

# LES ENLUMINURES

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## Choir Book for the Office and the Mass

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment with musical notation  
Northwestern Italy (Genoa), 1580 (dated)

*i + 96 folios on parchment, contemporary foliation in brown ink, presumably 1-96 (mostly cropped), modern foliation in pencil, 1-96, complete (collation i<sup>2</sup> [front flyleaf + f. 1] ii-xxiv<sup>4</sup> xxv<sup>3</sup>), no catchwords or signatures, ruled in brown ink (justification 288 x 200 mm.), written in black ink in Gothic bookhand (textualis) in single column with six staves and six lines of text on each page, rastrum 23 mm., music written on four-line staves in red ink with square musical notation, rubrics in red, capitals with penwork flourishes, including small floral and foliage motifs and faces, 1-line initials in red with areas of parchment left in reserve for decoration, 2-line initials (the height of 1 line and 1 staff) mainly in blue against square backgrounds decorated with floral motifs in red penwork, or in red against grounds in dark pink penwork, the bodies of the initials are decorated with reserve areas, a large initial (the height of 2 lines and 2 staves) in blue of the same floral style on f. 1, accompanied by a border executed in brown ink with yellow and brown wash in the upper and lower margins of this opening page representing floral ornament and two stags presenting a coat of arms, the colophon on f. 96 presented within a frame executed in brown ink and yellow wash representing a piece of parchment with curled edges in trompe-l'œil, stains and signs of use, parchment undulated and quite yellow throughout with natural holes and defects, in overall excellent condition. CONTEMPORARY BINDING of brown calf over wooden boards, covers blind-tooled with a frame made of several fillets and two bands with foliage motifs, corners decorated with fleurons and fleurs-de-lis, in the center the initials "M / SSS / T" in gilt, spine with four raised bands, blind tooled with fillets, a pair of leather straps and brass clasps that attach to brass catches on the back cover, the lower strap/clasp/catch lacking, front and back pastedowns are reused parchment leaves from a large-format early-fifteenth-century manuscript of De consolatione philosophiae by Boethius with a marginal commentary, leather very worn and with many worm holes, but sewing in good condition. Dimensions 416 x 288 mm.*

Manuscripts by and for females, such as this handsome Choir Book, are of special interest. We learn from its detailed colophon that the volume was made for Sister Maria Salome Scalia, to be used by novices of the Augustinian convent of Saint Thomas the Apostle in Genoa (manuscripts made expressly for use of the novitiate are rare). Expressing the pride of its maker the colophon is presented in an impressive trompe-l'œil frame. Preserved in its original binding, this manuscript is a valuable witness to the flourishing musical culture of female convents in early-modern Italy.

## PROVENANCE

1. The colophon on f. 96 reads: "Ut noviciae monasterii sancti Thomae ordinis sancti Augustini, haberent ubi se in canticis spiritualibus exercerent: veneranda S(oror) Maria Salomae scalia pro suaque devotione, hunc librum describi curavit: et frater Antonius Carmelita de <Cremona? > nutu dicte Sororis ad Dei laudem scripsit: anno Domini M. D. lxxx ['l' rubbed out]. Laus Deo Amen," which translates as: "So that the novices of the monastery of Saint Thomas, of the Augustinian order, would have somewhere to practice spiritual singing, the venerable Sister Maria Salome Scalia (and also for her own devotion) had this book copied; and Brother Antonius Carmelita from Cremona (?) wrote it at the suggestion of the said sister and in praise of the Lord, in the year of our

Lord 1580. Praise to God. Amen."

Only one Augustinian female convent in Italy was dedicated to St. Thomas, that of S. Tommaso Apostolo in Genoa, Liguria (cf. "Conventi Agostiniani Femminili," Online Resources; and see the discussion below). The decorated border in the lower margin of the opening page, f. 1, includes a monochrome coat of arms with three chevrons presented by two stags.

2. Private collection.

## TEXT

[First unnumbered leaf, blank, but ruled];

This blank leaf is part of the first quire, but it has been left unnumbered, in order to follow the contemporary foliation, visible on ff. 2, 18, and so forth.

ff. 1-19v, [Chants for the Mass on the feasts of St. John the Baptist, St. Augustin, St. Stephen, St. John the Evangelist, Holy Innocents, and Saturday within the Octave of Christmas,, beginning with the Mass introit for the feast of John the Baptist], incipit, "De ventre matris mee vocavit me Dominus nomine meo ...";

ff. 19v-79v, Antiphons for the liturgical year, Temporal and Sanctoral intermixed, from the antiphon "Puer Iesus proficiebat" for the third psalm in the second Vespers on Sunday in the Octave of Christmas, celebrating the Holy Family, and concluding with the antiphons "O beatum virum cuius anima paradisum possidet" and "O beatum pontificem, qui totis visceribus diligebat Christum Regem" for the feast of St. Martin on 9 November (ff. 76-79v);

The Sanctoral cycle includes chants for the feasts of St. Lucy, St. Agnes, Conversion of St. Paul, Peter and Paul (the rubric mentions only Peter for the Magnificat antiphon "Tu es pastor ovium" at first Vespers on this feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul), St. Agatha, St. Peter's Chains, St. Augustine, St. Monica, and St. Martin;

ff. 79-96, Antiphons for the Common of Saints: apostles, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and the dedication of the church, ending with the antiphon "O quam metuendus est locus" for the dedication of the church and the responsory "Beate mater et in(n)upta virgo gloriosa regina mundi intercede pro nobis ad dominum. Enovae"; [Concluding on f. 96 by the colophon transcribed above, see Provenance].

This Choir Book was made for Sister Maria Salome Scalia at the Augustinian convent S. Tommaso Apostolo in Genoa (we are grateful for the help of Professor Marc Smith in identifying the destination of this manuscript). Another, slightly younger "Suor Maria Scalia" from Catania in Sicily, contemporary to the Italian Jesuit missionary Luizi La Nuza (1591-1656) may have descended from the same family (see Frazzetta, 1708, p. 89).

The large initials in this manuscript are extremely regular and may have been executed with stencils. Those in blue are painted with a beautiful thick azure paint with a luxuriously matte surface, creating a delightful three-dimensional effect on the page. The backgrounds to these

initials are decorated with a variety of leaves, and some small fruit, in free hand with red or pink ink. When the initial is on the first line, the rectangular frame of these backgrounds is topped with a handsome ornamental pediment of leaves and flowers extending to the top margin. Very similar penwork decoration and script are found in a contemporary Choir Book made for another female convent in Genoa in 1590, *Les Enluminures TM 948* (Online Resources), which also includes a colophon inscribed, just like the colophon in our manuscript, on a piece of parchment painted in trompe-l'œil, stating it was made in "Anno Millesimo quingentesimo Nonagesimo" (1590). The delicate penwork decorating the capitals and initials in our manuscript provides an important new source for studying the development of manuscript ornament in the late sixteenth century in Northern Italy.

The importance of religious communities of women in the social history of Italian cities has been well-documented (see for instance, Reardon, 2002, Strocchia, 2009, and Sperling, 1999 in the Literature). A remarkably large percentage of the female population of Italian cities, especially noble women, lived in convents. Colleen Reardon has estimated that about ten percent of Siena's women lived in convents in 1575; by the middle of the seventeenth century this increased to about twelve percent (Reardon 2009, pp. 18-19). And female convents played an important role in the history of music; in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many of the most skilled female musicians lived in convents in Siena, Milan, Bologna, Rome and other Italian cities (see e.g. Kendrick, 1996, Monson, 1995, and "Music by Nun Composers in Lombardy," Online Resources for the seventeenth-century). The reinforced *clausura* removed nearly all contact between the nuns and the outside world after the Council of Trent in 1563, emphasizing the role music played in their lives. It was literally through their voices that these nuns could reach outside the walls of their convents. Our manuscript, whose owner can be identified as Sister Maria Salome Scalia and her sisters, Augustinian novices of S. Tommaso in Genoa in 1580, provides important new material for studying life and music in female convents in Renaissance Italy.

## LITERATURE

*Antiphonarium Romanum ad ritum Breviarii, ex decreto sacros[ancti] concilii Tridentini restituti Pii Quinti pontificis marimi jussu editi et Clementis VIII auctoritate recogniti, ea omnia continens, que tum ad divinum officium decantandum, cum ad religiosorum commodum, necessaria sunt...*, Venice, 1614.

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#### ONLINE RESOURCES

Conventi Agostiniani Femminili (Associazione Storico-Culturale S. Agostini)  
<http://www.cassiciaco.it/navigazione/monachesimo/femminile/monasteri.html>

Les Enluminures, TM 948

<https://www.textmanuscripts.com/medieval/antiphonal-choir-book-141354>

"Music by nun composers in Lombardy"

<http://cappella-artemisia.com/nun-composers-in-lombardy/>

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>

TM 1270