

## Reviews

*Josquin's Rome: Hearing and Composing in the Sistine Chapel*, by Jesse Rodin. AMS Studies in Music. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. xxvi, 395 pp.

*Josquin's Rome* is a terrific book. Detailed analysis of Renaissance music is still very hard to come by. It is therefore a real pleasure to read a book that engages with the actual notes in a detailed and persuasive way. Jesse Rodin provides lots of musical examples, with markings, ensuring that the analytical points are crystal clear. He makes every musical observation serve a larger argument, so the discussion never descends to boring lists of features or musical events.

Rodin also provides access to recordings and scores of much of the music discussed in the book. The recordings are available in excellent performances on a commercially released CD sung by Rodin's own ensemble, Cut Circle, and on the Oxford University Press website.<sup>1</sup> Where the musical examples can be found on the CD, the band number and the timing of the example within the band are shown in the margin. The website also includes downloadable scores edited by Rodin of all the pieces he discusses (scores for seven little-known liturgical works are found in appendices C and D of the book). Rodin is among the first to exploit these kinds of web resources in support of advanced musicological research. Even in the case of Patrick Macey's *Bonfire Songs*—another book on Renaissance music that is conceived to be read with both new editions and recordings to hand—the CD is included with the book but the scores are available only from A-R editions. We still have not seen the whole package (book, scores, recordings) in one place. I am looking forward to the day when we can read an ebook, click on the musical example and hear it performed, and then click again to see the example in its larger context within the whole musical work.

As the first chapter of Rodin's book acknowledges, Josquin studies are a "methodological minefield" (p. 23). We used to think he was born ca. 1440; now we think he was born ca. 1450 or even later. Most pieces attributed to Josquin survive only in sources copied or printed after 1500, and the list of pieces with "secure" attributions seems to change daily. Musical style was

1. *De Orto et Josquin: Musique à la Chapelle Sixtine autour de 1490 / De Orto and Josquin: Music in the Sistine Chapel around 1490*, Cut Circle, dir. Jesse Rodin, Musique en Wallonie, 2012, MEW 1265–1266; also available on the OUP website, accessible with a password provided in the book (<http://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780199844302/>).

changing radically in the late fifteenth century, and many different styles, genres, and subgenres existed side by side. All of these issues make figuring out what Josquin wrote when, how his style(s) changed over time, and how his music resembles or differs from the music of his contemporaries, almost impossible (pp. 23–27).

Rodin has come up with a brilliant solution to just about all of these problems: he focuses on one of the few periods in Josquin's life when we know where he was, whom he was singing with, and which music he had access to. From 1489 to 1494 pay registers document Josquin's presence in the papal chapel in Rome, along with other members of the ensemble, who sang from the largest collection of music sources associated with a single institution that survives from the fifteenth century, the Cappella Sistina manuscripts preserved in the Vatican. Rodin takes full advantage of this fortunate coordination of archival records and musical sources to paint a rich and compelling image of the musical world of late fifteenth-century Rome.

In Part I Rodin establishes his Josquin corpus: the music attributed to Josquin in Vatican sources copied before 1500 (chapter 1). He then goes on (chapter 2) to articulate what he sees as the major style features of these pieces, associating them with "an obsessive compositional personality" (on which more below), which provides evidence for his dating of *Illibata Dei virgo nutrix* to the Roman period (pp. 93–94).

In Part II Rodin focuses on the Sistine Chapel corpus: music by Josquin's fellow choir members, and music by other composers found in the Cappella Sistina sources from before 1500 (including the two sources acquired by the chapel, VatS 14 and 51, as well as the manuscripts copied in Rome, VatS 35 and 15). In chapter 3 he establishes who the singers were and when they were there. He also does a thorough study of the repertoire in the manuscripts (this section is complemented by Appendix A, which lists the music copied in the Vatican sources, ordered chronologically by scribe, as established by Richard Sherr and Adalbert Roth). The repertoire includes "64 masses, 14 mass movements or pairs, 54 motets, 14 Magnificat settings, and 76 settings of Hymn verses" (p. 100). Thirty-three pieces are by choir members (Gaspar, de Orto, Vaqueras, and Josquin). Thirty-one are by the older generation of composers who worked in Rome (Du Fay and one piece by Puylois). Rodin divides the rest of the music into four categories: music by composers who worked in Italy, and who may have traveled to Rome (pp. 101–3); anonymous music, mostly liturgical hymns and Magnificats (p. 103); music by famous composers of the previous generation and who did not work in Rome, such as Busnoys, Ockeghem, and Regis (pp. 103–4); and music by Josquin's contemporaries who were not in Italy, including Basiron, Brumel, and Prioris (p. 104). Rodin also includes a study of the organization and reportorial patterns in the sources, which have clear sections organized by genre, with an impressive collection of eleven *L'homme armé* masses.

He makes a convincing case that very little of the Cappella Sistina repertory from the late fifteenth century has been lost; the sources that survive are the sources from which Josquin sang (pp. 117–26).

The next two chapters focus on the musical style of Josquin's fellow choir members. Although chapter 4 focuses on Gaspar van Weerbeke, there is also discussion of the "Milanese style," Isaac's *Missa Quant j'ay au cueur*, some brief canonic *Da pacem* motets, a motet by Vaqueras, and Tinctoris's *Missa L'homme armé*. Chapter 5 focuses on de Orto's "maximalist musical mind" (pp. 189, 195–230). In every discussion Rodin reaches out beyond the individual work to a rich network of other works related by pre-existent material, genre, and musical style. While chapter 4 is entitled "The *lingua franca*," the emphasis is less on norms and more on individual styles and varied genres, as Rodin admits (p. 132).

In Part III Rodin returns to Josquin, now looking at connections between his music and that of his fellow choir members, but always insisting on Josquin's uniqueness. Chapter 6 is devoted to Josquin's *Missa L'homme armé super voces musicales*. Rodin establishes an astonishingly "dense web of connections" (p. 235) between Josquin's mass and the ten earlier *L'homme armé* masses that he probably knew, but especially to the masses of Ockeghem, Busnoys, and de Orto.<sup>2</sup> "Josquin seems to have composed the *Missa L'homme armé super voces musicales* with arms outstretched, searching in every direction for models to emulate" (p. 268); Rodin's analytical arms show a similar broad reach and virtuosity.

Chapter 7, "Intersections and Borrowings," uses a comparative approach in order to trace the sources for Josquin's style and also to identify what sets him apart. There are three case studies: one on "conspicuous repetition" (pp. 269–87); one on the use of the Credo I chant in masses by Josquin, Compère, and de Orto (pp. 287–92); and one on compositional planning in the *Domine non secundum* settings by Vacqueras and Josquin (pp. 293–305). In the somewhat muted conclusion to the chapter and the book, Rodin reflects on and advocates his own methodology.

Occasionally Rodin gets a bit defensive about his project. In a section called "Absolute Music," Rodin admits that we cannot provide a context for late fifteenth-century music as rich as the context for Beethoven's Ninth. He goes on to say:

As musicology shifts its center of balance toward cultural context, broadly construed, there is a danger of working too diligently to demonstrate that we in the fifteenth century can play with the cool kids. That danger is particularly great if it causes us to neglect the trove of polyphonic music manuscripts we do have. (pp. 130–31)

2. Table 6.3, p. 264, lays out the "Pitch level of the cantus firmus *L'homme armé*" in fourteen masses; this is fascinating, but it would have been much more informative if it had included the final and signature of each mass.

In the conclusion to the book Rodin clarifies the point—we may not have as much of a cultural context for Josquin, but we do have a musical context (p. 306)—the context that Rodin has laid out for the first time in this book. No apology is needed.

One of the joys of the book is the way Rodin describes works so that they come to life for the reader (and listener). He engages a broad range of stylistic parameters, set forth in a long sentence on page 134. I repeat the list here and have numbered the features for emphasis because they would make an excellent starting place for students in a course on the analysis of Renaissance music: (1) texture (e.g., homorhythm, paired duos, parallel tenths, and uses of imitation, including stretto *fuga*<sup>3</sup>); (2) cantus-firmus treatment; (3) sequential writing; (4) unusual melodic leaps; (5) distinctive rhythmic motives; (6) anomalous dissonance treatment; (7) pieces that cultivate metric or modal ambiguity; (8) rare cases of musical return; (9) the concept of *varietas*<sup>4</sup>; (10) false concords; (11) aspects of mensural practice, and (12) matters of musical pacing, including shifts in rhythmic activity and the preparation of climactic moments.

While mode is mentioned briefly in this list (with metric ambiguity), there is a surprising but refreshing lack of discussion of mode, which has dominated the approach to early music analysis for the last fifty years.

Rodin is particularly good at describing the ways in which Josquin builds toward climaxes using multiple parameters; see, for example his discussion of Missa *La sol fa re mi* (pp. 70–79) or *Domine non secundum* (pp. 298–305), which he fruitfully compares with a setting of the same text by Josquin's fellow singer in the Papal choir, Vaqueras.<sup>5</sup> His lively, enthusiastic prose also serves to spark our interest in other composers as well: see his discussions of De Orto's *Ave Maria mater gratie* (pp. 189–91, 195–203) or of Gaspar van Weerbeke's *Dulcis amica Dei/Da pacem* (pp. 134–41).

Sometimes his characterization of musical passages strikes me as slightly off, however. He describes several passages in Gaspar's *Dulcis amica Dei* as “irregular.” The opening is “elegantly irregular” (p. 136; Ex. 4.1 on p. 137), while an imitative passage in the *secunda pars* is “wonderfully

3. John Milsom first coined the term “stretto *fuga*” (canon after one time unit in first species) in the article “‘Imitatio,’ ‘Intertextuality,’ and Early Music,” in *Citation and Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Musical Culture: Learning from the Learned*, ed. Suzannah Clark and Elizabeth Eva Leach, Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music (Woodbridge, UK, and Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2005), 141–51; Rodin does not cite this article.

4. Rodin fails to cite an important article on *varietas*: Alexis Luko, “Tinctoris on *varietas*,” *Early Music History* 27 (2008): 99–136.

5. On p. 307 Rodin has an interesting discussion of the problems regarding the concept of musical borrowing with respect to this pair of pieces; the term “modeling” could have served him well in this context. See Michele Fromson, “A Conjunction of Rhetoric and Music: Structural Modelling in the Italian Counter-Reformation Motet,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 117 (1992): 208–46.

irregular” (p. 139; Ex. 4.4 on p. 140). To me these passages look extremely regular: they are characterized by multiple repetitions of contrapuntal modules of the same length, resulting in a periodic structure that is emphasized by the repeating melodies. The second passage is an example of the presentation type Peter Schubert calls “ID” (repeated imitative duos), varied by transposition and inversion.<sup>6</sup> If these passages are “irregular,” then what is regular?

Since so much of the book is rooted in close readings of the music, it is important to take a closer look at Rodin’s terminology. There is no scholarly consensus on analytical methods or even vocabulary for Renaissance music. When we devise new terms to describe music, therefore, or when we borrow other scholars’ terms, it is important to define them clearly. Rodin’s definitions of his terms sometimes strike me as counterintuitive.

For example, a central concept for Rodin is Josquin’s “obsessive compositional personality” (p. 41), characterized by “conspicuous repetition” (p. 43), which he divides into two types, melodic and contrapuntal. In his definition of “conspicuous repetition at the melodic level . . . a voice returns again and again to a single pitch at the top of its range (or to a pitch higher than any other within a local context) for a total of at least three statements” (pp. 43–44). “Conspicuous repetition in a contrapuntal context” is “the re-statement of identical or nearly identical motivic cells in multiple voices in close succession” (p. 57); Josquin often combines the two types, “using the repetition of a prominent pitch to reinforce motivic pileups” (p. 57). These are valuable concepts, and Rodin demonstrates almost conclusively that they are favorite techniques of Josquin’s and rare in the other composers he discusses.

I cannot help quibbling with his definitions, however. For me, repetition is a general term that includes melodic and contrapuntal repetition and imitation. If you have not read Rodin’s definitions (or if you miss them as you roam through the book, since they are concealed within paragraphs<sup>7</sup>) they suggest something quite different. “Conspicuous melodic repetition” sounds like it refers to passages where melodies repeat in an obvious way; but that is not how Rodin uses it. He comments that “strangely, *Ave Maria* . . . *virgo serena* . . . is notable for its lack of conspicuous repetition” (p. 285). Because *Ave Maria* repeats the opening melody in an obvious way (in different voices), I might call it conspicuous melodic repetition. Other passages in the piece repeat the same melody several times in the same voice (see the ascending sequential repetition at “*celestia, terrestria*” or the superius melody of the triple-meter section). However, these passages do not return three

6. See Peter Schubert, “Hidden Forms in Palestrina’s *First Book of Four-Voice Motets*,” this *Journal* 60 (2007): 483–556, at 495–98.

7. When I was reading the book I initially had trouble finding entries for Rodin’s analytical terms in the index; I finally found them, however, under “musical style and technique” (pp. 390–91).

times to the same high pitch, so they do not qualify as “conspicuous melodic repetition” according to Rodin’s definition. Perhaps a better term might have been “obsessive return in a single voice.”

“Conspicuous contrapuntal repetition” sounds to me like a striking chunk of repeated counterpoint in two or more voices. Kerman and Milsom would call this a “cell”; Owens, Schubert, and I would call it a “module.”<sup>8</sup> But that is not what Rodin’s “contrapuntal repetition” is. He distinguishes “imitation” (or *fuga*; he uses the terms interchangeably) from contrapuntal repetition as follows.

In my view imitation . . . involves situations where a motive is passed from voice to voice such that repetitions overlap . . . . Where there is no overlap between statements—places where a single voice states a motive twice in a row, for instance—repetition is a better descriptive term. (p. 57)

In Rodin’s “conspicuous contrapuntal repetition” the vertical interval successions of counterpoint are irrelevant. A better term might have been “repetition in multiple voices.” His terminology is based on an important distinction—overlapping repetition introduces contrapuntal constraints on melodies that non-overlapping statements of a motive lack. However, the terminology is confusing, and works against normal usage in the field. He contrasts non-overlapping “repetition” (either in one voice—melodic repetition; or in multiple voices—contrapuntal repetition) with “imitation” (where statements of the motive overlap). I prefer to define “imitation” to include both overlapping and non-overlapping appearances of a motive in different voices, and then to distinguish between the two types. I call imitation without overlap that results in repeated counterpoint “free imitation,” and I divide imitation with repeated modules into different presentation types, following Peter Schubert.<sup>9</sup>

My disagreement with Rodin on this or that issue, however, is actually a sign of the strength of this book. He has found a way to write about the music—without reference to the text, the cultural context, the number

8. On “cell” see Joseph Kerman, “Old and New in Byrd’s *Cantiones sacrae*,” in *Essays on Opera and English Music in Honour of Jack Westrup*, ed. F. W. Sternfeld, Nigel Fortune, and Edward Olleson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), 36; John Milsom, “Crecquillon, Clemens, and Four-Voice Fuga,” in *Beyond Contemporary Fame: Reassessing the Art of Clemens non Papa and Thomas Crecquillon*, ed. Eric Jas, Collection “Épitome musical” (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2005), 298. On “module” see Jessie Ann Owens, *Composers at Work: The Craft of Musical Composition 1450–1600* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 251; Schubert, “Hidden Forms,” passim; Cumming, “Text Setting and Imitative Technique in Petrucci’s First Five Motet Prints,” in *The Motet around 1500: On the Relationship of Imitation and Text Treatment*, ed. Thomas Schmidt-Beste, Collection “Épitome musical” (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2012), 83–110. Rodin does refer to “block repetition” (49, 53, 94, 279); Peter Schubert coined the term “contrapuntal blocks” in “A Lesson from Lassus: Form in the Duos of 1577,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 17 (1995): 1–26, at 13–16.

9. Cumming, “Text Setting and Imitative Technique,” 98–101; Schubert, “Hidden Forms.”

symbolism, or the mode—in a lively and engaging way. Whether applauding or arguing with Rodin, I am confident that this book will guide all lovers of music ca. 1500 toward a nuanced and appreciative understanding of a pivotal moment in music history.

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*The Organs of J. S. Bach: A Handbook*, by Christoph Wolff and Markus Zepf. Translation by Lynn Edwards Butler. Introduction by Christoph Wolff. Published in cooperation with the American Bach Society. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012. xxv, 208 pp.

*J. S. Bach at His Royal Instrument: Essays on His Organ Works*, by Russell Stinson. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. xi, 203 pp.

*Bach's Feet: The Organ Pedals in European Culture*, by David Yearsley. Musical Performance and Reception. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. xiv, 298 pp.

Ever since the ancient Greeks, technological innovation has been a driving force in Western civilization. Inventions such as the repeating rifle, the battleship, nuclear weapons, and drones have revolutionized relationships and interactions among peoples, nations, empires, and alliances. Notation, the printing press, the invention and improvement of instruments, electronic synthesis, the computer, sampling, and the internet have successively disrupted and revolutionized the fields of music and musicology. Among musical instruments, the organ has been especially susceptible to technological changes—from the water organs of Egypt, to the powerful mechanical-action instruments of J. S. Bach's day, to the electro-pneumatic action pipe organs of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to analog, digitized, and sampled electronic instruments of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Three recent publications focused on one of the oldest topics in music scholarship—J. S. Bach as organist, organ composer, organ expert, and canonic culture-hero—offer new perspectives and insights. The *Handbook* by Christoph Wolff and Markus Zepf leads us into experiential engagement with Bach's instruments—a scholarly guidebook to the organological landscape. Russell Stinson's collection of essays provides new studies concerning the historical construction of Bach the Organist. And David Yearsley's *Bach's Feet* shows us how knowledge of Bach research of the past sixty-five years can be blended with insights derived from new ways of musicological thinking—such as compositional procedure, carnal musicology, disability studies, memory studies, politics, and others—to produce thematically based narratives which, at times, have the page-turning qualities of a Dan Brown novel.