

includes an appendix that will be of interest to scholars of Medieval and Renaissance drama. Francesco Giordano's essay on the architectural and decorative aspects of the Oratory traces the origins of the present building. The architectural and technical sketches included in Giordano's survey will enable the reader to visualize better the lay-out of the Oratory and appreciate its artistic treasures, in particular, Lombardi's spectacular sculpture group, *Il Transito della Vergine* (later in the volume there is a more comprehensive treatment of the work by Maria Delbianco). The wealth of paintings housed in the Oratory is set out, in brilliant colour, in Giovanni Sassu's fascinating essay that speaks not only to the artistic merit of the various pieces but to the religious and social implications they represent. The painstaking nature of the restorations is highlighted in Daniele Meneghini's article on the flooring and decorative tiling of the Oratory. The final essay by Emma Biavati outlines the technical details of the project and emphasizes its sweeping nature. While each of these specialized essays will appeal to a particular field of scholars, taken together they comprise a comprehensive and dizzying view of the enormity of the renovations and the spectacular results they achieved. As such the volume is a valuable addition to confraternity studies.

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Riepe, Juliane. *Die Arciconfraternita di S. Maria della Morte in Bologna. Beiträge zur Geschichte des italienischen Oratoriums im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Kirchenmusik*, 5. Paderborn, München, Wien, Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1998. 604 pp. ISBN 3-506-70625-X

This well-documented and thorough study by Juliane Riepe is a valuable and important contribution to research on confraternal life and the Italian oratorio in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Her starting point is the role of Italian confraternities, specifically the Arciconfraternita di S. Maria della Morte, in commissioning and organizing oratorio performances beginning around 1650. In this book she seeks to trace the origin of, and reasons behind oratorio performance traditions, what these traditions were, and how they developed over a period of more than 100 years.

Riepe originally planned to focus on the oratorios of the Bolognese composer Giacomo Antonio Perti (1661–1756). In the course of her research, however, she discovered strong connections between the composer and the Arciconfraternita di S. Maria della Morte; the title pages of his oratorio libretti often referred to the confraternity and all of his known Passion oratorios were performed several times and almost exclusively by the confraternity. As she pursued these links, the focus of her study shifted away from the oratorios of Perti and towards the Arciconfraternita di S. Maria della Morte.

The choice of this particular confraternity was fortunate: this was one of the oldest, wealthiest, respected and influential of the Bolognese fraternities; its

members maintained the largest hospitals of the city, gave spiritual assistance to those condemned to die, and cared for the inmates of the city prisons. They also organized one of the most important annual Bolognese processions, the Procession of the Madonna di S. Luca. From the end of the sixteenth century onwards, its members belonged to the middle and upper classes; by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a majority came from noble families. They were prepared, and could afford, to spend large sums of money on music, and hired the most distinguished Bolognese composers to provide them with music. They also kept meticulous records that have been well preserved; these contain descriptions of oratorio performances that are colourful and full of detail. Of all the confraternities in Bologna, S. Maria della Morte offers the most complete and detailed information on the organization, financing and development of Good Friday ceremonies, and, consequently, oratorio performances over a period of many decades.

Based on the extent to which documentation was preserved, Riepe was able to investigate the role the confraternities played in the origin and early history of oratorio. She then sought to discover why oratorios were performed, the function of the performances, the conditions under which the performance traditions developed, which devotional practices the performances supported, how they were financed and organized, who was responsible for choosing the works, and which criteria were used to choose librettists and composers, singers and instrumentalists, and even the audience members.

The book is divided into four sections. In the first section, Riepe provides background information on Italian confraternities and their musical practices, music in Bologna in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the current state of research in these areas. She also addresses the question of commissions and the kinds of occasion on which oratorios were performed in Bologna during this period. In the second part she concentrates on the Arciconfraternita di S. Maria della Morte, and the occasions on which musical performances took place. Part three discusses the oratorio performances which took place annually on Good Friday in the prayer hall of the confraternity, and part four provides an extensive appendix with documentation on the confraternity and individual musicians as well as a chronological list of oratorios performed at S. Maria della Morte.

Riepe focuses primarily on the institutional history of a genre and the founding and development of a performance tradition. She admits that this leaves too little room to analyze and classify adequately the individual musical texts of oratorios that were written and performed by the confraternity over a period of more than 100 years. By concentrating on questions which relate to the Arciconfraternita di S. Maria della Morte, however, she has written a book that will appeal to a readership beyond musicologists. It is a welcome contribution to existing scholarship on the early development of the oratorio as well as the social context in which it matured.

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