



Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal

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Marie de Medici's 1605 Ballet de la Reine and the Virtuoso Female Voice

Melinda Gough's "Marie de Medici's 1605 Ballet de la Reine and the Virtuoso Female Voice" interrogates processes of self-authorization and dynastic ambition as both are reflected within the wider cultural milieu of music and performance. Using a hitherto unknown eye-witness account of the 1605 ballet, Gough opens with a description of a performance by a woman singer who, according to the eye-witness, "charmed the ears of the company by her voice more divine than human" (131). Gough identifies the singer as one of the celebrated Caccini family of musicians (probably Francesca). The inclusion of a virtuoso Italian singer in this court ballet leads Gough to reevaluate Marie de Medici's contributions to the development of the masque in France. Gough traces the familial links through which Marie de Medicis was able to gain cultural capital by bringing these sought-after musicians to France, and to consolidate her own position there. Gough also traces the English connections, via the current English ambassador (who requested the loan of the musicians for Queen Anna, wife of James I) and eventually via Marie's daughter Henrietta Maria. Particularly notable in Gough's original and interdisciplinary account is the judicious interplay between the essay and the notes, the latter providing additional background and analysis without interrupting the flow of the article.

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