



Early Drama, Art, and Music Documents

A Paleography Handbook

by John M. Wasson

DESCRIPTION:

There are few experiences as discouraging to a researcher trained in art history, drama, music, folk arts, or social history as the first encounter with an original medieval or Renaissance document. Despite Satan's claim, there is little comfort in the company of others who are miserable, but it may be comforting to know that many untrained researchers have learned to read original documents without formal instruction or years of practice. While some of the skills of a professional paleographer—the ability to identify various transitional hands, localize regional variations, or date documents by their handwriting, for instance—do require considerable training, a researcher can learn on his or her own to make some sense of a manuscript with little help on the way letters were formed, on standard abbreviations and formulaic constructions, and on the sheer need to practice transcription. Wasson here provides the basic tools necessary to transcribe documents, without regard for the historical development of alphabets, letter forms, and the like. This manual will be of great interest to scholars of the arts in need of a guide for their journeys into the archives.

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John M. Wasson was a professor of English who published and edited texts in early English drama alongside his wife Barbara Palmer.

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