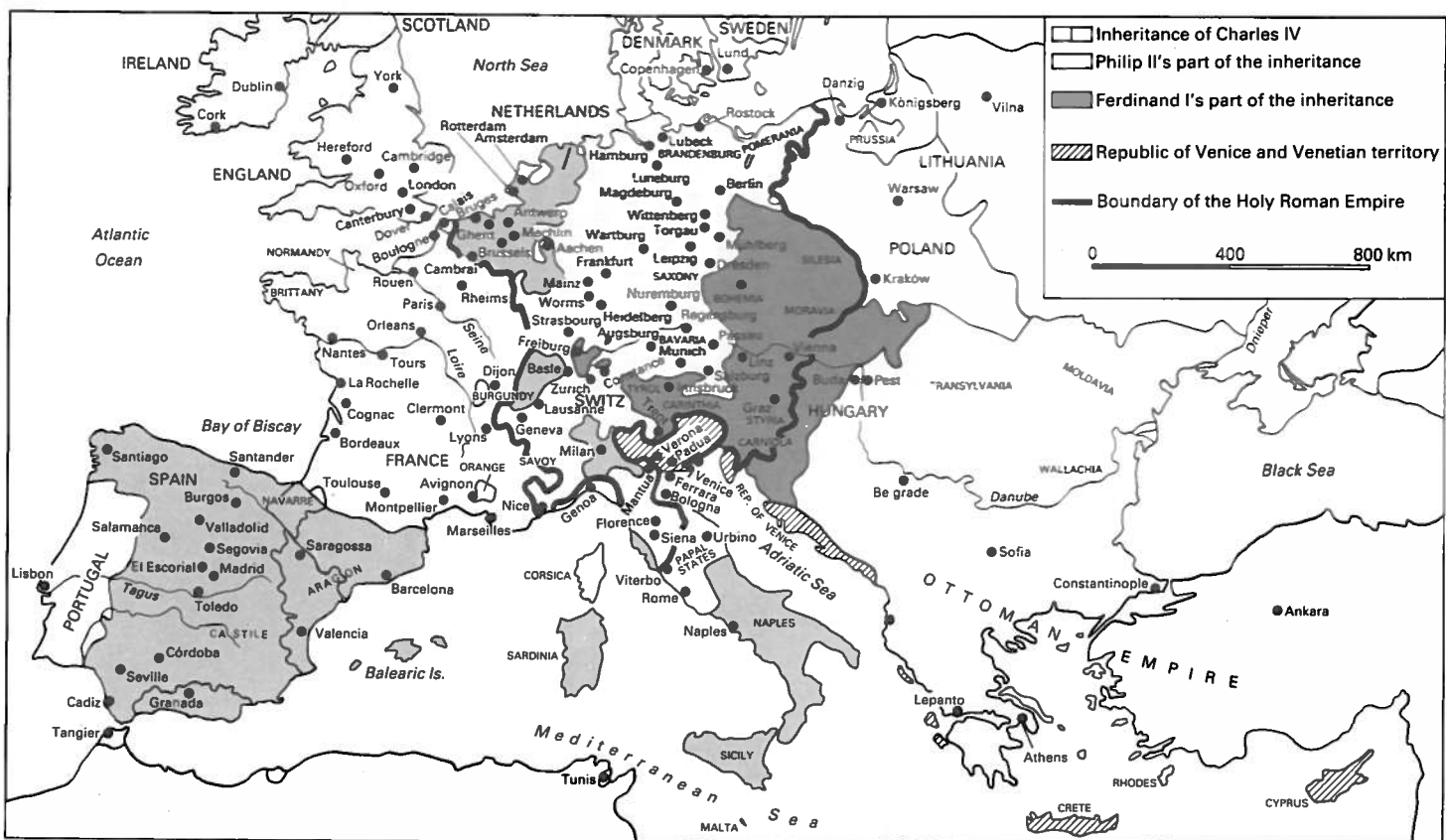




1. Map of Europe in the mid-sixteenth century showing the Habsburg dominions.

Chapter I

Music and Society

IAIN FENLON

As one scholar has put it, 'Renaissance music is not a set of compositional techniques but a complex of social conditions, intellectual states of mind, attitudes, aspirations, habits of performers, artistic support systems, intra-cultural communication, and many other ingredients which add up to a thriving matrix of musical energy'. It is the purpose of the present book to explore some of these features as they can be observed in different places and at different times in Europe during the Renaissance. As a glance at the table of contents makes clear, it is not our intention to do this in an encyclopedic way, but rather to proceed by contrast and analogy in order to tease out the common structural elements that were at work, while at the same time characterizing in quite a detailed way some of the more important differences between the musical life of various urban centres – Nuremberg and Venice, London and Naples – at various important moments in their histories. At the same time, while this book is emphatically not about Renaissance music seen merely as a set of compositional techniques, nor seen as a sequence of masterpieces, nor even as the aggregation of the biographies of great composers, that does not mean that we are not concerned with the activities of individuals or with details of musical styles and forms. On the contrary, three of the major phenomena of social significance in the period – the spread of humanism, the growth of bourgeois culture and the religious crises of the sixteenth century – all made a dramatic impact on the contemporary musical world in terms of the environment in which composers worked, and hence on the pieces that they wrote. To take one example, it is a commonplace of discussions about musical style in the Renaissance that the principal motor of change was humanism, which has a long and distinguished historiography as the main force for renewal in all the arts during this period. But it is equally true that those changes in style also reflect changes in the function of music itself, which are in turn responses to changes in the structures and needs of society. Beginning with humanism, and then moving on to other important developments such as religious change, the impact of printing and the growth in influence of the bourgeoisie, all of which are intimately and inextricably related,

ments in the early decades of the sixteenth century is a powerful testimony to the potency of the new attitudes towards music exemplified in the work of both Castiglione and Cortese as well as to other factors such as the impact of music printing. These new emphases are first evident in the attitudes of such patrons as Isabella d'Este, Lucrezia Borgia and Ippolito d'Este, as well as in the activities of such humanist theorists and composers as Gaffurius in Milan and Tinctoris in Naples. And it is against this background that our attention now naturally shifts to the question of the importance of courtly society for the cultural and musical life of Renaissance Europe.

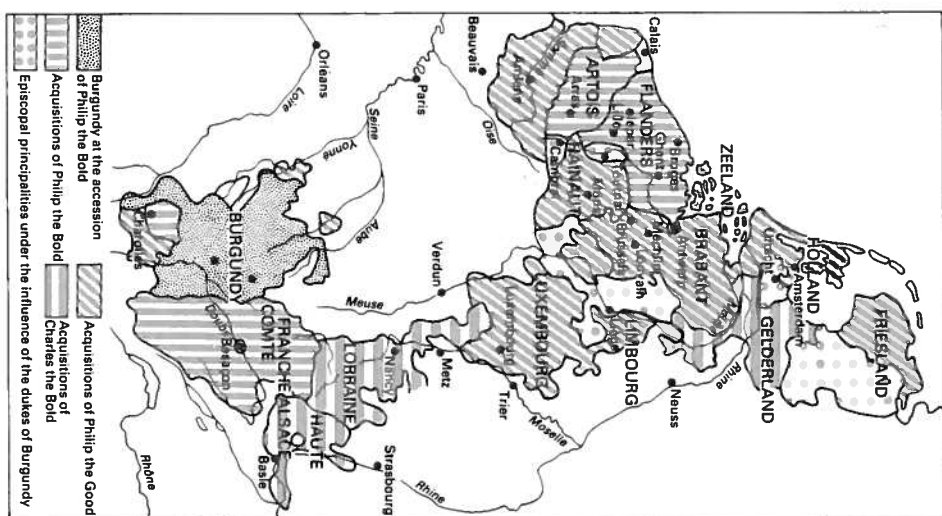
COURTLY SOCIETY

In 1860 Jacob Burckhardt's book *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* was published in Basle. After a substantial introductory essay, 'The state as a work of art', Burckhardt devotes himself to a detailed exploration of his main argument that the Renaissance witnessed 'the discovery of the world and of man', that it inaugurated the attitudes and preoccupations of modern European civilization. Although more than a century later Burckhardt's view of the period remains remarkably powerful despite attempts to undermine it, the impact of his magisterial work has not always been positive. In writing his famous account of Burgundian culture, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga effectively reinforced this vision of fifteenth-century Italy as the cradle of modern culture with an autumnal characterization of northern France and the Lowlands as 'medieval society in its last age, like a tree with overripe fruit'. Huizinga's picture of the fifteenth century in the north as 'an epoch of fading and decay' has so dominated the historiography of the subject that the notion that Burgundian culture had a real influence not only in England and Spain but even in Italy may seem startling. The history of music provides a clear, if in general cultural terms untypical, instance of the extent of this northern influence; even Burckhardt was forced to admit that 'musical composition down to the year 1500 was chiefly in the hands of the Flemish school', though he rapidly added the qualification that 'side by side with this there nevertheless existed an Italian tradition which probably stood nearer to our present taste'. Certainly there is no need to apologize for beginning discussion of the role of courtly society in the musical culture of Renaissance Europe not in Naples or Ferrara but north of the Alps.

By the middle of the fifteenth century, the economic power of the Lowlands combined with the position of the Burgundian territories, strategically located between the Empire and France, had made Burgundy the dominant power in Europe. As the result of a carefully contrived sequence of dynastic marriages and land acquisitions, the Duchy of Burgundy had grown to become larger than France in both

extent and power, a vast swathe of territory beginning with Burgundy and Franche-Comté in the south, extending northwards through Luxembourg, Hainault, Picardy, Artois and Boulogne, and including almost the whole of modern Belgium and the Netherlands. Among the Burgundian possessions were some of the wealthiest northern cities – Bruges, Ghent, Lille, Brussels and The Hague – all of which were used as stopping places for a peripatetic court. In this period, at the height of its power, Burgundian supremacy was not only political and economic but also cultural. As early as the 1420s the court of Burgundy had surpassed in magnificence not only neighbouring courts such as Blois and Foix, but even the royal courts of England and France, to present a picture of a wealthy and chivalrous society that had not been seen in Europe since the fall of the Hohenstaufen Empire. Opulent, ostentatious and self-confident, the Burgundian court presented a behavioural model in literature, the arts and chivalry which other European rulers sought to imitate.

5. Map of the acquisitions of the dukes of Burgundy up to the death of Charles the Bold in 1477



This exceptional political and cultural vitality was partly due to a continuous tradition which deliberately associated court society with artistic skill in accordance with cherished chivalric ideals. From generation to generation the dukes of Burgundy were bibliophiles, patrons of the arts and sovereigns of the Order of the Golden Fleece – a quasi-Arthurian society of knights drawn from the European monarchy and the higher reaches of the aristocracy, for whose elaborate ceremonies a number of composers, including Guillaume Dufay and Josquin Desprez, wrote pieces. The stable conditions which permitted such activities to flourish were partly ensured by a skilfully organized system of court officials who controlled inherited institutions. At the core of this bureaucracy was the ducal household (what Cortese, in a curial context, called the *famiglia*), ranging from court secretaries and treasurers to cobblers and grooms. It was a mutually advantageous system. On the one hand the dukes needed an army of servants to look after their affairs: aristocrats, diplomats, lawyers and accountants to manage their business and to protect their interests, tutors to instruct their children, physicians to oversee their health in this world and ecclesiastics to supervise it in the next; and on the other, well-placed members of this élite exerted considerable pressure for rewards (enhanced salaries, titles, benefices and land) in return for their services in ensuring the continued stability and prosperity of the system. The court itself was larger than the household; it might include for example foreign princes and other visitors such as Edward IV of England who spent a period of exile in 1470–71 in Bruges, or Italians such as Francesco d'Este or Rodolfo Gonzaga who arrived to represent the interests of the dukes of Ferrara and Mantua. Through such contacts at home, and those of its ambassadors and representatives abroad, the Burgundian court maintained an important position on the international circuit. Famed for its magnificence, wealth and liberality, princely virtues which humanism was eventually deployed to support, the Burgundian system became a potent model for courts elsewhere.

This extraordinary cosmopolitan concentration of power and skills created an atmosphere in which artists, musicians and men of letters and science were able to practise their talents to an extent that was unusual in the highly stratified societies of fifteenth-century Europe. From early in the century the Burgundian court maintained a chapel that included musicians, and a number of the most important northern composers of the time, including Baude Cordier and Jean de Noyers dit Tapisier, served the Burgundian princes. Under Philip the Good and his successor Charles the Bold these musical interests continued and, among others, the important song composers Robert Morton and Hayne van Ghizeghem were employed. Nevertheless, while the court of Burgundy was undoubtedly an important centre for the cultivation of music, both secular and sacred, it was not there so much as at the large

churches and choir schools of the north, such as Cambrai (strictly speaking not a Burgundian city at all but part of the Holy Roman Empire), that the great composers of the age received their training. Similarly, while Gilles Binchois was a court musician from about 1467 when he joined the household of Charles the Bold, many other composers who are credited with the formulation of the 'Burgundian style', including Dufay (another Cambrai product) were not, as far as it is known, formally connected with the court at all.

In this sense the traditional notion of a uniform Burgundian musical culture is somewhat suspect, since in practice a great deal of music was written for cities and collegiate churches throughout northern Europe which maintained their own traditions. In fifteenth-century Bruges for example, then the artistic and commercial centre of Flanders, musical life was concentrated on the collegiate church of St Donatian, which had both Dufay and Binchois among its canons as well as Jacob Obrecht for its choirmaster. Elsewhere in the city the performance of polyphony during Mass was well established at the collegiate church of Our Lady by the middle of the fifteenth century, and there was also active musical involvement at some of the smaller parish churches and hospitals. Music was performed in convents and confraternities, during processions and pageants, to accompany jousting and dancing, and as part of civic and political occasions. Bruges was an important place for the Burgundian court, one of the major sources of its wealth and the site of one of the ducal palaces that were scattered throughout the Burgundian territories. Yet it is clear that the rich musical life of the city (and of other major centres in the area such as Brussels and Lille) existed independently of the court and that, if anything, the court itself merely used local musical resources when it was in residence. A similar pattern of urban and corporate patronage operated in many of the commercially and politically important centres in the north.

Yet whatever the realities of the situation, the reputation of the Burgundian court was inextricably bound up with the considerable prestige which 'Burgundian' culture enjoyed elsewhere in Europe. In Tudor England, for example, the reign of Henry VII was a transitional period during which forms of poetry, drama, chivalry, architecture, painting and scholarship were directly copied from Burgundy. The situation is symbolized by Henry's construction of the new royal palace of Richmond, begun in 1497 and heavily indebted to Flemish models. Filled with sumptuous Flemish tapestries and paintings, illuminated manuscripts of the renowned Bruges–Ghent school for the palace library, and windows of Flemish stained glass, Richmond was a magnificent architectural symbol of the new dynasty, a visible sign that Henry's court was the equal of any in Christendom. Continuing the work begun in a rather hesitant and random way by Edward IV (who

had been deeply affected by what he had seen in Bruges during his exile there), Henry established a royal household at Richmond clearly patterned after that of the Burgundian court. Similarly, he also founded there an artistic and literary establishment largely staffed by poets, printers, artists and illuminators who had been trained in Flemish-Burgundian styles. In imitation of Philip the Good, one of the first European rulers to appoint an official court chronicler, Henry put at the head of this establishment Bernard André, a blind poet from Toulouse whose first official commission, the *Vita Henrici VII*, strikes an uneasy balance between history and encomium. A Flemish bibliophile, Quentin Poulet, entered royal service as the first royal librarian; as a result of his efforts both Henry VII and his successor were to read romances, chronicles and histories in Burgundian prose.

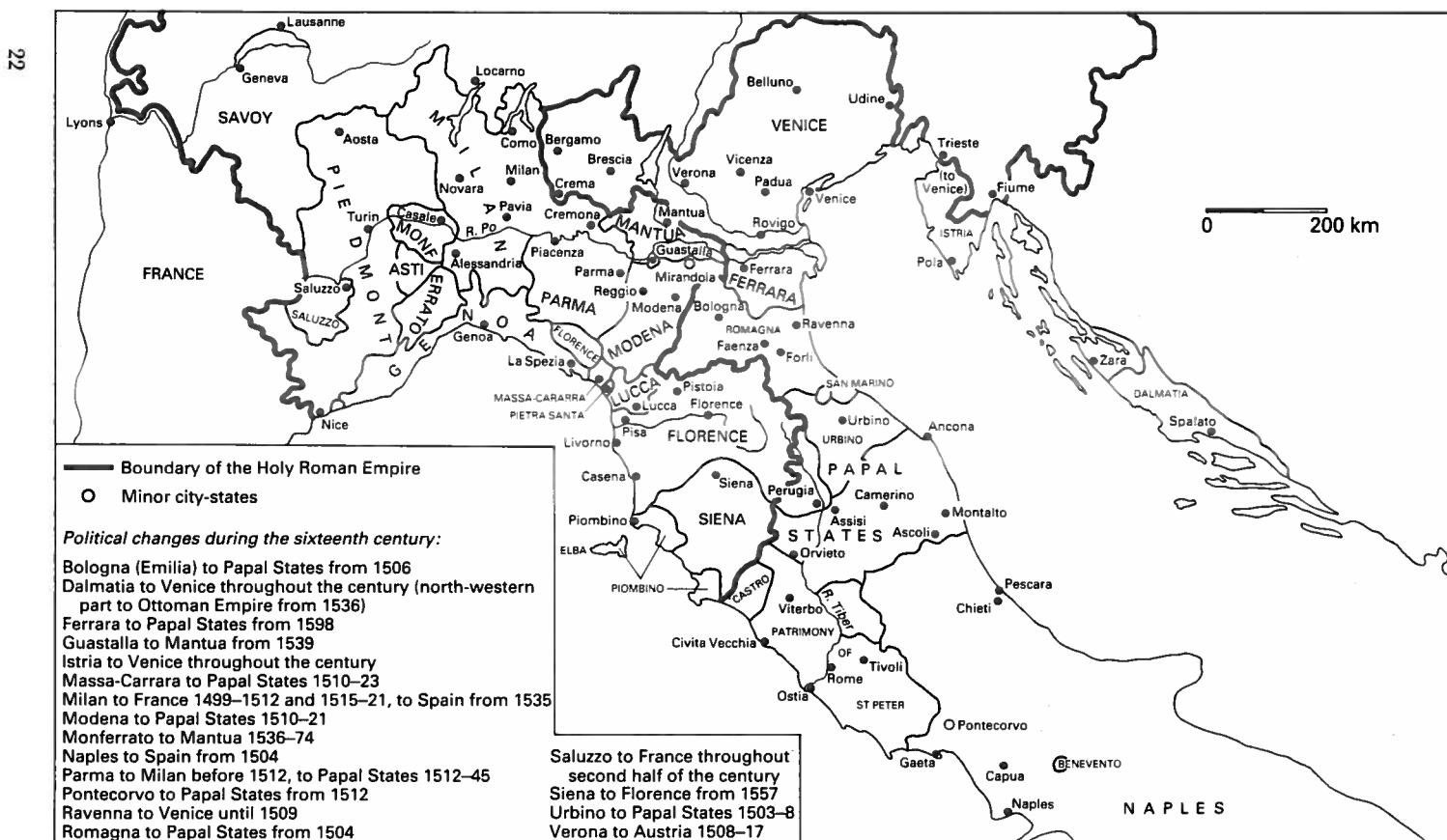
Similarly, by the beginning of the sixteenth century the first of a whole succession of Flemish painters and artisans arrived in London, the precursors of a tradition that included Gheeraerts and the De Heeres and endured well into the seventeenth century when Rubens and Van Dyck were appointed to the service of Charles I. In other areas the cultural affects of northern influence were equally long lived. Cornysh's adaptation of Burgundian pageants into Tudor disguisings lived on in Elizabethan entries and the Accession Day tilts, and behind the seventeenth-century English masque (Italian in name and, in the hands of Inigo Jones, Italian also in its technology and visual appearance) lay a conception which in its structural outlines was still recognizably indebted to northern example. This thoroughgoing transformation of English court culture in the first decades of the sixteenth century, which inevitably affected in turn the tastes of bureaucrats, courtiers and aristocrats, is mirrored elsewhere in Europe, for example at the courts of Spain and Maximilian I, and even as we shall see to some extent in Italy.

The first major occasion when these talents were on open display was the two-week celebration that accompanied the marriage of Arthur, Prince of Wales (an appropriate name for this heir to a Camelot by the Thames), to Catherine, Infanta of Spain. Some of the details of this occasion reflect its comprehensively Burgundian character and invite direct comparison with the marriage ceremonies in Brussels in 1496–7 for Joanna of Castile and Philip the Fair. Catherine was welcomed to London by a spectacular triumphal procession based upon a Burgundian model, and among the other entertainments a tournament, fought beneath the Tree of Chivalry, was devised along specifically Burgundian lines. Henry's own court painter, probably a Walloon, frescoed the walls of the chapel and great hall at Richmond with a sequence of portraits (later to influence Holbein in his great Privy Chamber painting at Whitehall) following a Burgundian scheme. And in the earliest of his court entertainments, the composer William Cornysh introduced pageant cars of Burgundian type, most familiar

from Hans Burgkmair's later woodcuts of *The Triumph of Maximilian* of 1526 (see fig. 54 below). As Henry's Spanish guests departed to the increasingly Burgundian atmosphere of their home environments, they may well have been convinced that the Tudor court was equal in magnificence to any in Europe.

Quite clearly, the decisive moment for the reception of humanist ideals in northern Europe also occurred at this time, when the urban origins of Italian humanism had become sufficiently submerged in a dynastic way of life which more closely matched the aristocratic nature of northern patronage than it had a century before. Further encouraged by the mood of neo-Platonism, which produced an attitude more consonant with northern ideals than the earlier civic principles had been, the north now became fertile ground for the new ideas. In terms of music, the continental repertory assumes a new importance during the early years of Henry VIII; through the activities of foreign musicians and composers in England, the experiences of English visitors to Europe and the circulation of continental music in manuscripts and printed books, contact with continental traditions was greater than it had been before. For the most part 'continental' means Franco-Flemish; although Henry VIII was presented with a manuscript of madrigals and motets including works by composers working in Italy, most of the manuscripts that found their way to England contain northern repertory, much of it from French court circles. As for the manuscripts themselves, most of them are richly illuminated presentation copies, and may say more about the ascendancy of the English court to a position of European significance than about its musical tastes.

The Burgundian tradition of learned chivalry firmly established by Henry VII and his successor runs through later English sixteenth-century culture alongside a more thoroughbred humanist tradition. One line of descent leads to Spenser and Sidney (above all to the *Arcadia*), the other to Erasmus and More. In the tapestries, paintings and manuscripts prepared for the Tudor court either by or under the influence of Flemings during the early decades of the century can be seen the first stages of that invasion of foreign influences that transformed native traditions into the more cosmopolitan style of Elizabeth's reign. Similarly, it was from the initial example of the court itself under Henry VIII that the seeds of interest in foreign music and musicians began. The discontinuity in English musical life which is usually associated with the Edwardine and Marian periods is in fact a more gradual process than often described, and some of the social changes which took place may actually have had a beneficial effect upon the employment as household musicians of many of those released from church service. Certainly it was during these middle decades of the century that a greater interest in both the viol and the lute in English society arose – tangible reflections of a growing musical involvement



6. Map of northern and central Italy in the sixteenth century

that was itself merely an aspect of a general increase in literacy.

It was with the 1560s that the new pattern of musical life in England achieved a sense of definition and permanency, and again the example of the court played a crucial role. Elizabeth I continued and expanded the cosmopolitan musical establishment at court which, being frequently in London as well as travelling on progresses, acted as both example and inspiration for aristocrats such as Henry Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel (*d* 1580). From about 1553 Arundel lived at Nonesuch Castle in Surrey, originally built for Henry VIII in 1538 and, during the early decades of Elizabeth's reign, an important centre of musical activity in England and an echo of the royal court. Among the surviving books and manuscripts from the Nonesuch library, a number contain Italian music acquired by Arundel on his visit to Italy in 1565–6, but the majority are devoted to Franco-Flemish repertory, much of which was copied by the Flemish composer Derick Gerarde whom Arundel employed. Gerarde often took his Italian pieces from northern sources, and this pattern of transmission is typical of many manuscripts of Elizabeth's reign; contrary to the impression created by historians keen to identify the progressive with the Italianate, not all foreign influences during the Elizabethan 'golden age' came from south of the Alps.

In Italy itself, the emergence of courtly society took a different but by no means totally separate path. It had been in medieval Italy that the previous governmental system, the commune (a city republic ruled by a mercantile patriciate), had reached its most developed form. But between approximately 1280 and the middle of the fourteenth century, the Italian communes had been faced with such serious difficulties, both internal and external, that there was no choice other than constitutional change. There were two options: either one-man rule under a single family in hereditary succession, or a republican system in which political power was concentrated in the hands of a narrower group of citizens. During the Renaissance, Venice, Florence, Siena and Lucca all took the republican route, while three other important cities, Bologna, Genoa and Perugia, oscillated between signorial and republican systems. In Florence, perhaps the most familiar example, the republican councils and magistracies remained in force almost until the middle of the fifteenth century. Then, after a short period of thinly disguised signorial government (c1470–94), the city revitalized its republican institutions for a time (1494–1512) before the Medici regime was restored. Finally, in 1530, after three years of ardent republican agitation, the city, besieged by foreign soldiers, settled under the rule of the Medici who, by the end of that decade, had established themselves as dukes (by the 1570s grand-dukes) of Tuscany, a position they were to maintain until the end of the eighteenth century.

This pattern, though more complicated than most examples, is characteristic of the general process in which, at the end of the Middle

Ages, the crisis of the cities led to the extinction of their liberties. In Italy (and then later in Flanders), the new monarchies replaced the old city republics. From about 1440, for at least a hundred years and in some cases more, the wealth, energy and extravagance of the Italian courts combined to give a distinct direction to the élite culture of the peninsula. By 1500 the major Italian courts, which in turn acted as cultural models for scores of satellites, were those of Milan, Naples, Ferrara, Savoy and Mantua. To these must be added papal Rome, a centre of both spiritual and temporal power and resonant with international standing as the capital of Western Christendom even though it had less political influence than Milan and not even half that city's fiscal income. Those few city republics which survived ceased to assert their independence. Genoa became dependent upon the King of Spain, and Venice retreated into comparative neutrality from which it emerged only to join crusades against the Turks; outside Italy, Geneva survived, to become an important centre of Calvinist thought, only through French protection, while the free cities of Germany were guaranteed their liberty by the Empire on one hand and by the fragmentation of Germany itself on the other. This shift from republican to monarchical systems marks a profound social change throughout Europe, but nowhere more so than in Italy. There the new rulers founded their states on a different social base by relying on wider support to counteract the urban patriciate, whose attachment to older ideas of liberty and republicanism remained strong, and justified it with a new political philosophy which depended heavily upon humanism. In some ways many writers such as Machiavelli, whose books both advised and justified princely rule, continued to endorse the values and concepts that had been promoted by the earlier humanists; but in others the changing character of their audience encouraged them to introduce new and often severely pragmatic elements into their moral and political thought.

In turn these features coloured the character of the Italian courts, whose cultural style was more indebted to Burgundian example than is often recognized; this is particularly true, though not exclusively so, of the courts of northern Italy, whose libraries were filled with French romances and where French itself was still thought of as the most suitable vernacular for the transaction of official diplomatic business. The support of Italian humanists for courtly style can be found as early as the end of the fourteenth century, and Buonaccorso's influential treatise on chivalry was an Italian production. But by the middle of the fifteenth century Burgundy had become the example of courtly magnificence *par excellence*; it is indicative that Buonaccorso's book had become best known, even in Italy, in Jean Mielot's translation which, in turn, provided the starting-point for other versions such as the English translation of John Tiptoft, Earl of Warwick. At the north

Italian courts, and above all at Ferrara, poetry on chivalric themes was much in vogue, and the deeds of Orlando (i.e. the French Roland) and his fellow knights were to be seen in tapestries and paintings. Writing in the first half of the fifteenth century, Sabadini degli Arienti described a fresco on chivalric themes at the Estense villa of Belfiore, and in the 1440s Pisanello was commissioned by Ludovico Gonzaga to paint an ambitious cycle based on an episode from *Lancelot*, a thirteenth-century French romance on Arthurian themes, for the ducal palace at Mantua (fig. 7). But perhaps nowhere is the influence of northern European culture upon Italian courtly style more evident than in the realms of literature and, to an even greater extent, music.

First, a literary example. Boiardo's *Orlando innamorato*, first published while still incomplete in 1484, is usually regarded as the first great epic poem in the Renaissance revival of the chivalric mode. And it was this poem, still left unfinished by Boiardo at his death, that Ariosto decided to continue in the *Orlando furioso*; as he put it in a letter of 1512, 'un mio libro al quale gia molti di (continuando la inventione del conte Matteo Maria Boiardo) io diedi principio' ('a book which I began many days ago, continuing the invention of Count Matteo Maria Boiardo'). And indeed Ariosto takes over Boiardo's characters and the main action of his poem: the war, the love of Orlando and the story of Ruggiero, just as Boiardo had outlined them at the beginning of his



7. Detail of the fresco cycle on Arthurian themes (1440s), by Pisanello, in the ducal palace at Mantua

Third Book. Yet while Ariosto plundered Boiardo for his main characters and action, he also drew upon numerous other sources, including northern ones. From the Estense library he was able to become acquainted with chivalrous romances; he makes especially frequent use of the *Aspramonte*, the *Spagna in Rima*, *Ancroia*, the *Storia di Merlino* and *Guerrin Meschino* as well as of contemporary writings. In terms of character and action, Ariosto's epic is merely the most recent stage in a long historical process. Boiardo's poem carries on the adventures of Orlando, whose birth is described in the last book of Andrea da Barberino's *Reali di Francia* of c1400. And in its turn, the *Reali di Francia* is a recasting and reordering of a vast body of narrative prose and verse which had accumulated around the legends of Charlemagne, the origins of which are to be found in the French *chansons de geste*, and particularly in the late eleventh-century *Chanson de Roland*. This same Roland, whose tragic death at Roncevaux is described in the French poem, is the protagonist of Ariosto's poem 400 years later.

A rehearsal of these well-established continuities is not meant to obscure the fact that the tone of this sequence of narratives had been constantly shifting in that intervening period. For example, when the French *chansons de geste* had first made their way over the Alps in the twelfth century, they were copied down in the northern cities, notably Ferrara and Venice. And as these versions, often in Franco-Venetian dialect, multiplied, the material was modified to suit Italian tastes. In their new environment, the serious, religious and patriotic note of the early French *chansons de geste* became fainter. Later still, in the fifteenth century, the romance evolved from its medieval origins to the society and culture of the Renaissance; Andrea da Barberino's most popular work, the *Reali di Francia*, is a serious attempt to rationalize and clarify the confusions of the tradition and to relate it more effectively to a fifteenth-century audience.

In terms of musical developments, connections with centres north of the Alps also had a long pedigree, but they became of crucial significance in the second half of the fifteenth century as the prominent Italian courts embarked upon a more sustained and consistent interest in practical music than hitherto. Contemporary recognition of the importance of this development is made explicit in the preface to Johannes Tinctoris's *Proportionale*, written about 1476, when the author was in the service of his Neapolitan patron, King Ferrante I of Aragon. Tinctoris divided the history of music into three periods beginning, inevitably, with classical antiquity, passing to the Christian Middle Ages and finishing with the music of his own period. Discussing the latter, Tinctoris wrote:

the most Christian princes . . . desiring to augment the divine service, founded chapels after the manner of David, in which at extraordinary

expense they appointed singers to sing . . . praise to our God with diverse (but not adverse) voices . . . And since, if their masters are endowed with the liberality which makes men illustrious, the singers of princes are rewarded with honour, glory and wealth, many are kindled with a most fervent zeal for this study.

These remarks constitute a remarkably perceptive account of the burgeoning interest in music at the more prominent Italian courts that occurred in the 1460s and 1470s. During the early fifteenth century courtly interest in the art had been principally concentrated on the employment of the singers and instrumentalists needed for entertainment and ceremonial; the numbers involved were often small and many of the musicians were recruited from northern Europe. Much of the music played by these ensembles of trumpeters, *piffari* (bands of trombones and shawms) and singers and string players (these groupings of performers are found, for example, at Ferrara, Milan and Naples during this period), was orally transmitted. Unwritten traditions, which are largely lost except for occasional polyphonic reworkings, reached their most sophisticated expression not in the hands of foreigners, but in the art of Italian poet-improvisers, about whom a little information has survived thinly scattered through letters and archival documents. Famous as many of these men were in their own times (Antonio di Guido was probably the best-known musician in Florence in the fifteenth century), details of their careers have largely disappeared leaving little trace of their existence. So too have the details of their musical performances and the repertoires of melodies which they drew on in their recitations of epic verse. Their songs belong to the substantial corpus of unwritten music of the Renaissance, a largely vanished tradition which represented an important and common aspect of musical experience.

Among the poet-improvisers who made their careers in the courts a small number achieved the status of masters, becoming legends in their own lifetimes. Most famed of all was the Ferrarese singer and lute player Pietrobono; praised by a long line of humanist writers including Tinctoris, Pietrobono was a member of Borso d'Este's court and his services were also eagerly sought at the courts of Naples, Mantua and Milan. From descriptions of his playing in Cornazzano's long poem *La Sfortiade*, it is clear that he was particularly admired for his performances of narrative verse in which he accompanied himself on a string instrument. At Ferrara he was so esteemed that a number of portrait medals were struck in his honour; it is both ironic and characteristic of our knowledge of these *maestri* of the improvised tradition that more is known about Pietrobono's appearance than about the sound of his art. Yet despite the fact that his music cannot be recovered, Pietrobono enters our history as one of the most celebrated and influential Italian

musicians of the fifteenth century, the practitioner of a song style that continued to exist alongside the Franco-Flemish chanson which became fashionable at the Italian courts in the last third of the century.

The notion, strongly familiar from later literary works such as Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, that music was a necessary part of courtly manners, had become increasingly widespread during those last decades of the century, partly as a natural consequence of the growth of humanistic culture with its emphasis on individuality and personal refinement. Even so, the musical interests of Ercole I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, were quite exceptional for the time. Many of his efforts were directed towards the operation of his *cappella di cantori*; as early as 1472, the first full year of Ercole's rule, it had included fifteen singers, and by the end of the century it had been expanded to a size that placed it on a par with any similar body in Europe, including the papal chapel. This side of Ercole's interest in music was partly promoted by his religiosity and the desire to present himself to the world and to posterity as the model Christian prince. At the same time, all the evidence suggests that Ercole had a quite genuine interest in music as an art, and that this interest was expressed in the pleasure he took in performance. It is reported that on his deathbed he called for the keyboard player Vincenzo de Modena and instructed him to play for an hour and that even during the war with Venice he sang and played every day. At times Ercole sang with his sons, at times with the professional singers of his chapel.

By making extensive use of Ferrarese diplomatic agents at the major centres both in Italy and abroad, as well as occasional forays through special representatives, the new *cappella* was continually increased in both size and quality throughout the 1470s. While there were purely local considerations and temperamental reasons for this phenomenon, including Ercole's serious religious devotion, his efforts were also motivated by a desire to compete with Galeazzo Maria Sforza at Milan. Using similar methods of recruitment, by 1474 Galeazzo had assembled the largest establishment of its kind. Further impetus to Ercole's initiative may have been provided by the example of Rome, where Sixtus IV had begun the construction of what was to become the Sistine Chapel and had established a new *cappella* of singers for St Peter's by 1473. Given the strength of the Burgundian influence upon the literary and musical culture of the Italian courts, it seems highly likely that all these foundations were modelled upon northern examples, fuelled by the direct or indirect experiences brought south by the many northern musicians who were recruited to fill these expanded or newly created institutions. The idea was not new. As early as the fourteenth century, the papal chapel in Rome had included a large number of Netherlanders, thus inaugurating a tradition which was to be maintained until well into the sixteenth century. And at Ferrara in the 1440s,

Leonello d'Este established a chapel of ten singers which was entirely made up of singers from the north. The continuing strength of this Netherlands influence in Italian chapels and courts is symbolized by the careers of the major composers Ciconia, Dufay, Josquin and Willaert; each represents a different generation, and all spent substantial portions of their careers south of the Alps.

Quite apart from their consequences for sacred repertoires, the formation of new princely chapels also had an impact on the dissemination of the French chanson in Italy, since so many of the musicians sought out for service in the *cappelle* were foreigners. At Ferrara during the 1470s, Ercole's *cappella di cantori* contained a significant number of Flemings and a large number of French musicians together with occasional members of other nationalities; indeed, for most of his period of rule these two groups of northerners together made up the majority of the chapel. In Naples, where ties with Aragon had given the royal chapel under Alfonso I a markedly Spanish and consequently somewhat provincial character, the accession of Ferrante I coupled with the serving of those ties inaugurated a period in which new recruits were often Franco-Netherlanders. The enthusiasm for the Italian courts for chansons written by the post-Dufay generation is in part a reflection of this influx and the taste, once established, was only further strengthened, at least in the north, by the French invasion of 1494. Throughout the late fifteenth century and well into the sixteenth, the chanson repertoire was widely cultivated at the Italian courts and provided an alternative to the Italian traditions of popular and improvised song which continued to be performed. In general, music at court was substantially reliant upon Franco-Netherlands polyphony, whether in chapel or chamber, and upon *oltramontani* to perform it.

It was presumably these developments, as well as the activities of his own patron, that Tinctoris had in mind. In this way rulers discovered a new way of both competing for status with one another and with asserting their own *virtus* by projecting an image of themselves as model Christian princes, and in this they were supported and encouraged by contemporary political thought. Giovanni Pontano, for example, devoted two treatises to the qualities of liberality and magnificence, and *De splendore*, which specifies how princes should demonstrate their status and virtue according to well-defined rules, insists that a reputation for creating 'noble buildings, splendid churches and theatres' is a necessary demonstration of princely fame. This is not merely an endorsement of the values and concepts articulated by the earlier humanists, who had been concerned to analyse the *virtus* of the citizen body as a whole, but an adaptation of the traditional mirror-for-princes style to suit the changing situation in the Italian courts at the end of the fifteenth century. What would have been previously regarded as inappropriate ostentation, was now incorporated within a theory of decorum.

Further changes of emphasis are discernible in the musical interests of the following generation of Italian princely patrons, nowhere more clearly than in the activities of Ercole d'Este's first child, Isabella, who grew up in Ferrara where many of her later attitudes and aspirations, including an interest in music, were formed. Other aspects of her artistic concerns can also be traced to her Ferrarese education, most notably a lifelong interest in painting. Both of her parents were enthusiastic and discriminating patrons of the arts, and Isabella had been raised in an atmosphere where humanistic discussion of such matters was commonplace and where the somewhat eclectic work of Cosimo Tura and Francesco Cossa was highly prized. Later in life Isabella took pride in her image as 'una decima Musa'; she took her role as patron of poetry, music and art with great seriousness and was, on her own admission, *appetitoso*, hungry for art. Through agents in all the major Italian cities she assiduously assembled an impressive collection of classical antiquities, acquired sculptures and bronzes including works by Anitico and Michelangelo and commissioned paintings from some of the finest artists of the age including Giovanni Bellini, Andrea Mantegna and Leonardo da Vinci.

Music also played a significant part in Isabella's upbringing. At Ferrara she received a good musical education under the guidance of



8. *Parnassus* (c1496) by Andrea Mantegna; the painting has been interpreted as an allegory of the arts at the Mantuan court under the patronage of Isabella d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga

the central figure of Ercole's chapel, the singer and composer Johannes Martini, and it is known from Isabella's later letters that she became an accomplished musician. At Mantua she was to make dramatic changes to musical life at a court which had, until then, been slow to emulate the examples of Milan, Naples and Rome. Her initial efforts were directed not towards the formation of a *capella di cantori* for the performance of liturgical polyphony, a task which was undertaken by her husband Francesco, but rather towards provision for the composition and performance of secular music, particularly frottoles (vernacular songs composed by Italian composers), a form that Isabella encouraged at Mantua and that later spread to other centres through musical intermediaries. In essence an Italian courtly art, the frottole marks an important juncture in the re-emergence of native Italian composers after a long period in the fifteenth century when musical life in the peninsula had been dominated, at all levels except for improvisation, by musicians from France, Burgundy, the Low Countries and England.

Isabella's interests in music and the way in which she pursued them were exceptional; in this respect, as in other aspects of her cultural patronage, her activities do not represent the norm. But the philosophy which lies behind those interests, different in character and emphasis from that of patrons of her father's generation, became increasingly influential during the early decades of the sixteenth century. For Isabella music was, above all, a secular, social activity in which she was able to participate; an art to be practised as entertainment rather than merely listened to or promoted as an elaboration of the liturgy. What had been regarded by the mid-fifteenth century as a mere frivolity was now prized as an essential part of a courtier's education. Thus aristocratic practical involvement in music was elevated to the status of a serious enterprise through its association with idealized music, the power of music to influence human emotions, that lies behind the practical art. In this way music was not only entertainment, but also a means towards that balance and harmony of spirit that was one of the highest objectives of the Renaissance courtier.

In the politically uncertain world of sixteenth-century Italy, the fundamental cultural changes, mirroring political shifts, came after 1500 when papal Rome began to assume the leadership of the Italian courts both in terms of ambition and resources. Under Leo X, a musically informed holder of the triple crown, a court-like atmosphere encouraged the cultivation of new rather than eclectic forms of secular music, including settings of Petrarch's poetry. Despite the disruptions caused by the horrors of the sack of Rome, when many artists, writers and musicians fled the city never to return, the musical life of Rome had become firmly re-established by mid-century. Typically portrayed as a bastion of musical conservatism through its association with the music of Palestrina and his contemporaries, sixteenth-century Rome was in

fact a cosmopolitan centre where cardinals from all over Italy and beyond built palaces and imported their own cultural tastes. Elsewhere there were also changes. As Naples and Milan came under foreign control, first French and then Spanish, they lost their cultural vitality. At Mantua and Ferrara, on the other hand, political stability ensured continuation of existing musical traditions, which can be observed undergoing processes of adaptation in the changed circumstances of late sixteenth-century Italy, particularly at Mantua where the ultra-pious duke, Guglielmo Gonzaga, established the private family chapel of S Barbara with a separate rite and extensive provision for music. Apart from the distinctive case of republican Florence, Venice was the only major centre outside papal Rome and the princely courts where musical life flourished. Beyond the confines of the Italian states, the model of the Italian court provided a potent stimulus to the refashioning of musical life and institutions in the sixteenth century, as the examples of the French court during the reign of François I and of the Bavarian court during the time that Orlande de Lassus served as Kapellmeister so clearly demonstrate.

Throughout sixteenth-century Europe the courts appropriated not only power itself but also the propagandistic means through which it could be consolidated and perpetuated. This change of emphasis is evident everywhere. In the Middle Ages universities had been principally founded to supply theologians for the church; the new colleges founded at Oxford and Cambridge in the sixteenth century were primarily intended to raise middle-class gentlemen (courtiers, diplomats and administrators), as well as divines, to staff what was now the state church. Similarly, most of the art produced during the medieval period was a form of propaganda for the church, even though through identification with local saints such images might also contain political resonances; now art was most often propaganda for the prince. Among court artists (or, more correctly, their patrons), the triumphs, victories and apotheoses of monarchs were now a fashionable theme. In Vasari's famous depiction of Cosimo I, Duke of Tuscany, painted on the ceiling of the Sala del Cinquecento of the Palazzo Vecchio (seat of the former republican government), the insignia of Florentine cities encircle the central image, with its unnerving echoes of the traditional iconography of the coronation of the Virgin (fig. 9).

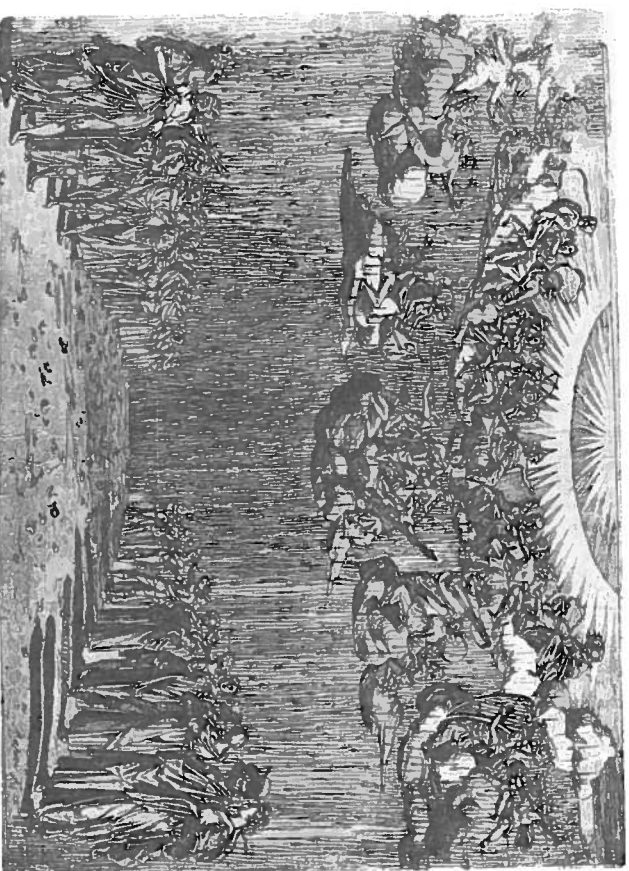
In terms of music, the example of Medicean Florence is particularly pertinent. Unlike papal Rome, Venice or the northern courts of Mantua and Ferrara, the Medici were not notable patrons of musicians in a consistent and systematic way. This was partly due to historical precedent; instead of maintaining a court chapel, the central organism of court music, the Medici continued their sponsorship of music at the cathedral, much as their forebears had done during the late fifteenth century. And although there were some resident musicians at court, the

9. Apotheosis of Duke Cosimo I, by Giorgio Vasari (1511-74), painted on the ceiling of the Sala del Cinquecento of the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence



major musical events in sixteenth-century Florence occurred when the family celebrated important dynastic occasions. These were done on a scale remarkable even by the standards of an age in which increasingly sophisticated technology and great financial resources combined to inspire elaborate private and public spectacles, as sanctioned by contemporary theories of princely magnificence. Typically such celebrations included processions and games to entertain the ordinary people, while banquets and plays were reserved for the élite of the city and visiting dignitaries. But customarily most effort and money was allocated to the production of a comedy supported, and later in the century often overshadowed, by spectacular *intermedi* involving music, elaborate lighting and decorative effects and complicated stage machinery. The 1589 *intermedi* to accompany the comedy *La Pellegrina*, devised to celebrate the marriage of Duke Ferdinando de' Medici to Christine of Lorraine, mark a highpoint in Medici cultivation of this particular form of the politics of spectacle and provide a striking example of the appropriation of the power of music itself in the interests of statecraft.

The subject of *intermedi* is music, or rather classical myths about neo-Platonic concepts of music, illustrated in allegories and through symbolic figures. Three of the *intermedi* deal with the supreme harmony of the cosmos, while the remaining three represent the power of human harmony. Giovanni de' Bardi was responsible for their *invenzioni*, or content, the complicated and detailed series of classical allusions upon which this vast edifice of musical and theatrical effects was constructed,



10. *The Descent of Pylhan and Harmony, the sixth intermedio in the 1589 performance of 'La Pellegrina': engraving by F. Sacchetti*

while both the music and the choreography were directed by a Roman aristocrat, Emilio de' Cavalieri. Giulio Caccini and Luca Marenzio were among the many composers and performers employed to realize this elaborate conception.

There are many instances in sixteenth-century art where music functions as a symbol of a political system, as an image of consonance, perfect harmony. The general implications of this common idea for a reading of the 1589 *intermedi* are obvious, taking as they do the idea of the power of music as the basic material for the celebration of a dynastic marriage. There is also another set of contemporary ideas, derived from theories of princely magnificence, which are exploited in these *intermedi*. Magnificence, liberality and erudition were all thought of as regal virtues, and that belief is well expressed in a spectacle of great elaboration, based on classical myths. Also important is the Renaissance admiration of 'wonder' as an experience, and this was catered for in costumes, lighting and scenic effects. 'Wonder' was also a necessary ingredient of the music, which had to amaze the listeners through the virtuosity of the performers or the sheer size of the forces required.

These various threads come together in the final *ballo* of the 1589 *intermedi*. The scene, impeccable in its humanist credentials, is modelled on a passage in the second book of Plato's *Laus* which deals with the gods' gift of music and dance to the mortals. In the size of its conception

and the intricacy of its choreography, Cavalieri's dance is certainly full of 'wonder': the elaborate machines bring the gods from their clouds to the stage, and the brilliance of the costumes proclaims the magnificence of the provider of this particular feast for the eyes and the ears. In the final stanzas the allusions accumulate. The dance is already a symbol of authority and order. Now Plato's gods descending merge with the couple through whose union that authority and order will be extended and consolidated. In the final couplet the mere mortals in the audience are exhorted to join the gods in songs of praise celebrating the future of Medici power:

Cantiam licet iudando
Christina e Ferdinando.

Thus, through the agency of music, celestial and terrestrial deities are conveniently fused and confused. There could hardly be a clearer demonstration of the appropriation by a ruler of the humanist notion of the power of music as part of the rhetoric of the politics of prestige, a vital ingredient in the business of ruling.

THE RISE OF THE BOURGEOISIE

Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, courtly society acted as a behavioural model, not only for the diplomats, ecclesiastics and administrators who served it, but also for the upper reaches of the wider world. The rise of the middle classes was already a feature of life in the fifteenth century, and by the sixteenth it had become a phenomenon. In general, the new bourgeoisie were thought to occupy the terrain that lay between the two other classes: those who had to work for their living, on the one hand, and those at the top of the social and political system who lived off unearned income. Writing in 1613, the French jurist Loyseau refers to 'the Third Estate' when discussing this middle layer of society, and in 1560 the Parlement of Paris defined the bourgeoisie as being 'good citizens living in the cities, whether royal officials, merchants, people who live off rents, or others'. These two elements, the possession of substantial property and residence in towns or cities, define the bourgeoisie as the urban élite. Throughout the length and breadth of Europe this group became increasingly important in political and economic terms in the course of the sixteenth century, often to the distaste of the aristocracy. As a member of the Norman nobility writing about 1650 put it, 'Another kind of person has risen among us, born to bring about the ruin of others. It is they who have chased the two pillars of the state, the gentry and the peasantry, from their ancient holdings'.

How large was the bourgeoisie? Figures are hard to come by, and problems of definition make them difficult to interpret even where they

— *Man & Music* —

THE RENAISSANCE

From the 1470s to the end of the 16th century

EDITED BY IAIN FENLON

M
MACMILLAN

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