



Italian Music Incunabula: Printers and Type

Mary Kay Duggan

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Musical notation presented unusual challenges to the new craft of printing in the fifteenth century. Its demands were so difficult that the first impression of music from metal type was not made until a full twenty years after the first printed alphabetic texts. By the end of the century dozens of such fonts had appeared throughout Europe. The books that resulted were often impressive volumes of folio or large-folio size, printed in two colors, with woodcut illustrations.

Mary Kay Duggan focuses on the technological processes developed in Italy to print music books. She begins by tracing the history and analyzing the techniques of casting and setting type and staves. She then identifies, classifies, and examines thirty-eight specific types. Finally, the author has compiled a descriptive bibliography of Italian music incunabula, including books containing either printed music or blank spaces for the insertion of manuscript music.

Italian Music Incunabula marks a major advance in the study of the paleotypography of music. It greatly enhances our understanding of the impact of the printing press on music and the importance of music books in the work of early printers. Its meticulous bibliography of over 150 incunabula, concordances, and indices will make it the standard reference work for many years to come.

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