

things.¹ But the situation there was quite clear: ninety-six pages all ruled exactly the same way, with the staves alternating 18 and 16 mm and with a couple of examples of wriggles to prove that it really was a double rastrum. The situation with MuL is entirely different. BU is on paper, which remains relatively stable; MuL is on parchment, which curls and expands (and it is easy to see from these lovely photographs how distorted the thin parchment has become). Klugseder's view (pp. 41–3) that the staves alternate between 12.5 and 13 mm simply cannot be endorsed: half a millimetre can happen simply by holding the rastrum at a different angle not to mention the way parchment can warp and bend over six hundred years. That he has those distances alternating on some leaves but not on others is in itself a demonstration that we are not dealing with a double rastrum. And there is no sense in any notion that the stave-ruler had two different rastra which he used one after the other more or less at random.

But the book stands as a clear statement that fragments of this kind are of major importance for music historians and that librarians must be encouraged to make them known. That way, perhaps we will get even more of what looks to have been one of the seriously authoritative sources of its generation.

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Katharine Ellis, *The Politics of Plainchant in fin-de-siècle France*, Royal Musical Association Monographs 20. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013. xxiii + 137 pp. £45. ISBN 978 1 4094 6373 3.

Katherine Ellis's monograph on the fraught history of plainchant in late nineteenth-century France is a densely woven tale which rewards sustained and attentive reading. Part institutional, part political history, part biography, *The Politics of Plainchant in fin-de-siècle France* takes a new approach to the history of plainchant in a period when the ancient music of the Roman church was at a flashpoint – political, musicological and ecclesiastical. The story has often been reduced to one of the struggle of the abbey of Solesmes to become pre-eminent in the editing and publishing of plainchant. Ellis's achievement in *The Politics of Plainchant* is to enrich and complicate that story in ways which situate much of what has become received knowledge about Solesmes and the plainchant restoration in new and illuminating perspectives.

The biographical angle of the book is the primary means by which Ellis attains these perspectives. The central character in the drama, a figure whom Ellis styles 'The Invisible Man' in her first chapter, is Auguste Pécoul. Pécoul emerges from Ellis's account as the spider at the centre of an immense and tangled web of correspondence, with threads which reach into the heart of the anti-clerical Republican

¹ 'Quelques aspects codicologiques des manuscrits de musique profane dans la première moitié du XVe siècle', *Gazette du livre médiéval* 38 (2001), 15–26.

government, the French liturgical publishing industry and its unions, the Vatican *curia* and the abbey of Solesmes. Once a novice at Solesmes, Pécoul retained very close ties to the community after family affairs forced him to leave the religious life: as well as being considered by Dom Guéranger 'a son', he more significantly had stood as sponsor ('parrain') to none other than Dom Pothier, at the latter's first monastic vows. An extremely well connected man wherever it mattered, Pécoul's extraordinary and almost obsessive commitment to Pothier's vision of chant restoration and performance drove him on a long and exhaustive campaign writing letters, petitions and articles on several fronts, pitting various different institutions and organisations against one another whilst keeping each of them in the dark about his labours elsewhere. Ellis's detailing of Pécoul's often pseudonymic antics (it turns out that he is the infamous 'Schmidt' of Solesmes history) makes for fascinating reading, and one cannot help but admire her patient trailing of his twisting and turning campaign of gossip, provocations, half-truths and audacious broadsides. Despite his omnipresence in the book, however, Pécoul as a subject remains elusive, still half-invisible behind his multiple personas, and it is to Ellis's credit that although she reveals him, she refrains from finishing his portrait. In the final analysis, Pécoul is not the subject of this study. Rather, his network and his campaign in the service of Pothier's vision are the means by which Ellis can explore broader aspects of plainchant and politics during her period.

Within the realm of institutional history, Ellis's study offers a striking example of how individuals such as Pécoul might manipulate seemingly monolithic and inflexible organisations and structures towards ends of which they are not fully aware. The unpleasantness of the post-1893 Pothier vs. Solesmes copyright saga with regard to Pothier's palaeographical and editorial work was in large part exacerbated by Pécoul's public and private agitation and machination on Pothier's behalf (not always with the latter's approval; Pothier emerges from the book as a curiously passive and rather non-committal character, something Ellis herself notes). Pécoul's pursuit of what he saw as Pothier's rights to ownership of his work and correctness in respect of chant edition and performance, and his vindictive and unswerving animosity towards Mocquereau's 'New Solesmes' work and publications (he felt that Mocquereau was turning Solesmes into a 'conservatoire', against the spirit of the chant as 'sung prayer') led him eventually to his great triumph: causing the anti-clerical Republican government inadvertently to support Pothier's chant editions against any new Solesmes edition prepared by Mocquereau and published in Belgium after the community's exile. A government circular of 4 July 1904 to the Catholic bishops of France urging them not to betray French interests by purchasing their chant books from a 'foreign' source was worded by Pécoul, and marked the culmination of his efforts ostensibly on behalf of French print unions but really on behalf of Pothier. Through this narrative strand of *The Politics of Plainchant*, Ellis explores the extent to which Pécoul could play on Republican protectionism, as well as strained diplomatic relations with the Vatican (which broke down completely less than a month after Pécoul's circular was sent out), to an end which he kept almost completely obscure from his government contacts.

Solesmes and its characters, feuds and divisions were Pécoul's main concern, and Ellis provides the reader with a new perspective on this well-known era of plainchant history, nuancing the account which easily streamlines the rather fractious period of the 1890s and 1900s into an easily comprehended institution called 'Solesmes'. Ellis's study, through her close work with Pécoul, quickly decomposes such an account of Solesmes during this period into one of institutional, interpersonal, musical and legislative crisis, albeit one which often simmered rather than exploded. Although Ellis's tone is measured, it is not difficult to read Solesmes under Delatte and Mocquereau as something like the villains of this particular piece, as the question of intellectual property and the relationship between the community and the individual becomes an important one, both to Pécoul and to Ellis. This Ellis makes clear in her Preface, suggesting a possible reading of her history within the context of contemporary academic life and the question of 'impact' and the ownership of research.

The issues surrounding nationalism, protectionism and the print industry are perhaps no less relevant in the present day, especially during the age of globalised industry and the internet. While plainchant may not be as ubiquitous anywhere in its liturgical presence as in nineteenth-century France, the ease of access to online editions – scholarly or otherwise – and manuscripts, of both chant and other music, causes anxiety for many in the music publishing and retail industry. But perhaps some things never change in the world of modern plainchant publishing. Pécoul began his campaign on behalf of Pothier during anxieties regarding the feared renewal of the Vatican privilege for the German-produced Pustet edition of the chant; well over a century later, after the eventual French triumph of the Solesmes/Vatican Edition, the *Graduale Novum* emerged from Regensburg in 2011. This new edition proudly displays a triple tiara on its frontispiece, and proclaims itself to be the answer to a call at the Second Vatican Council for a new edition of the chant; emblazoned on the front cover is the incipit of the first chant in the book, the Introit 'Ad te levavi', neumes-and-all, in a version pointedly different from that of the well-known, long-privileged Solesmes edition.

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