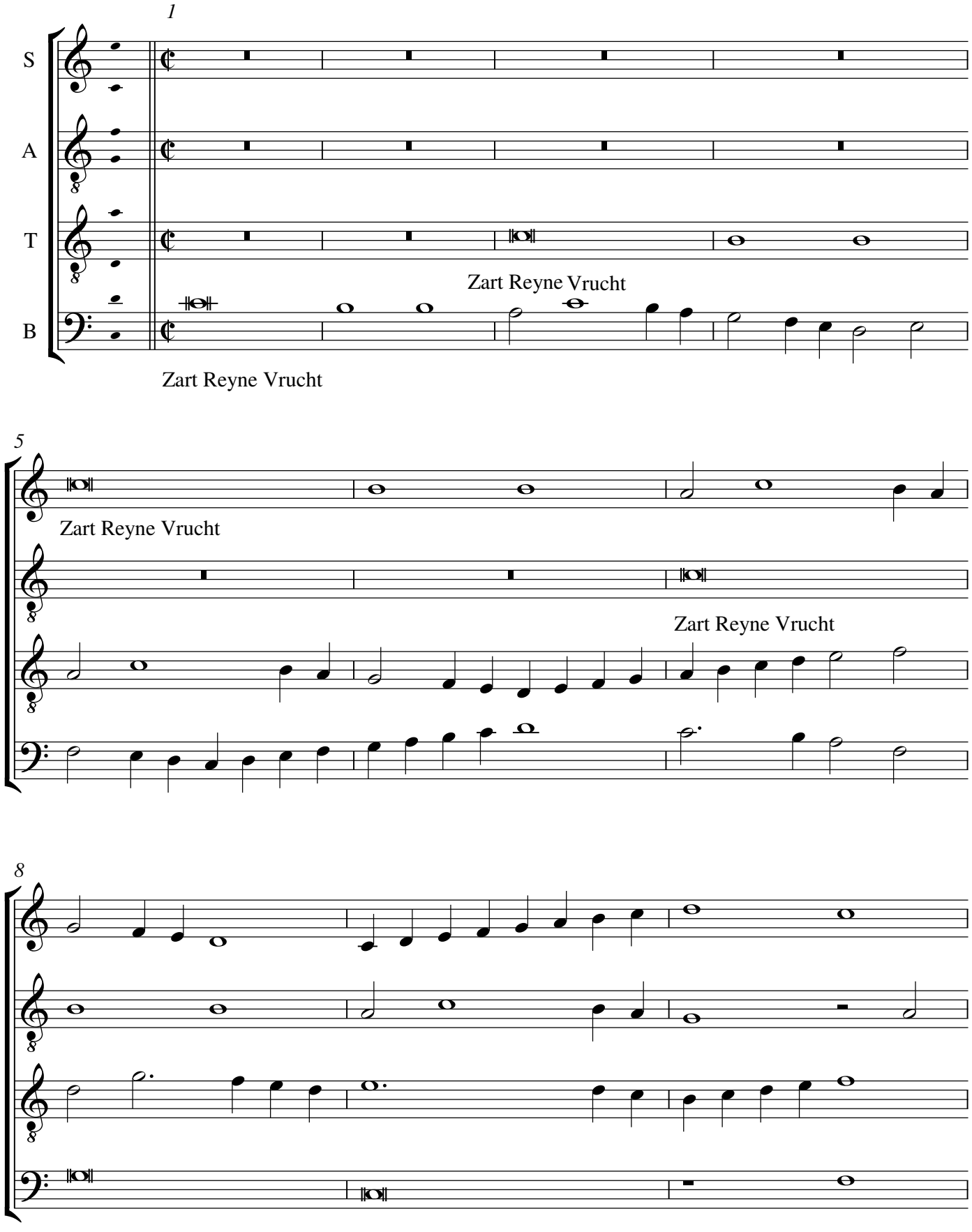
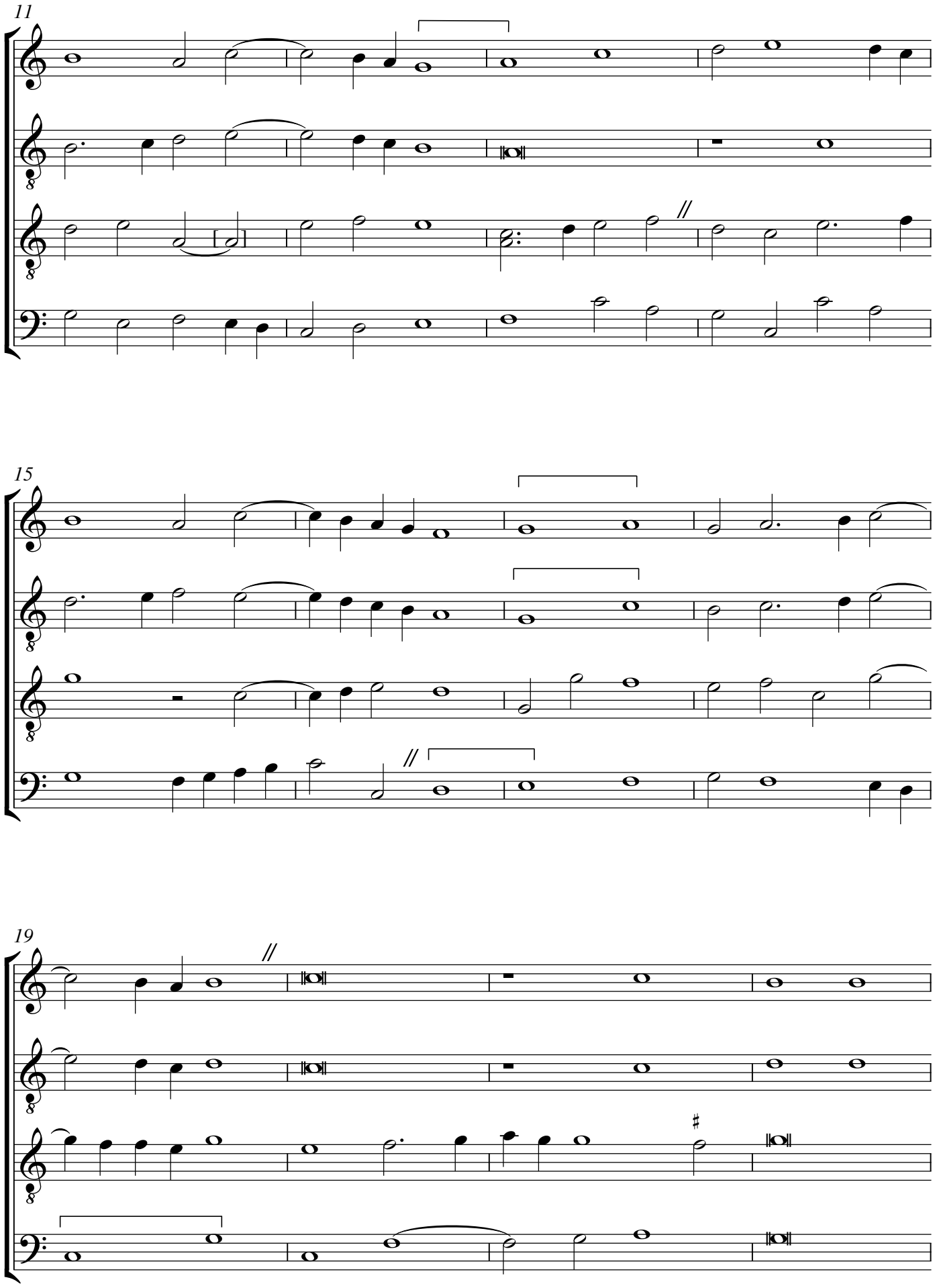
Zart Reyne Vrucht

Tender pure joy

Roelkin (= ? Rodolphus Agricola 1443/1444 Baflo - 1485 Heidelberg)

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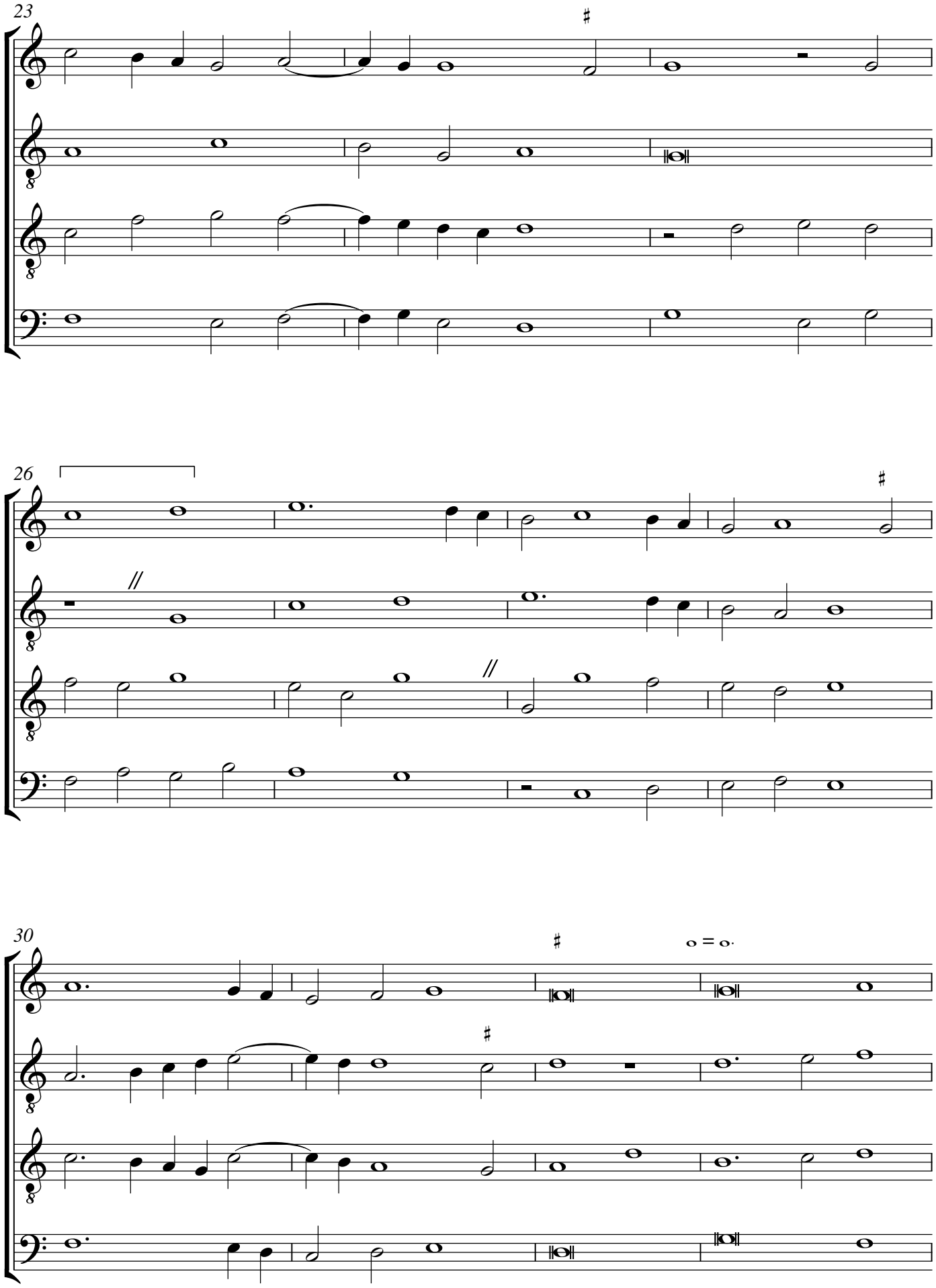
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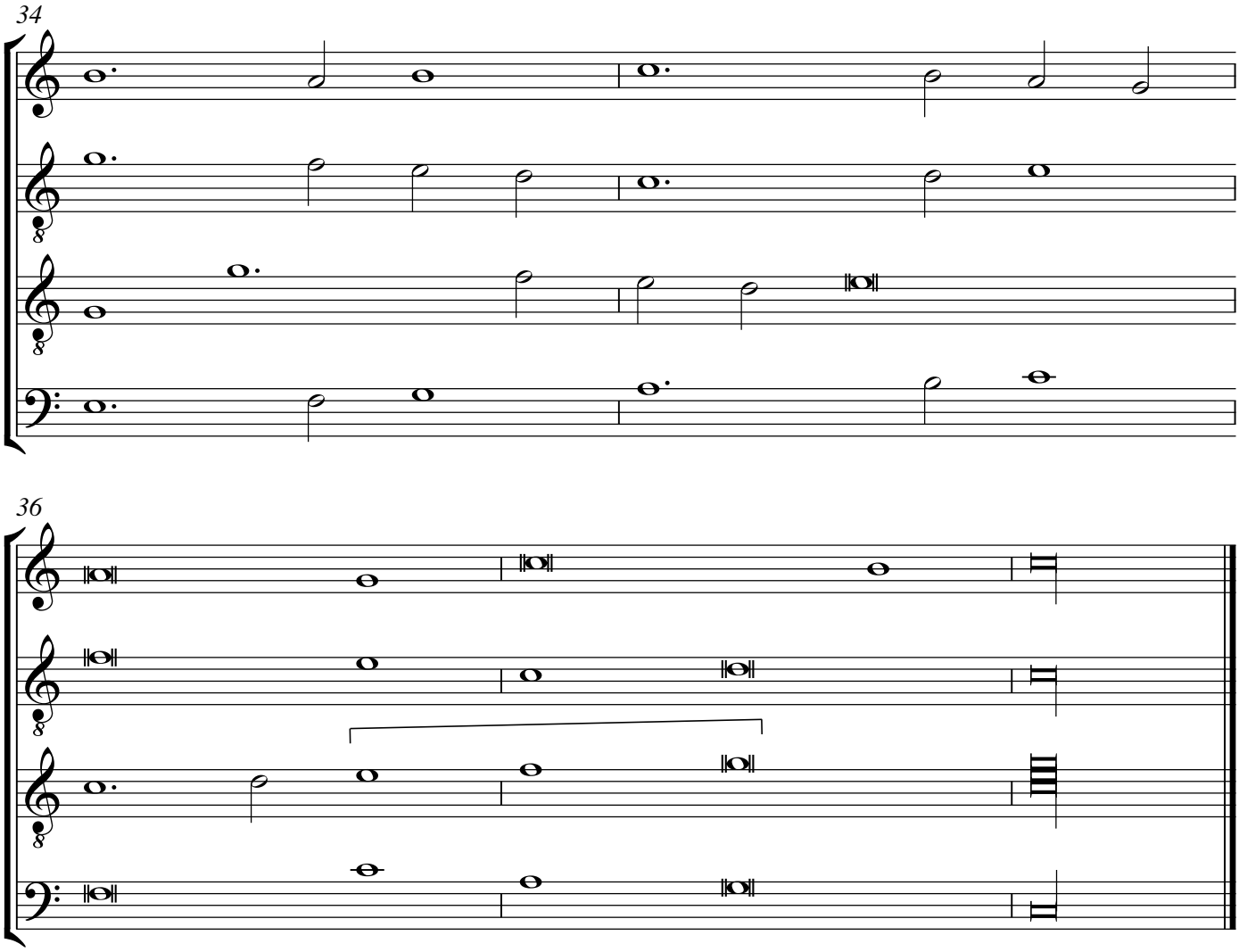
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Critical comment

I copied this work from R. Perales de la Cal, Cancionero de la Catedral de Segovia, edición facsimilar del Códice de la Santa Iglesia Catedral de Segovia, Segovia 1977. It is a very beautiful parchment bound edition. The editor alas made many errors in his introduction in transcribing Dutch, the most obvious being Roellrin, where the ms gives Roelkin beyond any doubt. A 15th century misreading of Roelkin is probably Bosfrin, occurring in several manuscripts with the song Et trop penser.

It contains three pieces by composer Roelkin, meaning in Dutch Little Rudolph. Except the titles no words have been transmitted. But the composer's name and the words in two of the three titles, Zart Reyne Vrucht (Pure tender joy) and Vrucht ende moet is (in T and B: es) gar da hin (Joy and emotion are all gone) point to a region in the border between Western and Eastern middle Dutch.
All words are included in the standard dictionary of Middle Dutch, J. Verdam, Middelnederlandsch Handwoordenboek, Den Haag 1932. One of them is characterised as Eastern middle Dutch (*saert, tsaert, tzart*), and the online edition of the dictionary at http://gtb.inl.nl/ even gives the phrase "*Eyn Jonckfrou reyn, kuesch ende zart*", a lady pure, chaste and tender . Other words occur in various spellings: the forms *da* and *hin*, for resp. *daar* and *heen* or *henen*; *gar* is evidently one of the variants of *gaer*. For *da* and *gar* German influence is mentioned. *Roelkin*, *vru(e)cht*, *ende*, *es/is* and *moet* cannot be German at all, and *reyn* and *zart* are both (middle) Dutch and German.
So I agree with the hypothetical ascription by J.W. Bonda: *De meerstemmige Nederlandse liederen van de vijftiende en zestiende eeuw* (Hilversum, 1996), 46, 112–15, though not all his arguments are generally accepted. He tentatively identified Roelkin as the Groningen humanist Rudolphus Agricola or Roelof Huusman (Baflo 1443 or 1444 – Heidelberg 1485). Baflo in the Frisian surroundings of Groningen and Groningen itself spoke Eastern middle Dutch, with an increasing influence from Western forms, like *ende,* particularly in urban Groningen. Agricola studied in several Italian universities from about 1465 on, he was in Ferrara from 1475-1479, where he was organist at the ducal court. From 1479-1484 he was the city secretary of Groningen and so engaged in the building of the famous organ of Groningen's St. Martin's church. He played many other instruments as well. A century after his death his songs were yet well known in the city.
The unique presence in the manuscript of another composer from the Northern Netherlands, Petrus Elinc or Pieter Edelinck, fl. Delft ca. 1504-1506, may be one argument more for this identification. No works of this composer occur in other manuscripts, just like the three pieces by Roelkin. But there are three compositions by a composer Raulin or Raolin in a Florentine manuscript (Magl. XIX 176). David Fallows in the New Grove s.v. mentions him as a Franco-flemish composer and a possible candidate for identification of Roelkin and/or Rudolphus Agricola. If he is right, his characterisation Franco-flemish is not: Agricola Phrisius.

As to this piece: the ms. clefs are C1, C3, C3 and F3. The bars 32-37 are colorated.
I applied the following corrections:

The first staff of the Bass part is wrongly presented with F4. Bar 16.3, preceded by a correct custos on the previous staff, shows the right clef, F3.
The Tenor bar 11.3 minima corrected to semibreves, bar 28.3-29.1 (thanks to Jankees Braaksma) two semiminimae corrected to two minimae.
Tenor 14.1 ms. e' corrected to d'. Bass 19.2 ms. f corrected to g. The final chord in tenor bar 38 has a b as its lowest note, which I corrected to c'. Its presence points to performance on a chord instrument of the tenor, as does the a under the c' in bar 13.1.

Arnold den Teuling, Assen (Netherlands) December 18th 2014.