

Johannes Ockeghem

Prenez sur moi vostre exemple amoureux a 3

Edition and comments by
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May 2010

<http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH033.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' 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 sources

Berlin 78.B.17	Berlin, Staatsliche Museen der Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett, Ms. 78.B.17 (Chansonnier Rohan)
London 380	London, British Library, MS Lansdowne 380

Literature

Fallows 1999	David Fallows, <i>A Catalogue of Polyphonic Songs, 1415-1480</i> . Oxford 1999
Löpelmann 1923	M. Löpelmann (ed.), <i>Die Liederhandschrift des Cardinals de Rohan</i> (Gesellschaft für romanische Litteratur, Band 44) Göttingen 1923
Wallis 1929	N. Hardy Wallis (ed.), <i>Anonymous French Verse: An Anthology of Fifteenth Century Poems from Manuscripts in the British Museum</i> . London 1929

Prenez sur moi vostre exemple amoureux 3v · Ockeghem, Johannes

Appearance in the group of related chansonniers:

*Copenhagen f. 39v »Prenez sur moi vostre exemple amoureux« 3v ex 1v
Dijon f. (6a) »Prenez sur moy [vostre exemple amoureux]« [3v ex 1v]

Other sources:

Mantua panel »Prendes sur moy« 3v ex 1v, Jo. Okenghem
Petrucci 1504/3 f. 167v »Prennes sur moy« 3v ex 1v, Okenghem

Later sources and examples in theoretical and historical literature, see further Fallows 1999, pp. 325-327 and the appended 'Bibliography of editions and literature for Ockeghem's "Prenez sur moi"':

Text: Rondeau cinquain, refrain only in Copenhagen; full text in Berlin 78.B.17 f. 185 (no. 578), ed.: Löpelmann 1923, p. 359; and London 380 f. 242v, ed.: Wallis 1929, p. 124. Copenhagen only has lines 1-5; the remainder is after Berlin 78.B.17 (Chansonnier Rohan), f. 185 (Löpelmann no. 578):

Prenez sur moi vostre exemple amoureux:
Commencement d'amours est savoureux 1)
et le moyen plain de paine et tristesse
et la fin est d'avoir plaisant maistresse,
mais au saillir sont les pas dangereux.

*Servant amours me suis trouvé eureux
l'une des foiz et l'autre malleureux,
ung jour sentant confort l'autre destresse.*

*Prenez sur moi vostre exemple amoureux:
Commencement d'amours est savoureux
et le moyen plain de paine et tristesse.*

*Pour ung plaisir cent pensers ennuieux,
pour ung solas cent dangiers perilleux,
pour ung accueil cent regards par rudesse;
s'amours sert donc de telz mets a largesse 2)
et les loiaux fait les plus doloureux.*

*Prenez sur moi vostre exemple amoureux:
Commencement d'amours est savoureux
et le moyen plain de paine et tristesse
et la fin est d'avoir plaisant maistresse,
mais au saillir sont les pas dangereux.*

Take me as your example in love:
the beginning of love is delicious,
in the middle it is full of pain and sadness,
and the outcome is to have a pleasing mistress;
but getting free of it is a dangerous path.

Serving love I have found myself happy
at one time, and at another unhappy,
one day feeling confidence, another distress.

Take me as your example in love:
the beginning of love is delicious,
in the middle it is full of pain and sadness.

For one pleasure a hundred cruel thoughts,
for one solace a hundred perilous dangers,
for one welcome a hundred harsh looks;
such dishes does love serve generously
and makes the loyal the most sorrowful.

Take me as your example in love:
the beginning of love is delicious,
in the middle it is full of pain and sadness,
and the outcome is to have a pleasing mistress;
but getting free of it is a dangerous path.

1) Copenhagen, line 2, "... d'amours et savoureux"

2) Berlin 78.B.17, line 15, "... sert donques de ..."

Evaluation of the source:

The Dijon scribe was probably well aware of the exceptional character of Ockeghem's canon "Prenez sur moi". He placed it as the final song of the Copenhagen chansonnier, and he used it to open the Dijon chansonnier; regrettably – the page containing it has later disappeared. It also closes the collection in Ottaviano Perucci's music print *Canti C numero cento cinquanta* of 1504 and is thus placed in a prominent position. On the other hand, pieces that could be contained on a single page were often selected for this role. Its selection for reproduction in intarsia in Isabella d'Este's *grotta nova* (c. 1506-1508) at the ducal palace in Mantua probably turned the canon into a symbol of musical learning and music's mystique. In a way it started the song's long career in the literature of music theory (beginning with Heyden's *Musica*, 1537, and Glarean's *Dodekachordon*, 1547) and its use as an example of Ockeghem's art in music histories with more or less confused interpretations of the canon (see further 'Bibliography of editions' below).¹ However, Copenhagen remains the only source dating from Ockeghem's lifetime, and the only one with the refrain of the *rondeau cinquain* underlaid as text.

The Dijon scribe's version of Barbingant's »Lomme banny de sa plaisance« in the Dijon chansonnier (ff. 97v-98) shows that he presumably did not have any deeper insight in the *fa*-clef notation of the preceding generations.² Therefore it is fortunate that he in this case apparently copied his exemplar faithfully and without errors. The later Petrucci and Mantua versions contain some musical variants (and *tempus perfectum* mensuration signs), but nothing that changes the picture of the music.³

By now most old enigmas concerning its notation, tonality and intervallic structure, and Glarean's characterization of Ockeghem's canon as a *katholikon*, seem to be answered satisfactorily through the latest publications by Fallows, Urquhart and van Benthem.⁴ From its single notated voice a three-part musical structure is created, which in diatonic canon presents its musical lines in three different intervallic realisations within the same overall (Mixolydian) mode. The temporal distance of one perfect breve between the voices is determined by the *signae congruentiae* at the end of the primary voice in Copenhagen (bb. 33 and 34), which signal the final cadence. The traditional design of the cadential movement at the end moreover assigns the roles of contratenor, tenor and superius to the three voices in their order of entry. Given this, the voices have to form a canon at the upper fourth, creating a fourth-seventh canon.

How to decode the notation of "Prenez sur moi" and other songs in *fa*-clefs was established in a short article by Carl Dahlhaus in 1960. Here he recognized that the sign formations at the start of the voice should be interpreted as hexachordal signs, which

1 On 16th century and later sources and editions, see Joseph S. Levitan, 'Ockeghem's Clefless Compositions', *The Musical Quarterly* 23 (1937), pp. 440-464, R. Bockholdt, 'Französische und niederländische Musik des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts' in T.G. Georgiades (ed.), *Musikalische Edition im Wandel des historischen Bewusstseins*, Kassel 1971, pp. 149-173, and Fallows 1999, pp. 325-327.

2 Cf. <http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH099.html>.

3 See the list of variants in J. Ockeghem (ed. Richard Wexler with Dragan Plamenac), *Collected Works III: Motets and Chansons*. Philadelphia (AMS) 1992, p. LXXXIX.

4 David Fallows, 'Prenez sur moy: Ockeghem's tonal pun', *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 1 (1992), pp. 63-75; Peter Urquhart, 'Calculated to Please the Ear: Ockeghem's Canonic Legacy', *Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* 47 (1997), pp. 72-98; Jaap van Benthem, "Prenez sur moy vostre exemple. Signae, text and cadences in Ockeghem's *Prenez sur moy* and *Missa Cuiusvis toni*", *ibidem*, pp. 99-118.

identify the positions of the semitone steps in the tone system.⁵ Its notation builds on the tradition of *fa*-clef notation,⁶ which Ockeghem certainly knew of through songs by older colleagues, for example by his friend, the older master Gilles Binchois, and at Tours he lived with the music of Barbingant and Guillaume le Rouge, a singer in the ducal chapel in nearby Orléans during the years 1451-1465.

The canon is notated as one single voice part with a famous enigmatic array of flats and sharps (see *Example 1*). With a knowledge of the *fa*-clefs the enigma is easily solved when the signs are read as clefs two at a time: The first two flats a fifth apart designate *c'* and *f*, and the first note is *a*; the next two, a flat and a *mi*-sign, are *f'* and *b-quadratum*, and the second voice starts on *d'*; and the last two *mi*-signs have to be *b'-quadratum* and *e'* with the last voice starting on *g'* (cf. the edition). Hereafter the canon unfolds without any hexachordal signatures and at a pitch convenient to the performers.

Example 1, Incipits,
Copenhagen f. 39v



Example 2,
Alternative incipits



Ockeghem's indubitable expertise in *fa*-clefs and the whole theoretical system surrounding them may have inspired the idea itself of the fourth-seventh canon in combination with the words of the poem. The point is that in a fifth-fourth formation of *fa*-signs⁷ moving one of the signs framing the fifth creates an automatic transposition of the following musical notation. The mechanics are drawn up in *Example 2*: The basic fifth *c'-f* defines the note *a*. If the lower flat is moved one step up, the signs become *f'-c'*, and the written note is now *d'*. Moving also the upper sign creates a new fifth *c''-f'* and the pitch *g'*. Instead of moving the *fa*-signs Ockeghem just replaced them with the sign for the lower note of the hexachordal semitone, the *mi*-sign, and in this way he was able to create a very elegant solution by retaining the signs on the same lines, and it confounded theoreticians for centuries.

That the Dijon scribe did not find room for the additional lines of text in his one-page copy of "Prenez sur moy" induced Richard Wexler in his edition of Ockeghem's secular works to write: "Perhaps the omission was deliberate in this instance. The very nature of the canon seems to preclude the formation of a smoothly functioning medial cadence, and without the point from which to return to the beginning, it is not possible to execute the complete *rondeau* form."⁸ – and in a note to this passage "There is a rather tentative looking *signum* in *Cop 291* that could be taken to indicate the halfway mark of the notated voice. In transcription, it lies above the ..., but none of these places represents a convincing medial cadence point." Fallows and others think that the *signum* is misplaced: "The corona in bar 19 [superius] seems quite wrong"⁹ while Jaap van Benthem regards the *signum* as a precise indication of a full stop on the major triad on *g* in bar 17.2. His transcription

5 Carl Dahlhaus, 'Ockeghems »Fuga trium vocum«', *Die Musikforschung* 13 (1960), pp. 307-310.

6 Cf. my article 'On chansons notated in *fa*-clefs' at <http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/NOTES/ChansonsFaclefs.html>.

7 See 'On chansons ...', *Figure 1*.

8 Ockeghem, *Collected Works III*, p. XCI.

9 Fallows, 'Prenez sur moy:', p. 65

presents a workable solution in which he, however, has to vary wide from the relatively unambiguous text underlay in Copenhagen.¹⁰

What has been overlooked is that the *signum* in Copenhagen is not a corona nor is it a marking of the medial cadence. It is a real *signum congruentia*. All three singers perform from the same voice-part, and the *signum* tells the third voice (superius) exactly where the primary voice (contratenor) begins the second section of the rondeau with the words (in the refrain) “et la fin ...” (b. 19.2). Exactly at this spot special care is needed, if the singers should manage the repeats of the short *couplets*. And there is no reason to believe that they did not perform the rondeau in full, as the poem was well known and appears in two of the big manuscript song collections (see above). The singers have to work out a solution for themselves, but the search for a cadence point in a piece without cadences is futile. The most natural is to let the third voice finish the line “... destresse / tristesse” (in b. 20) while the two other voices vocalize (see the edition),¹¹ but it is also possible to stop one bar earlier. An ingenious solution was presented by Gustave Reese in 1968, which permits the canon to start again in bar 20 overlapping the last word of the third voice (see the *ossia* in the edition). There is nothing in the MS or the music to support this solution, but it sounds brilliant, and if the singers could come up with it, then why not?¹²

Comments on text and music:

This chanson is unique in the chanson repertory. An experienced, if slightly melancholy voice is teaching its followers on the ups and downs of love. The poem's weary courtly spleen is totally transformed by the setting as a 3 ex 1 canon. Its constant juxtaposing of joy and despair is reflected by the constant shimmering of the diatonic harmony where the same figures come in subtle shadings produced by the diatonic fourth-seventh canon. The voices are woven together and propelled forward in constant motion, but still the words are easy to follow in all voices, if one respects the underlay sketched in Copenhagen. The voices take turns in pronouncing the words, and important words can be placed where the voice momentarily is the highest part. With this canon Ockeghem has created a paradigm of learned music, of enigma and musical mystique, and of the of the courtly chanson's mode of expression.

10 Benthem, “*Prenez sur moy*”, pp. 116-117.

11 This is probably also the solution indicated in Fallows, ‘*Prenez sur moy*.’

12 G. Reese, ‘Musical compositions in Renaissance intarsia’ in John L. Lievsay (ed.), *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (Medieval and Renaissance Series, no. 2), Durham 1968, pp. 74-97.

Bibliography of editions and literature for Ockeghem's »Prenez sur moi«

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- Dijon Chansonnier
c. 1470 Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. 517, f. (6a): ? (3v ex 1; only in index)
- Petrucchi 1504 Petrucci, *Canti C*, Venezia 1504, f. 167v: Okenghem (3v ex 1)
- Mantua c. 1506 Mantua, Palazzo Ducale, intarsia panel: Jo. Okenghem (3v ex 1v)
- Heyden 1537 Sebald Heyden, *Musicae*. Nürnberg 1537, p. 34: Okenghem (3v ex 1)
- Heyden 1540 Sebald Heyden, *De arte canendi*. Nürnberg 1540, p. 39: Okeghem (3v ex 1)
- London MS c. 1540 London, British Library, MS Add. 4911 (Scotland, c. 1540), f. 41: Anonymous (3v ex 1)
- Glarean 1547 Henricus Glareanus, *Dodekachordon*. Basel 1547, p. 454: Okenheim (3v ex 1)
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Copenhagen no. 33

Prenez sur moi vostre exemple amoureux [Ockeghem]

Copenhagen, The Royal Library, MS Thott 291 8°, f. 39^v

Mensura = ♩

[Superius] 1.4. Pre - nez sur moi
3. Pour ung plai - sir

[Tenor] 1.4. Pre - nez sur moi
3. Pour ung plai - sir

[Contraténor] 1) 1.4. Pre - nez sur moi vo - cent
3. Pour ung plai - sir sir cent

5 vo - stre_ex - em - ple_a - mou - - -
cent pen - sers en - nui - - -

vo - stre_ex - em - ple_a - mou - - -
cent pen - sers en - nui - - -

stre_ex - em - ple_a - mou - - - reux: Com -
pen - sers en - nui - - - eux, pour

10 - - - reux: Com - men - ce - ment d'a - mours est sa -
- - - eux, pour ung so - las cent dan - giers pe -

reux: Com - men - ce - ment d'a - mours est sa - vou -
eux, pour ung so - las cent dan - giers pe - ril -

men - ce - ment d'a - mours ²⁾est sa - vou - reux et le
ung so - las cent dan - giers pe - ril - leux, pour ung

15 - - - vou - reux et le moy - en plain de pai - ne_et
- - - ril - leux, pour ung ac - cueil cent re - gars par

reux et le moy - en plain de pai - ne_et tris - tes - se
leux, pour ung ac - cueil cent re - gars par ru - des - se;

moy - en plain de pai - ne_et tris - tes - se et la
ac - cueil cent re - gars par ru - des - se; s'a - mours

1) Primary voice (Contraténor), no mensuration indicated.
2) Primary voice (Contraténor), text 1, bar 12.2, in MS "et" (error).

20

tris-tes - se et la fin est donc d'a - voir
 ru-des - se; s'a - mours sert donc de telz

et la fin est donc d'a - voir plai - sant
 s'a - mours sert donc de telz mets a

fin est d'a - voir plai - sant mais - tres -
 sert donc de telz mets a lar - ges -

25

plai - sant mais - tres - se, mais au sail -
 mets a lar - ges - se et les loi - - -

mais - tres - se, mais au sail - - - lir
 lar - ges - se et les loi - - - aux

se, mais au sail - - - lir sont les
 se et les loi - - - aux fait les

30

lir sont les pas dan - ge -
 aux fait les plus do - lou -

sont les pas dan - ge - - -
 fait les plus do - lou - - -

pas dan - ge - - - reux.
 plus do - lou - - - reux.

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- - - reux.
 - - - reux.

reux.
 reux.

2a. Ser - vant a - mours
2b. Pre - nez sur moi

2a. Ser - vant a - mours
2b. Pre - nez sur moi

1) 2a. Ser - vant a - mours
2b. Pre - nez sur moi

me suis trou - vé eu -
vo - stre_ex - em - ple_a - mou -

me suis trou - vé eu -
vo - stre_ex - em - ple_a - mou -

suis trou - vé eu -
stre_ex - em - ple_a - mou - reux: l'u -
Com - reux: Com -

- - - reux: l'u - ne des foiz et l'au - tre mal -
- - - reux: Com - men - ce - ment d'a - mours est sa -

reux: l'u - ne des foiz et l'au - tre mal - leu -
Com - men - ce - ment d'a - mours est sa - vou -

ne des foiz et l'au - tre mal - leu - reux, ung jour
men - ce - ment d'a - mours est sa - vou - reux et le

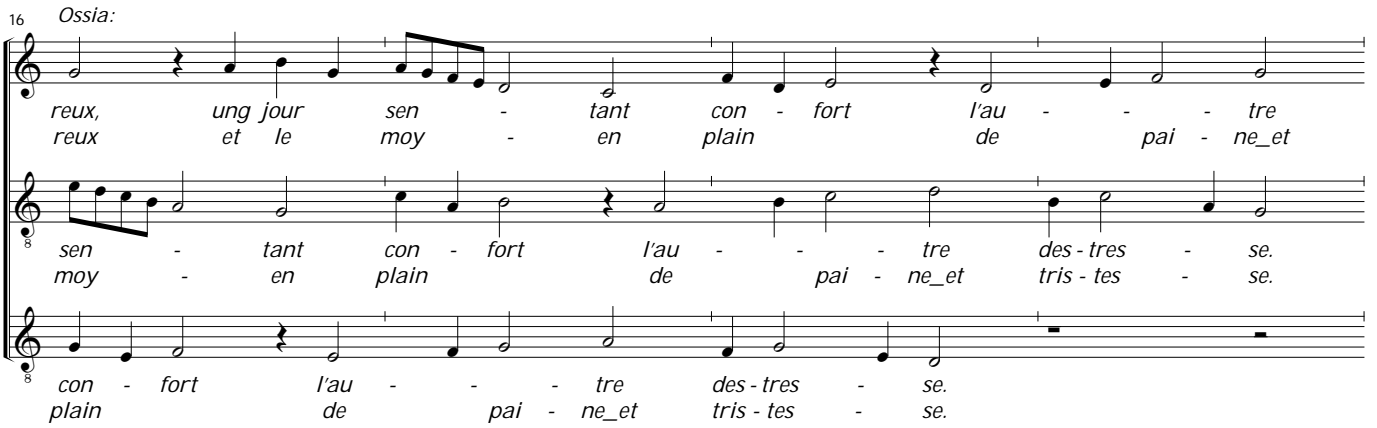
- - leu - reux, ung jour sen - tant con - fort l'au - tre des - tres - se.
- - vou - reux et le moy - en plain de pai - ne_et tris - tes - se.

reux, ung jour sen - tant con - fort l'au - tre des - tres - se.
reux et le moy - en plain de pai - ne_et tris - tes - se.

sen - tant con - fort l'au - tre des - tres - se.
moy - en plain de pai - ne_et tris - tes - se.

1) Primary voice (Contratenor), texts 2a and 3, missing in MS; added after Berlin, Staatsliche Museen der Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett, Ms. 78.B.17 (Chansonier Rohan), f. 185.

16 *Ossia:*

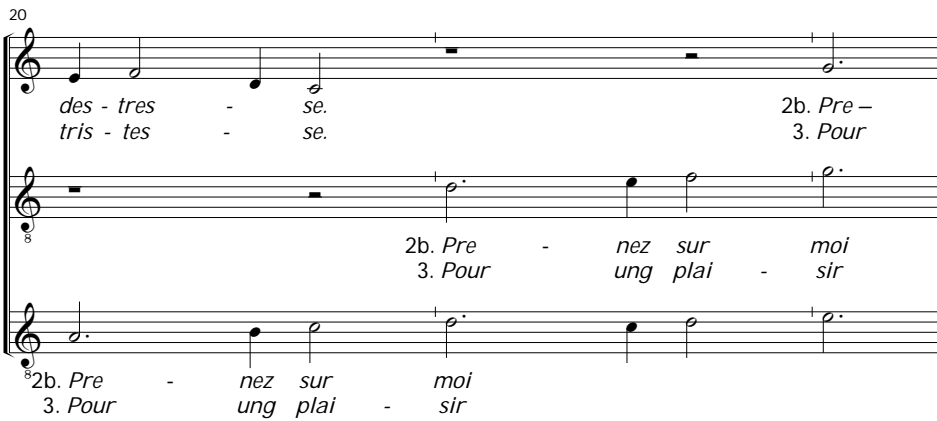


reux, un jour sen tant con - fort l'au - - tre
reux et le moy - en plain de pai - ne_et

sen - tant en con - fort l'au - - tre des - tres - se.
moy - en plain de pai - ne_et tris - tes - se.

con - fort l'au - - tre des - tres - se.
plain de pai - ne_et tris - tes - se.

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des - tres - se. 2b. Pre -
tris - tes - se. 3. Pour

des - tres - se. 2b. Pre - nez sur moi
tris - tes - se. 3. Pour ung plai - sir

2b. Pre - nez sur moi
3. Pour ung plai - sir