

Emma Dillon. 2002. *Medieval Music-Making and the 'Roman de Fauvel'*. New Perspectives in Music History and Criticism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, xiv, 304 pp. ISBN 0521813719 (hardcover)

James Grier

Volume 25, numéro 1-2, 2005

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1013315ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1013315ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Canadian University Music Society / Société de musique des universités canadiennes

ISSN

1911-0146 (imprimé)

1918-512X (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Grier, J. (2005). Compte rendu de [Emma Dillon. 2002. *Medieval Music-Making and the 'Roman de Fauvel'*. New Perspectives in Music History and Criticism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, xiv, 304 pp. ISBN 0521813719 (hardcover)]. *Intersections*, 25(1-2), 240–244. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1013315ar>

compositeurs et non aux analystes (p. 880), bien que l'analyse formelle soit maintenant solidement ancrée dans la tradition descriptive.

Malgré ces légères réserves concernant la qualité de certaines contributions individuelles et les quelques contorsions, sans doute difficilement évitables, dont souffre l'organisation des différentes sections, le *Cambridge History of Western Music Theory* constitue une œuvre intellectuelle collective de très haut niveau, et apparaît comme un ouvrage de référence indispensable qui devrait, sans plus tarder, trôner dans la bibliothèque de tout théoricien de la musique qui s'intéresse à l'évolution de la théorie musicale à travers les âges, à ses ramifications idéologiques et socioculturelles, ainsi qu'à ses nombreux liens avec les autres disciplines académiques.

RÉFÉRENCES

- Christensen, Thomas. 1993. *Rameau and Musical Thought in the Enlightenment*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.
- Dahlhaus, Carl. 1968. *Untersuchungen über die Entstehung der harmonischen Tonalität*. New York: Kassel-Bärenreiter. Traduit en anglais par Robert Gjerdingen sous le titre de *Studies on the Origin of Harmonic Tonality* (Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press, 1990).
- Fétis, François-Joseph. 1840. *Esquisse de l'histoire de l'harmonie, considérée comme art et comme science systématique*. Paris : Imprimerie de Bourgogne et Martinet.
- Krumhansl, Carol L. 1996. « A Perceptual Analysis of Mozart's Piano Sonata K.282 : Segmentation, Tension, and Musical Ideas ». *Music Perception* 13, n° 3 : 401–32.
- Lerdahl, Fred. 2001. *Tonal Pitch Space*. Oxford, NY : Oxford University Press.
- Riemann, Hugo. 1898. *Geschichte der Musiktheorie im IX.–XIX. Jahrhundert*. Leipzig : M. Hesse.
- Shirlaw, Matthew. 1917. *The Theory of Harmony : An Inquiry into the Natural Principles of Harmony, with an Examination of the Chief Systems of Harmony from Rameau to the Present Day*. Londres : Novello & Co.
- Zaminer, Frieder et Thomas Ertelt, dir. 1984– . *Geschichte der Musiktheorie*, 11 vol. (publiés jusqu'à présent, sur un total de 15). Darmstadt : Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

BRUNO GINGRAS

Emma Dillon. 2002. *Medieval Music-Making and the 'Roman de Fauvel'*. New Perspectives in Music History and Criticism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. xiv, 304 pp. ISBN 0521813719 (hardcover).

Since the publication in 1990 of a complete facsimile of Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS français 146 (hereafter fr.146, to use Dillon's siglum), the most famous witness of the *Roman de Fauvel*, both text and manuscript, already celebrated in musical and literary circles, has received

much scholarly attention. The current book, which began as an Oxford DPhil dissertation completed in 1998, explores the significance of the music that occurs in fr.146, much of it interspersed throughout the literary text of the *Roman*. Dillon calls attention to the physical setting of the music within the manuscript and shows that its visual impact, apart from how it might sound, interacts with text and image to create a multifaceted presentation. The book shows the results of much careful research with the manuscript itself and some original ideas about how books were produced in early fourteenth-century Paris, supported by a generous number of illustrations drawn from fr.146 and other manuscripts.

These achievements are weakened, however, by the author's desire to find a neat and consistent explanation for many, if not all, aspects of the book's appearance, viewed from the point of view of its compilers. As she says in her closing, "Yet it leaves open the question of how fr.146 was read: I have had space to deal with its reception only insofar as I have looked on its makers as its first readers, critiquing the music and poems before them through the act of shaping them on parchment" (pp. 281-82). Such a position invites the reader to harbour the suspicion Dillon is invoking the intentions of the manuscript's compilers, a position that could lead too readily to the "death of the reader."

One example will illustrate both the strengths and weaknesses of the book. Dillon devotes the bulk of the book to a detailed argument about levels of authorship (Chapters 3, 4 and 5). She begins (Chapter 3), after treating the theoretical issues that surround the definition of the concept of authorship, with a discussion of the ways in which authors and authorship are presented in the text of *Fauvel* and the supporting illustrations in fr.146. The double authorship of *Fauvel* parallels that of the *Roman de la Rose*: Jean de Meun completed the poem of Guillaume de Lorris while Chaillou de Pesstain supplemented the work of Gervais du Bus, putative author of *Fauvel*, with interpolations and other modifications.

The next stage (Chapter 4) tracks the contributions of the various scribes in fr.146. One scribe, designated C/E by Joseph Morin in his 1992 dissertation at New York University, who appears in most sections of the manuscript, compiled the index and corrected some of the musical items. From these observations, Dillon deduces that he was responsible for the overall organization and production of the manuscript. A further consideration of the planning that went into the book's production (Chapter 5) leads to the hypothesis that scribe C/E, the apparent director of the project, might be Chaillou de Pesstain himself. Much of this argument depends on the work of other scholars, particularly Morin, duly acknowledged. A good deal of space, therefore, is occupied with the presentation and discussion of their views, with the result that it is difficult in retrospect to extract the original contributions of the author. These latter, to be sure, are considerable and include such acute observations as the significance of certain marginal notes appar-

ently in the hand of scribe C/E. However, the conclusions are unexceptional. “To suggest that scribe C/E may be Chaillou de Pesstain does not take us any closer to revealing the identity behind that tantalizing name on folio 23v. The most it may offer is a prompt to reframe questions about Chaillou’s identity” (p. 215).

In Chapter 3, Dillon presents the possibility that Chaillou de Pesstain may be a *nom de plume*, either for an individual or a group of people responsible for the compilation of fr.146. But if scribe C/E may be Chaillou and we don’t really know who Chaillou is, are we any the wiser for this lengthy and somewhat derivative discussion? If the answer to that question is we now have good palaeographic and codicological evidence that a single person, scribe C/E (possibly Chaillou, whoever he is), is responsible for the planning, organization and execution of fr.146, including the selection and editing of the musical items and the interpolations in Gervais’s original *Roman*, then I would suggest that that is not a particularly exciting conclusion. I believe that most books from this period result from the supervision of a single individual who selects the contents, plans and organizes the volume, supervises the scribes, engages the illuminators and oversees the whole.

It is true that we have a particularly interesting example of book production from early fourteenth-century Paris in fr.146, especially in regard to its use of music in the production strategies of the codex, a question to which I return below. And the fact that its addressee might be royal makes the discussion more interesting but not less typical for the context in which it was created. But the insistence on the complex question of authorship of the manuscript (as opposed to the authorship of the texts that occur there) leads Dillon to conclusions whose deterministic nature may not be altogether warranted by the evidence.

Before treating that issue in more detail, however, I, like Dillon, digress to consider her historiographical survey of scholarship on *Fauvel* and fr.146, felicitously entitled “The Conquest of the Parchment.” (pp. 122–46) This may well be the most original part of the book. We learn a good deal, not only about the history of the relevant scholarship but also about the place of that scholarship in larger intellectual trends within the literary and musicological academic community of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Dillon raises important issues about the relative significance, to those scholars, of the manuscript itself as an artifact and the texts it contains, of the central role that photography played in conveying these views, and of the interaction between the literary and musical worlds that the manuscript conjoined.

The last chapter of the book (Chapter 6) contains analyses of several sections of fr.146 that contain musical interpolations. Again the title is captivating: “The Poetic Use of Song Space.” The analyses, however, take the zeal for identifying authorial intention to a level that defies credibility, even though, taken individually, they are all convincing to some degree and all rely on an original reading of the codicological evidence. A single example, per-

haps the most complex of the examples given by the author, will serve to illustrate, again, the strengths and weaknesses of the argument. Between the original fols. 28 and 29 of the manuscript, scribe C/E has interpolated a discrete codicological unit consisting of a single bifolium (now identified as fols. 28bis and ter) (pp. 257–81). It contains a lai sung by Fauvel who reflects on his unrequited love for Fortuna. It interrupts the narrative in which Fortuna rejects Fauvel's advances, and has been considered by most critics a later and only tangentially related addition.

Dillon begins her alternative interpretation by noting that scribe A, previously thought to have worked on only the early stages of fr.146, wrote the text for one column on the recto of fol. 28ter. (pp. 160, 267) From this observation, she deduces that scribes C/E and A may have executed the bifolium at an earlier stage of the manuscript's production than other scholars have thought. The author states that the hypothesis is "persuasive" because "the presence of this scribe [C/E], capable of such impressive imaginative feats of compilation elsewhere in the book, may ask us to be more sensitive to the possibility that the insertion of the bifolio was motivated by poetic concerns, rather than as a more or less random addition to the book" (p. 267). So, the author persuades herself that, because of other examples of intriguing juxtapositions of literary and musical materials, attributed to scribe C/E on the basis of her own interpretations, scribe C/E has again inserted a musical item, the lai on fols. 28bis and ter, as a meaningful reflection on the narrative.

Admittedly, she raises the possibility that scribe A may simply have worked on the manuscript a little longer than previously believed, but she dismisses it because it does not fit with her larger plan of authorial intent on the part of scribe C/E. I suggest that this rhetorical feat on the part of the author succeeds only in assuring us that the author is persuaded by her own arguments, hardly an astonishing situation. She fails to convince the reader (me, at least) that a number of suppositions, convincing but not proved, establish her ability to see into the intentions of scribe C/E. What is lacking from Dillon's rhetoric is an admission that these "impressive imaginative feats of compilation" are hypotheses of her own and not incontrovertible evidence.

Building on this foundation of supposition, she then proposes a number of links between the visual, literary and musical images of fols. 28bis and ter and their surrounding context that support her hypothesis of a planned interruption of Fortuna's speech of rejection to Fauvel. According to this construction, the lai represents Fauvel's reaction to Fortuna's treatment of his amorous advances. Each piece of evidence, taken independently, is, at the very least, interesting, and together they help to build a case. But a case for what? A case for an overriding interpretation that every aspect of fr.146 is the result of a brilliantly conceived and executed plan for its creation by scribe C/E. This conclusion, in view of the intrinsic interest and demonstrable importance of the manuscript, is interesting and intriguing, but it remains an interpretation, nevertheless, a reading by Dillon. It is supported by an in-

formed and meticulous investigation of the manuscript, but still it is a reading, not a statement of fact regarding the role of scribe C/E in the production of fr.146. Dillon's own critical reader would appreciate an acknowledgement of that fact.

Finally, I consider the music-making of the book's title. Dillon principally treats the musical items entered in fr.146 for their iconic worth in the literary, visual and codicological contexts. She presents provocative interpretations of music's function in the manuscript and raises many interesting points, as in the case discussed above. She consistently treats the music in the abstract, however, without considering what kind of existence in sound this mixture of plainsong, secular song and motet might have enjoyed. In part, her concern with the intentions of the book's creators, as revealed in the quotation from pp. 281–82 given above, forces her into this posture. She focuses, therefore, on the inscription of the music on the page, and its interrelations with the surrounding visual images and narrative. Thus, the music-making of the title becomes an excruciating pun, referring to its physical imposition in the manuscript. But what about the more conventional meaning of the phrase, the realization of these musical items in sound?

About this, I find nothing. Again, the author might retreat behind her own authorial intentions and declare that she is discussing the book's production and not its reception. As is clear from what precedes, I am not entirely persuaded by the validity of that approach, but even if I grant her that focus, can we say nothing whatever about what the sound of this music may have meant to its creators? Was this music never intended to be sung? Did it exist in a purely abstract and silent intellectual vacuum? Codex fr.146 is obviously not a manuscript intended to be used for performance, even though the format of the music, for example, the motets, would permit it. But that combination of circumstances does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the sound of the music meant nothing to the book's producers. Dillon creates a vivid and convincing drama about fr.146 and the place of music as iconic symbol in it, but some of the key characters, herself as reader of the manuscript, music as sound, are missing or, at best, only sketched in.

I close by noting a few errors that might elude the unwary reader. The reference to "model notation" (p. 54) should probably read "modal notation." The second closing rubric of Book I of *Fauvel* appears not "just below the final author portrait" (p. 87) but "just above" it (see Figure 3.4, p. 86). The same folio is identified as fol. 1v in Figure 3.13 (p. 116) and as fol. 1r in Figures 4.2–4 (pp. 157–58), but is identified correctly in the index (p. 301b) as fol. 1r. Finally, Jean Beck, Pierre Aubry's erstwhile rival in the study of medieval French lyric song, has become Pierre Beck (p. 133 and the index, p. 300a), one hopes not out of confusion with the much younger scholar of troubadour literature Pierre Bec.