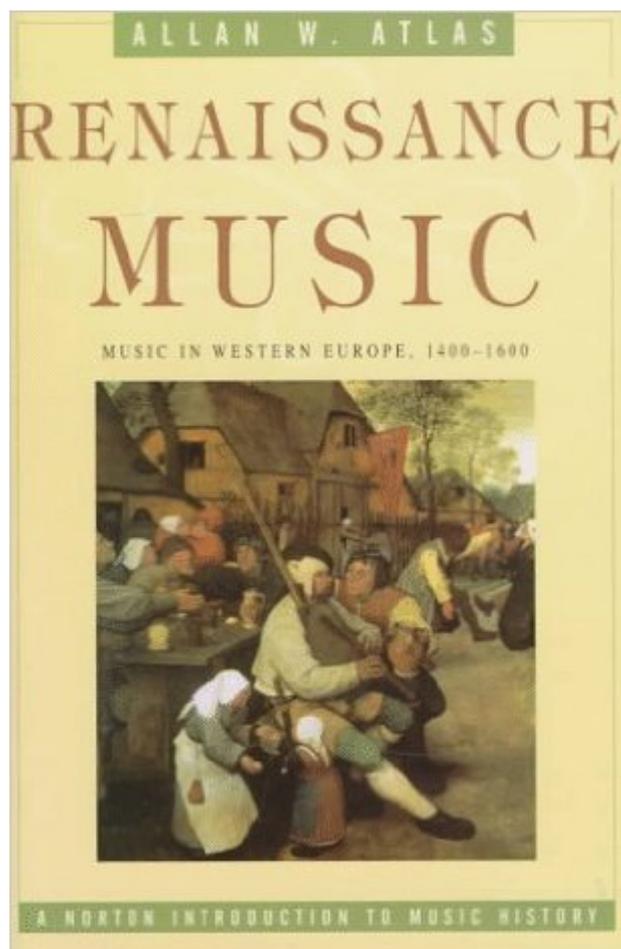


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# Renaissance Music: Music In Western Europe, 1400 1600 (The Norton Introduction To Music History)



## Synopsis

Renaissance Music, by Allan W. Atlas, is a formidable new addition to Norton's Introduction to Music History series. Focused foremost on the music and then on the social, political, and economic forces that combined to produce it, this book is the ideal undergraduate textbook for music history classes covering the period from c. 1400 to c. 1600. Atlas's graceful, accessible prose illuminates musical concepts and historical details. A clear format and comprehensive content make Renaissance Music a true teaching and learning text, crafted to meet the needs of today's students discovering this music and its history for the first time.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book, in a nutshell, is amazing. Atlas doesn't shy away from using sometimes-familiar language, empathizing with the reader and clearly explaining all major topics. It is very detailed but well-organized, and the musical examples are beautifully chosen. Additionally, the book is aesthetically pleasure -- it has lots of nice illustrations. The anthology, which is sold as a separate book, is almost a must-have, since Atlas discusses most if not all works contained with it. (Also, it's a well-chosen anthology, and worth adding to your library.) Therefore, if you like Renaissance music and want to learn more, or if you know a little about it and enjoy reading academic textbooks, this is the book for you.

I am of two minds about Dr. Allan Atlas' iconoclastic text, "Renaissance Music: Music in Western Europe, 1400-1600." On the one hand, I enjoyed Atlas' personal and eminently readable prose. He infuses the tome with witty observations, thought-provoking opinions, and offbeat vocabulary. How many textbooks have you read that use adjectives like "country-bumpkinish" or "huggable"? On the other hand, I believe that Atlas has boxed himself into a corner with his adamant effort to avoid the "great composers" approach. As a result, his organization becomes idiosyncratic and occasionally haphazard. Atlas invariably begins focusing on a particular composer while discussing a genre, and then finds himself forced to summarize the composer's life (sometimes as an afterthought). He interrupts the text proper with historical interludes (Intermedios) and chapters on translation, but their presence can be distracting rather than illuminating. Just as he seems ready to make a relevant point or observation, he switches subjects or just stops altogether (the analysis of Dufay's belongings at the time of his death is one example). This textbook almost requires the purchase of the companion anthology, "Anthology of Renaissance Music (Norton Introduction to Music History)." Atlas frequently cites works presented in the anthology; without it, the reader may become lost. When Atlas does present a score in the text rather than the anthology, he usually presents only excerpts (as he does with Josquin's "Nymphes des bois" or Willaert's "Aspro core e selvaggio e cruda voglia"). This can make it difficult to follow the score while listening to the music, unless the reader has impeccable timing. Finally, Atlas' presentation of instrumental music suffers in comparison to his comprehensive discussion of vocal works. He almost completely ignores lute music, admitting he discusses it "only in passing" at one point - even though other scholars estimate that lute music accounted for a majority of 16th century instrumental scores. Despite these considerable complaints, "Renaissance Music: Music in Western Europe" is a worthwhile and much-needed addition to the Renaissance music literature. An astute professor (like the one I had for a recent course in "Music of the Renaissance") should be able to cherry-pick Atlas' text for the highlights and take advantage of this sporadically brilliant volume.

This book is indispensable for every one, student or amateur, interested in Renaissance music. Clear and understandable, with many examples (in this book and in the anthology companion), Pr. Allan W. Atlas book presents music in the historical, geographical, political and artistic context which produced it. In addition to excellent presentation of composers, musical forms (mass, motet, chanson, instrumental music) and many works, pedagogical exercises are real introductions to research : how to edit a Busnoys chanson, how to understand payrolls. Moreover, Pr Atlas asks readers about the opportunity of adding a sharp, understanding contemporary earwitness texts. The

epilogue is about what is generally the introduction : is there any unity in what musicologists call Renaissance music (1400-1600)?

This is an excellent introduction to Renaissance music; however, the construction of the newer paperback is horrific. One hopes this is the kind of book that one has for many, many years. However after less than a month, the spine cracked and pages, nay chapters began to fall out. It is as if they didn't use enough glue to hold the thing together. I am very disappointed. Advice, by a used hardcover edition. The score anthology has the same problem.

Atlas's book on Renaissance music is a joy to read. It is full of information, but there are the occasional witty remarks, which helps lighten the tone. His analysis of pieces is helpful and fascinating, but he also makes sure all of this detail is contextualized in the major changes in Western Europe during the time (the rise of humanism, other arts, changes in politics, the Reformation). It presents a great general history. Always the historian, Atlas applies historiographical methods to show too how our conceptions of the music and the Renaissance as a whole has changed over time. He also develops how frame of reference can affect the way one interprets the music and the history (for example when talking about Spain, he points to how the music of 1492 was celebratory, but hid a sort of nasty events of Jews and Muslims expulsion and the Inquisition). If you love Renaissance Music or you want to learn about it, then read this book.

One of the only books on Renaissance music (with the one of Perkins I think). Both, history and music analysis are treated, with multiple musical examples; it's a very good introduction to that music. Still it lacks some aesthetics points concerning the real musical practice (but, that's not easy...). Also, you really shall buy the anthology with the book, cause there are many examples to refer. And you'll have them both for... a 100 \$, cheap... A CD would be appreciable (cause when it becomes complex polyphony, you should be a good sight-reader).

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