
Raffaele Brandolini (1465–1517) originally composed *De musica et poetica* at the request of Giovanni de Medici, later dedicating and presenting it to him upon Giovanni’s election as Pope Leo X in 1513. *De musica et poetica* has survived in one manuscript, ms.805 at the Casanatense library in Rome. With the exception of a few excerpts printed by Adrien de la Fage in 1864, the work has not previously appeared in print. Ann E. Moyer has remedied this deficiency by providing a full edition and a facing-page translation, complete with explanatory footnotes, an introduction and bibliography.

The development of musical thought in the Renaissance, and the role of humanists in that development, has been an area of particular concern to Ann E. Moyer, as evidenced by her earlier book, *Musica Scientia: Musical Scholarship in the Italian Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992). As Moyer remarks in her introduction to *On Music and Poetry*, “a distinct and lasting contribution of late Renaissance humanist to musical thought” was “to locate the meaning of music in terms of language and poetics” (p. xvii), a mode of analysis that became dominant in the following centuries. Moyer suggests that Brandolini is therefore a significant figure, as both a humanist and a musician, in so far as he appeared at the very beginning of this great shift in musical thought.

What makes Brandolini unique is his status and fame as a musician, in particular as a composer and reciter of extemporaneous Latin verse — the aspect of his life that occasioned *On Music and Poetry*. The text represents Brandolini’s attempt to defend the worthiness of his art, the employment of “lyre and Latin meters at the banquets of high prelates,” against the charge that such things are “fit only for buffoons, parasites, and men of no intelligence or judgment” (p. 11). Interestingly, as Moyer points out, despite his apparently well-appreciated talents as a musician, Brandolini was not a student of the *scientia musica*. Unlike his predecessors, he drew upon his extensive training as a humanist, rather than as a “natural philosopher,” and he combined that with his experiences as an entertainer at the principal courts of his day. The significance and importance of *On Music and Poetry* thus lies in the discussion of music in terms of poetry and social context, as opposed to science and mathematics. *On Music and Poetry*, Moyer writes, represents “the first independent work to examine music not in the context of mathematical consonance but in the context of the poetry that music accompanies and music’s role in the society” (*Musica Scientia*, p. 107).

*On Music and Poetry* takes the form of an extended oration of praise. Brandolini first discusses music, then poetry; he also conflates the two. He goes so far as to place poets and musicians in the same category as prophets: “Rightly, therefore, those ancient expert appraisers of all things and reasons deemed musicians, prophets, and wise men to be the same” (p. 25). Throughout, Brandolini
situates his art in the context of ancient and authoritative practices and thereby justifies its continuation. He has little to say on actual performance practice, however. His concern is only with Latin extemporaneous verse sung to a lyre, and his writing is in no way prescriptive.

Brandolini’s Latin is typical of his time and place. It is loaded with quotations, borrowings, and references, and is often dense (though rarely obscure), filled with multiple clauses and long sentences. Faced with this, Moyer has provided a pleasant and accurate translation, skillfully dividing up Brandolini’s lengthy periods and maintaining both the sense and much of the elegance of Brandolini’s prose. There are a few infelicities; however, such instances are rare indeed through the course of Moyer’s overall excellent translation.

Moyer provides numerous footnotes throughout the text, though she has clearly made an effort to keep these minimal and unobtrusive. As a solution to Brandolini’s extensive borrowing from classical and medieval sources, Moyer sensibly forgoes the use of quotations marks, which would break up the flow of the text. Where Brandolini’s use of source material is verbatim, Moyer usefully identifies the source and provides the corresponding passage in the notes. Notably, Moyer does not translate these passages; doing so would have made the footnotes prohibitively long. Given the space, however, in certain cases a translation would be useful to the reader not capable of reading the Latin original. When Moyer lists multiple sources, she often indicates Brandolini’s principal source, but on several occasions she provides a variety of sources without giving any indication of primacy. (For example, she lists seven possible sources for the story of Arion, to which we might add yet another, Ovid’s Fasti, 2.83–118.) Further discussion of Brandolini’s use of sources in the introduction would have alleviated this shortcoming.

Brandolini’s On Music and Poetry is not a great work of literature, but it does offer valuable insight into the practice and social context of extemporaneous musical performance at the beginning of the sixteenth century in Italy. While Brandolini’s influence on the following centuries is uncertain, as Moyer’s discussion shows, On Music and Poetry provides a useful summary of attitudes towards music from a distinctively humanistic perspective. This translation should prove informative for musicologists, as well as for cultural and literary historians of the Italian Renaissance.

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Un détail de la Chambre des Arts attribué au Primatice attire l’œil sur cet élégant volume qui propose en un format réduit un panorama aussi complet qu’attrayant du paysage poétique français de la Renaissance. François Rigolot, dont on connaît notamment les essais réunis sous le titre Poétique et onomastique (Droz, 1982) et