

# LES ENLUMINURES

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## Choir Book for the Office and the Mass

In Latin, illustrated manuscript on parchment and paper (later addition) with musical notation

Italy (Rome?), c. 1450-1475

*i* (paper) + 1 (paper) + 169 + 4 (paper) + *i* (paper) folios on parchment, contemporary foliation in red ink in Roman numerals, *i-xxxiii* (*xxv-xxxiii* on leaves with modern foliation ff. 4-12 and *i-xxiii* on leaves with modern foliation ff. 146-169), modern foliation in pencil, 1-170, 1-4 (printed addition), lacking at least seven leaves (collation *i*<sup>8</sup> [+1, -1, -2, -3, -6, -7, -8, a leaf added in the seventeenth century at the beginning, lacking three leaves before f. 2 and three leaves after f. 3, with loss of text] *ii*<sup>10</sup> [-10, lacking one leaf after f. 12, with loss of text] *iii-xi*<sup>10</sup> *xii*<sup>14</sup> [a singleton in the beginning of the quire] *xiii-xv*<sup>10</sup> *xvi*<sup>2</sup> *xvii-xviii*<sup>8</sup> *xix*<sup>9</sup> [a quire of 8 and a singleton; the quire of 8 is misbound with the last four leaves now preceding the first four leaves of the quire]), horizontal catchwords, ruled in brown ink (justification c. 230 x 160 mm.), written in black ink in Gothic bookhand (*textualis*) on a varying number of lines, ff. 2-3v in single column with six staves and six lines of text on each page, rastrum 25 mm., ff. 4-10 in single column with seven staves and seven lines of text, rastrum 20 mm., f. 10v in single column with nine staves and nine lines of text, ff. 11-12 text written in two columns on 33 lines on each page, f. 12v music in two columns with seven staves and seven lines of text on the page, ff. 13-145v in single column with five staves and five lines of text, rastrum 23 mm., text-only pages with 15 lines of text, ff. 146-170 in single column with seven staves and seven lines of text, rastrum 20 mm., music throughout written on four-line staves in red ink with square musical notation, rubrics in red, capitals touched in yellow, very fine 1- to 2-line initials alternating in red with purple penwork and in blue with red penwork, the penwork of the larger initials is very elaborate and fine, including fish-motifs (f. 166), EIGHT LARGE PARTI-COLORED INITIALS in red and blue with very fine penwork decoration, the added printed section on paper at the end (4 folios) has black square musical notation on red four-line staves up to eight staves to page, rastrum 17 mm., text printed in red and black, stains and signs of use, cropped near the text and penwork decoration on a few pages, in overall very good condition. Bound in the late fifteenth or the sixteenth century in brown calf over wooden boards, covers blind-tooled with triple fillets forming a frame that encloses a crossed X, five handsome brass bosses on each cover, spine with four raised bands, brass clasps and leather straps that attach to brass pins on the back cover (leather expertly replaced in modern times), green silk place markers, front pastedown a reused parchment leaf from a fifteenth-century manuscript (mentioning book 4, chapter 51 in of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*), stitching loose and book block broken in places, leather slightly worn on the spine and edges, otherwise in overall excellent condition. Dimensions 364 x 263 mm.

Fifteenth-century Choir Books are relatively rare on the market. This handsome volume is quite beautiful, embellished with large initials decorated with fine penwork flourishes, providing new material for studying Italian Renaissance book illumination. The textual contents of the manuscript are equally fascinating, for it contains the full office for the feast of St. Mary of the Snows, referring to a miraculous snowfall on August 5, 358 that led to the building of the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome.

## PROVENANCE

1. The style of the decoration and the script allow us to localize this manuscript in Italy around the third quarter of the fifteenth century. A more precise localization by style alone is challenging, because in the second half of the century the penwork style found

in Abruzzi and Rome spread to Tuscany, in part through the beautiful work of Guiniforte da Vimercate (for comparison, see the pattern-book with designs for penwork borders and initials signed in 1450 by Guiniforte da Vimercate, now in Bloomington, Indiana, The Lilly Library, Indiana University, MS Ricketts 240, and two signed Choir Books made in Ferrara, Alexander 1994, p. 213).

However, the liturgical contents suggest that the manuscript was made in Rome. The manuscript includes extensive chants for the feasts of St. Augustine (ff. 84-101) and St. Mary of the Snows (ff. 4-12). The entire office for the feast of St. Mary of the Snows, "in festo nivis," is included with the texts of the nine lessons. These contents suggest that the manuscript was made for use in Rome by canons regular of the Order of St. Augustine in a church dedicated to S. Maria ad Nives. (We are grateful to Professor Francesca Manzari for her help with the localization and dating).

2. The numerous amendments and additions to the text show that the volume was still in use in the seventeenth century, perhaps even in the eighteenth century.
3. Acquired on February 4, 1998, by Dr. Detlef Mauss (1943-2009), a lawyer and book collector based in Wiesbaden in Germany; see his neat, penciled signature and embossed stamp on the front flyleaf. For Mauss' personal account of his collection, which was especially strong in incunabula, see Mauss, 1996.

## TEXT

ff. 1-170, Noted antiphons, hymns, Mass introits, versicles and responsories, including accompanying texts for the most important Offices; text as follows:

f. 1rv, [added in the seventeenth or eighteenth century (a singleton on paper); the beginning of the chant is on the verso and the continuation on the recto, *In commemoratione Beate Marie virginis in Sabato*]; incipit, "Beata Mater et intacta Virgo Gloriosa regina Mundi intercede pro nobis ad Dominum. Magn. ... Sentiant omnes tuum juvamen celebrant tuam sanctam festivitatem. ps: Mag."

ff. 2-3, [Noted antiphons for an Office of the Virgin Mary, beginning imperfectly], incipit, "///dit odorem sanctitatis. ps. Domine Dominus. a. Leva eius sub capite meo, a dextera illius amplexabitur me. ps. Laudate. a. Nigra sum sed Formosa ..." // ending imperfectly (lacking 3 leaves in the beginning and 3 leaves at the end of this quire);

ff. 4-12v (original foliation in red xxv-xxxiii), [Office for the feast of Saint Mary of the Snows, with noted antiphons, nine lessons, a hymn and a prayer], *In festo nivis. Ad matutinum Invitatorium*, incipit, "Sancta maria dei genitrix virgo"; [f. 12v, Mass introit for the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, ending imperfectly (lacking one leaf at the end)];

This Office has been moved from its original place; it was presumably placed here, in the beginning of the book, because it was the most important Office celebrated at the church where this manuscript was used.

ff. 13-51, Noted hymns for the Temporale from Advent to Corpus Christi;

ff. 51-73, Noted hymns for the Sanctorale for the feasts of the Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle (Jan 25), Cathedral of St. Peter (Feb 22), Invention of the Cross (May 3), St. Michael, Archangel (Sept 29), Nativity of John the Baptist (June 24), St. Peter and St. Paul (June 29), St. Mary Magdalene (July 22), St. Peter's Chains (Aug 1), St. Lawrence (Aug 10), Assumption of the Virgin (Aug 15), St. Augustine (Aug 28), All Saints (Nov 1), St. Catherine (Nov 25);

ff. 73-83v, Noted hymns for the Common of Saints, for apostles and evangelists, one and several martyrs, for confessors pontiffs and non-pontiffs, virgins, and the dedication of a church;

ff. 84-101, Noted antiphons, versicles and responsories for the feast of St. Augustine;

ff. 101-145v, Noted antiphons, versicles, responsories and a few hymns for the liturgical year, Temporale and Sanctorale, including the feasts of St. Stephen, St. John, and the Holy Innocents;

ff. 146-170, (original foliation in red i-xxiv; leaves bound out of order in the last quire), Noted Mass introits, including the feasts of Epiphany, Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, Assumption of the Virgin, Nativity of John the Baptist, St. Mary of the Snows, St. Andrew, *commune confessoris non pontificis*, and St. Lawrence; these leaves would originally have preceded the leaves with the office for the feast of Saint Mary of the Snows (modern foliation 4-12);

f. 170, [originally blank, added in the seventeenth century], incipit, "Sancti Dei omnes, intercedere dignemini pro nostra omniumque salute".

Printed section added at the end on paper (of slightly smaller size):

ff. 1-4v, [Noted antiphons for specific feasts in Temporale and Sanctorale, including the feasts of St. Andrew and the Invention of the Cross], *Ne ob pauca quaedam, in iis quae ad Cantum ecclesiasticum pertinent, immutata, perturbatio aliqua divini cultus publicis ecclesiis afferatur, posita est ratio Cantus in illis servandi, quae suis etiam locis aptari poterit in libris Chori, ut sequitur, . . .*, [ending with instructions printed in black on f. 4v], incipit, "Cum etiam aliquae antiphonae et Responsoria alio ordine disposita sint, quam antea fuerant; in cantu idem ordo servetur, qui et in hoc Breviario ... in tono hymni Iesu nostra redemptio, ut in Ascensione Domini."

## ILLUSTRATION

Eight large parti-colored puzzle initials mark the beginnings of offices on the feasts of: f. 4v, Saint Mary of the Snows; f. 149, Christmas Day; f. 151, Epiphany; f. 152v, Resurrection; f. 154v, Ascension; f. 156, Pentecost; f. 158, Corpus Christi; and f. 160, Assumption of the Virgin.

The feast of St. Mary of the Snows, celebrated on August 5, was added to the Augustinian calendar in 1324 (Leroquais, 1932-, I, p. cx). It commemorates the dedication by Pope Sixtus III of the rebuilt Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore, the largest church in Rome dedicated to the Virgin Mary, just after the First Council of Ephesus in 431. The original church had been built in the middle of the fourth century, and its foundation is connected to a legend. A rich Roman patrician John and his wife made a vow to donate their possessions to the Virgin Mary. They

prayed for the Virgin to give them a sign on how to dispose of their property, and on August 5, in the middle of the Roman summer, snow fell on the summit of the Esquiline Hill, one of the famous Seven Hills of Rome. Following instructions by the Virgin given to them in a vision, the couple built a basilica in her honor on the very spot covered in snow. The legend became popular in the fourteenth century, and the Basilica started to be referred to as Santa Maria delle Nevi (or, in Latin, Sancta Maria ad nives). An altarpiece depicting the miracle of the snow was painted for the church of Santa Maria Maggiore by Masolino da Panicale between 1428 and 1432 (today in Museo di Capodimonte in Naples). It is important to note that before the year 1568, when the feast was added to the Roman Calendar, the feast was only celebrated in Rome, first only in the Basilica Santa Maria Maggiore itself, and, from the fourteenth century onwards, in all the churches of the city of Rome.

Both the format and the textual contents of this volume are distinctive. Choir Books, very large manuscripts designed to be read by many members of the choir at once, are among the most common musical manuscripts surviving from the later Middle Ages and Renaissance (and indeed, much later, since this genre was copied well into the eighteenth century). Our manuscript, while certainly a large manuscript, is smaller than many extant Choir Books, which tended to grow ever larger as time went on.

Textually, it is unusual in including texts both for the Mass and for the Divine Office. More commonly these two liturgical occasions were copied in separate volumes. The main Choir Book for the Divine Office is the Antiphonal or Antiphonary. As its name implies, the Antiphonal includes the antiphons, as well as the other sung portions of the Divine Office, the invitatories and responsaries; some Antiphons also include Office hymns (the Psalms were usually copied in a separate volume). Graduals include the sung portions of the Mass; these include texts that are proper to the Feast (the Introit, Gradual, Alleluia, which is replaced by the Tract during penitential seasons, Offertory and Communion). Our volume originally began with a series of Mass introits (the only Mass texts in the volume). These were followed by Office texts, including the complete Office of Our Lady of the Snows, hymns, texts for the Office of St. Augustine, and a small selection of other Offices for the liturgical year. These contents suggest that our manuscript was copied as a special supplement to a church's more comprehensive Choir Books.

## LITERATURE

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

Cantus Planus

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

Latin chants of the Mass and Divine Office from the Gregorian repertory

<https://gregorien.info/en>

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