

Music in Elizabethan Court Politics. Katherine Butler.

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The list of disciplines that will welcome Butler's examination of the political uses of music in Elizabeth's court is too long to enumerate here. That Queen Elizabeth I supported courtly musical activities and that European monarchs used music as a political tool is well-charted territory for musicologists and historians. Literary scholars have pondered the metaphors of image, petition, and complaint in the poetry of her courtiers and those seeking her favor, from Sidney and Shakespeare to the lutenist John Dowland. What distinguishes this study from others on Elizabethan musical culture is Butler's assertion that the queen was not directly in control of how music was used in her service at all times — that is, music could and did serve multiple political

purposes. Tightly organized and impeccably researched, this engaging study triangulates the disciplines of musicology, literary history, and iconography to present the political roles music could play within Elizabeth's court, and adds welcome nuance to the preexisting scholarly narratives of monarchical control over the arts.

Butler organizes this study of musical image making beginning with Elizabeth's most intimate spaces — her privy chamber — and then moving to elaborate and public occasions with more diverse audiences, such as the tiltyard and summer progresses. Accompanying this movement from private to public locales is a more metaphorical distancing of musical control from Elizabeth's personal performances and her role as patron, to the co-optation of her musical imagery by the nobility and civic hosts. Butler is also careful to define her scope as limited to the secular entertainments of Elizabeth's court, differentiating her study from the existing, and venerable, scholarship on English psalmody, the Chapel Royal, and Byrd and Tallis's publishing interests. The queen's realm was a unique environment — fragile Protestantism, personal and localized musical tastes, fears of musical effeminacy — with surviving musical manuscripts that are difficult to directly connect to her court. These complexities are worthy of the kind of cross-disciplinary methodology employed in this study.

The first chapter parses out the thorny issues of female music making and image construction in the early modern era. Using Hilliard's famous miniature of Elizabeth performing on the lute as a point of departure, Butler illustrates that the divide between music's attributes as sensual (feminine) and rational (masculine) existed along a continuum, allowing Elizabeth to exploit "music's traditional femininity to shape her relationships with courtiers and ambassadors, yet also [appropriate] its connotations of power and harmony as a symbol of authority" (19). This frame is a necessary introduction to the queen's role as a performer (chapter 2), amid music's connotations of intimacy, through which she cultivated diplomatic and courtly relationships. Elizabeth used performance in her privy chamber as a way to fashion images of her private self and influence ambassadors. Her courtiers — Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, in particular is discussed at length here — likewise employed music to be personally attractive to the queen. As a patron (chapter 3), "Elizabeth's influence over musical performances stretched only to directly the choice of performers rather than their politics" (88). While the entertainments analyzed in this chapter — masques and choirboy plays — have received substantial treatment in musicological and literary scholarship, the conclusion Butler draws is intriguing: not every masque or play depicted a flattering image of the queen, but did not threaten her authority either. In fact, "in no musical entertainment was Elizabeth's political agenda absolute; not even in her greatest sphere of influence, her own household" (104).

In general, the lengthier musical examples in this study are contained in chapters 4 and 5, on music for the tiltyard and progresses. Tournaments allowed for knights to co-opt Elizabeth's musical imagery to self-fashion noble masculinity by drawing on music's military, pastoral, and religious associations: "For the ideal gentleman-courtier music was a foil to his military display that affirmed his balanced and well-rounded talents" (141). Likewise, music for the progresses was not commissioned by the queen

and her court but rather by her summer hosts, entirely out of her control. Songs of praise and complaints, consort songs, madrigals, and even ballad tunes espoused lyrics that might appear to be royal flattery but instead emphasized themes of service and rewards, underlying notes of petition or political and religious commentary. Fortunately, Butler's commentary on these diverse musical genres avoids ahistorical analysis and instead relies on word-music relationships, cadential patterns, and musical conventions.

Some may wish for a more expansive conclusion; Butler discusses the role music played in securing the queen's legacy after her death. The excitingly thorough appendixes more than compensate for this brevity, however, and will surely provide scholars of Elizabethan secular music and court culture ample resources for further research and conversation.

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