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MUSIC AT A FLORENTINE CONVENT

*The Biffoli-Sostegni Manuscript
and Suor Maria Celeste Galilei*

Laurie Stras
University of Southampton



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Music at a Florentine Convent

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Laurie Stras
University of Southampton

Author for correspondence: Laurie Stras, l.a.stras@soton.ac.uk

Abstract: The Biffoli-Sostegni manuscript, MS 27766 of the Bibliothèque du Conservatoire royal de Bruxelles, is the only volume of sixteenth-century polyphony with a secure provenance in a female convent. Its extraordinary survival is made all the more important by its origin at the Florentine convent of San Matteo in Arcetri, the convent in which Suor Maria Celeste Galilei, daughter of Galileo Galilei, spent the last two-thirds of her life. This Element uses archival sources related to San Matteo to create a historical context for the manuscript's music and the lives of the nuns for whom it was written. Analysis of the music is accompanied by both notated and audiovisual musical examples, performed by the UK all-female early music ensemble, Musica Secreta.

This Element also has a video abstract: www.cambridge.org/EWIM_Stras_abstract

Keywords: Suor Maria Celeste Galilei and music, Renaissance convents, Renaissance music manuscripts, Renaissance nuns and music, Renaissance music in Florence

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