

St. Anne in Renaissance Music

Devotion and Politics

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Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	[page viii]
<i>List of Tables</i>	[x]
<i>List of Examples</i>	[xi]
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	[xiii]
<i>List of Abbreviations and Conventions</i>	[xvii]
1 Mary's Mother: Devotion, Politics, and Music	[1]
2 Heritage and Progeny in an Office for St. Anne	[26]
3 Of Widowhood and Maternity: La Rue's <i>Missa de Sancta Anna</i>	[66]
4 Devotion and Letters: St. Anne in Pre-Reformation Wittenberg	[104]
5 A "Divine Favor" at the French Court: In Pursuit of a Motet for St. Anne	[143]
6 Devotion without Borders: The Afterlife of <i>Celeste beneficium</i>	[176]
7 The French Royal Trinity, Biblical Humanism, and Chanted Mass Propers for St. Anne	[212]
Postlude	[247]
<i>Appendix A</i>	[251]
<i>Appendix B: Complete Text of the Mass for St. Anne</i> (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1035)	[261]
<i>Notes</i>	[271]
<i>Bibliography</i>	[317]
<i>Index</i>	[341]

Anna floret ut lilium
In summi regis curia,
Thronum adepta regium
Cum immortalis gloria,
Inter matronas rutilans,
Ut sol mundum illuminans.

(MR6, AH 25.19)

Anne blossoms like a lily in the highest court of the king, having obtained the royal throne with immortal glory. Like the sun lighting the world, she is the one shining among mothers.

Anna floret ut lilium, the sixth Matins responsory from a widespread versified office for St. Anne, brings forth in song a rich variety of suggestive images for the intent listener. St. Anne, the apocryphal mother of the Virgin Mary, is celebrated through a series of comparisons that appropriates some of the vocabulary of Marian symbolism. Anne is first compared to a lily, widely understood as signifying the Virgin's undefiled purity. She is also situated allegorically within an imperial court, "having obtained the royal throne with immortal glory." This regal imagery co-opts another attribute of her illustrious daughter, who held the epithet "Queen of Heaven" (*Regina caeli*). The responsory closes by casting St. Anne as a beacon for mothers, reflective of her popular status as the "Mother's mother" (*Mater matris*). As is well known, she was a guiding light for women wishing to conceive and for those already with children, even surpassing her daughter to some extent as an intercessor for matrons. How did Mary's mother, a woman not mentioned in the New Testament, rise to this lofty status, on par with royalty and well suited to aid in maternity? This study presents several cases from the early fifteenth century to the early sixteenth century that demonstrate the value of musical devotion to St. Anne mainly by female nobles in some of the leading courts in Western Europe of that time. This inimitable Christian saint has received considerable scholarly attention over the past century, but the cultural embrace of her multifaceted character (whether as a wise mother or

powerful progenetrix) has yet to be assessed through the medium of music. The survival of both plainchant and polyphony in her honor indicates that music was an essential component of the devotional life of the nobility and offered an important means of invoking – and indeed, interacting with – the mother of Mary. In focusing on the sonic expressions of devotion to St. Anne in elite court contexts, these cases not only illuminate new ways of understanding Christ's legendary grandmother, a figure known for her remarkable intercessory capacity, but also unveil the values that the saint offered to several unusually powerful noblewomen in this period.

In the history of the Latin Church, the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries represent an intense period of sanctoral devotion, some of which can be attributed to a revived emphasis on salvation. Symptoms of the attention to individual deliverance can be seen at the close of the Hundred Years' War with the growth of clergy and mendicant orders, the rise of confraternities, the economics of indulgences, and the emergence of devotional aids such as the Rosary. These phenomena increased lay anxiety about redemption. Permeating society from the aristocracy to the peasantry, the saints – holy models of Christian living – kept the focus on salvation, providing supplicants valuable intercession with Christ to calm their worries about the hereafter. Saints' lives were retold in widely circulated legends, especially in Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* (*Legenda aurea*) from the mid-thirteenth century, an encyclopedia of saints and feasts that became one of the most broadly disseminated books of the late Middle Ages. Key episodes of saints' *vitae* were also the subjects of visual art. Their *historiae* were further highlighted in the celebration of the Divine Office, which set their lives in poetry and song. Works of polyphony in honor of saints, such as choral motets and themed settings of the Mass Ordinary, were more elaborate musical creations available to wealthy patrons and opened up avenues for imprinting saints' merits in the soundscape.¹ This period of high cultural awareness of soteriological matters gave rise to significant artistic production that served to strengthen the movement.²

As suggested by the floral and royal analogies presented here, St. Anne was a figure validated by association with her daughter Mary, whose role as the most powerful *Mediatrix* of Christianity is well known. Marian devotion gained considerable traction in the late Middle Ages, coinciding not just with the renewed emphasis on salvation but also with the establishment of purgatory, the unknown region of waiting where one's sins that had accumulated on earth could be expiated. Because of her sinlessness, Mary could naturally be called upon to help purify sinful lives, and composers played an important part in supplying patrons with bountiful chant

and polyphony for the Virgin.³ Believers thought that an appeal to the very source of Mary – her mother, Anne – could also help secure the redemption of human souls.

There were even more advantages to venerating Mary's mother. As scholarship has emphasized, St. Anne is polysemic, though her image was anchored by several key character attributes that defined her numerous intercessory capabilities. An impressive matriarch over Christ's extended family, which was known as the Holy Kinship, St. Anne was pivotal in establishing the virtuousness of marriage and the value of progeny.⁴ As *Mater matris*, she was also tapped as an intercessor promoting fertility and aiding in the dangerous experience of childbirth. Given Anne's role as nurturer of the Virgin Mary, Christians further revered her as a master teacher, an advocate for female literacy in particular. Although she appealed to supplicants of all social ranks, St. Anne had a physical connection to Mary and to Christ, as well as to generations of distinguished kin, and this network of relationships attracted the attention of the nobility, whose claims to magnificent antecedents defined their place in society. It is these devotees of St. Anne (especially queens and duchesses) who could request – or were showered with – visual and aural works in honor of the “grandmother saint” to help shape their own images as rulers, in addition to earning her protection.

In *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, Johan Huizinga observed that late medieval art was essentially functional in nature.⁵ The idea of a masterpiece, a piece of “art for art's sake,” was completely foreign to both the artist or composer and his noble patron. Art instead had a job to perform, one that shifted according to circumstances. This principle would be easily grasped if the texts of the music for St. Anne to be studied simply announced their functional intent. But such music does not exist. What remains instead is a body of liturgical music in commemoration of the *Mater matris*, some of it with detectable political undertones. By focusing on this music for St. Anne prepared for some of the most important sovereigns of Renaissance Europe (many of them female), the reader will witness a wide range of sacred genres under consideration. Motets and more extensive polyphonic settings of the Mass Ordinary, along with newly composed plainchant for the Mass and Office, are all represented in this study. These genres are seemingly bound together by their role in the liturgy, the work or duty of the Church in the service of God; however, such works also offer a glimpse of a devotional atmosphere that may also construct or reinforce noble identities in the declamation of rich texts.⁶

Where are the politics in music geared for liturgies? Importantly, the sonic works for St. Anne were both collected by noble houses and sent

as gifts to courts to curry favor, usually in lavish manuscripts.⁷ The music was likely experienced in private liturgies, but it is also possible that these works simply lay in “coffee table”-type volumes for display, still efficacious for fashioning regal self-images. In possession of music for St. Anne, rulers established their own identities by associating with the powerful mother of Mary. The function of the sacred music identified in this study, I argue, transcended its obvious role in the liturgy. It was an emblem of prestige that reflected the values and ambitions of its patrons or dedicatees, mostly women in uncharacteristically powerful positions.

As Roman Hankeln has written, the celebration of the liturgy, particularly services in honor of saints, has typically mediated between religious ideals on one hand and historical reality on the other.⁸ The components of the liturgy that achieved this balance (namely, the variable texts and music) echoed human values and could have political weight, no matter how veiled that weight may be. Of course, nearly all of the items in the Mass and Office were sung, which draws attention to the multitude of chanted texts and their meaning for the recipients of music for St. Anne. Since the fourteenth century, motets in particular – not exclusively bound to the liturgy – developed a reputation as the genre of choice for ceremony and even for political statements, a feature that was carried through at least to the end of the sixteenth century in the music of William Byrd, whose politically tinged motets are well known.⁹ Over the course of the fifteenth century, the so-called cyclic mass, which draws together the texts of the Mass Ordinary into polyphony, became the most ambitious form of composition for cultural elites, eclipsing the motet as the “highest” genre of sacred music.¹⁰ Plainchant too, as will be shown, cannot be dismissed as incapable of performing cultural work toward political ends, despite (or conversely, because of) its pervasiveness and ancient roots.

As much as secular works, sacred music participated in the formation of identities for patrons, sometimes mapping their personal and political concerns onto pieces as communicated by composers. This added subjective layer of meaning and the reception of the music (whether performed in private or in public) intensified what some may perceive as a humble act of devotion. As difficult as it may be for the modern mind to admit politics into the sacrality of the liturgical ritual, this book demonstrates that the boundary between ecclesiastical conventions and secular wishes was as porous as ever in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. It is in this light that the case studies ahead must be viewed to unlock fully the perceived potency of Mary's mother in the soundscape of Western Europe's noble courts. This study endeavors not only to determine those aspects of St. Anne's character that were being proclaimed in the sound world, but

also to address the impact of this music on the rulers who requested, sent, received, or experienced it. Only a few of the nobles under consideration were women named Anne, thus suggesting that devotion to Mary's mother was not as simple as an invocation of a patron namesake.¹¹ The political value surrounding St. Anne undoubtedly extended into the sound world as a complement to – or sometimes in conflict with – the impressions from visual culture and devotional life. In addition to a wide social view of sacred musical settings, materials of their construction will also be investigated, often shedding light on their political capacity, whether it is a musical gesture in plainchant underlining a particular word, a freshly identified cantus firmus that brings a new interpretive dimension to a Mass Ordinary setting, or the network of associations unfolded in a polytextual motet.

St. Anne and Her Family

The Gospels reveal very little about the life of the Virgin Mary, and so it comes as no surprise that her mother, Anne, receives no mention in canonical sources. In this way, Mary's mother survives as a "constructed" saint, as nothing was officially known about Jesus' historical grandmother. However, some details of the life of Anne and her husband Joachim are documented in the second-century *Protoevangelium of James*, which enjoyed widespread circulation in the early Christian world. Responding to the silence in the New Testament on the subject of Mary's childhood, this apocryphal account supplied Christians with minutiae on the Virgin's early life.¹²

According to the *Protoevangelium*, Anne and Joachim, a rich man from the tribe of Judah, lived for many years without offspring and made a vow to God that if granted progeny, they would dedicate the child to the service of God. The righteous Anne and Joachim gave generously of their possessions, keeping only one-third of their wealth for themselves. Another third of their assets was given to the poor, and the remaining third was earmarked for the temple and its servants. While Joachim was at the temple one day, a priest criticized him about his childless marriage. Reflecting contemporary associations of fertility with heavenly approbation, the priest argued that a sterile man should not be in the company of those blessed with children. The humiliated Joachim fled to the desert. There, he was visited by an angel, who announced that his wife would bear an extraordinary daughter named Mary. The same angel then appeared to Anne and proclaimed the glorious news. Anne and Joachim reunited at the Golden Gate of Jerusalem and returned home in anticipation of the divine promise to receive Mary.¹³ This legend of Mary's parents remained strongly in the Christian collective

memory for at least the next millennium and a half, and the figures of Anne and Joachim, if not the particulars of the story, have survived to the present day. Places like Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, a major pilgrimage site in Quebec, Canada, continue to sustain the legend around St. Anne and testify to the power of her intercession.

The chronicle of Anne in the *Protoevangelium* follows a common Hebrew narrative of a barren woman who pledges a long-awaited child to God and then miraculously conceives at an old age. The account most closely resembles the Old Testament story of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, who issued a plea to God at the temple and conceived after remaining childless for a long time. The orthographical and aural proximity in the name (Anna/Hannah) strengthens the analogy between the two mothers. Anne's circumstances may also be compared to those of Sarah, the wife of Abraham from the book of Genesis.¹⁴ The legend also finds a parallel in the New Testament: the angel's announcement of the birth of John the Baptist to Elizabeth and Zechariah echoes the angel's declaration of the conception of Mary to Anne and Joachim.¹⁵ As shown later in this study, the modeling of Anne on the ancient Hebrew mothers was not only reinforced in the texts of musical works but also provided noblewomen – and men – with a potent social use for the saint.

Having no basis in Scripture, the apocryphal life of St. Anne as transmitted in the *Protoevangelium of James* was unacceptable to the Church Fathers, and their disapproval delayed Anne's immediate acceptance into the sanctoral canon.¹⁶ Amid the slow and uneven reception history of St. Anne in the early Middle Ages, one of the Church Fathers, Jerome, was indirectly drawn into the apocryphal legend in his writings on Mary's lineage, specifically in his explanation of the "brothers" of Christ named in the gospels of Mark and Matthew.¹⁷ Jerome assumed Jesus' "brothers" to be the sons of Mary's sisters (i.e., his cousins), and not the sons of Joseph by some other woman.¹⁸ The ninth-century biblical commentator Haimo of Auxerre (d. 853) went a step further, connecting these presumed sisters with women named "Mary" mentioned in the Gospels at the scenes of the sepulcher and the resurrection.¹⁹ His theory gave rise to Anne's "three marriages" (known as the *trinubium*), and the saint was henceforth held up as the mother of the "Three Marys." According to the popular trinubium belief, Joachim must have died soon after Mary was born, so that Anne – already eighty years old in some versions of the legend – could marry her second husband, Cleophas (sometimes called Jacob or James), by whom she bore "Mary Cleophas" (also known as "Mary Iacobi"). Anne then married a third man, named Salome, following Cleophas's death. By Salome, she bore the

third Mary, known as “Mary Salome.” From these three Marys, the theory continued, came Jesus and all six of his “brothers” or cousins named in the Gospels. James the Less, Joseph the Just, Simon, and Jude were positioned as the sons of Mary Cleophas, who had married a man named Alphaeus, while James the Greater and John the Evangelist were said to be the sons of Mary Salome, who had married Zebedee. In this way, Anne became the grandmother to some of Jesus’ most prominent disciples, all members of the Holy Kinship.

Depictions of the Holy Kinship were common in northern continental Europe in the fifteenth century. A book of hours from Rouen dated around the turn of the sixteenth century shows the core members of the Kinship (Figure 1.1). St. Anne and the Virgin Mary (with the Christ Child) occupy a central position flanked by Mary’s two sisters, who hold open books. Four men stand behind the throne, their undifferentiated representation – what Pamela Sheingorn has aptly described as an “awkward clump” – typical of the male figures in Holy Kinship iconography.²⁰ Presumably, the background features an arrangement of Joachim and the husbands of the Three Marys (Joseph, Alphaeus, and Zebedee), though technically one or more of the men could instead be a husband of Anne (Cleophas or Salome).

The theory of the trinubium took some time getting off the ground. Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) for one rejected the idea of Anne’s three marriages.²¹ But Jacobus de Voragine secured St. Anne and the “Three Marys” in the pantheon of holy figures in his *Golden Legend*. By the thirteenth century, a tradition had developed associating St. Anne with Mary’s early childhood, and Voragine followed suit, providing her legend as part of his entry on the Nativity of Mary (September 8). Reflecting a cultural appetite for the lineage of the Virgin in particular, he offered a mnemonic for the reader to keep track of the Holy Kinship, of which Anne and Mary were crucial members:

Anna solet dici tres concepisse Marias,
 Quas genuere viri Joachim, Cleophas, Salomeque.
 Has duxere viri Joseph, Alpheus, Zebedeus.
 Prima parit Christum, Jacobum secunda minorem,
 Et Joseph justum peperit cum Simone Judam,
 Tertia majorem Jacobum volucremque Joannem.²²

Anne is usually said to have conceived three Marys, / Whom her husbands Joachim, Cleophas, and Salome begot. / The Marys were taken in marriage by Joseph, Alpheus, and Zebedee. / The first Mary bore Christ, the second bore James the Less, / Joseph the Just with Simon and Jude, / the third, James the Greater and John the Wingèd [the Evangelist].



Figure 1.1 *The Holy Kinship* from an Anonymous Book of Hours (Rouen, Use of Paris), ca. 1500. Photo: The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. MS M.175, fol. 17v. Purchased by J. Pierpont Morgan (1837-1913) in 1902.

In addition to his validation of Jesus' extended family in the *aide-mémoire*, Voragine took a bolder step of criticizing the evangelists Matthew and Luke for tracing Jesus' lineage through Joseph instead of Mary.²³ The *Golden Legend* did much to raise the status of St. Anne, and she would be celebrated with unusually fervent devotion during the three centuries following.

The details of Anne's legend also circulated in *vitae* across the continent, particularly in the Low Countries and in Germany during the fifteenth century. As believers eagerly soaked up as many particulars on the early life of Mary as possible, the legends accrued new layers of biographical trivia related to St. Anne. In some late fifteenth-century *vitae*, Anne was given a mother named Emerentia, a father called Stollanus, and a sister known as Esmeria.²⁴ The creation of these and other ancestors in this period should give an indication of the fascination not just with the saints but specifically with those related to Christ and his mother. As the genetrix of Jesus and his holy relatives, Anne earned a reputation that extended far beyond that of a local or regional saint. And while veneration of Mary's mother took more than a millennium to gain momentum in Western Europe, the value of the "Mother's mother" in the distinguished company of the Holy Kinship spread rapidly throughout the Latin West after the twelfth century. Urban VI's official papal approval of her feast day (July 26) in 1378 recognized formally the value of Jesus' grandmother whom Christians had been celebrating for years.²⁵

Intercessory Flexibility

It is said that one can't be all things to all people, but Christians deployed St. Anne in a surprisingly broad devotional scope in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period. Her plasticity as a saint with powerful and wide-ranging intercessory capabilities made her an attractive subject of veneration in this period, particularly for women. For more than two decades, visual representation of St. Anne has drawn the attention of scholars, especially those attuned to issues of cultural meaning and shifting reception contexts for the saint. Her principal areas of intercession, right down to her assistance with salvation itself, derived from the intersection of her apocryphal life story and the social dynamics of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Further, she served gendered and nongendered functions alike, well beyond the warm, matronly role that many Catholics assign to her today. A review of St. Anne's polysemic nature and her functional value in

society will lay the foundation for an investigation into her ability to convey political power.

The central event in the life of Mary's mother is of course the conception and birth of her daughter. The topic of St. Anne often calls to mind the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in particular, a raging debate that peaked in the mid-fifteenth century concerning the precise moment of the Virgin's attainment of sinlessness in her mother's womb (a subject addressed more fully in Chapter 4). Recent scholarship, however, has downplayed a long-held view that St. Anne's cult was a direct product of the late medieval controversy over Mary's purity.²⁶ Rather, studies have emphasized that St. Anne had a hand in the "humanation" or "enfleshing" of Christ, because she gave birth to his earthly mother. While Christ's divinity came from God the Father, he owed his physical presence to his mother, Mary, who in turn owed her existence to her mother (and so on). St. Anne, as much as the Virgin Mary, was a reminder of the corporeality of Christ, the "Word made flesh." In addition to his divine qualities, Christ's bodily nature – a "low Christology," as modern theologians are wont to call his humanity – was a prevalent theme in visual art of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, as demonstrated by the countless Renaissance paintings in which Jesus touches his genitals.²⁷ The imagery of the Holy Kinship also went far to capture Jesus' connection to humanity, his grandmother often playing the dominant figure in the "family portrait."

Jesus' physicality and the value of his matrilineage achieved through St. Anne combine in a single iconographic representation known as the St. Anne Trinitarian. Often taking the form of a handheld statue especially popular in the Rhineland, this image features St. Anne holding miniaturized versions of her daughter and grandson in her arms or lap. The German equivalent *Anna Selbdritt* (literally "Anne, herself the third") suggests a subsidiary role for Anne compared to the core figures of Mary and Jesus.²⁸ But the generally oversized mother of Mary is clearly the focal point of the image, ironically making her two glorious descendants seem subordinate to her powerful maternity (Figure 1.2).²⁹ The Anglicized "St. Anne Trinitarian" is a more evenhanded term for this image, though it too fails to capture the idea that Mary and Jesus appear quite diminished in size. The divinity of Christ is hardly in evidence in the St. Anne Trinitarian iconography; rather, the viewer would be attracted to St. Anne as the corporeal source of the Virgin and her most holy son. Together with the Holy Kinship imagery, the St. Anne Trinitarian illustrates the "correction" of Christ's lineage that was issued in Voragine's *Golden Legend*. The image was emblematic of



Figure 1.2 Brabant, Mechelen, Anna-te-Drieën, 1515–24. Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht.

the feminine “power” to produce flesh, potentially resonant with (female) sovereigns in their quests to sustain precious dynasties.

St. Anne’s miraculous conception of the Virgin and her role as progenitrix of a glorious lineage made her a logical intercessor to aid Christian women in fertility and in the act of childbirth, especially given the high rate of infant mortality.³⁰ The creation of such a mediator reflected a cultural need for assurance in matters of fertility and delivery. Mothers-to-be fervently venerated St. Anne along with St. Margaret. In the city of Apt in

Provence (a center of the saint's veneration), the association between St. Anne and women's fertility was enacted in ritual. In the city's cathedral dedicated to the grandmother saint, women placed grapes in the bosom of a statue of St. Anne as a sign of her fruitfulness (and in hopes of their own fecundity); they also flocked to the cathedral to rock a special cradle, which was supposed to promote conception among infertile women.³¹ The appeals to the fertility powers of Mary's mother were also in full force in the Rhineland city of Düren. Not only was it a popular destination for pilgrims seeking the precious relics of the saint, but women wishing to become pregnant also wore "Anne girdles" around their waists.³² These are just a few examples of the kinds of charms and rituals that produced women's physical interaction with St. Anne.

Anne's oversight of women did not cease once the children of these expectant mothers were born.³³ Early modern Christians looked to Mary's mother in particular as a model for raising a family. Again, her apocryphal biography furnished the materials of devotion. Anne was obviously a key player in the childhood of the Virgin Mary, and thus she was absorbed as a protectress of families, especially valuable for the upbringing of children. To some extent, the St. Anne Trinitarian image would have registered this aspect of Anne's patronage, but it was the depiction known as the "Education of the Virgin" that directly showcased Anne in her daughter's formative years (Figure 1.3). An image revealing the saint's tutorial abilities, the "Education" scene features Mary's mother engaged with Mary, who may be shown either as a young child or a teenager. In the scene, Mary usually holds open a book (presumably the psalter or a book of hours) and is sometimes seen pointing to the volume to convey a sense of curiosity for learning. Remember from Figure 1.1 that Mary's sisters held open books, an extension of the core "Education" image, providing another layer of meaning to the popular Holy Kinship icon.

As Pamela Sheingorn and Miriam Gill have independently argued, the iconography of the "Education of the Virgin" did much more than inspire mothers to instruct their children just as Anne taught Mary: the imagery seems to have been a force to promote literacy among women. As it is today, literacy was a form of power during the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and women equipped with the ability to understand written texts – often the nobles of society – could hold substantial intellectual, political, or possibly spiritual advantages in their lives in an otherwise androcentric world. Despite the strong emphasis on females and the campaign for the written word, the "Education" scenes were not widespread and could be found mainly in England. Scholars have explained that the



Figure 1.3 Choir breviary. The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MS Laud Misc. 93, fol. 105v.

absence of Jesus in the image might have caused the constricted reception of the "Education of the Virgin."³⁴ That St. Anne imparted great wisdom, however, was a facet of her sanctity that northern European humanists took up and extolled in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, especially those involved in the formation of urban confraternities honoring St. Anne (*Annenbruderschaften*). To humanists such as Rudolf Agricola, Arnold Bostius, and Cornelius Aurelius, the saint represented a classic mother-goddess (*Magna mater*) and wise teacher, two persuasive attributes for humanists in pursuit of ancient wisdom.³⁵

Rounding out St. Anne's role in family life is her easily overlooked patronage of the institution of marriage. Virgin saints such as Barbara, Margaret, and Katherine had long been revered as models for Christian women, but during the later Middle Ages, the degree to which women should emulate the lives of these saints came into question, as marriage steadily accrued a positive, unsullied connotation for one's course of life. A particular emphasis on the sacramental definition of marriage (conjugal love as a sign of God's grace) by twelfth-century theologians, together with the rise of the urban patriciate, played no small role in the shifting perceptions of the institution. Yet again, the biography of the thrice-married St. Anne emphatically drives this point home. Her story demonstrated that living a married life was no longer incompatible with living a holy life; she made the once inferior life of marriage as attractive as the life of chastity. It was a thoroughly realistic paradigm for lay women, at least more realistic than her daughter's marriage, because Mary miraculously remained a virgin with Joseph in the conception of Jesus. Along with saints such as Birgitta of Sweden and Elizabeth of Hungary, Anne became one of the venerable "marrying saints," a key protectress of the sacrality of matrimony.³⁶

According to the legend of the trinubium, Anne witnessed the deaths of two husbands to enable her three marriages. Not surprisingly, she could be called on to comfort widows following the death of a spouse. Here too, her biography was in step with cultural norms. Despite the perils of childbirth that awaited medieval and early modern women, husbands typically predeceased their wives, by about a decade on average.³⁷ As a patroness of widows, Anne truly spanned the full arc of a woman's life to a degree that her own daughter could not achieve. One would indeed be hard-pressed to identify a saint who so closely mirrored the experiences of contemporary women and yet ran against the inherited (patriarchal) ideals of feminine sanctity. From a loyal wife and mother to a teacher and widow, St. Anne reflected several core values of the period, seeming to fit the bill at every turn and bringing a sense of empowerment to these sociocultural roles.

And this was just for women. As scholars have been quick to point out, Mary's mother was available to serve nongendered roles in lay devotional life at all levels of society. The embrace of St. Anne by humanists and confraternities has already been mentioned. By the late fifteenth century, more than two hundred urban confraternities in the saint's honor were scattered across northern and central Europe.³⁸ These confraternities often welcomed men and women alike, especially those who were capable of charitable giving, and it was in these institutions that anxiety regarding salvation was cultivated. In these contexts, St. Anne, as progenetrix of the Holy Kinship with a fleshly connection to Mary and her son, held tremendous sway in interceding for these Christians of the merchant and higher classes. Virginia Nixon's monograph on the veneration of St. Anne in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries emphasizes how religious guilds (particularly in the Rhineland) as well as cultural elites (e.g., clerics and humanists) promoted the salvational power of St. Anne, effectively controlling lay piety.³⁹

Mary's peerless mother, the hope of salvation, and the saint's long list of quotidian areas of intercession had economic implications. As confraternities reaped enormous benefits from the saint's patronage, churches took St. Anne as their dedicatee, and countless side chapels emerged in her honor during the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. All were poised to collect endowments and special contributions in honor of the potent mother of Mary. Cities with institutions that hosted relics of the *Mater matris* could also expect economic boons. That some interpreted the legend of Anne as a lesson in financial security and well-being did nothing to slow the devotional deluge. Joachim's wealth was noted in the *Protoevangelium of James*, but another important detail – reiterated often in the Divine Offices for St. Anne – involves the couple's tripartite distribution of their assets (also mentioned earlier) as dutiful servants of God. This purported disbursement of Anne and Joachim's possessions seems to have fueled the notion that St. Anne was to be associated with wealth and could suddenly make one rich.⁴⁰

St. Anne's fashionability as a saint touched almost every aspect of early modern culture, from issues specific to women to aiding in the salvation of souls. As the mother of the most important mother in the Christian faith, St. Anne interceded foremost on behalf of matriarchs, regardless of social rank, from the moment of conception through the raising of a family. As a rare married saint, she conferred legitimacy on the institution of marriage, which, until that time, bore a blemished reputation for those seeking the spiritual high road. Anne's legendary fruitfulness at an old age also made

her a patron saint of woodworkers (trees bearing fruit) and grape growers, as well as a protectress from drought. Seamstresses further revered the saint for her domestic reputation.⁴¹ St. Anne's fanciful biography thus proved to have distinct applications to life during this period.

While one can account for these broad areas of intercession, a profitable direction in studies of St. Anne concerns her appropriation by sovereigns for political purposes. As much as queens, kings, and nobles reached out to the grandmother saint to resolve everyday concerns, several cases reveal how the ruling class in Europe strategically petitioned Mary's mother as a sign of its dynastic ambitions. A brief examination of how politics and devotion intersected in the name of St. Anne is in order. The political repurposing of St. Anne will prepare an investigation into the music composed and compiled in honor of Mary's mother.

The Politics of Devotion to St. Anne

With her intercessory capabilities extending to seamstresses and woodworkers, St. Anne – not unlike other saints – was easily assumed into secular life, which throughout the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance was itself difficult to demarcate from purely sacred experiences. Indeed, it would be anachronistic to try and separate the two, as the distinction between sacred and secular was not articulated during these historical periods and was only recognized as a dichotomy after the seventeenth century.⁴² The invocation of the holy in the service of expressly political displays was commonplace by the fifteenth century but had roots in prior centuries. Consider the coronation tradition of the *laudes regiae* (“the king's praises”), the royal acclamations used at a French monarch's installation mass dating back to Carolingian times. The *laudes* began with a chanted trifold declamation: *Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat* (“Christ conquers, Christ reigns, Christ rules”). Then in the “litany” section of the acclamations, the ceremony called for the king's name to be inserted into the roll call of saints. The orchestrated intersection of the hallowed liturgy with the majesty surrounding the earthly ruler's coronation is both obvious and inseparable. As defender of the French people, the monarch was implicitly the guardian of their faith. He was expected to make good on the title “most Christian King” (*Rex christianissimus*), a formal recognition that the sovereign had a sacerdotal or ministerial role as much as a governing one. His anointing at the royal inauguration further recalled ancient Hebrew ceremonies of kingship and blurred traditionally sacred ritual acts with political theater.⁴³

While there is nothing like the *laudes regiae* in the surviving music for St. Anne, there are still ways to witness a political hue in devotional music in the saint's honor.

Saints broadly mediated between religion and society, sometimes with political force. They were often local heroes who rose to canonical status by their intrepid actions. As holy figures who were considered physically present in their remains, saints' relics were constantly available to Christians and could be acquired by nobles for prestige or even political (and certainly economic) gain. In addition to relics, patron saints of cities protected their people, whose ambitions for the locality rested in the domain of their holy defender. As it concerns St. Anne, the city of Florence is a case in point. Here, the grandmother saint was in fact commemorated for entirely political (and arbitrary) reasons. On St. Anne's then unofficial feast day (July 26) in 1343, a great revolt by the citizens of Florence saw the overthrow of Walter VI of Brienne, a military leader in the city who was championed by the nobility. This defeat began an important period of republicanism in Florentine culture, causing St. Anne, not normally a subject of intense devotion in Italy, to be venerated as a *de facto* custodian of the city, second to its eminent patron saint, John the Baptist. From that decisive day through at least the sixteenth century, July 26 was an official public holiday in the city, considered by one chronicler to be on par with the celebration of Easter.⁴⁴

While the Florentine veneration of St. Anne was an accident of history, the case for mixing politics with Mary's mother grows more simply out of the saint's apocryphal biography, a story of a woman on whom God bestowed momentous privileges. Monarchs and nobles commonly called upon Mary's mother to aid with fertility, a point that does not separate them from their subjects. But it was the perception that St. Anne presided over the noblest of dynasties – the Holy Kinship – that often encouraged the high-ranking members of society to adopt her into their devotional lives. In short, the grandmother saint provided noble supplicants with precious access to an unrivaled lineage, in the process conferring her “royal” attributes on rulers who sought her protection. For any aristocratic family, the conception of a male heir defined the success of a dynasty, and the notion of the Holy Kinship did much to highlight the production of magnificent descendants.⁴⁵

A family portrait of the Habsburgs that Bernhard Strigel painted for Maximilian I in 1515 clearly demonstrates the power of association with the Holy Kinship (Figure 1.4). In addition to depicting the members of the family, the court painter made clear allusions to figures of the Holy



Figure 1.4 Bernhard Strigel, *Portrait of Maximilian and His Family*, 1515. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Kinship. An inscription on the portrait curiously identifies the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian – the central figure of the family – as “Cleophas” and his wife, Mary of Burgundy, as “Mary” (Cleophas), allegorical appellations that actually confuse the analogy within the Holy Kinship. (Cleophas was said to be the second husband of Anne, not a husband of Mary. Recall that Mary Cleophas was the purported daughter of Anne and Cleophas.) Strigel further provided analogical names for Maximilian’s progeny, including the grandchildren (and future emperors) Charles and Ferdinand, discussed in the course of this book.⁴⁶ None of these epithets of course would have

been possible without the grandmother St. Anne, who is strongly implied as hovering over these genealogical allegories. Strigel unmistakably situated Maximilian and his family as honorable descendants of Mary's mother, indeed as members of a privileged heritage.

Representing a physical connection to Jesus and Mary, St. Anne played an unambiguous role as the Holy Kinship's progenetrix. She offered a secure model and untouchable space for noble women (and men) to pursue the goals of a dynasty with the help of a figure who radiated the merits of matrilineage and forged a new archetype for feminine sanctity. Who better to call on to oversee a ruling family than the woman who not only conceived miraculously like her daughter and matrons of the Old Testament but also powerfully presided over an extended family of unparalleled progeny? As much as, if not more than, the Virgin Mary, St. Anne was one to relieve dynastic anxieties that consumed sovereigns especially in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Europe. The value of noble lineage, an idea suggested in the image of the Holy Kinship, may also spring from heightened attention to demonstrating ancestry and proving kinship in the late Middle Ages. As R. Howard Bloch has explained, aristocrats in particular sought to prove their long and distinguished heritage as a sign of their nobility.⁴⁷

To be sure, the exploration of genealogy was entangled in changes to the institution of marriage. In the early and central Middle Ages, marriages between closely related kin ensured that property stayed with a given family. The church, however, discouraged this practice, instead advocating "exogamy," or marriage outside of one's family. Marriage between first cousins or closer blood relatives was considered a violation of this premise. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) formalized this position, although enforcing the decree would remain an ongoing problem, especially in rural areas.⁴⁸ The increasing pressure to substantiate genealogical relationships before marriage thus brought an increased awareness of kinship, with nobility often seeking relatives to preserve dynastic bloodlines. Family continuity was essential at all costs, usually to prevent the passing of a title to another ruling family or branch. As musical artifacts for a variety of Western European sovereigns show, poets and composers participated in this social phenomenon by going to some lengths to establish St. Anne as a woman with an illustrious pedigree.

Noble devotees of St. Anne were given precious access not just to the ancient heritage of the faith, but specifically to a lineage that was both royal and priestly at the same time. These assets were further political insurance for aristocrats who aimed to demonstrate their prestige. The claim to regal and sacerdotal ancestry stems from commentary traditions surrounding

the Nativity of the Virgin Mary. Already a feast bound up with Mary's lineage from the Carolingian era, the Virgin's nativity commemoration received a strong boost in the early eleventh century from Fulbert, a bishop of Chartres, who propagated the view that Mary synthesized two critical strands of lineage from the Old Testament – a royal one from the house of David (of Abrahamic descent) and a priestly one from the house of Levi. According to Fulbert's exegesis, these distinct lines of heritage uniquely converged in the familiar image of the "rod of Jesse" (*stirps Iesse*), an idea that was transmitted in offices for the feast of the Nativity of Mary in Chartres.⁴⁹ The impact of these strengthened filial perceptions was felt in later centuries in the versified offices for St. Anne, which grew out of the Nativity offices. Just one generation away from Mary, St. Anne conveniently rode the coattails of her daughter's outstanding heritage. Virginia Nixon has noted a German office for St. Anne that described the saint's royal and priestly lineage, but more incisive proof can be found in at least four different offices for Mary's mother, which contain phrases linking St. Anne directly to the precious heritage of Jesse (e.g., *virga Iesse*, *stirps Iesse*, and *Iesse plantula*).⁵⁰ The political utility of a figure with access to a doubly impressive royal and priestly heritage was no doubt attractive to sovereigns of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Politics in Music for Mary's Mother

This study seeks to chart the political force of the *Mater matris* through the medium of music, in forms ranging from the simplest of plainchants to opulent settings of the Mass Ordinary inspired and underpinned by melodies for St. Anne. As the preceding pages have suggested, the past century of scholarship has brought unusually high interest in explaining the significance of St. Anne during the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance; however, it has been art historians who have dominated these studies of cultural expression to the saint. At the same time, this is not the first investigation to make mention of Mary's mother in music. Paul-Victor Charland was the first to include the texts of the Divine Office in his study of devotion to St. Anne, extracting examples of the hymns, sequences, and rhymed offices from *Analecta Hymnica* (AH) and categorizing the musical output by monastic order and region. He did not attempt, however, to synthesize and comment on the repertory as a whole, nor is there mention of the music that was set to these texts.⁵¹

Research on musical works honoring St. Anne has also appeared, though in contexts not explicitly including Mary's mother. For instance, Stephen Bonime's archival study of repertory and musicians at the court of Anne of Brittany demonstrates an appeal to Mary's mother in Jean Mouton's motet *Celeste beneficium*, possibly in thanksgiving for the conception of what would become her second surviving child, Renée of France.⁵² (This motet will be examined more thoroughly in Chapter 5.) Working on a later period, Robert Kendrick also noted that Barbara Strozzi's motet *Mater Anna, quisquae personat* for solo soprano reflects not just the patron saint of the work's dedicatee (Anna de' Medici), but also perhaps the archduchess's devotion to the saint in light of her miscarriages, stillbirths, and future efforts to produce an heir at a relatively advanced age for motherhood.⁵³ No broader study has accounted for the social function of the music written for the grandmother saint. This investigation explores for the first time the breadth of meanings and uses of St. Anne specifically in music destined for fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century nobles for political as much as devotional ends.

A complete set of plainchants from a versified office for St. Anne is the center of investigation in Chapter 2. These chants for Mary's mother were a product of the court of King Janus I in Cyprus of French Lusignan descent, and the early history of this office, which has eluded scholars, will be brought to light. More important, the potential meaning of this music, based on a close reading of the office texts, will be explored from multiple perspectives. Indeed, this office, which is transmitted in the so-called Turin Codex (Torino, Biblioteca nazionale, MS J.II.9), would have been encountered by nobles in contrasting circumstances. This source is filled with sacred and secular music to be enjoyed by any court and represents one of the central collections of music from the early fifteenth century because of its comprehensive scope. The compiler of the Turin Codex prominently placed the office of St. Anne in the first fascicle of the manuscript along with an office for St. Hilarion. The extensive chants for St. Anne await interpretation as an expression of dynastic greatness and the promise of offspring in more than one courtly context, namely the Lusignan court on the island of Cyprus (where the music was heard in an early stage), the Avogadro family of Brescia (for whom the Turin Codex was prepared), and the court of Savoy (the apparent final destination of the manuscript).

The same court of Savoy returns to view some three generations later, in connection with musical devotion to St. Anne by Margaret of Austria (1480–1530), the subject of Chapter 3. As a child, Margaret was sent to the French

royal court to be reared by Anne de Beaujeu (i.e., Anne of France) in preparation for marriage to Charles VIII. It was here that Margaret encountered a boy from the Savoyard court (Philibert II), who in time would become the last of her three husbands. Anne of France exposed Margaret to the power of St. Anne at the French court, but it was not until the untimely death of her husband Philibert that Margaret – as sole regent of the Netherlands – would have begun to flee to the *Mater matris* for wisdom and comfort. At her court in Mechelen, likely between the years 1508 and 1514, Margaret received a polyphonic mass for St. Anne from her esteemed court composer, Pierre de La Rue. In each of its five movements, the mass paraphrases a heretofore unknown melody to be identified as a plainchant from an office for St. Anne. The full text set to this melody seems to encode a message about how Margaret understood St. Anne and how the mother of Mary could reenergize the regent's image. Though her profile as a twice-widowed noble in many ways mirrors the legend of St. Anne, the text of the underlying chant, along with other biographical and artistic evidence, suggests that Margaret wanted to portray her “eligibility” for marriage to the political elite of Western Europe.

Margaret's court eventually sent La Rue's mass in honor of St. Anne to Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony and famous protector of Martin Luther. Chapter 4 considers the function of this mass and several other pieces of polyphonic music for St. Anne in the context of the Castle Church of Wittenberg between approximately 1507 and 1519. The Castle Church was the elector's signature institution, one that quickly developed into a major center of Christian devotion in Western Europe during the early sixteenth century. In conjunction with art historical evidence, this chapter shows that St. Anne was revered for her versatility and diplomacy, a direct reflection of the elector himself, known for his evenhandedness as a peace negotiator within the Holy Roman Empire. St. Anne also appealed to both the humanistic and devotional pursuits of the citizens of Wittenberg, and her domestic family-centric qualities reinforced her sanctity in the early stages of the Reformation that occurred in that city.

The French court – the site of Margaret of Austria's first exposure to St. Anne – forms the backdrop to Chapter 5. This chapter highlights a single motet (*Celeste beneficium*) in honor of Mary's mother, written by French royal composer Jean Mouton probably between 1508 and 1511. Dedicated to Anne of Brittany, the twice-crowned queen of France, *Celeste beneficium* served as no ordinary piece of liturgical music. Instead, this motet acted foremost as a devotional vehicle encouraging fertility and progeny for the queen and her second husband, Louis XII, who failed to produce an heir.

The queen's veneration of St. Anne will be shown in the wider context of her devotional life (particularly in prayer books), and the political force of Mouton's motet for the grandmother saint is all but confirmed by the presence of a second related motet (possibly by Mouton's colleague), with which *Celeste beneficium* was sometimes paired in extant sources.

Between 1528 and 1534, Mouton's *Celeste beneficium* reappeared in a set of partbooks, known as the "Palatini Partbooks" (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MSS Palatini Latini 1976–9). These books were compiled by the famous Alamire scriptorium for Queen Anne of Bohemia and Hungary (1503–47), whose husband was the future Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I of Habsburg descent. In this extraordinary collection of music, *Celeste beneficium* was grouped together with other motets expressly for St. Anne, and this section was significantly positioned at the beginning of each of the partbooks. Chapter 6 features the first formal evaluation of this group of works as a whole and proposes how these pieces of music for St. Anne – three of them anonymous – would have resonated with the Austrian Habsburgs in general and with this "other" Queen Anne in particular. Because Anne of Bohemia and Hungary was already blessed with children before the partbooks arrived, the motets for St. Anne could not have functioned as a fertility appeal as in the case of Anne of Brittany; instead, they seem to act as a gesture of thanksgiving for offspring, a vehicle for establishing a royalty identity in fragile political times, and even a point of connection with the northern Christian humanists, so eagerly sought at court in the late 1520s.

Christian humanist theology plays a much stronger role in the final case study presented in Chapter 7, which returns to the French court and draws attention to an overlooked document of musical devotion to St. Anne during the reign of Francis I. Just as the grandmother saint held appeal in Wittenberg even in the advent of the Reformation, she became a figure of interest at the French royal court and took on demonstrable political overtones. In the early stages of the biblical humanist movement in France, the fascination with the Holy Kinship waned, similar to its demise in the north German estates. But the political appeal of Mary's mother remained, thanks in part to the cultural perception of Louise of Savoy, her daughter Marguerite of Navarre, and her son the French monarch Francis I as a kind of "St. Anne Trinitarian" in visual culture. Along with Mary Magdalene, St. Anne further underwent an identity transformation at the hands of biblical humanists, who held unusual sway at the French court (with Marguerite in particular). Although the saint's three marriages came under attack, reformers never abandoned devotion to St. Anne. This concluding chapter

explores a hitherto unstudied set of Mass Proper chants for St. Anne dedicated to Marguerite, the influential sister of the French king and author of *The Heptaméron* (1558). With texts selected from the Old Testament, the *Mass for St. Anne* on the surface presents a plea for fertility, fitting for Marguerite, who did not conceive a child until 1528, well after the likely appearance of the mass (ca. 1518–19). But an underlying political strategy emerges in the mass's loquacious preface, as the anonymous author explains that St. Anne can serve to rally Christian unity, effectively settling internal divisions and allowing Christians to fight against their persistent common enemy, the Turks.

A topical study of music such as this has inherent advantages. As it concerns St. Anne, the transmission of her legend and its political use can be observed in a number of accessible scenarios. Not beholden to a composer or to a particular geography, one is free to explore the multivalent meanings attached to the grandmother saint at some of the most pivotal European courts of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Taking stock of her appearance across disparate court contexts, we are in an auspicious position to compare the musical findings with the interpretations established in other cultural media, modifying the understanding of Mary's mother as it has been received in scholarship.

The evidence examined and the approach taken in this investigation productively expose larger musicological issues. The question of periodization is peripheral to this study but constantly hovers over scholars' identities and pursuits. The music surveyed here covers approximately 1410 until 1530, resisting – despite the book's title – the increasingly uncomfortable labels of “late medieval” and “Renaissance” commonly associated with music produced in this interval. The decision to operate within this chronology is of course a result of the extant music for St. Anne in court circles that can be assembled coherently. This is not to say that there is a lack of music exceeding the limits of the study. From a wider perspective on St. Anne, it is known that devotion to her began about two centuries prior to the early boundary of this study and that veneration of the saint did not slow after the Reformation, contrary to the usual historical narrative.⁵⁴ This study also profitably examines multiple musical genres circulating during this period. This book is framed by chapters on plainchant, from both Office (Chapter 2) and Mass (Chapter 7), defying the familiar privilege given to polyphony by historians of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century music. Some of the interior chapters also discuss how plainchant undergirds pieces of decorative polyphony. As scholarship has increasingly shown, plainchant lost no momentum during the sixteenth century, polyphony still being the

exception of the liturgical day. The versified offices for St. Anne are a source of unrecognized poetic treasures and in some ways can provide the most extensive and immediate insight on the perception of Mary's mother. The reader should sense the balance of plainchant and polyphony in the course of this investigation and should come to the realization that the precise genre of a work (so critical to musicologists) may not reliably indicate how it will function socially or politically. Indeed, the first case study demonstrates the premium put on plainchant – for St. Anne no less – in a manuscript that has overwhelmingly attracted musicologists' attention for the extent of its polyphony. The journey begins in the French outpost kingdom of Cyprus, with a manuscript compiler who prominently positioned chants for Jesus' esteemed grandmother in a prestigious collection of music for a court. This case is an important starting point for illustrating the powerful and multi-faceted role that St. Anne played in the politics of the era.