

DAVID MICHAEL O'SHEA, *THE CHORAL FOUNDATION OF THE CHAPEL ROYAL, DUBLIN CASTLE: CONSTITUTION, LITURGY, MUSIC, 1814–1922*, Irish Musical Studies, 14 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2023), ISBN 9781783277704, 306pp., £95 (hardback)

Any place of worship—a church, synagogue, mosque, temple or chapel—is a rich object of study that, in the hands of a perceptive scholar, can yield intriguing musical and cultural insights into its everyday life. The interplay between congregations and their local traditions set against the rules and regulations of national and international faith leaders, can highlight sympathies and tensions on a range of issues from the styles of clerical dress worn on high holy days to the genre and style of music played or sung at various ceremonies and liturgies. Architectural historians, anthropologists, and scholars of liturgy, religion, and theology have much exciting material to work with, as does the scholar of music.

David Michael O'Shea's study of the choral foundation of the Chapel Royal, Dublin Castle, is an example of what can be achieved in a close and careful study of the theological and musical life in a place of worship. O'Shea's aim is to write 'an institutional history of the Chapel Royal's choral foundation and to place this history in the wider context of the pre-Independence Irish administration and the liturgy and music of the Church of Ireland' (5). Right from the start, O'Shea knows what he is dealing with politically: 'Music and liturgy at the Chapel were shaped by the tastes of successive Lord Lieutenants and the clergymen and musicians they appointed, and so the Chapel's musical and liturgical history is one of direct interface between church and state' (1). Indeed, the first two chapters of the book, 'Precedents, Polity and Politics' and 'Clergy' are devoted to explaining the complex, and sometimes unwieldy, relationships in structure and governance of the chapel and its political milieu. The many threads in this history are superbly handled by O'Shea in providing such a solid foundation for the rest of the book.

O'Shea had rich material to work with in constructing this history: eyewitness accounts, newspaper sources, state papers, music books and other documents, 'most of which have so far been unexplored' (11). I was particularly interested to learn of the chapel's loft books. They survive in the form of 'twenty-eight bound volumes: twenty-three vocal part-books (with individual voice parts only and five organ books) with organ accompaniments and occasional vocal cues' (96). O'Shea explains the loft books have been unused since around 1870 and served him well in identifying the names of the choir members when other official records do not exist. Graffiti in the chapel also helped O'Shea identify some choristers! But the loft books also contain extensive marginalia—gold dust to any historian—that point to cross-references to other sources

and markers for performance practice, which go a long way to help understand not only the shape of the liturgy but how the music sustaining it may have sounded.

O'Shea also explains the ways in which the loft books were inconsistently numbered. He outlines the ways in which he re-organised this material that will delight and intrigue readers with interests in archival preservation, librarianship, and anyone else who has, at one point or another, been charged with such an exercise that requires a keen eye for detail and a huge dose of patience to execute such meticulous work. Equally intriguing is O'Shea's discussion of the place of hymns in the chapel's liturgies. He writes that while the date at which hymns were introduced is not known, they began to appear in published lists around 1870. His detective work in sorting through the introduction of hymns and the issues it created is also very well done.

This book was a joy to read and like any reader I had my favourite parts. I especially appreciated the chapter on 'Churchmanship, Furnishings and Function' in which O'Shea detailed the changing arrangement of furniture, such as desks, and explored the designs of the pulpit, and provided extensive discussion, and illustrations from the press, about the changing layout of the chapel especially during periods of renovation. Images are reproduced from the *Illustrated London News* in 1849 and photographs from the 1860s onwards help the reader visualise changes. Some of these changes were significant: in late 1859 to the early 1860s, for example, O'Shea notes the 'wider trend for the disposal of large pulpits instigated by the Ecclesiological Society. This change, along with the concomitant repositioning of the choir stalls flush with the pillars, created an unrestricted view of the Communion table from the main body of the Chapel' (69). Other re-arrangements were accommodated to serve the changing fashions in communion services that O'Shea discusses, which includes an account of the changing placement of the choir influenced by the same re-arrangements in other chapels. This is a strikingly good example of how, even in a chapel, trends can be set and copied from chapel to chapel.

Inevitably, there is a chapter on organs. Here, O'Shea writes on the role of the organ in the chapel, which was not merely employed to accompany the choir. O'Shea provides background to the 1815 William Gray Organ, as well as the Telford organ of 1857, and the 1900 Gray and Davison instrument, complete with photographs and lists of specifications, or supposed original specifications, of each instrument. This chapter is superbly handled by O'Shea in a thorough discussion of the influence of aesthetics and liturgical function and politics of organs. Readers will learn much from this account of an instrument that can cause so much controversy.

There are two especially amusing events re-told in this book. One event discusses a 'mock transcription of a disastrous performance of an "Amen" setting' at the chapel in 1836 (177). This hilarious incident is examined along with the transcription in question.

Another incident involved the removal of books from the chapel upon its closure, an action that spooks historians everywhere, but it is an all-too common feature of church life when fads change—or decrees from above—mandate the use of new or different editions of liturgical books. At any rate, the ducks and dives in this story are eloquently explained by O'Shea and exemplify yet another dimension to the reality of the life of a chapel in instances of significant change. This intriguing episode is examined in chapter 5, 'The Chapel Royal Music Collection'.

There is much more in O'Shea's book that I have not addressed in this review, ranging from details on the cost and colour of vestments to the salaries of the gentleman singers and the orders and shape of various liturgies. These topics, and many more, make for a very good read. Indeed, the book is a must-read for anyone interested in church history, Irish history, music and print culture, and much else besides. It is an outstanding example of how the history—even a biography—of a chapel or any religious institution might be approached. The book is supported by many well-chosen illustrations as well as tables and musical examples, and an exemplary index.

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