

**Gradual containing the first two Masses for Christmas  
In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment with musical notation  
Western Germany (Middle Rhine region?), 1570s(?)**

*ii (paper) + 12 + i (paper), folios on parchment, contemporary paper flyleaves with watermark of a crowned eagle with 'E', not listed in Briquet, but for similar marks with 'F', cf. Briquet 156, Eltville 1574, and 157, and Cologne 1574, modern foliation in pencil, complete (collation i<sup>2</sup>), no visible ruling (justification 240 x 150 mm.), written in black ink in gothic textualis bookhand on eight lines with eight staves of music, Hufnagel notation on four-line black and red staves, rastrum 14 mm., 1-line initials alternating in blue and red throughout, four 1-line puzzle initials, TWO ILLUMINATED INITIALS WITH BORDERS on ornamented grounds framed by borders in pink and green, in-filled with flowers and decorated with tendrils of flowers and strawberries that extend to the inner margin, occasional slight off-setting of black ink onto facing red initials, minor thumbing, otherwise in excellent condition. Bound in CONTEMPORARY SIXTEENTH-CENTURY calf blind-tooled with foliage panels and corner fleurons, with two sets of vellum straps, the leather on the covers and spine is slightly worn but binding otherwise in excellent condition. Dimensions 300 x 206 mm.*

Given the specific contents and decoration of this handsome, large manuscript was probably made for Christmas festivities, the most joyous occasion in the ecclesiastical calendar. The codex continues the medieval tradition of manuscript-making into the sixteenth century. It displays beautiful angular script, exuberant Renaissance illumination, and musical notation known as "Hufnagel," from its resemblance to a horseshoe nail. It is unusual to find just the Christmas Masses contained in a single volume.

#### PROVENANCE

1. Evidence of the script, decoration, and the original binding support an origin in Germany in the sixteenth century; based on the watermarks on the paper flyleaves, moreover, we suggest this likely was copied in Western Germany, in the Middle-Rhine region in the 1570s. The watermark, a crowned eagle with the letter 'E' inscribed on its chest is not found in the standard repertoires of watermarks by Briquet or Piccard (Online Resources), but Briquet has very similar variants inscribed with an 'F', localized in Eltville, a town near Mainz, as well as in Cologne, and dated to the 1570s (see Briquet variants 156-157). The style of decoration and script of the manuscript suggest it is contemporary to these datable flyleaves. The binding is likewise contemporary.
2. In the early seventeenth century the manuscript belonged to a certain T. Kzüg, who signed his name and inserted the date inside two initials on ff. 3v and 4: "A: 1613" and "T: Kzüg".
3. Stamped inside the front board with the ownership mark of Fritz Arens (1912-1986), art historian, curator of historical monuments and museum director in Mainz. The manuscript corresponds to the main scientific interests of Arens, who concentrated on the history and art of Mainz and the Middle Rhine region from Gothic to Baroque, including its monastic houses and churches. Arens published several dozen books and over 200 essays and studies.

#### TEXT

ff. 1-6, First Mass at Christmas, *Nativitatis Christi Prima Missa in gallicantu Introitus*, "Dominus dixit ad me, filius meus es tu, ego hodie genui te";

ff. 6-12v, Second Mass at Christmas, *Ad secundam Missam in Aurora. Introitus*, "Lux fulgebit hodie super nos quia, natus est nobis Dominus." Ends (complete) with the Communion antiphon "Exsulta filia Sion".

## ILLUSTRATION

Two large initials with Renaissance ornamentation:

f. 1, initial 'D' constructed of foliage, with a flower, on a pink ornamented ground and within a pink and green border imitating a picture frame. A flower tendril extends from the initial into the inner margin;

f. 6, initial 'L' constructed of a Renaissance leaf-and-ball finial, a pansy and a snake, on a yellow ornamented ground and within a pink and green border imitating a picture frame. A strawberry vine extends from the initial into the inner margin enclosing a large ant.

This Gradual contains the musical sequences sung by cantors and the choir during the first two Christmas Masses. By the seventh century, Christmas Mass was divided into a succession of three Masses. The first Mass at Christmastide honoring the Nativity of Christ, which begins this manuscript, is celebrated at midnight or, in the middle of the night, on Christmas Day. The second Mass, the Mass of Aurora, as the name suggests, is celebrated at dawn. The theme of light is prominent in this Mass and the Introit begins: "Lux fulgebit hodie super nos quia, natus est nobis Dominus" (A Light shall shine upon us this day, for the Lord is born to us). This Mass is also traditionally called the Shepherd's Mass, as the shepherds went to adore the newborn Christ Child at dawn. The manuscript does not include the final Day Mass, but only the two nocturnal Masses.

This manuscript only contains two Masses, rather than the music for the entire liturgical year. Given the specific contents and decoration of this handmade book and its late date, it was probably specially made for Christmas festivities, the most joyous occasion in the ecclesiastical calendar.

The music is written in so-called "Hufnagel" neumes, developed by German scribes. The name derives from the German word for horseshoe nails, which the notes resemble.

The religious institution for which it was made remains to be discovered, but it is probably located in Mainz or the vicinity, given the localization of the paper, as well as the research interests of the manuscript's distinguished recent owner, Fritz Arens (1912-1986). Arens, the distinguished art historian, made great efforts to conserve and restore medieval buildings and works of art during and after the Second World War, especially in his native Mainz.

## LITERATURE

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Franz, A. *Die Messe im deutschen Mittelalter: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Liturgie und des religiösen Volkslebens*, Freiburg, 1902.

Harper, J. *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century: A Historical Introduction and Guide for Students and Musicians*, Oxford, 1991.

*Le Graduel Romain, II: Les Sources*, Solesmes, 1957.

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Plummer, J. *Liturgical Manuscripts for the Mass and Divine Office*, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, 1964.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Briquet Online. Dictionnaire historique des filigranes  
[http://www.ksbm.oeaw.ac.at/\\_scripts/php/BR.php](http://www.ksbm.oeaw.ac.at/_scripts/php/BR.php)

Cantus Planus  
[https://www.uni-regensburg.de/Fakultaeten/phil\\_Fak\\_I/Musikwissenschaft/cantus/](https://www.uni-regensburg.de/Fakultaeten/phil_Fak_I/Musikwissenschaft/cantus/)

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