

## Notes on "The Devil to Pay"

Here's background on the coming performances of the musical "The Devil to Pay" at the Athenian School.

The Arts Department at the Athenian School tossed around the idea last spring of writing its own musical - book, music and all. Perhaps, it was soon felt, there wasn't time to come up with our own book, and so a search was begun in the area of the ballad opera of 18th Century England for a work which might be the basis for our own musical and stage invention. ("The Three Penny Opera" is a notable precedent as a 20th Century work based on the story of a ballad opera.)

"The Devil to Pay" was a popular success in this period of English musicals, second in popularity to the well known "Beggar's Opera", which we performed at Athenian School in the Benjamin Britten version 10 years ago. This last summer a volume of "The Devil to Pay", published in 1748, was located in the Stanford Library, and a copy was made for our use. This edition includes the play, with song verses and melodies only. The author, Charles Coffey, assembled well-known melodies of the time from various sources, including Irish, Scottish and English tunes, as well as melodies by composers such as Purcell and Handel.

"The Devil to Pay" is a farce which uses the following ingredients for the story: two couples, the noble Sir John Loverule and his temperamental and dominating new wife, together with an abusive and psalm-singing cobbler and his sweet wife, Nell. A visiting doctor (the devil), who is offended both by Lady Loverule and the cobbler, performs with the help of the spirits a magical switch of the wives - and from there the story develops.

With only melodies and lyrics given in the 1748 edition, the musical task called for the creation of harmonizations, introductions, interludes and dances, and choral pieces and instrumentations for our seven piece orchestra of two trumpets, clarinet, bass clarinet, flute, xylophone and piano. The finished work will be performed at Dyke Brown Hall on May 25, 26, and 27 at the Athenian School.

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