

# THE NEW MIDDLE AGES

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PERFORMING PIETY

MUSICAL CULTURE IN MEDIEVAL  
ENGLISH NUNNERIES

*Anne Bagnall Yardley*

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PERFORMING PIETY

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*This book is dedicated to my parents  
Roger and Peggy Bagnall  
with tremendous gratitude for their love and support*



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## PREFACE

In the fall of 1971 I entered the PhD program in musicology at Columbia University. Just prior to the opening of school, I attended a retreat for Danforth Fellows to help prepare us for graduate school. Florence Kennedy, a pioneer in women's studies, addressed the group and urged us to constantly raise the issue of women's roles in all of our classes. So armed with this sage advice, I immediately made use of it in my musical paleography seminar with Professor Ernest Sanders. As we transcribed music in a range for male voices, I asked him, "What did the nuns sing?" He responded, "If you'll pardon the pun, that is virgin territory." With that small exchange, I knew that I had my dissertation topic! I still retain a great sense of gratitude to the Danforth Foundation for its support of my graduate work and their wonderful retreats and to Ernest Sanders and my Columbia classmates for their support of my work.

Needless to say, in a project that has spanned over thirty years, there are many, many other people to thank as well. The impetus for deciding to publish a book on the topic came from a remark that Susan Boynton of Columbia University made to my older brother Roger Bagnall when she met him. She suggested that I should have published my thesis as a complete book. He passed this remark on through the family grapevine and I began to mull over the possibility. Susan's support and encouragement throughout the project and her careful reading of the manuscript have been immensely helpful to me. Her wide knowledge of musicological and liturgical sources has strengthened my work and the opportunity for dialogue has sparked many interesting conversations and email exchanges.

The book would undoubtedly still be something I was mulling over were it not for the energetic enthusiasm of my dear friend Bonnie Wheeler, the editor of this volume and a mentor to me since

the days at Columbia when I sneaked out of the music department to take her Arthurian literature course. She was an important role model for me of a successful woman academic. Throughout the many years of our friendship her keen mind, her interdisciplinarity, and her relentless curiosity have pushed and prodded me to think about new things in new ways.

The support of my current institution has of course been vital to the process of writing this book. My position as the Associate Academic Dean and Associate Professor of Music in the Theological School of Drew University demands most of my energies. I am very indebted to Maxine Clarke Beach, Dean of the Theological School and Vice President of Drew University for her support of the project both in allowing me to take time away from the office as well as offering encouragement along the way. Finding the time and support to write amidst my administrative duties has required the assistance of my wonderful administrative assistant Alma Tuitt, who has fended off callers and protected my writing time. Michelle Campbell of the dean's office has also helped immensely with phone calls and office traffic. To all of my faculty and staff colleagues who have encouraged me along the way I give thanks and especially to Virginia Samuel, Virginia Burrus, Heather Elkins, and Danna Nolan Fewell. My research assistant Lia Diorio spent hours checking all of the footnotes, endless passages of Latin, and other such details. I am immensely grateful for her cheerful spirit and meticulous work.

Speaking of Latin, Jesse Mann, a bookseller and medievalist, spent an immense amount of time helping me with translations of the Latin passages. Where he has been the principal translator, I have indicated that in the footnote. In most instances, he checked over and offered emendations to my translations. It has been a pleasure getting to know him through this project.

Along the way I have received assistance from numerous librarians and I offer a general thanks to all curators of medieval manuscripts for their careful care of these treasures. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Hilary Ely of the Cranston Library, Reigate, England, who made it possible for me to "see" an important manuscript from her library through digital photos that she emailed to me.

Many scholars have also generously shared expertise. Diana Coldicott helped me procure copies of the interesting musical materials from



the *Wherwell* calendar that is in the library at St. Petersburg. Ann Hutchinson offered many helpful comments on the chapter on Syon Abbey. Frank Henderson and my colleagues at the North American Academy of Liturgy Medieval Seminar shared many useful insights about the consecration of nuns, as did James Borders who has worked in that area.

Bruce Holsinger's meticulous reading of the manuscript for the press and his many helpful suggestions for revisions were invaluable in the final preparation of the manuscript. I appreciate the breadth of his knowledge of the field and his willingness to share.

For the foundations of my interest in music and the church and my love of the academic life, I thank my parents Roger and Peggy Bagnall to whom this book is dedicated. They continue to support my work and my mother has brought her English-teacher eye to the entire manuscript. It is impossible to express my deep, deep gratitude for the many ways in which they have made me who I am.

During the course of writing this book I have actually come to love the queries, corrections, rewordings, and other suggestions made by my husband Jim who has patiently read and re-read every chapter of the book. His enthusiasm for the project and his belief in my work are tangible expressions of his love that mean much more to me than any conventional gifts.