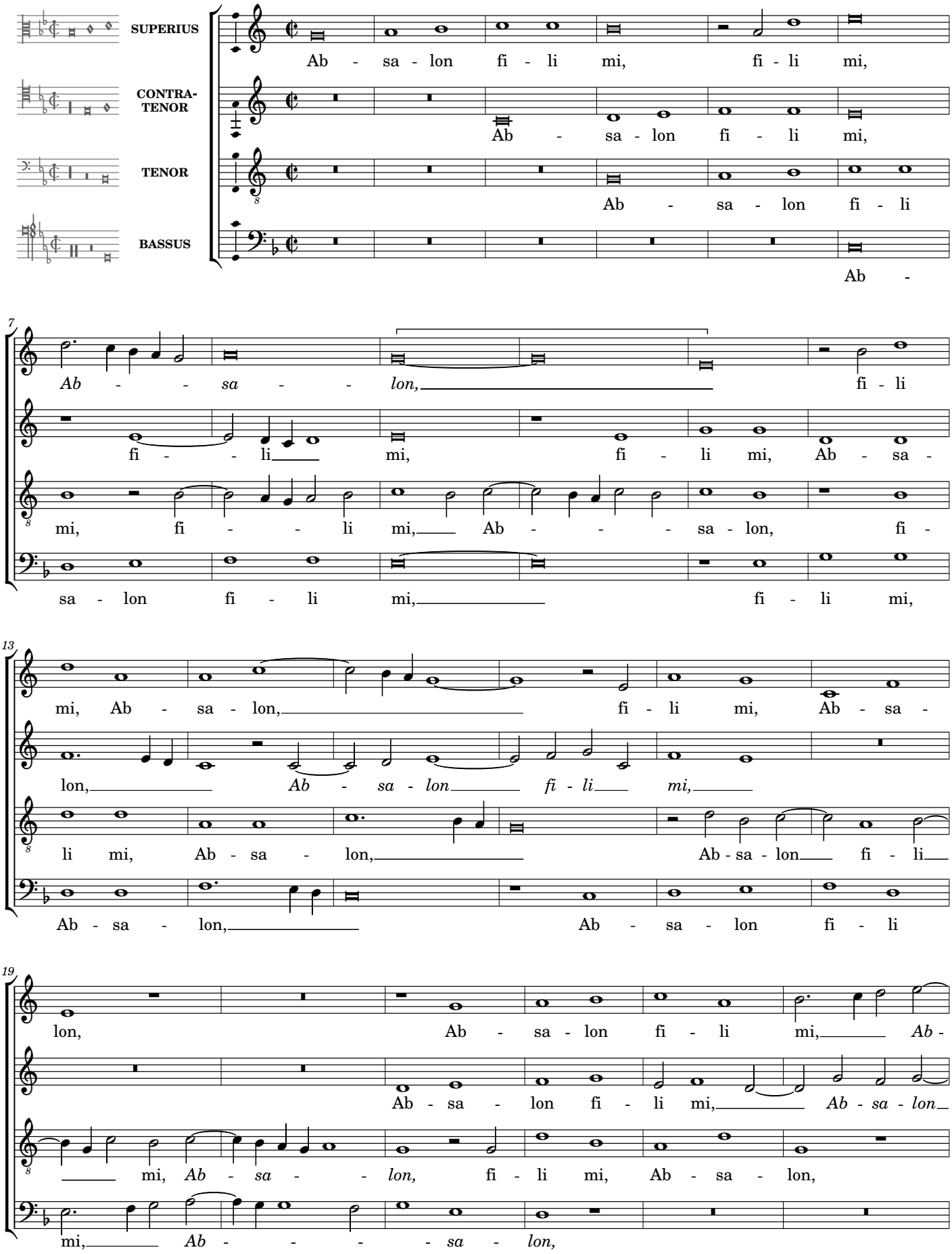
Absalon fili mi

?Josquin des Prez (c.1450–1521)
?Pierre de la Rue (c.1452–1518)

London, British Library, MS Royal 8 G. vii [Brussels/Mechelen, c.1513–25]



RESOLUT Editions **RSU–011B**

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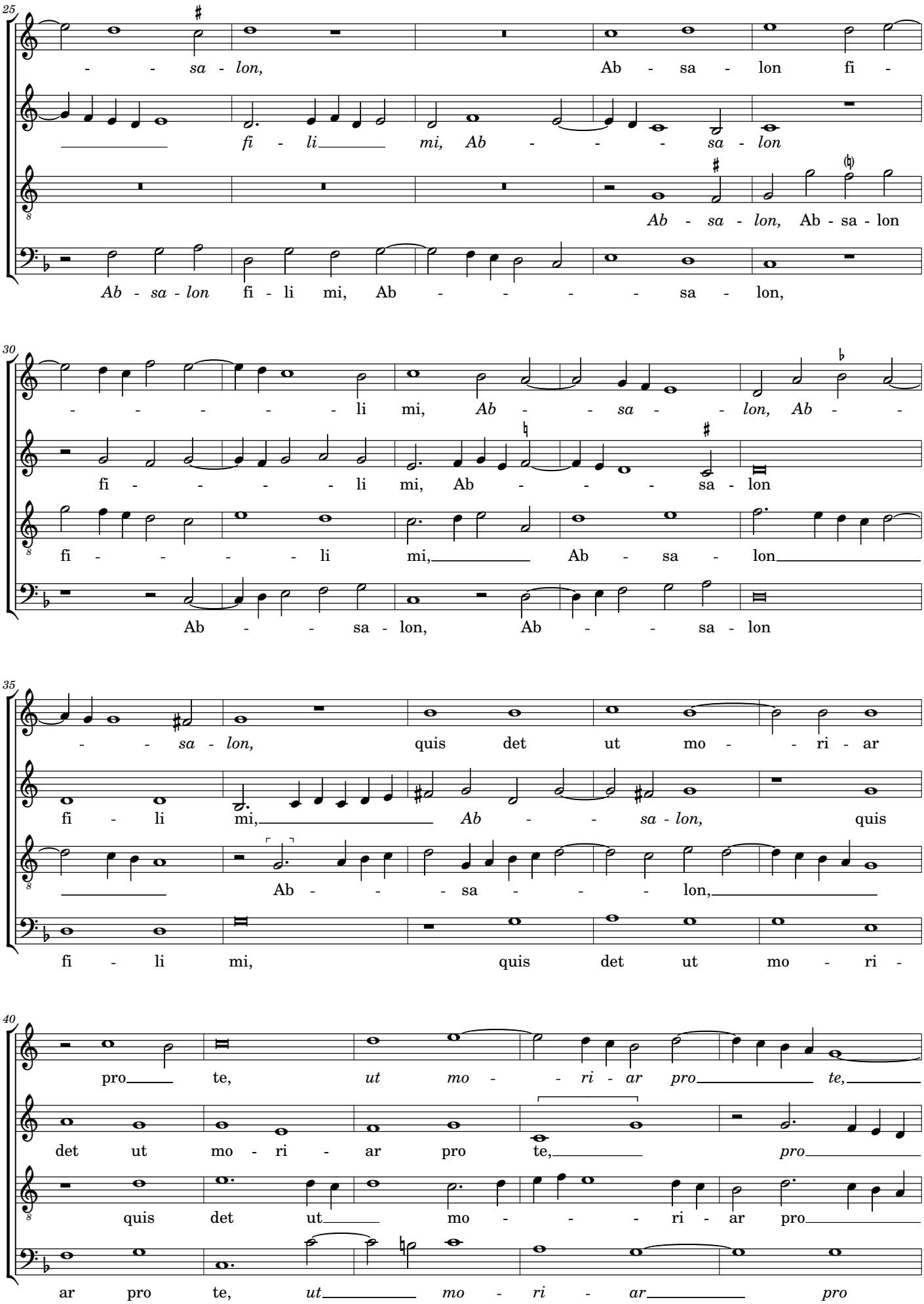
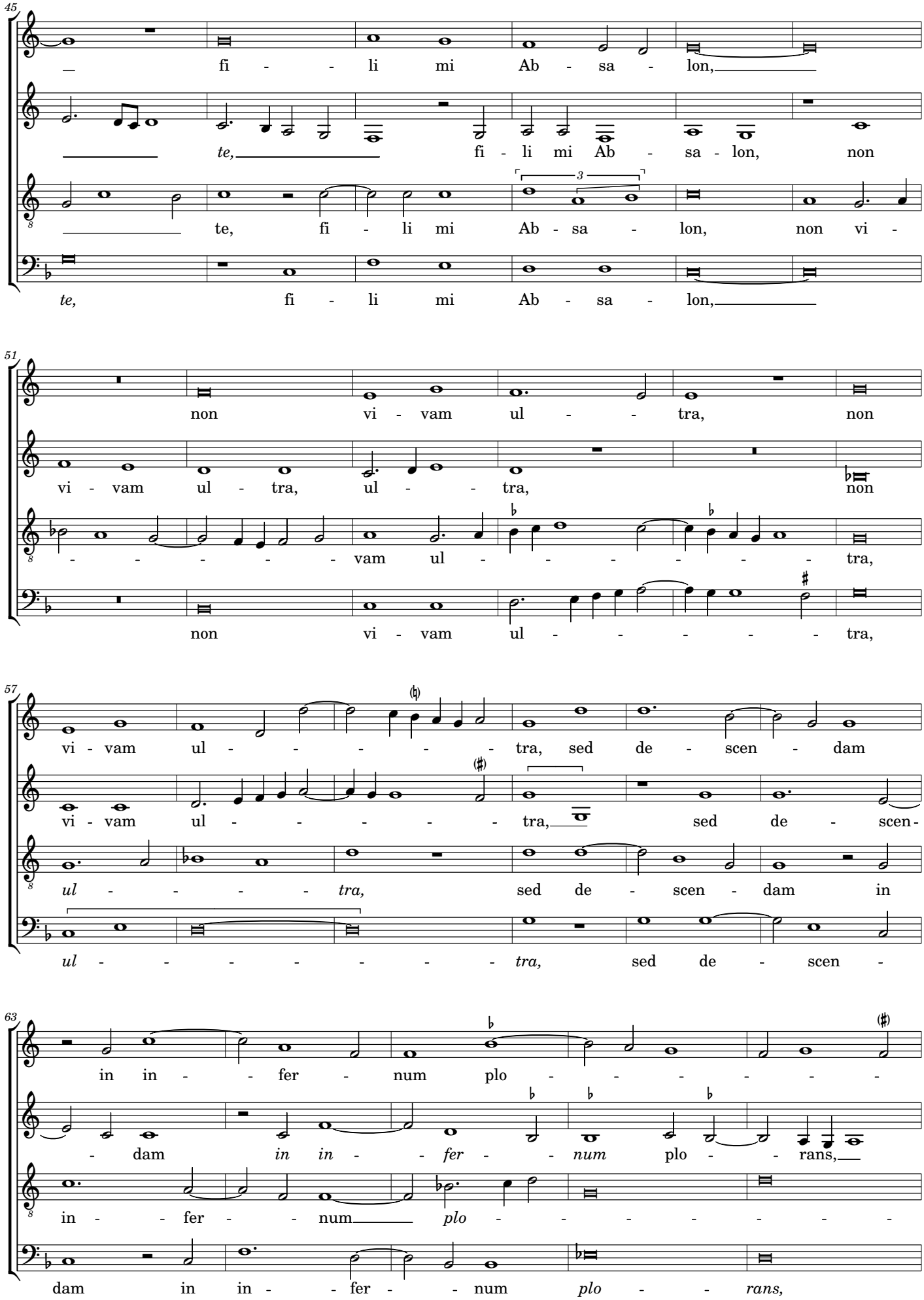
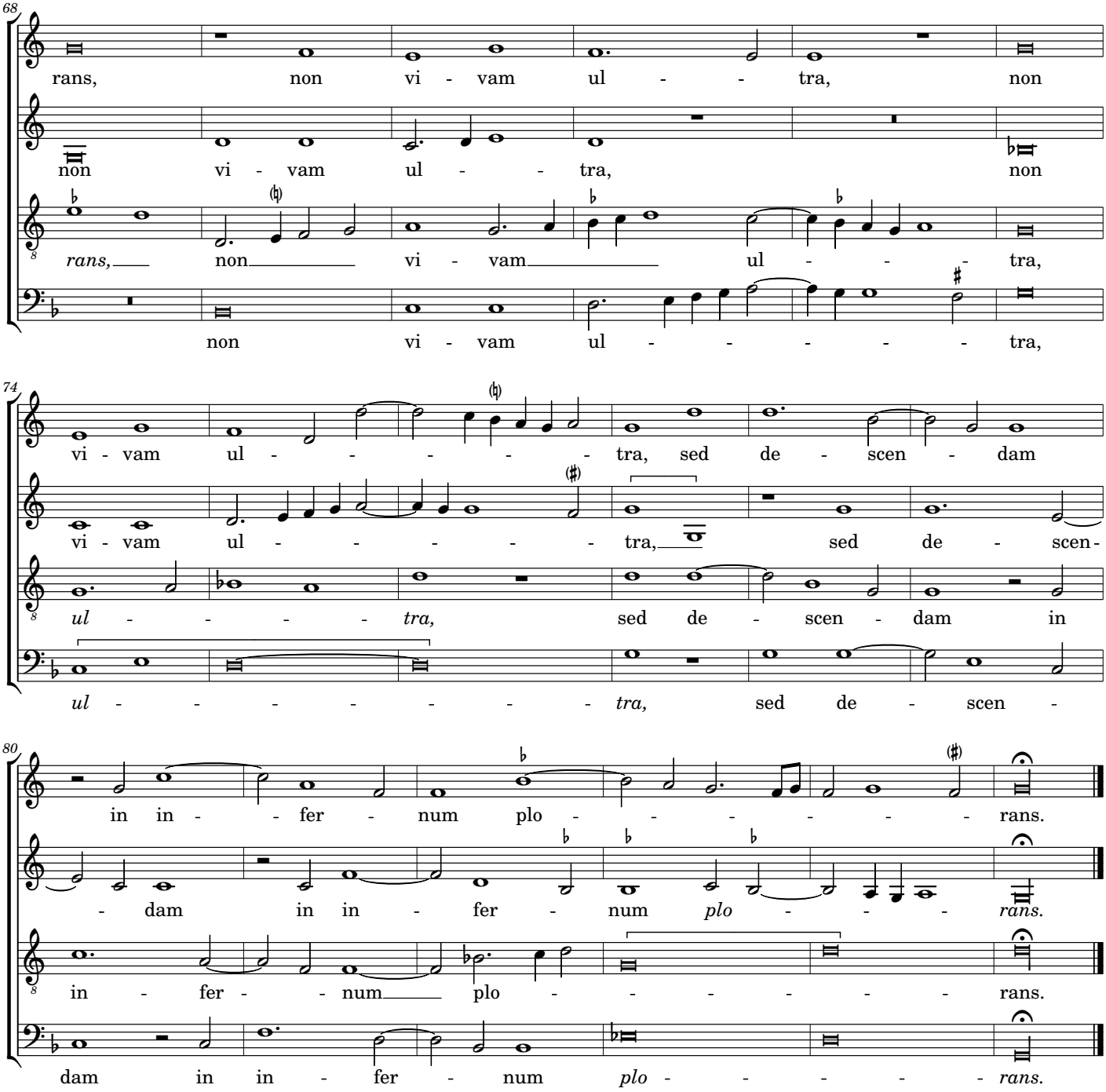

25
- - sa - lon, Ab - sa - lon fi -
fi - li mi, Ab - - - sa - lon
Ab - sa - lon, Ab - sa - lon
Ab - sa - lon fi - li mi, Ab - - - - sa - lon,
30
- - - - - - li mi, Ab - - sa - - lon, Ab - -
fi - - - - - li mi, Ab - - - sa - lon
fi - - - - - li mi, Ab - sa - lon
Ab - - sa - lon, Ab - - sa - lon
35
- - sa - lon, quis det ut mo - - ri - ar
fi - li mi, Ab - - sa - lon, quis
Ab - - - sa - - - lon,
fi - li mi, quis det ut mo - ri -
40
pro te, ut mo - - ri - ar pro te,
det ut mo - ri - ar pro te, pro
quis det ut mo - - - ri - ar pro
ar pro te, ut mo - ri - ar pro


45
fi - - li mi Ab - sa - lon,
te, fi - li mi Ab - sa - lon, non
te, fi - li mi Ab - sa - lon, non vi -
te, fi - li mi Ab - sa - lon,
51
non vi - vam ul - - tra, non
vi - vam ul - tra, ul - - tra, non
- - - - - - vam ul - - - - - - - tra,
non vi - vam ul - - - - - - tra,
57
vi - vam ul - - - - - - tra, sed de - scen - dam
vi - vam ul - - - - - - tra, sed de - scen -
ul - - - - - tra, sed de - scen - dam in
ul - - - - - - - - - tra, sed de - scen -
63
in in - - fer - num plo - - - - - - -
- dam in in - - fer - - num plo - - rans,
in - - fer - - num - - plo - - - - - - -
dam in in - - fer - - num plo - - rans,



Ábsalon fili mi, quis det ut móriar
pro te, fili mi, Ábsalon?
Non vivam ultra, sed descéndam in inférnum plorans.

Absalom, my son, would that I had died
instead of you, my son, Absalom!
I shall live no more, but go down into hell, weeping.

[from 2 Samuel 18:33, Job 7:16, and Genesis 37:35]

The manuscript held in the British Library — believed to have been copied by the Netherlands court scribe Petrus Alamire — is the earliest known source of this work. Though it has long been attributed to Josquin, recent scholarship has suggested its authorship more appropriately belongs to his Franco-Flemish contemporary, Pierre de la Rue. This setting of David's lament certainly bears the hallmarks of Josquin's supreme mastery of counterpoint and imitation, the most striking example of which is surely the vivid word painting of the final phrase, descending 'to hell' through the circle of fifths to D-flat major and G-flat major (at original pitch). The use of five (let alone six!) flats is highly unusual in early 16th-century polyphony.

Editorial Notes:

This edition is set a major sixth higher than the original. The complex key signature has been partly retained, insofar as the implied B flat in the original signature of each of the lower two parts has been restored without further editorial acknowledgement (all Bs in those parts are unmodified in the source). Prior to transposition, an A flat has been added to the key signature of the upper two parts to match the Tenor, so as to avoid a mixture of sharp and flat key signatures at the new pitch. This adjustment also aids reading by considerably reducing the number of editorial accidentals: at the original pitch, the majority of As in the upper two parts require lowering for reasons of melodic or harmonic necessity, other than the very few cadential leading notes that appear herein as non-editorial F sharps (S: m.35, m.67, m.84; C: m.37–38, m.59, m.76). Other editorial accidentals are indicated above the note. Original note values are retained, thus — consistent with 16th-century convention — the 𝔠 mensuration sign and its modern-equivalent 𝔠 time signature signify a semibreve tactus. Bar lines are added only to aid reading and direction: 'strong' and 'weak' beats implied by their position should never take precedence over phrasing or word stress. Ligatures and coloration in the source are acknowledged with overarching square brackets and open brackets respectively. Word underlay has been freely adjusted, given the ambiguity of the source: addition or reiteration of text not explicit in the source is indicated in *italic*.

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