



The Flower of Paradise: Marian Devotion and Secular Song in Medieval and Renaissance Music

David J. Rothenberg

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There is a striking similarity between Marian devotional songs and secular love songs of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Two disparate genres--one sacred, the other secular; one Latin, the other vernacular--both praise an idealized, impossibly virtuous woman. Each does so through highly stylized derivations of traditional medieval song forms--Marian prayer derived from earlier Gregorian chant, and love songs and lyrics from medieval courtly song. Yet despite their obvious similarities, the two musical and poetic traditions have rarely been studied together. Author David J. Rothenberg takes on this task with remarkable success, producing a useful and broad introduction to Marian music and liturgy, and then coupling that with an incisive comparative analysis of these devotional forms and the words and music of secular love songs of the period.

The Flower of Paradise examines the interplay of Marian devotional and secular poetics within polyphonic music from ca. 1200 to ca. 1500. Through case studies of works that demonstrate a specific symbolic resonance between Marian devotion and secular song, the book illustrates the distinctive ethos of this period in European culture. Rothenberg makes use of an impressive command of liturgical and religious studies, literature and poetry, and art history to craft a study with wide application across disciplinary boundaries. With its broad scope and unique, incisive analysis, this book will open up new ways of thinking about the history and development of secular and sacred music and the Marian tradition for scholars, students, and anyone with an interest in medieval and Renaissance religious culture.

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