Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence (review)

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commentary on the twenty-two works she treats in succession, wisely leaving for the final chapter an explanation of the more technical aspects of modal theory and a summary of each mode's characteristics. At the same time, she uses this final chapter to review the salient features of each case study and retrospectively demonstrates the logic behind the composer's choice of mode for a particular text, whether for its capacity to underline paradox — as with the Mixolydian mode of "Cruda Amarilli," for example — or to evoke anguish or mimic a troubled inwardness. Happily, an appendix supplies the complete scores of the works discussed, and interested readers will find that most of them are readily accessible in recorded performances.

There are other things to be said about the emergence of subjectivity in the madrigal: for example, the very phrase appears in the title of a recent article by Mauro Calcagno that focuses on an early composer of madrigals, Jacques Arcadelt (in *Pensieri per un maestro: Studi in onore di Pierluigi Petrobelli*, ed. Stefano La Via and Roger Parker [2002], 35–52). But here Susan McClary aptly demonstrates how the modal ambiguities of the polyphonic madrigal repertory — attributed by some scholars to the breakdown of the Renaissance rules of composition under the teleological strain of moving toward a new, seventeenth-century, and ultimately tonal practice — qualify instead "as a deliberate and highly complex set of strategies for delineating self-divided subjectivities" (199). *Modal Subjectivities* was recognized by the American Musicological Society in 2005 with its coveted Kinkeldey Award; however, the book's engaging style, bold premise, and persuasive argument will reward and gratify the reader who possesses a modicum of music literacy and a general interest in Renaissance poetics, regardless of discipline.

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Kelley Harness. *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence.*

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. xvi + 378 pp. + 4 color pls. index. append. illus. tbls. bibl. $45. ISBN: 0–226–31659–9.

Few families of influence in early modern Europe have been studied as extensively as the Medici. Their rise and fall, the forging of ever-shifting political alliances, and their steadfast patronage of the arts have all been the subject of some excellent studies. Yet the period between February 1621 and July 1628, when two Medici women assumed political control, has been somewhat neglected by recent scholarship. Grand Duke Cosimo II (1590–1621) created the regency in his testament, entrusting the government of Tuscany to his wife, Maria Magdalena of Austria (1589–1631), and to his mother, Christine of Lorraine (1565–1636). The two female regents were to rule with full sovereignty until Ferdinando II (1610–70), Cosimo and Maria Magdalena's son, turned eighteen on 14 July 1628.

Kelley Harness offers a fascinating and multifaceted investigation of the two

women's artistic patronage in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, focusing especially on the seven-year period of their rule. Archduchess Maria Magdalena assumed the more active role, engaging herself in a series of artistic commissions primarily of religious subjects. While the sacred bias has in the past earned the period a reputation for artistic sterility, Harness debunks this view by arguing that "Maria Magdalena's commissions can best be understood as self-fashioning, that is, a process in which visual images create symbolic responses to historical events and assert the legitimacy of an individual ruler, by constructing concrete personifications of the attributes with which she . . . wanted to identify publicly" (21). It is a convincing argument, one that Harness supports brilliantly in chapters 2 through 6 by examining a wide range of artistic commissions: frescoes and paintings for the Villa Poggio Imperiale, equestrian spectacles, theatrical plays, *intermedi*, and operas. Through the examination of court diaries and archival records, as well as the surviving manuscript and printed sources, Harness provides a reconstruction of Florentine state spectacles featuring female protagonists as well as the rich repertory of Saint Mary Magdalen plays performed at court or dedicated to Archduchess Maria Magdalena. Any musicologist will note with sorrow the number of *drammi per musica* whose music is lost. These include works by Jacopo Peri, Marco da Gagliano, and Francesca Caccini, composers who exercised remarkable influence on the development of early seventeenth-century opera, a genre still at its inception.

Chapters 7 and 8 turn the focus to Christine of Lorraine's artistic patronage, and especially to her interest in and support of the Dominican Monastero di Santa Croce in Florence, commonly known as La Crocetta, a religious institution founded by Domenica da Paradiso in 1513 and formally approved by Pope Leo X in May 1515. Harness relies on the monastery's extensive documentary records (now at the Archivio di Stato in Florence) to shed light on various aspects of the institution's position of spiritual influence and artistic prestige in late sixteenth- and early to mid-seventeenth-century Florence. Perhaps most significant, Harness underscores the importance of La Crocetta as a musical institution. The account books reveal that between 1593 and 1647 the nuns of La Crocetta turned to polyphony, began hiring outside musicians, and turned the convent into a prominent center of elaborate concerted music.

The strength of the book relies primarily on Harness's interdisciplinary approach to the subject. Take, for example, the author's masterful treatment of the biblical heroine Judith, the protagonist of *La Giuditta*, an opera on a libretto by Andrea Salvadori and music (now lost) by Marco da Gagliano, performed on 22 September 1626 on the occasion of the Florentine visit of Cardinal Francesco Barberini. Before discussing the opera itself, Harness summarizes the political background (that is, the strained relationship between the Medici court and the papacy) and presents an effective overview of the Judith tradition in Florence. She pulls together a wide range of evidence, drawn from various disciplines, all aimed at demonstrating the complex nature of the biblical heroine: Judith as a prefiguration of the Virgin Mary (focus on her chastity), as an emblem of civic virtue

(focus on her strength as a vanquisher of tyrants), as a symbol of erotic power (focus on her sexuality), and so on. Judith and her versatile nature found expression in the literature, art (Donatello's *Judith*, as Harness reminds us, is perhaps the most noteworthy example), and sacred drama of Renaissance Florence. Judith was thus "the most multivalent of the regency's vehicles of self-fashioning, having acquired multiple moral and symbolic implications in the preceding centuries" (113). Ultimately, Harness shows how *La Giuditta* and its *intermedi* "linked the multiple interpretations of the book of Judith to the political realities facing Maria Magdalena, her subjects, and her guest. . . . Plot, syntax, and, presumably, music combined to construct a powerful female character who could believably defeat her enemies and liberate her people" (132).

Echoes of Women's Voices is a superb contribution to women's studies, the history of arts patronage, musicology, and, more generally, to our understanding of early modern Florence and the dynamics of its political self-fashioning. Meticulously researched, beautifully written, well argued, and enhanced by a rich apparatus of illustrations, tables, musical examples, and document transcriptions (most with translations), this study is a model of interdisciplinary scholarship at its best.

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Christine S. Getz. *Music in the Collective Experience in Sixteenth-Century Milan*.

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Practices of Renaissance musical performance depended enormously on the many variables of local environments. Italian cities shared many types of venues and musical organizations, and individual musicians and composers might move from one city to another, so they had a number of features in common. But all manner of specifics, from the size and technical competencies of the choirs, to the strength of the music publishing industry, to the roles of courts and civic institutions, varied so considerably that modern efforts to understand urban musical experience require local study. Thus the past two decades have seen the production of a substantial scholarly literature on the musical culture of particular Renaissance cities, especially those of Italy. Christine Getz contributes to this important and growing body of knowledge with her study of Milan.

A number of features made Milan and its musical culture both significant and unique. It enjoyed its own liturgical rite, the Ambrosian. It was in many ways a meeting point between Mediterranean and Northern European cultural trends and features. Long run by a series of signori, Milan was not only one of the great cities of Italy, but was at the heart of the Italian Wars of the early sixteenth century. It began the era with Sforza dukes, ended with Spanish Hapsburg governors, and