

‘Vare Wel Dur Luf’: Tune Indicators in Alba Amicorum of the Sixteenth Century

CLARA STRIJBOSCH

Clara Strijbosch studied piano at the Utrecht Conservatory, and Dutch language and Literature at Utrecht University, where she earned her doctorate in 1995 with a dissertation on the Irish Saint Brendan, published as *The Seafaring Saint* (Dublin 2000). She has been a researcher in the Departments of Musicology and Dutch Literature at Utrecht, Antwerp, and Galway University. Since 2000 she has been working as an independent researcher and journalist, teaching at several European and South African Universities, publishing on medieval travel stories and on songbooks of the later Middle Ages. She is also a dedicated cembalo player.

Abstract

This article traces the phenomenon of tune indications from their beginning to their use in three sixteenth-century manuscripts which hover on the border between alba amicorum and songbooks. The tune indication, the reference that shows which melody the song can be sung to, forms part of ‘song literacy’, the art of conserving a song beyond the moment of performance. Songs written down in alba amicorum may fill a gap in existing theories about the rapid development of song literacy in the sixteenth century. In addition, concentrating on the tune indicators may help to sharpen the definition of an album-with-songs compared to a songbook. In the Low Countries, tune indicators began to be attached to religious songs in the last decades of the fifteenth century. They were used to communicate new religious texts to an audience and to facilitate overruling sinful worldly texts. In printed collections of secular songs tune indicators seems to have been introduced after 1550 – but it took well into the 1600s before they became conventional in printed song collections. In handwritten collections the tune indicator was not the norm, with one notable exception: in circles of chambers of rhetoric. As alba-with-songs from the sixteenth century show, in the century’s last decades it became fashionable, at least within a small circle of alba owners in the western Low Countries, to provide a tune indicator. In these circles

a good tune functioned as an important creative impulse to write new songs, especially semi-religious ones. These alba-with-songs might be considered harbingers of the song-minded Dutch 'Golden Age'.

Keywords: song, tune indicator, contrafactum, album amicorum

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Songs combine text and music. In performance, music tends to prevail – people more easily forget words than a melody – but when a song is written on a page, text usually dominates. As soon as a song is set to paper, words and music often have trouble finding each other. Musical notation is a difficult skill to master, and printing music is time-consuming and expensive. In order to bypass these difficulties, a useful compromise was found in the form of the tune indicator, a line of words preceding the song's text stating the (well-known) melody to which these new words could be sung.¹ Until the seventeenth century there was no standard of how a song should be notated, and since the art of writing and reading music was not mastered by many singers, transferring a melody could be a problem.² Tune indicators solved that problem, and their presence in texts is valuable evidence for an increasing song literacy: the art of song conservation outside performance before the invention of the technology which could preserve sound.³

Though insufficiently considered until now, alba amicorum are a rich and valuable resource to study the development of song notation.⁴ Most of these 'friends books', of which hundreds were written in the Low Countries after c. 1560, do not contain songs, but some ten percent of them do; these alba-with-songs were nearly always in the possession of women. Women seem to have had a different approach in the composition of their alba than men.⁵ First of all, women's alba contain contributions by people other than those

1 See the ground-breaking work of Grijp, *Het Nederlandse lied*, esp. 23-54, 69-70. His book formed the basis of the Dutch Song Database, which currently comprises data of 175,000 Dutch songs: <http://www.liederenbank.nl> (Accessed on 12 May 2022). The database allows researchers to search, among other things, by incipit, melody, tune indication, and meter.

2 Moelans, *Handgeschreven liederen*, 23, notes that 'neither for song collections nor for songs is there a fixed form and everyone notates songs in his or her own way'.

3 Grijp, *Het Nederlandse lied*, 45.

4 On Dutch alba amicorum of the sixteenth century, see Reinders, *De mug en de kaars*, esp. 35-54. Printed broadsheets from the sixteenth century which include songs might contain important additional information. However, for this overview of tune indicators they were not taken into account, because of lack of previous research on their contents.

5 For more on the differences between women's and men's alba, see Strijbosch, 'Sage mir', 412-414; Reinders *De mug en de kaars*, 127-148.

found in the alba of men. Mostly, they are not collecting inscriptions of ‘important men’, but of their family, friends, and close relatives. Often, their books have a playful aspect, and usually the main themes are virtue, honour, and love. Many women’s alba contain small drawings with hearts or knotted initials. Coats of arms are also present. They show how noble women who owned such alba established their place within their family and ancestry. Some alba may have functioned as guest books in which women collected contributions, for instance at a festive gathering. Why songs mostly feature in women’s alba and much less in those compiled by men is not clear. Were these inclusions designed to preserve the song for future occasions, one might expect a more legible handwriting and a kind of order implicit to aid retrieval, neither of which are often found in alba. In some alba, such as that of Walraven van Stepraedt, which includes sixteen Dutch or Low German songs amongst its 222 folia, it can be difficult to distinguish songs from the mass of other contributions, such as inscriptions, proverbs, initials, poems, and drawings.⁶ The song may, of course, have had a function much the same as other contributions, that is, as a gift – here encapsulating a cherished memory in the form of a song, one which may have been sung in the company of the album owner.

Even if their function is not completely clear, songs in alba contain important information. Because we know something about the lives of many of the women who possessed alba, the circumstances in which they lived and their social network, alba-with-songs permit a rare look into the actual use and preservation of songs, by a group whose creative and recreative work is otherwise barely documented.⁷ In addition, since these alba functioned in social circles where reading and writing was more widespread, alba with songs can inform us about the growing song literacy of the sixteenth century, which culminated in the well-developed songbooks that flourished in the seventeenth century.

It is not easy to distinguish between an album-with-songs and a personal songbook. How much possessors of an album actually wrote down in their own book varies: some album holders – such as Clara de Beers, or the owners of the Darfeld Songbook – wrote down the major part of their book, but in some other alba, like the aforementioned album of van Stepraedt, the writing of the owner is much less visible.⁸ Handwritten songbooks of the sixteenth century, in which songs were collected for personal or collective use, usually have far fewer discrete hands than do alba.⁹ Indeed, one way of distinguishing between the

6 Arnhem, Gelders Archief (hereafter GA), Ms. 412, Album amicorum of Walraven van Stepraedt. Besides the Dutch and Low German songs, the album also contains four French chansons.

7 The sixteenth-century Low Countries shared a common language in many dialect variations, except for the southern, French-speaking part. French was also the shared and often common language of the nobility: Reinders, *De mug en de kaars*, 148-162. In the eastern regions of the Low Countries, the Netherlandish dialects were written and understood far beyond the current German border. In this essay, ‘Dutch’ refers to the language of the Low Countries as well as of the adjoining regions that are now German, including Westphalia and the Lower Rhine region. On this geographical area, see De Bruin, Oosterman, and Strijbosch, *Repertorium*, 1, 15.

8 The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek (hereafter KB), 135 J 53, Album amicorum of Clara de Beers; GA, Ms. 412, Album amicorum of Walraven van Stepraedt.

9 This phenomenon may fit the different manuscript politics of men and women: Strijbosch, ‘Sage mir’, 412-414. One of the tentative conclusions is that men usually copied songs in their own handwriting, whereas women were much more inclined to adopt handwritten songs and similar contributions by other people.

songbook and the album-with-songs might be the number of different scribes involved or the lack of a clear collector's hand. Usually, an album-with-songs differs from a songbook in its more personal nature, which becomes apparent in dedications to the owner or remarks from the owner commenting on contributions or contributors. The blurred boundary between the genres of songbook and album amicorum indicates exactly the kind of categorical fluidity in alba that is the subject of other articles in this special issue.

After an overview of the development of the tune indicator in the sixteenth century, this article will discuss three manuscripts on the border between album-with-songs and handwritten songbook: the manuscripts of Herbert van Beaumont, Aefken van Gibrant, and Ariaenke de Gyselaer. They have been selected from the group of sixteenth-century alba-like manuscripts containing Dutch songs from the Northern Low Countries, on the basis of the high proportion of songs provided with tune indications.¹⁰ Whether we should call these sources songbooks, alba, or something in between remains to be seen.

The Beaumont manuscript contains sixty Dutch song texts, of which forty-seven are provided with a tune indicator; there are some poems and proverbs, but none of the typical alba elements such as an abundance of autographs, drawings, hearts, scribblings, initials, or coats of arms.¹¹ Herbert van Beaumont signed the first contribution in the album, a poem defending his 'bouck met liedekens' ('book of songs') against admonishers and ridiculers, with his name and his device M.R.E.D.: 'met raet en daet' ('with deliberation and action'). His family counted amongst those of the patrician families of Dordrecht, and he was possibly the father of the secretary of state and poet Simon van Beaumont.¹² Herbert van Beaumont probably filled the book up to folio 31v (part 1) as well as the folia 79r-98r (part 3), these two parts containing thirteen and ten Dutch songs respectively. He started his collection of songs in alphabetical order. Between Herbert's two series, another person added songs (part 2), sometimes undersigned with 'raet voor daet' and dates between 1592 and 1604; initially in this series the alphabetical order is kept, but it soon gets out of order. After part 3, written in Herbert's hand, several songs and poems follow bearing the signature of or a dedication to Maria de Wit.¹³ Other songs bear the acrostics of 'Janneken Oliviers Dochter Beaumont', or to 'Beaumont Adriana Tielmans dochter Bladegem'.¹⁴ The manuscript closes with a poem dedicated to Maria de Wit. The Beaumont manuscript seems to have started out as a personal songbook that was subsequently handed down and repurposed by his network of relatives as an album in which they collected songs, poetry, and contributions. It is also one of the few examples of a manuscript that has both male and female owners who collected songs.

The second manuscript, which will be dealt with in greater detail, was owned by Aefken van Gibrant and contains forty-six Dutch song texts, of which forty are preceded by a tune

¹⁰ For a list of sixteenth-century alba-with-songs containing songs in the Dutch vernacular, see the archival sources in the bibliography.

¹¹ KB, 76 H 10, Album amicorum of Herbert van Beaumont.

¹² Meertens, *Letterkundig leven*, 300.

¹³ KB, 76 H 10, Album amicorum of Herbert van Beaumont, fol. 147v, contains a sonnet dedicated to Maria de Wit, fol. 147r a *lofdicht* dedicated to her, and the verses on fol. 153 are undersigned by Maria (de?) Witte.

¹⁴ KB, 76 H 10, Album amicorum of Herbert van Beaumont, fols. 73r-74r, 77v.

indicator.¹⁵ The book cover bears the name ‘Aefgen claes dochter van Giblant’, the year 1599, and the well-known proverb she adopted as her motto, ‘eer voor goet is myn gemoet’ (‘my essence favours honour over material goods’). The first page repeats this motto, but also bears Giblant’s initials AGVG and the date 1600. The book was compiled between 1598 and 1601, possibly in Dordrecht and/or Haarlem.¹⁶ It differs from the Beaumont manuscript in the fact that it contains drawings and coats of arms alongside its songs and verses, and it comprises more than twenty different hands, with names and initials dispersed throughout. While its many song texts, tune indicators, and clear presentation of songs suggest that Album Giblant is almost a song book, its self-assured ownership, the dedications to Aefgen, the many hands, and its non-song contributions push it in the direction of an album amicorum.

The third manuscript, owned by Ariaenke de Gyselaer, contains some verses and twenty Dutch song texts, usually provided with a prince-stanza and in fifteen cases with a tune indicator, across its thirty-five folios.¹⁷ On the first folio a short note appears: ‘Dit boeck compt toe Ariaenken ariens dochter 1600’ (‘This book belongs to Ariaenken Arien’s daughter, 1600’). Aeriaenke de Gyselaer was born and raised in the city of Dordrecht and married a merchant from Schiedam in 1604. Apart from some small poems, the Gyselaer manuscript contains nothing other than Dutch songs: no proverbs, no sonnets, no drawings, and no coats of arms. The repeated instances of self-asserted ownerships and its many different hands, however, typify the album rather than the songbook. On the scale of album-with-songs to songbook, her album comes the closest of all sixteenth-century alba to a pure songbook, but it is written by an unusual number of different hands.

The Use of Tune Indicators in Songs

What is the purpose of a tune indicator? The obvious answer is to facilitate the singing of a song text. The manner in which a small group of people learn to sing a song in modern times is fundamentally the same as it was in the later Middle Ages: it was both oral and aural, as the group imitate the singing of an individual or a group. Writing a song out in musical notation is important only when there is distance in time or place: preserving the song for future singers, or transmitting the song to other communities. Far more texts of sixteenth-century songs are extant than musical notation. This is not surprising: text is more vulnerable to oblivion than melody, so the necessity of writing down a text is more obvious than notating music.¹⁸ Besides, writing and reading music has never been a common practice; if there is no teacher to assist in music-reading, written notes will not

15 KB, 135 K 36, Album amicorum of Aefken van Giblant.

16 Aefgen van Giblant’s album may have originated in Dordrecht, as suggested in the Dutch Song Database: <http://www.liederenbank.nl/bronpresentatie.php?zoek=1007038> (Accessed on 19 June 2020). However, she also had a strong connection with Haarlem, having been born there in 1581, married there to Gilles de Wildt in 1601, and finally buried there in 1625; Elias, *De vroedschap van Amsterdam*, 1, 392.

17 Rotterdam, Centrale Bibliotheek (hereafter CBR), 96 E 13, Album amicorum of Ariaenke de Gyselaer.

18 On the process of memorizing, forgetting, and replacing song texts, see Gerritsen, ‘Jan en Jenneken’, 292–301.

be particularly helpful. It is for these reasons that a tune indicator may serve better than musical notation to awaken the tune in the mind of the learner.

One of the obvious prerequisites for a good tune indicator is that it refers to a melody which may reasonably supposed to be known. Because of this imperative, tune indicators can provide insight into what melodies were popular at certain times and amongst certain groups. In what follows, I will first describe the development of the tune indicator in Dutch song collections, followed by a closer look at this phenomenon in sixteenth-century hand-written alba-with-songs.

From the last quarter of the fifteenth century a wealth of vernacular sacred songs began to appear in circles connected to the *Devotio Moderna*.¹⁹ Many of them are so-called *contrafacta*: new texts written to existing melodies, which may be introduced as such by a tune indicator.²⁰ The collecting and writing down of secular songs began some decades later in the Low Countries than that of religious songs, and, initially at least, such collections rarely included either musical notation or tune indicators.²¹ The first boom of secular song collections in the Dutch-German regions in the 1540s was marked by three books: the printed *Antwerp Songbook* (1544-1545), and the manuscript *Zupthen* (1537-1543) and *Darfeld* (c. 1550) songbooks.²² The *Zupthen* songbook does not contain any tune indicators. In the *Antwerp* and *Darfeld* songbooks, the sparse tune indicators hint at the phenomenon of the creation of new song texts.²³ A beautiful example is from the *Antwerp Songbook*. Of its 217 different song texts, only two pairs of songs have a tune indicator. The first pair is formed by two religious songs – in themselves a strange inclusion in the primarily secular *Antwerp Songbook* – of which the second one is doubtlessly modelled on the pattern of the first.²⁴ In the second pair, which consists of two secular songs, only the second one, ‘with a

19 For a survey of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century sacred song, see Van der Poel, ‘Late-Medieval Devout Song’. For a concise introduction to the use of songs in the *Devotio Moderna*: Morrée, *Voor de tijd van het jaar*, 11-43.

20 A *contrafactum* comes in several varieties. It might borrow only the melody of its model (a phenomenon called irregular borrowing); it might – and this is perhaps the most common type – borrow the melody and the strophic form; a further option is to borrow melody, strophic form, and some literary aspects of the model. See Grijp, *Het Nederlandse lied*, 23-24, 321-323. Falck and Picker, ‘*Contrafactum*’, note: ‘In the strictest sense, a *contrafactum* would not only employ the melody, rhymes and metric scheme of the model, but would also be in some sense an adaptation of the meaning of the original poem.’

21 Willaert, *Het Nederlandse liefdeslied*, discusses the development of Dutch and Dutch-German songs up to 1430. For a short summary, see Strijbosch ‘Hinter dem schwarzen Loch’, 81-83.

22 The *Darfeld* songbook is another example of a manuscript on the border of songbook and album amicorum. Brednich, *Darfelder Liederhandschrift*, 19, rightly calls it a *Liederstammbuch*.

23 The *Darfeld* songbook contains three consecutive songs on the same tune and with nearly the same incipit. Song no. 33, ‘ghen besser freet up erden niet en is’ (‘there is no greater joy on earth’) and song no. 34, ‘ghen boeser ding up erden niet en is’ (‘there is no worse thing on earth’) are both preceded by the indication ‘up die vurge wyse’ (‘to the preceding tune’). Song no. 35, ‘gheyn beter freudt up erden niet en is’ (‘there is no greater joy on earth’) is preceded by the indication ‘up die selvige wyse’ (‘to the same tune’). See Brednich, *Darfelder Liederhandschrift*, 90-95. The first two are – exceptionally for the otherwise secular *Darfeld* Songbook – religious songs, and it is very probable that the second song is a *contrafactum* of the first. The third, announced as ‘Eyn ander up die selvige wyse’ (‘another song on the same melody’) is a secular love song, which may have been the source for the other two songs.

24 Van der Poel et al. (eds.), *Antwerps Liedboek*, I, 124-131. Song no. 55, ‘Hoe luyde sanc die leeraer opter tinnen’ (‘How loudly sang the teacher on the ramparts’), is followed by song no. 66, ‘Hoe luyde riep die siel tot

new song' ('Met eenen nyeuen sange') is found in the *Antwerp Songbook*. It has the same tune as the previous song, beginning with the words 'with a sad song' ('met eenen droeven sanghe'). The tune indicator reads: 'to the same tune' ('op de selve wijze').²⁵ The style and official character of this second song suggest it was created by a member of a chamber of rhetoric; its official character is alluded to by the last lines which express good wishes to Emperor Charles V.²⁶ This song was probably modelled after the first one of the pair, and the tune indicator reveals this one as the *contrafactum*.

Up to the last quarter of the sixteenth century tune indicators are rarely found in print collections, and are virtually absent in handwritten ones. Out of six song manuscripts from the Dutch-German border area, only two contain one or two tune indicators.²⁷ However, there is one group of manuscripts with song collections in which tune indicators are the norm, rather than the exception: the Butevest, Razet, Verhee, and Leiden manuscripts, all of which came into being between 1590 and 1620 in circles of chambers of rhetoric, usually include tune indicators with their songs.²⁸ They were compiled relatively late, so it is not clear whether the presence of tune indicators in these manuscripts has to do with their place in the evolution of song collecting, or if it indicates a preference amongst rhetoricians for tune indicators – or possibly both. Rhetoricians, male amateur poets, playwrights, and performers, who organized themselves in so-called chambers of rhetoric, were active in most of the western part of the Low Countries. Their confraternities shaped most of the vernacular literary culture of the Low Countries in the fifteenth and sixteenth century.²⁹ Their manuscript collections, which often include songs, reflect the practices and tastes of their peer group. They showed a clear preference for the use of existing melodies, which were often referred to by means of a tune indicator. As such, the rhetoricians can be viewed as the masters of the *contrafactum*.³⁰

Hard to explain is the presence of tune indicators in a fragment of the *Antwerp Songbook*, currently preserved in Leiden.³¹ This fragment contains only thirteen songs (as compared to the printed edition of 1544 which comprised 217 different texts), of which

God van binnen' ('How loudly the soul called our Lord'), which has the same tune, as the header indicates: 'op die selve wijze' ('to the same tune').

25 Van der Poel et al. (eds.), *Antwerps Liedboek*, I, 266-269, songs nos. 117-118.

26 Van der Poel et al. (eds.), *Antwerps Liedboek*, II, 284-285.

27 Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (hereafter SBB), Mgq 612, Niederrheinische Liederhandschrift, 1574; SBB, Mgf 752, Niederrheinische Liederhandschrift, 1568; SBB, Mgq 1480, Songbook of Kathryn van Hatzfeld; Brussels, Royal Library, II.144, Venlo-Gelders Songbook; Weimar, Thüringische Landesbibliothek, Oct. 146, Zutphen Songbook; Brednich, *Die Darfelder Liederhandschrift*.

28 Leiden, Erfgoed Leiden en Omstreken (hereafter ELO), Gildenarchief 1474, Songbook of Antonis van Butevest; Utrecht, University Library, 10 B 13, Songbook of Jacob Razet; Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek (hereafter SUB), Cod.germ. 36, Songbook of Wouter Verhee; ELO, Gildenarchief 1473, Manuscript 'Liefd' es t fundament'.

29 Van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten*; Van Dixhoorn, Mareel, and Ramakers, 'The relevance of the Netherlandish rhetoricians', 14-17.

30 On collecting according to the taste of the peer group, see Moser, 'Verspreid verzameld', 107; on the use of existing melodies, see Coigneau, 'Muziek bij de rederijkers', 120.

31 Leiden, University Library (hereafter UBL), Fragmenten Druk map 2, Fragment of the *Antwerp Songbook* ('Fragment B'). On these fragments, see Van der Poel et al. (eds.), *Antwerps Liedboek*, II, 31-33.

twelve have a tune indicator. A second fragment of the same *Antwerp Songbook*, which included fourteen songs, and was probably printed five years earlier, does not have a single tune indicator.³² Louis Grijp's conclusion that the Leiden fragments prove the rapid accustomization of tune indicators in secular songbooks from around 1550 is premature: there are only a few secular song collections from this period to provide a comparison, and such as there are do not confirm a rapid establishment of tune indicators. Unfortunately, we do not have printed secular song collections from the period between 1545-1575 with which to compare our findings. The best explanation for the sudden appearance of tune indicators in the *Antwerp Songbook* fragment at Leiden might be its geographical proximity to a chamber of rhetoric in the city of Leiden.

After 1555 there is a relative lull in sources transmitting songs, which may be due to the religious and political turmoil in the Low Countries in the second half of the sixteenth century. While political and religious conflicts were unlikely to have kept people from singing – quite the opposite – they most likely hampered the production of 'innocent' secular collections like the *Antwerp Songbook*. On the other hand, the political situation proved fertile ground for the famous collection of political songs produced during the Dutch Revolt, known as the *Nieuw Geuzenliedboek* (1576), which enjoyed considerable popularity and was often reprinted and enlarged over the following decades. Of the ninety songs in the first edition, all but six have a tune indicator. These tune indicators are usually those of Dutch secular songs, but there are also many psalm tunes, one French tune, and nine uses of the song which later became the Dutch national anthem, the *Wilhelmus*.³³ The texts in the *Geuzenliedboek* are contrafacta; obviously, their authors sought to promote their new texts by writing them to well-known melodies. In this songbook the development of mass media (print) and the tune indicator complemented one another; both phenomena were a way to reach larger groups of people, also at a distance.

After the capture of Antwerp by the Spanish in 1585, the city of Amsterdam developed rapidly as the foremost printing centre of the Dutch Republic. Three large collections of secular songs were published in Amsterdam: the *Aemstelredams Amoreus lietboek* (1589), the *Nieu Amstelredams Lied-Boeck* (1591), and the *Nieu groot Amstelredams Liedt-boek* (1605); as the latter two titles suggest, the 1605 edition is an elaboration of the 1591 one.³⁴ These books represent the first examples of a plethora of secular songbooks with love songs which followed in the first decades of the seventeenth century. We can also observe a marked increase in tune indicators in these books, rising from seventy-five percent of songs in the first book to ninety in the second, and ninety-two in the last. Very often the tune indicator reads 'soot begint' ('as it begins'), which indicates the song could be sung to the tune of the first line of the text. This superfluous remark – eager singers would know what tune to use if they read the first line, and if they did not, the reference is not particularly helpful – makes clear that in printed songbooks in the last years of the sixteenth century, the tune indicator was considered something that 'had to be there'.

32 Brugge, City Hall, Vitrinekast, Fragment of the *Antwerp Songbook* ('Fragment A').

33 *Een nieu Guese liede boecxken*, fol. 32v, indicated once as 'Van Chartres'.

34 *Aemstelredams Amoreus lietboek*; *Nieu Amstelredams Lied-Boeck*; *Nieu groot Amstelredams Liedt-boek*.

Tune Indicators in Sixteenth-Century Alba

Earlier research into tunes and tune indicators has not taken into account the alba amicorum as additional handwritten material containing songs, despite the fact that the song material in alba is substantial: the alba written in the second half of the sixteenth century contain altogether some five hundred song texts in the Dutch vernacular.³⁵ Not all the material in these alba is new, given that more than half of the songs are known from other sources. Musical notation is almost never included and tune indicators only sporadically. We know that these texts are songs, because half of them accord with songs in other sources, and many of them bear titles like *chanson*, *liedt*, or *liedeken*.³⁶

The absence of musical notation or tune indicators in themselves says little about the actual singing of songs. As we have seen, many secular songs in the sixteenth century lacked either notes or a melody indication. Dutch alba contain several allusions to dancing and singing, some of them have illustrations of lutenists or keyboard players (figs. 1-2), and it is known that in houses of many alba collectors there were musical instruments. In her study of female alba owners, Sophie Reinders concludes that songs in alba are the reflection of a vivid song culture. However, in all likelihood, the alba did not function as collections to sing from. For actual use during collective singing parties the handwritten and often barely legible contributions in an album are not very practical.³⁷

The few tune indicators in alba do reveal two remarkable features, which strongly nuance the idea of a general, progressive development from ‘no tune indicators’ around 1550 to ‘tune indicators everywhere’ some fifty years later. Firstly, the distribution of tune indications in sixteenth-century alba seems coincidental to the point of appearing somewhat bizarre. Half of the alba-with-songs have no or perhaps only one tune indicator, some have tune indicators sporadically, and some books use them for nearly every song (the manuscripts of Beaumont, Giblant, Gyselaer, Herema, and Jacops).³⁸ The distribution

35 See the archival sources in the bibliography for the alba from the Northern Low Countries that were examined for this article.

36 Strijbosch, ‘Many shades’, 205. Only alba from the Northern Low Countries written before 1600 and containing at least three song texts in the Dutch vernacular have been included. Most alba also contain a substantial number of French songs, French being the usual language of the nobility. On the criteria used here, see Strijbosch, ‘Explorations beyond the black hole’, 80. The listings of incipits, titles, and concordances of these five hundred songs in alba before 1600 are to be found in Strijbosch, ‘Alba amicorum’, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17026/dans-xf7-zwyn> (Accessed on 15 May 2022).

37 Reinders, *De mug en de kaars*, 382-383.

38 Six alba contain either no or just a single tune indication: The Hague, Hoge Raad van Adel, Van Spaen 87abc, Album amicorum of Joanna Bentinck; Zwolle, Stadsmuseum, Ms. 773, Album of Maria van Besten; GA, Familie Batenburg/Van Basten Batenburg 28, Album amicorum of Johan van Lynden; GA, Huizen Waardenburg en Neerijnen 2118, Album amicorum of Margriet van Mathenesse; UBL, BPL 2912, Overijssel songbook; GA, Ms. 412, Album amicorum of Walraven van Stepraedt. Three alba contain sporadic tune indications: Private collection, Album amicorum of Beatrijs Pieck; Delden, Huisarchief Twickel 897, Album amicorum of Sophia van Renesse van der Aa; Oxford, Bodleian Library (hereafter Bod), Douce 221, Album amirocum of Theodora van Wassenaer en Duvenvoerden. The five alba containing tune indications for nearly all songs: KB, 76 H 10, Album amicorum of Herbert van Beaumont; KB, 135 K 36, Album amicorum of Aefken van Giblant; CBR, 96 E 13, Album amicorum of Ariaenke de Gyselaer; KB, 74 J 58, Album amicorum of Habel Wiglesdr. van Herema; Cambridge, University Library (hereafter CUL), Dd.6.49, Album amicorum of Styntgen Jacopsdr.



Fig. 1 Pieter de Jode after Adam van Noort, Musicians at play by candlelight, c. 1600, engraving, 15,1 x 19,6 cm, in the album amicorum of Aefgen Claesdochter van Giblant, The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek.

might be connected to the time of compilation: the earliest alba (the Overijssel songbook and van Lynden's album) do not have tune indicators, the latest (the alba of Gyselaer and Jacobs) do. There is, however, no straight chronological line from the absence of tune indicators around 1540 to their proliferation around 1600.³⁹ There could be some connection to the place of origin: whereas alba from Utrecht and especially the province of Holland have tune indicators, alba from more eastern regions do not. But time and place are not decisive: some later alba do not have tunes, and not all tune-rich friendship books are from Holland or Utrecht. The decisive factor seems to be a connection to chambers of rhetoric – which were more active in the western part of the Low Countries – or at least a connection to the literary phenomena associated with chambers of rhetoric, namely the use of the stanza form known as *refreinen* (refrains) and the *princestrofe* ('prince-stanza'), the dedication of the last stanza to the leading man of a chamber, the 'prince'.⁴⁰

³⁹ See the surveys in Strijbosch, 'Explorations beyond the black hole'. Strijbosch, 'Album amicorum', lists incipits, the presence of a tune indicator (not the tune indicator itself), and other devices, like a prince-stanza.

⁴⁰ A connection to chambers of rhetoric is more plausible in later, western alba than in earlier eastern-oriented books: Strijbosch, 'Many shades', 196-198. On the geographical shift in the course of the second half of the sixteenth century of song material, see Strijbosch, 'Explorations beyond the black hole', esp. 81-84.



Fig. 2 Anne Frans Willem Pieck, Woman playing the lute, drawing in black ink and red chalk, 1748, in the album amicorum of Beatrijs Pieck, Private collection.

To give a first impression of the presence of tune indicators in tune-rich alba of the sixteenth century, three of the most heavily populated are discussed here in greater detail: the previously mentioned manuscripts of Herbert van Beaumont, Aefgen van Gibrant, and Ariaenke de Gyselaer. The van Beaumont manuscript was created by the Dordrecht patrician Herbert van Beaumont (1533-1584) and later probably owned by Maria de Wit Nicolaesdochter Wits.⁴¹ It was written between c. 1580 and 1606.⁴² As a manuscript, it is closer to a songbook than to an album amicorum. It mainly contains songs, small moralistic poems, and a sonnet dedicated to Maria de Wit. The only typical alba features are the brown leather binding, the insertions by at least five other hands, and a few dedicatory poems. The beginning of the album is highly organised and even alphabetically ordered – though this order soon becomes diffused. As is usual in alba, most songs are *liefdesklachten* ('love complaints').⁴³ In the Beaumont manuscript, some ninety percent of the songs are these, while the other ten percent are scriptural and/or admonition songs. A cluster of five of these, in the middle of the songbook (fols. 59r-69v), shows a wide

41 KB, 76 H 10, Album amicorum of Herbert van Beaumont, fols. 126v-127r, contain the acrostic 'Maria de Wit Nicolaesdochter Wits'; the last 'ten veerskens' are undersigned with 'M de Wit' on fol. 153v; and the poems on fol. 147r-v have been dedicated to her.

42 For a chronology of sixteenth-century alba, see Strijbosch, 'Explorations beyond the black hole', 82.

43 Strijbosch, 'Many shades', 204.

range of possible tune indicators. The first one is announced as 'een geestelyck liedeken', a sacred song to be sung to the otherwise unknown tune indicator 'och scheyden bitter scheyden' ('oh parting, bitter parting'). The next one, with the incipit 'Tobias om sterven genegen' ('Tobias inclined to die'), is a scriptural song to the melody of 'O Venus der minne godin' ('O Venus, goddess of love'). The text of this song, probably Southern Netherlandish in origin, has overtly Marian and erotic connotations.⁴⁴ The following two are most likely 'occasional' songs, written for a wedding. For the first one, with the incipit 'Veel geluckx wensch ic te samen bruydegom en bruyt' ('Much happiness I wish both of you, bridegroom and bride'), no tune indicator is given. Its melody can be reconstructed as the one of Psalm 128 in the *Souterliedekens* (1540).⁴⁵ The melody of the last song, also a wedding song, begins with the joyful acclamation 'Och christenen u doch nu verblijt, Godts woort neemt aen sonder respijt' ('Ah Christians now rejoice, accept God's word without delay'). Its tune, 'as it begins', cannot be reconstructed. A clash between the religious and the secular is to be found in the last song of the cluster of five (fol. 69r), with the incipit 'Hovertij en hoochmoet/ die haet den heer der heeren' ('self-praise and pride the Lord of Lords detests'), which, as is indicated, can be sung to the tunes of 'schoon bloemken excellent' ('beautiful excellent flower') or 'ick weet een schoon casteel' ('I know a beautiful castle'), both artful love songs. In the margin, fitting biblical quotes have been added.

Of this cluster of five serious songs, only 'Tobias om sterven genegen' is found elsewhere, but the text in Beaumont is the first known occurrence. The five songs belong to the second part of the Beaumont manuscript, where some songs have been signed with RVD ('raet voor daet'; 'look before you leap'), and probably were written for a wedding. It seems that, in Beaumont's circle, love complaints and admonition songs complemented each other well in one collection, and it was clearly acceptable to include religious or scriptural songs with alternating psalm tunes or secular melodies accompanying frivolous texts. Tune indicators are not given systematically. When they are there, they give a tune title or refer to the first line ('soot begint'). All types of songs are used. The reference to the tune of Psalm 128 (which is not explicitly mentioned) indicates that in Beaumont's circle this was a well-known melody that did need to be clearly spelled out: everybody would have been able to sing along once the opening notes were heard. This cluster is followed by the usual love songs and love complaints. The album ends with the memento mori 'aenhoort mijn geclach' ('hear my complaint'): the stanzas have been presented as 'tien veerskens' ('ten small verses') and it has no tune indicator; perhaps it was used here not as a song, but as a collection of little poems. 'Aenhoort mijn geclach' ('hear my complaint') was quite common in sixteenth-century sources, and is also to be found in the three songbooks printed in Amsterdam and in other alba, sometimes with, and sometimes without tune indicator.

⁴⁴ Dutch Song Database, <http://www.liederenbank.nl/liedpresentatie.php?zoek=27953&lan=nl> (Accessed on 16 May 2022). See also KBR, II 7533, Ms. Bierses, fol. 447, lines 14-17: 'Wilt in genaden mijns onfermen/ in uwen smertsen eermen/wilt my verwermen/wilt my met uwen troest bedouwen.' ('Please mercifully take care of me/ in your sorrowing arms/please warm me/and bedew me with your comfort.')

⁴⁵ Dutch Song Database, <http://www.liederenbank.nl/liedpresentatie.php?zoek=27954> (Accessed on 14 July 2021). The *Souterliedekens* is a printed Dutch translation of the Book of Psalms, published in Antwerp in 1540.

It is interesting to see that stanzas of a popular song obviously could be presented also as a series of short poems – one wonders whether they were sung or read.

The manuscript of Aefgen van Gibrant, written between 1598-1601, has all the characteristics of a typical sixteenth-century album-with-songs: other than text it also includes (sometimes very accomplished) drawings and mottos, in at least twenty different hands. In the corpus of alba-with-songs it occupies a special place: the majority of songs show up in concordances, but for a substantial number of its texts and melodies this is the first known occurrence.⁴⁶ Songs seem to have been written for or collected by Aefgen van Gibrant, and the whole album is both literarily sophisticated and socially intimate.⁴⁷ Formally, the album *amicorum* of van Gibrant attracts attention in its consistent preference for concluding a song with a prince-stanza. Last but not least, it stands out from other alba-with-songs in its abundance of tune indicators, which accompany nearly all its songs.⁴⁸ As in all sixteenth-century alba-with-songs, most songs are love songs, but there are also some religious and scriptural ones. Among them is ‘Wij leesen in Esdras vanden wyn’ (‘We read in Esdras about the wine’), an ode to the perfect married woman from a Christian perspective.⁴⁹ Aefgen van Gibrant was twenty-seven years old and unmarried when she started collecting songs from friends. The many first attestations of melodies and the many prince-stanzas show they had ears and eyes for the latest songs of their time and obviously had connections to chambers of rhetoric.⁵⁰ Whether the flood of tune indicators in her album really means that Aefgen van Gibrant and her acquaintances were fully aware of what those tune indicators referred to, is a different question – one which will be discussed later.

A third tune-rich source is the manuscript of Ariaenke de Gyselaer, who, like Beaumont, was from Dordrecht. Compared to other sixteenth-century alba-with-songs it contains a large number of religious or semi-religious songs: of twenty songs in the Dutch vernacular, seven fall into this category, while the others are the more common secular love songs. One of the religious songs, with the incipit ‘Al leef ick in druck en groot gequel’ (‘Though I live under sorrow and great suffering’), probably originated from the Protestant minister Hans de Ries, who was born in Antwerp and died in Alkmaar. His first wife, Elisabeth Akers van der Does, was from Dordrecht.⁵¹ The album of de Gyselaer is special because most of its songs are unique: of the twenty only six are to be found elsewhere in similar songbooks. It is striking, however, that most of the songs can also be found in the alba of van Beaumont and van Gibrant, suggesting the city of Dordrecht may have been at the centre of their activities and was something of a sixteenth-century song capital.⁵²

46 The concordances are gathered in Strijbosch, ‘Alba amicorum’ (Accessed on 15 May 2022). On the melodies, see Van der Poel, ‘Song and youth culture’, 229.

47 Van der Poel, ‘Exploring Love’s Options’, 235.

48 The Gibrant album contains sixty-nine Netherlandish songs, a comparatively large number for an album.

49 Van der Poel, ‘Exploring Love’s Options’, 230.

50 The album also contains mottos to the chambers of rhetoric in Haarlem, Leiden, and Gouda: Van der Poel, ‘Exploring Love’s Options’, 229.

51 On Hans de Ries and his work, see Dyck, ‘Ries’. His Protestantism was marked by a strong Anabaptist influence. His Dordrecht wife Elisabeth Akers van der Does was a widow of the Englishman Thomas Bret.

52 Although for Gibrant the Dordrecht connection is not firmly established (see note 13), van Beaumont and de Gyselaer were closely connected to the city. Gyselaer was born and raised in Dordrecht in her parental home

Popular Tune indicators in Sixteenth-Century Alba

Many of the tune-rich alba show a repetition of tune indicators. The manuscript of Herbert van Beaumont even applies the popular tune ‘fortuin helaas’ (‘fortune, alas’) five times in its sixty-three songs.⁵³ This repeated use does of course distort numbers when establishing a top three of most popular tune indicators in alba; nevertheless, this allows a good insight into which tunes were apparently considered ‘good tunes’ in the prolific tune-mentioning alba.⁵⁴ The third most popular tune was ‘Soet Robbertje’ (‘sweet little Robbert’), originally an English song known as Rowlands Song, that formed part of a jigg, a short operetta-like comedy of English origin.⁵⁵ The second most popular tune indicators in alba is the just-mentioned ‘fortuin helaas’, which accompanies Dutch as well as French songs. The most popular tune is the song known as the ‘Engelse fortuin’ (‘fortune my foe’). In their preference for this tune, tune-rich alba-with-songs are in line with their English neighbours: ‘Fortune my Foe’ was the best-known secular melody in early modern England; it accompanied romance, morality plays, and public executions.⁵⁶ The success of the tune may be found in its relative simplicity and in its ear-worm qualities, as it sticks easily in the mind.⁵⁷ It was also used as the basis for pieces for lute, keyboard, and other instruments – well-known are the adaptations by Byrd, Dowland, and Sweelinck.⁵⁸ Both van Beaumont and van Gibrant make use of it, as do other owners of alba and song manuscripts.⁵⁹

The way in which the tune ‘Fortune my foe’ is indicated is telling for the treatment of tune indicators in alba: as soon as it appears, it is used more often. It appears no fewer than nine times in the three manuscripts described above: twice in the album of Aefgen van Gibrant, four times in the album of Herbert van Beaumont, and four times in the album of Ariaenke de Gyselaer.⁶⁰ Obviously, their collectors were happy to have found a useful melody and they did not hesitate to adopt or write new texts to the same melody.

at the Voorstraat and lived there the first years after her marriage in 1604 to Alewijn Jacobszn. van de(r) A(a): Walchren, ‘Een vergeten tak’, 7-8.

53 KB, 76 H 10, Album amicorum of Herbert van Beaumont, song no. 8 (‘fortune helaas pourquoy’), no tune indicator; song no. 9 (‘bedruet belast’), ‘op de vois fortuyne helaas pourquoy’; song no. 25 (‘fortuijne onghestadich’), ‘op 31 de wijse van fortuyne helaas pourquoy’; song no. 39 (‘Cupido ongenaedich’), ‘op die wijse fortuyne ongestaedich’; song no. 42 (‘voorwaer nu wel te recht’), ‘op die wijse van ‘fortuijn helaas pourquoy’.

54 I have counted the top three tune indicators as given in the alba, not the ‘abstract’ tune indicators as they are given in the Dutch Song Database. All tune indicators have been counted from all alba-with-songs written before 1600.

55 Darton and Tilmouth, ‘Jigg’.

56 Marsh, ‘Fortune my Foe’, 308.

57 Marsh, ‘Fortune my Foe’, 308-314.

58 Dutch Song Database, s.v. tune indicator ‘Engelse fortuin’, <http://www.liederenbank.nl/resultaatlijst.php?zoekveld=Engelse+fortuin&submit=zoek&enof=EN&zoekop=wijsaanduiding&sorteer=jaar&lan=nl&wc=true> (Accessed on 16 May 2022). The earliest known occurrence in the Netherlands is in the Beaumont manuscript.

59 See for instance GA, Ms. 412, Album amicorum of Walraven van Stepraedt, fol. 134r; Bod, Douce 221, Album amirocum of Theodora van Wassenaer en Duvenvoerden, fols. 102r, 139r; ELO, Gildenarchief 1474, Songbook of Antonis van Butevest, fols. 23r, 49r, 65r, 132r; SUB, Cod. Germ. 36, Songbook of Wouter Verhee, fols. 173, 225.

60 In the Gibrant album indicated as ‘d’engelse fortuin’; in the Beaumont album as ‘fortune enглеze/anglois’, ‘van engelsche fortuyne’, and as ‘d’engelsche fortuyne’. Despite the likely ties to the city of Dordrecht, none of the alba seems to contain a reference to its chamber of rhetoric ‘de Fonteynisten’ or their motto ‘Reyn geneucht’.

Considering the French orientation of sixteenth-century Dutch nobility and the many French songs in the alba, tune indicators to French songs are surprisingly rare.⁶¹ Remarkable, too, is the prevalence of references to English tunes. These will have been spread by comedians and musicians performing jiggs, which were popular on the European continent in the last decade of the sixteenth century and the years thereafter. A closer look at the influence of English jiggs in circles of Dutch chambers of rhetoric, and especially in the city of Dordrecht, might be fruitful: it is not far-fetched to suppose that van Beaumont, Giblant, and de Gyselaer were inspired by the popular tunes performed in these English musical plays.

The Art of Song Conservation

A question crucial to the assessment of the presence of tune indicators in sixteenth-century alba is: how much knowledge did the tune-rich alba writers have of the actual tunes, or, in other words, what lay behind the tune indicators? Did they refer to a tune that was actually sung? There are some peculiarities of tune indicators in alba which raise suspicions as to whether the idea behind a tune indicator really is a melody. One of them is the varied spellings, especially in the case of foreign tunes; this is a phenomenon appearing in many sixteenth-century songbooks, but in alba it leads to some stunning results. A famous case is that of the widespread tune *l'homme armé* ('the armed man'), which appeared in the *Aemstelredams Amoreus lietboeck* (1589) as 'Lombre demy' and in the famous sixteenth-century source of instrumental music known as the Thysius luteboek ('Thysius's Lutebook') as 'brande lommermeer'.⁶² This tune does not appear as a tune indicator in alba, but other popular ones do. Ariaenke de Gyselaer provides for her song 'hoort ghy dochters en ghesellen' ('hear you daughters and young men'), the tune 'mon oe[d]e' [verle?].⁶³ Though the same song appears in the album of Aefgen Claesdochter van Giblant with the more common indication 'gelyck als die witte swaene' ('like the white swan'), in Thysius's lutebook the melody is spelled as 'allemande monvarle', and in the *Nieu groot Amstelredams Liedt-Boek* as 'monsverlee' (from 'mon valet', my servant).⁶⁴ Probably Gyselaers had a work like Thysius's book or a printed Amsterdam songbook at her disposal and took her oddly spelled tune indicator from one of these. Even more puzzling is the tune indicator 'van Payeomphom' in the album of Herbert van Beaumont: we do not know what tune it refers to. Equally imaginative is his tune indicator 'fare wel dur luf', which refers to the English air 'farewell dear love' and is known in Dutch as 'wanneer ik slaap' ('when I sleep'); it is, as is usually the case with the tunes in tune-rich alba, one of the

61 The thirty-three percent representation in the top-three of popular alba tunes is above-average.

62 Burgers and Grijp (eds.), *Het luitboek van Thysius*, I, 8, 20-25. The presumed collector, Adrian Smout, started his collection of instrumental music when he studied in Leiden, around 1595.

63 CBR, 96 E 13, Album amicorum of Ariaenke de Gyselaer, fol. 16v.

64 KB, 135 K 36, Album amicorum of Aefken van Giblant, fol. 21r; UBL, Thysius 1666, Thysius lutebook, fol. 474r; *Nieu groot Amstelredams Liedt-boek*, 133.

earliest attestations of the melody.⁶⁵ In cases of oddly spelled titles, we might speculate whether the alba writers took their misspellings from printed or handwritten sources, made them up during oral transmission, or whether it was a combination of these factors; the repeated appearance of the same misspelling suggests that they were indeed taken from the popular printed songbooks.

Misspellings do not automatically mean that authors did not know what they were referring to, though they seem to hint at scribal copying; indeed, the many inconsistencies and different titles for the same tunes in some alba raise doubts. For example, in the album of Ariaenke de Gyselaer the favourite tune, 'Engelse Fortuin' (which serves as the melody for four of the twenty songs in her album) is mentioned only twice, once as 'd'engelsche lamentatie' ('the English lamentation') and once as 'de engelse fortune' ('the English fortune'). One of the songs, which is sung on the same melody but has no tune indicator, bears the title 'lamentation'.⁶⁶ If the writers of songs in de Gyselaer's album wanted to provide readers with proper tunes to sing, it is strange that the melody for two of the songs with the same reference has not been mentioned. The haphazard references raise the question of whether the collector and/or writers of the songs really knew what they were doing, or that maybe they did not have an actual tune in mind when the references were created. Gibrant and her writers, too, sometimes take winding roads with their tune indicators, for example with the tune 'schoon jonkheertje' ('pretty young man'). In the album of van Gibrant the tune is used five times, across a total of seventy-one songs. For the song 'schoon jonckheerken', the tune given is 'laest ginck ick in de mey spanceren' ('recently I went for a walk in May'). In turn, the song 'laest ginck ick inde mey spanceren', is preceded by the tune 'op een engels voysken' ('on an English tune'), and finally, for the song 'seg mij eedel jongman' ('say to me noble young man'), the tune 'schoon ionckheerke' is given.⁶⁷ It would seem that Gibrant or her writers knew the tune 'schoon jonkheertje' under three names: 'laest ginck ick in de mey', 'english voysken', and 'schoon ionckheerke'. What was their intention when they mentioned a tune indicator? Obviously, they were keen to provide a melody, but whether all of them had any 'real' melody in mind is doubtful; the chaotic references will not really have facilitated singing by readers at a geographical distance or by future generations.

It is not only the presence of tune indicators that is telling for the development of the art of putting songs to paper, but also their absence in many of the songs of alba amicorum from the eastern parts of the Low Countries. This probably says less about actual singing practice than it does about the narrow scope and use of these books, and their lack of participation in the newest developments, such as songs originating in England and chambers of rhetoric. Clearly, many of these books were not devised for use outside the small circle of the collector and her closest family and friends, and did not take part in the newest literary or musical influences that were in vogue in the cities of Holland. The secular books using tune indicators on a larger scale in the sixteenth century are, not surprisingly, the

⁶⁵ KB, 76 H 10, Album amicorum of Herbert van Beaumont, fols. 124r, 144r.

⁶⁶ CBR, 96 E 13, Album amicorum of Ariaenke de Gyselaer, fol. 2, song 'Een jonckvrou schoon houdt mij in haer gewelt', which is found only in this album.

⁶⁷ KB, 135 K 36, Album amicorum of Aefken van Gibrant, fols. 5r, 11v, 33v, 83r, 116r.

printed ones, especially the *Nieuw Geuzenliedboek*, whose authors clearly sought to spread their political and religious message through the medium of song. The eager use of tune indicators by writers of the chambers of rhetoric betrays their good instincts for public relations and for the outreach to a larger audience. This might imply that the manuscripts of van Beaumont, van Giblant, and de Gyselaer had aspirations to reach a larger (or later) audience than their own intimate circle. It would also explain why these three manuscripts contain elements of *alba amicorum* as well as of handwritten song collections. They essentially functioned as both.

The collectors of *alba*-like manuscripts containing many tune indicators (van Beaumont, van Giblant, and de Gyselaer) display traits which are telling for the development of the use of a tune indicator. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, a tune indicator was something that was expected in circles of song collectors. Whether it really was meant to facilitate singing at a later moment or by singers at a distance is doubtful, given the often-chaotic references. The repetitive use of the same tune for home-grown songs probably indicates here, as before in other secular books, the importance of known melodies. Tune-rich *alba* collectors, then, were early adaptors of the latest tunes, and who were so enthusiastic about them that they used them over and over to produce new songs, not just for the usual secular love songs, but especially for their (semi-)sacred repertoire. They must also have been early and devoted consumers of the printed songbooks that began to appear in those years. Above all, they were aware that providing a tune indicator signalled an up-to-date songbook. Van Beaumont, van Giblant, and de Gyselaer might rightly be considered the ‘song fashionistas’ of the last decade of the sixteenth century, who picked up what was ‘in the air’: popular songs, provided with a tune indicator and composed on the latest, often English, tunes.

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