

London, British Library, MS Royal 8 G. vii [Brussels/Mechelen, c.1513–25]

DISCANTUS CONTRA-TENOR TENOR BASSUS

Dul - cis - si - ma
Dul - cis - si - ma vir - go
Dul - cis - si - ma vir - go

vir - go Ma - ri -
cis - si - ma vir - go. Ma -
Ma - - ri - a,
Ma - ri -

a, mi - tis,
ri - a, mi - tis,
Ma - ri - a, mi - tis,
a, mi - tis,

hu - mi - lis, et pi - a
hu - mi - lis, et pi - a ma - - ter De -
hu - mi - lis, et pi - a ma - - ter De -
hu - mi - lis, et pi - a ma - - ter De -

22

ma - ter De - i, me - mor
i, ma - ter De - i, me - mor
i, me - mor
i, me - mor

27

e - sto me - i, et pro me
e - sto me - i, et pro me Chri -
e - sto me - i, et
e - sto me - i,

32

Chri - stum ex - o
stum, et pro me Chri - stum ex -
pro me Chri - stum
et pro me Chri - stum

36

ra,
o - ra, ex - o -
ex - o - ra,
ex - o - ra,
ex - o -

41

dum mor-tis ve-ne-rit,
ra,
dum mor-tis ve-ne-rit,
ho-ra, dum mor-tis ve-ne-
ra,
dum mor-tis ve-ne-rit,
dum

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rit ho-
ra, ho-
ra.
mor-tis ve-ne-rit ho-
ra, ho-
ra.
rit ho-
ra, ho-
ra.
mor-tis ve-ne-rit ho-
ra, ho-
ra.

Dulcíssima virgo María,
mitis, humilis, et pia
mater Dei,
memor esto mei,
et pro me Christum exóra,
dum mortis vénerit hora.

*Sweetest virgin Mary,
meek, humble, and tender
mother of God,
remember me,
and pray for me to Christ,
when the hour of death comes.*

The British Library manuscript Royal 8 G. vii was produced in the workshop of Petrus Alamire, prolific scribe to the Burgundian court in the Netherlands, in the early part of the 16th century (images of the manuscript and further detail on its provenance can be found in the Digital Archive of Medieval Music, at <https://www.diamm.ac.uk/sources/2032/>). The beautifully illuminated choirbook contains an equally beautiful collection of four-part works, none of which is attributed: the authorship of many of the works by renowned French and Franco-Flemish composers of the High Renaissance has been established from other sources of those works, but more than a dozen of the 35 works are unable to be confidently attributed.

Among the anonymous compositions is this short work, whose text appears to draw elements of a number of other Marian devotions into a metrical and rhyming prayer of preparation for death. Its compositional style is typical of the region and period — until the antepenultimate chord, which fleetingly catapults the listener out of the phrygian cadence to a soundscape half a millennium into the future. While there are no other known sources of this work to enable confirmation of this extraordinary writing, the clarity and accuracy of the rest of this manuscript gives little cause to doubt its veracity.

Editorial Notes:

This edition is set a minor third higher than the original. Editorial accidentals are indicated above the note. Original note values are retained: thus, consistent with 16th-century convention, the C time signature signifies a semibreve tactus. Bar lines are added only to aid reading and direction: 'strong' and 'weak' beats implied by their position should never take precedence over phrasing or word stress. Ligatures in the source are acknowledged with overarching square brackets. Word underlay reflects editorial judgment and has been freely adjusted, given the ambiguity of the source in this regard (although this manuscript is clearer than most others of the period); editorial addition or reiteration of words is indicated in *italic*.