Catherine Deutsch (Paris Sorbonne)

“Reconstructing Casulana’s Memory Through Intertextual Analysis”

Although Maddalena Casulana has become an emblematic figure in feminist musicology and women’s history, her music remains virtually unknown today. With the exception of her setting of “Morir non può il mio cor,” her madrigals are rarely performed, recorded or studied, and – due to their lacunar parts – only a minority of them have been edited. We still know very little about this pioneering woman composer, and it is significant that her contemporaries did not keep her memory alive after her death, contrary to other late sixteenth-century female musicians such as Vittoria Aleotti, Laura Peverara, or Vittoria Archilei. Following Anthony Newcomb’s recent article on Giovanni Maria Nanino’s early patrons in Rome (JM, 2013), this paper will investigate the issue of Casulana’s memory through an intertextual analysis of her work. First, we will focus on Casulana’s own musical memory by shedding light on the pieces that served as models in her music; second, we will enquire which composers were inspired by her work in the late sixteenth-century. Finally, we will formulate hypotheses regarding Casulana’s oblivion within the context of early seventeenth-century Florentine culture.