



# Music, Piety, and Propaganda: The Soundscapes of Counter-Reformation Bavaria (New Cultural History of Music)

*Alexander J. Fisher*

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*Music, Piety, and Propaganda: The Soundscapes of Counter-Reformation Bavaria* explores the nature of sound as a powerful yet ambivalent force in the religious struggles that permeated Germany during the Counter-Reformation. Author Alexander J. Fisher goes beyond a musicological treatment of composers, styles, and genres to examine how music, and more broadly sound itself, shaped the aural landscape of Bavaria as the duchy emerged as a militant Catholic bulwark. Fisher focuses particularly on the ways in which sound--including bell-ringing, gunfire, and popular song, as well as cultivated polyphony--not only was deployed by Catholic secular and clerical elites to shape the religious identities of Bavarian subjects, but also carried the potential to challenge and undermine confessional boundaries.

Surviving literature, archival documents, and music illustrate the ways in which Bavarian authorities and their allies in the Catholic clergy and orders deployed sound to underline crucial theological differences with their Protestant antagonists, notably the cults of the Virgin Mary, the Eucharist, and the saints. Official and popular rituals like divine worship, processions, and pilgrimages all featured distinctive sounds and music that shaped and reflected an emerging Catholic identity. Although officials imposed a severe regime of religious surveillance, the Catholic state's dominance of the soundscape was hardly assured. Fisher traces archival sources that show the resilience of Protestant vernacular song in Bavaria, the dissemination and performance of forbidden, anti-Catholic songs, the presence of Lutheran chorales in nominally Catholic church services into the late 16th century, and the persistence of popular "noise" more generally. *Music, Piety, and Propaganda* thus reveals historical, theological, and cultural issues of the period through the piercing dimension of its sounds, bringing into focus the import of sound as a strategic cultural tool with significant impact on the flow of history.

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