Philippe Basiron

Nul ne l'a telle, sa maistresse a 3

Edition and comments by
Peter Woetmann Christoffersen

December 2009, revised May 2013

http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH009.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

The related 'Loire Valley' chamsonniers

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) https://data.idemdatabase.org/IE9381778/representation?fl_pid=FL9382190
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 sources

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

Literature

Löpelmann 1923	M. Löpelmann (ed.), *Die Liederhandschrift des Cardinals de Rohan* (Gesellschaft für romanische Litteratur, Band 44) Göttingen 1923

Nul ne l'a telle, sa maistresse 3v · Basiron, Philippe

Appearance in the group of related chansonniers:

*Copenhagen ff. 9v-11 »Nul ne l'a tele, sa maistresse« 3v
*Laborde ff. 13v-15 »Nul ne l'a telle, sa maistresse« 3v P. Baziron
*Wolfenbüttel ff. 15v-17 »Nul ne l'a telle, sa maistresse« 3v

Text: Bergerette; full text in Copenhagen, Laborde and Wolfenbüttel; also in Berlin 78.B.17 f. 184v (no. 576) ed.: Löpelmann 1923, p. 358.

After Laborde:

Nul ne l'a telle, sa maistresse, mon cueur, que vous et moy avons, se bien considerer savons les biens dont elle a grant largesse.	No one has such a woman, as his mistress, as you and I have, my heart, if we know well to consider the virtues she has in abundance.
Au vray dire ce qu'il me semble, je ne viz oncquez la pareille. (1)	To tell in truth what appears to me, I have never seen her equal.
Tant belle et tant bonne est ensemble que plus la voiz, plus me merveille. (2)	She is all at once so beautiful and so good that the more I see her, the more I marvel.
De son maintien regardons qu'esse, affin que nous parachevons cest bruit si grant que nous devons dire en tous lieux sans point de cesse:	Let us regard her manner as it is, that we can enhance her grand reputation, which we ought to spread everywhere and without cease:
Nul *ne l'a telle, sa maistresse,* *mon cueur, que vous et moy avons,* *se bien considerer savons* *les biens dont elle a grant largesse.*	No one has such a woman, as his mistress, as you and I have, my heart, if we know well to consider the virtues she has in abundance.

1) Wolfenbüttel, lines 6-8, "tant belle et tant bonne est ensemble / Je ne vis oncques la pareille / car plus la voy, plus m'esmerveille." (error).
2) Copenhagen, line 8, "que plus me voi …"
There are some differences in spelling in the sources.

Evaluation of the sources:

The three sources are so similar that this song may have been quite new and of limited circulation when it was copied into them. Also the time span between its entries into the sources may have been quite short.

Laborde seems to be a nearly perfect copy of its exemplar. Its only questionable trait is that it does not have a one flat hexachordal signature in the tenor like in the other two sources. In bar 8, however, it displays a natural before *b*, which might imply that the scribe simply forgot to write the signature, but the melodic line itself does not need a signature in bars 1-6 as it is impossible to sing anything else than *b-flat* during the tenor's trudging back and forth between *f* and *b* – and thus the natural may come in as a precaution for the following. Laborde also places the repeat sign in the *couplets* at the same place in all three voices (in b. 56) ensuring a simple and effective return from the first to the second *couplet*. All three sources show a few insignificant variations in the use of colora-

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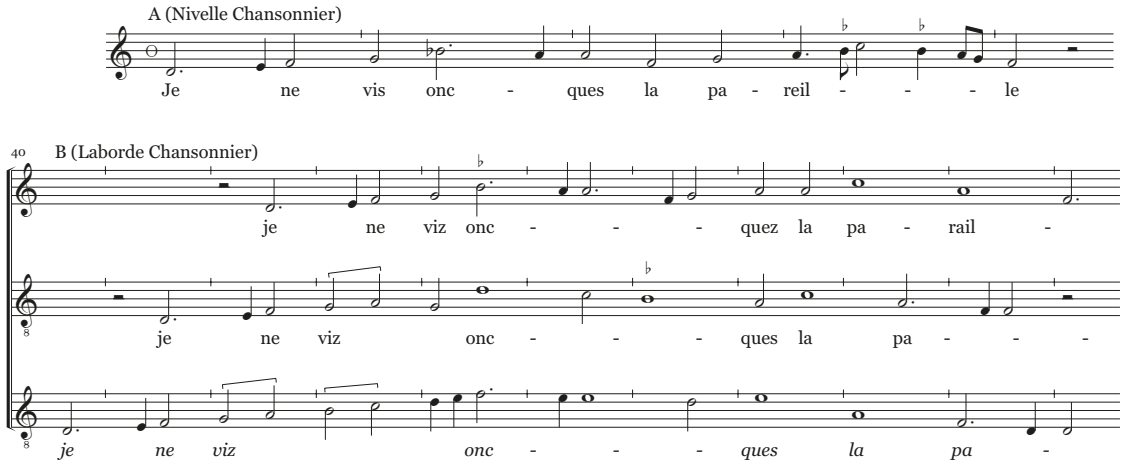
tion and ligatures, but Laborde also differs from the other two in some melodic details of greater importance (S b. 47; T bb. 2.3 and 54.2-55.1; C bb. 5, 6.3 and 17.3).

Copenhagen and Wolfenbüttel were copied from closely related exemplars. They both exhibit some scribal errors – the Wolfenbüttel scribe or his exemplar apparently did not recognize the musical and textual quote from Binchois' "Je ne vis oncques" (see below) as he changed about lines 6 and 7 in the text and thereby broke the connection between music and text, and botched the rhyme scheme. Otherwise they are quite alike. E.g. both place the repeat sign of the *couplet* in the tenor after the note *g* and thus prolong the chord before the return.

Copenhagen like Laborde has a signature of one flat in the first staff only of the contratenor, which Wolfenbüttel does not have. It does not make much difference in a performance.

Comments on text and music:

The lover and his heart praise their mistress in this exuberant bergerette, which is written in rich rimes (*léonine*, close to *équivoque*), and it was without doubt created by the composer himself while planning the shape of the music. The crucial point of the poem and the element upon which the text and music of the whole song was constructed, is a line "Je ne vis oncques la pareille", which was lifted from a very widely circulated song of the preceding generation. The rondeau »Je ne vis oncques la pareille« appears with an ascription to Binchois in the Nivelle Chansonnier (no. 40) and anonymously in Laborde and Wolfenbüttel (no. 32 and no. 30 respectively), while it is ascribed to Du Fay in the slightly younger Italian source, Montecassino, Biblioteca del'Abbazia, MS 871.[1] The emblematic first line of this rondeau (see example A below, bb. 1-5 of the superius) is quoted quite literally, but transformed into double time, as the second line of the bergerette's first *couplet* (bars 40-50; example B):
Moreover, the composer made the quote in his superius stand out by introducing it in a



three-part imitation with the contratenor in the lead. After contratenor's soaring line reaches its climax on "oncques", the voices slide into a cadential progression in *fauxbourdon*-like style, which at once is relieved by staggered descending triads in all voices.

Otherwise, there is not much imitation in the setting, only between tenor and superius

1 See further http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH189.html.

in bars 15-17 (a sort of octave canon), and *fauxbourdon* progressions seem to be the composer's favourite way of cadencing (bb. 5-6, 11-13, 44-47, and 61-63). Accordingly the song's contratenor lies above the tenor in many passages.

The formal layout of the setting conforms perfectly to the conventions of bergerette-settings in the Busnoys generation. It shows the clear contrast between the *refrain/tierce* section and the *couplets* by means of mensuration, namely *tempus perfectum* followed by *tempus imperfectum diminutum*, and the composer may also have intended – in the Copenhagen/Wolfenbüttel version – a contrast between a tenor b-flat in the first section and none in the second, even if this will be obscured by the rules of performing the musical lines (it is more of a visual contrast than a contrast in sound). Furthermore the *seconda volta (clos)* of the *couplets* ends in a glittering flourish like many other songs of this type from around 1460. While the form seems up-to-date, the sound and technique of the song appear a bit dated.

In the Laborde chansonnier the song was attributed to "P. Baziron" by a slightly later scribe (the so-called Index-Scribe 2)[2] who also wrote similar ascriptions above two other chansons in Laborde: »Je le scay bien ce qui m'avint« (no. 7) and »De n'esjouir plus n'ay puissance« (no. 13) – both are also found in Wolfenbüttel.[3] Philippe Basiron was between 1458 and 1474 associated the Sainte Chapelle of the royal palace in Bourges, as a boy chorister at first, and he ended up as *magister puerum*.[4] He must have been very young, when he composed it sometime in the late 1460s, and this agrees very well with the style of "Nul ne l'a telle", which is quite far from the technical maturity and precision of expression of its admired model, the rondeau by Binchois. And his song was apparently only circulated locally where musicians were familiar with the young talent.

The slightly younger French-Italian chansonnier in Sevilla, Biblioteca Capitular y Colombina, MS 5-1-43, transmits an anonymous bergerette with text incipits only, »Le bien fet«, which is an exact parallel to "Nul ne l'a telle" as regards the use of a quotation of all three voices from the first line of "Je ne vis oncques" as its second line of music in the couplets (see further the commentary).[5] This song could enentually be an early attempt at the theme of "Nul ne l'a telle" by Basiron. A more credible explanation may be that the relative success of "Nul ne l'a telle" inspired a colleague to try his hand at something similar.

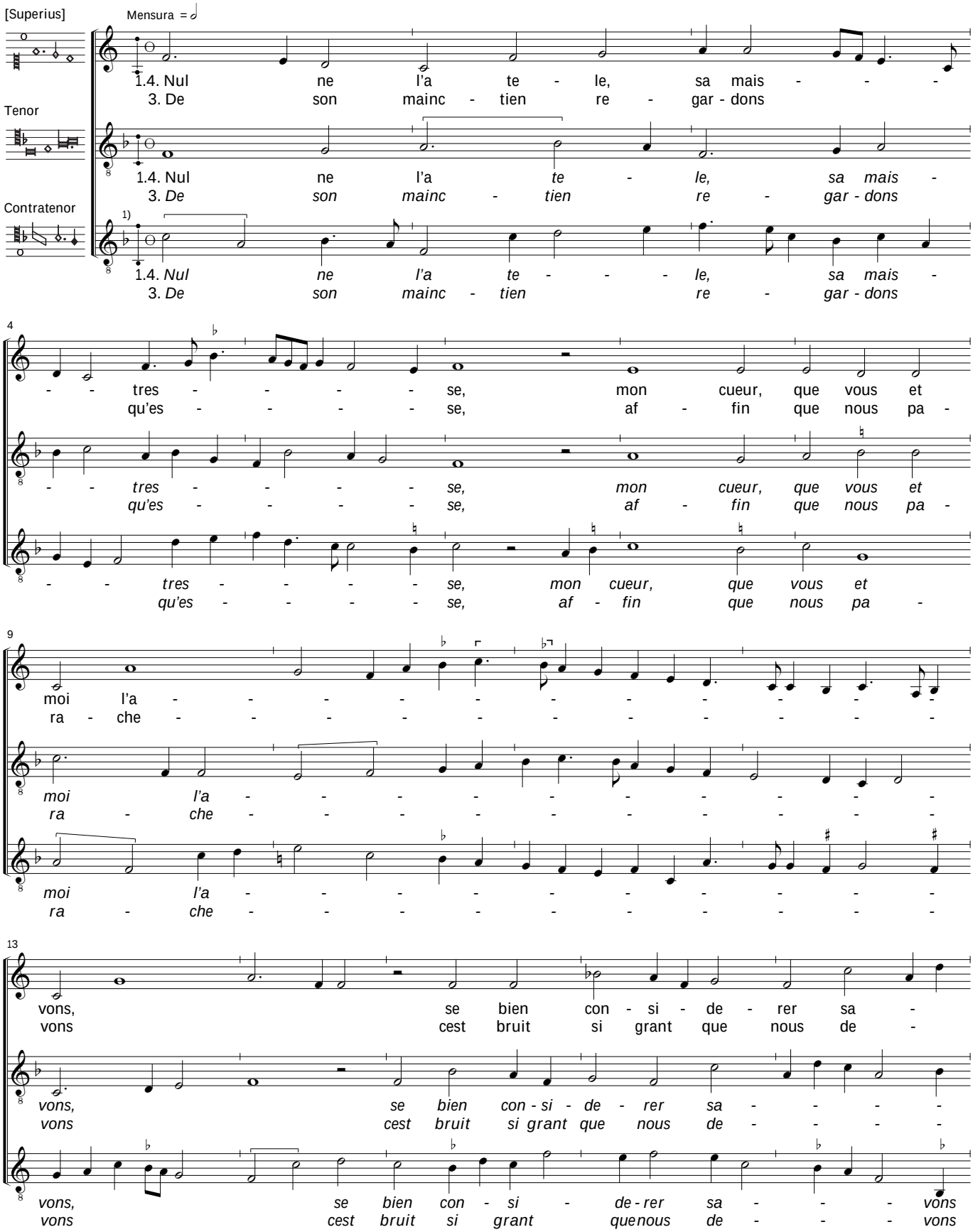
See also the article 'The chansons of Basiron's youth and the dating of the 'Loire Valley' chansonniers'.[6]

2 Cf. Jane Alden, *Makers of a Songbook: The Scribes of the Laborde Chansonnier* (Ph.d.-diss., Univ. of North Carolina) 1999 p. 80.
3 See http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH176.html and http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH179.html.
4 Cf. Jeffrey Dean, 'Basiron, Philippe' in *Grove Music Online* (November 2009).
5 At http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH556.html.
6 At http://www.pwch.dk/Publications/PWCH_Basiron.pdf.

Copenhagen no. 9

Nul ne l'a tele sa maistresse [P. Basiron]

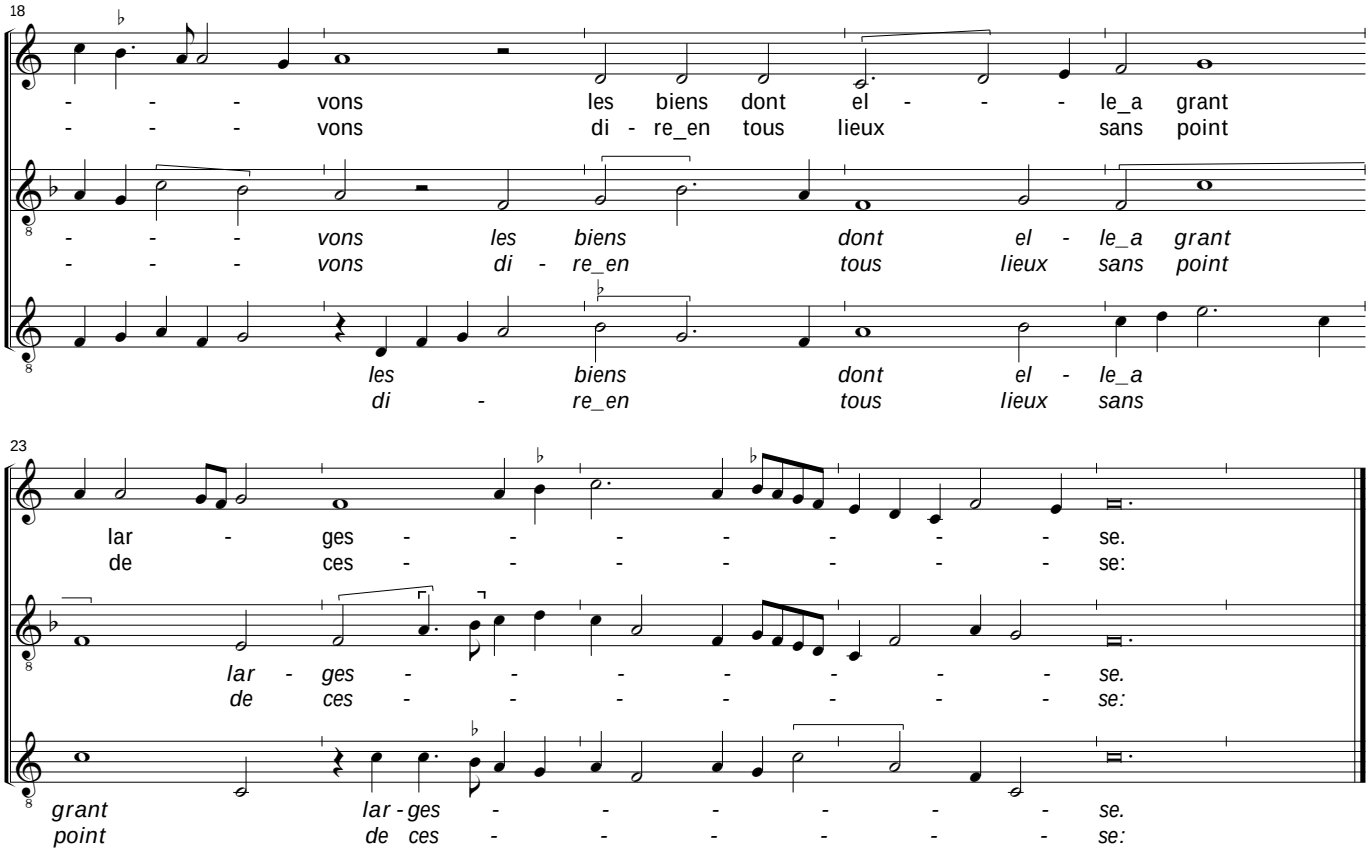
Copenhagen, The Royal Library, MS Thott 291 8°, ff. 9v-11



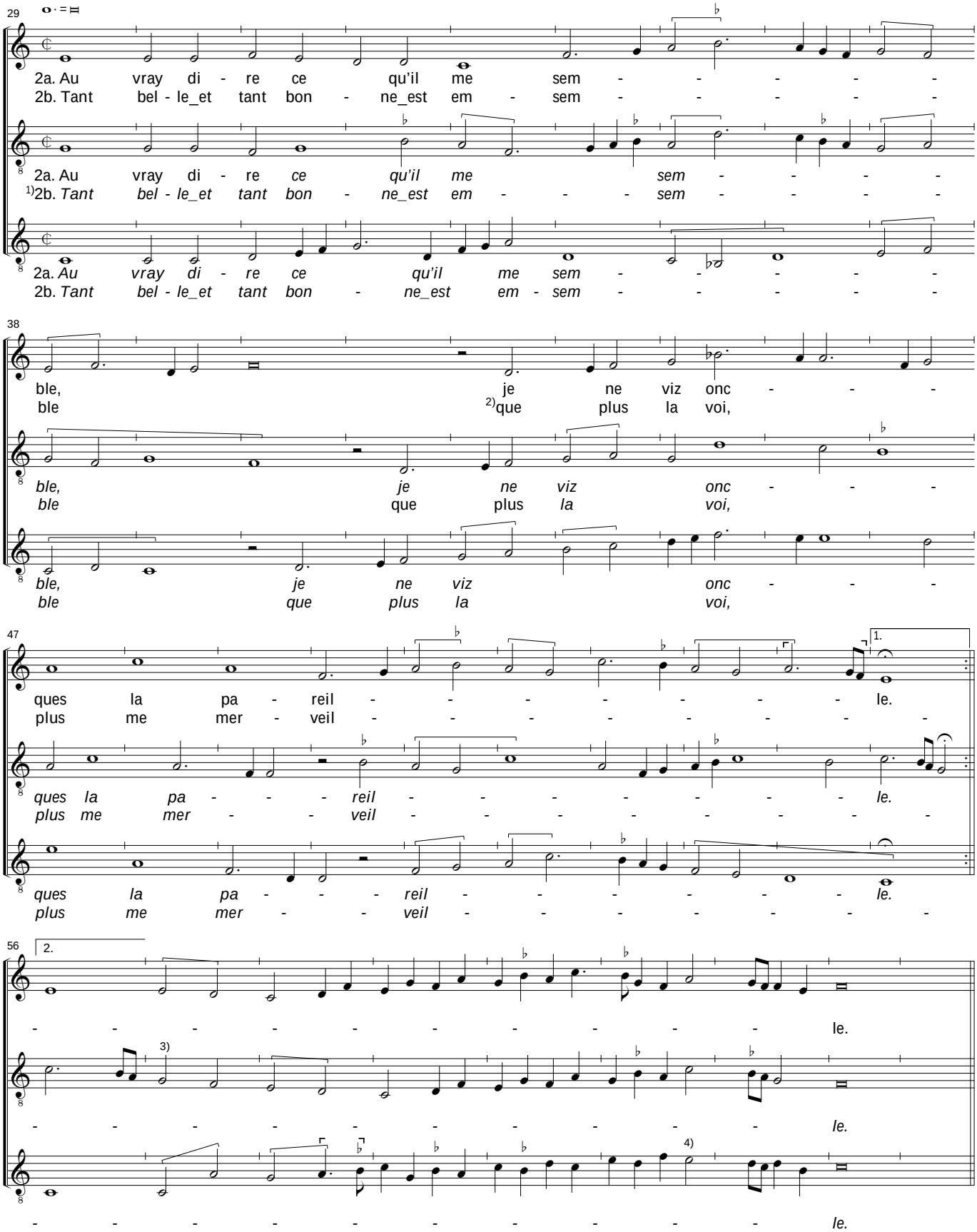
1) *Contratenor*, the one-flat signature is only in the first staff, which includes bars 1-9.2.

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1) *Tenor,* bar 29, *text 2b* has "Que plus " (incipit; error).
2) *Superius, text 2b,* bars 42.2 ff, "que plus me voi" in MS (error).

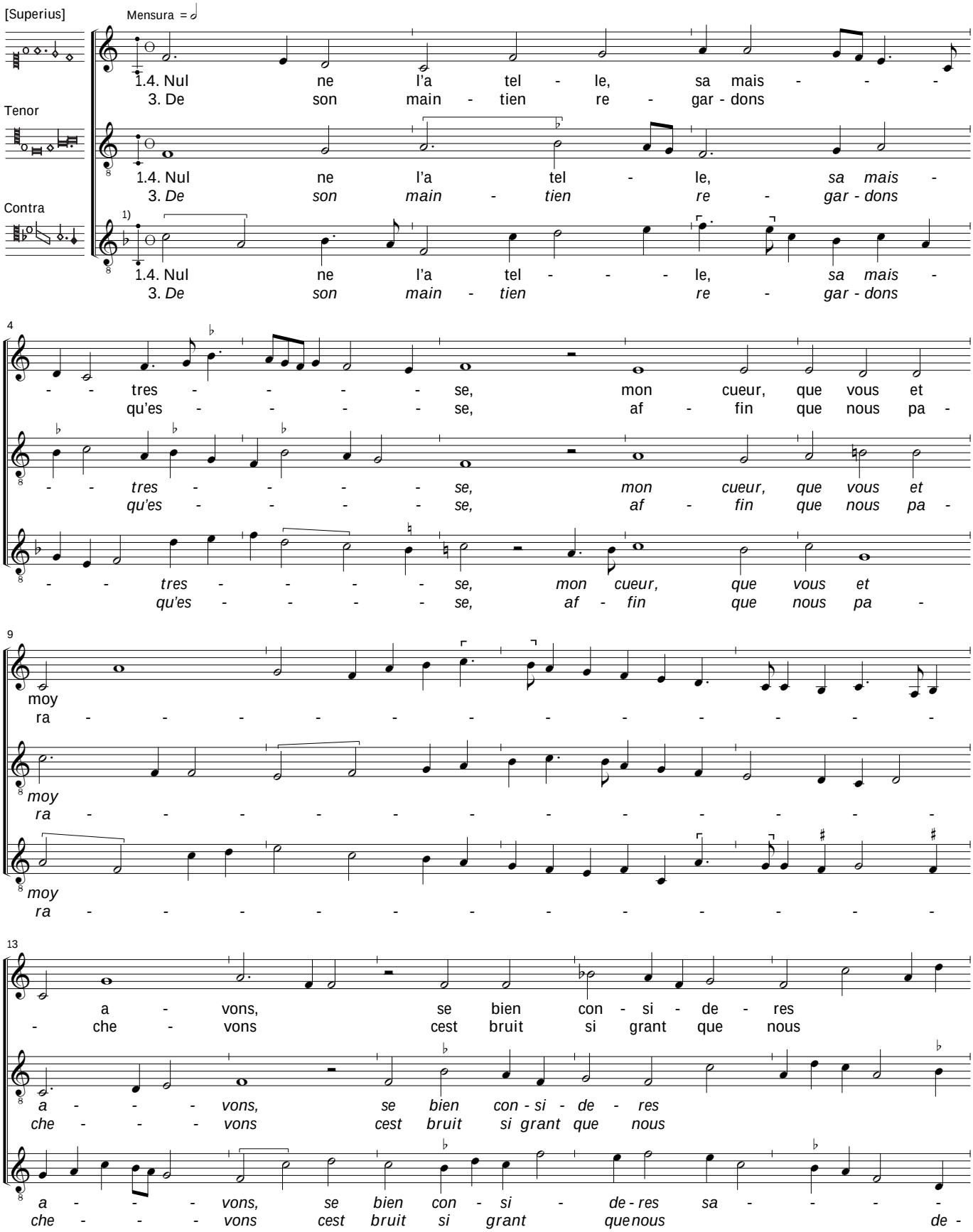
3) *Tenor,* bar 57.1, the repeat sign is placed after the *g* and not before bar 57 as in the other voices.
4) *Contratenor,* bars 61.2-62.1. the *semibrevis* is two *minimae* (error).

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Laborde no. 5

P. Baziron, *Nul ne l'a telle sa maistresse*

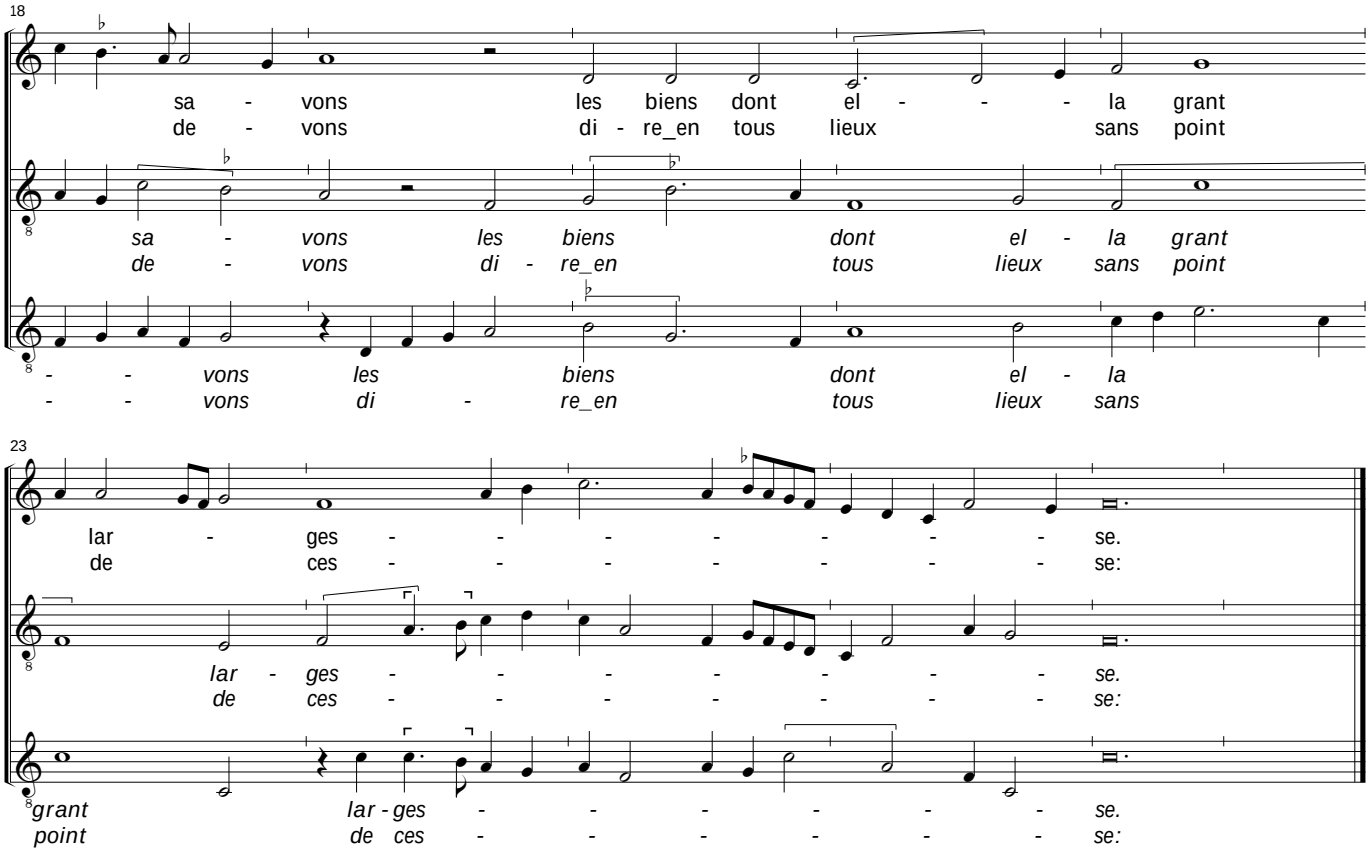
Washington D.C., Library of Congress, MS M2.1 L25 Case, ff. 13v-15



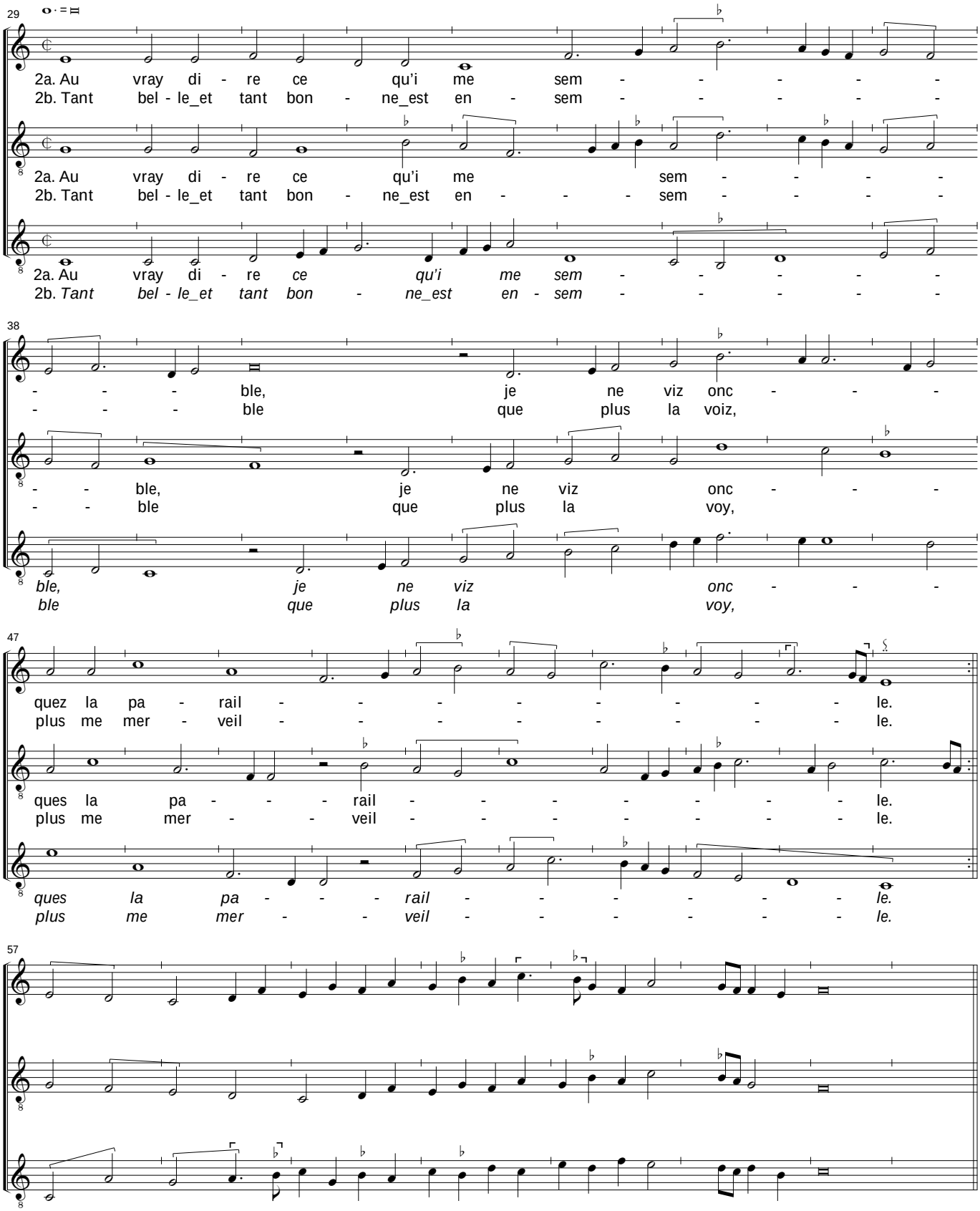
1) *Contratenor*, the one-flat signature is only in the first staff, which includes bars 1-5.

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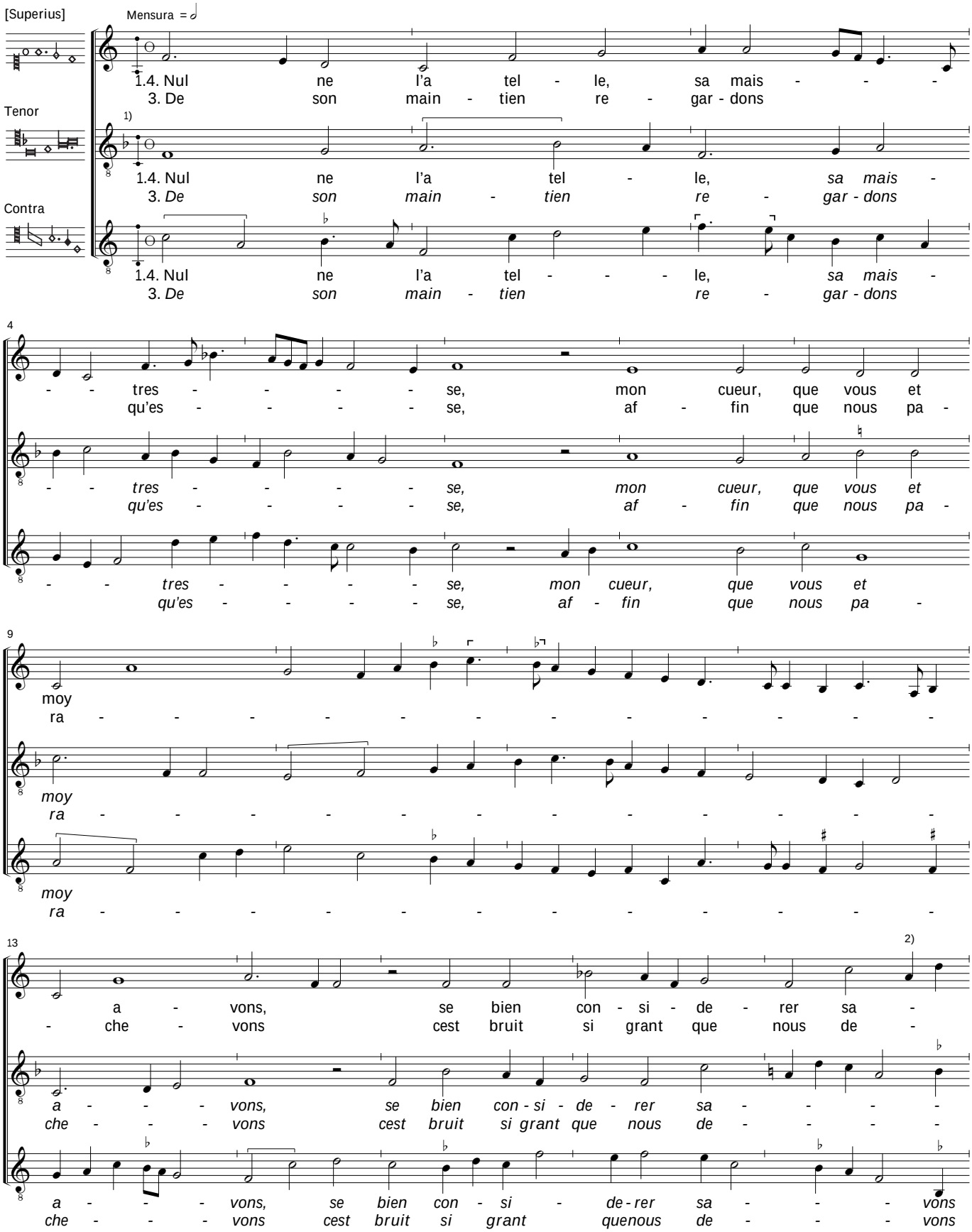


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Wolfenbüttel no. 15

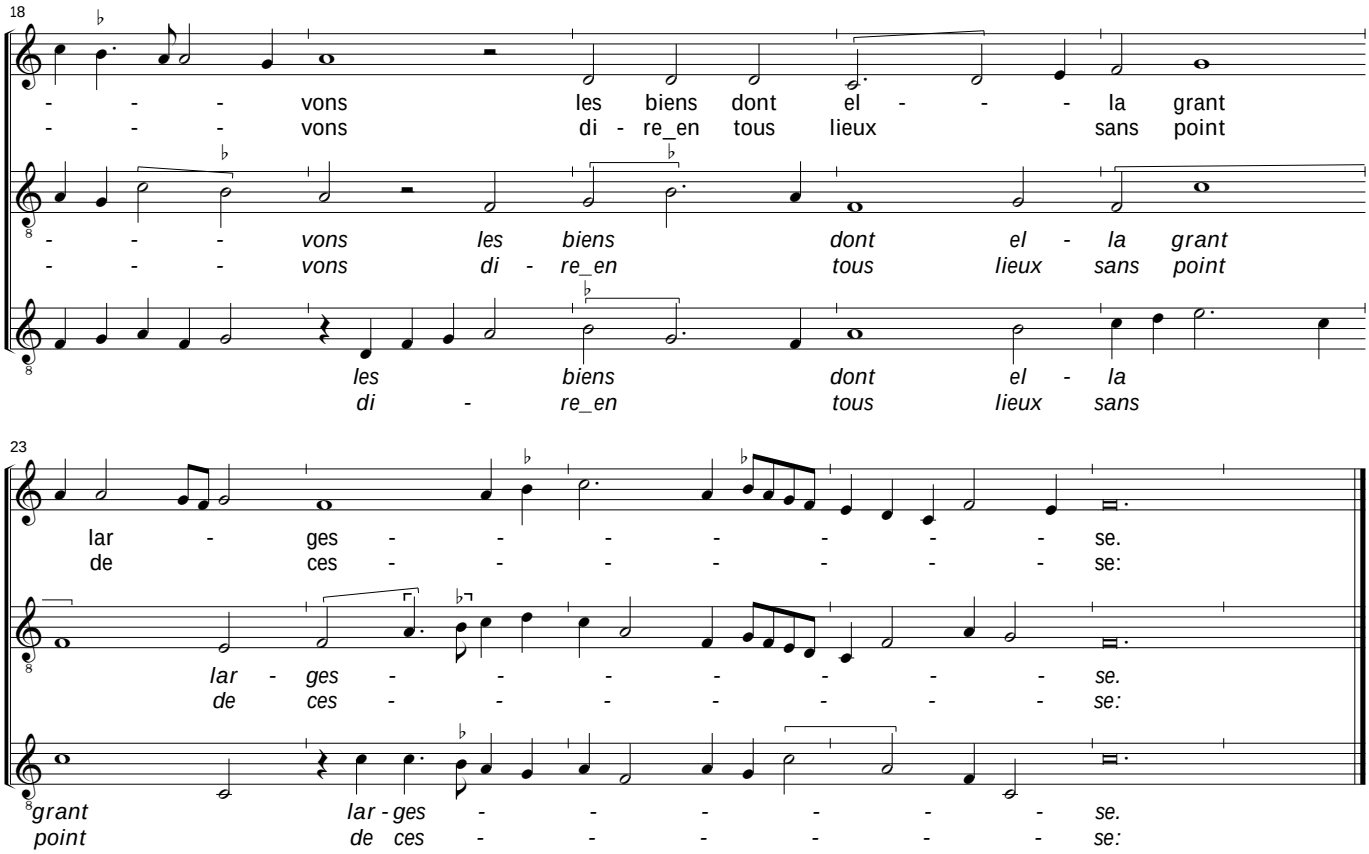
Nul ne l'a telle sa maistresse [P. Basiron]

Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Codex Guelf. 287 Extravag., ff. 15^{v}-17

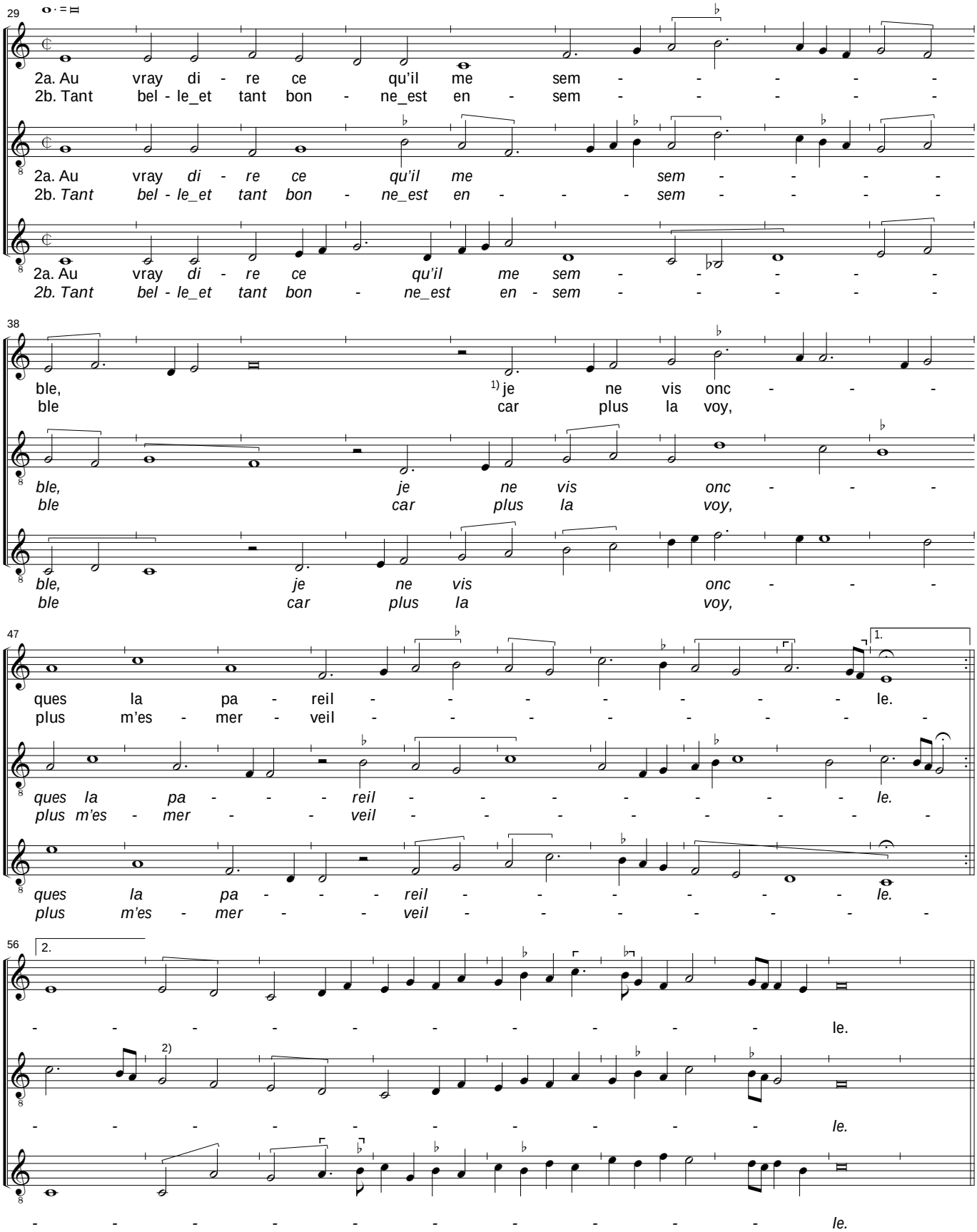


1) *Tenor*, the one-flat signature is in the first two staves only including bars 1-16.
2) *Superius,* bar 17.3, *b'-d"* in MS (error).

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1) *Superius, text 2a-b,* bars 42.2 ff, the MS changes about the text lines 6 "Je ne vis ..." and 7 "Tant belle et ..." (error).

2) *Tenor,* bar 57.1, the repeat sign is placed after the *g* and not before bar 57 as in the other voices.

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