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Review Article

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SINGING AND DEVOTION IN THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY LOW COUNTRIES

Eric Jas, *Piety and Polyphony in Sixteenth-Century Holland: The Choirbooks of St Peter's Church, Leiden*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2018. xvi + 414 pp. ISBN 978-1-783-27326-3.

Erin Lambert, *Singing the Resurrection: Body, Community, and Belief in Reformation Europe*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. xii + 222 pp. ISBN 978-0-190-66164-9.
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It has been thirty-four years since the publication of *Music in Late Medieval Bruges*, Reinhard Strohm's study contextualising the Lucca choirbook in the urban metropolis of late medieval Bruges.[1] His monograph was seminal for many reasons, not least for its ability to appeal – still today – to scholars across the various methodological quarters of musicology. Strohm's evocative, Huizinga-inspired opening chapter, 'Townscape – Soundscape', animates much of the current work on urban music, and has been especially relevant to the 'sonic turn' across the humanities. At the same time, the bulk of the study attended to thoroughly traditional musicological concerns of source studies, the cultivation of polyphony, patronage, and the history of institutions.

Music in Late Medieval Bruges was important in yet another way, namely its rejection of a long-standing view of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Low Countries[2] as a training ground for musicians who then migrated to work elsewhere. *Music in Late Medieval Bruges* insisted that the late medieval and Renaissance Low Countries

[1] R. Strohm, *Music in Late Medieval Bruges* (Oxford, 1985).

[2] Here I adopt the terms 'Low Countries', 'Netherlands' and 'Netherlandish' to refer to the geographical areas which at present include parts of Belgium, northern France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. For a similar use of this terminology, see J. Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520–1635* (Oxford, 2011), p. xvii.

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(for Strohm, Flanders especially) be studied 'in its own right', moving 'beyond the achievements of individuals' to meet 'the Flemish musicians "at home"', thereby permitting a reassessment and recognition of 'the cultural significance of their native environment'.[3]

In their own ways, the two books under review here aim to do just this. Both Lambert and Jas not only attend to the devotional and musical experience of communities of lay Netherlanders, rather than simply the compositions of individual musicians. Geographically, both studies also probe music-making in cities across the northern provinces of the Netherlands (above all, in Leiden), which have to date attracted far less attention than the southern provinces with the urban centres of Bruges, Ghent, Brussels and Antwerp. In these two monographs – both published in 2018 – one also sees plainly that, in the three and a half decades since Strohm's book, the question of how one should go about studying music of the late medieval and early modern Low Countries (and Europe, for that matter) is far from clear. Taken together, these monographs display the diverse and seemingly ever-widening methods (presaged by Strohm) which presently characterise the study of music in late medieval and early modern Europe, with intensive polyphonic source study on the one hand, and popular sensory, bodily and emotional experience of singing on the other.

In *Piety and Polyphony in Sixteenth-Century Holland*, Eric Jas broadly embodies the traditional concerns of musicology, particularly in the desire to place a set of polyphonic choirbooks in its pre-Reformation historical context, firmly grounded in source and manuscript studies, analysis of elite urban patronage, institutional history and musical genre. By contrast, Erin Lambert's *Singing the Resurrection: Body, Community, and Belief in Reformation Europe* is a study primarily about theology and the role of singing in the subjective experience of constructing religious belief, both before and during the Reformation. A comparative history of singing in Dutch- and German-speaking areas, *Singing the Resurrection* aims to understand not a particular set of musical sources, but 'the ways in which particular communities – and when possible, the individuals within them – sang of resurrection' (p. 18). Whereas Jas focuses on polyphony and members of the laity from the upper strata of Leiden society, Lambert concentrates primarily on monophonic vernacular songs sung by the laity from the middle and lower social orders.

On occasion, detailed polyphonic source study is coupled with a social, cultural and sensory history of music within a single

[3] Strohm, *Late Medieval Bruges*, pp. v and 2.

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monograph, as with Emma Dillon's *The Sense of Sound*.[4] However, what, if anything, is gained or lost when such methods become the basis of separate monographs? Do scholars interested in popular culture lose something when intensive source study of polyphony is jettisoned? Equally, how might greater attention to social and cultural history – particularly musical genres beyond polyphony, sung by lower social orders – enrich understanding of sources like the Leiden choirbooks? Such large questions obviously cannot be fully resolved here, but this essay, in addition to reviewing the present studies, aims to reflect on how the rich culture of singing of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Low Countries might also fruitfully be studied in the years to come.

Eric Jas's *Piety and Polyphony in Sixteenth-Century Holland*, published in the Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music series of The Boydell Press, is the most detailed study to date of the six extant choirbooks for the Catholic St Peter's Church in Leiden, which were copied and used at St Peter's between 1549 and the official institution of Protestantism in that city in 1572. Jas's stated aim is 'to understand them [the choirbooks] in their own historical context' (p. 197), building on what he describes as 'great strides forward in the field of manuscript and repertory studies' (p. 196).

Jas's opening chapter explores the *zeven-getijdencolleges* founded from the 1430s onwards in cities across the northern provinces of the Netherlands, including Leiden, The Hague, Delft, Haarlem and Amsterdam. Non-collegiate parish churches like St Peter's in Leiden began to celebrate the Divine Office, often 'on the initiative of the town government, prosperous citizens or the clergy' (p. 5), because 'it was increasingly considered a deficiency, a sign of lower status, that in non-collegiate churches the divine office was not celebrated' (pp. 5–6). Jas's second chapter zooms in on Leiden and St Peter's Church, outlining the church's vocal ensemble and the office of *zangmeester*, and discussing the countless memorial services ordered by parishioners, which helpfully give an impression of the 'day-to-day tasks of the *getijden* singers and of the liturgical context in which the mid-sixteenth-century choirbooks came to be used' (p. 57). Chapter 3 focuses on the material and scribal history of the six choirbooks, in which Jas identifies the main copyists of the books (the writing teacher Anthonius de Blauwe, and Leiden *zangmeester* Johannes Flamingus), and offers what is now the most accurate dating of the individual books. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the 349 compositions in the choirbooks. Because the author rules out discussing 'individual

[4] E. Dillon, *The Sense of Sound: Musical Meaning in France, 1260–1330* (New York, 2012).

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compositions from an analytic or stylistic point of view' (p. 3) – perhaps sensible for a book already numbering over 400 pages – Jas limits himself to discussing the composers and genres found in the choirbooks (including primarily masses, motets, Magnificats and hymns), and very briefly compares the contents of the Leiden choirbooks to other choirbooks from the sixteenth-century Low Countries.

Throughout *Piety and Polyphony*, Jas paints a detailed picture of civic religion amongst the fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century Netherlandish urban elite. *Getijdenmeesters* – those responsible for church goods, as well as hiring and paying of clerics and singers – were chosen by town governments and were usually 'well-to-do citizens' (p. 14). Ordering memorial services with donations of money or land became very popular among the urban laity, who viewed masses and memorial services not simply as a means of easing the passage through purgatory, but also of cementing social and familial bonds. In addition, it was members of the civic elite, not the clergy, who were responsible for ordering the Leiden choirbook manuscripts for St Peter's.

Furthermore, that the civic government required *zangmeesters* of St Peter's to teach the children of poor parents, despite the parents not being able to pay for their child's education, makes Leiden one of the earliest examples of a city subsidizing music education based on income (p. 69). Such information provides a tantalizing glimpse of Leiden's urban society beyond the wealthy elite, whose presence and devotion otherwise receive no attention from Jas. This absence is regrettable given that recent research has clearly illustrated the vibrancy of devotion amongst the laity across the social spectrum prior to the Reformation.[5] That literacy among lay Netherlanders was exceptionally high made accessing devotional texts – musical or otherwise – outside the church easier than in other areas of late medieval and early modern Europe.[6] One wonders, therefore, what sorts of singing did non-elite Catholics in Leiden engage in – litanies, hymns, carols, simple motet settings of common prayers? Where did such singing take place – in the home or on the streets? And did lay devotional singing have any topical or temporal intersections with polyphony of the choirbooks? Such questions must fall to future research.

Throughout the book, Jas illustrates in fresh ways the urban networks which connected Leiden to other cities and facilitated the flow

[5] Pollmann, *Catholic Identity*, ch. 1.
[6] H. de Ridder-Symoens, 'Education and Literacy in the Burgundian-Hapsburg Netherlands', *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies*, 16/1, (1995), pp. 6–21.

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of information, compositions, commerce and people across the Low Countries. Anthonius de Blauwe, one of the main scribes of the Leiden choirbooks, supplemented his income as a private writing teacher in Leiden by also copying music books for clients in Gouda (p. 92 and 96), Delft (p. 93) and Amsterdam (p. 96), even selling his manuscripts in England (p. 95). In the repertoire of the choirbooks, one sees Leiden's connection to the southern provinces of the Netherlands. Although the choirbooks contain motets and other 'compositions that are spread over Europe in more than twenty sources' (p. 142), 'the majority of composers who are represented with three or more works in the Leiden choirbooks were active for a large part of their careers in northern France and the southern Netherlands', including Arras, Bruges, Cambrai, and Tournai (p. 144).

Singers, especially *zangmeesters*, also migrated from city to city, particularly cities of the northern provinces of the Netherlands. In 1458, the *zangmeester* of St Peter's (Gillis) broke his contract and moved to The Hague (p. 70), presumably for better working conditions. Jan van der Biest was employed as *zangmeester* at the *getijdencollege* of the Nieuwe Kerk in Delft, before then becoming *zangmeester* at St Peter's in 1535 (p. 71). Michiel Jansz, originally from Nieuwpoort, worked in Den Bosch before arriving in 1546 at St Peter's; however, within months he had already left to take up a similar position at the *getijdencollege* in Delft and then Gouda (p. 72). Similarly, around 1546 Claudin Patoulet came to St Peter's as *zangmeester* from St Bavo's in Haarlem, but soon returned to Haarlem before settling at the Nieuwe Kerk in Delft (p. 73). As Jas rightly speculates, singers very likely transported compositions with them as they moved in search of different and better employment (p. 174). In one sense, the urban networks through which *zangmeesters* moved were built and endorsed by their institutional employers. In 1470, as Jas points out, singers at St Peter's sang high mass in discant together with their colleagues from The Hague. Similar cooperative efforts also took place at St Peter's with singers from Delft (p. 65). Sometimes, however, cities cooperated to stifle the movement of singers. In 1511 Delft and The Hague together 'committed themselves not to hire any singer or choirboy who had left his service – or tendered his resignation – within a period of two years after his departure from the former parish' (p. 20). Versions of this agreement, Jas states, continued to be renewed into the 1560s. In all of this, we glimpse something akin to the cooperative nature of urban relationships in the late medieval southern Netherlands, where nearly every

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Flemish city under the Bishop of Tournai expressed and re-established its urban bonds by processing each September to the cathedral of Tournai.[7]

Jas is certainly right to emphasise the uniqueness of the Leiden choirbooks to have survived the destructions of 1566. Across the Low Countries, iconoclasts targeted books as much as images and objects like windows, paintings, statues and sacrament houses. In 's-Hertogenbosch, Protestants and iconoclasts 'destroyed the altars and golden statues … [and] defecated in the priests' chests and tore up the books'.[8] At the Sint-Jacobskerk in Antwerp, 'the missal, and other books there, [were] cut or torn in pieces'.[9] Another account from Antwerp describes how rebels 'smeared their shoes with the holy oil, defiled the church vestments with ordure, and daubing the books with butter, threw them into the fire'.[10] Crucially, destroying Catholic objects – including expensive and ornate music books like the Leiden choirbooks – should be viewed not simply as the expression of theological views about music or Catholic images, but also as socio-economic statements against the wealth of the clergy.[11]

Jas implicitly views the iconoclastic activity of the Netherlands as inherently dangerous to the vibrancy of Netherlandish musical activity and culture, even referring to iconoclasts as 'wrongdoers' (p. 1). However, it must be said that the destruction of Catholic objects was frequently itself a musical event in its own right. When the interior of the Abbey of Marchiennes was destroyed on 25 and 26 August 1566 – the same two-day period during which rebels beset Leiden – Protestants paused to sing verses from Marot's setting of the Ten Commandments before destroying the interior of the abbey.[12] Similarly, Richard Clough recorded how rebellion in Antwerp began only after the iconoclasts had paused to sing in Dutch:

> yesterdaye aboutt five of the cloke, the prystes … when they shullde have begon there serves, there was a company begon to sing sallmes, att the begynnyng beyng butt a company of knayfse, wereappon the Margrave and hoder the Lordes came

[7] P. Arnade, *Realms of Ritual: Burgundian Ceremony and Civic Life in Late Medieval Ghent* (Ithaca, NY, 1996), p. 56.

[8] *Kroniek eener kloosterzuster van het voormalig Bossche klooster 'Marienburg' over de troebelen te 's-Hertogenbosch in de jaren 1566–76*, ed. H. van Alf ('s-Hertogenbosch, 1931), p. 2.

[9] G. Brandt, *The History of the Reformation and other Ecclesiastical Transactions in and about the Low Countries*, i (London, 1720), p. 203.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 193.

[11] P. Crew, *Calvinist Preaching and Iconoclasm in the Netherlands, 1544–1569* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 23.

[12] D. Freedberg, 'Art and Iconoclasm, 1525–1580: The Case of the Northern Netherlands', in J. P. Filedt Kok, W. Halsema-Kubes and W. Th. Kloek (eds.), *Kunst voor de Beeldenstorm* (Amsterdam, 1986), p. 73.

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to the chourche and rebukyd theme, but all in vayne, for that, as sone as they tournyd there bakes, they to hytt [i.e. began singing] agayne, and the company incresyd, beyng begon in Howre-Lady [Our Lady] chourche, so that, aboutt six of the cloke, they broke up the quere, and wentt and vysytyd all the bokes [books], wereof, as hytt ys sayd, some they savyd, and the rest utterly dysstryyd and brake.[13]

Netherlanders were therefore just as musical in their dissent against Catholicism as in their acceptance of it.[14] Indeed, in one sense, that artefacts like choirbooks prompted a complex array of devotional, musical and physical acts reinforces Jas's claim of their centrality to devotion at the Reformation. Protestant singing during iconoclasm cannot be viewed as any less meaningful or foundational to the confessional and social identities of its singers than the singing from choirbooks was for adherents to Catholicism. Not only do these musical acts of resistance also form an important part of the history of Catholic objects like the Leiden choirbooks, the attack on St Peter's and other Catholic institutions across the Low Countries in 1566, which the Leiden choirbooks remarkably survived, also serve as a reminder of the need for socially and confessionally intersectional (rather than bisected) histories of singing that provide a richer picture of the ways in which laity and clergy alike fought over and through music.

That singing was foundational to the beliefs, daily activities and identities of different confessional cultures forms the central premise of Erin Lambert's *Singing the Resurrection*. Published in The New Cultural History of Music series by Oxford University Press, *Singing the Resurrection* aims to probe music-making by individuals and communities across the social spectrum, from princes to the lower social orders. Because belief bridges the worlds of doctrine and individual action, and because singing 'binds body and belief' (p. 15), Lambert investigates how multiple confessional groups after the Reformation used song to construct belief, and charts the myriad understandings and manifestations of the theological concept of the resurrection.

After introducing the methods and scope of the book, Lambert engages in a discussion of resurrection and devotion in late medieval Nuremberg. Whether it was the tympanum in the portal of St Lorenz with its visual depiction of resurrection, memorial services and burial practices of prominent city members, or the Credo sung by a priest, resurrection, Lambert claims, had material, emotional, bodily and

[13] *Relations politiques des Pays-Bas et de L'Angleterre sous le règne de Philippe II*, iv, ed. J. M. B. C. Kervyn de Lettenhove (Brussels, 1885), p. 338.

[14] For a parallel argument about iconoclasts' physical reaction to sacrament houses, see A. van Bruaene, 'Embodied Piety: Sacrament Houses and Iconoclasm in the Sixteenth-Century Low Countries', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review*, 131/1 (2016), pp. 36–58.

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sonic significance in late medieval devotion. Such devotional practices 'constantly affirmed that residents of Nuremberg at the turn of the sixteenth century were bound by the rhythms of life, death, and resurrection, and they were to be forever united'. These ties, she goes on to state, 'were to be severed only decades later' (p. 26).

Lambert explores this severing over the course of the book. The theme of 'bonds' runs through the book, as she dedicates each subsequent chapter to the formation of bonds within each confessional group through singing of resurrection. Lamberts examines Lutheran communities in Nuremberg and Joachimsthal (ch. 2), Anabaptists in Leiden and Amsterdam (ch. 3), the Reformed church in Emden and London, especially the Strangers Church (ch. 4), and Catholicism at the court of Ferdinand I in Vienna and Prague (ch. 5). Complementing this confessional array, Lambert also acknowledges and considers the wide range of spaces and media connected to late medieval and early modern religious song. Broadsheets and pamphlets were sold and used in the streets and homes of Nuremberg (ch. 2). Dutch Anabaptists scribbled notes and sang from manuscripts and printed books in fields, homes and on scaffolds across the Netherlands (ch. 3). Members of the Reformed church sang from psalm books and pamphlets in churches and aboard ships navigating the North and Baltic Seas (ch. 4). At the funeral of Ferdinand I, Catholics published books commemorating and illustrating the funeral events, as well as books of motets (ch. 5).

Singing the Resurrection breaks new ground in a number of ways. Among the resurgence of Anglo-American interest in Reformation music over the last two decades, Lambert is among the first to give Anabaptism the same consideration as Catholicism, Lutheranism and the Reformed church. Musicologists, especially Anglo-American scholars, have tended to side-line Anabaptism in studies of confessional music, possibly not just because of questions surrounding musical genre, but also because of Anabaptism's relationship with the state. As Lambert helpfully notes, in confessional histories written by historians as well as musicologists, 'communities that had no direct relationship with the state, such as Anabaptists, are necessarily excluded from this paradigm and therefore have usually been treated separately from the other confessions' (pp. 6–7). Attending to Anabaptist singing, as Lambert does, has more than methodological value, however, as writing a history of singing in the sixteenth-century Netherlands without including the voices of Anabaptists would be to reimagine a world in some ways unrecognisable to its early modern inhabitants. Catholic

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peasants around Tournai during the 1560s regularly encountered Anabaptist conventicles in the woods – meetings which often included singing – and recorded that Anabaptists frequently sang as their last earthly act.[15] In addition, civic leaders across the Low Countries also worried about Anabaptism. Between the 1530s and 1560s – the same years which saw the appearance and use of the choirbooks at St Peter's – Leiden's civic government regularly sentenced dozens of Anabaptists to death, as well as imposing non-corporal punishments.[16]

Lambert's attention to Anabaptists therefore productively complicates the picture of religion in sixteenth-century Leiden painted by Jas, and already begins to enrich understanding of Catholicism and the Leiden choirbooks. Not only do Lambert's findings indicate that the choirbooks appeared at a time when Catholics acutely felt their traditions were under threat, and the books were commissioned by members of the same ruling class who regularly meted out punishment for Anabaptist dissent. But Lambert also introduces us to a young bookbinder named Anthoenis Courts, who was accused of singing and copying Anabaptist songs and of befriending other young men in Leiden who shared similar religious sympathies (p. 105). Lambert notes that Courts worked in the bookbinding shop of Jan Claes, who himself was prosecuted in 1552 for his Anabaptist beliefs and sentenced to perform public penance in Leiden for writing 'certain scandalous songs' (p. 105). Given the relatively small size of both Leiden and the local community of bookbinders during the early 1550s, one cannot help but wonder whether Courts and Claes may have known Adriaen Thysz., the binder of the Leiden choirbooks (Jas, p. 104). Regardless, Lambert's attention to Anabaptists permits a detailed glimpse of the mixed confessional complexion of professions involved in the production of archetypally Catholic music books.

Lambert also rightly gives attention to the early years of the Reformation during the 1520s, but usefully situates it in relation to the years leading to – and immediately proceeding – the Peace of Augsburg (1555), which enshrined in law a prince's right to establish Lutheranism or Catholicism in his territory. Recent work has examined singing in the early years of the Reformation, especially during the 1520s.[17]

[15] C. Steen, *The Time of Troubles in the Low Countries: The Chronicles and Memoirs of Pasquier de le Barre of Tournai, 1559–1567* (New York, 1989), p. 56.

[16] For precise numbers of Anabaptists prosecuted in Leiden, see J. Geraerts, 'The Prosecution of Anabaptists in Holland, 1530–66', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 86 (2012), pp. 5–48.

[17] D. Trocmé-Latter, *The Singing of the Strasbourg Protestants, 1523–1541* (Farnham, 2015); R. Leaver, *The Whole Church Sings: Congregational Singing in Luther's Wittenberg* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2017).

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However, adopting a slightly longer chronological scope allows Lambert to trace musical and cultural linkages which played out from the 1520s to the 1560s. One sees the wisdom of this approach, for instance, in Lambert's discussion of the Anabaptist martyr Weynken Claes, executed in 1527 in The Hague. As Lambert notes, despite the Catholic authorities' desire that there be 'no memory of her' (p. 86) following her being burned at the stake, song enabled Anabaptists decades later to know – and commit to memory – the circumstances and moral lessons of Claes's martyrdom, and possibly even to use these lessons to guide their own experience of martyrdom. In this, Lambert provides a compelling illustration that devotion grew not simply from the proclamations of reformers and religious authorities, but from lay men and women telling and re-telling stories of the past actions of fellow members of the laity.

Throughout *Singing the Resurrection*, Lambert expresses a clear desire to avoid universalising the experience of the mainline confessional groups or giving 'the impression that all members of a confession believed alike' (p. 8). Lambert rightly eschews the overreach of much confessionalisation research, which has tended to treat confessional groups as theologically and culturally coherent and uniform. This is successfully accomplished, in part, through the author's decision to engage in a series of microhistories of confessional communities from the Netherlands, England, and German-speaking lands from the North Sea and Bohemia to Vienna. Lambert's decision, however, to isolate the single theological concept of resurrection, coupled with a series of geographically and culturally disparate case studies, produces a historical picture of singing and belief that sometimes feels slightly thinner than one would wish, lacking the 'thick descriptions' that characterise the best microhistories. To be sure, Lambert's approach is ambitious and thought-provoking, and the examination of one theological concept certainly has potential to yield new insight.[18] However, alongside the examination of a single theological concept must also come a deep consideration of the unique and powerful social (not just religious) forces of a given place which also conditioned singing and the formation of beliefs.

For instance, something vital of the complexity of the late Middle Ages is lost when Lambert writes of Nuremberg that 'the rhythms of everyday life thus underscored the universal bond of Christianity even as they forged a local community of family and neighbors' (p. 41). Her

[18] For instance, Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999).

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depiction of sound governing urban rhythms closely resembles Strohm's for Bruges,[19] and she is surely right to signal how the organisation of time in the late Middle Ages was different from ours today. However, even while it is true that the majority of individuals never separated themselves from their local parish churches, medieval religion was not 'static', but was 'bound up with a mixture of contests and negotiations'.[20] Here, and elsewhere in *Singing the Resurrection*, Lambert acknowledges the importance of social factors, but sadly does not explore in any depth how such forces might also have conditioned practices of belief and singing. One suspects that life in medieval Nuremberg may have resembled that of Westminster, where kin, neighbour and self were the loyalties that most regularly shaped urban society, not simply belief in a local or universal collective.[21] Moreover, late medieval urban centres like Nuremberg were governed by social and civic rubrics of time which forged urban bonds in their own right.[22]

Similarly, in Lambert's treatment of Lutheranism in the mining town of Joachimsthal, we read that Herman's vernacular setting of 1 Corinthians 15, together with Mathesius's sermons, 'reflects the devotional tradition of a single community' (p. 66) which regularly faced physical pain and personal loss associated with life in the mines. While Lambert is certainly right to state that Joachimsthal was a single confessional community adhering to Lutheranism, sixteenth-century mining towns were themselves dangerous and highly divided places. Miners were bruised and broken not just by the mines, but also by their fellow miners, who organised themselves into clear and often antagonistic hierarchies according to the different jobs associated with mining – attitudes which were often fuelled by alcohol and reinforced by physical violence.[23] In such an environment, bonds were certainly formed, but not always easily or in the way we would expect.

To be sure, none of this invalidates Lambert's claims. In some ways, it makes the singing and 'knitting together' that happened across social categories all the more significant. However, even as Lambert is right to identify that the Reformation brought about a major change

[19] Strohm, *Late Medieval Bruges*, p. 3.
[20] J. Arnold, 'Catholic Reformations: A Medieval Perspective', in A. Bamji, G. H. Janssen, and M. Laven (eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation*(Farnham, 2013), p. 420.
[21] G. Rosser, *Medieval Westminster: 1200–1540* (Oxford, 1989), p. 3.
[22] M. Champion, *The Fullness of Time: Temporalities of the Fifteenth-Century Low Countries* (Chicago, 2017).
[23] On the social dynamics of the mining community in Mansfeld, see L. Roper, *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet* (London, 2016), pp. 17–34.

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never seen before, the contours, meanings and significance of that change will continue to be obscured when situated against a simplified narrative that glosses over the social complexities of both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Moreover, these examples should serve to caution scholars against overestimating the unity and social 'bonds' created by religious song and theology both before and after the Reformation, and to embolden historians of music to grapple further with experiences of conflict as much as cohesion, both between and within confessional communities.

Taken together, these two books demonstrate the richness and importance of singing across communities and spaces of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Low Countries. Despite my reservations, both books are warmly to be recommended and advance scholarship in their own ways. Jas illustrates the importance of polyphonic singing to elite sections of urban society, especially at times when lay Catholics felt their traditions were under threat. Lambert casts a wider net to introduce 'new voices' (p. 14) into narratives of music and belief in the Reformation, voices from across confessional groups and social categories.

Together, Lambert and Jas provide more evidence that late medieval piety was far from decaying and, as Jas illustrates, the elaborate and never-ending requirements of memorial masses and singing the Divine Office often led to singers being overworked (p. 81). Both Lambert and Jas illustrate the centrality of the parish church in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and together urge historians of music to continue to look beyond the activities of cathedrals and collegiate churches. Indeed, Lambert makes the fundamental point – noticeably absent from Jas's study – that religious song circulated in a vast array of media and flourished far beyond the walls of churches: in fields and homes, on the street and aboard ships. Although neither author sees their work as the last word on their respective subjects, both books are necessary and engaging reading for all who work on singing in the late medieval and early modern Low Countries and beyond.

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