Binchois / Du Fay

Je ne vis oncques la pareille a 3

Edition and comments by
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http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH189.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

Other sources

Florence 176	Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Ms. Magl. xix.176
Florence 2356	Firenze, Biblioteca Riccardiana, Ms. 2356
Montecassino 871	Montecassino, Biblioteca dell'Abbazia, Ms. 871
Munich 810	München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. germ. mon. 810 (Schedelsche Liederbuch)
Paris 1597	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. f.fr. 1597
Paris 2973	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. Rothschild 2973 (Chansonnier Cordiforme)
Trento 90	Trento, Castello del Buonconsiglio, Monumenti e Collezioni Provinciali, Ms. 90 (1377)

Text sources

Berlin 78.B.17	Berlin, Staatsliche Museen der Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett, Ms. 78.B.17 (Chansonnier Rohan)
London 380	London, BritishLibrary, MS Lansdowne 380
Paris 1719	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. f.fr. 1719
Paris 1722	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. f.fr. 1722

Literature

Bloxam 2006	M. Jennifer Bloxam, '»I have never seen your equal«: Agricola, the Virgin, and the Creed', *Early Music 44* (2006) pp. 391-407
Fallows 1999	David Fallows, *A Catalogue of Polyphonic Songs, 1415-1480*. Oxford 1999
Löpelmann 1923	M. Löpelmann (ed.), *Die Liederhandschrift des Cardinals de Rohan* (Gesellschaft für romanische Litteratur, Band 44) Göttingen 1923
Wallis 1929	N. Hardy Wallis (ed.), *Anonymous French Verse: An Anthology af Fifteenth Century Poems from Manuscripts in the British Museum.* London 1929

Je ne vis oncques la pareille 3v · Binchois / Dufay

Appearance in the group of related chansonniers:

*Laborde ff. 43v-44 »Je ne vis oncques la paraille« 3v
*Leuven ff. 15v-16 »Je ne vis onques la pareille« 3v
*Nivelle ff. 51v-52 »Je ne vis oncques la pareille« 3v Binchois
*Wolfenbüttel ff. 38v-39 »Je ne vis oncques la pareille« 3v

Other sources:

Florence 176 ff. 50v-51 »Je ne vis onques« 3v
Florence 2356 ff. 72v-73 »Je novis oncqueste« 3v
Montecassino 871 p. 304 »Je ne vis onques« 3v Dufay
Montecassino 871 p. 377 »Je ne vis onques la parelle« 3v
Munich 810 ff. 94v-95 »Jene vis« 3v
Paris 1597 ff. 40v-41 »Je ne viz oncques la pareille« 3v
Paris 2973 ff. 60v-62 »Je ne veis onques la pareille« 3v
*Trento 90 f. 352v »Je ne vis onques la paraiille« 3v

Citations and use in other compositions, see Fallows 1999 p. 216, and Bloxam 2006.

Text: Rondeau quatrain; full text in Laborde, Leuven, Nivelle and Wolfenbüttel; also in Paris 1597 and Paris 2973; also found in Berlin 78.B.17, f. 93, ed.: Löpelmann 1923, p. 146; London 380 f. 246, ed.: Wallis 1929, p. 129; Paris 1719, f. 53v; Paris 1722, f. 72v.
After Nivelle:

Je ne vis oncques la pareille de vous, ma gracieuse dame, car vo beaulté est, sur mon ame, (1) sur toutes aultres nonparaille. (2)	I have never seen the equal of you, my gracious lady, for your beauty is, by my soul, by all others unrivalled.
En vous regardant m'esmerveille (3) et dis: "Qu'est cecy Nostre Dame?"	When I see you, I wonder and say: Could this one be Our Lady?
Je ne vis *oncques la pareille* *de vous, ma gracieuse dame.*	I have never seen the equal of you, my gracious lady.
Vostre tresgrant doulceur esveille (4) mon esperit et mon oeil entame, mon cueur donc puet dire sans blasme, (5) puis qu'a vous servir s'apareille.	Your perfect sweetnes rouses my spirit and blinds my eye, my heart then can say so without guilt, because it is ready to serve you.
Je ne vis *oncques la pareille* *de vous, ma gracieuse dame,* *car vo beaulté est, sur mon ame,* *sur toutes aultres nonparaille.*	I have never seen the equal of you, my gracious lady, for your beauty is, by my soul, by all others unrivalled.

Lines 9-12 in Leuven and Wolfenbüttel:

Vostre tresgrant doulceur reveille mon esperit, et mon oeil entame (6) mon cueur, dont puis dire sans blasme, (7) puis qu'a vous servir m'apareille.	Your perfect sweetnes rouses my spirit/hope, and my eye jolts my heart, this I can say without guilt, because I am preparing to serve you.

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1) Leuven, line 3, "... par mon ame"
2) Lauven and Wolfenbüttel, line 4, "... nompareille"
3) Leuven and Laborde, line 5, "... voiant je me merveille"; Wolfenbüttel, "... je m'esmerveille"
4) Laborde, line 9, "... reveille"
5) Laborde, line 11, "... puis dire ..."
6) Leuven, line 10, "mon espoir ..."
7) Leuven, line 11 starts with a superflous word, "*aussi* mon cueur..."

Evaluation of the sources:

As regards this chanson, it is easy to view the four related sources, Laborde, Leuven, Nivelle and Wolfenbüttel, as a separate and homogeneous group transmitting slightly faulty versions of its music and text.[1] But if we scrutinize the efforts of the scribes of the respective MSS, we find a mixture of editorial interventions and flawed exemplars, which creates a far more complex picture.[2] In the following, the four 'Loire Valley' versions are compared to the 'normal' version of the song as transmitted by the majority of sources, here represented by its oldest source in Trent, Castello del Buonconsiglio, Monumenti e Collezioni Provinciali, Ms. 90 (1377), which probably precedes the 'Loire Valley' MSS by at least a decade (mid-1450s);[3] only variants illuminating the differences between the four MSS are included (many more differences can be found in the use of coloration and ligatures):

1. Superius, bar 4.2, Laborde and Nivelle have a *semibrevis* in stead of the characteristic formulation with two *minimae c"* found in all other sources except Florence 2356, and including Leuven and Wolfenbüttel.

2. Tenor, bar 9, Laborde and Wolfenbüttel have a note repetition (*brevis – semibrevis*), which is not found in other sources including Leuven and Nivelle. This reflects a tendency to subdivide the *breves* in the lower voices as heard in bar 1. Here the four MSS agree, but several other sources including Trento 90 have perfect *breves* in the Tenor or Contra, or in both.

3. Superius, bars 10.3-11.1-2, in all sources except the four 'Loire Valley' MSS the first note in bar 11 must be a *minima g*, which here owing to an error in a common ancestor is missing. Laborde, Leuven and Wolfenbüttel let the voice leap upwards a fifth from

1 "... *Niv* and the closely related *Lab* and *Wo* (especially close in this particular case) ... and they contain variants that seem simply wrong in the light of a full collation." (David Fallows, *A Catalogue of Polyphonic Songs, 1415-1480*. Oxford 1999, p. 255).

2 For enumerations of the variants, see David Fallows, *The Songs of Guillaume Dufay. Critical Commentary to the Revision of Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae, ser. 1, Vol. VI* (Musicological studies & documents 47), Neuhausen-Stuttgart 1995, pp. 256-259, Martella Gutiérrez-Denhoff (ed.), *Der Wolfenbütteler Chansonnier. Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, Codex Guelf. 287 Extrav.* (Musikalischer Denkmäler X), Mainz 1988, pp. 130-131 (NB errors in the readings of sources); concerning the 'corrected' version in Chansonnier Cordiforme, Paris 2973, see G. Thibault & D. Fallows (eds.), *Chansonnier de Jean de Montchenu (Bibliothèque nationale, Rothschild 2973 [I.5.13])*. Paris 1991, pp. cxxiii-cxxv.

3 Cf. Peter Wright, 'Johannes Wiser's paper and the copying of his manuscripts' in P. Wright (ed.), *I codici musicali trentini: Nuove scoperte e nouvi orientamenti della ricerca: Atti del Convegno internationale The Trent Codices: New Findings and New Directions, Trento, Castello del Buonconsiglio, 24 settembre 1994.* Trento 1996, pp. 31-53.

the *semiminima* in the preceding bar (*g-d'*) and prolong the next note *e'* into a *semibrevis*. The Nivelle scribe found this unacceptable and changed the dotted figure b. 10.3 into a *semibrevis a*, and recompensed by changing the prolonged second note in b. 11 into a dotted figure.

4. Contra, bar 15.1, in Nivelle the first note is missing; in Laborde this error has been amended by a *semibrevis* rest; Leuven and Wolfenbüttel has a *semibrevis G* like all other sources.

5. Superius, bar 26.1, Laborde and Wolfenbüttel here show up an obvious and uncorrected error, as the first note is missing and thereby dislocates the final cadence. This error does not appear in Leuven and Nivelle.

6. A one-flat hexachordal signature in the tenor supplemented by some accidentals along the road suffices for Trento 90; Nivelle comes without a signature in the upper voice and one flat in each of the lower voices (like Munich 810 and Paris 2379); Leuven and Wolfenbüttel open in the same configuration, but introduce the signature from bar 2; Laborde shows flats in all three voices like the majority of sources.

7. Nivelle and Laborde seem to share a variant in the poem's *tierce:* In Laborde lines 10-12 are: "...mon esperit et mon oeil entame, / mon cueur *donc puis dire* sans blasme, / puis qu'a vous servir s'aparaille", which in Nivelle has been ameliorated to "... donc puet dire ...". Leuven and Wolfenbüttel are much closer to the probable original version of the lines: "...mon esperit, et *mon* oeil entame / mon cueur, dont puis dire sans blasme, / puis qu'a vous servir m'apareille" - this only needs to exchange "mon oeil" with "vostre oeil" in order to convey the intended meaning clearly.

The sum of these points must be that the four sources represent a local 'Loire Valley' tradition, but also that the song had been circulating for a long period of time and in very many manuscripts. Their variants are contradictory and excludes common exemplars to some degree, even if the exemplars must have been closely related. Point 3 describes an error going back to a common ancestor, clumsily repaired by prolonging the second note in bar 11; here the Nivelle scribe was the only one who tried to edit the passage. Nivelle and Laborde share the text variant (point 7), a special declamation of the first line (point 1), and the error in the contra (which the Laborde scribe edited, point 4), but Laborde is closer to Wolfenbüttel in other details, for example by sharing an obvious error (points 5 and 2). Similarly, Wolfenbüttel and Leuven are close to each other in many traits in text and music (ponts 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7), but other points keep them a part (2 and 5).

The only explanation for the relations between these sources is the existence of many interrelated sources circulating in the local milieu. How this affects the credibility of Nivelle's ascription to Binchois weighted against the later and much farther removed MS Montecassino 871's ascription to Du Fay, is difficult to decide. As the song apparently had been part of the local repertory for a long time, an exemplar even older than Trento 90 and carrying Binchois' name could have instigated a local tradition, which though many generations of slightly corrupted copies reached the Nivelle scribe.

Comments on text and music:

The poem is an ecstatic worship of the gracious lady, who in lines 5-6 appears to the poet as the Blessed Virgin incarnated. The song was performed at the famous *Banquet de Faisan* hosted by the Burgundian duke Philippe le Bon in Lille in 1454. It was part of the *entremetz du serf,* where a boy of twelve years riding on a hart sang "Je ne vis onques", while the hart held the tenor.[4]

The song is perfectly suited for such a two-part performance as the counterpoint of superius and tenor is self-sustaining without fourths. The ranges of the upper voices are a fourth apart, and they move mostly in parallel thirds and sixths; at the beginning of the second section, the tenor sounds above the superius. To this structure is added a low contratenor, which, however, often crosses above the tenor, most audible in the final phrase bars 23-24.

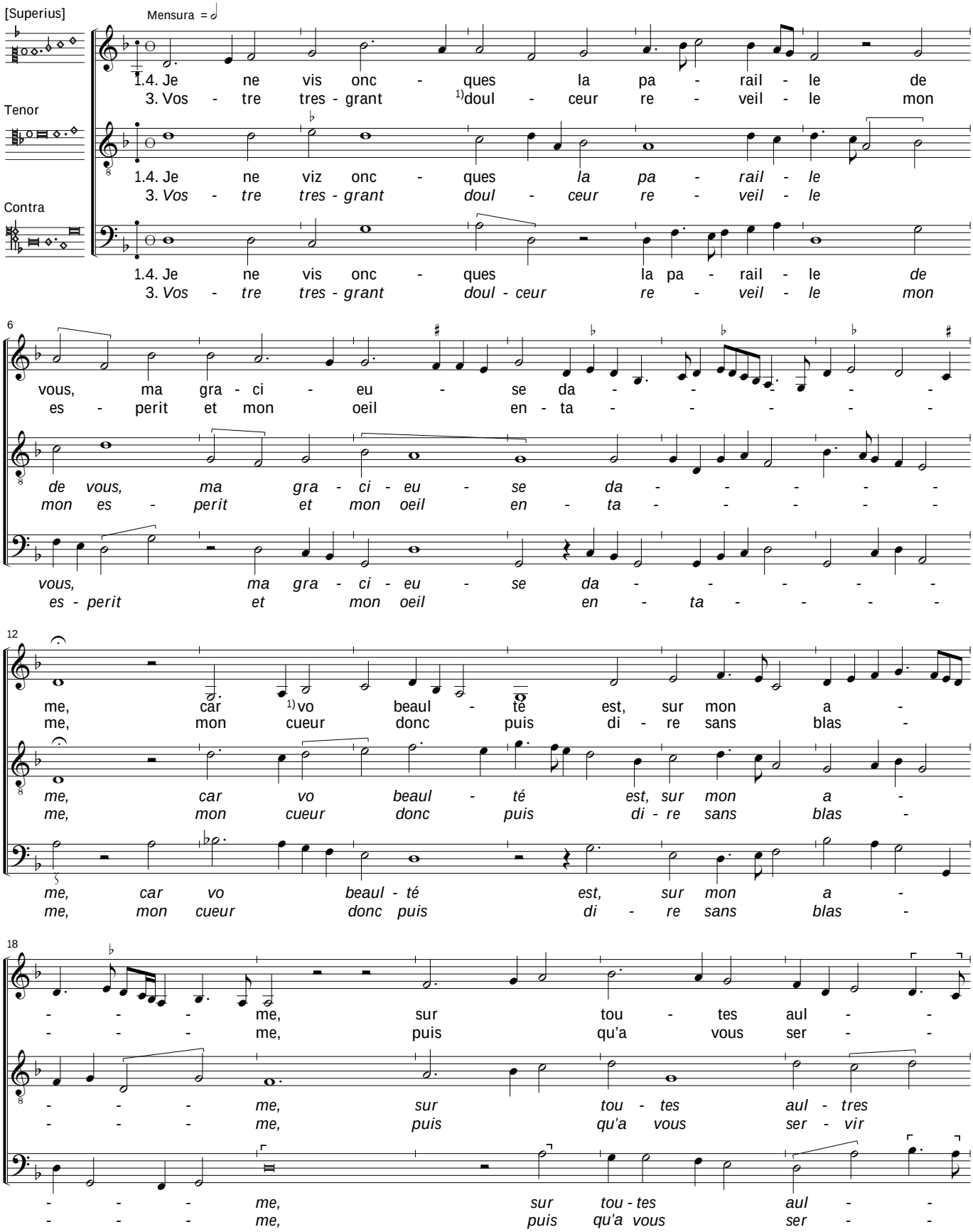
In addition to its melodic grace, much of the charm of this widely circulated and often reworked song consists in its easy flow and concentrated expressiveness. The first and third text lines end without an articulated cadence to stem the flow of the quite short sections. And the opening of the second section is striking; the tenor raises an octave and sings above the superius, while the contratenor too opens above the upper voice – a reversal in sound.

4 For a description of the occasion and comments on the confluence of secular and sacred expressions, see M. Jennifer Bloxam, '»I have never seen your equal«: Agricola, the Virgin, and the Creed', *Early Music* 44 (2006) pp. 391-407; see also her 'A Cultural Context for the Chanson Mass' in Honey Meconi (ed.): *Early Musical Borrowing.* New York & London 2004, pp. 7-35.

Laborde no. 32

Je ne vis oncques la paraille [Binchois / Du Fay]

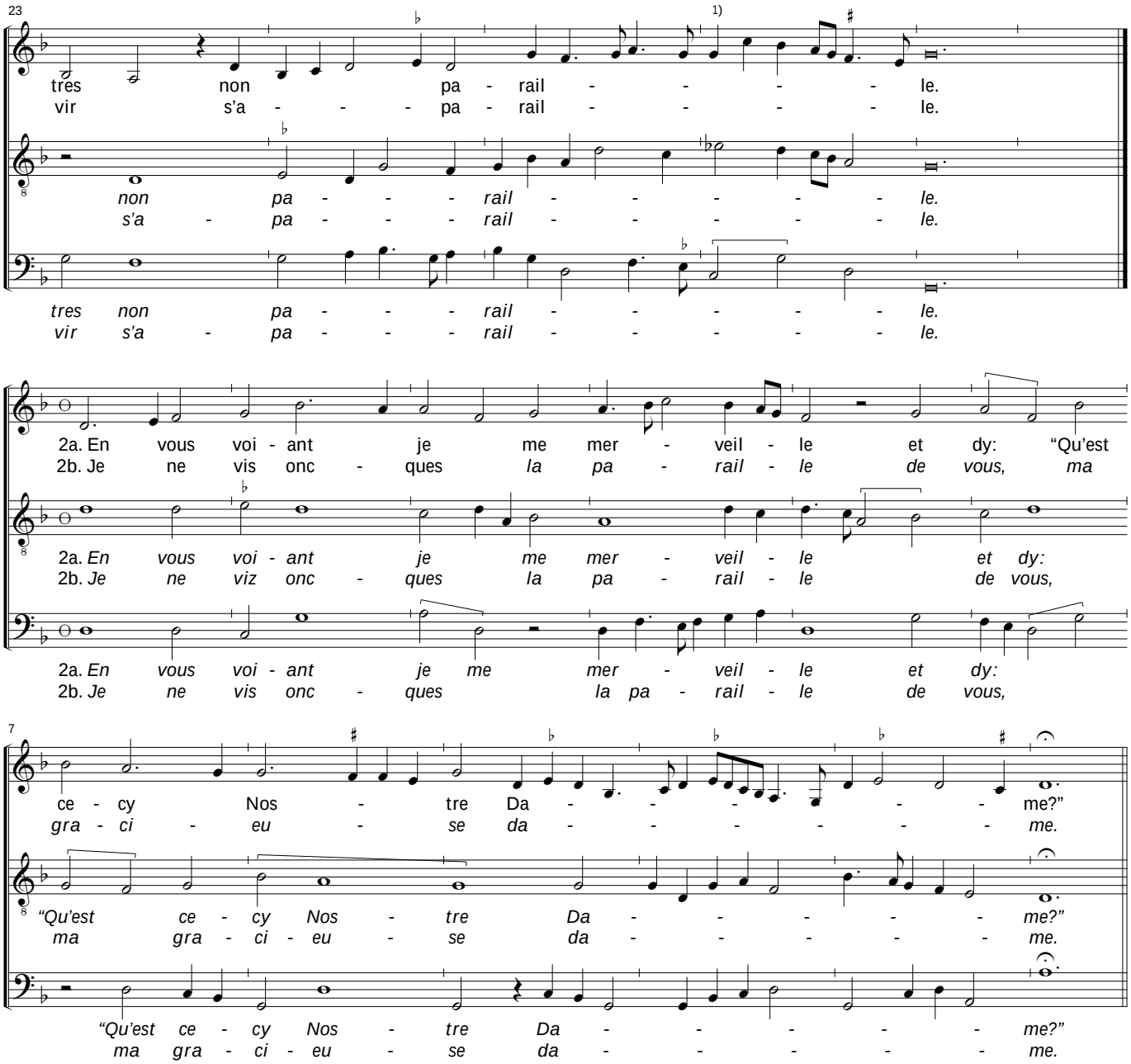
Washington D.C., Library of Congress, MS M2.1 L25 Case, ff. 43v-44



1) *Superius, text 3*, bar 3, "douleur" (error).
2) *Superius, text 1*, bar 13.3, "vostre" (error).

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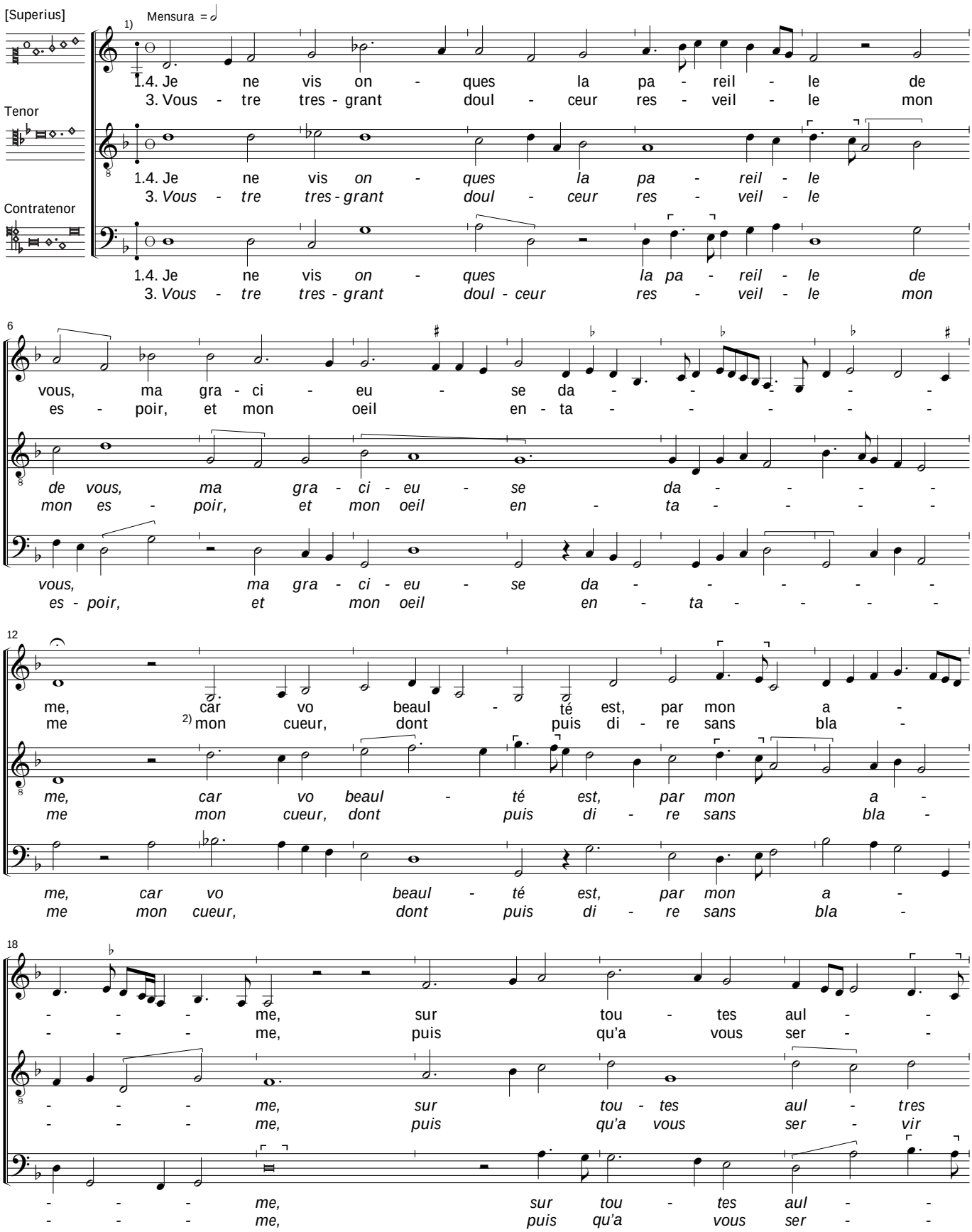


1) *Superius*, bar 26.1, the 1st note is missing (error).

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Leuven no. 11 *Je ne vis onques la pareille* [Binchois / Du Fay]

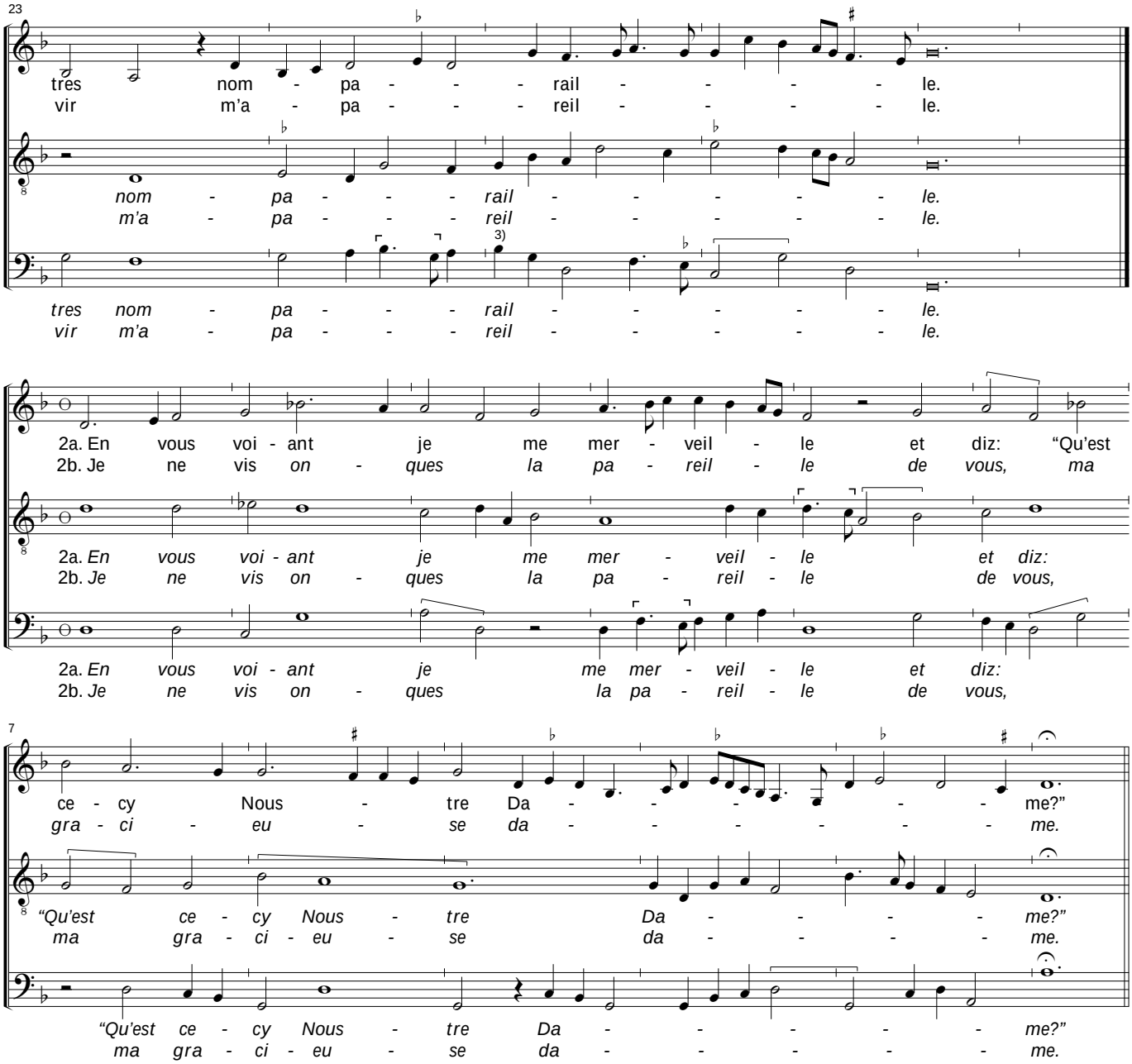
Leuven, Alamire Foundation, Manuscript without shelf number, ff. 15^{v}-16



1) *Superius*, mensuration sign in this voice only; a signature of one flat is introduced in bar 2.2.

3) *Superius, text 3,* b.13.1, has a superflous word "*aussi* mon cueur".

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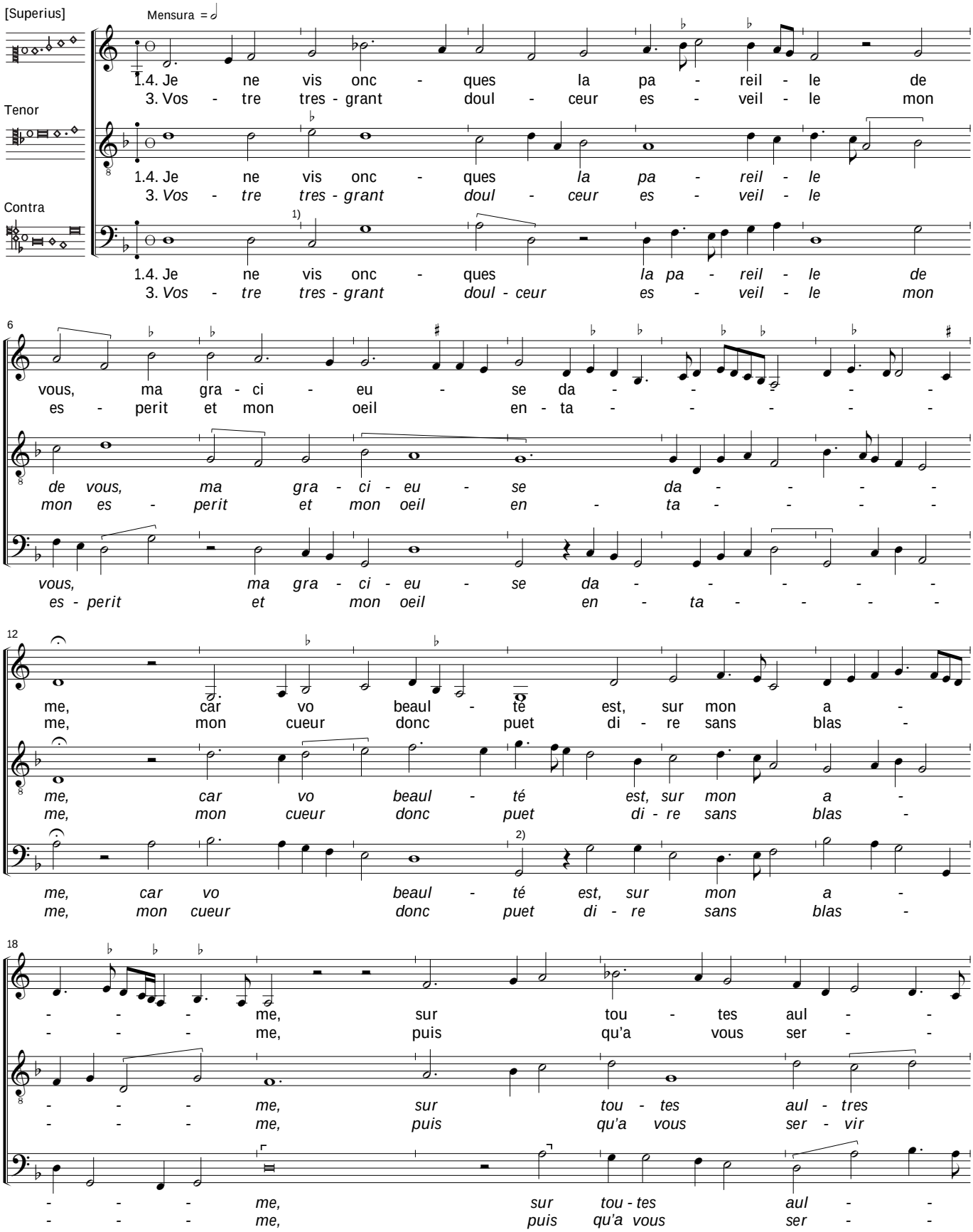
3) *Contratenor*, b. 25.1, the note *b* is missing (error).

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Nivelle no. 40

Binchois, *Je ne vis oncques la pareille*

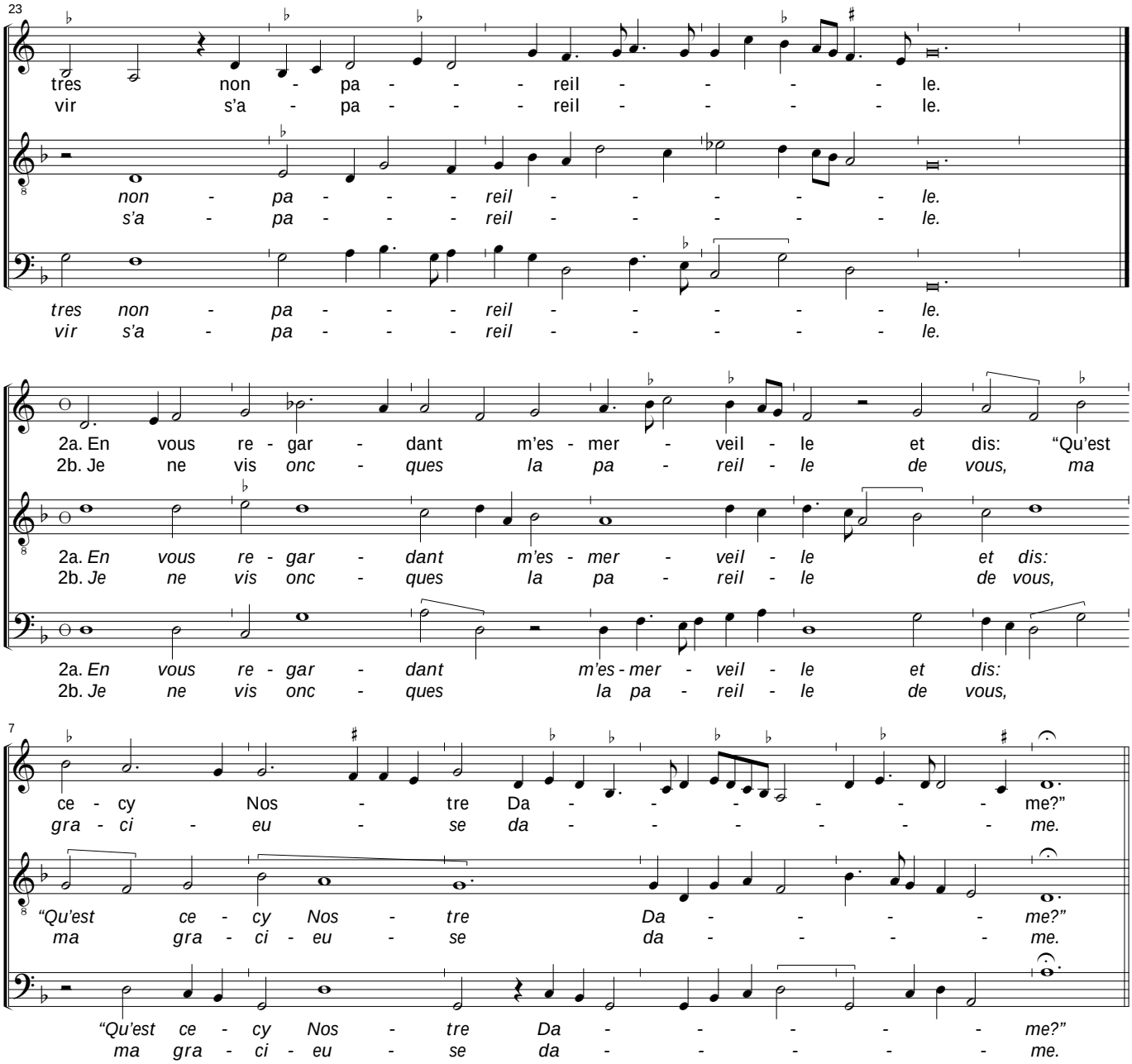
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Rés. Vmc. ms. 57, Chansonnier Nivelle de la Chaussée, ff. 51v-52



1) *Contra,* bar 1, a *punctis divisionis* after the 2nd note is misssing (error).
2) *Contra*, bar 15.1 is missing (error).

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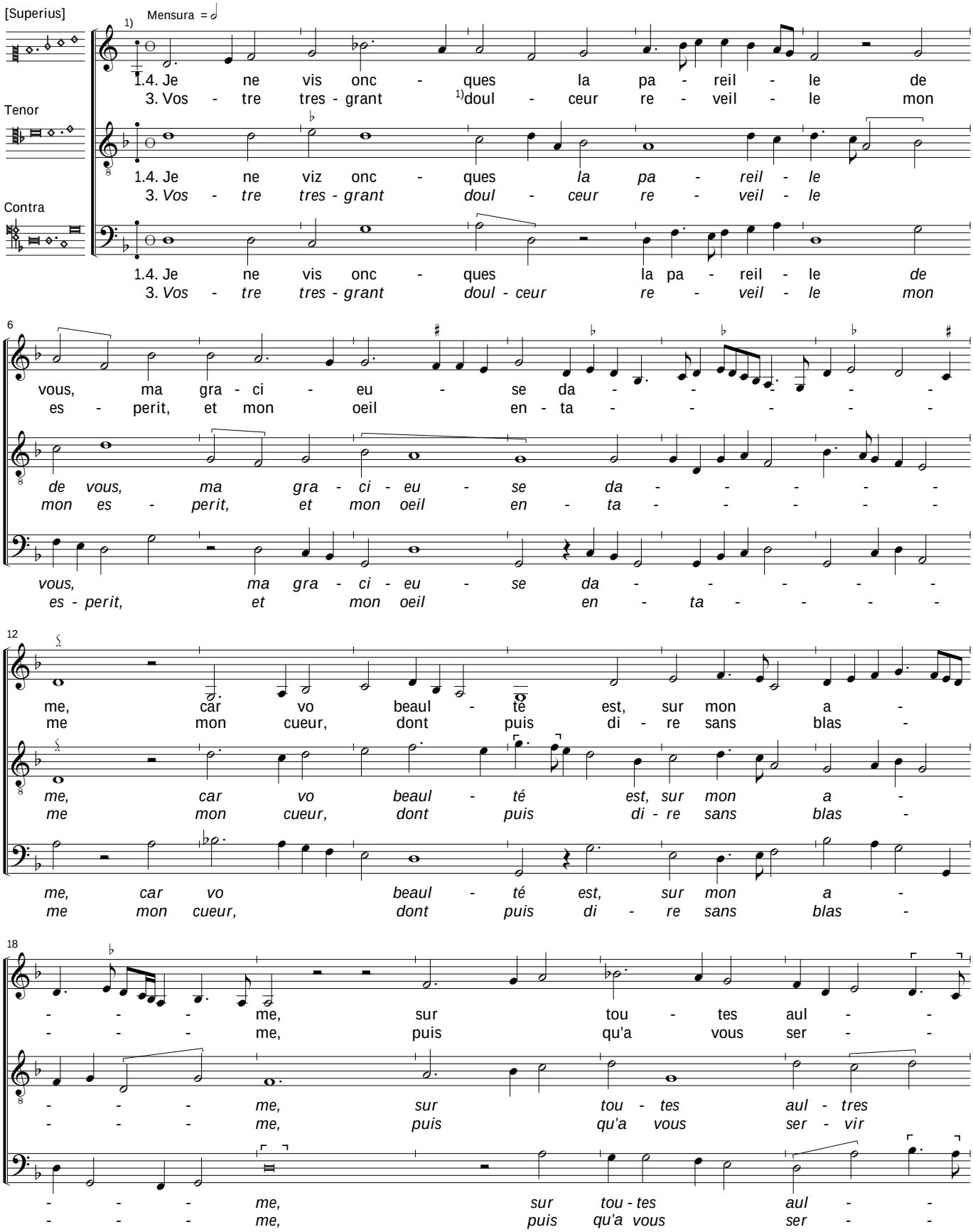


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Wolfenbüttel no. 30

Je ne vis oncques la pareille [Binchois / Du Fay]

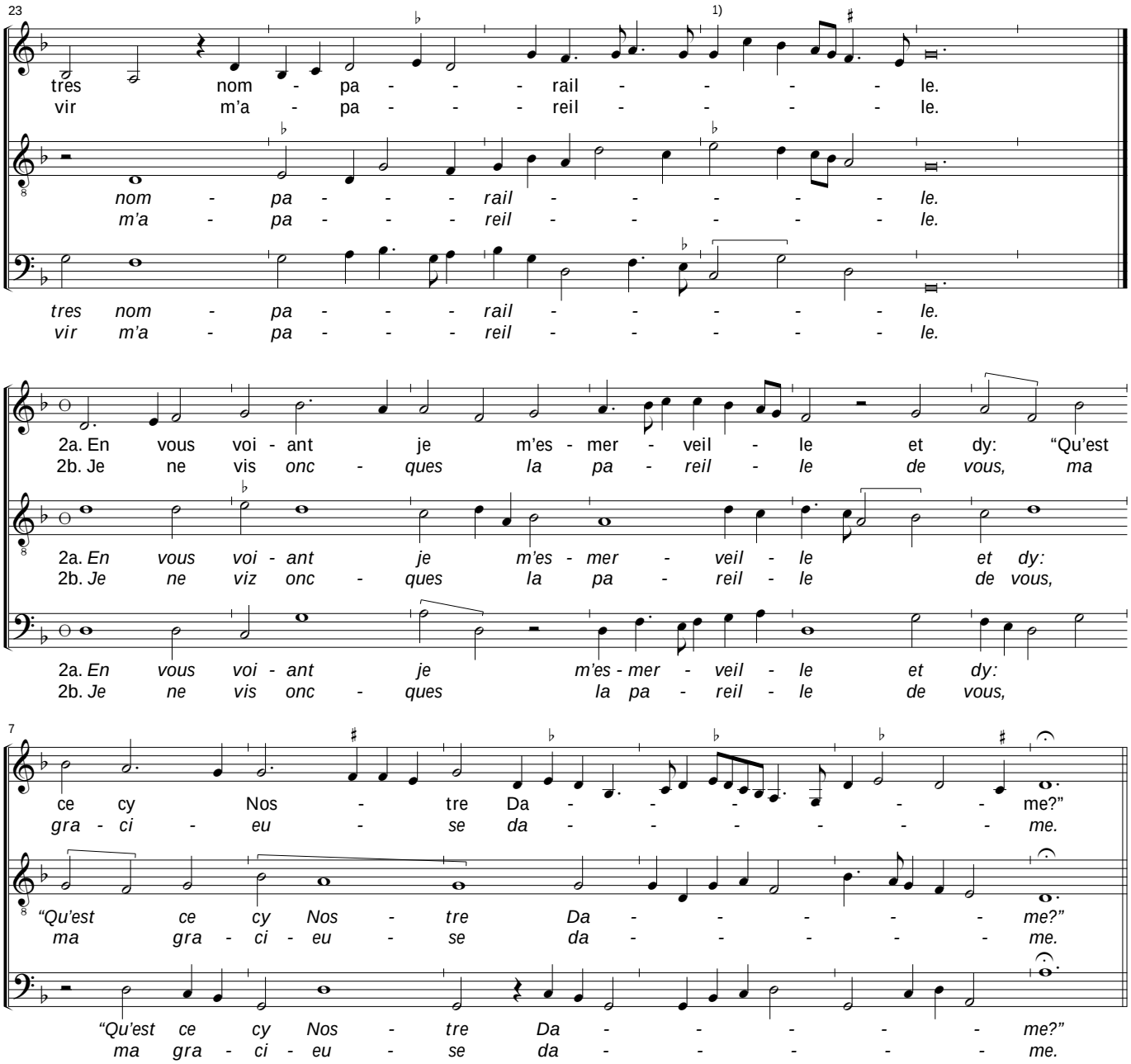
Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Codex Guelf. 287 Extravag., ff. 38v-39



1) *All voices*, no mensuration signs; *superius*, a signature of one flat is introduced in bar 2.2.

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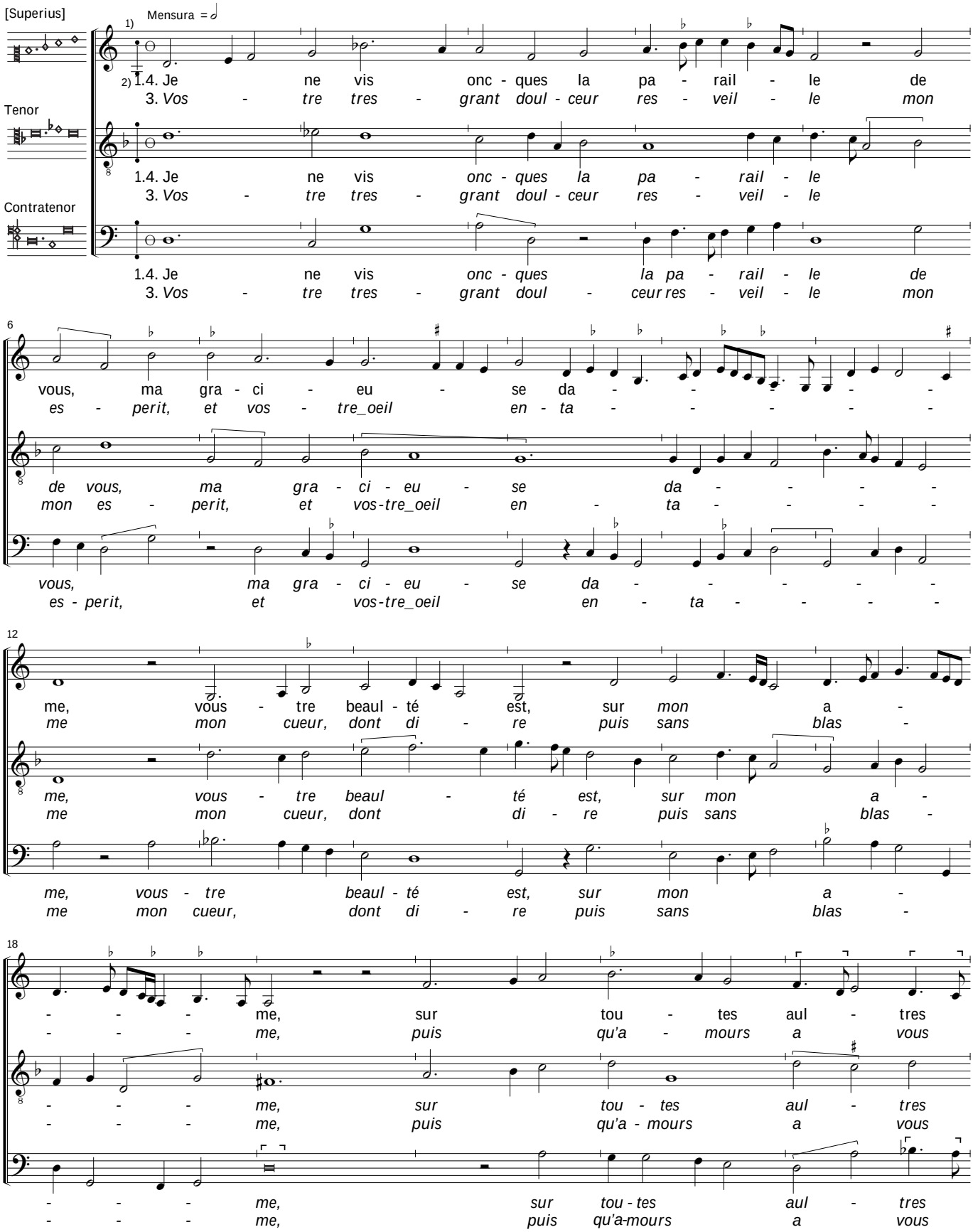
1) *Superius*, bar 26.1, the 1st note is missing (error).

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Trento 90 no. 278

Trento, Castello del Buonconsiglio, Monumenti e Collezioni Provinciali,
Ms. 90 (1377), f. 352v

Je ne vis oncques la paraille [Binchois / Dufay]

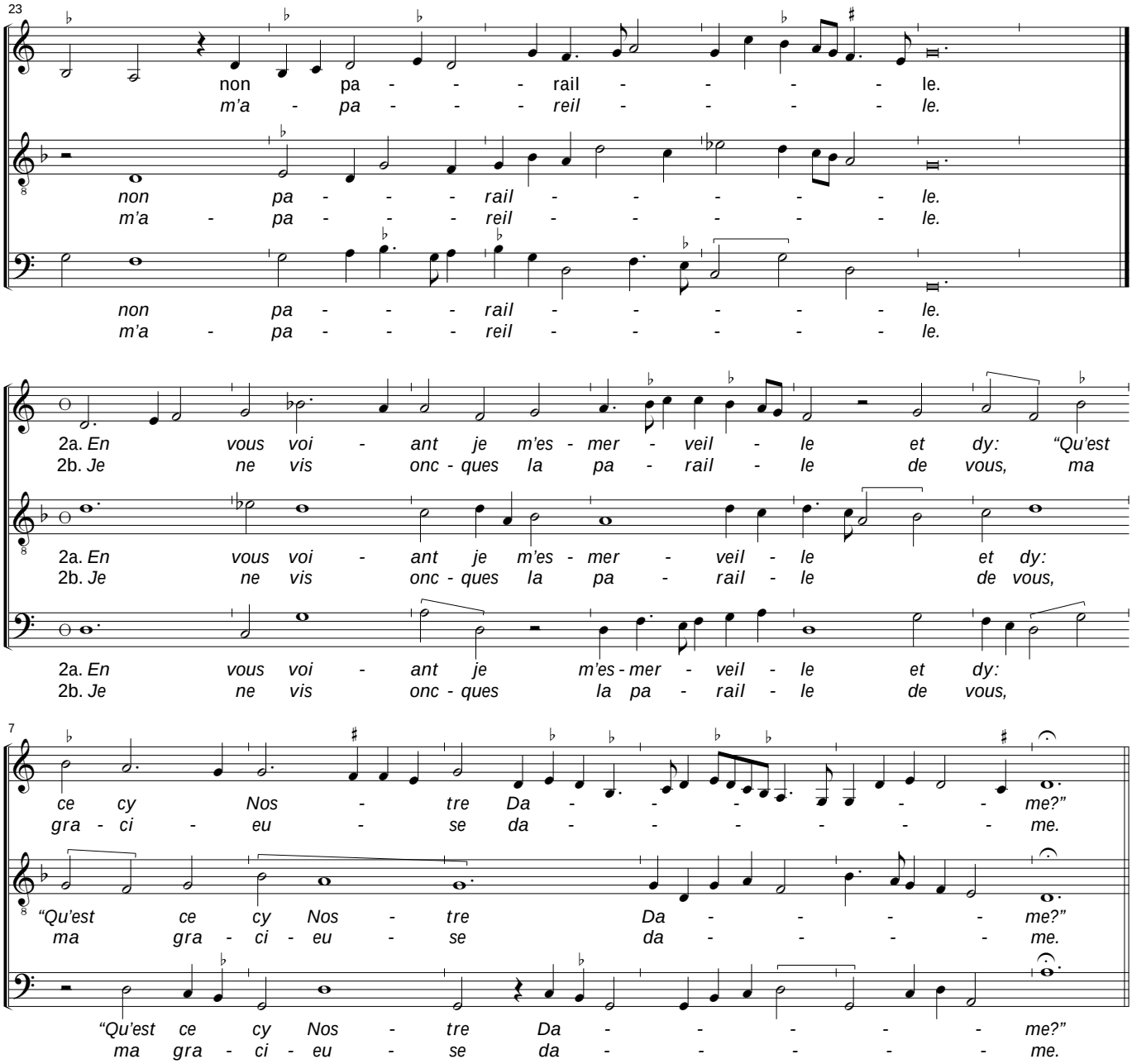


1) *All voices,* no mensuration signs.

2) *Superius, text,* only refrain in the MS; the remainder is added according to Berlin, Staatsliche Museen der Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett, Ms. 78.B.17 (Chansonnier Rohan), f. 93.

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