

Elizabeth Eva Leach, ed. *Machaut's Music: New Interpretations*.

Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music 1. Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, Inc., 2003. xviii + 296 pp. index. illus. bibl. \$120. ISBN: 1-84383-016-7.

Engaging specific scholarship from within and without, *Machaut's Music* resoundingly achieves the “explicitly polyphonic design” editor Leach proposed to “showcase the varieties of contemporary scholarly engagement . . . and the range of interpretative methods” in use for Machaut’s works and the period. Rising as well as established scholars rely upon, reexamine, and challenge earlier studies and each other in this closely argued, stimulating examination of Machaut and his music. Heeding the counsel of Reinhard Strohm and Margaret Bent, each essay contemplates individual works, asking “how a specific piece of music works” and seeking “knowledge of the music” (Hirshberg, 139). Karle Kügle’s conclusion broadens the spectrum, encouraging comparative alongside interpretive approaches. Through these provocative explorations of his music, Machaut’s own vivid intellect and creativity emerge.

Much work remains to be done in formulating effective methodologies for analyzing the variety of musical styles before 1600, but this anthology demonstrates that “analysis has done a lot to . . . increase our respect for Machaut’s command of his musical materials” (Leech-Wilkinson, 250). Peter Lefferts’s recognition that styles range along a spectrum from normal to original resonates with Bent’s oft-noted observation that departures from conventional musical grammars

expand the range of recognized usages. These analyses often bring new evidence to conventional wisdom, sometimes resulting in recognition of this expanded grammar.

Reassessments of primary sources drive many essays. Despite Machaut's famously clear source picture, problems of interpretation remain. Editors struggling to reconcile concepts of medieval theoretical practices with deviating compositional constructions may have misconveyed Machaut's intentions. Returning to primary sources with the intent to explain rather than to justify yields musical revelations for Christian Berger, who draws upon Machaut's Mass to corroborate his theories about *Balade 32*, illuminating a deeper resonance between music and text. Conversely, Thomas Brown's careful corrections of scribal errors may solve longstanding conundrums.

Virginia Newes, comparing manuscript transmissions, discovers a source metanarrative created by carefully ordered works, along with highly focused messages within individual chansons. Anne Stone makes explicit the links between adjacent works. Contemplating sources as visual objects, she discovers clues about borrowing, musical literacy, and interpretation. Within each source, Stone points out, readers simultaneously responded to poetic texts, painted miniatures, and musical notation.

Yolanda Plumley's citation of Deschamps encapsulates a recurring theme: "the melodies are rendered finer and more fitting by the words and by the eloquence of the lyrics than they would [be] on their own; similarly, the natural songs (poetry) are made delightful and more beautiful by the . . . song of artificial music" (231) — and yet, "a poem's integrity is inevitably compromised as its sonic play is dominated by that of the musical setting" (238). Scrutiny of Machaut's varied musical responses to poetic structures and meanings reveals instances of music interpreting (Boogaart, Bain) and even performing texts (Berger, Mahrt). Jane Flynn posits audiences familiar enough with chanson texts to imagine the words and rhymes even in textless instrumental performances. Intabulators, too, privilege text, retaining its fingerprints in instrumental realizations.

Sounding music, heard or imagined, occupies the foreground (Bent, Moll, Stone, Hirshberg, Lefferts, and Plumley). Leech-Wilkinson, observing that "a performer . . . is turning back into sound something that was conceived and composed as sound" (252), extracts insight from vowel quality and musical sonority in modern performances through spectrograph analysis. In conceptually contrapuntal investigations of contratenors, Kevin Moll examines voice designation and texture, and Jennifer Bain demonstrates that intabulations can identify musical essence.

This sophisticated, penetrating, lucid collection promises to ripple through musicological approaches to music of earlier and later periods and of Machaut's contemporaries. Many essays will infiltrate the classroom because of systematic and illuminating organization and content: for instance, Jacques Boogaart's masterful explication of *M3*.

Leach's introduction acknowledges Machaut's unique position in fourteenth-century musical culture: rarely do composers who command such sustained and

prominent attention fit the molds of their times. A refrain emerges as a testament to Machaut's imagination, as essay after essay fittingly reports that the work under examination "is unlike all the other songs of Machaut" (Bain, 215). This collection emulates Machaut's own masterful counterpoint of notes, texts, textures, melodies, structures, modality, rhythms, and symbols, imprinting the impact of this music upon its readers, singers, players, and hearers.

JENNIFER THOMAS

University of Florida