

Introduction

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Music was a force to be reckoned with in the age of Donne, animating everyday life and worship to an extent that we can only attempt to reconstruct imaginatively. Trailing the glory of a long tradition of irresistible, almost otherworldly power over the human soul, for better or (as some treatises claimed) for worse, music also had a down-to-earth existence both in the lives of its more humble practitioners and in the upper reaches of society, church, and state. The case of Thomas Morley's embarrassed student who could not sing his part at sight at an after-dinner entertainment suggests how high the expectations were in daily musical practice, both vocal and instrumental.

The essays gathered here view the music of the period from a number of perspectives, offering provocative glimpses of how Donne's contemporaries felt about music as well as how Renaissance music made itself felt in its own day and even in the postmodern period down to the present. Taking her cue from Donne's praise of the Sidneys' translation of the psalms, Anne Lake Prescott provides a lively, far-reaching account of how ideas about David and his miraculous music permeated medieval and Renaissance texts. R. D. S. Jack offers a fresh look at music and poetry in the court of James VI, highlighting settings of Alexander Montgomerie and making a convincing case for closer attention to Scottish achievement in these arts. Gavin Alexander reminds us of just how musically involved and musically accomplished the members of the Sidney family were, giving us new evidence of their skill in his treatments of music by Sir Robert Sidney and Lady Mary Wroth.

Three essays focus on Shakespeare, for whom music represented one of the most important keys to human nature. In a searching analysis, Elise Bickford Jorgens detects somber, postmodern overtones in the

songs and text of *The Merchant of Venice*. Lin Kelsey sets the exuberant polyphonic texture of *Twelfth Night*, with its emphasis on making music with others, against the strange new power of singing alone in *The Tempest* some ten years later, finding in the plays a faithful record of a major shift in musical practice. Byron Adams brings Shakespeare's far-echoing musical influence into the twentieth century, exploring the extensive use of Shakespearean music and motifs in the works of Ralph Vaughan Williams.

The protean topic of the relationship of words and music in the Renaissance receives a number of skillful turns here. Examining "words on music," Linda Phyllis Austern provides a closer look at the intimate entwining of these two powerful mediums in Early Modern England, surveying verbal praise and dispraise of music and analyzing the delicate balance between sacred and secular negotiated by such works as Thomas Weelkes's heaven-centered madrigal. Moving across the barrier of languages, William Peter Mahrt considers the formidable challenges posed both by the task of setting Italian madrigals to Italian music and by the equally tricky endeavor of producing new madrigals in English to texts translated from the Italian. Christopher R. Wilson deals with the difficulties of poetic and musical accent in those of Campion's airs that the musician called "measured," exploring the rival traditions of classical meters and modern poetic meters.

Focusing on the setting of a single word of praise, John Morehen finds subtle variation in the treatment of "alleluia" in a range of passages from English sacred music of the Renaissance. In another perspective on setting words for sacred singing, Paul L. Gaston widens our appreciation of George Herbert's poems by considering various hymn writers who used (or misused) his texts. Finally, Stephen M. Buhler takes text-setting beyond music and words into choreographed motion in a study of the fortunes of Milton's "L'Allegro," first transformed by Handel in his setting of an eighteenth-century rewriting and more recently translated into movement in the dances of Mark Morris.

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