

Canadian University Music Review

Revue de musique des universités canadiennes

Jan W. Herlinger. *The Lucidarium of Marchetto of Padua*.
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. xvi, 567 pp.

Bryan Gillingham

Numéro 6, 1985

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1014076ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1014076ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Canadian University Music Society / Société de musique des universités
canadiennes

ISSN

0710-0353 (imprimé)

2291-2436 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Gillingham, B. (1985). Compte rendu de [Jan W. Herlinger. *The Lucidarium of Marchetto of Padua*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. xvi, 567 pp.] *Canadian University Music Review / Revue de musique des universités canadiennes*, (6), 341–342. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1014076ar>

JAN W. HERLINGER. *The Lucidarium of Marchetto of Padua*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. xvi, 567 pp.

The *Lucidarium*, or “giver of light,” shines forth in a new critical edition, translation, and commentary by Jan Herlinger. This recasting of her dissertation includes a sixty-five page introduction (dealing with the treatise, its author, sources, and editorial procedures) as well as 500 pages of edition — Latin original on the versos facing the English translation on the rectos throughout — a convenient format for those who like to check. In the margins, as quasi-rubrics, are to be found exhaustive running comments which document variants, errors, sources, and the like. The large volume concludes with three indices: Technical Terms, Theorists and Sources Quoted or Paraphrased, and Chants to be found as examples scattered through the pages. The book appears to have been produced on a typewriter, or word processor with restricted capability, for the fonts are very limited (no Italics, Slant, or Boldface types), nor are right margins justified. The only typographical variance is the size reduction of marginal comments and footnotes. The musical examples seem to be hand-copied rather than engraved but they are perfectly neat and clear. The hardbound binding and paper are of good quality. In such a large volume, the savings realized by the use of inexpensive production methods are quite substantial, with little sacrifice, other than an aesthetic one with respect to appearance, in the quality of the emanating message.

Marchetto wrote the *Lucidarium* sometime in 1317 or 1318, and it is an important treatise of the *Ars Nova*, though he eschews that favorite subject of the period, rhythm, for the most part deliberately leaving it to the *Pomerium* a little later. In fact, it is rather conservative in that it deals with plainchant rather than the innovative polyphony of the period. His comments are often derivative reiterations of theory dating back to antiquity: quotations from Plato, Augustine, Boethius, Isidore, Guido and others. But this was a common enough practice used by theorists to legitimize their work. The theoretical concerns range from the nebulous aesthetic to the specific. Some of these are the nature and uses of music, acoustics, singing practices, tones, intervals, consonance and dissonance, proportions, melodic modes, mutations, *musica ficta*, and clefs. The quality of discussion is uneven, some of it bordering on nonsense, such as the tortured triple analogy comparing the practice of circumcision to, of all things, the interval of the octave (pp. 241 ff.). In spite of Marchetto’s biblical allusions and apparent concern with the penis, it is rather difficult to accept the comparison. Elsewhere he says “. . . if all notes were to lie on one line or in one space no singing would result but rather wailing” (p. 339). One suspects a mistake in editing and translation (on p. 93) when it is revealed that the word “voice” (*vox*) is derived from “voicing” (*vocando*). Such silliness, on the other hand, is redeemed by the useful comments on “permutation” (pp. 271 ff.), and penetrating insights into *musica ficta* and melodic modes. In short, the *Lucidarium* is not a

brilliant or avant-garde work, but a solid account of, for that time, traditional chant theory.

Do we really need a new edition? The *Lucidarium* has flickered most brightly in this century through the edition of Martin Gerbert (*Scriptores*, III, 64 ff) — the only available “modern” edition — though the *Pomerium* has fared better. It is now the sacredly *de rigueur* credo of medievalists to discredit Gerbert. So it is not surprising to read in Herlinger’s preface that Gerbert’s edition “abounds in errors and omissions” and that it “misrepresents” Marchetto’s ideas. How inaccurate is the older edition? There are spellings, word inflections, punctuation, occasional words, and numbering which differ from those of the new edition, but these are usually trivial and do not distort the content. Gerbert employed two sources, Herlinger eighteen. The effort required to tackle the other sixteen must surely have led to diminishing returns. For most of the treatise, Gerbert is perfectly adequate. As for the musical examples, Gerbert’s differ in ligation, barring, graphics, and occasionally in pitch, but not enough to obfuscate Marchetto’s meaning. Seldom could these variants reasonably be considered misrepresentation. The new edition is undoubtedly better, of course, but the old is far from useless, especially to the scholar with an experienced eye to the common calligraphic and grammatical carelessness characteristic of medieval manuscripts, factors which seem to be amply illustrated in the eighteen variants of *Lucidarium*.

There is little originality, nor much scope for it, evident on the part of the editor of the new *Lucidarium*. Since the bulk of the work is Marchetto’s, however, the editing and translation are for the most part thorough and sound. In the Introduction, where we do hear directly from the editor, there is the briefest biographical sketch of Marchetto (little is known of the man), an attempt to date the treatise, some shuffling of secondary sources, and an attempt (albeit muted) to aggrandize the historical position of *Lucidarium*. Following is a list of source manuscripts with sigla, an extensive inventory of their contents, references to other inventories, and stemmatic schemes which attempt to establish relationships among the manuscripts — all the favorite games of current medievalism. The editor adds little that was not already known in the Introduction nor is the translation necessary for the serious scholar. But it is not likely, mainly because of the edition, that anyone will have to replicate this task for some time to come. The light will sputter on, even if in a void.

Bryan Gillingham

JOHN ROSSELLI. *The Opera Industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi: The Role of the Impresario*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. viii, 214 pp.

In *The Opera Industry from Cimarosa to Verdi*, John Rosselli presents