

Anonymous

*La plus dolente qui soit nee a 3*

Edition and comments by  
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<http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH074.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>

### *Other sources*

Bologna Q16	Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, MS Q16
Cape 3.b.12	Cape Town, The South African Library, MS Grey 3.b.12
Florence 2356	Firenze, Biblioteca Riccardiana, Ms. 2356
Prague D.G.IV.47	Praha, Památník Národního písemnictví, Strahovská knihovna, MS D.G.IV.47
Uppsala 76a	Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket, Musik i Handskrift 76a

### *Literature*

Fallows 1999	David Fallows, <i>A Catalogue of Polyphonic Songs, 1415-1480</i> . Oxford 1999
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## *La plus dolente qui soit née* 3v · Anonymus

*Appearance in the group of related chansonniers:*

\*Dijon ff. 52v-53 »La plus dolente qui soit née« 3v

\*Leuven ff. 56v-57 »La plus dolente qui soit née« 3v

*Other musical sources:*

Bologna Q16 ff. 148v-149 »La plus dolente« 3v

Cape 3.b.12 ff. 106v-107 »Non nobis Domine« 3v

Florence 2356 ff. 64v-65 »Benedicite« 3v

\*Prague D.G.IV.47 f. 198 »Magistralis nimphula Maria beata« 3v

\*Uppsala 76a ff. 9v-10 »Benedicite Dominus nos« 3v

*Use of material in other compositions and quotation of poem by Molinet, see Fallows 1999, p. 237.*

*Text:* Rondeau cinquain; full text in Dijon and Leuven.

After Dijon:

La plus dolente qui soit née  
et aussi la plus fortunée  
je suis, sans avoir point de joye,  
pourquoy, sur ma foy, je vouldroie  
que la mort me fut tost donnée.

De tous lieux suis habandonnée,  
car Fortune m'a destinée  
d'estre tousjours ou que je soie

la plus dolente *qui soit née*.

Ma douleur est desordonnée,  
et suis en tel point demenée 1)  
que esjouir je ne me pourroye, 2)  
et si n'ay riens qui me resjoye  
parquoy doi bien estre nommée

la plus dolente *qui soit née*.

The most sad ever born  
and also the most unlucky  
I am, without having any joy,  
therefore, by my faith, I could wish  
that death soon was given to me.

Everywhere I am abandoned,  
because Fortune has destined me  
to be always where I will be

the most sad ever born.

My hurt is excessive,  
and I have reached the point  
where I cannot have pleasure,  
and when nothing can please me,  
I ought by that really to be called

the most sad ever born.

1) Leuven, line 13, "... point atournée"

2) Leuven, line 14, "qu'esjouir ne me ..." (error)

### *Evaluation of the sources:*

This song was entered in the Dijon and Leuven chansonniers by their main scribes after similar but different exemplars. Only details in music and text separate the two versions. However, the end of the song went wrong in the Leuven copy. Probably in its exemplar the two *semibrevis* in superius 1 in bars 22-23 had been changed into two *minimae*, which makes the song three *minimae* shorter. The scribe has tried to revise the other upper voice to make it fit by changing *a'* into a *minima* and the two following notes into *semi-minimae*, while the low voice, “Concordans”, remained unchanged, that is, identical to the Dijon version – and the parts do not fit each other anymore.

The most characteristic feature of this song, besides its simple and highly catchy unison canonic imitations in its equal high voices, is its disregard of the normal positioning of the cadences in the mensural pattern. The triple time has everywhere been overruled by the continually shorter distances between the entries of the two canonic voices. In the first line this poses no problem as the second voice enters after three beats, and the canonic imitation cadences in bar 6 in the normal way. For the next two lines the distance has been shortened to two beats, and even after the canon becomes freer in the third line, the middle cadence in bar 15 arrives one beat early. In the rondeau’s second section the distance between the entries is further reduced to only one beat and accordingly the refrain ends with a cadence placed on the second *semibrevis* of the perfection. The poem is constructed in such a way that the short couplet as well as the tierce must end with a short, one line refrain. This assures that the song in a complete performance ends absolutely regularly, on the beat.

That the version in Dijon with the displaced cadences is the original one is confirmed by an anonymous mass, which was added on empty pages to a manuscript containing theoretical treatises and songs copied by the young Franchinus Gaffurius (1451–1522) in Lodi in the years 1472-74, Parma, Bibl. Naz. Palatina, Fondo parmense, ms. 1158, ff. 34v-38.<sup>1</sup> The incomplete three-part mass (Kyrie, Gloria and first live of Credo) is built on “La plus dolente” using a similar disposition of the voices and an extensive dependence of canonic imitation at the unison between the upper voices. In addition to being based on motives from the song, it quotes its polyphonic structure including all three voices. Kyrie I quotes the beginning of the song, and the whole second section of the rondeau in the Dijon version is quoted literally at the end of Gloria (bb. 158-167, see ex. 1).

The irregular cadencing has been preserved in the mass where it directly quotes the song, namely at the cadence in Kyrie, bar 11, and the cadences at the end of Gloria. In a few instances in the mass, also the contratenor takes part in the imitations; this does not happen in the song where the contratenor has a more restricted and supportive role. See further the edition of the mass.<sup>2</sup>

In the Italian chansonnier of the late 1480s, MS Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, MS Q16, the rondeau appears with text incipit only. Here we find the shorter but still irregular ending, which the scribe of the Leuven exemplar seems to have had a vague idea of (ex. 2).

1 Cf. Francesco Saggio, ‘Il codice Parmense 1158. Descrizione del manoscritto ed edizione delle musiche di Gaffurio’, in Davide Daolmi (ed.), *Ritratto di Gaffurio*. Lucca 2017, pp. 73-103 (at pp. 75-76). A facsimile of the MS can be found at <https://www.diamm.ac.uk/sources/1452/#/images>.

2 Anonymous, *Missa Sine nomine a 3 (Missa La plus dolente)* in Parma, Bibl. Naz. Palatina, Fondo parmense, ms. 1158. Edited by Peter Woetmann Christoffersen, at [http://www.sacred.pwch.dk/Ma\\_An02.pdf](http://www.sacred.pwch.dk/Ma_An02.pdf).

158  
tu, in glo - ri - a de - - - i pa -  
tu, in glo - ri - a de - - - i pa -  
tu, de - - - i

162  
- - - tris. A - - - - - men.  
- - - tris. A - - - - - men.  
pa - - - tris. A - - - - - men.

Example 1, Anonymous, *Missa (La plus dolente)*, Gloria, bars 158-167

Example 2, Anonymous, *La plus dolente*, MS Bologna Q16, ff. 148v-149, bars 21-24

21  
i et spi - ri - tus sanc - ti. A - - - - - men.  
- i et spi - ri - tus sanc - ti. A - men.  
li - i et spi - ri - tus sanc - ti. A - men.

Example 3, Anonymous, *Benedicite dominus nos*, MS Uppsala 76a, ff. 9v-10, bars 21-27

There can be no doubt that the rondeau had a much wider circulation than what the few sources with French text indicate, and it must have been widely known long before it reached the 'Loire Valley' chansoniers. Its music is found as Latin *contrafacta* in sources geographically stretching from Bohemia to Italy and spanning several generations from the late 1460s to the first decade of the 16th century.

It appears as a table blessing »Benedicite Dominus nos« in the Italian MS of the early 1480s in Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, Ms. 2356, and in the French MS, Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket, Musik i Handskrift 76a, from Lyon around 1510. They have some differences from the Dijon version especially in the lowest voice, and their endings (similar to the one in Bologna Q16) have been prolonged by three bars, which brings the music to a cadence on the mensuration's primary beat (see the edition and ex. 3).

The song is found with other variants as "Non nobis Domine" in the Italian MS from around 1500 in Cape Town, The South African Library, MS Grey 3.b.12, and as »Magistralis nimphula Maria beata« in the Bohemian Strahov Codex (Praha, Památník Národního písemnictví, Strahovská knihovna, MS D.G.IV.47), which was compiled in the second half of the 1460s.<sup>3</sup> At the start of the original rondeau's second section, the Strahov version attempts to let the concordance voice take part in the imitation (bars 16-18) without complete success, see the edition.<sup>4</sup>

The convoluted relationships between the compositions that use material from "La plus dolente" can be interpreted in more than one way. The rondeau may have come in existence around 1460 or maybe even earlier. Different traditions of transmissions had then evolved, the Dijon version being one, Bologna Q16 may represent another that influenced the faulty Leuven copy and also formed the basis for the Latin versions, which expanded the ending of the piece. The three-part mass was created at an early date based on the Dijon version.

However, the picture drawn by the sources reminds of Busnoys' rondeau »Quant ce vendra au droit destaindre« and its relationship with the four-part *Missa Quant ce vendra* and the *contrafacta*. This rondeau was in a four-part version incorporated in the Credo of the mass as "Et in spiritu sanctus", and it is credible that the young Busnoys composed the song as well as the mass building on it.<sup>5</sup> The quote of the second part of "La plus dolente" at the end of Gloria in the three-part mass suggests that we could have a similar situation here. The composer of the rondeau might also be the author of the mass; like in the case of Busnoys, who else but the composer of the original song would have an interest in maintaining its irregular features. This could explain the persistence of the mass in holding on to the displaced cadences. And it is thinkable that the rondeau was quoted *in extenso* later on in Credo or Sanctus – possibly in a prolonged version that could have formed the basis for the Latin texted versions.

#### *Comments on text and music:*

A desperately sad song in elegant rich rimes in a female voice. As described above it is set in music for two equal high voices (*d'-f''* and *a-f''*) and a supporting voice in the tenor range (*d-d'*) perfect for a performance by women or by the boys in a choir school and their master. Most lines opens in canonic imitation at the unison in the upper voices, and the temporal distance between their entries is gradually diminished. This feature is underscored by the progression in the displacement of the cadences in comparison with the

3 Pawel Gancarczyk, 'The Dating and Chronology of the Strahov Codex', *Hudební věda* 2006, ročník XLIII, číslo 2, pp. 135-145 (at p. 141).

4 "Magistralis nimphula" has also been published in Jaap van Benthem, 'Rescued by Transplantation. An unorthodox approach to 'lost' chansons by Johannes Tourout in polyphonic sources from Bohemia', *Hudební věda* 50 (2013) pp. 221-238 (at pp. 235-236). This score is so heavily edited that it is difficult to recognize the source; e.g. also the entry of the concordans in bar 16 has been silently removed.

5 See further the discussion of »Quant ce vendra« at <http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH037.html>.

normal pattern: on the perfection's third beat in bars 14 and 15, and on its second beat in bars 19, 21 and 24.

All cadences are to the *finalis* on D except for the one dividing the fourth line in bar 19 on A. The melodic material is simple, stock phrases in Dorian, which easily lend themselves to canonic treatment. The short motives seem chosen to fit the words of the poem, also in the lowest voice; of course, this is most evident in the refrain. The poem is carefully constructed in such a way that it works best with a short, one line refrain after the first couplet and the tierce. This assures, as mentioned above, that the rondeau in a complete performance ends with a normal cadence on the perfection's first beat.

The main impression of the song is simple and easy elegance with short and catchy phrases returning in different combinations. The opening imitation returns in varied shapes at the start of the second section (b. 16) and again as the final line (b. 21), and it creates an audible round form, subtly reinforced by the short refrain in a complete performance.

The rounded form, which is quite rare in a rondeau, and the melodic material is closely related to a contemporary song, Robert Morton's »N'aray je jamais mieulx que j'ay?«, which appears in all the 'Loire Valley' chansonniers and was a long-lived international hit song. Musically "La plus dolente" borrows the opening unison imitation from "N'aray je jamais", and its final line and thereby the round form is very close to Morton's. Furthermore, the middle cadence in Morton's song (bb. 13-14; see the edition)<sup>6</sup> is placed just before the final line in "La plus dolente" (bb. 20-21). The songs are of equal length (24/25 bars) and both set sad rondeaux quintains.

"La plus dolente" seems to be a female answer to the love complaint of "N'aray je jamais". Especially the second line of "N'aray je jamais" is telling: "Suis je la ou je demouray" (am I there where I must remain) is developed in the couplet of "La plus dolente", the feeling of abandoned entrapment, but with a refined turn leading to the short refrain.

There cannot be much doubt that this song was derived from Morton's hit song. It has nothing of the refined balance of its model; its goal was rather the ear-catching effectivity of the interwoven high voices. As such it was a success, but it had probably its widest circulation with a selection of Latin prayers.

6 Cf. <http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH003.html>.

Dijon no. 44

La plus dolente qui soit née [Anonymous]

Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 517, ff. 52V-53

[Superius 1] Mensura =  $\text{♩}$

1. La plus do - len - - - te qui des -  
 3. Ma dou - leur est

[Superius 2] 1)  
 1. La plus do - len - - - te qui des - soit or -  
 3. Ma dou - leur est des - or -

Contraténor  
 1. La plus do - len - te qui soit  
 3. Ma dou - leur est des - or -

5  
 soit né - e et aus - si la plus for -  
 or - don - né - e, et suis en tel point de -

né - e et aus - si la plus  
 don - né - e, et suis en tel point

né - e et aus - si la plus for - tu - né -  
 don - né - e, et suis en tel point de - me - né -

10  
 tu - né - e je suis, sans a - voir point de joy -  
 me - né - e que\_es - jou - ir je ne me pour - roy -

for - tu - né - e je suis, sans a - voir point de  
 de - me - né - e que\_es - jou - ir je ne me pour -

e je suis, sans a - voir point de  
 e que\_es - jou - ir je ne me pour -

15  
 - e, pour - quoy, sur ma foy, je  
 - e, et si n'ay riens qui me

joy - e, pour - quoy, sur ma je  
 - roy - e, et si n'ay riens foy, me  
 qui

joy - e, pour et - quoy, sur ma foy, je  
 - roy - e, et si n'ay riens qui me

1) Superius 2 has a signature flat before *b* in the first staff (error).

2) Superius 1, bar 16.3 is *f'-e'* (error).



Dijon no. 44, p. 2

20

voul - droi - e que la mort me fut tost don - né - e.  
res - joy - e par - quoy doi bien e - stre nom - mé - e

voul - droi - e que la mort me fut tost don - né - e.  
res - joy - e par - quoy doi bien e - stre nom - mé - e

voul - droi - e que la mort me fut tost don - né - e.  
res - joy - e par - quoy doi bien e - stre nom - mé - e

2a. De tous lieux suis ha - ban - don - né -

2a. De tous lieux suis ha - ban - don - né -

2a. De tous lieux suis ha - ban - don - né -

6

e, car For - tu - ne m'a de - sti - né - e

e, car For - tu - ne m'a de - sti -

e, car For - tu - ne m'a de - sti - né - e de -

11



d'e-stre tous - jours ou que je soi - - - e

né - e d'e - stre tous - jours ou que je soi - - - e

stre tous - jours ou que 1. La soi - e

2b.4. la plus do - len - te qui soit né - e.

2b.4. la plus do - len - te qui soit né - e.

2b.4. la plus do - len - te qui soit né - e.



Leuven no. 36

La plus dolente qui soit née [Anonymous]

Leuven, Alamire Foundation, Manuscript without shelf number, ff. 56<sup>v</sup>-57

[Superius 1] Mensura =  $\text{♩}$

1. La plus do - len - - - te qui des -  
 3. Ma dou - leur est

[Superius 2]

1. La plus do - len - - - te qui des - soit hor -  
 3. Ma dou - leur est

Concordans

1. La plus do - len - te qui soit  
 3. Ma dou - leur est des - hor -

5

soit né - e et aus si la plus for -  
 hor-don - né - e, et suis en tel point a -

né - e et aus si la plus  
 don - né - e, et suis en tel point

né - e et aus si la plus for - tu - né -  
 don - né - e, et suis en tel point a - tour - né -

10

tu - né - e je suis, sans a - voir point de joy -  
 tour - né - e qu'es - jou - ir je ne me pour - roy -

for - tu - né - e je suis, sans a - voir point de  
 a - tour - né - e qu'es - jou - ir je ne me pour -

e je suis, sans a - voir point de  
 e qu'es - jou - ir je ne me pour -

15

- e, pour - quoy, sur ma foy, je  
 - e, et si n'ay rien qui me

joy - e, pour - quoy, sur ma je  
 - roy - e, et si n'ay rien foy, me  
 qui

joy - e, pour et - quoy, sur ma foy, je  
 - roy - e, et si n'ay rien qui me

20

voul - droy - e que la mort me fust tost don - né - e.  
res - joy - e par quoy doy bien e - stre nom - mé - e

voul - droy - e que la mort me fust tost don - né - e.  
res - joy - e par quoy doy bien e - stre nom - mé - e

voul - droy - e que la mort me fust tost don - né - e.  
res - joy - e par quoy doy bien e - stre nom - mé - e

2a. De tous lieux suis ha - ban - don - né -

2a. De tous lieux suis ha - ban - don - né -

2a. De tous lieux suis ha - ban - don - né -

6

e, car For - tu - ne m'a de - sti - né - e

e, car For - tu - ne m'a de - sti -

e, car For - tu - ne m'a de - sti - né - e de -

1) *Superius 1*, bars 22.3-23.1, c'' - f'' are two *minimae* (error).

2) *Superius 2*, bars 22.3-23.1, the notes a'-g'-f' are *minima - 2 semiminimae* (error).

11



d'e-stre tous - jours ou que je soy - - - e  
né - e d'e - stre tous - jours ou que je soy - - - e  
stre tous - jours ou que je soy - e

2b.4. la plus do - len - te qui soit né - e.  
2b.4. la plus do - len - te qui soit né - e.  
2b.4. la plus do - len - te qui soit né - e.



Prague IV.47 no. 191

Magistralis nimphula Maria beata [Anonymous]

Praha, Památník Národního písemnictví, Strahovská knihovna, MS D.G.IV.47, f. 198

[Superius 1] Mensura =  $\text{♩}$

Ma - gi - stra - lis nim - phu - la, Ma - ri -

[Superius 2]

Ma - gi - stra - lis nim - phu - la, Ma - ri - - -

Contrapunctus

Ma - gi - stra - lis nim - phu - la, Ma -

5

a be - a - ta, Tu vir - gi - num es

a be - a - ta, Tu vir - gi - num

ri - a be - a - ta, Tu vir - gi - num es

9

sto - la vir - tu - ti - bus or - na - - -

es sto - la vir - tu - ti - bus or - na -

sto - la vir - tu - ti - bus or - na -

13

- - - - - ta. Gau - de, Vir -

- - - - - ta. Gau -

- - - - - ta.



17

go, ver - nans ro - - - - - sa, Re -

de, Vir - go, ver - nans ro - - - - - sa, Re -

<sup>8</sup> Gau - de, Vir - go, <sup>1)</sup> ver - nans ro - - - - - sa, <sup>2)</sup> Re -

20

sto no - - - - bis o - di - - - - o - - -

sto no - - - - bis o - di - - - - o - -

<sup>8</sup> - sto no - - - - bis <sup>3)</sup> o - di - - - - o - -

23

- - - - - sa.

- - - - - sa.

<sup>8</sup> - - - - - sa.

1) *Contrapunctus*, bar 18.1 is missing (error).

2) *Contrapunctus*, bar 19.3, *a-d* (error).

3) *Contrapunctus*, bar 22.1, *f-g* (error).

## Uppsala 76a no. 11

Benedicite dominus [Anonymous]

Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket, Vokalmusik i handskrift 76a, ff. 9<sup>v</sup>-10

[Superius 1] Mensura =  $\text{♩}$

Be - ne - di - ci - - - te Do -

[Superius 2]

Be - ne - di - ci - - - te Do - - - -

[Concordans]

Be - - ne - di - ci - te Do -

5 1)

mi - - - nus nos et e - a que su - mus sump -

mi - - - nus nos et e - a que su -

2)

mi - - - nus nos et e - a que su -

10

tu - ri, be - ne - di - cat dex - te - ra Chri - sti,

mus sumptu - ri, be - ne - di - cat dex - te - ra Chri -

mus sump - tu - ri, be - - - ne - di - cat

15 3)

in no - mi - ne pa - - - tris et

- - sti, in no - mi - ne pa - - tris et

4)

dex - te - ra Chri - - sti, in no - mi - ne pa - tris

1) *Superius 1*, bar 5.1-2, 3 *minimae d''-f''-e''* (error).2) *Concordans*, bar 5.1, *d'-b* (error).3) *Superius 1*, bar 15.3 is missing (error).4) *Superius 2*, bar 18.1 is missing (error).

20

fi - li - - - i et spi - ri - tus sanc -  
fi - li - - - i et spi - ri - tus  
et fi - - - li - i et spi - ri - tus

Detailed description: This system contains three staves of music for measures 20, 21, and 22. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics 'fi - li - - - i et spi - ri - tus sanc -'. The middle staff is a vocal line with lyrics 'fi - li - - - i et spi - ri - tus'. The bottom staff is a vocal line with lyrics 'et fi - - - li - i et spi - ri - tus'. The music features various note values, rests, and accidentals (flats and sharps).

23

- - ti. A - - - men.  
sanc - ti. A - men.  
sanc - ti. A - men.

Detailed description: This system contains three staves of music for measures 23, 24, and 25. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics '- - ti. A - - - men.'. The middle staff is a vocal line with lyrics 'sanc - ti. A - men.'. The bottom staff is a vocal line with lyrics 'sanc - ti. A - men.'. The music includes a fermata over the final notes of each line.