BAGPIPES FOR THE LORD

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The art of the drolleries in the Hours of Jeanne d'Évreux belongs to those puzzling branches of medieval imagination where the sacred and the unholy are in close proximity. This is not the only branch of medieval art where these incongruous realms meet. In medieval church plays as well as in the architectural decorations of cathedrals the untamed ocean of life, full of wild and fantastic creatures, pipes and drums, satyrs and nymphs, jugglers and beggars, foaming with sin and sex, surges, if not to the altar, at least to the portals of the house of God. The sacred and the profane, even the vulgar, meet as close neighbors. And while art in the Middle Ages—the visual arts almost completely and music to a large extent—means sacred art, the business of everyday life with its dreams and nightmares, its obsessions and fears, its games and amusements, was by no means banned from the sacred world. It is admitted in outspoken illustrations or in various allegorical guises and personifications as an integral part of this world. This is not to say that the devil is given free play, but his existence is more than acknowledged. He receives a limited concession for his business, and the demons of hell, together with other fantastic creatures, are permitted to perform their lusty games even under the watchtowers of the cathedrals.

Thus the pages of the Jeanne d'Évreux Hours admit a crowd of whimsical and funny creatures, laymen and clerics and dream-born compound animals such as lion-reptiles and snake-goats, dragons with monk heads and friars with the hind legs of beasts of prey, mingling with the innocent beasts of the woods and fields, hares and deer, birds and monkeys. There are also peasants, shepherds, knights, jugglers, and acrobats. The wide margin beneath the text is peopled usually not by single figures but by whole ensembles performing little burlesque stage plays or buffooneries: dog-trainers, for example, with their audience astonished or pleased as the case may be.

Sometimes these scenes even ascend to fill the upper margins. And some form of fantastic life appears unfailingly in the space to the right of the text. Wherever the written sentence of the text leaves part of the line empty, monsters creep in to continue the black of the line up to the margin, and then widen out and expand in broader design on the border of the page. This, in a way, is a reversal of the position of gargoyles, which, for static reasons that are quite evident, adhere to the church walls with a broad, compact derrière and then thin out to reach far into the air with their long, slender necks. This high proportion of reptilian anatomy and long-tailed monsters is the only stereotyped aspect of Puccelle's otherwise boundless fancy, for the line left unfilled by the sacred text only leaves space for something long and thin—tails, if it is to be a living creature, and it inevitably is. Sometimes, however, these tails assume plantlike patterns and on occasion even the form of Gothic architectural decoration. Occasionally the artist must have become bored by all this monotony, for he frequently tries to wedge the body of a monster into an empty line space, with the tail then curving out unhampered into open space (p. 279).

The effect, as I said before, is absurd and almost sacrilegious. An aevae iram tuam nobis may end in a long-tailed goat, a Deo gratias in a reptile-man, or a Gloriam patri et filio et spiritu sancto...
in a lion’s tail with the top-heavy body of a hooded monk attached to it. Thus we have here a mingling of the most venerable words of the liturgy with the amusing, if not ridiculous and eery, creatures that are figments of the artist’s imagination.

This specific irruption of the bizarre and farcical into the sacred, as happens in the Hours of Jeanne d’Évreux, is a Northern phenomenon confined chiefly to Flanders, France, and England. Yet one is tempted to look for a moment across a span of two centuries to a Southern fashion, the Italian grotesques of the cinquecento, beginning with Pinturicchio’s famous vault decorations in the library of the cathedral of Siena, which, if not strictly parallel, still afford similar aspects from more than one point of view. Their habitat, of course, is walls rather than paper. Their immediate source is the ancient stucco and fresco decorations in the Thermae of Trajan and other buildings rediscovered at the time. Like the drolleries they spin a frivolous web of playful creatures around a center of totally different significance, this time not a text of the Scriptures, however, but frescoes with sacred, mythological, or historical content. One recalls here combinations such as the rich fungus of grotesques sprouting all over the walls of Raphael’s loggias, accompanying and crowding in the Biblical stories in the middle of the vaults. Here in the very center of Western Christendom the satyrs and nymphs play their jolly games around the Deluge, the Birth of Christ, or the Last Supper.

To be true, the single figures in the Italian grotesques, for all their fun and variety, are a rather domesticated brand of fantasy, and their symmetrical arrangement on the walls is largely dominated by their decorative function within the architectural frame. There is never any doubt that they are imitations—however free—of ancient models, while the medieval drolleries bear all the stamp of immediate, original, and inexhaustible imagination. If one were to look for a cinquecento parallel to our drolleries one would rather find it in Dürer's marginal draw-

ings for the Emperor Maximilian’s prayer book, which has that very same fusion of Northern exuberance and Latin clarity.

In the Hours of Jeanne d’Évreux a surprising number of the creatures, human or beastlike or compound, are engaged in playing musical instruments. Surprising, that is, to the spectator who is not familiar with the teeming, colorful musical life of the Middle Ages, and especially with the number and variety of musical instruments as compared with the standardized specimens which make up our modern symphony orchestra.

Illustrations of this kind are a real gold mine of information for the student of medieval musical instruments. They are an indispensable supplement to the occasional descriptions appearing in musical treatises and poetry, which necessarily lack the accuracy provided by illustrations as to the variety of types of instruments, of playing techniques, and their use in ensembles. Modern history of music has, with few exceptions, exploited these visual sources little—understandably so, for historians have concentrated above all on the music itself and thus on written music, which was chiefly sacred music. Therefore the music never confided to paper, that is, a large part of secular music, such as dances and the improvisations of solo performers, has remained somewhat outside the focus of musical history.

It is for this reason that the visual representations of instrumental performances assume great importance, providing an open window on secular music of the past. How important a role secular music played about 1320, when Pucelle decorated the Hours of Jeanne d’Évreux, may be hinted at here by one fact only. In 1321 there was established in Paris the Confrérie of Saint-Julien-des-Ménestriers, a guild—or, as we would call it today, “union”—of French instrumentalists under a roy des ménestriers. This was the time of the ars nova, when secular instrumental music in dances and arrangements of songs reached such heights that it in its turn began to influence
the style of sacred music with its new inventions.

If we examine the various instruments depicted in the Jeanne d'Évreux Hours, we will find that some are playful caricatures while others are realistic depictions of actual instruments of the time, often portrayed with amazing precision considering the miniature size of these drawings.

We turn first to the wind instruments, which were prevalent from the Middle Ages until well into the Renaissance. Let us look first at the bagpipes, which appear in various forms on our pages. The bagpipe is one of the oldest instruments shown here; its history reaches back to antiquity. As told by Suetonius and Dio Chrysostom, Nero played the bagpipe, though it is not reported whether he did this while Rome burned.

Some bagpipes on the margins of our pages are precise drawings of actual specimens while others are burlesque versions. A large bagpipe is played by a musician perched cross-legged on a ferocious long-tailed beast (p. 276). His thin legs and forearms form a strange pattern with the abnormally long chanter of the bagpipe, which ends in a carved animal head similar to that of the long-tailed monster. The bagpipe has an enormous drone reaching over the player’s shoulder.

A smaller bagpipe is held—but not played—by a hooded reptile-monk who extends, as it were, the line of the text *spiritus sancto* (p. 277). Here the drone is hardly longer than the chanter. The point where the chanter leaves the bag is decorated by a little crowned head. Such little wooden sculptures were quite common decorations on bagpipes of that time. This usage was retained for centuries, and the carved heads are still found in the powerful bagpipes played at the drinking parties painted by Jordaens, for example in the various versions of Le Roi Boit in the museums at Brussels, Leningrad, and Antwerp.

On another page a bagpipe, this time without a drone, is the focal point of a little comedy scene. The small instrument is being trained as a dog. The little decorative dog head is that of a real bagpipe, but little dog feet appear under the bag. Two rustic characters are so overcome by the spectacle that they cavort with gestures of surprise. Even funnier is a canine bagpipe which decorates the page showing Christ before Pilate. Here two monstrous musicians compete in the production of noise. Both are half animal, with long, intertwining tails that sprout oak leaves. The right one, with puffed cheeks, blows a reed pipe that terminates in a large bell, possibly of cowhorn. This is a realistic picture. The other musician, however, employs a dog as a bagpipe, using its tail as a blowpipe and one of its hind legs as the chanter. One can imagine the sound.

While these three bagpipes have no inner relation to the spiritual content of the page, we find quite a different situation on the page illustrating the Annunciation to the Shepherds (p. 279). The central scene overflows into the margin, where we see shepherds with all their attributes—sheep and crook and a dog—looking up in wonder. One of them plays the typical shepherd instrument, a small reed pipe (shawm or *chalumeau*). The reedy, bleating, gutteral tone of the shawm, associated with the pastoral realm since time immemorial, has become symbolic in Christian iconology of the Nativity scene, one of the many strange ways in which musical and visual symbolism often
LEFT: The Annunciation to the Shepherds. The musician in the initial below the main scene is playing a bagpipe, and the shepherd beneath him a pastoral shawm. RIGHT: Page showing an old man with a harp in the large initial and a monster playing a transverse flute in the space below the text.
Page showing a monster with a triangle in the initial and another with a harp below; a long-tailed monster is playing a mandola with a plectrum. A helmeted figure has a shield with a lion’s face.
mingle. Later the *pifferi* and *zampogne* with their heavy drones appear for many centuries and still today as the inevitable attribute of the shepherds surrounding the Child in Italian *presepi*. The symbolic union between the sound of reed pipes and the crèche in the stable, or, in other words, of pastoral music with its characteristic drone and Christmas, pervades more than half a thousand years of music up to the Christmas Oratorio of Johann Sebastian Bach, and to Handel's Messiah, and still further. If with this in mind we look at the initial D of *Deus*, it does not seem altogether accidental that it is formed by a bagpipe player, for the bagpipe has the same reedy timbre as the simple pipe beneath. The only difference is the bag, a mere mechanical convenience that makes the player less dependent on the rhythm of his breathing.

Of other wind instruments in our Book of Hours we may mention in passing a transverse flute (p. 279), several realistically drawn trumpets, and many specimens of the one-hand fife played together with a drum, according to age-old custom (p. 286).

Turning now to stringed instruments, we find these represented in the Pucelle Hours by harps, psalteries, mandolas, and vielles, the first three instruments plucked, the last bowed. The harps are all small and have the characteristic rounded Gothic form. In Romanesque harps the three elements of the frame, that is, sound box, neck, and pillar, were distinctly set off against each other, as they are in modern orchestral harps. The Gothic harp fuses the three elements into one curved design, as we see in the specimen plucked by the claws of a feathered monk-dragon in the illustration on page 280.

The psalteries represented in our book all have the typical shape of a trapezoid with the two slanting side walls curving inwards (above). We find psalteries of this form in many angel concerts, both Northern and Italian, and they ap-
The specimens show line neck hole forms pears (right). Above: bellows which 271 in (p. smallest passing three the neck-like the bellows like a trumpet and playing a mandola pear still in many illuminated manuscripts of the high Renaissance, in the hands of King David. In spite of the minute size of our illustrations, the hitch pins and the decorations of the sound hole have been indicated with great care.

The mandola, of Near Eastern origin like the psaltery, appears three times in our manuscript. All three forms have a lute-like body with a round sound hole in the center, and a characteristic long, thin neck passing into a widely curved sickle and terminating in a carved animal head. But our specimens differ in the shape of the sound box. The smallest one has an almost circular corpus to which the neck is joined at a sharp angle (see p. 271). The larger one has a corpus of oval outline (p. 280), and a third one of medium size shows the corpus gradually passing into the neck (right). Two of the mandolas are clearly plucked with a plectrum, with the plucking arm in a rather mannered, uncomfortable position.

The last of the stringed instruments—and the only bowed one—is the vielle, the typical fiddle of the time, depicted in countless Italian and Flemish paintings in the hands of angels and also in some secular manuscripts such as the Manesse codex. One vielle appears on the lower margin of the page showing the education and chastisement of Saint Louis (p. 283). It is played by a youth comfortably seated on the back of a monster. Since the youth resembles somewhat the young Saint Louis in the main scene, vielle-playing may have been shown here as part of his education. The instrument has the typical flat, leaf-shaped head so different from the scroll of the later violin; it has an elegant, shallow body with the side walls curving in slightly, already bordering on the shape of the Italian lira da braccio, a refined improvisation instrument which developed from the vielle and which we find, for instance, in the hands of Apollo playing to the Muses in Raphael’s Parnassus in the Segnatura. The other vielle, played by a monster in an initial, is bulkier and is played in droll fashion, the right hand stopping the strings—or does it?—the left drawing the bow over the strings on the wrong side of the bridge (above, left).

Up to now we have observed only pictures of real instruments or caricatures of them, but the variety of existing instruments was apparently not sufficient for the imagination of our draftsman; his comic sense supplied as instruments objects that are not instruments at all but other tools employed by his creatures for blowing or plucking or bowing. Among these, bellows play a large role. Now bellows are indispensable tools known to civilization ever since the technique of melting metal was invented. They even served as auxiliary gadgets for musical instruments; from an-
LEFT: The Nativity. The main scene shows two angels with cymbals and a vielle; below is a monster plucking a jawbone. RIGHT: Scene representing the education and chastisement of the young Saint Louis. At the bottom of the page a youth sitting on a bearded monster is bowing a vielle.
tiquity, for example, they have provided air pressure for the wind chest of pipe organs. And they were added for a similar purpose to bagpipes when these instruments were transformed into the neat little musettes played by court ladies in the fêtes champêtres of Versailles, relieving these make-believe shepherdesses of the unbecoming act of blowing. But in the Évreux Hours the bellows themselves are exalted into tools of music. They are played as heraldic trumpets (p. 282), or plucked with a plectrum by a monstrous monk, a sinister Orpheus who by his singing and playing entrances the creatures of the fields and woodlands (p. 281). Another comic pseudo-instrument is, of all things, the jawbone. It appears twice in our drolleries. Once it is plucked by a lion-footed king, to the amazement of a dog, which may perhaps be more interested in the bone than in the music (p. 283). Another time the jawbone is bowed with a rake by a billy goat, which is deterred somewhat from its performance by a ferocious, weasel-like creature attacking its tail (right). This brings to mind the Biblical jawbone of an ass, but one must be an obdurate iconologist to credit Pucelle with scriptural intentions here.

Besides wind and string instruments we find in the Hours of Jeanne d'Évreux a variety of percussion instruments, or, to use the scientific terms, sonorous substances and membranophones such as drums. The cymbals, an instrument going back to the ancient Orient and Rome, appears in our pages played by a monster in an initial (left). Its appearance in fourteenth-century illustrations is rather rare, but it is frequent in angel concerts of the fifteenth century, especially in Italy. Here each of the two disks has a simple form, curving gradually from the center towards the rim, while later cymbals usually consist of a flat rim sharply set off from a central boss. Cymbals of the later type are shown in one of the reliefs by Luca della Robbia for the Singing Gallery, formerly in the cathedral at Florence, which illustrates a line from Psalm cl: *Laudate eum in cymbalis jubilationis*; they also appear in the angel orchestra surrounding the Madonna in the painting by Giovanni Boccati in the Pinacoteca Vannucci at Perugia.

Another noisemaker of metal is the triangle. It is played by a snake-tailed youth who suspends it with one hand while the other strikes it with a stick (p. 286). The triangle in this illustration has several jingling rings that add a clattering noise to the sharp tones of the metal frame.

Bells— *tintinnabula* or *cymbala*—play a large role in the medieval instrumentarium. The Cloisters manuscript shows several forms: a youth perched on the shoulder of a monster plays a set of three bells with clappers; a hairy musician swings a set of bells with clappers while playing a small shawn with the other hand (p. 286); and a bearded man strikes a large suspended bell with a stick (p. 286). Chimes, so frequent in medieval illuminations, are for some reason absent from this book.

Of special interest is a rattle appearing in our
The Adoration of the Magi. Little angels in the background are playing a trumpet, bells, a psaltery, a vielle, and kettledrums. The scene below shows the Massacre of the Innocents.
pages, for rattles, especially of the form we have here, are rarely shown (below). We can clearly see a hammer attached to a horizontal bar. When this crossbar is shaken it is hit by the hammer. Rattles of this and other types played a large role in religious and folk customs of the Middle Ages and even of later times; they were used by night watchmen or by beaters in hunting, or to "break the bones of Judas" on Good Friday. The Metropolitan Museum's collection of musical instruments was recently enriched by a medieval crecelle, a rattle of slightly different construction which according to custom was used to replace the sound of the church bells while they "traveled to Rome" during the week before Easter.

Of single drums only one type is represented, a snare drum attached to the shoulders of the players (below). It has two drum-heads, evident from the bracing cords that connect the two skins. In one case the player hits the drum with a large stick, playing at the same time, as usual, the one-hand fife. In the other case the player blows a larger pipe, stopping its holes with both hands, while the drum is behind his shoulders, possibly waiting to be pounded with the elbows. Such playing methods were by no means unusual. When I was a child in Vienna there were still musical beggars, veritable one-man orchestras, who played their many instruments at the same time with mouth and hands, knees and feet, head and elbows.

While up to now we have observed single instruments individually played, we also have two ensembles in our Book of Hours. The smaller one appears in the scene of the Nativity over the monumental cradle of the Child (p. 283). One angel plays the cymbals, the other a large vielle.

The other and larger ensemble is an angel concert that significantly accompanies the page showing the Adoration of the Magi (p. 285). The lower margin illustrates as fitting counterpoint the Massacre of the Innocents supervised by Herod himself. Musical angels invaded sacred imagery relatively late, during the second half of the thirteenth century, and most probably under the influence of Jacobus de Voragine's Golden Legend. The combination of loud instruments such as trumpets and drums with the fine silvery sound of small stringed instruments is by no means uncommon. In this heavenly orchestra we see a large psaltery in the center similar to the one shown on page 281. The angel immediately right of it plays the vielle, while the one on the left side holds in each hand a set of bells with clappers. The flanking instruments, a trumpet and a pair of kettledrums, are old, inseparable companions throughout the Middle Ages and ever since. They have always been the attributes of high nobility since the Middle Ages, providing the musical equivalent to heraldic pomp and announcing with fanfares and flourishishes the coming of princes and peers. And just as the shawm and the bagpipe accompanied the Annunciation to the Shepherds (p. 279), trumpets and kettledrums here lend their majestic sound to the entrance of the three oriental kings.

It is here in the last-mentioned two pages from the Hours of Jeanne d'Évreux that the musical instruments make a deeply meaningful contribution to the spiritual content of the main illustrations. In this role they exceed their function elsewhere in the manuscript, where they merely provide an amusing and sometimes bizarre counterpoint to the scriptural text.

ABOVE: Bells and a reed pipe. BELOW: A triangle, a rattle, a bell hit with a stick, and snare drums

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