

Processional-Responsorial of Nonnberg Abbey

In Latin, with some German, illuminated manuscript on paper with musical notation
Austria (Salzburg, Nonnberg Abbey), c. 1505-1515

135 paper folios, watermark of bull's head topped with cross with seven-petal flower, Briquet 14554, popular especially in Bavaria and surrounding German-speaking regions from 1446-1516, modern pencil foliation in both top and bottom outer recto corners (top foliation used), complete (collation i-iii¹² iv¹⁰ [-1 leaf, position uncertain, no text loss] v-vi¹⁰ vii⁸ [-1 leaf, position uncertain, no text loss] viii-x¹⁰ xi¹² xii¹⁰ [-8, one leaf cancelled in eighth position, no text loss] xiii¹⁰ [+9 and 10, two folios added at end]), red ruling with double vertical bounding lines ruled to top and bottom edges arranged in six four-line staves (justification 138 x 104 mm.), six lines of text and music in a round Gothic bookhand in black ink, Hufnagel neumes on four-line red staves, red rubrics, cadel initials in black ink with red highlights equivalent to one line of text and music, numerous pink, red, blue, yellow or green initials with brown ink pen-flourishing, some with faces, equivalent to one line of text and music, 267 red, blue, purple, green or gold initials equivalent to one line of text and music, some on foliate grounds with white tracery and brown ink pen-flourishing, some with faces, some with gold frames, often with scrolling leaves, vines, and flowers extending into the margin, SIX LARGE 10-LINE ILLUMINATED INITIALS either gold on painted grounds with white tracery or in color on gold grounds with pen-flourished frames and scrolling leaves, vines, and flowers extending into the margin, FOUR LARGE 10-LINE HISTORIATED INITIALS (described below), one with a THREE-SIDED BORDER, some marginal decoration trimmed, stains and spotting from use and moisture, a small paper slip pasted over erroneous musical notation on f. 6v, very small tear in bottom margin of f. 65, some worming on front flyleaf and pastedown. Austrian BINDING DATED 1591, white pigskin over pasteboard, blind-tooled panel design separated by multi-filletted borders, outermost frame of roll-stamped heraldic arms around half-length figures of the Evangelists with their names beneath, set around central panels, on front: the Crucifixion with the Erection of the Brazen Serpent (Numbers 21:8-9) between blocks containing 'M. V. K.' and '1591' stamped and once gilt, on back: the prophet Samuel anointing David (I Samuel 16:1-13), three raised double-bands and four blind-tooled compartments on spine, two intact brass clasps decorated with simple twist design on leather tabs, some rubbing and staining on front and back covers, some wear on edges, minor worming on back cover, but in overall superb condition. Dimensions 194 x 147 mm.

An illuminated manuscript made for Nonnberg Abbey, the oldest convent in the German-speaking world and the setting for the "Sound of Music," in excellent condition, with a portrait of its first owner and possibly its scribe and illuminator, Margaret Marckdorff, who was a nun at the abbey. Includes processions for liturgical occasions throughout the year, almost entirely noted in German Hufnagel neumes. Named female scribes and artists are much less common than their male counterparts and are thus of special interest. Bound in an exceptional white leather blind-tooled binding, dated 1591, with intact clasps.

PROVENANCE

1. A Processional-Responsorial probably made for, and perhaps even by, Margaret Marckdorff, a nun of the Benedictine Abbey of Nonnberg in Salzburg, Austria. Barring an addition at the manuscript's end, the text was copied by a single skilled scribe. The decoration, perhaps also completed by the scribe, is expertly painted (see Illustration below). The German rubrics which sometimes stand in place of Latin suggest Margaret's direct involvement in the production of this book: they were probably added by Margaret if she copied the book herself, or were specifically requested by her, and might indicate her stronger literacy in the vernacular than in Latin.

The Marckdorff family arms – a red leopard with foreleg extended on a silver (here white) ground (Rietstap, Rolland, and Rolland 1912, pl. CXLII) – are found in a historiated initial on f. 52, identifying a portrait of a Benedictine nun as Margaret herself, kneeling before St. Margaret. The Marckdorff arms also appear on in the bottom border of f. 2, accompanied by the Pfäffinger family arms: a black demi-wolf on a gold (here yellow) ground (Rietstap, Rolland, and Rolland 1921, pl. XLVI). Their juxtaposition indicates that the book was commissioned or made by Margaret when Regina Pfäffinger was Abbess of Nonnberg, between 1504 and her retirement in 1514.

Although nothing more is presently know of Margaret Marckdorff, Abbess Regina is remembered for her oversight of the final major building phases in the Nonnberg complex (Tietze, 1911, pp. XXV-XXVI). Her portrait tombstone, also showing her family arms, is found in the north side-aisle of the abbey's church (Walz, 1871, No. 133, with tomb facsimile; Tietze, 1911, p. 41, fig. 56). The heraldic shield in the right-hand margin of f. 2 has been severely trimmed, but appears to show a white building on its red ground (possibly the city arms of Salzburg: three white towers surrounded by a city wall on a red ground).

Nonnberg is the oldest women's convent in the German-speaking world and is still active. It is perhaps best-known today as a setting in the musical film "The Sound of Music." Founded c. 714 by St. Rupert of Salzburg, Nonnberg is home to the relics of Rupert's niece and the convent's first abbess, St. Erentrude.

2. This book gained its present binding in 1591. As suggested by the initials "M.V.K." stamped on the binding's front along with the date, it was most likely commissioned by Margaret von Kuenburg (d. 1594), another nun of Nonnberg from a noble Austrian family. Margaret von Kuenburg donated to Nonnberg's church a wooden shrine with portraits of Mary and John the Evangelist and, also in 1591, a silk altar cloth embroidered with gold and silver and bearing her arms, initials, and the date (Tietze, 1911, pp. 121, 164). Her tombstone is found on the north wall of the abbey church (Walz, 1871, No. 225; Tietze 1911, p. 65 Fig. 86).

The central panel motif of the Crucifixion juxtaposed with the Erection of the Brazen Serpent is found on other Nonnberg bindings: e.g. *Stiftes Nonnberg*, Cod. 23 A 4 and Cod. 23 A 5 (Hayer et al., 2018, and Tietze, 1905, pp. 83-88). This central panel, and that of the back cover showing the anointing of David by Samuel, are also found on other books copied in Salzburg, Admont, Munich, and Dresden before 1597 (Haebler and Schunke, 1928-1929, II, pp.160-61). Margaret von Kuenburg was probably the last nun to consider this manuscript her own: Nonnberg was censured upon visitation in 1594, the year of Margaret's death, because the nuns continued to hold personal possessions against the decrees of the Council of Trent in 1545 (Lawatsch Melton, 2010, p. 261).

3. There is evidence that this volume continued to be used at Nonnberg in subsequent centuries. Inscriptions in a seventeenth- or eighteenth-century hand read "Auß der Nun(n)bergerischen librarj" (f. 1v, from the Nonnberg Library) and "Chreuz gang buch durch das ganz Jahr" (f. 2, Choir book for the whole year). Processions beyond the cloister were forbidden by the Council of Trent (Lawatsch Melton, 2010, p. 262), and this latter note may indicate that this manuscript was not only used in the cloister during processions,

but perhaps also stored there. The *Benedicamus* (f. 135), and notes on ff. 55 and 56 demonstrate use in the late 16th and 17th centuries.

The diocese of Salzburg was annexed to the Kingdom of Bavaria in 1810-1816, and the nuns of Nonnberg were forced to give up more of their library to avoid dissolution. Twenty-eight of their most precious books were given to Munich's Hofbibliothek on October 20, 1815 (now in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Hayer et al., 2018, p. 8), and other volumes, likely including this one, were also deaccessioned at this time. As of 1967, 235 manuscripts have been identified as formerly belonging to Nonnberg's extensive library (inventory in Plante, vol. 1, part 2.)

4. Zisska and Kistner, October 23, 1986, lot 4A; Heribert Tenschert, *Illumination und Illustration vom 13. bis 16. Jahrhundert*, No. 22, 1987, pp. 106-109; Christie's, London, *The Arcana Collection: Exceptional Illuminated Manuscripts and Incunabula*, July 7, 2010, lot 44.

TEXT

f. 1rv, ruled blank; ff. 2-47, incipit, "Collegerunt pontifices et pharsei concilium ... manducaverit non moritur";

Processional antiphons, hymns, versicles, and responsories for: Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, baptism (including a short litany with common saints except Sts. Erentrude and Rupert), Easter, the Finding of the Cross, Holy Cross, Rogation days, the Introit of the Mass, Pentecost, St. Martin, Holy Trinity, and Corpus Christi.

ff. 47-60, *De Sancto Johanne Waptista*, incipit, "Iste est de sublimibus ... nomina vestra scripta sunt in celis. Ideo que";

Processional antiphons, hymns, versicles, and responsories for: John the Baptist, St. Erentrude, St. Margaret, Assumption of the Virgin, Conception of the Virgin, St. Rupert, and All Saints. Notably, the rubric of John the Baptist's feast day has been Germanized and features a *þ* in place of *p*.

ff. 60-77v, *Dominica prima In Adventum dominum*, [f. 60v] incipit, "Ecce dies venient dicit dominus ... Benedicam domino in omni tempore semper laus";

Processional antiphons, hymns, versicles, and responsories for: Advent, St. John the Apostle and Evangelist, St. Thomas, Epiphany, the Purification of the Virgin, St. Benedict, the Annunciation to the Virgin, and Pentecost. Two staves lack musical notation at the end of a responsory for the third Sunday of Advent (f. 62v); perhaps the melody was unfamiliar and/or unavailable to the scribe.

ff. 77v-78v, Hymn "Deus tuorum militum" sung at the Common of One Martyr, and the *Magnificat*, unnoted (i.e. written in continuous text lines without staves);

ff. 78v-95v, *Dominica In Septuagesima*, [f. 79] incipit, "In principio deus ... C[h]riste audi nos";

Processional antiphons, hymns, versicles, responsories, and a sequence for: Septuagesima, Ash Wednesday (with a German rubric: "Un dem aschtag"), and Corpus Christi (one hymn for Corpus Christi, *Que te vincit clemen[t]ia* (ff. 93v-94), is not noted).

ff. 95v-133v, *Introitus pro defunctis*, incipit, "Si enim credimus . . . veritas domini manet in eternum alleluia";

The music for the Mass for the Dead, followed by processional antiphons, hymns, versicles, and responsories for: Passion Sunday (one hymn unnoted), Maundy Thursday (some staves without notes, f. 104v), the Common of several Martyrs, the Common of one Confessor, the Dedication of a Church, Holy Cross, St. Erentrude, St. Blaise, St. Rupert (not noted), All Saints (not noted), Prophets, the Virgin Mary (not noted), Nicholas (not noted), Benedict (partially noted), the Common of several Virgins, St. Erentrude (some staves without notes, some not noted), Dedication of a Church, Octaves of Easter, Christmas, Purification of the Virgin (partially noted), Ascension, St. John the Apostle and Evangelist (some staves without notes, some not noted), and Assumption of the Virgin. These are followed by *Dominus vobiscum* in several verses with the instruction "Zu d[em] pate[r] [no]ster" and several short chants "Vor dem agnus dei." Then more chants for Christmas (opening with empty staves and the rest not noted), and finally prayers and versicles for the Dedication of an Altar and those buried in the abbey's cemetery, without music.

f. 134rv, Litany with Sts. Rupert, Benedict, and Erentrude;

f. 135, *Benedicamus*, added in another hand, without music.

ILLUSTRATION

The decoration and illumination of this manuscript are expertly executed in the style popular in Salzburg and its environs during the later fifteenth century and opening years of the sixteenth century. Compare, for example, the Breviary, University of Salzburg, MS V.1.B.21, made in Salzburg c. 1475 (Illuminated manuscripts, University of Salzburg, Online Resources). Our manuscript is exuberantly decorated, with almost every opening graced by painted initials:

98 decorative cadel initials in black ink with touches of red, and 267 painted initials in red, blue, purple, yellow, green and/or gold, some on colorful grounds with monochromatic or contrasting foliage and/or with white tracery, and the others without grounds, both usually surrounded with intricate light brown pen-flourishing, sometimes featuring faces with animated expressions, and some of which have painted leaves, vines, and flowers extending from them into the margins;

Six large illuminated initials with leaves, vines, and other motifs extending into the borders: f. 53, gold 'M'; f. 89v, blue 'U'; f. 95v, gold 'S'; f. 110, gold 'B'; f. 114, gold 'S'; and f. 117, gold 'R'.

Four large gold historiated initials:

f. 1, Christ entering Jerusalem on a donkey towards stone gates; with a three-quarter border of scrolling blue green vines, leaves and flowers with gold besants; in the outer margin unidentified

arms in red and white, and in the bottom margin, the family arms of Marckdorff and Pfäffinger (see Provenance);

f. 52, Margaret Marckdorff, dressed in the black habit of a Benedictine nun, with her family arms (see Provenance) next to her, kneeling before a much larger, crowned St. Margaret; acanthus border in the inner margin;

f. 70, Presentation of Christ at the Temple; acanthus border in the inner margin;

f. 73, St. Benedict, tonsured, dressed in a black robe, and holding a crozier and a golden chalice emitting yellow noxious fumes (representing the chalice of poison from his *Vita*); an acanthus border in the inner margin.

Music played an integral role in liturgical processions throughout the year as celebrants walked from the church to the cloister, onto the grounds of their abbey complexes, and sometimes beyond into the fields and towns of medieval Europe. Participants in these walking choirs carried volumes called Processionals which often featured personalized decoration. These books contained the texts and music chanted used during different processions carried out on important feast days (Palazzo, 1998, p. 229-231). This Processional, or more properly a "Processional-Responsorial," includes processions for special feasts (Purification, Corpus Christi, Palm Sunday, Rogation days, and others), processions for Sundays and saints' days throughout the liturgical year, and processions for special sacramental occasions including baptism and death (Huglo, 1999, table IV, and 2000, p. 206). The characteristically German musical notation here features "Hufnagel" neumes (so named after the nails in a horseshoe). These notes would have been well understood at Nonnberg: the abbey became known in the early modern period for the nuns' spectacular musical abilities (see Lawatsch Melton, 2010, pp. 270-74).

Manuscripts known to be used (and especially those potentially copied and illuminated) by nuns are less common than those from male milieu. Even fewer, moreover, reach the market with this manuscript's combination of outstanding features: not only is it delightfully illuminated, nearly fully noted, and elegantly bound, but it is also connected to a particular group of women – the nuns of Nonnberg – and even with specific women within that community at different times. Together, these elements make this manuscript a rare and beautiful witness to processions and the role of music in the spiritual lives of women at one of the oldest and best-known convents in the western world.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

"Kuenburg (Adelsgeschlecht)"

[https://www.sn.at/wiki/Kuenburg_\(Adelsgeschlecht\)](https://www.sn.at/wiki/Kuenburg_(Adelsgeschlecht))

Official Website of Nonnberg Abbey

<http://www.nonnberg.at/>

"Pfäffinger (Adelsgeschlecht)"

[https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pfäffinger_\(Adelsgeschlecht\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pfäffinger_(Adelsgeschlecht))

"Processions," *Celebrating the Liturgy's Books*

http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/manuscripts/processions_mass.html

University of Salzburg Special Collections, Examples of Illuminated Manuscripts

<http://www.ubs.sbg.ac.at/sosa/webseite/hsabb.htm>

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