

Composing Community in Late Medieval Music

When we sing lines in which a fifteenth-century musician uses ethereal polyphony to complain mundanely about money or hoarseness, more than half a millennium melts away. Equally intriguing are moments in which we experience solmization puns. These familiar worries and surprising jests break down temporal distances, humanizing the lives and endeavors of our musical forebears. Yet many instances of self-reference occur within otherwise serious pieces. Are these simply in-jokes, or are there more meaningful messages that we risk neglecting if we dismiss them as comic relief? Musicologist Jane D. Hatter takes seriously the pervasiveness of these features. Divided into two sections, this study considers pieces with self-referential features *in the texts* separately from discussions of pieces based on *musical* self-referential elements. This examination of connections between self-referential repertoire from the years 1450–1530 and similar self-referential creations for painters' guilds reveals musicians' agency in forming the first communities of early modern composers.

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Composing Community in Late Medieval Music

Self-Reference, Pedagogy, and Practice

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-46559-5 — Composing Community in Late Medieval Music
 Jane D. Hatter
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108465595
 DOI: 10.1017/9781108643597

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First published 2019
 First paperback edition 2021

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Names: Hatter, Jane D. author.

Title: Composing community in late medieval music : self-reference, pedagogy, and practice / Jane D. Hatter.

Description: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, [2019] | Series: Music in context | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018052017 | ISBN 9781108474917

Subjects: LCSH: Music – 15th century – History and criticism. | Music – 16th century – History and criticism. | Musicians – Songs and music – History and criticism.

Classification: LCC ML172 .H4 2019 | DDC 780.9/031–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018052017>

ISBN 978-1-108-47491-7 Hardback
 ISBN 978-1-108-46559-5 Paperback

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Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-46559-5 — Composing Community in Late Medieval Music

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For Wesley

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Acknowledgments

Like the complex and interconnected music that forms its core, this book has been shaped by a rich interdisciplinary and international community. I am profoundly grateful to the many individuals, societies, and institutions that have supported my work on the project in various ways. I offer a special thanks to my mentors and advisors – Julie Cumming and Peter Schubert. Your individual work and fruitful collaborations embody an ideal model of dynamic scholarly community.

I have had the opportunity to benefit from feedback on my work on self-referential music at a number of conferences, including the MedRen Music conference in 2009, the annual meetings of the Renaissance Society of America in 2011, 2013, and 2018, the Medieval Association of the Pacific in 2016, and the American Musicological Society annual meetings in 2011, 2014, and 2018. I am particularly indebted to Wolfgang Fuhrmann, Katelijne Schiltz, and Philippe Vendrix for the opportunity to participate in the *journée d'étude* “Notation as Mode of Thinking,” at the 2015 Séminaire de Musicologie Ricercar in Tours, France. I am also incredibly grateful for the friendship and unflagging enthusiasm of David Rothenberg, who read several parts of this study and provided excellent advice. Thanks also to various colleagues who have provided feedback at key moments, read chapters, or shared materials or translations, including Tom Beghin, Jenny Bloxam, Douglas Brine, Zoey Cochran, Elizabeth Craft, Jeffrey Dean, Ruth DeFord, David Fallows, Jessen Kelly, Leofranc Holford-Strevens, Aaron James, Lars Lih, Patrick Macey, Catherine Mayes, Honey Meconi, Philippe Morel, George Nemeth, Sarah Projansky, Sarah Sinwell, Kate van Orden, and Angela Vanhaelen.

Research for this book has been made possible by a variety of entities through grants and fellowships: at McGill through a J. W. McConnell Memorial Fellowship, a Schulich Scholarship, and various travel and research grants funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, especially those awarded by two interdisciplinary research grants headed by Paul Yachnin – “Making Publics” and “Forms of Conversion”; and at the University of Utah through research grants from both the University Research Council and the College of Fine Arts.

This book has been supported through a publication subvention by the Martin Picker Endowment of the American Musicological Society, funded in part by the National Endowment of the Humanities and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

I am grateful to Kate Brett, Eilidh Burrett, Frances Tye, and various other associates of Cambridge University Press, whose professionalism and efficiency have made the publication process smooth and enjoyable, and to the two anonymous readers, who applied their extensive knowledge of the era to improving the manuscript. My warm thanks to Samantha Bassler for her help creating the index. I also wish to thank to Paul Harper-Scott and Julian Rushton for welcoming my book into their Music in Context series.

The visual aspects of this study would not have been possible without the generosity of the many institutions and individuals who are making their resources publicly accessible to scholars around the world for reproduction and study, both in person and over the web. I also benefited significantly from the resources of the Marvin Duchow Music Library at McGill, under the direction of the excellent Cynthia Leive, as well as from the resources of the McKay Music Library and the interlibrary loan department of the Marriott Library at the University of Utah.

Finally, without the love and support of my wonderful family, I am certain that I would never have had the courage to see this journey through. To Sky, aka the Font Fairy, thank you for teaching me about image resolution, formatting, and style hierarchies. To Clare, Gamma Ut, Grampa Mark, GGK, and GPP, your assistance in various ways, not least in providing childcare, has made this a richer and much less stressful experience. Mom, you are simply the best and my primary model of a persistent mind and unfaltering friend! Thanks to Loren for stimulating discussions about the intricacies of hexachordal solmization during long bike rides on the St. Lawrence seaway and hikes through the Wasatch range. Finally, to Wesley, whose life so far has been framed by his mother's obsession with "the book," thank you for sharing your enthusiasm for exploring your world with me and for your sweet snuggles, which made even the most challenging days joyful. I dedicate this book to you, my sweet baby and dear boy!

Note to the Reader

Pitch notation

When specific pitches are indicated in the text they will be referred to according to the terminology of the Guidonian gamut or *scala generalis*. These are listed here from low to high, and c = middle c:

GG A B C D E F G a b c d e f g aa bb cc dd ee

Clefs

In mensural notation of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the most common clefs are C clefs (C) and F clefs (F). G clef (G) is sometimes used, but this is less common. C clefs and F clefs can occur on any line of the staff, so where necessary these will be indicated with the letter C or F and a number indicating the line on which it occurs starting from the bottom line of the staff. For example, C1 indicates that there is a C clef on the bottom line of the staff and F3 indicates that there is an F clef on the middle line.

Mensuration signs

Mensuration signs are the late medieval equivalent of our modern time signatures, but they have some important differences.¹ They indicate recurring patterns of binary (imperfect or minor) and ternary (perfect or major) at different hierarchical levels (tempus for the breve and prolation for the semibreve). There are also larger mensural levels (modus for the

¹ The basic texts for learning mensural notations are Willi Apel, *The Notation of Polyphonic Music, 900–1600*; and Carl Parrish, *The Notation of Medieval Music*. For a more recent discussion of this topic that is highly accessible and accompanied by a recording of some of the music discussed in the text, see Thomas Forrest Kelly, *Capturing Music: The Story of Notation*.

long and maximodus for the maxima). The five most common mensuration signs in use for the time period covered by this book are:

⊙ = perfect tempus, major prolation

○ = perfect tempus, minor prolation

⊕ = imperfect tempus, major prolation

⊖ = imperfect tempus, minor prolation

♢ = which has the same metric structure as ⊖ but probably would be performed at a faster tempo.