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978-1-107-06472-0 - *Tactus, Mensuration, and Rhythm in Renaissance Music*

Ruth I. Deford

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Tactus, Mensuration, and Rhythm in Renaissance Music

Ruth DeFord's book explores how *tactus*, mensuration, and rhythm were employed to articulate form and shape in the period from c. 1420 to c. 1600. Divided into two parts, the book examines the theory and practice of rhythm in relation to each other to offer new interpretations of the writings of Renaissance music theorists. In the first part, DeFord presents the theoretical evidence, introduces the sources and explains the contradictions and ambiguities in *tactus* theory. The second part uses theory to analyze some of the best-known repertoires of Renaissance music, including works by Du Fay, Ockeghem, Busnoys, Josquin, Isaac, Palestrina, and Rore, and to shed light on composers' formal and expressive uses of rhythm. DeFord's conclusions have important implications for our understanding of rhythm and for the analysis, editing, and performance of music during the Renaissance period.

RUTH DEFORD is Professor Emerita of Hunter College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York. Her principal areas of research are the Italian madrigal and canzonetta and music theory of the Renaissance. She has edited the canzoni of Giovanni Ferretti and the canzonettas of Orazio Vecchi. Her articles have appeared in numerous scholarly journals.

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*In memory of my parents, Donald D. DeFord and
Leora Adams DeFord*

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One of the premises of this book is my belief that the experience of live music-making is indispensable to the understanding of rhythm. I do not imagine, of course, that it is possible to reconstruct the experiences of people who lived many centuries ago, but I do believe that the process of singing the music from copies of original sources sheds invaluable light on musical notation and theoretical statements about rhythm. I am deeply indebted to Dennis Slavin, who established a group devoted to singing Renaissance music from copies of original sources at the CUNY Graduate Center many years ago and has continued to play a leading role in it since then. I have been privileged to be a member of that group from the beginning. I am grateful to all of the members of the group, especially the regular participants, including Sarah Davies, Marjorie Naughton, Stephen O'Leary, Wendy Powers, and Alan Richtmyer, for their willingness to try out pieces that I have brought to them and experiment with different ways of measuring them. Their reactions to those experiments have contributed much to the formation of my ideas.

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