Anonymous

Le joly tetin de ma dame a 3

Edition and comments by
Peter Woetmann Christoffersen

November 2009

http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH017.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

Le joly tetin de ma dame 3v · Anonymous

Appearance in the group of related chansonniers:

*Copenhagen ff. 21v-23 »Le joly tetin de ma dame« 3v
Laborde Index »Le jolis tetin de ma dame« (missing in MS)
*Wolfenbüttel ff. 18v-20 »Le joli tetin de ma dame« 3v

Text: Bergerette, full text in Copenhagen and Wolfenbüttel:

Le joli tetin de ma dame a touché nu a nu le mien; de quoy trop heureux je me tien, quant il m'en souvient, sur mon ame. (1)	My lady's beautiful breast has touched mine, skin to skin; I count myself really happy when I think of it, by my soul.
Je ose dire et diray tout hault, a qui qi'il en doie douloir,	I dare to say and will shout loudly to no matter who it might hurt
qu'en toutes façons elle vault autant que femme peut valoir.	that she in every way is so wonderful as any woman can be.
Sans blasmer nesune aultre femme, elle a tant en elle de bien (2) qu'on ne sçaroit dire combien; or me demandez *dont* si j'ayme. (3)	Without blaming any other woman she has in her so much beauty that it is impossible to say how much; Ask me then if not I am in love.
Le joli tetin *de ma dame* *a touché nu a nu le mien;* *de quoy trop heureux je me tien,* *quant il m'en souvient, sur mon ame.*	My lady's beautiful breast has touched mine, skin to skin; I count myself really happy when I think of it, by my soul.

1) Copenhagen, line 4, "… par mon ame."
2) Copenhagen, line 10, "il a tant …"
3) Wolfenbüttel, line 12, a syllable is missing; Copenhagen: "… dont si j'ame."
The sources have a few more variants in spelling.

Evaluation of the sources:

The two versions may very well have been produced by scribes using the same exemplar – or they were based on closely related exemplars. Disregarding a few scribal errors in music and text (Copenhagen, T bb. 70.2-71.1, and C b. 75; Wolfenbüttel, text 3, b. 49.2), the differences between them consist solely in the use of coloration in dotted figures (S bb. 47.2-48.1; T bb. 21.1 and 22.1; C bb. 8.2 and 53.2-54.1), small differences in ligatures (S bb. 64-65; T bb. 75-76.1; C bb. 55 and 75-76) and minor variants in the text (see above).

The reason for their appearance in the present edition each in a separate modern transcription is that they clearly demonstrate how differences in the notation of hexachordal signatures may crop up. It looks like the Wolfenbüttel scribe did reproduce his exemplar quite faithfully. In the first section of the bergerette none of the voices has any signatures, while superius and tenor each acquires a flat in the contrasting *couplet*-section (bb. 58-81). In the first section the tonal colour changes suddenly when a flat is introduced in the superius before the five repeated notes on *b′* (bb. 15-17). This flat is only written once, as an accidental, but the rules of melody and counterpoint ensure that every single B in all

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three voices in the remainder of the section has to be sung flattened except for the *longa* in the tenor bars 28-29, which is clearly marked with a sharp. The superius is restricted in range (*d-d'*) and oscillates between *f'* and *b'*, and in the spun-out setting of the final line, the contratenor's insistence on repeated Fs imposes flats on the two other voices.

The Dijon scribe saw exactly the same music in his exemplar including in the superius the flat in bar 15, the sharp in the tenor in bar 28, and the flats in superius and tenor in the *couplets*. He realized, however, – maybe having heard the song – that the superius flat in fact rules the remainder of the section and for that reason he notated it as a signature in all the superius staves following bar 15 to ensure the correct performance, and consequently he also put in a flat before *e'* in bar 22. The result of his deliberations sounds in exactly the same way as a performance of the Wolfenbüttel version in accordance with the rules, which we today think of as appropriate for this repertory.

The song was also known to the Laborde scribe. It is mentioned in the original index and placed in the first part of the Laborde chansonnier on pages torn out between f. 21v and f. 22.

Comments on text and music:

This exuberant happy poem in bergerette form with short eight-syllables lines, bursting with the joy of sensual love, is quite rare in the courtly poetry, and its musical setting is no less. It demands a fast tempo in performance in order to let the contrasts between the triumphant trumpeting of the beginning, the sudden change of mood, the insistence of the "hocquetus" at the end of the *refrain*, and the intimacy of the *couplets* get their full value. The bergerette opens with a "strict" imitation between superius and tenor dominated by leaps of fifths and fourths, in which the contratenor joins in with just as energetic octave leaps. Note the discrepancy between the *a'* in superius in bar 3.2 and the *g* in tenor bar 4.2, which ensures that an open fifth (and not a fourth) is sounding. The composer could easily have made the canon strict by keeping the *a* in the tenor and letting the contratenor sing *f* in bar 4.2. That he did not chose this solution shows that the contratenor's singing of octaves is just as important for the sound picture as the imitation of the upper voices. A freer rhythmical imitation in the second line leads to the lingering incision on a major G-chord at the middle of the *refrain.* The third line starts homorhythmically and thereby establishes the maximal contrast to the final frenetic octave canon between superius and tenor. This canon runs in repeated short figures confined within the fifth G-D in constant rhythmical and melodic variation. It unfolds over an "ostinato" in the contratenor centred on *f* and confined to the fourth E-A, the motive varied in accordance with the five repetitions in the upper voices before the final cadence. This strongly invites corresponding repeats of the first five syllables of the last line; and the final line of the *refrain* as well as of the *tierce* is divided into five and three syllables, which fits the repetitions perfectly.

In the *couplets* there is no indication of a change in tempo or mensuration, but the listener will experience an abrupt change of pace. The music whispers in a breathless, suppressed intensity of its adoration for the woman and erupts in near shouting by the tenor's rise through an octave in bars 66-70, strongly supported by the contratenor's insistence on B-naturals in the first and last bars in contrast to the flats in the other voices.

In 1945 Edward E.E. Lowinsky commented on this chanson in a critique of Knud Jeppesen's interpretation (it is based on Jeppesen's edition, not on a knowledge of the source):

> Anyone who is familiar with the notation of 15th-century music will admit that the use of the three flats for the five consecutive B's (mm. 15-17) and the subsequent use of a signature of one flat is very strange. Why was not the signature simply introduced sooner? The anonymous composer gave a daring musical setting to a daring text, and he used the B-flats as a means, visual as well as aural, to enhance the intimacy of the scene represented. … In the terminology of the time, the B-natural was called *b durum,* the B-flat *b molle.* Adam of Fulda writes in his treatise on music of 1490: "[… quote in Latin] The natural sign makes the tone hard and rough; the flat sign makes the tone light and soft." All the flats that Jeppesen has added to the first 14 measures of the chanson are wrong. The composer wanted these measures to be in the *hexachordum durum;* the following section, composed in the *hexachordum molle*, was to depict the softness and sweetness of the words *"a touché nu a nu le myen*". To make his symbolic intention obvious, the composer used the accumulation of flats. One has only to compare the harmonic setting of the two sections [bb. 1-14 and 15-24] to become aware of his deliberate choice of means. In the first section, written in *hexachordum durum*, the composer tries to produce an empty and harsh harmonic effect through the frequent use of empty octaves and fifths and fifth-octave chords […]. In the second section, written in the *hexachordum molle*, the composer uses chains of thirds and sixths and triads to produce a full, soft sound of sensuous beauty. […] Just as conspicuous is the expressive character of the melody in the *hexachordum molle* section as against its monotonous and repetitious nature in the first section. Of course, the first section is set as it is not because the beginning of the text demanded it, but because the composer needed such a setting as a contrast for the luscious second setting, containing the words he especially wanted to illustrate.[1]

It is worthy of note that the distinct incision in the middle of the bergerette's *refrain/ tierce*, where both sources expressly notate a sharp before *b,* which implies that b-flat was predominant in the preceding musical phrase, very sophisticatedly correspond to the exposed natural Bs in the first and last bars of the *couplets* in the contratenor, which just as surely does not get a flat key signature in any of the sources.[2]

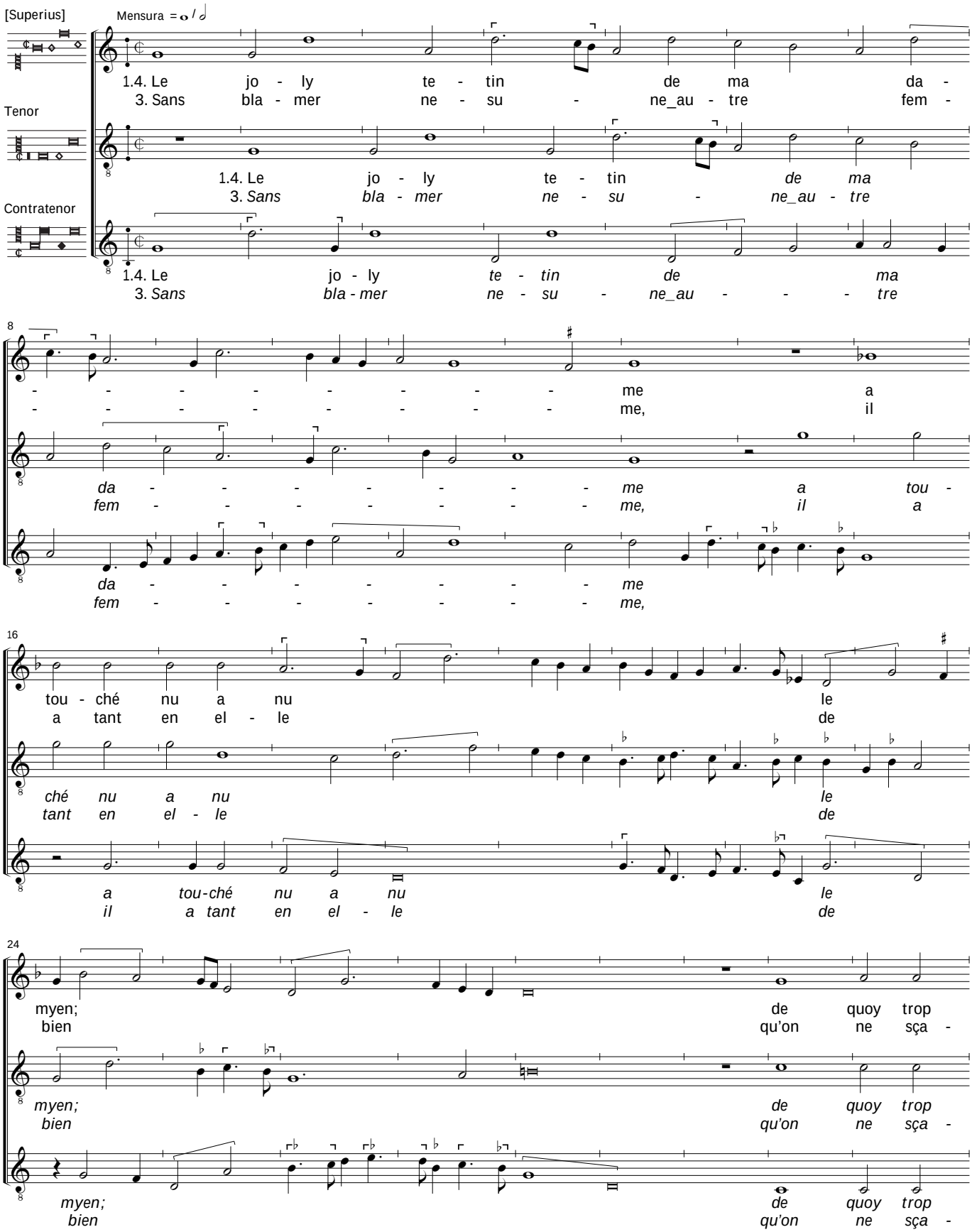
1 Edward E. Lowinsky, 'The Function of Conflicting Signatures in Early Polyphonic Music', *The Musical Quarterly* 31 (1945) pp. 227-260 (here pp. 252-253).

2 See also my article 'The chansons of Basiron's youth and the dating of the 'Loire Valley' chansonniers' at http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/NOTES/BasironYouth.html or http://www.pwch.dk/Publications/PWCH_Basiron.pdf.

Copenhagen no. 17

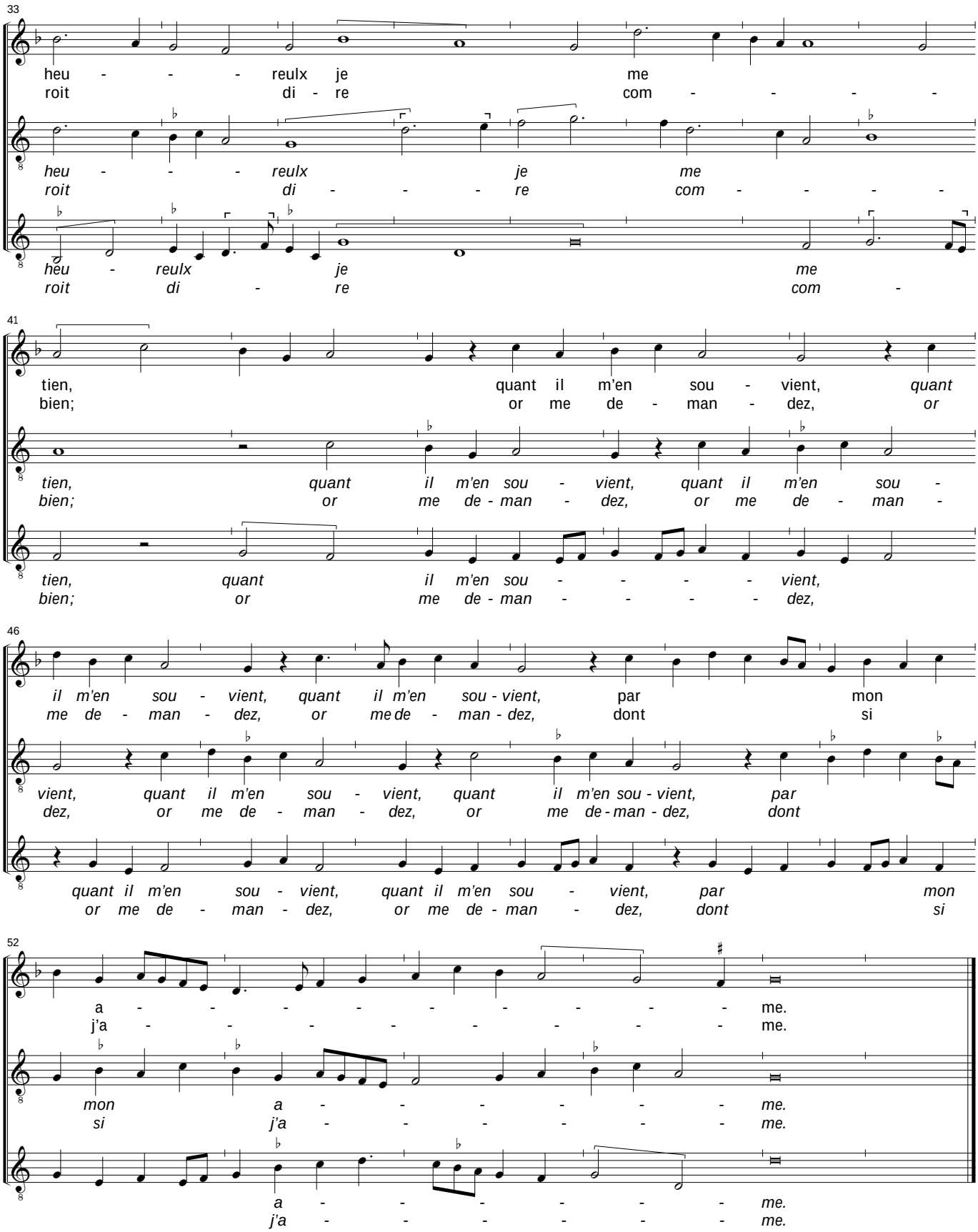
Copenhagen, The Royal Library, MS Thott 291 8°, ff. 21ᵛ-23

Le joly tetin de ma dame [anonymous]

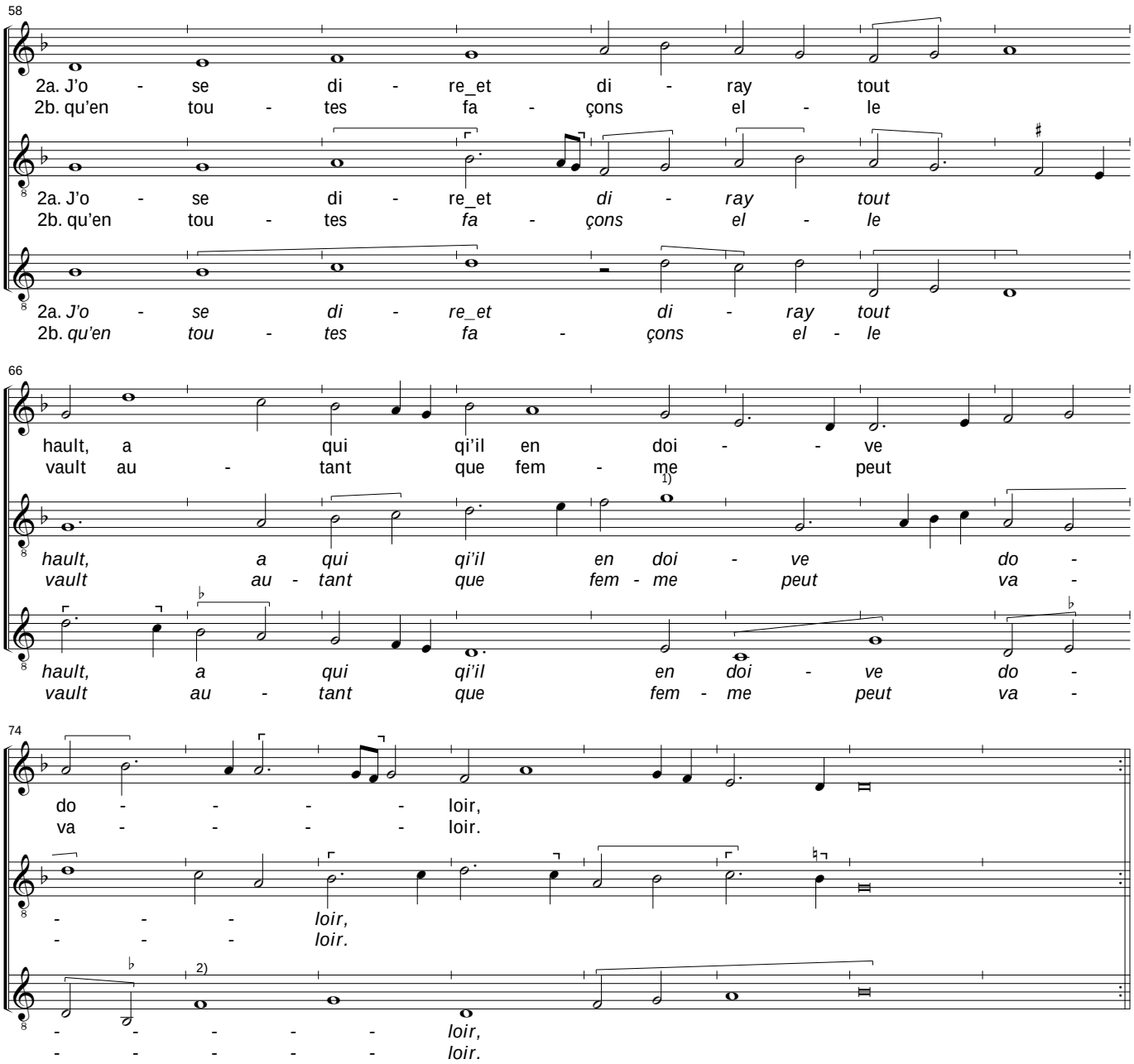


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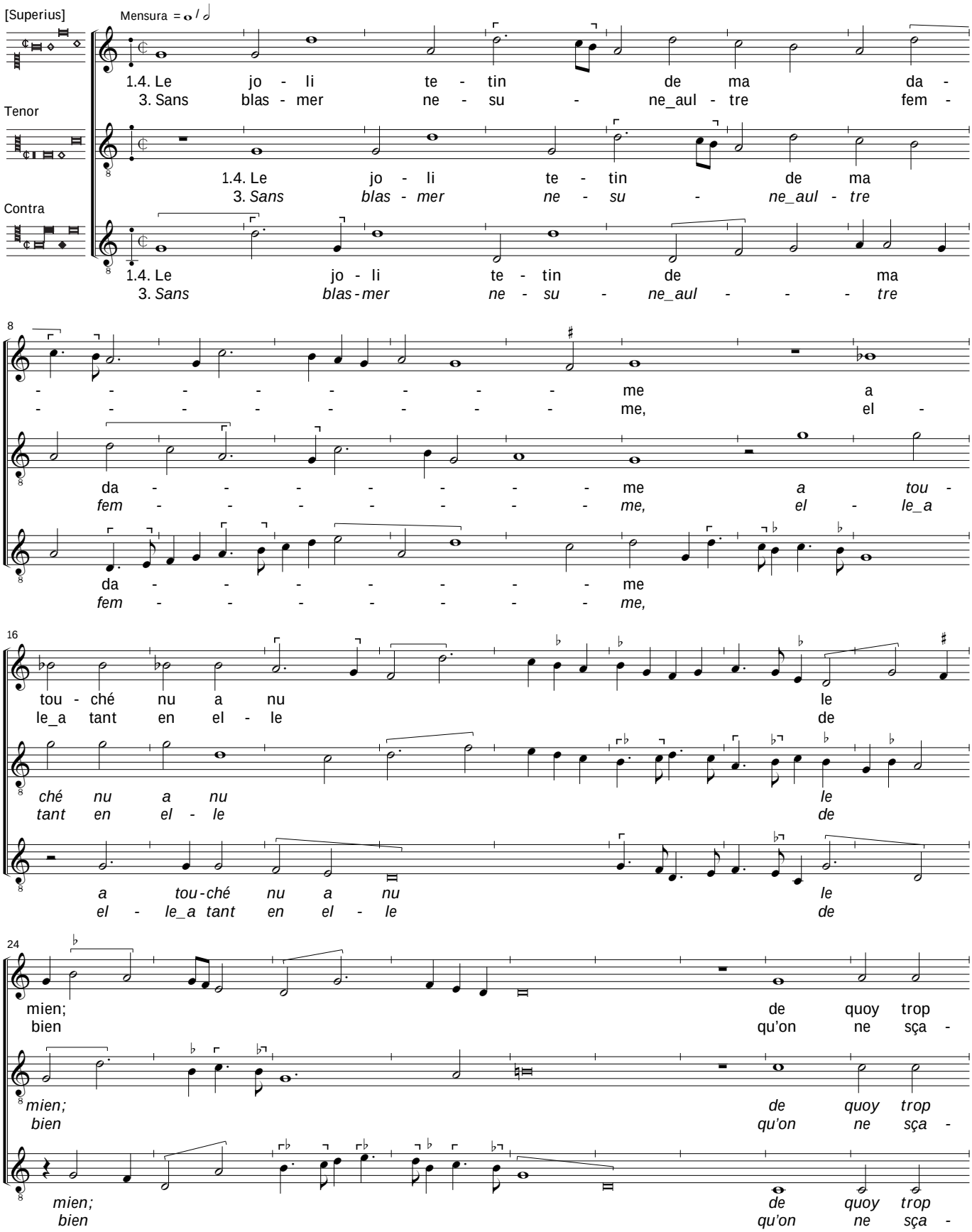
1) *Tenor*, bar 70.2-71.1 is a *semibrevis* (error).
2) *Contratenor*, bar 75 i *d* (error).

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Wolfenbüttel no. 17

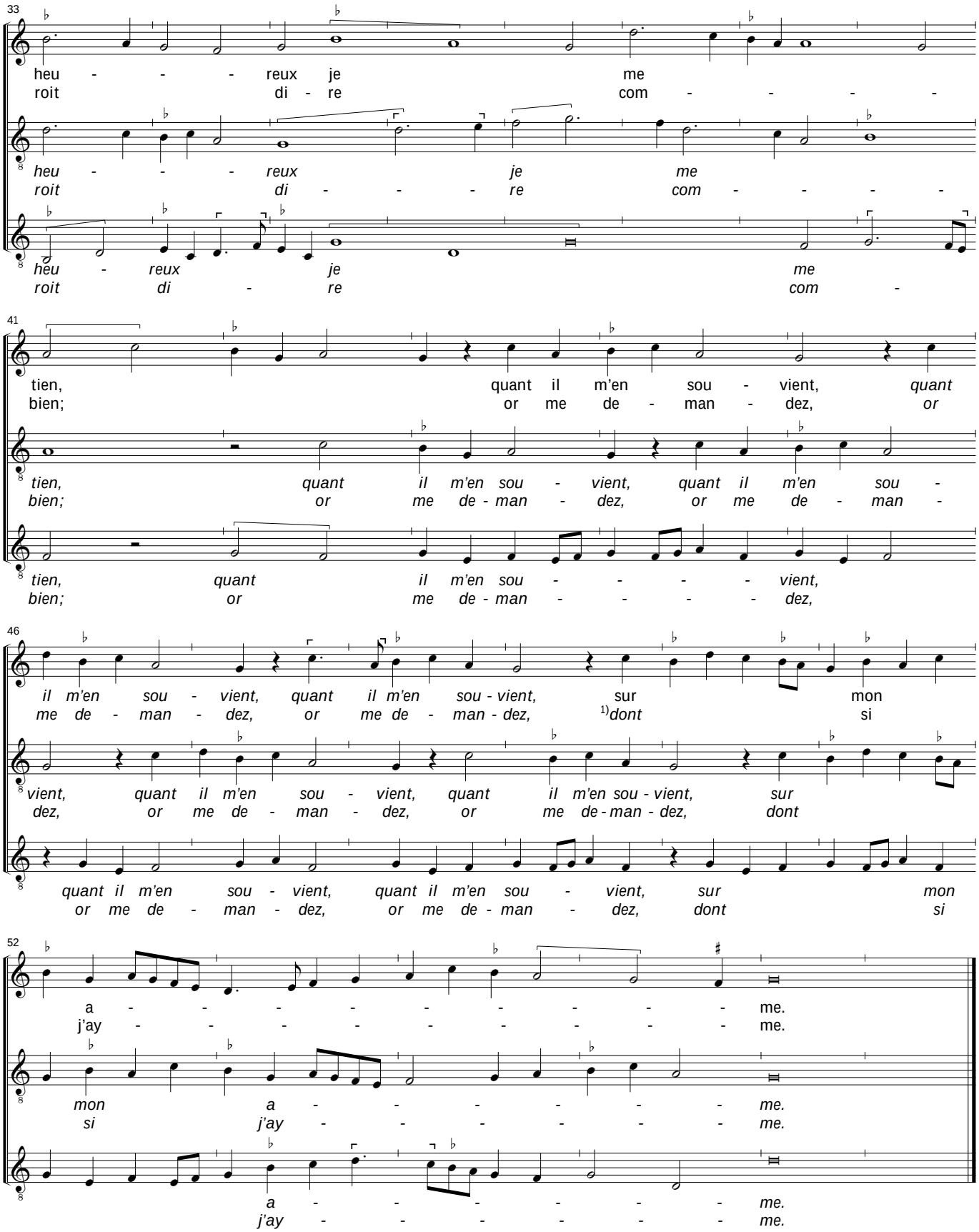
Le joli tetin de ma dame [anonymous]

Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Codex Guelf. 287 Extravag., ff. 18v-20



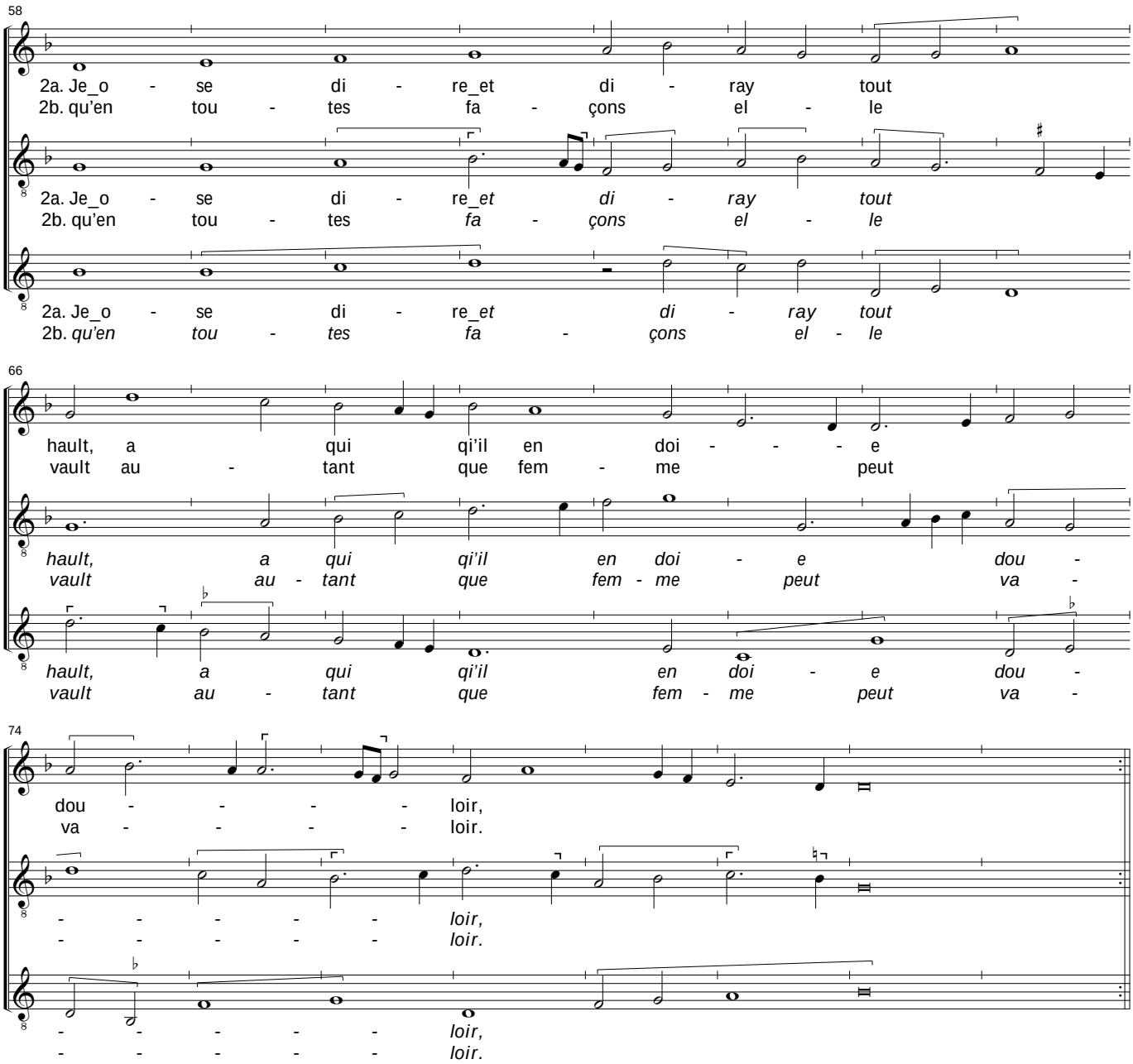
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1) *Superius, text 3,* bar 49.2, a syllable is missing (error), "dont" supplied from Copenhagen.

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