Source article: https://www.historyextra.com/period/tudor/smells-sounds-sights-elizabethan-england-food-clothes-music-bathing-toilets-medicine-surgery-witchcraft/

2

Sound

**Bells and bagpipes shatter the silence**

In modern times, there have been various brave attempts to recreate the ‘authentic’ sounds of the past by playing the music on instruments constructed to contemporary designs. As you will soon realise from experiencing sensations in Elizabethan England, even if you can recreate the sound you cannot recreate the experience of hearing it, for listening to music takes place in a different context in Elizabethan times.

There is no backdrop of motor, train and air traffic, no blaring sirens, no background of recorded music or radio, and no hum of electrical appliances. In fact, there are few loud noises. There is thunder; occasionally there is the report of a gun or cannon; and certain instruments, such as large bells, trumpets and shawms can create a striking impression, as can the galloping of many horses together.

But all these things are occasional or only heard in specific situations. The general range of aural experience is therefore much narrower and more sensitive to sounds, which are normally heard in isolation.

Elizabethans notice when a church bell rings the hour – they sometimes refer to a time as ‘ten of the bell’ rather than ‘ten of the clock’ – because they are used to listening out for the time. People also listen to music more intently because it stands out from their normal day-to-day silence.