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Ordo ad consecrandum virginum [Order for the consecration of nuns]

ca.1370

1 vol. (0.1 linear foot)

Call no.: MS 1060



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Read collection overview

Founded in 1067, the Benedictine convent of San Pier Maggiore was an ecclesiastical center of medieval Florence, and socially one the city's most prestigious religious houses for women. A Gothic church was completed at the convent in 1352, featuring an elaborate multi-paneled altarpiece by Jacopo di Cione. The convent remained active until its razing in 1784.

A utilitarian, but ritually significant work, this manuscript contains the text and music used in celebrating the consecration of nuns at the Benedictine convent of San Pier Maggiore. The acanthus border on the first folio suggests a mid-fourteenth century date of origin, though likely prior to the commissioning of Cione's Coronation of the Virgin altarpiece.

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Background on San Pier Maggiore



Ordo ad consecrandum virginum

The Benedictine convent of San Pier Maggiore was an ecclesiastical center of medieval Florence, and socially one the city's most prestigious religious houses for women. Founded under the Abbess Ghisla Firidoli in 1067, the convent was said to have been built on the site of a fifth century church built by the first Bishop of Florence, Saint Zenobius, but its significance can best be judged by one of its key rituals. From at least the thirteenth century, each newly-consecrated Bishop of Florence spent the first night after his ceremonial entrance into the city at the convent during which the abbess placed a ring on his finger in a symbolic marriage of church and convent. Florentines referred to the Abbess of the convent as the "bride" of the bishop.

A large triple-aisled Gothic church was completed at San Pier Maggiore in 1352, featuring a high altar above which a twelve-paneled altarpiece by Jacopo di Cione was installed in 1371. Commissioned by the powerful Albizi family, the altarpiece was one of the largest and most elaborate produced in fourteenth century Florence, featuring The coronation of the Virgin and scenes from the life of Saint Peter who, in one panel, holds a model of the church. The majority of Cione's masterpiece is now on display in

the National Gallery in London.

Remodeled and eventually rebuilt in 1638, the church was declared unsafe in 1784 following the collapse of a non-weight-bearing column during further renovation. Alleging that the structural integrity of the church had been compromised, Grand Duke Leopold seized the opportunity to reduce ecclesiastical influence in the region and ordered the church to be demolished.

Scope of collection

A utilitarian, but ritually significant work, this manuscript contains the text and music used in celebrating the consecration of nuns at the Benedictine convent of San Pier Maggiore. The acanthus border on the first folio suggests a mid-fourteenth century date of origin, though likely prior to the commissioning of Cione's Coronation of the Virgin altarpiece.

The humble binding, is a late fourteenth- or fifteenth-century (likely original) blind-tooled brown calf over wooden boards, with four brass bosses on each cover, two leather thongs with clasps (one missing), and two catch-pieces in the form of a pointed trefoil on the front cover. Overall dimensions: 253 x 180 mm.

i + 16 + i folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil, complete (collation i-ii8), catchword on f. 8v, ruled in brown ink (justification 160 x 117 mm.), written in grey ink in a round Gothic bookhand (southern textualis) on 20 lines, music on four-line red staves, rastrum 18 mm., 2-line pen-flourished initials throughout, one 2-line champie initial in gold on a painted blue and pink ground and a full foliate border in colors and gold, including a roundel with the Virgin and Child in the beginning of the volume, text written in grey ink rubbed in various places due to frequent use over the centuries, text in red ink intact throughout. Suffering wear and surface abrasion over the years, the manuscript was periodically retouched for legibility, including a nineteenth-century overpainting of the rondel of the Virgin and some strengthening of grey text.

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Les Enluminures, Dec. 2018.

The Virgin's declaration (fol. 1v) places the manuscript at the Benedictine convent of San Pier Maggiore: "secundum regulam sanctissimi Benedicti in hoc monasterio qd est constructum i honorem beatissimi apostoli Petri maioris... domini .N. dei gratia episcopi Florentini, et domine .N. abbatisse et aliarum sororum." Stylistically, the acanthus border on fol. 1 suggests a date of late fourteenth century, perhaps coinciding with the commission of Jacopo de Cione's Coronation of the Virgin altarpiece for the newly rebuilt church.

Less certainly, the manuscript is likely to have remained in active use at San Pier Maggiore until the destruction of the convent in the eighteenth century. In places where the grey ink has rubbed out, the text and music have been re-entered later.

Other formats available

The volume has been digitized and may be [viewed online through SCUA's digital repository](#). [Credo](#).

Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, December 2018.

Language:

English

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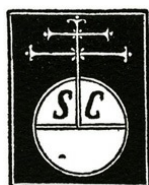
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