

The Representation of “Music” in Oscar Wilde’s Texts

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This dissertation is dedicated to exploring the nexus between Oscar Wilde and music, countering the common assumption that these topics are not closely connected. Wilde, an Irish-born author in the nineteenth century, was not particularly known as a musical aficionado yet appreciated music both as culture and as an idea. Covering most of Wilde’s writings, the thesis has examined the present topic by means of biographical, aesthetic, socio-cultural, and textual approaches.

The first chapter tracks down Wilde’s musical experience by exploring his biography and letters, and demonstrates his intellectual and theoretical attachment to music. The second chapter lays a basis for the following chapters by showing that his sketching of the music scene in England is worthy of acknowledgement. The third and the fourth chapters investigate how his characters embody contemporary discourses concerning music and musicians. As is demonstrated, the author incorporates such figures as a musical mesmeriser and musical entrancement in some of his dramatis personae appearing around the 1880s. Simultaneously, Wilde subversively depicted males as musical dilettantes, and females as musically ignorant and unskilful. One may argue that this corresponds with the changing and complex sexuality of Wilde himself. The final chapter is a comprehensive analysis of musical representation in Wilde’s poetry. It is discovered that his notion of a poet as “the real musician” and frequent references to the Greek pastoral are discernible in his earliest texts, while the music depicted in his poems changed its tone in the mid-1880s. *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, is also noteworthy as it turned out to be his most musically successful verse produced after a long poetic silence. Reflecting the burgeoning interest in interdisciplinary studies, the thesis has thus explored Wilde’s relationship to music, which had a great significance in his creative life.