

David Fallows. *Josquin*.

Collection "Épitome musical." Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2009. xviii + 522 pp. ISBN: 978-2-503-53065-9.

Josquin des Prez created music of unparalleled power and expressiveness, yet he presents thorny challenges for anyone wishing to trace his life and the chronology of his works. David Fallows succeeds magnificently in fleshing out a revised narrative of Josquin's life (ca. 1450–1521), as well as offering a fresh perspective on the music. The laserlike focus of his logic imparts a Sherlock Holmesian air to the proceedings, as he interrogates with gusto every available clue in order to track the elusive composer. He also rethinks the chronology of Josquin's compositions — Masses, motets, and French chansons — and he is especially fine on the central Masses of the 1490s, where he offers unqualified praise for their musical wizardry. He introduces the *Missa La sol fa re mi* with: "It is worth stopping to admire this work, since it is one of Josquin's most perfect creations. Its perfection begins with the strangeness of the melodic line that permeates almost every bar" (183). Fallows addresses nonspecialists and specialists alike, and his discussions of the music generally avoid overly technical terminology. Modern editions of this music place the voices on separate staves, but Fallows reduces his sixty-three music examples to two staves so that readers can play them on a keyboard.

Fallows lets the reader know when he is making a particularly risky point (he floats many trial balloons), and his implicit aim is to generate further debate about issues that admit no final answer. His work has been facilitated by the nearly complete *New Josquin Edition* (Utrecht, 1987–), a thirty-volume set that includes some 150 works for which Josquin's authorship is accepted, culled from a total of over 300 works attributed to the composer. The book generally avoids discussion of pieces for which Josquin's authorship has been questioned, and focuses on the central canon of about fifty compositions: twelve Masses, thirty sacred motets in Latin, and twenty-two secular works, mainly French chansons.

A particularly vexing problem for study of Josquin's music arises from loss of musical sources before about 1490, but a strength of the book is the methodology that proposes creation of a work close to the time it appears in its earliest source.

This is effective for compositions originating in the 1490s and later, and one focal point of the book is Josquin's first book of Masses, printed in 1502 in Venice. Fallows provides an illuminating account of the dazzling variety of rhythm and counterpoint in these five Masses, including two very different works on the tune *L'homme armé* (*The Armed Man*). Part of the powerful effect of Josquin's music derives from his obsessive repetition of short segments of melody; he piles up repetitions with steadily accelerating rhythms to construct forceful climaxes, especially in these Masses (152–53). The Masses serve as a foil for music that Fallows argues was composed before and after the 1490s, from early experimental works in rather simple textures, to a highly refined style after 1500 with expanded scoring for five and six voices.

Fallows bravely proposes a series of youthful works for the period between 1466 and 1483, despite lack of early sources. With astute observations about musical style, and construction of the context of courtly music during these decades, he makes a good case for locating the famous setting of *Ave Maria* at the court of René d'Anjou in the late 1470s. But his placement of the Psalm motet *Memor esto verbi tui* at the court of King Louis XI in the early 1480s will strike many as too early. More likely Josquin composed it for King Louis XII some twenty years later, given its style and the testimony of the music theorist Heinrich Glarean.

The book provides a fresh account of Josquin's life and the chronology of his works, based on documents recovered by Paul and Lora Merkley and others. Prior to 1998 it appeared that Josquin had spent some twenty years as an adult singer in Milan from 1459 to about 1477, and this implied a birth date around 1440, but the new documents have produced a sea change. They place Josquin's birth around 1450, ten years later than previously believed. And the singer at Milan turns out to have been another man named Josquin de Kessalia, while the actual composer Josquin des Prez did not arrive in Milan until 1484. In a stroke, the prolonged Milanese period for the composer has "evaporated," as Fallows puts it. Armed with these new findings, Fallows traces Josquin's career in chapters that cover periods of ten years. Josquin was a choirboy in Cambrai until 1466, but a gap appears from 1466 to 1475, when he was presumably still in France. In the years 1475–83 he surfaced at the courts of René d'Anjou and possibly Louis XI. In 1483 he inherited property in Condé-sur-l'Escaut, north of Cambrai, and Fallows suggests that personal wealth allowed him to avoid servitude during later periods of his life; this may explain periodic absences from pay records. Josquin spent only about ten years in Italy, from 1484 to 1494, first with Cardinal Ascanio Sforza in 1484–85 in Milan and Rome, then with Duke Ludovico Sforza in Milan in 1489, and finally in the papal chapel 1489–94. Fallows suggests he may have served Matthias Corvinus in Hungary in the mid-1480s, but the evidence is only circumstantial. After leaving the papal chapel Josquin apparently resided in the north from 1494 to 1503, probably in Cambrai and at the court of Louis XII. He returned to Italy in 1503–04 to serve Ercole d'Este at Ferrara. Here he composed a famous Mass, *Missa Hercules dux Ferrarie*, and the highly rhetorical setting of Psalm 50, *Miserere mei, deus*. I suggest one correction: Fallows quotes the list of Josquin's six-voice works in

Teofilo Folengo's poem *Baldus* (253); he believes that the title *Beata* is a loose reference to the motet *Benedicta es*, but more likely it refers to *O virgo prudentissima* (a poem by Poliziano), in particular its tenor part, *Beata mater*. At Ferrara Josquin appears to have known Pietro Bembo and Lucrezia Borgia. In a portrait of a musician attributed to Filippo Mazzola (given as plate 4), the sitter holds paper with musical notation, and Fallows identifies the music as one of Josquin's simplest compositions, *Guillaume se va chauffer*, but here it has words by Bembo. After Ferrara, Josquin spent his last years in Condé-sur-l'Escaut, and composed works for five and six voices, including the profoundly sorrowful lament, *Nymphes, nappés*.

Fallows provides balanced accounts of the extensive scholarship on Josquin, and he spells out arguments in detail, a welcome feature because of the contentious nature of much of the discourse on Josquin's life and the canon of his works. Other helpful features include over 100 pages of appendices with summaries of documents that name Josquin, and brief biographical entries for more than 100 contemporaries. The book is a major achievement, and stands as the most authoritative account in any language of Josquin's life and works.

PATRICK MACEY

Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester