



Ricketts 89 (recto)

9. Antiphonal

Italy (possibly Florence), ca. 1400

Ricketts 89

1 leaf; 64x38cm. (39.3x24cm.); vellum

One historiated initial, 11.2x12cm.

The large size of this single folio from an antiphonal (or choir-book) was required by the way the book was used. Choir members stood around a single book and all sang from it, making it imperative that the text and musical notation be on a grand scale to be legible at a distance. Because of its size and the length of the music to be included, this leaf would probably have originally belonged to a two or three-volume antiphonal. Here seven lines of Gregorian chant are punctuated by a large historiated initial, two staves high, containing a miniature of the Annunciation. The rubric, "*Missa de beatissima virgine Maria tempore adventus. Introit,*" indicates that the text is the opening prayer for the Common Mass of the Virgin said during Advent, the four-week period before Christmas. In the ducti of certain letters, the parchment has been eaten through by the ingredients of the ink. Musical notation continues on the verso.

The initial "R" frames an interior scene which shows a concern with facial modelling and realistic rendering of hair and drapery folds. Gabriel kneels in a heavy white robe and holds a tubular lily stem with three blossoms in his left hand. His right hand gestures toward the seated Virgin whose arms are crossed over her breast as she reads from a Book of Hours. The iconography is extremely common throughout Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, not only in manuscripts, but in panel painting as well. Painters and illuminators often had a close working relationship with artists such as Fra Angelico (1387-1455) who worked in both media and executed this particular scene both in monumental painting (Cortona, Museo Diocesano del Gesù) and in manuscripts (Florence, Museo San Marco, Missal No. 558). The influence of large-scale painting on Florentine miniaturists is reflected in the monumentality seen in the figures (Salmi, 24). Such weightiness and plasticity is apparent in the solid figures on the Lilly leaf. These standard elements remained common well into the mid-fifteenth century, as seen in the many Annunciations painted by Filippo Lippi (1406-1469).

The olive flesh tones with dark hatched shadows indicate By-

zantine influence. The burnished gold haloes are rimmed in red. These Byzantine influences recall the Florentine frescoes by Cimabue (1200-1285), which perhaps gave Florentine manuscripts a harsh, plastic style (Salmi, 24). The Ricketts 89 miniature bears similarities with an antiphonal leaf in Florence by an artist working in the manner of Cimabue (Florence, Museo San Marco, cor. G., folio 51) in its facial features and figure style. There is also an awkward understanding of perspective in the architectural elements in both. However, the modeling of the drapery in the Lilly manuscript is far less linear suggesting a later date. The voluminous drapery style of the angel's robe recalls that of the early fourteenth-century Florentine artist, Giotto (1267-1337).

A three-dimensional border fluidly envelops the page with broadly painted overlapping patches of color. The pale mauve, blue, green, and red bird and foliate forms are detailed with gold paint and delicate white, gold, and yellow tracery overlays. The Ricketts 89 border compares with other central Italian examples, most notably from fifteenth-century Florence. Common features include: broadly painted overlapping acanthus leaves in vibrant colors with the negative areas filled in, bright azure grounds in the interiors of initials, the use of gold in initial decoration, and gold teardrop shapes outlined in black. The grouping of three spheres in clusters is commonly seen in Florentine works. The playful use of birds and animals hidden in the leaf design is also in the Florentine tradition, for instance in an antiphonal in Florence (San Marco Museum, cor. S.S., folio 35; see Salmi, pl. xviii), where a similar rectangular frame with concave indentations encloses the initial contour.

PROVENANCE

Sold by Sotheby, London to Quaritch, April 1919; acquired by C.L. Ricketts from Quaritch, 1919; Lilly Library, 1961

N.E.B./S.vonD.T.