

# MUSICA SECRETA

## Mother, Sister, Daughter

SOUTHAMPTON, ENGLAND

VIRTUAL CONCERT

PREMIERE: MONDAY, MAY 23 | 12pm

### TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

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#### Missa de beata Virgine

Anon: Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare MS 761, c. 1495  
HE, VM, VC, YE, KH, CT, KW, AK, CW

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison.

Gloria in excelsis Deo. Et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis. Laudamus te. Benedicimus te. Adoramus te. Glorificamus te. Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam. Domine Deus, Rex cœlestis, Deus Pater omnipotens. Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe. *Spiritus et alme orphanorum Paraclite*. Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris. *Primogenitus Mariæ Virginis matris*. Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostrum. *Ad Mariæ gloriam*. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis. Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, *Mariam sanctificans*. Tu solus Dominus, *Mariam gubernans*. Tu solus Altissimus, *Mariam coronans* Jesu Christe. Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

#### Vespers of St Lucy

Anon: Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare MS 759, c. 1480  
Vespers psalm antiphons 1-4 and Magnificat antiphon,  
Feast of St Lucy  
HE, VM, VC, YE, KH, CT, KW, AK, CW

1. Orante sancta Lucia, apparuit ei beata Agatha, consolabatur ancillam Christi.
2. “Lucia virgo, quid a me petis quod ipsa poteris præstare continuo matri tuæ?”
3. “Per te, Lucia virgo, civitas Syracusana decorabitur a domino Jesu Christo.”
4. “Soror mea, Lucia virgo, deo devota, quid a me petis quod ipsa poteris præstare continuo matri tuæ?”
5. Tanto pondere eam fixit spiritus sanctus, ut virgo domini immobilis permaneret.

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.

Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will. We praise Thee. We bless Thee. We adore Thee. We glorify Thee. We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory. O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father almighty. O Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son. *O Spirit and kind comforter of orphans*. O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father. *First-born of the Virgin Mother Mary*. Who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Who takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. *To the glory of Mary*. Who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For Thou only are holy, *sanctifying Mary*. Thou only art the Lord, *ruling Mary*. Thou only art most high, *crowning Mary*, O Jesus Christ. Together with the Holy Ghost in the glory of God the Father. Amen

1. As Saint Lucy prayed, the blessed Agatha appeared unto her, and consoled the handmaiden of Christ.
2. “O virgin Lucy, why do you ask of me what you can so easily obtain for you mother?”
3. “Through you, O virgin Lucy, the city of Syracuse shall be made glorious by the Lord Jesus Christ.”
4. “Lucy, my sister, you, virgin consecrated to God, why do you ask of me what you can so easily obtain for your mother?”
5. With such power did the Holy Spirit fix her to the ground that the virgin of Christ remained immovable.

## **Virgo Maria speciosissima**

Votive prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary

AK (tr viol), HE, VC, CT, KH, CW

Virgo Maria, speciosissima,  
coelorum regina,  
triumphatrixque nobilissima,  
fons rivus, ros et lira,  
rosa liliium, dux melodia,  
norma decus, flos et via.

Virgo Maria, preciosissima,  
stella maris praefulgida  
candor, virtus, et omnia,  
tu parisi in saecula salvatorem. Alleluia.

### *Secunda pars*

Virgo Maria, virga Iesse florida,  
nostra mater et domina,  
Virgo Maria, mater patris et filia,  
nos quaesumus aure pia  
exaudi, Virgo Maria.

## **Avés point veu la malheureuse**

Marguerite de Navarre (1492-1549):

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, ms fr. 24298,

Les Dernières œuvres de la reine de Navarre... (c. 1550)

VC, AK

*Autre sur le chant: «Avez point veu la peronnelle?»*

Avés point veu la malheureuse,  
Que tous ennuis viennent chercher,  
Qui de nul bien n'est desirouse,  
Et ne veult de joye approcher?

Ne la cherchez point en la plaine  
De propre delectation;  
Elle s'en va sur la montaigne  
De toute tribulation;

Le rossignol, ny la callandre,  
L'estourneau, la pie et le jay  
Ne font point là leur chant entendre,  
Ne aussy le doux papegay.

Et en lieu de douce musique  
Sont reynes et chauves souris,  
Et à son pleur melancolique  
Prent plus de plaisir qu'en son ris

Virgin Mary, the most special,  
Queen of heaven,  
She who triumphes, and most noble  
Source of rivers, the dew and the banks  
Rose, lily, the leader of the melody,  
the standard of grace, the flower and the way.

Virgin Mary, most precious,  
Star of the Sea, outshining  
brightness, strength, and all things,  
you brought the Saviour into the world.

### *Secunda pars*

Virgin Mary, the flowering branch of Jesse,  
our mother and mistress,  
Virgin Mary, mother and daughter of the Father,  
we beseech that your holy ear  
may listen, Virgin Mary.

*To the tune of "Avez point veu la peronnelle?"*

Have you ever seen the unhappy one  
for whom all the troubles come,  
who is desirous of no good  
and does not want to draw near to joy?

Don't look for her on the plain  
of her own delight;  
she goes off to the mountain  
of all tribulation.

Neither the nightingale, nor the lark,  
the starling, the magpie, and the jay  
ever make their song heard,  
nor also the sweet popinjay.

And in place of sweet music  
are foxes and bats,  
and at her sad weeping  
they take more pleasure than in her laugh.

Mais sy Dieu tout bon la dellaisse  
En ce rocher plus dur que fer,  
Tristesse, qui son cueur abaisse,  
Le menera jusqu'en enfer.

En luy trouve telle armonie,  
Que d'homme et d'oyseaux fuit les chants;  
Du monde veult estre bannie,  
Pour estre avec luy seule aux champs.

### **Aen mijn Suster Betken**

Martha Baerts (d. 1560): The Hague,  
Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1713 F 33:4 (1579)  
Melody: Souterliedekens (1540) XCIX  
HE, CW

*Op die Wijse: wel hem de Godes vrede staet*

O Godt ghy zijt mijn Hulper fijn  
verlost my van de eewige pijn  
O Heere wilt my bewaeren,  
voor den Draec met zijn scharen.

Die verleyders quellen my so seer  
om my te trecken van Godes leer  
die en wil ick niet ghelooven,  
want sy soecken my te verdooven.

Mijn Vrienden doen my ooc vermaen  
dat ick soude mijn Geloof afgaen,  
O neen dat wil ick behouwen,  
totter doot al sonder flouwen.

Doe seyden sy al metter spoet,  
daeromme sult ghy inder hellen gloet  
dat eewige Vyer beerven,  
het Rijcke Godts sult ghy derven.

Doe seyde ic haer met koelen moe,  
dit Oordel hoort den Heere toe,  
hoe derft ghy dat uut spreken,  
het quaet sal hy wel wrecken.

Doe seyden sy du snoode Beest,  
in Oudenaerde is noyt geweest,  
gheene so quaet bevonden  
ban sulcken boosen gronden.

Al versmaet my de werelt quaet,  
die Heere is mijn toeverlaet,  
ick hoope hy sal my stercken,  
ende crachtich met my wercken.

But if the God of all good abandons her  
in this rocky place harder than iron,  
Sadness, who debases her heart  
will lead her to Hell.

In him she finds such harmony,  
since she flees from the songs of men and birds,  
She wants to be banished from the world  
to be with him alone, in the fields.

*To the tune: Blest he, who has the peace of God*

O God, thou art my Helper good,  
reserve me from eternal pain;  
O Lord, I pray thee to protect me  
from the Dragon and his hosts!

The tempters torment me so much  
to separate me from God's creed;  
but yet, believe them I will not,  
for to ruin me they seek.

My Friends, too, do admonish me,  
that my faith I should renounce;  
Oh no! to that I will hold fast,  
up until death - I will not flag!

Next they said, with sharp impatience:  
"For that you will in hell's hot glow,  
earn that everlasting Fire,  
And God's Kingdom you'll forgo!"

I answered them, in spirit calm:  
"Such Judgement is the Lord's alone.  
How dare you utter loud such thoughts?  
Most surely evil he'll avenge!"

Then they replied: "You lowly Beast!  
In Oudenaard' there's never been  
anyone so wicked found  
with such an evil core!"

And should the evil world despise me,  
the Lord, he will my refuge be.  
I trust that he will strengthen me  
and work in me so powerfully.

Die dit Liedeken heeft gemaect  
by die Blindeleiders is sy geraect  
sy en brochtense niet gevanghen  
maer quam van haer selfs gegangen.

The one who this Song did write,  
arrived at those Leaders Blind;  
not as a captive was she brought,  
but of her own free will she came.  
--(transl. Hermina Joldersma and Louis Grijp)

### **Mater Christi cooperto capite**

Anon, attr. Juan Anchieta (1462-1523):  
Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare MS 760, c. 1520  
Contrafact of "Rex autem David" Antiphon,  
Summer Histories, Kings  
KH, KW

Mater Christi cooperto capite incedens,  
lugebat filium, dicens:  
Jesu Christe, fili me, fili mi Jesu Christe,  
quis mihi det ut ego moriar pro te, fili mi  
Jesu Christe?

The mother of Christ, went with covered head,  
mourning her son, saying,  
"Jesus Christ, my son, my son, Jesus Christ!  
who will grant me that I might die for you, my son,  
Jesus Christ!"

### **Vespere autem sabbati**

Anon, attr. Leonora d'Este (1515-1575):  
Musica quinque vocuum ... materna lingua vocata (1549)  
Magnificat antiphon, Vespers, Easter Sunday  
HE, VM, YE, KH, CT, AK, CW

Vespere autem sabbati,  
quae lucescit in prima sabbati:  
venit Maria Magdalene, et altera Maria,  
videre sepulchrum. Alleluia.

Now late on the Sabbath,  
as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week,  
came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary  
to see the sepulchre. Alleluia.

### **First Vespers of St Clare**

Anon: Biffoli-Sostegni manuscript, Brussels, Bibliothèque  
des Conservatoires royaux, MS 27766 (1560)  
Psalm antiphons, hymn, and Magnificat antiphon for First  
Vespers, Feast of St Clare  
[Hymn source: Vědecká knihovna v Olomouci, M.IV.6]  
HE, VM, VC, YE, KH, CT, AK, CW

1. Iam sanctae Clarae claritas  
splendore mundi cardines  
mirifice complevit  
cuius perfecta sanctitas  
in devotas propagines  
velocius excrevit.

1. Now, with the brightness of Saint Clare  
the world's structure with splendour  
is wonderfully completed;  
whose perfect sanctity  
quickly emerged  
in promised green shoots.

2. Mundi totius gloriam  
ut Christum lucrifaceret  
vile quid arbitrata  
finibilem laetitiam,  
ne infinitam perderet,  
semper est aspernata.

2. In order to gain Christ,  
she thought the glory  
of the whole world  
cheap and of limited happiness,  
and so not to lose eternity,  
it was forever disdained.

3. Haec in paternis laribus  
puella sacris moribus  
agebat, caelibatum.  
Quam praedocebat unctio  
sine magistro medio,  
cor Christo dare gratum.

4. Sacra spirat infantia  
magni regis connubia  
virtute promereri  
moxque Francisci studia  
sectatur et in gratia  
conatur exerceri.

5. Hanc et papa Gregorius  
Fovit et Innocentius  
patrum more piorum,  
quam Alexander inclitus  
ascripsit motus caelitus  
catalogo sanctorum.

6. Concinat plebs fidelium  
virginale preconium,  
matris Christi vestigium  
et novitatis gaudium.

Novum sidus emicuit,  
candor lucis apparuit,  
nam lux, que lucem influit,  
Claram clarere voluit.

Sub paupertatis regula  
Patris Francisci ferula  
docta Christi discipula  
luce respersit seculam.

Spretis nativo genere,  
carnis et mundi federe,  
clauditur velut carcere  
dives superno munere.

Virginis huius merito  
laus Patri sit ingenito,  
gloria Unigenito,  
virtus summa Paraclito. Amen.

7. Duce caelesti numine  
Matre favente virgine  
Clara, re; Clara, nomine  
Spreto paterno limine  
Spreto nativo sanguine

3. She, maiden of holy mores,  
lived celibate  
in her father's house.  
When she was anointed  
without a priest's assistance,  
she freely gave her heart to Christ.

4. A holy but infant spirit,  
marriage to the King of Kings  
was only to be earned by virtue.  
Soon she seeks studies with Francis,  
and in grace  
she tries to practice.

5. Pope Gregory and Innocent,  
the pious fathers,  
cherished her;  
as illustrious Alexander entered [her],  
in a heavenly gesture,  
in the catalogue of the saints.

6. Faithful people sing  
of the famous virgin,  
who walks in the steps of the mother of Christ,  
and the joyful news.

A new star burned,  
the brightness of the light appeared,  
for the light, that flows into the light,  
He wanted Clare to shine bright.

Under a rule of poverty,  
and Father Francis's crook,  
the learned disciple of Christ  
sprinkled the world with light.

Rejecting the family,  
the flesh and world together,  
to be locked away as if in prison  
is a rich and supernatural gift.

The merit of this Virgin,  
Praise be to the Father,  
Glory to the only Son,  
and to the highest Holy Spirit. Amen.

7. Lead thou, by the heavenly divinity,  
the mother and the favoured girl,  
Bright [Clare] by nature, bright [Clare] by name.  
Spurning her father's threshold,  
spurning her native blood,

Est in sanctorum lumine  
Ac beatorum agmine  
Gloria tibi Domine.

she is in the holy light  
with the blessed congregations.  
Glory to you, O God.

## Lauds and Second Vespers of St Clare

Anon: Biffoli-Sostegni manuscript, Brussels,  
Bibliothèque des Conservatoires royaux, MS 27766 (1560)  
Psalm antiphons for Lauds and Second Vespers; hymn, and  
Magnificat antiphon for Second Vespers, Feast of St Clare  
HE, VM, VC, YE, KH, CT, AK, CW

1. Post vitae Clarae terminum  
Clara cum turba virginum  
ad caelos evolavit  
suum complexa Dominum  
regnat in regno luminum  
quo Dominus regnavit.

1. After the end of Clare's life,  
Clare, with the multitude of virgins,  
flew to the heavens  
into the Lord's embrace.  
She reigns in the realm of light  
where the Lord has reigned.

2. Agnes, ad agni nuptias  
ad aeternas delitias  
post Claram evocatur;  
ubi per Syon filias  
post transitas miserias  
aeterne iubilatur.

2. After Clare, Agnes was called  
back to her wedding with the Lamb,  
to the eternal delights,  
when by the daughters of Sion,  
after passing of misery,  
she was celebrated eternally.

3. Sicut sorore praevia  
Christi passi vestigia  
sectatur gaudens cruce  
sic dum haec signis rutilat  
Agnes post ipsam vigilat  
Deus ad te de luce.

3. Like her sister before her,  
she was led in Christ's suffering footsteps  
rejoicing in the cross.  
Thus while the stars twinkle,  
Agnes, after [Clare] wakes,  
to you, God, at daybreak.

4. Honorat Christi dextera  
per sanitatum munera  
virginis mausoleum,  
sanat morbos et vulnera,  
ut benedicat opera  
quae fecit Deus, Deum.

4. She, at Christ's right,  
by the healing gifts  
of the tomb of the virgin;  
she heals diseases and wounds,  
and blesses works that God made,  
and honours God.

5. Laudans laudare studeat,  
In laudem semper prodeat  
Plebs ista salvatoris  
Quam tanta ditat sanctitas,  
Non cesset ipsa civitas  
A laude conditoris.

5. Praising strives to praise  
advances ever in praise  
this saviour's people,  
to her whom holiness has so enriched  
this community itself will not cease  
its founder's praise.

6. En praeclara virgo Clara  
regnat in regno luminum  
quam amasti desponsasti  
Jesu, corona virginum.

6. So the illustrious virgin Clare  
reigns in the kingdom of light;  
when you loved him, you were betrothed.  
Jesus crown of virgins!

Mundo spreto, corde laeto,  
Francisci magisterio  
carnem terit et te quaerit  
Jesu nostra redemptio.

Per te solem parit prolem  
sanctarum gregem pauperum,  
quas tu ditas et maritas  
conditor alme siderum.

Puritate, paupertate  
mater et eius agmina  
tu sectantur, imitantur  
O gloriosa Domina.

Finit cursum, scandit sursum  
Claret multo prodigio  
annotatur, comprobatur  
in caelesti collegio.

Virgo pura, nostri cura  
fac tibi sit in curia  
sint optata per te data  
beata nobis gaudia. Amen.

7. Salve sponsa Dei  
virgo sacra planta minorum  
tu vas munditie  
tu previa forma sororum  
Clara tuis precibus duc nos ad regna polorum.

The world, having been rejected; the heart, having  
been made happy; through the office of Francis she  
sheds her flesh and seeks you,  
Jesus, our redemption.

Through you [Mary], who gives birth to the child-sun,  
the flock of the poor female saints,  
whom you enrich and marry,  
creator of the stars.

By purity, by poverty,  
the mother of her flock;  
we follow and imitate you,  
O glorious Lady.

She finished the journey, she climbed upwards,  
she shone through many miracles,  
inscribed and approved  
in the heavenly college.

Pure virgin, our guardian,  
make yourself to be in our house.  
Your gifts are to be desired,  
our blessed joy. Amen.

7. Hail bride of God,  
sacred virgin, flower of the Minorites;  
you, the spotless vessel;  
you, the predecessor of the body of sisters,  
Clare, with your prayers, lead us to the heavenly realm.

## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

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The lives of women in Renaissance Europe, as in so many other cultures and at other times in history, were shaped by their family ties: every path they might pursue would be defined by whose daughter, sister, or mother they were, whether in the city, at court, or in a convent. By and large, they also all had the same role models for the most virtuous female life: women of the Old Testament, the Virgin Mary, and the saints. Women learned to be women from the Bible and liturgy, and from the communities of women around them. Storytelling was, then as now, a direct way of connecting the lived experiences of listeners with the lives of holy (and unholy) women; and could be both a captivating and a collective way of retelling the stories to each other.



The program is dominated by music ostensibly from two Italian convents, Santa Lucia in Verona, and the Florentine San Matteo in Arcetri. Santa Lucia's alleged musical glory may have past by the time San Matteo's was in full swing. While there is no incontrovertible documentation linking the late 15th-/early 16th-century choirbooks now held in the Biblioteca Capitolare in Verona (numbered 758-761) with Santa Lucia, both their repertoire and the illuminations in the most sumptuous of the books point to a Benedictine convent dedicated to Saint Lucy. The *Missa de Beata Virgine* is a Kyrie-Gloria pair, in which the Gloria includes the *Spiritus et alme* tropes – short passages of additional text which insert Mary directly into the mass liturgy. In MS.761 it is adorned with illuminations of Saint Lucy and Benedictine nuns, clustered around a choirbook and singing a Kyrie. The polyphonic settings of the psalm antiphon texts of the *Vespers of St Lucy* from

759 (the earliest book in the group), is freely composed in a style that Canadian scholar Julie Cummings calls “the community motet.” The simplicity of the setting allows its story to be heard clearly: a dialogue between Lucy and St Agatha, in which Lucy prays to the saint to heal her mother, who suffered from a “haemorrhagic illness.”

The polyphonic antiphons from Verona are almost unique in the Renaissance repertoire, for there appears to be only one other complete set of Vespers psalm antiphons, also for a female saint: Clare, founder of the Second Order of St Francis. Curiously, it, too, is found in a convent manuscript, MS 27766 of the Bibliothèque des Conservatoires Royaux in Brussels. Dated 1560, the Biffoli-Sostegni manuscript is so called after the nuns whose names are embossed on the leather bindings: Agnoleta Biffoli and Clemenzia Sostegni. My recent research shows that it originates in San Matteo in Arcetri, the home of Suor Maria Celeste Galilei, daughter of Galileo Galilei – who in 1630, four years before her death became responsible for teaching the novices plainchant and for the day-to-day running of the choir. It is almost certain that she would have used this manuscript, as it would have reverted to the convent on Clemenzia Sostegni's death some time after 1606.

The *Vespers of St Clare* are more extensive than Lucy's, with two separate liturgies. The settings are stylistically consistent with imitative equal-voice polyphonic works of the first half of the sixteenth century, exploiting dissonance and sounding parallel intervals, and they are written expressly for four skilled high voices. Clare's office tells the story of her and her sister Agnes; how Clare was determined to take holy vows; how she established her order, and eventually recounts her death and that of Agnes soon afterwards, the sisters eternally watching over the community they created.

Even in spaces where formal compositional skills were lacking, Renaissance women found ways to adapt music to tell their stories, often by using “contrafacts” – new words to existing tunes or even motets. *Mater Christi cooperto capite* is found in one of the Veronese manuscripts, MS.760, which probably dates from between 1520 and 1530. The motet, now attributed to



Juan Anchieta (1462-1523), was copied as *Rex autem David*, but the words “Rex autem David” and “Absalon” have been pasted over with “Mater Christi” and “Jesu Christe.” David’s grief is turned into the Virgin’s grief over the body of her dead son, creating the musical equivalent of a *Pietà*.

The two songs in vernacular languages come from women at opposite ends of the social scale from each other, but united in their reformist views. Marguerite, Queen of Navarre (1492-1549), was a prolific poet and composer of spiritual songs. *Avés poinct veu la malheureuse*, sung to the traditional tune *La peronnelle*, has forty-one verses and describes the fate of she who clings to misery and turns away from God’s grace: it is like a Hilaire Belloc cautionary tale, full of imagery of wild animals and terrifying landscapes.

Martha Baerts (d. 1560), directed her fourteen-verse song, *Aen mijn Suster Betken* to the daughter of Lady Soutken van den Houte. Lady Soutken, Martha’s employer, was beheaded in November 1560 for her Anabaptist beliefs, Martha was executed alongside her. Martha recounts the story of her own arrest, and urges her listeners to remember she went to her death willingly. Martha’s song is also sung to a borrowed tune: *Wel hem de Godes vrede staet* (itself borrowed from the secular song *Een meisje had een ruiter lief*), which is found in the 1540 collection *Souterliedekens*.

Suor Leonora d’Este was a gifted musician, and we have included two works attributed to her. One, *Vespere autem sabbati*, was published anonymously in 1549. It tells the story of the women running to the tomb at dawn on Easter morning – Mary Magdalene and the “altera Maria,” Mary Salome, sister of the Virgin Mary. The other, the Marian prayer *Virgo Maria speciosissima*, was published anonymously in 1543. It may be a student work demonstrating mastery of specific techniques, as it incorporates the opening phrase of the three-voice *Mater patris et filia* by Antoine Brumel (c.1480-after 1512) near the beginning of the second part, and it also has a three-note *soggetto ostinato* in the Cantus part.

## Notes on the performance

We have chosen a variety of timbres and instrumentations to reflect changing uses over a nearly a century of music. Organ accompaniment appears to have been almost ubiquitous in convents, and we have used it liberally here, sometimes with the viol providing the Bassus alone. In *Virgo maria speciosissima*, a treble viol is used on the *soggetto ostinato*, as the part would have been quite wearing to sing. The Veronese mass and Vespers are accompanied by viol and bray harp, both taking the Bassus in the mass, and sharing the untexted lines in the Vespers. A double harp is used for the solo motet and the Clare Vespers 2. The vernacular songs have been arranged by the musicians, both with only selected verses from otherwise very long poems.

Some transposition has been necessary to bring the pieces within the ranges of the ensemble’s current singers. However, we chose not to transpose the *Vespers of St Clare*, as they seem intended to exploit the shimmering sound of three very high soprano voices. In order that this altitude might not become wearing to the listener (in liturgical use, these antiphons would have been interspersed with lengthy psalm recitation), we chose to include a doxology on the appropriate psalm tone.

For detailed information on the sources and suggestions for further reading, see [musicasecreta.org](http://musicasecreta.org).

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