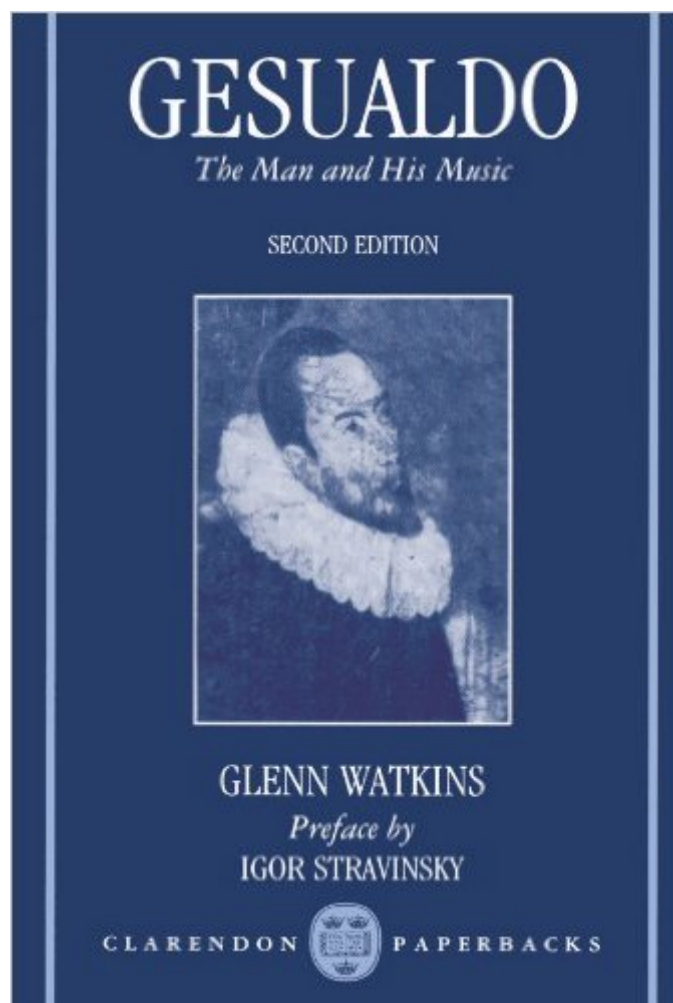


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Gesualdo: The Man And His Music (Clarendon Paperbacks)



Synopsis

Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa, is equally celebrated as the composer of madrigals of great power and tortured complexity and as the murderer of his wife and her lover in flagrante delicto. His life and compositions are not unconnected. His neurotic sensibility found an ideal outlet in the mannerist tendencies of late Renaissance music, and his works are the most extreme examples of those tendencies. Watkins's extended study of Gesualdo's life and works was originally published in 1973. Alongside detailed analysis of Gesualdo's remarkable madrigals and of the few works in other genres, it contained much new biographical material, particularly on the latter part of the composer's life. This new edition has been extensively updated, and contains a new chapter covering the research of recent years. The preface to the first edition, by Igor Stravinsky is reprinted.

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Customer Reviews

Don Carlo Gesualdo (1560 - 1613) was rich, artistic, and - as the second son of a noble Neapolitan family - free to indulge his passion for music. But disaster struck: his brother died, and it was decreed that he must carry on the line. The bride found for him - Donna Maria d'Avalos - was his cousin, and the greatest beauty in town. Older and more experienced, she had already sent two husbands to their graves -one of them according to rumor, from "an excess of connubial bliss". Don Carlo, (who may have been gay) fathered a son, whereupon he his interest wandered elsewhere to music and to hunting. One day his uncle divulged to him that his attention starved wife was enjoying

a brazen affair with the handsome Duke of Andria, and that whenever possible they would "invite each other to battle on the fields of love". Alerted to the fact that Don Carlo knew about the affair, the Duke tried to persuade Donna Maria to end the affair, but she proclaimed she would sooner die. Thus was the scene set for Don Carlo's historic act. One day in October of 1590 Don Carlo surreptitiously disabled his locks, then announced that he would set out on a hunt only to creep back in the still of night with his henchmen. The chronicles go into salacious detail about what happened next: About the night-dress Donna Maria asked to be put out on the bed, about the maid posted as sentinel, and the sudden commotion as Don Carlo and his men broke down the doors to find the pair "in flagrante delicto di fragrante peccato", exhausted and asleep after their love-making. There were shots and multiple sword-thrusts, with Don Carlo unable convince himself the job was done until he had cut his victims to ribbons, and had personally skewered his wife to the floor, repeating to himself "I do not believe she is dead".

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