

Nés qu'on porroit

ballade, Le Livre du Voir dit
Machaut MS E, F-Pn fonds fr. 9221, 178r-v

Guillaume de Machaut (1300-77), B 33
text edited by Imbs, presentation Cerquiglini-Toulet, translation by Sarah Kay
music transcribed by Christopher Preston Thompson

Cantus

8

Nés qu'on por - - - roit
Et les gou - - - tes

Contraténor

Ténor

5

les de es pluie - - - toil et - - - les de nom la - - - brer mer

9

Quant on les voit
Et l'a re - ne

14

8

lui sur - - - - re plus
sur - - - - quoi el -

18

8

1. cle - re - ment,
2. le s'es -

23

8

tent, Et com - pas - se[r] le tour du

28

8 fir - ma-ment, Ne por - roit on pen - ser

32

8 ne con - - ce - voir

37

8 Le grant de - sir que j'ai de

41

Stanza 2

vous ve - - - oir. Et si ne - - -
Dont maint sous -

46

puis par de vers vous a -
pir me cou vient es - tran -

51

ler Pour For tu - ne -
gler Quant a vous pen -

56

que s'et le je vice sui

61

1. et def - fent; 2. en - tre

66

gent; Et quant je sui par moi se-

71

cre - te-ment, A - donc me fait tous mes - - -

75

- chiés re - - - ce - voir ____

80

Le ____ grant - de - sir que j'ai de

84 Stanza 3

vous ve - - - oir. [Q]uar il me - - -
Et ___ vo biau -

89

- fait té com - plaindre et do - lou -
sou - ve rai - n'et sans

94

- ser per Et re - gre - ter
Et la - [tres] grant

99

vos dou - - - - - stre vi -
dou - - - - - ceur qui

104

1. ai - re gent
2. en des cent.

110

Ain - si me fait lan - guir pi - teu - se - ment, Mon

115

8
cuer es-prent et es - taint mon

120

8
es - poir Le

125

8
grant de - sir que j'ai de vous ve - oir.

No more than anyone could count the stars when one sees them shining at their brightest, nor drops of rain or water in the sea, nor the grains of sand on the sea shore, or measure the circle of the firmament, could anyone conceive the great desire I have to see you.

And yet I am unable to go to meet you, for Fortune forbids it. Because of this, I have to stifle many a sigh when I think of you in company; and when I am on my own privately, then the great desire I have to see you makes me feel all manner of pain.

For it makes me lament and grieve, and long for your noble face, your matchless sovereign beauty, and the immense sweetness it casts. And so the great desire I have to see you makes me languish pitifully, inflames my heart and snuffs out my hope.

– Sarah Kay

Notes on the music:

This transcription draws primarily from Machaut MS E, with the following emendations:

m. 11, tenor, The third note is shown in MS E as the pitch “E.” MS A shows the pitch “C,” as transcribed here, which seems to accord with the harmonic structure more uniformly than does “E.”

m. 22-3, contratenor, The pitches “B” and “C” appear in MS E as *semibreves* followed by a perfect *breve* on “G.” MS A shows the pitch “B” as an altered *breve* followed by “C” as a *semibreve* that alters the following “G” *breve*. If the rhythm found in MS A is followed, all cadence endings are rhythmically consistent, as shown in this transcription.

m. 33, contratenor, The last note is shown in MS E as the pitch “G” and in MS A as the pitch “F.” As above, the latter seems to accord with the harmonic structure more uniformly than the former.

Notably, the text underlay in MS E differs from that of MS A. This transcription follows the underlay of MS E.

– Christopher Preston Thompson