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Thomas Tomkins: The Last Elizabethan (review)

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(Review)

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Braun's intention is "to sketch a complete picture of the German Lied in the seventeenth century" (i). He focuses on the period ca. 1630–80, the heyday of the continuo lied, but rather than retrace the development of the genre, as previous scholars have done, he instead raises a number of interesting issues that arise out of an examination of the continuo song as a musical, sociological, and cultural phenomenon.

In his treatment of the continuo song in parts 2–4, Braun begins with early developments in Saxony (Leipzig and Dresden), and first focuses on the works of Johann Hermann Schein (1586–1630), most of which predate the important poetic reforms of Martin Opitz (1597–1639) and prefigure the continuo song. He then looks at the emergence of the continuo song in Dresden in the work of Johann Nauwach (pub. 1627) and Christoph Kittel (pub. 1638), and the reform poetry of Opitz, "without [whom] there would be no Baroque Lied" (141). Braun emphasizes the impact and influence of Opitz, and points out that with the new reform poetry of Opitz a new relationship developed between word and music, and thus between poet and composer. Now the composer served as "Beseeler" ("enlivener" or "animator") of the poetry, and as such was courted by the poet. This new relationship defined the continuo song throughout its existence — in the period of its first flowering, as represented by the Königsberg school with its primary representative Heinrich Albert, and its later period, defined by the works of Dedekind, Staden, Löhner, Krieger, and others.

In part 5, Braun looks at the relationship between music and poetry from a more analytical perspective. Here he addresses such topics as the metric (i.e., musical meter) responses of composers to various poetic meters, the effect of various styles of musical declamation on the original form and punctuation of the poetry, the implications of enjambment for musical settings (and the consequences of certain types of musical setting for enjambment), the rediscovery by poets of the dactyl and its musical results, and many other matters central to the more practical aspects of setting poetry to music.

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Anthony Boden. *Thomas Tomkins: The Last Elizabethan*.

With Denis Stevens, David R. A. Evans, Peter James, and Bernard Rose. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005. xiv + 374 pp. index. illus. tpls. bibl. \$134.95. ISBN: 0-7546-5118-5.

In recent years, the works of composer and organist Thomas Tomkins (1572–1656) have enjoyed a renewed popularity among early-music performers, resulting in some outstanding recordings as well as increased audibility in the concert hall. This collaborative study of his life and works continues the trend into the relative silence of scholarship, and represents the first new full-length biography of the composer in almost half a century. Although the book is timely and solidly researched, it is by no means the academic counterpart of the vibrant and innovative performances of Tomkins's music released since 2000. Just as the subtitle

proclaims the composer to have been a relatively old-fashioned figure for his time, Boden and his coauthors have compiled a work that hearkens back to an era of musical positivism and biographies for general audiences.

Thomas Tomkins was born into a musical family in St. Davids, Pembrokeshire, where his father served as vicar-choral at the cathedral. The greater part of his own life was spent as organist at Worcester Cathedral, although he was also associated with the Chapel Royal as a young chorister and, again, as an adult. Far more importantly, Tomkins's life coincides with one of the most turbulent periods of British religious and cultural history, and with the transition between the musical styles of the high Renaissance and early Baroque. He belonged to the first generation of English composers to be steeped from earliest childhood in the sound of the metrical psalms of the Reformation, and to the last to write madrigals influenced by sixteenth-century Italian models. Tomkins wrote in nearly every native musical genre of his era, and contributed pieces to such historically-significant events as the death of Henry, Prince of Wales, and the coronation of Charles II: a staunch royalist and religious traditionalist, he made a somber and moving comment on the execution of the latter and his country's general political situation in 1649 with a "*Sad Pavan: for these distracted times.*" Although most often considered a musical conservative, Tomkins was especially sensitive to melody and was extremely adept at conveying the meaning and sense of the texts he set, during an era in which musical-textual relations underwent continuous prescriptive and descriptive revision. It is the expressive qualities of his finest pieces, both instrumental and vocal, that has most likely accounted for his increased recent popularity.

*Thomas Tomkins: The Last Elizabethan* is divided into three parts: presenting the composer's biography as a member of a musical dynasty and product of his era, an analytical discussion of his musical oeuvre, and further commentaries on his music. In the first and most significant part, Anthony Boden conveys a sense of Tomkins's life against the rich background of Elizabethan and early Stuart political and religious history. Using an impressive range of archival documents and early modern publications in a wide range of fields, Boden establishes Tomkins as a member of the growing and increasingly respectable class of educated artisans during the golden age of English literature and drama, and provides a fascinating glimpse into late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English choral establishments of the sort in which he, his father, and three half-brothers spent their lives. This great strength is also the book's main weakness. Although Boden's citations tend to be useful and detailed, he assumes such familiarity with the history and documents of the Church of England that he often dispenses with the scholarly apparatus altogether, or presents vague references in his footnotes such as "From the injunctions of 1559" or "1559 prayer book, preface," without discussing the items elsewhere or including them in the book's copious bibliography. Perhaps more importantly, he oversimplifies the extremely nuanced range of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English Protestantism, while deemphasizing the secular styles and institutions that helped to shape Tomkins's music. The

shorter musical sections of the book are, likewise, models of meticulous scholarship, but fail to integrate the wider disciplinary trends of recent musicology: indeed, the most important of these, Denis Stevens's very useful summary of the composer's works, is revised from extracts from the author's full-length 1957 biography of Tomkins and the additional preface to the 1967 reprint. Nonetheless, this is a very useful and engaging book for scholars of early modern England and for general readers with an interest in its music.

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Lee Palmer Wandel. *The Eucharist in the Reformation: Incarnation and Liturgy*.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. xii + 302 pp. index. append. illus. bibl. \$70 (cl), \$23.99 (pbk). ISBN: 0-521-85679-5 (cl), 0-521-67312-7 (pbk).

Lee Palmer Wandel offers a very welcome comparative study of Eucharistic practice. Its balanced, cross-denominational approach provides rich new insights into the differing enactments of the central Christian sacrament, differences that often served as the flashpoint for bloody contention. Does "This is my body" mean Christ's body is present? If so, how? What is the nature of Christ's body? What is the meaning of "This do in remembrance of me"? Does the supper reenact Christ's sacrifice? Should it recreate the fellowship of the apostles at the Last Supper? Should those of weak faith be excluded? This study depicts the well-known answers offered by the Catholic and major Protestant churches by the end of the Council of Trent as part of a larger, often turbulent sea of teachings and practices that were in flux before and during these defining years and often continued to be so afterward as well.

Wandel takes a holistic approach that seeks to give as much weight to ritual practices as to doctrine, to reject the notion that "prescriptive texts" are "normative," while "images and performances" are "derivative" (20). Moreover, a major theme of her book is that no church followed an inexorable path to correct theology. She begins by depicting the diversity of medieval approaches. This diversity, she argues convincingly, is better understood as reflecting a variety of sources rather than as simple variants of the Roman model: elevation of the host, for example, reflected the influence of lay piety. She then turns to early Reformation Augsburg, where a variety of approaches competed for legitimacy, and shows that Augsburgers heeded the voices of locally-known preachers, of city officials and of ordinary laypeople as much as they did the teachings of such renowned theologians as Zwingli, Bucer, and Oecolampadius.

In her chapter on Luther and Lutheranism, she again suggests that doctrine and practice emerged out of both theological debates and the pressures of local circumstances. Her view of Luther is indicative of her larger approach. Other reformers "did not . . . 'follow' 'Luther' [*sic*] at all: they found in the writings, in the articulated positions of a theologian and preacher what they themselves held to