

ANIMALS PLAYING THE ORGAN

Some European iconography from the 14th and 15thc shows animals as organists. A sketch in the Macclesfield Psalter of c1330 (now at Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge) depicts a rabbit and a dog involved in organ playing.

Asses playing the organ are portrayed in the Flemish, c1480, pen and ink drawing (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford) and a 14thc stall carving (Lübeck). Pigs are depicted as organists in Beauvais (F:), Ostheim (D:), and Härnevi (S:). Although portraying animals engaging in human activities was a general practice in manuscript marginalia, in certain cases there is a symbolic meaning to the illustration. For example, in the Härnevi painting, the pig represents King Herod's pride, and presumably the organ was chosen to suggest his lavish lifestyle. Each depiction must be assessed within its iconographical context, as the implications can be quite complex. In 13th century England pipes were even referred to as 'mules'. The surviving image of the [Peterborough Psalter](#) organ (a positive - 2 ranks?) comes from the *Peterborough Psalter and Bestiary* dating from c1315. For some other depictions see [Medieval organ types](#).

