Anthony M. Cummings. *The Politicized Muse: Music for Medici Festivals, 1512-1537*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. Pp. xix, 260.

In many respects an impressive study, in others this book disappoints the reader. The treatment of extant music offers little that is not known to the specialist or available elsewhere to the non-specialist. Cummings' work helps music historians understand the relative importance of visual as opposed to musical elements in the festivals. However, the uneven treatment of the actual music creates a pitfall for the unwary: it falls short of meticulous "synthesis of primary references and results of scholarship" (p. xiv), and thus skews the plan of the "coherent whole" the author seeks to convey.

The book has three sections, flanked by introductory and concluding chapters. Part I (1512-1515) includes the return of the Medici to Florence, the election of Pope Leo X (Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici), his entry into Florence, and the investiture of Giuliano di Lorenzo de' Medici as a Roman citizen. Part II (1513-1519) covers the formal possession of Florence by its archbishop, Giulio di Giuliano de' Medici, the 1514 Feast of San Giovanni, the appointment of Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici as Captain General of the Florentine Militia, and Lorenzo's wedding to Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne. Part III (1519-1537) begins with the election of Archbishop Giulio as Clement VII, goes on to the coronation of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, the acknowledgement of Alessandro di Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici as Duke of Florence, and ends with the wedding of Alessandro and Margaret of Austria.

This period marks the rise of the Medici to political and cultural prominence: the restoration in Florence (a process that culminated in the accession of Cosimo II as hereditary Grand Duke of Tuscany in 1537), and the election of two popes in Rome (Leo X [1513-1521] and Clement VII [1523-1534]). The events along the way were celebrated with considerable pomp and circumstance, and it is the festivities that Cummings recreates by weaving a narrative from original sources.

He begins with an informative analysis of two different types of sources: archival documents that chart changes in political institutions, and narrative accounts such as official court histories and descriptions as well as private diaries, memoirs, letters and the like. The issue for researchers with regard to the latter group, Cummings tells us, is the overt or covert "partisanship" inherent in it. Scholars may choose to disregard partisanship and use the sources as if they were archival material in order to reconstruct events; however, Cummings believes that personal comments "communicate something of the 'texture' of sentiment and of aesthetic experiences, and aesthetic prejudices and preferences, of Florentines of the time: (p. 5). This "texture" should be significant in reactions recorded to the art connected with the festivals: the literary, visual and musical components.

Most of the sources have been published in various modern editions. But Cummings is the first to bring them together in a manner that illuminates the social history of the period. It is a delight to read his elegant and lively translations; the endnotes allow scholars to check the original excerpts or to locate the sources from

which they were taken. Music historians are well aware of the ephemeral nature of the music performed for these festivals; much of it was extempore, and much of the written music (either performed from the book or by memory) has been lost. They may be surprised by the preponderance of what art historians call *ephemera*, especially in architecture: triumphal arches, false facades, decorated carts, and even temporary theatres capable of accomodating thousands of spectators.

The evidence gathered by Cummings enriches the hermeneutics of the literary and visual images as well as the context of prospective and retrospective accounts, and of official and unofficial attitudes. But then, as now, people found it relatively easy to describe such images in words. Music was less amenable, and probably less important. Lists of numbers of drummers drumming and pipers piping do not allow us to recreate the auditory effect of a procession; and adjectives (according to Roland Barthes, the bane of music discourse) such as sweet, heavenly, or noisy, are hardly more helpful.

The sources identify texts of four compositions, transcribed as Examples 1, 2, 6, and 7: two anonymous carnival songs from 1513 (poems by Nardi and Alamanni respectively), a *canzona* by Verdelot for Machiavelli's *La Clizia* performed in 1525, and an anonymous *lauda* for Belcari's *Festa di San Felice* in 1533. What more can be ascertained about music for the Medici festivals?

For vocal music, scholars must attempt to match music preserved independently in manuscript or print with extant texts associated with such festivities. For the most part Cummings repeats the research done in this vein in part by himself and mostly by others, although the discussion of the *lauda* for Belcari's *Festa* is new. Indeed this is the sole music example that has not been thoroughly discussed and transcribed in the literature. Among the eight examples Cummings includes an instrumental work, a two-voice elaboration on the *basse danse* *La Spagna*, possibly by M. Gulielmus. One wonders why this piece is included, since Cummings admits that its style was old-fashioned in 1518 (p. 108). The same may be said of Example 4, Corteccia's motet for the 1539 entry into Florence of Eleanor of Toledo. It is rather difficult to project this style and its mode of performance back to 1515.

No music survives for the improvised vocal and instrumental works performed at these festivals. Cummings provides valuable information, in so far as it is transmitted by the documents. What is needed is an examination of theoretical sources that shed light on improvisatory practices of the time and how these sources connect with the descriptions offered by Cummings. When more analytical work is done on both the written and unwritten traditions of "music for Medici festivals," then Cummings' final chapter on social typology will acquire an added, yet necessary, dimension.

A final word about the usefulness of the book: a formal bibliography of sources would have been a great help, as would some sort of listing of musical instruments.

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