

Guillaume Du Fay

La plus mignonne de mon cueur a 3

Edition and comments by
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<http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH034.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, BritishLibrary, MS Lansdowne 380
Jardin 1501	<i>Le Jardin de plaisance et fleur de rethorique</i> , Paris, [Antoine Verard, 1501]

Literature

Löpelmann 1923	M. Löpelmann (ed.), <i>Die Liederhandschrift des Cardinals de Rohan</i> (Gesellschaft für romanische Litteratur, Band 44) Göttingen 1923
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La plus mignonne de mon cuer 3v · Guillaume Du Fay

Appearance in the group of related chansonniers:

*Nivelle ff. 64v-65 »Ma plus mignonne de mon cuer« Dufay

*Wolfenbüttel ff. 55v-56 »La plus mignonne de mon cuer«

Text: Rondeau quatrain; full text in Nivelle and Wolfenbüttel, and in the anonymous setting in Dijon; also found in Berlin 78.B.17 f. 97v (no. 202), ed.: Löpelmann 1923, p. 156, London 380 f. 246, Jardin 1501 f. 67 (no. 59).

After Nivelle:

La plus mignonne de mon cuer, (1) je m'èsbahis, dont ce me vient que sans cesser il me souvient de vostre beaulté et douceur.	Most darling of my heart, I am astonished at how it happens that without cease I am reminded of your beauty and sweetness.
Des bonnes estez la meilleur, puisque dire le vous convient, la plus, <i>mignonne de mon cuer</i> <i>je m'èsbahis, dont ce me vient.</i>	Of the good you are the best, since it is fitting to tell you so, most darling of my heart, I am astonished at how it happens.
Quant j'ay desplaisir ou douleur (2) aucune foiz, comme il advient, (3) je ne sçay que cela devient pensant en vostre grant valleur.	When I feel grief or pain sometimes, as it happens, I do not know what this will turn into when I think of your great worth.
La plus <i>mignonne de mon cuer</i> , <i>je m'èsbahis, dont ce me vient</i> <i>que sans cesser il me souvient</i> <i>de vostre beaulté et douceur.</i>	Most darling of my heart, I am astonished at how it happens that without cease I am reminded of your beauty and sweetness.

1) Nivelle, line 1, "Ma plus ..."

2) Wolfenbüttel, line 9, "j'ay" is missing (error)

3) Wolfenbüttel, line 10, "... il seurvient"

In addition some differences in spelling.

The poem is also found in a different anonymous setting in the Copenhagen and Dijon chansonniers, also in the Italian MS Bologna Q16.¹

Evaluation of the sources:

The two sources for Du Fay's rondeau transmit different interpretations of how it should sound; and both sources seem to belong to traditions of transmission, which somewhere along the road have been corrupted to some degree. This may indicate that the chanson had been in circulation long before it reached the two scribes.

It is evident that the song's G tonality to some extent was coloured by fluctuations between B natural and B flat. The question is how much? The Wolfenbüttel scribe (or his exemplar) takes the easy way out and prescribes b-flat in both upper parts and a flat at the beginning of the lowest voice. The Nivelle scribe put a flat in the first staff of superius

¹ At <http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH022.html>.

2 where no Bs at all occur and in the first and fourth (the last) staff of the lowest voice. Taken at face value these flats do not impart any important meaning, maybe only that some tonal colouring is to be expected. It may be significant that in the rondeau's second section, where an e-flat is introduced and where the contrapuntal rules bring b-flats about in the upper voices' duet, the lowest voice carefully avoids touching on any Bs.

The uncertainty of the scribes is apparent. But both has produced performable, but quite different, versions of the song as regards hexachordal signatures. Differences in ligatures and details moreover cause differences in text underlay and phrasing.

The middle cadence (and the point of repeat for the two *couplets*) is only marked with fermatas in the upper voices in Nivelles. If these fermatas signify a prolongation of the cadence tones, the second section will start effortlessly in the rhythmical pattern already established, but a sure transition along with the lower voice will be difficult to accomplish. The Wolfenbüttel version probably was notated in the same way at some point in its genesis, but without fermatas, only a *signum*. A copyist along the road was not satisfied with its displacement of the strong beat and tried to repair the music by prolonging the static harmony in bars 8-9 and thereby bringing the second section in line. Later a better solution was probably brought in from another line of transmission, which clarified bars 17-18 with *semibrevis* rests – but the now superfluous prolongation of bars 8-9 was retained. In my transcriptions I propose to use the Wolfenbüttel interpretation of the middle cadence in both versions, and to ignore the prolongation of bars 8-9 in a performance of the Wolfenbüttel version.

In Nivelles, the two high voices are placed at the locations of superius and tenor on the opening ff. 55v-56, but they are not labelled, only the third voice, located as a contratenor, is labelled “Concordans”. In Wolfenbüttel the voices are arranged in exactly the same way on the pages, but the voices on the right-hand page are mechanically labelled according to their location as “Tenor” and “Contra”. Without doubt the labelling of the parts in Nivelles is the most authoritative of the two sources.²

Comments on text and music:

Du Fay has set the poem's worship of the beloved in artful, nearly *équivoques* rimes for two equal high voices and a “Concordans” (Nivelles, see above). The two-part structure of the equal voices is entirely self-sufficient and uses movement in parallel thirds (text line 1), unison canon (line 2), and free polyphony with the 2nd voice raising an octave above the first and exchange of the superius and tenor roles (lines 3-4). The Concordans (in accordance with whichever voice takes the tenor function) generally supports and colours this duet from below, but in the second section of the rondeau it lays between the upper voices and in fact for a moment (b. 28) is the highest sounding voice.

In this succinct setting of the *rondeau quatrains* the varied technique more than fulfils the demands for a viable rondeau setting. The contrast between the exuberant unison canon (bb. 6-15) and the much greater distance between the upper parts in the second section is accentuated by the introduction of the E-flat in bar 24, which for a time really moves the song into *cantus mollis*.

² See also the comments in 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. 215-219.

All this works just as well in the Wolfenbüttel version, which has key signatures of one flat all through the song. But it cannot be denied that the greater contrast between an only slightly coloured *cantus durus* in the first section of the rondeau in Nivelles and the *cantus mollis* in the second is somewhat levelled out in the Wolfenbüttel version. For example the E-flat comes up earlier in Wolfenbüttel (b. 20) by virtue of the contrapuntal rules, and with less effect.

In comparison with the anonymous setting of the same poem in Copenhagen and Dijon Du Fay's is a masterpiece – even if it has become a bit tainted during transmission.

Nivelle no. 51

Du Fay, *Ma plus mignonne de mon cuer*

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Rés. Vmc. ms. 57,
Chansonnier Nivelle de la Chaussée, ff. 64^v-65: dufay

[Superius 1] Mensura = ♩

1. 4. Ma plus mi - gnon - ne de mon cuer, je
3. Quant j'ay des - plai - sir ou dou - leur au -

[Superius 2]

1) 1. 4. Ma plus mi - gnon - ne de mon cuer,
3. Quant j'ay des - plai - sir ou dou - leur

Concordans

1. 4. Ma plus mi - gnon - ne de mon
3. Quant j'ay des - plai - sir ou dou -

7

m'es - ba - his dont ce me ad -
cu - ne foiz, com - me_il -

je m'es - ba - his dont ce me ad -
au - cu - ne foiz, com - me_il -

8 *cuer,*
leur je m'es - ba - his dont ce
au - cu - ne foiz, com - me_il

15

2) vient que sans ces - ser il
- - - vient, je ne sçay que ce -

3) vient que sans ces - ser il
vient, je ne sçay que ce -

4) me ad - vient, que sans ces - ser il
ad - - - vient, je ne sçay que ce -

1) *Superius 2* and *Concordans* both have a signature of one flat in their first staves indicating that some tonal coloring can be expected. However, the first staff (bb. 1-7) of *Superius 2* does not contain any Bs at all, so it is probably an error; and in the *Concordans* bb. 1-10.1) the signature has been interpreted as written accidentals in bars 3-4. The b-flat in the signature also appears in the last staff of the *Concordans* (bb. 33 ff), where again no Bs occur.

2) *Superius 1*, bar 17.2, the *semibrevis* rest does not appear in the MS.
3) *Superius 2*, bar 18.1, the *semibrevis* rest does not appear in the MS.
4) *Concordans*, bar 17 is a *brevis* without *punctus*. – The fermata middle cadence has probably been corrupted during transmission; adjusted in accordance with the version in the Wolfenbüttel chansonnier.

24

me la sou de - - - vient de vos -
la de - - - vient pen - sant

me la sou de - - - vient de vos -
la de - - - vient pen - sant

me la sou de - - - vient de vos -
la de - - - vient pen - sant

32

tre beaul - té et doul - leur.
en vos - tre grant val - - - leur.

tre beaul - té et doul - leur.
en vos - tre grant val - - - leur.

tre beaul - té et doul - leur.
en vos - tre grant val - - - leur.

2a. Des bon - nes es - tez la meil - leur, puis - que di - re
2b. ma plus mi - gnon - ne de mon cueur, je m'es - ba - his

2a. Des bon - nes es - tez la meil - leur, puis - que di -
2b. ma plus mi - gnon - ne de mon cueur, je m'es - ba -

2a. Des bon - nes es - tez la meil - leur,
2b. ma plus mi - gnon - ne de mon cueur,

9

le dont vous ce con me - - - vient, vient.
re his le dont vous ce con me - - - vient, vient.

puis - que di - re le dont vous ce con me - - - vient, vient.

1) Concordans, bar 30.2 is f (error).

Wolfenbüttel no. 46

La plus mignonne de mon coeur [Du Fay]

Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Codex Guelf. 287 Extravag., ff. 55V-56

[Superius] Mensura = ♩

1. 4. La plus mi - gnon - ne de mon coeur, je
3. Quant 2) j'ay des - plai - sir ou dou - leur au -

1) 1. 4. La plus mi - gnon - ne de mon coeur,
3. Quant j'ay des - plai - sir ou dou - leur

7 m'es - ba - his dont ce me vient
cu - ne foiz, com - me_il seur - vient,
je m'es - ba - his dont ce me vient
au - cu - ne foiz, com - me_il seur - vient,
cœur, je m'es - ba - his dont ce me vient
leur - leur au - cu - ne foiz, com-me_il seur - vient,

15 que sans ces - ser il me sou -
je ne sçay que ce - la de -
que sans ces - ser il me sou -
je ne sçay que ce - la de -
que sans ces - ser il
je ne sçay que ce - ser il ce -

1) *Contra* has a signature of one flat in its first staff (bb. 1-12.1) only. This signature has been retained for the whole piece, and the single *b* following the imitation bars 9-12 (in b. 14.1) has been treated as if it had a notated natural sign.

2) *Superius*, text 3, bar 2, the word "j'ay" is missing (error).

3) *All parts*, bar 9, the end of "je m'esbahis" has been extended by a *semibrevis* value (not in Nivelle), probably to repair a corruption of the musical text. In performance it would be best to ignore the extension by omitting the first *semibrevis* rest in the superius (b. 9.1) and the dots on the *breves* in the tenor and contra (T b. 9 and C b. 8).

24

vient de vos
vient pen - sant

me sou - vient de vos
la de - vient pen - sant

32

tre beaul - té et dou - leur.
a vos - tre grant va - leur.

tre beaul - té et dou - leur.
a vos - tre grant va - leur.

2a. Des bon - nes es - tes la meil - leur, puis - que di - re_il
2b. la plus mi - gnon - ne de mon cueur, je m'es - ba - his

2a. Des bon - nes es - tes la meil - leur,
2b. la plus mi - gnon - ne de mon cueur,

9

le vous con - vient,
dont ce me vient.

re_il le vous con - vient,
his dont ce me vient.

puis - que di - re_il le vous con - vient,
je m'es - ba - his dont ce me vient.

1) *Contra*, bar 36.2, the *c* could be read as a *B*.