

Bergamo.” Using the records from Bergamo’s Misericordia Maggiore (MIA), the largest of Bergamo’s six confraternities, Brolis finds a number of indicators that suggest women were more than peripheral to the confraternal movement and its survival. Founded in 1264, the MIA admitted over 1,000 women between 1265 and 1274, consisting of 58% of the total admissions. Not only were these women from diverse social classes, but also from rival families. The promised peace appealed to women as did the active role in charity. Taking on the question of valour, Brolis asserts that the high number of women at the confraternity’s beginning indicates that the collaboration of women was necessary. Similarly, the rules of the confraternity were clear that men and women enjoyed the same spiritual fruits. As they did in the domestic sphere, some women held administrative roles in the MIA. They also contributed to the continued existence of the organization with their bequeathals. The archive has preserved testaments of some female members, again attesting to the female proclivity for donating to hospitals and other charitable groups. But more than just women, all members of the family appear to play a role, at least in the beginning of the confraternity. The matriculation register shows that a number of families entered en masse—grandparents, parents, children, and other relatives including in-laws, thus highlighting the importance of the family in shaping and providing the model for confraternities.

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Glixon, Jonathan. *Honoring God and the City. Music at the Venetian Confraternities, 1260-1807*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. xxvi, 372 pp. ISBN 0-1951-3489-3

Jonathan Glixon’s study of music patronage by Venetian confraternities has grown out of a doctoral dissertation originally limited to music making at the *scuole grandi* (the six, at the time, large confraternities of Venice) during the Renaissance. Drawing on succeeding years of systematic archival research, he has expanded that initial study into a more detailed examination of music patronage at *all* the Venetian confraternities (the *scuole grandi* and the smaller, shorter-lived *scuole piccole*) from their origins in the mid-thirteenth century to their dissolution in 1807.

The book is divided into two main sections. The first (and much larger) portion recounts the history of the *scuole grandi*, while the *scuole piccole* are treated in the latter part. With their greater financial resources, longevity, and spirit of competitive tradition, the *scuole grandi* contributed substantially more over time to the Venetian musical scene than the *scuole piccole*. Thus although

the two parallel chronologies make comparison a little awkward, the presentation of material in this way is not unreasonable.

Glixon grounds his material with a history of the founding of the *scuole grandi* and an overview of their main rituals, before turning to their musical activities specifically. His main sources are the constitution and membership lists of the *scuole*, records of meetings, account books and other diverse papers comprising several thousand documents in all. Unlike most Italian confraternities, those of Venice were largely independent of church control, and were instead overseen by the state. From the sixteenth century onwards, these institutions came under relatively tight government control, and written communications between the *scuole* and the government bodies charged with regulating them also form part of the source material.

Creating a coherent and sufficiently detailed narrative from such material without overwhelming the reader is a daunting challenge, and it is to Glixon's credit that he succeeds quite well. He has aimed for a readable narrative, giving specific detail and quoting sources where interesting or important information is present, and otherwise condensing the great mass of documents into a general history. To compensate for sources not transcribed in the notes, Glixon intends to create a searchable internet database of all the documents that form the basis of this study.

Glixon argues that music, far from being a diversion from the main activities of the confraternities, became instead a significant means of bringing honour to God, to the city of Venice, and to the *scuole* themselves. "Honoring God and the City" was undoubtedly an effective pitch when trying to gain concessions from the Council of Ten, but the lingering impression from Glixon's account is that the honour of the *scuole* took precedence. The *scuole grandi* in particular were so keen not to be publicly outdone by each other that laws had to be continually passed (and subsequently disregarded) by both individual *scuole* and the Venetian state limiting the amount of money that could be spent on music-related activities.

The documents of the *scuole* provide indications as to the kinds of singers and instrumentalists hired, the occasions on which they were to be employed, and many particulars of the hiring process, such as auditions, dismissals, duties expected, and whether the musicians were to be drawn from the ranks of the members or priests, or professionals salaried or hired at need. Glixon's judicious quotation of source materials combined with commentary makes almost palpable the frustration of the *scuole* officers in trying to acquire, keep, and obtain good service from their musicians, all the while maintaining a reasonable budget. Humorous episodes captured in the documentation relieve the sometimes dry chronology. One such is the minor drama involving a musician at San Rocco in the early eighteenth century who was denied his former position as organist after the rebuilding of the organ. He pleaded his case to the *inquisitori*, upon which the *scuola* launched an internal investigation, bringing in a distinguished organist

(unnamed in the sources) as expert witness. The findings ultimately sided with the scuola in denying him his old post, for his playing technique was deemed to have caused great damage to the instrument.

Scarcity of detail in the confraternity records is a problem. At most of the scuole, the chief officer was expected to contribute handsomely to the musical festivities from his own pocket, and for these personal disbursements there are usually no records. The significance of the missing information is underscored in the records of San Rocco, which did file the personal payments. An English traveller, Thomas Coryat, witnessed the celebrations for the feast of San Rocco in 1608, and the pay slips for that year confirm his otherwise seemingly exaggerated description of the lavish musical resources and expert performances.

The most notable absence from these confraternity records is actual music. This poses something of a paradox (the book is after all subtitled “Music at the Venetian Confraternities”), but it also underscores a significant point – the Venetian confraternities were not patrons of music in a creative sense. With a few exceptions, they did not commission new works, actively promote rising and established composers, influence musical trends, or acquire and maintain important collections of music. What the confraternities did do, however, was significantly *support* the musical activity of the city. In doing so, they made accessible to the Venetian people musical spectacles of excellent quality, provided necessary extra sources of income for Venice’s musicians, and brought resources for regular music making to many of the local parish churches.

Music historians have long noticed the musical activities of confraternities, but as yet not many book-length studies have emerged on the subject. Works such as Glixon’s are invaluable, however, for deepening our knowledge of the wider range of music making within a given locale, and for revealing the flexibility of musical interaction between elite institutions and less exalted organisations like the confraternities and parish churches.

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Hills, Helen. *Invisible City. The Architecture of Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Neapolitan Convents*. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. xii, 268 pp., 10 colour plates, 44 b/w figures. ISBN 0-1951-1774-3

As Helen Hills notes in her introduction to this impressive work, “it has become customary to view the conventual system in stark terms, either idealized as a place of comparative freedom and independence for women or stigmatized as a place of imprisonment” (10). By exploring the nuances of what she terms “competing