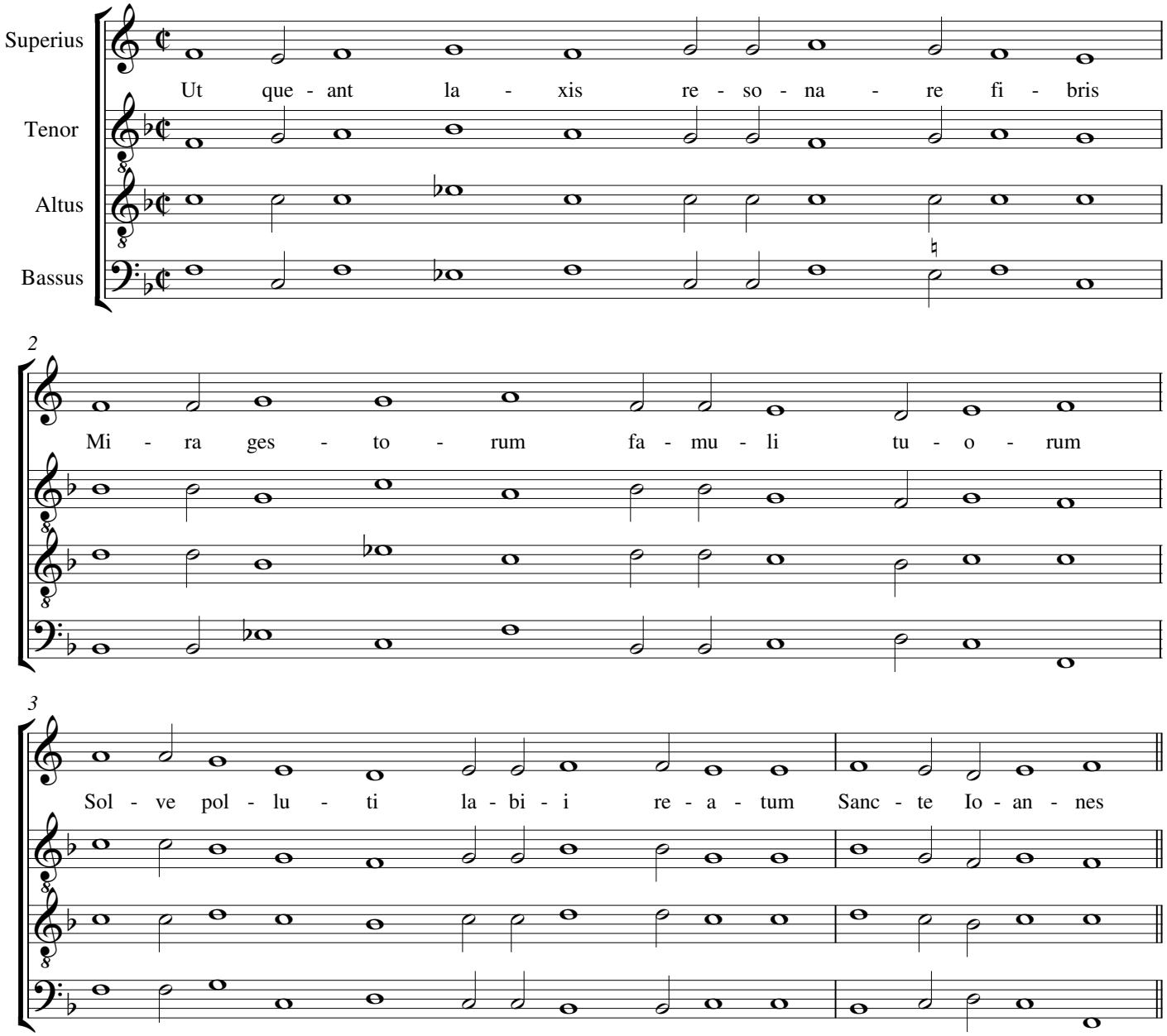
Ut queant laxis

Paulus Diaconus (Friuli, ca 720/735 - Monte Cassino, 796/799)

Anonymous, sixteenth century, in Glareanus' Dodecachordon (1547)



Original clefs C1, C3, C2, F4 on a four line staff. Tenor, bar 2 note 7 is a g in Glareanus's print, page 438, an obvious error, because there are no seventh chords in this piece. Glareanus gives this piece as an example of the transposed Ionic mode.

The music rather unusually follows the metric scheme of the text, the ancient Greek Sapphic verse. Glareanus's version seems to ignore the pitches of the syllables which Guido of Arezzo used to facilitate music teaching: ut re mi fa sol la. However, the tenor voice has four of them: ut, re, fa, sol, in the right places. So there might have been a previous version of the tenor with all notes in the right places, which I try to reconstruct on the next page, avoiding the parallel fifths of the original. The voice-leading in neither version is convincing.

The original plainchant ignores the metre of the text, as you may see from the plainchant (the points double the note value, the "inverted mordent" is a quilisma, a short note, lengthening the previous note, the short vertical line is a breathing pause, the bar line is a real pause), copied from the Liber usualis p. 1504. The plainchant is in the Doric (first) mode, or protus authenticus. The complete hymn to St John Baptist has got four more stanzas.

Translation:

So that your servants may make resound with relaxed mind/ the wonders of your acts/
absolve the guilt from their stained lips,/ oh, Saint John.

Ut queant laxis

Reconstruction attempt with solmization in the Tenor

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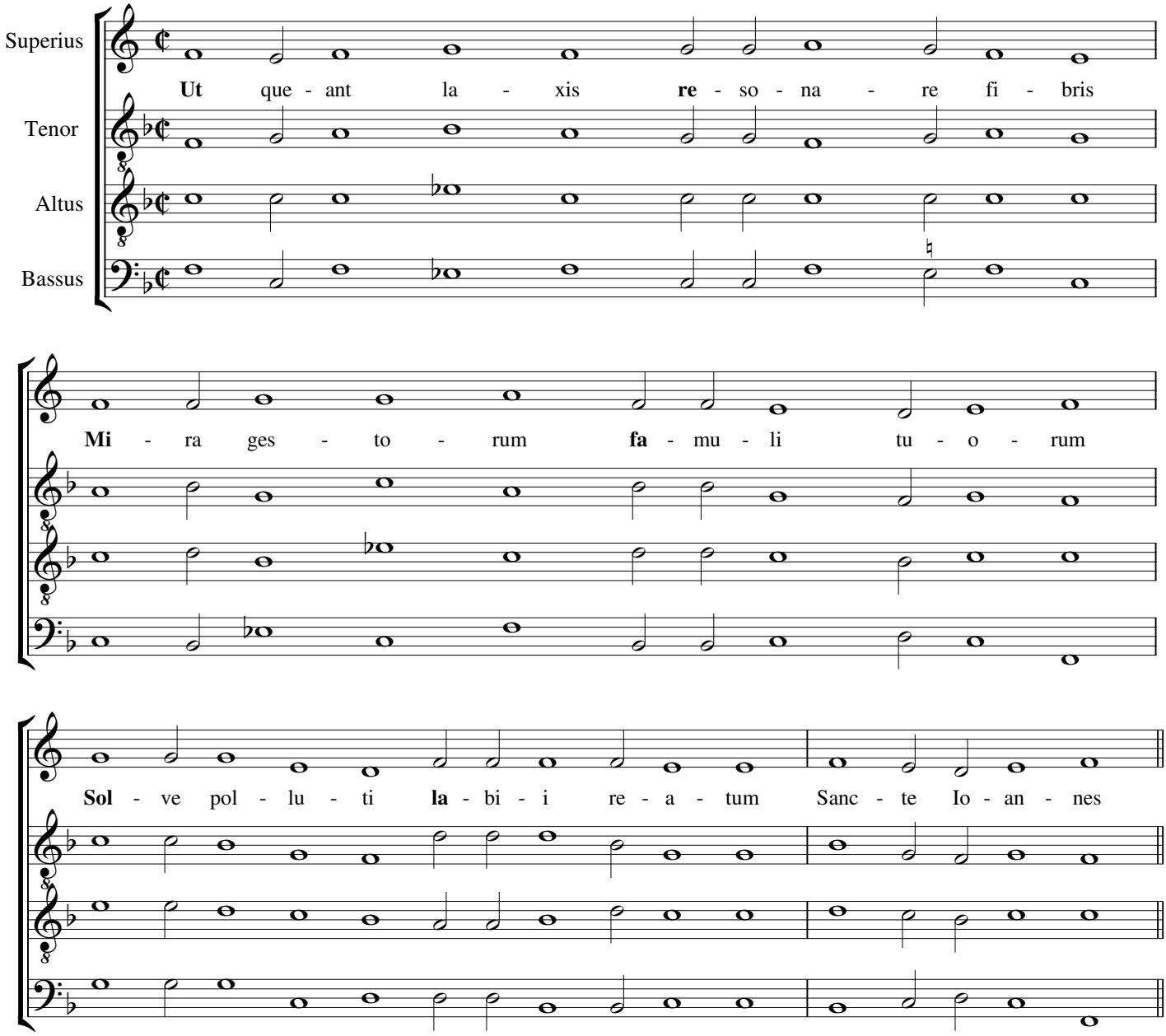
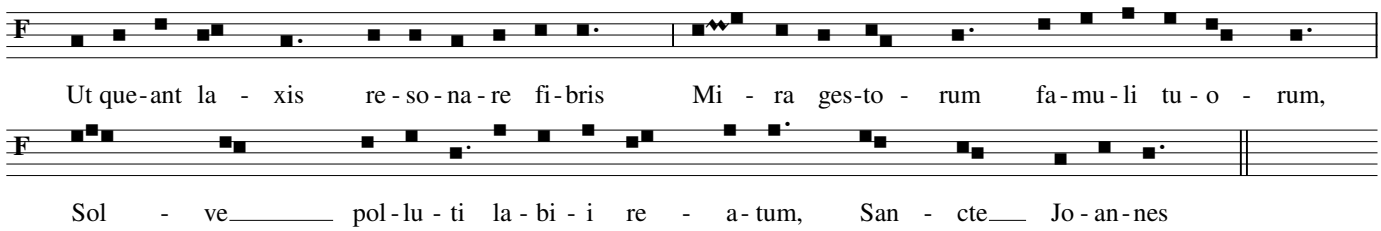
Plainchant, presumably by Guido of Arezzo (991 -1030)