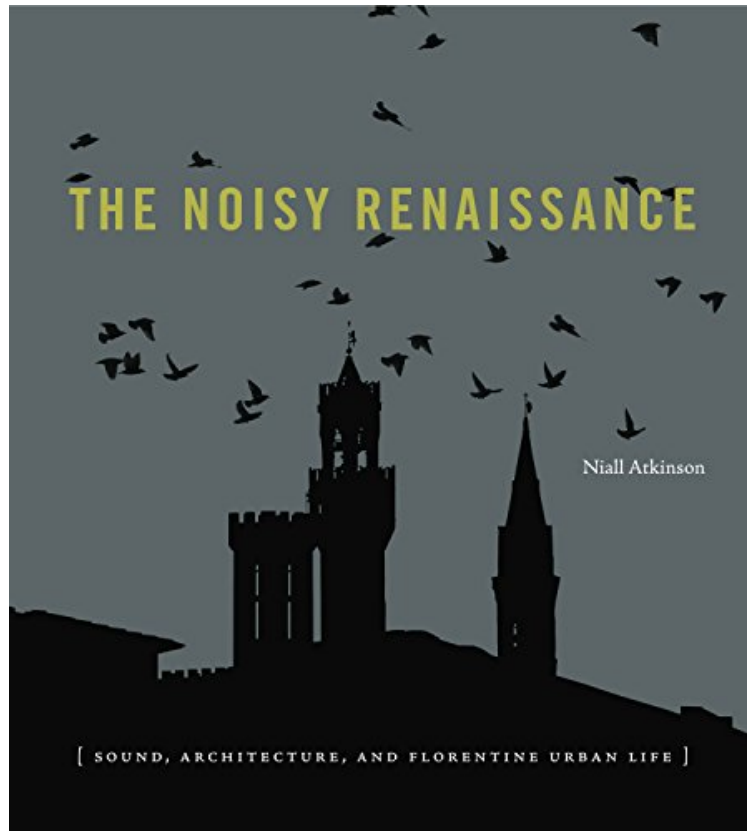


[FREE] The Noisy Renaissance: Sound, Architecture, and Florentine Urban Life

# The Noisy Renaissance: Sound, Architecture, and Florentine Urban Life

*Niall Atkinson*

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**Niall Atkinson : The Noisy Renaissance: Sound, Architecture, and Florentine Urban Life** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Noisy Renaissance: Sound, Architecture, and Florentine Urban Life:

From the strictly regimented church bells to the freewheeling chatter of civic life, Renaissance Florence was a city built not just of stone but of sound as well. An evocative alternative to the dominant visual understanding of urban spaces, The Noisy Renaissance examines the premodern city as an acoustic phenomenon in which citizens used sound to navigate space and society. Analyzing a range of documentary and literary evidence, art and architectural historian Niall Atkinson creates an “acoustic topography” of Florence. The dissemination of official messages, the rhythm of prayer, and the murmur of rumor and gossip combined to form a soundscape that became a foundation in the creation and maintenance of the urban community just as much as the city’s physical buildings. Sound in this space triggered a wide variety of social behaviors and spatial relations: hierarchical, personal, communal, political, domestic, sexual, spiritual, and religious. By exploring these rarely studied soundscapes, Atkinson shows Florence to be both an exceptional and an exemplary case study of urban conditions in the early modern period.

“In this compelling study of the lost soundscape of early Florence—a dynamic field of aural signals and celebrations rung from its many church and civic bells—Niall Atkinson combines wide-ranging research, deft analysis, and imaginative writing. Anything but noise on a highly original and important subject.”—Marvin Trachtenberg, author of *Building-in-Time: From Giotto to Alberti and Modern Oblivion* “Basing his work on contemporary diaries and legislative records, Atkinson changes the way that we think about architecture as space, movement, and social structure by listening astutely to the language of the bells of Florence, as well as the telling messages of their silences. His ‘acoustic topography’ of Renaissance Florence—with comparable examples from other city-states—gives new meaning to the organizational structures of Renaissance cities and the powerful social and political control that regulated sound exerted on human populations.”—John Paoletti, author of *Michelangelo’s ‘David’*; *Florentine History and Civic Identity* “Atkinson’s bold reimagining brings us directly into the lives of Renaissance Florentines through their shouts and whispers, their ringing bells and riotous rebellions, their stories, prayers, and songs. This innovative use of sound to understand how Florentines constructed and occupied space gives acute insight into the messy and conflicted dynamics of a city usually approached through texts and images. This is a new and deeper Florence, infinitely richer for mapping the sensory lives and horizons of its people. Soundscapes were not just a consequence of daily life—they built and organized it, and at times even overturned it.”—Nicholas Terpstra, author of *Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World* “A brilliant exploration of the dialogue between buildings and bodies. Exploiting the power of new digital tools to visualize the Florentine soundscape, Atkinson shows how sound—from the acoustic regime of bell ringing to the cacophony of the street—brought the Renaissance city into being. In this original and imaginative book, the stones of Florence not only come alive but are made to speak.”—Sharon Strocchia, author of *Nuns and Nunneries in Renaissance Florence* “Renaissance Florence is a place and time that has received massive attention from scholars, although none appear to have asked, What did the city sound like and how did noise shape the urban environment? In this highly original book, Niall Atkinson builds a compelling and beautifully written argument that puts sound firmly back into the urban sensorium and recovers not only the instances and ways in which the city and its life were marked by sound but also the social interactions that were crucially mediated through the soundscape.”—Fabrizio Nevola, author of *Siena: Constructing the Renaissance City* “Gracefully written and superbly designed, this landmark study of Florentine soundscapes reveals how listening and hearing influenced everything from life on the street to the ways that citizens understood and experienced the passing of time itself. Niall Atkinson does not simply move the history of Renaissance Florence onto new ground with *The Noisy Renaissance*—he reorients our thinking about how lives were lived in all late medieval and early modern European cities.”—Nicholas Eckstein, author of *Painted Glories: The Brancacci Chapel in Renaissance Florence* About the Author Niall Atkinson is Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of Chicago.