

Antoine Busnoys

Je m'esbais de vous, mon cueur a 3

Edition and comments by
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<http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH075.html>

This edition is extracted from the online project *The Copenhagen Chansonnier and the Loire Valley' chansonniers*, which consists of linked html-files and a great number of single PDF editions. It can be accessed at <http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/>.

Each html-file about a song contains lists of sources, and edition and translation of the poetic texts, discussion of the main sources and comments on text and music. Separate files hold lists of contents and descriptions of the sources. Other files contain papers and notes on related topics. The online edition offers many cross references and links to online facsimile editions. These links had to be simplified in the present edition.

Each version of a song is regarded as a valid performance by a scribe/musician, and therefore they are published separately. In most cases there will be no attempts to imagine the intentions of the composer or to reconstruct exactly what the composer had written when the music left his pen. Rather the aim is to interpret the written music in largely the same way as 15th century performers may have read it. Many details, which in one source are different from other sources, must be accepted by the editor as valid elements in a performance of the actual source. Sources marked by an asterisk * are included in the edition.

Sigla of the related 'Loire Valley' chansonniers

Copenhagen	Copenhagen, The Royal Library, MS Thott 291 8° http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/manus/702/dan/0+recto/
Dijon	Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. 517 http://patrimoine.bm-dijon.fr/pleade/img-viewer/MS00517/viewer.html
Laborde	Washington D.C., Library of Congress, MS M2.1 L25 Case (Laborde Chansonnier) https://www.loc.gov/resource/ihas.200152631.0/?sp=1
Leuven	Leuven, Alamire Foundation, Manuscript without shelf number (Leuven Chansonnier) http://depot.lias.be/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE9381778
Nivelle	Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Rés. Vmc. ms. 57 (Chansonnier Nivelle de la Chaussée) http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55007270r/f1.image
Wolfenbüttel	Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Codex Guelf. 287 Extravag. http://diglib.hab.de/wdb.php?dir=mss/287-extrav

Text source

Berlin 78.B.17	Berlin, Staatsliche Museen der Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett, Ms. 78.B.17 (Chansonnier Rohan)
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Literature

Löpelmann 1923	M. Löpelmann (ed.), <i>Die Liederhandschrift des Cardinals de Rohan</i> (Gesellschaft für romanische Litteratur, Band 44) Göttingen 1923
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Je mèsbais de vous, mon cueur 3v · Busnoys, Antoine

Appearance in the group of related chansonniers:

*Dijon ff. 53v-54 »Je mèsbais de vous mon cueur« 3v Busnoys

Text: Rondeau cinquain; full text; also in Berlin 78.B.17 ff. 114-114v in a slightly different version, ed.: Löpelmann 1927, p. 195.

Je mèsbais de vous, mon cueur,
dont tant maintenez la foleur
de plus servir nostre maistresse,
veu que savez que fait a cesse 1)
de nous amer, c'est grant courreur. 2)

Vray est que tant a de valeur
que c'estoit pour nous grant honneur,
mais toutesfois, puis qu'elle lesse,

je mèsbais de vous, *mon cueur*,
dont tant maintenez la foleur
de plus servir nostre maistresse.

Deportez vous, c'est le meilleur,
sans plus accroistre ma douleur,
par dieu, j'en ay assez largesse; 3)
vostre bonté et gentillesse
me facent paie pour ma faveur.

Je mèsbais de vous, *mon cueur*,
dont tant maintenez la foleur
de plus servir nostre maistresse,
veu que savez que fait a cesse
de nous amer, c'est grant courreur.

You startle me, my heart,
that you so strongly maintain the folly
of still serving our mistress,
since you know that she has decided to cease
loving us – this is infuriating.

It is true that she has such worth
that it was a great honour for us,
nevertheless, since she is leaving us,

you startle me, my heart,
that you so strongly maintain the folly
of still serving our mistress.

Go away, that is the best,
without further increasing my pain,
by God, I have been more than generous;
your goodness and kindness
make me pay for my service.

You startle me, my heart,
that you so strongly maintain the folly
of still serving our mistress,
since you know that she has decided to cease
loving us – this is infuriating.

1) Berlin 78.B.17, line 4, "... qu'elle a fait cesse"

2) Berlin 78.B.17, line 5, "... c'est grant erreur"

3) Berlin 78.B.17, lines 14-16, "... j'en amasse a largesse / puisque doncq n'avons que tristesse / en cest estat et tout malleur."

Evaluation of the source:

The Dijon scribe copied this song with only a single error in the music, a missing note in the contratenor. In the second half of the rondeau a curious flat before the note *f* appears in the contratenor (b. 18.2). It is simply a caution for the singer: The first time he sang a descending figure starting on *f*, he had to flatten the following *e*; this time it is not the case, therefore the *f* has been marked clearly as *fa*.

Comments on text and music:

“Je m'esbais de vous, mon cueur” is a courtly archetype in rich rimes. An abandoned lover is furious about being left by his mistress, but astonished that his heart still loves her. The setting is quite unusual: It has an upper voice moving within a restricted range ($c'-c''$) and it does not display one single cadential inflection; it keeps to the hexachord on f' expanded by the hexachord below on c' . The tenor is in a more normal range ($f-a'$) and much more expansive with cadential inflections towards c' (bb. 5 and 9) and towards d' (b. 19). The contratenor ($Bb-f'$) starts above the tenor (bb. 1-3), but for the remainder keeps below as a supporting voice.

The hexachordal simplicity of the setting is close to being demonstrative. It is normal that two voices at a given time sing in the same hexachord, at the same level or an octave apart, while the third voice proceeds in a hexachord a fifth above or a fifth below. But in the small chanson format it is unusual that they keep on doing so for longer passages or in such a straightforward way. The opening of this rondeau is typical, and it keeps on in the same way. For example, in the third line leading to the middle cadence the upper voices sing F-hexachords (with decorative expansions), while the contratenor first runs through a C-hexachord (bb. 10-12) and then changes the colour by a turn to the Bb-hexachord (bb. 12-13); at the start of the second section (b. 14) it announces the return to the F-hexachord emphatically. A simple and effective procedure.

The basic technique of polyphony combined with the absence of cadential figures in the upper voice, except for the final and middle cadences, permits the composer to set the poetic lines as a continuous stream of music – much enhanced by the active tenor. The second and third lines both are highlighted by canonic imitation in the upper voices, unison and at the octave, but this happens without any disruption of the flow, because the discantus functions are handled by the tenor – and quite unobtrusively, displaced and prolonged in bars 5-6, interrupted in bars 9-10.

Rhythmically the song is in triple time, and from the start it innocently signals this pattern. However, very soon double time seems eager to take over the action with displaced cadences, the ligatures in the second half, etc. In the rondeau's second section black notation in the lower voices (bb. 20-21) enforces a hemiola effect culminating in a harsh dissonance on “de nous amer”. Tenor and contratenor hold the “forbidden” diminished fifth $bb-e$ for a full *brevis* value, while the upper voice lingers on a' before resolving the tension with a flourish leading to the final passage. This deliberate dissonance is clearly marked in the chansonnier by in flat before f in bar 18, a *fa*-sign which warns the singer of the contratenor to stay in the c -hexachord. This surely originated with the composer and demonstrates his awareness of his use of daring effects in an on the surface simple song.

“Je m'esbais” is the subject for a recent article by Jesse Rodin, ‘The Songbook as Sensory Artifact’, which I strongly recommend for further reading.¹ At the end of the article the song is the subject of a “sensory analysis”, a close reading of the music formed as a discussion between the members of a group of singers and an informed listener: “Let us imagine, then, that we are seated in a dining hall somewhere in Southern France. The

1 Jesse Rodin, ‘The Songbook as Sensory Artifact’ in Griffiths, F. and Starkey, K. (eds.), *Sensory Reflections: Traces of Experience in Medieval Artifacts*. Berlin & Boston 2018, pp. 22-49.

year is 1475 ... We are reflecting on our dinnertime performance ... And we are privileged to have in front of us a recently copied chansonnier known today as Dijon.” (pp. 36-46, at p. 37).

A funny, and probably unavoidable, detail is that the participants in this dialogue are in fact *not* looking at the Dijon chansonnier, but either at the edition in the *Trois chansonniers* of 1927 or Rodin’s in the appendix to the article, which both have a different poetic text and disregard the ligatures. And a group of singers in 1475 would certainly have discussed the song’s hexachordal use or at least have remarked shortly on the flat sign before *f* in bar 18. This sign has been suppressed in both modern editions.

Dijon no. 45

Busnoys, *Je m'esbais de vous. mon cueur*

Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 517, ff. 53^v-54: Busnoys

[Superius] Mensura = ♩

1.4. Je m'es - ba - is de
 3. De - - - por - tez vous, c'est

Tenor

1.4. Je m'es - ba - is de
 3. De - por - tez vous, c'est

Contraténor

1.4. Je m'es - ba - is de
 3. De - por - tez vous, c'est

3

vous, mon cueur, dont
 le mil - - - leur, sans

vous, mon cueur,
 le mil - - - leur,

vous, mon cueur, dont
 le mil - - - leur, sans

6

tant mainc - te - nez la fo - - -
 plus a - crois - tre ma dou - - -

dont sans tant mainc - te nez la fo - leur
 sans plus a - crois - tre ma dou - leur,

tant mainc - te - nez la fo -
 plus plus a - crois - tre ma dou -

10

leur de plus ser - vir nos - tre mais - tres -
 leur, par dieu, j'en ay as - sez lar - ges -

de plus ser - vir nos - tre mais - tres -
 par dieu, j'en ay as - sez lar - ges -

leur de plus ser - vir nos - tre mais - tres -
 leur, par dieu, j'en ay as - sez lar - ges -

1) *Contraténor*, bar 8.1 is missing (error).

14

se, veu que sa - vez que fait a -
se; vos - tre bon - té et gen - ti -

18

ces - - - se de nous a -
les - - - se me nous fa - cent

22

mer, c'est pour grant ma cour fa - - - reur.
paie pour ma fa - - - veur.

2) *Contraténor*, bar 18.2, flat before *f* indicating (*fa*-sign) *e*-natural in the following.

27

2a. Vray est que tant a
2b. je m'es - ba - is de

2a. Vray est que tant a
2b. je m'es - ba - is de

2a. Vray est que tant a
2b. je m'es - ba - is de

29

de vous, va mon leur cueur, que dont c'es - toit mainc

de vous, va mon leur cueur, que dont

de vous, va mon leur cueur, que dont

33

pour nous grant hon - neur, mais tou - tes -
te - nez la fo - leur de plus ser -

c'es - toit tant mainc - pour nous grant hon - neur, mais de tou - tes - fois,
tant mainc - te - nez la fo - leur de plus ser - vir

c'es - toit tant mainc - pour nous grant hon - neur, mais de tou - tes -

fois, puis qu'el - le les - se,
vir nos - tre mais - tres - se,

puis nos - tre mais - tres - se,
nos - tre mais - tres - se,

fois, puis qu'el - le les - se,
vir nos - tre mais - tres - se,