

Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme



Merkley, Paul. Music and Patronage in the Court of René d'Anjou: Sacred and Secular Music in the Literary Program and Ceremonial

Luke Arnason

Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533): Faith, Antiquity, and the Witch Hunt

Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533) : Foi, Antiquité et chasse aux sorcières

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Merkley, Paul.

Music and Patronage in the Court of René d'Anjou: Sacred and Secular Music in the Literary Program and Ceremonial.

Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 498. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2017. Pp. x, 414 + 23 ill. ISBN 978-0-86698-553-6 (hardcover) US\$78.

This volume, as the author recounts in the introduction, is born out of the discovery that Josquin Desprez was employed at René d'Anjou's court prior to his appointment at the Sforza court in Milan. The earlier chapters of this book sketch a portrait of the diverse contexts for musical and artistic production, both sacred and secular, at René's court, culminating in a reappraisal of Josquin's biography in light of his activity there.

The first chapter is devoted to the central musical institution of René's court, the polyphonic chapel. The bulk of the chapter consists of the documentary records of individual singers (with the exception of Josquin, covered in chapter 10), constituted from considerable archival research. Through employment records as well as contracts made between the musicians or witnessed by them, Merkley shows that the choir was composed of noblemen and clerics, prosperous in their own right and benefitting from a surprising level of contact and familiarity with the monarch.

The next three chapters set out some of the main thematic and stylistic considerations of the repertoire, beginning with a discussion—in chapter 2—of the importance of artistic exchange, in this case principally between René d'Anjou and Charles d'Orléans. This practice of poetic *réponse-réplique* lends an important intertextual component to the poetry which, as discussed in chapter 3, is mirrored and accentuated in the music. Chapter 4 then examines the artistic patronage undertaken by René's second wife, Jeanne de Laval, and explores the ways in which the thematic or other content of her commissioned works might be affected by female patronage.

In chapter 5, Merkley discusses the importance—particularly at René's Provençal court—of the Golden Legend (according to which Mary Magdalen, fleeing Judea after the death of Jesus, is said to have arrived in Marseille and brought knowledge of Christ to Provence). One supposes that this rather descriptive chapter (of which a large proportion is made up of passages from Caxton's English account) is intended to set up the later chapters on mystery plays and on René's Marian program, which draw upon this legend frequently.

Chapters 6 through 8 deal with different aspects of theatre music. Chapter 6 catalogues the farces and morality plays known to have been performed at René's court and identifies the allusions to music and to lyric topics known to have circulated in the court poetry. Chapter 7, on music in mystery plays prior to 1472, is a highlight of the book and identifies passages where music was performed, offering suggestions as to repertoire that would have been known and could reasonably have been inserted. Chapter 8 continues in a similar vein, but is specifically focused on the 1470s. This is the period of Josquin's activity at the court and thus the focus is on pieces of his that could have been performed in the theatrical context.

This naturally sets the stage for a more detailed study of Josquin's career, centred around his time at the Angevin court but also detailing his early life and the circumstances of his move to Milan. This chapter, which is likely to be of principal interest to most readers, opens with a biographical sketch based on archival research, following the model of chapter 1. Consideration is then given to what pieces Josquin either is known to have composed or is likely to have composed during this period, followed by an analysis of the implications of the above for the dating of his music. This analysis contains perhaps the most striking findings, since Merkley's chronology based on historical and practical information is often at odds with traditional chronologies, which tend to be based on stylistic considerations. Chapter 10 discusses the importance of the veneration of Mary and the doctrine of her immaculate conception for René, and connects these circumstances to the earlier discussion of Josquin's output, making a case that many of Josquin's motets on a Marian theme (such as *Ave Verum Corpus*, *O Intermerata Virgo*, and *Ave Maria... Virgo Serena*) were likely composed for René.

The concluding chapter culminates in a very useful "Conspectus of Music" listing pieces "Proposed as Having Been Heard in the Court" with lyrics by prominent poets as well as "Works by Composers Attached to the Court" (388–91), the bulk of these being composed by Josquin.

The archival research underpinning this book cannot fail to impress interested readers, and the establishment of a repertoire associated with René's court, the bold reassessment of the chronology of Josquin's works, and the discussion of theatre music are all extremely well-researched and meticulously analyzed. It is at times difficult to link the content of a given chapter to an overarching theme or argument, and some passages come across as a miscellany of

any and all references to music at René's court rather than as a unified presentation of its musical life. There are also some editorial oversights, including typos and occasional errors or inconsistencies in the handling of translated passages. Readers should also be advised that French poetry and lyrics are not translated (except, inexplicably, on 163–64), so proficiency in French is a must. This book nonetheless makes a very compelling case for the importance of René's court as a musical centre and assembles an extraordinarily rich documentary base upon which to further explore its cultural riches.

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Neville, Alexander.

***The Histories of Alexander Neville (1544–1614): A New Translation of Kett's Rebellion and The City of Norwich*, ed. Ingrid Walton, Clive Wilkins-Jones, and Philip Wilson.**

Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2019. Pp. liv, 399 + 4 figs. ISBN 978-1-78327-332-4 (hardcover) US\$120.

The Neo-Latin histories of the sixteenth-century English humanist Alexander Neville receive a thoughtful and long-overdue treatment in this elegant, accessible volume. The book provides both a clear, lightly annotated transcription of the Latin texts and a stylish, articulate translation. For some of the texts, this is the first translation to appear in print. *The Histories of Alexander Neville* serves as a master class in combining literary, historical, and bibliographic insights to create a beautifully-informed edition that will become the new scholarly standard for Neville's histories and significantly advance our understanding of sixteenth-century culture.

Alexander Neville studied at Cambridge and the Inns of Court before advancing as a client first of Archbishop Matthew Parker and then of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, then serving as an MP late in Elizabeth's reign. His account of Kett's Rebellion, an event that roiled the kingdom in 1549, was published in 1575 as *De furoribus Norfolciensium Ketto duce*. It was the first printed account of that uprising and appeared with Neville's history of Norwich, *Norvicus*, as well as a brief civic chronicle including major officeholders for the