

Anonymous

*Donnez l'aumosne, chiere dame a 4*

Edition and comments by  
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<http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH277.html>

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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' chansonniers*

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

*Donnez l'aumosne, chiere dame 4v · Anonymous*

*Appearance in the group of related chansonniers:*

\*Leuven ff. 47v-50 »Donnez l'aumosne, chiere dame« 4v

*Text:* Virelai simple, full text in Leuven.

Donnez l'aumosne, chiere dame,  
au povvre cueur requerant grace;  
voustre charite, las, luy face  
du bien pour dieu et noustre dame.

Give alms, dear lady,  
to the poor heart seeking grace;  
your kindness, alas, may do him  
good, for God and Our Lady.

Pelerin alant a saint Jame  
est qu'ainsi passant se pourchace.

A pilgrim going to Saint Jame  
is he who thus begs his passage.

*Donnez l'aumosne, chiere dame,  
au povvre cueur requerant grace.*

Give alms, dear lady,  
to the poor heart seeking grace.

Octroyez sans plus une dragme  
de voustre amour, helas, a ce  
que pour vous prie en toute place,  
ce vous sera merite a l'ame.

Give just a drachma  
of your love, alas! to him,  
that he may pray for you everywhere,  
it will be worthy of your soul.

*Donnez l'aumosne, chiere dame,  
au povvre cueur requerant grace;  
voustre charite, las, luy face  
du bien pour dieu et noustre dame.*

Give alms, dear lady,  
to the poor heart seeking grace;  
your kindness, alas, may do him  
good, for God and Our Lady.

*Evaluation of the sources:*

Copied into the Leuven chansonnier by the main scribe with just a few errors. The text is, like the preceding song, a *virelai simple* or *rondeau double*, and it is carefully laid under the four voices – in the lowest voice, the “Basis”, a line and a few words have been passed over. For a discussion of the *virelai simple*, see »Tousdis vous voit mon souvenir«. <sup>1</sup> In “Donnez l'aumosne” the refrain is a quatrain, and consequently the couplets have two lines.

The song is in F, and the refrain is provided with one-flat hexachordal signatures where needed. Both sections are like “Tousdis vous voit” in *tempus imperfectum diminutum* and are performed at the same tempo, but since the flat signatures disappear in the couplets, a certain tonal contrast arises.

*Comments on text and music:*

The poem is an appeal for grace from a male lover who sees himself as a penitent pilgrim, all in rich rimes, and the music has a correspondingly sacred veneer. It is the only song in Leuven in four parts. Three of the voices are in nearly the same high and wide ranges as in the preceding setting of a *virelai simple*, “Tousdis vous voit”; that is, the upper voice (*c'-f'*), a high tenor or contratenor (*e-a'*) and the low “Basis” (*B-flat-c'*): The fourth voice, which in the manuscript is labelled as “Tenor”, is in a more modest range, *f-g'*. The two tenors alternate in taking care of the structural tenor functions and the role of a high

1 Cf. <http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH276.html>.

countertenor, while the “Basis” performs as a low contratenor, mostly below the tenors, but occasionally crossing above one or both of them, and at cadences it often goes up an octave.

The song opens with a duo between the highest tenor, which we can call contratenor, and Basis, sounding an octave lower. The contratenor continues where the contratenor in “Tousdis vous voit” ended – with a recitation of the first line on one note, *c'*, ending in a cadence to C.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, the words “Donnez l’aumosne, chiere dame” (Give alms, dear lady) provoked the ecclesiastical reference to a chant recitation tone. This duo is then repeated an octave higher by superius and tenor (bb. 9-16), with a slightly varied counter-voice in the tenor. Before the cadence, the two other voices re-enter without text (repeat of the line’s last words?) in order to have a full-voice ending to C, which is immediately reinterpreted into a F-chord in *longa*-values, with fermatas and followed by a general pause – full stop!

The second line goes on in calm recitation in which the upper voice seems to aim for a cadence on *f'* (bb. 20-25), but the pace is held up by the tenor who in half tempo pulls the music towards C (bb. 26-29). After this prolongation the line is quickly brought to the refrain’s middle cadence on F, underscored by a fermata in the contratenor. The melodic material is strongly reminiscent of “Tousdis vous voit”. There the first two lines are formed musically as antecedent and consequent phrases (see ex. 1a-b); and the second phrase, a recitation formula followed by a cadential formula, appears several times in slightly different shapes during the course of the song (ex. 1c). The second phrase as shown in ex. 1b and transposed down a fourth is similar to the second line in “Donnez l’aumosne” with an interpolated prolongation.

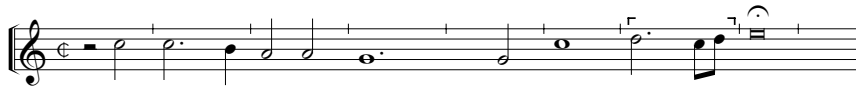
The same simple melodic gesture is presented in the refrain’s third line in the highest voice (bb. 40-48), now in the shape shown in ex. 1c and in C tonality; the contratenor starts imitatively a fifth lower. The harmonization of this passage twice shows up the characteristic sequence of triads on *c-Bb-c* (in bb. 41-43, and an octave higher bb. 43-45), which coloured the sound of “Tousdis vous voit”.

The fourth and last line in the refrain receives an extended setting. The cadences of the first two lines are in their final chords embellished by a dotted descending third (superius and Basis bb. 16-17, tenor bb. 35-36). This figure is taken up by all four voices in strict or free imitation bars 49-54 in a fast delivery of the words “du bien pour dieu”, while the “et noustre dame” is drawn out: first in a three-part passage in *fauxbourdon* style with parallel cadence to A and the contratenor functioning as tenor (bb. 56-59), then in a massive final phrase leading to the cadence to F driven by the tenor’s exhibition of the basic *c'*- and *f*-hexachords. In the final chord, the contratenor splits in two notes to include the chord’s third.

The one-flat signatures are removed in the couplets, and this creates along with the much more compact delivery of the two lines of text an audible contrast with the refrain. Also here, the close connection with “Tousdis vous voit” is impossible to overhear. Its opening line, as in ex. 1a, is presented in a slightly condensed version in canonic imitation between superius and contratenor accompanied by the tenor (bb. 72-78), and the consequent phrase (ex. 1b) continues in the contratenor (bb. 78-83) accompanied by tenor and Basis ending in a parallel cadence in *fauxbourdon* style. In this way the first line

2 This link between the two songs was pointed out in Adam Knight Gilbert, ‘Songs that Know Each Other in the Leuven Chansonnier’, *Journal of the Alamire Foundation* 12 (2020), pp. 231-261, at p. 240.

Ex. 1a “Tousdis vous voit”, superius bars 1-9



Ex. 1b “Tousdis vous voit”, superius bars 10-16



Ex. 1c “Tousdis vous voit”, superius bars 79-85



of the couplets displays a motet-like alternation between two three-part sets of voices, a higher and a lower. The four-part second line has in the superius a repeat of ex. 1b, slightly extended and harmonized with the same alternation of triads on *c*, *Bb* and *c* as we heard in the refrain's third line – and in “Tousdis vous voit”. Superius, contratenor and Basis reach the last syllable on the cadence to C in bar 90, but the tenor pushes on and leads to the cadence on F – with the third sounding in the superius, but modified by the thematic dotted descending third figure in doubled note values.

There can be no doubt that “Donnez l'aumosne” was composed by the same musician who created “Tousdis vous voit” as an exploration of the same formal layout for four voices, and most probably intended them for performance as a set. The use of the same musical material is remarkable, and the effect of the sound of a ‘refrain line’, which we could hear in “Tousdis vous voit”, is only increased at the same line's reappearance in “Donnez l'aumosne” in its third line (bb. 40-48) and at the end of the couplets (bb. 83-90). “Tousdis vous voit” sounds more like a small sacred composition than a chanson. By the change to the four-part medium, the sacred sound has only become more prominent. Its start with the first line's recitation of the words in a duo, which is repeated an octave higher, is similar to many motets or mass sections, and the appearance of passages with a reduced number of voices points in the same direction. The two virelais simples share the wish to experiment, the mixture of new and old in sound treatment, the general pauses and the simplistic and recurring melodic material.

In “Tousdis vous voit” we could observe one of the composer's favourite devices, the decoration of long notes with a dotted dissonant turn note. In “Donnez l'aumosne” it appears less conspicuously in the tenor bars 12, 74 and 78, and in superius bars 30 and 60.

Parts of this text are included in my publication *The unica of the Leuven chansonnier – a portfolio of songs by an ambitious young musician*, August 2024.<sup>3</sup>

3 See further at [http://www.pwch.dk/Publications/PWCH\\_Leuven.pdf](http://www.pwch.dk/Publications/PWCH_Leuven.pdf).

Leuven no. 31

Donnez l'aumosne, chiere dame (unique)

Leuven, Alamire Foundation, Manuscript without shelf number, ff. 47<sup>v</sup>-50

[Superius] Mensura =  $\circ$

[Contratenor]

Tenor

Basis

1.4. Don - nez l'au - mos - ne, chie - re da - - - - me,  
 3. Oc - troy - ez sans plus u - ne drag - - - - me,

1.4. Don - nez l'au - mos - ne, chie - re da - me,  
 3. Oc - troy - ez sans plus u - ne drag - me

10

nez l'au - mos - ne, chie - re da - - - - me,  
 troy - ez sans plus u - ne drag - - - - me

da - - - - me,  
 drag - - - - me

1.4. Don - nez l'au - mos - ne, chie - re da - - - - me,  
 3. Oc - troy - ez sans plus u - ne drag - - - - me

chie - re da - - - - me,  
 u - ne drag - - - - me

20

au pou - vre cuer re - que - rant gra - - - -  
 de vous - tre a - mour, he - las, a

au pou - vre cuer re - que - rant gra - - - -  
 de vous - tre\_a - mour, he - las, a

au pou - vre cuer re - que - rant  
 de vous - tre a - mour, he - las,

au pou - vre cuer re - que - rant gra -  
 de vous - tre\_a - mour, he - las, a ce

1) Tenor, bar 28, the ligature is longa-brevis-longa (error).

32

ce; vous - tre cha - ri -  
 ce que pour vous pri -  
 ce; vous - tre cha - ri - te, las,  
 ce que pour vous pri - e\_en tou -  
 gra - ce; vous - tre cha - ri - te, cha -  
 a ce que pour vous pri - e\_en tou -  
 ce; vous - tre cha - ri -  
 que pour pri -

43

te, las, luy fa - - - ce du bien pour dieu  
 e\_en tou - te pla - - - ce, ce vous se - ra  
 luy fa - - - ce du bien pour  
 te pla - - - ce, ce vous se -  
 ri - - - te, las, luy fa - ce du bien pour dieu et  
 te tou - te pla - ce, ce vous se - ra me -  
 te, las, luy fa - - - ce du  
 e\_en tou - te pla - - - ce, ce

53

et nous - - - - tre  
 me - ri - - - - te\_a  
 dieu et  
 ra me - - - - -  
 bien pour dieu et  
 vous se - ra me - - - -

2) *Contratenor*, bar 33.1, *f* (error).

63



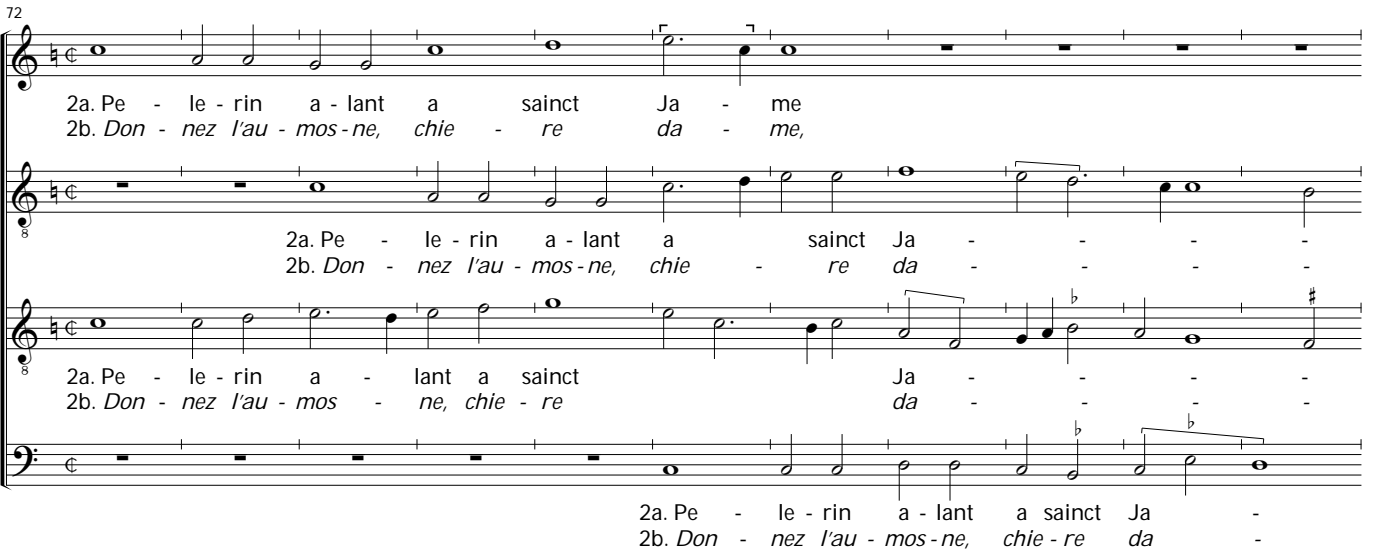
da - - - - - me.  
l'a - - - - - me.

nous - - - - - tre  
ri - - - - - te\_a da - - - - - me.  
l'a - - - - - me.

nous - - - - - tre  
ri - te\_a da - - - - - me.  
l'a - - - - - me.

nous - - - - - tre  
ri - te\_a da - - - - - me.  
l'a - - - - - me.

72



2a. Pe - le - rin a - lant a saint Ja - me  
2b. Don - nez l'au - mos - ne, chie - re da - me,

2a. Pe - le - rin a - lant a saint Ja - - - - -  
2b. Don - nez l'au - mos - ne, chie - re da - - - - -

2a. Pe - le - rin a - lant a saint Ja - - - - -  
2b. Don - nez l'au - mos - ne, chie - re da - - - - -

2a. Pe - le - rin a - lant a saint Ja - - - - -  
2b. Don - nez l'au - mos - ne, chie - re da - - - - -

2a. Pe - le - rin a - lant a saint Ja - - - - -  
2b. Don - nez l'au - mos - ne, chie - re da - - - - -

83



est qu'ain - si pas - sant se pour - cha - ce.  
au pou - vre cuer re - que - rant gra - ce.

me est qu'ain - si pas - sant se pour - cha - ce.  
me, au pou - vre cuer re - que - rant gra - ce.

me, est qu'ain - si pas - sant se pour - cha - ce.  
me, au pou - vre cuer re - que - rant gra - ce.

me est qu'ain - si pas - sant se pour - cha - ce.  
me, au pou - vre cuer re - que - rant gra - ce.