

[Choir Book] Texts for the Office and Mass for St. Anne and the Holy Rosary of the Virgin Mary; Prose for the Holy Cross

In Latin, stenciled book on paper with musical notation

France, eighteenth century, c. 1750-1800

*i* (paper with text continuing from the front pastedown) + 41 folios or 82 pages, numbered as follows: stenciled pagination, 1- 50, 50bis-51, 53\*-65, [66 blank and unnumbered] + 16 pages with modern pagination in pencil top outer corner recto, on paper, through p. 66, good quality paper with narrow laid lines, unidentified watermark, apparently complete (collation *i*<sup>6</sup> *ii*<sup>12</sup> *iii*<sup>4</sup> *iv*<sup>14</sup> [-12 through 14, cancelled with no loss of text] *v*<sup>8</sup> [one quire of independent origin]), pp. 1-66, ruled in lead (not very visible), with full-length vertical bounding lines, and with horizontal rules for the text, (justification c.370 x 250-245 mm.), seven lines of text and seven lines of music (square notation on red 4-line staves) on almost every page (hymn, pp. 3-4, is only partially notated), red rubrics, one-line red initials, decorated head- or tail-pieces in red in a floral pattern, pp. 1, 67 (cross and "PAX"), 79 (sunburst surmounted by a cross), 81, and 82, large red initials equivalent to one-line text and music surrounded by stenciled borders in red, pp. 1, 6, 12, 43, 50 bis, initial with circular decorative border p. 80; II., pp. 67-82, sixteen pages (eight folios at end), on paper (rather thick and darker in color, no visible watermark), ruled in lead and in blind(?) (justification 380 x 220 mm.), six lines of text and six lines of music (square notation on black four-line staves), all in brownish ink, p. 67, with header of stenciled fleurons, two roundels (thorns) encircling "PAX", and a cross in the middle, with the title, Prosa De Sancta Cruce; p. 79 large stenciled roundel of a fleur de lis in a sunburst surmounted by a cross, p. 80, initial in a round stenciled border, p. 81, tail piece, some worming, pp. 17-18 partially detached, bottom outer corners quire 2 especially tattered, bottom and inner corners tattered on pp. 29-30, 31-32, 35-36, pp. 14-15, with stains, probably wax, pp. 33-34, torn (extending into text which remains legible), p. 35, stain, pp. 36-37, dirt. Bound in its original 18<sup>th</sup>-century binding of parchment leaves (re-used from documents copied in long lines, perhaps letters from the sixteenth or seventeenth century) over pasteboard (assembled from printed sheets which are visible), sewn on seven bands, recessed so the spine is almost flat, both covers heavily abraded, peeling up and damaged at the top, bottom and spine. Dimensions 454 x 295 mm.; ff. 67-82, 453 x 305 mm.

Stenciled manuscripts are curious hybrids, unique items, like handwritten manuscripts, but produced with a mechanical aid like printed books. Made using stencils, this large but slim volume is an attractive example of a genre that deserves a place in every collection devoted to the history of the book and typography. Combining the text and music for both the Mass and Office for selected feasts, this volume was likely intended for use in the choir for a church that otherwise lacked these texts.

## PROVENANCE

1. Made in France in the eighteenth century, most likely in the second half; the liturgical contents of this volume unfortunately do not enable us to narrow down its origin and establishing a more accurate date range is difficult without good stylistic comparisons.
2. Inside front cover, bottom outer corner where the pastedown is lifted, printed book plate, Ex Libris Maurice Delort (with an owl), and a handwritten number, "8592/<91?>-16."

## TEXT

Front pastedown and f. i, Creed with musical notation (square on black four-line staves), incipit, “//patrem omnipotentem factorem coeli et terrae visibilibus omnium et invisibilium et in unum dominum ...”;

pp. 1-41, Texts for the Divine Office and the Mass for the feast of St. Anne: pp. 1-13, *Officium proprium sanctae annae matris mariae virginis In primis Vesperis, Antiphonae vt in Laudibus. Psalmi de B. M. Virgine. Responsor. 6 toni*, incipit “Inter legis sacramenta ...”; [pp. 13-27], *Ad Missam*, Introitus, Graduale, Prosa; pp. 28-37, Creed, Offertorium, incipit, “Diffusa est gratia ...”, Sanctus; Communion; [pp. 38-41], *In Secundis Vesperis. Antiphonae ...*, incipit, “Felix Anna quae Samuelem prophetam genuit ...”; [p. 42, blank];

pp. 43-65, Texts for the Divine Office and the Mass for the feast of the Holy Rosary of Mary: [p. 43], *Officium Sanctissimi Rosarii beatissimae Mariae Virgins ad Laudes et in vtrisque Vesperis. Antiph. 7. Toni*, incipit, Solemnitas est hodie ...”; [includes Mass texts, pp. 50bis-63, with a long Prosa, then second vespers, pp. 63-65, ending with a Hymn at prime, p. 66, blank].

II. pp. 67-79, *Prosa de Sancta Cruce*, incipit, “Crucifixum adoremus, Christi crucem praedicemus ...”; pp. 80-81, incipit, “Regina coeli ...”; [p. 82 blank].

The musical texts for the Divine Office (prayers said throughout the day and night by members of religious orders at the offices of Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline), were collected in Antiphonals. Musical texts for the Mass were usually found in a separate volume, the Gradual. Our book includes both Office and Mass texts for just two liturgical occasions, the feasts of St. Anne, the mother of Mary, and the Holy Rosary of Mary. The last text in the volume is of independent origin and includes the Prose or Sequence (a special musical text chanted before the Gospel on select feasts) for the Mass of the Holy Cross. The focused contents of our volume suggest this book originated as an independent volume to provide texts and music otherwise lacking in a church’s library. It is large enough to be easily read, but smaller than many Choir Books. The liturgy was not static, and new music and texts were created in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, often for feasts in honor of various saints. Recent scholarship (Anderson, 2014), for example, has underlined the interest of the music written to honor St. Anne in the Renaissance, and the texts and music in our volume deserve more careful study.

In most respects this book is a direct descendant of the liturgical Choir manuscripts copied in the later Middle Ages through the seventeenth centuries (and occasionally later). The script, however, although it was clearly not produced by type face, was not written by hand, but instead was produced using metal stencils. The stenciled letters can be recognized by the small breaks in the body of the letter from the bridges found in the stencil template (stencil-templates must avoid continuous shapes that would cause them to fall apart, for example, the inside of an “o” must be connected with bridges to the outer shape of the letter). Stenciled books are curious hybrids. They are unique items, like handwritten manuscripts, but were produced with a mechanical aid, and in that sense are more like printed books. Here the text, initials and other the decoration, and almost certainly the musical notation, were all constructed with stencil templates. Stenciled liturgical books, often made in monastic settings, are known from the mid seventeenth century until the latter decades of the nineteenth century, and in some cases later. This practice probably began in France, where the practice was wide-spread (François, 2010;

O'Meara 1933) and then spread around Catholic western and southern Europe, including the Low Countries (presently francophone Belgium), Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, and Portugal, and possibly even Mexico. One example has been identified in England (I thank Mr. Eric Kindel for sharing his research, in correspondence, 2012). In Germany in the monasteries around Mainz were known for their stenciled books (see Schreiber 1927; Gottron 1938; Rodrigues 1973; and Rosenfeld 1973); the most famous practitioner was Thomas Bauer (d. c. 1780), who entered the Carthusian monastery in Mainz c. 1720.

Gilles Filleau des Billettes composed an extensive account of the process for the "Description des Arts et Métiers" of the French Royal Academy of Science c. 1700 (edited in Kindel, 2013). In his description he suggests the practice was created by someone (name unknown) c. 1650, and specifically mentions that books for particular churches were written in this way, as opposed to printed books used more generally by the whole church ("C'est celui par lequel on écrit les plus beaux livres d'églises particulières qui n'ont pas besoin d'être autant répandus que ceux qu'on imprime pour l'usage général du clergé ..."; quoted by François, 2010). Another early historian of these books, Fischer van Waldheim, writing c. 1800, suggested that they were invented by a Trappist monk in 1674.

It is hard not to be struck by the labor that was required to produce a volume like this. Would it not have been easier to simply to copy the volume by hand? Eva Judd O'Meara, asked William Addison Dwiggins a modern stencil maker in the United States in the 1930s-50s, this question. His opinion was that stenciling was quicker than writing. Moreover, copying manuscripts in scripts imitating roman type may have been particularly difficult. Certainly, the books produced by this method have their own striking aesthetic appeal, and the fact that they could be made without employing a trained calligrapher was a practical advantage.

## LITERATURE

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### ONLINE RESOURCES

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<http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/manuscripts/>

Jean-Baptiste Lebigue, "Initiation aux manuscrits liturgiques, " Ædilis, Publications pédagogiques, 6, Paris, IRHT, 2007

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Eric Kindel, Reading University, staff profile, with bibliography of his articles on stencils:

[http://www.reading.ac.uk/typography/about/Staff\\_list/e-t-kindel.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/typography/about/Staff_list/e-t-kindel.aspx)

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