Music in the Spiritual Culture of the Devotio Moderna

BRILL

CHRC 88.3 (2008) 313–328

Church History
and
Religious Culture
www.brill.nl/chrc

Introduction: Music and the Devotio Moderna

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In the late Middle Ages, private devotion gained considerable importance in monastic, semi-religious, and even lay circles. Issuing from a more personalized view of religious life, this devotion emphasized individual emotion and spiritual fulfilment, and led monastic orders and the laity to develop the spiritual skills required to gain eternal life. Research on late medieval piety has grown considerably during the last two decades. Critical editions of theological texts as well as analytical monographs have resulted in a new appreciation of what has been aptly characterized as *Frömmigkeitstheologie* (theology of devotional piety).[1] This research is concentrated primarily in the history of theology and art history, with literary history participating to some degree.[2] Music history has only recently begun to attend to this phenomenon, even though music occupied a crucial supporting role in generating the piety and emotion necessary for adequate faith. This role included liturgical music available in proper form, organized schemes for the use of music in private meditation, vernacular translations to ensure that liturgical music would be more broadly accessible, and para-liturgical hymns and songs capturing key theological concepts in emotionally charged poetic language. The Devotio Moderna as fascinating late-medieval religious movement has been relatively well-researched, but a correlation between its unique history and its equally

1) Berndt Hamm, *Frömmigkeitstheologie am Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts. Studien zu Johannes von Paltz und seinem Umkreis* [Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 65] (Tübingen, 1982).

2) Examples of studies in these three fields are Berndt Hamm, 'Frömmigkeit als Gegenstand theologiegeschichtlicher Forschung. Methodisch-historische Überlegungen am Beispiel von Spätmittelalter und Reformation,' *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 74 (1977), 464–469; Jeffrey Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent* [California Studies in the History of Art] (Berkeley, 1997); Thom Mertens, 'Mystieke cultuur en literatuur in de late middleeuwen,' in *Grote lijnen. Syntheses over Middelnederlandse letterkunde*, ed. Fritz van Oostrom et al. [Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de middeleeuwen XI] (Amsterdam, 1995), pp. 117–135 and pp. 205–217.

DOI: 10.1163/187124108X426510

unique use of music are only just beginning to be investigated. This theme issue is intended to stimulate further research into the relationship between music, piety, and liturgy in the late Middle Ages, and the place of that relationship in late-medieval music history.[3]

This introduction briefly sketches the history and meditational practice of the Devotio Moderna as context for the essays which follow. All of them are concerned in one way or another with the heart of the matter, the relationship between music and the movement's goals. A key to that relationship must be sought in different aspects of Modern Devout meditation. Meditation as such has been an important aspect of research into late medieval spirituality in the Low Countries, but the role of music in it is still a muddled area with more questions than answers. Sufficient work has been done to show that music was an important factor in everyday life of the movement's adherents;[4] questions about why and how it was so are the subjects of these essays.

Research on the function of music in Modern Devout meditation has a dual purpose: it contributes to our understanding of the movement's spiritual ethos, and broadens our knowledge about the music history of the Low Countries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by profiling a significant musical culture far removed from the much better known Flemish polyphony. The music of the Devotio Moderna naturally included liturgical chant, but beyond that also a significant body of para-liturgical Latin hymns often related to liturgical music, and a large number of religious vernacular songs composed to the tunes of secular counterparts. The nature and extent of these corpuses, their history and their function, is an as yet largely unexplored field.

1. The Devotio moderna

The movement which became known as the Devotio Moderna emerged towards the end of the fourteenth century against the background of great social and religious insecurity. War, epidemics and social unrest characterized everyday life. The Church was divided by the Western Schism (1378–1417) between

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3) For a more detailed overview on research into late medieval piety see Arnold Angenendt, 'Liturgie im Mittelalter,' in *Liturgie, Ritual, Frömmigkeit und die Dynamik symbolischer Ordnungen*, ed. Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer [Wolfenbütteler Hefte 19] (Wiesbaden, 2006), pp. 35–78, there pp. 67–76.

4) For information about Modern Devout sources with music see Ulrike Hascher-Burger, *Musica devota*, at www.musicadevota.com/datenbank.htm.

rival popes in Rome and Avignon. Various movements, of which the Devotio Moderna was one, reacted by seeking to reform the Church from within.

Institutionally the movement began in Deventer in the Low Countries, in the valley of the IJssel River, through the efforts of Geert Grote (1340–1384) and his followers. As son of a Deventer merchant, Grote belonged to the relatively privileged civic patrician class. In 1355 he studied at the university in Paris, first the liberal arts, later also theology, law and medicine. According to his own report, a serious illness around 1374 became a turning point in his life: he gave up his prebends, returned to Deventer, and in his parental home founded the first common institution, the "Meester-Geertshuis," for what became known as the Sisters of the Common Life. The goal of the Devotio Moderna has been succinctly summarized by R.Th.M. van Dijk: "The charisma which they shared was the so-called *devotio moderna*: by means of a dedicated inner life (*devotio*) and in a suitably contemporary manner (*moderna*) striving to emulate the example of the first Christians for the renewal of an ailing church (Reform)."[5]

Over the next two hundred years, the movement spread throughout the northern and southern Low Countries, in German-speaking territories to Bordesholm in the north and Jasenitz (today's Poland) in the east, into northern Switzerland and the north-east of France. In a sense the history of the Devotio Moderna has two separate aspects which are not always distinct or distinguishable: its own—quite complex—institutional history, and the history of its reforming influence.[6] There are hints that these different histories also resulted in some differences in the use of music—an example would

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[5] Rudolf T.M. van Dijk, 'Het Kapittel van Windesheim 1395–1995. Terugblik en vooruitzicht,' in *Windesheim 1395–1995: Kloosters, teksten, invloeden*. Voordrachten gehouden tijdens het internationale congres '600 jaar Kapittel van Windesheim' 27 mei 1995 te Zwolle, ed. A.J. Hendrikman et al. [Middeleeuwse studies XII] (Nijmegen, 1996), pp. 1–9, there p. 5: "Het charisma dat zij met elkaar deelden, was de zogenaamde *devotio moderna*: het streven om op eigentijdse wijze (modern) en door een toegewijd innerlijk leven (devotie) te ijveren voor de hervorming (reform) van de verziekte Kerk naar het voorbeeld van de eerste christenen."

[6] Two recent studies provide an overview and analysis of the complex history of the Devotio Moderna: John van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life. The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 2008), and Koen Goudriaan et al., *Vernieuwde innigheid. Over de Moderen Devotie, Geert Grote en Deventer* [Deventer Reeks] (Nieuwegein, 2008). R.R. Post's classic, *The Modern Devotion. Confrontation with Reformation and Humanism* [Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 3] (Leiden, 1968), is also available at http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/post029mode01_01/index.htm. Beyond the scope of our discussion, but certainly important, is the relationship between the Deventer initiative and the mysticism of Groenendaal, especially Jan van Ruusbroec.

be the prose translations for liturgical music in institutions which devoted themselves to the Latin liturgy, versus collections of vernacular religious songs from institutions in which Latin played a more minor role. This complex question is touched on by the essays which follow, but it remains a matter for more concentrated research.

The first institutions founded by the Devotio Moderna were houses in which Brothers or Sisters of the Common Life lived together, acting in most respects as monastics but retaining lay status as they did not take monastic vows. Brother and Sister Houses continued to be founded throughout the fifteenth century, although there was a marked trend to stricter enclosure through the adoption of Augustinian or the rule of the Third Order of St Francis, especially for Sister Houses.

Already early on, during Grote's own life, thought was given to starting a monastic branch of the movement, which would provide some institutional safeguards as well as a measure of security against constant opposition by the mendicant orders. Two years after Grote's death in 1384 this plan was realized: as the Windesheim canon Johannes Busch reports, in 1386 Windesheim (near Zwolle) became the Devotio Moderna's first cloister, inhabited by six canons regular living according to Augustinian rule.[7] It was followed by others, and in 1395 the four cloisters Windesheim, Nieuwlicht, Eemstein and Marienborn joined to form the Chapter of Windesheim.[8] The first Augustinian cloister for women, Diepenveen (close to Deventer), was founded at the beginning of the fifteenth century; it joined the Windesheim chapter in 1414.[9]

Of the many Sister Houses which strove for cloistered status in the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, only a few were admitted to Windesheim. As a result others combined to form congregations such as the "Chapter of Sion" (also called the "Chapter of Holland"), and the "Chapter of Venlo." These chapters maintained many of the ideals of the Devotio Moderna and are also to be counted among the women's institutions of the movement.

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7) Karl Grube, ed., *Des Augustinerpropstes Johannes Busch Chronicon Windeshemense und Liber de reformatione monasteriorum* [Geschichtsquellen der Provinz Sachsen XIX] (Halle, 1886), pp. 274–275. See Bertram Lesser, *Johannes Busch: Chronist der* Devotio Moderna. *Werkstruktur, Überlieferung, Rezeption* [Studien zur Modernität des Mittelalters 10] (Frankfurt a. M., 2005).

8) S. van der Woude, ed., *Acta Capituli Windeshemensis. Acta van de kapittelvergaderingen der congregatie van Windesheim* ('s-Gravenhage, 1953), p. 13.

9) Ibid., p. 17; for the history of Diepenveen: W. Kohl, E. Persoons, and A.G. Weiler, eds., *Monasticon Windeshemense*, 4 vols. [Archives et bibliothèques de Belgique/Archief- en bibliotheekwezen van België, Extranr. 16] (Brussels, 1976–1984), 3: 608–612.

The adoption of Franciscan lay rule resulted in a third institutional branch of the Devotio Moderna, the female tertiaries belonging to the Chapter of Utrecht. In this the Utrecht tertiaries were early adopters, for already in 1399 the first such Franciscan tertiary houses combined to form that Chapter.[10] Like other houses which accepted the third rule of the Franciscans as their governing order, they maintained the movement's religious ethos, for their *visitatores* (examining assessors) and confessors were primarily priors of Windesheim cloisters or Brothers of the Common Life.[11]

The second aspect of the movement's history is its influence on many existing convents belonging to other orders. In the second half of the fifteenth century, it was instrumental in an extensive effort to reform monasteries in northern Germany, especially Benedictine and Cistercian cloisters. Closely tied to the success of this so-called Bursfeld Reform movement was the introduction of the ideas and ideals of the Devotio Moderna.[12] In this Johannes Busch was a key figure; his years of tireless efforts and many long journeys for the cause are described in his two remarkably detailed reports.[13]

Among the many cloisters subject to monastic reform in the spirit of the Devotio Moderna were six women's institutions on the Lüneburg Heath, now commonly called the "Lüneburger Frauenklöster."[14] The introduction of reform led to a stricter adherence to the official liturgy, but also to increased study of religious texts about personal spirituality, among them writings of Grote und Thomas a Kempis. A number of these cloisters produced

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10) For results from a research project on the Chapter of Utrecht, *De derde orde van Franciscus in het bisdom Utrecht*, led by Koen Goudriaan at the VU University Amsterdam (1998–2004), see the database *Monasticon Trajectense*: http://www3.let.vu.nl/project/monasticon/index.html. See further Hildo van Engen, *De derde orde van Sint-Franciscus in het middeleeuwse bisdom Utrecht. Een bijdrage tot de institutionele geschiedenis van de Moderne Devotie* [Middeleeuwse Studies en Bronnen XCV] (Hilversum, 2006).

11) Gerhard Rehm, *Die Schwestern vom gemeinsamen Leben im nordwestlichen Deutschland* [Berliner Historische Studien 11] (Berlin, 1985), pp. 162–164.

12) Kaspar Elm, *Mittelalterliches Ordensleben in Westfalen und am Niederrhein* [Studien und Quellen zur westfälischen Geschichte 27] (Paderborn, 1989).

13) Grube, *Johannes Busch* (see above, n. 7).

14) Renate Giermann and Helmar Härtel, *Handschriften des Klosters Ebstorf* [Mittelalterliche Handschriften in Niedersachsen 10] (Wiesbaden, 1994), p. ix. On these nunneries see Eva Schlotheuber, *Klostereintritt und Bildung. Die Lebenswelt der Nonnen im späten Mittelalter. Mit einer Edition des 'Konventstagebuch' einer Zisterzienserin von Heilig-Kreuz bei Braunschweig* (1484–1507) (Tübingen, 2005); Ida-Christine Riggert, *Die Lüneburger Frauenklöster* [Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Niedersachsens im Mittelalter 10]

manuscripts, and especially Medingen became known for both vernacular and Latin prayer books. As a result, we have from Medingen a considerable number of sometimes beautifully executed manuscripts combining prayers and other meditative texts with liturgical music, songs, and images.[15]

In France the Devotio Moderna was much less of a factor, though Johannes Mauburnus, canon in Agnietenberg (near Zwolle), was assigned the task of reforming five monasteries in the area of Paris. In this he had only limited success, for only the canons of the Abbey of Livry, where Mauburnus became abbot near the end of his life, showed inclination for the ideals of the movement.[16] For us, Mauburnus' chief legacy is an intriguing tract on methodical meditation containing directives about the role of music in devotion.

While the Devotio Moderna grew rapidly in the fifteenth century, this was also its most flourishing period. During the sixteenth century it was virtually wiped out by the success of the Reformation by Martin Luther and John Calvin. Only a few monastic communities survived this development.[17] The last Windesheim canon died in the cloister of Sulta near Hildesheim (Germany) in 1865.

The female adherents of the Devotio Moderna deserve special mention, for although we know more about their male counterparts who left the more extensive written record, women flocked to the movement in such numbers that speaking of "a second religious women's movement" (Beguines being the first) has some legitimacy.[18] From modest beginnings in 1374, when sixteen poor, single women seeking to lead a life devoted to God without taking vows lived together in the Meester-Geertshuis in Deventer, women came to outnumber men roughly three to one. It has been estimated that of about 10,000 women in religious institutions in the Low Countries around 1500,

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(Hannover, 1996). On extant music manuscripts of these nunneries see Ulrike Hascher-Burger, *Verborgene Klänge. Inventar der handschriftlich überlieferten Musik aus den Lüneburger Frauenklöstern bis ca. 1550*. Darstellung der Musikikonographie von Ulrike Volkhardt (Hildesheim, 2008).

15) The manuscripts have been collected virtually for a research project headed by Henrike Lähnemann, *Medingen Manuscripts* at http://research.ncl.ac.uk/medingen/public_extern/.

16) Post, *The Modern Devotion* (see above, n. 6), pp. 634–635.

17) Ibid., pp. 655–656.

18) Wybren Scheepsma, *Medieval Religious Women in the Low Countries. The Modern Devotion, the Canonesses of Windesheim, and their Writings*, trans. D.F. Johnson (Suffolk, 2004), p. 4; Goudriaan et al., *Vernieuwde innigheid* (see above, n. 6), p. 54.

about 8,000 are to be counted as part of the Devotio Moderna: Sisters of the Common Life, regular canonesses, and tertiaries. Approximately half of these were under the direct influence of the Chapter of Windesheim, even if they were not official members.

Long considered by scholars the more passive, receptive part of the movement, as women did not preach or write (many) religious treatises, their contribution of leading by example and putting into practice the principles articulated by male leaders has become more of a focus in recent research. Publications by Gerhard Rehm and Madelon van Luijk about the Sisters of the Common Life,[19] of Wybren Scheepsma about the canonesses of Windesheim,[20] and of Anne Bollmann about Books of Sisters in both kinds of institutions,[21] sketch in important details to this picture. As a result, more of the women's writings—such as Alijt Bake's treatises, the communal Books of Sisters, and song manuscripts[22]—are becoming fruitful subjects for research.

2. Meditation Practice in the Devotio Moderna

The goal of the Devotio Moderna was to return to the way of life of the early Christians, in order to rediscover the true Christian faith. To achieve this, adherents lived in small communities within cities, earning their keep with various kinds of manual labour. At the same time, personal spiritual development was the most important aim of their lives. This development of one's own soul, described in detail by several authors, was essential if one was to become a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem after death and be united with Christ. In this respect the Devotio Moderna was closely aligned with developments in late-medieval spirituality across Europe. The most important theological influences were, besides St Augustine, also Bonaventura und Jean Gerson.[23]

An important method of spiritual development was meditation on central theological themes, particularly hell, heaven, death, and the Passion of Christ. Such meditation was to be virtually ceaseless—every waking hour, including

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19) Rehm, *Die Schwestern* (see above, n. 11); Madelon van Luijk, *Bruiden van Christus: De tweede religieuze vrouwenbeweging in Leiden en Zwolle, 1380–1580* (Zutphen, 2004).

20) Scheepsma, *Medieval Religious Women* (see above, n. 18).

21) Anne Bollmann, *Frauenleben und Frauenliteratur in der Devotio moderna. Volkssprachige Schwesternbücher in literarhistorischer Perspektive* (Dissertation Universiteit Groningen, 2004) (in press).

22) See Hermina Joldersma's contribution to this issue.

23) Christoph Burger, *Aedificatio, fructus, utilitas. Johannes Gerson als Professor der Theologie und Kanzler der Universität Paris* [Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 70] (Tübingen, 1986).

and perhaps especially those not structured by the usual offices of the day, was to be devoted to it. Communion with God through prayer was the ultimate goal of meditation; key tools were *memoria* and *ruminatio*, the latter intended to encourage constant reflection on devotional material consigned to memory, forming the most immediate layer of consciousness for constant and effortless recall. The meditative process was intended to "inflame the affect" (*affectio*) in order to achieve the heartfelt understanding required for true communion with the divine through prayer.

Meditative material was supplied by official readings in Latin (*lectio*) but other sources as well. In order to assist their own meditation, many individuals compiled a personal *rapiarium*, pieces of paper or a small booklet gathering significant extracts for later repetition and reflection, a religious version of the "commonplace book" as it is known in the English tradition.[24] A few of these private *rapiaria* were sufficiently extensive that they formed the basis for considerable tracts later circulated as authored treatises. A well-known example is the *rapiarium* of Gerlach Peters, which after his death was reworked by Johannes Schutken into the treatise now known as *Soliloquium*.[25]

For adherents of the Devotio Moderna, meditation was complemented by obligatory manual labour, held by St Augustine to be a central monastic activity. Since it was impossible to only meditate, meditation ought to be combined with work. Such work should, in turn, be interrupted regularly by meditation and prayer.[26] Standing in this Augustinian tradition, the Devotio Moderna accepted manual labour as constitutive element of its piety, as for example the theologian and Brother of the Common Life at Deventer, Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen (1367–1398) shows in his *De spiritualibus ascensionibus*.[27] Like St Augustine, Zerbolt considered it advisable that regular work be combined with prayer and meditation.

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24) Thom Mertens, 'Rapiarium,' in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (Paris, 1988), 13: 187–200.

25) See M.M. Kors, ed., *Gerlaci Petri opera omnia* [Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis 155] (Turnhout, 1996), pp. 299–503.

26) Augustinus, *De opere monachorum*, ed. *PL* 40: 548–581, there 565. For a discussion of music during work see Ulrike Hascher-Burger, *Gesungene Innigkeit. Studien zu einer Musikhandschrift der Devotio Moderna (Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, ms. 16 H 34, olim B 113). Mit einer Edition der Gesänge* [Studies in the History of Christian Thought 106] (Leiden, 2002), pp. 134–136.

27) Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen, *De spiritualibus ascensionibus*, cap. LXVII, in *Gérard Zerbolt de Zutphen, La montée du cœur: De spiritualibus ascensionibus, édition critique et traduction*, ed. Sr Francis Joseph Legrand [Sous la règle de Saint Augustin 11] (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 382–390; English translation in John van Engen, ed. and trans., *Devotio Moderna.*

For Zerbolt, ideal work (especially for the male devout) consisted of writing religious books. This activity reduced the distance between manual labour and spiritual development because the writing itself was a *de facto* occupation with religious content; in addition, the result—religious books—contributed to the spiritual development of others, which counted positively for the contributor.[28] Nikolaus Staubach has characterized this key element of the movement as "pragmatic literacy" (*pragmatische Schriftlichkeit*):[29] writing religious books was a spiritual act which profited not only the reader but also the writer through insight into matters of faith. This process, described by Thom Mertens as "reading with the pen,"[30] also had an effect on the nature of the texts which have come down to us.[31]

The majority of religious books were liturgical books needed for daily celebration of the sacrifice of God's son and salvation of mankind. Brothers of the Common Life must have written hundreds of liturgical books for convents and churches in their neighbourhood. At Cologne, 's-Hertogenbosch, Tilburg, Münster and Xanten dozens of liturgical manuscripts written by the Brothers have survived.[32] Producing religious books was not limited to writing with hands. Printing, notably of liturgical books, also advanced spiritual development. The newly founded community of Brothers at Marienthal was the first printer of liturgical books north of the Alps, especially reformed liturgical texts for the new German Bursfeld Congregation of Benedictines, and diocesan breviaries.[33]

Basic Writings [The Classics of Western Spirituality 59] (New York, 1988), pp. 309–311. Already Florens Radewijns had cited St Augustine in his *Tractatulus devotus*, cap. XXIV, in *Florent Radewijns: Petit manuel pour le dévot moderne: Tractatulus devotus*, ed. Sr. Francis Joseph Legrand [Sous la règle de saint Augustin 6] (Turnhout, 1999), p. 110.

28) Zerbolt, *De spiritualibus ascensionibus* (see above, n. 27), pp. 386–388, and Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna* (see above, n. 27), p. 311.

29) Nikolaus Staubach, 'Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit im Bereich der Devotio moderna,' *Frühmittelalterliche Studien. Jahrbuch des Instituts für Frühmittelalterforschung der Universität Münster* 25 (1991), 418–461, there 424.

30) Thom Mertens, 'Lezen met de pen. Ontwikkelingen in het laatmiddeleeuws geestelijk proza,' in *De studie van de Middelnederlandse letterkunde: stand en toekomst*, ed. Frits van Oostrom and Frank Willaert (Hilversum, 1989), pp. 187–200.

31) Zerbolt, *De spiritualibus ascensionibus* (see above, n. 27).

32) See Hascher-Burger, *Musica devota* (see above, n. 4), http://www.musicadevota.com/quellen_brueder.htm.

33) See Mary Kay Duggan's contribution to this issue.

Another important and influential aspect of the movement's spirituality was the translation of Latin texts into the vernacular in order to make them available for those who had not mastered this language sufficiently. The best known example is the Middle Dutch book of hours of Geert Grote which was transmitted all over Northern Europe. Vernacular translations of liturgical hymns and sequences in particular were intended to assist in understanding the Latin liturgy of the Mass and Office, which would otherwise have been emotionally inaccessible to many, especially women.[34]

The organization and the extent of meditational schemes increased in complexity through time. In the early years there was little proscription: adherents meditated in the morning upon arising, and in the evening before going to bed.[35] Extant from the second half of the fifteenth century are weekly schedules which spread a number of meditation programmes thematically over the course of seven days.[36] A final text of this genre, arguably a culmination for the genre, was the *Rosetum spiritualium exercitiorum et sacrarum meditationum* by Mauburnus, first printed in 1494. This extensive treatise contains numerous meditative exercises which were to be performed in exactly prescribed sequences on particular days of the week and at particular times of each day.[37] In the late Middle Ages, several monastic orders such as Carthusians, Cistercians, and Benedictines also used methodical meditation as a way to support personal spiritual development. This explains in part why ideas of the Devotio Moderna influenced so many houses of these orders: method and ideas were transmitted symbiotically.[38]

While the general meditational practice just described has frequently been the object of research, especially from the perspective of church history and literary history, there are numerous indications that music, too, played an important role in this activity.

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34) See Youri Desplenter's contribution to this issue.

35) L.A.M. Goossens, *De meditatie in de eerste tijd van de Moderne Devotie* (Haarlem, 1952).

36) R.Th.M. van Dijk, 'Die Wochenpläne in einer unbekannten Handschrift von "De spiritualibus ascensionibus" des Gerhard Zerbolt von Zutphen,' in *Studien zum 15. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Erich Meuthen*, ed. J. Helmrath et al. (Munich, 1994), pp. 445–455. See also Ulrike Hascher-Burger, *Singen für die Seligkeit. Studien zu einer Liedersammlung der Devotio moderna: Zwolle, Historisch Centrum Overijssel, collectie Emmanuelshuizen, cat. VI. Mit Edition und Faksimile* [Brill's Series in Church History 28] (Leiden, 2007), pp. 91–96.

37) See Ulrike Hascher-Burger's contribution to this collection.

38) Otger Steggink O. Carm., 'Iñigo López de Loyola, de pelgrim van Monteserrat uit het Baskenland, en de Moderne Devotie,' *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 78 (2004), 184–193, there 184.

3. Music and Meditation

In the context of meditation, not only texts but also music had an important function. In particular, music was intended to give rise in the person meditating the proper and desired affect or emotion (*affectio*), the emotion that, based on the text or reading (*lectio*), should result from the *meditatio* in order to flow into effective prayer to God (*oratio*). Awareness that music affected the emotions was not new, stemming as it did from Antiquity. The idea entered into the treatises and the ideas of the Devotio Moderna through writings such as St Augustine's *De opera monachorum*,[39] and the *Etymologiae* of Isidorus of Sevilla.[40] St Augustine's view is reflected in specific treatises by authors of the Devotio Moderna, for example Zerbolt and Radewijns,[41] and by many more general sources which report about music being involved in meditation.

The music manuscripts of the Devotio Moderna reveal connections with the practice of daily meditation in various ways, both in content and in codicological features. A considerable number of song texts make concrete references to meditation,[42] daily schedules for spiritual exercises point to song during meditation,[43] and some song collections were organized on the basis of meditation programs.[44]

How music and song figured in *rapiaria* composed by individuals is still an unanswered question. Certainly there are examples of songs included in mixed-genre collections of devotional material,[45] but whether such manuscripts were

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39) *PL* XL (see above, n. 26), p. 565. See Hascher-Burger, *Gesungene Innigkeit* (see above, n. 26), pp. 135–137.

40) *Etymologiae liber III, XVII: De musica*, ed. W.M. Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, vol. I (Oxford, 1911). The complete text of this edition is online: http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Isidore/home.html.

41) Zerbolt, *De spiritualibus*, pp. 388–389 and Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, p. 311; Radewijns, *Tractatulus devotus*, p. 110 (see above for all, n. 27).

42) On music and meditation see Hascher-Burger, *Gesungene Innigkeit* (see above, n. 26), pp. 95–146.

43) For example the *exercitia* of Cornelis van Vianen from the house of Brothers at Harderwijk, see Post, *Modern Devotion* (see above, n. 6), pp. 399–402 and Hascher-Burger, *Gesungene Innigkeit* (see above, n. 26), pp. 124–127 (on music).

44) Two examples are Zwolle, Historisch Centrum Overijssel, coll. Emmanuelshuizen, cat. VI (short: Zwolle Emm VI): Hascher-Burger, *Singen für die Seligkeit* (see above, n. 36), and Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Ltk. 2085: P.F.J. Obbema, *Die gheestelijcke melody. Ms Leiden, University Library, Ltk. 2085* (Leiden, 1975).

45) Examples are Zwolle Emm VI and Cologne, Historisches Archiv der Stadt, MS W 28, see Hascher-Burger, *Gesungene Innigkeit* (see above, n. 26), p. 119.

personal or compiled for group use is still a matter to be studied. Equally certainly there were collections dedicated solely to music and songs in various combinations of Latin and the vernacular, with or without musical notation; some of these sources, especially those which belonged to women, have private names attached to them.[46] However, these are not *rapiaria* in the usual sense of "jottings" for personal memorization and meditation. Still, analysis of Latin manuscripts with Latin songs originating in Brother-houses has shown that songs were regularly included in *rapiaria*; it is possible that "musical rapiaria" could have existed, although none are extant.[47]

The use of music had a shadow-side, however. Beneficial though the influence of music could be in generating the desired affect, it was a danger for those who lost sight of the text connected with the music. For inherent in singing was the possibility that a song's music would be accorded greater prominence than the text carried by the music. Music and false affect were specifically connected by St Augustine in his *Confessions*:

> Thus I fluctuate between peril of pleasure and approved wholesomeness; inclined the rather (though not as pronouncing an irrevocable opinion) to approve of the usage of singing in the church; that so by the delight of the ears the weaker minds may rise to the feeling of devotion. Yet when it befalls me to be more moved with the voice than the words sung, I confess to have sinned penally, and then had rather not hear music.[48]

The Modern Devout shared Augustine's unease and sought to combat potentially inappropriate use of music as he suggested, by emphasising the text of a song and not the melodic part for its own sake. This emphasis led, for example, to the prohibition of organs in churches and dormitories of monasteries belonging to the Chapter of Windesheim in 1464, on the grounds that singing in combination with organs led to far too much excitement: "Sicuti non admittimus organa in divino officio, ita nec in dormitorio causa excitationis."[49]

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46) Examples are Anna von Köln: Walter Salmen and Johannes Koepp, ed., *Liederbuch der Anna von Köln (um 1500)* [Denkmäler Rheinischer Musik 4] (Düsseldorf, 1954) and Catherina Tirs (extant only in a modern copy: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Mus. ms. 40411) ed. Albrecht Classen, *"Mein Seel fang an zu singen." Religiöse Frauenlieder der [des] 15.-16. Jahrhunderts. Kritische Studien und Textedition* (Leuven, 2002), pp. 155–257.

47) Hascher-Burger, *Gesungene Innigkeit* (see above, n. 26) p. 113.

48) Saint Augustine, *Confessions of St. Augustine* (Westminster, MD, 2000), p. 229.

49) *Van der Woude, Acta Capituli* (see above, n. 8), p. 66. Hascher-Burger, *Gesungene Innigkeit* (see above, n. 26), pp. 185–205.

This view also had significant influence on the composition of polyphonic music in Modern Devout circles.[50] While music might have been acceptable in encouraging the development of affect in meditation, the accompany text was responsible for ensuring that it was the right affect, and hence the text had to be clearly audible and understandable. As a result, polyphony in manuscripts of the Devotio Moderna was quite simple.[51] If this was not so, "false affect" would result in improper and hence ineffective prayer. In this way meditative function influenced ideas about music in the sphere of the Devotio Moderna as well as the structure of the music itself.

4. Research Context

The majority of manuscripts originating in the Devotio Moderna coincide with its peak period in the fifteenth century. Sources devoted entirely or containing some reference to music constitute an impressive aspect of the corpus: more than 400 manuscript and printed sources from the current Netherlands, Belgium and northern Germany can be connected with the movement's musical practice. Song collections, liturgical manuscripts, and references in historiographical and biographical sources amply demonstrate that in its core communities as well as in institutions influenced by it, music played an essential role every day. "Pragmatic literacy" is very much evident in the area of music, for most of the extant music manuscripts are relatively plain collections intended to serve the personal meditative goals of their owners.

This extensive group of sources is largely unknown to scholars of the Devotio Moderna and of music history, and has been studied one-sidedly by literary historians. Literary historians did recognize the significance of song sources, but typically devoted little attention to its religious origins and context and virtually none to the musical aspect.[52] For their part, music historians have only recently become aware of any musical culture worth exploring in these circles. Any attention music of the Devotio Moderna did receive originated in

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50) Hascher-Burger, *Gesungene Innigkeit* (see above, n. 26), pp. 185–238.

51) Simple Polyphony is discussed by Alexander Blachly, 'Archaic Polyphony in Dutch Sources of the Renaissance,' *Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* 53 (2003), 183–227.

52) J.A.N. Knuttel, *Het geestelijk lied in de Nederlanden voor de kerkhervorming* (Rotterdam, 1906, reprint Groningen, 1974); a clear tie to the Devotio Moderna was made by G.G. Wilbrink (Sr. Marie Josepha), *Das Geistliche Lied der Devotio Moderna. Ein Spiegel niederländisch-deutscher Beziehungen* (Nijmegen, 1930). Music, however, is not part of their discussions.

a comparison with the professional Flemish musical culture of the time and usually led to asssessments such as "retrospective," "simple," or "peripheral."

However, when situated in a different, more appropriate framework, with criteria which do it justice according to its own terms, the musical culture of the Devotio Moderna emerges as a unique aspect of the religious culture in the late middle ages. Most important is the framework of cultural history, which uses as key the issue of functionality rather than (predominantly) aesthetic criteria. This broader perspective on the cultural imbeddedness of music is best, and perhaps only, to be achieved through interdisciplinary research, as collaboration between different disciplines will best illuminate the interaction between music and spirituality in this movement. This collection seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the religious music of the Devotio Moderna by gathering insights from theology, literature, music, liturgy, and early printing.

5. The Essays in this Collection

Christoph Burger's contribution investigates theological aspects of songs used by the Devotio Moderna. He analyzes song material from three song sources: one from a house of Brethren of the Common Life at Zwolle, the second from the canons regular of Windesheim at Gaesdonck, and a third which is held to have a provenance in a female community in the IJssel valley. Arguing that the songs in such manuscripts ought to be seen as a highly personal expression of belief, Burger establishes that while life on earth is to be seen as misery, there is a surprising emphasis on the anticipated joys of the heavenly Jerusalem. Although all three sources demonstrate common aspects, as might be expected, they do differ in theological emphases and advice.

Ulrike Hascher-Burger's contribution on Johannes Mauburnus's meditational tract points to the role of music in the spirituality of the adherents of the Devotio Moderna. Mauburnus himself establishes a close connection between song and meditation, as he held that meditation demanded too much from the meditating person without the aid of music. His *Rosetum exercitiorum spiritualium et sacrarum meditationum* contains seven religious songs which were intended to stir up the emotions and facilitate the correct disposition for meditation. A unique feature of the *Rosetum* is the combination of a concrete meditation with a corresponding written song.

Youri Desplenter aims to provide insight into the nature, distribution and function of certain Middle Dutch translations of Latin hymns and sequences originating from the Devotio Moderna. These translations, which functioned as subtitles to the Latin liturgy, were primarily intended for canonesses regular,

religious women who had committed to attend the full spectrum of liturgical services of Divine Office and Mass, but had not (fully) mastered Latin. The translations were intended to assist in generating understanding—both intellectual and emotional—in those who followed these services.

Combining the perspectives of women's studies and literary interpretation, Hermina Joldersma notes the much stronger connection between women and vernacular religious monophonic song to ask specifically about the function of that song in women's communities. She explores especially the problem posed by the rule of silence, and by extrapolating from records telling of actual singing to other possible situations, argues that, for at least some communities of women, song must have been a key component of certain aspects of a day devoted to spiritual things.

Mary Kay Duggan combines music and printing history to focus on a different aspect of the musical culture of the Brothers of the Common life: their role in assisting spiritual reform by disseminating liturgical music through manuscripts but especially print. The Brothers at Marienthal near Mainz were among the earliest printers of liturgical books—primarily ordinaries and beviaries—north of the Alps, supplying many institutions with the literature needed to reach their reform goals. While these liturgical incunables do not contain musical notation, they are imbued with the liturgical music so integral to monastic life.

6. Conclusion: Further Research

The articles collected in this special issue throw single spotlights on only a few aspects of the intriguing subject of music in the Devotio Moderna. In doing so, they also point to areas for further research.

One such is the actual theological content of the songs used by adherents, and our picture of the movement as a whole. Burger shows that, theologically, the songs were surprisingly expressive of joy, thereby qualifying at least a little the general view of the Devotio Moderna as a movement not prone to joyfulness.

Research into meditation practice, with special attention to how songs—music and text—functioned, must differentiate between the various streams of the movement, as well as differences between liturgy, para-liturgy, personal meditation, and recreation. For example, in reformed communities such as Medingen and Wienhausen, to name just two of the "Lüneburger Frauenklöster," music seems to have been used differently than in the Chapter of Windesheim.

Editions of sources are a major desideratum, especially by an interdisciplinary team with experts in Latin, the vernacular, musical notation, and codicology. Songs included in miscellanies are an almost untouched field, although when studied in context they stand to yield important insights into the belief system of the group.

Finally, true interdisciplinarity requires not just the collection of perspectives, as is the case in this issue, but extended interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration on focussed research projects. Such endeavour must be the subject of future publications.