



The Refrain and the Rise of the Vernacular in Medieval French Music and Poetry (Gallica)

By Jennifer Saltzstein

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The relationship between song quotation and the elevation of French as a literary language that could challenge the cultural authority of Latin is the focus of this book. It approaches this phenomenon through a close examination of the refrain, a short phrase of music and text quoted intertextually across thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century musical and poetic genres. The author draws on a wide range of case studies, from motets, trouvère song, plays, romance, vernacular translations, and proverb collections, to show that medieval composers quoted refrains as vernacular auctoritates/; she argues that their appropriation of scholastic, Latinate writing techniques worked to authorize Old French music and poetry as media suitable for the transmission of knowledge. Beginning with an exploration of the quasi-scholastic usage of refrains in anonymous and less familiar clerical contexts, the book goes on to articulate a new framework for understanding the emergence of the first two named authors of vernacular polyphonic music, the cleric-trouvères Adam de la Halle and Guillaume de Machaut. It shows how, by blending their craft with the writing practices of the universities, composers could use refrain quotation to assert their status as authors with a new self-consciousness, and to position works in the vernacular as worthy of study and interpretation. Jennifer Saltzstein is Assistant Professor of Musicology at the University of Oklahoma.

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Editorial Review

Review

A major contribution to scholarship on thirteenth- and fourteenth-century French music and literature in many respects. MODERN LANGUAGE REVUE (A) compelling study. SPECULUM This book is as accessible to the non-specialist as it is valuable to the expert, carefully explaining any technical vocabulary and precisely clarifying terminological distinctions ... Saltzstein's detailed engagement with musical examples is particularly welcome ... Offers important new contexts in which to understand practices of refrain quotation ... will prove invaluable to musicologists as well as scholars of medieval French literature and culture. EARLY MUSIC An admirable study, with much to say about the closely intertwined, highly experimental and extremely sophisticated medieval literary and musical cultures in which refrains were so liberally used ... this book is of great value for any performer of medieval music. THE CONSORT Absorbing and informative ... vital reading for everyone working on medieval motets, songs or poetry ... The overall achievement of this volume is great. PLAINSONG AND MEDIEVAL MUSIC COLLECTIONS THE BRITISH LIBRARY

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