

MASS FOR
CHRISTMAS DAY
.CURRENTES.



The Roman Catholic mass today is, in its main parts, similar to the mass around 1400. It consists of two sets of texts: The Ordinary of the Mass (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei and *Ite, missa est*) are mostly invariable texts sung or recited at all masses throughout the year. Each item of the ordinary can be sung to several different chants, today organized in 18 families or sets of chants known as the Kyriale. Some of these chants can be sung throughout the year, while others are reserved for special feasts or periods. The Proper of the Mass (Introit, Gradual, Alleluia, Offertory, Communion) consists of texts that vary depending on the liturgical feast or day, recited or sung to a chant specific to that text. Additionally, both the ordinary and the proper can be set to polyphonic music, either improvised or composed. Compositions and improvisations can be based on a chant (in the Middle Ages almost always set in the tenor part, which are then called “liturgical tenors”) or composed freely without references to chant.

In this recording, the items for the Proper are all from the mass for Christmas Day, with polyphony by the ensemble members. For the ordinary, we have chosen three medieval compositions without liturgical tenors (Gloria, Credo, Sanctus) and added to them three movements based on chants from Mass IV of the Kyriale, “*Cunctipotens Genitor Deus*” (Kyrie, Agnus Dei, *Ite, missa est*). The traditional choice for Christmas

Day would be Mass II, “*Kyrie fons bonitatis*”. The main reason we have chosen to work with a different mass, is that we wanted to record Matteo da Perugia’s beautiful *Agnus Dei/Ave sancta mundi*, *salus* which is based on the *Agnus Dei* from Mass IV. We wanted to use chants from the same mass for our own compositions of Kyrie and *Ite, missa est*.

Why do we make our own music in a medieval style instead of performing medieval compositions? *Currentes* has, for the last decade, been fascinated by the possibilities of exploring not only repertoire from the late Middle Ages but also different improvisatory practices. Several medieval sources provide glimpses of what seem to be unwritten performance traditions, such as improvised counterpoint or richly decorated melodic lines to existing compositions — so-called diminutions. What would performance practice be like, and how would the music sound, if we took up these invitations from the sources and created the music ourselves? By challenging ourselves to develop new music within medieval frameworks, we offer our concert audiences more of our artistic personality: more risk, more spontaneity, more of our musical understanding, and more of our intuition of what medieval music is or can be — music making as a sort of meta-interpretation. There is also more responsibility: if the music does not convince, there is no composer to blame — only the group.

When preparing for this kind of music making, there is a lot of practice involved, learning and memorizing solutions that work. The process is a mix of copying, composition, memorization, and improvisation. Often, and especially when recording, the result lies somewhere between composition and improvisation, sometimes referred to as “comprovisation”. For some of the settings, we have no notation apart from the plainchant (tracks 1, 10); for some we have planned and notated the rhythm of the tenor in detail (tracks 4, 7); some settings we have notated fully as compositions (tracks 2, 11, 12). In these cases, the compositions are based on motifs and ideas improvised or developed by the ensemble members and revised in rehearsals.

We have had many points of inspiration for our *comprovisations*, most importantly the famous *Codex Faenza*, which contains around 50 intabulations of existing secular and liturgical pieces, with highly decorated cantus parts. This document has informed the way we shape liturgical tenors rhythmically, the way we improvise simple counterpoint, and the way we create rich diminutions (especially tracks 4 and 7). We have also studied a number of liturgical *Trecento cantus firmus* compositions as well as Paolo da Firenze’s counterpoint treatise “*Ars ad discantare contrapunctum*”, a treatise that provides very rudimentary rules for simple

counterpoint. In the following, we provide a short introduction to each of the tracks.

We sing the introit *Puer natus est* first in a free, declamatory rhythm in a (mostly) two-part note-against-note counterpoint. After the doxology (“*Gloria Patri et Filio...*”) we repeat the introit with a florid counterpoints by Ingvill Holter.

The Kyrie is a composition by *Currentes* based on the chant from Mass IV, “*Cunctipotens Genitor Deus*”. The chant is in the lowest voice (tenor), as usual for this repertoire. Each of the sections—*Kyrie eleison*—*Christe eleison*—*Kyrie eleison*— is repeated three times, alternating between instruments and voices.

Gloria Rosetta is a composition by the famous composer Antonio Zacara da Teramo (ca. 1350/60–before 1416). Zacara based his *Gloria*, which survives only in the large manuscript *Bologna Q15*, on the secular song *Rosetta che non cambi mai colore*. The mass movement copies and expands many motives from the secular song, including the characteristic long opening notes in the tenor. For the Gradual, we have rhythmized the chant sung by the tenor and added a few simple counterpoints, especially at cadences, while the fiddle players Anna Danilevskaia and Hans Lub take turns flourishing the chant with diminutions. Tyler Ray sings the psalm verse alone (“*Notum fecit Dominus...*”) and is joined by

the rest of the ensemble in three-part florid counterpoint on the words “*justitiam suam*”.

We sing the Alleluia as a plainchant, divided between the cantor (Tyler Ray) and the choir (all singers).

Credo is a composition by Zacara. As with the *Gloria*, it is transmitted in *Bologna Q15*, but we have chosen to record a version copied into the *Modena Codex* (*Mod A*, *Biblioteca Estense a.M.5.24*). This particular version is richly decorated with diminutions in the cantus part, resulting in a melodically and rhythmically much more complex upper voice than in other known versions. The musicologists Layton and later Stone speculate whether these anonymously added diminutions might be written by, or for, Matteo da Perugia – a singer, composer, and the first *magister capellae* of Milan Cathedral whose almost complete works are transmitted uniquely in *Modena Codex*. (Although his dates of birth and death are unknown, he worked for Milan Cathedral 1402–07 and 1414–1416.) At any rate, this might be one of many indications of performance practices in which musicians could add to what we today would consider the score.

Similar to the Gradual, we have rhythmized the chant of the Offertory, but this time the female singers perform it. Holter adds some simple counterpoints, while Danilevskaia plays a freer contratenor. Gundersen embellishes the chant with diminu-

tions on the recorder, inspired by the style of Codex Faenza.

We do not know the composer of the Sanctus. It is transmitted in the manuscript Ivrea 115, dated to the second half of the 14th century and in a slightly earlier style than the other medieval compositions in this recording. The tenor looks somewhat like a liturgical tenor, but we do not know which it would be. The composition is notable for its use of hoquetus-style complementary rhythms and rhythmic subdivisions in both three and four. The opening bars of the Sanctus directly inspired the opening bars of our Kyrie.

Agnus Dei/Ave sancta mundi salus by Matteo da Perugia is the very first composition in the aforementioned Modena Codex. It is a complex work combining the first part of the Agnus Dei from Mass IV with a Eucharistic poem in five stanzas. Matteo places the chant in the tenor, to be performed in the second of the rhythmic modes (iambic rhythm). The chant is repeated three times, each time with the note values halved. He sets the Eucharistic poem in the cantus and contratenor. These parts are isorhythmic: they perform the same rhythm (talea) four times, but each time with a new melody (color). In the last repetition, the note values are halved. The scholar Benjamin Brand argues that the text might be by the Franciscan friar and cardinal Pietro Filargo of Candia, Matteo's patron, who was later elected Pope Alexander V at the Council of Pisa

in 1409. Brand speculates that the work may even have been composed for the Council.

Following this structurally very complex piece, our version of Communion follows a very simple strategy, transmitted in the anonymous 14th century treatise *Quartum principale* under the category "parallel organum": "let there be four or five men: the first begins the plainsong in the tenor; let the second produce his voice at the fifth; the third with his voice at the octave, and let the fourth; if there is one, place his voice at the twelfth. All of them, in the concordant intervals with which they have begun, will continue the plainchant to the end. But those who are singing together and continuously at the twelfth and the octave should break and flower the notes..."

Exploring this technique, we perform the Communion in parallels fifths, octaves, and twelfths, letting the instruments and the highest voice break off in diminutions whenever they wish.

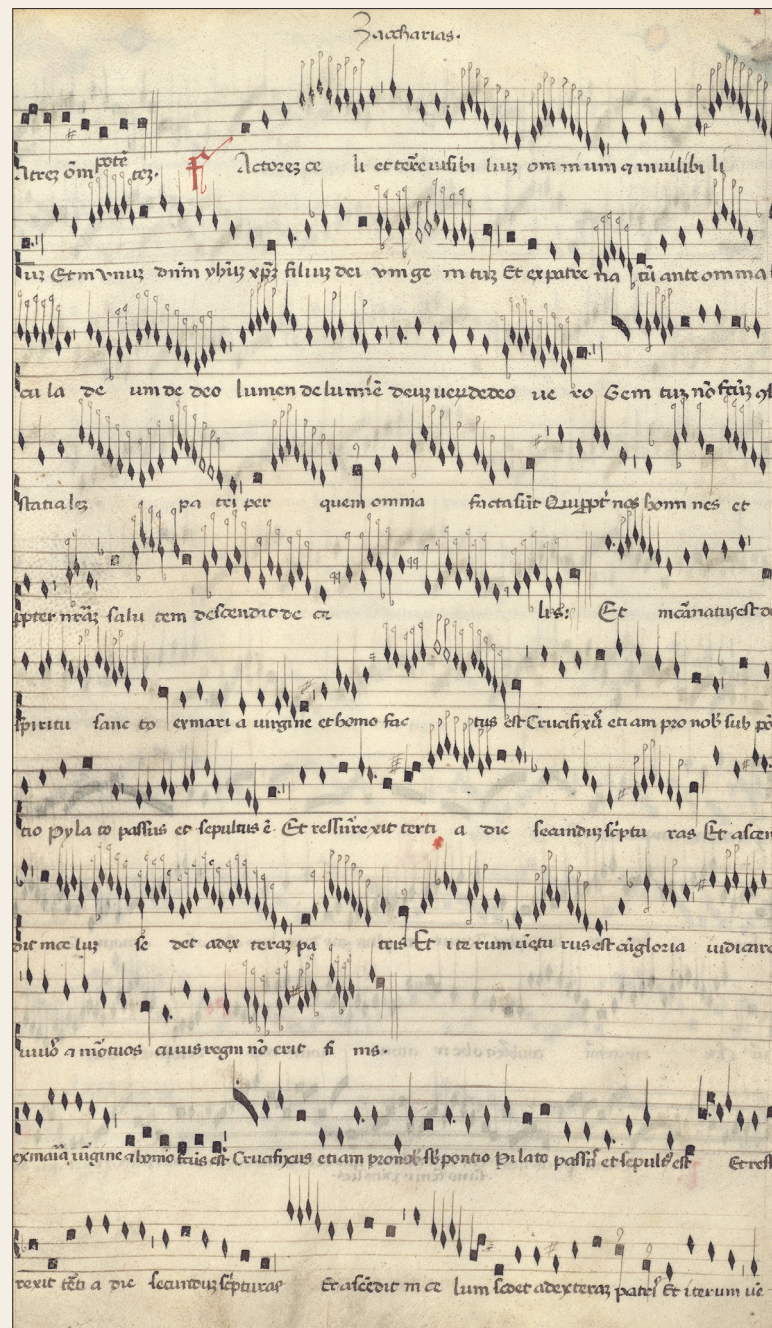
With *Ite, missa est*, we finish the mass with a joyful, istanpita-like setting of the chant from Mass IV, inspired by the famous istanpita *Chominciamento di gioia* from the manuscript London 29987.

We have added a bonus track to the recording: Communion from the Mass for the Blessed Trinity, celebrated on Trinity Sunday, the first Sunday after the conclusion

of the Easter season. In this setting, we wanted to see what happens if we add more voices to a counterpoint than what we find in the *Ars Nova* repertoire. Counterpoint treatises of the time, including the above-mentioned treatise by Paolo da Firenze, provide rules only for two-part counterpoint.

The rules for two-part counterpoint are relatively simple and improvisable, generally moving between perfect consonances (unison, fifth, octave) and imperfect consonances (thirds, sixths). In three-part counterpoint there are no additional rules, but one usually distributes the lines at cadences so that the upper parts cover the fifth and the octave, rather than both singing the same note. In four-part counterpoint, the highest part will almost always double one of the lower parts at the octave, as there are only three possible notes in a perfect harmony.

Parallels are therefore unavoidable, and perfectly normal, in four-part counterpoint of the *Ars Nova*. What if we add a fifth part? That never happens in the *Ars Nova*, but the rules would be the same, resulting merely in slightly more doubling of lines. The Communion *Benedicimus Deum caeli* is a five-part composition by *Currentes* based on experiences from improvised performances of the same Communion, using the same simple principles and borrowing a few motives that occurred in our concerts.



1. INTROIT VIITH TONE	Puer natus est nobis, et filius datus est nobis: cujus imperium super humerum ejus: et vocabitur nomen ejus, magni consilii Angelus. Ps.: Cantate Domino canticum novum: quia mirabilia fecit. Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto. Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.	A child is born to us, and a son is given to us; whose government is upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called the Angel of great counsel. Ps.: Sing ye to the Lord a new canticle; For he hath done wonderful things. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Is. 9, 6. Ps. 97, 1
2. KYRIE IST TONE	Kyrie, eleison. Christe, eleison. Kyrie, eleison.	Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy.
3. GLORIA	Gloria in excelsis Deo. Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. Laudamus te. Benedicimus te. Adoramus te. Glorificamus te. Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam. Domine Deus, Rex caelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens. Domine Fili unigenite Jesu Christe. Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris. Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis. Quoniam tu solus sanctus. Tu solus Dominus. Tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe. Cum Sancto Spiritu, in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.	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, King of Heaven, God the Father almighty. O Lord the only-begotten Son Jesus Christ. O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father. Thou who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Thou who takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. Thou who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For thou only art holy, thou only art Lord, thou only art most high, O Jesus Christ, with the Holy Ghost, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.
4. GRADUAL VTH TONE	Viderunt omnes fines terrae salutare Dei nostri: jubilate Deo omnis terra. V: Notum fecit Dominus salutare suum: ante conspectum genitum revelavit justitiam suam.	All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God; sing joyfully to God all the earth. V: The Lord hath made known his salvation; he hath revealed his justice in the sight of the gentiles. Ps. 97, 3 and 5
5. ALLELUIA IIND TONE	Alleluia. V: Dies sanctificatus illuxit nobis: venite gentes, et adorete Dominum: quia hodie descendit lux magna super terram.	Halleluja. A hallowed day has dawned for us: come ye Gentiles, and adore the Lord; for this day a great light has descended upon the earth.
6. CREDO	Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, factorem caeli et terrae, visibilium omnium et invisibilium. Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum. Et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula. Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero. Genitum, non factum, consubstantialem Patri: per quem omnia facta sunt. Qui propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem descendit de caelis. Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine: ET HOMO FACTUS EST. Crucifixus etiam pro nobis: sub Pontio Pilato passus, et sepultus est. Et resurrexit tertia die, secundum Scripturas. Et ascendit in caelum: sedet ad dexteram Patris. Et iterum venturus est cum gloria judicare vivos et mortuos: cujus regni non erit finis. Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum, et vivificantem: qui ex Patre Filioque procedit. Qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur, et conglorificatur: qui locutus est per Prophetas.	I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. And born of the Father before all ages. God of God, light of light, true God of true God. Begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father: by whom all things were made. Who for us men and for our salvation descended from heaven. And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary: AND WAS MADE MAN. Was crucified also for us: suffered under Pontius Pilate and was buried. And the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures. And ascended into heaven: sitteth at the right hand of the Father. And again he shall come with glory, to judge the living and the dead: of whose kingdom there shall be no end. And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and life-giver; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son. Who together with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified: who spake by the prophets. And one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

	Et unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam. Confiteor unum baptisma in remissionem peccatorum. Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum. Et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.	I confess one baptism for the remission of sins. And I expect the resurrection of the dead. And the life of the world to come. Amen.
7. OFFERTORY IVTH TONE	Tui sunt caeli, et tua est terra: orbem terrarum, et plenitudinem ejus tu fundasti: justitia et judicium praeparatio sedis tuae.	Thine are the heavens, and thine is the earth: the world and the fulness thereof thou hast founded: justice and judgment are the preparation of thy throne. Ps. 88, 12 and 15
8. SANCTUS	Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis. Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Hosanna in excelsis.	Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts. The heavens and the earth are full of thy glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.
9. AVE SANCTA MUNDI SALUS / AGNUS DEI	Ave, sancta mundi salus, panis vivus, immortalis, sacrosanta hostia. Ave, cibus spiritalis, cibus bonus et regalis, celi pandens hostia. Tu es panis angelorum, factus cibus viatorum, ducens ad celestia. Tu es panis filiorum, mundi vita, spes reorum, donans vera gaudia. Duc nos tecum ad superna, tu, virtutum o pincerna, ubi pax et gloria. Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi: miserere nobis. Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi: miserere nobis. Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi: dona nobis pacem. Amen.	Hail, holy salvation of the world Living, immortal bread, Most holy Host. Hail, spiritual food, good and royal food, host that opens the heavens. You are the bread of the angels, made the food of pilgrims, leading them towards the heavens. You are the bread of God's children, The world's life, the hope of sinners, granting true joys. Lead us with you to the heavens, you, o servant of the virtues, where there is peace and glory. Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant us peace. Amen.
10. COMMUNION IST TONE	Viderunt omnes fines terrae salutare Dei nostri.	All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Ps. 97, 3.
11. ITE, MISSA EST IST TONE	Ite, missa est. Deo gratias.	Go, the Mass has been said. Thanks be to God.
12. BONUS TRACK: COMMUNION IIIRD TONE FEAST OF THE BLESSED TRINITY	Benedicimus Deum caeli, et coram omnibus viventibus confitebimur ei: quia fecit nobiscum misericordiam suam.	We bless the God of heaven, and before all living we will praise him; because he has shown his mercy to us. Tobias 12, 6.

JOSTEIN GUNDERSEN

Jostein Gundersen is a Norwegian recorder player whose work spans medieval repertoire through to new commissions. He holds a PhD in artistic research and has developed projects that combine performance, historical inquiry, and collaboration with contemporary composers. Gundersen is professor in music performance at the Grieg Academy – Department of Music and serves as vice dean of research at the Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design (KMD) in Bergen from 2021 to 2029. From 2011 to 2022 he taught historical improvisation at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater «Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy», Leipzig.

CURRENTES

Currentes is a Bergen-based Norwegian ensemble focused on medieval and early Renaissance music, directed by recorder player and PhD in artistic research Jostein Gundersen. Working with a variable group of singers and instrumentalists, the ensemble emphasizes historically informed performance grounded in direct study of medieval manuscripts and treatises. Their repertoire centers on late medieval and early renaissance polyphony.

A consistent part of Currentes' work is the exploration of improvisation and ornamentation, reflecting practices that shaped musical performance in the past. The ensemble also collaborates closely with contemporary composers, integrating new works into their concerts to create dialogue between historical material and present-day composition. Recorded and published music include works by Eivind Buene, Alwynne Pritchard, and Ruben Sverre Gjertsen. Currentes performs regularly at festivals and venues in Norway and across Europe.

Through concerts and recordings, the ensemble contributes to ongoing discussions about how music from past times can be approached, interpreted, and performed in a contemporary context.

MUSICIANS

Ingvill Holter — Soprano
Sunniva Eliassen — Mezzo soprano
Tyler Ray — Tenor
Tord Kalvenes — Tenor
Anna Danilevskaia — Medieval fiddle
Hans Lub — Medieval fiddle
Jostein Gundersen — Recorders

Artistic direction:
Jostein Gundersen

CREDITS

RECORDED IN:
JOHANNES CHURCH, BERGEN,
17.–19. OCTOBER 2024
PRODUCER:
VEGARD LANDAAS
BALANCE ENGINEER:
THOMAS WOLDEN
EDITING:
VEGARD LANDAAS
MASTERING:
THOMAS WOLDEN
BOOKLET NOTES:
JOSTEIN GUNDERSEN
TRANSLATION:
JOSTEIN GUNDERSEN
ENGLISH MASS TEXT:
ABBAY OF SOLESMES. (1957).
*THE LIBER USUALIS: WITH
INTRODUCTION AND RUBRICS
IN ENGLISH.* DESCLÈE & CO.
MATTEO DA PERUGIA: AVE SANCTA
MUNDI SALUS: TRANSLATED WITH
THE KIND HELP OF KLARA SJO,
RESEARCHER AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF BERGEN, DEPARTMENT OF
LINGUISTIC, LITERARY AND
AESTHETIC STUDIES.
BOOKLET EDITOR:
TORGEIR M. LANDAAS
COVER DESIGN: BLUNDERBUSS
PHOTOS BOOKLET: DETAILS FROM
MOD A, BIBLIOTECA ESTENSE
A.M.5.24, F. 7R, 7V, 24V. WITH
PERMISSION OF THE MINISTRY
OF CULTURE — GALLERIE
ESTENSI, BIBLIOTECA ESTENSE
UNIVERSITARIA.

THIS RECORDING HAS BEEN MADE
POSSIBLE WITH SUPPORT FROM:
ARTS AND CULTURE NORWAY /
FUND FOR PERFORMING ARTISTS,
VESTLAND COUNTY COUNCIL,
THE AUDIO AND VISUAL FUND,
AND THE CITY OF BERGEN.

IN COLLABORATION WITH THE
UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN, FACULTY
OF FINE ART, MUSIC AND DESIGN

MASS FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

- I. INTROIT: PUER NATUS EST (CURRENTES) ^{04:40}
- II. KYRIE IV (CURRENTES) ^{06:13}
- III. GLORIA ROSETTA (ANTONIO ZACARA DA TERAMO [CA 1360—1416]) ^{05:40}
- IV. GRADUAL VIDERUNT OMNES (CURRENTES) ^{05:50}
- V. ALLELUIA (PLAINCHANT) ^{01:56}
- VI. CREDO (ANTONIO ZACARA DA TERAMO) ^{07:01}
- VII. OFFERTORIUM: TUI SUNT CAELI (CURRENTES) ^{04:31}
- VIII. SANCTUS (ANONYMUS/MS. IVREA 115) ^{02:50}
- IX. AGNUS DEI IV/ AVE SANCTA MUNDI SALUS
(MATTEO DA PERUGIA—ACTIVE CA. 1400—1420) ^{04:16}
- X. COMMUNION: VIDERUNT OMNES (CURRENTES) ^{01:47}
- XI. ITE, MISSA EST IV (CURRENTES) ^{01:38}
- XII. BONUS TRACK: COMMUNIO: BENEDICIMUS DEUM CAELI
FOR THE FEAST OF THE BLESSED TRINITY (CURRENTES) ^{03:11}

