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Sung Birds: Music, Nature, and Poetry in the Later Middle Ages (Hardback)

By Elizabeth Eva Leach

Cornell University Press, United States, 2006. Hardback. Book Condition: New. 239 x 157 mm. Language: English . Brand New Book. Is birdsong music? The most frequent answer to this question in the Middle Ages was resoundingly no. In *Sung Birds*, Elizabeth Eva Leach traces postmedieval uses of birdsong within Western musical culture. She first explains why such melodious sound was not music for medieval thinkers and then goes on to consider the ontology of music, the significance of comparisons between singers and birds, and the relationship between art and nature as enacted by the musical performance of late-medieval poetry. If birdsong was not music, how should we interpret the musical depiction of birdsong in human music-making? What does it tell us about the singers, their listeners, and the moral status of secular polyphony? Why was it the fourteenth century that saw the beginnings of this practice, continued to this day in the music of Messiaen and others? Leach explores medieval arguments about song, language, and rationality whose basic terms survive undiminished into the present. She considers not only lyrics that have their singers voice the songs or speech of birds but also those that represent other natural, nonmusical, sounds such as...



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