Make a Joyful Noise: Renaissance Art and Music at Florence Cathedral.
Gary M. Radke, Gabriele Giacomelli, Patrick Macey, Marica S. Tacconi, and Timothy Verdon, eds.
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Though the title of this book suggests a broad study of Renaissance art and music at Florence Cathedral, *Make a Joyful Noise* is a collaborative effort involving an art historian and three musicologists, all more or less focused on a masterpiece of early Renaissance sculpture, Luca della Robbia's *Cantoria*. Since Luca's work and its companion piece by

Donatello were created to function as lofts for musicians (principally organists and singers), this is a welcome effort, occasioned by an exhibition of three of the ten panels from della Robbia's marble loft at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta in 2013.

The centerpiece of the volume is the substantial essay on the circumstances of the commissioning and creation of the *Cantoria* by Gary Radke, who was the consulting curator for the exhibition. Remarkably, this was Luca's first documented commission, and Radke sets about tracing, with the aid of numerous high-quality color images, the artist's rapid evolution in this competitive artistic environment from good, to better, to best as he worked on the project during 1431–38. Radke offers a convincing chronology for the creation of the panels. Spurred by extant examples of sculptors line Nanni di Banco and by direct competition fostered by the Opera del Duomo with the older Donatello (who began his *Cantoria* in 1433), Luca gradually developed more complex relationships between figures, greater undercutting of the figures to create increased planes of depth, and greater numbers of figures within a panel.

The remaining three musicological essays are more modest complements to Radke's. Each is quite short and based mostly on previously published work, but they make accessible to an interdisciplinary readership the fruits of their expert scholarship, and are essential to understanding Luca's *Cantoria* within the context of the "multisensory experiences Florentines expected from all of their religious art" (7). A visitor to the cathedral in the decades after the installation of Luca's *Cantoria* on the wall above the north sacristy would have seen three primary objects in the stall: an organ, singers, and liturgical books on a lectern, and it is to each of these three musical items that the three essays are addressed. Gabriele Giacomelli's extensive research on Florentine organs, especially those of the cathedral, enables him to make the most definitive comments on what was seen and heard in the lofts. At this time Tuscan organs were among the finest in Italy, and the most famous maker of them was Matteo da Prato, whom the Opera del Duomo commissioned around 1434 to fashion an *organo ghrande* for Luca's *Cantoria* (a smaller organ was installed in Donatello's *Cantoria*). The organ was not completed until 1448, at which time this instrument of unprecedented timbre and expression was given a much-anticipated and well-attended debut at the hands of several organists, chief among them Squarcialupi, and was pronounced "good and perfect" (55).

Patrick Macey deftly weaves together the Florentine song traditions that would have shaped what was sung in Luca's loft: liturgical chant, polyphonic music written specifically for the cathedral, music from the unwritten (or, more accurately, mixed oral and written) tradition of the Italian *lauda*, and imported music of French chansons that were reset with *lauda* texts. Like Radke earlier, Macey also attempts to draw a direct connection between Luca's figures and contemporary Florentine musical practice (e.g., Florentine boy singers as models, the use of scrolls, etc.), but this is a problematic venture in a work that draws heavily on antique Roman figures and the biblical content of Psalm 150.

Prior to a postscript by Timothy Verdon on the newly expanded Museo dell'Opera del Duomo (a circumstance that made possible the loan of Luca's panels to the Atlanta exhibition), Marica Tacconi provides the final essay on the cathedral's sumptuous

liturgical books. Though she does not tackle the difficult task of linking these choirbooks directly to Luca's *Cantoria*, the topic is essential to constructing the visual and sonic environment of the loft, and the cathedral in general. The project to provide the cathedral with new choirbooks of "the greatest possible value and beauty" (74) began with the production of two new psalters in 1439, thus contemporary with the building of a new organ, the establishment of a polyphonic choir, and the completion of Luca's youthful masterpiece that would house and celebrate the harmonious conjunction of them all.

BLAKE WILSON, *Dickinson College*