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Kate van Orden, *Materialities: Books, Readers, and the Chanson in Sixteenth-Century Europe*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. xix + 320 pp. Tables, figures, notes, glossary, bibliography, and index. £34.99 U.K. \$55.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-199-36064-2.

Review by Tim Carter, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Abraham Bosse's engravings of *Les Cinq Sens* from the mid-1630s represent *L'Ouïe* (Hearing) by way of what is labeled in one version as "Les plaisirs de la musique."^[1] In a cozy domestic scene, five persons sit around a table performing music from separate parts: from left to right, a man and a woman singing, a woman playing the lute, a boy singing, and a man playing the viola da gamba. The apparent age differences, plus the facial similarities at least between the women, suggest that here we have three generations of a well-ordered family guided by the man on the left who also directs the ensemble by beating time. Even if that is a step too far, such harmonious sociability would appear to reflect a common musical practice in well-to-do households in early modern Europe. Certainly, this is how Kate van Orden reads the image at the outset (pp. 4-6) of her new study of sixteenth-century books, readers, and the French chanson.

Inevitably, matters are a little more complicated. Van Orden crops her illustration to focus on the five performers, so we lose some of the detail. They sit in a room decorated by tapestries containing military scenes, one from ancient Rome, and another a battle against the Ottoman: a timely reminder that music offers respite in the midst of war. Their demure behavior contrasts with the overtly sensual content of Bosse's other engravings in the sequence: for example, in *Le Toucher*, a couple (two of the musicians?) in various states of undress engage in tactile foreplay in front of a warm fire prior to jumping into the bed that a maid is preparing for their pleasure—we can argue over whether they have already been heated up by way of singing and playing, or if that serves as post-coital relaxation.^[2] As for *L'Ouïe*, Van Orden's cropped image also omits a strange object covered with a cloth that stands on a side-table at the far left.

One might guess that this is a birdcage, and its occupant, a nightingale kept silent so as not to intrude on the songful scene around the table. Bosse makes the connection by way of two quatrains at the foot of the image (again, omitted here). On the right is a text in French that invokes the conventional connection between music and the celestial harmony of the spheres; on the left, one in Latin that the lyre plucked by skillful fingers pleases "me," the nightingale seizes "me" with wondrous songs, but still more delightful is the harmony which sings "my" praises with learned art.^[3] Both quatrains point to another issue with this image, for they are written from the perspective of a listener. Bosse shows us five performers listening to each other as they make music. But how might we "listen" with, or to, them?

Such ambiguities are typical of genre paintings involving scenes of music making where the viewer is on the outside looking (listening?) in. They also underpin, and perhaps undermine, Van Orden's admirable efforts to grapple with a number of important issues concerning "print culture" for music in the sixteenth century. Her present book is a companion to her *Music, Authorship, and the Book in the First Century of Print* (2014).^[4] Neither quite delivers on the promise of their ambitious titles: Van Orden's interests lie

primarily north of the Alps and the Pyrenees, and west of the Rhine. Her terms need unpacking as well. For example, while Bosse's performers sing and play from musical notation, whether they are "readers" of "books" is another matter: the music is in parts, not a score, so cannot be read silently as a whole. "Materialities" is also troublesome given that sound is, by most definitions, immaterial. We can examine the material objects that were used to produce music, but the "music itself" (a term Van Orden tends to use for the musical text) is much more evanescent. This worked to the significant economic and social benefit of musicians in the marketplace, who needed to be present at any moment of musical creation. But it makes life difficult for historians of material culture.

Of course, musical materials are all we have left. Studies of sixteenth-century music printing have followed the trajectory adopted more broadly for the history of the printed book: from catalogues of printers' outputs through detailed analysis of production methods (paper, typography, impression, etc.) to issues of consumption. Thus Van Orden situates herself within the "new bibliography" of Roger Chartier and others.[5] In general, music came somewhat late to the "print revolution" and it required highly specialized equipment and skills. From the point of view of those who produced music (composers and performers), printing also mixed advantages with disadvantages, the latter including the threat of redundancy. In her 2014 study, Van Orden explored how some northern European composers (principally, French) struggled with issues of "authorship" when it was not clear who might be the "author" involved in any musical work. Now she looks at musical work, however defined, from the other side: that of the consumer.

Current studies of early music printing cover the major centers south and north of the Alps, but they all tend to suffer from a lack of archival sources—or an ability to interpret them—sufficient to document the economics of what one might call the music trade. Thus Van Orden has no greater success than the rest of us in terms of extrapolating general principles from the sporadic information we have for particular presses on production costs (materials and labor), distribution mechanisms, profit margins, and most important, who paid for what.[6] To cite just one issue that she raises but does not resolve, what she calls "knock-off" editions (e.g., p. 53) were very common in her repertory. In part this was because of the limited reach of such copyright protection as was available by way of privileges and the like. But how and why, precisely, did it benefit a printer-bookseller in one location to spend time and money pirating a print produced elsewhere rather than just importing copies to sell? There are several possible answers to that question, but first it needs to be asked.

The advantage of Van Orden's present repertory, however, is that it concerns that part of the music trade closest to the marketplace. Parisian printers alone issued over 350 partbook anthologies of polyphonic chansons between 1528 and 1598 (pp. 13-14). Produced in relatively cheap quarto and octavo formats for various numbers of voices (often four), they represent the bread-and-butter output of the presses run by Pierre Attaignant and then Adrien Le Roy and Robert Ballard in Paris, Jacques Moderne in Lyon, Pierre Phalèse in Antwerp, and many others. These editions, which often came out in series, catered cannily to a particular kind of market crossing geographical boundaries and also, in the case of the spiritual texts that started to enter the repertory, confessional ones. Given the very low survival rates documented by Van Orden, it also seems that they were relatively disposable: they fell apart in use save where collectors and bibliophiles took the bother to gather and bind them in tract volumes. One might add that such built-in fragility—both of the object and of the repertory—made perfect economic sense from the printer's point of view: the market needed constant renewal.

The nature and contents of these editions encourage Van Orden to consider their "material life" (p. 27) and thus how their purchasers used them. One assumes that amateur musicians of the kind represented in Bosse's later engraving were particular targets. But Van Orden's most significant achievement here is to embed music within the standard educational principles and practices adopted for children and adolescents of good breeding, not just as a pastime but to aid rote learning in terms of texts to be memorized (the Credo, Pater Noster, Ave Maria, and other parts of the catechism), the proper sequence and pronunciation

of letters, maxims for good living, and any other lists too tedious to grasp in other ways. Thus she situates music within a then-still-dominant oral culture of reading (and learning) aloud, now enhanced by way of stock melodies sung together—which is how most learn the alphabet even today—or in the form of a round (a multi-voice canon at the unison, as in “Three Blind Mice”). Van Orden may be stretching a point in suggesting that these simple canons led directly to the far more complex ones found in sacred polyphony of the time, but her argument is a good one all the same.

As for the secular chanson, Van Orden also scores by linking it to sixteenth-century efforts to fix and standardize the French language as the one of civil discourse, enabling youngsters to learn to read and properly pronounce their words, and even, in the case of a few editions using Robert Granjon’s *caractères de civilité* developed in the late 1550s (he also designed a music font), to write in an appropriate hand. All this shifts at least one segment of the market for music prints to a much earlier age-group than we might otherwise assume, placing them more in the context of French-language primers. The link becomes even clearer later in the century with the musical settings (that started to appear from 1580 on) of the moralizing *Quatrains, contenant préceptes et enseignemens utiles pour la vie de l’homme* of Guy du Faur, Seigneur de Pibrac, and similar texts. The young Louis XIII was by no means unusual in starting to learn the *Quatrains* by heart at the age of four: he had twenty-five of them under his belt by the end of 1606, and the following year he was reciting them “en musique” (p. 235).

Children necessarily grew up quickly in early modern Europe, but the idea of targeting at least some chansons at them puts the repertory in significant new light. It also suggests that the title of Clément Marot’s collection of poems issued as *L’Adolescence clémentine* (1532) was more than just a matter of self-deprecation. One of Van Orden’s concerns—that the often erotic or coarse tone of chanson texts might seem too adult (pp. 229–30)—can be allayed easily enough by reference to popular nursery rhymes and children’s stories that often hold dark secrets and indeed attune the young of either gender to them by osmosis, fulfilling important social functions in the process. But there is other evidence in Van Orden’s book that she might bring to bear on the matter in general. When Wolfgang Prommer catalogued the music collection of Hans Heinrich Herwart of Augsburg in 1586 in anticipation of its being purchased by Duke Wilhelm of Bavaria (pp. 83–84), he shoved the unbound items into forty-three sacks, the last three of which contained “Laütter Kinderwerk und nichts werth” (Mere children’s works and worth nothing). Further, of the tract volumes that Van Orden notes were so important in preserving the repertory, one containing superius partbooks (the top voice) printed by Attaingnant from 1529 to 1534 was purchased by Heinrich, Count of Castell (in northern Bavaria), in Paris in 1539, when he was thirteen or fourteen years old (pp. 158–59).^[7] Another, with bass partbooks from prints of the 1550s from Paris, Lyon, Antwerp, and Nuremberg (p. 179), in fact belonged to Adrian Scholiers, succentor of Antwerp Cathedral, who taught music there; in a rare lapse, Van Orden seems to have missed the evidence of ownership.^[8] In the case of both these bound volumes, one might assume that their companion partbooks have been lost, although it is indeed possible that a young student owned just the top-voice parts, and a teacher, the bass-voice ones (which might have been all that was needed for instructional purposes, although it would take me more than current space allows to argue the point).

Then, of course, we have the boy in Bosse’s engraving learning to read, pronounce, and sing his part in domestic company. That still leaves open the question of who is listening to his voice, just as Van Orden tends not to consider the issue in general of any listening culture (as distinct from performing practice) for music in early modern Europe. But she certainly takes some significant steps along the way, and for that we should be truly grateful.

NOTES

[1] See <http://expositions.bnf.fr/bosse/grand/163.htm>.

[2] See <http://expositions.bnf.fr/bosse/grand/167.htm>.

[3] “A bien considerer la douceur infinie / Des tons de la musique et leurs accords divers, / Ce n’est pas sans raison qu’on dict que l’harmonie / Du mouvement des cieux entretient l’univers.” “Pulsa placet digitis mirè mihi lyra peritis, / Cantibus et miris me philomela rapit; / At mihi concentus numquam iucondior ullus, / Quam laudes docta qui canit arte meas.”

[4] Kate Van Orden, *Music, Authorship, and the Book in the First Century of Print* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2014).

[5] See, for example, Chartier’s now classic *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), and *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1994).

[6] But Van Orden seems unaware of Angela Nuovo’s recently revised *The Book Trade in the Italian Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

[7] Van Orden gives the purchase date, and also Heinrich’s birth and death dates (1525-95), but does not do the math, it seems. For other examples of teaching children, see Van Orden’s account (pp. 193-94) of private music lessons for the thirteen-year-old Basilius Amerbach, the son of a lawyer in Basel; and the one of the Florentine Jacopo Peri teaching Princess Eleonora de’ Medici at the age of nine or ten in Tim Carter and Richard Goldthwaite, *Orpheus in the Marketplace: Jacopo Peri and the Economy of Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 275.

[8] See Kristine K. Forney, “A Proper Musical Education for Antwerp’s Women,” in Russell E. Murray, Jr., Susan Forscher Weiss, and Cynthia J. Cyrus, ed., *Music Education in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 84-125, at p. 102.

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