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The reflections of memory : an account of a cognitive approach to historically informed staging

Blin, G.R.

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THE REFLECTIONS OF MEMORY

**AN ACCOUNT OF A COGNITIVE APPROACH
TO HISTORICALLY INFORMED STAGING**

Proefschrift

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de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
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in 1960

Promotores :

Prof. dr. h.c. Ton Koopman	Universiteit Leiden

Prof. Frans de Ruiter	Universiteit Leiden

Promotiecommissie :

Prof. dr. Tim Carter	University of North Carolina

Prof. dr. Ton van Haften	Universiteit Leiden

Prof. dr. Rebecca Harris-Warrick	Cornell University

Prof. dr. Ellen Rosand	Yale University

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Note to the Reader

This note presents an orientation regarding the editorial procedure used in this dissertation:

- Spelling: American English.
- Italics are used to indicate titles of opera and book titles.
Italics are used to specify a genre: *Masque*, *Ballet de Cour*, etc., unless the word is used in a quotation.
- English double inverted commas are used to indicate articles titles.
- French quotations marks are used for quotes.
Quotes are always integrated in the text, even as they are 50 words or more.

Citation style: for early sources, I present diplomatic transcriptions of original documents, both printed and/or manuscripts. Wherever possible, I have transcribed documents from original or period edition rather than rely on transcription published recently. In quoting from printed and manuscript documents, I have chosen to retain the original capitalization, and punctuation as well as spelling, including reproducing typographical anomalies. The Latin adverb sic inserted between square brackets after a quoted word or passage indicates that the quoted matter has been transcribed exactly as found in the source text, complete with any erroneous or archaic spelling or other matter that might otherwise be taken as an error of transcription.

Quotes from Italian, French, German and Swedish are translated and when the context of the section actually quoted is important, the full original sentence is given in its full length in the footnotes and the part quoted in the text is underlined. Unless specified otherwise, translations are all my own.

Poetic texts from the librettos, when quoted, reflect early printed editions and have not been altered to conform to the scores. Occasionally, however, punctuation and accents have been added to clarify and facilitate the reading, and abbreviations have been expanded when clarifying the text was needed. In addition, for librettos, the beginning of each poetic line has been marked by capitalizing its initial letter.

- Notes and Figures are numbered by Chapter.
- Within the footnotes themselves, bibliographical references are always fully supplied, except when a very short interval has elapsed since the previous reference. The Select Bibliography at the end of this volume lists printed sources which have been mostly of use.
- Appendix are online at: <http://gilbertblin.eu>
Password for download: ledessein (no capital)



Apollon, conseille à Melpomene et à Thalie, de joindre la pratique à la Théorie, dans l'usage du Théâtre.

Figure inset: *Apollon conseille à Melpomene et à Thalie, de joindre la pratique à la Théorie, dans l'usage du Théâtre*

(Apollo advises Melpomene and Thalia to join practice to Theory in the usage of Theatre)
 Etching of 1714 by Bernard Picart (1673–1733) for François Hédelin, abbé d'Aubignac. *La pratique du théâtre*,
 Amsterdam: Jean Frederic Bernard, 1715.
 Leiden, Leiden University Library Print Room.

Foreword

The research presented here is dedicated to my work in staging operas of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This exploration aims to show how Historically Informed staging is in relation with my approach to baroque opera aesthetics. The first objective of my dissertation is to enable a better understanding of both my creative and interpretive processes in the operatic field. The main research question I will attempt to answer in my dissertation can be phrased as follows: how can I, as a post-modern stage director, use historical research for creative purposes? The title of this dissertation, « The Reflections of Memory », is the appellation I have been giving to my current approach as an artist and constitutes a conceptual answer to this question. It found its origins in the different meanings the noun « reflection » has in English, all of them overpassed by my research.

« Reflection » is known as something, such as an image, that is reflected. The word originated from old French « reflexion » or late Latin « reflexio(n-) », from Latin « reflex- »: bent back, and from the verb « reflectere ». Therefore, reflection is « the throwing back by a body or surface of light, heat, or sound without absorbing it »¹. In this first sense this « throwing back », and my subject, is as « An amount of light, heat, or sound that is reflected by a body or surface. An image seen in a mirror or shiny surface. A thing that is a consequence of or arises from something else ». But then again, the word reflection can also express « serious thought or consideration. » and most notably something that shows, expresses, or is a sign of something: « An idea about something, especially one that is written down or expressed ». Finally, the third meaning, which comes from Mathematics « The conceptual operation of inverting a system or event with respect to a plane, each element being transferred perpendicularly through the plane to a point the same distance the other side of it », is a good description of the methodology adopted for my research, as I consider its development as a matter of space. A second image, a consideration, a transfer process: it is to all these concepts of my research that the plural of my title references. By associating it with the larger notion of Memory, I refer to the common understanding that memory is the faculty of the mind by which information is encoded, stored and retrieved. Besides this literal sense I keep in mind the rich tradition of the Art of Memory². In the spirit of the period I study, I also refer to Mnemosyne, the Greek goddess of Memory and the mother of the nine Muses as my tutelary figure.

Though the second part of the title leads one, perhaps, to expect a wide-ranging discussion of some of the more general problems presented by the staging of opera, I have chosen to write a study that contributes rather less in the way of new theoretical understanding of the Historically Informed Performance phenomenon than it gives a testimony which, hopefully, makes a contribution on the factual side. This PhD dissertation should be looked at as a personal expression of a poetics and a practice for the baroque spectacle. Consequently,

¹ « Reflection » in *Oxford Dictionary of English* (3 ed.), Edited by Angus Stevenson. Oxford: Oxford University Press Print, 2010. In this paragraph all quotes are coming from this source.

² See: Yates, Frances A. *The Art of Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966. See also the more recent: Rossi, Paolo. *Logic and the Art of Memory: The Quest for a Universal Language*, translated with an introduction by Stephen Clucas. London & New York: Continuum, 2006.

while the evolution of opera is outlined, little attempt has been made to reexamine the received knowledge about the development of opera or to test these generalizations in the light of the practice of this artistic genre: this thesis is not a thesis in musicology. Nevertheless, I will attempt to address some of these questions in the Introduction where I identify and explain the principles of my approach and in the Conclusion where I review my current findings. My interest in staging baroque opera and theatre goes back a long time; my work did not start and will not end with this dissertation.

Ironically, the concept for this project came many years ago when a large production I was working on was cancelled during its research and design phase, due to financial constraints faced by the theatre that had commissioned it. In the time vacuum created by this cancellation of « Practice », I went back to « Theory » and more specifically to the works of the French writer and encyclopedist Louis de Cahusac (1706–1759) and planned a personal research project dedicated to his conception of the « Théâtre lyrique ». Between 1745, the year of their first proven collaboration, until his death in 1759, Cahusac wrote the libretti of more than seven operas for Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764). From 1747, Cahusac's project appears to be a comprehensive undertaking that includes a large number of spectacles and theoretical contributions spread over several years of common work. The relationship between the operas he created with Rameau and the rest of his writings, has, strangely enough, never been thoroughly investigated. In a first plan of research, I wanted to try to define this new French lyrical genre through a literary and contextual study focusing on the staging component, which seems to be the key to comprehend all of Cahusac's concepts³.

This idea seemed to be the logical consequence of my previous academic research. While a student at the Institut d'Études Théâtrales of the Sorbonne Nouvelle, I constructed my syllabus with an emphasis on theatre history and stage directing. As part of my master's degree, I wrote a « mémoire » dedicated to the staging of the operas of Rameau during the composer's lifetime⁴. The work presented itself as a synthesis of the elements necessary to Rameau's operas as the composer had known them. The objective was already, by examining librettos, scores and iconographic material, to determine their complementary relationships. Both the French opera theories of the eighteenth century and the concrete conditions of the representation of operas were taken into consideration, although there was then little hope that I would be able to implement or even test these findings in a Historically Informed Performance.

For my « Diplôme d'études approfondies »⁵ year I then chose to extend this research by broadening my thinking to theatre architecture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the idea of dedicating my future doctoral thesis to the Drottningholms Slottsteater and

³ The Cahusac research found its expression later in two of my publications. In my introduction to: Cahusac, Louis de and Rameau, Jean-Philippe. *Zoroastre, Livret de 1756, présenté par Gilbert Blin*. Paris: Académie Desprez, 2005, pp. 7–59. And: Blin, Gilbert. "Le Théâtre des Enchantements de Monsieur de Cahusac" in *Program 2005, Drottningholms Slottsteater*. Stockholm: Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2005, pp. 94–104.

⁴ Blin, Gilbert. "Les Opéras de Rameau: pour un Théâtre des Enchantements" (mémoire de Maîtrise soutenu à l'Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris III. Paris: Institut d'Études Théâtrales, 1986).

⁵ The Diplôme d'études approfondies or DEA was a degree in France from 1964 to 2005. It was a postgraduate degree (diplôme de troisième cycle), aimed to prepare for advanced doctoral studies. In order to award a government-sanctioned degree (diplôme national) for a DEA, the university had to require its students to complete a thesis of at least ninety pages with a bibliography based on the students' original research, and a thesis defense.

its collections. Built in 1766, this theatre is a unique historical resource, with original, fully functional stage machinery and a large collection of original sets. It was then deserving a new critical approach and during the early stage of this research, it appeared to me that my practical experience of opera staging could enlighten the understanding of the spectacular modalities of this theatre. The project was accepted by my supervisor at the Sorbonne Nouvelle, Prof. Martine de Rougemont (1940–2015), but soon had to be forsaken due to a lack of funds. To assure my own subsistence, I then abandoned the world of the university to devote myself, by pursuing intense professional practice, to my artistic career. For several years, my artistic work developed around the operatic French repertoire of the nineteenth century, but the conditions of production and elaboration of operatic projects that I encountered, in the major opera houses I was working for, left me dissatisfied on intellectual and artistic levels.

Fortunately, I had the opportunity during this period, thanks to the invitation of Arnold Östman (b. 1939), to work many times at the Drottningholms Slottsteater: first as a language coach, then as an assistant director and finally as a stage director⁶. This historical theatre⁷ was then buzzing with activities and debates around the notion of Historically Informed Performance for the repertoire of the late eighteenth century. As Östman, then Artistic Director⁸, explained in his welcoming words of 1988, the formative year I joined the Drottningholms Slottsteater as an Intern: « The reason why artistic investigation is done in the musical field is that we fiddle with the clock and try out the old way of playing. The same ambition applies to production and style of acting. This is not to be seen as a lack of creativity. Or a longing to go backward. Rather it is a necessity in an age when the history of learning begins to be associated with research into future. Not until our age have we discovered how fruitful that game is ».⁹ These experiences culminated in 1998, with the revival of my production of *Orfeo ed Euridice*, the *azione teatrale* of Ranieri de' Calazabigi (1714–1795) and Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787). The success of this production at the Drottningholms Slottsteater, despite the non-creative aspect of the revival of its staging, revitalized in my mind the need to reexamine the rich historical opera heritage of Drottningholm.

To try to unearth its principles and apply them in live performance, to test their contemporary relevance, was my purpose when I founded the Académie Desprez, *Association Française pour le Rayonnement du château de Drottningholm*. By taking the work and life of architect Louis-Jean Desprez (1743–1804) as a reference¹⁰, the Académie Desprez had the mission to assert the viability of the musical and theatrical European heritage of the baroque period, and to explore jointly, in the unique contextual perspective the Drottningholms Slottsteater

⁶ See: Blin, Gilbert. “Mettre en scène à Drottningholm” in *Lettres Actuelles*, N°1–2, Juin–Septembre 1993. Mont de Marsan: Société de Presse, d’Édition et de Communication, 1993, p. 13.

⁷ See: *A Sovereign Spectacle: Court Theaters of the Eighteenth Century*. Photographs by André Costantini. Introduction by Gilbert Blin. Cambridge (MA): ConstellationCenter, 2011.

⁸ Conductor Arnold Östman was the Artistic Director of the Drottningholms Slottsteater from 1980 to 1992. He was succeeded by singer Elisabeth Söderström (1927–2009) from 1993 to 1996, and stage director Per-Erik Öhrn (b. 1946) followed from 1997 to 2006.

⁹ Östman, Arnold. « Dear audiences » in *Program 1988, Drottningholms Slottsteater*. Stockholm: Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 1988, p. 11.

¹⁰ See: Blin, Gilbert and Trotier, Rémy-Michel. “The Young Desprez’s Years of Apprenticeship, seen against the abundant background of Architecture in France during the eighteenth century” in *Program 2004, Drottningholms Slottsteater*. Stockholm: Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2004, pp. 141–149,

provides, its theoretical and practical facts¹¹. From 2000 to 2010, I directed an international research group composed of several artists and scholars: organizing study visits, overseeing numerous projects and supporting several productions, by study and publication. A first contact with Leiden University, where Dr. Cobi Bordewijk invited the Académie Desprez in 2001 to direct a workshop on the theatre of Voltaire (1694–1778), encouraged me to reconsider the academic world as a possible framework for the full expression of my research¹². The idea that my exploration could find a suitable frame for its theoretical expression was encouraged by the foundation, that same year, by Leiden University of a new Faculty of Creative and Performing Arts, with Prof. Frans de Ruiter as Dean, and with the declared purpose of promoting research in and through artistic practice. From 2008, when the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts was formalized as a research institute under the Faculty of Humanities, I was attracted by the idea of a combination of practical and theoretical knowledge in exploring my hypotheses. But while the theoretical knowledge could be explored in the solitude of a library, the specificities of opera, which requires for its full existence a large number of artists from a variety of disciplines, technicians and audience, make a thorough investigation difficult and multifaceted, but necessary; this is a key issue in the Historically Informed Performance movement and in the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts.

At the same time, my research found a fertile field of application when, following my productions of *Thésée* by Philippe Quinault (1635–1688) and Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687) for the Boston Early Music Festival (BEMF) in 2001 and of *Psyché* by the same composer in 2007, I was invited by this nonprofit organization to experience a long-term artistic residency. The Boston Early Music Festival, since its foundation in 1980¹³, has promoted the continuing vitality of Early Music through biennial festivals and exhibitions that attract international attendees, baroque opera productions, and an annual Boston-area concert series that later expanded to New York City. As a leading presenter, producer and promoter of the very highest quality performances, including standard repertoire and newly rediscovered works, BEMF's mission continues to be to give music lovers a renewed understanding and appreciation of the great music of the past. As BEMF's Stage Director in Residence from 2008, and then as its Opera Director since 2013, I was able to dedicate all my time, and work, in research and practice, to the staging of baroque operas. This unique experience was fruitful on two fronts.

¹¹ Here is a selection of research projects led by the Académie Desprez. See: Blin, Gilbert and Trotier, Rémy-Michel. "The Young Gallodier's Years of Apprenticeship, seen against the background of the abundant French dance life of the mid-eighteenth century" in *Program 2003, Drottningholms Slottsteater*. Stockholm: Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2003, pp. 81–86. Blin, Gilbert. "Iphigénie en Tauride, Le Modèle français de Guillard et Gluck" in Guillard, Nicolas-François and Gluck, Christoph Willibald. *Iphigénie en Tauride, Livret de 1779, présenté par Gilbert Blin*. Paris: Académie Desprez, 2004, pp. 9–27. See also: Blin, Gilbert. "How do we reconstruct the original sets of the first performance of *Don Giovanni*, Prague, 1787" in *Mozart, Don Giovanni, Program – Opera Mozart, Prague 2006*. Prague: Opera Mozart, 2006, p. 12.

¹² For an account of the workshop about Voltaire's theatre with Leiden University, and other contributions by the Académie Desprez to celebrate the tricentenary of the Leidse Schouwburg, see: Blin, Gilbert and Trotier, Rémy-Michel. "The Reforms of Lekain, Abstract, in 2001 18th Century Acting Styles" in Bordewijk, Cobi; Roding, Juliette; Veldheer, Vic. *Wat geeft die Comedie toch bemoeijng! De Leidse Schouwburg, 1705–2005*. Amsterdam: Boom, 2005, pp. 16 & 17.

¹³ For the history of the foundation of the Boston Early Music Festival, see: Burgess, Geoffrey. *Well-Tempered Woodwinds: Friedrich von Huene and the Making of Early Music in a New World*. Bloomington (IN): Indiana University Press, 2015.

The first was the possibility to attach myself to a stable opera organization. The professional brief for my residency was expressed in 2008 by Kathleen Fay, BEMF's Executive Director: « to ensure long-term thinking for all our opera projects: Festival operatic centerpieces, annual Chamber Operas, national and international tours, and recordings. »¹⁴ The mission was two years later further defined by Fay during a Planning Retreat organized with the Board of Directors and Overseers, Artistic Directors and Staff: « Motivating, exacting, demanding, thorough / Teaching us to function more like an opera company, while respecting our priority status as the world's leading festival of Early Music ». ¹⁵ To establish a method of operating and to cultivate a team of technical experts were also among the tasks of my mission.

The second was the desire of the artistic directors to include a Historically Informed Practice in the staging of full-scale performances of baroque operas. Since 1995, BEMF's intent had been to unearth lesser-known masterpieces and present them « infused with the latest information on period singing, orchestral performance, scenic design, costuming, dance, and staging »¹⁶. Under the leadership of Artistic Directors Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs since 1997, BEMF had already created a brilliant trail of Historically Informed opera productions for which they had also served as musical directors. Their commitment to the importance of extending the values of Historically Informed Performance to other departments other than music was expressed when I was invited to join BEMF's team: « Most opera companies assume that historical authenticity is reserved for the music alone, while stage directors provide innovation by "bringing the opera up to date". BEMF's dedication to examining every element of Baroque opera – music, dance, costume, design, and staging – is a rare and invaluable attribute for an opera producer. But rarer still are stage directors with the breadth of knowledge and passion for the subject to make this vision a reality ». Both artistic directors were describing my research as well fitted to their organization for its ability « to see the big picture of bringing a Baroque opera to life ».¹⁷

My mission was thus twofold: to develop, in close collaboration with my colleagues, a professional structuring of BEMF's opera production system, and to bring the staging to the same level of Historically Informed Practice that the musical directors were putting at the center of their artistic work. This conjunction of purposes already made the mission rather rare, but it is its duration which makes the experience unique. Although the business of opera (planning, budgeting, casting, etc) is a big part of my daily work, the present dissertation focuses on the relation of my work with History during the last ten years, as BEMF offered me a fertile ground for experiments. There, my work and research lead toward these questions: how to stage baroque operas now? What relationships between the different performing languages¹⁸ are necessary for baroque opera to find an accomplished form on stage? How do

¹⁴ Fay, Kathleen. « Boston Early Music Festival appoints Gilbert Blin as Stage Director in Residence ». Press release dated 15 April 2008, Boston.

¹⁵ Fay, Kathleen. *PowerPoint presentation* for Boston Early Music Festival Planning Retreat. Saturday, 20 February 2010. Internal document.

¹⁶ Boston Early Music Festival Mission Statement.

¹⁷ Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs in « Boston Early Music Festival appoints Gilbert Blin as Stage Director in Residence ». Press release dated 15 April 2008, Boston.

¹⁸ By « performing languages » I mean all the expressive ways an opera production can offer: text and music, movements and acting, sets and costumes, machines, light, and relations with audiences, the staging being in my

I conceive the presence of historical elements on stage? These directions will allow to disclose as many clues of the importance of the process I am trying to account for in this dissertation.

In the 1990s a series of historical articles¹⁹ that I wrote at the invitation of the Drottningholms Slottsteater started a personal process which found its full development with the Boston Early Music Festival. For this organization, I made the decision that, for each production I was staging, I would write texts that would present my research on the piece at hand to form the main axis of the dramaturgy on which I was building my staging. These texts were not intended for a specific group, but they were shared in various states of length and completion, at different steps of the process: first with the team for the staged production (directors, performers and technicians), then with the audience and ultimately with a larger public through symposia and conferences. An intellectual and analytical approach of the artistic product could follow the creative development, but also initiate the interpretive process and become Poetics or even Aesthetics. For my research I followed, like many of my colleagues in the Historically Informed Performance field, a methodology somewhat similar to scholar Randall A. Rosenfeld's application of experimental archaeology to medieval music improvisation, exploring « the range of supportable interpretations through performing them».²⁰ My research as a whole developed in different contexts, around different structures, in the course of varied projects, materialized through various experiments and found a framework in the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts of Leiden University. This overall exploration has thus far taken place primarily within four structures:

1. A frame of historical reference for research: the Drottningholms Slottsteater, Sweden, theatre of the eighteenth century (1766), with which I worked since 1990;
2. A framework for free experimentation, independent of any commercial or institutional requirements: the Académie Desprez, a French Association that I founded in 2000 to explore the resources offered by the Drottningholms Slottsteater;
3. A framework for concrete implementation: the Boston Early Music Festival, United States, where, after being Stage Director in Residence from 2008 to 2013, I am now Opera Director and where I direct operas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on a regular basis;
4. A framework for theorizing, sharing and taking part in a more global debate: the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts at Leiden University in the Netherlands, where this doctorate was formally started in 2014 for completion in 2018.

To explore my main research question in the present dissertation, I established a corpus of productions that I staged for the Boston Early Music Festival as from 2007. This corpus

mind the combination of all. See: Kowzan, Tadeusz. *Littérature et spectacle*. The Hague: Mouton & Co and Warszawa : PWN - Éditions scientifiques de Pologne, 1975, p. 173. See also: Buyssens, Eric. *Les Langues et le discours, Essai de linguistique fonctionnelle dans le cadre de la sémiologie*. Bruxelles: Office de Publicité, 1943, p. 56.

¹⁹ See: Blin, Gilbert. "The French Gluck" in *Program 1990, Drottningholms Slottsteater*. Stockholm: Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 1990, pp. 93–96. Blin, Gilbert. "The Gods, The Artist and the Mortal – An attempt to interpret the Orpheus myth" in *Program 1992, Drottningholms Slottsteater*. Stockholm: Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 1992, pp. 105–108. Blin, Gilbert. "Philidor – between Chess and Music" in *Program 1995, Drottningholms Slottsteater*. Stockholm: Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 1995, pp. 86–89.

²⁰ Rosenfeld, Randall A. "Performance Practice, Experimental Archaeology, and the Problem of the Respectability of Results" in *Improvisation in the Arts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, edited by Timothy James McGee. Medieval Institute Publications. Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series 30. Kalamazoo (MI): Western Michigan University, 2003, p. 85.

does not include all the spectacles I produced for this organization²¹, nor of course all my productions, staged or designed, for other international organizations during this decade. However, the corpus, which will be detailed in the next paragraphs, is demonstrative of a broad period of the history of opera and integrates several styles. It also has the intent of addressing several problems inherent in the opera genre, such as those with librettos, sets, costumes, and machines, all elements that will be addressed, not for themselves but in their complementary relationships in the staging. Within this series of productions, the exploration is organized primarily around representative works within the domain of baroque opera, at the crossroads of geographical areas and various periods. The development of opera from its origins in north Italy around 1600 to various successive flowerings throughout Europe during the seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries is the general path of the research. For this doctoral dissertation about the theory and practice of the baroque stage, the definition of the corpus had to consider an effective implementation on stage of the works studied. The research for the ten productions that I have gathered here because of their joint origin, has been subjected to the rules of living theatre and the constraints specific to each production. Nevertheless, it was necessary to focus on particular opera works, which I have been working on from the production's beginning until its completion during a performance, to be able to test the validity and vitality of the method, but then the resulting corpus is still in itself quite revelatory.

The chapters in this dissertation examine well-known operas by Monteverdi, Lully, Charpentier, Blow, Steffani, Campra, and Handel, but aim to provide fresh perspectives by their approach and by the themes they focused on, developed in relation with the concrete staging of them. Some of the ideas presented here have appeared before in various program books²², but all were reread, corrected, reworked and expanded, to reflect the sum of each experience, various experimentations in the rehearsals' studio, discussions with my colleagues and elements that were discovered a posteriori through further readings and site visits. Although each experience also sheds light on previous ones, these studies do not claim to have considered all the scholarship that has appeared during or since they were elaborated. They nonetheless constitute the chapters of a coherent work as they reflect my own experience from the vantage point of the BEMF residency and directorship. The distribution of these studies quickly structured itself; it mixes the systematic approach and the concern of the opera chronology. Here is the plan of it:

In the Introduction, I present the problems faced while attempting to reconstruct performances of the given period, in view of the fact that the relationship between those ephemeral entertainments and their surviving records is almost always impossible to fully establish. I argue that it is not only by making the inventory of these separated historical elements of a performance and their accumulation in a new one that a true Historically Informed Staging of the operas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries could unfold. An artistic development can only happen in a satisfactory way for a modern audience by establishing a system of relationships between these elements which can be meaningful today. This system, which takes into consideration traceable elements that either predate the moment of first performance or provide a transcript of that performance, allows us to discover new ones when the structural relationships are understood. Because the various semantic natures of these performing elements coexist in the same space during the time of the performance, the task of structuring them is consequently largely in the hands of the stage director. The following chapters of the dissertation study various relations between various performing

²¹ For a full list, see p. 471.

²² When applicable, I will give the references to the previous publications in each corresponding chapter.

elements, and these relations can be considered as my first findings. I define my conception of the methodology for staging opera of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and, as announced before, identify it as *The Reflections of Memory*.

Chapter 1 investigates how the relation between performing space and poetic space –and by “poetic” I mean imaginary as defined by the libretto– is a cultural one which cannot be underestimated when shaping the staging of the operas of this period. It examines how Italian early operas dealt with the questions of space: the fundamental role of real space in the beginnings of Italian opera and how the Venetian pictorial conception of it has shaped opera as a specific genre are the subjects of investigation for this first part. Although still considered by many as the first true opera, *Orfeo* was not written by Alessandro Striggio (ca. 1573–1630) and Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643) for the theatrical building equipped with a proscenium frame that would soon be synonymous with the opera genre. By referring to the term « modello », understood as preparatory study or model, I want to switch the attention from this approach, built around the notion of time, to a space questioning (both poetical and factual). My hypothetical description of the process of the performance sheds light on the experimental identity of the piece. By building a hypothesis about the specificities of *Orfeo* and the space and scenery of its staging in Mantua in 1607, I hope to attract the attention to the fruitful implications this Italian « modello » can have for experimental research and staged production. In the following parts I then focus on the fundamental role of scenography in Venetian opera and some of its implication for staging. By the 1630s the art of set design found in this city a seminal ground which influenced, both in terms of artists and style, all opera staging in Europe for two centuries. While presenting my findings on two of Monteverdi’s operas for Venice in the following sections I evaluate the extent to which the scenography of both *Il Ritorno d’Ulisse in Patria* and *L’incoronazione di Poppea* can be reconstructed. I also argue that although ostensibly present in the same way in both pieces, the sets are not of the same consequence and if *Ulisse* cannot truly exist without multiple sets, *Poppea* may have well been performed without any, and therefore, quite surprisingly, a production with no set at all could deserve the label of Historically Informed Performance.

Chapter 2 explores a major development: the creation of French opera during the late seventeenth century. By reemphasizing the Aristotelian emotions of pity and fear, which *Tragédie* was still supposed to provoke, and by adding next to them the sense of the « merveilleux » that the French *Ballet de Cour* was based on, French poets aimed to demonstrate that opera could affirm itself as an independent poetic form, albeit in the proximity with one or the other genres that I just mentioned. The different pieces composed by Lully around the mythological character of Psyche have been previously explored by scholars but the ending Ballet of *Psiché* has never been fully investigated. This chapter demonstrates how this finale which appears both in *Psiché*, the tragedy of 1671 and *Psyché*, the opera of 1678, contains an allegorical poetical program, and de facto a musical project, for opera « à la Française ». My aims are threefold: first to reexamine the details of the texts of this long « Divertissement » while focusing on the poetics of the *Ballet de Cour* and, second, to give a new perspective on Quinault’s role in the conception of French opera. Thirdly I wanted to provide a study of an intellectual spacing, present in two of three dimensions in various visual documents from the period, and applicable to the general design of the staging because transferable in the placement/spacing of performers on stage. A case study, presented at the end of this dissertation, relocates the « espace poétique » of the full text of the play *Psiché* in the real place of the Drottningholms Slottsteater. This *Psiché* study reconstructs the succession and spatial natures of what the Swedes called « changemang » when the play was presented there in 1766.

Chapter 3 examines what appears to me as an alternative French system, whose importance, in the shadow of the operas by Quinault and Lully, is not only musical. I investigate several works by Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643–1704) and more specifically focus on the question of the librettos of his « petits opéras ». Besides giving all the librettos, which are only known to us by through Charpentier's scores, an editorial form (my own editions of these librettos and my own English translations are made available as an Appendix to this dissertation), I linked them with the literature and theatre history of the period. By making that connection I came across some innovative paratexts and possible hypotexts, creating fresh perspectives useful to my stage productions. Three of Charpentier's operas are discussed extensively in three distinct sections: *Les Plaisirs de Versailles*, an allegorical work, holds a special place in his opera production because of its clear closeness to Louis XIV. *La Couronne de Fleurs*, a symbolic but fleeting piece, has heretofore been misunderstood and underestimated. My findings reveal a possible attempt by Charpentier to have this music performed outside the French capital. I demonstrate that the ambitious yet incomplete *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* was written by Charpentier with the hope of having it performed by the Académie Royale de Musique in Paris. The piece seems to mark an attempt to go back to the pastoral origins of the French Opera, as this *Pastorale* deliberately ignores the features of the genre of the *Tragédie en musique* established by Quinault and Lully, which was then in full vogue. Heretofore, the identities of Charpentier's collaborators for these works were unknown but I propose a possible librettist for each piece, hoping that challenging the anonymity of his poets gives Charpentier's operas a fertile context for staging.

Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 acknowledge the concurrent developments in opera outside France and Italy, by concentrating on England and Bavaria. Through three examples I explore the question of social and cultural contexts of performances and their impacts on the creative process of opera. In Chapter 4, devoted to England: I focus on two « chamber operas » and explore private performances, courtly patronage and private patrons. First, by placing the art of painting in the center of my reflections on *Venus and Adonis* by John Blow (1649–1708) and on *Acis and Galatea* by George Frideric Handel (1685–1759), I examine the differentiation between time and space perception in poetry and painting. I argue that the complementarity of the « sister arts », in the artistic form called English masque opera, implies a staging which clearly engages in a visual movement concomitant to music, but suggests the support of specific visual references. These referents would have been present at that time in the space, and therefore in the minds, of the creators and their audience. It is we, today, who find it hard to see their relationship, but I believe that these referents can be reactivated by the performance as they are contained in the works themselves, in the librettos and in the music. Essential factors such as time are inherent in the texture itself of a performance with its instantaneous reception, just as they are for the contemplation of a picture, in its composition, or in its aesthetic arrangement. Revisiting the well-worn parallelism between poetry and painting I apply it to these two English works: with Blow's *Venus and Adonis* I reveal that the ekphratic quality of the libretto relocates the piece between poems and pictures and by doing so come up with a new hypothesis about the authorship of its anonymous libretto. For Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, I expand the concept of painting as applied to garden design, in accordance with some debates of the time, and demonstrate how the opera of Handel is an attempt to establish the mythical character of Acis as the Genius of the gardens of Cannons, the domain where it was created.

In Chapter 5 I then examine *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, the opera composed by Agostino Steffani (1654–1728) for Munich in 1688. The combination of strong influences from Venice and France with the culture of the Bavarian court gave rise to operas that were rich with cultural references. It appeared to me that these various references were unified under the

auspices of the classical custom of allegory, a figurative mode of representation that conveys meanings other than the literal ones. Favored by the Jesuit culture, which dominated education and culture in Bavaria in the seventeenth century, this rhetorical device is deeply present in Steffani's *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, and is the object and subject of the artistic process I try to describe in a form which takes inspiration from the allegorical mode of expression. Seven gates, according to Ovid, stood at the entrances to the city of Thebes, and this number is used here as an allegorical pathway to imagine seven keys to the construction of the production of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*. It is an attempt to write down all the major elements which my staging of *Niobe* took into consideration. Some pictures are associated to these symbolic openings, which in turn created visual directions. They serve to curate a small personal « memory palace », a Jesuit mnemonic device based on mental visualization of images in order to comprehend the larger complexity of a piece. A performance in the 1680s in Munich was like a representational room of mirrors, where reality and fiction were intertwined through the power of allegory, both visual and verbal. This Chapter presents the fundamentals of a Historically Informed dramaturgy for the piece, which not only reflects on its components but, by its presentation, on its conceptual process.

Finally, in Chapter 6 of this dissertation, I return to France and explore the ongoing search for a defined poetics of opera and investigate the renewal that the genre knew at the very end of the seventeenth century with the blossoming of what would soon be known as French « opera-ballet ». This search for new expressions is as much linked with the regicentric power as the works of Quinault and Lully were, but although connected to issues of diplomatic discourse, self-fashioning and surveillance in the French theatre of the power of absolute monarchy, *Le Carnaval de Venise* manages to develop a symbolic form of freedom and unconventionality. Librettist Jean-François Regnard (1655–1709) and composer André Campra (1660–1744) contribute to the theatrical entertainment provided for political reasons but succeed in creating an original narrative which gives renewed places to scenography, theatre and dance. *Le Carnaval de Venise* is not only a royal product of masked diplomacy but also an original attempt to create a new genre.

The last section of this dissertation, Chapter 7, presents three cases which deal with some of the specific problems to be faced when staging a Historically Informed Performance. These three cases are approached from the point of view of one of the elements of the staging discourse: costumes, sets and machines. Case-study 1 exemplifies the type of exploration I envisage when designing a costume for a Historically Informed production. In direct relation with *Acis and Galatea*, it is centered on the river gods' theatrical costumes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but reveals a more general method of investigation that is applicable when costuming not only river gods but also other figures. Case-study 2 is dedicated to the performance of *Psiché* in the Drottningholms Slottsteater in 1766, which provides an example of the places and relations of scenery and stage machinery in a period performance space. Case-study 3 is dedicated to the staging preparation and more specifically to the implementation of flying machines in my own production of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*.

Two electronic Appendices complete the dissertation. Appendix A is a selection of short videos which presents snippets from my productions of the operas explored in this dissertation. These clips were not made as part of the dissertation, but they nonetheless help the reader who was not able to see a performance to envisage my productions. Appendix B offers the editions of librettos of Charpentier's operas, studied in Chapter 3, together with my English translations, destined to the performers.

Introduction

« Aussi ne donnay-je icy mes opinions qu'à la mode de M. de Montagne,
non pour bonnes, mais pour miennes.
Je m'en suis bien trouvé jusqu'à present,
mais je ne tiens pas impossible qu'on reussisse encore mieux en suivant les contraires. »

Pierre Corneille. "Au Lecteur" of *Héraclius*, 1647¹.

Although originally conceived by the artists of the end of the Renaissance as an attempt to recreate an ancient form of expression, opera ultimately grew into the most innovative spectacle in Europe². Offering a unique character of profane but sublime excellence it allowed the meeting of several artistic languages, such as poetry, music, theatre, architecture, dance, and painting, and seemed to thrive with the performing addition of the powers of expression. Reflecting the aspirations but also the social changes of different periods, opera sparked different approaches, both theoretical and material³. While opera, a staged drama telling a story in words and music, remains a deeply hybrid genre, it has seen its image radically changed over the course of history. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, a shift has gradually been made between the creation and interpretation of operas: the phenomenon that saw the decline in the number of new works was offset by the rediscovery of the repertoire of the past and its transfer to the stage. In this occurrence, of which the trend seems irreversible, baroque opera has been largely explored and offers to the modern audience the many resources of this vast repertoire⁴. Operas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have also benefited from the renewal of the relation to early music in general: many works were reviewed musically and returned to their original proportions by interpretations based on knowledge of the aesthetic criterions of the period in which the work was created⁵. This last movement is known

¹ [Corneille, Pierre]. *Héraclius, empereur d'Orient: tragédie*. Paris: A. de Sommaville, 1647, np.

² For an overview of the development of opera in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see: Donington, Robert. *The Rise of Opera*. London & Boston: Faber and Faber, 1981. For Venice, see: Rosand, Ellen. *Opera in seventeenth-century Venice, the creation of a genre*. [Berkeley, CA]: University of California Press, 1991. For France, see: Barthélemy, Maurice. *Métamorphoses de l'opéra français au siècle des Lumières*. Arles: Actes Sud, 1990.

³ For studies about the various forces which shape opera, see: Salazar, Philippe-Joseph. *Idéologies de l'opéra*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980. And see : Flaherty, Gloria. *Opera in the development of German Critical Thought*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978. See also: Glixon, Beth L. and Glixon, Jonathan E. *Inventing the Business of Opera, The Impresario and His World in Seventeenth-Century Venice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

⁴ Handel is a good example as he can be considered as the first baroque composer to have some of his operas regularly staged since the mid-twentieth century. See: Wolff, Hellmuth Christian. *Die Händel-Oper auf der modernen Bühne, Ein Beitrag zu Geschichte und Praxis der Opern-Bearbeitung und -Inszenierung in der Zeit von 1920 bis 1956*. Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1957.

⁵ Despite the few attempts in the early twentieth century to base interpretation with the period of origin of the piece, the work of the Schola Cantorum and Wanda Landowska in France, and Arnold Dolmetsch in England,

nowadays as the Historically Inspired or, more specifically, as the Historically Informed Performance movement (henceforward referred sometimes as HIP)⁶. Nobody can deny that this movement has been fostering opera as a musical corpus, but when it comes to stage productions it has not always succeeded in applying its own principles to opera as an art form.

Musicology, after taking the history of the opera genre to the speculative level, currently tends to assert its influence on musical practice. Critical editions of scores, treatises of musical practices, and history of instruments are among the many resources available to performers who wish to tie their musical interpretations closer to that of the opera in its original acoustic condition. Furthermore, early music education and specialized pedagogy have spread around the globe. Finally, musicology seems to have often substituted itself for philosophy, literature and the performing arts to lead a reflection on the aesthetics of opera⁷. The supremacy of music over the other components of opera has been asserted to such an extent that the text and the arts of the stage have been long neglected⁸. On the one hand research of quite some musicologists has the merit of trying to understand the lyric genre as a whole without excluding any of its components; on the other these approaches, because they are based on a musicological methodology, cannot help but establish a hierarchy in the constituent parts of the opera where music dominates the others. In addition, by the rhetorical setting of their formulation, and despite their intrinsic qualities, quite some musicological works are often forced to disconnect their considerations from the nature of opera as a live performance. Consequently, such musicological research is often discounted by the artists and craftsmen in charge of live productions. Here the Historically Informed Performance movement finds a limitation, more by the lack of opportunities to implement its principles than interest: interactions between historians and stage artists are not common.

Consequently, opera tends today to be in many instances only considered as a musical genre represented by one « object »: the score, the sole work of the « composer »⁹. The fruitful discussion on the hierarchy of parts that make up an opera, and which inspired its creation,

it is around the early 1960s that the movement becomes noticeable in its effect on performance practice. See: Donington, Robert. *Interpretation of Early Music*. London: Faber and Faber, 1963. See also: Wilson, Nick. *The Art of Re-enchantment, Making Early Music in the Modern Age*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

⁶ For some other milestones chronicled in the Historically Informed Performance movement literature, see: Koopman, Ton. *Barokmuziek: theorie en praktijk*. Utrecht: Bohn, Scheltema & Holkema, 1985. And see: Butt, John. *Playing with History, The Historical Approach to Musical Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. See also: Haynes, Bruce. *The End of Early Music, A Period Performer's History of Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

⁷ Taking into account the period spectacle in opera was the subject of my master's dissertation: Blin, Gilbert. "Les Opéras de Rameau, pour un Théâtre des Enchantements", (mémoire de Maîtrise soutenu à l'Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris III. Paris: Institut d'Études Théâtrales, 1986). For the distinction between literature and performance, see: Kowzan, Tadeusz. *Littérature et spectacle*. The Hague: Mouton & Co and Warszawa: PWN – Éditions scientifiques de Pologne, 1975. For a philosophical approach of French opera, see: Kintzler, Catherine. *Poétique de l'Opéra Français de Corneille à Rousseau*. Paris: Minerve, 1991.

⁸ The disdain with which literature treated opera librettos has been ameliorated by the impact of the musicological approach. Librettos have ceased to suffer from the contempt of literature only recently. See: Girdlestone, Cuthbert. *La Tragédie en Musique (1673–1750) considérée comme genre littéraire*. Genève: Droz, 1972. See also: Smith, Patrick J. *La Decima musa, Storia del libretto d'opera*. Firenze: Sansoni Editore, 1981.

⁹ This focus on the composer is the product of a school of thought which appeared before the French Revolution, established itself in the nineteenth century with the figure of the composer demiurge and was erected in model by the « progress » – made of social, technological and musicological developments – formulated in the twentieth-century.

has found a single, but sterile, answer: opera is often reduced to its musical form. Paradoxically, music has not always benefited from such an appropriation: finding itself isolated from the other arts that are needed for making an opera and losing its ability to organically communicate with the other components, music could have very nearly excluded itself from any possibility of operatic development. The problem frequently comes from the fact that today there is a dichotomy between the musical factor and the others in opera. In actuality, opera has no aesthetical or historical reason to be considered from a purely musical perspective – neither does it thrive under exclusively poetic, dramatic or visual approaches. And this combinative itinerary is particularly true regarding baroque opera.

Indeed, the arts and disciplines which contribute to the completion of an opera can be considered individually. Music but also poetry, architecture, the decorative arts and the art of the actor, singing or dancing, require such specializations – each have such an intrinsic complexity – that it is necessary to « work » with them separately, whether one wish to « analyze » or to « produce » an opera. But the difficulty is that none of these media are enough, by themselves, to « do » a historically informed opera production: the poetics of opera is primarily combinative and cannot be reduced to any of its parts. Different approaches which are all constitutive of the historically informed process, as usually understood, can be applied to all of these segments. These approaches are often based on a fidelity to the original material, and a way to interpret it, perform it, following the techniques, practices and tastes of the period. But this scope brings some legitimate questions for a stage production, and one may wonder « What are the criteria to qualify a stage production with the expression “historically informed”? » This expression has turned into a label and would suppose a standard of judgment or criticism and some rules or principles for evaluating a production.

Meanwhile, opera stage direction, since the mid-twentieth century, has become an expression that claims exclusivity and originality¹⁰. The development of the role of the stage director from the 1960s created the notion of *Regietheater*, or « theatre of the stage director »: it is not the composer or the librettist nor the conductor or the singer, it is the director who is often perceived as the key figure of an opera performance¹¹. The result of this development has been nowadays dividing artists and audience alike: de facto, by ignoring the poetics in force at the time of the creation of the piece, this limited attitude assumed that it is only up to the artists in charge of the staged production – stage directors and stage designers – to establish a dynamic dialogue with today. The search for bringing the audience to new levels of perceptions and impressions which was one of the primary ambitions of the opera project around 1600 has been changing its nature. What is the « purpose » of opera? It is a large question but, in my opinion, the audience as a community, seems to be the destination of the work of the artists, as a collective. Separating the poetic and musical vectors from the stage vector and overlooking the audience factor leaves out this twice-collective nature of opera. An incomplete approach like this does not reflect the original integrity – the state of being complete – of the artistic

¹⁰ For a short history of the staging process of opera, see: Guccini, Gerardo. “Direzione scenica e regia” in *Storia dell’opera italiana, volume 5: “La spettacolarità”*, edition by Lorenzo Bianconi, and Giorgio Pestelli. Turin: EDT, 1988, p. 123; and: *Histoire des Spectacles*, Encyclopédie de la Pléiade. Volume publié sous la direction de Guy Dumur. Paris: Gallimard, 1965. For the current situation, see: Deshoulières, Christophe. “La mise en scène contemporaine des opéras baroques, classiques et romantiques” in *Musiques. Une encyclopédie pour le XXI^e siècle*, Volume 2: « Les savoirs musicaux », edited by Jean-Jacques Nattiez. Arles: Actes Sud/Cité de la Musique, 2004, pp. 1091–1127. See also : Baker, Evan. *From the score to the stage, An Illustrated History of Continental Opera Production and Staging*. Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 2013.

¹¹ Dahlhaus, Carl. “Regietheater” in *Musica*, No. 38, *Das Theater mit der Oper*. 1984, p. 227.

project called *opera*¹². It leaves out the criteria of aesthetics necessary for a more unprejudiced perception of the piece and is at risk of reducing it to an incomplete re-presentation. Instead of negatively singling out the importance of the stage director in this translation process, it may seem logical to instead see his function as a key factor in creating a more profound historically informed stage practice. Aside from his ability to direct the stage and the authority (if not always the capacity) to give it its meaningful necessity, the stage director also has the obligation to work with all the competences of the opera personnel and with every component of the performance.

The currently held notion, by audience and the reviewers alike, that Historically Informed staging is made of shapes and forms, with a capacity of reproducing period original artifacts that signals an « authenticity » of style is misleading¹³. The word authenticity covers a wide category of notions, and many scholars have been questioning its relevance and its use when it comes to musical performance¹⁴. But for audience and reviewers alike the word authenticity is mostly used as « displaying visual or acoustic historical knowledge ». Peter Kivy (1934–2017), in his seminal approach on authenticity in musical performance (1995)¹⁵, came to the conclusion that the notion should be expanded to authenticities of performance, including authenticities of intention, sound, practice, and the authenticity of personal interpretation in musical performance. The Kivy categories are self-explanatory¹⁶, but when it comes to opera as a combinative art, another one must be added to integrate the concrete and visual elements of a performance to call it Historically Informed; one could call this category: authenticities of shapes.

These authenticities of shapes are, in more than a visual way, the emerging part of the iceberg and have been dominating and blurring the debate regarding the Historically Informed staging of opera. While I am the first to recognize that opera is a combinative art, which requires a well formulated visual language, I have frequently observed that while many staged productions that have been labelled HIP placed such an emphasis on visual details, they ignored the aesthetical categories and theory of arts of the period, what Kivy would have called the « authenticity of intention ». By doing this, these so-called HIP productions have disconnected the works so significantly from their original *raisons d'être*, that they tend to lose the sense of balance, a sense of the whole, a sense of proportions: the characteristic fundamentals of baroque opera, as expressed by many contemporary definitions of aesthetics

¹² This trend has provoked polemical reactions. See: Dandrey, Patrick. “Vers une scénographie d’ « authenticité » ” in *Lettres Actuelles*, N°1–2, *Juin–Septembre 1993*. Mont de Marsan: Société de Presse, d’Édition et de Communication, 1993, pp. 10–13. And see: Beaussant, Philippe. *La Malscène*. Paris: Fayard, 2005. See also: Muller, Julie and Muller, Frans. “De nieuwe kleren van Monteverdi” in *Mens en melodie*. Jaargang 63 nummer 5. 2008, pp. 20–25.

¹³ See: Fischer, Christine. “Baroque Opera, historical information, and business; or, how a Nerd became a Hipster” in Belina-Johnson, Anastasia and Scott, Derek B. *The Business of Opera*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2016, pp. 31–49.

¹⁴ See : Wilson, Nick. *The Art of Re-enchantment, Making Early Music in the Modern Age*. New York : Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 37–53.

¹⁵ Kivy, Peter. *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance*. Ithaca (CT): Cornell University Press, 1995.

¹⁶ For a synthesis and critical approach of Kivy’s *Reflections* see: Jackson, Roland. “Authenticity or Authenticities? -Performance Practice and the Mainstream” in *Performance Practice Review*, *Volume 10, Number 1 Spring, Article 2*. Claremont (CA): Scholarship Claremont, 1997, pp. 1–10.

of the period in question. By ignoring how the elements were designed to connect with each other, these productions alter the equilibrium between the different components of opera and give a somewhat incomplete expression of the pieces. In striking opposition, I have seen productions without the visual language of the period (for example without period costumes, candles and so-called baroque gestures) that were closer to the original intentions and artistic forms because they were able to articulate these connections within modern sets and costumes, a decorum much easier to imagine for the audience, than reconstructing the structure in which they combine. Given the HIP movement and its radical effects on music performance over the past half century it may seem that trying to follow the same principles while staging operas is an even more recent development. However, as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, efforts to convey authenticity to a staged performance of an early piece were at the center of the work of some of the most revolutionary stage directors and thinkers, whose influence cannot be attributed to lack of creativity, or to theatrical conservatism. Three examples, going back a century, help to introduce my own approach on the importance of the connections between the various parts of operatic works.

French theater director André Antoine (1858–1943) was most importantly often associated with the Naturalism movement as he created the plays of Émile Zola (1840 – 1902), but he may also be one of the first director to extend his research of authenticities to the repertoire of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when he directed a series of French « classiques »¹⁷. First, with his production of *Le Cid* by Pierre Corneille in 1907 he chose not to represent medieval Spain, as it was then customary at the Comédie-Française but presented an evocation of the first performance at the Théâtre du Marais in 1636. In this production, presented at the Théâtre de l'Odéon, he used 624 wax candles to light a simple stage where actors in seventeenth century costumes took positions as an on-stage audience while between the acts a vocalist sang accompanied by a lute. Then, for his staging of Racine's tragedies, he reproduced the same setting of meta-theatre for an evocation of original staging of the Hôtel de Bourgogne for *Andromaque* (1909); for his production of *Esther* (1913), Antoine uses the same device and, in addition to restoring the musical « intermèdes » of Jean-Baptiste Moreau (1656–1733) for the first performance in Saint-Cyr, he directed his actors by asking them to integrate in their acting the gestures and attitudes found on the series of tapestries by Jean-François de Troy (1679–1752) and Antoine Coypel (1661–1722) depicting the biblical episode¹⁸.

From these examples, I deduce that the productions of Antoine, while researching shapes and forms of the period (research was carried by Antoine, his designers and musical director in various libraries and museums), were in search of a contextualization of the performance. By means of staging a fake audience, the purpose was to establish the perception of the drama through the eyes of these characters and reestablish the authenticity of intention in the drama itself. The seventeenth century spectators that Antoine put on both sides of the stage acted as mediums: their reactions in front of the performance they attended informed the modern audience and added another layer to its modern perception. It seems to me that Antoine identified the two main elements that any HIP staging must work on: the visual parts

¹⁷ Chothia, Jean. *André Antoine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 155–158.

¹⁸ Works by Coypel and De Troy are still considered as unique sources of documentation for period French stage rhetoric. See: *Le théâtre des Passions (1697–1759)*, *Cléopâtre, Médée, Iphigénie*. Lyon: Fage éditions and Nantes : Musée des Beaux-Arts, 2011, pp. 135–138. See also: Wentz, Jed. "The relationship between gesture, affect and rhythmic freedom in the performance of French tragic opera from Lully to Rameau". Doctoral thesis. Leiden University, 2010, pp. 148–150 & 175–179.

and the relation between them. By offering his own audience the opportunity to look through the eyes of a period audience, Antoine was providing a critical discourse on the play while performing it and was as such more creative than the productions that the Comédie-Française offered around 1910, which were based on circumvolved reconstructions of Greek or Assyrian culture.

Another initiative around the same period completes the picture by addressing one of the fundamental aspects of any attempt to create Historically Informed spectacle: the need for specialized performers and their training. Debates regarding musical education have been spreading for centuries, but when it comes to the rediscovery of early repertoire, some artists realized that a language was needed for specific means of expression ; in a rare text published in 1906, eloquently titled *De l'opportunité de créer en France un Théâtre d'Application pour la Reconstitution des anciens Opéras français des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*¹⁹, French composer Charles Bordes (1863–1909) pleaded for a special HIP practical education for opera singers. Bordes, one of the founders of the Schola Cantorum de Paris, in 1894, with Alexandre Guilmant (1837– 1911) and Vincent d'Indy (1851–1931), emphasized the need of trained performers to do justice on stage to the early repertoire of opera: « The study and the reconstruction, even at the concert, of all the monuments of the musical history and in particular the theatre made such progress and aroused the interest of so many people, that it seemed to me that gap was to be filled, that of the complete realization of many of these works in their milieu, i.e. in the theatre »²⁰ . Bordes reiterated that one of the initial goals of the Schola Cantorum was to « restore to honor all documents of music history and revive them in their milieu [...] constituting for this very reason a kind of Musical Museum by the audition where one could easily realize the high artistic value of all these works, most of them forgotten, but, what is more important the life that they carried in them, which made them not only realizable in our time, but imposed them on our interest, so much do they still vibrate in unison with our feelings, since they are above all sincere and based on the true and universal expression».²¹ Next to the Schola Cantorum, where musical education of the highest level was being dispensed, he wished to create « une école d'application théâtrale » (A school for theatre application) with the goal of « preparing young opera singers trained for free declamation of the masters of the basso continuo and of early French opera. »²² These singers would work on the roles of a specific early piece under the direction of singing teachers, but Bordes

¹⁹ Bordes, Charles. *De l'opportunité de créer en France un Théâtre d'Application pour la Reconstitution des anciens Opéras français des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, Article paru dans la Tribune de Saint-Gervais, n° de Février 1906. Paris : Bureau d'édition de la « Schola », 1906.

²⁰ « L'étude et la reconstitution, même au concert, de tous les monuments de l'histoire musicale et en particulier du théâtre ont fait de tels progrès et suscité l'intérêt de tant de gens, qu'il m'a semblé qu'une lacune était à combler, celle de la réalisation complète de beaucoup de ces œuvres dans leur milieu, c'est à dire au théâtre. » in Bordes, Charles. *De l'opportunité...* Paris: Schola, 1906, p. 3.

²¹ « remettre en honneur tous les documents de l'histoire musicale et les faire revivre dans leurs milieu; d'abord la musique religieuse à l'église, puis les œuvres de concert au concert, constituant par cela même une sorte de Musée musical par l'audition où l'on a pu aisément se rendre compte de la haute valeur artistique de toutes ces oeuvres, la plupart oubliées, mais, ce qui est plus important la vie qu'elles portaient en elles et qui les rendait non seulement réalisables à notre époque, mais les imposait à notre intérêt, tant elles vibrent encore à l'unisson de nos sentiments, puisqu'elles sont avant tout sincères et reposent sur l'expression vraie et universelle. » in Bordes, Charles. *De l'opportunité...* Paris : Schola, 1906, p. 3.

²² « préparant de jeunes chanteurs lyriques entraînés à la libre déclamation des maîtres de la basse continue et de l'ancien opéra français. » in Bordes, Charles. *De l'opportunité...* Paris : Schola, 1906, p. 4.

emphasizes « the necessity to attach to the Foundation a permanent stage director, artist, and to be more respectful of older works than sometimes antiquated traditions and unnatural modern opera ».²³ The stage director would be the key factor of this new school, in opposition to the then-current ways of performing²⁴.

A third example will confirm the early comprehension of the importance of the critical approach of the stage director for the repertoire of the seventeenth century. The Russian stage director Vsévolod Meyerhold (1874–1940), known as a radical and political theatre pioneer, experimented in this direction when he staged *Dom Juan* of Molière for the Theatre Alexandrine in Saint Petersburg in 1910. Like in Antoine's productions in Paris, « Hundreds of wax candles in three chandeliers and two candelabra on the proscenium » were used as an essential part of the scenography: « The entire space seems to be designed to intensify the play of light the candles project on the stage and from the auditorium which stays lit during the performance »²⁵. Meyerhold explained how his artistic choice came at first from the text at his disposal, and the search for what he identified as « the knowledge of the period » to be evoked in to the audience: « if Molière's *Dom Juan* is read without any knowledge of the period which shaped the genius of its author, what a dull play it seems! » Meyerhold is convinced that qualities of the play can only be revealed by the historical context when the play is staged: « If the spectator is not to get bored, too, if whole passages are not to strike him as simply obscure, it is essential somehow to remind him constantly of the thousands of Lyonnais weavers manufacturing silk for the monstrously teeming court of Louis XIV, to remind him of the Manufacture des Gobelins, the whole town of painters, sculptors, jewelers and carpenters under the supervision of the celebrated Le Brun, all the master craftsmen producing Venetian glass and lace, English hosiery, Dutch mercery, without forgetting the ones who worked tin and copper in the German fashion ». To stage this idea, Meyerhold integrated some stage servants, whose activities, inspired by the *Kōken* of Japanese Noh theater, made the physical link between audience and actors: small dark-skinned people²⁶ who interacted as ushers with the audience and as stage servants with the actors. He clarified the purpose stating that « all these are not merely tricks designed for the delectation of snobs but serve the central purpose of enveloping the action in a mist redolent of the perfumed, gilded monarchy of Versailles ». Like Antoine before him, the concern to integrate the period in the performance was done by Meyerhold with an addition of this mist: the first task of a director staging *Dom Juan*, is « to fill the stage and auditorium with such a compelling atmosphere that the audience is bound to view the

²³ « la nécessité d'attacher à la fondation un metteur en scène permanent, artiste, et plus respectueux des œuvres anciennes que des traditions quelquefois surannées et antinaturelles du théâtre lyrique moderne. » in Bordes, Charles. *De l'opportunité...* Paris : Schola, 2006, p. 4. I made mine all principles of Bordes when I created the Young Artists Training Program in 2011 for the Boston Early Music Festival.

²⁴ Bordes' desire to create a school for theatre application did not come to fruition but various experiences where the Schola Cantorum's spirit and artists were involved, including a performance of Rameau's *Castor et Pollux* in Montpellier in 1908 (the first revival since 1754) prompted a new awareness that this type of opera could not be satisfactorily accommodated by using the ways operas were conceived and performed in this early twentieth century.

²⁵ All quotes from Meyerhold about his production of *Dom Juan* come from his article which first appears in the *Annales des Théâtres Impériaux* and then in his book *Du Théâtre*. They can be found in an English translation in : Meyerhold, Vsévolod. *On Theatre, edited and translated by Edward Braun*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016. I based my own translation on the French edition, which gives some extra details: Meyerhold, Vsévolod. *Le théâtre théâtral, Traduction et présentation de Nina Gourfinkel*. Paris: Gallimard, 1963, pp. 81–88.

²⁶ The American translation used the word « blackamoors » and the French one « négrillons », both expressions not very culturally sensitive today, although more accurate in their referent.

action through the prism of that atmosphere ». The word « prism », even with the limitation of translation, establishes a sense of correspondence, based on the vocabulary of optical sciences, with my own research about *The Reflections of Memory*.

When I take the historical data relative to a specific opera in order to establish the foundation of the process of a historically informed staging for it, I am confronted by various elements of different nature: original librettos, scores, sets and costumes (as extant designs or material remains), and planned or built architectures. This varied evidence of past activity can be seen as archeological remains and I choose to call these tangible data the *Remaining parts*. But they constitute an incomplete although as accurate as possible picture of the piece, because, according to its own original poetics, opera requires the simultaneous participation of various media. Yet coexistence does not here mean accumulation but the addition of the relations that these remains have between them. It is consequently in this way that opera wholly formulates itself, through different codes interrelated with each other. These vectors of relations between music and text, audio and visual codes, static and motion forces, organic and still lives, to name a few, develop at different levels of perception. Such various configurations constitute together a structure of memory, as they deal with information encoding, storing and being retrieved. It is an almost endless world of interferences and influences which organizes itself through various mental ciphers, both conscious and unconscious. It is a structure of layers that one could also visualize as three-dimensional spider webs²⁷, with the threads as routes of interactions: opera's existence can only be developed and supplemented by their meeting.

Unfortunately, a flawless shape is very rare and the difficulty of obtaining a perfect form is due to the scarcity of the *Remaining parts*: the memory of opera, like all memories, is made of different levels of recollection. As much as we have of the remains of an opera, some short-term memories have disappeared: in most of the cases the information we possess does not give a much-defined picture of the opera. Therefore, after one has recognized the potential existence of these disappeared elements on the speculative level, a reconstruction of what is missing is necessary to make the surviving data more meaningful. How can I create these *Missing parts*? One direction which presents itself is the use of the creative structures in place at the time the work was made. Insofar as these parts, remaining and missing, are representative of the theories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they belong to the Aristotelian system of Poetics largely applied to opera during the baroque era²⁸. Consequently, to analyze these historical documents following the thinkers of the time is like deciphering a code with a key at hand. Theoretical treatises and recorded usages shed light on the creative systems that had the integrity of the operatic project in mind and help to enlarge the picture by proposing such structures. It establishes a first set of reflections between evidence and ambitions, because it locates the *Missing parts* next to the *Remaining parts* within the *Structural parts*.

²⁷ This syncretic structure of layers can be associated to a rhizome, the philosophical concept developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972–1980) project. It is what Deleuze calls an « image of thought », based on the botanical rhizome, that apprehends multiplicities. A rhizome is characterized by « ceaselessly established connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles » in Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Transl. Brian Massumi. London and New York: Continuum, 2004. Vol. 2 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. 2 vols. 1972-1980, pp. 7–13.

²⁸ The Aristotelian dramatic system presented mostly in his *Poetics* has been translated, commented upon and developed extensively since the first Latin edition was published in Italy in 1498. See: Carter, Tim. *Music in Late Renaissance and Early Baroque Italy*, Newark (NJ): Amadeus Press, 1992.

The development of these remains and the formulation of new elements, to replace the missing ones, will also be clarified by a better understanding of their complementary relations at the moment of the original performance. The second domain of research to make the stage production of today more related to history is a cognitive study of all existing historical elements. Period treatises relative to performance practice offer another type of evidences for the performance. Here period theory offers one (or more) systems which structure theoretically all the « items » necessary for an opera. In this attempt, while most rhetoricians follow the example of Aristotle and his works, observers and other time witnesses offer some alternative approaches that are less connected to the text (as literature or musical composition) and more to the spectacle (as performance). The information related to the ephemeral nature of the period performance itself needs to be added to the *Structural parts*, and I name here this information, the *Performing parts*. There is, however, a difficulty to retrieve these *Performing Parts*: the historically informed movement applied to stage performances does not have the same ground to grow as the music movement or even the dance movement had. Although poetry, music, dance and scenography are all codes, their means to record by notations their activation—the performance—may vary and qualify their capacities for being interpreted and re-created.

The update by *Structural parts* established from historical data's comparisons with other primary and secondary sources, might allow the identification of the reference points of the aims of the piece. The use of the *Performing parts* permits the contextualization of the recorded facts that reflect the initial state of the performance: The *Missing parts* start then to emerge next to the *Remaining parts*. The opera starts now to appear to me in a more defined way: This total form is not exactly the original formulation as these *Performing parts* bear also witness to the ambition and of the reality of past artists, elements difficult to detect. It is from the relations between the *Structural parts* and the *Performing parts* that the vitality of the spectacle depended. It is therefore necessary, as a last step in the process, to make a transfer of the parts – remaining and missing – by a new step in the method that allows me to retain if not all, most of the creative mechanisms of the period and, from the elements that I discovered, to conceive of potential formal developments. The interest for such an attitude is based on the spatial/material nature of the live performance itself but includes the necessity for the auditory and visual elements to meet each other at a certain moment of time with some necessity.

Evidence from original performances comes in a variety of forms and needs a great deal of time and effort to be brought together. Nevertheless, the investigations to retrieve the *Performing parts* are guided by the same belief as the quest for the *Structural parts*: the combinative relations of the arts of the Baroque era do offer alternative structural solutions enfeoffed to current subjectivity to a lesser degree²⁹. This second set of reflections offers the possibility of a less prejudiced interpretation and ultimately gives the audience a freedom to confront itself more directly with opera, as the neglect of these *Performing parts* is de facto impossible in the case of a performance: it is the very accuracy of the translation of the piece in a stage language echoing the time and place of its origin which makes it contemporary.

²⁹ For an example of the work of the *Remaining* and *Missing parts*, see an account of my approach to the 1787 sets of *Don Giovanni*: Trotier, Rémy-Michel. “La restitution de scénographies à l’épreuve de l’expérience: un exemple des travaux de l’Académie Desprez” in *Restitution et création dans la remise en spectacle des œuvres des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, Actes du colloque international Versailles, 29 mai 2008, Nantes, 30-31 mai 2008*. Annales de l’Association pour un Centre de Recherche sur les Arts du Spectacle aux XVIIe et XVIIIe s. En partenariat avec Le Printemps des Arts & Centre de recherche du Château de Versailles, edited by Jean-Noël Laurenti. Villereau: ACRAS, June 2010, pp. 15–22.

Although requiring a separation of the aforementioned components in the production process, opera is only fully revealed to the spectator in the concrete form of the interpretation. Opera is indeed an art which is fulfilled exclusively in the moment of the performance by the simultaneous activation of all its components. The full existence of opera is circumscribed with the time of its development but also to the common space of its representation; what exists before the time of this « image » is not yet opera, what follows it is no longer opera. This principle accepted, it may thus be only useful to consider the opera of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the context of its time: as a living spectacle where all constitutive and interpretive elements interact with each other at a certain moment in time. Therefore, to the two first sets of reflections – based on the *Structural* and *Performing parts* – between the opera components, a third needs to be added: the interface which is the modern performance itself, in its duration and location, is a point of interconnection between the piece, as it was conceived « then », and the work, as it exists « now ». Maybe this truism brings in fact an intriguing analogy with the realm of physics and presents the performance as a boundary between different universes or two phases of a single universe. It is as much with the capacity of the performers as with the one of the audience that this interface may create various dynamic reflections which, because of their mirror-like connections and transfers between past and present time ideas, I identify as *The Reflections of Memory*.

Baroque operas are in continuous need of a renewal of their interpretations and if the Historically Informed Performance movement has been making a mark on the musical side, it is still pertinent to wonder whether or not this musical phenomenon is applicable to stage performance. If so, the stage director's role can be the vector of an alternative approach, by exploring the vestiges of the original stage productions while illuminated by the principles of the aesthetics of the period and what he knows of the stage practice of the period in question. These guidelines bring the approach to cognitive philology, because, in addition to the interest for the material evidence that remains, it focuses on the way the Baroque era was thinking when it aimed to elaborate opera as an artistic language³⁰. It takes into consideration the structures of the symbolic that can be perceived in the Baroque material culture to produce all items and ideas necessary to stage a production today. But this approach is also cognitive by the way it acquires knowledge and understands historical facts through thought, experience, and the senses.

The articulation of the process is not new by itself and can be put in relation with pianist and researcher Paulo de Assis' acute remarks about artistic research: « The archeological moment relates to conventional scholarly research, including archival and sources studies; the genealogy calls for interpretation, semiotic and transtextuality; and the problematization happens by constructing new and experimental machinic assemblage ».³¹ This dissertation is the fruit of my scholarly research and the experimentation around it: my staged productions are at the same time the product of the research and the problematization of it. Between

³⁰ See: Noë, Alva. "Art and Entanglement in *Strange Tools*" in *Phenomenology and Mind*, n.14 - 2018, pp. 30-36. See also: Arteaga, Alex. "Embodied and Situated Aesthetics: An enactive approach to a cognitive notion of aesthetics" in *"Arts and Research" Artnodes*. N°20, pp. 20-27.
<https://artnodes.uoc.edu/articles/abstract/10.7238/a.v0i20.3155/> (accessed 18 June 2018).

³¹ Appropriating Deleuze and Guattari's terminology on *strata*, Paulo de Assis gives another classification of existing *parts*, which mirrors my own definitions. See: Assis, Paulo de. "Towards aesthetic-epistemic assemblages" in *Assemblage Theory 3.0*. Book machine. 2014.
https://issuu.com/me21collective/docs/booklet_2_-_book_machines (accessed 18 June 2018).

pastiche³² and allusion³³, it may be accurate for some aspects of the experiments to speak of appropriation, as the process uses preexisting “audio” objects – music and text – or images with little or no transformation applied to them³⁴. However, inherent in my own use of the term appropriation is the evidence that the modern performance recontextualizes de facto whatever it has been using to recreate the opera. My exploration aims to demonstrate how Historically Informed staging has the ability to nourish my own creative process. There is enough ground to demonstrate that if historically informed staging is still a form of interpretation in the making it may also be, when establishing itself through *The Reflections of Memory*, an expression rich of discoveries and possible creative evolutions for the musical theatre³⁵. The following chapters will show how I apply this theoretical process in the making of staged productions and to which results.

³² The word « pastiche » is a French cognate of the Italian noun « pasticcio », which derives from the post-classical Latin « pasticium »: a pie filled with a mixture of diverse ingredients. Metaphorically, « pastiche » describes a work which is composed by several authors or made from various preexisting pieces by a single author. The term « pasticcio » is first found in the sixteenth century referring both to a kind of pie and to a literary mixture, and for music, the earliest English attestation is 1742, and in Italian, 1795. The practice of opera pasticcio was common in Italy in the eighteenth century and Vivaldi's *Rosmira fedele* offers some typical and topical aspects. For a review of my approach to this pastiche, see: Delaméa, Frédéric. “Vivaldi in Scena: Thoughts on the Revival of Vivaldi's Operas” in *Vivaldi, « Motezuma » and the Opera Seria, Essays on a Newly Discovered Work and Its Background. Edited by Michael Talbot*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2008, pp. 169–185.

³³ « Allusion » may refer to another art work, but it does not replicate it and requires the audience to share in the author's cultural knowledge in order to fully appreciate it. These terms and concepts can be used as mechanisms of intertextuality. For a full exploration of the postmodern use of pastiche, although this book does not address the question of opera, see: Hoesterey, Ingeborg. *Pastiche: Cultural Memory in Art, Film, Literature*. Bloomington (IN): Indiana University, 2001.

³⁴ See: Muller, Julie and Muller, Frans. “Completing the picture: the importance of reconstructing early opera, the case of the *Fairy Queen*” in *Early Music, Vol. XXXIII, N°4*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 667–681. See also : Banducci, Antonia. “Staging a tragédie en musique : a 1748 Promptbook of Campra's *Tancrède*” in *Early Music, Vol. XXI, N°2*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 180–190.

³⁵ Some of these views are summarized in an article written following a lecture given at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in 2013, see: Blin, Gilbert. “The Reflections of Memory – A Proposition for a Cognitive Approach of Historically Informed Staging” in: *Historische Aufführungspraxis und Oper* edited by Christine Fischer, (*Zwischentöne* 3). Zürich: Chronos (in preparation).

1 Poetic and Performing spaces in Monteverdi's operas

This chapter presents my approach to the relationship between space and scenography for the three remaining operas of Monteverdi. The opera production of Monteverdi spreads over almost fifty years at a time of major social, religious and philosophical movements. Artistic growth was abundant at the period and literature, with the development of the printing press, was not less intense. Taking in consideration the range of visual culture in evidence from the mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth century, I attempt to show how opera drew heavily on this imagery to stimulate the imagination of the audience. I plan to demonstrate how the theatrical arts that surrounded Monteverdi and his contemporaries had a profound influence on the ways in which opera was written, staged and received. By doing so I hope to give a renewed *image* of Monteverdi's operas.

From the early attempts of the Renaissance at reconstructing the milieu of the stage of antiquity, set design had progressed via the scene changes for the musical *intermedii* of spoken drama to the scenery of the Venetian opera. Created in 1607, Monteverdi's *Orfeo* belongs to the beginning of this period, when the language of performance is still a subject of experimentations, having still some inheritance from the past but by then influenced by politics more than religions¹. By the second quarter of the seventeenth century, opera and the art and technique of theater design, had undergone a rich development and the opening of public opera houses in Venice modify the opera purpose and, consequently, its art form². It is in this context that Monteverdi's last operas were created. The scarcity of sources for *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* and the plurality of versions for *L'incoronazione di Poppea* turns any study of the sets for Monteverdi's operas into a challenging investigation. Although the chronology of performances and their documentations already offer a great deal of information, the sets of the Venetian premieres of 1640 and 1643 can be more accurately traced by putting the spectacles in the context of theater set history and Venetian opera practice.

To evaluate how the research of ideal performing space has connections with the operas of Monteverdi it is necessary first to outline the main currents in theatre design at the beginning of the early modern period. Along with the revival of classical culture in the Renaissance, European artists found most of their inspiration when designing for the performing space in the writings of a Roman architect, Vitruvius (ca. 80–70 BC to ca. 15 BC). Back in the first century BC, Vitruvius wrote *De architectura*, known today as *The Ten Books on Architecture*, the only surviving major treatise on architecture from antiquity, which has been available in numerous editions since 1486. A Venetian edition published in 1511 was very

¹ Strong, Roy. *Art and Power, Renaissance Festivals 1450-1650*. Berkeley (CA) : University of California Press, 1973.

² Rosand, Ellen. *Opera in seventeenth-century Venice, the creation of a genre*. Berkeley (CA) : University of California Press, 1991.

comprehensive and offered detailed illustrations³. Italian artists of the *Rinascimento* initially based their reconstructions on Vitruvius's descriptions of the theatre and the stage⁴, also studying the remains of the extant Roman and Greek theatres⁵. In 1545, architect, painter, and theatre designer Sebastiano Serlio (1475–ca. 1554) included in his *Secondo libro di prospettiva* (published in Lyon, France) a discussion of the stage, influenced by Vitruvius's descriptions of Greek and Roman theatres and his own experiences with temporary performing structures⁶. And indeed, Serlio's proposals are for a temporary theatre, built in wood in a room or a courtyard. These conditions requiring that a temporary structure be placed within a permanent one, not designed to contain such structures, influenced the conception of the set in a square frame, not in the panoramic rectangle that will become the trademark of any set designs. This set does not comprise all the space devoted to acting, as a flat platform is placed in front of the elevated slope stage.

Serlio was the first to give a well-developed chart of rules inspired by Vitruvius, who, apart from the description of the Roman stage, had established a short typology of sets for it: the *scena comica* showed a market street in a city; the *scena tragica*, a square with ancient monuments; and the *scena satyrica*, trees and a few huts⁷. These three sets were supposed to enable performances of all the dramas of antiquity and the contemporary plays inspired by its rules. The engravings in Serlio's book, in the Italian edition published in Venice in 1551, and constantly reproduced thereafter, show scenes composed around a central path. This path, which take the character of a street for the Comic and Tragic urban sets, is noticeable even in the bucolic scenery of the satirical set, which suits the pastoral repertoire, as shown in Figure 1. In each of the scenes, a set of stairs connecting levels shows that performers were able to go down or up on the stage. They link the realm of the fiction⁸ with the real dominion where

³ The *De architectura* of Vitruvius published in Venice in 1511 by Giovanni da Tridentino is a folio edition prepared by Fra Giovanni Giocondo (ca. 1435–1515). It marked a milestone, for the text was considerably modified compared with those of the first three editions (ca. 1486, 1496 and 1497) and it included one hundred thirty-six woodcuts. See: http://architectura.cesr.univ-tours.fr/Traite/Notice/CESR_2994.asp?param=en (accessed 21 November 2017). See also: Pagliara, Pier Nicola. « Le *De architectura* de Vitruve édité par Fra Giocondo, à Venise en 1511 », in *Sebastiano Serlio à Lyon. Architecture et imprimerie*. Lyon: Mémoire active, 2004, pp. 348–354.

⁴ In book V, Vitruvius describes how to build theatres and other buildings for spectacles. See: Vitruvius. *The Ten Books on Architecture*. Translated by Morris Hicky Morgan, Ph.D. LL.D. New with illustrations and original designs prepared under the direction of Herbert Langford Warren, A.M. York: Dover Publications, 1960.

⁵ Theatres such as the ones of Orange, Verona, Roma, Pula, and Vicenza (Teatro Berga) were known and started to trigger the interest of humanists. See: Ricci, Giuliana. *Teatri d'Italia, dalla Magna Grecia all'Ottocento*. Milano: Bramante Editrice, 1971.

⁶ In 1539 in Vicenza, Serlio built a temporary theatre in a courtyard « cortile della case Portesca ». See: Frommel, Sabine. *Sebastiano Serlio architect*, translated from the German by Peter Spring. Milano: Electa, 2003, p. 20.

⁷ The three scenes designed by Serlio (1475–ca. 1554) have been often reproduced. See: Hart, Vaughan and Hicks, Peter. *Sebastiano Serlio on Architecture Volume One, Books I–V of Tutte l'opere d'architettura et prospetiva by Sebastiano Serlio*. New Haven (CT): Yale University Press, 1996, pp. 86–91.

⁸ Serlio confirms that these sets make use of visual illusion even for the satirical scene: « Et perche a tempi nostri queste cose per il piu delle volte se fanno la invernare, dove pochi arbori & herbe con fiori si tritrovano, si potran bene artificiosamente fare cose simili di seta lequali saranno anchora piu lodate che naturali, percioche: cosi comme nelle Scene Comiche e Tragiche, se imitano li casamenti & altri edifici, con l'artifico della pittura: cosi anchora un quelle se potran bene imitare gli arbori, & l'herbe co' fiori. » In Serlio, Sebastiano, [*Libro Primo & II d'Architettura...*], Venezia: G. Battista & Marchio Sessa Fratelli, 1560, p. 27.

the performance is taking place, as the patron is seated in the center of a middle level in Serlio's plans. These stairs, so essential to the circulation between poetic, allegoric and political spaces, will be present for more than a century, even when permanent performing structures, theatre buildings, eventually appear. It is worth noticing that the spaces of Vitruvius and of Serlio are presented in a square composition, a geometrical form which will be soon forsaken and be replaced by the horizontal rectangle that still predominates today.



Figure 1: Sebastiano Serlio, *Scene Satyrique*, engraving from a non-identified seventeenth century-century French edition of *Libro II d'Architettura...* Collection of Gilbert Blin.

It was near Venice that the first attempt was made to reunite permanent architecture with the illusionist realm of the stage. In the late 1570s, Andrea Palladio (1508–1580)⁹ created a theatre in Vicenza for a very distinguished academy of patrons, scholars and artists—the *Accademia Olimpica*—with a clear reference to the work of Vitruvius. The overall impression of the *Teatro Olimpico*, which took its name from the academy, is indeed that of a roofed Roman theatre: the ruins of Roman antiquity gave ample visual examples of Vitruvius's descriptions, but Palladio was also familiar with the theories of the Roman author, since he had provided illustrations for a critical edition of *De architectura* in 1556¹⁰. The two main features of the *Teatro Olimpico*, inspired by the Greek and Roman remains, are the placement of the rows of benches designated for spectators in the form of a half ellipse, and the *frons scaenae*, a monumental wall in front of which the actors would perform. Palladio's design of this wall as a stable solution

⁹ For an introduction to the work of Palladio, see: Wundbram, Manfred; Pape, Thomas; Marton, Paolo. *Andrea Palladio, 1508–1580, Un architetto entre la Renaissance et le Baroque*. Köln: Benedikt Taschen, 1989. On the Teatro Olimpico, see: Schiavo, Remo. *Guida al Teatro Olimpico*. Vicenza: Accademia Olimpica, 1980. See also: Rigon, Fernando, *Il Teatro Olimpico di Vicenza*. Milano: Electa, 1989.

¹⁰ This edition had comments by Daniele Barbaro (1514–1570). In 1569, he also published in Venice *La Pratica della Perspettiva* where he reconsiders the system of the three classical scenes, already theorized by Serlio, but he adds precise details about defining the stage in perspective.

to the question of the scenic space turned out to be a misdirected attempt. The *Teatro Olimpico* had little influence on the development of scenic arts at the time. Instead, it was the need for a frame – which would soon develop into the proscenium arch¹¹, representing the transition from the reality of the auditorium to the illusionary world of the stage – that gives the *Teatro Olimpico* the shape we see today. Palladio died before he finished his theatre's technical equipment, so the architect Vincenzo Scamozzi (1552–1616)¹² had to be called upon to design the “sets” for the theatre's first production, the Sophocles *Oedipus Rex*, in 1585¹³.

Scamozzi's evocation of the city of Thebes, seven streets leading to the seven famous gates of the city, appears like a multiplication of the *scena tragica* described by Vitruvius¹⁴. But far from respecting Palladio's original idea, this intervention reduces the monumental wall to the function of a proscenium arch¹⁵. By enlarging the central gate, Scamozzi turns the Palladian wall into a frame. He proceeds with the idea of a permanent set but does so by constructing streets of houses built in three-dimensional perspectives, thereby offering the possibility of movement to the actors, who can appear in the streets of this *Città Ideale*.¹⁶ Scamozzi was the sole designer of *Il Teatro Olimpico* at Sabbioneta, which the local inhabitants prefer to call *Il teatro all'Antica* to avoid confusion with Palladio's theatre¹⁷. Constructed between 1588 and 1590, *Il teatro all'Antica* was the first example of a theatre built as a single building, and this isolated structure also offers a new articulation of the scenic space with the auditorium, all integrated in a rectangle plan. Within the building is a U-shaped amphitheater with stepped rows of seats under a colonnade of Palladian inspiration. A permanent set, seen through a proscenium arch, represented a city street in the same style as the ones that Scamozzi had designed for Vicenza. The configuration of this theatre, based on an architectural approach,

¹¹ The frontispiece of *I Quattro libri dell'Architettura* by Andrea Palladio, published in 1570 in Venice, presents figures of Architecture and of Geometry in front of an arch/wall meeting with some figures of fame and glory. Later, in 1638, Sabbatini, forsaking the allegory, extended the notion : See: Sabbatini, Nicolo, *Pratique pour fabriquer scènes et machines de théâtre*, Traduction de Maria Canavaggia et Louis Juvet. Neuchâtel : Ides et Calendes, 1942, Chapitre 31 : « comment colorier le parapet de la scène », p. 51.

¹² “Vincenzo Scamozzi” in *Sabbioneta, guida alla vista della città*. Sabbioneta: Il Bulino edizioni d'arte, 1991.

¹³ *Edipo tiranno* of Sophocles was performed in a translation by Orsato Giustiniani on 3 March 1585.

¹⁴ Subtle differences between the architectures of buildings in each street seem to follow the original idea of Palladio: at the center the royal gate (*porta regalis*), and on the sides the streets where the foreigners to the city would come from (*portae hospitales o hospitalia*). See: Schiavo, Remo. *Guida al Teatro Olimpico*. Vicenza: Accademia Olimpica, 1980, p. 100. The commission to evocate Thebes with its seven gates was clearly expressed by the stage director of the play, Angelo Ingegneri. See: Beyer, Andreas. *Palladio Le Théâtre Olympique, architecture triomphale pour une société humaniste*. Paris: Adam Biro, 1989, p. 39.

¹⁵ Despite the work by Vincenzo Scamozzi, the initial project of Palladio is still clear for well-read amateurs as noticed by Carlo Goldoni in the eighteenth century (I underline) : « Je vis avec plaisir à Vicence le fameux Théâtre Olympique de Palladio, très célèbre architecte du seizième siècle, natif de cette ville, j'admirai son arc de triomphe, qui, sans autres ornements que ceux de proportions régulières, passe pour le chef-d'œuvre de l'architecture moderne. » in Goldoni, Carlo, *Mémoires de M. Goldoni, pour servir à l'histoire de sa vie et à celle de son théâtre*, Edition présentée et annotée par Paul de Roux. Paris: Mercure de France, 1965, Chapitre XXVII, p. 119.

¹⁶ Palladio seemed to have initially thought to use the *Periaktoi*, this triangular construction thought to come from ancient Greece, which was supposed to offer a view through the doors on three different types of settings. But as the detailed plans are lost, it is difficult to have a clear idea of what exactly Palladio had in mind.

¹⁷ A revelatory tradition if « all'Antica » refers to the Roman times, as suggested with the capital letter A.

was meant to focus the eyes of the audience on the stage, where the use of forced perspective was drawing the eye.

In the sixteenth century, the stage was thought to be a picture; as such, the rules of perspective in painting could be applied to it. Even in the beginning, however, the three types of sets mentioned by Vitruvius were approached with ingenuity. The idea of combining illusion—where the surfaces were painted in an illusionist manner—and reality, with the flat shutters assembled in space to create an architectural effect, came from previous forms of entertainment ranging from church pageants to feasts for princely weddings¹⁸. Soon European writers were creating new dramas that, although inspired by the classic Roman and Greek models, showed some freedom in their conception. Like these earlier forms of entertainment, both comedy and tragedy were performed with music. Singers and dancers were combined with luxurious costumes and scenery to produce incredibly extravagant entertainments. Florence led the development of these *intermedii*, at the occasion of the princely weddings. Bernardo Buontalenti (1536–1608)¹⁹ had set the Florentine standard in 1589 for these extravaganzas with his memorable sets for the *intermedii* of *La Pellegrina*. All kinds of devices were used, but in the third *intermedio* showing *la Vittoria di Apollo su Pitone*, what was to become the main feature of the art of theatrical perspective in the seventeenth century was introduced: a series of wing flat shutters, placed on two diagonals converging on a distant central vanishing point. This pictorial concept, developed further through the establishment of Florentine opera, will ultimately predominate for centuries.

¹⁸ Magagnato, Licisco. *Teatri Italiani del Cinquecento*. Venezia: Neri Pozza Editore, 1954.

¹⁹ For reproductions of some of the sets by Bernardo Buontalenti, see: *Illusion et Pratique du Théâtre, Propositions pour une lecture de l'espace scénique des Intermèdes florentins à l'Opéra-comique vénitien*. Paris: Editions des Musées de France, 1976.

1.1 *Orfeo* in Mantua

« I have always made a small, carefully measured *modello* in wood and paper card
and it served me easily to scale up each individual thing to a very accurate,
full-size version of the work I had undertaken.
This lesson may perhaps be difficult to follow for some students of this science,
but I can make it more intelligible only by advising them to make *modelli*,
because the experience attached to the study reveals the truth of what one is looking for. »²⁰

Sebastiano Serlio, *Libro II d'Architettura...*, Paris, 1545.

It is in the dynamic context of exploration of the performing space that *Orfeo* by Alessandro Striggio (1573–1630) and Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643) came to fruition in Mantua. Even though considered by many as the first true opera, *Orfeo* was not written for the theatrical building equipped with a proscenium frame that would soon be synonymous with the genre in which it later came to shelter. Although there is still a great deal of research to be done about the actual material context of the first performance of *Orfeo*, it has been established with certainty that the premiere on 24 February 1607 did not take place in a theatre but in a room of the ducal palace in Mantua. Furthermore, in these modest conditions, *Orfeo* was first presented in front of a very restricted audience: the members of the *Accademia degli Invaghiti*, the “Academy of the enamored.” Alessandro Striggio, author of the libretto, was himself a member of this society of gentlemen longing for knowledge, who discussed the arts and studied the Roman and Greek classics during their meetings. Not conceived as a grand court festivity, like most of the other first attempts to create full-length musical dramas²¹, and far from the idea of pure entertainment, *Orfeo* was conceived as an experimental work by a poet and a composer striving for new musical ways of expression.

While not totally free from political message, diplomatic influence and circumstantial allegory, the piece manages to establish a new level of artistic ambition. The complexity and at the same time candid character of the music by Monteverdi, and the clarity in Striggio’s libretto of the metaphysical treatment of the myth of Orpheus, make the piece a kind of an intellectual *modello*. Although it is generally accepted that *Orfeo* has all the qualities to be considered an

²⁰ « J’ai toujours en telz accidentz faict un moule ou patron d’aix de papier, & de boys mesurez le plus justement possible, & cela m’a servy pour faire facilement en grand, l’ouvrage que j’avoye entrepris. Je ne scay si ceste leçon sera malaysée a entendre a aucuns studieux de cette science. Mais je ne la puis rendre plus intelligible que par conseiller qu’ilz facent des moules, car l’experience conjointe a l’estude faict trouver la vérité de ce que l’on cherche. » In Serlio, Sebastiano, [*Libri d’Architettura...*], Paris: Jehan Barbé, 1545, p. 66.

²¹ *Dafne* by Ottavio Rinuccini with music by Jacopo Peri, first performed in Florence during the Carnival of 1598, is the earliest known work that could be considered an opera. *Euridice* from the same authors followed in 1600. *Il rapimento di Cefalo* by Gabriello Chiabrera and Giulio Caccini was performed the same year. Caccini wrote his own *Euridice*, performed in 1602, on the same libretto by Rinuccini. For general orientation, see: Donington, Robert. *The Rise of Opera*. London & Boston: Faber and Faber, 1981. For Peri, see: Mayer Brown, Howard. “Opera Began: An Introduction to Jacopo Peri’s *Euridice* (1600)” in *The Late Italian Renaissance 1525–1630*, edited by Eric Cochrane. London: Macmillan, 1970, pp. 401–443. On the less-known *Cefalo*, see: Carter, Tim. “Rediscovering *Il rapimento di Cefalo*” in *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music*, Volume 9 (2003) No. 1. <https://sscm-jscm.org/v9/no1/carter.html#AuthorNote> (accessed 18 December 2017).

opera, by referring to the term “modello,” which is a preparatory study or model, I want to switch the attention from the temporal (time) approach, although taking in consideration both historical and musical aspects, to a questioning of the space, both poetic and factual, to show the specificities of *Orfeo* that should be addressed by any staging. The word “modello,” which gained currency in art circles in Tuscany in the fourteenth century, and the Latin term *modulus*, a synonym of *typus*, “archetype,” are pertinent to *Orfeo*. Usually proportioned in a smaller scale than the final version, this model for a work of art or architecture is especially produced for the approval of the commissioning patron before its full development: all aspects that accord well with what we know of the context of the creation of *Orfeo*.

The distinguished *Accademia degli Invaghiti* could pride itself for being under the protection of the Duke of Mantua, Vincenzo I Gonzaga (1562–1612), and, even more so, under the active patronage of the heir to the Mantuan throne, Francesco IV Gonzaga (1586–1612), the prince who sponsored *Orfeo*. The Gonzaga family had a strong practice of patronage²², without a doubt emulated by their familial and political links with the Florentine court. Ferdinando Gonzaga (1587–1626), the younger brother of Prince Francesco, had already written the text and music for a court ballet performed in Pisa in 1606 for the Medici court, where, as a cleric scholar, he was acting as *de facto* Mantuan ambassador. The correspondence between the two brothers shows their common interests in this type of entertainment and artistic research, certainly nourished by their memberships in the *Accademia degli Invaghiti*, but if the 1606 spectacle showing *L'abatimento di Dario et il finto Alessandro* by Ferdinando is clearly a typical Florentine court ballet²³, what Francesco was planning for the following year in Mantua was something more radical. Both Gonzaga brothers were busy in 1607, each preparing a « comedia in musica »²⁴. Francesco asked his brother to send singers belonging to the Medici court to Mantua²⁵ for *Orfeo*, and Ferdinando had informed his brother of his own project: « I spend the carnival very cheerfully and work on my comedy, optimistically to have it performed on Monday of the carnival, hoping that I will be able to enjoy it and that it will please me. »²⁶

A week later, the Medici court could enjoy Ferdinando's work in Pisa: « on this day 26 [February 1607] at 22 o'clock H. H. went with the whole court in the room called Consoli di Mare where a comedy in music was recited, the one that Cardinal Don Ferdinando Gonzaga

²² On the Gonzaga influence and relation with music, see: Fenlon, Ian. *Music and patronage in sixteenth-century Mantua*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp. 119–160.

²³ The role of Alessandro was danced by the young Francesco Medici (1594–1614). See: Solerti, Angelo. *Musica, ballo e drammatica alla corte Medicea dal 1600 al 1637; notizie tratte da un diario, con appendice di testi inediti e rari*. Firenze: R. Bemporad & figlio, 1905, pp. 37 & 38.

²⁴ *Nomenclatura* of entertainments is extensive during the early seventeenth century. See: Calcagno, Mauro. *From Madrigal to Opera, Monteverdi's Staging of the Self*. London: University of California Press, Ltd. 2012, pp. 17 & 18.

²⁵ See: Fenlon, Iain. “Monteverdi Mantuan Orfeo: Some New Documentation” in *Early Music*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (May 1984). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, pp. 163–172.

²⁶ Ferdinando to Francesco, 18 February 1607: « vado passando il carnevale assai allegramente et tirando innanzi la mia comedia par farla rappresentar il lunedì di carnevale, sperando che mi riuscirà benne et a gusto moi ». Francesco answered : « Prego V. E. a darmi ragguaglio della sua opera recitata costi, che per farmi credere che sia stata bellissima, bastava di ch'essa è sua » in Bertolotti, Antonio. *Musici alla corte dei Gonzaga in Mantova dal secolo XV al XVIII. Notizie e documenti raccolti negli Archivi Mantovani*. Milano: Ricordi, 1890, p. 86.

had done »²⁷. Created two days apart, both works had in common that they were conceived partly as court spectacle and partly as experimental, since the carnival allowed a freedom for the overall conception of what elements might be included in the entertainment that the diplomatic and celebratory concerns during weddings and state visits, their customary field of production, did not²⁸. These social events, where the distinction between audience and spectators sometimes ran very thin, were of a variable nature: masquerade, banquets, feasts, etc. They were all based on exploring the relationship between poetry, music and visual arts, one of the most fruitful debates of the academies at the time.

Did the « *comedia in musica* » by Ferdinando in Pisa draw again from history as had the one from the year before, or was it inspired by mythology, like the one Francesco produced in Mantua? The Pisan work seems lost, but the origin of the two pieces by the Gonzaga brothers are entwined in time, and the locations of their creations shed some light on the shapes their first performances took. The room in Pisa where the comedy of Ferdinando Gonzaga was performed is called « *Consoli di Mare* ». It may be the room where the Magistrature of the Consuls of the Sea was established during the era of Florentine domination, with the purpose of administering trade justice and regulating the dikes and the drainage of water in the Pisan damp plain. The « *salone* » on the first floor, with a majestic vault composed with admirable frescoes depicting in compartmented sections Ovidian myths such as the tales of Diana and Actaeon and of Love and Psyche, the labors of Hercules and other deities, was a fitting place for a piece which was likely to have been in the Florentine style.

It is also obvious that the Prologue of *Orfeo* was written as taking place « *hic et nunc* », in the very place and time of the performance. The request for silence by Music, the character who gives the address, to be made on « *these banks* » is clearly an evocation of the geographical location of Mantua, almost an island then, surrounded by lakes and next to the river Mincio. This convention presents the coming show as a performance, commanding attention from the audience, and more specifically the patrons, to the story and the tale. The Gonzaga family received praise for its support to the society when Alessandro Striggio paid tribute to its kin in the very first lines of the prologue of his libretto for *Orfeo*: « *Glorious Heroes, noble descendent of Kings, / Of whom Fame proclaims high praise, / Yet without attaining the truth because it is beyond description* »²⁹. The allusion to the praise of Fame was establishing a strong relation between the « *descendents* » of history, and the « *Heroes* » of mythology. The character of Music then tells the Gonzaga that she is about to tell the story of another hero: Orpheus, the mythical artist. Orpheus was among a small number of mortals whose art was so outstanding that they could measure themselves with the gods, the first musicians. Orpheus was the most renowned, as he was the only one to ally instrument and voice, music and poetry.

²⁷ « 1607 [February] et adì 26 detto [lunedì] alle 22 ore S.A. andò con tutta la corte nella sala detta dei Consoli di Mare dove se recitò una *comedia in musica* la quale fece fare il sig. Don Ferdinando Gonzaga » in Solerti, Angelo. *Musica, ballo e drammatica alla corte Medicea dal 1600 al 1637; notizie tratte da un diario, con appendice di testi inediti e rari*. Firenze: R. Bemporad & figlio, 1905, p. 38.

²⁸ Blumenthal, Arthur R. *Theater Art of the Medici*. Hanover (NH): Dartmouth College, 1980.

²⁹ « *Incliti Eroi, sangue gentil de' Regi, / Di cui narra la Fama eccelsi pregi, / Nè giunge al ver, perch'è tropp' alto il segno.* » In Striggio. *Orfeo*, Prologue. The references to the libretto of *Orfeo* in this dissertation are from my performing edition of libretto based on the text published by Francesco Osanna in Mantua in 1607 and the variants of the scores published in Venice by Ricciardo Amadino in 1609 and 1615. Striggio, Alessandro. *Orfeo Favola in Musica (A Tale in Music)*. Alessandro Striggio. Claudio Monteverdi. English Translation by Gilbert Blin. Cambridge (MA) : Boston Early Music Festival, 2012.

1.1.1 Orpheus, the Humanist figure

The figure of Orpheus was well defined by ancient literature: Apollonius of Rhodes, the Greek poet living in the third century BC, tells how Orpheus, the son of the muse Calliope, took part in the Argonauts' quest to recover the Golden Fleece³⁰. Even if his strength did not lie in fighting or cunning behavior, he certainly showed himself to be valuable. When Jason's companions were tired at the oars, Orpheus let his lyre sing, and at once the rowers started to beat the water in rhythm. And again, when an argument threatened, his instrument had such calming effects that even the most aggressive of the heroes regained their composure and forgot their rage. Not even the singing of the immortal Sirens could measure up to his music, and Orpheus diverted it from the ears of the Argonauts by the power of his own voice and so saved their lives. Two Roman poets, Ovid and Virgil, completed the Orpheus story and gave matching accounts of his unhappy union with Eurydice³¹. Each of their texts describes in detail Orpheus's strength and increasing power. The musician no longer bewitched only human, but also the animals of the fields. The power of his singing was so great that the wild beasts followed him; even the rocks, the plants and the trees moved. No one could withstand him, everything both living and lifeless followed him, and even the rivers changed their courses to get closer to him. Orpheus the artist, accordingly, had great power: the power to transform the order of the gods, the power to create a new order of nature.

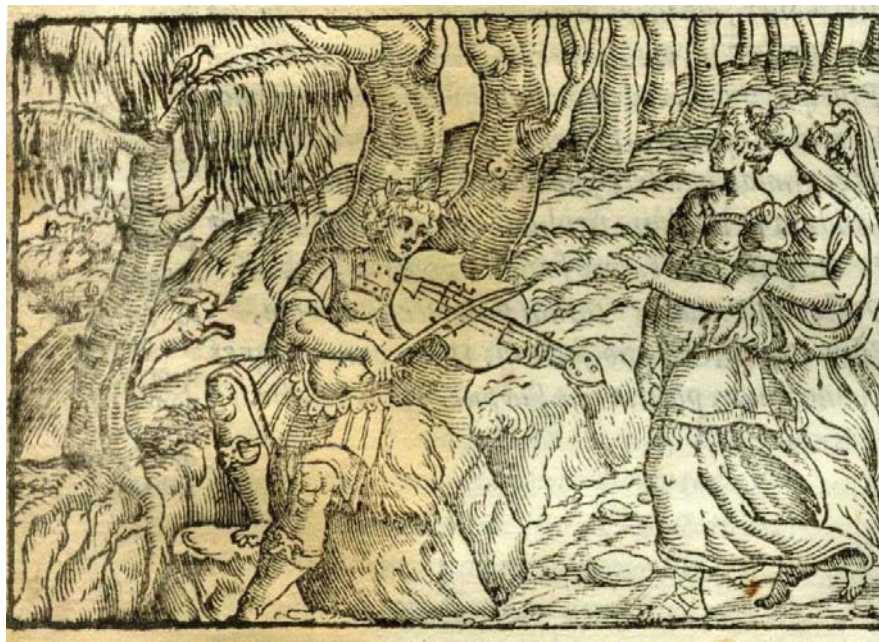


Figure 2: Orpheus charming all. Engraving from *Ovidii Metamorphoseon*. Venice: Ioannes Gryphius, 1591.

The lords of the universe took offense that a mortal could possess such power, and they put Orpheus to the test. Here ensues in the Orpheus myth the twofold experience linked

³⁰ The Editio princeps of Apollonius's works was published in Florence in 1496. Orpheus is mentioned in: Book 1, lines: 23, 32, 494, 540, 915, 1134; Book 2, lines: 161, 685, 928; Book 4, lines: 905, 1159, 1409, 1547.

³¹ Ovid tells the story of Orpheus in the Book X of his *Metamorphoses*. For the various early editions of Ovid's works, see: <http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/ovidillust.html>
Virgil tells about Orpheus in the *Georgics*. Book IV, 453–527. For Virgil, see: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0059%3Abook%3D4%3Acard%3D453>

with Eurydice. The young wife's death, the first ordeal that the singer endured, failed to diminish Orpheus's artistic power: indeed, the experience of pain enhanced his inspiration. The suffering did not crush the poet's lyre, but made it sing more deeply, more movingly. The other, more subversive, baptism of fire begins with Orpheus being put to the trial: he is allowed to test his bewitching art on the gods. His success with the deities of the Underworld, the hardest of them all, appears to confirm and increase his power, and even these gods seem to yield to it. Has Orpheus become the equal of a god?

It is through the express condition of the reunion with Eurydice, however, that his true ordeal comes: he must not turn around. This prohibition works within him to call up one of the basic elements in man's lot: the phenomenon of doubt. This doubt appears in Orpheus's and Eurydice's passage from darkness to light, and it affects the artist so that at last he is overwhelmed and made into that which he has always been: a human being. Orpheus doubts, turns around, and loses Eurydice. The gods can be content: however great the artist's power may be, a god he is not. The artist is a human being like all the others. Although he has lost Eurydice, Orpheus continues to sing, and his power over the world is not reduced but, on the contrary, grows greater. Therefore, the gods decide to put an end to him: only his death can satisfy them. The women of Thrace cast themselves upon Orpheus, in the excitement of their Bacchanalian orgies, and tear him to pieces. But his head, which is separated from his body, continues to utter Eurydice's name, like the ceaseless love and indomitable hope in the heart of mankind. To interpret the Orpheus myth can be only an attempt, but whatever moral one takes from the events, the Gods, the Artist and the Mortal articulate essential relations between them and that may explain the attraction of the Humanism movement for the character³².



Figure 3: Orpheus and the Bacchantes. From *Ovidii Metamorphoseon*.
Venice: Ioannes Gryphius, 1591.

³² This interpretation of the myth of Orpheus was first expressed in relation with my production of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* at the Theatre of Drottningholm. See: Blin, Gilbert. "The Gods, The Artist and the Mortal, An attempt to interpret the Orpheus myth" in *Program 1998, Drottningholms Slottsteater*, Stockholm: Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 1998, pp. 68 & 69.

1.1.2 *Orfeo*: a static lesson

Striggio, a member of the *Accademia*, was clearly inspired by the works of Ovid and Virgil, but the full enterprise may have been conceived as a tribute to a famous play by Angelo Poliziano (1454–1494) on the same subject. Poliziano's *La favola d'Orfeo*³³ had been performed more than one hundred years earlier in Mantua for the 1490 wedding of Francesco II Gonzaga (1466–1519), the ancestor of Striggio's own patron, Francesco IV. Striggio's *Orfeo* follows the outline of Poliziano's: a prologue gives the subject of the tale – Orpheus's travails – and then a succession of scenes is presented, conceived as episodes, whose autonomy had previously inspired various forms of visual representation³⁴. Poliziano already presents Orpheus as a sovereign poet, an idea that runs through all his writings³⁵. But, by omitting the character of Aristeo, the other suitor for Euridice, Striggio concentrates further on the figure of Orfeo. His *favola* exhibits some common points with the morality plays popular in the fifteenth century, in which the protagonist, always on stage, is met by personifications of various moral values before his fate is decided³⁶.

This similitude with the earlier type of spectacles can be supported by the fact that *Orfeo* of 1607 may have been seen by Striggio and his fellow academicians as a new type of a moral allegory about the meaninglessness of earthly life. Around this time, the transient nature of all earthly attachments and pursuits, including musical eloquence, was at the center of reflecting. In this vein, *La Rappresentazione di Anima et di Corpo* by Emilio de' Cavalieri (ca. 1550–1602) was a first milestone in February 1600. With this « Representation of the Soul and the Body », Cavalieri regarded himself as the composer of a new genre³⁷. Whether the work, on a libretto by Agostino Manni (1548–1618), is better categorized as an opera or an oratorio is subject to some academic debate. But as it was first performed in Rome during Carnival time, in the Oratorio dei Filippini, adjacent to the church of Santa Maria in Vallicella, the moral

³³ See: Poliziano, Angelo. *Fabula di Orfeo*, in *Stanze, Orfeo, Rime*, introduzione, note e indici di Davide Puccini. Milano: Garzanti, 1992.

³⁴ See: Calcagno, Mauro. *From Madrigal to Opera, Monteverdi's Staging of the Self*. London: University of California Press, 2012, pp. 22 & 23.

³⁵ As Stephen Murphy puts it: « Poliziano marks the culmination of Quattrocento discourse on poetry, in particular two currents: the essential category of praise as idealized gift exchange and the elevation of poetry to a position of sovereignty and primordality. » See: Murphy, Stephen. *The Gift of Immortality: Myths of Power and Humanist Poetics*. Vancouver: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997, p. 31. See also the article of Paola Ventrone about Angelo Poliziano in: *Encyclopedia of Italian Literary Studies*. New York: Taylor & Francis, 2007, pp. 1463–1469.

³⁶ For Italy: Ventrone, Paola. “The Influence of the Ars praedicandi on the Sacra rappresentazione in Fifteenth Century Florence”, in *Prédication et liturgie au Moyen Âge*, études réunies par Nicole Bériou et Franco Morenzoni. Turnhout: Brepols, 2008, pp. 335–348 and Stallini, Sophie. *Le théâtre sacré à Florence au XVe siècle. Une histoire sociale des formes*. Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2011. For texts of this kind in Italy, see: D'Ancona, Alessandro. *Sacre rappresentazioni dei secoli XIV, XV, e XVI*. Firenze: Le Monnier, 1872. For France, see: Helmich, Werner. *Moralités françaises. Réimpression fac-similé de vingt-deux pièces allégoriques imprimées aux XVe et XVIe siècles*. Slatkine: Genève, 1980.

³⁷ See Cavalieri's text in Carter, Tim. “Composing opera from *Dafne* to *Ulisse Errante*” in *Practica musica No. 2*. Kraków: Musica Jagellonica, 1994. (English translations of Italian originals of Rinuccini, Peri, Caccini, Marco da Gagliano, Cavalieri, Agazzari, Vitali, Mazzocchi, Ottavio Tronsarelli, Landi, Michelangelo Rossi, and Giacomo Badoaro.)

edifying purpose is clear³⁸. The specific request Cavalieri made that the orchestra should not be seen by the audience was also an attempt to elevate the *Rappresentatione* to a mystery play. In 1607, Striggio elevates the figure of Orpheus to the one of a humanist « saint », by unfolding the edifying content of the « Favola » in two main poetic gestures and in an ingenious dramatic construction artifact.

The first poetic device Striggio uses in his libretto to write the story of Orpheus as a moral lesson on the fleeting nature of human life is the direct inclusion of philosophical considerations. The verses which conclude Act II are a clear summary of the moral lesson: « Let no mortal man trust / Fleeting and frail happiness, / That soon vanishes, and often / after a great ascent a precipice is near. »³⁹ It echoes the « Time the devourer of all things »⁴⁰ found in Ovid. In the following acts Striggio integrates in each chorus rewordings of thoughts of Roman philosophers: these humanist paraphrases capitalize on the knowledge of the listeners by awakening a reflective attitude. « No undertaking by man is attempted in vain, / Nor against him can Nature further arm herself. »⁴¹ which starts the conclusion of Act III is related to the « Nothing is impossible for humankind »⁴² of Horace. The end of this act also builds on the parallel between Orpheus's travails and human destiny: « and of the unstable plains / He has ploughed the wavy fields, and scattered the seeds / of his labors, when he has gathered golden harvest »⁴³. By the very end of the piece, this angle is clarified in the epilogue with the well-known « He who sows in sorrow / Reaps the fruit of all grace »⁴⁴. Both are rewordings of « As you sow – you shall reap »⁴⁵ found in Cicero and the Bible. This poetic device works on memory because the situation, besides the paraphrase, makes the listener/viewer think of the quote, accentuating the prompted spiritual reflection. To present Orpheus as a parable, Striggio was relying on the high level of erudition of the members of the *Accademia degli Invaghiti* who, all well learned in Latin, would have known these quotes⁴⁶. Next to these Latin elicitation, Striggio also quotes recent authors, albeit these are more difficult to

³⁸ In the 1640s, Giacomo Carissimi (1604/1605–1674) wrote *Vanitas vanitatum*, a short piece for two voices with text from the *Ecclesiastes*, which takes its title from the *Vulgate* 1:2; 12:8 where the verse is rendered as « Vanitas vanitatum omnia vanitas ». For musical and stage expressions of the Counter-Reformation, see: Lowe, Robert W. *Marc-Antoine Charpentier et l'opéra de collège*. Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve & Larose, 1966.

³⁹ « Non si fidi huom mortale / Di ben caduco a frale, / Che tosto fugge, e spesso / A gran salita il precipizio è presso. » in Striggio. *Orfeo*, Act II.

⁴⁰ « Tempus edax rerum » in Ovid. *Metamorphoses*, Book XV, 234.

⁴¹ « Nulla impresa per uom si tenta invano / Nè contr' a lui più sa natura armarse. » in Striggio. *Orfeo*, Act III.

⁴² « Nil mortalibus ardui est » in Horace. *Odes*, Book I, ode III.

⁴³ « Ei de l'instabil piano / Arò gli ondosi campi, e 'l seme sparse / Di sue fatiche, ond' aurea messe accolse. » in Striggio. *Orfeo*, Act III.

⁴⁴ « chi semina fra doglie / D'ogni grazia il frutto colgie. » in Striggio. *Orfeo*, Act V.

⁴⁵ « Ut sementem feceris ita metes » in Cicero *De Oratore* and from the ninth book of the New Testament, Paul the Apostle's *Epistle to the Galatians*, 6:7: « Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. », as found in 1611 King James Version of the Bible.

⁴⁶ See: Black, Robert. "School" in Tilg, Stefan and Knight, Sarah. *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Latin*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

trace. The most obvious quotation is the « Abandon hope, all Ye who enter here »⁴⁷ that Hope reads to Orpheus at the entrance of the Underworld. Coming from the *Divine Comedy* by Dante (ca. 1265–1321), it extends the relation to Virgil, as it is this author, as a fictional character in Dante's book, who explains it: « Here all doubt needs must be abandoned, / All weakness must needs be here extinct. / We to the place have come, where I have told thee / Thou shalt behold the people dolorous / Who have foregone the good of knowledge. »⁴⁸ « Forego the good of intellect »: this understated elucidation of the damnation supports a spiritual background and helps to confer *Orfeo* an ambitious moral scope.

The second device used by Striggio to elevate the myth to a spiritual journey is the inclusion in his libretto of simple words, evocative of material objects commonly used in visual vanitas. The Latin noun *vanitas* means « emptiness », from the Latin adjective « *vanus* », meaning empty, and thus refers in this context to the traditional Christian view of the worthless nature of all earthly goods and pursuits. Vanitas visual themes were common in medieval funerary sculpture art, and by the fifteenth century, these became extremely explicit, reflecting an increased obsession with death also seen in the illustrations of the *Ars moriendi*, the depictions of *Danse Macabre* and in the overlapping motif of the *Memento mori*⁴⁹. With the Humanist movement of the Renaissance such motifs gradually became more emblematic and founded a new field in the still-life genre. Works executed in the vanitas style were meant to remind viewers of the transience of life, the futility of pleasure and the certainty of death. In the realm of visual arts, common pictorial vanitas symbols include skulls, which are a clear reminder of the certainty of death, but also fruits and flowers (decay), bubbles and smoke (suddenness of death), hourglasses and musical instruments (brevity and ephemeral nature of life)⁵⁰. Striggio integrates some of these themes in his libretto (See table 1), and some hand props, inspired by the accounts of Ovid and Virgil, may have completed the picture when Striggio's words were not explicit enough. Horace's « *Ut pictura poesis* »⁵¹ was a definite subject of reflection for Humanist culture and discourse. This parallel of Horace, taken up again by the Italian treatises on painting, where it was also quoted in reverse, expressed the wish that painting was considered to be an art directly related to poetry⁵². The transfer of a philosophical concept to a visual expression created the unique pictorial genre of the vanitas, but this field was also present in stagecrafts, where poetry and painting coexisted, and were merging to create the new form of *Rappresentazione*. Already well organized in a language at this period, allegory and emblems were used in profusion and created a visual culture whose condition of

⁴⁷ « Lasciate ogni Speranza ò voi ch'entrate » in Striggio. *Orfeo*, Act III and « Lasciate ogni Speranza, voi ch'entrate! » in Dante (Durante degli Alighieri). *Divina Commedia*, "Inferno", Canto III.

⁴⁸ « Noi siam venuti al loco ov' io t' ho detto / che tu vedrai le genti dolorose / c' hanno perduto il Ben dell' intelletto. » in Dante (Durante degli Alighieri). *Divina Commedia*, "Inferno", Canto III.

⁴⁹ *Moyen Âge entre ordre et désordre*. Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2004, pp. 184–187.

⁵⁰ See: Schneider, Norbert. *Les Natures Mortes, Réalité et symbolique des choses, La peinture de natures mortes à la naissance des temps modernes*. Köln: Taschen, 1994, pp. 76–86.

⁵¹ Horace. *Ars poetica*, Verse 361.

⁵² Reflecting the opinion of many scholars, the comparison refers, through Latin Plutarch (c. 46 AD – 120 AD), to the Greek lyrical poet Simonide de Céos (556 BC – 468 BC). See: Rensselaer, Lee Wright. *Ut Pictura Poesis, The Humanistic Theory of Painting* (1940). New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc. 1967, pp. 3–9. For an example of Horace's influence in the seventeenth-century visual culture, see: Asemissen, Hermann Ulrich. *Vermeer, L'Atelier du Peintre ou l'image d'un métier*. Paris: Adam Biro, 1989, pp. 49–58.

ephemerality linked itself with the fleeting nature of life. The conception of *Orfeo*, and its first performance, must have drawn substance from this fertile philosophical debate. Certainly, the words of Apollo in the second finale are an echo of this spiritual idea: « Do you still not know / How nothing that delights down here will last? »⁵³. By merging the time frame of the tale with the time development of the show, Striggio creates a structure which he develops further by integrating different pictures.

	Prologue	Act I	Act II	Act III	Act IV	Act V first part	Act V second part
TIME ORIGINAL TEXT	« hor... »	« fortunar o giorno »	« sè n'alletta l'ombra »	« tenebroso regni »	« perdando il sole » « l'ombra eterna »	« l'odiosa luce »	Apollo/ Sun
TIME	Time of performance	Morning	Noon	Evening	Night	Before Dawn	Dawn
SPACE ORIGINAL TEXT	« queste rive » (Mantua)	« in questi prati »	« prato adorno » « boschi ombrosi »	« Altra palude... nero stagno »	« Di morte ampie campagne... questi abissi... orribile carverne » Vast fields of death... abysses... terrible caverns	« Selve suavi »	« al cielo »
IMAGES VANITAS	« Cetera d'or »	In these meadows	flowers, shadows	Dark marsh... Black swamp		Sweets woods	To Heaven
ELEMENTS ORIGINAL TEXT	« De la lira del Ciel piu l'alme invoglio »	« Imeneo face ardente » « Sol... Luna... Stelle »	« Care selve et piagge...i sassi »	« atra palude » « fiume »	« per quel foco »	« campi di Traccia »	« una nuvola »
COSMOGONY ELEMENTS	Harmony	Air	Earth	Water	Fire	Earth	Aether
SENSES ORIGINAL TEXT	« cantando »	« offriamo incensi »	« mi rispondi con gli ultimi accenti »	« acerbo » « amari »	« Un solo sguardo »	« voi lagrimerò mai sempre »	« vagheggerai le sue sembianze belle »
HUMAN SENSES	Hearing	Smell	Touch	Taste	Sight	Confusion	Grace

Table 1: *Orfeo's* dramaturgical themes in chronological order.

1.1.3 *Orfeo*: a dynamic construction

These devices are of a poetic nature, playing with Latin roots and culture, but in the overall construction of his libretto, Striggio also uses a dramatic construction which accentuates the idea of a cycle of life and its submission to time. Attached like the time frame to the character of the protagonist, this device is of a spatial nature and therefore had naturally an impact on the space components of the performance. While the first vocal involvement of *Orfeo* is already centered on the memory of the first time he saw Euridice and how she initially responded to his courtship, the notion of return, central to the tale of Orpheus, is also exploited in a spatial way in the rest of the piece. By twice bringing back his main character in

⁵³ « Anco non sai / Come nulla qua giù diletta e dura » in Striggio. *Orfeo*, Act V.

a space which has seen events of an opposite emotional nature, the poet forces contemplation and reflection in the main character and, through Orfeo's self-expression, in the audience. The first return takes place at the beginning of Act II, when Orfeo comes back with the shepherds to the place where he had lamented about his then-unreciprocated love for Euridice, an event that took place before the telling of the tale. « Here I return to you, / Dear forests and beloved meadows [...] Do you remember, O shady groves, / My long and harsh torments / When, at my laments, the rocks were moved to pity? »⁵⁴ Here the negative past has vanished, as the present, shared by the shepherds and the audience, is happy. But during the act, the atmosphere changes as this space is also the one where Orfeo hears about the death of Euridice. The second return, at the beginning of Act V, is more striking as Orfeo, after having lost Euridice in the Underworld, comes back to the same place where he heard of Euridice's death: « These are the fields of Thrace, and this the place / Where my heart was pierced / By grief at the bitter tidings ». ⁵⁵ This goes beyond retrospection to become a reflective moment, and Striggio and Monteverdi integrate the character of Echo⁵⁶, who by returning the last words of Orfeo's lamentations like she did for Narcisse, advises him that he has « wept enough ». These returns to the same place certainly had a direct effect on the conception of space during the original performance.

	Prologue	Act I	Act II/act V first part	Act III	Act IV	Act V second part
SPACE ORIGINAL TEXT	« queste rive »	« in questi prati »	« prato adorno » « boschi ombrosi » « campi di Traccia »	« Altra palude... stagno »	« Di morte ampie campagne... questi abissi... orribile carverne »	« al cielo »
SPACE	Mantua	In these meadows	flowery meadows, shady groves Fields of Thrace	Dark marsh... Black swamp	Vast fields of death ...abysses...terrible caverns	To Heaven

Table 2: Spaces in *Orfeo*. NB: The prologue englobes all locations

This series of episodes may have been visually emphasized by a long stage, that the Italians of the fifteenth century called « *talamo* » (the bed), divided in different spaces, showing for each a different location of the plot, the « *luogo deputato* ». Or even different set units like the mansions used in medieval theatre to represent specific places, such as Heaven or Hell, organized from right to left. In this lens, *Orfeo* also clearly articulates itself between the two poles of the Underworld of Pluto and the Aether where Apollo brings Orfeo. Flanked by these opposites, all other spaces can find a location in between. The actors would move between these mansions as the play demanded, accentuating the idea of the quest of Orpheus, depicting the wanderer's path and his bitter return. The « *platea* », the acting area of the stage around or along which mansions were placed, would take on the scenic identity of the particular mansion

⁵⁴ « *Orfeo*: Ecco pur ch'è voi ritorno, / Care selve e piagge amate / [...] / Vi ricordà o boschi ombrosi / De' miei lunghi aspri tormenti, / Quando i sassi à' miei lamenti / Rispondean fatti pietosi? » in Striggio. *Orfeo*, Act II.

⁵⁵ « *Orfeo*: Questi i campi di Tracia, e quest'è il loco / Dove passommi il core / Per l'amara novella il mio dolore. » in Striggio. *Orfeo*, Act V.

⁵⁶ See: Ovid. *Metamorphoses*, Book III, 356.

where the story was taking place. Like in ancient Greek dramas, that is perhaps where the « *coro stabile* » would comment on the adventures of Orpheus. This performance system also has roots in the liturgical plays popular in Italy and continental Europe, where the stations were lined up in an open space, sometimes in a U-shaped or circular formation, the mansions figuring specific places mentioned in the story⁵⁷. The conditions of the first performance of *Orfeo*, which took place in a room without proscenium, seem to lead to a stage configuration with coexisting sets, evocative of pieces with a spiritual content, such as the « *laudi* » and « *sacre rappresentazioni* » of the north of Italy⁵⁸ and the « *mystères* » of France and Flanders. The most famous, *La Vie, la Mort, la Passion et la Résurrection du Sauveur* performed in Valenciennes in 1547, shows a series of mansions, articulated through an axis coming from Paradise to Hell. Even inside the frame of a proscenium stage, this type of scenography was still influential in the early seventeenth century⁵⁹, showing that the so-called Aristotelian rule of unity of place was not applied universally⁶⁰.



Figure 4: 1577, Stage Design by Hubert Cailleau (ca. 1526–ca. 1579) for the performance of *La Vie, la Mort, la Passion et la Résurrection du Sauveur* in Valenciennes in 1547. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

⁵⁷ Rey-Flaud, Henri. “Le Théâtre et la Ville au Moyen-Age et à la Renaissance” in *Architecture du Spectacle, Monuments historiques*, Numéro 4 1978. Paris: Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques, 1978, pp. 5–9. Although apparently no drawing survives, this type of configuration may have been used for the performance of Poliziano’s *Orfeo* in Mantua in 1490.

⁵⁸ Pandolfi, Vito. *Histoire du théâtre, Tome 2 : commedia dell’arte, théâtre religieux, classicisme, théâtre kabuki*. Paris: Marabout Université, 1968, p. 124.

⁵⁹ For examples of this type of sets, see: Nicoll, Allardyce. *The Development of the Theatre, A Study of Theatrical Art from the Beginnings to the Present Day*. London: George G. Harrap & Company Ltd., 1966, pp. 93–95. See also: Bayard, Marc. *Feinte baroque, Iconographie et esthétique de la variété au XVIIe siècle*. Collection d’Histoire de l’art. Rome : Académie de France , 2010.

⁶⁰ Aristotle’s *Poetics* was not well known until the sixteenth century. The first reliable Latin translation, that of Giorgio Valla, appeared in 1498; the first commentary, Robortelli’s, in 1548; the first Italian translation, Segni’s in 1549. Both Robortelli and Segni remark on the long neglect of the book. See: Spingarn, Joel Elias. *A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance*. New York: 1938, p. 16.

1.1.4 Space in *Orfeo*'s score

If we accept a likelihood that the score published in 1609 gives the forces of the Mantuan spectacle of 1607, it is clear that *Orfeo* is a work that calls for a complex involvement of the orchestra, as Monteverdi's score is quite explicit in terms of instruments and instrumentation⁶¹. In the small room the varied instruments of the sizable orchestra would have constituted a major visual element. The instrumentalists, Striggio and Monteverdi likely among them, would have been aware of the strong relationship between their playing and the emotions that the operatic score, text and music, was supposed to create in the audience. It is probable that the performance, like the music, was neither solely illustrative nor purely descriptive but mostly evocative. Nevertheless, Striggio's libretto is titled *La Favola d'Orfeo rappresentata in musica* in its 1607 edition⁶². This title can be read as an aesthetic program: it is a tale with different episodes; it is not yet a « drama », although the Gonzaga call it a « commedia », as there is a distance from the subject created by the moralizing chorus, the « Coro stabile », at the end of each act. The subject is taken from Greek mythology, and this antique story is « represented », that is, performed in words, music and pictures. In short, the title is: The Tale of Orpheus represented in music.

Such an idea was still experimental in 1607, and would undoubtedly stimulate a poet musician, and indeed Striggio, the son of a renowned Mantuan madrigalist⁶³, was himself a distinguished viol player, the instrument whose family was mostly associated with Orpheus in the iconography of the period⁶⁴. The printed score in 1609 goes even further than Striggio, as Monteverdi's *Orfeo* is subtitled *Favola in Musica*: not only is music the subject of the story of *Orfeo*, but although one can argue that this title refers also to the *Orfeo* score itself, the *Favola in Musica* has become the object of the whole presentation itself, its nature⁶⁵. Monteverdi's musical setting merges the Renaissance intermezzi, the short musical and allegorical sequences which framed the acts of spoken dramas, with the linearity of an intimate human tale. The

⁶¹ Stubbs, Stephen. « L'armonia sonora »: continuo orchestration in Monteverdi's *Orfeo* in *Early Music*. Vol. 22, No. 1, *Monteverdi II* (Feb. 1994). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 87–98. See also: Carter, Tim. « Some Notes on the First Edition of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (1609) » in *Music & Letters*, Volume 91 Number 4 November 2010. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 498-512.

⁶² [Striggio, Alessandro]. *La favola d'Orfeo ; Rappresentata in musica il carnevale dell'anno 1607. Nell'Accademia de gl'Invaghiti di Mantova sotto i felici auspizii del Serenissimo Sig. Duca benignissimo lor protettore*. Mantova: Francesco Osanna, 1607. <http://diglib.hab.de/wdb.php?dir=drucke/549-quod-1&imgtyp=0&size> (accessed 18 December 2017).

⁶³ Alessandro Striggio, the elder (ca. 1536/37–1592), born in Mantua, evidently to an aristocratic family, began working for Cosimo de' Medici in 1559 as a musician, eventually to replace Francesco Corteccia (1502–1571) as the principal musician to the Medici court. In 1560 he visited Venice and produced two books of madrigals in response to the musical styles he encountered there. Throughout the 1560s Striggio composed numerous *intermedi* for the Medici. During the 1580s he began an association with the Este court in Ferrara. Ferrara was one of Italy's avant-garde centers of musical composition in the 1580s and 1590s, and Striggio composed music, now lost, in the progressive madrigal style he heard there, commissioned by the Medici. In 1586 the elder Striggio moved to Mantua where he remained for the rest of his life, although he retained a close association with the Medici, composing music for them at least as late as 1589.

⁶⁴ Gétreau, Florence. « Orphée et les instruments de musique dans l'Occident moderne » in *Les Métamorphoses d'Orphée*. Gand: Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1994, pp. 95–103.

⁶⁵ *L'Orfeo Favola in Musica da Claudio Monteverdi rappresentata in Mantova l'Anno 1607, & novamente date in luce. Al Serenissimo Signor D. Francesco Gonzaga Principe di Mantova, & di Monferato, &c.* In Venetia, Appresso Ricciardo Amadino, MDCIX [1609].

story of Orpheus had already proven a good choice for such an enterprise as the action does not fully fit in a realistic context, which already helps to give the characters a symbolic status. This is obvious in the case of allegorical characters that are intended to represent an idea or to convey a moral message. The gods, although subjected to passions, embody various forms of power and are also part of a symbolic framework. The humans are the characters of the fable who must comply with the laws of fate, determined by the forces of nature. Orfeo, whose semi-divine origin as the son of the god Apollo makes him the receptacle of all conceptual, godlike and human traits, is at the work's center as the supreme artist he was.

In his published score, Monteverdi divides his orchestral forces in two groups, some players visible and some behind the space devoted to acting and singing. Even if Monteverdi called this acting space « la sena » [sic], the stage, it should not necessarily be understood as a unique platform, separated from the audience by a proscenium frame. At any rate, the composer's acoustical use of the spaces clearly suggests an optimization of the available spaces to enlarge the scope of the tale. If we assume that the score registered some of the Mantuan performance practices and considering the obscurities and inconsistencies of some of these notes (they almost look like notes taken hastily during rehearsals), some of the instruments were played « from within » the main room or « from outside »⁶⁶, while some instruments are played « at the left-hand corner, the other at the right-hand corner ». The « noise » that causes Orfeo to turn to Euridice in Act IV is specified as coming from « behind the curtain »⁶⁷, maybe an attempt to quote Virgil's mention in his *Georgics*: « There all his toil was spilt, and the treaty broken with the merciless monarch; and thrice a thunder pealed over the pools of Avernus. »⁶⁸ Although Striggio and Monteverdi place this noise before Orpheus turns back and not after like the Roman source, this Virgilian origin at least gives us an idea of the extent (three times) and unpleasant nature of this « noise ».

At any rate, in view of these indications added by Monteverdi in his score, it is obvious that the composer considered the role played by the placement of the instruments as crucial. We have no further evidence that this dispersed configuration may or may have not been the one of the original performance, but the spatial distribution of sound sources was an area of research in full development at the time. During the late Renaissance, the contrast between distant and close sounds, as well as the variety of sources, was one of the tropes of the aesthetics of theatrical performances, and more specifically of their *intermezzi*: during these moments when music was given a role of a distinct importance, alongside the voices, the resounding instruments were sometimes visible to the spectators, and sometimes hidden or distant⁶⁹. It is therefore reasonable to assume that *Orfeo* was performed with some effects of this kind, which were part of the performance practice. From this point of view, it is interesting to observe Monteverdi's creative relationship with motifs so typical of the spectacle of his time, to see how he exploits them for expressive purposes and, for the performance, how Monteverdi uses the small spaces at his disposal to extend the musical experience.

⁶⁶ « di dentro », « nel angolo sinistro de la sena l'altor nel destro. » In *L'Orfeo Favola in Musica da Claudio Monteverdi...*, Amadino, MDCIX.

⁶⁷ « Qui si fa strepito dietro la tela » in Striggio. *Orfeo*, Act IV.

⁶⁸ « Ibi omnis / effusus labor atque immitis rupta tyranni / foedera, terque fragor stagnis auditus Avernus. » in Virgil. *Georgics*. Book IV, Verses 4491–4493.

⁶⁹ See: Farahat, Martha. "On the Staging of Madrigal Comedies" in *Early Music History*, Vol. 10 (1991), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 123–143.

1.1.5 A comparative work: *Le Balet Comique de la Reine*

We know that *Orfeo* was created in a room of the Ducal palace. But this summation is misleading, as *Orfeo* was in fact musically performed in a *few* rooms. The main palace chamber that housed the singers and the audience has been the subject of various theories, and the palace has been so often modified and restored that it is difficult to know for sure which rooms were the location of the ephemeral structure built for the performance. What we do know for sure, thanks to eyewitnesses of the time, is that it was not the large salon commonly used in Mantua for musical entertainments but a rather small space, a fact that would have made the dispersion of instruments a necessity⁷⁰. However, it is possible to see the connected rooms as a perfect architectural structure to separate the instruments for artistic effect and, therefore, the location must have been chosen knowingly. While we are sure that *Orfeo* was presented in a small palace room, there are no surviving visual documents about that first performance⁷¹.

To have a visual idea of how these types of spatial arrangements were used in an actual architecture for a performance, one must turn to France, where the Florentine style had been imported beginning at the start of the sixteenth century, and where Catherine de' Medici (1519–1589) had an active role in protecting poetry academies and organizing court spectacles with them⁷². An important « ballet de cour », *Le Balet Comique de la Reine*⁷³, was presented not long before *Orfeo*, and has some similarities with Striggio's *favola* as does its musical organization with the work of Monteverdi. Performed on Sunday, 15 October 1581, *Le Balet Comique de la Reine* was described in French by its Italian born author, Balthasar de Beaujoyeux (1535–1589)⁷⁴, in a book dated the same year, which is regarded as the first illustrated and printed ballet. In addition to the plot, based on the story of the enchantress Circe and her evil power, it gives the text that was sung and recited, and a full description of the staging and some

⁷⁰ See: Besutti, Paola. "Spaces for Music in Late Renaissance Mantua" in Whenham, John and Wistreich, Richard. *The Cambridge Companion to Monteverdi*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 76–94.

⁷¹ The actual room has been differently identified. For discussions of the evidence surrounding in which of the rooms the opera was likely performed, see: Besutti, Paola. "The « Sala degli Specchi » Uncovered: Monteverdi, the Gonzagas and the Palazzo Ducale, Mantua" in *Early Music*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Aug. 1999), pp. 451–456, 459–461 and 463–465. See also: Fenlon, Iain. "Monteverdi Mantuan *Orfeo*: Some New Documentation" in *Early Music*, Vol. 12, N° 2 (May 1984). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, pp. 163–172.

⁷² Sternfeld, Frederick. "Les intermèdes de Florence et la genèse de l'opéra", in *Baroque*, 5. 1972. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/baroque/368> ; DOI : 10.4000/baroque.368 (accessed 29 December 2017).

⁷³ *Balet comique de la Royne, faict aux nopces de monsieur le duc de Joyeuse & madamoyselle de Vaudemont sa soeur. Par Baltasar de Beaujoyeux, valet de chambre du Roy, & de la Royne sa mere.* Paris: Le Roy, Ballard & Patisson, MDLXXXII [1582]. The « Royne » is here queen Louise de Lorraine, wife of king Henry III. The designation « Ballet Comique » means here « Ballet Dramatique », as the prime importance of this spectacle was the full dramatization of the story, in which dancing, music, singing, declamation, and pageantry were combined for the expression of the theme: the tale of Circe. It also refers to the happy ending, as explained in the preface of the book.

⁷⁴ Baldasarino da Belgioso (1535–1589), whose name was frenchified as Balthasar de Beaujoyeux when naturalized around 1555, was violinist, composer and choreographer of the French Court. See: Handy, Isabelle. *Musiciens au temps des derniers Valois (1547–1589)*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008, pp. 105, 127, 130, 138, 161, 308, 326 & 434. See also: McGowan, Margaret. *L'art du Ballet de Cour en France : 1581–1643*. Paris: CNRS, 1963, pp. 37–43. See also: Caula, Giacomo Alessandro. *Baltazarini e il "Balet Comique de la Royne"*. Biblioteca degli eruditi e dei bibliofili. Scritti di bibliografia e di erudizione raccolti da Marino Parenti. LXXXVIII. Firenze : Sansoni Editore, 1964.

music; it also contains some engravings showing most of the costumes and the sets of the spectacle⁷⁵. The single performance took place at the Hôtel de Bourbon (Figure 4), a palace contiguous to the Louvre in Paris⁷⁶. Although the dimensions of the Grande Salle where the ballet was given were ample and estimated to be fifteen meters wide and thirty-five meters long with an apse adding an additional thirteen meters at one end, and thus have little in common with the size of the rooms in Mantua's palace, it is in the division and organization of spaces that *Le Balet Comique* may help to understand how *Orfeo* was performed in its original space.

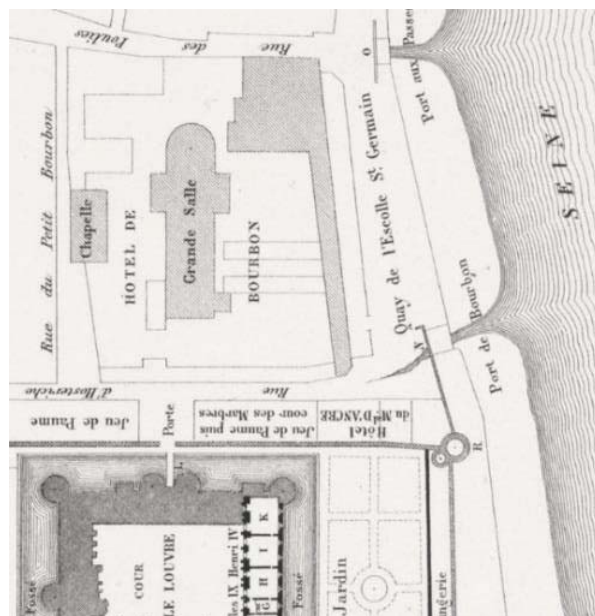


Figure 4: Reconstructed site plan of the Hôtel de Bourbon in 1595
from the book of Theodor Josef Hubert Hoffbauer (1839–1922): *Paris à travers les Ages, aspects successifs des monuments et quartiers historiques de Paris, depuis le XIIIème siècle jusqu'à nos jours, fidèlement restitués d'après des documents authentiques.*
Paris: Firmin Didot, 1875–1882.

For the Parisian audience, the Grande Salle was equipped with two tiers of seats, in form of galleries, erected on the two longest sides of the hall. The Queen herself taking part in the ballet, the King, his brother, the Queen mother, and the ambassadors sat on one end of the hall, in front of benches built in amphitheater for the ladies of the Court. The position of the royal family (the queen mother seated at the right of the king) is an indication that the design was engraved in reverse, to be able to show on the print the actual order of the room during the performance. The division of space is organized around the direction of the position of the sovereign. Comparing what we know about the original architecture of the room with the depiction in the book, we can see that Patin and Beaujoyeux made pragmatic use of the floor plan of the hall, similar to the cross of a church, to divide the playing area and take advantage of the apse, and of the recesses on the sides.

⁷⁵ See: Donington, Robert. *The Rise of Opera*. London & Boston: Faber and Faber, 1981, pp. 53–61.

⁷⁶ Bjurström, Per. *Giacomo Torelli, and Baroque Stage Design*. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1962, p. 122. The Great Hall, the Grande Salle du Petit-Bourbon, was larger than any room in the Louvre, and served as the first theatre used by Molière upon his arrival in Paris in 1658; by 1660, Molière's troupe had been evicted, and the Petit-Bourbon was pulled down to make space for the construction of Claude Perrault's Colonnade, as an addition to the Louvre.

1.1.6 Space and scenery for *Le Balet Comique de la Reine*

On the first of the twenty-seven engravings of the book, it is evident that the sets, designed by Jacques Patin (d. 1587) are spread out in the space (Figure 5). The descriptive and detailed text of the *Balet* gives more information: opposite the king, using the apse in the back of the hall, was Circé's garden, « all enclosed with balustrades, with gold and metallic balusters and brownish silver, and divided in two green alleys », decorated with flowers and fruits « counterfeit in gold, silver, silks, and feathers of colors necessary there. This garden appeared even more beautiful, as it was vaulted over by a large trellis. »⁷⁷ On either side a passage allowed the entrances and exits of decorated cars: « on both sides there were two vaulted trellises [...] and this place was even more remarkable, since it was necessary for the musicians of the intermezzi to pass through, and the cars, which were going to present themselves to the King »⁷⁸. Behind this trellis was Circé's castle surrounded by walls. To the right of king was the « Grove of Pan » that Beaujoyeux describes as « having all around it very fine oaks, two feet long, of which the trunks, branches, leaves, and acorns were gilded, and made by a singular artifice ».⁷⁹ This Grove of Pan was hidden by a curtain made of veil which was brought down during the evening, when the cart of Diana's Nymphs joined in the pastoral: « The curtain that hid the grove fell, exposing to everyone's sight the marvelous beauty of this enclosure. »⁸⁰ To the left of the king was a gilded arch covered with gleaming clouds: « A vault of wood, eighteen feet long, and nine wide, having at the front its opening only three feet long; outside, it was trimmed with great clouds everywhere, and at the front, all gilded with gold shining and gleaming, because of the great quantity of lights concealed therein, serving to make the gold so radiant, that this place appeared part of the azure sky ».⁸¹

Between all these spaces, the acting and dancing area was left free for the entrées of characters, singers, dancers, and instrumentalists. They were sometimes accompanied by floats, which followed a route that came from the left of Circé's garden and exited right. This space is the equivalent to the low platform recommended by Serlio in his advice for building a temporary theatre, and he recalls from his own experience in Vicenza how « there, because of the extraordinary intermezzi which took place – triumphal carriages, elephants and various

⁷⁷ « tout enclos d'accoudoirs, avec des balustres dorez d'or et de ducat, & d'argent bruny, & party en croix avec deux allees vertes [...] contrefaict d'or, d'argent, soyes, & plumes de couleurs y necessaires. Ce jardin ressembloit encores de tant plus beau, comme il estoit voulté par-dessus d'une grande treille » in *Balet comique de la Royne...* MDLXXXII, p. 6.

⁷⁸ « à ses deux costez y avait deux treilles voultees [...] & estoit ce lieu plus remarquable, d'autant qu'il falloit que par iceluy passassent les musiques des intermedes, & les chariots, qui s'alloyent presenter devant le Roy. » in *Balet comique de la Royne...* MDLXXXII, p. 6.

⁷⁹ « ayant tout à l'entour de fort beaux chesnes esloignez de deux pieds, desquels les troncs, branches, feuilles & glands estoyent dorez, & faicts par un singulier artifice » in *Balet comique de la Royne...* MDLXXXII, p. 4.

⁸⁰ « Le rideau qui cachoit le bois tomba, exposant à la veue de chacun la beauté merveilleuse de ce pourpris. » in *Balet comique de la Royne...* MDLXXXII, p. 39.

⁸¹ « une voulte de bois, longue de dixhuict pieds, & de neuf de large, ayant par le devant son ouverture de trois pieds seulement de long; au dehors elle estoit bouillonnee par tout de grands nuages, & au devant toute doree d'un or esclatant & reluisant, à cause de la grande quantité de lumières qui y estoit cachee, servant à faire resplendir de telle sorte l'or, que ce lieu paroissoit quelque partie du ciel azuré. » in *Balet comique de la Royne...* MDLXXXII, p. 5.

Moorish dances and the like – I wanted it to be flat in front of the sloping part of the stage. »⁸² Above this acting space, « at the top of the hall [ceiling], there was a large cloud full of stars: the light from which pierced the cloud, through which Mercury and Jupiter descended into the earth »⁸³, that the engraving unfortunately fails to show. Again, Serlio gives us some indications: « The rising of the sun, its progression and then at the end of the play its setting can be seen, done with such ingenuity that many of the viewers are amazed by it. With this artifice, when the occasion presents itself, a god can be seen descending from heaven ».⁸⁴

This musical tribune did not see any dramatic action but used forty musicians, instrumentalists and singers who stayed there, certainly seated, during the performance: « Within this vault there were ten consorts of music, different from each other; and it was this vault which was called Golden, both because of its great splendor, and for the sound and harmony of music, which was sung there: which for its resounding voices, some of the audience considered to be the same voice which was converted into a resounding air, called since Echo: and others more educated in the Platonic discipline, considered it to be the true harmony from heaven, from which all things that are in existence, are preserved and maintained. »⁸⁵ But if this tribune provided most of the music during the performance, it was from behind the rearmost backdrop of Circé's garden that the music to signal the beginning of the proceedings could be heard: « behind the castle a note of oboes, cornetti, sackbuts, and other soft musical instruments »⁸⁶. And it is behind the grove of Pan that a grotto was created where seated musicians with big instruments could play out of sight: « Inside the grotto, and behind its opening, was arranged the music of the soft organs, to play also in time and place. »⁸⁷ Elaborate cars on wheels and walking masquers brought voices and instruments into the middle area following their allegorical identities.

⁸² « Et pour l'aysance des estranges figures de personnages que se devoient entremettre du jeu, meemes pource qu'il estoit besoing qu'il y eust des chars de triumphe, des Elephans, & des moriques de beuacoup de sorte, je voulu qu'il y eut devant la Scene penchante une platte forme » In Serlio, Sebastiano. [*Libri d'Architettura*...]. Paris: Jehan Barbé, 1545, p. 65.

⁸³ « Entre le bois & la voulte susdite, & au feste de la salle, y avoit une grosse nuee toute pleine d'estoiles : la lueur desquelles transperçoit le nuage, parmy lequel devoient descendre en terre Mercure & Jupiter. » in *Balet comique de la Royne*... MDLXXXII, p. 5.

⁸⁴ « L'on voit le lever du Soleil, & son mouvement circulaire. Puis sur la fin du jeu son occident conduit par une telle ruze que plusieurs des assistans sont estonnez de la merveille, & en ces entrefaictes se voit (quand l'occasion se presente) quelque dieu descendre du ciel. » In Serlio, Sebastiano. [*Libri d'Architettura*...]. Paris: Jehan Barbé, 1545, p. 65.

⁸⁵ « Au dedans de cette voulte y avoit dix concerts de musique, differens les uns des autres : & fut ceste voulte dicte & appelee Dorée, tant à cause de sa grande splendeur, que pour le son & l'harmonie de la musique, qui y fut chantée : laquelle pour ses voix repercussives, aucuns de l'assistance estimerent estre la mesme voix qui fut convertie en air repercussif, appelé depuis Echo : & d'autres plus instruits en la discipline Platonique, l'estimerent estre la vraye harmonie du ciel, de laquelle toutes les choses qui sont en estre, sont conservées & maintenuees. » in *Balet comique de la Royne*... MDLXXXII, p. 5.

⁸⁶ « derrière le chasteau une note de hauts-boys, cornets, sacqueboutes, & autres doux instrumens de musique » in *Balet comique de la Royne*... MDLXXXII, p. 7.

⁸⁷ « Au dedans de la grotte, & derrière l'huys d'icelle, fut dispose la musique des orgues doulces, pour iouër aussi en temps & lieu. » in *Balet comique de la Royne*... MDLXXXII, p. 5.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 5: « Figure de la Salle » in *Balet comique de la Royne, faict aux nopces de monsieur le duc de Joyeuse & madamoyselle de Vaudemont sa soeur.*

Par Baltasar de Beanjoyeux, valet de chambre du Roy, & de la Royne sa mere.

Paris: Le Roy, Ballard, & Patisson, MDLXXXII. [1582]

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

1.1.7 Space and scenery compared

Beyond the fact that the poetic spaces of *Le Balet comique* shows many similarities with the ones of *Orfeo*, notably the grove of the god Pan, mentioned by the shepherds at the beginning of Act II (for which the score specifies « flautini »), and the places of Harmony and Heaven where Musica and Apollo come from⁸⁸, more consequently the ballet's organization also gives some information about the places where orchestra and chorus were disposed in relation with dramatic and poetic intents. Table 3 and Table 4 are an attempt to structure the performing space of *Orfeo* on the poetic and spatial template given by *Le Balet comique*. The concern for a clear spatial understanding of the poetic imitation is also found in the various disdascalia present in the *Orfeo*'s libretto of 1607. One can argue that these few indications were not written as staging instructions, as this edition was created for the audience to read, but perhaps were written down by the Corago of the Mantuan performance to indicate the planned staging or what it was supposed to represent⁸⁹. These notes could indeed be matters to help what the visualization was only suggesting. An interesting instance is the mention of Orfeo crossing the river Styx after he has put Caronte asleep: « Here he enters the boat and crosses over, singing »⁹⁰. It suggests the movement of a boat on wheels, a vehicle stable enough for a standing Orpheus to sing and that passes from one side of the space to another, further suggesting the visual simultaneity of the two sides of the river. This is another point of concordance with *Le Balet comique*, where carts paraded the heroes through the room, with an obligatory passage in front of the patron.

Contrary to *Le Balet comique* where an allegorical antagonism is created between the patron and the subject⁹¹, dictating the opposition of the king and Circé, the story of Orpheus articulates itself through two complementary sides, earth and the underworld, presented equally to the patron, as an effect of the concept of *Vanitas*. This clear dichotomy is accentuated by some changes of space indicated in the libretto and score. But if the « Qui si muta la Scena » at the end of Act II seems to indicate a changing of sets from the fields of Thrace to the entrance of the Underworld, it may refer to the inclusion of the gate of hell in the middle of the platea. At the « Qui di nuovo si volge la Scena », the set moves again when the Underworld section ends, bringing Orfeo back to the fields of Thrace. It may even suggest a use of the turning set, if the word « volge » (« turn » or « revolve ») is to be understood literally, and that this set element had on one face the gate of hell and on the other arcadian components suited to the Thracian space of Acts II and V. This mention of scenic movement suggests a device like the one found in the *Ballet de la Delivrance de Renaud* in France in 1617 where the middle part of the central set would revolve, offering two different scenes⁹².

⁸⁸ « Apollo (descende in una nuvola cantando) », « Apollo ed Orfeo (assende al Cielo cantando) » in Striggio, *Orfeo*, Act III.

⁸⁹ For the Corago, see: Savage, Roger and Sansone, Matteo. « *Il Corago* and the staging of early opera: four chapters from an anonymous treatise circa 1630 » in *Early Music*, Vol. 17 (1989). Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 495–511. For the full text, see: *Il Corago, o vero alcune osservazioni per metter bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche*. Edizione a cura di Paolo Fabbri et Angelo Pompilio. Firenze : Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1983.

⁹⁰ « Qui entra nella barca e passa cantando » in Striggio, *Orfeo*, Act III.

⁹¹ For an analysis of the general allegory of *Le Balet comique*, see: Salazar, Philippe-Joseph. *Idéologies de l'opéra*. Paris: PUF, 1980, pp. 25–29.

⁹² See: [Durand, Étienne (1585–1618) ; Bordier, René (d. 1658?) ; Guédron, Pierre (1564–1619/20)] *Discours au vray du ballet dansé par le Roy, le dimanche XXIXe jour de janvier. M. V^{le}. XVII. Avec les desseins, tant des machines & apparences différentes, que de tous les habits des masques*. Paris: Pierre Ballard, 1617.

	<i>Le Balet comique</i> poetry	<i>Le Balet comique</i> music	<i>Orfeo</i> poetry	<i>Orfeo</i> music
Referent	To the French King		To the Gonzaga family	
Prologue	A man « Gentilhomme fugitif », escaping from Circé's palace to here, « là », where he addresses the « Roy »		Music coming from « Permessus » to « queste rive » (Mantua) where « Incliti Eroi » are	
Space 1	Opposite of the patron, back of the room: Circé's garden and behind it her city and then her palace	Wind Musicians behind Circé's backdrop for Intro: « hauts-boys, cornets, sacquebouttes, & autres doux instrumens de musique »	Opposite of the patrons, back of the room: The gate of Hell and behind it the Acheron with a boat, and then Pluto's palace (or the three mansions next to each other, from right to left)	« Dietro la tela »: « toccata »
Space 2	Right inside of patron: Pan's grove behind a curtain	« Orgues » behind Pan's grove	Right inside of patrons: « Campo di Tracia » behind a « tela »	Behind « campo di Tracia »: 1 Organ di legno 1 contrabasso
Space 3	Left inside of patron: « Tribune Dorée » Golden vault	40 musicians (singers and instrumentalists) « vraye harmonie du ciel »	Left inside of patron: « Pindus and Elicon »: The Pindus mountains with Mount Helicon in the center with river Permessus flooding from it	« tutti li stromenti »: « 5 viole di braccio, 3 Chitarroni, 2 Clavicembali, 1 arpa doppie, 1 Contrabasso di Viola »
Space 4	Under ceiling: Mercure and Jupiter cloud		Under ceiling: Apollo cloud	
Space 5	Acting/Dancing Area with various moving Cars with seated and walking musicians	Music: Instrumentalists and singers in « Entrée » of Masquers	« Platea » with Caronte's « barca » and walking musicians, and « coro stabile »	Singers and Flutes and violins for Shepherds

Table 3: Comparison of the spaces of *Le Balet comique* and *Orfeo*.

	<i>Le Balet comique</i> poetry	<i>Le Balet comique</i> music	<i>Orfeo</i> poetry	<i>Orfeo</i> music
Referent	To the French King		To the Gonzaga family	
Prologue	A man « Gentilhomme fugitif », escaping from Circé's palace to here, « là », where he addresses the « Roy »		Music coming from « Permessus » to « queste rive » (Mantua) where « Incliti Eroi » are	
Space	Opposite of the patron, back of the room: Circé's garden and behind it her city and then her palace	Wind Musicians behind Circé's backdrop for Intro: « hauts-boys, cornets, sacquebouttes, & autres doux instrumens de musique »	« Pindus and Elicona »: The pindus mountains with Mount Helicon in the center and river Permessus from it	« tutti li stromenti »: « 5 viole di braccio, 3 Chitarroni, 2 Clavicembali, 1 arpa doppie, 1 Contrabasso di Viola », etc. « Dietro la tela » « toccata »
	Right inside of patron: Pan's grove behind a curtain	« Orgues » Behind Pan's grove	Right inside of patron: « Campo di Tracia » behind a « tela »	Behind « campo di Tracia » 1 Organo di legno 1 contrabasso
	Left inside of patron: « Tribune Dorée » Golden vault	40 musicians (singers and instrumentalists) « vraye harmonie du ciel »	Left inside of patron: Pluto's palace.	
	Under ceiling: Mercure and Jupiter cloud		Under ceiling: Apollo cloud	
	Acting/Dancing Area with various moving Cars with seated and walking musicians	Music: Instrumentalists and singers in « Entrée » of Masquers	« Platea » with the gate of Hell center and the Acheron with Caronte's « barca » walking musicians, « coro stabile »	Singers and Flutes and violins for Shepherds

Table 4: The musical spaces of *Le Balet comique* and *Orfeo* adjusted.

At any rate, however the space was changed, it seems logical to articulate the spaces in two sides, with the underworld to the patron's left (using the underworld's « sinistra » association), the « campo di Tracia » on the patron's right, and the « permesso », or larger orchestra center, opposite the patron. Both Thrace and the Underworld are spaces connected (through doors) to other rooms, where instruments can play « di dentro ». There are many differences between the printed libretto of Striggio and the scores of Monteverdi, and these discrepancies witness that, as with any operatic creation, the piece received a number of modifications. This first « tryout » was a complete success, and preparations for subsequent performances were immediately underway. A second performance was organized for the « ladies of the town » of Mantua, and a third performance for a planned visit of the Duke of Savoy was also in preparation. It is probably –and my belief– for one of these « public » performances that the finale of Act V was changed, and the scene where Apollo leads Orfeo to immortality replaced the (deadly?) Bacchanal initially written by Striggio⁹³. The poet and the composer were infinitely practical and adjusted their productions according to the new circumstances⁹⁴ and new audiences⁹⁵. The whole production may have gained another dimension if it left the narrow stage to go into a bigger room, possibly equipped with a flying machine, like the one used for *Le Balet Comique*⁹⁶.

1.1.8 *Orfeo*, the Modello of Striggio and Monteverdi

After this definition of a possible organization of the space, what do these speculations mean for the staging of this academic modello? From a letter written by Francesco Gonzaga, we know at least that there were not many principal performers, as the singers took multiple roles⁹⁷. They performed these roles from memory, but the text was in the possession of the audience. Francesco Gonzaga had librettos of the opera printed, so that everyone could have a copy to follow while the performance was in progress: « the tale has been printed so that

⁹³ We know that the ladies' opinion was generally taken in consideration: for example, in 1606, a ballet for Pisa staging the battle between Ajax and Odysseus, and their respective followers, was not appreciated by the ladies because they judged it to be too dangerous and serious: « fu specie di tragedia ». See: Solerti, Angelo. *Musica, ballo e drammatica alla corte Medicea dal 1600 al 1637; notizie tratte da un diario, con appendice di testi inediti e rari*. Firenze: R. Bemporad & figlio, 1905, p. 37.

⁹⁴ Fenlon, Iain. "Monteverdi Mantuan *Orfeo*: Some New Documentation" in *Early Music*, Vol. 12, N°2 (May, 1984). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, pp. 163–172.

⁹⁵ Aresi, Stefano. "Dai « doppi finali » alle edizioni anastatiche. Alcune considerazioni in merito alla tradizione de L'Orfeo" in *Philomusica on-line Vol. 8, No. 2, L'Orfeo di Claudio Monteverdi nel quarto centenario della prima rappresentazione*. Cremona: Università degli Studi di Pavia, 2009, pp. 64–90. See: https://www.academia.edu/8374116/Dai_doppi_finali_alle_edizioni_anastatiche._Alcune_considerazioni_in_merito_alla_tradizione_de_L_Orfeo (Accessed 12 March 2018)

⁹⁶ The Mantuan court theatre was not completed until early 1608 by the architect Antonio Maria Viani. See: Fabbri, Paolo. *Gusto scenico a Mantova nel tardo rinascimento*. Padua: Liviana, 1974, pp. 41–43, 51, 52 & 54. See also: Fenlon, Iain. *Music and Spectacle at the Gonzaga Court, c. 1580–1600*. Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association Vol. 103. London: 1976–1977, pp. 90–105.

⁹⁷ For an exhaustive analysis of what parts were doubled and who likely sang which roles, see Carter, Tim. "Singing Orfeo: on the Performers of Monteverdi's First Opera" in *Ricerche* 11, 1999, pp. 75–118.

each of the spectators can have one to read, while it will be sung »⁹⁸. So even if we don't know much about the shape of this production, we can get a sense of direction from this very point: the few principal singers would sing their role for an audience who were reading the verses, their eyes moving between actors and text. By doing so, they were merely checking what was happening: the story of Orpheus was even better known then than it is today. But the audience would have judged and enjoyed the invention with which the performers depicted the story of the legendary artist.

To make clear the multiple identities they were interpreting for the audience, the singers must have worn a variety of luxurious costumes⁹⁹. Besides the integration of symbols and emblems which would have made the characters readable as allegorical figures, expensive garments were expressive of the patron's wealth and the local craftsmen's proficiency. This theatre convention was also made necessary by the fact that the female roles were performed by castrati¹⁰⁰, special performers which seems to indicate that the full cast was of male origin¹⁰¹. A small « coro stabile », likely recruited from the chapel musicians of the Gonzaga, would have completed the cast¹⁰². In addition to Striggio, some other distinguished members of the Accademia may have played some of the numerous instruments for a specific section of the performance and, before or after, enjoyed the show while standing in a corner of the room. The configuration of the room, far from being a handicap, may have facilitated these movements and involvements. During this period, the best view of any type of scenography would have been from the location of the patron of the performance.

This political gesture is both an expression of the renewed place of the arts in society and of the quest for absolutism which dominated the late Renaissance. Most of the librettos of this period integrate thoughts and references to the role of sovereigns, as they were (History and Myth), as they are (Praise) and as they should be (Demands and Wishes). By praising Art and associating it with Philosophy, *Orfeo* is a philosophical lesson. This discourse is addressed to the patron but also, in the frame of the Academy, by the patron. With this angle in mind, there is some evidence that the performance of *Orfeo* incorporated, in more than a single way, spatial relations with the Gonzaga family: the plan would have laid out the routes of circulation, and stairs between the various levels of acting and the viewing areas would have connected

⁹⁸ « la favola s'è fatta stampare acciochè ciascuno degli spettatori ne possa havere una da leggere, mentre che si canterà » See: Fenlon, Iain. "Correspondence Relating to the Early Mantuan Performances," in *Claudio Monteverdi: Orfeo*, edited by Whenham, John. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 170.

⁹⁹ Serlio, in a praise of the role of the patron, declares about a show staged by Girolamo Genga for Francesca Maria, Duke of Urbino at an unknown date) mentions superb costumes of shepherds, made from costly gold and silk cloth and lined with the finest wild animal skins. See: Hart, Vaughan and Hicks, Peter. *Sebastiano Serlio on Architecture Volume One, Books I–V of Tutte l'opere d'architettura et prospetiva by Sebastiano Serlio*. New Haven (CT): Yale University Press, 1996, p. 90.

¹⁰⁰ See: Calcagno, Mauro. "Signifying Nothing: On the Aesthetics of Pure Voice in Early Venetian Opera" in *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 20, No. 4. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press, 2003, pp. 461–497.

¹⁰¹ Kelly, Thomas Forrest. "« Orfeo da Camera » Estimating Performing Forces in Early Opera" in *Historical Performance Volume 1 Spring 1988*. 1988, pp. 3–9.

¹⁰² The singing chorus in the 1585 *Edipo* at Vicenza numbered fifteen; Cavalieri seems to recommend a minimum of eight for the *Rappresentazione di Anima e di Corpo*, while for *Dafne* Gagliano suggests at least sixteen. See: Grout, Donald Jay. "The Chorus in Early Opera", in *Festschrift Friedrich Blume*, ed. By Anna Amalie Abert and Wilhelm Pfannkuch. Kassel: 1963, pp. 151–161.

performers and audience. Trying to visualize the original Palazzo Ducale conditions of the 1607 performance informs us greatly about the various possibilities that any planned production of *Orfeo* should consider. But then again as the original libretto offers some differences with the published scores, when establishing performing material, it is necessary a question of choices. Logically to be influenced, like it was in 1607, by the factual conditions and resources at the time of the production, performers must find their way¹⁰³. Monteverdi, in the dedication of his score to Prince Francesco, launches *Orfeo* from a narrow stage, « sopra angusta Scena », into the great Theatre of the Universe, « nel gran Teatro dell'Universo ». The space metaphor proves to be a prophecy for the unexpected destiny of what was an academic modello.

¹⁰³ Carter, Tim. "Some Notes on the First Edition of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (1609)" in *Music & Letters, Volume 91 Number 4 November 2010*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 498–512.

1.2 Monteverdi's operas in Venice

« therefore I can truthfully say of myself that, for the pleasures of Architecture and of Machines
I was the first one, in this time, to have been making Sceneries and Machines in this City »¹⁰⁴

Giovanni Burnacini. Venezia, 1651.

Besides the fertile experiments of academies, the social events of princely courts remained for decades the main occasion for designers to experiment and refine their theories about theatre sets. It was for such a lavish occasion that architect Giovanni Battista Aleotti (1546–1636)¹⁰⁵ was employed in 1587: he created, as a performing space, a temple modelled on the Pantheon in Rome, and whose stage functioned as a sort of 'magic box' made dynamic by mechanical motion, a concept close the « Wunderschränke » which was fascinating the intellectuals of the time¹⁰⁶. Prompted also by a princely wedding, associating two of the most powerful families of Italy, the Farnese with the Medici¹⁰⁷, the major contribution of Aleotti came to light when he inaugurated one of the most important theatre buildings of all times: the *Teatro Farnese* in Parma. Although Aleotti had apparently first employed the flat-wing system in the temporary theatre of the *Accademia degli intrepidi* at Ferrara in 1606, it was not until his design for the *Teatro Farnese*, which opened in 1628 after ten years of planning and construction, that a building of

¹⁰⁴ « A me dunque, che per i dilette dell'Architettura, e di macchine posso con verità dirmi il primo, quanto al tempo c'habbia ornate Scene, ò fatte Macchine in questa Città » in Burnacini, Giovanni. "Al lettore" in Cicognini, Giacinto Andrea. *Gli amori di Alessandro Magno e di Rossane*. Venezia: Pinelli, 1651, p. 8. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/musschatz.19833.0/?sp=6> (accessed 18 June 2018).

¹⁰⁵ Architect Giovanni Battista Aleotti, called l'Argenta from his native city, was especially active in Parma and can be considered as the first of the great architects of the early seventeenth century, as he applied his skills in the various fields of civil, religious and military construction, hydraulics and ballistics, scenography and the stagecraft, always with a theoretical activity, as he wrote important treatises in these various sectors, assimilating Palladio, Scamozzi and Vignola, without forgetting the Ferrarese tradition.

¹⁰⁶ We have no visual documents about this magic box; for marvel boxes, see: Stafford, Barbara Maria. *Devices of Wonder, From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen*. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2001, pp. 158–165. One of Aleotti's more traditional theatrical productions for the Ferrara court, a variation on the *scena satyrica* of Serlio, was made in 1592 in Mantua for a performance of *Il Pastor fido* of Giovan Battista Guarini. See: Sampson, Lisa. "The Mantuan performance of Guarini's *Pastor fido* and Representations of Courtly Identity" in *The Modern Language Review*, Volume 98, 1 January 2003, pp. 65–83.

¹⁰⁷ The marriage of Duke Odoardo I Farnese with Margherita of Medici took place on 11 October 1628 in Florence. The wedding celebrations were accompanied by much spectacle and pageantry, including the performance of Marco da Gagliano's *La Flora*, composed especially for the occasion. To welcome the couple back to Parma, *Mercurio e Marte* was performed in the Teatro Farnese on 21 December 1628.

this magnitude was specially conceived to integrate the flat-wing system¹⁰⁸. The opening spectacle in the *Teatro Farnese*, which made good use of the various mechanical possibilities, but also of the large « platea », dedicated here to horses' ballet and chariot entrance, was *Mercurio e Marte* by Claudio Achillini (1574–1640), performed with music by Claudio Monteverdi¹⁰⁹. The score is lost but we know that the performance was testing the theatre's resources to the full: It ended with a scene in which Neptune flooded the central arena to a depth of two feet; storms, shipwrecks and fights between sea monsters ensued, to be pacified only by the descent of Jupiter on stage with « one hundred » attendants.¹¹⁰

Aleotti's architectural reference for Parma is still Roman in its ambitious proportions; Venetian Aurelio Aureli (1652–1708), in the foreword of his libretto *Il Favore degli Dei*, could still write in 1690: «The theater of Parma, indeed the most sumptuous in Europe—indeed in the whole world—is in no way inferior to the long-vanished theaters of ancient Rome...»¹¹¹ The auditorium, a larger copy of Scamozzi's in Sabioneta, was not in itself unique; Aleotti's innovations were in the design of the stage, where behind a majestic *frons scaenae*, he placed painted panels upright in grooves laid out on the stage floor¹¹². In a parallel pair of these runners, two wings were put, one directly in front of the other, with one of them extended towards the stage center in view of the audience¹¹³. The flat-wings stage was in relation with the art of perspective since these sets were composed of frames, arranged on each side of the proscenium at intervals running up-stage, and closed off in the rear by a backdrop. The set design was painted onto this series of flat-wings over which canvas was stretched; these increasingly distant images faced the audience: thus, the special relevance of the art of perspective as a unifying principle. The coordination of the simulated architecture of the set and the real space was created by visual illusion.

The innovations from the Florentine opera were carried to other wealthy cities. In Rome, the Barberini cardinals had added a temporary theater to the Palazzo Barberini in 1632;

¹⁰⁸ See : “Le Théâtre Farnese de Parme” in *Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, 1954 III. Paris : Société d'Histoire du Théâtre, 1954, pp. 170–172.

¹⁰⁹ *Mercurio e Marte* was an extravagant show which involved many creators, but even if Monteverdi's contribution is lost, we have a lot of insights coming from the letters of the composer. See: Fabbri, Paolo. *Monteverdi*, Translated by Tim Carter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 206–219.

¹¹⁰ See: Tidworth, Simon. *Theatres: An Illustrated History*. London: Pall Mall, 1973, pp. 65–68.

¹¹¹ « Perché si come il Gran Teatro di Parma è il più maestoso di quanti n'abbia l'Europa, anzi il mondo tutto, nulla cedendo in pregio a gl'Antichi più famosi di Roma già dal tempo distrutti » in Aureli, Aurelio. *Il Favore degli Dei*, 1690. This opera on music by Bernardo Sabadini (lost) was given on the wedding of Odoardo II Farnese with Dorothea Sophie of Neuburg in the Farnese theater. See: Heller, Wendy. “*Il favore degli dei* (1690): Meta-Opera and Metamorphoses at the Farnese Court” in *Dramatic Experience, The Poetics of Drama and the Early Modern Public Sphere(s)*. Boston & Leiden: Brill, 2016, pp. 118–139.

¹¹² The Farnese theatre does not have space under stage. See Dall'Acqua, Marzio. “L'Illusione Farnese” in *FMR* N°2, aprile 1982. Milano: Franco Maria Ricci, 1982, pp. 73–98.

¹¹³ This change was done by the stagehands who, at a given signal, pushed out the second wing and pulled back the first. Since this movement had to be synchronized for full effect, a great number of stagehands was necessary; the total synchronization could only be achieved in Venice with a mechanization of the stage: the grooves were cut all the way though the stage floor and the flats were mounted on little carriages that ran in tracks located under the stage. A winch system with counterweights allowed a single individual to put in action the machine.

the first performance was of the opera *Il Sant' Alessio*, with a libretto by Cardinal Giulio Rospigliosi (1600–1669), and music by Stefano Landi (1587–1639). We know little of the building itself, but the symmetrical concept of the stage, by then firmly established, appears in engravings showing the sets attributed to the architect Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680). The picture isolated by the stage frame is formed by superimposed graphics on the wings and backdrop¹¹⁴. The perspective stage is clearly readable along several painted elements. The use of the illusionist art of *trompe-l'oeil*¹¹⁵ in the paintings followed the rules of central perspective: this theory, continually enriched by the works of architect and painters, found in the theater a fertile ground for large-scale experiments in all Italy.

1.2.1 Opera in Venice

Until the foundation in Venice of the first public opera house in 1637, Italian theatrical life was mainly connected to the humanistic environment of academies and princely courts, secular or spiritual. Indeed, with *Andromeda* by Benedetto Ferrari (1603–1681) and Francesco Manelli (1594–1667), it was an opera in the Roman manner that conquered Venice. But in the Republic, although librettists were often linked with literary academies, opera evolved, in its performing form, from an aristocratic *passé-temps* to a seasonal spectacle open to all, an extra attraction of the yearly Carnival preceding Lent. Within five years, Venetians could rightly boast of maintaining several public theaters—no other city had even one—four of which presented opera performances: the Tron Theater at San Cassiano¹¹⁶, the Giustinian Theater at San Moisè, and the Novissimo Theater and the Grimani Theater, both situated in the parish of Santissimi Giovanni e Paolo; it was in the Grimani that Monteverdi's operas, *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* and *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, were created¹¹⁷.

What characterizes the Venetian opera is its conformity with the theatrical productions of the time following the mercantile model. Opera houses had an entrance fee, as opposed to court performances funded by a patron, and were therefore operating on a precarious basis, surviving primarily on income from performances¹¹⁸. Appealing to a socially enlarged audience

¹¹⁴ See: Bjurström, Per. *Den romerska barockens scenografi*. Stockholm: Svenska Humanistika Förbundet, 1978, pp. 23–32. For a recent reconstruction of this set for a stage performance, see: Landi, Stefano. *Il Sant' Alessio*, DVD, Direction musicale : William Christie, Mise en scène : Benjamin Lazar. Paris: Virgin Classics, 2008.

¹¹⁵ “Trompe-l'œil” (French for “deceive the eye”) is an art technique that uses realistic imagery to create the optical illusion that the depicted objects exist in three dimensions. For a large approach, well-illustrated, see: Milman, Miriam. *Le Trompe l'œil*. Genève: Skira, 1992. And, for architecture, from the same author: Milman, Miriam. *Architectures peintes en trompe l'œil*. Genève: Skira, 1992.

¹¹⁶ In 1637 Benedetto Ferrari and Manelli's *Andromeda* had its premiere in the newly built theater San Cassiano il nuovo, introducing Venice to public opera. The entire company came from Rome and indeed *Andromeda* was an opera in the roman manner with machines.

¹¹⁷ Titles of Monteverdi's operas for Venice already vary in the period sources and nowadays the capitalization of certain words is not consistent in all publications. I choose to write *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* and *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, and use capitalization as rhetorical device, but the footnotes include variants adopted by the respective writers and publishers.

¹¹⁸ Opera may have been a commercial business in Venice but was all together unprofitable, earning the family of patrons far more in prestige than in wealth. See: Glixon, Beth Lise and Glixon, Jonathan Emmanuel. *Inventing the Business of Opera: The Impresario and His World in Seventeenth-Century Venice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 3–16.

called for a revision of the elitist models of the Florentine and Roman schools. The Venetian opera houses naturally wanted to retain the splendor associated with princely courts. Due to financial constraints, lacking the traditional resources of a prince such as large groups of singers coming from his chapel and a troupe of recreational dancers, the emphasis was placed upon solo singers, the *virtuosi*, as opposed to numerous choruses¹¹⁹ and allegorical ballets. Nevertheless, the sets and costumes remained of high importance, not surprising in a city where the taste for painting and architecture was so well established, and also attractive to visitors. The role of machine-driven engineering stimulated by the presence of important shipyards is as well not to be underestimated. It was to satisfy the appetite for visual arts, the medium best shared with music in Venice, that Venetian opera was developing a musical dramaturgy in which set designs and mechanical marvels would hold a predominant place¹²⁰.

The fact that sceneries and machines were becoming an art by itself, combining architecture, painting and engineering is witnessed by the edition of the very first book about theater practice. In 1638, Nicola Sabbattini (1575–1654) published his book on the machinery of the theater¹²¹. *Pratica di fabricar scene e machine ne' teatri* is a treatise of the utmost importance, which contains an abundance of views and relevant precepts so pertinent that many of them set a path for centuries to come. It also confirms what Serlio proposed in the previous century regarding the general architecture of the theater. The construction of buildings used exclusively for the theater was still a new development at the time, so Sabbattini still focuses primarily on how to adapt existing facilities. In addition to numerous tricks to that end, the book also gives a clear definition of the proscenium arch: for the purpose of enhancing the illusion, one can make « An arch with statues and colonnades, and in its inside, build the scene because not only will one be well assured that the interior [back stage] will not be in sight, but the stage itself will be beautifully decorated with it, will gain more perspective and, on the other side of this arch, one can put many lights which will not only illuminate the houses of the scene, but the whole sky without being seen as no one will know where they are placed ».¹²² This search for a new quality of illusion led to the transformation of Venetian theaters, initially conceived for dramatic works. To welcome the artistic company that had introduced Roman operas to Venice, the theater Santissimi Giovanni e Paolo, for its official reopening in 1639, was fitted out with a new proscenium arch, whose columns are clearly visible on the design dating from

¹¹⁹ The choir presence is diminishing quickly and by 1650 it has almost disappeared. See: Rosand, Ellen. *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice, The Creation of a Genre*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, pp. 54–55.

¹²⁰ Glixon, Beth Lise and Glixon, Jonathan Emmanuel. *Inventing the Business of Opera....* Oxford, 2006, pp. 227–276.

¹²¹ The *Pratica* published in 1638 by Sabbattini in Ravenna (Book 1 was previously printed at Pesaro in 1637) is a compendium of techniques used at the time in theaters. See: Sabbattini, Nicola. *Pratica di fabricar scene e machine ne' teatri*. Ravenna: de' Paoli e Giovannelli, 1638. See : <https://archive.org/details/praticadifabrica00sabb> (accessed 18 June 2018).

¹²² « si potrà in testa al Palco fare un'Arco con Colonne, e Statue, e dentro fabricarvi la Scena, perche oltre all'essere sicuro di non esser vedute le parti di dentro, darà gran dissimo ornamento all' medesima Scena, aggiungendole ancora maggior fuga, e dalla parte di dietro ad esso Arco vi si potrà porre buona quantità di Lumi, i quali non solo illuminaranno le Case della Scena, ma ancora tutto il Cielo, senza essere veduti, e senza sapersi dove siano posti. » in Libro II, 3, Sabbattini, Nicola. *Pratica di fabricar scene e machine ne' teatri*. Ravenna: 1638, p. 73.

the third quarter of the seventeenth century¹²³ reproduced on Figure 1. And although this design has to be considered with great precautions, its general layout is relevant to Monteverdi's Venetian operas.

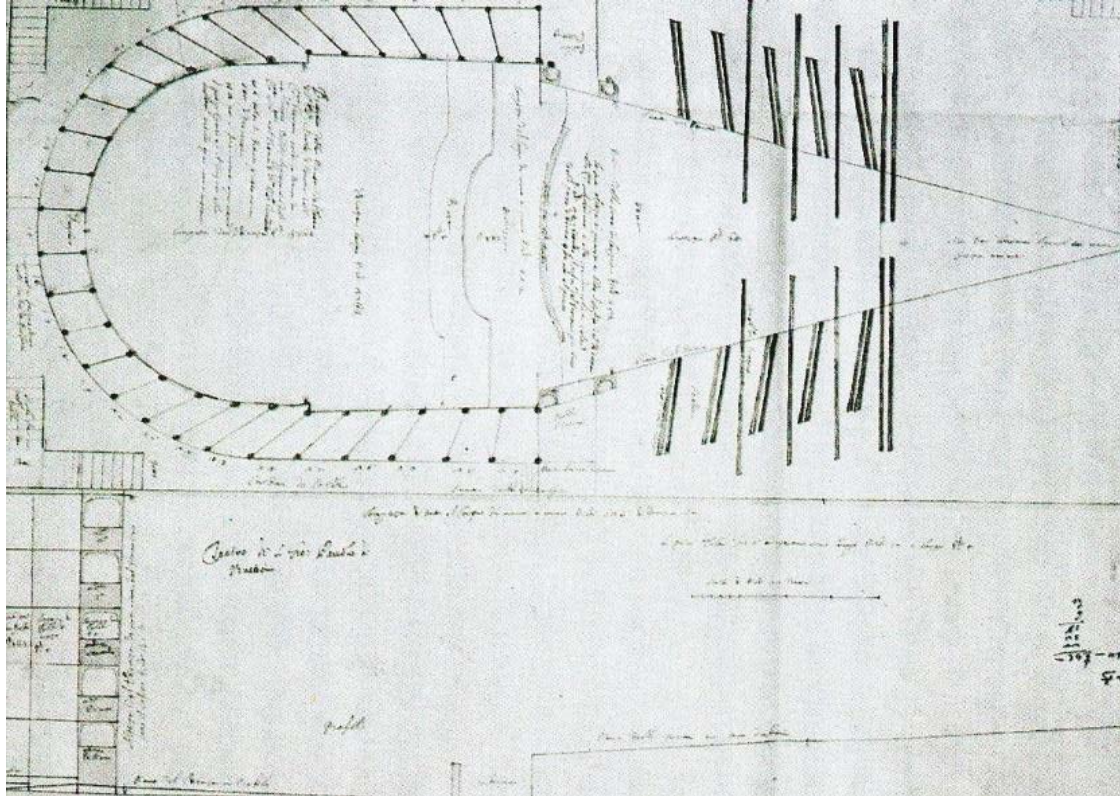


Figure 1: Tomaso Belli, *Theatre of SS Giovanni e Paolo* (Teatro Giovanni Gristostomo), measured drawing, post 1678, plan and section inscribed: «Tomaso Belli Ingegniero». London, Sir John Soane Museum.

¹²³ The plan of the Santissimi Giovanni e Paolo probably shows the theatre by the end of the seventeenth century, so it has to be analysed with great care when trying to refer to the première of Monteverdi's operas. At this time, the stage had five pairs of tracks on either side at oblique angles, on which to mount and move the wings. They are also 3 tracks on either side and 2 pairs of tracks toward the back of the stage, all parallel with the proscenium. These parallel tracks could support and move flats that fulfil the functions of backdrops. See: Holmes, William C. "Venetian Theaters during Vivaldi's Era" in *Opera and Vivaldi*, edited by Thomas A. Collins and Elise K. Kirk. Austin (TX): University of Texas Press, 1984, p. 134. Andrea Pozzo in his book of 1693, *De perspectiva pictorum et architectorum* proposed a machinery of the same nature with oblique wings and parallel tracks for bigger shutters; see: Nicoll, Allardyce. *The Development of the Theater, A Study of Theatrical Art from the Beginnings to the Present Day*. London: George G. Harrap & company LTD, 1966, p. 185.

The manager Giovanni Grimani (1603–1663) and his brother Antonio Grimani (1605–59), whose family owned the theater, had a strong interest in the commercial perspectives of opera that undoubtedly led him, when reconstructing the theater, to equip the stage with the most advanced machinery of the age, a pole of attraction for curious entrance buyers. The machinery must have allowed set changes to take place, as the theater was inaugurated with *La Delia o sia le Sera sposa del Sole*, a mythological opera by Francesco Manelli with significant spectacular components. It is a sign of the times that Giulio Strozzi (1583–1652), in his *Scenario*¹²⁴ for *La Delia*, chose as one of the dedicatees the set designer, Alfonso Chenda (1591 or 1597 or 1607–1640), whose sets and machines he claimed would « ennoble » his drama¹²⁵. As an engineer, Chenda, born Alfonso Rivarola, had already worked in Parma in 1628 for the inauguration of the Teatro Farnese; he could have met Monteverdi there during the rehearsals for *Mercurio e Marte* in the most technically advanced theater of the time¹²⁶. As an upcoming architect, he also gained fame by building temporary theaters in his native Ferrara¹²⁷ and in Padua¹²⁸, this last one being one first example of the system of boxes that will predominate the architecture of Venetian theatres, so it is likely that he was commissioned to make the Grimani

¹²⁴ The *scenario* was first used as a publicity tool by Giulio Strozzi who recognized the importance of providing the public with advance publicity. Using various lures, including the fame of its composer, Francesco Manelli, whose *Andromeda* had been such a success, and the fact that it was the inaugural opera for the new theatre SS Giovanni e Paolo, Strozzi published his scenario over a month before *La Delia* opened. This scenario consisted of a synopsis and a running description of the action, a preface by the author, and an advertisement for the next production, Ferrari's *Armida*. See: Thorburn, Sandy. "What News on the Rialto? How Publicity Created and Destroyed Commercial Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice" in *Discourses in Music: Volume 4 Number 1* (Fall 2002). Toronto: University of Toronto, 2002.

¹²⁵ « una nuova Armida, che sarà come sono state l'altre due delgi anni andati, la maraviglia delle Scene, venedo hoggi tanto nobilitata dele Machine di Vostra Signoria [Grimani], e del Signor Alfonso [Chenda]... » in Strozzi's *Delia Scenario* of 1638 reproduced in Rosand, Ellen. *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice, The Creation of a Genre*. Berkeley: 1991, Appendix I. 15c, p. 414.

¹²⁶ Chenda is named as assistant of Francesco Gutti (c.1605-1645) when the latter was working with Aleotti for *Mercurio e Marte* in Parma in 1628. See: Bjurström, Per. *Giacomo Torelli, and Baroque Stage Design*. Uppsala : Almqvist & Wiksell, 1962, p. 44 & note 23.

¹²⁷ For Ferrara 1631, see: *Il Torneo a piedi, e l'invenzione, ed allegoria, colla quale il signor Borso Bonacossi comparì à mantenerlo l'Alcina maga favola pescatoria fatta rappresentare dal suddetto signore nella sala detta de' Giganti in Ferrara, alla presenza di tre Altezze Serenissime di Mantova, e de i due Eminentissimi cardinali Sacchetti, e Spada, nel carnevale dell'anno 1631. Descritti dall'Aggirato accademico fileno. Ervi aggiunto il Tebro epitalamio, che fu dispensato nella sera, e nel teatro, in cui si fece il torneo*. Ferrara: Gioseffo Gironi e Francesco Gherardi, 1631. The tournament was organized by Borso Bonacossi for the nuptials of Giovanni Francesco Sacchetti and Beatrice Estense Tassoni in the Ferrara Castle, in presence of the Duke of Mantova Charles de Nevers, dedicaty of the book, and of the cardinal Giulio Sacchetti. The book contains 6 engravings of the sets of Alfonso Chenda. See: <http://bibliotecaestense.beniculturali.it/info/img/lib/i-mo-beu-70.i.19.6.pdf>

¹²⁸ For Padua 1636, see : *L'ERMIONA del S. Marchese Pio Enea Obizzi Per introduzione d'un Torneo à piedi & a cavalli E d'un Balletto rappresentato in Musica nella Città di Padova l'Anno M. DC. XXXVI dedicata Al Sereniss. Principe di Venetia FRANCESCO ERIZO descritta dal S. Nicolo Enea Bartolini Gentilhuomo, & Academico° Senese*. Padua: Paolo Frambotto, 1638. Performed in Padua in 1636 *L'Ermiona*, music by Giovanni Felice Sances and text by G. Tonti Padova and Pio Enea degli Obizzi, unlike previous operas, was not commissioned to celebrate a special occasion, nor was it performed before an audience exclusively made-up of the nobility. See: Rosand, Ellen. *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Creation of a Genre*. Berkeley 1991, pp. 69–72. For the sets, see also: <http://movio.beniculturali.it/bupd/lemusetrailibri/it/72/23-scenografia-dellermiona>

theater suitable for performing operas in front of an auditorium divided in boxes¹²⁹. This division was made necessary by the desire to offer a private as much as public experience for the audience. In this case the theater Santissimi Giovanni e Paolo must correspondingly have had a wing stage from the start, which allowed several sets to appear, one after the other. The number of tracks inserted in the stage permitted scenes to change before the audience's eyes in a minimal amount of time: and although the way they were changed is not known, this would have been new for the audience and part of the attraction for the spectacle. Indeed, the stage machinery of the Teatro SS Giovanni e Paolo may have been among the most sophisticated at that time¹³⁰. But after a second spectacular production, *Armida* by Benedetto Ferrari, Chenda died in 1640. He appears to have been succeeded at the SS Giovanni e Paolo by Giovanni Burnacini (1610–1655), to whom can be attributed the sets for Monteverdi's operas in Venice.

1.2.2 Giovanni Burnacini (1610–1655)

Born in Cesena around 1610, Giovanni Burnacini built a temporary theater in Ferrara in 1642 to stage a tournament entitled *La Pretensioni del Tebro e del Po*. For this big spectacle, which took place in the courtyard of the Palazzo Publico, Burnacini designed a performance area closed on three sides with four tiers of boxes, a formula invented by Chenda for the same type of spectacle¹³¹. On the fourth side, the stage could offer changeable scenery: from an Underworld scene with ruined architecture to a woody landscape¹³². Burnacini divided his large stage, fit for the horses of the tournament, into three sections: the river gods Tiber and Po on each side, and, a center space where, after showing the flaming palace of Pluto, the city of Ferrara was the focal point¹³³. This similitude of conception with the performance space that Chenda had chosen in 1637 for *L'Ermiona* in Padua may indicate some shared experience or at least common ideas that will prevailed for the Venetian opera auditoriums¹³⁴. Burnacini's first

¹²⁹ *L'Ermiona* is generally regarded as the decisive antecedent of the commercial Venetian opera; see: Petrobelli, Pierluigi. "L'Ermiona di Pio degli Obizzi ed i primi spettacoli d'opera veneziani" in *Quaderni della Rassegna musicale* 3, (1965), pp. 125–141.

¹³⁰ This supremacy was short lived as the Tron family opened the Teatro Novissimo in 1641 with machinery invented by Giacomo Torelli for *La Finta Pazza* which was allowing quicker and simultaneous changes of sets. See: Bjurström, Per. *Giacomo Torelli, and Baroque Stage Design*. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1962, p. 47.

¹³¹ It is quite revealing that from all cities in Italy, Venice will be the one to promote public opera and the only one where horse tournaments were, by then, if not impossible, difficult to achieve.

¹³² For Ferrara 1642 see designs reproduced in Torre Franca, Fausto. "Il primo scenografo del popolo G. Burnacini" in *Scenario*, N°3. Milano & Roma, 1933, pp. 191-194. For the descriptive text, see: *Le Pretensioni del Tebro, e del Po' cantate, e combattute in Ferrara, nella venuta dell'eccell. sig. principe Taddeo Barberini ... Componimento del sig. Donn'Ascanio Pio di Savoia. E descrizione di Francesco Berni*. Ferrara : Francesco Suzzi, 1642. See also : https://www.europeana.eu/portal/en/record/2048088/oai_www_internetculturale_it_metatocicat_oai_bid_bra idense_it_7_MI0185_UM1E000444.html

¹³³ For the hell scene this structure is kept, with columns dividing the palace in 3 sections, and burning city as focal point.

¹³⁴ Gualandri, Francesca. "Spettacoli, luoghi e interpreti a Venezia all'epoca della *Didone*" in *La Fenice prima dell'Opera* 2005–2006, no. 7, pp. 45–48, suggests that Chenda's sets were transferred from Padua to Venice where they were reused for various productions.

recorded work for the Venetian opera stage was presented in 1643¹³⁵: he worked in SS Giovanni e Paolo as a set designer and impresario for the opera *La Finta Savia*, the marketing answer devised by Grimani to counter the success of *La Finta Pazza*, performed in the rival Novissimo theater with spectacular sets of Torelli¹³⁶. However, the opera's librettist, Giulio Strozzi, seems to indicate that Burnacini had already been working in Venice for some years. In the foreword of the libretto, Burnacini is praised as the designer “who in the past years was the first one to revive the theaters of Venice, with this majestic grandeur [...]”¹³⁷. This reference to his activity during previous seasons is the reason that one can attribute to him the sets of the other operas performed in SS Giovanni e Paolo after the death of Chenda in 1640¹³⁸. Among these productions, the three last operas by Monteverdi stand out: *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* with a libretto by Giacomo Badoaro (1602–1654) in 1640, revived in 1641; *Le nozze d'Enea e Lavinia* by Michelangelo Torcigliani (1618–1679) in 1641 (the score of which is now lost); and *L'incoronazione di Poppea* by Giovanni Francesco Busenello (1598–1659) in 1643.

As impressive as these records are, we have only a couple of pieces of visual evidence of Giovanni Burnacini's activity in Venice: two small prints that represent ephemeral architecture, one for the Feast of the Virgin on the Piazza San Marco in 1642¹³⁹ and one for a fireworks' display probably given during Carnival¹⁴⁰ (Figure 2). Although these festive displays indicate serious connection with the elite of the city, who was in charge of organizing such public events, his position in Venice was likely overshadowed by the presence of his rival, Giacomo Torelli (1608–1678)¹⁴¹. This ambitious designer, ever mindful of his reputation, had engravings made at great cost of his own sets designed for the Novissimo Theater, itself a rival of the Grimani Theater. These lavish publications had, and still have, great impact on Torelli's fame. It was only after the departure of Torelli for Paris in 1645, following the bankruptcy of the Novissimo, that Burnacini was able to regain his position as the premier designer in Venice.

¹³⁵ Dates are tricky to establish when retracing the evolution of Venetian opera because of the specificity of the Venetian calendar: Despite my effort to be consistent, dates through this chapter may vary from one year. On the complexity of opera and the Calendar, see: Donington, Robert. *The rise of opera*. London & Boston: Faber and Faber, 1981, pp. 307–316. See also: Selfridge-Field, Eleanor. “Ritual, liturgy and the Venetian theatrical calendar” in *D'une scène à l'autre, l'opera italien en Europe. vol.1 : Les pérégrinations d'un genre* sous la direction de Damien Colas and Alessandro Di Profio. Wavre : Editions Mardaga, 2009, pp. 13–25.

¹³⁶ *La Finta Pazza* by Francesco Saccati to a libretto by Giulio Strozzi. Its premiere in Venice during the Carnival season of 1641 inaugurated the Teatro Novissimo. *La Finta Savia* of Giulio Strozzi with Music by Filiberto Laurenzi, Giovanni Battista Crivelli, Benedetto Ferrari, Alessandro Leardini, Tarquinio Merula, and Vincenzo Tozzi was performed on 1 January 1643 at the Teatro SS Giovanni e Paolo.

¹³⁷ « Le macchine, e le scene con numerose mutationi sono state inventate dal vivacissimo Sig. Gio. Burnacini da Cesena, il quale fù gli anni adietri il primo, che ravivò i Teatri di Venetia con questa maestrose apparenze. » in Strozzi, Giulio. *La Finta Savia*. Venetia: Matteo Leni e Giovanni Vecellio, 1643, p. 184, quoted by Torre Franca, Fausto. “Il primo scenografo del popolo G. Burnacini” in *Scenario*, N° 3. Milano & Roma, 1933, p. 191.

¹³⁸ 1642: *Gli amori di Giasone e d'Issifile* by O. Persiani and Marco Marazzoli, and *Il Narciso ed immortalati Eco* by the same artists.

¹³⁹ I was not able to locate a copy of this print. See: https://www.uibk.ac.at/aia/burnacini_giov_5_1.htm

¹⁴⁰ On the forefront of the print a battle is taking place: that seems to suggest the fistfight between the two main guilds of gondoliers, a yearly spectacle in Venice taking place on the Saint Barnaba Bridge. See chapter 6.

¹⁴¹ For the latest approach of work of Torelli, see: *Giacomo Torelli, L'invenzione scenica nell'Europa barocca*. a cura di Francesco Milesi. Fano: Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio, 2000.

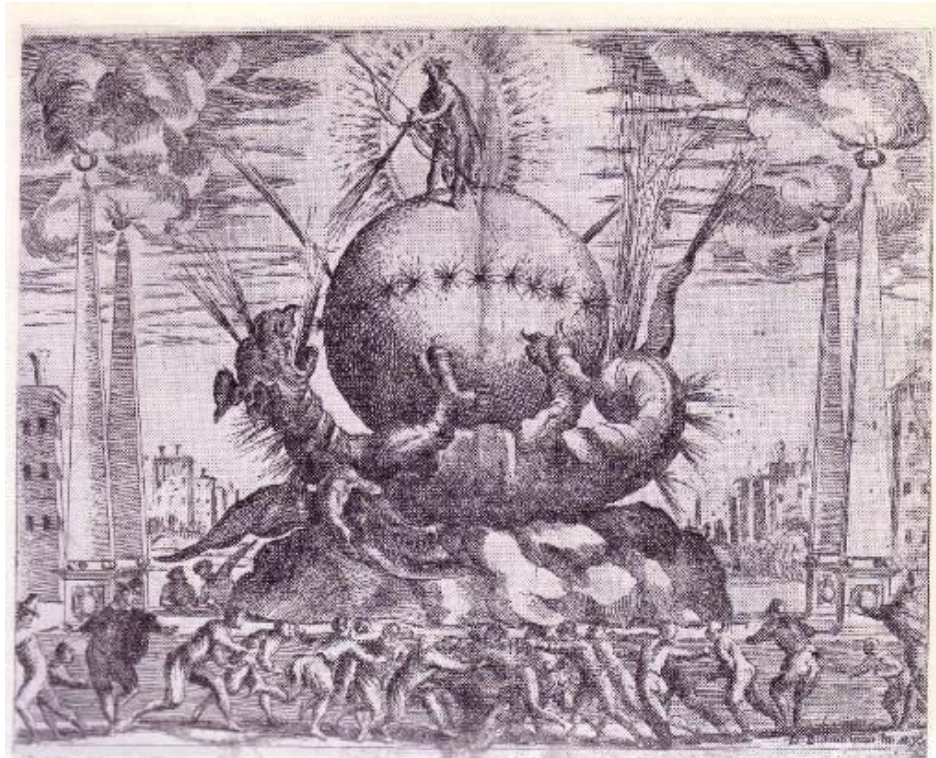


Figure 2: 1640?, engraving by Giovanni Burnacini of his set for a firework display in Venice showing *The Victory of Apollo over the Python*¹⁴².
London, Victoria and Albert Museum (previously in Theater Museum, Harry R. Beard Collection).

One of Giovanni Burnacini's documented productions from this later period is 1651's *Gli amori di Alessandro Magno e di Rossane*, with music by Francesco Luccio (ca 1628–1658). For this piece, presented at the Grimani Theater, Burnacini acted as designer and impresario. In his foreword to the libretto of Giacinto Andrea Cicognini (1606–1651), he claims that he was “the first who has adorned the stage and made machines in this city.”¹⁴³ Despite this entitlement, Venetian opera theaters were constrained in the production resources they could provide, and did not always offer the designer, even doubling as impresario, ideal conditions in which to maintain a predominant position next to the composer and the poet whose fields of activities were more diverse and easily accessible in printing form. The career path of Torelli moving from the unsecure private enterprises of Venice to state patronages in France was a model whose prestigious social appeal, inherited from the Renaissance, was also based on a search to find circles as well learned as connected. Perhaps this is also why, in 1651, Burnacini accepted the princely invitation of Emperor Ferdinand III (1608–1657) to Vienna where the

¹⁴² In *The rise of opera*, this print is attributed wrongly by Donington to his son Lodovico, Donington reading on the print « Lo: Burnacinius », when one should read « Io. ». The letter « I » is used here in the Latin way, Ioannis, coming from the Greek Ioannese and derived from the Hebrew «Yohanan», consisting of «Yahwè», God and «hanan», to be merciful. Venetian used Giovine or Iovine as nickname or to indicate a young (in modern Italian giovane) person. See: Donington, Robert. *The rise of opera*, London & Boston: Faber and Faber, 1981. pl. XII.

¹⁴³ « A me dunque, che per i dilette dell'Architettura, e di macchine posso con verità dirmi il primo, quanto al tempo c'habbia ornate Scene, ò fatte Macchine in questa Città » in Burnacini, Giovanni. “A Lettore.” in Cicognini, Giacinto Andrea. *Gli amori di Alessandro Magno e di Rossane*. Venezia: Pinelli, 1651, p. 8.

Italian artist, until his death on July 21, 1655, established a productive career as a court architect and theater designer. His son Lodovico (Ludovico) Ottavio Burnacini (1636–1707), first working as his assistant, will keep on in the style of his father and establish a long-lasting influence on the scenography of the German speaking countries.

Due to the lack of first-hand iconographical sources on Giovanni Burnacini's creations for opera in Venice, we are forced to look at his productions in Austria to get an idea of his personal style. One of his productions, *La Gara*—an operatic prologue for a tournament by Alberto Vimina (1603-1667) —was performed in Vienna in 1652. The libretto is illustrated with engraved scenes evoking the event¹⁴⁴. Even more informative, as we will see, is *L'Inganno d'amore* by Antonio Bertali, as the libretto by Benedetto Ferrari, published for the performance in Regensburg in 1653, shows clearly the different sets¹⁴⁵. One of Burnacini's designs for *La Gara* (Figure 3) is typical of the architectural work of the designer. Behind a majestic *frons scaenae* composed of long columns, the eye is drawn and led along the walls, cornices, and colonnades toward the center of the stage. The interest is concentrated upon these transversal elements, which form the most significant decorative part of the picture. The backdrop perspective is simply used to complete the milieu; it was too far away and too dimly lit to transmit more than a dominating mood or atmosphere¹⁴⁶. Its effect in Burnacini is primarily to serve as a neutral background in front of which the performers are more defined, thanks to the colored costumes¹⁴⁷, and better lit, as a result of the footlights. Even so, regardless of the magnificence and the ornamentation of Burnacini's sets, it is easy to perceive the strict symmetrical and monumental composition that would enhance the human presence¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴⁴ See: Vimina, Alberto. *La gara. Opera Dramatica rappresentata in Musica. Per introduzione di Torneo fatto in Vienna per la nascita della Serenissima Infante di Spagna, Donna Margarita Maria [sic] d'Avstria, dedicata a Sua Eccellenza il Signore Marchese di Castel Rodrigo, Gentiluomo Della Camera di S. Maestà Cattolica, del suo Consiglio, e suo Ambasciatore straordinario in Corte Cesarea. Da Alberto Vimina.* Vienna d'Austria: Matteo Riccio, 1652.

¹⁴⁵ See : Bertali, Antonio. *L'Inganno d'amore. Inhalt und Verfassung der comoedi von Liebs Betrug ; ersinnet von Benedicto Ferrari ; dedicieret dem aller durchleuchtigsten grossmächtigsten und Unüßervindlichsten Römischen Kayser auch zu Hungarn und Böhmen König &c. &c.* [Regensburg] : Gedruckt in der Kays. Freyen Reichs Statt Regenspurg bey Christoff Fischer, 1653.

¹⁴⁶ Later in the century a French traveller wrote : « L'on joue à Venise plusieurs opéras à la fois ; les théâtres sont grands et magnifiques, les décorations superbes et bien diversifiées, mais très mal éclairées. » in Limojon de Saint Didier, Alexandre Toussaint. *La ville et la république de Venise.* Paris: 1680, p. 347.

¹⁴⁷ For costumes, a good source are the paintings kept in the Pinacoteca of Fano showing Torelli's sets for *Venere Gelosa* (1643) and for *Deidamia* (1644), although the presence of nudity of the gods in the set of this piece indicates a desire of the painter to elevate the composition to History painting, and not performance documentation, the bright colours seem accurate. See: *Giacomo Torelli, L'invenzione scenica nell'Europa barocca.* Fano: Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio, 2000, pp. 122–146.

¹⁴⁸ Lodovico (Ludovico) Ottavio Burnacini (1636-1707) was his father's assistant until the latter's death and succeeded him in the office of theatre architect and imperial court engineer to the Habsburg Emperor. He is famous today thanks to the series of engravings showing his sets for *Il pomo d'oro*, the opera by Antonio Cesti (1623-1669) on a libretto by Francesco Sbarra (1611-1668), which was first performed before the imperial court in a specially constructed open-air theatre in Vienna. Originally planned to mark the wedding of the Emperor Leopold I and Margaret Theresa of Spain in 1666, the production was rescheduled to mark the Empress's seventeenth birthday in 1668. The work was staged over the course of two days: The Prologue, Acts I and II were given on July 12; Acts III, IV and V on July 14. The staging was unprecedented for its lavishness and no fewer than 24 sets with stage machinery.



Figure 3: 1652, anonymous engraving of a Giovanni Burnacini's «Atrio Reggio» for *La Gara* in Alberto Vimina. *La Gara : Opera Dramatica rappresentata in Musica, Per introduzione di Torneo fatto in Vienna Per La Nascita Della Serenissima Infanta Di Spagna, Donna Margarita Maria D'Avstria, Dedicata A Sua Eccellenza il Signore Marchese Di Castel Rodrigo ...* Vienna d'Austria : Matteo Riccio, 1652.
London, British Library.

1.3 *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*

A visual configuration that emphasizes the movements of the singer was clearly appropriate for the Venetian staging of the story of Ulisse's return to his island of Ithaca. It may not be a coincidence that the existing prologue of the opera by Monteverdi shows Human Frailty tormented by three gods who are blind¹⁴⁹. Unfortunately, this intriguing visual allegory is, like many aspects of *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*, difficult to investigate, as there is little extant evidence of the first performance in Venice in 1640. Even though the opera was revived in 1641, no printed copies of the libretto have survived. Fortunately, a number of manuscripts is kept in Venice, one likely to be contemporary and perhaps even from the hand of the librettist Badoaro. This lack of printed sources makes the study of this libretto as essential as examining the only surviving manuscript of the score, as it contains scenes that were not set in music and seems therefore to have preceded the production. In this libretto, we learn about the original plan to perform the opera in five acts and a prologue, a division that brought the play closer to the antique model of *tragedia*¹⁵⁰. In this plan, the development of the sets appears to be very closely related to the action of the drama. The libretto offers a dramaturgy of space, both in terms of places of action and types of scenery required, close to the one Homer describes in his *Odyssey*¹⁵¹. The narrative style of the libretto, with its division by sequences, may be an evocation of the Greek epic, but the definition of its spaces of action on stage also bears the mark of Venetian early opera¹⁵². The extensive information we have about the usages and practices of the Venetian theaters of the period fits well with what the librettist Badoaro had in mind. First of all, the narration follows a series of episodes that do not necessarily succeed each other chronologically until they merge during the slaughter of the suitors. Furthermore, to establish this pacing, these events take place in different locations, and the changes of space underline the possible simultaneity of action. Movable scenery and special effects, a trademark of Venetian designers, offered the perfect visual tools to display the multiple events of the ultimate episode of Ulisse's story.

On the libretto manuscript, next to the detailed list of characters, the so-called Aristotelian unity of place is announced: «The scene is in Ithaca, an Island in the Ionian Sea, now called Theachi. »¹⁵³ Ithaca is a real island in the Ionian Sea, and it was under Venetian control in the time of Monteverdi: one of numerous harbors offering shelter for the maritime

¹⁴⁹ Badoaro wrote another version of the prologue showing: Il Fato, la Fortezza and La Prudentia. See following note.

¹⁵⁰ Manuscript of the libretto of *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*: I-Vmc 564, Biblioteca d'Arte e di Storia del Civico Museo Correr, Venezia, Italy.

¹⁵¹ Badoaro bases his adaptation on the book 13 to 24 of Homer's *Odyssey*, and, as Ellen Rosand, has suggested, on the Italian translation published in 1573 by Lodovico Dolce. See: Rosand, Ellen. *Monteverdi's last operas: a Venetian trilogy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007, p. 133.

¹⁵² See: Carter, Tim. *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*. New Haven (CT): Yale University Press, 2002, pp. 237-249.

¹⁵³ « La scena é in Ionia Isola del Mar Ionio Vera nomineva Theachi » in Manuscript of the libretto of *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*. Biblioteca Correr.

trade of the *Serenissima*¹⁵⁴. Called « Thiaki » by the sailors before the Venetian period, the name was kept by the inhabitants, and the island was called « Theaki » by the Venetians, sometimes written « Theachi » as in the manuscript of the libretto. Far from being an imaginary place, or a place lost in time, Ithaca/Theaki was as real for the audience of the theater SS Giovanni and Paolo as any other island of the Mediterranean and the patriot audience of 1640 may have seen in Ulisse regaining his kingdom over the suitors, a possible allegory of Venetian legitimacy in the possession of Theachi over the Ottomans. On stage, the island, where the entire opera takes place, is shown in three sets, very different from each other: the « Reggia », the « Boschereccia », the « Marittima »: The Royal Palace, the Grove, and the Seashore.

1.3.1 The « Reggia »

One custom that characterizes the scenography of most Venetian operas of the period is the presence of a *Scena Maestra* (principal set), also known as *Scena ordinaria* (regular set)¹⁵⁵. In *Ulisse* the royal palace occupies the function of *Scena Maestra*, the set that appears most often in the story as the center of power of Ithaca and the destination of Ulisse for his return to his fatherland. The title of the opera, *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*, declares clearly that it focuses on the final chronological episode of the Homeric adventures of Ulisse. By making the royal palace the most recurrent set in *Ulisse*, Badoaro is able to develop two distinct narratives before merging them in this very space for the last scenes: Penelope facing the suitors, and Ulisse and his journey from the moment of his landing on the shores of Ithaca to his arrival in his home. The « Reggia » is the royal palace where Queen Penelope has confined herself, waiting for her husband, and where the suitors are courting her. More specifically, the main room of the palace is the center of royal power and where the King of Ithaca received his visitors: in *Ulisse*, it is a throne room without a king, and an empty seat may have highlighted the imbalance of power.



Figure 4: 1674, engraving by Matthäus Küsel, (1629-1681) from the set by Lodovico Burnacini (1636-1707) for *Il Fuoco Eterno Custodito Dalle Vestali* by Niccolo Minato & Antonio Draghi, Vienna, 1674.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

¹⁵⁴ Scammell, Geoffrey Vaughn. *The world encompassed: the first European maritime empires, c. 800-1650*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1981, p. 119.

¹⁵⁵ Glixon, Beth Lise and Glixon, Jonathan Emmanuel. *Inventing the Business of Opera...* Oxford, 2006, pp. 242–244.

To reflect this, it is likely that Burnacini had painted an imposing architecture for his principal set, with lines of columns and pillars bringing the eye to the vanishing point, where an empty throne would have been a clear expression of the void Ithaca suffers from. We already have seen the *Atrio Reggio* by Giovanni Burnacini which can be found in his work of 1652 for *La Gara*¹⁵⁶ in Vienna (Figure 3). The stage is organized in a very monumental way, with the perspective accentuated by means of close points of connection coming from the capitals and the pillars creating perspective lines. This configuration emphasizing the vanishing point could lead to a throne in the middle. However, the throne may also have also been located on one side, as we find this disposition in many sets of this period.¹⁵⁷ A throne room by Lodovico Burnacini, the son of Giovanni, for *Il Fuoco Eterno Custodito Dalle Vestali* in Vienna in 1674 shows also such a disposition. Taking in consideration that the print showing a « Room in the Palace of the Dictator in Roma » may have reversed the original composition, the place of the ruler, « with his majestic seat »¹⁵⁸, is on the side (Figure 4)



Figure 5: 1653, engraving by Jacob van Sandrart (1630–1708) of Giovanni Burnacini's « Atrio Reggio » for Act I of *L'Inganno d'amore* for the performance in Regensburg. Washington, Library of Congress.

¹⁵⁶ Vimina, Alberto. *La Gara : Opera Dramatica rappresentata in Musica, Per introduzione di Torneo fatto in Vienna Per La Nascita Della Serenissima Infanta Di Spagna, Donna Margarita Maria D'Avstria, Dedicata A Sua Eccellenza il Signore Marchese Di Castel Rodrigo ...* Vienna : Matteo Riccio, 1652.

¹⁵⁷ A good example can be found in one of Torelli's sets for the *Ballet de la Nuit*, performed in Paris in 1653, but the accumulations of different performing space in the design, reusing elements of *Andromède*, dissolve the idea of a throne room. See: *Giacomo Torelli, L'invenzione scenica nell'Europa barocca*. Fano: Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio, 2000, p. 236.

¹⁵⁸ « Stanze, del Palazzo del Dittatore in Roma con il suo maestoso Seggio » See: [Niccolo Minato and Antonio Draghi]. *Il Fuoco Eterno Custodito Dalle Vestali, Drama Musicale Per la Felicissima Nascita della Sereniss. Arciduchessa Anna Maria Figlia delle S.S. C.C. R.R. M.M. Dell' Imperatore Leopoldo, e della Imperatrice Claudia Felice....* Vienna: Giovanni Christoforo Cosmerovio, 1674.

For *l'Inganno d'amore* of 1653, Burnacini designed a « Royal Atrium composed of Doric order with a continuous order of doubled columns, with in the inter columns niches with statues, whose beautiful construction, and continuation of depth [...] »¹⁵⁹. This royal atrium fits the elements of *Ulysse's* «Reggia» (Figure 5). The courtyard open to the sky would also allow in *Ulysse*, the flying of Minerva who «appears in a machine»¹⁶⁰ for the slaughter of the suitors.

The place speaks of the absent center of power, but it is also the place of rebirth, where Ulysse will regain his true identity as King of Ithaca: the room where the suitors will be slaughtered. This episode, one of the most important of the *Odyssey*, is reminiscent of the fatal meals that are a staple of Greek mythology¹⁶¹, and is the one most represented in visual arts. In these drawings, paintings, and engravings, the space is often organized vertically with the architecture of the palace and horizontally by the axis delimited by the table of the banquet of the suitors. A very good example of this type of composition is present in a drawing of the Genovan artist Luca Cambiaso (1527–1585) whose language, influenced by the purpose of his work, destined to become a fresco, is close to the one of a picture of a stage performance (Figure 6). Following Homer¹⁶², Cambiaso places in the center the figure of Minerva, flanked by Telemaco on one side, with a spear, and Ulysse, on this other, with his bow. As the entrance of the room is blocked by Ulysse, the suitors have no way to flee away. As viewers in the room itself, we are part of the action.

While a banquet with its long table is often presented in the Venetian paintings showing biblical meals at the center of lavish architecture in perspective—Veronese had been the champion of this type of composition, and the size of some of his canvases reached the actual dimensions of a stage¹⁶³—the visual trope of the meal as phenomenon of revelation acquires a new outcome in *Ulysse*. This composition of the verticality of the palace and the horizontality of the table is completed by the dynamic axis defined by Ulysse slaughtering the suitors. Luca Cambiaso makes good use of the rules of perspective, and the scene seems perfectly suited to the Venetian stage. In this scene, with Burnacini's strong linear style directing focus, the violence that stops the festivities must have been very effective, but how realistic the staged

¹⁵⁹ « Atrio Regio composto d'ordine Dorico con una continuoata ordinanza di duplicate colonne, negl'intercoluni delle quali erano nicchie cone statue, onde belle costruttione, e continuoatione di lontananza faceva restare ammirato ciascuno, che le riguardava. » in: Bertali, Antonio. *L'Inganno d'amore*. [Regensburg] : Gedruckt in der Kays. Freyen Reichs Statt Regenspurg bey Christoff Fischer, 1653.

¹⁶⁰ «Apparisce Minerva in macchina» in *Ulysse*, Act IV, Last Scene.

¹⁶¹ One may think of the story of Atheus and Thyestes as told by Seneca in his *Thyestes* (based on a Euripides model now lost).

¹⁶² « Then Athene, daughter of Zeus, drew near them, like unto Mentor in form and voice, and Odysseus saw her, and was glad; and he spoke, saying: "Mentor, ward off ruin, and remember me, thy dear comrade, who often befriended thee. Thou art of like age with myself" [then the goddess] flew up to the roof-beam of the smoky hall, and sat there in the guise of a swallow to look upon. » in Homer. *The Odyssey* with an English Translation by A.T. Murray. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press & London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1919, Book XXII, 200–240, pp. 353–355.

¹⁶³ Several compositions by Paolo Veronese (1528–1588) include a meal and a table: *The Supper at Emmaus*, *Feast in the house of Levi*, *Feast in the house of Simon*, etc, and *The Wedding Feast at Cana* (1563) which measures 6.77 m × 9.94 m.

slaughter would have been remains a question¹⁶⁴. Nevertheless, this massacre was certainly an expression of ferocity, which is reaffirmed by the parallel as established in the story when a witness of the butchery, Iro, compares the « proci » (suitors) to « porci » (pigs)¹⁶⁵. The libretto suggests a ritual sacrifice, a cleansing in blood and that anchors the drama in the Greek style¹⁶⁶. The celestial good omens that Minerva bestows¹⁶⁷, the sound of thunder and the vision of lightning that she promised as the signal for the slaughter, must have amplified its extent on stage¹⁶⁸.



Figure 6: ca. 1565, Study by Luca Cambiaso (1527-1585) for the *Return of Ulysses*, Pen and brown ink and brush and brown wash on brown laid paper, squared in red chalk for a fresco for the Grimaldi palace on the Strada Nuova in Genova. Princeton (NJ), Princeton University, Art Museum.

¹⁶⁴ It seems that, in respect for the integrity of costumes, simpler artifices were more commonly used on the stage. Red fabric, as used in eastern theatre form, would have produced in the dim lighting of the candles the same effect without irreversible consequences for the garments.

¹⁶⁵ On the comical aspect of the part of Iro, see: Rosand, Ellen. "Iro and the Interpretation of *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*" in *Journal of Musicology* 7 (1989), pp. 141-164.

¹⁶⁶ The aim to refer to ancient tragedy is part of the literary aims of Badoaro. See: Rosand, Ellen. *Monteverdi's last operas...* 2007, pp.130-143.

¹⁶⁷ « Minerva [...] Allor che l'arco tuo ti giunge in mano / e strepitoso tuon fiero t'invita, / saetta pur, che la tua destra ardita / tutti conficcherà gli estinti al piano. / Io sarò teco e con celeste lampo / atterrerò l'umanità soggetta: / cadran vittime tutti alla vendetta, / ché i flagelli del ciel non hanno scampo.» in *Ulisse*, Act III, Scene 6.

¹⁶⁸ The lightning effect, the « lampo » that Minerva predicts, must have been figured by fireworks in directional « flagelli », while the « tuon » may have been done with the help of a thunder machine.

1.3.2 The « Boschereccia »

Whereas the royal palace is the sty of sin, the pastoral scene is, in opposition, presented as the kingdom of innocence. The « Boschereccia », the grove where Eumete, the swineherd, reigns over his pigs, is the first place where Minerva sends Ulisse, albeit incognito. It is there that the broken hero meets the wise Eumete and gradually regains his human identity by being honored with the ancestral laws of hospitality. There, he also recovers his unique status as a father by being reunited with his son Telemaco. These fundamental values of the pastoral life, the sense of community and the family ideals, speak of an uncorrupted world and natural goodness. The woodland of the Venetian stage, the « Boschereccia », was probably still much like the design Serlio had proposed a century before as a generic set for the Pastoral Scene, which he called in a Greek fashion following Vitruvius, *scena satyrica* (See Figure 1, in the *Orfeo* part). In a forest dominated by tall trees that look like Mediterranean pines, on both parts of a path some simple huts can be seen, suggesting a human settlement. Indeed, in Homer, Eumete welcomes Odysseus in his house, but Badoaro chooses to have the action take place outside, among the trees.



Figure 7: 1636, anonymous engraving of the theatre set by Alfonso Chenda (ca 1600 -1640) for «una boschereccia o Campagna di Beozia» with an apparition of Pallade of *L'Ermiona*, music by Giovanni Felice Sances and text by G. Tonti Padova and Pio Enea degli Obizzi, in Padua in 1636.
Los Angeles, Getty Museum.

For the performance in Venice, Burnacini may have reused sets from the stock left by Chenda at his death, and more specifically the trees this designer created for the first act of Ferrari's *Armida*, a spectacle which opened a few months before *Ulisse*. The shutters showing the game-filled forest of the magician would have suited the calm and beauty of Eumete's abode. The side shutters may have shown the same elongated trunks which confer an architectural feel to the set for « una boschereccia o Campagna di Beozia » of Chenda's 1636 production of *L'Ermiona*, as seen on Figure 7. If Burnacini would have wanted to express the specific idea of Homer about the dwellings of Eumete, he may have integrated to the trees of Chenda some shutters painted like rustic buildings. Shutters showing wild trees appear on many sets of this period and these shutters showing huts may have made all the difference. The model of Serlio was the reference for composing a set of this kind and a good example of the wide spread influence of *Scena satyrica* is the design by Inigo Jones (1573–1652), for *Florimène* in London in 1635 or 1636¹⁶⁹. As shown of Figure 8, the English designer, who spent formative years in Italy, follows strictly the composition of Serlio but enlarged it in proportion with the dimensions of the Whitehall, where the performance took place. If one forgets the design of Jones for the proscenium frame, and the graphic hand of the artist, Burnacini's « Boschereccia » may have been of the same type, maybe with a view of the royal palace on the backdrop, as the grove of Eumete is only a step, although decisive, between the seashore and the « Reggia ».



Figure 8: 1635-36, Study by Inigo Jones (1527–1585) for a set for *Florimène*, in the Whitehall,
Pen and brown ink and brush paper
Chatsworth, Devonshire Collection.

¹⁶⁹ For an interesting reconstruction of the sets of *Florimène*, see:
<https://spectacle.appstate.edu/news/florim%C3%A8ne-whitehall>

Ulisse of Monteverdi ends, as it started, in the « Reggia » set, but with the evocation of another space of the palace, this one hidden in its center: the marital bedchamber. Ulisse describes it in visual terms: « I know that your pure bed, which none have seen, save Ulisse, ... »¹⁷⁰. By stating that the marital bed has not been seen by anyone else, Ulisse reassures Penelope of his trust and at the same time proves his identity. The bed, as much as the throne, is Ulisse's goal: a wanderer who wants to repossess his identities as man, father, king, and husband. The reunion happens after the gods have agreed to let Ulisse regain the last part of his self. In this scene, which summarizes the twenty years of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Juno, goddess of marriage, admits that « Ulisse has wandered too much »¹⁷¹ and thereby marks the beginning of the denouement. To finally convince his wife of his identity, Ulisse must describe the couple's bed and the figure of Diana that Penelope has embroidered on the bed cover. It is with the description of this picture of the chaste goddess that Penelope recognizes Ulisse, and in the conjugal embrace that follows that the wandering of the hero really ends. The association of ideas elevates the sovereigns to the status of mythic couple for the audience as much as it did for the readers of Homer¹⁷².

1.3.3 The « Marittima »

This ultimate private center in the palace parallels the immensity of the sea, where the wanderer went when he left Ithaca and where he is returning from at the beginning of Monteverdi's opera, that main theme of Homer's epic poem. The relation of Venice with the sea was at the center of its identity by 1640, culminating in *Lo Sposalizio del Mare* (The Marriage of the Sea), the lavish annual ceremony that used to symbolize the maritime dominion of Venice¹⁷³. Since the eleventh century, this symbolic union took the form of a pageant on Ascension Day with the head of the state, the Doge, as the main character, and the sea as partner and backdrop. Considering the importance of the sea in Venice both in terms of reality and symbol, it is not surprising that the depictions of seascapes became compulsory in Venetian operas. Indeed, the first opera presented in a Venetian public theater, *Andromeda* in 1637, had a sea-related theme, and for its very first set Chenda designed a « Marittima »: «The Curtain gone, one could see the whole sea with, in the distance, some movements of water, and rocks, the naturalness of which (even though it was fake) brought doubt as to whether one was in a theater, or on a real seashore ».¹⁷⁴ In *Ulisse*, the set that immediately follows the first appearance of the palace is the seascape. The way to present the illusion of the sea was reported by Sabbatini in 1638, and his treatise describes various techniques to represent water, showing that ingenuity was a constant factor in attempting to represent this most constantly changing of elements. The capacity of the sea to metamorphose inspired much research in

¹⁷⁰ « So che'l letto pudico, che tranne Ulisse solo, altro non vide, ... » in *Ulisse*, Act V, Last scene.

¹⁷¹ « Ulisse troppo errò » in *Ulisse*, Act V, Scene 7.

¹⁷² The alternative text for a prologue found in the manuscript, kept by the Biblioteca d'Arte e di Storia del Civico Museo Correr, is even closer to this end: Speaking of Ulisse, Il Fato declares: « Gode la patria al fin, gode la moglie ».

¹⁷³ Urban, Lina; Romanelli, Giandomenico; Gandolfi, Fiora. *Venise en fêtes*. Paris : Éditions du Chêne, 1992, pp. 14–20.

¹⁷⁴ « Sparita la Tenda si vide la Scena tutta mare; con una lontananza così artificiosa d'acque, e di scogli, che la naturalezza, di quella (ancor che finta) movea dubbio a Riguardanti, se veramente soffero in un Teatro, o in una spiaggia di mare effettiva. » in [Ferrari, Benedetto]. *L'Andromeda Del Signor Benedetto Ferrari ; Rappresentata in Musica in Venetia l'Anno 1637. Dedicata all'Illustrissimo Sig. Marco Antonio Pisani. Con Licenza de' Superiori, e Privilegi*. Venetia: Antonio Batiletti. MDCXXXVII, pp. 5–6.

how to show the movement of waves, from quiet swells to a tempestuous sea. On the stage of the SS Giovanni and Paolo, the shores of Ithaca may have been created by a complex system of sea rollers or more simply by a series of balancing profiled canvases showing waves.



Fig 9: ca 1651, engraving by François Chauveau (1613–1676) of the theatre set by Giacomo Torelli (1604–1678) for Act III, of *Andromède* by Pierre Corneille and Charles d'Assoucy, 1650. Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The side shutters of a « Marittima » were almost invariably of rocks, and Torelli's well known set for *Andromède* in Paris of Figure 9 shows a good example of such seaside cliffs. *Ulisse's* « Marittima » must have been created by Burnacini following the same scenic language. The disposition that Burnacini will apply in 1653 for *L'Inganno d'amore* in Regensburg as shown on Figure 10 is constructed the same way and allows moving boat and flying devices: « A quiet sea, where desperate Fortuna whose little ship, with the broken rudder and the sail torn, is sinking. Amor, who from the beach mocked her, rises in Heaven to the sign of Venus, which on a golden chariot wandered with artful motions the air, from which Hymen gently descended on earth. »¹⁷⁵. Here again, the question remains whether Burnacini may have used for the sea of the Teatro SS Giovanni e Paolo the sea set made by Chenda for his 1637 production of *Andromeda*, which visual language must have been close to the sets for *Ermiona* of the same year (Figure 11). He may also have repainted the existing shutters or at least reused the wooden frames, a custom documented in the period¹⁷⁶. This would explain the lack of first-hand documents on the sets of *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*: in the confusion which probably followed

¹⁷⁵ « un tranquillo mare, in cui la Fortuna disperata sù picciola nave con l'albero rotto, e la vela squarciata si sommerse. Amore che sù la spiaggia la deridea sali repente in Cielo all cenno di Venere, che sù carro dorato con moti artifiziosi vagò par l'aria, dalle quale dolcemente discese Imeneo in terra.» in Bertali, Antonio. *L'Inganno d'amore*. [Regensburg] : Gedruckt in der Kays. Freyen Reichs Statt Regenspurg bey Christoff Fischer, 1653.

¹⁷⁶ See: Glixon, Beth Lise and Glixon, Jonathan Emmanuel. *Inventing the Business of Opera*. ... Oxford, 2006, pp. 271–272.

Chenda's early death, Burnacini may have had to complete or reuse some of the elements painted by his elder for a previous spectacle. Added to the fact that Burnacini did not have his work printed prior to his Austrian period, that may explain why the set designer of Monteverdi's first Venetian opera did not enjoy the same fame as his predecessor Chenda or his "rival" Torelli.



Figure 10: 1653, engraving by Jacob van Sandrart (1630–1708) of a Giovanni Burnacini's set for *L'Inganno d'amore* for the performance in Regensburg.
Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria did, however, demand some spectacular special effects which may have satisfied the appetite of the audience for theatrical marvels: a ship turning to stone, a trapdoor swallowing a disguised Ulisse (and bringing him back in another costume), an airborne chariot transporting Minerva and Telemaco, Jupiter's eagle flying over the suitors, and Minerva appearing in the sky during the slaughter. All these effects, which involve the different levels of the stage, were becoming customary in Venetian opera at the time, and were spread out strategically by Badoaro over the course of the drama. The techniques involving pieces of scenery movable by pulleys and ropes, thanks to human strength, were close to the ones used on ships. The first stagehands of the Venetian theater were likely to have come from the city's *Arsenale* district. The mechanical prowess of shipbuilders and sailors, turned carpenters and stagehands for the Republic's theaters, were becoming a part of the opera genre, alongside poetry and music. The flying effects were one of the greatest attractions of the business of Venetian opera. In 1645, a young Englishman on his Grand Tour exclaimed: « We went to the Opera which are Comedies and other plays represented in Recitative Music by the most excellent Musicians vocal and Instrumental, together with a variety of Scenae painted and contrived with no lesse art of Perspective, and Machines, for flying in the aire, and other

wonderful motions; so taken together it is doubtless one of the most magnificent and expensive diversions the Wit of Men can invent ».¹⁷⁷



Fig 11: 1636, anonymous engraving of the theatre set by Alfonso Chenda (ca 1600 -1640) for Act III, of *L'Ermiona*, music by Giovanni Felice Sances and text by G. Tonti Padova and Pio Enea degli Obizzi, in Padua.
Los Angeles, Getty Museum.

¹⁷⁷ John Evelyn in 1645, see: Evelyn, John. *Diary*, London: 1907, I, p. 202.

1.4 *L'incoronazione di Poppea*

That sets, and machines were part of the attraction of Venetian opera is confirmed by a trend which is of great interest for the study of set designs during this period: impresarios would publish, often before the opening night, a synopsis of the action with mention of the sets that were planned for the performances¹⁷⁸. The *Scenario* of *L'incoronazione di Poppea* does not provide much details of Giovanni Burnacini's sets, but it at least indicates what types of spaces the characters should act in and what changes were subsequently represented. The *Scenario* presents the following sequence: « The Palace of Poppea » and « The City of Rome » for the first act; « The Villa of Seneca », « The City of Rome », and « The Garden of Poppea » for Act II; and « The City of Rome » and « The Palace of Nero » for Act III¹⁷⁹. In the story itself, it appears as if the chosen spaces articulate themselves in a polarity of forces, expressive of the axis of tension where the plot is developed. Rome is the general space of the action, but there are different locations around the center of power. Therefore, the city of Rome and its various locations revolve around its focus: the imperial palace. The rather recent discovery of another copy of *Poppea's* libretto¹⁸⁰, a manuscript called the Udine *Poppea* Libretto (in reference to its current location), has offered new information and therefore allowed new insights into the original staging of the piece¹⁸¹. Considered today as the closest to the first performance of 1643, its reading in conjunction with the first *Scenario* allows a notably better understanding of the space of the action and the sets with which *L'incoronazione di Poppea* could have been performed.

The opposition between the palace, the city, and the forest, even if it seemingly follows the rules of Serlio, is united by the unanimous acceptance by the characters that the center of action is the palace of the emperor. The last set mentioned in the scenario, this « Reggia di Nerone », witnesses the coronation and apotheosis of Poppea. This ultimate association of a space to a specific character, after « The Palace of Poppea » and « The Villa of Seneca » anchors the plot in history and brings its load of reference both from literature and visual arts. Busenello, like Badoaro librettist of *Ulisse*, was member of the Accademia degli Incogniti (Academy of the Unknowns) the learned society of freethinking intellectuals, mainly noblemen, that significantly influenced the cultural and political life of mid-seventeenth century Venice¹⁸². At the beginning of his libretto, Busenello summarizes the Roman history of Nerone and Poppea adding « And thus Tacitus is telling. » but, referring to his libretto, he

¹⁷⁸ On opera 'Scenarios' see: Rosand, Ellen. "The opera Scenario, 1638-1655: A Preliminary Survey" in *In Cantu et in Sermone: For Nino Pirrotta on his 80th Birthday*, ed. Fabrizio Della Seta & Franco Piperno. Florence: Olschki, 1989, pp. 346-355.

¹⁷⁹ "pallazzo di Poppea" (Act I, sc. 1-4). "città di Roma" (Act I, sc. 5-13); "villa di Seneca" (Act II, sc. 1-3), "città di Roma" (Act II, sc. 4-11), "giardin di Poppea" (Act II, sc. 12-14); "città di Roma" (Act III, sc. 1-7), "reggia di Nerone" (Act III, sc. 8). See: *Scenario of L'incoronazione di Poppea* as transcribed by Ellen Rosand in Rosand, Ellen. *Monteverdi's last operas...* 2007, p. 394.

¹⁸⁰ Udine *Poppea* Libretto: *La coronatione di Poppea*, Udine, Biblioteca Comunale, 55.

¹⁸¹ See: Fabbri, Paolo. "New Sources for Poppea" in *ML* 74, 1993, pp. 16-23. See also: Rosand, Ellen. *Monteverdi's last operas...* 2007, pp. 50 & 51 & pp. 61-68.

¹⁸² See: Carter, Tim. *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*. New Haven (CT): Yale University Press, 2002, pp. 270-277.

added: « But here it is represented differently. »¹⁸³ To this familiarity with the *Annals* of Tacitus¹⁸⁴ (Figure 1) we may add his knowledge of the tragedies attributed to Seneca¹⁸⁵, and notably *Ottavia*, likely known to Busenello in the translation¹⁸⁶ of Lodovico Dolce (1508/10–1568), the erudite Venetian man of letters and theorist of painting (Figure 2).

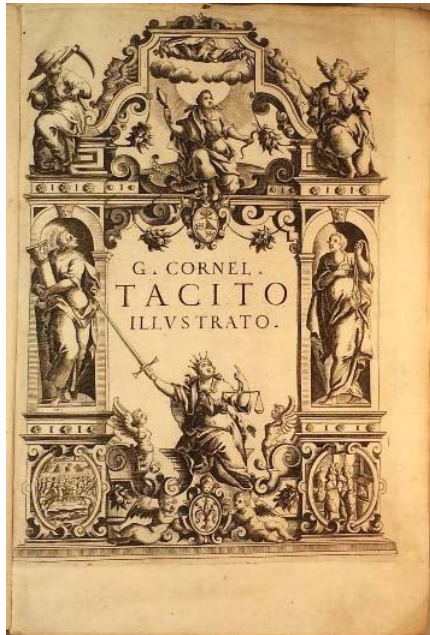


Figure 1: Title page of *Opere di G. Cornelio Tacito, Annali, Historie, Costumi de' Germani, e Vita di Agricola; illustrate con notabilissimi aforismi del signor D. Baldassar' Alamo Varianti, trasportati dalla lingua castigliana nella toscana da D. Girolamo Canini d'Anghiari.* Venetia: Giovanni Battista Ciotti, 1618.

Figure 2: Title page of *Le Tragedie di Seneca, tradotte da m. Lodovico Dolce* Venetia: Gio. Battista & Marchion Sessa f., 1560

Since the Renaissance, besides Latin literature, Roman architecture and sculpture, mosaic and paintings, medals, with their text and representations of emperors, were starting to

¹⁸³ Busenello, in his “Argomento” of *Poppea* wrote « ... così rappresenta Cornelio Tacito. Ma qui si rappresenta il fatto diverso. ». For a full transcription of Argomento, Scenario and preface see: Rosand, Ellen. *Monteverdi's last operas...* 2007, pp. 394–397.

¹⁸⁴ Nero's reign is described in Tacitus, *Annals*, Books XIII to XVI. For Tacitus, see: *Opere di G. Cornelio Tacito, Annali, Historie, Costumi de' Germani, e Vita di Agricola; illustrate con notabilissimi aforismi del signor D. Baldassar' Alamo Varianti, trasportati dalla lingua castigliana nella toscana da D. Girolamo Canini d'Anghiari. Aggiuntoui dal medesimo il modo di canar profitto dalla lettura di questo autore, e la vita di Tacito, le testimonianze fatte di lui dagli Antichi Scrittori, l'Arbore della Famiglia di Augusto, le Postille in margine del Lipsio, la Cronologia dell'Aveerto, e la Distintione del Testo del Grutero, Arricchite di tre copiosissimi, e ordinatissimi Indici, l'uno delle voci, e delle materie Historiali, e Politiche del Testo, il secondo degli Aforismi, e il terzo de' nomi antichi più oscuri de' luoghi.* Venetia: Giovanni Battista Ciotti, 1618.

¹⁸⁵ Busenello, letter about *Statira principessa di Persia*, dramma per musica by Francesco Cavalli, first performed in Venice at the Teatro SS. Giovanni e Paolo, on 18 January 1656. For the text of the letter, see: Livingston, Arthur. *La vita veneziana nelle opere di Gian Francesco Busenello.* Venezia: V. Callegari, 1913, p. 373.

¹⁸⁶ “Ottavia” in *Le Tragedie di Seneca, tradotte da m. Lodovico Dolce.* Venetia: Gio. Battista & Marchion Sessa f., 1560, pp. 252–284.

fascinate scholars for the historical value they represent.¹⁸⁷ Venice hold an important place in this part of the humanist movement notably with the erudite Sebastiano Erizzo (1525–1585), thanks to his collection of nearly two thousand coins and medals and over a thousand books. The publications of his *Trattato dell' istrumento e via inventrice degli antichi* (Venice, 1554) and his *Discorso [...] sopra le Medaglie [...] de gli Imperadori Romani* (Venice, 1559-1571)¹⁸⁸, which knew many re-editions and contains no less than eighteen pieces related to Nero (Figure 3), contributed to give a leading place to Venice in the European network of Antiquarians. This strong relationship with Roman history¹⁸⁹, added to the artistic license claimed by the Venetian poet, must have had an impact on the design of the sets of *Poppea*.



Figure 3: Title page of *Discorso di M. Sebastiano Erizzo sopra le Medaglie de gli Antichi : con la Dichiaratione delle Monete Consulari, & delle Medaglie de gli Imperadori Romani : nella qual si contiene una piena & varia cognitione dell'istoria di quei tempi.* Vinegia: Giovanni Varisco, 1571.

¹⁸⁷ See: Haskell, Francis. *History and its Images, Art and the interpretation of the past*. New Haven (CT) : Yale University Press, 1995, pp. 13–79.

¹⁸⁸ Erizzo, Sebastiano. *Discorso di M. Sebastiano Erizzo sopra le Medaglie de gli Antichi : con la Dichiaratione delle Monete Consulari, & delle Medaglie degli Imperadori Romani : nella quale si contiene una piena & varia cognitione dell'istoria di quei tempi*. Vinegia [Venetia]: Giovanni Varisco, 1571.

¹⁸⁹ Besides Tacitus and Seneca, Ellen Rosand points out that Busenello included facts coming from Suetonius and Dio. See: Rosand, Ellen. *Monteverdi's last operas...*: 2007, pp. 176–177. For the earlier biographers of Nero, see: Champlin, Edward. *Nero*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 2003. On Venetian opera and Roman history, see also Heller, Wendy. "Tacitus incognito: opera as history in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*" in *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 52, 1999, pp. 39–56.

One aspect of this historical ambition must have expressed itself in this very set of the « Reggia di Nerone » and the libretto, differing from the scenario, mentions the « Città di Roma con lontananza », City of Rome with a view in the distance. This new detail draws our attention to the requirements for the staging of the last event of the story; as the gods also descend from heaven to praise the beauty of Poppea, one should imagine an exterior architecture with a long perspective, maybe an open courtyard with cloud borders. This « cortile » could be an open palace with a recognizable view of Rome itself on the backdrop. The custom to paint well-known monuments on the far backdrop to associate the action to a specific city was well spread during this period. Burnacini himself had represented the city of Ferrara on his backdrop for *Le Pretensioni del Tebro, e del Po'* in 1642, as Torelli did for Venice the same year, following the example of Alfonso Parigi (1606–1656) for Florence in 1637 (Figures 4 & 5). Burnacini may have chosen to paint a backdrop showing the most famous monuments of Rome.

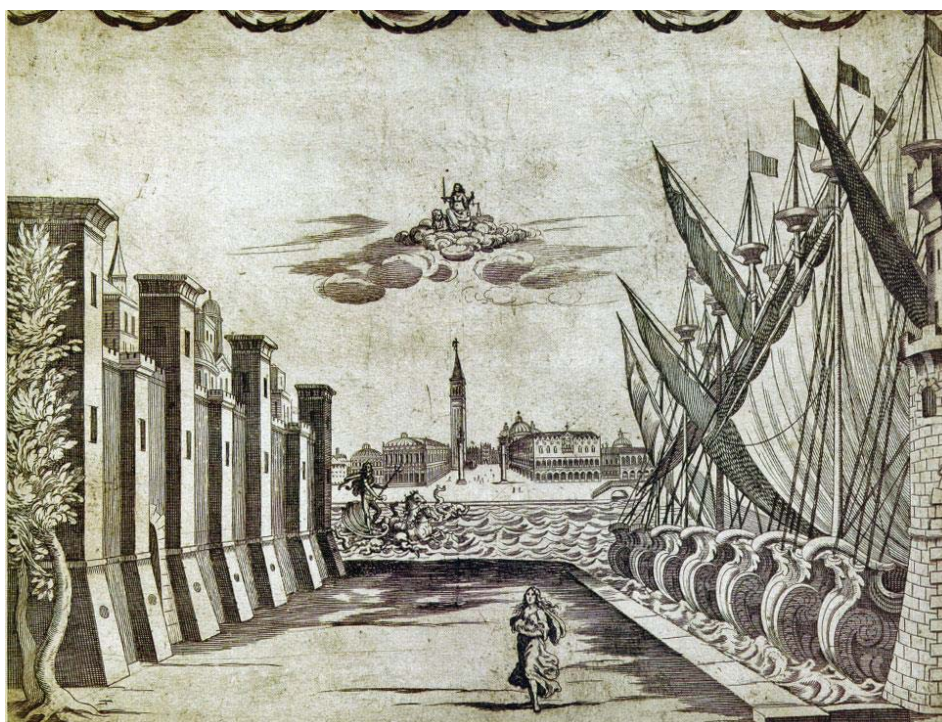


Figure 4: 1642, engraving by Giovanni Giorgi of a set by Giacomo Torelli, showing a view of Venice, for the prologue of *Il Bellerofonte*, created in Venice. Milano, Museo Teatrale all Scala.

While these depictions featuring in the prologues had the function of sending the message of «hic et nunc», presenting the city of Rome at the end of the opera, may have fulfilled the opposite purpose of emphasizing the “there and then”. By showing together as many Roman buildings as possible, even without any topographical accurateness, Burnacini would have increased the recognition potential of the place depicted as Rome. The set designer would have followed in this approach the genre of painting known as « capriccio ». While for Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), the term capriccio refers to the expressions of a puzzling fantasy, testifying to the originality of a painter, Filippo Baldinucci (1625-1697) in his *Vocabolario Toscano dell'Arte del Disegno*¹⁹⁰, finally defined in 1681 the capriccio as a work born from the spontaneous

¹⁹⁰ Baldinucci, Filippo. *Vocabolario Toscano dell'Arte del Disegno, nel quale si esplicano i propri termini e voci, non solo della Pittura, Scultura, & Architettura; ma ancora di altre Arti a quelle subordinate, e che abbiano per fondamento il Disegno...* Florence: Santi Franchi, 1681, p. 28.

imagination of the painter. The meaning of capriccio becomes metonymic by referring to the work itself, not to the whimsical idea that produced it. The roots of this type of *vedute* can be found during the Renaissance in the architectural settings of frescoes and ceiling decorations known as « quadrature ». These architectural elements gained prominence in seventeenth century painting to become subjects of easel paintings¹⁹¹. Like in a capriccio, where elements are borrowed and worked up from real monuments, buildings that could be seen in Rome, both ancient and modern, could have figured on Burnacini's backdrop. This process would have echoed the way Busenello compose his libretto, by way of collage of various antique sources, and Burnacini would have use the notion of space like the librettist used the one of time, in their artistic evocation of Nero's Rome.



Figure 5: 1637, Design after Alfonso Parigi's set, showing a view of Florence, for the prologue of *Le Nozze degli Dei*, created in Florence, Palazzo Pitti. Paris, Archives Nationales.

¹⁹¹ For a plurality of views on the Capriccio, see: *The Architectural Capriccio: Memory, Fantasy and Invention*, edited by Lucien Steil. Farnham, Ashgate Publishing, 2014, and notably the article of Selena, Anders. "Patronage in the Golden Age of the Capriccio", pp. 41–59.

1.4.1 Street of Comedy or of Tragedy?

The opera shows the rise of Poppea to the rank of empress, but the audience of 1643 would have immediately understood that her affair with Nero was primarily of a lascivious nature when seeing the first scenes: the action of Nero leaving the dwelling of Poppea in the early hours of the morning is witnessed by her previous lover, looks like an episode in the life of a courtesan. For the first scene of Act I, the scenario and the Udine libretto indicates « the Palace of Poppea » and the Florence manuscript mentions « il cortile di Poppea ». But are we in the palace or, as Ottone's words suggest by mentioning a window¹⁹², in front of it? If it is the exterior of Poppea's building, we must imagine a front porch flanked by two ways, one of which will serve for the entrance and exit of Ottone, while the other angle may support the two sleeping soldiers. Poppea and Nero would have sung their goodbyes in the frame of the doorway. But how can one justify this precarious location for the intimacy of the following scene between Poppea and Arnalta, « old woman her adviser »¹⁹³? Here the convention clearly comes from the Roman and Greek theater, and the comedies of Terence, Plautus, and Menander, where young ladies confide their love secrets in the bosom of their beloved nurses¹⁹⁴, a tradition already revived by the *Commedia dell'Arte*, with the added variant of the procuress character¹⁹⁵. This set would have been inspired by the street of houses of the *scena comica* of Vitruvius as explained by Serlio and placed on each pair of grooves parallel to the proscenium, with a backdrop showing the house of Poppea. All in all, the opera opens in the atmosphere of a comedy and the street scene, a typical set for this genre from the Renaissance, allowed the extension to opera, as exemplified by the work of Alfonso Chenda for *L'Ermiona* in 1636 and the set of Ludovico Burnacini for *Il pomo d'oro* in 1668, as presented on Figure 6 and Figure 7.

After this first scene full of comic conventions, we face a total change of atmosphere, with the appearance of the forsaken Ottavia, the true tragic figure in the opera¹⁹⁶. Here, more than ever, we have to read the libretto to complete the scarce information the Scenario offers. Indeed the « City of Rome », which appears here for the first time and returns so often throughout the piece, could also be the generic street of classical buildings as defined by Serlio with a backdrop of a view of temples or triumphal arches, a scene reminiscent of the *scena tragica* of Vitruvius and Serlio. The fact that the empress tells Seneca she is on her way to the

¹⁹² «Apri un balcon» and «Amoreggio con lagrime un balcon» in Udine *Poppea* Libretto: *La coronazione di Poppea*, Udine, Biblioteca Comunale, 55.

¹⁹³ «Arnalta vecchia sur consiglieria » in Scenario of *Poppea*.

¹⁹⁴ For an overview of the reception history of a major literary genre from Greco-Roman Antiquity to the present day, see: *Ancient Comedy and Reception: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey Henderson*, edited by S. Douglas Olson. Berlin & Boston, Walter de Gruyter, 2014. See Section II, which deals with the European reception of Greek and Roman comedy in the Medieval, Renaissance, and Early Modern periods, and with the European stage tradition of comic theatre more generally.

¹⁹⁵ See: Pirrotta, Nino. “ ‘Commedia dell’Arte’ and Opera ” in *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 41, N°3, (Jul., 1955). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955, pp. 305–324. See also: Wilbourne, Emily. *Seventeenth-Century Opera and the Sound of the Commedia dell’Arte*. Chicago & London : The University of Chicago Press, 2016.

¹⁹⁶ Heller, Wendy. “Phaedra’s Handmaiden: Tragedy as Comedy and Spectacle in Seventeenth-Century Opera” in *Ancient Drama in Music for the Modern Stage*. Edited by Peter Brown and Suzana Ograjensek. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 67–84.

temple¹⁹⁷ may suggest a street between the Imperial Palace and a Temple. Later, the appearance of Pallas Athena in this space seems to corroborate this fact, as the goddess could fly from the cloud borders above the street.



Figure 6: 1636, anonymous engraving of the theatre set by Alfonso Chenda (ca 1600 -1640) with apparition of Pallade for *L'Ermiona*, music by Giovanni Felice Sances and text by G. Tonti Padova and Pio Enea degli Obizzi, in Padua in 1636. Los Angeles, Getty Museum.

The difficulty to elect the « City of Rome » to the rank of *scena maestra* seems to come here from the fact that many scenes of intimate or even secret nature would have to take place in this location. It is hard to imagine that Ottavia would plot the murder of Poppea in the middle of a public square. Perhaps the “Città di Roma” may also refer to various locations in Rome, and it could subsequently mean a more isolated courtyard in the empress’s apartment, or a street with the front of the Palace. Once accepting this possibility, one must be very careful when linking action and suitable settings for them, as the understanding of convention in Venice in 1643 was necessarily very different from ours today. Their convention was closer to their understanding of Roman drama, where all sorts of events could take place in the same location: the set was also the expression of this convention allowing the story to be told boldly without any minor interference. Stylization was often as much an artistic answer as an intellectual solution. In any case, it is likely that this simple mention of the « city of Rome » was given more as a reference for the space and would have allowed Burnacini to design various architectures in a Roman style, or even to use some classical stock left by Chenda, for different sets. That non-definition of a certain space by the librettists would allow designers not only to keep the open relationship with a certain style, here Roman, but to have a significant input in the poetic definition of the drama, represented by the novelty of their composition for the architecture set. It could also serve an economic interest, as every theater, public or private, would have a suitable set of architectural shutters already in stock for this type of description. The indication of the City or Roma was no doubt the most generic the scenario

¹⁹⁷ « E va a porger preghiere al Tempio » in Scenario of *Poppea*.

could use, without constraining the designer, and the impresario, to any overconfident promises.



Figure 7: Period hand coloring engraving of Balthasar Sigmund Setlezky (1695-1771) reusing Lodovico Burnacini's set for Act III of *Il pomo d'oro* for the performance in Vienna in 1668.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Because the wings were planted parallel to the edge of the stage, the designer could interrupt this plan with a backdrop, which itself could be removed to create more depth. It is likely that Burnacini had created generic Roman scenes playing with the depth of the stage and therefore was able to create space that could respond to some specific requirements of the libretto. While the wings' shutters were likely to display houses' facades, in the basic style which can be seen on all set designs of the seventeenth century (the similitude in the wings of the sets by Chenda, Torelli and Burnacini is evocative of this trend), different backcloths could have locate the various actions in specific parts of the city of Roma, a city not short of recognizable architectural icons. This distinction between « scena corta » and « scena lunga »—scenes with a *short* real perspective and scenes with a *long* one—has been explored from the earliest times, as it allowed this type of variations¹⁹⁸. This use of long scene and short scene in *Poppea* is confirmed by the mention in Udine libretto, of Act III scene 7: « The prospect closes and Roma comes back »¹⁹⁹. The use of a long scene for the departure by boat of Ottavia for exile would have showed the river in the back ground where the empress « that goes by boat

¹⁹⁸ See: Glixon, Beth Lise and Glixon, Jonathan Emmanuel. *Inventing the Business of Opera: The Impresario and His World in Seventeenth-Century Venice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 241, n. 33.

¹⁹⁹ « Si serra il prospecto e torna Roma » in Udine *Poppea* Libretto: *La coronatione di Poppea*, Udine, Biblioteca Comunale, 55.

to exile »²⁰⁰. The « Strada in Roma ove s'imbarca nel Tevere » by Lodovico Burnacini (1636–1707) for *Il Fuoco Eterno Custodito Dalle Vestali* in Vienna in 1674 shows a very suitable composition (Figure 8): a street of Roma where one embarks on the river Tiber. We see the generic city set opening on a « lontano » occupied by the river and finished by a backdrop showing Roma, a lontano which can easily be closed by a prospect, to hide the river. It is interesting to note that in the *Poppea*'s scenario this scene of the departure for exile of Ottavia is also happening in the set "Città di Roma" and it worth mentioning that set of the same nature already appeared in *Le nozze d'Enea e Lavinia* by Michelangelo Torcigliani in 1641.



Figure 8: 1674, engraving by Matthäus Küsel, (1629-1681) of the *Strada in Roma ove s'imbarca nel Tevere* by Lodovico Burnacini (1636-1707) for *Il Fuoco Eterno Custodito Dalle Vestali* by Niccolo Minato and Antonio Draghi, Vienne, 1674. Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute.

²⁰⁰ « che se ne va in barca all'essiglio » in Udine *Poppea* Libretto: *La coronatione di Poppea*, Udine, Biblioteca Comunale, 55.

1.4.2 From « Boschereccia » to « Deliziosa »

Indeed, the mention of Seneca's villa could also mislead us, as the picture of Roman country houses is as vivid in our imagination as it was for Venetians, being surrounded by the revival villas of Palladio. But here again, essential information is provided by what the characters say. Seneca is not *in* his villa, but outside of it: the Stoic philosopher is celebrating the rustic charm of trees and greenery around him when Mercury comes to him and flies away. It is therefore a set showing a natural landscape with Seneca's villa in the perspective: a clear moral antipode to the urban house of Poppea. The group of wings representing trees around Seneca's villa probably already existed in the stock of the theater, maybe coming from Burnacini's set for the « Boschereccia » of *Ulisse*, or, if they required a new investment, the resulting set could be used again in future productions of the theater Santissimi Giovanni e Paolo²⁰¹. It is also relevant to note that because the trees do not imply a specific setting to keep the rules of perspective, they can be used in different sets, combined with various architectural elements—in this particular case, certainly a backdrop showing a villa. A disposition that Torelli used for *Deidamia* in 1644, as shown of Figure 9.

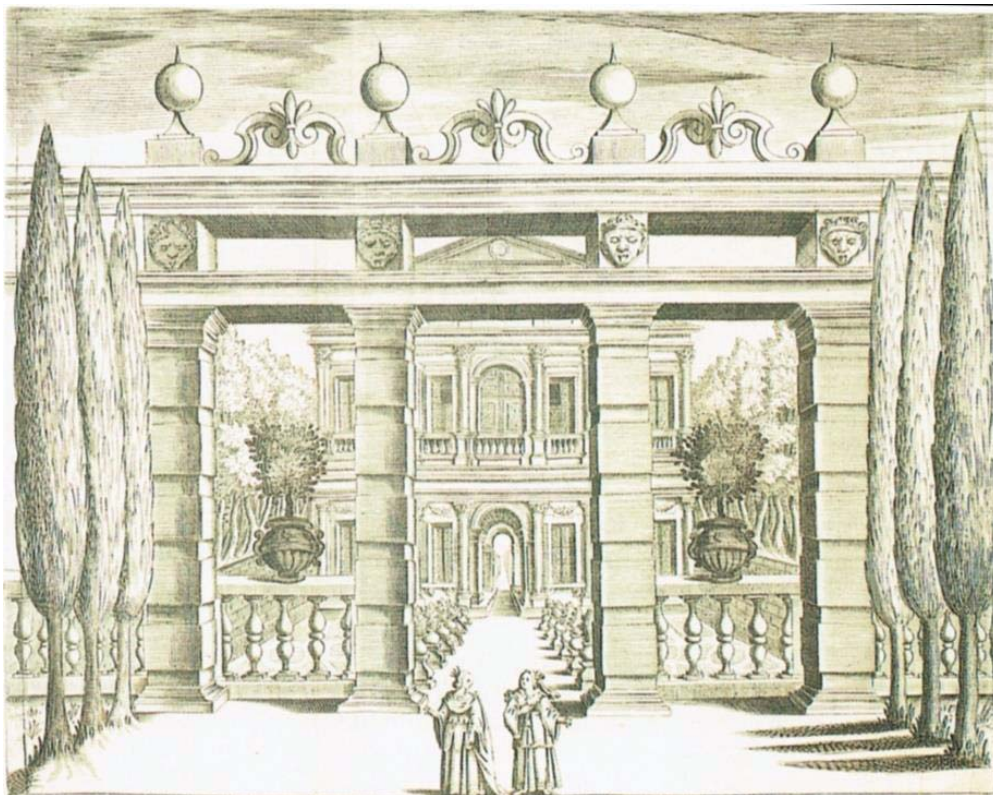


Figure 9: 1644, engraving by Marco Bioschin of a Giacomo Torelli set, showing a « Cortile Delizioso » for Act II of *Deidamia*, for Venice. Fano, Romolo Eusebi.

²⁰¹ Trees shutters designs do not vary from the Renaissance to the late eighteenth century. In the case of Torelli, recognizable cypresses in some of his sets for *Deidamia* in 1644, (as shown in Figure 7 and 8) were already present in *Bellerofonte* (Venice 1642): shutters could be reused, not only in their actual painting at least in terms of designs as these cypresses reappear in *La Finta Pazza* (Paris, 1645). See: *Giacomo Torelli, L'invenzione scenica nell'Europa barocca*, a cura di Francesco Milesi. Fano: 2000.

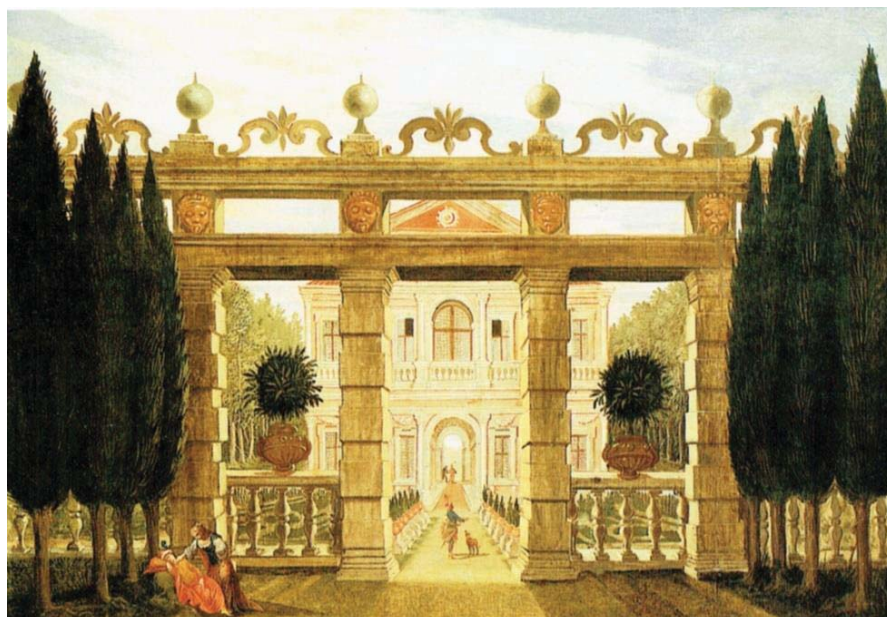


Figure 10: 1644, anonymous painting a Giacomo Torelli's set, showing a « Cortile Delizioso » for Act II of *Deidamia*, for Venice.
Fano, Museo Civico.

Interestingly enough, an anonymous painting representing the same set of Torelli shows different characters and, looking at a resting figure of a woman on stage discovered by another character²⁰², one can think of a similar placement for Poppea when she falls asleep in her garden lulled by Arnalta (Figure 10). But, even if also connected to Nature, the garden of Poppea would have been a space of a different kind than the one of the severe philosopher, as it is a “pleasure garden.” The Italians invented a delicious term to name what would become the most commonly used for sets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries operas: a « *Deliziosa* ». Ludovico Burnacini gave a wonderful example in his « Giardino del Palazzo del Dittatore » for *Il Fuoco Eterno Custodito Dalle Vestali* in Vienna in 1674²⁰³. The statues of satyrs, evocative of lascivious pursuits, serving as columns of his roman garden, would fit well the sensual atmosphere of the scenes taking place in the garden of Poppea (Figure 11). A period hand coloring of a later reproduction of this set, shows how this set was still popular in the eighteenth century (Figure 12). This enclosed garden, ornate with architecture and a proper place for a lady to take a nap in peace, had been created in ancient Rome; it experienced a wonderful revival during the Renaissance²⁰⁴ but was, due to the foundation of the water city, a rare sight in Venice, and more than anywhere else, evocative of wealth. Here again the sets

²⁰² The character of Deidamia is asleep and Eufria discovers her: a situation similar to the scene of Poppea and Ottone. See: Bjurström, Per. *Giacomo Torelli, and Baroque Stage Design*. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1962, pp. 89–94.

²⁰³ Minato, Niccolò. *Il fuoco eterno custodito dalle vestali. Drama Musicale Per la Felicissima Nascita della Serenissima Arciduchessa Anna Maria, figlia dell' Imperatore Leopoldo, e della Imperatrice Claudia Felice*. Vienna: Giovanni Christoforo Cosmerovio, 1674.

²⁰⁴ See: Thacker, Christopher. *The History of Gardens*. London : Croom Helm Ltd Publishers, 1979, pp. 95-111. See also: Laird, Mark. *The Formal Garden, Traditions of Art and Nature*, Photographs by Hugh Palmer. London : Thames and Hudson, 1992, pp. 11–40.

would have given information about the social identity of the character but play with the imagination and experience of the audience²⁰⁵.



Figure 11: 1674, engraving by Matthäus Küsel, (1629-1681) of the *Giardino del Palazzo del Dittatore* by Ludovico Burnacini (1636-1707) for *Il Fuoco Eterno Custodito Dalle Vestali* by Niccolo Minato & Antonio Draghi in Vienna. Yale, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.



Figure 12: ca. 1740, period hand colored engraving after Matthäus Küsel, (1629-1681) of the *Giardino del Palazzo del Dittatore* by Lodovico Burnacini (1636-1707) for *Il Fuoco Eterno Custodito Dalle Vestali* by Niccolo Minato & Antonio Draghi. Collection of Gilbert Blin.

²⁰⁵ Fortini Brown, Patricia. *Private lives in Renaissance Venice, Art, Architecture, and the family*. New Haven (CT): Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 48–50.

1.4.3 Gods in Machines

While the scenario does not offer any indication for the location of the prologue, the libretto manuscript gives two pieces of information: a description of the set, «Aerial scene with a low horizon»²⁰⁶, and the positions of the three gods «in the air on clouds». These two clarifications, after the names of Fortune, Virtue, and Love, enable us to imagine a cloud scene with the gods in three cloud chariots, or even only two, as Love having his own wings may have been a free flying effect, with the performer directly attached to the machinery²⁰⁷. While Love claims the center, as the play will demonstrate, the debate/dispute between Fortune and Virtue establishes clearly a symmetrical opposition. The presence of these two allegorical figures in the prologue would have echoed the permanent statues on both sides of the proscenium of the Teatro SS Giovanni e Paolo. The tradition to ornate the *frons scenae* with allegorical figures having a meaningful relation with the performance was coming from the setting of princely performances.



Figure 13: 1637, Frontispiece of *Le Nozze degli Dei*. Design engraved by Stefano della Bella, showing a view of the *frons scenae* created by Alfonso Parigi in 1637 in Florence, Palazzo Pitti.

²⁰⁶ «Scena areara con orizzonti bassi» «Fortuna, Virtù e Amor in Aria sopra nuvole» in Udine *Poppea* Libretto: *La coronazione di Poppea*. Udine, Biblioteca Comunale, 55.

²⁰⁷ I differ here totally from the analysis of Nino Pirrotta, who did not know about the existence of the Udine libretto. see: Pirrotta, Nino. "Teatro, scene e musica nelle opere di Monteverdi." In *Claudio Monteverdi e il suo tempo*, ed. Raffaello Monterosso. Verona: Stamperia Valdonega, 1969, pp. 45–67.

Numerous examples exist of such a disposition, but the engraving opening the book²⁰⁸ showing *Le Nozze degli Dei*, the «Favola» given in Florence in 1637 to celebrate the wedding of duke Ferdinando II of Toscana with Vittoria Principessa d'Urbino is remarkable because it does not only show the *frons scenae* and the curtain of the theater built in the Palazzo Pitti but integrate it in the manner of a frontispiece on the first page of the commemorative book. Two statues figure on both sides of the stage, while the coats of arms of the Duke and the Princess occupied the top center (Figure 13).

This disposition and ornamentation for a *frons scenae* finds its roots in the engraved frontispieces of Renaissance books, whose conception as a portal towards knowledge was already in bloom before the theatre and musical drama were evolving. Besides their connection with architecture and theatre performance, the editions of the work of Palladio offers many good instances of the long-lasting usage of such allegorical system on title pages. On the edition published in Venice in 1570 (Figure 14), figures of Geometry and Planimetry are on both sides of a portico in Roman style, while Philosophy (often confused with Architecture in modern comments) is seated in the center, flanked by two figures of Fame blowing trumpets.



Figure 14: 1570, Title page of *I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura di Andrea Palladio* in the edition by Domenico de' Fransechi in Venice.

By couching his theories in the same philosophical musings that had so interested Vitruvius, Palladio associated *I quattro libri* with the architecture of classical Rome. While in the edition published in 1642 (Figure 15), the figure of Philosophy has been replaced by the coat

²⁰⁸ *Le Nozze degli Dei Favola Dell' Ab' Gio. Carlo Coppola Rappresentata in Music in Firenze Nelle Reali Nozze de Serenis.^{MI} Gran Duchi di Toscan Ferdinando II. E Vittoria Principessa d'Urbino.* Firenze: Amadore Massi e Lorenzo Landi, 1637.

of arms of the dedicatee, a member of the influential Vidman family, patron of the edition²⁰⁹. This heraldic custom which established itself for the *frons scenae* of the theatre, as we have seen with the example coming from Florence, but the use of allegory was also well spread in Venice²¹⁰. We can only suppose that the Grimani coat of arm ornamented the top of the stage frame²¹¹, but we are sure that statues were present: in 1664, the performance of a three-act opera in the Teatro SS Giovanni e Paolo, *Rosilena* was attended by an English traveler. Before the curtain went up, observing first that the musicians were placed in front of the stage²¹² Sir Philip Skippon (1640 or 1641-1691) noticed that « on each side of the stage was a fair statue.»²¹³



Figure 15: 1642, Title page of *L'Architettura di Andrea Palladio* in the edition by Marc Antonio Brogiollo in Venice.

²⁰⁹ On the Vidman, or Widman or Vidmani, family and their relationship with Barbara Strozzi, see: Beer, Anna. *Sounds and Sweet Airs: The Forgotten Women of Classical Music*. London, Oneworld Publications, 2016, pp. 53–87.

²¹⁰ Hochmann, Michel. « L'allégorie à Venise vers 1540: Le Sorti de Francesco Marcolini » in Nativel, Colette. *Le noyan et l'écorce, Les arts de l'allégorie XVe-XVIIe siècles*. Rome : Académie de France and Paris : Somogy éditions d'art, 2009, pp. 323–337.

²¹¹ The coat of arms of the Grimani is present on the engraving by Vincenzo Maria Coronelli showing the interior of Teatro Grimani a San Giovanni Grisostomo in 1709 (Collection of Ton Koopman).

²¹² Incidentally this remark shows that this disposition was not all established at the time. We know for example that in 1628 in Parma, the orchestra was divided in two groups, seated under portico arches on both side of the proscenium. See: Fabbri, Paolo. *Monteverdi*, Translated by Tim Carter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 212–216.

²¹³ “An account of a Journey Made Thro’ Part of the Low-Countries, Germany, Italy and France by Philip Skippon, Esquire” in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels, tome VI*. London: Churchill, 1732, pp. 359–736. Skippon's account of the Venetian opera is on pp. 506-508. See copy online: https://archive.org/stream/cihm_33302#page/n557/mode/2up (Accessed 12 January 2018).

The presence of gods in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* is perhaps the most stylistically dated element of the libretto of 1643. It offers a realm of rhetoric that sheds light on the moral values called into question by the story²¹⁴. Fortune, Virtue, Cupid, Pallas Athena, and Mercury punctuate the action with their comments; Cupid even intervenes to change the course of events. The appearance of Pallas takes place in the City of Rome. Mercury flies away from the «Villa of Seneca», Love comes down from the sky in the « Garden of Poppea », and for his final triumph in « the Palace of Nero », he is accompanied by «Little cupids, Venus and a chorus of Graces»²¹⁵. It seems clear that the libretto and what we know of the convention of the time are strictly connected and offer an objective fact: all of the sets of *Poppea* were spaces open to the sky: sets with cloud borders allowing the flying of gods to take place, both logically in terms of the drama, and physically given the existing stage machinery. In 1664, this kind of staging was still in full existence as «In the prologue some of the actors hung in the air, and then flew cross the stage, and one flew downwards [...] and then he flew up again » Skippon's²¹⁶ accounts give us also the mechanism for a free flying. And it is appropriate to *Poppea* that this figure shows a winged god. Mercury like Cupid had his own wings to fly by himself and did not require a cloud chariot. Free flying was a dangerous but spectacular effect and its transversal motion over the stage was a subject of a technical diagram by Skippon, showing «The Engine us'd to fly down with. » and how it was done at the Teatro SS Giovanni e Paolo: the mechanism seen from under, while the figure is presented from profile (Figure 16).²¹⁷ No doubt that Mercurio who first appears in the garden of Seneca on the floor of the stage would have departed flying thanks to this machine equipped in the upper section of the stage.

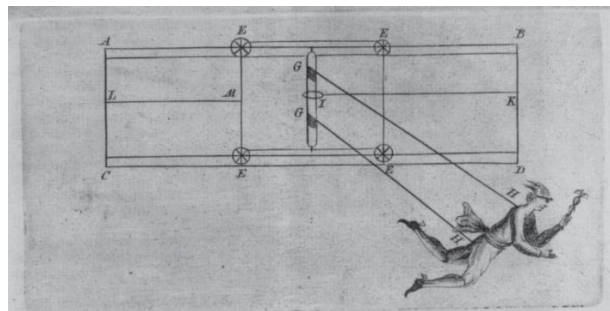


Figure 16: 1664, Diagram of «The Engine us'd to fly down with. »
mechanism for a flying Mercury in Teatro SS Giovanni e Paolo, in “An account of a Journey Made Thro’ Part
of the Low-Countries, Germany, Italy and France” by Philip Skippon, Esquire.”
Edmonton, University of Alberta Libraries.

²¹⁴ For a discussion about meanings in Venetian opera, and notably in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, see: Calcagno, Mauro. “Signifying Nothing: On the Aesthetics of Pure Voice in Early Venetian Opera” in *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 20, n°4. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press, 2003, pp. 461–497.

²¹⁵ « Choro d’Amori, Venere e choro delle gratie » in Udine *Poppea* Libretto: *La coronatione di Poppea*, Udine, Biblioteca Comunale, 55.

²¹⁶ Skippon describes productions seen at the Teatro SS. Giovanni e Paolo and the Teatro San Salvatore. See: “An account of a Journey ...by Philip Skippon, Esquire” in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels, tome VI*. London: Churchill, 1732. He includes three diagrams: The floor plan of the stage of the Teatro SS Giovanni e Paolo with the mechanized flat wing scene change using central shaft and counterweight (p. 507), and the flying machine utilizing a tracked sled and graduated shaft (p. 508, diagram reproduced here figure 16).

²¹⁷ See: Day, Christine J. “The Theatre of SS Giovanni e Paolo and Monteverdi’s *L’Incoronazione di Poppea*” in *Current Musicology* 25 (1978), pp. 22–38. See also: Larson, Orville. K. “Giacomo Torelli, Sir Philip Skippon, and Stage Machinery for the Venetian Opera” in *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 32, No. 4, Dec.1980. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980, pp. 448–457.

1.4.4 « senza machine »

It is more than likely that a mechanism of this type for the flying of the gods in the performance of *Poppea* in the SS Giovanni e Paolo, but are these flying effects necessary to a HIP performance of *L'incoronazione di Poppea*? If cutting most of the scenes presenting the gods would reduce the opera to a mere irregular comedy of manners, and reduce the scope of their motivations, it is certainly possible to imagine a full performance of the opera without any of the machines the SS Giovanni and Paolo possessed, even on historical grounds. We know for sure that, after the performance in Venice, *L'incoronazione di Poppea* was performed in Naples. Taking place in a theater in 1651, it is likely that these performances, under the title *Il Nerone overo L'incoronazione di Poppea*, would have been in the same style as the ones in Venice, with an expanded use of machines as the roles of the gods were lengthened, maybe requiring more flying devices. But recently, a new source has been discovered and, even if still in need of corroboration, it offers some fresh perspective of the absolute necessity of changing sets and flying machines when performing Monteverdi's masterpiece.

In Paris in January 1647, in the middle of difficult rehearsals of a new piece, *L'Orfeo* by Francesco Buti, the music by Luigi Rossi being unfinished, the Italian company²¹⁸ called by Cardinal Mazarin (1602-1661) was led to seek a possible replacement, and thought to turn to *L'incoronazione di Poppea* as an alternative piece in order to offer a performance: « it is believed that we'll certainly do the Nerone but in a small theater without machines, only with beautiful costumes, and then we'll do the big opera [*L'Orfeo*], the one with the text of Mr. Buti. »²¹⁹ That « the Nerone » mentioned by Stefano Costa could be another title for *L'incoronazione di Poppea* is more than likely as this singer, a castrato²²⁰, had sung the leading part of Nero in the Venetian premiere four years before. Besides, some contemporary scores and librettos of Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* bear this very title²²¹ and make his choice of designation of « Nerone » more likely²²². We know for sure that *L'Orfeo* of Rossi was finally performed on March 2, 1647, but it has not yet been confirmed whether this Parisian performance of *Il Nerone* ever took

²¹⁸ See: Nestola, Barbara. « Les italiens à la cour de France : histoire en forme d'opéra » in *Les italiens à la cour de France : de Marie de Médicis au régent Philippe d'Orléans*. Versailles : Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles & Établissement public du musée et du domaine national de Versailles, 2004, pp. 11–45.

²¹⁹ « si crede che faremo il Nerone sicuro in anzi pero nel picciolo teatro senza machine, solo con le abbiti belli, et doppo faremo l'opera grossa quale le parole sono del sig.r Buti. » see: Monaldini, Sergio. *L'orto dell'Espiridi: Musici, attori et artisti nel patrocinio della famiglia Bentivoglio (1646-1685)*. Lucca: Libreria italiane musicale, 2000, p. 13. Letter of 3 January 1647 from Stefano Costa in Paris to Cornelio Bentivoglio in Ferrara. Quoted by Rosand, Ellen. *Monteverdi's last operas...* 2007, p. 126.

²²⁰ Stefano Costa, birth and death unknown, studied with Carissimi from 1632 in Rome until an indefinite date. In 1641, Costa is in Ferrara for *Armida* by Marazzoli. Costa is engaged for the 1642-43 season to SS Giovanni e Paolo; he performs in *La Finta Savia* by Laurenzi and then most probably *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*. In Paris, Costa comes to perform in Luigi Rossi's *L'Orfeo* (We do not know what role Stefano played in it). The castrato appears in *Erismena* de Cavalli in 1655 and 1656. The following season, Costa is engaged in the San Cassiano of Venice, and may be singing in Ziani's *Il Teseo*. he is found in the San Luca in 1660-61, for the revival of an opera of Cavalli and the *Pasifae* of Castrovillari. Costa is still singing in Venice in 1666 in *Selencio* by Sartorio.

²²¹ Chiarelli, Alessandra. « *L'incoronazione di Poppea o il Nerone*: problemi di filologia testuale » in *Rivista italiana di musicologia*, ix, 1974, pp. 117–151.

²²² *Il Nerone* is also the title under which *L'incoronazione di Poppea* was presented in Naples in 1651. See: *Il Nerone overo L'incoronazione di Poppea, Drama musicale dedicato all'Illustriss. & Eccellentiss. Sig. D. Inigo De Guevara, et Tassis*. Napoli: Molli, 1651.

place and the letter of Stefano Costa may have been the wishful expression of a singer who, cast in a role of third category in *L'Orfeo*²²³, was hoping to shine in a title role? However, this letter does introduce the essential fact that for artists and audiences of the seventeenth century, it was possible to present the work without some of the theatrical components that made Venetian opera so famous.

The specific mention of « le abiti belli »²²⁴, beautiful costumes, still indicates the idea of a dramatic performance not a simple court concert²²⁵, but the mention of « nel picciolo teatro senza machine », in a small theater without machines, suggests the possibility that the performance of *L'incoronazione di Poppea* would have taken place without any change of sets or flying effects. Besides the fact that most of the sets of *L'incoronazione di Poppea* are generic baroque sets, the Paris performance offers a new perspective in our understanding of the theatricality of Venetian opera in general and in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* in particular. Although often deeply related to the actions depicted in the libretto, the sets of *Poppea* were an artistic component that could be developed, in excess or in reduction, as required. Flying machines were not necessarily seen as compulsory to perform *Poppea*. The scenario of Venice, the libretto of Udine and the possibility of Paris performance, offer evidence of various definitions of spaces and sets. These variations are an indication that the function of sets was of poetic inspiration, a collaboration between the librettist and the designer, similar to the collaboration between the librettist and the composer, and like it, as much subjected to the vision of the creators, as they were to the circumstances of the patronage, public in Venice, princely in Paris.

²²³ Two other castratos, Atto Melani and Marc Antonio Pasqualini, were cast in the title role of Orfeo and the de facto leading one of Aristeo; Stefano Costa, as castrato soprano, may have sung the little role of Nutrice or the one of Bacco. For an overview of the genesis of *L'Orfeo*, see: Klaper, Michael. "New light on the history of *L'Orfeo* (Buti-Rossi)" in *D'une scène à l'autre, l'opéra italien en Europe. vol.1 : Les pérégrinations d'un genre* sous la direction de Damien Colas & Alessandro Di Profio. Wavre : Editions Mardaga, 2009, pp. 27–36.

²²⁴ In Venice, Skippon also remarked that «The actors cloaths appear'd very rich and splendid, tho' they wore false jewels and bad silver. » in "An account of a Journey ... by Philip Skippon, Esquire" in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Tome VI*. London: Churchill, 1732, p. 507.

²²⁵ Like for *Orfeo* in Mantua in 1607, the presence of costumes may also have been dictated to allow an easier identification of the characters, which may have been also useful in case of the same singer performing more than one role and use of castrati for travesty roles. For casting questions, see: Tessing Schneider, Magnus. « Seeing the Empress Again: On Doubling in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* » in *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Volume 24, Issue 03, November 2012. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 249–291.

2 Allegorical program by Quinault for the Poetics of the French opera

« It is true that Lully had the good fortune to find a Poet whose verses were worthy of his music, and those verses being such as he desired in order to reveal with them all of the beauties and delicacies that his art could bring to light, but this good fortune was due to the composer himself, to the effect that nothing remained to be desired in his works. »

Charles Perrault. *Des hommes illustres qui ont paru en France pendant ce siècle...*
Paris: A. Dezallier, 1696¹.

« It was not enough to say that Quinault was an excellent Poet in the Lyrique du Theater, and that no one, neither Ancients nor Moderns, had equaled him in this kind of poetry. One went as far to say, and to say it all in one voice, that perhaps there would never be another one who equals him. »

Charles Perrault. *Des hommes illustres qui ont paru en France pendant ce siècle...*
Paris: A. Dezallier, 1696².

With the impressive list of distinguished collaborators that joined forces to write it, but also in the variety of its different versions, *Psyché* has a special place in the works of Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687) and therefore is of special relevance when trying to understand the specificity of French opera. Aside from the various productions by Molière (1622–1673) of his play, the work knew two distinct versions with music by Lully separated by several years: in 1671, *Psiché, Tragi-comédie, et Ballet*, a theatre play with incidental music and, in 1678, the opera *Psyché*, also presented as a *Tragédie*, like other operas by Lully, in its contemporary editions³. This temporal distance is even more consequential as this period saw the birth of the Lullist opera. *Psyché* is indeed one of Jean-Baptiste Lully's most intriguing works: in the various other pieces which lead to it, but also in the plurality of interpretations its libretto allows.

¹ « Il est vray qu'il [Lully] a eu le bonheur de trouver un Poëte don't les Vers ont esté dignes de sa Musique, & tels qu'il pouvait les desirer pour bien mettre en leur jour toutes les beautez & toutes les delicatesses de son Art, mais ce bonheur luy estoit deu [du] afin qu'il ne restait rien à desirer à ses Ouvrages. » in *Des hommes illustres qui ont paru en France pendant ce siècle, avec leurs portraits au naturel. Tome 1/, par M. [Charles] Perrault,...* Paris: A. Dezallier, 1696, p. 86.

² « On ne s'est pas contenté de dire qu'il [Quinault] estoit un Poëte excellent dans le Lyrique du Theatre, & que personne, ni des Anciens, ni des Modernes ne l'avoit égalé dans cette espèce de Poësie, on a esté jusqu'à dire, & à le dire tout d'une voix, qu'il en viendrait peut-estre jamais un autre qui l'égalast. » in *Des hommes illustres qui ont paru en France pendant ce siècle, avec leurs portraits au naturel. Tome 1/, par M. [Charles] Perrault, ...* Paris: A. Dezallier, 1696, p. 82.

³ The distinction between the two versions is easier if one keeps in mind the slightly different spelling, with the letter « i » used for the *Psiché* of 1671, and with a « y » for the *Psyché* of 1678. See: *Psiché, tragi-comédie et ballet, dansé devant S. M. au mois de janvier 1671*. Paris: R. Ballard, 1671. And: *Psyché, tragédie représentée par l'Académie Royale de Musique*. Paris: René Baudry, 1678. Subsequent editions are not always consistent in this regard, but in this article, I refer to the spellings given in the first printed edition of each libretto. (It is interesting to remember that the name of the composer himself will see a similar modification, from Lulli to Lully.)

Of all the musical « Intermèdes » from the original 1671 play, the last one shows this celebration and has a specific status. This final long scene, where dance is mixed with singing, is clearly considered a special entity as evidenced by the original title of the piece: *Psiché, Tragi-comédie, et Ballet*. This concluding *Ballet* after the end of Psyché's story is not written by Molière – like all sung parts which punctuate the *Tragi-comédie*, the verses are from the hand of Quinault. In style and composition, it is of a completely different dramatic nature compared to the rest of the piece. This surprising ending presents a complex program of « entrées » in the « V. Intermède », and by its length and complexity seems to call for a special elucidation, both symbolic and emblematic. To date, this *Ballet* of *Psiché* has generated little research and no real critical interpretation⁴; therefore, I will try here to propose a new reading of Quinault's contribution.

This research started in 2006, while preparing my stage production of *Psyché*, the opera version of 1678 wherein the final ballet of 1671 is integrated in its entirety, for the Boston Early Music Festival⁵. My aims were threefold: to examine the detail of the texts of this *Ballet* while focusing on the poetics and the aesthetics of *Ballet de Cour*, to provide a first period intellectual spatial order transferable for the blocking and applicable for the staging, and to give some new perspective on the role Quinault played in creating French opera. The present chapter develops this approach and gives some new references to support the importance of *Psiché*'s ending in the history of French opera.

2.1 The *Ballet* of *Psiché* in 1671

The circumstances around the creation of the very first piece in 1671, presented under the title *Psiché*, are revealing as to the importance of the staging in its poetic conception but also regarding the effect of the royal artistic propaganda, a program which increased its sphere of influence at the time⁶. The poet François Lagrange-Chancel (1677–1758) gives a rare testimony of the genesis of *Psiché*, albeit long after the first performance. He tells us that Louis XIV (1638–1715) was « resolved to give all his court one of these great festivals »⁷. The king was the declared patron, but the command was based on two performing circumstances. The first was driven by economic and stage constraints: keen to reopen the « Salle des Machines », the theatre of the Palais des Tuileries, and also to reuse the scenery from *Ercole amante*, which had been presented there almost ten years earlier, the king asked several poets to propose a performance subject that « an excellent decoration representing the Underworld could be put

⁴ See: Norman, Buford. *Quinault, librettiste de Lully, Le poète des Grâces*, Translation by Thomas Vernet and Jean Duron. Versailles: Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles, and Liège: Mardaga, 2001. See also: Couvreur, Manuel. *Jean-Baptiste Lully, Musique et dramaturgie au service du Prince*. [Bruxelles]: Marc Vokar, 1992, p. 257.

⁵ A summary of the research was presented in the 2007 BEMF Program Book. See: Blin, Gilbert. “The allegorical ending of *Psyché*” in *Boston Early Music Festival Program Book, 11–17 June 2007, Feast of the Gods*. Cambridge, (MA): Boston Early Music Festival, [2007], pp. 140 & 141. This text, with some minor edits, was included in the CD booklet of the recording by the Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra & Chorus conducted by Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs, CPO 777 367-2.

⁶ See: Apostolidès, Jean-Marie. *Le roi-machine, Spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1981.

⁷ « ayant résolu de donner à toute sa cour une de ces grandes fêtes » in: Lagrange-Chancel, François. “Préface” to *Orphée, Tragédie en Machines* in *Œuvres de Monsieur Lagrange-Chancel, nouvelle édition, revue et corrigée par lui-même*, Tome IV, Paris: Libraires associés, 1758, p. 63.

into, which was carefully preserved in his furniture repository »⁸. Beyond the obligation to use an existing set there was the royal artistic propaganda, then developing its influence, to consider: the sun king had ceased dancing in 1670⁹, and the court ballet, obligatory entertainment for the Carnival, lacks in polarity. Louis XIV wanted to renew and to extend the political influence of his *Menus-Plaisirs*¹⁰. There were many suitable subjects in Greco-Roman mythology that would require the underworld scenery, and the poets most able to serve the royal request answered the call of the king with the best-known ones: « Racine proposed the descent of Orpheus, Quinault the abduction of Proserpine [...] and Molière, with the help of the great Corneille, was for the subject of Psyche »¹¹.

Indeed, it may be a vain wish to want to see in the proposal by Jean Racine (1639–1699) the desire to feature a character known as a poet and a musician; more likely it would have been influenced by the innovation of « machines » spectacles in France. The subject of Orpheus had previously been treated on the French stage by Luigi Rossi (1597–1653) and Francesco Buti (1604–1682) with their *Orfeo*, offered to the Parisians by Cardinal Mazarin (1602–1661) in 1647. The myth also inspired François de Chapoton (15??–16??), and his *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* had achieved great success in 1639. This *Pièce à machines* was subsequently revived in 1648 and 1662 to benefit from the popularity of the mechanical performances of the machines for *Orfeo* and *Ercole amante*¹².

Constructed in 1659–1661, the theatre of the Tuileries Palace was built specifically to present the opera *Ercole amante*. The « Théâtre des Tuileries », also known as the Salle des Machines¹³, because of its elaborate stage machinery, was designed by the Italian theatre architects Gaspare Vigarani (1588–1663) and his two sons, Carlo (1637–1713) and Lodovico (1624–16?). This theatre was not a new architectural conception but based on the one Vigarani had built in Modena before, the Teatro della Spelta. In the eighteenth century, the French Président de Brosses visiting Modena, reported: « After the opera, the duke¹⁴ took me by the

⁸ « Pour cet effet, il leur demanda un sujet où pût entrer une excellente décoration qui représentoit les enfers, & qui étoit soigneusement conservée dans ses garde-meubles. » in: Lagrange-Chancel, François. "Préface" to *Orphée, Tragédie en Machines* in *Œuvres de Monsieur Lagrange-Chancel* [...]. Paris: Libraires associés, 1758, p. 63.

⁹ Although Louis XIV rehearsed his roles of Neptune and Apollon, he did not dance in February 1670 for the performances of *Les Amants magnifiques* by Molière with music by Lully: two courtiers replaced the king. See: La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Jean-Baptiste Lully*. Paris: Fayard, 2002, pp. 156–158.

¹⁰ The *Menus-Plaisirs* was the royal organization responsible for the "lesser pleasures of the King", which meant in practice it was in charge of all the preparations for ceremonies, events and festivities at Court. Cowart, Georgia. *The Triumph of Pleasure, Louis XIV & the Politics of Spectacle*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008.

¹¹ « Racine proposa le sujet d'Orphée ; Quinault [sic], l'enlèvement de Proserpine [...] & Molière, avec l'aide du grand Corneille, tint pour le sujet de Psyché » in: Lagrange-Chancel, François. "Préface" to *Orphée, Tragédie en Machines* in *Œuvres de Monsieur Lagrange-Chancel* [...]. Paris: Libraires associés, 1758, p. 63.

¹² Chapoton, François de. *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* 1639, Établissement du texte, notes et postface par Hélène Visentin. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004.

¹³ Coeyman, Barbara (1998). "Opera and Ballet in Seventeenth-Century French Theatres: Case Studies of the Salle des Machines and the Palais Royal Theater" in Radice, Mark A. *Opera in Context: Essays on Historical Staging from the Late Renaissance to the Time of Puccini*. Portland (OR): Amadeus Press. 1998, pp. 37–71.

¹⁴ Duke Francesco III d'Este (1698 –1780).

hand and said to me: “Come, let me show you the Tuileries Hall.” He had torches brought by his pages and conducted me to a large auditorium entirely similar to this one. The same architect built both; the one of Modena is the original. On the reputation it had, the king [Louis XIV] wished to have one in France. It is not used much in Modena, nor in Paris; it has been recognized that the ordinary form of our theatres is even more convenient »¹⁵. Both theatres had two main particularities: their auditoriums were constructed as an amphitheatre and their stages were extremely deep, allowing perspective sets to be of grand architectural proportions, framed by tall columns and pilasters. The stage of the Tuileries was narrower than the one of Modena, as it can be observed while comparing a little documented drawing of the Italian theatre¹⁶ and an engraving showing the Salle des Machines¹⁷. (Figure 1 and 2).

Indeed, finding a subject to fill up such a performing space was the first key of a possible success. Lagrange-Chancel tells us that he « often heard from the famous Racine that the subject of Orpheus was of all the adornments the most able to form a great spectacle »¹⁸. To create a « great spectacle » was the general guideline of the royal command. Philippe Quinault (1635–1688), aware of the potential of the story of Proserpine for the spectacular, suggested the character, and although his proposal was not selected, « he subsequently made [it] one of his finest operas. »¹⁹ As early as 1666, Quinault worked as a poet for the court ballets with his contributions to *Le Ballet Royal des Muses*²⁰. His production for spoken theatre, of which his tragedy *Pausanias* performed in 1668 marks the peak, was crowned with success.

¹⁵ « Après l’opéra, le duc me prit par la main et me dit : Venez, que je vous fasse voir la salle des Tuileries. Il fit apporter des flambeaux par ses pages, et me conduisit dans une grande salle de spectacle entièrement semblable à celle-ci : le même architecte a construit l’une et l’autre ; celle de Modène est l’original. Sur la réputation qu’elle avait, le roi voulut en avoir une pareille en France. On ne s’en sert pas trop à Modène, non plus qu’à Paris ; on a reconnu que la forme ordinaire de nos théâtres est encore plus commode. » in Lettre du Président de Brosses à M. de Neuilly, « A Modène, le mercredi des Cendres 1740. », in *Le Président de Brosses*, édition par Yves Florenne, Paris : Mercure de France, 1964, p. 205.

¹⁶ Sale “The Collection of the late Marianne C. Gourary”, Bloomsbury Auction, Oct 28, 2015, London. This drawing shows, in front of the proscenium, a group of seven men and among them, the Duke of Modena, recognizable to his hat and his position right under the coats of arms of Este at the top of the theatre frame, pointing at a paper presented by the architect Gaspare Vigarani. On the stage, some painters are still working on the sets: A huge cloud machine is hovering above the stage. On the ground is a figure of dragon. This view is also known thanks to an engraving by Bartolomeo Fenis, albeit in a reverse composition.

¹⁷ This reduction was imposed by the fact the architect had to fit his plan to continue the existing architecture of the Tuileries palace. See: La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Carlo Vigarani, intendant des plaisirs de Louis XIV*. Paris : Perrin, 2005, pp. 19–20.

¹⁸ « J’ai souvent entendu dire au fameux Racine, que le sujet d’Orphée étoit le plus susceptible de tous les ornemens qui peuvent former un grand spectacle. » in: Lagrange-Chancel, François. “Préface” to *Orphée, Tragédie en Machines* in *Œuvres de Monsieur Lagrange-Chancel* [...]. Paris: Libraires associés, 1758, p. 64.

¹⁹ « dont il fit dans la suite un de ses plus beaux opéras » in: Lagrange-Chancel, François. “Préface” to *Orphée, Tragédie en Machines* in *Œuvres de Monsieur Lagrange-Chancel* [...]. Paris: Libraires associés, 1758, p. 63. Quinault’s libretto for *Proserpine* will be finalized in 1680, during his « comeback » to the opera stage, not long after the second *Psyché* of 1678. See: Quinault, Philippe. *Œuvres d’Opéra, Présentés et annotés par Buford Norman, Tome Premier*, Toulouse: Société de Littératures Classiques, 1999.

²⁰ This Ballet, created in the Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye on 2 December 1666, has seven texts by Quinault, See: *Le Ballet Royal des Muses Dansé par Sa Majesté à son chateau de S. Germain en Laye, le 2. décembre; 1666* Paris: Robert Ballard, 1666.

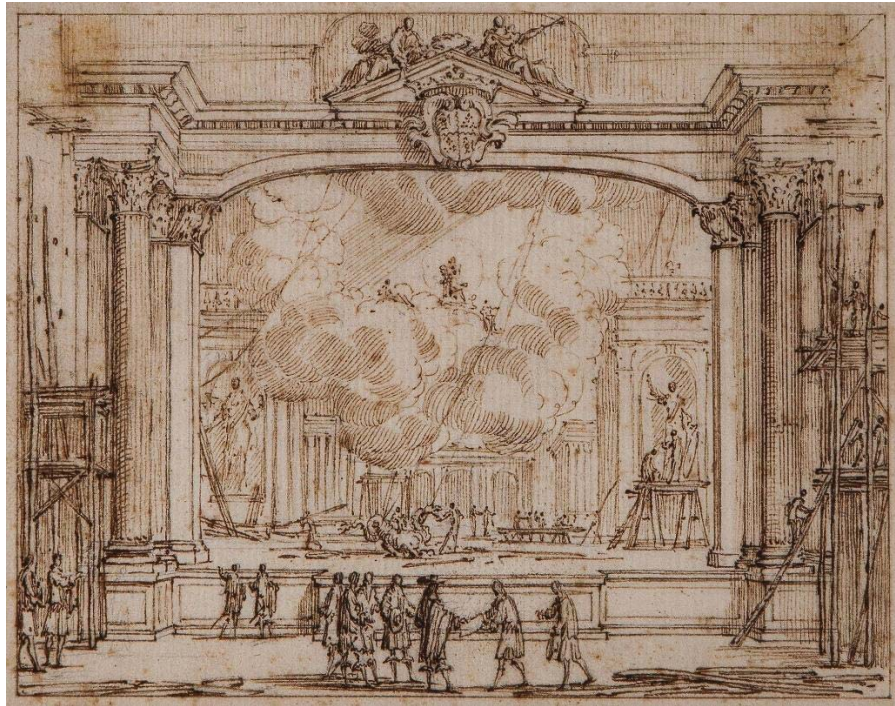


Figure 1: Adam Perelle (1640-1695), attributed to, *Gaspare Vigarini presenting to Duke Francesco I the Teatro della Spelta in Modena, 1659.*
Actual location unknown

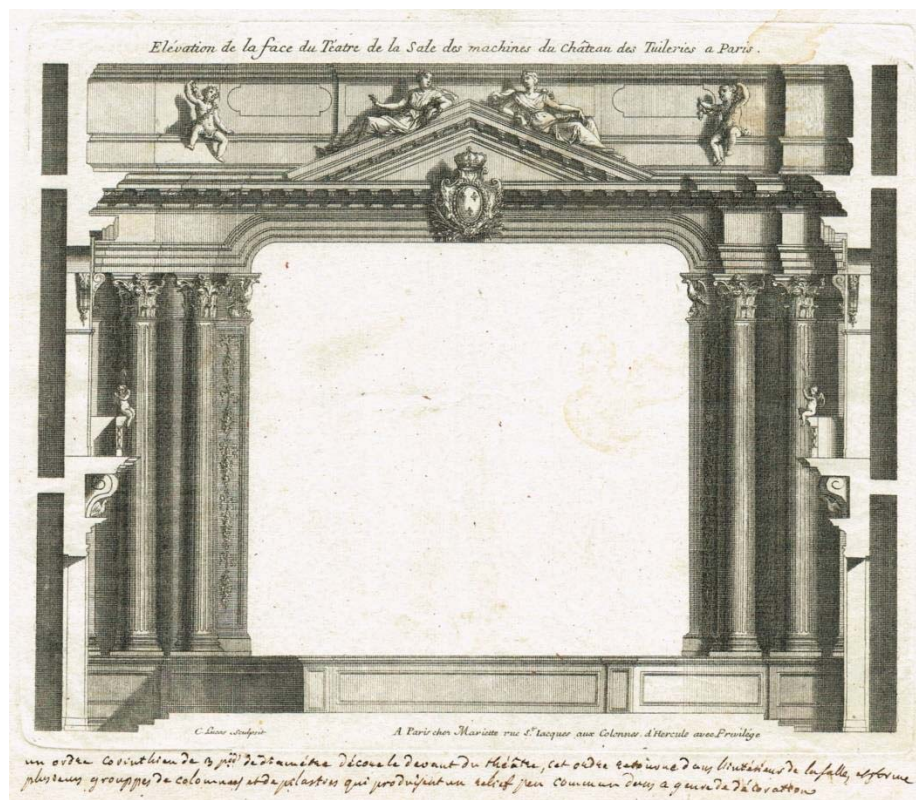


Figure 2: *Elévation de la face du Théâtre de la Sale des machines du Château des Tuileries a Paris*
Engraving by Claude L. Lucas (1685? – 1765)
from Jean Mariette. *L'Architecture françoise*. A Paris, chez Mariette, [1727-1738].
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The same year he had already collaborated with Molière on the spectacle of *Le Carnaval, mascarade*²¹. The first attempt by Quinault and Lully to offer a fully composed homogenous operatic work, *La Grotte de Versailles*, was successfully performed before Louis XIV in 1668 and revived in 1669 and 1670 « avec une dépense extraordinaire »²². Quinault's reception at the Académie française in 1670 established him as an official poet considered well suited to fit the regicentric rules of the royal institution²³. *Bellerophon*, the first tragedy he offered as academician, was officially presented to the Parisian audience in February 1671. But Quinault's play had already been given during some « visites », a type of pre-premiere at court, in January, at the same time *Psiché* was performed²⁴, suggesting rehearsals concurrent with *Psiché*'s.

A project like the Tuileries show required not only literary qualities but also those of a theatre man, able to direct the stage of such a big theatre. Molière, when he proposed the story of Psyche, was acting not only as a poet but also as a company director capable of organizing and uniting the many talents, including the one of the set designer Carlo Vigarani (1637–1713), that such a grand spectacle requires²⁵. And events were to prove that it was this last quality that saved Molière, who was unable to write the full text of the play but resourceful enough to gather around him other gifted poets such as Pierre Corneille (1606–1684) and Quinault to collaborate on the text; they ultimately provided a grand spectacle. Louis XIV, still delighted with the recent successes of *Les Amants magnifiques* and *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, chose Molière and thus Psyche, perhaps bearing in mind that the subject allowed for the comic episodes that were appropriate during Carnival²⁶. The Roman tale of the beautiful mortal Psyche provided Molière the plot of the play: the persecutions she endures from the envious Venus, goddess of

²¹ The first version of 1668 was created at the Louvre (appartements du roi) on 18 January 1668 (Note: The 1675 version is different). See: *Le carnaval, mascarade royale, dansée par Sa Majesté, le 18 janvier 1668*, Paris: Robert Ballard, 1668.

²² Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits, Mélanges Colbert 286, f. 11v-12r: « A M Nicolas Melique tresorier aux menus plaisirs et aff^{es} de la chambre du Roy la somme de six mil six cent vingt cinq livres quatorze sols pour avec iii.⁹ [3.000] lt qu'il a ci devant recus faire ix.⁹ vi.^c xxv^{lt} xiii^s. pour le parfait paiement de la desp.^{ce} extraordinaire faite dans lesd' menus plaisirs tant po^r. l'Eglogue et autres divertissemens representez devant sa Maiesté au chau' de Versailles les 23. aoust et 6. septemb' 1670. ». See: <http://www.quinault.info/Home/la-vie/Sources> (accessed 5 November 2017)

²³ « Je scay, MESSIEURS, qu'il s'en faut beaucoup que le vulgaire apperçoive ce que vous pénétrez, & que souvent il y a bien loin de l'estime du peuple à vôtre approbation, aussi n'ay-je souhaité d'obtenir la grace que vous m'accordez, que pour acquérir parmy vous la perfection qui me manque, & les lumieres dont j'ay besoin. » In "Compliment fait en 1670. Par Monsieur Quinault, Auditeur des Comptes, lorsqu'il fut reçu à la place de Monsieur Salomon" in *Recueil des harangues prononcées par Messieurs de l'Académie françoise dans leurs réceptions, & en d'autres occasions différentes, depuis l'establissement de l'Académie jusqu'à present*. A Paris: chez Jean Baptiste Coignard, imprimeur ordinaire du Roy, & de l'Académie françoise, ruë S. Jacques, à la Bible d'or. MDCLXXXVIII [1698], p. 102.

²⁴ *Bellerophon* was performed on 22 and 23 January 1671 at the Château of Vincennes. « Leurs majestez continüans les Divertissemens du Carnaval, au Chasteau de Vincennes, y eurent celui de la chasse: & apres une splendide Collation, celui d'une Tragedie intitulée Bellérophon, par la troupe Royale » in *La Gazette*, No. 14, Paris: 1671, p. 107.

²⁵ Molière had already proven his capability in Versailles with *Les Plaisirs de l'île enchantée* of 1664 and *Le Grand Divertissement Royal* of 1668. See: Moine, Marie-Christine. *Les fêtes à la Cour du Roi Soleil 1653–1715*. Paris: F. Sorlot & F. Lanore, 1984.

²⁶ The story of Psyche is first told by Apuleius (ca. 124 – ca. 170 AD) in his *Metamorphoses*, a comical novel known today as *The Golden Ass*, following the designation by St. Augustine (Asinus aureus).

Beauty, and the Love she inspires in Cupid (L'Amour) himself. Cupid disguises himself in order not to be recognized, but curiosity overtakes Psyche and she discovers the identity of her lover. She breaks Cupid's charm, and Venus, to test Psyche, orders her to carry out a symbolic task: to go to the underworld. Psyche, saved by Love, returns, and to appease the jealous Venus, Jupiter makes Psyche immortal. Psyche and Cupid are reunited, and Jupiter invites all the Gods to celebrate the glory of Love. Molière²⁷ arranged the plot in such a way as to use in his staged production not only the sets of the underworld, but almost all the decorations of *Ercole amante*: the sea port fortified by several towers, the cypress garden full of magnificent sepulchers, the desert of horrible rocks, the courtyard of a palace, the garden, the portico of the Temple of Hymen. This re-use of existing resources from *Ercole amante*²⁸ did not prevent the invoices of painters and decorators working on *Psiché* to reach substantial amounts. The state of the production expenses²⁹, gives a huge total without counting the fees of the actors. If the construction costs of the theatre building are included, it is said that it was the most expensive of the French court's « great spectacle » mounted up to that date.

2.2 The content and symbolism of the *Ballet of Psiché*

Psyché's marriage with Cupid symbolized, for the audience of 1671, the eternal union of the human soul with the divine love³⁰. To celebrate this eternity which starts with the apotheosis of Psyché, all of Olympus appears at this concluding Ballet. « The divinities who had been divided between Venus and her son, reunite, seeing them in agreement; and all together, through concerts, songs, and dances, celebrate the nuptial feast of Love and Psyche. »³¹ Indeed, as the peace is restored, all the gods and goddesses who have appeared during the tale return to the stage. From the list of the « Noms des personnes qui ont recité, dansé & chanté dans Psiché, Tragi-comédie, & Ballet » which is found at the end of the editions of Molière's play, it appears that most of the characters seen during the previous intermèdes would have returned to form, by their union with the gods appearing in the plot, the « Chœur des Divinités célestes ». But to complete this Olympus, created by cloud machines, other divinities appear for the first time in this entertainment. Four masculine deities, who have not been seen before, rule over the revels: Apollo, the god of harmony; Bacchus, the god of wine; Momus, the god of mockery; and Mars, the warrior god. It would be easy to assume that each of these gods is simply what he is known to be in classical mythology, but the significance of

²⁷ Molière *Psyché, Tragédie-Ballet en cinq actes avec une notice et des notes par Georges Monval*. Paris : Librairie des Bibliophiles Flammarion, 1895.

²⁸ [Francesco Buti] *Ercole amante : tragedia rappresentata per la nozze delle Maestà christianissime, Hercule amoureux : tragédie représentée pour les nocces de leurs Majestez tres-chrestienne*. Paris : R. Ballard, 1662.

²⁹ This document, preserved in the manuscripts of the British Museum, was first published in 1891, by M. Bougenot in *Bulletin historique et philologique du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques*, 1891.

³⁰ This was the moral interpretation of the myth given in the fifth century by Martian Capella and the Christian approach by Fulgence. For an history of the myth of Psyché, see: Collignon, Maxime. *Essai sur les Monuments grecs et romains relatifs au mythe de Psyché*. Paris: Ernest Thorin, 1877; Le Maître, H. *Essai sur le mythe de Psyché dans la littérature française des origines à 1890*. Paris: Boivin & Cie, éditeurs, [1940]; and Gély, Véronique. *L'invention d'un mythe : Psyché, Allégorie et fiction, du siècle de Platon au temps de La Fontaine*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006.

³¹ « Les divinités qui avaient été partagées entre Venus & son fils, se réunissent en les voyant d'accord ; et tous ensemble par des concerts, des chants, & des danses, célèbrent la fête des nocces de l'Amour & de Psiché. » Molière, *Psiché*, V. Intermède.

this ballet is hidden behind such a first reading. The choice of these gods leaves the viewer perplexed: if music and wine are expected at a wedding, Apollo and Bacchus could serve as « Maîtres d'hôtel »³² under the order of Jupiter, and the presence of Momus could announce some theatrical entertainments, but how to explain Mars? War is an unlikely guest, and an even more unlikely « ordonnateur »³³ at such nuptials.

To determine their personal status, we must consider that if they appear on stage together, it is these associations which need to be deciphered. The four of them, each with his own retinue, are of equal importance, and even if the order in which they will sing will be of special relevance, it is by their association that these four gods indicate an allegorical meaning. Since the sixteenth century, the art of *Ballet de Cour*, as a princely entertainment, was intended to connect well-read references and witty associations in an intricate manner³⁴. The Greek and Latin worlds, with their complex systems of allegory, were associated with contemporary references through a visually transmitted rhetoric³⁵. By 1671, after decades of taking part in and being the audience for numerous Ballets, Louis's court was sufficiently trained to expect and to decipher enigmas through mottos and visual attributes³⁶. Given the ingenuity of Quinault who was familiar with the complex world of the *Ballet de Cour*³⁷, which concept is symbolized in the action of the final ballet of *Psyché*?

The royal commission behind the creation of *Psyché* began as a kind of poetry contest. The winner, Molière, was busy as « The Carnival was approaching, and the pressing orders of the King, who intended to give this magnificent entertainment several times before Lent, put him in the necessity of suffering a little help ». This « little help » was a euphemism by the publisher as Molière gathered a large team around him including Quinault, one of the unsuccessful contestants³⁸. « This work is not all by one hand. M. Quinault has made the words

³² François Vatel (1631–1671) is the most famous of these Maîtres d'hôtel. Vatel served Louis XIV's superintendent Nicolas Fouquet in the splendid fête at the Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte on 17 August 1661. Ten years later, few months after the opening of *Psyché*, Vatel was responsible for a banquet for 2000 people hosted in honor of Louis XIV by le Grand Condé in April 1671, at the Château de Chantilly. According to Madame de Sévigné, Vatel, distraught about the lateness of the seafood delivery, committed suicide. See: James A. Harrison, editor, *Letters of Madame de Sévigné*, 1899, p. 35. For a visually historically informed cinematographic interpretation, see also Joffé, Roland. *Vatel, DVD, Film by Roland Joffé*. Neuilly-sur-Seine: Gaumont Vidéo, 2000.

³³ I used the French word « ordonnateur » as an equivalent of the Italian « corago ».

³⁴ See: Christout, Marie-Françoise. *Le Ballet de Cour de Louis XIV, 1643–1672, Mises en scène*. Préface d'André Chastel. Paris : Picard, 1967 and Durosoir, Georgie. *Les ballets de la cour de France au XVIIe siècle, ou les fantaisies et les splendeurs du Baroque*. Genève: Éditions Papillon, 2004.

³⁵ See: Saunders, Alison. *The Seventeenth-century French Emblem: A Study in Diversity*. Genève, Librairie Droz, 2000.

³⁶ See: Mourey, Marie-Thérèse. «L'art du Ballet de Cour aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles : poétique de l'image animée» in: *La construction des images : persuasion et rhétorique, création des mythes, Actes en ligne du Colloque Ecole Doctorale IV, « Civilisations, cultures, littératures et sociétés »*. Paris : 2009. <http://www.paris-sorbonne.fr/fr/spip.php?article9555>. (accessed 5 November 2017).

³⁷ For period perspectives on the *Ballet de Cour*, see : Ménestrier, Claude-François. *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du theatre*. Paris: Rene' Guignard, 1682.

³⁸ We do not know for sure how this team was made, but one may surmise that Molière would have wished to exclude Racine. See: Caldicott, Edric. «Les fonctions incompatibles de Molière, impresario et auteur de cour» in *Les Métamorphoses de Psyché*. Dossier établi par Carine Barbaferi et Chris Rauseo. Valenciennes: Presses Universitaires de Valenciennes, 2004, pp. 101–112.

in it which are sung in music, with the exception of the Italian Complaint. M. de Molière has drawn up the Plan of the work, and regulated the disposition, in which he is more attached to the beauties and pomp of the Spectacle than to the exact regularity. As for the Versification, he had not the leisure to do it whole. [...] Thus, there is only the Prologue, the First Act, the first Scene of the Second and the First of the Third, of which the Verses are by him. M. Corneille was occupied a fortnight for the rest; and by this means His Majesty found himself served at the time that he had ordered it ».³⁹ The events, which tell about this remarkable team working diligently to satisfy the king, are close enough to the gods uniting their talents to answer Jupiter.

Quinault, in charge of the sung verses which conclude the spectacle, may have made an allusion to these circumstances of the creation, in the pure tradition of the allegorical tribute of the *Ballet de Cour* to its participants. It is thinkable to see in Jupiter, the ruler of the gods, who wanted the other deities to celebrate Love and Psyché, an image of Louis XIV himself, asking his most accomplished poets to create a new entertainment to mark the elevation of a lady to a superior status (maybe to celebrate Madame de Montespan (1640–1707), the favorite who had just given birth to his son?⁴⁰). And Quinault could have traced portraits of his colleagues in this unseen team of artists: Lully (Figure 3) was perhaps the god of harmony Apollon in this assembly⁴¹, while Molière (Figure 4) could be seen as Momus, the god of raillery. Pierre Corneille (Figure 5), famous for his heroic plays⁴², would have made a suitable Mars and Quinault (Figure 6) might have seen himself as Bacchus, as he had just gained special recognition for his abilities in the *Pastorale* genre for *La Grotte de Versailles*. These « grands génies de son siècle »⁴³ answered the order of Louis, much like the gods united their talents to create something new to please Jupiter and to entertain the celestial court⁴⁴.

³⁹ « Le libraire au lecteur. Cet Ouvrage n'est pas tout d'une main. M. Quinault a fait les Paroles qui s'y chantent en Musique, à la réserve de la Plainte Italienne. M. de Molière a dressé le Plan de la Pièce, et réglé la disposition, où il s'est plus attaché aux beautés et à la pompe du Spectacle qu'à l'exacte régularité. Quant à la Versification il n'a pas eu le loisir de la faire entière. Le Carnaval approchait, et les Ordres pressants du Roi, qui se voulait donner ce magnifique Divertissement plusieurs fois avant le Carême l'ont mis dans la nécessité de souffrir un peu de secours. Ainsi il n'y a que le Prologue, le Premier Acte, la première Scène du Second et la première du Troisième, dont les Vers soient de lui. M. Corneille a employé une quinzaine au reste ; et par ce moyen Sa Majesté s'est trouvée servie dans le temps qu'elle l'avait ordonné. » in Molière, *Psyché*, avertissement du libraire, in Molière. *Œuvres complètes*. Paris: Gallimard, 2010, vol. II, p. 423.

⁴⁰ Louis-Auguste de Bourbon, duc du Maine was born 31 March 1670 in Saint-Germain-en-Laye. See: Voltaire. *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, publié par M. de Francheville... Tome second. Berlin: C.-F. Henning, 1751, pp. 53–55.

⁴¹ Lully may also have contributed to the libretto: the verses of the Italian complaint is attributed to him.

⁴² The apocryphal words of Turenne, « Où donc Corneille a-t-il appris l'art de la guerre? », supposed to have been prompted by *Sertorius*, were reported and at the same time dismissed by Voltaire in his 1764 *Commentaires sur Corneille*. Nevertheless, their existence points to the martial quality of Pierre Corneille's theatre, where honor and duty were at the center of his stage rhetoric.

⁴³ See: Lagrange-Chancel, François. "Préface" to *Orphée, Tragédie en Machines* in *Œuvres de Monsieur Lagrange-Chancel, nouvelle édition, revue et corrigé par lui-même, Tome IV*. Paris: Libraires associés, 1758, p. 63.

⁴⁴ This reading is supported by some verses of Charles Robinet dating from 1665: « L'admirable et plaisant Molière, / Le Mome des terrestres Dieux, / Comme l'autre est Molière aux Cieux » quoted in: La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Jean-Baptiste Lully*. Paris: Fayard, 2002, p. 496.



Figure 3: *Jean-Baptiste Lully* (1633–1687)
Engraving by Dominique Sornique (1708–1756)
Collection of Gilbert Blin.



Figure 4: *Jean Baptiste Poquelin Molière* (1622–1673)
Engraving by Gérard Edelinck (1640–1707) from *Des hommes illustres qui ont paru en France pendant ce siècle, avec leurs portraits au naturel. Tome 1/, par M. [Charles] Perrault, ...* Paris: A. Dezallier, 1696.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.



Figure 5: Pierre Corneille (1606–1684)

Engraving by Jacques Lubin (1637–1695) from *Des hommes illustres qui ont paru en France pendant ce siècle, avec leurs portraits au naturel. Tome 1 / , par M. [Charles] Perrault,...*

Paris: A. Dezallier, 1696.

Collection of Gilbert Blin.



Figure 6: Philippe Quinault (1635–1688)

Engraving by Gérard Edelinck (1640–1707) from *Des hommes illustres qui ont paru en France pendant ce siècle, avec leurs portraits au naturel. Tome 1 / , par M. [Charles] Perrault, ...*

Paris: A. Dezallier, 1696.

Collection of Gilbert Blin.

2.3 A Forebearer in 1656: *Le Ballet de Psyché ou de la Puissance de l'Amour*

It is Apollo as the Sun God, presented by Quinault as « Dieu de l'Harmonie », who leads the whole celebration. He opens with a « Récit » (musical speech) that orders the unification of all Gods and « invites [them] to rejoice », after which he orders them to « sing together to praise Love ». The shift of focus from Psyché to Amour is radical; indeed, the heroine is never mentioned again⁴⁵. More eloquently, in Quinault's text, the French name « Amour » not only refers to Cupid, the character of the tale whom the feast honors, but also to the general feeling that he incarnates: Love. The poet fully exploits this ambiguity of the French language, which uses the same word for both. Such richness of meanings had already been captured by Molière and Pierre Corneille in the rest of the play, but Quinault gives the word its double sense in order to expand the significance of his ballet, which thereby acquires another level of meaning. In this introduction Quinault invokes what the inspiration of his ballet: Love and its eternal power. The theme was not new, as it had previously been the subject of a *Ballet de Cour* on a text by Isaac de Benserade (1612–1691) with music by Lully: *Le Ballet de Psyché ou de la Puissance de l'Amour*. Created fifteen years before, in 1656, this ballet deserves some attention as, despite its music having been lost, it offers some perspective on the *Psyché* of 1671.

Le Ballet de Psyché ou de la Puissance de l'Amour was created on 17 January 1656 in the Louvre⁴⁶. Benserade did not develop the story of the love between Psyché and L'Amour in dramatic terms but articulated the ballet around two major events: « In the first are depicted the beauty and delights of the Palace of Love. And in the second, Love himself entertains the beautiful Psyche by the representation of some of the wonders he has produced. »⁴⁷ Some features of Benserade's *Ballet* are particularly relevant to *Psyché*. The king, then aged eighteen, danced in the production, first as the character of Le Printemps (spring) in the second entrée next to Zephyre, Flore, Vertumne and Bacchus, gods who also appear, again associated with the abundance given by the royal peace, in the *Psyché* of 1671. The first part offered a ballet within the ballet: a « Ballet of the Five Senses », inserted in the larger structure and developed in as many consecutive entrées of « merveilles » : First three excellent painters were brought into the Palace by the will of Love, to satisfy the sense of sight with their works. Musicians followed to charm the sense of hearing.⁴⁸ In the following entrée a god and his allegorical

⁴⁵ It is possible that the full ballet of *Psyché* could have come from the draft Quinault proposed in 1670 for a work on *Proserpine*, « dont il fit dans la suite un de ses plus beaux opéras ». See: Lagrange-Chancel, François. « Préface » to *Orphée, Tragédie en Machines* in *Œuvres de Monsieur Lagrange-Chancel* [...]. Paris: Libraires associés, 1758, p. 63. When Quinault completes the project on this character as an opera for Lully in 1680, he creates a similar situation at the end of the opera in the wedding of Pluton and Proserpine (order restored: rejoicing about the power of love) which could lead to the text of the full final ballet of *Psyché*, as the title character is not mentioned in the text of the ballet. See : Quinault, Philippe. *Livrets d'Opéra, Présentés et annotés par Buford Norman, Tome Premier*. Toulouse : Société de Littératures Classiques, 1999.

⁴⁶ Ballet in two parts with twenty-seven Entrées, « dansé par le roi au Louvre le 16 janvier 1656 ». See: [Benserade, Isaac de] *Ballet de Psyché ou de la Puissance de l'Amour, dansé par Sa Majesté le 16 jour de janvier 1656*. Paris: R. Ballard, 1656.

⁴⁷ « Dans la premiere sont représentées les beautez & les delices du Palais d'Amour. Et dans la seconde, l'Amour mesme y divertit la belle Psyché par la representation d'une partie des merveilles qu'il a produites » See: [Benserade, Isaac de] *Ballet de Psyché ou de la Puissance de l'Amour, dansé par Sa Majesté le 16 jour de janvier 1656*. Paris: R. Ballard, 1656.

⁴⁸ See: *Ballet de Psyché ou de la Puissance de l'Amour...* Paris: R. Ballard, 1656.

retinue were used for the sense of taste: « Comus God of feasts accompanied by Cleanliness and Abundance ». The pleasure of smell called for four Perfumers carrying the sweetest fragrances of « happy Arabia ». The last entrée, dedicated to the sense of touch, saw, the physical entrance of Psyche herself: « The fifth and last of the senses being reserved to Love in the legitimate possession of the beautiful Psyche, she arrives accompanied by Beauty and the Graces ».⁴⁹



Figure 7: Isaac de Benserade (1612–1691)

Engraving by Gérard Edelinck (1640–1707) from *Des hommes illustres qui ont paru en France pendant ce siècle, avec leurs portraits au naturel. Tome 2 / , par M. [Charles] Perrault,...*

Paris: A. Dezallier, 1700.

Collection of Gilbert Blin.

In the second part of his ballet showing the « wonders » of Love, Benserade extended the power of that god from Comus on to Apollon, Mars and Momus, all deities who will reappear in 1671. The twelfth entrée of the second part featured the effect of Love in the Underworld: « A den opens, Pluto appears on his Throne, surrounded by Demons. Fear, Suspicion, Despair and Jealousy make an Italian concert, supported by various Instruments. Composed by Sieur Baptiste [Lully] »⁵⁰. Louis XIV portrayed Pluton, presiding over the

⁴⁹ VI Entrée: « Trois excellents Peintres portez dans le Palais par le vouloir de l'Amour, pour y satisfaire par leurs ouvrages le sens de la veüe. » VII Entrée: « Sept Musiciens venus en ce lieu pour y charmer le sens de l'ouïe. » VIII Entrée: « Comus Dieu des festins accompagné de la Propreté & de l'Abondance pour le sens du goust. » IX Entrée: « Quatre Parfumeurs chargez des plus douces odeurs de l'Arabie heureuse pour le Plaisir de l'odorat. » X Entrée: « Le cinquième & dernier des sens estant reserve à l'Amour dans la possession légitime de la belle Psyché, elle arrive accompagnée de la Beauté, & des Graces. » See: *Ballet de Psyché ou de la Puissance de l'Amour...* Paris: R. Ballard, 1656.

⁵⁰ « Un antre s'ouvre, Pluton paroist sur son Trône, environné des Daémons. la Crainte, le Soupçon, le Desespoir & la Jalousie font un concert Italien, soustenu de divers Instruments. Composez par le Sieur Baptiste ». See: *Ballet de Psyché ou de la Puissance de l'Amour...* Paris: R. Ballard, 1656.

suffering caused by Love, with Lully's music performed by Italian singers⁵¹. « Pluto and his Dark Court testify by a very extraordinary dance that Love inspires cheerfulness even to the Underworld »⁵². After many entrées showing a great variety of characters, L'Hymen, performed by Monsieur, younger brother of the king⁵³, offered a moral, but ironic and detached, conclusion to this panorama of the power of Love.

The ballet was a huge success⁵⁴. But its popularity, and the memory of it, may be one of the reasons why Benserade (Figure 7) was not one of the writers asked by the king to propose a theme for the 1671 performance. Indeed, at that time Benserade was also a theatre author and therefore would seem to have been a legitimate candidate to answer the royal command. There must be a reason why his name does not appear among the playwrights consulted by Louis XIV. It may have something to do with the fact that the king did not plan to dance himself in the new ballet. Benserade may have been judged too old-fashioned as his style was at its best when he wrote to associate aristocratic dancers from the court with allegorical figures, a witty talent which was not required in 1671⁵⁵. Did Benserade, who may have had health problems around this time, have doubts about his ability to successfully complete the project given its ambitious schedule and decide not to propose a subject? Maybe the poet was bitter about seeing his younger rival Quinault being received at the Académie française before him⁵⁶. Did Benserade feel left out of the Royal establishment and of the royal favor⁵⁷? Nevertheless, revisiting the theme of the power of Love from the ballet by Benserade, Quinault, polishes his subject by first presenting each of the four gods of his 1671 *Ballet* as they boast of their puissance except in the face of Love: indeed Apollon, Bacchus, Momus and Mars tell us how Love inspires them to unexpected behaviors and alters their individual natures.

⁵¹ Among these Italian singers, notable are the names of those who will sing in *Ercole amante* in 1662: Anna Bergerotti (Gelosia in the *Puissance*, Iole in *Ercole*) and Gian Francesco Tagliavacca (La Desparatione in the *Puissance*, Mercurio in *Ercole*). See the Manuscript of Philidor, André (1652?–1730). [Ballet Relation de ce qui s'est passé à l'arrivée de la Reine Christine de Suede A Essaune en la maison de Monsieur Hesselin avec un Panegyrique Latin sur l'entrée de cette Princesse. A Paris l'an 1656. / Ballet de Psyché ou de la Puissance de l'Amour dansé par sa Majesté l'an 1656 / Ballet de l'Amour Malade dansé par sa Majesté l'an 1657], 1705. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k103683r/f77.image.r=Ballet%20de%20la%20puissance%20de%20l'Amour> (Accessed 8 September 2017).

⁵² « Pluton & sa Cour ténébreuse témoignant par une danse toute extraordinaire que l'Amour inspire la gayeté jusqu'aux Enfers ». See: *Ballet de Psyché ou de la Puissance de l'Amour...* Paris: R. Ballard, 1656.

⁵³ Philippe I, Duke of Orléans (1640–1701), was then sixteen years old.

⁵⁴ The Ballet was revived on the 17, 23 and 30 January, the 14 and 16 February and the 18 March 1656, but also the following year, in February 1657.

⁵⁵ Charles Perrault (1628–1703) in his article about Benserade singles out this aspect of his ballets. See: Perrault, Charles. *Des hommes illustres qui ont paru en France pendant ce siècle, avec leurs portraits au naturel. Tome 2 / , par M. Perrault*. Paris: A. Dezallier, 1700.

⁵⁶ Benserade, twenty-three years older than Quinault, may have hoped to be elected to the seat that had been occupied by Salomon de Virelade (1620–1670), but Quinault was elected instead. Benserade was received by the Académie française in 1674, replacing Chapelain (1595–1674).

⁵⁷ It seems that Benserade was having some health problems: a sonnet he wrote, possibly during this period, appears to allude to a psychological burden: « Je suis las de jouer ce rôle: / depuis long-temps je travaille au ballet; » in: *Annales poétiques, depuis l'origine de la Poésie Française, tome XXII*. Paris: Merigot, 1782, p. 83. N.B. This volume contains a rare biographical sketch of Benserade.

2.4 Visual allegory in *Le Ballet of Psyché*

These four gods do not introduce themselves and their identity is only a visual one: nothing in their first words tells us who they are, and it is only through the printed text that we know now who they are. On stage, these identities were certainly easier to decipher thanks to the elaborate costumes for the performance, a characteristic of the French *Ballet de Cour*. The costumes of the « divertissements » of *Psyché* had been drawn by Henry de Gissey (1621–1673); he had held the post of « dessinateur du cabinet du Roi » in the *Menus-Plaisirs du Roi* since 1661. Gissey's appointment was no more than an official recognition of the fact that the designer had already been designing costumes for the French royal court for ten years. In 1651, at the Palais Royal, Henri de Gissey made his recorded debut by creating the costumes of the ballet *Les Fêtes de Bacchus*. He was nominated in 1660 to be the « Concierge et Garde des décorations et machines » of the Salle des Machines of the Tuileries, then under construction. He also collaborated in many official spectacles, like the famous *Carrousel* of 1662⁵⁸. Although his participation in the creation of the costumes for the *Ballet royal de la nuit* of 1653 is not fully established⁵⁹, we know he oversaw the costumes for the *Ballet de l'Impatience* (1661), the *Ballet des Arts* (1663), and the *Ballet des Muses* (1665).

In 1666 Gissey was appointed « Garde salle et machines » of the theatre of the Palais-Royal, where Molière and his company were tenants. Collaborating with Molière, Gissey designed costumes for the intermèdes of *George Dandin* in 1668 and *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* in 1670, anticipating the role he would take for *Psyché* in the following year. Gissey's fanciful costumes accentuated the relation with the *Ballet de Cour*⁶⁰. His designs were seen as « perfect » by the great collector Michel de Marolles (1600–1681): they had « nothing of the ugly » about them and were considered to be « of fine manner and pleasing look. »⁶¹ The costumes by Gissey for *Psyché* are of Roman inspiration for Apollon, Mars and Bacchus (Figures 8, 9 & 11). Momus, on the other hand, seems to be influenced by the fashion of the sixteenth century, a trend he therefore shares with the characters of Italian theatre, particularly the *Commedia dell'arte* (Figure 10). They all have trimmings and hand props suitable to their character and their ability to be clearly seen on the big stage of the Salle des Machines assured an understanding of their identity. Apollon, holding his bow, has a costume and a headset full of rays of the sun, a costume reminiscent of the one worn by Louis XIV as Apollo in the *Ballet de la Nuit* of 1653.

⁵⁸ See: Castelluccio, Stéphane. *Les Carrousels en France, du XVI^e au XVIII^e siècle*. Paris et Versailles: L'Insulaire & Les Éditions de l'Amateur & Versailles: Bibliothèque Municipale, 2002.

⁵⁹ Gissey is a possibility as much as Charles Beaubrun (1604–1692) or Henry Beaubrun (1603–1677). See: *Ballet de la Nuit*. Edited by Michael Burden and Jennifer Thorp. The Wendy Hilton Dance & Music Series No. 15. Hillsdale (NY): Pendragon Press, 2009. See also “River gods theatrical costumes” in the Case-studies of the present dissertation.

⁶⁰ La Gorce, Jérôme de. “Les costumes d'Henry Gissey pour les représentations de *Psyché*” in *Revue de l'Art*, numéro 66. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1984, pp. 39–52; and Dock, Stephen V. “Unpublished Costume Drawings by Henry Gissey for Molière's *Psyché*” in *Theatre History Studies, Volume XIII*, edited by Ron Engle. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 1993, pp. 181–207. See also: La Gorce, Jérôme de, & Jugie, Pierre. *Dans l'atelier des Menus Plaisirs du roi. Spectacles, fêtes et cérémonies aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*. Paris : Archives nationales-Versailles, Artlys, 2010, No. 14 ; and Marie-Françoise Christout. *Le Ballet de Cour au XVII^e siècle*. Genève: Minkoff, 1987.

⁶¹ « A propos de Rabel, Jessé [Gissey] fut admirable / A former des dessins pour des jeux de balet; / Ses crayons achevez ne portoient rien de laid / D'une manière fine et d'un air agréable. » in Marolles, Michel de. *Le livre des peintres et graveurs*, edited by Georges Duplessis. Paris: P. Jannet, 1855, p. 28.



Figures 8, 9, 10 & 11: 1670, Henry Gissey, costume designs for Apollon, Bacchus, Momus and Mars in the *Ballet of Psyché* (presented here in the order of their vocal entrance).
Stockholm, Nationalmuseum.

Bacchus holds a cup while his costume and his spear⁶² are ornate with grapes and wine leaves. Momus holds a thyrsus, usually associated with Bacchus but a symbol of hedonism and pleasure in general, while Mars has a helmet, shield and sword, symbolic of high rank.

The art of costume design for the *Ballet de Cour* integrated conventions and rules of association between garments and roles, allowing audiences to recognize characters. Existing sculpture, paintings and printed materials helped in tracing sources and creating new ones. Among these references, Cesare Ripa (ca. 1560-ca. 1622) in his *Iconologia* had fixed a visual codification for moral entities inspired by Greek and Roman emblematical representations. Since 1593, his influential emblem book was used by orators, artists and poets to give visual substance to virtues, vices, passions, arts, sciences, etc. For each entry Ripa proposes a description of the allegorical figure about how to embody the concept, giving the type and color of its clothing and its varied symbolic paraphernalia, along with the reasons why these were chosen, reasons often supported by references to classical literature. But the interest of the book lays not only in this compendium. The concepts were arranged in groups which had their own logic and meaning. Therefore, these groupings offered not only a promise of extra poetic syntax, but also, by their order in the descriptions, an order emphasized by later illustrated editions, gave a first placement of individual values in relation with each other, useful for organizing any further visual representation. All these qualities allowed the book to be used as a practical reference and as such Ripa's thesaurus of abstractions-made-images was a major iconographic reference for costume design and staging.

2.5 Iconology in *Le Ballet of Psyché*

If we look at the groups of four presented by Ripa: the elements, the seasons, the parts of the world, the ages, the winds, the fortunes, among other, one assembly offers a clear correspondence with the four gods of *Psyché's* ballet: The Four Poems. Because they are presented together, the four gods embody a much larger concept: they are, in Quinault's text, the expression of the four Forms of Poetry: Lyric Poetry is represented by Apollon, Pastoral Poetry by Bacchus, Satiric Poetry by Momus, and Epic Poetry by Mars. The figures illustrating the four types of Poetry engraved by Jacques de Bie (1581–1640) for the first French edition of 1643 – the edition most likely used in France in 1671⁶³ – share many attributes with the designs of Gissey and clarify the identities of the four deities chosen by Quinault for *Psyché's* ballet⁶⁴ as seen on Figure 12.

The phylactery which each character is holding helps clarify his identity. Their mottos, inscribed on speech scrolls, enhance this ancient convention and had a double relevance, historical and symbolic. The historical elements come from the texts of antiquity, which were

⁶² This hunting spear may have initially been a shepherd's crook as the paper of this design has been cut to fit the silhouette.

⁶³ The French edition of 1643 indicated on the title page that Ripa's system was « nécessaire à toutes sortes d'esprits, et particulièrement pour ceux qui aspirant à être, ou ceux qui sont en effet, Orateurs, Poètes, Sculpteurs, Peintres, Ingenieurs, Auteurs de Médailles, de Devises, de Ballets, et de Poèmes dramatiques ». See: Guillermin, Jean-Pierre. "Introduction" in [Ripa, Cesare]. *Iconologie, ou les principales choses qui peuvent tomber dans la pensée touchant les Vices et les Vertus, sont représentées sous diverses figures, gravées en cuivre par Jacques de Bie, et moralement expliquées par J. Baudouin*. Gravures de Jacques de Bie. Textes par Jacques Baudouin. [Paris], MDCXXXIII, 1643. Facsimile Paris: Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1987.

⁶⁴ [Ripa, Cesare]. *Iconologie...* Seconde partie. Paris : 1643, pp. 77–79.

originally written on scrolls, many of them in the same Latin being used for mottos (because the idea linking words must be short to be quickly readable). The symbolic relevance is clear, as poetry could be written as much as sung. The banderole held by the Poème Lyrique which reads « Brevi complector singula cantu » could be translated as « I tell of the unique in a short song », or as the French understood it: « In a few words I enclose all things ». The figure of the Pastoral Poetry says « Pastorum carmina ludo »: I play shepherds' songs. In *Psyché's* final Ballet, Aegipans and Maenads are grouped around Bacchus and Silene; ever since Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the two gods had been associated with Pastoral settings. The motto of Heroic Poetry, crowned with laurels symbolizing military victory, is « Non nisi grandia canto », meaning: I sing only of great things. Words like « cantu », « canto » or « carmina » present in these mottos are a clear common active denominator encapsulating the expressive function of poetry. The last figure, which is the one of the Satiric Poetry, holds a banderole inscribed « Irridens cuspidi figo »: through ridicule I wound with prickings⁶⁵.

The familiarity of Quinault with these types of mottos is a matter of historical record. Although he came from a simple social background, we know now that Quinault had received a full literary education, notably in Latin⁶⁶. In the early 1680s Quinault composed some « Devises » for the Royal Treasury⁶⁷; at the end of his life, Quinault created the mottos intended for the Dauphine, Anne-Marie Christine Victoire de Bavière (1660–1690), a prestigious responsibility⁶⁸. But the question remains: although these speech scrolls are not visible in the costume designs of Gissey, were they somehow included in the show, carried by followers? It is more than likely: the statement of expense done in 1671 for *Psyché* specifies that some mottos were painted for the performance. Georges de Tourny, painter, was paid 210 livres for « peinture des devises, des drapeaux et banderolles »⁶⁹. Aside from the flags for the four dancers, « Guerriers avec des Drapeaux » who accompany Mars, the « devises » (mottos) may have been presented on stage either by the god himself on one the « banderolles » or painted on the « rendaches » (shields) that four of his followers were holding, as was the custom during tournaments⁷⁰.

⁶⁵ Jacques Baudouin translates the motto of the Poème lyrique: « en peu de mots je comprends toute chose ». Baudouin uses « comprendre » with the meaning of « to contain » not « to understand ». Poème Pastoral: « avec cette devise, Pastorum carmina ludo. Comme s'il disoit, Je m'entretiens des chansons des Bergers ». Poème Héroïque: « Non nisi grandiae canto, qui signifient Mon chant a pour objet les choses les plus grandes. » Poème Satyrique: « Comme s'il vouloit dire à peu près, je raille & picque tout ensemble ». See: [Ripa, Cesare]. *Iconologie...* Textes par Jacques Baudouin. Seconde partie. Paris : 1643, pp. 77–79.

⁶⁶ La Gorce, Jérôme de. “Un proche collaborateur de Lully, Philippe Quinault” in *Société d'Étude du XVIIe Siècle n°161*. Paris: Société d'étude du XVIIe siècle et du C.N.L., du C.N.R.S. et de la Ville de Paris, 1988, pp. 365–370.

⁶⁷ See: Gros, Étienne. *Philippe Quinault, sa vie et son œuvre*. Paris: Champion, 1926. Facsimile Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970, pp. 11 & 175.

⁶⁸ See: Palaprat, Jean de. “Lettre à M. B. P. M. D. M.” in *Les Œuvres de Monsieur de Palaprat... Tome Second*. Paris: Pierre Ribou, 1712, p. 184.

⁶⁹ See: « État officiel de la dépense faite pour représenter *Psyché* en 1671 », submitted by Louis-Marie d'Aumont de Rochebaron, « premier gentilhomme de la chambre de Sa Majesté », kept at the British Museum, in: Bougenot, Étienne-Symphorien. “*Psyché* au Théâtre des Tuileries” in *Bulletin historique et philologique du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques*. Paris: 1891, pp. 71–80.

⁷⁰ For surviving examples of this type of shield, see: *Riddarlek och Tornerspel, Sverige - Europa*. Katalog sammanställd av Lena Rangström. Stockholm: Livrustkammaren, 1992, No. 175 p. 162 & No. 198 p. 174.

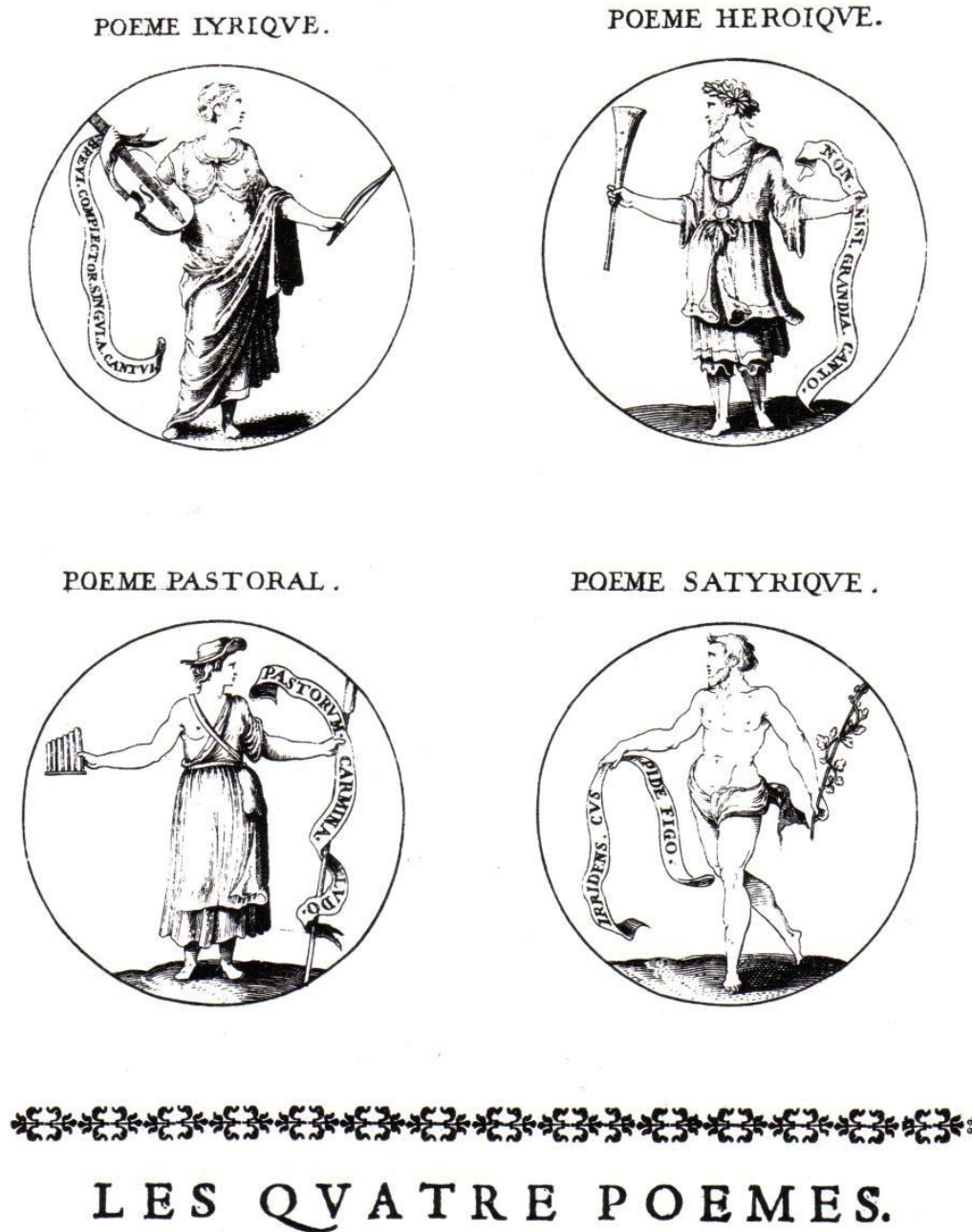


Figure 12: « Les Quatre Poemes. », engraving by Jacques de Bie (1581–1640) from [Ripa, Cesare] *Iconologie, ou les principales choses qui peuvent tomber dans la pensée touchant les Vices et les Vertus, sont représentées sous diverses figures, gravées en cuivre par Jacques de Bie, et moralement expliquées par J. Baudouin.* [Paris], MDCXXXIII [1643].

For the designs of the shields of the Carrousel of 1662 see: Castelluccio, Stéphane. *Les Carrousel en France, du XVI^e au XVIII^e siècle.* Paris: L'Insulaire - Les Éditions de l'Amateur and Versailles: Bibliothèque Municipale, 2002, pp. 150–169. And for the definition of the « devises », see: Fabre, Antonin. *Chapelain et nos deux premières Académies : études littéraires sur le XVII^e siècle / par l'abbé A. Fabre.* Paris: Perrin, 1890, pp. 417 & 445.

From the same statement of expenses, we know that Jean Breton, « armurier », provided shields for 80 livres. A similar thing had been done the previous year, when the royal motto had been painted on trophies for the final intermède of *Les Amants magnifiques*, to accompany Apollo for his entrée concluding the « Jeux Pythiens »⁷¹.

In *Psiché*, the three Recits that follow Apollon's call for unity are undeniably illustrations of the Power of Love, to which Bacchus, Momus and Mars successively declare they have surrendered. In addition to indications of staging and the sung text, the libretto, following the tradition of the *Ballet de Cour*, includes comments that explain each song of the allegorical celebration. Bacchus « makes it understood that he is not as dangerous as Love »: the effects of wine pass after one day, while Love's effects last forever. Momus mocks everyone but Love, who « he dares not make fun » of because it is Love « who spares no one ». The final god, Mars, concedes that « he has not been able to avoid surrendering to Love »⁷²: Amour alone can boast of defeating the god of war. Each one presents the inspiration of their entrée to come, telling us not to look at them as they usually are, but through the opposing force that an irresistible Love produces to accomplish poetry. A call from the heavenly gods, wrapping up what is undeniably a kind of introduction, invites the instruments and voices to join the general rejoicing and the Ballet can now line up the successive entrées of Apollon, Bacchus, Momus and Mars.

2.6 La Petite Académie behind *Le Ballet of Psiché*?

This assembly of the four poems is also present in the design of the « Grande Commande », the large commission ordered by Louis XIV for statues intended to decorate the gardens of the Palace of Versailles, as initially conceived in 1672. In 1674, la Grande Commande was in progress under the supervision of Charles Le Brun (1619–1690)⁷³. From 1662, when he was made « Premier Peintre du Roi » (First Painter of the King), everything artistic that was done in the royal palaces was directed or influenced by Le Brun. In 1663, he became director of the *Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture*, and with this title, was responsible for the designs of the Versailles sculptures. The theme of the fundamental elements influenced by the course of the Sun was to be an extension of his setting for the Great Apartments, based then around the myth of Apollo, a glorification of the king which started on the ballet stage⁷⁴. As was true of the planned decoration for the ceilings of the palace, the Grande Commande was dominated by Apollonian and solar significance⁷⁵. This ensemble, destined for the « Parterre d'eau », was conceived as a broad panorama on the effects of the solar god on the order of the world and on the arts, based on the unity of man and nature⁷⁶. The sculpture decoration was to include twenty-four statues representing the four Parts of the world, the four Hours of the day, the

⁷¹ See: [Molière] *Intermèdes des Amants magnifiques*. Paris: R. Ballard, 1670, p. 28.

⁷² *Psiché, tragi-comédie et ballet, dansé devant S. M. au mois de janvier 1671*. Paris: R. Ballard, 1671.

⁷³ See: Gady, Bénédicte. « Charles Le Brun et les sculpteurs de Versailles » in *Versalia*, No. 11, 2005, pp. 85–95.

⁷⁴ See: Sabatier, Gérard. *Versailles ou la figure du roi*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1999, pp. 48–56.

⁷⁵ Moine, Marie-Christine. *Les fêtes à la Cour du Roi Soleil 1653–1715*. Paris: F. Sorlot & F. Lanore, 1984.

⁷⁶ Maral, Alexandre. *La Grande Commande de 1674. Chefs-d'œuvre sculptés des jardins de Versailles sous Louis XIV*. Montreuil: Gourcuff Gradenigo, 2013.

four Seasons, the four Elements (Water, Earth, Air, Fire), the four Temperaments of Man, and the four Poems (Figure 11). These were complemented by eight mythological abductions symbolizing the changes in the four Elements. Claude Denis (1596-1680) described around 1675 the groups, then still in the making: « The four Poems./ The epic [heroic] poem exposes and makes known, / that in the fighting the heroes make appear, / their great actions and the famous exploits / that their courage makes for the glory of the Kings./ Here we see another and it is the dramatic / which contains a subject in tragic or comic, / The comic is filled with features of gaiety, / the tragic is pompous and full of gravity, / the satiric spades, and taking against the vice, by its biting style condemns Injustice, the lyric deals with various subjects, and composes songs of odes and tunes ».⁷⁷

The program of royal propaganda was devised under the supervision of the *Petite Académie*, entrusted, since 1663, with the primary responsibility of writing the history of Louis XIV in inscriptions, medals and monuments⁷⁸. Members of the *Petite Académie*, under its active secretary Charles Perrault (1628–1703), extended their duties soon to all artistic programs that were related to the king⁷⁹. Quinault officially joined the ranks of this elite group consisting of members of the Académie française in 1672, but as an academician starting in 1670⁸⁰ and as a friend of Perrault, he was no stranger to its work before then. Inspired by Cesare Ripa, and certainly advised by the *Petite Académie*, Charles Le Brun produced the preparatory drawings for the sculptors (Figure 13), following the same order in his spatial layout as in Ripa's *Iconologia*. Beyond this example of the conjunction of their artistic endeavors⁸¹, relations between Quinault and Le Brun were close, even familial; one of Quinault's daughters later marries Le Brun's nephew and godson, who he treated as an adoptive son. Their circle was rich in artists and it is also worth mentioning that Jean-Baptiste Tuby (1635–1700), the sculptor of the *Poème Lyrique* of Versailles (also known as *Thalie*), was a witness at the 1685 wedding.⁸² It is around this year, or the previous one, that the statues of the Grande Commande were transferred to other locations in the gardens, due to the forsaking of the Apollonian theme.

⁷⁷ « Les quatre Poesme./ La le poesme Epique [héroïque] expose et fait connoistre,/ ce que dans les combats les heros font paroistre,/ leurs grandes actions et les fameux exploits/ que leur courage fait a la gloire des Roys./ Icy l'on voit un autre et c'est le dramatique/ qui contient un sujet en tragique ou comique, / Le comique est rempli de traits de gayeté,/le tragique est pompeux et plain de gravité, /le satyrique picque, et reprenant le vice, par son stile mordant condamne l'Injustice, / le lyrique s'occupe a des sujets divers,/ et compose des chants des odes et des airs. » in « Explication de toutes les grottes, rochers et fontaines du chasteau royal de Versailles, maison du soleil et de la menagerie, en vers heroïque », par « C. DENIS ». Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, Français 2348. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9006949h> (accessed 26 June 2018).

⁷⁸ See: Charton, Fabrice. “« Vetat Mori. », Une institution au service du Prince, de la Petite Académie à l'Académie royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres (1663–1742)” in *L'Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques* [on line], 2011. URL: <http://acrh.revues.org/4549> (accessed 2 November 2017).

⁷⁹ See: Fabre, Antonin. *Chapelain et nos deux premières Académies : études littéraires sur le XVIIe siècle / par l'abbé A. Fabre*. Paris: Perrin, 1890, p. 443.

⁸⁰ See: Couvreur, Manuel. *Jean-Baptiste Lully, Musique et dramaturgie au service du Prince*. [Bruxelles]: Marc Vokar Editeur, 1992, pp. 43–63.

⁸¹ See: Himelfarb, Hélène. “Source méconnue ou analogie culturelle ? Des livrets d'opéras lullystes au décor sculpté des jardins de Versailles” in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, VI^e période, Tome CXX, 1486^e livraison, 1992, pp. 179–194.

⁸² See: La Gorce, Jérôme de. “Un proche collaborateur de Lully, Philippe Quinault.” in *Société d'Étude du XVIIe Siècle n°161*. Paris: Société d'étude du XVIIe siècle et du C.N.L., du C.N.R.S. et de la Ville de Paris, 1988, pp. 365–370.



Figure 13: 1674, *Les Quatre poèmes*, drawing by Charles Le Brun (1619–1690).
Design for the sculptors of the « Grande Commande ».
Versailles, Musée du Château de Versailles.

By separating them the elaborate message was weakened. Ten years later, although still associating the statues in the numbering of his plates, Thomassin, in his *Recueil des Figures, Groupes, Thermes, Fontaines, Vases, Statuës & autres Ornemens [...] dans le Château et parc de Versailles...*, orders them differently. He puts the *Poème Héroïque* first and therefore blurs the image of the concept of « Les quatre poèmes », further obscuring Quinault's purpose in his Ballet for *Psiché*⁸³. With this restriction, the engravings published by Thomassin in 1694 have the merit to give a first well-defined image of each poem (Figure 14, 15, 16 & 17). One cannot miss the omnipresence of music instruments: trumpet, lyra, and pan flute are linking the godly figures with the arts they are representing. The thyrsus, was used to hit the floor and one of the instruments of orgiastic feasts. The royal chronicler André Félibien (1619-1695) had seen this use of the thyrsus in the Versailles party of 1668⁸⁴, at the end of *George Dandin* by Molière: « All the dancers mingle together, and among the shepherds and shepherdesses are four of Bacchus's followers with thyrsus, and four bacchantes with a kind of Basque drums, which represent those sieves which they formerly carried during the feasts of Bacchus. Of these thyrsus, the followers hit the screens of the bacchantes and do different postures while the shepherds and the shepherdesses dance more seriously. »⁸⁵ This last observation gave us a hint about the comical use of the phallic symbol, well in the satirical spirit.

⁸³ Even today, there is still some ambiguity in the understanding of the program behind the royal visual propaganda. See: La Moureyre, Françoise de. "Réflexions sur le style des statues aux façades du château de Versailles" in *Bulletin du Centre de recherche du château de Versailles [En ligne], Articles et études, mis en ligne le 16 juin 2008*, URL: <http://crcv.revues.org/992> . See also : *Versailles, décor sculpté extérieur* by Béatrix Saule, Conservator in chief of the Château de Versailles: <http://www.sculpturesversailles.fr/html/5b/index/index.htm> (Both sites accessed 8 November 2017.)

⁸⁴ The 1668 party was celebrating the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle.

⁸⁵ « Tous les Danseurs se mêlent ensemble et l'on voit parmi les Bergers & les Bergères quatre suivans de Bacchus avec des thyrses & quatre bacchantes avec des espèces de tambours de Basque qui représentent ces cribles qu'elles portaient anciennement aux fêtes de Bacchus. De ces thyrses, les suivans frappent sur les cribles des Bacchantes, & font différentes postures pendant que les Bergers & les Bergères dansent plus sérieusement. » in Félibien, André. *Relation de la feste de Versailles du 18^e juillet 1668*. Paris: Pierre Le Petit, 1668, p. 28.



Figure 14: Le Poème Heroique (1674–1680)
etching of 1694 by Simon Thomassin (ca. 1652–1732) of the sculpture by Jean Drouilly (or De Rouilly) (1641–1698),
after a design by Charles Le Brun (1619–1690), Plate 107 from *Recueil des Figures, Groupes, Thermes, Fontaines, Vases, Statuës & autres Ornemens tels qu'ils se voyent à present dans le Château et parc de Versailles, gravé d'après les originaux. Par Simon Thomassin.*
Collection of Gilbert Blin.



Figure 15: Le Poème Lyrique (1681–1682)
etching of 1694 by Simon Thomassin (ca. 1652–1732) of the sculpture by Jean-Baptiste Tuby (1635–1700),
after a design by Charles Le Brun (1619–1690), Plate 108 from *Recueil des Figures, Groupes, Thermes, Fontaines,
Vases, Statuës & autres Ornemens tels qu'ils se voyent à present dans le Château et parc de Versailles, gravé d'après les
originaux. Par Simon Thomassin.*
Collection of Gilbert Blin.



Figure 16: Le Poème Pastoral (1675–1681)
etching of 1694 by Simon Thomassin (ca. 1652–1732) of the sculpture by Gérard-Léonard Hérard (1637– 1675)
& Pierre Granier (1655–1715),
after a design by Charles Le Brun (1619–1690), Plate 109 from *Recueil des Figures, Groupes, Thermes, Fontaines, Vases, Statuës & autres Ornemens tels qu'ils se voyent à present dans le Château et parc de Versailles, gravé d'après les originaux. Par Simon Thomassin.*
Collection of Gilbert Blin.



Figure 17: Le Poème Satyrique (1674–1679)
etching of 1694 by Simon Thomassin (ca. 1652–1732) of the sculpture by Philippe de Buyster (1595–1688),
after a design by Charles Le Brun (1619–1690), Plate 110 from *Recueil des Figures, Groupes, Thermes, Fontaines,
Vases, Statuës & autres Ornemens tels qu'ils se voyent à present dans le Château et parc de Versailles*, gravé d'après les
originaux. Par Simon Thomassin.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

2.7 The Four Poems and Quinault's « anchainement »

After the chorus of mixed musical forces that opens the feast, with episodes of alternating dances and songs, the series of four entrées in *Psiché* develop the quadruple gods/poems approach. The meaning resides not only in the four main gods but in their retinues, made up of singers, dancers and on-stage instrumentalists, which in turn emphasize their association to the four forms of poetry. The musical instruments that had a decisive role in clarifying the identity of the four poems in Ripa are carried by the gods' followers in *Psiché*. The lira (depicted as a lira da braccio on the 1643 Jacques de Bie's engraving for the « Poème lyrique ») is given by Quinault to one of the Muses. (A feminine figure was also chosen by Le Brun for Versailles.) The trumpet that Mars was holding has now been multiplied and blown by nine trumpeters; Pan's flute⁸⁶ from the Pastoral likely appears together with the « Aegipans », the satyrs who accompany Bacchus, while Momus, still holds a « Thyrs », possibly used as a percussion instrument, as his followers, Matassins and Polichinelles, have costumes with small bells. All of these instruments were undoubtedly integrated with the orchestration during the performance. The visual indications of musical instruments in the costume iconography related to *Psiché* are numerous and a thorough analysis of them could certainly be useful for the musical performance of each section⁸⁷.

In addition to completing the identity of the four divinities, these four groups create a subtle but clear link between the deity they accompany and the one to follow. In this way, Quinault follows one of the precepts formulated by the Abbé Michel de Pure (1620–1680) in his *Idée des spectacles anciens et nouveau*, published in 1668. The rhetorician states that the entrée is independent of that which precedes it and of that which follows it. But he insists that it may prove advantageous to link the entrées together by « anchainement », by concatenation, a kind of invisible web of what he calls the « incidents », which are the thematic links that develop from one entrée to the other⁸⁸. Here is my understanding of the incidents in the ballet of *Psiché*: Apollon is accompanied by the Muses and the Arts, but the libretto points out that the Arts are dressed as « Bergers Galants » (gallant shepherds) to make a more fitting appearance at the

⁸⁶ Pan was considered as one of the possible originators of bucolic poetry. See: Colletet, Guillaume. *Discours du Poème Bucolique*. Paris: Louis Chamhoudry, 1658, p. 2, in *L'art poétique du Sr Colletet, où il est traité de l'épigramme, du sonnet, du poème bucolique, de l'églogue, de la pastorale et de l'idyle, de la poésie morale et sentencieuse, avec un discours de l'éloquence et de l'imitation des anciens, un autre discours contre la traduction et la nouvelle morale du mesme auteur*. Paris: A. de Somerville & L. Chamhoudry, 1658.

⁸⁷ The special context of a performance can also provide some extra information: in 1671 in Dunkerque, during the concert performance of *Psiché*, cannons were shot following the invitation of Mars, which emphasizes the double importance of « props »: visual and acoustic. For the Dunkerque performance, see: Powell, John S. "The Metamorphosis of Psyché" in *Les Métamorphoses de Psyché*. Dossier établi par Carine Barbafieri et Chris Rauseo. Valenciennes: Presses Universitaires de Valenciennes, 2004, pp. 227–251.

⁸⁸ « Section VII. Des incidents. Encore que nous laissions la liberté au Poète de détacher les Entrées les unes des autres, il est toutefois avantageux pour Elles, & pour le Sujet, qu'elles soient bien liées entr'elles : & que la suite fasse une espece d'anchainement, comme indivisible. Cette liaison se fait avec plus de facilité & plus de perfection par le moyen des Incidents, & lors que l'Entrée est un progres ou un embarras de celle qui a precedé, ou une préparation pour celle qui suit. » in Pure, Michel de. *Idée des spectacles anciens et nouveaux. Des anciens : cirques, amphithéâtres, théâtres, naumachies, triomphes ; Des nouveaux : comédie, bal, mascarades, carosels, courses de bagues et de testes, joustes, exercices et revues, militaires, jeux d'artifices, entrées des rois & des reynes [...]*. Paris: Michel Brunet, 1668, p. 242.

Feast. Their pastoral disguise – an echo of *La Grotte de Versailles*⁸⁹? – connects them with the bucolic world of Bacchus and Silene, themselves introduced by a court of Maenads and Satyrs. The drunken energy of their scene links with the arrival of Polichinelles coming to « join their jokes and banter » to the feast. Followers of Momus, these theatrical characters are accompanied by Matassins, dancers who, in public squares, imitated war in a burlesque manner. Thomas Corneille (1625–1709) in his *Dictionnaire des Arts et des Sciences* relates them to Mars: « the Dancers who were called Matassins, were dressed in little Corselets, with golden helmets, bells on their legs, and the sword and shield in their hands. It was made by imitation of a Dance Numa [Pompilius] instituted for the Sali, Priests of the god Mars, who danced with weapons ».⁹⁰ Their presence indeed prefigures that of Mars, who leads Warriors and an on-stage military music band, including timpani, and encourages them « to enjoy their leisure by taking part in the Divertissement ». In 1671, while peace is celebrated in the opening verse of the Prologue, military power was still on the royal agenda as the kingdom of France was preparing to go to war with the Dutch Republic and declared it the following year⁹¹.

This pattern of successive musical and theatrical numbers carries the spectacular energy into a final grandiose reprise of the general chorus, which orders « drums and trumpets » to mix with « musettes ». The musettes were already a traditional instrument of the *Ballet de Cour* and Charles-Emmanuel Borjon (1633–1691) in his *Traité de la musette* of 1672 stresses the place that the instrument attained in Louis XIV's spectacles: « We have nothing sweeter nothing more marvelous than concerts of it, as we know from those which often contribute to these entertainments of our invincible monarch. The pastoral and bucolic spectacles cannot do without them and one sees them nearly every year in the King's ballet »⁹². The rhetoric of military instruments opposed to pastoral ones was to become a convention of the French *Tragédie en musique*⁹³.

⁸⁹ The dancers may even have worn the costumes used for the performance of *La Grotte de Versailles* the preceding year: once the principle of the reuse of the sets of *Ercole amante* was accepted, costumes could also come from the stock of the *Menus-Plaisirs*.

⁹⁰ « Sorte de danse folastre. C'étoit autrefois une danse, dont les Danseurs qu'on appelloit aussi Matassins, estoient vestus de petits Corcelets, avec des Morions dorez, des sonnettes aux jambs, & l'épée et le bouclier aux mains. Elle estoit faite à l'imitation d'une Danse que Numa institua pour les Saliens, Prestres de Mars, qui dansoient avec des armes. » Thomas Corneille's definition of « Matassin »: in *Le dictionnaire des arts et des sciences. T. 2, M-Z /*, de M. D. C. de l'Académie française. Nouvelle édition revue, corrigée et augmentée par M****, de l'Académie royale des sciences... Paris: Le Mercier, 1732.

⁹¹ See: Bluche, François. *Louis XIV*. Paris: Fayard, 1986, pp. 359–386.

⁹² « Dans l'estat où est à present la Musette on ne peut rien trouver de plus doux, ny de plus merveilleux que les concerts qu'on en fait, comme on le peut juger par ceux qui contribuent souvent à ce divertissement de nôtre invincible Monarque. Les representations pastorales & champestres ne s'en sçauoient passer, & nous en voyons presque tous les ans dans les balets du Roy. » See: Borjon de Scellery, Charles-Emmanuel. *Traité de la musette, avec une nouvelle méthode pour apprendre de soy-même à joier de cet instrument facilement et en peu de temps*. Lyon: J. Girin and B. Rivière, 1672, p. 33. For the musette at the French court, see: Leppert, Richard D. *Arcadia at Versailles, Noble Amateur Musicians and Their Musettes and Hurdy-gurdies at the French Court (c.1660-1780), A Visual Study*. Amsterdam and Lisse: Swets & Zeitlinger, 1978.

⁹³ Lully « a fait entrer agreablement dans ses Concerts jusqu'aux Tambours & aux Timbales, Instrumens qui n'ayant qu'un seul ton sembloient ne pouvoir rien contribuer à la beauté d'une harmonie, mais il a sçu leur donner des mouvemens si convenables aux Chants où ils entroient, qui la plupart estoient des Chants de guerre & de triomphe, qu'ils ne touchoient pas moins le cœur, que les instrumens les plus harmonieux.» in *Des hommes illustres qui ont paru en France pendant ce siècle, avec leurs portraits au naturel. Tome 1 /*, par M. [Charles] Perrault,... Paris: A. Dezallier, 1696, p. 86.

Quinault's Ballet in *Psyché* not only refers to the past tradition of the *Ballet de Cour*, but also prefigures the future stylistic definition of French opera, made of heterogeneous components all united by the power of lyric art, in his poetic and musical expression. It was indeed a recognized characteristic of lyric poetry to be of an assimilating capability and of superior nature⁹⁴. As Jean Baudouin (ca. 1590–1650), explained in his edition of Ripa: « In only one thing, the Lyric Poet tightens several others [...] *Brevi complexor singular cantu*. That is to say, in a few words I contain everything ».⁹⁵ In accordance with this tradition, the last entrée of *Psyché*'s Ballet, which « incorporates all the others »⁹⁶, is clearly a moment of unification. This concept of a poetic integration in the form of the ballet had already found an expression under the hand of Claude-François Ménéstrier (1631–1705). In his *Remarques pour la conduite des Ballets*, the Jesuit states, after listing different forms of poetry (epic, satiric and dramatic): « The Ballet includes them all, and as learned painters skillfully mix fantasies with pieces of history, we do a dance mixing Serious and Ridiculous, Natural and Chimerical, Fabulous and Historical to make a fair Ballet ».⁹⁷ Quinault, in his 1671 *Ballet* for *Psyché*, makes an attempt to allegorically describe a poetic form and, in the shape inherited from the *Ballet de Cour* of a poem about poetry, produces a poetics manifesto for the not yet born French opera⁹⁸. In 1671, the vision of potentially creating a new type of lyric art was a daring concept, one which proved to be possible by Quinault and Lully two years later with their first original opera, *Cadmus et Hermione*, a piece which will establish the form of French opera for the years to come.

The history of the different versions of *Psyché* will support this interpretation: the multiple paternity of 1671 finds an echo in 1678, when Lully, unable to collaborate with Quinault during the latter's banishment from the French court, asked Thomas Corneille to transform the drama written by Molière and Pierre Corneille (Thomas's elder brother) into an opera, requesting that he keeps the pre-existing musical material and therefore Quinault's texts. Thomas Corneille had to shape a new piece, creating a Quinault-style adaptation of the myth where the original divertissements would find their natural places in the narration. The poetic program of the Ballet from *Psyché* had proven to be valid in the intervening years, and for his first opera libretto,

⁹⁴ Quinault's attachment to hierarchy appears during his entrance at the Académie française: « Il en est du Royaume des Lettres ainsi que des autres Empires, il doit y avoir de la subordination, & l'harmonie ne s'y trouveroit jamais parfaite, si tous les Genies s'y rencontroit également élevez. » in « Compliment fait en 1670, par Monsieur Quinault, Auditeur des Comptes, lorsqu'il fut reçu à la place de Monsieur Salomon. » See: *Recueil des harangues prononcées par Messieurs de l'Académie française dans leurs réceptions, & en d'autres occasions différentes, depuis l'establisement de l'Académie jusqu'à present*. Paris: Jean Baptiste Coignard, 1698, p. 102.

⁹⁵ « Sa figure est celle d'une jeune Femme, qui tient de la main gauche une Lyre, & de la droite un archet. Son habillement est de plusieurs couleurs, mais agréable à voir & assez étroit, pour montrer que dans une seule chose, le Poète Lyrique en resserre plusieurs autres ; comme il est signifié par ces paroles latines, *Brevi complexor singula cantu*. C'est à dire, en peu de mots je comprends [contiens] toutes choses. » See: [Ripa, Cesare]. *Iconologie...* Textes par Jacques Baudouin. Paris: 1643, Deuxième partie, p. 78.

⁹⁶ « Dernière entrée. Les quatre Troupes différentes, de la suite d'Apollon, de Bachus, de Mome, & de Mars apres avoir achevé leurs Entrées particulières, s'unissent ensemble, & forment la dernière Entrée, qui renferme toutes les autres. » in *Psyché, tragi-comédie et ballet...* Paris: R. Ballard, 1671.

⁹⁷ « Le Ballet les embrasse toutes, & comme les Peintres sçavans meslent addroitement des fantaisies aux pieces d'Histoire, on fait une danse meslée du Sereux & du Ridicule, du Naturel & du Chimerique, du Fabuleux & de l'Historique pour faire un juste Ballet. » in Ménéstrier, Claude-François. *Remarques pour la conduite des ballets*. Lyon: Jean Molin, 1658, p. 50.

⁹⁸ See: Norman, Buford. *Quinault, librettiste de Lully, Le poète des Grâces*, translation by Thomas Vernet and Jean Duron. Versailles: Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles, and Liège: Mardaga, 2001, pp. 74–76.

indeed the first opera libretto for Lully not written by Quinault himself, Thomas Corneille rigorously followed the precepts that Quinault had created in the early 1670s. But in 1678, this original form was already outdated, and that may explain the semi success *Psyché* in its full operatic form met then with the Paris audience. In 1675, *Thésée* had been the last attempt of Quinault to have the four forms of poetry present in his opera⁹⁹. Abbé Dubos (1670–1742) remarked in 1679 that Quinault « would not have made two operas, that he understood well that the characters of jesters, so essential in the Opera of Italy, were not appropriate in Opera made for French people. *Thésée* is the last Opera where Monsieur Quinault introduced jesters; and the care he took to ennoble their character, shows that he had already felt that these roles were out of place in tragedies made to be sung, as well as in the tragedies made to be declaimed. »¹⁰⁰ Forgetting the fundamental influence of the *Ballet de Cour*, the presence of *Tragédie* in the French opera would dominate for a decade while the opera monopoly of Lully made any attempt to create an alternative remarkable. I will show in the next chapter how Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643–1704) has been working on a different path.

⁹⁹ Blin, Gilbert and Stubbs, Stephen. “Thésée - a mirror of its time” in *Boston Early Music Festival & Exhibition, June 11-17, 2001. The French Influence in Europe*. Cambridge (MA) : Boston Early Music Festival, 2001, pp. 128-129.

¹⁰⁰ « Monsieur Quinault qui travailla pour nôtre theatre Lyrique après les Auteurs que j’ay citez, n’eut pas fit deux Opera, qu’il comprit bien que les personnages de bouffons, tellement essentiels dans les Opera d’Italie, ne convenoient pas dans des Opera faits pour des François. Thésée est le dernier Opera où Monsieur Quinault ait introduit des bouffons; & le soin qu’il a pris d’annoblir leur caractere, montre qu’il avoit déjà senti que ces rolles étoient hors de leur place dans des Tragedies faites pour être chantées, autant que dans les Tragedies faites pour être déclamées. » in Dubos, Jean-Baptiste. *Réflexions Critiques sur la Poésie et la Peinture*. Paris: Jean Mariette, 1679. I, pp. 159–160.

3. The Alternative French System of Marc-Antoine Charpentier

3.1. Practice and context of the research

« I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. »

Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*.¹

My research about Marc- Antoine Charpentier (1643–1704) as opera composer was prompted by a series of stage productions. Starting with a unique experimental performance, the Chamber Opera Series productions of the Boston Early Music Festival have known a fast and radical growth. Since 2008, eleven baroque operas have been presented, and among them four pieces of Charpentier, fulfilling what Kathleen Fay, Executive director, had planned for the Boston Early Music Festival as an alternative to our biennial fully staged baroque opera blockbusters: « Produce smaller-scale, known operas, during the concert season in Boston, concert version or semi-staged, eventually fully staged »². In the program book of our first performance, Paul O'Dette stated clearly the importance of this notion in his definition of the repertoire for the BEMF Chamber Opera Series: « Charming small-scale works performed in intimate spaces for select audiences »³. While the qualification of « charming » was eminently subjective, the « small-scale » referred as much to the musical performing forces as to the actual length of the baroque operas BEMF had been exploring so far. The word « intimate » was related to the quality and the nature of the relation between audience and opera, rather than the actual location where the planned production would be presented to the audience. In fact, the performance venue for each creation, Jordan Hall in Boston⁴, is a large, early 20th-century concert hall suitable for a symphonic orchestra and a large chorus. Furthermore, the idea that these productions should be easily presented in other unidentified venues, during touring, added to the conundrum. Clearly, the performance side of the project was going to be a

¹ Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space* (1968). New York: Touchstone, 1996, p. 7.

² Fay, Kathleen. Internal note, Boston Early Music Festival, 2007.

³ O'Dette, Paul. "The BEMF Chamber Opera Series" in *An Evening of Chamber Opera, Boston Early Music Festival Program Book, 2008–2009 Concert Series*. Cambridge (MA): Boston Early Music Festival, 2008, p. 2.

⁴ Opened in 1903, Jordan Hall has a total seating capacity of 1,051. The dimensions of the stage are 40 feet (12.2 metres) wide (46 feet [14.0 metres] near the proscenium) by 29 feet (8.8 metres) deep.

challenge. The specific nature of the « chamber » performance appealed to me instantly, and it still does: not a concert, yet not an opera either. But how should I create the feeling of intimacy with the work, in such a vast, conventional and non-period space? The objective was to find an alternative, a different approach, specifically designed for BEMF, to perform a specific opera repertoire. My chosen dramaturgical approach is to try to question in a new perspective the relationships between time, musical and poetic, and space, real and mental. I have tried, and I am still trying, to answer the following questions by looking at the librettos: How to produce a « dramatic » space in a concert hall? How to create the intimate space closer to the « chamber » character of the original opening performance? How to make the emotions more direct and close by? How to tell a story in a way which would bring a type of emotion not to be found easily in the concert hall or the opera house?

Our first offerings were, coupled in a single performance in 2008, *Venus and Adonis* by John Blow (1649–1708) and *Actéon* by Charpentier. These two pieces were joined because of the closeness of the probable dates of their compositions around 1683, and also because of the poetic theme their anonymous librettos have in common: the hunt. *Venus and Adonis* and *Actéon* each depict the sad fates of two unfortunate hunters who encounter powerful female deities. In Blow's courtly adaptation of the myth of Adonis, Venus falls in love with Adonis after being struck by Cupid's errant arrow and encourages him to hunt the very wild boar that ultimately will gore him to death. In Charpentier's *Actéon*, when the title character discovers the goddess Diane bathing with her nymphs in the woods, he incurs her wrath and is transformed into a deer and torn apart by his own hounds. Blow's and Charpentier's musical dramaturgies, including the orchestration, have in common that they are well suited to a single space shared by singers and instrumentalists, without the operatic convention dictating a distinction between a stage and a pit. Our performing formula to present chamber operas opted for a rather small number of instrumentalists typically similar to the number of singers. In terms of forms, we had an English work that appears to be unique – it is considered to be the earliest surviving English opera – and next to it, what seems to be the original effort of a French composer, whose operas are definitely oriented toward alternative works, at a time when French opera business and aesthetics are still dominated by the figure of Lully. I have always been interested by this singular position of Charpentier and, while the English Chamber Operas will be addressed in the next section, the present chapter treats the ways I put Charpentier's little operas in relation with historical, literary and poetic references⁵.

Among the many composers active in France at the end of the seventeenth century, Charpentier undeniably holds a striking position. Born in France, he began his long career, after formative years in Italy, at the time when Jean-Baptiste Lully, the Italian-born creator of French opera, enjoyed royal patronage. Charpentier's works, little published during his lifetime, are happily still known to us thanks to his manuscripts; this large collection, probably assembled by Charpentier himself, demonstrates the magnitude of his talents, starting with an impressive quantity of religious music, suitable to almost all occasions of Catholic pomp and ceremony. Wiley Hitchcock (1923–2007) has compiled the catalogue of these impressive works⁶, and its publication in 1980 prompted a new interest in the music of Charpentier⁷.

⁵ This chapter, focusing on the libretto of Charpentier, does not offer any visual figures.

⁶ Hitchcock, H. Wiley. *Les œuvres de/The works of Marc-Antoine Charpentier, Catalogue raisonné*. Paris: Picard, 1982.

⁷ I directed my first production of Charpentier's *Actéon* in March 1988 for the ensembles *Les Arts Musicaux* and *Centrale Théâtre*, composed of students of the *Ecole Centrale des Arts et Manufactures* (Chatenay-Malabry, France).

Around the same time, the work of William Christie and his ensemble *Les Arts Florissants* – the name of which was inspired by one of Charpentier’s secular works – started to create a myriad of memorable musical experiences through performances and recordings⁸. Finally, the edition of the manuscripts of Charpentier published by Minkoff in facsimile since 1989 made the original material widely available.

Although Charpentier’s secular works are significantly less numerous, the compositions he wrote for the stage are, as is his sacred music, quite diverse. Among his productions the genre of chamber opera – « petit opéra » as musicologist Nathalie Berton has categorized them so clearly since 1996⁹ – is represented by remarkable pieces. Three of them are presented here: *Les Plaisirs de Versailles*, an allegorical piece, holds a special place in his opera production because of its clear closeness to Louis XIV. *La Couronne de Fleurs*, a symbolic but fleeting piece, has heretofore been misunderstood and underestimated. My findings reveal a possible attempt by Charpentier to have this music performed outside the French capital. The ambitious yet incomplete *La Descente d’Orphée aux Enfers* is a work which, as I will try to demonstrate, was written by Charpentier with the hope of it being performed by the Académie Royale in Paris. This piece seems to mark a dramaturgical attempt to go back to the *Pastorale* origins of the French Opera, as this *Pastorale* seems to deliberately ignore the features of the genre of the *Tragédie en musique* established by Philippe Quinault and Lully. Despite their differences in the dramatic development, these pieces were all written on anonymous librettos. At least so far, the identities of Charpentier’s collaborators were unknown.

3.1.1 Methodology applied to Charpentier

Preparing my Charpentier productions for the Chamber Opera Series of the Boston Early Music Festival, I started, like I did for the texts by Quinault for Lully, by making a transcript of the librettos. The extensive editing from the scores and the translating work on the librettos of Charpentier « petits opéras » was a major element in the construction of the productions¹⁰. Nevertheless, for each piece, I needed to know more about the possible nature of the first performances of Charpentier’s creations, to extend the resonances and ramifications inherent in the librettos. The research was problematic, as compared to music there are only a few sources about Charpentier’s literary connections. Besides, for most of these pieces, the question remains: what was the intended or actual form of their first performance? Or, more aesthetically, for which type of performance did Charpentier intend to write them? Because of the anonymity of most of his librettists, many of his works have been only considered from the musicological point of view. To me, the fact that some of Charpentier’s scores mention names of performers in the service of the Guise family, for whom Charpentier worked for many years as composer in residence, was puzzling and seemed

⁸ See: Vidal, Pierre. *Au cœur du baroque, Les vingt ans des Arts Florissants*. Catalogue d’exposition (Paris, 1999). Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1999.

⁹ Berton, Nathalie “Le petit opéra (1668–1723) : aux marges de la cantate et de l’opéra” (PhD diss., Université de Tours, 1996.) For part of the thesis, see also: Berton-Blivet, Nathalie. “Le Mercure Galant, une source pour penser le petit opéra”. Juin 2008, Paris, France IRPMF, p. 29, études et documents de l’IRPMF en ligne. <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00632138> (Accessed 15 August 2017) See also: Berton, Nathalie. *Les petits opéras de Marc-Antoine Charpentier, cahier Philidor N°34*. Versailles: Éditions du Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles, 2007.

¹⁰ My editions of the librettos and my translations are available in the Appendix.

to diminish the scope of these pieces¹¹. At this stage, the anonymity of the librettos did not pose a problem but reduced the quantity of paratexts as compared to librettos whose poetic authorship was published or simply firmly established. More than the obvious interest for performers, including me, to become more familiar with the personal musical style of a composer¹², the prospect of following my large-scale Lully spectacles¹³ with another kind of piece from the same period, was the opportunity to extend my field of research. Presenting different pieces by the same composer in an ongoing series also offered some useful points of reference for members of the audience, who were then able to enjoy the new show more than the previous one by way of expansion of their knowledge of the period.

The « paratext » is first a concept in literary interpretation. It refers to the material around the main text of published authors: other constituents supplied by the authors, editors, printers, and publishers, is known as the paratext. Unfortunately, as Charpentier's « petits opéras » were not published, these added elements, which usually form a first frame for the main texts, poetic and musical, are missing. To increase the amount of data, it appears necessary to me to extend the notion of paratext and therefore I was attracted by the thinking of Gérard Genette¹⁴ on « transtextuality ». According to him transtextuality is « all that sets the text in relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts » and [that] it « covers all aspects of a particular text »¹⁵. Genette described transtextuality as a « more inclusive term » than intertextuality, notably when he defines his concept of hypertextuality. Genette explains that hypertextuality refers to *any* relationship uniting a text B (the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (the *hypotext*)¹⁶. My research for hypertexts related to Charpentier's « petits opéras » was nourished by the fundamental assumption that the baroque opera performance was made of various « paratexts » keeping in mind that in France in the seventeenth century they are mostly

¹¹ The research and publications of Catherine Cessac and Patrica Ranum were excellent starting points but do not address the question of the performance as such and often ignore the possibility that a work could have had multiple performances that took place in differing contexts and settings.

¹² Although this aspect, inspired by the history of *Les Arts Florissants* and William Christie, was of course a reference.

¹³ *Thésée* (BEMF 2001) and *Psyché* (BEMF 2007).

¹⁴ Gérard Genette was born in Paris in 1930 and received his professorship in French literature at the Sorbonne in 1967. Among other positions, Genette was research director at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales and a visiting professor at Yale University. Genette is largely responsible for the reintroduction of a rhetorical vocabulary into literary criticism. Additionally, his work on narrative is best known in English through the selection *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. His major work is the multi-part *Figures* series, of which *Narrative Discourse* is a section. His trilogy on textual transcendence, which has also been quite influential, is composed of *Introduction à l'architexte* (1979), *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (1982), and *Paratexts. Thresholds of Interpretation* (1997). Terms originating in his vocabulary and systems have become widespread, such as the term « paratext » for prefaces, introductions, illustrations, or other material accompanying the text, and « hypotext » for the sources of the text.

¹⁵ Genette, Gérard. *The architext: an introduction*. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press, 1992, pp. 83 & 84.

¹⁶ Gérard Genette explains that « Hypertextuality refers to any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary ». See: Genette, Gérard. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Lincoln (NA): University of Nebraska Press, 1997, p. 5.

related to the poetic text, here the hypotext. The question was to see how much Charpentier created his own opera style, and how to interpret it in the frame I had at my disposal.

Médée, the only *Tragédie en musique* by Charpentier, is a work which seems to be able to define itself only through the mirror of the Lully operas, and Benjamin Pintiaux¹⁷ wrote acutely that the « rediscovery of ‘the masterpiece’ has been superseded by rediscovery of a repertory within which we can perceive intertextual links ». Like Benjamin Pintiaux, I believe that the search for direct sources « reminds us that, at the end of the seventeenth century the production of an opera was – even more than in the spoken theatre – a multi-layered creation involving the interaction with existing works and the intertextual skills of the audience: a ‘game’ which extended beyond the libretto and music to the inevitable use of décors, machines or costumes ».¹⁸ Could the same attitude be applied to shorter works by Charpentier? Could, like for *Médée*, the textual and musical frame of reference in the wake of Lully operas be reconsidered and applied to the « petits opéras »? Could I make readable – and enjoyable – some signs that the intertextual skills of the audience may have deciphered at the time?

After looking closely at both librettos and scores, the hypotexts, while connecting them with the literature and theatre history of the period, I came across some unexpected paratexts and possible hypertexts, creating innovative perspectives useful for my staged productions. These reflections, of which some synthesis I present here under the form of answers to the three questions, defined the dramaturgy of my staged productions of Charpentier’s operas: Could shorter works of Charpentier be considered as a multi-layered creation involving the interactions with other existing works and the intertextual skills of the audience? Could the textual and musical frames of reference, not necessarily aligned on the Lully operas, be reconsidered and applied to les « petits opéras »? Could I make readable today – and enjoyable – some signs that the intertextual skills of the audience may have deciphered at the time? It emerges from this research that what I call the French System of Charpentier cannot be dissociated from the question of the librettos’ authorships of his « petits opéras »: The poetic component of his works creates an « alternative » program to the one Lully and Quinault created and developed in the 1670s.

It has been emphasized repeatedly that Charpentier’s dramatic music did not have the same fortune as that of his contemporary, Lully¹⁹. Nevertheless, starting in 1672, when he replaced Lully to become the collaborator of Molière (1622–1673), Charpentier wrote the music for many new plays and revivals for the spoken theatre. This activity, which saw a renewed productivity when the Comédie-Française was created in 1680, put him in contact with celebrated actors who were also authors: Poisson, Baron, Dancourt among them²⁰. But Charpentier also composed on texts from contemporaneous writers who were already

¹⁷ Benjamin Pintiaux is a historian and musicologist, doctor of the École des hautes études en sciences sociales. His thesis *L’Abbé Pellegrin et la tragédie en musique*, under the direction of Catherine Massip, is soon to be published (Mardaga-C.M.B.V.).

¹⁸ Pintiaux, Benjamin. “*Médée* within the Repertory of the tragédie en musique: Intertextual links and the « Posterity » of Charpentier’s opera.” in *New Perspectives on Marc-Antoine Charpentier*, edited by Shirley Thompson. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010, p. 252.

¹⁹ Cessac, Catherine. *Marc-Antoine Charpentier*. Paris: Fayard, 1988, pp. 125 & 126.

²⁰ Raymond Poisson (1633–1690), Michel Boiron dit Baron (1653–1729), Florent Carton dit Dancourt (1661–1725).

recognized literary figures: La Fontaine, Madame Deshoulières, Pierre Corneille²¹, to mention just those whose names are still remembered today. More significantly, Charpentier, during the same time Lully's partnership with Quinault was producing work after work, had been collaborating repeatedly with Jean Donneau de Visé (1638–1710) and Thomas Corneille (1625–1709). These two dramatists, who working as a team created many literary productions at the time, benefited greatly from Charpentier's talents: the three artists collaborated at least on six productions together. This count does not include the additional undocumented projects that such an ongoing collaboration must have produced: plays which were never been performed or printed. Indeed, there is the fundamental assumption on my part that Charpentier may have written exclusively to be performed, and that he conceived his operas like other composers of the time did: as a composition, text and music, to be performed in front of an audience. Without a doubt the librettos and texts the composer used for his « petits opéras » are all very different from each other and this may suggest different hands. But there is no reason to believe that these writers must be from a circle other than the ones that we know Charpentier was associated with at the Comédie-Française, and before 1680 with the company founded by Molière. The notion of attributing some librettos to specific writers, like I do in this chapter, is not only based on a literary approach but takes into consideration what could have been the frames of a possible performance.

The sections in this chapter were all begun as dramaturgical tools once the choice of the work(s) had been made by the directors of the Boston Early Music Festival, including myself. Transcriptions, translations, staging notes, readings, visits to various sites, meetings with musical directors, and rehearsals with singers have been the sources of multiple notes and references which all found their way into the present reflections²². When a specific work was finally presented to an audience, a set of program notes gave a first summary of the state of the research, and as revivals, touring and audio recordings developed, the research continued, and my hypotheses were presented during lectures, and in publications in program books and CD booklets associated with these events²³. First elaborated intuitively, some hypotheses gained vitality as they also had to be testable, since the next step was to do some experiments to determine whether the hypotheses were right. These hypotheses led to one or more performing predictions that were tested by experimenting in the stage shows. Because of the multiple interactions between the elaborations of these projects, this investigation is presented here chronologically, meaning the pieces are explored in the order they must have been conceived and/or performed in the seventeenth century. This order allows following Charpentier in his attempt to establish himself as an opera composer. It tries to enhance the performance perspective on mostly three of his « petits opéras » : *Les Plaisirs de Versailles*, *La Couronne de Fleurs* and *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, but also alludes to some other works.

²¹ Jean de La Fontaine (1621–1695), Antoinette de Lafon de Boisguérin des Houlières ou Deshoulières, Madame Deshoulières, née Antoinette du Ligier de la Garde (ca. 1634 or 1638–1694), Pierre Corneille (1606–1684).

²² This research started during the preparation for my staged productions for the Boston Early Music Festival. Previous versions of some these texts have been published as program notes for the show and/or as booklet notes for the CD recordings of the pieces by the Boston Early Music Festival, Musical Directors Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs, for which I served as Drama Coach: *Actéon* and *La Pierre Philosophale* (CPO 777 613-2); *La Couronne de Fleurs* and *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* (CPO 777 876-2).

²³ See Bibliography.

Les Plaisirs de Versailles (H. 480), a « divertissement » in four scenes, was written by Charpentier for Versailles in 1682–1683. This light and comic piece is a snapshot of « Les Soirées d'Appartements » in the Versailles castle and presents allegorical characters who debate about the best way to spend an evening at Versailles. The personification of music, « La Musique », argues with « La Conversation » because she wants to be heard without distraction. This comic element is supplemented with the evocation of eating and gaming. The presence in the title of the name of the famous palace of Louis XIV brings immediate cultural and visual associations. Therefore, for the performance, the research was oriented deliberately to works which are connected to Versailles. My research focused on the notion of a real space's self-fashioning identity: it is the association to what was becoming a cultural icon which makes *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* a perfect example of the distinctive creative power of Charpentier.

Charpentier wrote *La Couronne de Fleurs* (H. 486) in 1684 or 1685 on a text made from the prologue of *Le Malade imaginaire* by Molière. Conceived as a tribute to Louis XIV, this *Pastorale* in three scenes introduces the goddess Flore who inspires some shepherds to celebrate with poetry the exploits of the Sun King and promises in return a crown of flowers to the one who is the most eloquent. It is not a singing contest, which has been stated incorrectly many times and misleading until now any kind of serious critical interpretation, but a poetic one: each of the shepherds is trying to invent the most beautiful poetry praising the king. This simple but essential clarification in the reading of the libretto has opened new ways to look at the piece and created the path I follow to establish an authorship for the libretto and possible circumstances for its intended purpose.

The unavoidable fact of *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* (H. 488), composed around 1686 by Charpentier, is that the existing manuscript has only two acts. The action stops at the end of the second act with the permission given to Orphée to bring Eurydice home from the Underworld if he does not turn to look back at her. This dramatic structure is unknown at the time: the piece should have a third act completing the myth's usual development and, even possibly a Prologue, locating the angle in which this develiment should be seen. The third act would have depicted the main event of the story of Orpheus, his looking back at Eurydice and its inevitable consequences. I try to demonstrate that the question of the « missing parts », as defined in the general introduction and so crucial for this Charpentier major piece, is expanded but can be addressed by considering *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* as an opera made for the stage of the Académie Royale de Musique.

3.2. *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* opera portrait by Donneau de Visé for Versailles in 1683

« The most beautiful things are not always the easiest to paint. The grandeur and the brilliance of the material can dazzle; and when it gives too much to express, one fears to fall under an overheavy burden, and to enfeeble the beauties one should seek to bring to light, as the most vivid colors would seem to have little ability to make a portrait that would have some likeness. »

Jean Donneau de Visé about *Les Appartements* de Versailles, *Mercure Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin*, December 1682²⁴.

Marc-Antoine Charpentier's *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* stands out among his operas as this piece has a direct connection to the French monarch. We know nothing certain about a performance of the piece, but although his librettist remained anonymous, Charpentier offers a great number of clues in his manuscript score – the only testimony remaining from that time – about the purpose of this piece and the form of its intended performance²⁵. For a start, the title is clear and unequivocal, and boldly proclaims the content. Associating the pleasures with the royal domain was not only a way to advertise clearly its subject matter but also its objective: the piece itself was conceived to be one of these pleasures and was likely to have been written not only about but for Versailles. In the *Memoire* prepared in 1726, before the sale of the collection of Charpentier's manuscripts to the French Royal Library, the description for this opera specifies that it was a « piece for the apartments of the King »²⁶, thereby suggesting that it was intended to be performed in the royal castle. Furthermore, Charpentier stipulates in his manuscript where the opera is set: « La Scène est dans les app.[artements] » (The action takes place in the apartments [of the Castle of Versailles]). This double connection with Versailles, « for » and « in » the *Appartements*, is one of the most informative aspects of *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* and provides a key to understanding it.

Aside from this royal location, we can be reasonably confident that the piece was intended to be performed in front of the king himself: the last line of the character La Musique refers to « Louis » as the beneficiary of the intent of the plot²⁷, while the final chorus addresses

²⁴ « Les plus belles choses ne sont pas toujours les plus faciles à peindre. La grandeur & l'éclat de la matière éblouissent quelquefois ; & quand elle donne trop à exprimer, on craint de succomber sous l'accablement, & d'affaiblir les beautés qu'on cherche à mettre au jour, tant les plus vives couleurs semblent avoir peu de force pour faire un portrait qui ait de la ressemblance. » in *Mercure Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin, Décembre 1682*, Paris : au Palais, 1682, p. 1.

²⁵ *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* (H. 480) Département de la musique de la Bibliothèque nationale de France, cote F-PnRés Vm1 259. Cah. 37 ; volume XI, 68–84. Facsimile in *Meslanges autographes* in *Œuvres complètes de Charpentier*, Vol. 11, Paris: Minkoff, 1997.

²⁶ Ranum, Patricia & Thompson, Shirley. "Memoire des ouvrages de musique latine et françoise de défunt M.^r Charpentier. A Diplomatic Transcription" in *New Perspectives on Marc-Antoine Charpentier*, edited by Shirley Thompson. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010, pp. 316–340. The mention of *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* appears on p. 322.

²⁷ « Si Louis en a ri, / Je me tiens trop heureuse »: « If Louis has laughed because of it, / I shall count myself happy enough. » *Les Plaisirs de Versailles*, Scene 4.

the king directly as a spectator who has just enjoyed the whole work²⁸. Many plays and operas had their première, and sometimes their sole documented performance, before the monarch. Jean Racine (1639–1699) himself, whose works are considered the pinnacle of tragedy, wrote exclusively for the king at the end of his career. Even better known is the close relation the playwright Molière had with Louis XIV; of the writer's thirty-three plays, over half were created for the king, and many of these were commissioned by the monarch himself. In addition to these authors, several of their followers and less-famous disciples had the opportunity to count the monarch as their first audience for the creation of their plays. The works written for the king and his courtiers were the opportunity to try new artistic ideas that could be supported by the special circumstances around the performance – for example, a feast that was part of a larger celebration – for which the royal budget allowed stage productions of a royal standard, frequently with political aims in mind.

3.2.1 *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* : fiction versus reality?

The subject of the anonymous libretto of *Les Plaisirs* could be the one of a spoken satirical comedy but at the end, music, as a character and as a genre, has literally and aesthetically the last « word »: personified, the character of La Musique explains the whole construction of the plot was a trick of hers in order to make Louis laugh. The fact that the story is enriched by Charpentier with music from the beginning to the end – including deliberate silences for special dramatic effects – creates the form chosen for this divertissement: one which is close to an opera. This occurrence offers a mirror effect between reality and art. In the “concert” which opens the piece, La Musique sings a song and later she seems to improvise in real time, though we learn by the end that she was just manipulating the other characters all the way through. Meanwhile, the plot is a crafty device to present all the evening entertainments that courtiers could enjoy several times a week in Versailles, as the action is staging allegorical figures that represent all the facets of an evening in the palace: La Musique starts her “concert” but is soon interrupted by La Conversation, who, true to her nature, cannot help but to comment endlessly, much like the chattering French courtiers²⁹. The two spar for predominance until Comus, the god of feasts, intervenes to try to calm them both by offering refined food and luxurious drinks. Unsuccessful in establishing his power over the mouths of the two battling goddesses, he calls then for the help of Le Jeu. The god of Games proposes that they settle their argument by playing one of his activities: chess, cards, billiards, or the then-fashionable « trou-madame », a kind of shuffle-board game played on a table with thirteen balls, composed of thirteen gates and as many galleries diversely labeled for loss or gain of points³⁰. By the end of this « concert interrompu », and after La Musique (The voice of

²⁸ « Grand Roi tout couvert de lauriers, / Si pour te délasser de tes travaux guerriers, / Nos flutes et nos voix te semblent impuissantes / Prends nos désirs pour des effets. » : « Great King, all wreathed in laurels, / If to relax you from your martial labors, / Our flutes and voices seem powerless, / Take our wishes as done deeds. » *Les Plaisirs de Versailles*, Scene 4.

²⁹ La Conversation follows the precepts of the « conversation galante » as presented through literature. For example, see: Bary, René. *L'Esprit de cour ou les conversations galantes, divisées en cent dialogues*. Paris : Charles de Sercy, 1662, “Du Luth. On louë Beroline, de ce qu'elle jouë bien du Luth.”, “De la belle voix. On vante la voix d'Amarillis”, “Du Luth, de la Voix & de la Danse. Tarente cajole Tamise sur ce qu'elle jouë bien du Luth, sur ce qu'elle chante bien, & sur se qu'elle danse agréablement.”

³⁰ « Trou-madame. s. m. Sorte de jeu de bois composé de treize portes & d'autant de galleries. On joue à ce jeu avec treize petites boules, qu'on laisse couler dans des trous ou des rigoles, marquées diversement pour la perte ou pour le gain. » Thomas Corneille, *Dictionnaire universel des termes des arts et des sciences*, 1694.

Charpentier?) explains that the plot was only a scheme she devised to entertain Louis, all agree to coexist in Versailles for the pleasures of the king. The idea of this enjoyable combination was the very definition of a new kind of entertainment, which would soon be known under the appellation of *Les Appartements*.

Beyond the occasional grand balls, seasonal festive masquerades, and exceptional horse tournaments, Louis XIV invented something more frequent to keep the French court, which he wanted to be fixed in Versailles³¹, well entertained on a regular basis. The *Soirées d'Appartements* were evening gatherings held at least three times every week during the winter season: on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday³². Soon known simply as the *Appartements* – because they were taking place in the Grand Apartments of Versailles – they offered many pastimes lined up in the enfilade of the public rooms of the palace. What made the *Appartements* of Versailles so special was primarily their magnificent setting: the interiors of the palace were almost finished in 1682, the same year the French court moved in and could admire the new hall of mirrors, where the lavish painted ceiling depicting the great deeds of the king was by then almost finished³³. Music was present in form of concerts and dancing, and all kinds of games were also offered³⁴. Food and drink were presented in abundance: fruits coming from the royal gardens were provided in an array of forms, cooked with sugar and honey. They were the basis for the art of the « confiseur »³⁵: jams, jellies and preserves were presented in architectural displays on lavish buffets. Fruit juices flavored with herbs, spices and nuts were also available. A wide variety of other drinks were served in a different room and ranged from the usual wines³⁶ and liquors to exotic coffee and chocolate³⁷. The food was not formally served at table but all at once, at very grand buffets « à la française »³⁸, where courtiers would help themselves and find seats where they could eat and converse. This created free movement

³¹ See Beaussant, Philippe. *Louis XIV artiste*. Paris: Payot, 1999, p. 221.

³² But sometimes every day of the week, see: *Journal du marquis de Dangeau, Tome I*. Paris : Firmin Didot Frères, 1854, p. 56.

³³ Bajou, Thierry. *La Peinture à Versailles, XVIIe siècle*. Préface de Jean-Pierre Babelon. Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1998.

³⁴ The passion for gaming, and gambling, was not new and prompted a lot of literature : In 1642, 1643 and 1657, Charles Sorel (1582?–1674) had published *La Maison des Jeux, où se trouvent les divertissements d'une compagnie, par des narrations agréables et par des jeux d'esprit, et autres entretiens d'une honeste conversation*. This book presents a veritable school of social graces for « Les personnes de bonne condition nourries dans la civilité et la galanterie. » (*Avis aux Lecteurs*). The author introduced many « jeux d'esprit & de conversation » which differs from the « jeux d'exercice » and « jeux de hazard ».

³⁵ Massalot, François. *Nouvelles instructions pour les Confitures, les liqueurs et les Fruits*. Paris : De Sercy, 1692.

³⁶ The Bourgogne wines are said to have been the favorite of Louis XIV, and in 1693, his doctor Fagon said they were the best for health. Comus in *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* offers « D'un vin délicieux de la côte rôtie / Qui ferait rire un Jérémie, / J'ai des bouteilles à foison. / Buvez-en, je vous y convie. »: Côte-Rôtie is a French wine in the northern Rhône wine region of France. The vineyards are unique because of the steep slopes facing the river and their stone walls. Côte-Rôtie can be rendered in English as “the roasted slope” and refers to the long hours of sunlight that these steep slopes receive, giving the red wine its deep and complex aroma.

³⁷ Dufour Ph. S. *Traitez nouveaux et curieux du Café, du Thé et du Chocolate*. Lyon: J. Girin et B. Rivière, 1685. See also: Blégny, Nicolas de. *Le bon usage du thé du café et du chocolat pour la preservation & pour la guerison des maladies*. Paris: chez l'auteur, 1687.

³⁸ « Service à la Française » implies that all sorts of food are served at the same time, in opposition with the « service à la Russe », which offers dishes one after the other.

among courtiers, stimulating interactions from simple greetings to more extended conversation. It is the very components of a *Soirée* in the *Appartements* that *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* describes.

There is a series of period engravings dating from the end of the seventeenth century that gives a hint as to what happened in each room³⁹; the images show how familiar the librettist of *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* was with the components of the *soirée*. Antoine Furetière (1619–1688), whose posthumous 1690 dictionary was among the first publications to record the expression « appartements » to describe the entertainments which took place in them, defines it as « a feast or celebration, which the king gives to regale his court on some evenings, in his superbly furnished and illuminated public apartments, with music, balls, dance, meals, games and other magnificent entertaining »⁴⁰. A courtier, the Marquis de Dangeau, uses the expression in his *Journal* from 1684, but the most extensive description had already been printed in the December 1682 issue of *Mercure Galant*⁴¹. Jean Donneau de Visé, the editor of this monthly periodical, provided news of the court, and here the details of the account show that he must have been in a position to be a first-hand witness of this new royal way to entertain.

3.2.2 Jean Donneau de Visé as librettist

Being of noble birth⁴², pensioned by Louis XIV, and therefore wealthy enough to appear at court⁴³, Donneau de Visé may well have been the author of the libretto of *Les Plaisirs de Versailles*, or at least had a hand in it, as a zealous courtier himself. Indeed, Donneau de Visé was not only a journalist protected by the Grand Dauphin, Louis de France (1661–1711), but also a playwright, and his oeuvre, although forgotten today, was one of the most successful of the seventeenth century. He was a *modern* dramatist, as opposed to the writers who based their

³⁹ Engravings by Antoine Trouvain (1652?–1708) edited “rue St. Jacques au grand Monarque, Paris” in 1698.

⁴⁰ « On a dit ces dernières années, qu’on tenait *appartement* chez le Roy, d’une feste ou réjouissance, en laquelle le Roy regaloit la Cour, pendant quelques soirées dans ses *apartements* qui étaient superbement meublés, & éclairés avec musique, bal, danse, collations, jeux et autres divertissements magnifiques. » Article « *Appartement* » in Furetière. *Dictionnaire Universel*, Volume I. La Haye : A. et R. Leers, 1690, p. 117.

⁴¹ *Mercure Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin, Décembre 1682*. Paris : au Palais, 1682.

⁴² Donneau de Visé, also recorded as Donneau de Vizé, appeared jealous of the lineage of his family and published in the *Mercure Galant* of February 1699 (pp. 158–195) a long genealogy of Devize; the Donneau de Visé family had, however, to struggle to get letters of nobility being unable to provide the titles requested in 1668, and had to appeal to the king and by letters patent of 25 April 1670 were excused of evidence; the *Cour des aides* having refused to ratify, the king had to use his authority; the nobility of Donneau de Visé was only definitely recorded on 3 July 1673. (For the genealogy of the family Donneau see: Mongrédien, Georges. “Le Fondateur du Mercure de France. Jean Donneau de Visé”, in *Mercure de France*, 1er octobre 1937, pp. 89–97). To my current knowledge (November 2017) there is no family relation with the contemporaneous composer and guitar player Robert de Visée (ca. 1655–1732/1733).

⁴³ Donneau de Visé’s pensions are known and give an idea of the large wealth of the man. After an unsuccessful request in 1682 (Mélèse, Pierre. *Un Homme de lettres au temps du Grand Roi, Donneau de Visé, fondateur du Mercure Galant*, Paris: Droz, 1936, p. 168), Donneau de Visé obtains 6,000 Livres in February 1684, then 2,000 Livres with a raise of 4,000 Livres in March 1691; the charge of « garde-meuble » (keeper of the furniture) being eliminated in 1697, he obtained 1,000 Livres of indemnity. On 7 July 1697, he obtained a new pension of 2,000 Livres, which brought his yearly income to 15,000 Livres (Mongrédien, Georges. “Le Fondateur du Mercure de France. Jean Donneau de Visé”, in *Mercure de France*, 1er octobre 1937, pp. 89–116, pl. III).

works on the Greco-Latin tradition, and therefore he excelled in treating contemporary subjects, often in relation with the actuality that he was reporting monthly in his magazine *Le Mercure Galant*. He wrote more than twenty-four plays, many of them in collaboration with his friend Thomas Corneille⁴⁴. This hypothesis of his authorship, perhaps also in conjunction with Corneille, seems possible when taking into consideration the similarities between the various accounts given by Donneau de Visé in *Mercure* and the plots of his dramas written during this period of collaboration with Thomas Corneille: *La Devineresse*, first performed on 19 November 1679, is an echo of the trial of the poisoner La Voisin (1640–1680) that was first mentioned in *Mercure Galant* in 1679, and *La Comète* is a play created on 29 January 1681, while an actual comet is described in *Mercure Galant* of December 1680 and January 1681⁴⁵. In addition, Thomas Corneille became Donneau de Visé's official collaborator on *Mercure Galant* starting in 1681. If we then compare *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* with *Mercure Galant*'s 1682 account of *Les Appartements*, not only does the dramaturgical structure follow the same order as the narrative, but many elements of the two are comparable in their form and intent.

In *Mercure* of December 1682, after « setting the stage » in the recently finished rooms of the Palace with a florid description of the furniture made out of silver, the famous « mobilier d'argent » of Versailles, Donneau de Visé continues by describing the various entertainments offered in each room: music, games and the abundant food, in which visual detail mixes with social account. Conversation, an art which has long been associated with courtiers⁴⁶, is not confined to one room in particular and is unfettered: « The freedom to speak is complete, and one talks with one another as one delights in the conversation. »⁴⁷ Donneau de Visé finishes with praise for Louis XIV for having such a brilliant idea and makes an attempt to explain the political benefice of such entertainments⁴⁸. At the end, the union of all pleasures makes the

⁴⁴ For an overview of this collaboration, see: Reynier, Gustave. *Thomas Corneille, Sa vie et son théâtre*. Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie, 1892, pp. 266–319.

⁴⁵ For *La Devineresse*, see: *Mercure Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin, Août 1679*, pp. 20–52 and in *Février 1680*, p. 345; for *La Comète*, see *Mercure Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin, Décembre 1680*, pp. 269–277 and *Janvier 1681*, pp. 93–144. For an easy access to the contents of *Mercure Galant* see: Vincent, Monique. *Mercure Galant. Extraordinaire, Affaires du temps. Table analytique contenant l'inventaire de tous les articles publiés 1672–1710*. Paris : Éditions René Champion, 1998.

⁴⁶ See Gracian, Baltasar. *L'Homme de Cour, Traduit de l'Espagnol par le Sieur Amelot, de La Houssaie*. Paris: Veuve Martin & Jean Boudot, 1684, p. 163. See: Maxime CXLVIII « Savoir l'art de converser. C'est par où l'homme montre ce qu'il vaut. [...] Quelques-uns tiennent que le véritable art de converser est de le faire sans art ; et que la conversation doit être aisée comme le vêtement, si c'est entre bons amis. Car, lorsque c'en est une de cérémonie et de respect, il y doit entrer plus de retenue, pour montrer que l'on a beaucoup de savoir-vivre. Le moyen d'y bien réussir est de s'accommoder au caractère d'esprit de ceux qui sont comme les Arbitres de l'entretien ». I underline the sentence which finds an echo in the line of La Conversation in *Les Plaisirs de Versailles*, Scene 4: « Apprenez qu'à la Cour on s'accommode aux gens ». See also: Vaumorière, Ortigue de. *L'Art de plaire dans la conversation*. Paris: Jean & Michel Guignard, 1688, pp. 326 & 327.

⁴⁷ « La liberté de parler y est entière, & l'on s'entretient les uns les autres selon qu'on se plaît à la conversation. » *Mercure Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin, Décembre 1682*. Paris : au Palais, 1682, p. 47.

⁴⁸ An official Medal, a visual program for possible designs and staging of *Les Plaisirs de Versailles*, was stamped in 1682, putting the creation of *Les Appartements* in relation with the birth of the Duc de Bourgogne. « A l'occasion de la naissance du Prince, le Roi afin d'augmenter les Plaisirs de la Cour, voulut que ses appartements fussent ouverts à certains jours de la semaine. Chacun, selon son goût, pouvait s'amuser à la Danse, au Jeu, ou à la Musique. On y trouvoit toutes sortes de rafraichissemens avec profusion ; & ce qui faisoit le comble de la joie, dit l'Académie des Inscriptions en expliquant la médaille qu'elle fit frapper ce sujet, on y jouissoit de la présence d'un si grand Roi & d'un si bon Maître. Cette Médaille représente un salon magnifique, dans lequel on voit trois Divinités. Une Muse, qui tient sa Lyre, désigne la Musique ; Pomone, qui tient une corbeille de fruits, marque

experience truly satisfying: « Judge the pleasures that one enjoys for four hours in these places intended by such a great monarch for the entertainment of the Court. There is more, and if true pleasures are about change, since a pleasure too continuous becomes less profound, one changes as often as one wants »⁴⁹. These notions of freedom of speech and experience can be found in the rhythm and density of the exchanges between the characters in Charpentier's opera. Adding to the evidence which brings *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* close to the account given by *Mercure Galant*, aside from the strong parallel between the orders of the description of the different entertainments in both accounts, one can also trace the verses given to each of them in the opera and the style used by the magazine. In *Les Plaisirs*, La Musique occupies the first rank, proud and confident in the king's love for her; Comus, the god of feasts, offers a large « menu à la carte » of many delights: pastry, jelly, wine, and the fashionable chocolate. The description of the games takes the shape of a playful enumeration that speaks about the variety and fantasy of the pastimes proposed to the courtiers as well as their conversation which is everywhere and unrestricted, but always happy and « civil. » At the end, like in the description of *Mercure Galant*, all pleasures hope to be able to entertain the monarch⁵⁰.

Although he was a fashionable writer, whose first productions used the baroque machines then in favor in Paris, Donneau de Visé published only a few of his plays, and that may also explain his anonymity as author of *Les Plaisirs*. In addition, Charpentier's scores never mention the author of the poetic texts he sets in music and furthermore, there is no definitive evidence the piece was performed. Nevertheless, the ongoing association Donneau de Visé and Thomas Corneille had with Charpentier is easy to evaluate thanks to the musical manuscripts of the composer and the records of the Parisian theatres of the time. It is well established that Charpentier collaborated with Molière after the playwright had a falling out with Lully in 1671. After Molière's death, Charpentier continued to work with his theatre company, which later became the Comédie-Française. Donneau de Visé and Corneille wrote *Circé, a tragédie en machines*, for the troupe then in the theatre Guénégaud⁵¹: it premiered on 17 March 1675, with music by Charpentier, and had a prologue that staged « Les Arts et Les Plaisirs »⁵². *La Devineresse*, created in 1679, elaborates on the theme of magic but in a

les Rafrâichissements, & Mercure préside aux Jeux. La Légende, COMITAS ET MAGNIFICENTIA PRINCIPIS, l'Exergue, HILARITATI PUBLICAE APERTA REGIA, signifient, que *l'Affabilité & la Magnificence du Prince ouvrit son Palais aux plaisirs de ses Sujets.* » See: Bruzen de La Martinière, Antoine-Augustin. *Histoire de la Vie et du Règne de Louis XIV, Roi de France & de Navarre...*, Volume 4. La Haye : J. van Duren, 1740-1742, p. 254.

⁴⁹ « Jugez des plaisirs dont on jouit pendant quatre heures dans des lieux destinés par un si grand Monarque pour les Divertissements de la Cour. Il y a plus & si les vrais plaisirs sont d'en changer, puis qu'un plaisir trop continue devient moins sensible, on en change aussi souvent que l'on veut. » *Mercure Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin, Décembre 1682*. Paris : au Palais, 1682, p. 55. This observation echoes the « Chacun, selon son gout » quoted in note 46.

⁵⁰ For another example of this inclusion of the audience in the Aristotelian's « imitation done by characters in action » in the productions of Thomas Corneille, see: Le Chevalier, Gaël. « Un exemple de connivence culturelle : *Le Berger extravagant* de Thomas Corneille » in Dufour-Maître, Myriam. *Thomas Corneille (1625–1709), Une Dramaturgie Virtuose*. Rouen: Presses Universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2014, pp. 173–190.

⁵¹ Clarke, Jan. « La fin d'une si longue carrière : de nouvelles recherches à propos de Thomas Corneille dans les archives de la Comédie-Française » in Dufour-Maître, Myriam. *Thomas Corneille (1625–1709), Une Dramaturgie Virtuose*. Rouen: Presses Universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2014, pp. 219–246.

⁵² See: [Corneille, Thomas]. *Circé, tragédie. Ornée de machines, de changemens de théâtre, & de musique. Par T. Corneille. Représentée par la Troupe du Roy, établie au fauxbourg S. Germain., Et se vend à Paris, au Palais, dans la salle royale, à l'Image S. Louis. Et à la porte de la Comedie, où l'on prend les billets, 1675.*

contemporary context, taking advantage of the publicity of the recent « Affaire des poisons »⁵³. This play, one of the many Corneille and Donneau de Visé wrote together, was a triumph that brought with it exceptional fame and profits⁵⁴. Beginning with *Ciré*, Corneille and Donneau de Visé wrote a number of special works for spectacle and stage machinery, and it is to this genre that *La Pierre Philosophale* belongs⁵⁵. The idea of experiencing magic – especially those forms able to transmute metals – excited the public's interest. By mocking the greed of a naïve burgher, by showing that would-be Cabbalists were the prey of skilled fakes, like they did in 1679 for *La Devineresse*, Donneau de Visé and Corneille believed « public satire was the only way to get them back to their senses. »⁵⁶ *La Pierre Philosophale*, because of its proximity in time with *Les Plaisirs de Versailles*, deserves notice. A quick exploration will reveal structures applicable to *Les Plaisirs de Versailles*.

3.2.3 *La Pierre Philosophale*

While created at the Comédie-Française on 23 February 1681, *La Pierre Philosophale* was not printed. Fortunately, we have the *livre de sujet*, a kind of very detailed synopsis that tells us the essential component of this *comédie mêlée de spectacles*: the machinery⁵⁷. The story cleverly combines the mechanical inventions of a nobleman and the charmed visions of his dupe, a naïve bourgeois who believes magic exists. The dupe, Mr. Maugis, an adept of alchemy, is nearly bankrupt due to his search for the philosopher's stone: the « stone » able to transform base metal into gold. The marquis, who loves Maugis' daughter but cannot gain his permission to wed her, pretends to support the father's magical obsessions by proposing him to be initiated into the mysteries of the Rose-Croix, the mystical order in vogue at the time⁵⁸. Maugis, excited to belong to a secret society of Cabbalists, has to undergo a series of initiation tests, each more frightening than the last. Ultimately, he agrees to the marriage of his daughter with her suitor, but only because he believes the marquis to be a spirit of air⁵⁹.

⁵³ Mélése, Pierre. *Un Homme de lettres au temps du Grand Roi, Donneau de Visé, fondateur du Mercure Galant*. Paris : E. Droz, 1936, pp. 149–158.

⁵⁴ See: Brooks, William. “La Devineresse dans la « Notice nécrologique » de Thomas Corneille par Jean Donneau de Visé, I^{re} partie – d’Un Siècle à l’Autre” in Dufour-Maitre, Myriam. *Thomas Corneille (1625–1709), Une Dramaturgie Virtuose*. Rouen: Presses Universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2014, pp. 271–286.

⁵⁵ Poirson, Martial and Le Chevalier, Gaël. « La Pierre Philosophale » in *Féeries*, 3, 2006. URL: <http://feeries.revues.org/156v> (accessed 31 October 2017).

⁵⁶ Corneille, Thomas and Donneau de Visé, Jean. *La Pierre Philosophale, comédie mêlée de spectacles*. Paris: C. Blageart, Imprimeur-Libraire, 1681, Avis « Au lecteur ». It is worth mentioning that the official Edit of 1682 marks the end of the juridical acknowledgment of sorcery. See: Louis XIV (roi de France ; 1638–1715), *Édit... pour la punition de différents crimes* [magic, sortilèges, empoisonnement]. *Registré en Parlement le 31 aoust 1682*. Paris : F. Muguet, 1682.

⁵⁷ Corneille, Thomas and Donneau de Visé, Jean. *La Pierre Philosophale, comédie mêlée de spectacle...* 1681.

⁵⁸ The hermetically closed sect of Rose-Croix, the first mention of which dates to early seventeenth-century Germany, had many followers in France; there were plenty of rogues who were abusing the public's gullibility.

⁵⁹ The play was inspired by *Le Comte de Gabalis ou Entretiens sur les sciences secrètes*, a social satire published anonymously in 1670 by Nicolas-Pierre-Henri de Montfaucon, abbot of Villars (1635–1673). Composed of five speeches given by a spiritual master to his disciple, it has been considered by some as a Rosicrucian text of a cabbalistic nature and has been the subject of multiple interpretations. Corneille and Donneau de Visé gave the name of « Comte de Gabalis » to one of their characters. The book was the first in French literature to mention

If Thomas Corneille admitted that there was « little singing »⁶⁰ in *La Pierre Philosophale*, it is thanks to the manuscript of the music by Charpentier that some of the verses of the play is known to us today⁶¹. The incidental music focuses on the end of Act IV, when our hero gets to know the elemental spirits: a gnomide and a gnome, spirits of Earth; a mermaid and a merman, spirits of Water; two salamanders, spirits of Fire; and a « sylphide » and a sylph, spirits of Air. Eager to complete his initiation by choosing a mate among these spirits, the greedy « bourgeois » gives his preference to the gnomide, knowing she is the guardian of the subsurface richness, but expresses « grief at finding her so little. » The spirits remedy this and the gnomide, after returning for a moment to earth, the element of her birth – thanks to a trapdoor – comes back having grown so much that the spirits must stop her growth by a comic « That's enough, that's enough. » The whole scene still feels the Molièresque influence of the Turkish ceremony composed by Lully for *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* and the medical promotion composed by Charpentier for *Le Malade imaginaire*. It grows in buffoonery and intensity, and acts as an entertainment in which music would enhance the spell of the stage machines in the eyes of the gullible audience. The audience was experiencing the representation of the supernatural, knowing at the same time that the « Machination » of the marquis, his plot, is based on mechanical devices, musique being one of them. In *La Pierre Philosophale*, the authors wanted, as they had in *La Devineresse*, to ridicule the appetite of their contemporaries for the occult sciences. *La Pierre Philosophale*, however, was only presented twice: the public credulity was perhaps too strongly entrenched, or the displays of « magic » given by the machines were simply not able to sway public opinion to any significant degree. This failure may have prompted the writers to try a new comic genre with *Les Plaisirs de Versailles*. By contrast, the earlier *La Devineresse*, which was already a comedy inspired by the occult, became so famous that the Dauphin disguised himself as one of its characters for a masked ball during the 1683 Carnival, an occurrence proudly related by Donneau de Visé himself in *Mercure Galant*⁶².

Indeed, Donneau de Visé methodically builds on the success of his newspaper to support his theatre productions even well after their actual performances. His coverage of the activities of the court, and his numerous correspondents outside Paris, ensured him a place as official journalist to the point that, in 1699, he gave himself the title of « historian of France »⁶³. His working relation with his longtime friend Thomas Corneille was described by him at the latter's death in 1710: either Donneau de Visé would write various scenes with no relation between them and Corneille would create the plot, or Donneau de Visé wrote in prose and Corneille would versify the entire thing. For *Circé*, they divided the work so Corneille wrote the play and Donneau de Visé was responsible for the divertissements⁶⁴. More than any other

the sylph, a fictional elementary creature of air, and had a notable influence on popular culture by introducing this character durably notably on the lyric stage.

⁶⁰ Corneille, Thomas & Donneau de Visé, Jean. *La Pierre Philosophale, comédie mêlée de spectacles*. Paris: C. Blageart, Imprimeur-Libraire, 1681. Avis « Au lecteur ».

⁶¹ *La Pierre Philosophale* (H. 501) Département de la musique de la Bibliothèque nationale de France, cote F-PnRés Vm1 259. Cah. XXIX–XXX ; vol. XVIII, 17^v–20^v.

⁶² *Mercure Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin, Mars 1683*. Paris : au Palais, 1683, p. 334.

⁶³ *Mercure Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin, Février 1699*. Paris : au Palais, 1699, p. 186.

⁶⁴ *Mercure Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin, Janvier 1710*. Paris : au Palais, 1710, p. 270.

piece for a special occasion, *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* may have been the conjunction between the snapshot of the event by Donneau de Visé and the versification and rich vocabulary of Thomas Corneille. There was also Charpentier's personal agenda: the composer wished to show the King that he could write something other than religious music. Indeed, the title of the memoir of 1726 about his work gives a clue about the distinction recorded then: « Mémoire des ouvrages de musique latine et françoise de défunt M.^r Charpentier »⁶⁵ makes a clear difference on the linguistic distinction between church and profane music. Next to the Latin liturgy of the royal chapel in Latin, the *Appartements* were the perfect opportunity to perform some music « françoise » in front of the king and attract attention, without directly competing with Lully who had the monopoly on all French opera performances.⁶⁶

3.2.4 Les Fontaines in les Appartements

In *Les Etats de la France* of 1692, a book which gives a snapshot of the royal court, one can read « at the beginnings of Les Appartements, the singers of the Royal Music recite and sing – without theatre costumes – parts of an opera. »⁶⁷ In Versailles, the « salon d'Apollon », god of the sun and of music and symbol of the king since 1662⁶⁸, was especially devoted to this type of concert in 1682⁶⁹: singers, harpsichord, theorboes, lutes, guitars, basses de viole and violins performed excerpts from the operas of Lully, the official composer of the king, and *Alys*, the king's favorite, probably more often than any other⁷⁰. In addition to these « best of » presentations of *Tragédie en musique*, the French royal opera genre, performances were given of moderate-length occasional pieces, suitable for being part of an evening in which other pastimes were on offer. Pieces with a lighter content than the *Tragédie en musique* were specially composed for what should be considered as an alternative stage. Such concerts were the opportunity to present opera without challenging the monopoly of the Académie Royale de Musique directed by Lully. Among the works written for the Versailles Appartements *Les Fontaines de Versailles*⁷¹, with music by Michel-Richard de Lalande (1657–1726), is of great

⁶⁵ Ranum, Patricia & Thompson, Shirley. “Mémoire des ouvrages de musique latine et françoise de défunt M.^r Charpentier. A Diplomatic Transcription” in *New Perspectives on Marc-Antoine Charpentier*, edited by Shirley Thompson. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010, pp. 316–340.

⁶⁶ It is only after the death of the powerful *Surintendant* that Charpentier will write *Médée*, on a libretto of Thomas Corneille, and finally be able to measure himself against Lully in a full-length opera at the Paris Opera.

⁶⁷ « Au commencement des Apartemens [*sic*], les Chantres de la Musique de S.M. récitent & chantent sans habits de Théâtre, partie de quelque Opéra » in *Les Etats de la France*. Paris : 1692, p. 290.

⁶⁸ Louis XIV. *Mémoires et divers écrits*, ed. Bernard Champigneulle. Paris: Club français du livre, 1960, p. 90.

⁶⁹ The orchestra later moved (1684–1687) to the Salon de Mars, devoted to gaming starting in 1682, see: Taxil, Gaëlle. “L'ameublement et le décor intérieur du salon de Mars (1673–1789)”, *Bulletin du Centre de recherche du château de Versailles*. URL: <http://crcv.revues.org/12359> ; DOI : 10.4000/crcv.12359 (Accessed 7 August 2017).

⁷⁰ *Alys*, created in 1676, was revived in January 1682 in Versailles (Trianon). See: La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Jean-Baptiste Lully*. Paris: Fayard, 2002, p. 214.

⁷¹ “*Les Fontaines de Versailles sur le retour du Roy. Concert Donné à sa Majesté dans les grands appartements de son Château de Versailles, le cinqu.e Avril 1683. Fait par M. Morel, et mis en musique par M. de La Lande, Maistre de musique de la Chapelle du Roy. Coppié par Mr Philidor, & écrit par Fr. Collosson Le 3e Juin 1683*”. Bibliothèque nationale de France : ms., 1683, [6]-63 p., 450 x 300 mm, F-Pc, Rés. F. 537. S133. Despite the original form of a « Concert », Sawkins argues that a revival in 1685, in conjunction with the new bassin de Neptune, may have

interest. The piece was performed in April 1683, before Lalande obtained the position of « Sous-Maître de la Chapelle », being one of the winners of the contest for the new post that took place that month⁷². Charpentier had planned to take part in the same contest, but he fell ill and could not attend the concluding examination of the candidates. The lack of information about an actual performance of *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* may also be due to this illness and his nonappearance. The odds seemed equally auspicious as both composers were well connected with court: Lalande was supported by the Marquise de Montespan the still powerful ancient mistress of the king (he was teaching harpsichord to the daughters she had with the king), while Charpentier, in addition to his allegiance to the powerful Guise family, was connected to Le Dauphin. *Les Plaisirs de Versailles*, like *Les Fontaines de Versailles*, may well have been part of this national effort by composers, supported by their patrons, to create works perfectly suited to the “new” Versailles, both in terms of form and poetic contents⁷³, and to showcase the composer’s abilities to the king.

Les Fontaines de Versailles sheds therefore some original light⁷⁴ on *Les Plaisirs de Versailles*, even more so when considering that, if Charpentier’s work was evocative of the entertainments offered during the soirées inside the palace of Versailles, Lalande’s is a subtle evocation of the pleasures its gardens offer. Antoine Maurel (1648?–1711), in the service of the court for decades, wrote the libretto for this « concert donné à sa Majesté dans les grands appartements de son Château de Versailles, le 5 avril 1683 » (given in front of His Majesty in the grand apartments of his Castle of Versailles, 5 April 1683). He imagines the deities whose sculptures adorn the fountains of the gardens having a meeting in the palace (at night when the gardens are deserted?). They confer about the preparation in order to celebrate the return of the king to Versailles. Quinault and Lully had already distinguished an ornamental feature of the gardens of Versailles in *La Grotte de Versailles*, an « Eglogue en musique » which had been composed and first performed at Versailles in April 1668. This first opera collaboration between Lully and Quinault speaks about the *Grotte de Thetys* of the gardens of Versailles: a fake grotto in the Italian style, which contained various sculptures and a water organ⁷⁵. Quinault’s

included dance. See: Sawkins, Lionel. *A Thematic Catalogue of the Works of Michel-Richard de Lalande (1657–1726)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 461.

⁷² The king chose eight candidates for the final examination (following the Préface of the edition of Lalande’s scores published in 1729, tome I, pp. 3 & 4, Boivin, Paris) from the thirty-five musicians who auditioned every day in the Chapel. The final candidates composed, in isolated houses where « they were, five or six days, at the expenses of the king, and where they did not speak to anyone... », their pieces on the psalm 31 « Beati, quorum ». See: *Mercurie Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin, Avril 1683*, p. 310. The final selection was influenced by patrons: Lully put forward Pascal Collasse, the archbishop of Reims asked the king to receive Guillaume Minoret, while Abbé Robert, retiring from the Royal Chapel, proposed Nicolas Goupillet, supported also by Bossuet. Louis XIV answered: « I received, Gentlemen, the ones you introduced to me; it is fair that I chose one to follow my taste, it is Lalande that I take ». On the contest, see: Cessac, Catherine. *Marc-Antoine Charpentier*. Paris: Fayard, 2004, p. 136.

⁷³ Much like André Philidor dit l’Ainé (ca. 1647–1730) would do with *Le Canal de Versailles* in 1687: a « Divertissement dansé, en huit scènes » was performed in Versailles, on 16 July 1687, in front of the king.

⁷⁴ See: Roennfeldt, Peter. “The Nature of Fame: Reflections on Charpentier’s *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* and Lalande’s *Les Fontaines de Versailles*.” in *New Perspectives on Marc-Antoine Charpentier*, edited by Shirley Thompson. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010, pp. 269–285.

⁷⁵ The « grotte de Thétis » was conceived by the brothers Perrault: Charles the writer and Claude the architect. See: Thompson, Ian. *The Sun King’s Garden, Louis XIV, André Le Nôtre and the Creation of the Gardens of Versailles*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2006, p. 141.

text is built like the prologues he would later write for Lully's operas; the *Pastorale* celebrates Louis XIV who « se plait en ces lieux »⁷⁶. It contains an early evocation of the hydraulic feats of Versailles when at the end the shepherds invite huntresses to come « près de ces fontaines ». In the years since 1668, however, the gardens had been enriched with many more features, and the destruction of the Grotto was already planned due to the extension of the North wing in 1684. Maurel and Lalande offered an updated view on the theme with *Les Fontaines de Versailles*. As all of these statues were indeed on display in the gardens in 1683, could the order in which the fountains appear in Maurel's libretto reflect an actual promenade through the gardens? It does initially seem possible when comparing the libretto with a map of this period, as the beginning of the piece presents a spatial logic in which, exiting the palace and starting at the Latona's fountain, from there one would go down towards the basin of Apollon, and return through the groves of Flore and Cérès. However, as the second half of the piece would offer an erratic zig-zag which goes from north to south and from south to north, it seems clear that, rather than a description, *Les Fontaines* is a poetic evocation, a French spring night's dream. By imagining a symposium, in the *Appartements*, of the gods⁷⁷ personified by the statues which were the ornaments of the waters of Versailles, Maurel⁷⁸, who also served as a singer in the Royal Chapel, takes the opportunity to praise Louis XIV, in his libretto, as the creator of the gardens, « this enchanted domain which he himself has fashioned »⁷⁹.

This declared royal authorship was not pure flattery as, from 1661 until his death fifty years later in 1715, the king ordered the initial creation and oversaw the many expansions and improvements to the castle and, even more, the gardens of Versailles. The most skilled and capable were hired from the scientific and artistic world: architects, engineers, sculptors, gardeners, poets, and artists of all kinds. If their ingenuity created the many marvels that made up Versailles, the combination of them – the overarching concept, its ambition and evolution, the cohesive vision – came from Louis XIV. Before becoming a social pole, Versailles was a field of experimentation in arts, crafts and sciences. The sovereign's unfailing interest in the gardens and their evolving growth was noted by members of the French court⁸⁰, while the king met with engineers, designers and craftsmen to discuss their progress in these areas, and personally examined the efforts of the soldiers employed to transform the landscape. The biggest technical challenge was the mastery of water, and for decades, the engineers for the

⁷⁶ It is a rather ambitious score with seven roles for singers (3 S, 1CT, 3T, 1B), a five-part chorus, roles for twelve dancers, and a rich orchestration. The length is around 35 to 40 minutes. See: *La Grotte de Versailles*, edited by Nathalie Berton, Versailles: Éditions du Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles, 2000.

⁷⁷ « La Scène est dans les Grands Appartements du Château de Versailles » in *Les Fontaines de Versailles*.

⁷⁸ Antoine Maurel (or Morel), basse-taille, was initially a singer for Queen Marie-Thérèse, and then of the Chapelle royale and the Chambre starting in 1669. He performed the role of Encelade in *Les Fontaines de Versailles*, and served as a member of the house of the Dauphine. He was also a composer and was a witness at Lalande's wedding. His texts for Lalande included not only *Les Fontaines de Versailles* but also *Le Concert d'Esculape*, and he probably wrote *Les Bergers de Marly (Tircis et Célémène)* for Jean-Baptiste Matho. He is to be distinguished from Antoine Morel, haute-contre, who entered the Court music in 1696. See: *L'Etat de la France*, 1698, tome 1, pp. 45 & 46, which lists both singers.

⁷⁹ « ces lieux enchantés qu'il a formés lui-même » *Les Fontaines de Versailles*, Scène 6, Comus & chorus.

⁸⁰ See: Garrigues, Dominique. *Jardins et Jardiniers de Versailles au Grand Siècle*. Préface de Joël Cornette. Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2001.

water works – « les fontainiers » – were at work to make the fountains flow⁸¹. Even when still under construction, the gardens were used as a fantastic theatre ground, where temporary theatrical sceneries were mixed with water structures and fantasy was confused with reality⁸². When the time of the great festivities of 1664, 1668 and 1674 ended, and even more when the court settled permanently in Versailles in 1682, the palace and the ever-changing gardens themselves became the unique spectacle. The gardens offered a complex layout of alleys leading to special secluded groves – the *Bosquets* harboring the various fountains. This complex structure was allowing many variant routes through the grounds and it was the king's delight to show the gardens to his visitors, giving a personal tour around the parterres, taking them to specific « points de vue », explaining the beauties of the sculptures and the allegorical meanings of fountains appearing in the *Bosquets*; proceeding on foot, or, in his old age, in a wheelchair or « roulette ». Louis XIV himself, updating his itinerary at intervals, wrote in due course many versions of his « Manner to show the gardens of Versailles. »⁸³

The dramatic chain of the appearances by the gods in *Les Fontaines de Versailles* seems to be, in 1683, a kind of prefiguration of such a royal « walker's guide ». The Jardins were as much the triumphant expression of the king's power of art over nature as the Château was one of political supremacy over mankind⁸⁴. From 1682, the life of the court became increasingly governed by the rules of French etiquette: the interactions between persons were dictated by the combined notions of rank, function and lineage, in an attempt to regulate and rule over the ever-growing number of courtiers. This ability of the king to change human nature was a force of refinement, as Donneau de Visé notes wittily about the *Appartements*: « The presence of the King makes swearers to cast away the habit of swearing, and cheaters to refrain from using unfair means to win; and it seems that His Majesty, in humbling himself, is only laying aside his own grandeur to force gamblers to lay aside their passions [...]. Of all the sovereigns, the King alone has devised a safe way to correct the vices of Gaming, by allowing the Court to entertain itself in his palace. »⁸⁵ This affirmative paradox finds an echo in the king's fatherly advice to the crown prince about how to use pleasures at court: « This society of pleasures, which gives the people of the Court an honest familiarity with us, touches them and charms

⁸¹ See: Santini, Chiara. “Les artistes de l'eau”, published in *Projets de paysage* on 23 December 2009. URL: http://www.projetsdepaysage.fr/fr/les_artistes_de_l_eau (accessed 2 August 2017).

⁸² See: La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Carlo Vigarani, intendant des plaisirs de Louis XIV*. Paris : Perrin, 2005, pp. 55–63. See also: Gerin-Pierre, Claire. “Henri Gissey, Carlo Vigarini et les premières fêtes de Versailles” in *Gaspare & Carlo Vigarani, Dalla corte degli Este a quella di Luigi XIV, De la cour d'Este à celle de Louis XIV. a cura di/ dirigé par Walter Baricchi and Jérôme de La Gorce*. Versailles: Centre de recherche du château de Versailles, and Milano: Silvana Editoriale Spa, 2009, pp. 308–318.

⁸³ Louis XIV, roi de France. *Manière de montrer les Jardins de Versailles*, edited by Simone Hoog. Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1982.

⁸⁴ Thompson, Ian. *The Sun King's Garden, Louis XIV, André Le Nôtre and the Creation of the Gardens of Versailles*. New York : Bloomsbury, 2006, p. 73.

⁸⁵ « La présence du Roy fait perdre aux Jureurs l'habitude de jurer, & aux Pipeurs celle de se servir d'injustes moyens pour gagner ; & il semble que Sa Majesté en s'abaissant, ne se soit dépouillée de sa grandeur, que pour obliger les Joueurs à se dépouiller de leurs passions [...]. De tous les Souverains, le Roy seul a imaginé un sûr moyen de corriger les vices du Jeu, en permettant à sa Cour de se divertir dans son Palais. » in *Mercure Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin, Décembre 1682*. Paris : au Palais, 1682, p. 60.

them more than one can say »⁸⁶. These lines are written by the king in reference to the idea that one essential component of the French monarchy was the accessibility of the king to his subjects. It may also shed light on the change to the king's visibility as a hero at that time, specifically in Versailles⁸⁷.

It is remarkable that the iconographic decorative program begun in Versailles around this time gradually replaces the allegorical representations of the king with the image of Louis XIV himself. It was felt that the king no longer should be referred to as a mythic figure or be shown in the guise of the heroes of antiquity. His image was heroic enough to exist by itself. This concept of monarch superseding myth also appears in the 1683 libretto of *Les Fontaines de Versailles* where Apollon acknowledges that « The brilliance of [The King's] great name, / honored by all, / Overshadows [Apollon's] divinity, / And [Apollon is] no more than the image/Of which Louis is the truth ».⁸⁸ This is clearly present in the decoration for the new Hall of Mirrors: the preliminary design based on Apollo's travails was abandoned in favor of a depiction of Louis' reign: history replaced mythology⁸⁹.

In the *Mercur Galant* of December 1682, Donneau de Visé explains the subject of the main painting of the end of the gallery which has been partially finished by then. « What can be seen of it is enough to judge what will be this wonderful work, where Mr. Le Brun has painted in the vault the history of the King. He represented in the piece exposed, Holland distraught, opposing in vain its dykes, its main rivers, its ramparts, and its waterways, to the speed of the Conqueror, that nothing can stop. He appears in a chariot driven by Minerva, and accompanied by the Glory, Mars and Victory follow him, and Terror and Fame go before him ». Donneau de Visé admits that he will not attempt to « describe here nor the beauty of the painting or the strength of the correction of the drawing or the truth of expressions. The pen cannot give the majestic and fearless air that this great painter has maintained in the action of the King, nor represent with sufficient force the dread of Holland, and the terror of the defeated People overthrown at the first shock »⁹⁰. This emphasis on the military power of the king in the painting « Le Passage du Rhin en présence des ennemis, 1672 » (The crossing of the Rhine in presence of the enemies, 1672) is a possible key to the « the reborn heads / Of

⁸⁶ « Cette société de plaisirs, qui donne aux personnes de la Cour une honnête familiarité avec nous, les touche et les charme plus qu'on ne peut dire » in Louis XIV. *Mémoires et divers écrits*, edited by Bernard Champigneulle. Paris: Club français du livre, 1960, p. 90.

⁸⁷ For a global perspective, see: Apostolidès, Jean-Marie. *Le roi-machine, Spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1981.

⁸⁸ « Apollon: L'éclat de son grand nom à qui tout rend hommage / Obscurcit ma divinité, / Et je ne suis plus que l'image / Dont Louis est la vérité. » in *Les Fontaines de Versailles*, Scène 2.

⁸⁹ See: Sabatier, Gérard. *Versailles ou la figure du roi*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1999.

⁹⁰ « on passe ensuite dans le bout de la Galerie qui est découvert, parce qu'il est achevé. Ce qui s'en voit fait assez juger quel sera ce merveilleux Ouvrage, où Mr Le Brun peint dans la Voûte l'Histoire du Roy. Il a représenté dans le morceau découvert, la Hollande éperdue, qui oppose en vain ses Dignes, ses Fleuves, ses Remparts, & ses rivières, à la rapidité de ce Conquérant, que rien ne peut arrêter. Il paroist dans un Char conduit par Minerve, & accompagné de la Gloire, Mars et la Victoire le suivent, & la Terreur, & la Renommée marchent devant luy. Je ne décrirai icy ni la beauté de la Peinture, ny la force de la correction du Dessin, ny la vérité des expressions. La plume ne sauroit donner cet air majestueux & intrépide que ce grand Peintre a sçu conserver dans l'action du Roy, ny représenter avec assez de force la frayeur de la Hollande, & la terreur des Peuples vaincus & renversez au premier choc. » in *Mercur Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin, Décembre 1682*, Paris : au Palais, 1682, pp. 7–9.

this hydra opposed to the delights of peace »⁹¹ that the final chorus of *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* blames for disturbing the peace. The hydra with his multiple heads was then the conventional representation of the Triple Alliance formed in 1668 under the will of Holland with England and Sweden to halt the expansion of Louis XIV in the Spanish Netherlands. In 1683, the alliance had a kind of revival in the War of Reunions, and in the Fountain installed the same year in the *Bosquet de l'Arc de Triomphe*, the statue of France is seen with a three-headed hydra at its feet.⁹²

3.2.5 *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* : reality versus fiction

This shift in the image of the king also appears in the spatial and dramaturgical approach of the divertissements performed during this period. It is noticeable when Versailles is associated with « pleasures », a term that in French acquires a double meaning, especially when used in its plural form. It associates the action with the result, or the cause and the consequence; as in the double meaning of *Appartements*, it is as much the feeling one experiences as the object which causes it. Like the image of the king, the definite location of these « plaisirs » is also shifting and is passing from the realm of literature to reality. In 1664 the lavish three-day party that took place in the gardens of Versailles was given the watery title of *Les Plaisirs de l'île enchantée* (The Pleasures of the enchanted island) inspired by the Italian romance epic *Orlando furioso* of Ludovico Ariosto (1474–1533). In the winter of 1682–1683, two of the inaugural pieces of the new *Appartements* were the more deep-seated *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* and the almost technological *Les Fontaines de Versailles*. For these « new » *Plaisirs*, « l'île enchantée » was replaced by the more real Versailles, castle and gardens. Versailles started to acquire a reputation comparable to the great cities and palaces of mythology.

The *modern* Donneau de Visé could write in his inaugural account of the *Appartements* in 1682: « they used to say, in exaggeration, that the Games and Laughter were at Court; but it was a way to speak so in those days, and it is not until today that we effectively found them there »⁹³. It is also quite remarkable that in *Les Plaisirs de Versailles*, as in *Les Fontaines de Versailles*, pleasures for evenings inside and fountains for days outside are clearly the ones of the Royal domain *at the moment of the performance*. This double concomitance of space and time is remarkably well articulated in *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* and suggests an accomplished librettist, such a Donneau de Visé maybe with the usual help of Thomas Corneille. The place where these Pleasures and Fountains flourish is never named in the lyrics: after its auspicious presence in the titles, the name Versailles is never sung by the characters. In both pieces, the royal domain is often defined by the generic « ces lieux » which, as they include both castle and gardens, should be understood as « these grounds ». Both expressions extend the notion of space from Versailles to the entire French kingdom⁹⁴. Such was the new status of Versailles

⁹¹ « Malgré les têtes renaissantes / De cette hydre opposée au Bonheur de la paix » *Les Plaisirs de Versailles*, Scene 4, final Chorus.

⁹² See: Sabatier, Gérard. *Versailles ou la figure du roi*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1999, p. 230.

⁹³ « on disait autrefois en exagérant, que les Jeux & les Ris estaient à la Cour; mais c'était manière de parler en ces temps-là, & ce n'est que d'aujourd'huy qu'on les y trouve effectivement » in *Mercure Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin, Décembre 1682*. Paris : au Palais, 1682, p. 61.

⁹⁴ As confirmed by La Conversation addressing La Musique when the latter is threatening to leave Versailles : « Dirait-on pas que la France / Tomberait en décadence / Sans son ut ré mi fa sol la ? ». The basic order in which the French names of the notes are put in to satirically name a composer was coming from the spoken theater. The enumeration of the notes of the scale to form a patronym gives the impression that Conversation

then: not only the king's home and the residence of his family and his court but the seat of his government and the new center of France: a modern symbol of power for the French monarchy.

may speak about a musician. Later, in the eighteenth century, Diderot, in *Les Bijoux indiscrets* wrote : « Utmiutsol et Utrémifasollasiututut, musiciens célèbres, dont l'un commençait à vieillir et dont l'autre ne faisait que de naître, occupaient alternativement la scène lyrique. Ces deux auteurs originaux avaient chacun leurs partisans ; les ignorants et les barbons tenaient tous pour Utmiutsol ; la jeunesse et les virtuoses pour Utrémifasollasiututut. » *Les Bijoux indiscrets*, (Euvres, éd. Assézat, IV, p. 174. Utmiutsol and Utrémifasollasiututut are the names given by Diderot to Lully and Rameau. Maybe Charpentier and his librettist already mock Lully by using the same conceit?

3.3. *La Couronne de Fleurs* a Pastorale by Jean Palaprat for Toulouse in 1685

« The painting of the entertainments of past times has a grace of novelty for those who have not seen them, and never fails to awaken a pleasant reminiscence in those who have witnessed them.

In a word, I have always remarked that there were two times equally favorable to these sorts of things : the one of their birth, and the one of their caducity : because this caducity, this antiquity is not only a second novelty, if I dare to express myself so, but a novelty that has already had the advantage of being successful in the past ; »⁹⁵

Jean Palaprat in his “Preface” of *Les Œuvres de Monsieur de Palaprat....* Paris: Pierre Ribou, 1712.

The origins of Marc-Antoine Charpentier’s *La Couronne de Fleurs* can be traced to the short collaboration between the composer and the famous French playwright of the seventeenth century, Molière. Indeed, a large part of the libretto of this *Pastorale* comes from the original *Églogue en Musique et en Danse* which opened *Le Malade imaginaire*, the last play Molière wrote with Charpentier for Louis XIV in 1672. Molière stated clearly at the beginning of his text the joint purpose of his *Églogue* and his *Comédie mêlée de Musique et de Danses*: « After the glorious endeavors and the victorious exploits of our August Monarch, it is only fitting that one and all who write are employed for his Praise or his Entertainment. That is what we wanted to do here, and this Prologue is an attempt at Praising this great Prince, which gives an Introduction to the Comedy of *Le Malade imaginaire*, where the purpose is to unweary him from his noble labors. »⁹⁶

Charpentier used this poetic material for *La Couronne de Fleurs* without hesitation: the *Églogue en Musique et en Danse* received only a few performances before Lully used his royal privilege to forbid any revival shortly after the death of Molière in 1673⁹⁷. The novel *Pastorale* retains from the original *Églogue en Musique et en Danse* the characteristics of a French prologue: the libretto is conceived as a tribute to Louis XIV, it depicts the current state of affairs of the

⁹⁵ « La peinture des divertissements des temps passez a une grace de nouveauté pour ceux qui ne les ont pas vûs, & ne manque jamais de réveiller une agreable reminiscence en ceux qui en ont été les témoins. En un mot, j’ai toujourns remarqué qu’il y avoit deux temps également favorables à ces sortes de choses: celui de leur naissance, & celui de leur caducité: parce que cette caducité, cette antiquité est non seulement une seconde nouveauté, si j’ose ainsi m’exprimer, mais une nouveauté qui a eu déjà l’avantage de reüssir autrefois ; » in [Palaprat, Jean de]. “Preface” in *Les Œuvres de Monsieur de Palaprat, Nouvelle édition, Augmentée de plusieurs Comédies qui n’ont pas encore été imprimées; d’un Recueil de Pièces en vers, adressées à Monseigneur le Duc de Vendôme; et de divers Essais de différentes Poésies, avec une Lettre à M. B. P. M. D. M. contenant quelques légères observations sur une Devise. Tome Premier.* Paris: Pierre Ribou, 1712.

⁹⁶ « Après les glorieuses fatigues, & les Exploits victorieux de notre Auguste Monarque, il est bien juste que tous ceux qui se mettent d’écrire travaillent, ou à ses Louanges, ou à son Divertissement. C’est ce qu’ici l’on a voulu faire, & ce Prologue est un essai des Louanges de ce grand Prince, qui donne Entrée à la Comédie du Malade imaginaire, dont le projet a été fait pour le délasser de ses nobles travaux. » in Molière. *Le Malade imaginaire*. Paris: Thierry & Barbin, 1675, p. 4.

⁹⁷ See: Cessac, Catherine. *Marc-Antoine Charpentier*. Paris: Fayard, 1988, pp. 59–64.

kingdom⁹⁸, and it is presented as a feast before the feast, with its own singing and dancing⁹⁹. But if the origins of *La Couronne de Fleurs* are known, there is little evidence of its final destination, and we know nothing certain about the circumstances of the performances. Although *La Couronne de Fleurs* is clearly a circumstantial piece, its context has so far eluded most historians as its prestigious « Molièresque » origins have overshadowed the final *Pastorale*¹⁰⁰. This section is an attempt to identify the poetic specificities of *La Couronne de Fleurs* and, by doing so, tries to give it its possible purpose: a *Pastorale* for the *Jeux floraux* in Toulouse in 1685. By identifying Jean Bigot de Palaprat (1650–1721) as the librettist who had been working with Charpentier, I also hope to give new consideration to the importance of *La Couronne de Fleurs*.

3.3.1 *La Couronne de Fleurs* : a celebratory offering

La Couronne de Fleurs was not published during Charpentier's lifetime, and like most of his other works, is known to us thanks to the survival of a manuscript score¹⁰¹. Aside from the presence of dance numbers, which indicate that the project may have not been conceived as a simple concert, the score itself does not present many circumstantial clues about its possible performance. It contains, like many of Charpentier's scores, some indications about casting, as each part is attributed to an actual singer. Charpentier had been writing down his musical material with the intention to fit the musical resources of the household of Mademoiselle de Guise – Marie de Lorraine, Duchess of Guise (1615–1688) – where he was employed. The names of the singers, among them his own name, suggest that the score had been given a presentation in connection with the powerful French princess. But like in other works of Charpentier, some casting facts would make an actual staged performance quite difficult, as the assigned singers would have been changing from one part to another to the detriment of dramatic continuity¹⁰². My explanation of such conflicts is that Charpentier may have used the musicians who were living in the household with him to try out, to rehearse, or simply to give a preview of the work to his patron. This concert would have been of a private nature, but might have been attended by some guests of the princess. The line between the presentation

⁹⁸ The text by Molière of 1672 is a clear echo of the end of the war with Holland: « LOUIS est de retour, / Il ramène en ces lieux les Plaisirs et l'Amour. / Et vous voyez finir vos mortelles alarmes, / Par ses vastes Exploits son bras voit tout soumis, / Il quitte les armes / Faute d'ennemis. ». *La Couronne de Fleurs* is vaguer but the idea of « banishing » may refer to the « reunions ». « LOUIS en a banni les funestes alarmes / Que les cris des mourants et le fracas des armes / Y faisaient régner autrefois. / Si la gloire a pour vous des charmes / Revenez sans peur dans ce bois. »

⁹⁹ For the French prologue see: Cornic, Sylvain. “Ad limina templis Polymniae: les fonctions du prologue d'Opéra chez Quinault” in *Recherches des jeunes dix-septiémistes, Actes du Ve Colloque du Centre International de Rencontres sur le XVIIe siècle*, edited by Charles Mazouer. Tübingen : Narr, 2000, pp. 47–62.

¹⁰⁰ For the beginning of the modern critical history of *La Couronne de Fleurs* see: Quittard, Henri. “La Couronne de Fleurs” in *Journal des Débats Politiques et Littéraires*, 14 Juillet 1905, *Supplément*. Charpentier, Marc-Antoine. *La Couronne de Fleurs, Pastorale sur un Poème attribué à Molière*, révision et réduction par Henri Büsser. Paris: Durand, 1907. And: Lowe, Robert W. *Marc-Antoine Charpentier et l'opéra de collège*. Paris : Maisonneuve & Larose, 1966.

¹⁰¹ *La Couronne de Fleurs* (H. 486) Département de la musique de la Bibliothèque nationale de France, cote F-PnRés Vm1 259. Cah. 44–45; vol. VII, 35^v–50^v.

¹⁰² For example, the singer Beaupuis is given the role of the god Pan in *La Couronne de Fleurs*, but just before the entrance of his character, Beaupuis is specified as singing in the chorus of shepherds participating in the poetic contest that Pan himself interrupts.

of a work in progress and an actual private performance was thin at the time¹⁰³, and that would explain the large number of works by Charpentier for which performances are not clearly documented.

Given what is known of the life of the Guise singers mentioned in the score, the musical style of the *Pastorale*, its place in the order of Charpentier's numbered manuscript volumes, and even the quality of the paper – everything suggests that it was written down around 1685¹⁰⁴. At this time, the composer was working on a revival of *Le Malade imaginaire* for the Comédie-Française¹⁰⁵, and while reorganizing his musical material, the composer may well have decided to use his music from the initial prologue, which had been forsaken since 1673, to create a new dramatic work: *La Couronne de Fleurs*. Combining 1685 and the fact that, in the libretto, Flore sings about the return of peace in France, it is believed that *La Couronne de Fleurs* was written to celebrate a peace treaty. Of the events in the political chronology of France, this *Pastorale* was almost certainly associated with the Truce of Ratisbon, also known as the Truce of Regensburg, signed in 1684, which ended the war that Louis XIV had fought against the Holy Roman emperor Leopold I and the king of Spain, Carlos II.

The truce was made public in October 1684 and preparations for its celebration took place during the icy winter that followed¹⁰⁶. It was fully celebrated in France during the spring and summer of 1685 by large parties, including the one given by the Marquis de Seignelay at the castle of Sceaux, near Paris, in July 1685: during this lavish celebration, the short *Idyle sur la Paix* by Jean Racine and Lully was first performed¹⁰⁷. Charpentier was also commissioned to compose for the commemoration of the truce. During the summer of 1685, the Duc de Richelieu was planning a big party in honor of the king in his castle of Rueil. He wanted to celebrate both the centenary of the birth of his uncle, the famous cardinal, and the first anniversary of the Truce of Ratisbon. For these circumstances, Charpentier composed *La fête de Rueil*, an ambitious score with a rich orchestration well suited for an outdoor

¹⁰³ See: Ranum, Patricia. "Charting Charpentier « Worlds » through his *Mélanges*" in *New Perspectives on Marc-Antoine Charpentier*, edited by Shirley Thompson. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010, pp. 1–29.

¹⁰⁴ See: Hitchcock, H. Wiley. *Les œuvres de / The works of Marc-Antoine Charpentier, Catalogue raisonné*. Paris: Picard, 1982, p. 354. Catherine Cessac and Patrica Ranum later agreed about 1685.

¹⁰⁵ On the different versions of the music of Charpentier for *Le Malade imaginaire*, see the works of H. Wiley Hitchcock: "Marc-Antoine Charpentier and the Comédie-Française" in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* XXIV (1971), pp. 255–281; "Problèmes d'édition de la musique de Marc-Antoine Charpentier pour 'le Malade imaginaire'" in *Revue de Musicologie*, LVIII (1972), pp. 3–15; and "La comédie-ballet: un art du mélange" in Molière, and Charpentier, Marc-Antoine. *Le Malade imaginaire, Programme de Salle du Théâtre du Châtelet*. Paris: Théâtre du Châtelet, 1990, pp. 27 & 28.

¹⁰⁶ Like for the winter of 1683–1684, when the sea was frozen in England (See Manley, Gordon. "1684: The coldest winter in the English Instrumental Record", in *Weather*, Volume 30, Issue 12, December 1975, pp. 382–388.) and Holland and France. In the south of France there was extraordinary snow and the river Garonne, which passes by Toulouse, was frozen. The lowest temperature recorded by Cassini in Paris was on 4 February 1684: –16.8°C. The following winter was again cold in Paris with abundant snow in the east of France. Spring 1685 was dry. See: Easton, Cornelius. *Les hivers dans l'Europe occidentale*. Leiden : Brill, 1928, p. 116.

¹⁰⁷ Racine, Jean & Lully, Jean-Baptiste. *l'Idyle sur la Paix et l'Eglogue de Versailles divertissements, Représentées en différents temps par l'Académie Royale de Musique*. Paris : Ballard, 1703, tome 3, p. 73.

entertainment¹⁰⁸. But the king decided against attending, the party was cancelled, and the piece was not performed¹⁰⁹. Did a similar fate overtake *La Couronne de Fleurs*? It is possible and would explain the lack of information about the performance and the dates it may have occurred. However, the text of the work gives some indications about the time of its planned performance. Flore not only sings about the return of peace in France, but she also states clearly the time of her presence: « The cold weather, having withdrawn / To its somber refuge, / Allows the spring / To rejuvenate our fields ».¹¹⁰ The action of *La Couronne* takes place in spring when the goddess Flore displays her powers. The specific mention of the cold weather – the month of January 1685 was especially cold in Europe – should bring the date of a possible performance to the spring of 1685.

3.3.2 The Floralia of the Ancients

Springtime has always been poetically associated with Flore. The goddess of flowers and vegetation is the central figure of the libretto: she is the first character who appears in the drama – Charpentier takes great care in his score to mention « Flore alone », which can be understood as a stage indication more than as a musical requirement – and she is marking her empire by rejuvenating the fields and has flowers growing under her steps. This goddess has been closely related to the spring season since early times, and she once had her own festival: the Floralia, also called the Florifertum, was the ancient Roman festival dedicated to Flora¹¹¹. It symbolized the renewal of the cycle of life, marked with dancing, poetry and displays of flowers, and was held for five days before the Calends of May. These dates are important, since in *La Couronne de Fleurs*, Flore also invites shepherdesses and shepherds to celebrate spring in a festival. But aside from this allusion to the Floralia of classical antiquity, Flore's festival in Charpentier's *Pastorale* is for the glory of the king, and therefore had stronger resonances for the French audience of the seventeenth century.

In fact, in *La Couronne de Fleurs*, the celebration Flore organizes is a contest. The goddess makes clear that « To whomever will best sing the glorious deeds / Of the famous conqueror who ends our tears, / [her] hand will bestow the honors / Of this Crown of Flowers. »¹¹² She will award the prize to the most eloquent singer: it is a poetic contest, not a singing joust. The contest is evocative of the poetic competitions that France had been so keen about since the Middle Ages, and which by the 1680s were spreading through the kingdom. This proliferation of poetic tournaments was mostly a result of the creation of royal academies

¹⁰⁸ *La fête de Rueil*, H. 485 pour 6 voix solistes, chœur à 4, 2 flutes traverso, 2 flutes, 2 hautbois, cordes (5), bc, XXII (1685) ; F-Pn Vm6 17 (parties séparées).

¹⁰⁹ Ranum, Patricia M. "Marc-Antoine Charpentier et la 'Feste de Rüel' 1685", in *XVIIe Siècle*, 161 (1988), pp. 393–399.

¹¹⁰ « Les frimas retirés / Dans leur sombre retraite, / Souffrent que le printemps / Rajeunisse nos champs ».

¹¹¹ The Floralia, the « Florifertum », was the ancient Roman festival dedicated to Flora. It was held between April 27 and May 3. See: Scullard, Howard Hayes. *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic, (Aspects of Greek and Roman Life.)*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981, p. 110; see also: Warde Fowler, William. *The Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic: An Introduction to the Study of the Religion of the Romans*. London: Macmillan, 1899, pp. 92–94.

¹¹² « A qui chantera mieux les glorieux exploits / Du fameux Conquérant qui met fin à nos larmes / [Sa] main destine les honneurs / De cette Couronne de Fleurs. »

in France¹¹³. In addition to the royal protection given in 1672 to the Académie Française in Paris, an academy was created in Arles as early as 1668, another in Nîmes in 1682 and one in Angers in 1684, to name only a few¹¹⁴. These societies were organizing yearly contests: in 1681, the Académie d'Arles instituted two prizes, « one for prose and the other for verses, to the two writers who will have composed in these two languages, in the most dignified and eloquent manner, to the honor of His Majesty. »¹¹⁵ Praise to the king became the main official inspiration. The same year, the subject of the competition of the Académie Française was, « One always sees the King being calm, although always in perpetual motion. »¹¹⁶

There is a similarity of inspiration between these official subjects and the ones the shepherds of *La Couronne de Fleurs* choose for their contributions. The first contestant compares Louis's energy to the strength of a rushing stream, and the second to the powers of the natural elements. The third contender boasts about the mythic heroes from ancient times who were as nothing compared to Louis, while the last shepherd affirms the unique place Louis will take in history. Similar ideas appear under the form of devises (mottos) in the book of Menestrier: *La Devise du Roy justifiée*. This work, published in Paris in 1679, offers « cinq cens Devises faite pour S.M. & toute la Maison Royale ». Among those five hundred mottos, each of which aims to describe a famous person by way of allegory, four offer images similar to those in the verses proposed by the shepherds of *La Couronne de Fleurs*¹¹⁷. The images contained in the four short poems were already in Molière's *Églogue*¹¹⁸. The verses which lead to the « devise » explain it by subsisting to the image, « le corps », a poetic description where it is the visual vocabulary which depicts the subject¹¹⁹. Charpentier retained most of the original

¹¹³ Caradonna, Jeremy L. *The Enlightenment in Practice: academic prize contests and intellectual culture in France, 1670–1794*. Ithaca (NY): Cornell University, 1979, p. 14.

¹¹⁴ See: *Almanach Royal pour l'année MDCCXXVI* [1726]. Paris: Veuve d'Houry, & Ch. M. d'Houry, 1726, p. 265. And, for Nîmes, see: Delandine, Antoine François. *Couronnes Académiques, ou Recueil des Prix proposés par les Sociétés Savantes, avec les noms de ceux qui les ont obtenus, des Concurrents [sic] distingués, des Auteurs qui ont écrit sur les même sujets, le titre & le lieu de l'impression de leurs Ouvrages ; précédé de l'Histoire abrégée des Académies de France, Tome Second*. Paris : Cucher, 1787, p. 54.

¹¹⁵ « l'un pour la prose et l'autre pour les vers, aux deux qui auront compose en ces deux langues le plus dignement et le plus éloquentement à l'honneur de Sa Majesté. » in Letter of Robias Estoublon, « secrétaire de l'Académie royale » [sic], dated 10 September 1681, in Registres de l'Académie, fol 207 & 208, quoted in Rance, Abbé Antoine Joseph. *L'Académie d'Arles au XVIIème Siècle d'après les documents originaux, Tome Deuxième*. Paris : Lechevalier, 1890, p. 376.

¹¹⁶ « On voit toujours le roi tranquille, quoique dans un mouvement continuel » in: Delandine, Antoine François, *Couronnes Académiques, ou Recueil des Prix proposés par les Sociétés Savantes, avec les noms de ceux qui les ont obtenus, des Concurrents [sic] distingués, des Auteurs qui ont écrit sur les même sujets, le titre & le lieu de l'impression de leurs Ouvrages ; précédé de l'Histoire abrégée des Académies de France, Tome Premier*. Paris : Cucher, 1787, p. 11.

¹¹⁷ See: Menestrier [Père Claude-François]. *La Devise du Roy justifiée*. Paris : Estienne Michelet, 1679, pp. 164, 118, 122, 116 (in order of appearance in *La Couronne de Fleurs*).

¹¹⁸ On the four poems, three are identical, but the first one is formulated with some differences of vocabulary and syntax.

¹¹⁹ The verses which precede each devise of *La Couronne de Fleurs* seem to be a trigger to the devise, and maybe a subject to treat by the contestant? « le bon sens veut, ce me semble, que cette espèce de madrigaux n'étant qu'une explication de la devise, il n'y entre que la pensée de la devise, ou que les pensées qui y conduisent, & qui sont liées naturellement à elle » in Bouhours [Père Dominique]. *Les Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène*. Paris : Seb. Marbre-Cramoisy, 1671, p. 302. (Underline added).

melody, but before each small « ritournelle » ending the songs of the first version, he inserts a chorus, which by its growing contrapuntal structure develops in a most glorious way the final praising lines from the contestant's song: the envoi, the « soul »¹²⁰ of the devise made specifically for Louis XIV. The musical treatment, using musical keys that Charpentier has defined himself as « Joyeux et très guerrier » (Joyful and very warlike) and « Joyeux et champêtre » (Joyful and pastoral)¹²¹, illuminates the royal nature of the four poems, as each shepherd creates wording akin to a motto at the end, a small symbolic sentence, « la parole », attempting to characterize Louis XIV¹²².

In 1672, Molière had already given the poetic contest the characteristic of a collective event to celebrate the deeds of the king. But inspired by the singing contests described by Greek and Roman writers¹²³, Molière chose to have only two participants enter the contest. It was a « combat » based on a persistent attempt by the two shepherds to surpass in eloquence what the other had just sung. If the idea of a progression is kept in *La Couronne de Fleurs*, the duel becomes a real contest with many shepherds entering the competition, each with a single poem¹²⁴. This number of participants is a major change from Molière's classically based setting, and gives a very modern sense to the piece. This shift to an evocation of Charpentier's time is seen in another distinction, the one of gender, as women now enter the arena and aspire with the male contestants to the crown of flowers. A next major change from Molière's version, the one that gives the most evident clue about a possible context for the commission of *La Couronne de Fleurs*, is the crown of flowers itself. In Molière's *Églogue*, Flore does not clearly

¹²⁰ Abbé Batteux gives, in 1747, a simple key to understand the art of the devises, taking as an example the devise of Louis XIV: « On peut définir la Devise, une pensée exprimée par une image & par des paroles allégoriques. L'image s'appelle le corps de la devise, & les paroles l'âme. L'image & les paroles sont allégoriques, parce qu'elles ont deux sens ; l'un propre et direct, l'autre figuré et indirect. Ainsi dans la Devise de Louis XIV, on voit un soleil au-dessus du globe terrestre avec ces mots, *Nec pluribus impar*, il suffirait à plusieurs. L'image représente au propre le soleil, & au figuré le Roi ; & le mot signifie au propre que le soleil pourroit éclairer plusieurs terres, & au figuré que le Roi pourroit gouverner plusieurs royaumes. Toute devise est donc une métaphore, une comparaison, qui a quatre termes : le roi est à son peuple ce que le soleil est au monde entier. » in Batteux, [Abbé] Charles. "Traité de l'Épigramme & de l'Inscription" in *Principes de la littérature. Cinquième édition, Tome III*. Paris : 1775, pp. 429 & 430.

¹²¹ See: *Règles de Composition par Monsieur Charpentier* in Cessac, Catherine. *Marc-Antoine Charpentier*. Paris: Fayard, 1988, pp. 456 & 457. The first two airs of the shepherds are in D major « Joyeux et très guerrier », the third air is in that key's dominant, A major « Joyeux et champêtre », and the fourth air is also in A major. Thanks to Pierre Galon, harpsichordist, and Dr. Camille Tanguy for their help.

¹²² In 1685, subjects reflect the Truce of Ratisbon and the Académie Française proposal to compose on a Comparison between the King and the emperor Auguste [...] based on the justice of the king, who maintains the owners of the goods of his kingdom against his own interest: « Comparaison du roi & d'Auguste, d'après ces paroles de Suetone en la vie d'Auguste, n° 32: *Loca, in urbe, publica, juris ambigui possessoribus adjudicavit, fondée sur la justice du roi, qui maintient les possesseurs des biens de son domaine contre ses propres intérêts.* ». See : Delandine, Antoine François. *Couronnes Académiques, ou Recueil des Prix proposés par les Sociétés Savantes, avec les noms de ceux qui les ont obtenus, des Concurrents [sic] distingués, des Auteurs qui ont écrit sur les mêmes sujets, le titre & le lieu de l'impression de leurs Ouvrages ; précédé de l'Histoire abrégée des Académies de France, Tome Premier*. Paris: Cucher, 1787, p. 12.

¹²³ Theocritus, *Idyls*, Idyl 6: Damoetas & Daphnis and Idyl 8: Menalque & Daphnis, and Virgil, *Bucolics*, Eclogue 3: Palemon and Eclogue 5: Daphnis. See: Theocritus. *Late Spring*, A translation by Henry Harmon Chamberlin. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1936. Virgil: *Eclogues*. Oxford: Clarendon, Oxford University Press, 1994.

¹²⁴ We hear four of them but as the contest is interrupted, nothing in the text limits this number to those four. For the dramatic idea of an interruption to work, having more shepherds awaiting their turn is a must.

state the prize for which the shepherds are contesting, and each shepherd's main motivation is to win the hand of his beloved. There is a mention of two crowns, and they appear very briefly as props in the description of a dance at the end of the prologue¹²⁵. The characters never sing the words « couronne de fleurs ». In the *Pastorale*, Charpentier himself directly declares the shift of interest with his title *La Couronne de Fleurs*. Flore specifically declares, in the libretto, that the crown of flowers will reward the poet who best sings the deeds of the king. When the contest is interrupted, the crown is not bestowed; Flore instead dismantles it and gives a single flower to each of the contestants¹²⁶. What the librettist of *La Couronne de Fleurs* is describing can be summarized: a poetic contest taking place in May where men and women singing the deeds of Louis XIV received flowers as prizes.

3.3.3 Jeux floraux of the Moderns

This description of events is especially evocative of one the most famous poetic contests of the time: *Les Jeux floraux* of Toulouse, the major city of southwest France. This literary event, the « Floral Games », whose name and dates derive from the Floralia of ancient Rome, took yearly place at the end of April and the beginning of May. The Toulouse festival originated in the fourteenth century, and had poets reciting their work in front of the audience and the judges. Winning poetic compositions were awarded flowers as prizes: the Violet, the Eglantine and the Marigold. These flowers were made of precious metals, gold or silver, and therefore had both symbolic and financial aspects¹²⁷. Beyond these prestigious prizes, small flowers of lesser value and honor were also awarded to encourage rising talents. The « Compagnie des Jeux floraux », an assemblage of the intellectual elite of Toulouse, organized and judged the games, though according to the rules from the original competition in 1323, everyone could enter the contest: « All persons, of whatever quality they are and country they come from, of one and the other sex, may aspire to the Prize. »¹²⁸ This is reflected in *La Couronne de Fleurs* where both shepherds and shepherdesses receive for their efforts the prize of a single flower¹²⁹. All these common points seem to establish *La Couronne de Fleurs* as a dramatized evocation of the Toulouse event.

¹²⁵ « Entrée de Ballet: Les deux Zéphirs dansent avec deux couronnes de Fleurs à la main, qu'ils viennent donner ensuite aux deux Bergers » in Molière. *Le Malade imaginaire*. Paris: Thierry & Barbin, 1675, p. 9.

¹²⁶ This distribution is another clue which may speak to the number of contestants: the crown cannot be made only with four flowers (as we actually hear four competitors before the contest is interrupted).

¹²⁷ Gélis, François de. *Histoire critique des Jeux floraux, depuis leur origine jusqu'à leur transformation en Académie (1323–1694)*. Reprint Slatkine, p. 107.

¹²⁸ « Toutes Personnes, de quelque qualité & païs qu'elles soient, de l'un & de l'autre sexe, pourront aspirer aux Prix » in Avertissement in *Recueil de plusieurs pièces d'éloquence et de poésie présentées à l'Académie des jeux Floraux pour les Prix de l'année MDCCXXI. Avec les Discours prononcez cette année dans les Assemblées publiques*. Toulouse : Lecamus, 1721, n.p.

¹²⁹ As Jeremy L. Caradonna, University of Alberta (Canada), has shown in his article “Prendre part au siècle des Lumières, Le concours académique et la culture intellectuelle au XVIIIe siècle”. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales*, vol. 64, n. 3 (mai–juin 2009), pp. 633–662: the « concours académique » in eighteenth-century France was a socially diverse literary activity that included thousands of amateur and professional writers, male and female, rich and poor. This social component is also part of *las leys d'amor*, the rules for poetic composition of *Les Jeux floraux* recorded by Guillaume Moliné in the fourteenth century: it notes that all of the social groups are welcome to take part in the contest. See: Gélis, François de. *Histoire critique des Jeux floraux, depuis leur origine jusqu'à leur transformation en Académie (1323–1694)*. Toulouse : Privat, 1912, p. 16.

3.3.4 Jean Bigot de Palaprat (1650–1721)

Whoever adapted Molière's *Églogue* as a *Pastorale* for Charpentier must have had in mind the celebration of *Les Jeux floraux* of Toulouse. Among the writers active at the end of the seventeenth century in this city, Jean Bigot de Palaprat (1650–1721) appears as a possible librettist: his life and activities all make him a likely candidate. He knew Molière in person, whom he considered a « great actor and a thousand-times-greater writer »¹³⁰, and he is mostly known today for his comedies¹³¹. Born in Toulouse in 1650, Palaprat « always had since childhood a genuine love for our old Floral Games »¹³², and first entered the contest when he was still young. We know for sure that by the age of twenty-one he had competed successfully three times, the third time receiving a major prize, a Marigold, for a Chant Royal in praise of Louis XIV¹³³; this accomplishment allowed him to become a judge of the contest¹³⁴. Being a lawyer from a noble family, he was also part of the social elite of the town. Appointed twice as *Capitou*, which is similar to being the provost of the merchants¹³⁵, Palaprat had as his goal to seize all opportunities to rejuvenate the cultural life of Toulouse. For his first tenure, in 1676, fireworks for the birth of a royal heir were followed by big plans to build a Royal square

¹³⁰ « Ce grand Comédien, & mille fois encore plus grand Auteur » in the “Preface” by Palaprat for *Les Œuvres de Monsieur de Palaprat, Nouvelle édition, Augmentée de plusieurs Comédies qui n'ont pas encore été imprimées; d'un Recueil de Pièces en vers, adressées à Monseigneur le Duc de Vendôme; et de divers Essais de différentes Poésies, avec une Lettre à M. B. P. M. D. M. contenant quelques legeres observations sur une Devise. Tome Premier*. Paris : Pierre Ribou, 1712, n.p.

¹³¹ For a few autobiographical elements, see Palaprat's various prefaces for the 1712 edition of his works: *Les Œuvres de Monsieur de Palaprat, Nouvelle édition, Augmentée de plusieurs Comédies qui n'ont pas encore été imprimées; d'un Recueil de Pièces en vers, adressées à Monseigneur le Duc de Vendôme; et de divers Essais de différentes Poésies, avec une Lettre à M. B. P. M. D. M. contenant quelques legeres observations sur une Devise*. Paris : Ribou, M. DCC. XII. [1712]. On Palaprat by François de Gélis, see: Gélis, François de. “Autour de Palaprat” in *Revue des Pyrénées, Tome XXI*, 1909, p. 188 ; “Autour de Palaprat (suite)” in *Revue des Pyrénées, Tome XXI*, 1909, p. 357 and “Autour de Palaprat (suite et fin)” in *Revue des Pyrénées, Tome XXII*, 1910, p. 75. The list of works by Palaprat is difficult to establish because: 1. he worked often in collaboration with another author, Brueys; 2. some of his works were not printed; and, more important for us, 3. some of his earlier works were destroyed during his stay in Italy: « Pendant que j'étais en Italie, une personne qui m'est chère, craignant peut-être que la passion de corriger les mœurs me menât aussi loin que celle de réparer les torts avait mené Don Quichotte, imita le bon office que la nièce de celui-ci avait rendu en jetant au feu tous ses livres de chevalerie. Elle fit, en mon absence, un abatis entier, une déconfiture totale de tous les papiers où se trouvent les mots d'acte et de scène. » in “Discours sur le Grondeur” in *Œuvres de Monsieur de Palaprat... Tome Premier*. Paris : Pierre Ribou, 1712, p. 188.

¹³² « toujours eu depuis [s]on enfance une véritable tendresse pour nos vieux jeux floraux » in Palaprat, “Discours sur les Empiriques” in *Les Œuvres de Monsieur de Palaprat... Tome Second*. Paris : Pierre Ribou, 1712, p. 70.

¹³³ A « Souci » in Gélis, François de. *Histoire critique des Jeux floraux depuis leur origine jusqu'à leur transformation en Académie (1323–1694)*. Toulouse : Privat, 1912, p. 316.

¹³⁴ « Deux fois dans nos illustres Jeux, / J'avais déjà su faire approuver mes demandes, / On aoutait déjà, pour orner mes cheveux, / La dernière couronne à deux belles guirlandes : / Que fallait-il pour rendre encore mon sort plus doux? N'avais-je pas trios fois remporté la victoire ? » Palaprat in *Histoire et mémoires de l'Académie royale des sciences, inscriptions et belles-Lettres de Toulouse Tome Second 1.re partie ...* Toulouse : Jean-Matthieu Douladoure, 1830, p. 344.

¹³⁵ See : Raynal, Jean. *Histoire de la ville de Toulouse...* Toulouse : Forest, 1759, p. 520 ; and [Farmain de Rosoi, Barnabé]. *Annales de la ville de Toulouse, dédiées au Roi, Tome quatrième*. Paris : Duchesne, 1776, pp. 650 & 657.

and a project to erect a new statue of Louis XIV¹³⁶. During his second mandate in 1684, Palaprat wanted to create a Royal Academy that would unite the Compagnie des Jeux floraux and another literary society in the town, Les Lanternistes¹³⁷. To promote his idea, he organized a public celebration, which was presented with all the features of a Festival: « In this respect, we believed it was necessary to take advantage of joining together the opening of the Floral Games with the presentation of these proposals. We put on all that was customary to attract the world; we succeeded too well, and the multitude of people, always in love with novelty, prevented some from being able to hear well all the ways we used to interest people about the benefits of the establishment of this Academy in honor of the King. »¹³⁸

The event of 1684 must have been grand enough, as Palaprat « added to this feast all the amenities we could think about to get approval for our project. We did not spare the symphony or the chorus of music. »¹³⁹ Although music was always part of *Les Jeux floraux*, Palaprat had a double agenda: he also wanted a signal accomplishment of his administration to be « the establishment of an opera ». Time was of the essence as a *Capitou* was selected only for one year. Timing was also crucial, so Palaprat tried to launch the two projects together. He later admitted: « although I did my best to attract one [opera company] to Toulouse in my year, I did not manage to show the town the whole delightful spectacle, but at least I used the occasion of the opening of the Floral Games to give it a magnificent sample. »¹⁴⁰ This « magnificent sample », entitled *Ouverture des Jeux floraux de Toulouse*, was performed on 5 April 1684, in the Town Hall of Toulouse, to mark the day when the yearly call for entering the contest was officially proclaimed. Although the piece seems lost, we know that Palaprat wrote

¹³⁶ [Farmain de Rosoi, Barnabé]. *Annales de la ville de Toulouse, dédiées au Roi, Tome quatrième*. Paris: Duchesne, 1776, p. 571.

¹³⁷ Schneider, Robert Alan. *Public Life in Toulouse, 1463–1789: From Municipal Republic to Cosmopolitan City*. Ithaca (NY): Cornell University, 1989, p. 259.

¹³⁸ « Dans cette vue, nous crûmes qu'il fallait profiter de la conjoncture des ouvertures des Jeux Floraux pour faire ces propositions. Nous mîmes tout en usage pour y attirer beaucoup de monde ; nous ne réussîmes que trop, et la foule du peuple, toujours amoureux de nouveautés, empêcha qu'on pût bien entendre tous les moyens dont nous nous servîmes pour prévenir les gens en faveur de l'établissement de cette Académie à la gloire du Roi. » Archives de Toulouse, *Livre des Conseils*, XXXII, Séance du 4 mai 1684, quoted in Gélis, François de. *Histoire critique des Jeux floraux depuis leur origine jusqu'à leur transformation en Académie (1323–1694)*. Toulouse : Privat, 1912, pp. 149 & 150.

¹³⁹ « Nous accompagnâmes cette fête de tous les agréments dont nous pûmes nous aviser pour faire approuver notre dessein. Nous n'y épargnâmes ni la symphonie ni les chœurs de musique ». Archives de Toulouse, *Livre des Conseils*, XXXII, p. 60. Conseil des Seize. Séance du 4 mai 1684, quoted in Gélis, François de. *Histoire critique des Jeux floraux depuis leur origine jusqu'à leur transformation en Académie (1323–1694)*. Toulouse : Privat, 1912, p. 150.

¹⁴⁰ « Que l'année de ma *Prefecture* me dura peu ! Deux choses principales me la firent trop courte : l'une, de n'avoir pas pû la marquer & la signaler par l'établissement d'un *Opéra*: je fis mon possible pour en attirer un à Toulouse dans mon année, je ne parvins point à lui faire voir ce spectacle charmant tout entier, mais du moins je me servis de l'occasion de l'*ouverture des Jeux Floraux* pour lui en donner un échantillon magnifique » in Palaprat, « Discours sur les Empiriques » in *Les Œuvres de Monsieur de Palaprat... Tome Second*. Paris : Pierre Ribou, 1712, p. 67.

the libretto and Thibault Aphrodise (or Afroidise)¹⁴¹, new Master of Music at Saint-Sernin, the cathedral of Toulouse, composed the music.¹⁴²

3.3.5 Academic fever

After the success of *Les Jeux floraux* of 1684, Palaprat had good reason to hope the King would support his idea of a Royal Academy, and he planned to celebrate what he thought would be the first year of the new Royal Academy of Toulouse by staging another small opera in 1685. The Truce of Ratisbon and the ensuing peace that was supposed to last for twenty years were wonderful auspices. Palaprat was in Paris at the beginning of 1685¹⁴³ trying to build support, at court and in town, for his two academy projects. Looking for a suitable Parisian composer, it may have been at this time that he made the acquaintance of Marc-Antoine Charpentier. Together, they may have planned a new work for *Les Jeux floraux* of 1685. Charpentier was under significant time pressure as he not only had to compose the ambitious score of *La Fête de Rueil*, but he was also working on the revival of *Le Malade imaginaire*. The connection between Palaprat's commission – a piece celebrating a poetic contest – and the original material of *Le Malade imaginaire* would have been quite evident to the two artists. The changes to Molière's text are all made to heighten the connection with *Les Jeux floraux* and mold it into a suitable piece for such an occasion: *La Couronne de Fleurs*.

Even beyond his familiarity with the model of the poetic contest, Palaprat must have been at ease with the subject of the compositions requested by Flore in *La Couronne de Fleurs*: les devises. These short poetries, in addition to their literary attraction, were used not only on architecture, but also on sculpture and on medals. Quinault himself had been in charge of composing the texts for « jettons », the token coins¹⁴⁴, of the Dauphine, and when he died in 1688, Palaprat took over this duty. After the death of the Dauphine in 1690, Palaprat worked for La Chambre aux Deniers, the royal institution which had the charge of the spending of the king and the royal household. For twenty years he wrote poetry annually destined to be engraved on the medals of the organization. If the early « *Traité sur les devises* » that Palaprat said that he composed in 1663¹⁴⁵ is nowhere to be found, the attraction of Palaprat for this kind of literary style is well documented. In his *Lettre sur les Devises*¹⁴⁶, dated 7 January 1711, he

¹⁴¹ Thibault Aphrodise, or Afroidise (ca. 1656–1719). Master of music at Saint-Sernin of Toulouse from 1682 to 1719.

¹⁴² *Ouverture des Jeux floraux de Toulouse : mise en musique par le sieur Aphrodise, maître de musique du vénérable chapitre de Saint-Sernin et chantée dans le grand Consistoire de l'Hôtel-de-ville, le 5 avril 1684*. Toulouse: G.-L. Colomiez, 1684. The music was so appreciated that *Les Jeux Floraux* gave a prize to the composition. See: Archives de Toulouse, *Livre des Conseils*, XXXII, Séance du 4 mai 1684, quoted in: Gélis, François de. "Autour de Palaprat" in *Revue des Pyrénées*, Tome XXI, 1909, p. 199.

¹⁴³ Raynal, Jean. *Histoire de la ville de Toulouse*.... Toulouse: Forest, 1759, p. 399.

¹⁴⁴ The exact use of these type of coins at the French court in the seventeenth century is difficult to trace; some may have been used as a way of identification, like a pass, a permit for access, a « mereau » in French, but also for payment (like in the Académie française).

¹⁴⁵ Palaprat wrote « Je ne veux point faire ici une Dissertation sur la Devise : il me serait aisé de rappeler ce que j'en ai dit il y a long-temps dans un petit traité que j'en fis imprimer en 1663, à Toulouse » in Palaprat; *Lettre à M. B. P. M. D. M.* in *Les Œuvres de Monsieur de Palaprat... Tome Second*. Paris : Pierre Ribou, 1712. p. 142.

¹⁴⁶ See: *Lettre à M. B. P. M. D. M.* that Palaprat addresses to Monsieur Boudin, Premier Médecin de Monseigneur (the Dauphin) in *Les Œuvres de Monsieur de Palaprat... Tome Second*. Paris : Pierre Ribou, 1712. « Monsieur Boudin,

explains the Toulouse origin of his passion: « The fury I always had, on the example of my parents, for the Ballets, the Masquerades, and all sorts of games where our fathers used the Mottos »¹⁴⁷. Added to this familiarity with the entertainments was a declared ambition to celebrate Louis XIV in Toulouse: « The King gave us frequent opportunities of making public festivities. I was in charge of it, it was where I triumphed. As many battles or sieges, as many Te Deum and therefore bound fires, feasts and rejoicing in the City Hall. Never has the King had a subject more zealous than I was to rejoice in his conquests. »¹⁴⁸

3.3.6 Further evidence

That Palaprat is a contributor to *La Couronne de Fleurs* seems likely, but was this piece performed in Toulouse in 1685? Further research in the town records of the time is necessary to find a mention of the inclusion of *La Couronne de Fleurs* and in the agenda of the festivities and verify the hypothesis. What we know for sure from the Archives of Toulouse is that the festivities around *Les Jeux floraux* in the year of 1685 were especially lavish, and sumptuous parties were given, which all the elite of the city and distinguished guests attended. In addition to the prizes of precious metal flowers, gifts were distributed: fruit jams were given to the Ladies, and cakes to the people. The bill from 1685 is impressive and was even quoted as a great extravagance decades later: « It cost 675 livres for the Caterer, 315 livres for the cakes, 210 livres and 16 f. for the boxes of preserves. »¹⁴⁹ The Truce of Ratisbon, so favorable to Louis XIV, was an auspicious circumstance and hopes for the renewal of *Les Jeux floraux* were high, but in a matter of months the situation in Toulouse changed greatly. The kingdom was facing the most tragic event of the reign of Louis XIV: the interdiction of the Reformed religion¹⁵⁰. The projects to create a Royal Academy or an Academy of Opera were no longer a priority in a community divided and in a town in social turmoil¹⁵¹. Palaprat, perhaps shocked

ancien Doyen, Docteur-Régent en Médecine de la Faculté de Paris, ci-devant premier Médecin de Monseigneur, & ensuite de Madame la Dauphine, à présent de la reine, en Cour » in: *Almanach Royal pour l'année MDCCXXVI* [1726]. Paris : Veuve d'Houry & Ch. M. d'Houry, 1726, p. 322.

¹⁴⁷ « la fureur que j'eus toujours, sur l'exemple de mes parens, pour les Ballets, les Mascarades, & toutes ces sortes de Jeux où nos pères employaient les Devises » See: Palaprat, *Lettre à M. B. P. M. D. M.* in *Les Œuvres de Monsieur de Palaprat...* Tome Second. Paris : Pierre Ribou, 1712. p. 183.

¹⁴⁸ « Le Roy nous donna de fréquentes occasions de faire des fêtes publiques. J'en étais chargé, c'était où je triomphais. Autant de combats ou de sièges, autant de *Te Deum*, & partant de feux de joye, de repas & de réjouissances dans l'Hôtel de Ville. Jamais le Roy n'a eu un sujet plus zélé que moi pour se réjouir de ses conquêtes. » See: Palaprat, « Discours sur les Empiriques » in *Les Œuvres de Monsieur de Palaprat...* Tome Second. Paris : Pierre Ribou, 1712, p. 66.

¹⁴⁹ « il en coûta 675 livres pour le Traiteur, 315 livres pour les gateaux, 210 livres 16 f. pour les boîtes de confitures, 100 l. pour celui qui fit l'éloge de Clemence Isaure, et 39 livres pour les gardes » in Raynal, Jean. *Histoire de la ville de Toulouse, avec une notice des hommes illustres, une suite chronologique et historique, des Evêques et Archevêques de cette ville et une table générale des Capitouls, depuis la Réunion du Comté de Toulouse à la Couronne jusqu'à présent: par Me. J. Raynal, Avocat au Parlement, de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres de Toulouse.* Toulouse: Jean François Forest, 1754, p. 133.

¹⁵⁰ For the impact of the interdiction of the Reformed religion in Toulouse see: Cabanel, Patrick. *Histoire des protestants en France : XVIe–XXIe siècle.* Paris : Fayard, 2012. See also : Brenac, Madeleine. “Toulouse, centre de lutte contre le protestantisme au XVIIe siècle” in *Annales du Midi*, Volume 77, 1965, pp. 31–45.

¹⁵¹ [Farmain de Rosoi, Barnabé]. *Annales de la ville de Toulouse, dédiées au Roi, Tome quatrième.* Paris: Duchesne, MDCCCLXXVI [1776], p. 575.

by the tragic events, left for Italy and remained in Rome for two years before returning to France.

When he came back in 1688, Palaprat entered the service of the Vendôme family. In his functions as the secretary of Louis Joseph de Bourbon, Duke of Vendôme (1654–1712), Palaprat certainly remained involved with the Pastoral genre as another circumstantial piece demonstrates. In 1691 Palaprat wrote another *Églogue* to be performed for the Dauphin at the Castle of Anet¹⁵² with music by « M. Lully, fils du célèbre M. Jean-Baptiste Lully »¹⁵³. The new generation walks in the steps of their elders: like Molière did for Louis XIV in the Prologue of *Le Malade imaginaire*, Palaprat gives the title of *Eglogue* to his short libretto for the Dauphin. The outlines of the action offer some striking similarities with the ones of Molière and with *La Couronne de Fleurs*: Two shepherds¹⁵⁴ celebrate the Dauphin, and of course his father, in a contest of praises, under the judgment of a third one, who promises the winner « as a prize [his] dog and two shepherd's crooks »¹⁵⁵. Each of the shepherds accumulates praises and allegory until one declares « May he shines in the Empire of the Lily / May he goes to cover himself of a noble dust on the battlefield / He is everywhere the picture of his father... », a final word which the judge interrupts: « What more could you say? Come to receive the prize. »¹⁵⁶ Although this time the purpose, which is reflected by the content, is more entertainment « à l'antique » than celebration of a contemporary event, it is remarkable that the only other known libretto by Palaprat also uses the idea of a poetic contest¹⁵⁷.

¹⁵² In 1686, the Dauphin had already visited Anet where *Acis and Galatée* by Lully was premiered for him at great expense by the Vendôme. In 1691, some budget restrictions were imposed by Louis XIV and the personnel reduced to three actors. The *Églogue* of 1691 has indeed three roles. See “Discours sur le Grondeur” in [Palaprat, Jean de]. *Les Œuvres de Monsieur de Palaprat... Tome Second*. Paris: Pierre Ribou, 1712, p. 175. For the event, Campistron wrote an « *Idylle* » composed by « M. Lully, l'ainé. » Palaprat also mentioned a composition by « M. Morel, de la musique du Roy », p. 179.

¹⁵³ For the libretto, see [Palaprat, Jean de]. *Les Œuvres de Monsieur de Palaprat... [Tome Troisième]*. Paris: Pierre Ribou, 1712, p. 36.

¹⁵⁴ The shepherds like in Theocritus *Idyls*, Idyl 8, are named Daphnis and Menalque. The judge of the contest is named Palémon, as in Virgil, *Bucolics*, Eclogue 3.

¹⁵⁵ The idea of the crook of the shepherd as a prize is found in Virgil, *Bucolics*, Eclogue 5: Daphnis.

¹⁵⁶ « Qu'il brille dans le sein de l'Empire des lys, / qu'il aille se couvrir d'une noble poussière, / Il est partout l'image de son père... / Que dirais-tu de plus? Viens recevoir le prix. » “Eglogue mise en musique par M. Lully, fils du célèbre M. Jean-Baptiste Lully” in *Les Œuvres de Monsieur de Palaprat... Tome Second*. Paris: Pierre Ribou, 1712, p. 175.

¹⁵⁷ It seems that the simple shepherds of the *Pastorale* were a form of excuse for the style of the praise, if found weak. It echoes Virgil and his « Remarquez 3°. Que l'Eglogue ne laisse pas de s'élever, jusqu'à chanter les actions des Héros : mais toujours d'une manière proportionnée à son ton. *Si canimus sylvas Sylva sint Consule dignae*. Elle s'approche des grands, mais sans oublier l'air modeste qui lui convient. » In quoting Virgil, *Bucolics*, Eclogue 4, the Jesuit Père Mourgues, in his *Traité de la Poésie française* dedicated to the Académie des Jeux floraux, echoes Pan in the *Eglogue* of *Le Malade imaginaire*, a text integrated without modifications in *La Couronne de Fleurs*, when he declares: « Quittez, quittez Bergers, ce dessein téméraire, / Hé, que voulez-vous faire? / Chanter sur vos chalumeaux, / Ce qu'Apollon sur sa Lyre / Avec ses chants les plus beaux, / N'entreprendrait pas de dire? / C'est donner trop d'Essor au feu qui vous inspire, / C'est voler vers les Cieux sur des ailes de Cire, / Pour tomber dans le fonds des Eaux. / Pour chanter de LOUIS, l'intrépide courage, / Il n'est point d'assez docte voix, / Point de mots assez grands pour en tracer l'Image; / Le silence est le langage / Qui doit louer ses exploits. » See: Mourgues, Père Michel. *Traité de la Poésie française par le P. Mourgues, Jésuite. Nouvelle édition, revue, corrigée & augmentée : avec plusieurs observations sur chaque Espèce de Poésie*. Paris : Jacques Vincent, 1729, p. 268.

In 1694, another member of the Compagnie des Jeux floraux, Simon de La Loubère¹⁵⁸, completed Palaprat's project and obtained royal protection from Louis XIV, so it became the Académie des Jeux floraux. The French king enacted the statutes of the Academy and chose Palaprat to be one of the first academicians¹⁵⁹. Louis XIV also changed the flower prizes given: « And those flowers are Amaranthe Gold, which we institute and ordain by these said herein, for the first prize, and a Violet, an Eglantine, and a silver Marigold, which will be the regular prizes. »¹⁶⁰ By selecting a new flower for the first rank, Louis XIV was using the allegorical language of flowers, the meaning of the amaranth being immortality¹⁶¹. It is an odd coincidence that in *La Couronne de Fleurs*, among the characters who were given charming « botanical » names that had not been used by Molière – Sylvandre, Forestan, Myrtil, Rosélie, and Hyacinthe – one also finds Amaranthe¹⁶². Might this idea of the amaranth have come from Palaprat¹⁶³? It

¹⁵⁸ Simon de La Loubère (1642–1729) led an embassy to Siam (Thailand) in 1687 (the « La Loubère-Céberet mission »). Upon his return La Loubère was requested by Louis XIV to make a description of his travels: *Du Royaume de Siam par Monsieur de La Loubère, envoyé extraordinaire du Roy auprès du Roy de Siam en 1687 et 1688*. Paris : Coignard, 1691.

¹⁵⁹ *Traité de l'origine des Jeux Floraux de Toulouse ; Lettres patentes du Roy, portant le rétablissement des Jeux Floraux en une Académie de Belles Lettres ; Brevet du Roy, qui porte Confirmation des Chancelier, Mainteneurs & Maîtres des Jeux Floraux, & nomination de nouveaux Mainteneurs ; Statuts pour les Jeux Floraux*. Toulouse : Claude-Gilles Lecamus, 1715, p. 135.

¹⁶⁰ « onze cens livres qui seront employées à l'achat de quatre Fleurs, pour servir de Prix. Et seront lesdites fleurs, une Amarante d'or, que Nous instituons et ordonnons par cesdites présentes, pour être le premier Prix, & une Violette, une Eglantine, & un Soucy d'argent, qui seront les Prix ordinaires. » in Gélis. *Histoire Critique des jeux floraux*. Paris, p. 155. « L'amarante d'or vaut 400 livres. La violette l'églantine et le Souci sont d'argent; les deux premières fleurs sont tarifées à 250 livres, la troisième à 200. » See: "Lettres patentes du Roy, portant le rétablissement des Jeux Floraux en une Académie de Belles Lettres" in *Traité de l'origine des Jeux floraux de Toulouse...* Toulouse : Claude-Gilles Lecamus, 1715, p. 125.

¹⁶¹ « Quelques-uns font venir le mot d'amarante des mots Grecs *anthos*, fleur, & *maraino*, je me flétris, & de la particule privative *a* ; comme qui diroit, une fleur qui ne flétrit point. [...] On a donné ce nom cette plante à cause que les fleurs conservent long temps leur couleur quoique seches. L'*Amarante* est le symbole de l'immortalité chez les Poètes. » Furetière. *Dictionnaire universel: contenant generalement tous les mots françois tant ...* La Haye/ Husson, 1726. On the importance of flowers in France, see: Hyde, Elizabeth. *Cultivated Power: Flowers, Culture, and Politics in the Reign of Louis XIV*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.

¹⁶² The names of the characters are different in Molière and his shepherds and shepherdesses have names common in the French seventeenth-century pastoral: Tircis, Dorilas, Climène, and Daphné. It is also quite interesting to note here that none of these new characters is used in the sung text of *La Couronne de Fleurs*. This idea of the name of all the characters connected to the flora is a « trait d'esprit » which would have been only enjoyed by a reader of the libretto. Therefore, this further evidence indicates that the goal of the composition must have been an event where a printed libretto would have been available during the performance, as was then customary for an opera performance, linking *La Couronne de Fleurs* even more strongly to a visual element in the performance.

¹⁶³ Perhaps the Amaranth, the Rose and the Hyacinth were supposed to become the new prizes of the combined academy proposed by Palaprat? Their embodied presence in the shepherds and shepherdesses of *La Couronne de Fleurs* would have created a mythological lineage and conferred to the prize an added poetic value. This poetic idea was already explored by Palaprat when, successful in *Les Jeux floraux* of 1667, he had to pay homage to a less fortunate contestant, named M. d'Olive: « Un jour que sous un gay bocage / Cithérée avec Mars passait d'heureux momens / Ils prescrivirent à tous par des arrests charmans / Que le laurier seroit la marque du courage / et l'Olive le prix des fidelles amans: Depuis cet heureux jour / L'Olive et son heros triomphent tour à tour. » Palaprat cité par Gélis, François de. "Autour de Palaprat" in *Revue des Pyrénées*, Tome XXI, 1909, p. 195.

is possible, as the amaranth, as well as the crown of flowers, appears on the seal of the new Royal Academy of Toulouse. « It is round, and standing in the middle is a woman, representing poetry, wearing a crown [of flowers] on her head, and giving by her hand an Amaranth to a poet inclined in front of her, offering some Verses. » Around the seal is the inscription: « Seal of the Jeux Floraux de Toulouse. »¹⁶⁴ This scene, whose similarity to the action of Charpentier's elusive pastoral is too striking to be dismissed, would remain for decades in France a tangible evocation of *La Couronne de Fleurs*.

¹⁶⁴ « Les Jeux Floraux auront à peu près leur ancien Sél: il sera rond, & au milieu sera debout une femme, représentant la poésie, et portent une Couronne sur sa tête, & donnera de sa main une Amarante à un Poète incliné, qui lui présentera des Vers. Autour du Sél sera cette inscription : Sél des Jeux Floraux de Toulouse [...] Le contre-Sél sera rond, au milieu duquel sera figuré un Parterre de Fleurs, sans aucune inscription » in *Traité de l'origine des Jeux Floraux de Toulouse...* Toulouse : Claude-Gilles Lecamus, 1715, p. 146.

3.4. *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* an opera by Thomas Corneille for Paris in 1687

« You will not lose her, alas, in restoring her to me.
Every mortal is subject to the decree of death,
And my dear Euridice will resist it in vain.
Sooner or later she will have to return here. »¹⁶⁵
Anonymous, libretto for Charpentier's *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*.
"Will you lose her in restoring her to me?
Your Empire everywhere has always been able to expand,
Here, sooner or later, everyone must arrive.
This is our inevitable & last retreat. »¹⁶⁶

Thomas Corneille, Livre X "La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers" in
Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide : mises en vers françois

Based on the mythical figure of the famous poet-musician Orpheus, *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* contains all the elements of the French « Pastorale en musique »¹⁶⁷. But this operatic work, composed on an anonymous libretto, is a fragmentary dramatic composition. Indeed, the original score contains only two acts, during which the story of Orpheus, inspired by the version in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, is not completely told. Furthermore, according to the rules of the poetry in French opera of the time, this type of musical pastoral was often preceded by a prologue, and was composed in one, three, or five acts, but never in two¹⁶⁸. Although it must therefore be considered incomplete, this musical manuscript is nevertheless filled with valuable information on the circumstances surrounding its creation. While the score provides the names of the performers, which on the surface seems to support a concert-like presentation, other indications in the manuscript lead me instead to the hypothesis that *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* was an opera composed with the primary goal of having it

¹⁶⁵ « Tu ne la perdras point, hélas, pour me la rendre. / Tout mortel est soumis à la loi du trépas, / Et ma chère Euridice aura beau s'en défendre, / Il faut que tôt ou tard elle rentre ici-bas. » Anonymous, libretto for Charpentier's *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*. See my full translation in the Appendix.

¹⁶⁶ « La perdrez-vous pour me la rendre ? Votre Empire partout a su toujours s'étendre, / Ici-bas, tôt ou tard, chacun doit arriver. / C'est notre inévitable & dernière retraite. » in "La descente d'Orphée aux enfers" in *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide : mises en vers françois, Par T. Corneille de l'Academie Françoise, Tome II*. Liège: Jean François Broncart, 1698, p. 295.

¹⁶⁷ See: Durosoir, Georgie. "Pastorales avec musique et pastorales en musique en France au milieu du XVIIIe siècle" in *Littératures classiques : Théâtre et musique au XVIIIe siècle*. éd. Charles Mazouer. n°21 (printemps 1994). Paris : Klincksieck, pp. 237–248. See also : Dalla Valle, Daniela. "Le succès du premier opéra en français : La Première comédie française en musique. Pastorale de Pierre Perrin et Albert Cambert" in *L'âge de la représentation : L'art du spectacle au XVIIIe siècle, Actes du IX^e colloque du Centre International de Rencontres sur le XVIIIe siècle*. Tübingen : Gunter Narr, 2007, pp. 157–168.

¹⁶⁸ Genest, Abbé Charles-Claude. *Dissertations sur la poésie pastorale, ou De l'idylle et de l'épique*. Paris, Coignard, 1707. For a modern view, see: Kintzler, Catherine. *Poétique de l'opéra français, de Corneille à Rousseau*. Paris : Minerve, 1991, p. 210.

performed on a stage, in a complete theatrical spectacle with dances, decorations and machines. This probable intention sheds new light on the fate of the work and allows a reconsideration of the place it occupies in the history of French opera: its destiny seems to be a faithful echo of the state of the genre at the end of the 1680s, a period during which a new taste was beginning to assert itself and Charpentier was looking for new fields of expression.

The collected books of manuscripts by Charpentier are the only source for *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*¹⁶⁹. Although the number « II » on the volume where it is found would seem to imply a work of the composer's youth, the musical style of the piece and the quality of the calligraphy in the manuscript add to the likelihood that the composition is from the mid-1680s. Thanks to the names of the performers that were in the score, among them Charpentier himself, we can date it to before the 1688 death of their patroness, Mademoiselle de Guise, the Duchess of Guise¹⁷⁰. The names of two *haute-contres* (high tenors) from Duchess' household are especially significant because they appear together in the score. Charpentier was one; the other soloist, Anthoine, whose name is written beside Orphée, is found only in those books that are dated with certainty between 1686 and 1688. As we know that Charpentier left the service of the Duchess of Guise in 1687, and the same year saw numerous changes in the French opera landscape: the retirement of Quinault, the demotion of Lully and other events we will disclose later may have contributed to stimulate Charpentier to write an ambitious piece in the hope to have it performed. *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* should likely be dated to 1687¹⁷¹.

On the last page of his score, Charpentier wrote « fin du Sd Acte » (end of S[econ]d Act): this clarification is significant because Charpentier invariably ended his other dramatic compositions with the simple word « fin », the end. The manuscript also omits the total number of measures that the composer usually included on the last sheet of his compositions. In short, the usual devices by which Charpentier indicates that the work is complete are missing. It therefore seems that another act is needed to finish this opera and permit the end of the story of Orpheus to unfold. The anonymous libretto, which follows the first fable in book X of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*¹⁷² until this point, presents in the first act the death of Euridice in the middle of the pastoral scene celebrating her marriage, and Orphée, heeding the advice of the god Apollon, is planning to descend to the Underworld to claim his wife. In the second act, after having charmed both the damned and the furies who are torturing them, the poet-musician touches Proserpine's heart. The goddess helps him to convince her husband Pluton to let Euridice return to the living world, but the monarch of hell sets a condition that prohibits Orphée from turning to see his wife before leaving the vast kingdom of shadows. It is with the premonition, « Love, burning Love, will you constrain yourself? / Ah! How the tender

¹⁶⁹ *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* (H. 488). Département de la musique de la Bibliothèque nationale de France, cote F-PnRés Vm1 259. Cah. « II » ; volume XIII, Cahiers 49–51.

¹⁷⁰ See: Ranum, Patricia. "A sweet servitude: A musician's life at the Court of Mlle de Guise" in *Early Music*, August 1987, p. 351.

¹⁷¹ Hitchcock, H. Wiley. *Les œuvres de/The works of Marc-Antoine Charpentier, Catalogue raisonné*. Paris: Picard, 1982, p. 35.

¹⁷² "La descente d'Orphée aux enfers" in *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide : mises en vers françois, Par T. Corneille de l'Academie Françoise*, Tome II. Liège: Jean François Broncart, 1698, p. 295.

Orphée must fear himself »¹⁷³, that the hero « exits » the stage followed by the regrets of a « Chorus of Happy Shades, Condemned Ones, and Furies »¹⁷⁴ that concludes the act and the manuscript.

3.4.1 *Orpheus' period message*

In fact, the dramatic action stops in the middle of the second part of the tripartite myth, before the catastrophe and the denouement, elements the spectators of the seventeenth century would have expected. In 1660, the French Academician Pierre du Ryer wrote in the introduction to his translation of *Metamorphoses*: « It should not be thought that one invented the Fable only for pleasure. It is a path strewn with roses that the Elders have found to lead us agreeably to the knowledge of Virtue. And one can say, it seems to me, that it is Wisdom herself who has briefly stripped away what she has of the austere and serious, to trick humankind, and to instruct them while being tricked. »¹⁷⁵ To be understood, the fable of Orpheus, following the example of the other stories taken from *Metamorphoses*, had to be told in its totality in order to have this value of instruction so dear to the literary men of Charpentier's time. The second act of *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* finishes with the beginning of the ascent of Orphée toward the light, accompanied by his wife who he has regained thanks to the force of inspiration that love imparted to his music. The ancient myth also relates that it is because of this passion that Orpheus loses Eurydice: impatient to see her again, he looks back at her, violating the god's instructions and losing her for the second time. This catastrophe was followed by a denouement in Ovid's text, in which Orpheus returns to Earth alone and is later put to death by the Bacchantes, female followers of the god Bacchus who are infuriated by the disdain that he has shown to all women since the death of his wife. The head and the lyre of Orpheus are swept away by the waves, but his soul, rescued by Apollo, will find the one of Eurydice in the Underworld. Thus, the second loss of Eurydice is balanced by the « second » descent of Orpheus to the Underworld: the couple is reunited together for eternity. This morality that seems present in the very title of *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* appeared essential to readers and storytellers of the seventeenth century, who needed to see the potential for edification in ancient fables. The lessons inherent in its stories inspired the creation of many editions of the *Metamorphoses* « with new explanations historical, moral, and political. »¹⁷⁶ The story of Orpheus lends itself to many interpretations, but at the time of Charpentier it seems

¹⁷³ « Amour, brûlant Amour, pourras tu te contraindre? / Ah! Que le tendre Orphée à lui-même est à craindre » in Charpentier, *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, Act II.

¹⁷⁴ « Chœur des Ombres Heureuses, de Coupables et de Furies » in Charpentier, *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, Act II.

¹⁷⁵ « Il ne faut pas s'imaginer qu'on ait inventé la Fable seulement pour le plaisir. C'est un chemin semé de Roses que les Anciens ont trouvé pour nous conduire agréablement à la connaissance de la Vertu, Et l'on peut dire, ce me semble, que c'est la sagesse même qui se dépouille pour quelques temps de ce qu'elle a d'austère & de sérieux, pour se jouer avec les hommes, & les instruire en se jouant » in Du-Ryer, Pierre [Pierre Du Ryer]. « Au Lecteur » in *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide, en latin et en françois, divisées en XV livres. Avec de nouvelles Explications Historiques, Morales et Politiques sur toutes les Fables, chacune selon son sujet; de la traduction de Mr. Pierre Du-Ryer Parisien, de l'Académie Française. Edition nouvelles, enrichie de tres-belles Figures.* Amsterdam : Blaeu, Jannssons, etc., 1702, n.p.

¹⁷⁶ Du-Ryer, Pierre [Pierre Du Ryer]. *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide, en latin et en françois, divisées en XV livres. Avec de nouvelles Explications Historiques, Morales et Politiques sur toutes les Fables, chacune selon son sujet; de la traduction de Mr. Pierre Du-Ryer Parisien, de l'Académie Française. Edition nouvelles, enrichie de tres-belles Figures.* Amsterdam : Blaeu, Jannssons, etc., 1702.

to have been above all « a fine example of conjugal friendship »¹⁷⁷ and an allegory of the union of the soul and the body through love.

One can also try to apply this interpretation of the moral content of the storyline as a key to the creation of another piece of Charpentier composed on the story of Orpheus: the « cantata » *Orphée descendant aux Enfers*. The anonymous text of the cantata represents Orpheus' exact arrival in the Underworld where his singing, accompanied by his « violin » playing, alleviates the eternal suffering of the two criminals Tantalus and Ixion by reminding them of the gentleness of their former loves. Inspired by the shape of the Italian cantata, Charpentier's creation seems a forerunner of the French cantate, a form that would not find its mature shape until the beginning of the early eighteenth century. Drawing on what he learned during his studies in Italy and from the many scores he brought back with him¹⁷⁸, including works by Giacomo Carissimi (1605–1674), the French composer explored the intimate drama of a cantata for the private room. During 1683–1684, when *Orphée descendant aux Enfers* is thought to have been composed, the French cantata does not yet exist, and the piece could be seen as a draft for a scene to fit in a larger work. As such, for his cantata Charpentier borrows from the opera genre, bringing into play several characters that share their emotions. The composer uses the evocative power of music and the lyrical conventions of his time to portray a scene about the curative effect of love and music, inspired by this feeling. The cantata then seems to be written for a particular circumstance, perhaps by way of consolation for physical suffering. The final sentence sung as final chorus – the expression of the moral of the story – seems to have been designed to appease some pain or sorrow: « Once love touches a soul, it can feel no other torments ».¹⁷⁹

3.4.2 Performing and musical information

In *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, if for the narrative and poetic reasons at least one more act is missing, the two acts that have survived are rich in information for a performance. Indeed, the score lists names of performers in front of many vocal and instrumental parts. These names are mainly those of household members of the Duchess of Guise. Marie of Lorraine, an unmarried woman known as Mademoiselle de Guise, was a rich and devout princess who attended the churches and convents of Paris. Although she was the French king's cousin, she had abandoned the life of the royal Court. Charpentier, who excelled in the composition of religious music, entered her service upon his return from Rome in about 1670. As we have seen before, in her Parisian residence, Mademoiselle de Guise had formed a small vocal and instrumental ensemble that presented music for her, including Charpentier's creations¹⁸⁰. But, despite the presence of the names of her musicians in the margins of the autograph manuscript, we cannot say today that *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* is an opera

¹⁷⁷ Du-Ryer, Pierre [Pierre Du Ryer]. *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide...* Amsterdam : Blaeu, Jannssons, etc., 1702, p. 308.

¹⁷⁸ Hitchcock, H. Wiley. "Marc-Antoine Charpentier" in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

¹⁷⁹ « Pour peu que l'Amour touche une âme, / Elle ne ressent point tous les autres tourments. » in Charpentier, *Orphée descendant aux Enfers*.

¹⁸⁰ Much of this information on the musical establishment of Mademoiselle de Guise is taken from Ranum, Patricia. "A sweet servitude: A musician's life at the Court of Mlle de Guise" in *Early Music*, Vol. 15, N° 3, *Lully Anniversary Issue*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 351.

composed for the Duchess. It is more likely that these two acts were presented, or maybe just rehearsed, at her Parisian residence. In other operas by Charpentier, the part assignments shown in scores were often for works given in concert without concern for the dramatic relation between the performer and the role or roles being sung. The same singer could play a character who enters the scene though he has just sung in the previous chorus¹⁸¹; there are examples of this kind of situations in *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, where Anthoine, who plays the role of Orphée, switches in the middle of a scene, where both characters are present, to the line of Ixion. More significantly, the soprano Brion, who sings the role of Euridice, is among the voices of the chorus of Furies that celebrates the reunion of Euridice with Orphée in the Underworld. These obvious irregularities in the distribution of the roles make a scenic performance unlikely by the singers mentioned in Charpentier's score. That the opera was « played and sung » by the musicians of the Hôtel de Guise is what seems to be indicated by the mention of the names of the singers in the manuscript. That the work was solely written for this purpose, however, is quite doubtful, as the score contains strong indications that Charpentier intended his project to be a complete opera for full scenic performances.

Although we know nothing about the circumstances of the first planned performance of *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, some striking elements of the score show that Charpentier had a staged performance in mind. He composed a number of dances and mentions explicitly in the score the identity of the characters who were to perform them. In the first act, he states that the nymphs, companions of Euridice, « sing and dance »¹⁸². In fact, his composition alternates song and dance sections on the same musical motif in the pure tradition of the French court staged entertainment¹⁸³. The care Charpentier takes to establish a close relationship between music and visual imagery grows remarkably following the death of Euridice when the composer specifies, after the poignant simplicity of the heroine's dying words, « here make a great silence »: the picture of immobility resulting from shock and grief can only be fully expressed by a period of silence in the music¹⁸⁴. That Charpentier aims to identify, isolate and characterize key moments of expressiveness in the story of Orpheus is conveyed again at the end of the act, when the companions of Euridice are joined by the men for an « Entrée de Nymphes et de Bergers désespérés » The music in A minor – a key that, a few years later, Charpentier in his description of the « energy of the modes » characterizes as «

¹⁸¹ Like Beaupuis in *La Couronne de Fleurs*, see Note 100.

¹⁸² « chan[tantes] et dans[antes] » in Charpentier, *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, Acte I.

¹⁸³ Harris-Warrick, Rebecca. *Dance and Drama in French Baroque Opera, A History*. Cambridge Studies in Opera. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 45–55.

¹⁸⁴ This relation between a moment of silence and a frozen picture suggest an interesting sensibility of Charpentier towards theory of painting of his time. See Félibien's description of the expression: « Cependant comme dans les pieces de theatre la fable n'est pas dans sa perfection, si elle n'a un commencement, un milieu, & une fin pour faire comprendre tout le sujet de la piece ; L'on peut aussi dans de Grands Ouvrages de Peinture pour instruire mieux ceux qui le verront, en disposer les figures & toute l'ordonnance, de telle sorte qu'on puisse juger de ce qui aura mesme précédé l'action que l'on représente ; » this point of the picture which shows the effect, but supposes the cause, is also illustrated by the conference about Véronese's *Les pèlerins d'Emmaus* where one of the pilgrim is described: « sa surprise ne paroist pas seulement par la disposition de son corps ; on la voit peinte sur son visage par tous les signes qui arrivent lors qu'il survient quelque action que l'on n'a point prévue, comme d'avoir les yeux fixement attachez sur le Christ, les sourcils élevez, & la bouche entr'ouverte. » in Félibien, André. *Préface aux Conférences de l'Academie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture pendant l'Année 1667*. Paris : 1669, p. 66.

tender and plaintive »¹⁸⁵ – is used to depict a dance of despair for Nymphs and Shepherds with a high level of expressiveness. This musical representation is evocative of the pictorial research that Le Brun led at this time on the visual expression of the passions, and that he would later establish as academic criteria with his decisive conference in 1688 on « General and specific expression »¹⁸⁶ for which he wrote that despair « can be a man who pulls out his hair, bites his arm, tears at his entire body, and rushes wildly about. »¹⁸⁷ In the second act, the large chorus of happy shades, condemned ones, and Furies who lament the departure of Orphée offer a sublime mirror to this expression of despair. They are joined by « Dancing Ghosts »¹⁸⁸ in a « light Sarabande » of poignant melancholy that expresses admiration mixed with regret¹⁸⁹. This mention of ghosts is used only for dancers, and this casting information reinforces our impression that the work was written for a staged presentation.

3.4.3 Staging information

That the work is intended for the stage is also strongly suggested by several details of entrances and exits by the characters. These indications of staging, although rare in the manuscript, are rather precise and even suggest scenic effects only possible in a technically well-equipped theatre. Orpheus was naturally a symbol of the poet-musician who created wonders, which explains why the first Italian operas with machines seized on the character¹⁹⁰. In France, it is under the evocative title of the *Tragicomedy of Orphée in music & Italian verses. / With the marvelous scene changes, / the machines & other inventions until / the present day unknown to France* that the opera known by the title of *L'Orfeo*, composed by Luigi Rossi to a libretto by Francesco Buti, was performed for Louis XIV in 1647¹⁹¹. In the seventeenth century, the

¹⁸⁵ Charpentier in his « énergie des modes » associated A minor to « Tendre et plaintif ».

¹⁸⁶ For Le Brun's theory and its relation with Descartes' *Traité des Passions*, See: Ross, Stephanie. "Painting the Passions: Charles Le Brun's Conference Sur L'Expression" in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Jan.–Mar., 1984), pp. 25–47.

¹⁸⁷ Le Brun, Charles. *L'Expression des passions & autres conférences, Correspondance*, edited by Julien Philippe. Paris: Dédale, Maisonneuve et Larose, 1994.

¹⁸⁸ The dictionary of the Académie Française published in 1694 gives for « Fantosme » : « Spectre, Vaine image qu'on voit, ou qu'on croit voir » in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*. Paris, 1694.

¹⁸⁹ Sébastien de Brossard in 1701 wrote: « La sarabande n'étant à la bien prendre qu'un menuet, dont le mouvement est grave, lent, sérieux ». see: *Dictionnaire de musique, contenant une explication des termes grecs, latins, italiens et françois les plus usitez dans la musique... ensemble une table alphabétique des termes françois qui sont dans le corps de l'ouvrage, sous les titres grecs, latins et italiens, pour servir de supplément, un Traité de la manière de bien prononcer, surtout en chantant, les termes italiens, latins et françois...* par Me Sébastien de Brossard,... 2e éd. Paris : C. Ballard, 1705, p. 300.

¹⁹⁰ Legrand, Raphaëlle. "Orphée, figure du merveilleux dans l'opéra baroque" in *Per Musi - Revista Académica de Música*, n. 24, December 2011. Belo Horizonte: UFMG, pp. 30–34. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1517-75992011000200004> (accessed 7 August 2017).

¹⁹¹ *La Tragicomédie d'Orphée en musique & / en vers Italiens. / Avec les merveilleux changements de Théâtre, / les machines & autres inventions jusques / là présent inconnus à la France*. Menestrier in his *traité des représentations en musique anciennes et modernes* of 1685 wrote: « ce Prologue n'était pas de l'action d'Orphée, il faisait une pièce détachée. » and suggesting a form that could have been the one of the prologue of *Orphée* by Charpentier, if the composer would have followed the fashion, he adds: « nous nous sommes conservez dans cette liberté en France, & Presque tous les Prologues des pieces de Musiques que l'on a représentées sont à la louange du Roi pour qui l'on a fait jusqu'icy ces actions de Theatre pour le délasser des fatigues de la Guerre, ou pour celebrer ces

descent of Orpheus lent itself to « infernal » machinery, and it was with these possibilities for spectacle in mind that the poets before Charpentier's time recounted the myth on the French stage. Among these machine-based plays, an identically titled work to Charpentier's by François de Chapoton, *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, was created with great success in 1639 and was subsequently revived with the addition of music of Dassoucy¹⁹² in 1648 and 1662. These shows with machines give us information about the uses of staging elements in the works about Orpheus created in the seventeenth century, and descriptions of them in the memoirs of the period enable us to better understand what Charpentier had in mind for his production of *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*.

The death of Eurydice is the first event in the story that may have required special theatrical effects. The heroine dies from the bite of a snake, and Chapoton's play does not hesitate to call for, in its stage directions, a fake reptile « that one sees crawling on the Earth, and whose free movement and animated action are represented with so much ingenuity that it is not without difficulty than one could distinguish Nature from the trick. »¹⁹³ In Charpentier's version, however, it is with the subsequent arrival of Apollon, who advises Orphée to travel to the Underworld in order to bring back Euridice, that the work first avails itself of the marvelous effects of theatre machinery. The appearance of Apollo is an event that was previously included in Buti's libretto for Rossi and in Chapoton's play. Apollo, the god of the sun, traditionally arrived in a flying chariot. As described in Chapoton, « the Sun appears in his chariot », and in Rossi's opera, one could see Apollo « descended from the Heavens in his blazing chariot [...] and his arrival illuminated the flower beds and the pathways of his spacious garden as far as the eye can see. »¹⁹⁴ Consequently, we could wonder whether this kind of machine might have been used in the projected production of the *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*. Furthermore, Charpentier writes beneath an instrumental postlude of seven bars at the end of the scene that « Apollo follows his course »¹⁹⁵, clearly intending the music to accompany the movement of the chariot as he resumes his path through the heavens. This invaluable

trionphes ». See : Ménestrier, Claude-François. *Des représentations en musique anciennes et modernes*. Paris: R. Guignard, 1681, p. 196.

¹⁹² Charles Coyseau d'Assoucy, known as Dassoucy (1605–1677 or 1679), also composed the stage music for *Andromède* by Pierre Corneille in 1650. He is the same Dassoucy who complained bitterly that Molière had preferred Charpentier to him when the playwright had to find a new composer after falling out with Lully in 1671. See: Cessac, Catherine. *Marc-Antoine Charpentier*. Paris: Fayard, 1988, pp. 30 & 31.

¹⁹³ « un horrible Serpent que l'on void ramper sur la Terre, & dont le mouvement libre & l'action animée sont représentées avec tant de naïveté que ce n'est pas sans peine que l'on pourroit distinguer la Nature d'avec la feinte. » in « Dessein du Poeme et des superbes machines du Mariage d'Orphée et d'Euridice qui se représentera sur le Theatre du Marais, par les Comediens entretenus par leurs Majestez, Paris, René Baudry, 1647 » transcribed in Chapoton, François de. *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* 1639... Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004, p. 137.

¹⁹⁴ « Le Soleil paraît dans son char » in « Dessein du Poeme et des superbes machines du Mariage d'Orphée et d'Euridice qui se représentera sur le Theatre du Marais, par les Comediens entretenus par leurs Majestez, Paris, René Baudry, 1647 » transcribed in Chapoton, François de. *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* 1639... Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004, p. 137, and « Le Soleil descendu des Cieux dans son char flamboyant [...] & venant illuminer les agréables parterres & les allées à perte de vue de son spacieux jardin » in « N° 27 La représentation n'aguere faite devant Leurs Majestez dans le Palais Royal de la tragicomédie d'Orphée en musique & en vers Italiens... » in *Extraordinaire de La Gazette de France*, 1647, transcribed in Chapoton, François de. *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* 1639... Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004, p. 130.

¹⁹⁵ « Apollon poursuit sa carrière » in Charpentier, *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, Acte I.

indication is corroborated by the effects related to the same scene in the Chapoton: « Apollo ascends in his Chariot, and breaking the Clouds, shows through them his Palace filled with surprising light »¹⁹⁶.

3.4.4 The staging trope of the Underworld

But, of course, it is with the second act, which sees Orpheus in the Underworld, that set designers could exercise their imagination and show the public the wonderful effects of the « machine ». Aristotle had in his *Poetics* already indicated that the « *pieces tirées des enfers* » were a specific genre¹⁹⁷. In *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, while the first act takes place in a grove setting that the libretto merely evokes in the first verses, Charpentier wrote, at the beginning of the second act, « L'Enfer » – Hell – at the top of the page. This capital indication, in lieu of the words « Les Enfers », The Underworld, that the title of the work seemed to imply, is used to specify scenery. In 1685, polymath Claude-François Menestrier mentioned this term « L'Enfer » with his typological list of « Magic » decorations, in his treatise *des Représentations en musique anciennes et modernes*: « Hell, the Court of Pluto, the Elysian fields, the rivers Styx and Cocytus, lake Avernus, the Caverns of Wizards where everything is black and full of Specters. »¹⁹⁸ Since the Middle Ages, the scenery of Hell was assured of success with audiences because it allowed designers and machinists to evoke a supernatural dwelling¹⁹⁹. In *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, the three « fameux coupables » who open the second act by describing their pains allowed for a display of tortures that the machinery could make more frightening: the fruits and the water that Tantale cannot reach, the monstrous vulture²⁰⁰ which was devouring Titye's liver and even more the wheel of Ixion, all of which was supposed to stop at the arrival of Orpheus, recall the Mystery plays from the Middle Ages and their depictions of martyrs, and these visual manifestations offered stimulating challenges to the set designers and machinists.

Beginning in the Renaissance, plays with themes from Greek and Roman authors provided new sources of inspiration, and the Underworld had become an ideal pretext for the large stage sets that baroque theatre spectators marveled at. In the play of Chapoton, we saw « Hell appears » and « this decoration of Hell, where one will suddenly see the stage [is] covered

¹⁹⁶ « Apollon remonte dans son Char, & perçant les Nuées, fait voir à travers son Palais rempli de lumières surprenantes [...] ». in “Dessein du Poeme et des superbes machines du Mariage d'Orphée et d'Euridice qui se représentera sur le Theatre du Marais, par les Comédiens entretenus par leurs Majestez, Paris, René Baudry, 1647” transcribed in Chapoton, François de. *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, 1639... Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004, p. 137.

¹⁹⁷ [Dacier, André.] *La Poétique d'Aristote Traduite en François. Avec des remarques*. Paris : Claude Barbin, 1692, Chapitre XIX, p. 307 ; and the remark by Dacier, p. 315 : « les Anciens mettoient sur le Theatre les supplices de ceux qui y étaient tourmentez ».

¹⁹⁸ « L'Enfer, la Cour de Pluton, les champs Elysiens, le Styx, le Cocyte, l'Averne, les Cavernes des Magiciens où tout est noir & plein de Spectres » in Menestrier. *des Représentations en musique anciennes et modernes*. Paris : R. Guignard, 1681, p. 173.

¹⁹⁹ For a early visual example, see Figure 4 of Chapter 1.

²⁰⁰ In *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, Titye is tormented not by one vulture but by two or more: « Titye: *De mes cruels vautours la faim semble assouvie.* » Acte II, Scene 2. The plural is not dictated by the rules of versification and can also be found in Thomas Corneille: « *La descente d'Orphée aux enfers* » in *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide : mises en vers françois*, Par T. Corneille de l'Academie François, Tome II. Liège: Jean François Broncart, 1698, p. 299.

with flames from one side to the other».²⁰¹ For *Ercole amante*, the opera written by Francesco Cavalli and Buti in 1662 for Louis XIV's wedding, the newly designed sets by the Vigarani, father and son²⁰², were so successful that, as I have explained in the previous chapter, a new show was requested later by the French king in order to reuse in 1671 the stunning hell scenery. Several poets entered the contest to write the play: Molière, helped by Pierre Corneille and Quinault, was the winner, and in *Psiché* the Hell of Vigarani served for the Underworld scenes. But is relevant to remember that Racine favored the descent of Orpheus. There is little doubt that the main attraction of a performance of *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* by Charpentier would have been an opportunity to see a set of this type. In Charpentier's work, Pluton and Proserpine do not enter the stage, they « appear », and this staging term suggests that the audience would have seen the gods magically appearing as in Chapoton's play where « Orpheus arrives at Pluto's Palace which opens and makes the stage change its appearance ». This effect of an engineered apparition where « we see Pluto appearing on his Brazen Throne [...] and Proserpine seated beside him »²⁰³ is paralleled by Charpentier's specification, at the end of the scene: « Pluton and Proserpine disappear ».²⁰⁴ This stage direction is very different from the simple « He exits »²⁰⁵ that follows the departure of Orphée, and indicates a theatrical effect, linked to the machinery.

The following act, if it ever existed, would have also offered its share of surprising effects. The ascent of Orpheus to the light and his fatal glance at Eurydice, while they are still in the shadows, is the moment of the story most often treated by Baroque painting and would certainly have allowed a well-lit effect of a spectacular chiaroscuro²⁰⁶. Following Ovid's tale, the return of Apollo could allow a positive ending: the god, coming down in a cloud machine might have united the two lovers forever, as was done in the Rossi and Buti version of the tale. A tragic denouement, with Orpheus killed by the Bacchants, would have transformed the pastoral in a tragedy like the play of Chapoton. By comparing other works it is possible to

²⁰¹ « L'Enfer paroist » and « cette Decoration de l'Enfer, où l'on verra tout d'un coup le Theatre couvert de flammes depuis un bout jusques à l'autre ». in « Dessein du Poeme et des superbes machines du Mariage d'Orphée et d'Euridice qui se representera sur le Theatre du Marais, par les Comediens entretenus par leurs Majestez, Paris, René Baudry, 1647 » transcribed in Chapoton, François de. *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* 1639... Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004, p. 138.

²⁰² La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Carlo Vigarani, intendant des plaisirs de Louis XIV*. Paris: Perrin, 2005, p. 111.

²⁰³ Chapoton: « Acte Quatriesme. Orphée arrive devant le Palais de Pluton qui s'ouvre aussi tost & faict que le Theatre change de face, l'on voit parroistre Pluton sur son Trosne d'Airain [...] & Proserpine assize auprès de luy. » in « Dessein du Poeme et des superbes machines du Mariage d'Orphée et d'Euridice qui se representera sur le Theatre du Marais, par les Comediens entretenus par leurs Majestez, Paris, René Baudry, 1647 » transcribed in Chapoton, François de. *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* 1639... Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004, p. 138.

²⁰⁴ In *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* Charpentier wrote « Pluton et Proserpine disparaissent » which indicates a machine effect, perhaps through a trap door, distinct from the simple « Il sort » for Orphée. See also following note.

²⁰⁵ Charpentier wrote « Il sort » in *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*. This is an instruction which is clearly for a stage version and makes the Guise concert more a rehearsal of a work in progress, perhaps a public audition, not the final version of the piece.

²⁰⁶ On the understanding of « Chiaroscuro » by French artists of the seventeenth century, see: [Du Fresnoy, Charles Alphonse]. *L'Art de Peinture de C.A. Du Fresnoy, Traduit en François. Enrichy de Remarques, reveu, corrigé & augmenté. Troisième édition*. Paris : Langlois, 1684, p. 44 ; and [Piles, Roger de]. *Dialogue sur le coloris*. Paris : Langlois, 1699, p. 13.

imagine what would have become *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*: an ambitious pastoral with « de rigueur » scenic effects, or a tragedy in music of a poignant expressivity. The work, even if it was rehearsed, tried out, or performed in concert by Mademoiselle de Guise's musicians, seems to have been intended – in view of the information contained in the score – as a large-scale theatrical performance.

3.4.5 *Actéon*: a first attempt for tragic pastorale

We know with certainty that Charpentier had composed, since the early 1680s²⁰⁷, for the king's son and heir, the Dauphin, mostly music for the religious celebrations and services. But far from the very pious education that his tutors tried to inculcate in him, « Monseigneur le Dauphin » manifested a keen interest for hunting and music in his youth. There is no record of dramatic compositions dedicated to the Dauphin but among the dramatic work of Charpentier, *Actéon* seems to be an interesting possibility and sheds some light on the specificity of *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*. *Actéon*'s style, and its place in the order of Charpentier's numbered manuscript volumes, suggests that it was written in the mid-1680s, likely in 1684²⁰⁸. On the first page of the manuscript score for *Actéon*²⁰⁹, Charpentier makes no mention of a librettist. The author of the text is hard to identify; adding to the difficulty, the exact date of the creation for *Actéon* is unknown, and printed editions of the libretto, if they even existed, have never been found. The quality of the poetry of this *Pastorale en musique*²¹⁰ indicates, however, an author familiar with the concise style of French opera. The poet might be Thomas Corneille, a regular collaborator of Charpentier's on his theatrical works and the librettist of Charpentier's opera *Médée* of 1693. Thomas Corneille was also librettist for Lully, and he wrote many dramatic works in a great variety of genres²¹¹. He was also genuinely familiar with the stories of Actaeon and Orpheus: in 1669, he had begun an ambitious poetic translation of several books of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*²¹². Thomas Corneille's style in translating Ovid is too much like the one used in the librettos – particularly certain similarities in vocabulary – to be merely a matter of chance. However, unlike Thomas Corneille's known librettos for the operas of Lully and Charpentier which include many elaborate set descriptions and stage directions in addition to the sung words, *Actéon* has few staging instructions²¹³. In compensation, the

²⁰⁷ For the relation between Charpentier and the Dauphin see: Cessac, Catherine. *Marc-Antoine Charpentier*. Paris: Fayard, 1988, p. 127.

²⁰⁸ Hitchcock, H. Wiley. *Les œuvres de/The works of Marc-Antoine Charpentier, Catalogue raisonné*. Paris: Picard, 1982, p. 349.

²⁰⁹ *Actéon* (H. 481) Département de la musique de la Bibliothèque nationale de France, cote F-PnRés Vm1 259. Cah. « XLI–XLIII »; volume XXI, 10^v–29^v.

²¹⁰ Ranum, Patricia and Thompson, Shirley. “Memoire des ouvrages de musique latine et françoise de défunt M.^r Charpentier. A Diplomatic Transcription” in *New Perspectives on Marc-Antoine Charpentier*, edited by Shirley Thompson. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010, pp. 316–340. The mention of *Actéon* appears on p. 330.

²¹¹ Collins, Thomas A. *Thomas Corneille: Protean Dramatist*. The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1966.

²¹² *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide, Mises en vers françois par T. Corneille de l'Academie Française*. Suivant la copie de Paris, à Liège, chez J.-F. Broncart, 1698. For the story of Actaeon see: Tome 1, pp. 151–160.

²¹³ « Elle s'envole » (she flies away) seems to suggest a visual effect linked with machinery, but during the recording of the piece, I discovered with the help of percussionist Marie-Ange Petit that this indication can be a musical one, expressed with the use of a wind machine.

dialogue itself furnishes an extraordinary abundance of descriptive detail for spaces, actions, and characters. This *Pastorale* could well have been written for a private concert where the events and setting would have needed to be conveyed entirely in the lyrics, and not designed for the stage where the poetry would have been complemented by visual elements.

The story of Actaeon, as with Orpheus, was told by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*²¹⁴. According to Ovid, the young man was transformed at the peak of his youthful virility, after a fatal encounter with the goddess Diana. Actaeon suffers a tragic fate: during a hunting party, the young man unexpectedly spies the chaste goddess, who was bathing with her virgin nymph followers. Angered at being discovered naked by a mortal and worse, by a man, Diana, protective of chastity in general and hers in particular, is without her usual weaponry, so she flings the water from the fountain on Actaeon. The outraged goddess accompanies this water, however, with a curse that turns the hunter into prey. Actaeon gradually loses his human form, ultimately transforming into a stag²¹⁵. The unfortunate hunter then dies, devoured by his own dogs that no longer recognize him.

If this transformation of Actaeon is the result of an accidental encounter, hunting is the cause of this meeting, and is a running theme for the whole tale. Hunting parties allow the mortal and immortal to meet: Actaeon leads a bear hunt before discovering Diana, who is herself resting after her hunt. If the libretto is built around the hunt, with a high frequency of the words « chasse » and « chasseur », the score of Charpentier contains also some music inspired by the chase, including the « Bruit de chasse » which opens the opera after the overture²¹⁶ and precedes the « Choeur des Chasseurs ». The original myth has so many ties with the art of hunting that this *Pastorale en musique* can be called an « Opéra de Chasse », a hunting opera. And indeed, it is likely that « l'opéra d'Actéon », as Charpentier himself named it, was written in connection with the hunting season celebrations. Despite the pagan origin of its myth, it was probably performed in November around the feast of Saint Hubert, patron saint of hunters, as a secular entertainment – maybe one of the *Soirées d'Appartements* at the end of a day of hunting or during the vigil that preceded it. If the most famous piece of this kind remains *la Chasse du Cerf* by Jean Baptiste Morin (1677–1745), which was presented in 1708²¹⁷, we know that the kind of entertainments which gave a place to the theme of the hunt were offered at Fontainebleau much earlier on²¹⁸. The large park of the castle was the hunting ground of the court in autumn, and entertainments performed in the Castle have echoes of this « raison d'être ». The *Ballet des Saisons* of Lully and Benserade was performed in 1661, if not in the fitting

²¹⁴ Ovid. *Metamorphoses*, Livre X.

²¹⁵ In Charpentier's opera, Actéon, viewing his reflection in the fountain, is both an actor and a witness during his transformation, allowing a narrative which does not need any extra visualization.

²¹⁶ The « bruit de chasse » reappears at the return of the hunters in the beginning of Scene 5.

²¹⁷ *La Chasse du Cerf, divertissement chanté devant Sa Majesté, à Fontainebleau le 25^e jour d'Aoust 1708, mis en musique par Monsieur Morin, Ordinaire de la Musique de S.A.R. Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans. Ce Divertissement est mêlé de plusieurs Airs à Boire*. Paris : C. Ballard, 1709. On a libretto of Jean de Serré de Rieux (1668–1747). See: Ringer, Alexander L. "The Chasse as a Musical Topic of the 18th Century", *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Summer 1953), pp. 148–159.

²¹⁸ Vatout, Jean. *Le Palais de Fontainebleau (souvenirs historiques), son histoire et sa description*. Paris : Didier, 1852.

« Galerie des Cerfs » more likely in the park, and it shows « Diane²¹⁹ et ses nymphes, que le plaisir de la chasse attire en ces forêts »²²⁰. In 1667, for example, two plays of Donneau de Visé were performed in front of the king « during the eight days which followed the S. Hubert; there was concert, comedies by the two companies, balls and feasts ». ²²¹ If *L'embarras de Godard, ou L'accouchée*²²² is a short comedy based on an anecdote known at court, *Délie*²²³ is an ambitious *Pastorale* in five acts which contains the narration of a wild boar attacking a shepherdess and an allegorical description of the French king and his court²²⁴. *Actéon* with its poetic content was well suited for a royal entertainment at Versailles or at Fontainebleau.

It is also tempting to interpret the moral content of the plot as a key to the motives behind its creation. The convention regarding the myth of Actaeon had been, since the Renaissance – notably thanks to the emblems of the author Andrea Alciati (1492–1550) – that it represented the dangers of prodigality²²⁵. In 1688, the writer Pierre Ortigue de Vaumorière (1610?-1693), in his *L'Art de plaire dans la conversation*, mentioned again this lesson prompted by the appreciation of « the picture of Actaeon » by a prodigal hunter. A well-intentioned lady felt « obliged to induce him to seriously reflect upon what he was examining. [She] represented to him that his expenditure for the hunt was a bit large; that it would be well for him to moderate it, and to be aware that Actaeon, devoured by his dogs, warned people of Quality not to be ruined by a pack »²²⁶. The belief of the moral power of showing and seeing was at the center of the Jesuit order, and Charpentier, during the latter part of his career, deeply explored the

²¹⁹ Benserade, Isaac de. *Ballet des Saisons, Dansé à Fontainebleau par Sa Majesté, le 23 juillet 1661*. Paris: R. Ballard, 1661. Diane was performed by Madame Henriette d'Angleterre. The sets of the Ballet were by Vigarani. See: La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Carlo Vigarani, intendant des plaisirs de Louis XIV*. Paris: Perrin, 2005, pp. 38–42.

²²⁰ Lully, Jean-Baptiste. *Ballet des Saisons*: edited by James P. Cassaro; *Les amours déguisés*: edited by James R. Anthony and Rebecca Harris-Warrick; *Ballet royal de Flore*: edited by Albert Cohen, coordination by Rebecca Harris-Warrick. Hildesheim/New York : Georg Olms, 2001.

²²¹ « Ces deux pièces furent jouées à Versailles pendant les huit jours qui suivirent la S. Hubert ; il y eut concert, comédies par les deux troupes, bals & festins. », see : Beauchamps, Pierre-François Godard de. *Recherches sur les theatres de France, depuis l'année onze cens soixante & un, jusques à présent... Tome II*, Paris: Prault, 1735, pp. 367–371. But the historian has mistaken the place of the performance: *L'embarras de Godard* was in fact performed in Fontainebleau, on 6 November 1667. See: Parfaict, François & Claude. *Dictionnaire des Théâtres de Paris, Tome II*, Paris : Lambert, 1756, p. 384.

²²² Donneau de Vizé, Jean. *L'embarras de Godard, ou L'accouchée : comédie, représentée sur le théâtre du Palais-Royal*. Paris : J. Ribou, 1668.

²²³ Donneau de Vizé, Jean. *Délie : pastorale, représentée sur le théâtre du Palais-Royal*. Paris : J. Ribou, 1668.

²²⁴ *Délie : pastorale*, Act II, Scène 1 & 2 and Act III, Scène 11.

²²⁵ Alciati, Andrea. *Emblemes d'Alciat, en Latin et Francois vers pour vers. Augmentez de plusieurs Emblemes en latin dudict Auteur, traduits nouvellement en François. Ordonnez par lieux communs, avec briefues explications, & enrichis de plusieurs figures non encores imprimées par cy devant...* Paris: Hierosme de Marnes et Guillaume Cavellat, 1574, pp. 79 & 80. On the « emblèmes », see: Paultre, Roger. *Les Images du Livre, Emblèmes et Devises*. Paris: Hermann, 1991.

²²⁶ « La Fable me fournit dernièrement un conseil que je donnai à Timocrate en qualité de sa parente et de son amie. Il regardoit dans mon Cabinet, le Tableau d'Actéon que vous y avez vû, & je crus être obligée de le porter à faire une sérieuse réflexion sur ce qu'il examinait. Je lui représentai que sa dépense pour la Chasse étoit un peu forte ; qu'il seroit bon qu'il la moderât, & qu'il prît garde qu'Actéon dévoré par ses chiens, avertissoit les gens de Qualité de ne se pas laisser ruiner par une Meute » in Ortigue de Vaumorière, Pierre. *L'Art de plaire dans la conversation*. Paris: Jean & Michel Guignard, 1688, Entretien XX, p. 329.

potential of music written to have a moral effect on its listeners, to benefit the pupils of the Jesuit colleges he served²²⁷. Charpentier wrote two five-act operas for the Collège de Louis-le-Grand in the late 1680s²²⁸; an opera in miniature could easily find a place in the long days of performances, where lighter divertissements were intertwining the religious plays for which the Jesuit order was so famous. But considering the pagan theme of *Actéon*, and its erotic undertext, it is more likely that the work would be associated with one of the composer's noble sponsors. Charpentier's greatest patron, Mademoiselle de Guise, is one possibility, because of an isolated reference in the *Actéon* manuscript at the beginning of the chorus « Charmante fontaine » to Jacqueline Genevieve de Brion, a singer in the service of the Duchess. While the patronage of the Guise family also extended to literature and notably had included Thomas Corneille's elder brother, Pierre Corneille²²⁹, the hunting theme and light nature of the work do not seem to fit the tastes of the old religious devotee: the lady who refused in 1685 to acquire paintings on overly worldly subjects does not seem a likely sponsor of this little opera²³⁰. The entry in the score listing Mlle. de Brion does not constitute proof, because if she was in the service of Mademoiselle de Guise before that lady's death in 1688, the soprano was listed as member of the *Musique de la Chambre du Roy* in the beginning of 1689²³¹.

3.4.6 The Dauphin as Charpentier's patron

Starting in 1680, Charpentier became a favorite composer of the Dauphin who was known for his passion for hunting and his love of music, and the piece could well have been

²²⁷ Lowe, Robert. W. *Marc-Antoine Charpentier et l'opéra de collège*. Paris : G.-P. Maisonneuve & Larose, 1966.

²²⁸ *Celse Martyr* (1687) and *David et Jonathas* (1688).

²²⁹ Pierre Corneille, protected by the Guise family, was resident in the Hôtel de Guise in 1662–1664. See: Cessac, Catherine. *Marc-Antoine Charpentier*. Paris: Fayard, 1988, p. 109. See the sonnet Corneille dedicated to Louis Joseph de Guise, son of a brother of Mademoiselle de Guise, on the death of Henri II de Lorraine, in 1664: Corneille, Pierre. *Œuvres complètes, tome X*. 1862, pp. 182–184.

²³⁰ « 12 Janvier 1685 [...] à quoy je suis particulièrement attachée c'est qu'ils soyent reconnus par tout pour originaux sans contestation d'entens pintres qu'ils soyeont de devotion ou du moins que se ne soyent que sujets modestes et honnestes » in the autograph letter from Marie de Lorraine de Guise to Gondi, former agent for the Medicis in Paris and at that time serving Cosimo III in Florence. Archivio di Stato, Florence, Med. del Prin. 4783, quoted in Ranum, Patricia. "Mlle de Guise chooses a painting for her gallery" in: <http://ranumspanat.com/gallery.html> (accessed 16 August 2017). When the myth of Actaeon is represented in painting it mostly shows his meeting with Diana, the scene of the bath interrupted being a pretext to show a great deal of female nudity, emphasizing the parallel between Actaeon and the viewer. Louis XIV had two paintings in his collection by Francesco Albani (1573-1660) that showed different episodes of the myth: one acquired in 1671 and the other a gift of Le Nôtre in 1693, both now in Musée du Louvre (INV. 15) & (INV. 16).

²³¹ Jacqueline-Geneviève de Brion (1665–1721) entered the service of Mademoiselle de Guise in the mid- or late 1670s. She was the angel in the Christmas oratorio (H. 417) of 1684. After Mademoiselle de Guise's death in 1688, Brion moved to Versailles, and became one of Louis XIV's « filles de la musique ». She became engaged to Pierre Pièche, who had performed with the Guise singers in the mid-1680s. In July 1690, seventeen illustrious persons assembled in the « château de Versailles, sa Majesté y étant, » to sign the musicians' wedding contract. See: Ranum, Patricia. "A sweet servitude: A musician's life at the Court of Mlle de Guise" in *Early Music, Vol. 15, N° 3, Lully Anniversary Issue*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 351; and her online musings: <http://ranumspanat.com/jacquet-brion.html> (accessed 16 August 2017). On Geneviève Brion, see also: Benoit, Marcelle. *Musiques de cour (1661–1733) : Chapelle, Chambre, Écurie*. Paris: Picard, 1971, pp. 259, 290 & 316.

performed before the French Crown Prince as a disguised morality lesson, a statement on the dangers of lust for a young mind overly occupied with sensual pleasures²³². The subject is full of eroticism, which Charpentier's score, along with its libretto, emphasizes. While *Actéon* might have been given in public, the lack of evidence regarding the creation of the work suggests a highly private context which supports the thesis of a mirrored relationship between characters and audience²³³. The inclusion in the manuscript of *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* of the names of instrumentalists from the *Musique du Roi* who the Dauphin regularly employed, in addition to previously mentioned musicians belonging to the Guise circle, also greatly expands the possible scope of the patronage of the work²³⁴. The opera was therefore connected to the Court, much more than the Guise establishment, and was written at a time when the lyric genre was in search of a renewal. *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* appears in French opera at a point when, for some years, Louis XIV had been losing interest in spectacles, and Lully no longer enjoyed the monarch's favor. Opera had to find other reasons to exist, and aside from the Lully-controlled Paris Opera – *l'Académie Royale de Musique* – it was from the Dauphin that librettists and composers sought commissions²³⁵.

Since he was favored by the Dauphin, did Charpentier hope that with this powerful protector, he was more likely to have his *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* performed on stage? The growing hostility Lully had been experiencing starting in 1685²³⁶ provided a new context for many musicians eager to shine in the opera genre, and it is possible that *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* was an attempt by Charpentier to present a work of importance under the protection

²³² « la Metamorphose d'Acteon en Cerf nous enseigne que les Princes qui ont trop de passion pour la chasse, se dépouille pour ainsi dire de ce qu'ils ont d'humains, & qu'ils deviennent comme sauvages à force de demeurer dans les Bois, & de s'accoutument au carnage des bêtes. Et l'on dit ordinairement que les Chasseurs ont été dévoré par leurs chiens quand la chasse les a ruinez. [...] Cette fable d'Acteon qui vit Diane dans le bain, nous apprend ce qu'une autre nous a déjà appris, de n'être point curieux des choses qui ne nous concernent point, & de ne se mettre en peine de sçavoir les secrets des Rois, & enfin de tous les Grands, parce que l'apprehension qu'on a que vous ne les découvriez, ou le soupçon que vous les aiez découverts est souvent cause de vôtre perte. » in Du-Ryer, Pierre [Pierre Du Ryer]. *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide...* Amsterdam : Blaeu, Jannssons, etc., 1702, p. 87.

²³³ Donneau de Visé in his address « au Lecteur » of *L'embarras de Godard, ou L'accouchée : comédie*. Paris : J. Ribou, 1668, refers to this type of connivance : « D'ailleurs, si tout le Monde pouvait sçavoir, comme une partie de la Cour, ce qui m'a fourny l'idée de cette Scene, je ne serois pas en peine de la justifier ; &, peut-être aussi, que je ne l'aurais pas faite, si elle était sans Mystère ».

²³⁴ Fader, Don. "The « Cabale du Dauphin », Camptra, and Italian Comedy: the courtly politics of French musical patronage around 1700" in *Music & Letters*, Vol. 86, N° 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 380–413.

²³⁵ *Acis et Galatée*, which Lully composed in 1686 on a libretto by Campistron for the visit of the Dauphin to the Château d'Anet, is an attempt by the composer to regain the good graces of the king, as the dedication to the king in the score attests: « Vous avez eu la bonté de me dire qu'en travaillant pour MONSEIGNEUR LE DAUPHIN j'allois en quelque manière travailler pour VOSTRE MAJESTÉ mesme, puisque la tendresse dont vous l'honorez vous fait interesser fortement dans tout ce qui le regarde. » See: *Acis et Galatée, Pastorale héroïque de Campistron, mise en musique par J.-B. Lully*, publiée par Henry Prunières. Amsterdam: Wagnervereeniging, 1933, p. 27 and La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Jean-Baptiste Lully*. Paris: Fayard, 2002, pp. 332–340.

²³⁶ See: La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Jean-Baptiste Lully*. Paris: Fayard, 2002, p. 305, and Borel, Vincent. *Jean-Baptiste Lully*. Arles: Actes Sud and Paris: Classica, 2008, p. 99.

of the Dauphin to establish his reputation as an opera composer²³⁷. Lully's death, in March 1687, changed radically the situation; Charpentier, who was for some years in line to get an employment in the *Musique du Roi*, had great hope that he would finally receive official recognition. Could *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* have been intended for the Paris Opera itself? It is likely, given the staging the work requires. The score, aside from the specified dances and dancers, contains stage directions that suggest several sets and a number of machine effects, which make this interpretation plausible²³⁸. Presumably the project was abandoned by Charpentier, perhaps with the knowledge that one of Lully's sons, Louis, was preparing a work for *l'Académie Royale de Musique* on the same subject: *Orphée* premiered in 1690 at the Paris Opera. In this tragedy, consisting of a prologue and three acts on a libretto by Michel Du Boullay (16 ??-17??), the second act takes place in the Underworld²³⁹.

It was not until 1693 that a work of Charpentier, *Médée*, would be created at the Paris Opera: « Mr. Charpentier, who had it printed, had the honor of presenting it to the King a few days ago, » and Louis XIV declared of Charpentier that « He was convinced that he was a clever man, and that He knew there were many beautiful things in his opera ». ²⁴⁰ Despite the libretto by Thomas Corneille conforming the format Quinault adopted for his last librettos, and the declared support of the Dauphin²⁴¹, the work was met with hostility by the supporters of Lully's music: *Médée* was not the great success Charpentier had hoped for and the composer was never to write operas again.

²³⁷ Ranum, Patricia. "Charting Charpentier « Worlds » through his *Mélanges*" in *New Perspectives on Marc-Antoine Charpentier*, edited by Shirley Thompson. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010, p. 21.

²³⁸ It may be also relevant to note that if in his cantate *Orphée descendant aux Enfers* the sound of the lyre of Orpheus was expressed by the sound of one violin, in *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, Charpentier gives it to two violas da gamba. In 1688, Steffani gives the sound of the lyre of Amphion to four violas da gamba in his *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* for the Munich stage. See chapter 5.

²³⁹ Du Boullay, Michel and Lully, Louis de. "Orphée, Tragédie Représentée par l'Académie Royale de Musique l'An 1690, Les Paroles de M. Du Boullay, & la Musique de M. Louis de Lully, XXV. Opéra" in *Recueil général des opéra représentés par l'Académie Royale de Musique, depuis son établissement, Tome quatrième*. Paris : Ballard J.B.C. [Jean Baptiste Christophe], M.DCCIII [1703], pp. 1–50.

²⁴⁰ « Mr Charpentier, qui l'a fait graver, eut l'honneur de la présenter au Roy il y a quelques jours, et Sa Majesté lui dit 'qu'Elle était persuadée qu'il était un habile homme, et qu'Elle savait qu'il y avait de très belles choses dans son Opera'. » in *Mercure Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin, Décembre 1693*. Paris : Au Palais, pp. 331–335.

²⁴¹ Following the *Mercure Galant* of December 1693: « Quoique l'on n'en ait encore donné que neuf ou dix représentations, Monseigneur le Dauphin y est déjà venu deux fois ». This information is confirmed by the Journal by Dangeau who notes that the Dauphin attended at least four performances: Friday, 11 December 1693: « Monseigneur vint à Paris avec madame la princesse de Conty voir l'opéra nouveau de Médée ; les vers en sont de Corneille, et les airs de Charpentier. »; Sunday, 27 December 1693: « Monseigneur est allé dîner aujourd'hui au Palais Royal, chez Monsieur, et a entendu l'opéra dans sa loge. »; Thursday, 21 January 1694: « Monseigneur alla dîner à Paris avec les princesses chez Monsieur. Après dîner il y eut grand jeu, puis ils entendirent l'opéra dans la loge de Monsieur. »; and Thursday, 28 January 1694: « Monseigneur partit de Choisy le matin, et vint dîner au Palais Royal ; après dîner, il joua, et puis entendit l'opéra dans la loge de Monsieur. » in *Journal du marquis de Dangeau. Tome 4 / publié en entier pour la première fois par MM. Soulié, Dussieux, de Chennevières, Mantz, de Montaignon ; avec les additions inédites du duc de Saint-Simon publiées par M. Feuillet de Conches*. Paris : Firmin Didot frères, 1854–1860, pp. 409, 417, 440 & 443.

4. English « Masque/opera »

« To [stage] direct is to tell a story »

Ariane Mnouchkine, 1988¹

« But when we are in the Metamorphoses,
we are walking on enchanted ground,
and see nothing but scenes of Magick lying round us. »

Joseph Addison, 1712²

John Blow's *Venus and Adonis* was featured in the Boston Early Music Festival's inaugural Chamber Opera Series in 2008. I staged two other English operas which were presented the following seasons, with performances extending from 2009 to 2015: Blow's *Venus and Adonis* was followed by *Acis and Galatea* of George Frideric Handel (1685–1759), and the cycle was completed in 2010 with *Dido and Aeneas* by Henry Purcell (1659-1695). However, the concept of an English set took shape in my mind only after Blow's opera was produced, when I suggested that we would continue the series with a piece by a well-known opera composer but also with another work sung in English. The idea was also to strengthen the Chamber Opera Series concept by relying on the desire of Boston audiences for librettos set in their native tongue. The multiple and brilliant authorship of the libretto of *Acis and Galatea* attracted my attention as well as my curiosity regarding a piece whose identity had not been well served by recent staged performances. It led me to commence extensive research into the perspective of a staged production that would perfectly fit the spatial concept, poetic and literal, of Chamber Opera. This study was interconnected with an attempt to question the anonymity of the libretto of *Venus and Adonis*.

4.1 Practice and context of the research

The first perspective chosen to establish the directions for the staging was to read the librettos from the contexts of their first performances and clarify the intentions of their creators. To identify for each opera the influence of a specific patronage over the compositions both in artistic terms of libretto and score, was the first step. Because *Venus and Adonis* was composed around 1683 for Charles II, performing forces, place of performance and poetic themes are deeply connected with the monarch, at both public and private levels. The origins

¹ « Mettre en scène c'est: raconter une histoire » was the answer Ariane Mnouchkine (b. 1939) gave to my question « Mettre en scène, qu'est que c'est, en trois autres mots? » during a private conversation while I was an intern at Théâtre du Soleil in 1985.

² Joseph Addison (1672–1719) in *The Spectator*, No. 417, 28 June 1712. Available on line at: <http://web.mnstate.edu/gracyk/courses/web%20publishing/addison417.htm>

of *Dido and Aeneas* and its exact date of creation are still an object of academic debate³ which blurs its identity and that is why the research concerning Purcell's opera has been left out of this study⁴. Besides, the lack of original musical material results in too many vast questions about its original form and design⁵. Created in 1718, *Acis and Galatea* may have known the same fate: quite unique in the production of Handel, the patronage which created the piece was so linked to it that after the demise of the Chandos family, for which the piece was created, and the eradication of the Cannons gardens, where the piece was performed, the memory of this original version was lost. Only recently has *Acis and Galatea* been regaining its original shape, thanks to the work of John Butt which led to a new edition of the score⁶.

My relationship with *Venus and Adonis* started earlier than the project, as the title had attracted me in a simple way for decades. The clear narrative focused on one couple, the relation of love and beauty, the definition of genders, and the hunting theme, were as many points of entry which were interesting for me because of their omnipresence in the visual arts of the period. The considerable occurrence of Venus in poetry and iconography helped me to become familiar with all the episodes of the existence of the character. Things were very different for Handel's opera. Although the myth was not as familiar to me, *Acis and Galatea* had the same characteristics and seemed to follow the exact same artistic path. When Paul O'Dette proposed *Venus and Adonis* to inaugurate our first Chamber Opera Series, the work was self-evident by its major characteristics: it is considered the first English opera, the short libretto in English being set to music from beginning to end⁷. The fact the Blow's church music is well known may also have played a role in the recognition of the composer's name and the then recent edition by Bruce Wood of the score had also attracted new interests of the early music community for the piece⁸. As explained in the introduction of Chapter 3, pairing Blow's *Venus* with Charpentier's *Actéon* was a dramaturgical gesture which, besides putting next to

³ A recent article by Professor Ellen Harris gave a vivid state of affair regarding *Dido and Aeneas*. See: Harris, Ellen T. "The More We Learn About *Dido and Aeneas*, the Less We Know". *New York Times*, 15 December 2017.

⁴ Besides, from the point of view of the libretto, Virgilian poetical origins of *Dido and Aeneas* are superseding the Ovidian ones which unites the two other ones.

⁵ For the 2010 performance of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, I used a large tapestry as a backdrop. A tapestry was a feature which connects with the identity of a room, giving a double identity, such as a chamber in a palace (or, as matter of fact, in a school, for a gala performance), and although it does not convey immediately today the idea of « opera stage », the use of Tapestry for creating a theatrical space in a palace was current during the seventeenth century. For example, Vigarani had used tapestry for Cavalli's *Xerse* for the performances in the Louvre Palace in 1660. See: La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Carlo Vigarani, intendant des plaisirs de Louis XIV*. Paris: Perrin, 2005, pp. 30–33.

⁶ See: Handel, George Frideric [Georg Friedrich Händel]. *Acis and Galatea*. {Acis and Galatea (1718), (First « Cannons » Version)/HWV 49a/STTTB soli 2 oboes (doubling recorder), bassoon, 2 violins, bassi/edited by Clifford Bartlett} Huntingdon: The Early Music Company Ltd, 2009.

⁷ *Venus and Adonis* is set in music from start to finish, as we can determine today following the earliest surviving score; the libretto was not published for the original performance, and a spoken epilogue, for example, may have been recited, or dances may have followed.

⁸ Wood, Bruce. "Introduction" in Blow, John. *Venus and Adonis*, edited by Bruce Wood and Purcell Society. London: Stainer & Bell, 2008.

each other an English structure with a French one⁹, also asked the general « question of the chamber »: how to establish a new relation with the performing side of the chamber opera repertoire; that is, how to represent the repertoire dramatically in an empty space? How to tell a story? If the care for the contexts was also the guide I followed to define the dramaturgical foundations of the staged productions, my investigation focused on what appeared to be some of the aesthetic principles behind the conception of the original works. The method undertook to discover the pieces reveals that both *Venus and Adonis* and *Acis and Galatea* could be considered as expressions of a fundamental question regarding opera as a genre: in the relations and correspondences between literature, music and visual arts, what are the structural connections they explore during a performance? These connections borrow from the long rich tradition of the English *Masque*, influenced during the Restoration by French and in the Georgian era by Italian *opera*. That is why I consider both Blow's and Handel's works as belonging to a genre I call, following Andrew R. Walkling's insights, *Masque/opera*¹⁰.

4.1.1 Concept or design

As explained in the previous chapter, Blow's *Venus and Adonis*, associated with Charpentier's *Actéon*, was the first part, in my BEMF production, of a court divertissement given in the frame of a hunting party. The staging of its Prologue defined this frame to unite the two pieces. I enhanced the function of the Prologue, a theatrical means that poets and musicians have been using since ancient times, to create a new mental space suited to the empty stage of a concert hall and suitable for comprehending the two pieces. This Prologue format gave the dramatic template on which all my staged productions for this very space have been conceived. By reinvigorating its meaning in my staging, the Prologue was given back its original function: to offer a frame and a doorway for the audience to the story the operas represent. In fact, the Prologue is literally used to set the time and give the necessity to proceed with the story telling. I gave the Prologue the function to give the « dessein » of the performance following the seventeenth century where any intellectual or artistic project confused itself with its design (Figure 1). In 1690, Furetière explained that a « dessein » is a « Project, enterprise, intention. [...] and] the thought that one has in the imagination of the order, of the distribution and of the construction of a painting, a Poem, a Book, a building. [...] dessein] is also said in Painting, for these pictures or paintings that are without color, and that are sometimes executed in a big way. [...] but] is also taken for the thought of a great work that is crudely drawn in small [size], to be executed and finished on a grand scale. »¹¹, the last meaning being close to the one of the Italian « modello », as we have seen in Chapter 1, when exploring Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. « Disegno », the Italian word for drawing or design, carries this complex meaning in art, involving both the ability to make the drawing and the intellectual capacity to invent the design. A French–English dictionary of 1673 had already given the translation of « dessein » as « a

⁹ Aside from assuring our ongoing artistic work on French operatic repertoire as BEMF just had recorded Lully's *Thésée*, and produced and recorded his *Psyché*.

¹⁰ See: Walkling, Andrew R. *Masque and Opera in England, 1656–1688*. London: Routledge, 2016.

¹¹ « Projet, entreprise, intention. [...] la pensée qu'on a dans l'imagination de l'ordre, de la distribution & de la construction d'un tableau, d'un Poëme, d'un Livre, d'un bastiment. [...] se dit aussi en Peinture, de ces images ou tableaux qui sont sans couleur, & qu'on execute quelquefois en grand. [...] se prend aussi pour la pensée d'un grand ouvrage qu'on trace grossièrement en petit, pour l'exécuter & finir en grand. » in Furetière, Antoine. *Dictionnaire universel, contenant généralement tous les mots françois tant vieux que modernes, et les termes de toutes les sciences et des arts... par feu Messire Antoine Furetière...* La Haye: A. et R. Leers, 1690.

design, plot, project, purpose, determination, resolution »¹². These notions, which are applicable to both poetry and visual arts, were also applied to performing arts.



Figure 1: *Le Dessain*, engraving by Etienne Jeaurat (1699–1789)
From a painting by Sébastien Le Clerc (1637–1714).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

To give visual purpose and in-motion shapes to poetic ideas is one of the tasks of the stage director, and the authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, themselves influenced by the ancient theorists, provide ample and useful perspectives on the subject. The Latin dictum « *Ut pictura poesis* », which literally means « As is painting so is poetry », comes to mind again and deserves attention. The statement occurs in Horace's *Ars Poetica*: « As is painting so is poetry. Some works will captivate you when you stand very close to them and others if you are at a greater distance. This work prefers a darker vantage point, that work wants to be seen in the light since it feels no terror before the penetrating judgment of the critic. This work pleases only once, that work will give pleasure even if we go back to it ten times over. »¹³ Horace meant that poetry deserved the same careful consideration that was, in Horace's day, reserved for painting¹⁴. The concept that poetry and painting might somehow be linked from a certain point of view was not original to Horace, though he devised the motto « *Ut pictura poesis* ». But, as I have noted in my chapter about Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, the

¹² Cotgrave, Randle. *A French and English dictionary*. London: Anthony Dolle, 1673.

¹³ Horace. *Ars Poetica*, Verse 361.

¹⁴ Golden, Leon. "Reception of Horace's *Ars Poetica*" in *A Companion to Horace*, edited by Gregson Davis. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, p. 400.

comparison refers, through the Roman Plutarch (ca. AD 46–AD 120), back to the Greek lyrical poet Simonide of Keos (556 BC–468 BC)¹⁵. Plutarch, in his book on the fame of the Athenian, *De Gloria Atheniesium*¹⁶, attributes to Simonides of Keos the idea that poetry is a speaking picture, painting a mute poetry: « Poema pictura loquens, pictura poema silens ». Plutarch employed the association to praise historians who wrote such imagistic texts that readers could « see » the moments they were reading, or, as a matter of fact, hearing, as poetry were read aloud or sung and therefore still perceived through a phonic medium¹⁷. This idea that poetry, when heard, can create in the mind images was to know a fervent development during the Renaissance, also thanks to the popularity of Aristotle's *Poetics*.

The mimetic representation of life in painting, poetry and theatre is central to Aristotle's *Poetics*, his treatise about aesthetics introducing the concept of mimesis. Aristotle stated that human beings are mimetic beings, feeling an urge to create texts and art forms that represent reality and offer reflections.¹⁸ But Aristotle considered it important that there be a certain difference between the work of art on the one hand and life on the other: spectators draw knowledge and consolation from tragedies only because these events do not happen to them. Without this distance provided by the imitation, tragedy could not give rise to catharsis, the purgation of the soul of its bad passions. However, it is equally important for Aristotle that the text causes the audience to identify with the characters and the events in the text, and unless this identification occurs, it does not touch them¹⁹: Aristotle holds that it is through « simulated representation »²⁰, i.e., mimesis, that the audience respond to the acting on stage which is conveying to it what the characters feel, so that the audience may empathize with the characters in this way through the mimetic form of dramatic roleplay. It is the task of the stage director to produce the enactment to accomplish this empathy by means of what is taking place on stage. In short, catharsis, the purgation of the soul, can only be achieved if we see something that is both recognizable and distant from us.

4.1.2 *Masque/opera: the meeting of sounds and images*

This approach found a fertile ground in the formative years of the opera genre, as music de facto conferred a distance to the strong emotions depicted in a libretto. In opera, this distance is supplemented by different matters: i.e., the characters sing when they are sometimes

¹⁵ See: Harvey, Judith. "Ut pictura poesis." In *Glossary 2004, Theories of Medias*, The University of Chicago, 2002: <http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/utpicturapoesis.htm> accessed 8 April 2018.

¹⁶ Plutarch. *De Gloria Atheniesium*, III, 346f–347d.

¹⁷ « We tend to think that to compare poetry with painting is to make a metaphor, while to differentiate poetry from painting is to state a literal truth. » in Mitchell, William John Thomas. *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986, p. 49.

¹⁸ Praz, Mario. *Mnemosyne. The Parallel between Literature and the Visual Arts* (« Bollingen Series », XXXV, 16). Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 1970.

¹⁹ My summary of Aristotle's views is inspired from notes taken during the Seminar *Esthétique Classique* of Professor Jacques Scherer, Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1980 and 1981. See: Scherer, Jacques. *La Dramaturgie Classique en France*. Paris: Nizet, 1986 and two study cases by the same author: Racine, Jean. *Bérénice, Édition avec analyse dramaturgique sous la direction de Jacques Scherer*. Paris: Société d'Édition d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1974; and Scherer, Jacques. *Racine: Bajazet*. Paris: Centre de Documentation Universitaire, 1971.

²⁰ Aristotle. *Poetics*. Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, notably 1488a, Chapter 3.

supposed to talk, and pioneers in the genre were aware of the problem²¹. During the Renaissance, the argument sprung up of which form, poetry, and sometimes music, or painting, and sometimes also sculpture, was superior. Painting took precedence in most of the cases, and Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) recognized the imitation of nature in both arts but designated painting as the more noble art²². This competition, or « paragone » as da Vinci put it, between media of painting and poetry placed primacy on painting because sight was considered a higher-ranking sense than hearing, the sense on which poetry, and music, depended. Opera was the form elaborated to satisfy both senses equally: the ‘weakness’ of recited poetry being compensated by the added value of music and by the art of painting. As remarked by Lee Rensselaer (1898–1984), in his 1940 seminal study “*Ut Pictura Poesis* : The Humanistic Theory of Painting”, the « sister arts », as they were called during the Renaissance, were acknowledged as different « in means and manner of expression » though they « were considered almost identical in fundamental nature, in content, and in purpose ».²³

In the Classical age, the 1668 translation in French by Roger de Piles (1635–1709) of the Latin poem *De arte graphica* by another painter and theorist Charles Alphonse Du Fresnoy (1611–1668) proved influential in expanding the discussion of « *Ut pictura poesis* » with new editions in 1673, 1684 and 1688, all fundamental years when tracing the history of French opera and English *Masque*. While his opening lines²⁴ referred directly to Plutarch, his developed views inspired new avenues of exploration, and propose a method to compose pictures which denotes a sense of direction, where the organization of the space and the placement of characters in it contributes, if not makes clear, the story told by the picture. In England, it was at the request of non-speaking French painters that John Dryden (1631–1700) translated the de Piles version of the poem into English in 1695 but he added his own preface establishing « A Parallel betwixt Painting and Poetry »²⁵. Dryden develops the idea of artistic perfection and likeness in mimesis and compare extensively epic poetry, theatre stage and painting purposes

²¹ This is particularly noticeable in the “Letter to the Duke of Buckingham upon operas” by Saint-Evremond from 1678, one of the first French critics to write about opera as a genre. See: Saint-Evremond, [Charles de]. *Œuvres Mêlées, revues, annotées et précédées d’une histoire de la vie et des ouvrages de l’auteur, par Charles Giraud de l’Institut, Tome Deuxième*. Libraire, Paris: J. Léon Techener fils, MDCCCLXV [1865], pp. 389–403. For an elegant English translation, see: *Letters of Charles Marguetel de Saint-Denis, Seigneur de Saint Evremond, Edited with an introduction and notes by John Hayward*. London: George Routledge & Sons, 1930, pp. 205–217. See also: Saint-Evremond, [Charles de]. *Les Opéra. Édition présentée, établie et annotée par Robert Finch et Eugène Joliat*. Genève: Droz, 1979.

²² Leonardo da Vinci’s views on poetry and painting are stated in his *Trattato della pittura*. For an online edition, see: <http://www.dominiopublico.gov.br/download/texto/lb000840.pdf>

²³ Rensselaer, Wright Lee. “*Ut Pictura Poesis*: The Humanistic Theory of Painting” in *Art Bulletin* 22, 1940, pp. 197–269.

²⁴ « La Peinture & la Poésie sont deux Soeurs qui se ressemblent si fort en toutes choses, qu’elles se presentent alternativement l’une à l’autre leur office & leur nom: On appelle la premiere une Poésie muette, & l’autre une Peinture parlante. » in Piles, Roger de. *L’art de peinture, de Charles-Alphonse Du Fresnoy, Traduit en françois, avec des remarques necessaire & tres-amplés*. Paris: Nicolas L’Anglois, 1668, p. 3.

²⁵ *The Works of John Dryden, Volume XX: Prose 1691–1698 De Arte Graphica and Shorter Works*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990, pp. 38–207.

and methods²⁶. Performed in 1683, *Venus and Adonis* by John Blow offers an operatic application reflecting these principles²⁷.

Closer in time to *Acis and Galatea*, Joseph Addison (1672–1719) in 1712 praises sight as « the most perfect and delightful of all our senses »²⁸ arguing for the vividness and universality of pictorial images in contrast to poetry, itself depending on a specific idiom: « description runs yet further from the things it represents than painting; for a picture bears a real resemblance to its original, which letters and syllables are wholly void of ». ²⁹ Extending his reflection on gardening, Addison recommended « there are as many Kinds of Gardening as of Poetry »³⁰ and advised the man of taste to « make a pretty Landskip of his own Possessions »³¹ with his garden, suggesting a very close relationship of landscape painting and garden design. A practitioner of the two arts, Alexander Pope, one of the librettist of *Acis and Galatea*, considered both the art of poetry and the art of painting to be equals, and it can easily be seen that he held that there was a close relationship of expressivity.³² But his views on visual arts are supplemented and amplified by the fact that, when Pope started to reflect on the question, gardens were starting to be inspired by the taste for picturesque called for by Addison, defined by the influence of paintings by Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) or Claude le Lorrain (ca. 1600–1682). By comparing gardening to landscape painting, Pope's eloquent writings will ultimately have an enormous influence on English garden design. The garden around his villa of Twickenham was the receptacle of all his experiences and research and became famous during his lifetime, but the gardens of Cannons, a place which triggered *Acis and Galatea*, had doubtless initiated the creative and reflexive process of the thinker, even if it may have been in negative terms.

By placing the art of painting in the center of my reflections on *Venus and Adonis* and on *Acis and Galatea* I try to work on the differentiation between the perception of time and

²⁶ Already in 1691, for the dedication of the score of *The Prophetess*, which the poet drafted for Purcell's signature, Dryden begun by associating « All arts and Sciences » in their common need of patronage and asserted a closer relationship between music and poetry « acknowledgd [sic] Sisters », for « As poetry is the harmony of words, so musick is that of notes ». In the draft of the same text Dryden goes further and offers a comparison between music, poetry and painting, a comparison omitted from the publication. See: Roswell G. Ham. "Dryden's dedication for The Music of the Prophetesse, 1691" in *PMLA*, L (1935) pp. 1065–1075.

²⁷ See: Hagstrum, Jean H. *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958.

²⁸ Addison, Joseph. *The Spectator*, No. 411, 21 June 1712. Available on line at: <http://web.mnstate.edu/gracyk/courses/web%20publishing/addison411.htm> (last accessed 19 March 2018).

²⁹ Addison, Joseph. *The Spectator*, No. 416, 27 June 1712. Available on line at: <http://web.mnstate.edu/gracyk/courses/web%20publishing/addison416.htm> (last accessed 19 March 2018).

³⁰ Addison, Joseph. *The Spectator*, No. 477, 6 September 1712. Available on line at: <http://archive.twoaspirinsandacomedy.com/spectator/spectator.php?line=477> (last accessed 19 March 2018).

³¹ Addison, Joseph. *The Spectator*, No. 414, 25 June 1712. Available on line at: <http://web.mnstate.edu/gracyk/courses/web%20publishing/addison414.htm> (last accessed 19 March 2018).

³² See: Williams, Robert W. "Alexander Pope and « Ut Pictura Poesis »" in *Sydney Studies in English Journal*, Volume 9 (1983), pp. 61–75. Available on line (last accessed 19 March 2018): <https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/SSE/article/view/396/365>

space in poetry and painting³³. I argue that their complementarity in the artistic form I called the *Masque/opera* implies a staging which engages in a temporal movement concomitant to music but suggests the support of the adequate visual references. Factors such as essential time are inherent in the texture itself of a show with its instantaneous reception like they are for the contemplation of a picture, in its composition, or in its aesthetic arrangement.³⁴ In both cases, spectacle and painting, this empathy is happening in real time, as Jean Mairet (1604–1686) explained it in 1631: « From the point of view of imagination, history and comedy [spectacle] are not the same thing: the difference is in this point, that history is only a simple narration of things that happened before, aptly made for the maintenance of memory, and not for the contentment of the imagination; where the comedy is an active and touching representation of things as if they really happened in real time, and of which the main objective is the Pleasure of the imagination ». ³⁵ In opera, the time of the score fixes the time of the contemplation of the stage and it is not a minor effect of the creative power of the composer. Taking into consideration the emphasis on the viewer's eye and the imagery that contributed to audience to be able to so vividly « watch » the plot of these poems unfolding, the two following essays try to place *Venus and Adonis* and *Acis and Galatea* in the larger aesthetical debates of their times. With a broad up-to-date attitude of investigation regarding their performing capabilities, I will, in the perspective of staging them, try to unearth what is the « Pleasure of the imagination » they can procure.

³³ Silver, Larry. "Step-Sister of the Muses: Painting as Liberal Art and Sister Art" in *Articulate Images, The Sister Arts from Hogarth to Tennyson*, Edited by Richard Wendorf. Minneapolis (MN): University of Minnesota Press, 1983, p. 36–69.

³⁴ See: Wendorf, Richard. "Ut Pictura Biographia: Biography and Portrait Painting as Sister Arts" in *Articulate Images, The Sister Arts from Hogarth to Tennyson*, Edited by Richard Wendorf. Minneapolis (MN): University of Minnesota Press, 1983, p. 115.

³⁵ « L'histoire et la comédie pour le regard de l'imagination ne sont pas la même chose: La différence est en ce point, que l'histoire n'est qu'une simple narration de choses autrefois arrivées, faite proprement pour l'entretien de la mémoire, et non pour le contentement de l'imagination; où la comédie est une active et pathétique représentation des choses comme si véritablement elles arrivaient sur le temps, et de qui la principale fin est le Plaisir de l'imagination. » in Mairet, Jean. *La Silvanire, tragi-comédie pastorale*. Paris: Targa, 1631.

4.2 *Venus and Adonis* by John Blow

« Among those Things with Beauty shine,
(Both Humane natures, and Divine)
There was not so much sorrow spi'd,
No, no that Day the sweet Adonis died! »

Anne Killigrew, *Upon a Little Lady Under the Discipline of an Excellent Person*.³⁶

The story of the death of the beautiful hunter Adonis is recounted by Ovid, the Roman poet of the first century, in Book X of his illustrious compilation of *Metamorphoses*. Adonis inspired love in Venus, and the goddess was so taken by the mortal that she began to spend more time on earth than she did in the heavens. Yet, even though Venus warned him of the dangers of pursuing dangerous beasts, Adonis went hunting a monstrous wild boar. Adonis was mortally wounded by the beast, and Venus, with her tears, transformed her beloved's blood into a flower of the same color. Immortality was given to Adonis through these little red anemones, with a spring life as short his was: a flower so fragile that the wind disperses the petals of its passing beauty. From the Greek bucolic poet Bion of Phlossa, who flourished in Sicily in the late second and early first centuries BC, one complete poem, *The Lament for Adonis*, survives. As its title indicates, it focuses on the end of the tale, when Adonis is mourned by Venus and the metamorphosis happens: « The Paphian weeps and Adonis bleeds, drop for drop, and the blood and tears become flowers upon the ground. Of the blood comes the rose, and of the tears the windflower. »³⁷ If the metamorphosis is the end of the tale of Venus and Adonis, it is the hunt that marks the key events of it. Thus, hunting, and its conclusion in the fatal outcome, emerges through time as a dominant theme of the myth and many versions are found throughout literature and the visual arts. In poetry, the attachment of Venus for Adonis finds fertile ground with the parallels offered by hunting and love: the physical vocabulary of the art of the chase can be applied to the courtship, and the tale of the mother of love and the beautiful hunter offers many opportunities for shifts between them³⁸. In painting, the meeting of the two lovers during Adonis's hunt and the death of the hunter frame the tale and remain among the most represented episodes, one in the gallant manner, and the other in the funeral

³⁶ « Upon a Little Lady Under the Discipline of an Excellent Person » in Killigrew, Anne. *Poems 1686*. Facsimile edition, edited by R. E. Morton. Gainesville, Florida: Scholars, 1967, p. 93.

³⁷ Bion. « The Lament for Adonis », Verse: 64, in *The Greek Bucolic Poets*. Translated by Edmonds, J. M. Loeb Classical Library Volume 28. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press and London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1912.

³⁸ For a synthesis of Adonis in literature, see: Caruso, Carlo. *Adonis: The Myth of the Dying God in the Italian Renaissance*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

mode³⁹. Starting in the Renaissance, poetry and painting unite on stage to make the myth a love tragedy in pastoral scenery, where hunting finds an extra cultural setting. It is with this dual expressivity that, in 1683, John Blow composed his scenic version of *Venus and Adonis* as a « Masque » for Charles II (1630–1685). It is necessary to explore how the theme offered a striking articulation between poetry and visual arts in the seventeenth century, before investigating in detail how the patronage informs us as to the purpose of this opera in societal terms, and how the private side of this royal backing shaped the piece in detail. These considerations about the cultural context allow me to offer a personal hypothesis about the authorship of the libretto, authorship which reinforces the singularity of Blow's *Venus and Adonis* and enlightens its contents.

4.2.1 Betwixt Poems and Pictures

Although there were editions printed of the *Metamorphoses*⁴⁰ in the original Latin and in French and English translations, the tale of Adonis was mostly known in England thanks to the poem by William Shakespeare (1564–1616). Published in 1593, *Venus and Adonis* was probably Shakespeare's first publication, and gives a beautiful visual description of the metamorphosis⁴¹. By the end of the seventeenth century, however, the vivid eroticism of the rest of the poem was considered lecherous⁴². This vision may have been accentuated by religious concerns, catholic and reformed, who saw in Adonis one of the false idols of the Antiquity, adored for his beauty, a belief which finds an echo in by the works of Bion⁴³. The importance of Shakespeare's poem is not to be underestimated, but in England it was soon superseded. The Italian poet Giambattista Marino (1569–1625) wrote *L'Adone*, published in Paris and Venice in 1623. Marino's work has substance: the myth is related by Ovid in

³⁹ See: Price, Hereward T. "Function of Imagery in Venus and Adonis" in *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters* 31 (1945), pp. 275–297 (This essay is reprinted pp. 107–122 in the anthology of Kolin, see note 7). See also: Sillars, Stuart. *Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 55–94.

⁴⁰ For an English translation from Shakespeare's time, see the first widely available English translation (and the first to be translated directly from the Latin) by William Golding: [Ovid]. *The Fyrst Fower Bookes of P. Ovidius Nasos worke, entitled Metamorphosis, translated oute of Latin into Englishe meter*. [Edited by J. M. Cohen. Translated by Arthur Golding]. London: Willyam Seres, 1565 & 1567.

⁴¹ « And in his blood that on the ground lay spill'd / A purple flower sprung up, chequer'd with white, / Resembling well his pale cheeks, and the blood / Which in round drops upon their whiteness stood. » in [Shakespeare, William.] *Venus and Adonis*. London: Richard Field, 1593, Verses 1167–1170.

⁴² For the reception of Shakespeare's poem see: Kolin, Philip C. "Venus and/or Adonis among the Critics" in *Venus and Adonis: Critical Essays*, edited by Philip C. Kolin. New York: Garland, 1997, pp. 3–66, and for its reputation of lechery during the seventeenth century more specifically, see: pp. 10–12.

⁴³ « Un sanglier ayant malheureusement tué Adonis, Vénus le pleura d'une manière inconsolable. La plupart des peuples de l'Orient, à l'imitation de ce deuil, établirent des Fêtes pour pleurer Adonis. Les Poètes racontent que Vénus obtint de Proserpine qu'Adonis ressusciteroit, & passeroit six mois sur la terre, & six mois dans les enfers. C'est sur cela qu'étoient fondées les réjouissances qui suivoient le deuil de la mort d'Adonis. » in Calmet, Augustin. *Dictionnaire historique, critique, chronologique, géographique et littéral de la Bible, par le R. P. Dom Augustin Calmet*,... Paris : Émery, 1722-1728, p. 30. In the same book, see also N° 5: Adonis in "Hauts-lieux consacrez au culte des Idoles, & à toute sorte d'abominations", engraving by Charles-Nicolas Cochin Père (1688–1754), plate between pp. 334 and 335.

approximately 100 lines but was expanded to more than 40,000 lines by Marino⁴⁴. Near the middle of the poem, the description of a garden occupies three entire cantos, 5,000 lines. This « Garden of Pleasure » is described in five sections: the Garden of the Eye, the Nose, the Ear, the Mouth, and the Garden of Touch. Here Marino displayed his gift for « ingegno » and « acutezza », the ingenuity and the wit the readers of his time appreciated in him, and here especially he earned the title « Poet of the Five Senses »⁴⁵. This mannerist style invigorated the perception of the myth with sensory descriptions and influenced many writers⁴⁶, including the French poet Jean de La Fontaine (1621–1695), who in his *Adonis*, written in 1658, also treats the story with great care for visual effects.⁴⁷ Like Marino, La Fontaine expands the topical scenes of the tale by dividing it into episodes, which prompts a number of lavish descriptions and offers opportunity for sensorial exploration⁴⁸. The tale of Adonis, by the time of La Fontaine, has become an eminently pictorial subject and La Fontaine cannot ignore this, and it may be a sign that *Venus and Adonis* was published in 1669 with his *Les Amours de Psyché et Cupidon*: the tale of Adonis, associated in publication with his eminently visual version of Psyché, immediately places the work in resonance with pictorial art. From 1670, the imaginary myth of Adonis was already formed at the crossroads of Ovid's original *Metamorphoses*, the contemporary poets' versions of the tale of Adonis and an illustrative tradition spread throughout Europe, defined through many illustrations and well-known masterpieces in England.

The tale of Venus and Adonis has held a major place in the production of illustrative artists since the Renaissance, suggesting its innately visual aspect. Any reader of *The Metamorphoses* would have expected engravings to accompany the fable of Adonis in illustrated editions since *The Metamorphoses* with figures by Bernard Salomon (1506–1561) was published in Lyon in 1557. This intense scene between the lovers, although not literally in the Ovidian text, is marked in Salomon's engraving by the amorous body language of lovers and was highly influential (Figure 1). Not only has Salomon's plate been repeated in numerous editions throughout Europe but his composition was reused, copied and imitated many times, as the engraving by Jean Mathieu (1590–1672), itself repeated in many different editions, exemplifies (Figure 2). The embracing couple became, for the engravers, the most used configuration inspired by the tale⁴⁹.

⁴⁴ For an introduction to Marino, see: Priest, Harold. "Marino and Italian Baroque" in *The Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Dec. 1971), pp. 107–111.

⁴⁵ For Marino in England, see: Mirollo, James V. *The Poet of the Marvelous: Giambattista Marino*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963, pp. 243–264.

⁴⁶ See: *Tutte le opere di Giovan Battista Marino, volume 2, tomo 1*, a cura di Giovanni Pozzi. Milano: A. Mondadori Editore, 1976.

⁴⁷ See: Dandrey, Patrick. "Marino et La Fontaine ou l'allégorie détournée" in *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, 112e année, No. 2, avril 2012, pp. 305–313. See: La Fontaine, Jean de. *Œuvres galantes (Adonis, Le Songe de Vaux, Les Amours de Psyché et de Cupidon)*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1996. [Critical anthology chosen and presented by Patrick Dandrey. Introduction, pp. 3–15. Bibliography, pp. 16–29].

⁴⁸ See: Dandrey, Patrick. "Les temples de Volupté. Régime de l'image et de la signification dans *Adonis, Le Songe de vaux* et *Les Amours de Psyché*", *Littératures classiques*, No. 29, 1997, pp. 181–210. See also: Bohnert, Céline. "La Fontaine peintre de mythologie: art de l'écphrase et goût pictural dans l'*Adonis* (1658–1669)" in *Dix-septième siècle*, Vol. 245, No. 4, 2009, pp. 683–698.

⁴⁹ For illustrations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, see the extensive, albeit confusing, website of the University of Virginia dedicated to Ovid: <http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/index.html#Latin> (last accessed 9 March 2018).



Figure 1: 1557, *Venus & Adonis*
Woodcut by Bernard Salomon (1506–1561) for *La métamorphose d'Ovide figurée*
by Jean de Tournes (1504–1564). Lyon: Jean de Tournes, 1557.
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Figure 2: *Adonis aimé de Vénus*
Engraving by Jean Mathieu (1590–1672) in Nicholas Renouard (16??-165?), *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide, Traduites en Prose Française, et de nouveau soigneusement revues, corrigées en infinis endroits, et enrichies de figures a chacune Fable. Avec XV. Discours Contenant l'Explication Morale et Historique...* Paris: Pierre Bellaine, 1637, p. 294.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Titian (ca. 1488/1490–1576), in his various *Venere e Adone*, chose to focus on another episode, in the middle of the tale, which integrates both the foundation of the tale and its tragic ending: the departure of Adonis for the hunt. Remarkably for our argument, « poesie », poems, is the term applied by Titian to the group of his paintings that *Venere e Adone* belongs to. Aimed at exciting the senses, this series of mythological works⁵⁰ was executed between 1553 and 1562 for Philip of Habsburg (1527–1598), then king of England, later king of Spain as Philip II. Titian's first *Venere e Adone* was painted in the 1520s⁵¹, and the painter revisited the theme years later for a painting meant for the 1554 wedding of Philip with Queen Mary I of England (1516–1558). Several compositions by the Venetian painter, based on the 1554 version, keep the axis of tension which makes the work so powerful: Venus tries to detain Adonis who is leaving to hunt. On the left side of the painting, Venus is accompanied by Cupid, who is asleep among the protective trees, while on the right side, Adonis is led by his dogs toward an open space. This configuration has the ability to condense the narrative and renew the theme. Most artists isolate the couple in a landscape with the opposition of the two sides, the open space, towards which the hunter belongs, opposed to the lavish vegetation which harbors Venus, but is balanced in Titian's painting by his great care to represent the lovers in a very lifelike manner.

Contemporary viewers hailed *Venere e Adone* as the most erotic of the « poesie » and Lodovico Dolce, in a letter to the noble Venetian Alessandro Contarini (1486–1553), acutely reflects on the dual power of Titian's painting: « This poem on Adonis was painted recently [...] One can see that this unique master tried to express in his face a graceful beauty, which while partaking of the feminine, does not however depart from the virile: hereby I mean that a woman might have a certain something male about her, and a man a something beautifully female – a mixture difficult to achieve, agreeable, and (if one believes Pliny) one most highly valued by Apelles ». ⁵² Dolce admired without inhibition, as Marino will, the beauty of Adonis⁵³ but especially marveled at how the goddess seemed to be alive and, aware of the eroticism of

⁵⁰ *Jupiter and Danaë* (London, Aspley House), *Persus and Andromeda* (London, Wallace Collection), *Diana and Actaeon* (Edinburgh, National Gallery), *Diana and Callisto* (London, National Gallery), *The rape of Europa* (Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum), and *Venus and Adonis* (Madrid, Museo del Prado). The version now in Madrid's Museo del Prado is generally considered to be the earliest of the surviving versions. Although not certainly documented until 1626, it is regarded as the painting dispatched to King Philip in London by Titian in September 1554. (Research about the painting at the Museo del Prado [Exhibition *Tiziano, Danae, Venus y Adonis. Las primeras poesias*] was carried out in January 2015 during my residency with the Boston Early Music Festival at the Auditorium Nacional de Música, Madrid).

⁵¹ A 1631 copy by Peter Oliver (1594–1647) of this first version was in an English private collection in the seventeenth century and is now in the Burghley House collection in Lincolnshire. See: Joannides, Paul & Shoaf Turner, Jane. "Titian's Rokeby Venus and Adonis and the Role of working templates within his development of the Theme" in *Studi tizianeschi*, n. IX, 2014 (issued in 2016), pp. 48–76. See also: Joannides, Paul. "Titian in London and Madrid" in *Paragone*, 657, November 2004, pp. 3–30.

⁵² « Fu questa poesia di Adone poco tempo addietro fatta [...] E vedesi, che nell'aria del viso questo unico maestro ha cercato di esprimere certa graziosa bellezza, che partecipando della femmina, non si discostasse però dal virile: vuo' dire, che in donna terrebbe non so che di uomo, e in uomo di vaga donna: mistura difficile, aggradevole, e sommanente (se creder dobbiamo a Plinio) prezzata da Apelle. » in Dolce, Lodovico. "Al magnifico M. Alessandro Contarini" in [Bottari, Giovanni Gaetano] *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architettura*, Volume 3, Roma: Niccolò & Marco Pagliarini, 1757–1773, pp. 257 & 258.

⁵³ Male beauty was Adonis's characteristic and Marino expands on the theme by describing a male beauty contest in Canto XVI of his *Adone*. The beauty contest, in the temple of Venus, between young men aspiring to the kingship of the island of Cyprus, includes the main praise of the beauty of Adonis, praise which by itself is opportune from the point of view of the fable, but also contributes to a real treatise of aesthetics.

the painting, declared that the viewer of such a beautiful nude must feel aroused: « one cannot find a man so acute of vision, and of judgment, who seeing her does not believe her to be alive, none so chilled by years nor so hard of complexion that he does not feel himself warmed, softened and all the blood stirring in his veins ». ⁵⁴ With Titian's painting, the myth of Adonis and Venus acquired a clear eroticism that would thereafter be the primary aspect of any artistic rendering.



Figure 3: *Venere e Adone*
1554 by Titian (ca. 1488/1490–1576)
Madrid, Museo del Prado.

Titian had included the erotic tale of Venus and Adonis in his series of « poems » about the love between gods and mortals, but the tale was expanded by other artists in more than one painting, retelling the different episodes of the story. Often destined to be displayed one next to the other, most of the other versions of Venus and Adonis retain the embodiment of genders but additionally express an opposition between love and death. This led to the prominence of two other narrative moments: the love encounter and the hunter's death. These episodes gave birth to an iconographic tradition in which viewers would have recognized the tale of Venus and Adonis, notably in works where the cupids are often multiplied and

⁵⁴ « Vi giuro, Signor mio, che non si truova uomo tanto acuto di vista, e di giudicio, che veggendola non la creda viva: niuno così raffreddato dagli anni, o sì duro di complessione, che non si senta riscaldare, intenerire, a commoversi nelle vene tutto il sangue. » in Dolce, Lodovico. "Al magnifico M. Alessandro Contarini" in [Bottari, Giovanni Gaetano] *Raccolta di lettere* ..., Volume 3, Roma: Niccolò & Marco Pagliarini, 1757–1773, p. 259. It is worth mentioning that Lodovico Dolce published his own translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in 1553.

sometimes accompanied by the three Graces. This situation happens in France when in 1685 Louis XIV acquired a series of four paintings by Francesco Albani (1578–1660), which were seen and understood by the French as depicting the full story of Venus and Adonis, albeit the death and metamorphosis were not represented⁵⁵. This interpretation, possibly prompted by the earlier, 1671 acquisition by Louis XIV of a small Albani painting showing the encounter of the goddess and the hunter, was in fact erroneous. The first intention of the painter for the series seems to have been representing an allegorical battle between Venus and Diana, Love and Chastity⁵⁶, but as Diana is the goddess of hunt, and as Adonis seems to forsake Venus to go hunting, the French viewers related to the paintings on a narrative level, not on the complex allegorical one, and the series was appropriated by the Ovidian myth. Started in 1621, before the 1623 publication of Marino's *L'Adone*, and finished in 1633, when the fame of the exuberant poem by Marino was starting to reach far and wide, Albani's cycle of four cabinet pictures features a profusion of cupids, who by their large number and the variety of their activities, played a major role. The polymath Roger de Piles (1635–1709) wrote that Albani « marry'd a second Wife, who brought for her Portion a great deal of Beauty and good Humour. By this means he had quiet at home, and a perfect Model for the Women he was to Paint. She had very handsome Children, by whom he us'd to draw little Cupids Playing and Dancing, in all the variety of Postures imaginable, and by his Wife he drew all his Naked Venus's and Nymphs ». But this sense of truth and likeness in the imitation was balanced by the fact the learned painter « made use of his Knowledge of the *Belles Lettres* ingeniously to adorn the Subjects he treated of, with the Fictions of Poetry».⁵⁷ The attraction of the Albani series may also be based on the fact that the paintings offer proportions for the relation between figures and backgrounds that were close to the one offered by the theatre stage during this period.

The fascination for the « lifelike » found, around the time of the acquisition of the Albani series, a three-dimensional expansion in the « grand Groupe de pierre »⁵⁸ by Louis Le Comte (1644–1694) for Versailles (Figure 4). Furthermore, Albani chose to paint his characters in various landscapes whose compositions were evocative of stage sets. Above and beyond, this enlarged group of *dramatis personae*, where Venus and Adonis can be surrounded by cupids and Graces, huntress and dogs, suggested characters to be put on the opera stage, possibly as a varied « chorus »⁵⁹. The dynamism conveyed by the visual depictions of the different episodes and this extended casting offered potential for the stage, and just as with visual artists since the

⁵⁵ The paintings are now in the Louvre Museum. See: Bohnert, Céline. “Adonis dans les collections de peinture de Louis XIV” in *Vénus & Adonis, Tragédie en Musique de Henry Desmarest (1697), Livret, études et commentaires. Textes réunis par Jean Duron et Yves Ferraton*. Versailles: Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles and Sprimont: Pierre Mardaga, 2006, pp. 17–30.

⁵⁶ See: Loire, Stéphane. *L'Albane (1578–1660)*. Paris, Réunion des musées nationaux, 2000, Cat. No. 16. For further research about Albani, see: Puglisi, Catherine R. *Francesco Albani*. New Haven (CT) and London, Yale University Press, 1999.

⁵⁷ *The Art of Painting, and the Lives of Painters: Containing, a Compleat Treatise of Painting, Designing, and the Use of Prints: With Reflections on the Works of the most Celebrated Painters, and of the several schools of Europe, as well Ancient as Modern. Done from the French of Monsieur de Piles*. London: J. Nutt, 1706, pp. 239 & 240.

⁵⁸ « Venus & Adonis, grand Groupe de pierre, fait par Le Comte, natif de Boulogne près Paris. 74. » in *Recueil des figures, groupes, thermes, fontaines, vases, et autres ornemens tels qu'ils se voyent a présent dans le chateau et parc de Versailles : gravé d'après les originaux*. Paris: Thomassin, 1694, p. 12.

⁵⁹ One painting of Albani inspired a small cantata by a French composer of the eighteenth century: Lemaire, Louis (1693 or 1694–ca. 1750). *Venus et Adonis, tirée des Albanes, IIIe tableau. Cantatille nouvelle, pour un dessus avec accompagnement de violons et flutes*. Paris: Ballard, 1744.

Renaissance, the tale of Adonis and Venus had been the subject of many plays and entertainments prior to the creation of Blow's opera.



Figure 4: Simon Thomassin, engraving of *Venus et Adonis* (1687) by Louis Le Comte (1644–1694), from his *Recueil des figures, groupes, thermes, fontaines, vases, et autres ornemens tels qu'ils se voyent a présent dans le chateau et parc de Versailles : gravé d'après les originaux*. Paris: Thomassin, 1694, pl. 74 (image reversed from the original sculpture).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

In Italy, in addition to the numerous Italian paintings on this theme, the tale of Adonis after Marino's 1623 publication further inspired a number of stage versions, and the succession of literary genres these embraced makes a good illustration of the evolution of how the myth was perceived: from the « favola boschereccia » *La catena d'Adone* written by Ottavio Tronsarelli (d. 1646), with music by Domenico Mazzocchi (1592–1665)⁶⁰, continuing through the « tragedia musicale » *Adone* by Paolo Vendramin (?–?), performed in Venezia in 1639 at the Teatro SS Giovanni e Paolo with music by several composers⁶¹, to the « drama per musica » of Giovanni Matteo Giannini (?–?), *Adone in Cipro*, performed at Teatreo San Salvatore in Venice in 1675 with music by Giovanni Legrenzi (1626–1690)⁶².

The influence of Marino is also present in *La Mort d'Adonis*, a « tragedie en musique » by the French poet Pierre Perrin (1620–1675). Perrin had previously created the libretto for

⁶⁰ Tronsarelli, Ottavio. *La catena d'Adone, Favola boschereccia*. Roma: Crobelletti, 1626 and Venezia: Ciotti, 1626. It is worth noting that the title page offers a similar composition to that of the edition of Marino's *Adone*.

⁶¹ Vendramin, Paolo. *Adone. Tragedia musicale rappresentata in Venezia l'anno 1639 nel teatro de' SS. Giovanni e Paolo*. Venezia: Sarzina, 1640.

⁶² Giannini, Giovan Matteo. *L'Adone. Drama per musica*. Venezia: 1676. See: Selfridge-Field, Eleanor. *A New Chronology of Venetian Opera and Related Genres, 1660–1760*. Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press, 2007, p. 116.

*La Pastorale d'Issy*⁶³, the very first French opera, with music composed by Robert Cambert (ca. 1628–1677)⁶⁴. It premiered in 1659, and not long after the work was performed for the French king, Perrin published *La Pastorale d'Issy* in 1661 in Paris⁶⁵ and included a long letter, dated 1659, where he claimed that he « discovered and cleared a new land and provided my nation with a template of a comedy in music in the French style, the first in the pastoral genre; my *Ariane* will show them another one in the comedy style » but he added « and for the tragedy, *La Mort d'Adonis*, the composition of which I have entertained myself with for a few days, [it] will show that one can succeed in all dramatic genres »⁶⁶. For this tragedy, Perrin worked with the composer Jean-Baptiste de Boësset (1614–1685); they would collaborate in the following years on songs and court spectacles, but unfortunately the music for the opera has been lost⁶⁷.



Figure 5: *Adonis tué par le sanglier*

Engraving by Jean Mathieu (1590-1672) from *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide, divisées en XV livres. Avec de nouvelles Explications Historiques, Morales et Politiques sur toutes les Fables, chacune selon son sujet. Enrichies de Figures. Et nouvellement traduites par Pierre Du-Ryer Parisien, de l'Académie Françoise*. Paris: Antoine de Sommaville, 1660, p. 463. Collection of Gilbert Blin.

⁶³ La Laurencie, Lionel de. *Les créateurs de l'opéra français*. Nouvelle édition. Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1930, pp. 171–192. The poet wrote *Ariane, ou le Mariage de Bacchus* but the planned performance of this comedy in Paris did not take place due to the death of Cardinal Mazarin in 1661.

⁶⁴ Robert Cambert left France in 1673 to pursue his career in England where he was well received at the court of King Charles II and quickly appointed to the position of « Master of the King's Band ».

⁶⁵ Perrin, Pierre. *Œuvres de poésie de Mr. Perrin, contenant les jeux de poésie, diverses poésies galantes, des paroles de musique, airs de cour, airs à boire, chansons, Noël et motets, une comédie en musique, L'Entrée de la Reyne, et la Chartreuse*. Paris: Estienne Loyson, 1661.

⁶⁶ « j'ay l'avantage d'avoir ouvert & applany le chemin, d'avoir découvert et défriché cette terre neuve & fourny à ma nation un modèle de la Comedie Françoise en Musique, premièrement dans le genre Pastoral, mon *Ariane* leur en fera voir un dans le Comique & dans la tragique *La Mort d'Adonis* à la composition de laquelle je me divertis depuis quelques jours leur fera connoistre que l'on y peut reüssir dans tous les genres du Dramatique. » in Perrin, Pierre. “Lettre ecrite Monseigneur l'Archevesque de Turin.” in *Œuvres de poésie...* Paris: Estienne Loyson, 1661, pp. 288 & 289.

⁶⁷ Dufourcq, Norbert. “Un musicien, officier du roi et gentilhomme campagnard au XVIIe siècle. Jean-Baptiste de Boësset (1614–1685)” in *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes*, No. 118, 1960, pp. 97–165.

In Perrin's libretto, the story of Adonis is inserted in a larger plot involving the god Mars and a magician name Falsirene, two characters found in Marino's poem. In Act I, Scene 3, Amour, the Graces and Mercure sing « un hymne à la louange d'Amour », a scene that has been constructed following the celebratory structure of a prologue. In Act IV, a rapid succession of scenes gives most of the episodes of the Ovidian myth: Scene 1 shows the departure for the hunt with « Music of horns, cries and dogs, at the sound of which Adonis, carried away by the ardor of hunting, leaves Venus and follows the hunters »⁶⁸ and Scene 2 offers a dialogue between Venus, who is longing for Adonis's return, and Cupid. The last scene shows the return of the wounded Adonis and his death in Venus' embrace. In Act V the action takes place in front of the tomb of Adonis, where during a ceremony inspired by Bion, with a complex staging which owes a great deal to Marino's detailed approach, Venus sprinkles the heart of the unfortunate hunter with nectar and changes it into an anemone. The tragedy and the funeral ceremony end with *Le ballet des Jeux d'Adonis*, a spectacle which calls for « dancers, wrestlers, fencers, chariot runners, palm players, etc., as they are in the Adonis poem of the Cavalier Marin[o] ». ⁶⁹

The plan of this Act IV follows exactly the order of the libretto for Blow's opera, whose final chorus stands for the final ballet found in Bion/Marino. Excerpts of *La Mort d'Adonis* were executed in a private concert for the French monarch, and, according to Perrin, « the king was kind enough to defend against all the cabal of the *petit coucher*, which was trying to ruin it by particular motives of interest and passion ». ⁷⁰ Indeed, the work may have been the victim of a cabal as it was neither performed nor printed ⁷¹. The score, never completed, is lost; the libretto, however, is known to us through a manuscript offered in 1669 by Perrin to Pierre Colbert (1619–1683) ⁷², and it is possible to assume that Cambert brought another copy with him when immigrating to England, and this document became available to Blow.

⁶⁸ « Musique de cors, de cris et de Chiens, au bruit de laquelle Adonis, emporté de l'ardeur de la chasse, quitte Venus et suit les chasseurs » in Auld, Louis E. *The Lyric Art of Pierre Perrin, Founder of French Opera, Part 3 Recueil de Paroles de Musique de M Perrin*. Musicological Studies Vol. XLII. Henryville (IN): Institute of Mediaeval Music, 2000, p. 140.

⁶⁹ « danseurs, lutteurs, escrimeurs, coureurs de char, joueurs de paume &c. tels qu'ils sont dans le poème d'Adonis du Cavalier Marin. » in Auld, Louis E. *The Lyric Art of Pierre Perrin...* Henryville (IN): Institute of Mediaeval Music, 2000, p. 145.

⁷⁰ « La Tragedie de la mort d'Adonis, mise en musique par Mr Boesset, dont S.M. a entendu quelques pieces detachées à son petit coucher, chantées par cette mesme musique avec beaucoup de temoignages de satisfaction de sa part, et don't elle a eu souvent la bonté de prendre la defense contre toute la cabale du petit coucher, qui tachoit de l'abismer par des motifs particulier d'interet de passion. » in Auld, Louis E. *The Lyric Art of Pierre Perrin...* Henryville (IN): Institute of Mediaeval Music, 2000, p. xiv.

⁷¹ It may even have not been fully composed by Boësset as Perrin indicates: « Le public jugera maintenant de la composition des vers et bientost de celle de la musique, mon dessein estant de luy donner imprimée celle qu'a composée Cet Intendant sur les premiers Actes de cette pièce. » in Auld, Louis E. *The Lyric Art of Pierre Perrin...* Henryville (IN): Institute of Mediaeval Music, 2000, p. xiv.

⁷² Perrin offered this beautiful manuscript copy to Colbert, who supported him that same year for the privilege « pour l'establissement des Académies d'Opera ou Représentations en musique en vers françois, à Paris et dans les autres villes du Royaume » See: Duron, Jean. « Pierre Perrin un « Virgile françois »? » in Conihout, Isabelle de; Gabriel, Frédéric; Martin, Henri-Jean. *Poésie & calligraphie imprimée à Paris au XVIIe siècle, Autour de « La Chartreuse » de Pierre Perrin, poème imprimé par Pierre Moreau en 1647*. Paris – Chambéry: Bibliothèque Mazarine Éditions Comp'act, 2004, p. 150. It is remarkable that both La Fontaine and Perrin presented their versions of Adonis in sumptuous manuscripts, bringing the poetry closer to a visual art.

After 1669, the success of La Fontaine's published versions of his tales about Psyché and Adonis prompted a new interest and led immediately to new spectacles.⁷³ Donneau de Visé's *Les amours d'Adonis, tragédie en machines*, was performed on the stage of the Théâtre du Marais on 2 March 1670⁷⁴, with incidental music, possibly by Marc-Antoine Charpentier. It was followed soon after by the already discussed *Psiché*, a collaboration of Molière, Corneille, Quinault and Lully, performed at the Salle des Machines in the Tuileries castle in 1671, instead of the usual *Ballet de Cour*⁷⁵. In England, Molière's play *Psiché* was translated and adapted by Thomas Shadwell (ca. 1642–1692) as *Psyche* for the Dorset Garden theatre in 1675. Shadwell had already produced comedies inspired by Molière and, the year before, a successful semi-opera, *The Enchanted Island*⁷⁶. Supported by the Duke of Monmouth (1649–1685), son of Charles II, with sung music by Matthew Locke (ca. 1621–1677) and orchestral dances by Giovanni Battista Draghi (ca. 1640–1708), *Psyche* was the first dramatic musical score to be printed in England⁷⁷. The production was presented « in all her Ornaments, new Scenes, new Machines, new Cloath, new *French* Dances: This Opera was splendidly set out, especially in Scenes »⁷⁸ which indicates the importance of the visual elements, specifically connected to the art of painting⁷⁹. A certain Stephenson, named as the designer/painter by Shadwell in his preface, attests to this importance⁸⁰. The British poet acknowledges his debt to the French: « The next sort I am to encounter with, are those who are too great admirers of the French Wit,

⁷³ Sweetser, Marie Odile. *Parcours lafontainien: d'Adonis au livre XII des Fables*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2004, pp. 28–81.

⁷⁴ Donneau de Visé, Jean. *Le sujet des amours de Venus et d'Adonis, tragédie en machines Représentée sur le Théâtre Royal du Marais, le 2 Mars 1670*. Paris: Pierre Promé, 1670. See also: Donneau de Visé, Jean. *Les Amours de Vénus et d'Adonis, tragédie*. Paris: Guillaume de Luyne, 1670. The play was revived at the Comédie-Française in September 1685 with incidental music by Marc-Antoine Charpentier, music which I suggest may have been already performed in 1670. See: Hitchcock, H. Wiley. *Les œuvres de/ The works of Marc-Antoine Charpentier, Catalogue raisonné*. Paris: Picard, 1982, p. 382.

⁷⁵ See Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

⁷⁶ *The Enchanted Island* was an adaptation from Davenant and Dryden's 1667 version of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. *The Sullen Lovers, or the Impertinents* was based on *Les Fâcheux* by Molière. His next plays, *The Humourists* (1670) and *The Miser* (1671–72), were rhymed adaptations of Molière. For fourteen years Shadwell produced a play nearly every year, and each showed his gradual shift toward the wit of the comedy of manners. Shadwell wrote eighteen works, including a pastoral, *The Royal Shepherdess* (1669), and a blank verse tragedy, *The Libertine* (1675).

⁷⁷ *A Companion to Restoration Drama*. Edited by Susan J. Owen. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008, p. 346.

⁷⁸ John Downes, (ca. 1660–1712) worked as a prompter at the Duke's Company, and later at the United Company. At the end of his life, Downes wrote his history of the Restoration stage. See: Downes, John. *Roscius Anglicanus, or an Historical review of the Stage...* London: H. Playford, 1708, p. 35.

⁷⁹ Canova-Green, Marie-Claude. "Le spectacle de Psyché à Londres en 1675" in *La scenografia e le macchine teatrali dei Vigarani in Gaspare & Carlo Vigarani, Dalla corte degli Este a quella di Luigi XIV, De la cour d'Este à celle de Louis XIV, a cura di/ dirigé par Walter Baricchi et Jérôme de La Gorce*. Versailles : Centre de recherche du château de Versailles and Milano : Silvana Editoriale Spa, 2009, pp. 143–157.

⁸⁰ Shadwell's description of the set showing Olympus which concludes the piece states « The Scene changes to a Heave'n. In the highest part is the Palace of Jupiter; the Columns and all the Ornaments of it of Gold. The lower part is filled with Angels and Cupids, with a round open Temple in the midst of it. This temple is just before the Sun, whose Beams break fiercely through it in diver places: Below the Heav'ns, several Semicircular Clouds, of the breadth of the whole House, descend. In these Clouds sit Musicians, richly Habited. » in Shadwell, Thomas. *Psyche: a Tragedy, Acted at the Duke's Theatre*. London: H. Herringman, 1675, p. 66.

who (if they do not like this play) will say the French *Psyche* is much better; if they do, they will say, I have borrow'd it all from the French. [...] That I have borrow'd it all from the French, can only be the objection of those, who do not know that it is a Fable, written by Apulejus, in his *Golden-Ass*; where you will find most things in this play, and the French too ».⁸¹ The fact that Shadwell refers to Apuleius as his first source reveals how the English artistic relation with French art was multifaceted but, as I will show, many French elements are present in the genesis of Blow's *Venus and Adonis*.



Figure 6: *Venus and Adonis*
Engraving after Virgil Solis (1514 – 1562) from an unidentified edition of *Ovid's Metamorphoses*.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

4.2.2 Betwixt *Masque* and *opera*

Around 1683, the story of Adonis was chosen by Blow to compose his first and only opera: *Venus and Adonis*. The earliest musical score entitled the work « A Masque for the Entertainment of the King »⁸². Although « Masque » refers to the earlier English form of Royal entertainments where spoken dialogue alternated with songs and dances, the text of *Venus and Adonis* was set to music by Blow from beginning to end, like a French opera of the same period. John Blow may have had a personal agenda with the creation of *Venus and Adonis*, as we know that the same year, in April 1683, he had requested a « Royal Grant & License for the creating an Academy or Opera of Music, & performing and causing to be performed therein their

⁸¹ Shadwell, Thomas. "Preface" for *Psyche: a Tragedy, Acted at the Duke's Theatre*. London: H. Herringman, 1675. See the notes on *Psyche* in *The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell* edited by Montague Summers, Volume II. London: The Fortune Press, 1927.

⁸² The earliest source is a manuscript copied by John Walter, organist at the Eton College, and kept today at the British Library (Add. MS 22100). See: Wood, Bruce. "Introduction" in Blow, John. *Venus and Adonis*, ed. Bruce Wood and Purcell Society. London: Stainer & Bell, 2008, p. xi.

Musicall Compositions »⁸³ a plan clearly inspired by the monopoly Lully enjoyed in France. The British designation of « Masque » for *Venus and Adonis* refers primarily to the context and performance of the royal premiere, more than the poetic text and musical proceeding. As we will see, the authorship of the libretto, after centuries of anonymity, is nowadays subject to various conjectures and, as it is the only lyrical work of Blow, the fact that the work was performed or at least written to be performed for King Charles II of England (1630–1685) remains the key point of approach to try to understand its meaning and define its artistic purpose. Blow and his librettist, in choosing to tell the misfortunes of Adonis, are not only in the poetry lineage of Shakespeare, Marino and La Fontaine, but they have selected an eminently pictorial subject. Because it seems to me that the ekphratic device⁸⁴, the description of Adonis and Venus in the libretto, is a natural result of the dynamism of the myth, I suggest that any staging of Blow's *Venus and Adonis* should be created in relation with the contemporaneous taste for the hunt, and even more so, with the esthetic elevation of this activity by literature and painting. Taking into consideration this cultural aspect, I will now bring the libretto of this *Masque/opera* closer to the context of its first performance, in circumstances related to poetry and music but also to the royal family itself.

Every work designed for a specific audience contains in its causes, if not in its effects, a number of identity components of the social group for whom it is intended. In dramatic and lyric works composed for the royal power, words and images were loaded by allegorical meaning that the presence of the monarch made comprehensible. This practice of including the patron in the revealing of hidden meanings, born in Italy, had been adapted into an aesthetic system at the court of France with the *Ballet Royal*, which spectacle foreshadowed the *Tragédie en musique*. Charles II and his younger brother, the Duke of York (1633–1701), later James II, had during the English Civil War gone into exile in France and while there experienced the French court ballet, with its complex scenic rhetoric which had the primary purpose of glorifying their young cousin, the Sun King. Both princes also inherited this taste from their French mother, Henrietta Maria (1609–1669)⁸⁵. If the princes were both good dancers and had as their dancing master a French professor⁸⁶, it seems that Charles was confined in France to the role of spectator and left to his younger brother the task of performing.

Among the many ballets that the Duke of York took part in, there is one, *Le Ballet Royal de la Nuit*, which has many connections with *Venus and Adonis*. This seminal show took place from the evening of 23 February 1653 to the following morning at the Palais du Louvre. Among the dancers, « His Royal Highness the Duke of York » appeared first as « Lovesick

⁸³ Wood, Bruce and Pinnock, Andrew. « « Unscarr'd by Turning Times »? The Dating of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* » in *Early Music*. Vol. 20, N° 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 387.

⁸⁴ I use the word in the sense inherited from the Hellenistic rhetoric: « ekphrasis » refers to a self-contained argument or poetic description of an object, especially of a work of art. For the origin of « ekphrasis », see: Webb, Ruth. *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge, 2016.

⁸⁵ Britland, Karen. *Drama at the Courts of Queen Henrietta Maria*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

⁸⁶ Information about Sebastien la Pierre, whose name appears in some second-hand literature as Dance Master of the princes, is scarce. A dancer named La Pierre was dancing in *Pomone* by Cambert in Paris in 1671. Maybe La Pierre left France for England with the composer? See: *Dance, Spectacle, and the Body Politick, 1250–1750* edited by Jennifer Nevile. Bloomington (IN): Indiana University Press, 2008, pp. 121 & 122. See also: Ravelhofer, Barbara. *The Early Stuart Masque: Dance, Costume, and Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 61, 75 & 217.

Lover » and then as « Genius of Honor ». The verses written by Benserade that accompanied the ballet's first entrée clearly refer to his exile; his place as « Genius » by the side of « Le Soleil » Louis XIV, in the final scene of the ballet, alludes to his rank and his close relationship to his cousin, the king of France. In *Le Ballet Royal de la Nuit*, the theme of the hunt appears in the fourth entrée of the first part: six hunters « sounding their horns »⁸⁷ with a « Valet de limier » and a « Huntsman with Dogs on a leash »⁸⁸ return from their day of hunting and refer in spoken verses to the story of Adonis and Venus. We find all these characters, and even the dogs who accompany them, in the first act of Blow's *Venus and Adonis*, when the hunters come to take the lover away from the arms of the goddess to go hunting: the subject of Titian's painting. Blow even wrote « a Hunters' Music » to signal their approach, which remains one of the earliest examples of musical treatment of the sound language of the hunt⁸⁹. The verses where Adonis responds to the hunters, « You who the slothful Joys of City hate, / And early up for rougher pleasures wait », were certainly addressed to Charles II in the ears of contemporaries. The king was well known to be an early riser and his awakening was often followed by physical activities among which hunting was the one he preferred⁹⁰. The king found a theorist of his habits in the person of Richard Blome (1635 or 1641–1705) who, in his illustrated book *The Gentleman's Recreation* begun in 1682⁹¹, summarized that « *Hunting* is a commendable *Recreation*, and hath always been practised and highly prized by all *Degrees* and *Qualities* of *Men*, even by *Kings* and *Princes*; that it is a great preserver of *Health*, a Manly *Exercise*, and an increaser of *Activity* ». ⁹²

⁸⁷ On hunting calls, see: Cummins, John. *The Hound and the Hawk, The Art of Medieval Hunting*. London: Phoenix Press, 2001, pp. 160–171.

⁸⁸ See: *Ballet de la Nuit*. Edited by Michael Burden and Jennifer Thorp. The Wendy Hilton Dance & Music Series No. 15. Hillsdale (NY): Pendragon Press, 2009.

⁸⁹ Symbolic of the outside world, the horn, whose decisive development from the primitive specimen depicted by Marin Mersenne in 1636 in his *Harmonie universelle* to its final stage years later is obscure as horns' range and tuning underwent constant changes. With the « trompe de chasse » in the middle of the century, a larger number of pitches became available for horn calls, and these calls are imitated in program music from the second quarter of the seventeenth century onward, though first scored not for actual horns but for strings only. An example is the « Chiamata a la caccia » in Francesco Cavalli's opera *Le nozze di Teti e di Peleo* (1639) (Act I, Scene 1). A few years later, Jean-Baptiste Lully used horn calls in a five-part piece for strings called « Les cors de chasse » in Molière's comédie-ballet *La Princesse d'Élide*, itself part of *Les plaisirs de l'île enchantée* (1664). Lully's scoring of the « second Air des valets des chiens et des chasseurs avec Cors de chasse » seems to be the first documented use of the new instrument in a musical composition, besides hunting signals and sound evocations in previous ballets de cour. In England, John Gaillard wrote the aria « With early horn », with an obbligato horn part, for the 1723 Masque *Jupiter and Europa*, later performed under the title *The Royal Chace, or Merlin's cave*.

⁹⁰ The tale of Cephalus, another Ovidian hunter, painted from 1666 to 1671 on the ceilings of the Tuileries Castle, had the purpose, according to Félibien, to « faire voir aux Courtisans quelles sont leurs obligations ». Indeed, the tale of Céphalus, « Ce Chasseur si considerable dans la Fable pour sa diligence, estant toujours en cam[p]agne avant le lever du Soleil, marque le soin qu'un vray Courtisan doit avoir d'estre matinal, & se trouver au Palais du Prince avant son lever. » in Félibien, André. *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellents peintres anciens et modernes. Tome second*. Paris: Florentin & Pierre Delaulne, 1690, p. 639. See also: Sabatier, Gérard. *Versailles ou la figure du roi*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1999, p. 115.

⁹¹ Blome, Richard. *The Gentlemans Recreation in two parts. The First being an Encyclopedia of the Arts and Sciences.... The Second Part Treats of Horsmanship, Hawking, Hunting, Fowling, Fishing, and Agriculture. With a Short Treatise of Cock-Fighting*. London: S. Roycroft for R. Blome, 1686.

⁹² Of course, sound and music being linked to the hunt, the book also contains some musical indications for hunting calls, including the first call in the morning: « A Good Huntsman ought to be loving to his Hounds, especially after hard labour. His first business every Morning should be, to cause their Kennels to be cleansed;

The theme of the hunt, both work and pleasure, and the story of Adonis, had thus already formed the entertainment of the royal family of England during their exile in France. It is not unlikely that the memory of the lavish *Ballet de Cour* of the new monarchy of Louis XIV in the 1650s influenced the design of entertainments at the English court, and among them *Venus and Adonis*. The court spectacle with coded messages was not something new in Britain, but with the Restoration in 1660, the *Masque* was under French influence⁹³. From 1660 until 1688, musicians and poets circulated between the two kingdoms and the intense musical and theatrical French life influenced English poets and composers. It is fair to say that England discovered opera through the Gallic ears and eyes, more than through a direct Italian inspiration. An Italian opera troupe arrived in London around 1664, recruited by Thomas Killigrew (1612–1683) with the king's support⁹⁴, but alongside the Italian singers, French vocalists were also present at the English court during the Restoration. The political, religious and personal contacts between the English and French courts encouraged an interest in French music. In the 1660s, the royal English court had an ensemble of six French musicians, mostly singers⁹⁵. French singers also appear in 1671 in the « concert des nations »⁹⁶ held at Whitehall for Charles II, the opera *Ariane* staged by Robert Cambert in 1674 and in the court performance of *Calisto* in 1675⁹⁷. In 1676 Louis XIV sent three French singers to entertain the king of England with scenes from Lully's operas⁹⁸. From its beginning, political patronage played a major role in the creation of opera and its diffusion, and the magnitude of French royal support eclipsed all others.

Performances at European courts, far from only fulfilling the function of entertainment, were also an opportunity to express the image of a political situation or the structure of the social relations of the moment. The royal spectacle, as a part of a wider policy, was an opportunity for participants to gain visibility under the eyes of the sovereign and give anew a readability of their ranks to the court. The placement of the spectators was already expressive of the position of each and every one, social status was made public, and the favor of the monarch clarified by the casting of performers. And indeed, if we are to understand that the choice of the story of Adonis for this performance is also about the context, then we must attempt to untangle the threads of the work and to try to better understand the libretto. While

then he should take his *Horn* and Sound three or four times the *Call*, to encourage them and call them to him ». See: Blome, Richard. *The Gentlemans Recreation. ... An Encyclopedia of the Arts and Sciences ... [and] Horsemanship, Hawking, Hunting, Fowling, Fishing, and Agriculture. With a Short Treatise of Cock-Fighting*. London: S. Roycroft for R. Blome, 1686, pp. 68 and 72.

⁹³ For the Italian influence on the Stuart Masque see: Strong, Roy. *Art and Power, Renaissance Festivals 1450–1650*. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press, 1973, pp. 153–170. For the French influence on the Restoration Masque, see: Walkling, Andrew R. *Masque and Opera in England, 1656–1688*. London: Routledge, 2016.

⁹⁴ See: Mabbett, Margaret. “Italian Musicians in Restoration England (1660–1690)” in *Music and Letters* 67, 1986.

⁹⁵ See: Holman, Peter. *Four and Twenty Fiddlers, The Violin at the English Court, 1540–1690*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, p. 290.

⁹⁶ See: Holman, Peter. *Four and Twenty Fiddlers...1690*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, pp. 361–366.

⁹⁷ See: Walkling, Andrew R. “Masque and Politics at the Restoration Court: John Crowne's *Calisto*” in *Early Music Vol. 24, N° 1, Music in Purcell's London II*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 34–36 & 51.

⁹⁸ Buttrey, John. “New Light on Robert Cambert in London, and his *Ballet en musique*” in *Early Music. Vol. 23, N° 2*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 199–221.

the English public and political conditions⁹⁹ of 1683 hardly seem conducive to entertainment, it is remarkable that no contemporary document mentions, if only briefly, the presentation of *Venus and Adonis*. This silence may have many reasons, but it is possible that the work had a character so intimate that it was considered neither good nor appropriate to report the details of the circumstances. The private nature of the performance is clearly borne out by what is known about the distribution of roles for the royal presentation¹⁰⁰.

4.2.3 Betwixt king and mistress

The manuscript¹⁰¹ noted that *Venus and Adonis* was premiered at the Court with « Mary Davis », who sang the role of Venus, and « Lady Mary Tudor » as Cupid, the god of Love. With the Restoration, Mary « Moll » Davis (ca. 1650–1708) was one of the earliest English actresses to benefit from the lifting of the ban on women to appear on the English stage¹⁰². She was furthermore said to have danced in boy's clothing, a costume that was more revealing of her feminine gender¹⁰³. As a member of the Duke's Theatre Company, which was under the patronage of James, Duke of York, she was noticed by Charles II, and became his mistress. With this new social status, she made her farewell to the professional stage in 1668 but continued to take part in performances at the court¹⁰⁴. Between February and April 1675, she was the leading lady in the performances of the court *Masque* titled *Calisto: Or, the Chaste Nymph* by John Crowne (1641–1712) with music by Nicholas Staggins (1650?–1700)¹⁰⁵. Moll Davis

⁹⁹ The situation in England was tense in 1683: on June 12, the Rye House Plot to assassinate King Charles II was discovered. See: Owen, Susan J. "Restoration Drama and Politics: An Overview" in *A Companion to Restoration Drama*. Edited by Susan J. Owen. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008, pp. 126–139.

¹⁰⁰ Rose, Stephen. "Performance Practices" in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Henry Purcell*, edited by Rebecca Herissone. London: Routledge, 2016, pp. 115–164.

¹⁰¹ See: Blow, John. *Venus and Adonis*, edited by Bruce Wood and Purcell Society. London: Stainer & Bell, 2008.

¹⁰² Fisk, Deborah Payne. "The Restoration Actress" in *A Companion to Restoration Drama*. Edited by Susan J. Owen. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008, pp. 69–91.

¹⁰³ Moll Davis' activities are most assiduously noted by Samuel Pepys. See Pepys, Samuel. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys, In three volumes, Edited from Mynors Bright, With an introduction by John Warrington*. London: J. M. Dent & sons and New York : E. P. Dutton & co inc., 1953. He states, 7 March 1667, that at the Duke's playhouse (Lincoln's Inn Fields): « little Miss Davis did dance a jig after the end of the play, and there telling the next day's play, so that it come in by force only to please the company to see her dance in boy's clothes; and the truth is there is no comparison between Nell's [Gwynn's] dancing the other day at the King's house in boy's clothes and this, this being infinitely beyond the other. » II, p. 421. On 5 August 1667 he saw *Love Tricks, or the School of Compliments* by James Shirley, and chronicles that « Miss Davis dancing in a shepherd's clothes did please us mightily. » III, p. 31. On 11 January 1667-8 he says: « Miss Davis is for certain going away from the Duke's house, the king being in love with her, and a house is taken for her and furnishing; and she hath a ring given her already worth £ 600 ». III, p. 146.

¹⁰⁴ Her final departure from the stage is chronicled 31 May 1668: « I hear that Mrs. Davis is quite gone from the Duke of York's house ». She had danced « her jig » at a performance at court a few nights previously, when the queen, through supposed displeasure, « would not stay to see it, which people do think was out of displeasure at her being the King's mistress, that she could not bear it. » in Pepys. *Diary*, III, 1953, p. 238.

¹⁰⁵ See: Walkling, Andrew R. "Masque and Politics at the Restoration Court: John Crowne's *Calisto*" in *Early Music Vol. 24, N° 1, Music in Purcell's London II*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 27–62.

portrayed the shepherdess Sylvia in the « songs betwixt the acts »¹⁰⁶, but also the River Thames in the sung prologue. Crowne defended his unorthodox casting of a woman as a river god, a divinity of male gender by ancient tradition, saying that his purpose was to delight the court: « and the graceful motions and admirable singing of Mrs. Davis, did sufficiently prove the discretion of my choice »¹⁰⁷. In the *Calisto* performances of 1675, Moll Davis appeared in the cast of 111 performers among other professionals, but alongside lord and ladies of the court, including Princesses Mary and Anne, daughters of the Duke of York. In this category of recreational players, it is remarkable that two of the king's illegitimate offspring, James, Duke of Monmouth, and Anne Fitzroy, Countess of Sussex (1661–1721 or 1722), were also dancing. Mary Davis' singing and dancing talents, supplemented by her exuberant personality, seem to have produced a strong stage presence: in his 1675 *Epigrams*, Richard Flecknoe (1600–1678) created a second tribute « To M. M. Davies. On her Excellent Dancing and Singing »¹⁰⁸ to supplement his first poetic effusion « On her Excellent Dancing » from 1669¹⁰⁹. But, after this new epigram dedicated to Mary Davis, he added another one, « On her pretty Daughter »¹¹⁰, certainly an homage to the baby girl the actress had from Charles II in 1673, who was known as « Lady Mary Tudor ».

Lady Mary Tudor was ten years of age at the time of the presentation of *Venus and Adonis* at the royal court¹¹¹. Casting a former mistress of the king in the role of the goddess of beauty was certainly gallant enough and also an opportunity to display some conventional nudity, but the courtesy, with a degree of voyeurism, was tinged with other motivations by awarding the role of Cupid, child of Venus, to their daughter. By giving Mary Tudor the role of a god born from the adulterous love of Mars and Venus, as some poets believed, the audience could complete an allegorical family picture. Unlike many other versions of the myth,

¹⁰⁶ *Calisto, or, The chaste nimph, the late masque at court as it was frequently presented there, by several persons of great quality: with the prologue, and the songs betwixt the acts / all written by J. Crowne*. London: James Magnes and Richard Bentley, 1675.

¹⁰⁷ Vere Beauclerk-Dewar, Peter de. & Powell, Roger S. *Right Royal Bastards: The Fruits of Passion*. London: Burke's Peerage & Gentry, 2006, p. 55.

¹⁰⁸ Flecknoe, Richard. *Enterpe revived, or, Epigrams made at several times in the years 1672, 1673 & 1674 on persons of the greatest honor and quality most of them now living: in III books*. [London], 1675, p. 64. See, text: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A39713.0001.001/1:6.4?rgn=div2;view=fulltext> (Accessed 11 March 2018). Giving the role of river to a female performer was not rare in France, as « rivière » is feminine while « fleuve » is masculine. In Quinault and Lully's *Alceste* of 1674, the year *Calisto* was in the making, the prologue includes La Nymph de La Seine and La Nymph de la Marne.

¹⁰⁹ Flecknoe, Richard. *A collection of the choicest epigrams and characters of Richard Flecknoe being rather a new work, then [sic] a new impression of the old*. [London]: Printed for the author, Will Crook, 1670, p. 43. See text: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A39710.0001.001/1:5.31?rgn=div2;view=fulltext> (Accessed 11 March 2018)

¹¹⁰ « Pretty childe, in whom appears / All the seeds, above thy years,/ Of every Beautie, every Grace, /

As ere was sown in minde or face. / Never by Nature yet was made / A Childe who more perfections had;/ Nor ever, though she'd ne'r so fain, / Can she make the like again. / Thou art th' Epitome of all / We pretty, fair, and sweet do call: / And for the more Conformity, / This is th' Epitome of Thee. » in Flecknoe, Richard. *Enterpe revived, or, Epigrams made at several times in the years 1672, 1673 & 1674 on persons of the greatest honor and quality most of them now living: in III books*. [London], 1675, p. 65.

¹¹¹ Lady Mary died in Paris on 5 November 1726, at the age of 53. See: Wilson, John Harold. *All the King's Ladies: Actresses of the Restoration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958, p. 140.

the god Mars is absent from Blow's opera, or better yet, absent from the stage. The presence of Charles II/Mars in the auditorium seems to give him the role of a witness to the story, even as a god adamant that revenge should be taken on the unfaithful Venus. Indeed, many variants of the story, including Marino, indicate that it is the god Mars himself, in the guise of angry wild boar, who jealously kills Adonis. Whatever the way he was supposed to see his role, Charles II could only smile at the tongue-lashing the god of love gave to the fickle courtiers. All of the lines written for Lady Mary Tudor are imbued with humor, especially appreciated by a court audience, and her childish words, which have an element of double entendre to them, were colored with added irony by the presence of her august father.

This rapprochement between father and daughter virtually amounted to a public recognition of her and given the practices of royal courts in the seventeenth century it is quite possible that the show was the occasion of the first appearance of Lady Mary Tudor at court. It was indeed the custom to formally present a child during a party, and it was probably the first time Mary had a visible role in a social event. Consequently, if it is fair to attribute the casting of Venus to the occupational status of Moll Davis, professional actress, the casting of Cupid was indeed in the tradition of the royal Masque, of a recreational order¹¹². The official presentation coincided with a more substantive recognition by Charles II of his natural daughter, and in September 1683, Lady Mary Tudor received from the king the benefit of a pension of £1,500 that was to ensure that she would be able to hold a social position worthy of her illustrious father and become a party of interest to a potential husband¹¹³. In kingdoms of the seventeenth century, a first appearance at the Court often took place at a ballet in which the child could display her self-control and demonstrate her ability to join the adult world of the court¹¹⁴. How little Mary was able to overcome the difficulties and the length of the singing role of Cupid remains a mystery of this royal rite of passage¹¹⁵.

Lady Mary Tudor appeared as Cupid only in the Prologue and Act II of *Venus and Adonis*. Although the prologue does not give any clues about the upcoming tale of Venus and Adonis, the leading role is given to Cupid, who interacts with Shepherds and Shepherdesses. It anchors the show in a pastoral setting of « sweet groves » offering « close shades » propitious to amorous intimacy. And indeed, the opera is set in a single space and Adonis himself refers

¹¹² Lady Mary Tudor may have benefited from acting lessons from her mother, but it was certain that, due to her paternal lineage, she would never become a professional actress.

¹¹³ Lady Mary Tudor's pension was larger than the one given to her mother, who received a pension of £1,000.

¹¹⁴ Mademoiselle de Nantes (1673–1743), illegitimate daughter of Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan, had married Louis de Bourbon, Duke of Bourbon, on 24 July 1685 (*Adonis ou l'hymen triomphant* by M. Laurent was performed *au mariage de LL. AA. SS. Monseigneur le duc de Bourbon et Mlle de Nantes*. #3587 in *Bibliothèque dramatique de Monsieur de Soleinne, Tome 3*. Paris: Administration de l'Alliance des arts, 1844, p.270). Mademoiselle de Nantes danced entries and was admired for her good grace and the accuracy of her dance in *Les Fontaines de Versailles* (the entertainment composed by Lalande in 1683), revived in Marly on July 28, 1685, in front of the French king and the Dauphine. Lalande, who taught the harpsichord to Mademoiselle de Nantes, composed *Venus et Adonis, Divertissement en musique*, in 1696. See: Sawkins, Lionel. *A Thematic Catalogue of the Works of Michel-Richard de Lalande (1657–1726)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

¹¹⁵ Another example of this rite of passage is *Les Noces de Pelée et de Thétis* (May 1654, Petit Bourbon) where right after Louis XIV appears as Apollo, Henriette Anne Stuart (1644–1670), the ten-year-old sister of Charles and James, performed the role of Erato. To her verses on « the fall of the crowns » correspond, in the third « Entrée », verses of the Duke of York, which leave little ambiguity on the ideas of the court of France at that time: « Loin de ne faire ici que pescher le coral / Il faut que d'un endroit malheureux & fatal, / Que la vaste Mer environne, / Je m'applique en homme expert, / A pescher tout ce qui sert / A refaire une Couronne ». See: *Les oeuvres de M. de Benssérade, Tome II*. Paris: Charles de Sercy, 1697, pp. 72–100.

in the following act to « the shadiest covert of this grove » and the final chorus of Act III alludes to « this forsaken grove ». A single set made of painted shutters and a backdrop showing trees must have been the simple scenery of *Venus and Adonis*. But, in the traditions of the *Masque* and the *Ballet de Cour*, Cupid addresses « courtiers » directly and refers to the rarity of constancy « at court » and opposes to the naturalness of love in « these sweet groves », a topical opposition found in poetry since the Renaissance. The character of Cupid introduces comedy into a structure hitherto regarded as tragic. This satire of ill lovers from the court is developed in the second act, which does not owe much to Ovid, as it presents Venus interacting with Cupid and being attended by the Graces. Indeed, Ovid's story almost ignores the son of Venus, who disappears after mistakenly striking the goddess with his arrow. But, as we have seen, the character is often present in paintings: as a mischievous child, a sleeping companion, an accomplice of Venus' desire, he intervenes in the game of love and highlights its nature.

In poetry, equipped with a half-narrative, half-heuristic role, Cupid is both in the tale and outside, actor of the subject represented and part of its interpretation, and that is the way Blow's *Venus and Adonis* integrates the character. This is an opportunity for Blow and his librettist to expand the role of Cupid by adding a number of cherubs to take part in Cupid's lesson, where the god instructs the other « amores » about who they should make the victims of their darts. For this scene, boys from the Royal Chapel must have joined Lady Mary Tudor for the chorus, as John Blow, aside from being a « gentleman of the Chapel Royal », had since 1674 been the « Master of the children », responsible for the musical education of the youngest members of the royal institution. The subsequent appearance of the Graces, who were also present in the paintings of the period, next to the proliferation of cupids, gives the second act of *Venus and Adonis* a feminine counterpart to the masculinity defined in the first act by the hunters around Adonis. By its lightness and its humor, the second act functions as an Antimasque, shedding new light on the main plot by using a new, more detached tone. After the cupids have recited their theoretical lesson about love, a riddle whose sense has been obscured by time, the Graces take over and embody it with singing and dancing. It is also a chance to incorporate dancing in a dramatic logical context, as « While the Graces dance, the Cupids dress Venus, one combing her head, another ties a bracelet of pearls round her wrist etc. [sic] », a scene previously treated by painters and notably by Albani. Altogether the Graces dance four numbers, likely performed by the young ladies of the court, the longest dance section of the piece occurring while the cupids attend Venus with the contents of « the Magazine of Beauty », a coffer containing cosmetics and grooming tools for the morning toilette of a lady. As I will show later, this act, often given short treatments in academic commentaries because it is external to the original Ovidian myth, may well offer a piece of evidence to the possible authorship of the libretto.

4.2.4 Betwixt life and death

The family background with its mirror effects in the myth may already suggest a close link between the hunter abandoning his lover to go hunting, a scene which acquired a high degree of pathos thanks to the painting by Titian, and Charles II always in pursuit of new pleasures. The king of England was in fact, like most monarchs of his time, an avid hunter and a flighty lover. The monarch's passion for dogs, hounds and pets was also well known, and the breed of miniature spaniels known as Cavalier King Charles Spaniel still bears living testimony of it. *Venus and Adonis* contains several themes, which work together in a play of references to give warning to the flighty man: to flee the pleasures of love for the hunt may prove fatal. This evocation of the unhappy fate of the hunter is supported by a detail which in this context takes

on a poetic significance: in *Venus and Adonis*, the hunters call their dogs by their names¹¹⁶. Three of these have identical names to the dogs of Actaeon, another unfortunate hunter from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* who was ultimately transformed into a stag and met a horrible death, devoured by his hounds. Among Actaeon's pack of forty dogs mentioned by Ovid, *Venus and Adonis* distinguishes three to which Blow's librettist adds new elements: the dog Melampus from Sparta is accompanied by Ladon from Sycon with lean flanks who becomes « strong and bold », and Lachne, who Ovid describes as shaggy, is here an « old » bitch, although this last predicative adjective could be merely a choice of translation from the Latin. These small touches, highlighted by the music that Blow created to set the words, could suggest that the dogs from the Ovidian myth were present on stage.

These dogs elevated to the rank of characters were perhaps performed on stage by the bloodhounds of the royal kennel, the Privy Pack. The dogs would have been accompanied by their huntsmen, and their leashes would help to control their movements. Actual dogs had been used on the stage since Shakespeare¹¹⁷. But there is another possibility, considering that the animal the hunters invite Adonis to pursue was the wild boar¹¹⁸. They would have taken advantage of the « costume » real dogs had to wear for their protection during their encounter with a wild boar and have a child (or a dwarf) representing the animal, with the help of a mask. An engraving made of a costume for an earlier French ballet gives a good idea of the look that could be achieved. The iconographic sources for costumes for small actors playing a dog as a character are not contemporaneous, but this personified animal sometimes appeared in court entertainments of the period, most famously in the *Ballet de la Délivrance de Renaud* where « pleasant and deformed Monsters together » in the shape of owls and monkeys wearing judge and chambermaid costumes were seen, and « two others had the head, arms, and legs of the Dog, the rest of the body related to a peasant ».¹¹⁹ The satirical costume of an animal dressed

¹¹⁶ For context about hounds, see: Cummins, John. *The Hound and the Hawk, The Art of Medieval Hunting*. London: Phoenix Press, 2001, pp. 12–31 and Salvadori, Philippe. *La Chasse sous l'Ancien Régime*. Paris: Fayard, 1996, pp. 91–98.

¹¹⁷ In Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (ca. 1590 but published in 1623) the clownish servant Launce has a long conversation with his dog, named Crab, Act II, Scene 3. The role of Launce may have been written for the famous comic actor Richard Tarlton (Queen Elizabeth's favorite clown); this theory stems from the fact that Tarlton had performed several extremely popular and well-known scenes with a dog. See: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, with an introduction by Stanley Wells, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Plays: Early Comedies*. London: Folio Society, 1997, p. 4. See also: Brooks, Harold F. "Two clowns in a comedy (to say nothing of the dog): Speed, Launce (and Crab) in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*". *Essays and Studies*. XVI, 1963, pp. 91–100. My own staging of the play in 1982 for a student's group (Centrale Theatre, Chatenay-Malabry) had a real dog, although not trained: one could easily imagine the spectacle Tarlton would have presented with a trained one.

¹¹⁸ Topical coincidence: 1683 was the last year that a wild boar was seen in England. See: Strutt, Joseph. *The sports and pastimes of the people of England from the earliest period, including the rural and domestic recreations, may games, mummeries, pageants, processions and pompous spectacle, illustrated by reproduction from ancient paintings in which are represented most of the popular diversions*. London: J. Charles Cox, 1801, p. 14.

¹¹⁹ « deux autres avoyent la teste, les bras, & les jambes de Chien, le reste du corps rapportant à un païsan [...] Monstres plaisans & difformes tout ensemble. » in [Durand, Étienne (1585–1618), Bordier, René (d. 1658?), Guédron, Pierre (1564–1619/1620)]. *Discours au vray du ballet dansé par le Roy, le dimanche XXIXe jour de janvier. M. Vlc. XVII. Avec les desseins, tant des machines & apparences différentes, que de tous les habits des masques*. Paris: Pierre Ballard, 1617, p. 13 and following plate showing the costumes of owl, dogs and monkeys.

as a man¹²⁰ gives a brilliant counterpart to the humans metamorphosed into flower and animal. Here also the memory of French experience may have played a role, as children had played hunting dogs in *The Ballet de la Nuit* in 1653¹²¹. In Stuart *Masques* before the English Civil War, many animals had already appeared on stage: hounds, by their connections through the hunt to the other animals, were bringing a larger Nature for indoor performances¹²². Familiar but also fierce, dogs appear as a symbolic medium between the realm of the stage and the world of the hunt.

The story of Adonis presents the departure to and the return from the hunt and it is likely, in view of the habits of the European courts, that the work was presented after a hunting party as a light spectacle after a tiring day of sport. The connection with the time and the space opens the possibility that the performance might have taken place in Windsor, the « country » royal residence, west of London, where the king would spend the summer months and from where the court would start royal hunts. The sweet groves referred to in the prologue of *Venus and Adonis* may well be the famous forest of Windsor¹²³, and the Armory room of the castle a fitting place for a performance celebrating the hunt, in a single dramatic space requiring minimal decoration.¹²⁴ Like in Quinault's prologues for some of Lully's operas, the place of this action gives the representation of myth an extra reality while its location may offer direct connections for the satirical lines of the prologue to members of the court¹²⁵.

¹²⁰ A design for the dogs' costume, on which the engraving of the *Discours* is clearly based, is attributed to Daniel Rabel (1578–1637) and kept in the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum. Museum number: S.1159–1986. See: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1222908/costume-design-rabel-daniel/>

¹²¹ *Ballet de la Nuit*. Edited by Michael Burden and Jennifer Thorp. The Wendy Hilton Dance & Music Series No. 15. Hillsdale (NY): Pendragon Press, 2009, pp. 21, 29, 32, 91 & 98.

¹²² Staging animals in entertainments was common since the Renaissance and next to horses and dogs, one finds example of bears and birds. See: Nicoll, Allardyce. *Stuart Masques and the Renaissance Stage, with one hundred and ninety-seven illustrations*. New York : Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938, pp. 205-207. See also: Norman, Buford. "Hybrid Monsters and Rival Aesthetics: Monsters in Seventeenth-Century French Ballet and Opera" in *Theatrum Mundi Studies in honor of Ronald W. Tobin*. Edited by Claire L. Carlin and Kathleen Wine. Charlottesville (VA): Rookwood Press, 2003, pp. 180–188.

¹²³ Roberts, Jane. *Royal Landscape: The Gardens and Parks of Windsor*. New Haven (CT): Yale University Press, 1997.

¹²⁴ « On 20 April 1683 the Lord Chamberlain wrote orders to the Officers of the castle of Windsor: "These are to signifie His Mat^{es} pleasure that you cause a Theatre to be forthwith made, in the White Tower in Windsor Castle where the Armory is: as soone as the Lord Dartmouth Master of Ordinance shall by His Mat^{es} Command, have removed all the Armes from thence & cleared the same: and that you make ye same Theatre in all parts as you shall receive direction from His Mat^{es} upon the place." », quoted by Boswell, Eleanore. *The Restoration Court stage, 1660–1702, with a particular account of the production of Calisto*. 2nd Edition. London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1966, p. 61.

¹²⁵ The 1674 prologue of *Alceste* took place in the gardens of the Tuileries Palace, the 1675 one of *Thésée* in the Versailles' gardens, although the work was created in the Castle of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. *Venus et Adonis*, a tragédie lyrique by Henri Desmarest (1661–1741) on a libretto by Jean-Baptiste Rousseau (1670–1741) and created at the Académie Royale, has a prologue showing the forests of Marly, which was by then for Louis XIV what Windsor was for Charles II. See: *Vénus & Adonis, Tragédie en Musique de Henry Desmarest (1697), Livret, études et commentaires. Textes réunis par Jean Duron et Yves Ferraton*. Versailles: Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles and Sprimont: Pierre Mardaga, 2006.

The theme of the hunt was itself already connected to the nobility: hunting rights had been a tangible sign of membership in the elite class since the early Middle Ages, and, in 1671, Charles II strengthened the aristocratic privilege with a law known as the Game Act¹²⁶. The hunt was certainly a leisure pastime, but according to certain thinkers, it was also a morally healthy activity that could distract a man from the futility of his condition. The hunt of the seventeenth century was above all a collective work of art that rallied communal experiences around itself: shared meals, sacred rituals, vigils. All texts of the period concerning the hunt agree on this aspect of fellowship and emphasize the fraternal friendship that unites the hunters. Pavilions and sumptuous halls were built to welcome such celebrations¹²⁷. Trophies, real or sculpted, gave ample opportunities to remember previous hunts and dream about future heroic successes¹²⁸. The sociability of the hunt was expressed equally in the assembly that preceded it as in the repast that succeeded it: such a feast was indeed the occasion to sing the legends of the hunt and seems to be an appropriate environment, aimed at exalting the senses, for a performance of *Venus and Adonis*, « A Masque for the Entertainment of the King ». Presented in the course of the festivities around a royal hunting party, the story of Adonis was a reminder that if hunting might seem a pleasure of life, it remained primarily a labor where death had to be the outcome and rebirth the mystery.

4.2.5 Betwixt Anne Finch and Anne Killigrew

Confronted by such a refined libretto which integrates so many other versions of the myth and is so well connected with the societal context of its performance, one cannot help but wonder who its author was. The libretto of *Venus and Adonis* has remained anonymous for over three centuries. No indication of authorship of the poem appears on the score. The first printed libretto, published in 1684 by Josias Priest (ca. 1645–1735) for his school performance of this « OPERA », announced in capital letters, in Chelsea, does not bear any name¹²⁹. The poetess Anne Kingsmill Finch (1661–1720), then Anne Kingsmill, has recently been proposed as the author of the libretto¹³⁰, but I suggest here that her contemporary, Anne Killigrew (1660–1685), may be a more convincing attribution¹³¹. Poetesses and even female playwrights were

¹²⁶ Munsche, Peter B. *Gentlemen and Poachers: The English Game Laws 1671–1831*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

¹²⁷ Sabretache [Albert Stewart Barrow]. *Monarchy and the Chase*. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1948, pp. 87–103.

¹²⁸ See: Deuchar, Stephen. *Sporting Art in Eighteenth-century England: A Social and Political History*. Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art. New Haven (CT) and London: Yale University Press, 1988, pp. 86–91. See also: Salvadori, Philippe. *La Chasse sous l'Ancien Régime*. Paris: Fayard, 1996, pp. 148–175.

¹²⁹ Luckett, Richard. “A New Source for « Venus and Adonis »” in *The Musical Times*. Vol. 130, No. 1752 (Feb. 1989). London: Musical Times Publications, 1989, pp. 76–79.

¹³⁰ Winn, James A. “« A Versifying Maid of Honour »: Anne Finch and the Libretto for Venus and Adonis” in *The Review of English Studies*. Vol. 59, No. 238. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008, pp. 67–85.

¹³¹ Prof. Tim Carter attracted my attention to the fact that the same hypothesis has been explored recently: Pinnock, Andrew. “The Rival Maids: Anne Killigrew, Anne Kingsmill and the making of the court masque Venus and Adonis (music by John Blow)” in *Early Music*. (In Press). See: <https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/421363/>. My work has been developed without knowing about Prof. Andrew Pinnock's research.

not rare during the Restoration¹³², and several elements make the Killigrew attribution more than merely another possibility. Like Anne Kingsmill, Anne Killigrew joined the court of the Duke of York, the future James II¹³³, in London. In the spring of 1682, James was setting up a household for himself and his second wife, the then-pregnant Mary d'Este, better known to English speakers as Mary of Modena (1658–1718). In the refined coterie of the Duchess of York, both Maids of Honour wrote poems. Aside from this court circle and many similarities between the style of the libretto of *Venus and Adonis* and the vocabulary of Anne Killigrew's poetry, turns of phrases and themes of verses, three more arguments can be made in her favor.

Unlike Anne Kingsmill, Anne Killigrew came from a family prominent in the court of Charles II, particularly very close to James, Duke of York, a declared supporter of the performing arts. Her father Henry (1612–1700) was James' chaplain, and one of her uncles, William Killigrew (1606–1695), was an admiral under James. One of her aunts, Elizabeth Killigrew (1622–1680), had been a mistress of Charles II, by whom she had a daughter, Charlotte Killigrew (1650–1684), which meant that Anne Killigrew's cousin was Lady Mary Tudor's half sister. The family had strong ties to the theatre as well as the court. At the Restoration, among the first acts of Charles II was the issuance of patents for the establishment of two London playhouses; one of these was given to her other uncle, Thomas Killigrew. All three brothers wrote theatre plays¹³⁴. Thus, Anne grew up in a well-connected and well-educated family. No details of her own education are known, but « being tenderly educated, she became most admirable in the Arts of Poetry and Painting »¹³⁵. Her works, both in writing and in painting, display knowledge of Greek and Roman mythology and of biblical history. Her ambitious poem about Alexander the Great, her first poetry, has already a classical title « Alexandreis », and she later composed pastoral dialogues in the Greek style, and wrote poetry about two episodes of the life Saint John the Baptist.¹³⁶ As a young woman, Anne Killigrew moved in the highest court circles with her father and her other family members and in her poems, she addresses various members of the court, including Mary of Modena. Anne Killigrew's poem titled *Upon a Little Lady Under the Discipline of an Excellent Person* could be of great consequence for the 1683 *Venus and Adonis* possible authorship¹³⁷. Still waiting for a full critical commentary, it does not only present a long section about Cupids but mentions Adonis

¹³² See: Hobby, Elaine. *Virtue of necessity: English women's writing, 1649–1688*. Ann Arbor (MI) : University of Michigan Press, 1989. See also: Lowenthal, Cynthia. "Two Female Playwrights of the Restoration: Aphra Behn and Susanna Centlivre" in *A Companion to Restoration Drama*. Edited by Susan J. Owen. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008, pp. 396–411. See also: Fitzmaurice, James. *Major Women Writers of Seventeenth-century England*. Ann Arbor (MI): University of Michigan Press, 1997.

¹³³ John Blow was named a private musician to James II in 1685.

¹³⁴ Thomas wrote obscene comedies; Sir William published tragedy and comedy as well as works of prose and verse: *Ormasdes, or Love and Friendship* (1664), *Pandora, or the Converts* (1664), *Selindra* (1664), *The Siege of Urbin* (1666); and Anne's father, Henry, wrote a play called *The Conspiracy* in 1638, revising it for publication under the title *Pallantus and Eudora* in 1653.

¹³⁵ See: "Henry Killigrew" in Wood, Anthony. *Athenae Oxoniensis. An exact history of all the writers and bishops who have had their education in the University of Oxford*. 1721 edition. Volume II, columns 1035 & 1036.

¹³⁶ « A Pastoral Dialogue: Melibæus, Alcippe, Asteria, Licida, Alcimedon, and Amira. » in Killigrew, Anne. *Poems 1686*. Facsimile edition, edited by R. E. Morton. Gainesville (FL): Scholars, 1967, pp. 63–75.

¹³⁷ Killigrew, Anne. *Poems 1686*. Facsimile edition, edited by R. E. Morton. Gainesville (FL): Scholars, 1967, p. 93.

and even contains some verses which could be referring to the performance of *Venus and Adonis* at court. Killigrew died of smallpox on 16 June 1685, when she was 25 years old¹³⁸.



Figure 7: 1683?, James Duke of York (later James II)
By Anne Killigrew (1660-1685).
Oil and Canvas.
United Kingdom, HM the Queen Collection.

The posthumous publication of her *Poems* by her father in 1686¹³⁹ is opened by an ode written by John Dryden (1631–1700), incontestably the most important English poet of the period and a family friend. He addresses her as « the Accomplisht Young LADY Mrs Anne Killigrew, Excellent in the two Sister-Arts of Poësie, and Painting ». ¹⁴⁰ Her talent as painter is corroborated by records of at least fifteen works¹⁴¹. Many of her paintings display portraits, including portraits of Mary of Modena and of James, Duke of York¹⁴² (figure 7).

¹³⁸ For a more complete biography, see: *Anne Killigrew: Printed Writings 1641–1700*, edited by Patricia Hoffmann. London: Routledge, 2003.

¹³⁹ Killigrew, Anne. *Poems*. London: S. Lowndes, 1686. See a transcription at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/41076/41076-h/41076-h.htm>

¹⁴⁰ Dryden, John. “To the Pious Memory / Of the Accomplisht Young LADY / Mrs Anne Killigrew, / Excellent in the two Sister-Arts of Poësie, and Painting. / An ODE.” in Killigrew, Anne. *Poems*. London: S. Lowndes, 1686.

¹⁴¹ Anne Killigrew was included in the English edition of Roger de Piles’ *Vie des Peintres*. See: *The Art of Painting, and the Lives of Painters: Containing, a Compleat Treatise of Painting, Designing, and the Use of Prints: With Reflections on the Works of the most Celebrated Painters, and of the several schools of Europe, as well Ancient as Modern. Done from the French of Monsieur de Piles*. London: J. Nutt, 1706, p. 440.

¹⁴² One self-portrait is kept at Berkeley Castle (see following note). Her portrait of James II is still in the Royal Collection. See: Wright, Christopher; Gordon, Catherine May; Peskett Smith, Mary. *British and Irish Paintings in*

Yet, the ambition of Anne Killigrew was to be considered as a learned painter, treating biblical and mythological subjects, and one early self-portrait showed her holding a paper, likely one of her poems, in a classical landscape filled with old ruins, suggestive of a representation in the guise of a muse, likely Calliope¹⁴³. Admiral William Killigrew owned six of his niece's canvases. Their titles, recorded in 1727 by the catalog of a sale, are representative of her choice of subjects: *A woman's head* (likely a self-portrait), a biblical *Judith and Holofernes*, and among the mythological genre, praised by the verses of Dryden, a *Satyr playing on a Pipe*, and most importantly for us, a painting recorded as: *Venus and Adonis*. This painting of *Venus and Adonis* seems lost but the myth had attracted Anne Killigrew at least twice: another of her paintings showing *Venus attired by the Graces*, has been recently discovered and its similarity with Act II of the opera by Blow is too striking to be dismissed. While some verses of Dryden may be evocative of her painting titled *Satyr playing on a Pipe*, for he describes its scenery « Of lofty trees, with sacred shades, / And perspectives of pleasant glades, / Where nymphs of brightest form appear, / And shaggy satyrs standing near, / Which them at once admire and fear ».¹⁴⁴ This may well be evocative of *Venus attired by the Graces* as shown on Figure 8.

Dryden was not the only poet to write about Anne Killigrew's paintings; she « her self » wrote verses about her own pictures, and this ekphrastic style is of consequence for the possible attribution of the libretto of Blow's opera. In her *Poems* one can find verses on « St. John Baptist Painted by her self in the Wilderness, with Angels appearing to him, and with a Lamb by him » and on « Herodias Daughter presenting to her Mother St. John's Head in a Charger, also Painted by her self ». Closer to *Venus and Adonis*, her works also contain a poem « On a Picture Painted by her self, representing two Nymphs of Diana's, one in a posture to Hunt, the other Bathing. »¹⁴⁵ which alludes beautifully to the themes of the hunt and of the intimate, in a vocabulary close to the lyrics of *Venus and Adonis*. Besides the similarity of poetic vocabulary found in the succession of verses destined to be sung, and that only an extensive lexical comparison could fully demonstrate, it is by its stage directions that the libretto displays a clear desire to elevate the dramaturgy to a specific purpose.

Public Collections: An Index of British and Irish Oil Paintings by Artists Born Before 1870 in Public and Institutional Collections in the United Kingdom and Ireland. New Haven (CT) and London: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 920.

¹⁴³ I was not able to trace the location of this painting, but it may be the one kept in Berkeley Castle. I date this portrait, following the fashion of the dress, of the mid 1673s when Ann was around 13 years old and making her debuts at court. Further research is needed to trace the location of this painting, starting by Berkeley Castle. For a black and white reproduction, see: <http://www.jimandellen.org/finch/emion1-3.htm>

¹⁴⁴ Dryden, John. "To the Pious Memory / Of the Accomplisht Young LADY / Mrs Anne Killigrew, / Excellent in the two Sister-Arts of Poësie, and Painting. / An ODE." in Killigrew, Anne. *Poems*. London: S. Lowndes, 1686.

¹⁴⁵ « On a Picture Painted by her self, representing two Nymphs of DIANA's, one in a posture to Hunt, the other Bathing. WE are Diana's Virgin-Train, / Descended of no Mortal Strain; / Our Bows and Arrows are our Goods, / Our Pallaces, the lofty Woods, / The Hills and Dales, at early Morn, / Resound and Eccho with our Horn; / We chase the Hinde and Fallow-Deer, / The Wolf and Boar both dread our Spear; // In Swiftnes we out-strip the Wind, / An Eye and Thought we leave behind; / We Fawns and Shaggy Satyrs awe; / To Sylvan Pow'rs we give the Law: / Whatever does provoke our Hate, / Our Javelins strike, as sure as Fate; / We bathe in Springs, to cleanse the Soil, / Contracted by our eager Toil; / In which we shine like glittering Beams, / Or Christal in the Christal Streams; / Though Venus we transcend in Form, / No wanton Flames our Bosomes warm! / If you ask where such Wights do dwell, / In what Bless't Clime, that so excel? / The Poets onely that can tell. » in Killigrew, Anne. *Poems*. London: S. Lowndes, 1686, pp. 28 & 29.



Figure 8: 1683?, *Venus attired by the Graces*
By Anne Killigrew (1660-1685).
Oil and Canvas, 44 x 37 1/3 inches, 112 x 95 cm.
Falmouth, Falmouth Art Gallery.

The libretto is a device to show *pictures where text can be sung*. Indeed, the Prologue, and what is rarer, each act, opens with a mention of a curtain “drawn” to reveal various tableaux vivants, composed like mythological paintings of the period¹⁴⁶. In the prologue « The curtain is drawn where is discovered Cupid, with a bow in one hand and an arrow in the other hand, and arrows by his side, and round him Shepherds and Shepherdesses ». This picture is close to an emblematic symbol and anchors the tale in a moral ambition, like an illustration on a title page. But in the first act, the curtain reveals the scene so often copied by the illustrators of Ovid: « The curtain opens and discovers Venus and Adonis sitting together upon a couch, embracing one another ». This practice of the curtain is distinct from the theatre customs of the period, as the set of « groves » does not change, and its repeated use should be seen in relation with the custom of the period to place a little curtain in front of certain picture to protect them for sight. This largely documented picture curtain¹⁴⁷, could manually be drawn to reveal the painting to the eyes. Although it originates in the habit to cover holy pictures, it was, by the late seventeenth century, mostly used to cover paintings which displayed nudity, and Venus and Adonis were both erotic models¹⁴⁸. While the second act shows the side of the character of Venus as a mother, « The curtain opens and Venus and Cupid are seen standing with Little Cupids round about them », the third act focuses on the lonely forsaken female lover: « The curtain opens and discovers Venus standing in a melancholy posture ». In *Venus and Adonis*, the librettist’s poetic ambition reveals itself when it is integrating openings of curtain to reveal carefully composed pictures: stage effects of the libretto apply some devices coming from the painting practice and theory.

The crimson velvet curtain which features on the portrait painted by Peter Lely (1618–1680) at the end of his life, is also revealing the artist Anne Killigrew at work, designing what appears to be a classical male portrait (Adonis?), in a luxurious yellow silk dress with a pearl baldrick evocative of a *Masque* costume, in front of a window opening on a shadowy grove (Figure 9). Despite the convention of the picture, Lely manages to bring many elements allusive to Anne Killigrew’s identity as maid of honour, as a painter, as an artist.

Is it probable that the libretto of *Venus and Adonis* was written by Anne Killigrew at the time she was painting her canvases?¹⁴⁹ Her painting titled *Venus and Adonis* seems lost, but the designation suggests a composition around the two lovers, showing either the couple in embrace or the discovery of the dead Adonis by the goddess. The fact that the myth had attracted her at least twice shows a true interest in the narrative and dramatic developments of

¹⁴⁶ On tableaux vivants, see: Holmström, Kirsten Gram. *Monodrama, Attitudes, Tableaux vivants, Studies on some Trends of theatrical Fashion 1770-1815*. Uppsala : Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967.

¹⁴⁷ On the use of curtain in England, see: Nicoll, Allardyce. *Stuart Masques and the Renaissance Stage*. New York : Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938, pp 39-44. For France, see: Scherer, Jacques. *La Dramaturgie Classique en France*. Paris : Nizet, 1986, pp. 171-175. On the curtain in front of painting, see: Kemp, Wolfgang. *Rembrandt: "La Sainte Famille" ou l'art de lever un Rideau*. Paris: Adam Biro, 1989.

¹⁴⁸ The representation of Adonis is being purged of possible homosexual connotations by the presence of Venus.

¹⁴⁹ The painting has been on sale at the Philip Mould & Co. gallery in 2012. Now in the Falmouth Art Gallery private collection, the provenance of the painting has been traced to the Killigrew sale of December 1727. Literature: ‘Vertue Note Books’, Volume II, *Walpole Society Volume XX*, 1931-2, pp. 4 & 58. Collins Baker, Charles Henry. *Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 28, no. 152, Dec 1915, pp. 112 & 114 illus. Barash, Carol. *English Women’s Poetry, 1649-1714: Politics, Community and Linguistic Authority*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 157. See: <http://www.historicalportraits.com/Gallery.asp?Page=Item&ItemID=1491&Desc=Venus-Attired-by-the-Graces-|-Anne-Killigrew> (last accessed 24 June 2018)

it. Her painting of *Venus attired by the Graces* (Figure 8) shows a landscape ornamented by a sculptured fountain, with a naked Venus attended by the three Graces: one combing her hair, another tying a bracelet of coral around her ankle, while another one is preparing an embroidered belt. A satyr, whose presence may suggest the idea of lust, supported by his offering of grapes, balances a composition capped by Cupid flying above. While one can only wonder whether the lost painting, the one that belonged to her uncle William, was related to either Act I or Act III of Blow's *Venus and Adonis*, this surviving scene is evocative of Act II. In a composition influenced by the works of Albani, known thanks to engravings, Anne Killigrew's painting *Venus attired by the Graces* could be a part of a coherent series of pictures of which the poetic libretto would be the ekphratic pendant.



Figure 9: 1680?, Anne Killigrew at her design table (1660-1685) by Sir Peter Lely (1618–1680)
Oil and Canvas.
England, Private collection.

Beyond the similarities in poetic vocabulary of Anne Kingsmill and Anne Killigrew and their common social context, the fact that the latter was connected to a family of playwrights made her a more suitable candidate to be writing the text of a royal *Masque*, especially considering her family's ties to Lady Mary Tudor. More importantly, she had painted at least two works about the myth, and even beyond her demonstrated interest in the mythical lovers, we know she was accustomed to write poetry about her own paintings. All of these elements make her a serious candidate for the maternity of the libretto of *Venus and Adonis*. Her early death, in the year after the last known performance given while Blow was still alive, the one at Priest's school in Chelsea, may well be the reason for the obscurity that ultimately

befell the authorship of the libretto. Her father, if he found a manuscript of it in her papers, separated from the visual element of its ekphrastic component, may well have disregarded it as he was concerned to establish the reputation of his departed daughter as a vestal poetess, as Dryden called her: « a Youngest Virgin-Daughter of the Skies »¹⁵⁰. *Venus and Adonis* would have not fit well in this picture: in the same way Venus's nudity in Anne Killigrew's painting was subsequently covered with a drapery¹⁵¹, the libretto of *Venus and Adonis* was separated from its genitrix.¹⁵² There is no doubt in my mind that *Venus and Adonis* offers a arresting example of the complex relation between poetry and painting in England.

¹⁵⁰ Dryden, John. "To the Pious Memory / Of the Accomplisht Young LADY / Mrs Anne Killigrew, / Excellent in the two Sister-Arts of Poësie, and Painting. / An ODE." in Killigrew, Anne. *Poems*. London: S. Lowndes, 1686.

¹⁵¹ A yellow drapery was painted over the nudity at a later date, but the painting has been now restored to its original state. See notice of the Philip Mould & Co Gallery, London at: <http://www.historicalportraits.com/Gallery.asp?Page=Item&ItemID=1491&Desc=Venus-Attired-by-the-Graces--Anne-Killigrew>

¹⁵² Research for this paper, presented during lectures (Juilliard School of Music, New York, 19 March 2014 & 20 March 2018), has been carried out in the frame of the Boston Early Music Festival for my stage production of *Venus and Adonis* (2008, 2009) and for the Audio recording of it (2011: CPO 777 614-2). The central part of it has been published in successive BEMF program books and in the booklet accompanying the recording, which also includes pictures from the staging. I am indebted to Dr. Camille Tanguy for her assistance in the preliminary research. I am also grateful for Dr. Andrew Walkling's interest in my interpretation and our stimulating conversations.

4.3 *Acis and Galatea* by George Frideric Handel

« Consult the genius of the place in all;
That tells the waters or to rise, or fall;
Or helps th' ambitious hill the heav'ns to scale,
Or scoops in circling theatres the vale;
Calls in the country, catches opening glades,
Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades,
Now breaks, or now directs, th' intending lines;
Paints as you plant, and, as you work, designs. »

Alexander Pope, *Epistle IV*¹⁵³

In the summer of 1717, after the highly successful performance on the river Thames of his *Water Music* for the King of England, George Frideric Handel went to take up residence at Cannons, a rural domain few miles north of London. It was there that his « little opera » of *Acis and Galatea*, as a witness of the time called it¹⁵⁴, was to be written and first performed in the late spring of 1718¹⁵⁵. The composer had accepted the invitation of one of his patrons: James Brydges (1674–1744), the Earl of Carnarvon and Baron Chandos, who would later be elevated to the title by which he is best known, the Duke of Chandos¹⁵⁶. As Paymaster-General of the English armies during the War of Spanish Succession, Chandos was able to amass a colossal fortune starting in 1705. His first marriage allowed him to buy the large grounds of Cannons in 1709. His second wedding, in 1713, to a rich cousin, had added to his wealth. Highly cultivated and artistic, Cassandra Willoughby (1670–1735) had a keen interest in the history of painting and was an amateur painter herself. Her educated interest in the arts made her a perfect match for Chandos, who was an avid art collector and a liberal patron¹⁵⁷, as

¹⁵³ Pope, Alexander. *Of false taste; an epistle to the Right Honourable Richard Earl of Burlington. Occasion'd by his publishing Palladio's designs of the baths, arches, theatres, &c. of ancient Rome*, 3rd edition. London: L. Gilliver, 1731, Verses 57–64.

¹⁵⁴ « I have been at Canons with E: of Carnavan who lives *en Prince* & to boot is a worthy beneficent man, I heard sermon at his parish church which for painting and ornament exceeds every thing in this Country he has a Choorus of his own, the Musick is made for himself and sung by his own servants, besides which there is a little opera now a making for his diversion whereof the Musick will not be made publick. The words are to be furnished by M^{rs} Pope & Gay, the musick to be composed by Hendell. » Letter from Sir David Dalrymple (d. 1721) to Hugh Campbell, 3rd Earl of Loudoun (d. 1731), dated 27 May 1718, transcribed in: Rogers, Patrick. "Dating *Acis and Galatea*: a newly discovered letter" in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 114, No. 1566 (August 1973), p. 792.

¹⁵⁵ The exact date of the performance, if a performance did take place, has not yet been determined.

¹⁵⁶ For a biography and larger assessment of the Duke of Chandos's patronage, see: Jenkins, Susan. *Portrait of a Patron, The Patronage and Collecting of James Brydges, 1st Duke of Chandos (1674–1744)*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

¹⁵⁷ Charles Gildon's poem of 1717, *Canons or the Vision* is praising Chandos's patronage. See: Gildon, Charles. *Canons: or, The vision. A poem address'd to the Right Honourable Earl of Caernarvan, &c.* London, 1717. Eighteenth

Handel would appreciate himself during the years he spent as his guest. The couple was enjoying the grand life befitting their high noble rank and political connections, and their large estate of Cannons was to be both the symbol of this success and the backdrop of *Acis and Galatea*; it was also the motive for its creation, as I will demonstrate¹⁵⁸. The poetic and spectacular role of a real garden confers on *Acis and Galatea* a very special identity. This identity must be taken into consideration when staging the piece: clues of a visual nature, signs of movements and tensions, evidence of symbols and metaphors, all show that *Acis and Galatea* was more than a minor *Masque*: rather, it was an attempt to integrate all elements of an Augustan patronage in order to celebrate it. *Acis and Galatea* can be considered to belong to the genre of *Masque/opera*.

4.3.1 Cannons : the place

The year following his second marriage, Chandos had started to radically transform his Jacobean house at Cannons into a sumptuous up-to-date residence. Daniel Defoe (1660–1731), who characterized it in 1725 as « the most Magnificent in England » in his *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, further expressed his admiration as follows: « The great palaces in Italy, are either the work of Sovereign Princes, or have been Ages in their Building; one Family laying the Design, and ten succeeding Ages and Families being taken up, in carrying on the Building: But *Cannons* had not been three Years in the *Duke's* Possession, before we saw this Prodigy rise out of the Ground ». ¹⁵⁹ The comparison was well-founded as the new mansion itself was designed in the Italian style, a rather new trend in English architecture that was strongly influenced by the villas built by Palladio around Venice and the buildings of Rome¹⁶⁰. England was then as fascinated by Italian art, past and contemporary, as the rest of Europe was, and by the end of the seventeenth century a journey to Italy was a must for the education of every young man of good family. If the entrepreneurial and busy Chandos, deeply involved in trade and business life, could not himself go to Italy, he wished nevertheless to have Italy around him, a cultural image of both classical tradition and pragmatic modernity. Consequently, the house designed for him by numerous architects, most notably James Gibbs

Century Collections Online. Gale. Universiteit Leiden / LUMC. Accessed 16 February 2018
http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&use_rGroupName=leiden&tabID=T001&docId=CB3330554004&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE

¹⁵⁸ Preliminary versions of this research have been presented during public and private lectures (Vancouver Public Library, Vancouver, 19 March 2011, and Juilliard School of Music, New York, 21 March 2014 & 22 March 2018), and has been carried out in the frame of the Boston Early Music Festival for my staged production of *Acis and Galatea* (2009, 2011, 2015) and for the audio recording of it (2015: CPO 777 877-2). A summary has been published in successive BEMF program books and included in the booklet of the recording, together with photographs of the original staged production. I am indebted to Dr. Camille Tanguy for her assistance in the preliminary research. I am also grateful for Dr. Ellen Harris's interest in my interpretation and helpful comments on early drafts. I am indebted to the research on Cannons of Dr. Suzanne Jenkins and to the works of Dr. John Dixon Hunt on the English Garden.

¹⁵⁹ Daniel Defoe is best known as the author of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), but he was also famous as a political pamphleteer and was considered a pioneer of modern journalism. His three-volume travel book, *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, was published between 1724 and 1727, and was innovative because Defoe had actually visited the places he described. For Cannons, see: Defoe, Daniel. *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain, Divided into Circuits or Journies*, [...] Vol II. London: G. Strahan, 1725, pp. 8–12.

¹⁶⁰ The influence of Italy on the taste of Handel's other great English patron, Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington (1694–1753), is also visible in his own work as an architect. See: Kingsbury, Pamela D. *Lord Burlington's Town Architecture*. London: RIBA Heinz Gallery, 1995.

(1682–1754)¹⁶¹, active in Cannons in the years 1716–1720, was to have all the classical features of symmetry and proportion, with large Venetian windows and elegant Ionic pilasters creating a Roman portico. The inside of the house was still under construction in 1717, when Handel arrived, as the plans for the interior were as ambitious as for the exterior. Numerous artists were commissioned to make it the finest house in England, and Chandos spared no expense to have everything be as rich as possible. The rooms, opulently painted and decorated, were intended to welcome the art treasures he had begun collecting before Cannons was built. Ironically, one of the difficulties he faced when collecting was that the War of the Spanish Succession, which was a key factor in his great wealth, also made it more difficult to import art directly from the continent¹⁶². Even so, his collection of paintings included some of the great Italian masters like Caravaggio, Titian and Giorgione¹⁶³. The French school was less well represented, perhaps for political reasons, though several paintings by Poussin, an artist who was renowned for his Italian affinity, had been obtained¹⁶⁴. Portraits with musical instruments, water landscapes and mythological paintings show the taste of Chandos for classical subjects.

Masterpieces adorned the walls of the house, and Cassandra Willoughby's own excellent copies of old masters decorated the private apartments. Aside from these museum pieces and family treasures, Italian and French fresco painters¹⁶⁵ were called to lavish their talents on a series of rooms that were designed to embody a princely life. At a time when public appearances and social gatherings were expressions of power, these spaces were also a kind of stage set, where the Earl and Countess of Carnarvon could play their private roles with magnificence. The vast apartments were specifically fit out to accommodate their passions for the arts, and included a picture room, a « stone gallery » to displays sculptural antiques, a tapestry room, a needlework room, and a huge library. There was a special music room which was situated next to the dining room to allow the noble couple to eat in style: in private but immersed in music, the orchestra being unseen from the table. Described in 1722 as « very spacious » by John Macky (d. 1726) in his *Journey through England*, this Dining Room had indeed « at the End of it, a Room for his Musick, which performs both Vocal and Instrumental, during the Time he is at Table; and he spares no Expende to have the best ».¹⁶⁶ An orchestra and a

¹⁶¹ Trained in Rome, and particularly known for the domed Radcliffe Camera at Oxford University, James Gibbs (1682–1754) also transformed the villa of Alexander Pope. His impact on the British architecture of his time was significant, notably thanks to his book: *A Book of Architecture, containing designs of buildings and ornaments* published in 1728. See: Friedman, Terry. *James Gibbs*. New Haven (CT): Yale University Press, 1984.

¹⁶² See: Weiss, Benjamin. “Arcadian Visions: The Art Collection of the Duke of Chandos” in *Boston Early Music Festival Program Book, 2015–2016 Concert Season, BEMF Chamber Opera Series, Handel's Acis and Galatea*. Cambridge (MA): Boston Early Music Festival, 2015, pp. 24–27.

¹⁶³ See: Jenkins, Susan. *Portrait of a Patron, The Patronage and Collecting of James Brydges, 1st Duke of Chandos (1674–1744)*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, pp. 127–138.

¹⁶⁴ Works by Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) also feature in Handel's collection. See: McGeary, Thomas. “Handel as art collector: art, connoisseurship and taste in Hanoverian Britain” in *Early Music. Vol. 37, N° 4*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 533–574.

¹⁶⁵ Chandos commissioned painters directly, and for the decoration of the interiors of his house he had an international taste, inviting the Italian Antonio Belluci (1654–1726), the French Louis Laguerre (1663–1721) but also the British William Kent (1685–1748). See: Jenkins, Susan. *Portrait of a Patron, The Patronage and Collecting of James Brydges, 1st Duke of Chandos (1674–1744)*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, pp. 58–72.

¹⁶⁶ Macky, John. *A Journey through England in Familiar Letters from a Gentleman Here to his Friend Abroad*. Volume II. London: J. Pemberton, 1722, Letter I, p. 9. Daniel Defoe also mentions: « Nor is the Chapel only Furnish'd

male vocal ensemble were part of the permanent household at Cannons, and their activities were concerned as much with the spiritual life of the estate, with daily services at the chapel, as with the social aspects, which included court-like entertainments¹⁶⁷.

To head his musical establishment, in 1712 the future duke appointed Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667–1752). This Berlin-born composer started his career in England as a viola player and later as harpsichordist at the Royal Theatre in Drury Lane¹⁶⁸. There he was appointed musical director in 1714 and collaborated with several of the leading theatrical figures of the day, including in the production of a series of English *Masques*. Among these spectacles, *Venus and Adonis*, on the same subject as Blow's opera, did much to establish his reputation in 1715 as a composer in the London musical world¹⁶⁹ and was followed by other successes, including *Apollo and Daphne* in January 1716, also based on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*¹⁷⁰. Pepusch, who had been awarded the degree of Doctor of Music at Oxford in 1713, served for about twenty years as musical director to the Duke of Chandos, and wrote a considerable amount of church music for the chapel at Cannons. In 1717 or 1718, he married the renowned Italian-born singer Margherita de L'Epine (1680–1746), who is likely to have sung the role of Galatea at Cannons, as she had created all of the lead soprano roles in the operas Handel had composed for the London stage since 1712¹⁷¹. Pepusch and L'Epine were the true core of

with such excellent Musick, but the Duke has a Set of them to entertain him every Day at Dinner. » in Defoe, Daniel. *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain, Divided into Circuits or Journies*, [...] Vol II. London: G. Strahan, 1725, p. 11.

¹⁶⁷ Speaking of the chapel of Cannons, Defoe notes its « singularity, not only in its building, and the beauty of its workmanship, but in this also, that the duke maintains there a full choir, and has the worship perform'd ... with the best musick after the manner of the chapel royal, which is not done in any other noble man's chapel in Britain » in Defoe, Daniel. *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain, Divided into Circuits or Journies*, [...] Vol II. London: G. Strahan, 1725, p. 10.

¹⁶⁸ See: Cook, Frederick Donald. *The life and works of Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667–1752), with special reference to his dramatic works and cantatas*. Doctoral Thesis. London, King's College London, 1982, pp. 69–183. See: [https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/theses/the-life-and-works-of-johann-christoph-pepusch-16671752-with-special-reference-to-his-dramatic-works-and-cantatas\(3fb21beb-a99b-4be5-aa3e-951495d3986a\).html](https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/theses/the-life-and-works-of-johann-christoph-pepusch-16671752-with-special-reference-to-his-dramatic-works-and-cantatas(3fb21beb-a99b-4be5-aa3e-951495d3986a).html) (Accessed 28 February 2018).

¹⁶⁹ *Venus and Adonis* was written by Colley Cibber (1671–1757) and premiered on 12 March 1715. The piece was revived at the theatre at Lincoln's Inn Fields, where Pepusch became director of music, during the 1718–1719 season, and again in 1725 and 1730. See: Cook, Frederick Donald. “*Venus and Adonis*: An English Masque « After the Italian Manner »” in *The Musical Times*. Vol. 121, No. 1651 (September 1980). London: Musical Times Publications, 1980, pp. 553–557.

¹⁷⁰ *Apollo and Daphne* was set by Pepusch on a text by John Hughes (1677–1720). See: *Poems on Several Occasions with some select essays in prose in Two Volumes by John Hughes, Esq.* London: Tonson & Watts, 1735, Volume II, p. 107. In the gardens of Cannons a statuary group showing Apollo in pursuit of Daphne, and holding her as she transformed into a laurel tree, was visible on the south side of the canal. See: Jenkins, Susan. *Portrait of a Patron, The Patronage and Collecting of James Brydges, 1st Duke of Chandos (1674–1744)*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, p. 85.

¹⁷¹ Margherita de L'Epine sang Adonis in Pepusch's *Venus and Adonis*. See: Middleton, Lydia Miller. “Epine, Francesca Margherita de l' » in Stephen, Leslie. *Dictionary of National Biography*. Volume 17. London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1885–1900, pp. 380 & 381. See also: Dean, Winton. “l'Epine, (Francesca) Margherita de” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Volume 10: “Kern to Lindelheim”. London: Macmillan, 1995, pp. 682 & 683.

Musical Cannons at the time and may have been instrumental in connecting Handel and Chandos¹⁷².

4.3.2 Cannons: the gardens

But even more than the house and its musical staff, it was the gardens of Cannons that were renowned for their magnificence, their size and their variety. When Handel arrived, this admiration was already widespread, and the scale of the work put Cannons at the front line of the avant-garde. « The gardens are so well designed, and have so vast a variety, and the canals are so large, that they are not to be out done in *England* »¹⁷³. Thanks to his large grounds, Chandos was able to create a harmonious compendium of different styles. English gardens knew the beginning of a renewal in these years, where the models of Italian, Dutch and French gardens were copied but also adapted to allow less formality¹⁷⁴. In Cannons, like in Het Loo in the Netherlands, there was a pleasure garden and an orchard, but also a grand terrace opening on a parterre with sculptures, based on the geometric model of Versailles, which opened in turn onto a huge park with a canal in the far end. The general layout of the grounds, reflecting the new fashion of gardens opening directly on wild nature, was planned by George London¹⁷⁵, who died in 1714. Several head gardeners were successively involved in the landscaping of Cannons, and by 1717 the post had been given to Richard Bradley (1688–1732), who was later to become the first Professor of Botany at Cambridge University. For his research, Bradley, although more a naturalist than a designer, was allowed by Chandos to build a greenhouse, some walled kitchen gardens, an orchard, a physic garden, and one hot house, where pineapples were a great culinary favorite of his experiments. In 1718, the year *Acis and Galatea* was created, Bradley published a third part to his *New Improvements of Planting and Gardening both*

¹⁷² Under the direct patronage of Chandos for approximately two years, Handel wrote ten anthems known today as the *Chandos Anthems* and a *Te deum*. In addition to *Acis and Galatea*, he wrote music for *Haman and Mordecai*, « oratorium », later reworked as the oratorio *Esther*. Despite the fundamental difference between their literary sources, the two works offer striking similarity in their forms and possibly performance formats. See: Harris, Ellen T. *George Frideric Handel, A life with friends*. London and New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014, pp. 64–66. And: Harris, Ellen T. *Handel as Orpheus, Voice and Desire in the chamber cantatas*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 2001, pp. 210–239.

¹⁷³ Defoe puts Cannons' gardens at the top but adds « possibly the Lord *Castlemains* at *Wanstead*, may be said to equal but can not exceed them ». See: Defoe, Daniel. *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain, Divided into Circuits or Journies*, [...] Vol II. London: G. Strahan, 1725, p. 10. Due to the expansion of the London agglomeration, both estates have disappeared. There is still a park in Cannons, where very little of the original design survives.

¹⁷⁴ See: Hunt, John Dixon. *Gardens and the Picturesque...* Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 1997, and *The Anglo-Dutch Garden in the Age of William and Mary/De Gouden Eeuw van de Hollandse Tuinkunst*, *Journal of Garden History* Volume/Jaargang 8 Numbers/Nummers 2 & 3 April–September 1988. Edited by John Dixon Hunt. London: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 1988.

¹⁷⁵ George London (ca. 1640–1714) was an English nurseryman and garden designer. He aspired to the baroque style and was a founding partner in the famed Brompton Park Nursery in 1681. Henry Wise (1653–1738) was his apprentice, and the two later worked as partners on parterre gardens at Hampton Court, Chelsea Hospital, Longleat, Chatsworth, Melbourne Hall, Wimpole Hall, Castle Howard, and Cannons. His Garden designs at Hanbury Hall near Bromsgrove have been recently reinstated using plans, contemporary surveys and archaeological evidence. See: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hanbury-hall-and-gardens> (Accessed 16 February 2018).

*Philosophical and Practical*¹⁷⁶, and gratefully dedicated his book to Chandos. The libretto of *Acis and Galatea* contains evocations of many fruits: grape, plum, berry and cherry, and the book by Bradley provided advice on how to cultivate them. Among the cherries the gardener recommends, the « Carnation » and the « Cluster »¹⁷⁷ of Cannons may have inspired the metaphors Polyphemeus uses to praise Galatea « O ruddier than the Cherry / O sweeter than the Berry! / O nymph, more bright / Than Moonshine Night! / Like Kidlings blithe and merry. / Ripe as the melting Cluster ». Ovid was the inspiration but, by the choice of a vocabulary used on the grounds of Cannons, the poetic resonance was given a local flavor, where the sense of hearing, viewing and tasting were associated¹⁷⁸.

The production of fruit and other harvests was a minor facet of Cannons and the gardens were not merely used for the purpose of consumption and botanical experimentation. The grounds were ornamented with a great basin, a canal and numerous fountains. The water features in Cannons were to be of double importance, at the same time technical prodigy and artistic fantasy. The canal led John Macky to share his amazement in 1722: « The Canal runs a great Way, and indeed one would wonder to see such a vast Quantity of Water in a Country ». These water features were installed in a spot « where are neither Rivers nor Springs »¹⁷⁹, and water had to be brought from the closest mountains. Mastering these diverse aspects was to define its symbolic eloquence in the same mode as at Herrenhausen, the Hanoverian palace of George I, King of England (1660–1727), where Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) was busy trying in 1696 to create the highest « jet d'eau » in Europe¹⁸⁰, and where Handel had been named Kapellmeister in 1710¹⁸¹. In an influential text celebrating the « Act of Settlement », by which the English crown was presented to the Hanoverian dynasty, John Toland (1670–1722) expressed his admiration in 1702 for the gardens of Herrenhausen and more specifically for the great waterworks there: « The Garden is delicat indeed, the Water-works great and noble, the Basins and Fountains extremely large »¹⁸². Keen to align himself with the new dynasty, Chandos had great plans for Cannons, and to direct such king-like undertakings, Chandos was

¹⁷⁶ Bradley, Richard. *New Improvements of Planting and Gardening both Philosophical and Practical; explaining the Motion of the sap and Generation of Plants*.... London: Mears, 1718. Parts I and II are dedicated to Henry Grey, 1st Duke of Kent, (1671–1740), who is one of the founders, with the Duke of Chandos and the Earl of Burlington, of The Royal Academy of Music in February 1719.

¹⁷⁷ « Cherries; the Early or May-Cherry; the May-Duke; the Black, Red, and White-Heart-Cherries, the Carnation, the Morella, the Flemish-Cherry, and the Common-Black; and also the Cluster-Cherry, well enough deserves a Place in our Gardens for the Curiosity of its Fruit. » in Bradley, Richard. *New Improvements of Planting and Gardening both Philosophical and Practical*... London: Mears, 1718, pp. 43 & 44.

¹⁷⁸ See: Solomon, Jon. "Polyphemus's whistle in Handel's *Acis and Galatea*" in *Music & Letters*. Vol. 64, No. 1/2 (January–April 1983). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. 37–43.

¹⁷⁹ Macky, John. *A Journey through England in Familiar Letters from a Gentleman Here to his Friend Abroad*, Volume II. London: J. Pemberton, 1722, Letter I, p. 9.

¹⁸⁰ For a general introduction to the gardens of Herrenhausen, see: Barlo, Nik. *Herrenhausen gardens*. Rostock: Hinstorff, 2008, pp. 21 & 67.

¹⁸¹ See: Harris, Ellen T. *George Frideric Handel, A life with friends*. London and New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014, p. 31.

¹⁸² See: Toland, John. *An Account of the Courts of Prussia and Hannover; Sent to a Minister of State of Holland*. London: John Darby, 1705, p. 72.

fortunate enough to have a water engineer in his household in the person of John Theophilus Desaguliers (1683–1744)¹⁸³.

Born to a Huguenot family and employed as Chaplain of Chandos' private chapel by 1716, this expert created a complex system of pipes and bores to feed the water features of Cannons. In 1718 his research reached a peak and Desaguliers dedicated to Chandos his translation of a French treatise on water by Edme Mariotte (1620–1684)¹⁸⁴. To *The Motion of Water*, was added a *Little Treatise of the same Author; giving Practical Rules for Fountains, or Jets d'Eau*¹⁸⁵ nourished by his own experiments in the gardens of Cannons. This mastery over the natural elements, and the patronage which allowed it, can be seen to correspond to the myth of the transformation of Acis into a fountain by Galatea. The gardens and waters of Cannons were in the background of the creation of *Acis and Galatea*, a work specially designed for the lord and the lady of the manor. It was conceived to please them by reflecting on the nature of their domain: a nature metamorphosed by their power and care, as was the transformation of Acis into a fountain by Galatea. In his dedication to Chandos which opens his translation, Desaguliers praises the interest in Arts and Science of his patron and even compares him to the Roman emperor Augustus, famous for his profligate patronage, by quoting from Virgil's *Eclogues* « a god grants us this peace » and also « upon whose altar / A young lamb from our folds will often bleed »¹⁸⁶. The verses of Virgil which follow these, verses that a well-learned gentleman like Chandos would have known, state that Augustus « has allowed, you see, my herds to wander and me to play as I will on my shepherd's pipe ». This connection between the work of Desaguliers and the classical pastoral poetry and music reveals the classical roots of the Cannons microculture where theory and practice were largely contributing to the Augustan Age that England knew at the time¹⁸⁷.

Chandos may have had a keen interest in experimental physics, but his wife Cassandra was likely the artistic mind behind the water ornaments of the gardens of Cannons. In her private writings the future first Duchess of Chandos described parks and gardens of various English estates that she visited prior her wedding, and her passion for water features is often

¹⁸³ Desaguliers, born in La Rochelle in France, emigrated to England and went to Oxford University, and then developed a rich career in experimental philosophy (physics). He worked on developing early steam machines. Seven of these were erected to his designs for pumping water to fountains, the first in the gardens of Peter the Great in St. Petersburg. Desaguliers was made a member of the Royal Society in 1714. See: *A Biographical Dictionary of Civil Engineers in Great Britain and Ireland, Volume 1: 1500–1830*. London: Thomas Telford and The Institution of Civil Engineers, 2002, pp. 177 & 178.

¹⁸⁴ *Traité du mouvement des eaux et des autres corps fluides, divisé en V parties, par feu M. Mariotte, de l'Académie Royale des Sciences. Mis en lumière par les soins de M. de La Hire, Lecteur & Professeur du Roy pour les Mathématiques, & de l'Académie Royale des Sciences*. Paris: Jean Jombert, 1700. For an online copy of this important work, see: <https://archive.org/details/traidumouvemen02marigoog> (Accessed 16 February 2018).

¹⁸⁵ *The Motion of WATER, and other FLUIDS. Being a Treatise of Hydrostaticks. Written originally in French, by the late Monsieur Marriotte, Member of the Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris. Divided into Five Parts, and Translated into English. Together with a Little Treatise of the same Author, giving Practical Rules for fountains, or Jets d'Eau*. By J. T. Desaguliers, M. A. F. R. S. Chaplain to the Right Honourable James Earl of Caernarvon. By whom are added, Several Annotations for Explaining the doubtful Places. London: J. Senex and W. Taylor, 1718.

¹⁸⁶ « O Meliboe, deus nobis haec otia fecit: / namque erit ille mihi semper deus, illius aram / Saepe tener nostris ab ovilibus imbuet agnus. » in Virgil, *Bucolics, Eclogue 1*.

¹⁸⁷ For an overview of the concept of the Augustan Age, see: Rogers, Pat. *The Augustan Vision*. London: Methuen, 1974.

expressed by her disappointment when viewing mediocre waterworks, and her taste for the more formidable displays. Convinced that waterworks were adding much to the Beauty of the Place, she marvels at the height of a « jet of water » or the extent of a cascade. Of Boughton House in Northamptonshire, she comments that: « the Waterworks there are extremely fine, ye Cascaid [*sic*] is made by turning a Mill dam to play into ye Great Bason where there are 5 large Fountains ».¹⁸⁸ In her accounts of visits to Badminton¹⁸⁹, she notices that « in it [the wilderness] and the gardens are 22 fountains, which are in [her] opinion all too small, there is not one large jet of water in the whole garden, a river or greater command of water would add much to the beauty of the place »¹⁹⁰. The tale of Galatea, which culminates in the use of her creative « command » over the motions of waters, would have also appealed to her inclination for classical subjects, long nourished by her passions for paintings and for gardens. The characters of *Acis and Galatea* come from the literature of Antiquity and, of course, Latin and English editions of the classical works were present in the rich library of Cannons¹⁹¹. The Greek story can first be found in Theocritus's *Idyll* XI, entitled *The Cyclops*. Theocritus, born in Sicily, tells the longing song the Cyclops Polyphemus addressed to his love, the sea-nymph Galatea, who prefers the mortal Acis. Since Acis changes form at the end of the tale, this story is recounted by Ovid, the Latin poet of the first century, in his influential compilation called the *Metamorphoses*. After Acis had been crushed under a boulder launched by the jealous Polyphemus, Galatea metamorphosed Acis into a water source, the young shepherd's blood being changed into the crystal liquid.

4.3.3 « Ut Pictura Poesis, Ut Pictura Hortus »¹⁹²

While this Ovidian story was familiar to Handel, who had already composed an Italian cantata on the same theme during his time in Naples¹⁹³, it was also largely appealing to the poets who were by then the literary masters of the intellectual circle at Cannons. Alexander Pope (1688–1744), John Gay (1685–1732) and John Hughes (1677–1720)¹⁹⁴ collaborated to

¹⁸⁸ See: Jenkins, Susan. *Portrait of a Patron, The Patronage and Collecting of James Brydges, 1st Duke of Chandos (1674–1744)*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, p. 15.

¹⁸⁹ On Richard Bradley, the gardens of Badminton, and the Duchess of Beaufort, see: Laird, Mark. *A natural history of English gardening*. New Haven (CT): Yale University Press, 2015, pp. 64–107.

¹⁹⁰ See: *Cassandra Brydges (1670–1735), First Duchess of Chandos: Life and Letters*. Edited by Rosemary O'Day. Martlesham: Boydell Press, 2007, p. 37.

¹⁹¹ Jenkins, Susan. *Portrait of a Patron, The Patronage and Collecting of James Brydges, 1st Duke of Chandos (1674–1744)*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, pp. 143–146.

¹⁹² The title of this section and the reflection it introduces, owes a great deal to the inspiring works of Dr. Hunt. See: Hunt, John Dixon. *Gardens and the Picturesque, Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 1997.

¹⁹³ The « serenata a tre », entitled *Acis, Galatea e Polifemo* (HWV 72), was composed in June 1708 for a wedding feast in Naples. This was followed by the cantata *Il Tebro* created in September in Rome. See: Trowell, Brian. « Acis, Galatea and Polyphemus: a « serenata a tre voci »? » in *Music and Theatre, Essays in Honour of Winton Dean*. Edited by Nigel Fortune. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 31–93. See also: Harris, Ellen T. *Handel as Orpheus, Voice and Desire in the chamber cantatas*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 2001.

¹⁹⁴ Alexander Pope and John Gay had just completed some contributions to a new edition of *Metamorphoses*, translated by John Dryden (1631–1700), published in 1717. This translation appeared a year before the creation of *Acis and Galatea*; Samuel Garth brought together works by John Dryden, several tales by Joseph Addison,

provide the English libretto. These poets were all deeply connected with pastoral theory¹⁹⁵, but the choice of the story of Galatea and Acis was certainly influenced as much by their deep knowledge of the classics as by a strong desire to please their noble patrons with a fitting subject for Cannons. Since the publication in 1715 of his *An Essay on Allegorical Poetry With Remarks on the Writings of Mr. Edmund Spenser*, John Hughes was considered to be the expert on the English pastoral tradition. But his translations from Latin poetry and French drama, including Molière, gave him the ability to consider his national heritage in a more European context. Hughes was keen to explore the relation between poetry and music and his English cantatas, set to music by Pepusch¹⁹⁶ and by Handel¹⁹⁷, « were design'd as an Essay (which was the first in its kind) for Compositions in *English* after the manner of the *Italians* »¹⁹⁸. John Gay had just published *Trivia: Or, The Art of Walking the Streets of London* where many pages of this poem/guide were devoted to the river Thames.¹⁹⁹ In his address to the reader in *The Shepherd Week*, published in 1714, he boasted that « no poet (though otherways of notable Cunning in Roundelays) hath hit on the right simple Eclogue after the true ancient guise of Theocritus, before this mine Attempt ». His six classical pastorals are given English settings, which he is convinced are « in no wise sure more unworthy a *British* Poet's imitation, than those of *Sicily* or *Arcadie* »²⁰⁰. Of the three poets, Alexander Pope, although the youngest, was the leading figure; in his *Pastorals*, published in 1709, he had already given classical names to his shepherds as well as incorporated traditional pastoral situations, but he transported them to early

and contributions from Alexander Pope, Nahum Tate, John Gay, William Congreve, and John Rowe, as well as those of eleven others including Garth himself. Verses from this translation can be found in the libretto of *Acis and Galatea*. See: Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Translated by John Dryden, and others, edited by Samuel Garth. With an introduction by Garth Tissol. Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1998.

¹⁹⁵ See: Harris, Ellen T. *Handel and the Pastoral Tradition*. London: Oxford University Press, 1980, pp. 193–199.

¹⁹⁶ On 13 April 1706 Margherita de L'Epine introduced at Drury Lane a new English cantata « written and compos'd after the Italian manner », likely one of the ten English cantatas composed by Pepusch on texts by Hughes. See: *Poems on Several Occasions with some select essays in prose in Two Volumes by John Hughes, Esq.* London: Tonson & Watts, 1735, Volume I, pp. 125–140.

¹⁹⁷ Handel had composed an English cantata to a text by John Hughes in 1710–12. See: Harris, Ellen T. *George Frideric Handel, A life with friends*. London and New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014, p. 48. The text of « Venus and Adonis, A Cantata set by Mr. Handel » appears in the posthumous collected works of Hughes published in London in 1735: *Poems on Several Occasions with some select essays in prose in Two Volumes by John Hughes, Esq.* London: Tonson & Watts, 1735, Volume II, p. 64. See: Burrows, Donald. *Handel*. Second Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 127.

¹⁹⁸ Hughes continued, « They were writ [sic] before the introducing of Italian Operas on the English Stage, tho' not publish'd till afterwards. » In: *Poems on Several Occasions with some select essays in prose in Two Volumes by John Hughes, Esq.* London: Tonson & Watts, 1735, Volume I, p. xv.

¹⁹⁹ Gay, John. «The Frozen river» in *Trivia: Or, The Art of Walking the Streets of London*. London: Bernard Lintott, 1716, p. 14. With his libretto for *The Beggar's Opera*, created in 1728 with music by Pepusch, John Gay's contribution to musical drama was definitely established. See: *The Beggar's Opera by John Gay. A faithful reproduction of 1729 Edition which includes the words and music of all the AIRS, as well as SCORE for the overture, with commentaries by Louis Kronenberger and Max Goberman on the literary and musical background and with the original words of all the airs John Gay adapted for this work*. London: John Watts, [1729] facsimile Larchmont (NY): Argonaut Books, 1961.

²⁰⁰ Gay, John. «The proeme to the courteous reader» in *The Shepherd's Week: In Six Pastorals*. London: Ferd. Burleigh, 1714.

eighteenth-century England on the banks of the river 'Thames'²⁰¹. The three poets were united by their desire to create a national Pastoral genre and the setting of classical characters in a real English landscape was also the treatment chosen to tell the story of the river god Acis. This treatment was not new: as early as 1701, a *Masque* by John Eccles (1668–1735) titled *Acis and Galatea* was performed at Drury Lane²⁰², but Cannons offered deeper resonances with the myth than a theatre stage, albeit a royal one. Credited for having introduced the weeping willow in the landscape of the banks of the Thames, soon famous for the design of his own garden, and more specifically for his grotto, Pope's interest in garden design must have found in Cannons if not a starting point, a clear resonance. While performing *Acis and Galatea* in English verses, within the gardens of Cannons or with them in the background, the poetical and musical evocations of water produced by the collaborative process between writers and composer was inspired and complemented by the presence of the waterworks of the garden.

4.3.4 Theatrical and non-theatrical performances of *Acis*

As I have shown, a great deal of the context of the composition of *Acis and Galatea* can be traced, but we do not have direct information regarding the exact shape of the private performance at the Chandos estate in the summer of 1718. In fact, the later performance history of the piece further blurs the original conception: Handel continued to alter the work, first to make his 1732 version and then for successive performances up through 1741. He also gave performances of the original English work, adapting it into its two-act form in 1739. *Acis and Galatea* was the work by Handel that enjoyed the greatest popularity during his lifetime: it received more than seventy performances, and the composer conducted a concert including it for the last time in 1742, during his famous trip to Dublin to create the *Messiah*²⁰³. Comparing *Acis and Galatea* with other English operas of the period generally leads to the conclusion that the work was originally devised as a *Masque*. Although this term refers to the earlier English form of courtly entertainments where spoken scenes were interrupted by songs and dances²⁰⁴, the English text of *Acis and Galatea* is indeed set to music from beginning to end, bringing it closer to the contemporary stage works of Pepusch and Johann Ernst Galliard (1687–1749)²⁰⁵.

²⁰¹ For an introduction to Pope's pastoral poetry, see: Heath-Stubbs, John. *The Pastoral*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969. pp 49–53 and for a choice of his writings, see: *Early Eighteenth Century Poetry*. Edited by James R. Sutherland. Columbia (SC): University of South Carolina Press, 1970, pp. 78–136.

²⁰² See: Hook, Lucyle. "Introduction" in Motteux, Peter Anthony & Eccles, John. *The Rape of Europa by Jupiter (1694) and Acis and Galatea (1701), Volume 208 of Publications, Augustan Reprint Society*. Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1981.

²⁰³ *The Messiah* premiered in Dublin on 13 April 1742. See: Harris, Ellen T. *George Frideric Handel, A life with friends*. London and New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014, pp. 194 & 195.

²⁰⁴ The history of the Masque as a genre is too complex to be summarized here but composers such as Thomas Campion (1567–1620), who wrote and published numerous ones, are worth mentioning. See: Nicoll, Allardyce. *Stuart Masques and the Renaissance Stage*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938. See also: Reyher, Paul. *Les Masques Anglais, Étude sur les ballets et la vie de cour en Angleterre (1512–1640)*. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964. See also: *Trois Masques à la Cour de Charles Ier d'Angleterre/The Triumph of Peace, The Triumphs of the Prince d'Amour, Britannia Triumphans/Livrets de John Shirley et William Davenant, Dessins d'Inigo Jones, Musique de William Lawes. Introduction, commentaires et transcriptions par Murray Lefkowitz*. Paris: CNRS Editions, 1970.

²⁰⁵ Johann Ernst Galliard, born in Celle (Germany) to a French wig-maker, studied composition at the Court of Hanover with Agostino Steffani. As an esteemed oboe and recorder player, he earned a seat in the chamber music of George, Prince of Denmark. Later, he moved to England where he became the chapel-master of Somerset House. There, in response to war victories, Galliard composed a *Te Deum*, a *Jubilate* and some

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, this designation of *Masque* refers more to the English language of the libretto, to clearly distinguish these works from the Italian *operas*, than to the performance format of the premiere. Besides, *Acis and Galatea*'s similarity in style to this type of contemporary entertainment should not influence our understanding of its spectacular form, and certainly *Acis and Galatea* was not meant to be staged at Cannons in the same manner that other English *Masques* were being presented in theatres in 1718. For a start, the original Cannons version included only five solo singers, a soprano, three tenors and a bass, who not only sang the principal roles but also served together as the vocal ensemble in a style inherited from Greek theatre, a chorus commenting on the story but not taking any active part in it²⁰⁶. The few recitatives between characters show that the piece owes a lot to the form of the English cantata as developed by Hughes and Pepusch. Another piece of evidence about the narrative and symbolic aspect of the original staging of 1718 was given years later, when a theatre production of the work was presented by Thomas Arne (1710–1778), probably without the consent of Handel: *Acis and Galatea* was advertised in London in 1732 as « being the first Time it ever was performed in a Theatrical Way. »²⁰⁷

Although *Acis and Galatea* was not « performed in a Theatrical Way » when created, we can deduce the form the performance might have taken in 1718, thanks to a subsequent performance, this time supervised by Handel, which gives enough clues to the original artistic conception of the composer: As we have just pointed out, the short recitatives of 1718 do not, at any rate, give very many opportunities for dramatic interactions and there is almost no dialogue between characters. In 1732, Handel, to compete with Arne's production, chose to extend the piece with the addition of Italian arias he composed for his 1708 Naples *Acis, Galatea e Polifemo*. For the performance, he opted to present the piece as a *serenata* in costumes in front of a theatre set showing, « in a Picturesque Manner, a rural Prospect, with Rocks, Groves, Fountains and Grottos ».²⁰⁸ The list of elements suggests a different space for each of the main events of the piece²⁰⁹, but the composite nature of this set looks like the intended view of a

anthems. He participated in the founding of the Academy of Ancient Music. In 1712 he wrote the music to the opera *Calypso and Telemachus*, on a libretto by John Hughes. He joined Handel's Italian Opera in 1713 as a wind soloist. In 1718 he composed *Pan and Syrinx*, a fitting subject for the virtuoso wind player he was and, considering their complexity, the parts for the recorder and oboe in *Acis and Galatea* may have been written by Handel for him. Thanks to Dr. Jed Wentz for introducing me to the work of this composer.

²⁰⁶ This dual function causes a dramatic hiatus when the tenor singing Acis must take part in the ensemble mourning his own death to complete the voices needed (it is worthy to note that it is same line up as for the Chandos Anthem: STTTB). See: Handel, George Frideric. *Acis and Galatea* 1718, (First « Cannons » Version) / HWV49a / STTTB soli 2 oboes (doubling recorder), bassoon, 2 violins, bassi: edited by Clifford Bartlett. Huntingdon: The Early Music Company Ltd, 2009.

²⁰⁷ Announcement of 17 May 1732 in the *Daily Post* « At the New Theatre in the Hay-market, this present Wednesday being 17th day of May, will be perform'd in English, a Pastoral Opera, call'd ACIS and GALATEA. Compos'd by Mr HANDEL. With all the Grand Chorus's, Scenes, Machines, and other Decorations: being the first Time it ever was performed in a Theatrical Way. » in Gilman, Todd. *The Theatre Career of Thomas Arne*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013, pp. 39–41.

²⁰⁸ « 1732 [...] Acis & Gallatea [sic] – a Serenata by Mr Handell » in Sasse, Konrad. « Opera Register from 1712 to 1734 (Colman-Register) » in Händel-Jarbuch 5. Edited by Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft. Wiesbaden: Deutsche Verlag für Musik, 1959, pp. 199–223.

²⁰⁹ If we leave aside the plural form of some of the listed elements, likely due to a commercially driven exaggeration, we can reorganize them in relation with the narrative of the libretto: 1. The *Grove* where the shepherds Damon and Coridon meet the main characters, 2. The *Grotto* where Acis and Galatea hide, 3. The *Rocks* that Polyphemus throws, 4. The *Fountain* which concludes the metamorphosis of Acis. This may suggest

real garden, and one is irresistibly reminded of the Chandos estate. The word « Picturesque », so important in the foundation of the specific aesthetics of the English garden, deserves attention as, besides its etymology, it suggests, having in mind its period use in language, a pictorial attitude towards the set. « Picturesque » emphasizes the manner in which the set was conceived: as an easel painting²¹⁰. The lack of movement in the staging is indeed confirmed by the 1732 playbill: « There will be no Action on the Stage ». In other words, the composer intended *Acis and Galatea* to be performed before an audience, but not staged like an opera. This serves as evidence that for Cannons, *Acis and Galatea* was devised more as a succession of pastoral pictures (maybe some *tableaux vivants* like I suggested was the case for Blow's *Venus and Adonis*) leading to an apotheosis than a real drama to be performed in a theatrical way. Visual cycles dedicated to the *Metamorphoses* had been popular since the Italian Renaissance and the genre found in the myth of Galatea and Acis a favorite subject. The costumes would have played an important part, as all characters suggest clothes which types were traditionally presents in British *Masques* and Italian operas: shepherds, cyclops and nereid. Costumes would have offered easily decipherable identity signs, such as coral and mother of pearl for Galatea, for example, maybe with shepherd's crooks *à la Poussin* as hand props, culminating with the metamorphoses of the shepherd Acis into a new river god, with a « wreath that binds his head »²¹¹.

If, in addition to costumes, an extra illusionist theatrical element was necessary, some scenery may have been used, and if so the painter Joseph Goupy (1689–1769)²¹² may have served as set designer. Goupy, a friend of Handel, was credited with painting the sets of his operas in the years immediately following *Acis and Galatea*, and furthermore his easel work offers many relations with the operatic work of the composer²¹³. Goupy provided Chandos with many paintings and notably a copy of Poussin's *The Death of Sapphira*²¹⁴, a painting which uses a fully theatrical point of view, integrating in the background a city composed as a set for

that the focus of the action moved from one part of the set to another. Two spaces could also be used simultaneously, like for the trio sung by Galatea, Acis and Polyphemus when the cyclops observes the lovers. For a set of this composite nature designed in 1710 by Francesco Galli Bibiena, see: Lenzi, Deanna, and Bentini, Jadranka. *I Bibiena, una famiglia europea*. Venezia: Marsilio, 2000, No. 25, pp. 260 & 261. For a later spacing of the same episode see the design by Cochin showing a performance of *Acis et Galatée* in the *Théâtre des Petits Appartements* in 1749. See: Caude, Elisabeth et al. *Fêtes & divertissements à la cour*. Catalogue d'exposition (Château de Versailles du 29 novembre 2016 au 26 mars 2017). Paris: Gallimard, 2016, pp. 94 & 95.

²¹⁰ On the notion of the picturesque, see: Hunt, John Dixon. *Gardens and the Picturesque, Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 1997.

²¹¹ *Acis and Galatea*. Libretto, last chorus. Addison, while recommending Ovid as inspiration for the power of his creative imagination, admired the way Ovid excels at describing the metamorphosis, emphasizing the troubling moment between the two different states of the transformation (Addison. *The Spectator*, No. 417, 28 June 1712). For how this metamorphosis was leading to a costume change, see in the present dissertation: "River gods theatrical costumes", p. 291.

²¹² See: Harris, Ellen T. "Joseph Goupy and George Frideric Handel: From Professional Triumphs to Personal Estrangement" in *Huntington Library Quarterly* 71/3 (2008), pp. 397–452 and Harris, Ellen T. *George Frideric Handel, A life with friends*. London and New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014.

²¹³ See: Harris, Ellen T. *George Frideric Handel, A life with friends*. London and New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014, pp. 65–67 & 73–75.

²¹⁴ The location of the Goupy is unknown to me but the original painting by Poussin, acquired in 1685 by Louis XIV, is now in the Louvre Museum. See: http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=2139 (accessed 24 February 2018)

tragedy following the typology of Serlio: it shows Goupy's familiarity with the conventions of Italian set designs. We also know that Goupy made numerous copies of an oil painting by Luca Giordano (1634–1705) depicting the end of the Ovidian tale²¹⁵, focusing on the moment when Acis's body is spreading water like a fountain. The allegorical content of the libretto and its poetic variations around the water theme²¹⁶ may indeed offer a key, if framed by an Arcadian set. Regardless of its means of representation, whether natural, as the actual garden, or artificial in the form of a painted set, or even combined in an outdoor theatre, this ideal vision of a bucolic landscape was definitely conceived as a work of art as elucidated a little later by the verse of Alexander Pope: « Paints as you plant, and, as you work, designs. »²¹⁷

4.3.5 *Acis*, as Genius of Cannons

The allegory of the power over water found in *Cannons* a setting full of reflections for the eyes of the Chandos family during the first performance in 1718. Ten years later, Pierre-Jacques Fougereux (1678–1743) made a tour of the best English houses around London. The French traveler wrote that *Cannons* « passes for the finest and best-decorated of all the country houses in the neighborhood of London » but was disgusted by the luxury of it. More impressed by the garden, he concedes that « one could call it grand ». His description shows his admiration: « It has fine lawns, with groups of figures in the middle, emphasized by tall avenues and bosquets, and flanked more effectively by gilded lead urns. The view ends magnificently in a long stretch of water in the form of a canal. The garden extends on the left, between more bosquets, with salons and a vegetable garden. In the middle of a very long allée there is piece of water with a fine jet. This allée takes you in all directions and crosses all the others in the garden. One allée is closed by a gilded lead equestrian statue of George I on a fine pedestal »²¹⁸. Thanks to this eloquent description, augmented by the plan Fougereux drew during his visit of 1728 (the only still-extant diagram of *Cannons*), we can visualize a possible spot for the performance in the gardens. If the spectacle took place in conjunction with the

²¹⁵ One of these copies seems to be have been in the collection of Lord Burlington, and I proposed that this Giordano painting be reproduced on the front cover of the 2013 recording of *Acis and Galatea* by the Boston Early Music Festival, with Musical Directors Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs, for which I served as Drama coach (CPO 777 877-2). The booklet which accompanies the recording presents a summary of the present research and some photography of my 2011 staged production.

²¹⁶ In the libretto, the word « Fountain » appears six times and this frequency is accentuated by the variety of other descriptions or evocations of water: « bath », « bed », « bubbling », « dew », « flood », « rain », « rove », « showers », « stream », and « waves ». This vocabulary is used by Galatea and by Acis and, infrequently, by the Chorus. The verses given to Polyphemus, Damon and Coridon do not contain any of these watery words.

²¹⁷ Pope, Alexander. *Of false taste; an epistle to the Right Honourable Richard Earl of Burlington. Occasion'd by his publishing Palladio's designs of the baths, arches, theatres, &c. of ancient Rome*, 3rd edition. London: L. Gilliver, 1731, Verses 57–64. The main idea of this poem about the notion of *good taste* equals *good sense* is set out in the « Argument », which Pope added in 1735: « That the first principle and foundation in this as in every thing else, is Good Sense. The chief proof of it is to follow Nature, even in works of mere luxury and elegance. Instanced in Architecture and Gardening, where all must be adapted to the genius and use of the place, and the beauties never forced into it, but resulting from it ». See: *Early Eighteenth Century Poetry*. Edited by James R. Sutherland. Columbia (SC): University of South Carolina Press, 1970, pp. 122–131.

²¹⁸ The manuscript is now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum: V&A Library, MS86NN2. See: Jacques, David & Rock, Tim. « Pierre-Jacques Fougereux: a Frenchman's commentary on English gardens » in *Experiencing the Garden in the Eighteenth Century*, edited by Martin Calder. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006, pp. 213–236. Fougereux also gave accounts of three Handel's operas in London. See: Dean, Winton. « A French Traveller's View of Handel's Operas » in *Music & Letters*, Vol. 55, No. 2, 1974, pp. 172–178.

inauguration of a new fountain by Desaguliers (and, as I have shown, this is more than a probability), two places are possible: both are supported by the placement of the statue of King George in the background, establishing an axis between the King and Chandos, united by the new fountain. This confirms that the historic parallel between *Water Music* and *Acis and Galatea*²¹⁹ is not only due to their contemporaneity but also to their poetic purposes.

The first possible location is outdoors: on Fougereux's map, a water feature on the north side of the house is intriguing because of its specific shape. Two basins, one larger than the other, were connected by a small canal. This special shape is evocative of Italian fountains where water would shoot up in one basin and then flow along the little channel between them and fall into the other one, which could be called the receptacle pond²²⁰. Fougereux shows a vertical jet in the bigger pool, indicating that the water, thanks to Desaguliers, was in motion: rising first from a fountain, it then became horizontal, evoking the new stream of a river. Such a configuration in the style of the *water chains* owes a lot to Italian gardens, like the Villa Farnese in Caprarola or the Villa Lante. Examples from the late seventeenth century can be found in Versailles, where the *Bosquet des Trois Fontaines* offered a similar albeit extended progression²²¹, while in Het Loo the small canals, whose bottoms were set with colored pebbles, offered the sound of running water²²². The source of the jet was a statue depicting a river god, possibly Acis²²³. In the case of an indoor performance, a view through the windows of the Acis fountain

²¹⁹ For some fresh views on *Water Music* which reestablishes it in the royal context of the river, see: Doran, Susan. *Royal River: Power, Pageantry and the Thames*. London: Scala Publishers Ltd, 2012, pp. 134–137. For a reconstruction of the original performance, see the film: Ackroyd, Peter & Manze, Andrew. *Händel, Georg Friedrich. Handel's Water Music, Re-creating a Royal Spectacular*, DVD, BBC. London: Opus Arte, 2003. Some recent compositions which link the Thames and the British crown were prompted by the Diamond Jubilee of Elizabeth II that took place in 2012; but decades earlier in 1969, the British composer Andrzej Panufnik (1914–1991) composed the full-scale Cantata *Thames Pageant*, which was, as he put it in his notes to the work, « an expression of [his] love for the River Thames which flows past [his] garden ». This work integrates a beautiful tribute to « Pope's Weeping Willows: An elegy to the memory of Alexander Pope who introduced the willow tree to the River Thames. In three sections: the first Allegretto, musically characterizes the wit of the poet; the second, a slower section with one solo voice, pays tribute to him; and the third section, Andante, is "weeping willow music", the choirs lamenting wordlessly. No brass instruments take part ». See: Panufnik, Andrzej. *Thames Pageant*. London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1969.

²²⁰ Water technical equipment and garden features are described by Antoine Joseph Dezallier d'Argenville (1680–1765) in the chapters IX and X of the second part of his influential 1709 book about gardens: *La Théorie et la Pratique du Jardinage*. The general layout of the grounds of Cannons is indebted to the first plate of the book by Dezallier d'Argenville.

²²¹ The *Bosquet des Trois Fontaines* was conceived in 1677–1679 by Louis XIV and designed by his gardener André Le Nôtre. See: *Versailles à Stockholm, Dessins du Nationalmuseum, Peintures, Meubles et Arts Décoratifs des Collections Suédoises et Danoises*. Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1985, pp. 31, 38, 39, 49 & 50. Destroyed during the reign of Louis XVI, it was reconstructed between 1999 and 2004 thanks to the patronage of the society of the Amis de Versailles and to the financial participation of the association of The American Friends of Versailles. See: Richard, Pascale. *Versailles, the American Story*. Paris: Alain de Gourcuff, 1999, pp. 158–161.

²²² See: Vosteen, Ing. R. "Het Water in de [Het Loo] Tuin" in *Groen*, 40e jaargang – nr. 6. Bussum: S.I. Publicaties B.V., 1984, pp. 232–242. In 1711, Addison evokes a garden where « The Springs are made to run among Pebbles, and by that means taught to murmur very agreeably » in *The Spectator*, No. 37, 12 April 1711.

²²³ In the English translation of Dezallier d'Argenville's book, *The Theory and Practice of Gardening wherein is fully handled all that relates to fine gardens, commonly called pleasure-gardens, as parterres, groves, bowling-greens &c. ...* London: John James, 1712, for which Chandos was a subscriber (listed as « The Hon. James Brydges Esq. e»), one can read on page 76, speaking of statues: « These figures represent all the several Deities, and illustrious Persons of Antiquity, which should be placed properly in gardens, setting the River-Gods, as the *Naiades*, *Rivers*, and *Tritons*,

would have been a prerequisite; the interior architecture of the house could give us a second possible location. On the north side of the house, a room designed a « Hall » in the inventory of 1725²²⁴ seems a likely candidate, as it is situated on the gentlemen's side of the house, suitable for the all-male Cannons musical establishment, and may have occasionally been used as an Assembly room. Suitable for musical rehearsals, this room could have been chosen as the space of the performance, as it offers, through a French door, not only a view of the jet, but access to it. From a certain angle it also provides all viewers a sight on the gilded statue of George I in the perspective: a fitting focus point in the perspective of an Augustan design.

The gardens and waterworks created at Cannons made a suitable backdrop for the English pastoral of Handel. The staging of *Acis and Galatea* may have involved the opening of a large tap at the crucial moment: a display of waterworks marking the final metamorphosis. The original performance may even have taken place concurrent with the inauguration of a new fountain. By this technical and artistic gesture, the gallant allegory of the power of Galatea/Cassandra over the Waters of Cannons would have been crystalline. A flawless visual testimony of such a relation still exists: a portrait of the Duchess in a glossy blue dress holding a shell in one hand like a Nereid. Attributed to Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723), the painting shows Cassandra, in the guise of Galatea, in a park, next to a fountain²²⁵. In 1718, *Acis* would have become « the genius of the place », in the words of a dictum revived in 1709 by the philosopher Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713)²²⁶ and which Pope was soon to expand into a rule for inspiration in English garden design²²⁷. Inspired by the Greek tradition of mythic mapping²²⁸ and by the protective spirit of a place of the classical

in the Middle of Fountains and Basins, and those of the Woods, *Sylvanes*, *Faunes*, and *Dryads*, in the Groves ». See: <https://archive.org/stream/theorypracticeg00DeYz#page/18/mode/2up> Accessed 26 February 2018.

²²⁴ Jenkins, Susan. *Portrait of a Patron...* Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, p. 33.

²²⁵ The portrait is today in the collection of Lord Middleton at Birdsall House, North Yorkshire. Reproduced as frontispiece in *Cassandra Brydges (1670–1735), First Duchess of Chandos: Life and Letters*. Edited by Rosemary O'Day. Martlesham: Boydell Press, 2007.

²²⁶ « Your Genius, the Genius of the Place, and the GREAT GENIUS have at last prevail'd. I shall no longer resist the Passion growing in me for Things of a *natural* kind; where neither *Art*, nor the *Conceit* or *Caprice* of Man has spoiled their *genuine Order*, by breaking in upon that *primitive State*. Even the rude *Rocks*, the mossy *Caverns*, the irregular unwrought *Grotto's*, and broken *Falls* of Waters, with all the horrid graces of the *Wilderness* it-self, as representing *NATURE* more, will be the more engaging, and appear with a Magnificence beyond the formal Mockery of Princely Gardens ». See: [Cooper, Anthony Ashley, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury]. *The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody. Being a Recital of certain Conversations upon Natural and Moral Subjects*. London: John Wyat, 1709, pp. 62, 156, 162 & 205.

²²⁷ For a selection of Pope's texts about gardens, see: *The Genius of the Place, The English Landscape Garden 1620–1820*. Edited by John Dixon Hunt & Peter Willis. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1975, pp. 204–214.

²²⁸ Storytelling was a part of how the Greeks charted their world: mythic maps existed alongside more objective methods. Myths gave sense to environments and were crucial to the conceptual resonances of places. The Sicilian origin of the myth of *Acis* reveals its anchorage in geography. The Cyclops is connected to Mount Etna, an active volcano, and a little sea harbor, called *Acis* on a seventeenth-century map, named today *Acireale*, was built on the spot of a fresh-water spring, with impressive boulders believed to have come from a volcanic eruption in the bay: landscape features acted as repositories of myth and spurred their retelling. See: Buxton, Richard. "Landscapes of the Cyclopes", and Robinson, Betsey A. "Fountains as Reservoirs of Myth and Memory" in *Myths on the Map, The Storied Landscapes of Ancient Greece*. Edited by Greta Hawes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Roman religion, this « *genius loci* »²²⁹ principle finds a clear expression when Pope planned, in his own villa of Twickenham, to establish a statue of the river Thames, in the spirit of both a reference to Antiquity and a desire to establish a British iconology. The river Thames floated by his garden, and the presence of the statue showed that if the « *Genius of the place* » was first an artistic concept, Pope was willing to signify it by a sculpture. The original Latin expression finds a British echo, albeit more in terms of ingenuity, in the words of John Macky in 1722: « The Disposition of the Avenues, Gardens, Statues, Painting, and the House of Cannons, suits the Genius and Grandeur of its great Master ».²³⁰ This mastered « *Disposition* » can be understood as a term suggesting that Cannons was a « work of art » destined to capture the « *genius of the place* »: in the gardens of the Chandos family, Handel, Pope, Gay, and Hughes had created a suitable celebratory pastoral for the water marvels of Desaguliers, and Chandos had found, in the water-god Acis, a perfect « *genius loci* » for Cannons. And Acis, if not totally proven to have been signified by a river god sculpture, was at least present as a poetical emblem of an attempt to define the « *genius of the place* ».

The « *Grandeur of its great Master* » that Macky associates to the *Genius* may also have been the Achilles' heel of the gardens of Cannons and from the beginning of its history critics about its over-the-top nature and its lack of refinement made it soon out of fashion. This may also be a possible reason for the ill fate of the original version of *Acis and Galatea*, as it was so much associated with its place of origin. Alexander Pope himself, in a famous 1731 satire²³¹, versified about his disapprobation of the garden of « *Timon's villa* », whose luxurious superficiality he placed in opposition to the quintessence of his views on picturesque garden design; the Duke of Chandos's mansion at Cannons has been suggested as the target of what would be then an ekphrastic poem²³². Although it has been argued that Pope's attention is more likely directed at an imaginary and composite image of the contemporary absurdities in garden design, still some verses deserve attention, because of their evocation of dry fountains: « The suffering Eye inverted Nature sees, / Trees cut to statues, Statues thick as Trees, / With here a Fountain, never to be play'd, / And there a Summer-house, that know no Shade. / Here Amphitrite sails to Myrtle bow'rs; / Then Gladiators fight, or die, in flow'rs; / Un-water'd see the drooping Sea-horse mourn, / And Swallows roost in Nilus' dusty Urn... ». While a

²²⁹ A comparable aspiration for a « *genius of the place* » occurred in the Netherlands: in 1714, a statuary group was installed on a property at Driemond, not far from Amsterdam, where two rivers came together, the Gein and the Gaasp. The statues by Ignatius van Logteren (1685–1732) of a reclining man and woman represent the river gods Gein and Gaasp. Although doubtful in my eyes, the boy Arion, the poet-singer who was saved by a dolphin, would represent the Smalweesp, a stream in the center. See: Stokroos, Meindert. *Fonteinen, in Nederland, Historische watervoerende monumenten*. Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2005, pp. 57 & 58, and: Fischer, Pieter M. "De fontein van Frankendael Gein, Gaasp en Smalweesp aan de Middenweg" in *Ons Amsterdam*, jg 37 nr 2, 1985, pp. 42–47.

²³⁰ Macky, John. *A Journey through England in Familiar Letters from a Gentleman Here to his Friend Abroad*. Volume II. London: J. Pemberton, 1722, Letter I, p. 5.

²³¹ Pope, Alexander. *Of false taste; an epistle to the Right Honourable Richard Earl of Burlington. Occasion'd by his publishing Palladio's designs of the baths, arches, theatres, &c. of ancient Rome*, 3rd edition. London: L. Gilliver, 1731, p.10.

²³² « Pope's scorn of Timon's villa in his *Epistle to Burlington* is precisely for compositions so random and so lacking in the art that arranges how details contribute to a whole *histoire*. » in Hunt, John Dixon. *Gardens and the Picturesque, Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 1997, p. 112.

Borghese gladiator was recorded in the gardens of Cannons²³³, Amphitrite and a statue of the Nile resting on his urns have not appeared in any record. But if one replaces the mention of « Amphitrite » by the one of « Fair Galatea » fleeing to the sea after Polyphemus' attack; and the mention of « Nilus » by « Acis », the satire gives some new light to the silence which surrounds the first performance of Handel's opera at Cannons. The fact the « dusty urn » of the river god is dry during summer (the season when swallows are yearly nesting) shows more a neglected than an unpleasant garden. This seems to me more important than the idea of a « bad garden » that some readers of Pope see in this Satire. The « Fountain never to be play'd » may even suggest a technical failure, and the beautiful meanings of the verb's construction « be play'd », as it can also be understood, beside its adequacy to a working fountain, as an evocation of the sound of water and therefore music.

²³³ See: Jenkins, Susan. *Portrait of a Patron...* Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, p. 84. A Gladiator Borghese, also in a gilded version, is also present in the gardens of Herrenhausen, showing that Chandos was deliberately trying to align himself with George I's taste and inclinations.

5 Opera of Mirrors in Munich in 1688: *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*

« These benefits from Poets we receiv'd,
From whence are rais'd those Fictions since believ'd,
That Orpheus, by his soft Harmonious strains
Tam'd the fierce Tigers of the Thracian Plains;
Amphion's Notes, by their melodious pow'rs,
Drew Rocks & Woods, and rais'd the Theban Tow'rs:
These Miracles from numbers did arise... »

Boileau. *Art poétique*, 1674¹.

The libretto of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* by Luigi Orlandi was published in Munich to support the performance of the opera of Agostino Steffani (1654–1728) in 1688. The booklet did not solely present the text of the opera which is sung but also contained some information about the original performance². At the beginning of the libretto, before the text of the opera, after a lengthy dedication which sets the allegorical style of his poetry, Orlandi provides a series of lists giving the principal roles, the ballets, and the necessary supernumeraries, that can be found through the dramatic developments. Sets and machinery are also described in both the libretto and the score, which demonstrates their original importance. All these components, human and technical, must be understood in relation with the drama, but also in the frame of its context—the libretto and score therefore can and should be complemented with data on and from the time, the 1680s, and the place, the opera house of Munich. Just as the manuscript score was the ultimate reference for musical directors Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs, the

¹ « Cet ordre fut, dit-on, le fruit des premiers vers. / De là sont nés ces bruits reçus dans l'univers, / Qu'aux accents dont Orphée emplir les monts de Thrace, / Les tigres amollis dépouillaient leur audace; / Qu'aux accords d'Amphion, les pierres se mouvaient / Et sur les murs thébains en ordre s'élevaient. / L'harmonie en naissant produisit ces miracles... » in Boileau. *Art poétique*. Paris: Denys Thierry, 1674, Chant IV. I use the English translation of 1683: *The art of poetry written in French by the Sieur de Boileau ; made English*. [Translated by Sir William Soames, revised by John Dryden]. London: Printed by R. Bentley, and S. Magnes ..., 1683, p. 62. Although I could not locate a German translation ca 1688, the book was widely available in Europe. For a Dutch example of 1678, see: <http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/Dutch/Ceneton/Boileau17221768.html>

² [Orlandi, Luigi; Steffani, Agostino; Ardespin, Melchior d']. *Niobe, Regina di Tebe, Drama per Musica Da rappresentarsi All' Altezze serenissime elettorali Di Massimiliano Emanuele... e della serenissima Elettrice Maria Antonia... L'Anno 1688. Composto da Luigi Orlandi Segretario di S.A.E. E Posto in Musica dal Sigr. D. Agostino Steffani Direttore della Musica di Camera di S.A.E. Con l'Arie per i Balli del Sigr. Melchior d'Ardespin Maestro de Concerti, & Aiurante di Camera di S.A.E.* Monaco [Munich] : Per Giovanni Jecklino, Stampatore Elettorale, 1688.

libretto of the first performance was for me the primary source of inspiration for the staging to be³.

A rigorous analysis of the letter of this libretto was therefore essential to establish the spectacle to be. It allowed me first to identify the essential elements, but it also suggested their relation to each other. But then again, the spirit of the period—this more elusive context—is as important as the letter. Combining the strong influences from Venice and France with the culture of the Bavarian court gave in the seventeenth century rise to operas written for Munich that were rich with cultural references. It appeared quickly that these various references were unified under the auspices of the classical custom of allegory, a figurative mode of representation that conveys meanings other than the literal one. Favored by the Jesuit culture, which dominated education and culture in Bavaria in the seventeenth century, this rhetorical device is present in *Niobe's* libretto, and was object and subject of the artistic process⁴.

Allegory was generally treated as a figure of rhetoric, but since an allegory does not have to be expressed in language and can be entirely visual, it was a style particularly suitable to the representative art of opera. Aristotle considered *Rhetoric* a counterpart of both logic and politics and defines it as « the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion. »⁵. The art of discourse, wherein one strives to edify, persuade or motivate a particular audience in a specific situation has found in Steffani's opera an unprecedented tribute, when combined with Aristotle's *Poetics*.⁶ A performance in the 1680s in Munich was like a representational room of mirrors, where reality and fiction were intertwined through the power of allegory, both visual and verbal.

In the case-study section, at the end of this dissertation, I present two internal documents made for my staged production of *Niobe* for the Boston Early Music Festival 2011, based on the libretto of 1688. First, by trying to give a short technical account on what makes the piece work, I hoped to help to define what is needed to stage today *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* not only in terms of human resources, soloists, chorus, dancers, and supernumeraries, but also in terms of sets, costumes and machines. To end this case about the French and Venetian influences in Munich, an internal document dedicated to the flying effects, in form of a document listing all effects, offers an example of an application⁷.

³ The libretto available online, was printed as a facsimile for direct relationship with the original material: <http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/bsb00002357/images/>

⁴ Sabatier, Gérard. *Claude-François Ménéstrier, Les jésuites et le monde des images. La pierre et l'écrit*. Grenoble : Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 2009. For the important impact Jesuit culture had in Bavaria, see: Fisher, Alexander J. *Music, Piety, and Propaganda: The Soundscape of Counter-Reformation Bavaria*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. For education, see: Scaglione, Aldo. *The Liberal Arts and the Jesuit College System*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 1986. For architecture, see: Smith, Jeffrey Chipps. *Sensuous Worship: Jesuits and the Art of the Early Catholic Reformation in Germany*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002.

⁵ See: Aristotle. *Rhetoric*. trans. W. Rhys Roberts. Vol 2. In *The Complete Works of Aristotle: Revised Oxford Translation*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 1984, I:4:1359.

⁶ « La notion clé qui gouverne tout le corps de l'art de bien dire, son plexus solaire, c'est, je l'ai dit, le *prepon* grec, le *decorum*, la *decentia*, la *convenientia* des Romains. C'est une notion d'essence harmonique, que Nicolas Poussin au XVIIe siècle, antique dans l'âme, faisait comprendre à ses correspondants en invoquant la théorie des modes musicaux ». See: Fumaroli, Marc. *L'Age de l'éloquence*. Genève: Droz, 2002 p. XIV.

⁷ Research for this chapter, presented during a lecture (Juilliard School of Music, New York, Wednesday, April 15, 2015), has been initially carried out in the frame of the Boston Early Music Festival for my staged production of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* (Musical Direction: Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs, Boston 2011). A

Seven gates, according to Ovid, stood at the entrances to the city of Thebes, and this number is used here as an allegorical pathway through seven gates when I offer seven poetic keys to the construction of the staging of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*. It is an attempt to write down all the major elements which my staging of Niobe took in consideration. To these symbolic keys are associated some pictures, all coming from my own little *museo* but for one, which created in turn visual directions. They service to curate a small « memory palace», a Jesuit mnemotechnic device based on mental visualization of image useful to comprehend the complexity of the piece⁸. This section presents the fundamentals of a Historically Informed dramaturgy of the piece, dramaturgy which not only reflects on its components but, by its presentation, on its conception of style.

5.1 One Patron

The history of opera in Munich begins and develops under the monarchic power of the Prince Electors, rulers of Bavaria. Ferdinand Maria (1636–1679), who was crowned in 1654, inaugurated the same year the *Salvatortheater*, a grain storehouse that the Venetian architect Francesco Santurini (1627?–1688?) had converted into the first freestanding theater in Germany⁹. The birth in 1662 of Ferdinand's son and heir, Maximilian Emanuel, was the occasion for a magnificent festival of operas, tournaments, and dramatized fireworks¹⁰. The popularity of opera in Munich continued unabated during the eventful reign of Maximilian II Emanuel (1662–1726)¹¹. The young Prince Elector had big political ambitions for his dukedom, which involved him in many wars, and his court life, although the one of a generous patron, reflects this military passion. On a portrait of 1698, he is shown wearing the metal armor worn during battles (Figure 1). Typical of his time, Elector Maximilian II Emanuel had all of the qualities that were associated with a Baroque prince: the quest for military glory, the desire for glorious self-representation, the pursuit of dynastic prestige, and an insatiable appetite for courtly entertainment. Not surprisingly, being raised by a Francophile mother, Henriette Adélaïde of Savoy (1636–1676) who hired French tutors for him, Louis XIV was held up to the young prince as a model to emulate¹²; like his French cousin, Max Emanuel was

summary has been published in the 2011 BEMF program book but not included in the booklet of the recording (Erato-Warner Classics 0825646343546, 2015); this booklet shows photographs of my staged production. I am grateful for Dr. Colin Timms' interest in my interpretation and indebted to his works on Steffani's life and music.

⁸ See: Spence, Jonathan D. *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*. New York: Penguin Books, 1985. See also: Haskell, Francis. *History and its Images, Art and the interpretation of the past*. New Haven (CT): Yale University Press, 1995. Because its equivalency to the city of Thebes, see also: Herrera, John Philip. "Towards the Memory Theater: The Re-presentation of the city in Literature and Architecture", thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Architecture. Houston (TX): Rice University, 1991.

⁹ The Salvatortheater, was commissioned by Maximilian I but not open until three years after his death. See: Münster, Robert. "Court and Monasteries in Bavaria" in *The Late Baroque Era: Vol 4. From The 1680s to 1740*, edited by George J Buelow (*Man & Music Series; Vol. 4*). London: Macmillan Press, 1993, pp. 297–298.

¹⁰ Schone, Günter. "Les grandes fêtes de Munich en 1662" in *Baroque [En ligne]*, 5 | 1972, mis en ligne le 04 octobre 2012. Accessed 4 April 2018. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/baroque/391> ; DOI : 10.4000/baroque.391

¹¹ See: Zenger, Max. *Geschichte der Münchener Oper*. München: F.X. Weizinger, 1923, pp. 16–34.

¹² Klingensmith, Samuel John. *The Utility of Splendor, Ceremony, Social Life and Architecture at the Court of Bavaria, 1600-1800*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993, p. 40.

a genuine music lover who was able to play several instruments, and his liberal patronage supported the flourishing musical life of Munich¹³. The Venetian composer Agostino Steffani started his career as an opera composer there in 1681, and the union in 1685 of the Prince Elector with a young Austrian princess, Maria Antonia, heralded a particularly prosperous time for opera and festivities in Munich¹⁴. The opera house, both house and stage, was modernized on this occasion by the Venetian brothers Gasparo Mauro (1657–1719) and Domenico Mauro (1669–1707)¹⁵, and for four consecutive years Steffani composed a new opera in Italian that was premiered on the Munich stage. *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, dedicated to Max Emanuel, was created with a new Italian libretto by Luigi Orlandi, a diplomatic secretary at the court of Bavaria¹⁶. On January 5, 1688, the curtain opened on what seems to have been a lavish spectacle, and from his central box of the ducal opera house, Max Emanuel could relish the display of illusionistic stage.



Figure 1: *Maximilian II of Bavaria* (1662–1726)
 « Maximilian Emanuel D[ei] G[ratia] El[ector] Bav[ariae] ».
 Portrait as « Gubernator Generalis », Governor of Spanish Belgium.
 German Etching from *Theatrum Europaeum* by Matthäus Jr. Merian and Caspar Merian
 under the name Merian Erben (i.e. Merian Heirs), Frankfurt, 1698.
 Collection of Gilbert Blin.

¹³ Münster, Robert. “Die Musik am Hofe Max Emanuels” in *Kurfürst Max Emanuel. Bayern und Europa um 1700. Band I : Zur Geschichte und Kunstgeschichte der Max-Emanuel-Zeit, herausgegeben von Hubert Glaser*. München: Hirmer Verlag, 1976, pp. 295–316.

¹⁴ Timms, Colin. *Polymath of the Baroque, Agostino Steffani and His Music*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2003.

¹⁵ The activities in set designs and architecture of the Venetian family Mauro were connected with Munich for a long time: Francesco Mauro the father was active in Bavaria since 1662, with Santurini, and so was his elder son Gasparo, thanks to the recommendation of Grimani, who kept on employing them in SS Giovanni e Paolo in Venice. (1665, Gasparo for *Tito* and *Doriclea*). Other sons named Pietro and Domenico were also active. See: Povoledo, Elena. Article “Mauro” in *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo*, Volume VII. Roma: Unione Editoriale, 1954–1977, pp. 310–322.

¹⁶ Luigi Orlandi, whose birth and death dates are unknown, was a court poet of Bavaria with the title of secretary from 1684 to 1697, a post certainly making use of his language and diplomatic skills. His wife Angela Orlandi joined the court of Munich in 1686 as a vocalist, received the honorary title as *Kammersängerin* and died in the first quarter of the year 1697 in Munich: Orlandi then resigned and returned to Italy. See: Kägler, Britta. “Competiton at the Catholic Court of Munich” in Nieden, Gesa zur & Over, Berthold. *Musicians' Mobilities and Music Migrations in Early Modern Europe: Biographical Patterns and Cultural Exchanges*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2016, p. 84.

The lengthy and complex libretto, whose length and intricacy is reminiscent of the Venetian librettos of the time, gives indeed a great place to the sets and machinery. A list presents no less than thirteen sets that were changed under the eyes of the audience, after the curtain was drawn once for all at the beginning of the performance. Some of them are, by then, typical of baroque scenery, like Royal Rooms, a Grove, some Hills' landscape, and the interior of a Temple and may have come from the stock made of sets from *Servio Tullio*, the opera presented the previous year. To this group, some "special" sceneries are added that are more directly linked with the plot, including a royal Study, the planet Mars, and an Amphitheater. This last one is an animated set: The Amphitheater contains a dynamic element, which is not listed in the « Machine » section, although it has clearly a mechanical component described in the course of the action: a « Globe » which after opening forms a « Heavenly Body ». This mysterious shrine, of which the description evokes alchemy, welcomes Anfione in ecstasy. In opposition to this paradise, the under stage is also used for the appearance of the Hell set. A second list, this time for Machines, complements the list of the sets which were changed under the eyes of the audience. Among the machines specifically described, there are some rolling devices: a magic chariot, a monster, and two dragons, but these are more means of pageantry than necessary to the plot. This is not the case of the depiction of « Tebe », announced by the title: as the Ovidian myth establishes, we see in *Niobe* the rising of the famous walls of Thebes from the ground and their subsequent destruction in a terrible earthquake, the vengeance of the gods. Other machines are clearly identifiable as flying machines: there is no free flying in *Niobe*, but several « Nube » or cloud wagons that bring characters, mortal and gods, down from and up to heaven. Most notable is the flying « gloire » that carries Latone, Apollo and Diana as the end of the opera: this element is essential to the dramaturgy as linked to the plot. These characters do not sing or dance, they are merely an image, and their identity is purely visual.

In classical mythology, both Apollo and Diana were travelling through the heavens, thanks to their chariots. While the carriage of Diana drawn by deer was following the movement of the moon, the sun chariot of Apollo was a chariot drawn by four horses abreast. On the Munich stage Apollo's quadriga must have took the shape a flying chariot covered with a flat painted representation, the narrowness of the volume imposed by the intensive use of the fly area. A dynamic illustration by Jean-Baptiste Oudry (1686–1755) for La Fontaine's fable *Phaëbus et Borée* offers a good example of Apollo's chariot (Figure 2), as seen from under, the perspective which would have been adopted for the stage in Munich. The tale of the North Wind and the Sun, found in Aesop (c. 620–564 BC), was popularized when La Fontaine gave his version in his fables of 1668¹⁷. It depicts a competition between the North Wind and the Sun to decide which is the stronger of the two by making a traveler remove his cloak. However hard the North Wind blew, the traveler only wrapped his cloak tighter, but when the Sun shone, the traveler was overcome with heat and took his cloak off. The sixteenth century publisher already Gilles Corrozet featured the contest between the sun and the wind in his emblem book *Hecatomgraphie* (1540)¹⁸, the story is accompanied by a woodcut in which a man holds close a fur cloak under the wintry blast while on the other side he strips naked beneath the sun's rays. It is titled with the moral « Plus par douceur que par force », more by gentleness than strength. While La Fontaine's conclusion was almost the same as Corrozet's (Fables VI.3) and gives the moral that persuasion is better than force; in the London edition of Aesop's

¹⁷ Dandrey, Patrick. *Dans La Fabrique des fables. Poétique de La Fontaine*. Paris: PUF, 1996.

¹⁸ [Corrozet, Gilles.] *Hecatomgraphie*. Paris: Denis Janot, 1540. See: <http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/emblem.php?id=FCGa027>

Fables of 1687, Aphra Behn (1640–1689) taught the moral that there should be moderation in everything: « In every passion moderation chuse, /For all extreames doe bad effects produce ». The French moral explanation in the same book preaches humility: « Who would not laugh of the vanity of this Wind, who all crawling and in turmoil he is, dare nevertheless to compare himself to the Sun [...] we are warned by this fable to submit ourselves to our Superiors, and to have no trouble with the ones who could make us piteous objects of their power, and of our infirmity »¹⁹. This lesson could also be applied to Niobe, whose hubris was the reason of her downfall.



Figure 2: *Phoebus et Borée*, etching by Jean-Baptiste Oudry (1686–1755) for the edition of La Fontaine's *Fables*, Paris: 1735. Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Though influenced by Italy—and especially by the dramaturgy and the scenery of Venetian opera—the spectacles of Munich for Max Emanuel also contained some French elements, such as archetypal costumes, instrumentalists, and dance. The variety of nature of these resources: material, human and style, is expressive of the fame the entertainments and culture of the French court life had achieved around these years²⁰. Paris was, for Europe, the

¹⁹ « Qui ne rira de la vanité de ce Vent, qui tout rampant et turbulent qu'il est, ose néanmoins se comparer au Soleil. [...] nous sommes avertis par cette Fable à nous soumettre à nos Supérieurs, & à ne point avoir de démêlé avec ceux qui seroient capables de nous rendre de pitoiables objets de leur puissance, & de notre infirmité. » in *Aesop's Fables : with his life, in English, French and Latin : newly translated : illustrated with one hundred and twelve sculptures: [...] by Francis Barlow*. London: H. Hills jun. for Francis Barlow, 1687, pp. 68 & 69. See: Note 39 and : https://hollar.library.utoronto.ca/islandora/object/hollar%3AHollar_a_3009

²⁰ Vanuxem, Jacques. « Des fêtes de Louis XIV au baroque allemand. » in *Les divertissements de cour au XVIIe siècle. Cahiers de l'Association Internationale des Études Françaises Juin 1957, N°9. publiés avec le concours de l'Unesco*. Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 1957, pp. 91–102

place where clothes for special occasions had to be purchased, and we know that for Steffani's *Servio Tullio* in 1686, all the costumes, were ordered in Paris and so were the wigs, of the latest fashion, in 1688²¹. The ballets in the French manner were integrated within the operas, tournaments and other pageants and danced by members of the court and by the numerous extras likely recruited from the ranks of the army or the benches of the Jesuit schools. Ballet music was considered such a specialized art that it was, as often before and after, composed by a different musician from the one who wrote the rest of the opera; instead of the Italian Steffani, the ballets for *Niobe* were composed by the director of the court orchestra, Melchior d'Ardespin (c.1643–1717) a cornetist from French origin who has been one of the music teachers of the young Maximilian Emanuel²².

For the ballets required by the lavish staging of *Niobe*, the French born and trained choreographer François Rodier (?-?) was a guarantee that the dance would include the latest developments in style²³. There is scant biographical information about the Rodier dancing dynasty which started when Jacques Rodier the father was hired in 1666 to teach dancing to the royal children, including Max Emanuel, and to create new court ballets danced by both occupational and recreational performers. His name appears in the illustrious cast of *Le Ballet Royal de la Nuit* of 1653²⁴, indicating the new allegorical French royal style was constitutive of his years of apprenticeship. Jacques Rodier passed away sometime in 1680, and his son François was sent to Paris to study the new trends with French dancing masters, including the principal choreograph of the Paris Opera Guillaume-Louis Pécour (1653–1729), in preparation for taking over his father's appointment at court²⁵. Returning to the Bavarian capital in 1683, likely with a load of penned choreographies, as the French system of notation was spreading quickly at the time²⁶, the younger François Rodier began preparing for the festivities surrounding the 1685 royal wedding of Maximilian Emanuel to the Austrian Princess, Maria Antonia. A royal wedding was a key element of the stability of the monarchic system and of the continuation of dynasty. These fundamental reasons/causes for a marital union and the perspective/effects of future offspring was to be signified by allegorical signs. Defined by the status of the aristocratic body, influenced by royal mythology coming from Versailles, the representative style dominating at the time, the Bavarian spectacle renewed its visual rhetoric.

²¹ Seelig, Lorenz. "Aspekte des Herrscherlobs – Max Emanuel in Bildnis und Allegorie" in *Kurfürst Max Emanuel. Bayern und Europa um 1700. Band I : Zur Geschichte und Kunstgeschichte der Max-Emanuel-Zeit*, herausgegeben von Hubert Glaser. München : Hirmer Verlag, 1976, pp. 1–29.

²² Münster, Robert. "Die Musik am Hofe Max Emanuels" in *Kurfürst Max Emanuel. Bayern und Europa um 1700. Band I*. München : Hirmer Verlag, 1976, pp. 295–296.

²³ Vanuxem, Jacques. "Des fêtes de Louis XIV au baroque allemand" in *Les divertissements de cour au XVIIe siècle*. Cahiers de l'Association Internationale des Études Françaises Juin 1957, N°9 publiés avec le concours de l'Unesco. Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 1957, pp. 91–102.

²⁴ Rodier was dancing « Une Marchande » (a woman seller), one of the « Parques », and an « Ardent » (next to king Louis). See: *Ballet de la Nuit*. Edited by Michael Burden and Jennifer Thorp. The Wendy Hilton Dance & Music Series N°15. Hillsdale (NY): Pendragon Press, 2009, p. 31.

²⁵ See: Mlakar, Pia et Mlakar, Pino. "Notizen über Max Emanuels Beziehung zum Ballet" in *Kurfürst Max Emanuel. Bayern und Europa um 1700. Band I*. München: Hirmer Verlag, 1976, pp. 317–320.

²⁶ For a presentation of the Feuillet system of notation, see: Harris-Warrick, Rebecca and Marsh, Carol G. *Musical Theatre at the Court of Louis XIV "Le Mariage de la Grosse Cathos"*. Cambridge and New York : Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 82–122. For an introduction about its diffusion in Europe, see: Winter, Marian Hannah. *The Pre-Romantic Ballet*. London: Pitman Publishing, 1974, pp. 45–48.

5.2 Twins

The libretto of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, which was the second opera written for Munich by Luigi Orlandi, but different from the historical display of the previous year, is based on Greek mythology²⁷. Niobe and Anfione are the central characters of the plot. Amphion, Anfione in the Italian text, was rightly famous as a king of Thebes, but also as an incomparable musician, whose abilities built the walls of Thebes from the rocks his twin brother Zethus brought. Niobe was his wife, and together they had many children. So proud was Niobe of her offspring that they were called the Niobids, a notable exception to the rule that a Greek family is usually named after the Father. Niobe boasted of her superiority to Latona (Leto), the mother of Apollo and Diana, because the goddess had only two children, while she had given birth to many offspring. For her hubris, Apollo killed her sons, and Diana, her daughters. Amphion, at the sight of his dead children, killed himself. The devastated Niobe turned to stone as she could not weep no more²⁸.

The myth is clearly a moral warning to the human race to remain humble while enjoying earthly glory. Since Antiquity, Niobe and her Niobids have been the subject of many statuary groups where the theatricality of the subject is supported by the stone nature of the metamorphose, the multiple characters, and the fact that the group could be exposed under the sky where sun and moon would alternate to complete what is appropriate to call a Theater of hubris²⁹. It is possible that such a group was known to Orlandi or Steffani, anyway the scene is integrated as an Aristotelian « catastrophe » in their opera³⁰. But the story is also a story of vengeance of cosmic proportion. Ovid, when he tells of the goddess's revenge on Niobe in his *Metamorphoses*, notes that the two children of Latona are twins: « The goddess was deeply angered, and on the top of Mount Cynthus she spoke to her twin children. 'I am your mother and you are my pride, no one but Juno is a greater goddess, and even now someone presumes to doubt my powers and worship will be prevented at my altars, unless you help me, my children' ». ³¹ In mythology, Diana was associated with the Moon, as her twin brother Apollo was associated with the Sun. This twinning, although based on a sexual difference, symbolizes their complementary places in the interstellar balance.

²⁷ *Alarico il Baltha cioè L'audace re de'Gothi* was performed in 18 January 1687 with music of Steffani: the libretto is around the historical figure of Alaric I (370 or 375– 410 AD) who was the first King of the Visigoths from 395–410 and is best known for his sack of Rome in 410, which marked a decisive event in the decline of the Roman Empire. See: Timms, Colin. *Polymath of the Baroque, Agostino Steffani and His Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 208–217.

²⁸ Commelin, Pierre. *Mythologie grecque et romaine*. Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1961, pp. 250–252.

²⁹ The famous group of Niobe of the villa Medici in Florence was discovered by archaeological excavation in Roma in 1583: Ferdinando de' Medici bought it and installed it in the garden. The painter Balthus (1908–2001), director of the French Academy in Rome (from 1960 to 1977), reorganized the group. There are three other known groups: at the villa Borghese, at the Vatican and at the Villa Albani.

³⁰ The notion of *Catastrophe* is not originally in Aristotle, who uses the expression of *Noeud* but appears in his latin critics and translators and commentators, Evanthius and Aelius Donatus. For the relation between stage catastrophe and natural cause, as in an earthquake, see: *L'invention de la catastrophe au XVIIIe siècle: du châiment divin au désastre naturel. Etudes publiées sous la direction de Anna-Marie Mercier-Faivre et Chantal Thomas*. Paris: Droz, 2008. But it seems that Orlandi follows more that one of Aristotle's principles of *Poetics* and the choice of the Niobe subject may even have been inspired by the recommendations of Aristotle: 1456a about the importance to choose, like Aeschylus did, only one special episode of *Niobe's* story.

³¹ See : Ovid. *Metamorphoses*, Book VI, 204–209.

According to Ovid, Latona was wandering the earth with her newborn twins when she attempted to drink from a pond. The peasants there refused to allow her to do so by stirring the mud at the bottom of the water. Latona turned them into frogs for their lack of hospitality, forever doomed to swim in the murky waters of ponds and rivers. This scene has been depicted by painters, notably by Annibale Carracci (1560–1609), as seen on Figure 3, but its water element makes it especially suitable for a fountain and is represented in the *Bassin de Latone*, in the gardens of Versailles.

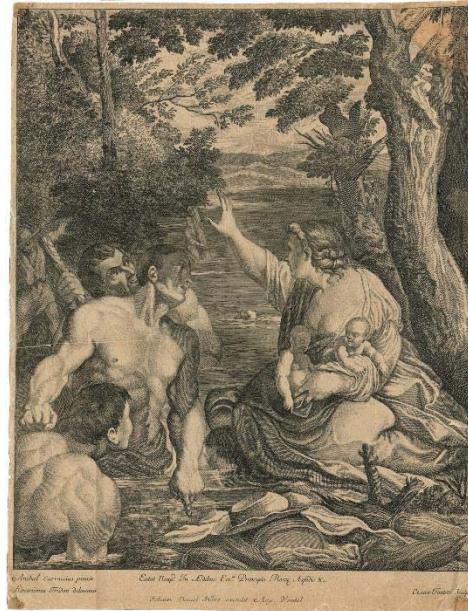


Figure 3: Latona and the Shepherds of Licia
Latona e i pastori di Licia
 Italian print ca. 1620 – ca. 1650 by Cesare Fantetti (ca. 1600–16?)
 after a design of Jérôme Trudon (?-?) of Annibale Carracci (1560–1609).
 Painting kept at the time in Casa di Rocca Aspidi in Naples³².
 Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The choice of the myth of Latona for the central spot of the gardens of Versailles is an allusion to the difficult Regency for the mother of Louis XIV, to the “Fronde”—the uprising of the nobility against the queen regent—and to the ultimate victory of the French monarchy. The Parterre of Latone was designed by André Le Nôtre and built when the idea of making Versailles the center of power was still being developed; in 1686, Jules Hardouin-Mansart (1646–1708) adjusted the Latone Basin by elevating the central figure of the goddess by the brothers Marcy (figure 4) on three levels of marble, placing it so it faced in the direction of the Grand Canal, where Apollo in full adulthood emerges triumphantly from the water on his

³² The engraving was made after a painting preserved in the palace of the Prince Rocca Aspidi of Naples where in the eighteenth century two illustrious French travellers saw it (Cochin, Charles Nicolas. *Voyage d'Italie ou recueil de notes sur les ouvrages de peinture et sculpture, qu'on voit dans les principales villes d'Italie*. Paris: 1758, p. 189 and Lalande, Joseph Jérôme Le Français de. *Voyage d'un français en Italie*. Paris: 1769, ed. 1787, V, p. 350). The painting is to be associated to the one today at the Bratislava National Gallery. It may be instead a copy after a similar, but much higher quality canvas now preserved at the Episcopal Castle of Kroměříž, Czech Republic, and coming, with every probability, from the Pamphili collection. See: Benati, Daniele and Riccomini, Eugenio. *Annibale Carracci, Bologna 2006*. Milano: Electa, 2006, p. 208. Due to its strong colours and material qualities, the painting can be dated to the Venetian phase of Annibale Carracci, around 1590. See: Borea, Evelina and Mariani, Ginevra. *Annibale Carracci e i suoi incisori*. Roma: École française de Rome, 1986, p. 287.

chariot³³. This new location, integrating an earlier allegory of the end of the minority of the Sun King, was helping to define a new use of the space in the garden and a renewed allegorical message. This coming of age of the king was the opportunity for one of the first association between Louis and the sun took place on stage during *Le Ballet Royal de la Nuit* as early as 1653. The famous gold costume worn by the king as Le Soleil, in the last entrée, establishes a royal persona as the Apollo Phoebus and this allegory will know a huge fortune³⁴.



Figure 4: *Latona and her children Apollo and Diana*

French etching by Simon Thomassin (ca. 1652–1732) of the sculpture by Balthazar Marcy (1628–1674) and Gaspard Marcy (1624–1681), from *Recueil des Figures, Groupes, Thermes, Fontaines, Vases, Statuës & autres Ornemens tels qu'ils se voyent á present dans le Château et parc de Versailles, gravé d'après les originaux. Par Simon Thomassin*. Paris, 1694.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Although 1653 was not the first time Apollo has been associated with the sovereign, this was the first time Louis had himself embodied the image³⁵. But besides the equivalency of its dawn with the coming of age of the king, the association of Apollo Sun with the Louis XIV expanded in the 1660s: Charles Le Brun's projects for Parisian fountains of 1668 offer diverse projects related to the myth of Apollo³⁶. One fountain shows him on the Mount Helicon with the muses, above the river Hippocrene, whose spring considered to be a source of poetic inspiration is figured as a river god, easily identified by his water urn. Another design displays the victory of the Apollo over the serpent python, an allegory of the victory of the king over

³³ Garrigues, Dominique. *Jardins et Jardiniers de Versailles au Grand Siècle*. Seyssel : Champ Vallon, 2001.

³⁴ See: *Ballet de la Nuit*. Edited by Michael Burden and Jennifer Thorp. The Wendy Hilton Dance & Music Series N°15. Hillsdale (NY): Pendragon Press, 2009, p. X (Costume design) and p. 129 (Stage design).

³⁵ See: Hauteceur, Louis. *Louis XIV, Roi-Soleil*. Paris: Plon, 1953, p. 7.

³⁶ Projects kept by Musée du Louvre: <http://arts-graphiques.louvre.fr/detail/oeuvres/0/207832-Fontaine-dApollon-et-de-Daphne>

his enemies and an expression of the god's terrible might. A third project shows Apollon pursuing Daphné and the metamorphose of the nymph in a laurel plant, by her father, the river god Ladon (named Peneus in Ovid). Although this image was inspired by the famous sculpture, dating from 1622–1625, of the Roman artist Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680)³⁷, some later etchings depicting the apollonian fountains³⁸ demonstrate that Ovidian Apollo was a symbol still approved by Louis XIV, after the allegorical program was abandoned (Figure 5)³⁹ by the end the seventeenth century.



Figure 5: *Fontaine d'Apollon et de Daphné*

French etching by Louis de Chastillon (1639?–1734) from a project by Charles Le Brun (1619–1690).

Plate 10 from: *Recueil De diverses Dessesins de Fontaines et De Frises Maritimes Inventez et dessignez Par Monsieur Le Brun premier Peintre du Roy, Directeur et Chancelier de l'Academie Roy.le de Peinture et Sculpture / Avec Privilege du Roy.*

Et se vendent à Paris Chez Audran graveur du Roy à l'Hotel Royal des Gobelins. Paris, 1680 [?].

Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Niobe's tale, as a less known part of the deeds of Apollo, was also chosen to decorate the bedroom of the Sun King, in his Parisian castle of Tuileries, a space which was both private and public. The writer Félibien tries to describe how the paintings of Pierre Mignard (1612–

³⁷ This statue is in the collection of the Galleria Borghese in Rome. A detail study of the hand of Daphne during the metamorphoses by Tiepolo, c. 1744–45, was chosen as a poster of the 2011 Boston Early Music Festival: Change and transformation.

³⁸ See: Barolsky, Paul. "Ovid, Bernini, and the Art of Petrification" in *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* Third Series, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Fall, 2005), pp. 149–162. See also: Gastel, Joris J. van. "Bernini's metamorphosis: sculpture, poetry, and the embodied beholder" in *Word & Image* Vol. 28 (2), 2012, pp. 193–205. See also: Wilkins, Ann Thomas. "Bernini and Ovid: Expanding the Concept of Metamorphosis" in *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 6.3 (2000), pp. 383–408.

³⁹ After the initials of Charles Le Brun, signature « CLB » on the bottom left, the abbreviation « CPR » (cum privilegio regis) attests of the royal privilege.

1692) and insists that the episodes « from the tale of Apollo befit the Sun, and besides, they are emblematic images of the beautiful actions of the king. [...] The story of Niobe shows the inevitable downfall of those who fail to keep the respect they owe to the sacred person of such a powerful monarch ». ⁴⁰ Reminding us of the possible moral of the fable of the sun and the wind, Le Brun had used this same symbol in his first project for one end of the “Grande Galerie de Versailles,” known today as the Hall of Mirrors (Figure 6), which was to become ultimately a temple dedicated to the deeds of the Sun King ⁴¹, leaving out direct mythological allegory ⁴².



Figure 6: Versailles Hall of Mirrors “Coupe de la Grande Gallerie de Versailles”

Etching by Jean-Michel Chevotet (1698–1772) and Antoine Herisset (1686–1769), from *Versailles immortalisé ou les Merveilles Parlantes des bâtimens, jardins, bosquets, parcs, statues, groupes, termes, & vases de marbre [...] qui sont dans les Châteaux de Versailles, de Trianon, de la Ménagerie & de Marly ; En neuf tomes in quarto, Composé en vers libres françois par le sieur Jean-Baptiste de Monicart [...] Avec une traduction en prose latine, par le sieur Romain Le Testu [...], tome II.* Paris: E. Ganeau-J. Quillau, 1720.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

⁴⁰ « tirées de l’Histoire d’Apollon conviennent au Soleil, & outre cela, elles sont des images emblématiques des belles actions du roi. (...) L’histoire de Niobe montre la perte inévitable de ceux qui manqueroient au respect qu’ils doivent à la personne sacrée d’un si puissant Monarque. » in Félibien, André. *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres anciens et modernes. 5e partie, Neuvième entretien.* Paris : Vve S. Mabre-Cramoisy, 1688, pp. 74–75. See also: Hauteccœur, Louis. *Le Louvre et les Tuileries de Louis XIV.* Paris: Librairie Nationale d’Art et d’Histoire and Bruxelles: Vanoest, 1927, pp. 130–132 & planche XXVI. See sketch for Diana by Mignard: <http://arts-graphiques.louvre.fr/detail/oeuvres/155/38759-Amour-soutenant-une-corbeille-chasserresse-bandant-son-arc-max>

⁴¹ For the Apollonian first visual program, see: Sabatier, Gérard. *Versailles ou la figure du roi.* Paris: Albin Michel, 1999, pp. 199–203. For the design of Le Brun of *Niobe* for the « Grande Gallerie », see: <http://arts-graphiques.louvre.fr/detail/oeuvres/471/207413-Dessin-darchitecture-avec-decor-max>

⁴² Bajou, Thierry. *La Peinture à Versailles, XVIIe siècle.* Préface de Jean-Pierre Babelon. Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1998, pp. 176–179.

In Munich the choice of Niobe as a subject for the entertainment of Maximilian Emanuel can also be read in the same allegorical way. In his dedication, printed at the beginning of his libretto of 1688, Orlandi reworks the Apollonian emblems and compares Maximilian Emanuel and his wife to « two living suns in the great Firmament of Bavaria » who dispense their beneficial « Rays » on the whole world. The poet makes his point by attributing the sun « the greater Light today, like a symbol of your supreme Attributes »⁴³—to the Prince Elector, anchoring the allegory of his libretto in the Apollonian tradition of opera, as established by the Florentine first attempt to define poetically the genre⁴⁴. Orlandi's full dedication reads like the draft for a possible prologue, which is indeed missing from *Niobe*: it gives the allegorical style as a main rhetorical device to understand the tale which follows.

5.3 Three Princes

Orlandi's dedication offers some keys to the allegory but, in his drama, the poet creates more allusive references to the Prince Elector. Although the sons and daughters of Niobe and Anfione are an essential part of their story, the source of Niobe's pride, and the cause of her downfall, Orlandi added three subplots to the original story of Niobe and her children as told by Ovid. Orlandi justifies these additions by stating « It was a great specialty of the fable from Greece to allow some variation in poetic telling of such events [...] The following likelihoods are added. »⁴⁵. These subplots depict the characters of three princes—Anfione, Tiberino, and Creonte—and their royal destinies.

The figure of king Anfione is represented as a disturbed character wishing for a life of contemplation and willing to renounce the throne in favor of his wife Niobe. Although he is a great musician, he is shown to be a bad ruler who wants to flee from his duties. Orlandi changes the episode of the erection of the walls of Thebes: far from being due to the musical excellence of Amphion, their building is mostly due to Jupiter answering the prayer Anfione addresses him as his father: the miracle is the reward of orthodoxy. The suicide of the king at the end of the opera is not a heroic act but shows rather a man who puts his personal grief above his responsibilities, a tragic figure common in Venetian operas. Amphion is a counterexample to that of a good ruler, lacking two of the qualities—modesty and courage—that Orlandi attributes to Max Emanuel in his dedication⁴⁶.

⁴³ « e parmi, che per degno Applauso di Virtù così rara, e rara Dote de vostri generosissimi Cuori, vadi hoggi di Voi decantando il Mondo ciò, che del Sole fù detto: Quæ omnes in ipso mirantur, ipse solus non videt. Et ecco il maggior Luminare hoggi come simbolo de vostri supremi Attributi abbattere con fulminante destra la Tebana Altezza, rappresentando non meno all'ombre atterrite dell'Asiana superbia i Lampi vittoriosi della Vostra acclamata Possanza. Ma dove à fronte di Voi, che siete i due vivi Soli del gran Cielo della Baviera, ardisco con Ali d'Icaro seguire il Volo, che spiega trionfante la Vostra Fama? » in Orlandi, Luigi. "Dedication" in *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, ... Munich: Giovanni Jecklino, 1688. [I underlined].

⁴⁴ Donington, Robert. *The Rise of Opera*. London and Boston : Faber and Faber, 1981, pp. 120–125.

⁴⁵ « Gran Campo hebbe la favolosa Grecia di finger Menzogne nel Poetica Racconto di tali successi, [...] Si aggiungono li seguenti verisimili » in Orlandi, Luigi. "Argomento" in *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, ... Munich: Giovanni Jecklino, 1688.

⁴⁶ « Ecco per ciò dalla famosa Reggia di Tebe risorto sù la Scena il gran Mostro della superbia à provocare i Fulmini nelle tremende Destre de Numi, perche servano di Faci luminose nel sacro Tempio de vostri Regi Lari, dove il Nume d'una eccelsa Humiltà magnanimente si adora. All'immutabil Gloria di così potente domatrice

A Pastoral intrigue balances the tragedy: under the protection of Diana, chaste goddess of the Hunt, the foreign prince Tiberino, a descendant of the river god Tiber is on a quest for glory but falls in love with Manto, daughter of the high priest Tiresia. The prince courts her during the course of the opera, marries her, and at the end leaves with her to go back to his native Italian country. That the couple will create a new dynasty who will found the city of Mantova was implied in the name of Manto⁴⁷. Like the forest of the Temple of Latona where they meet, these characters are shown as pure, devoted, and true to their faith, and Tiberino himself as courageous and courteous, two princely qualities.



Figure 7: *Victory*
German etching from 1670 by Melchior Küsel (1626–1683),
after Johann Wilhelm Baur (1607–1642).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

But it is the third subplot that reveals a precise link between Maximilian Emanuel and *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*. Having some blood rights to the Theban throne, Creonte, crown prince of Thessaly, is on a quest to conquer Thebes. Creonte is first seen under the spell of his ally, the magician Poliferno, who sends him an enchanted dream causing him to fall in love with Niobe. While his armies are approaching Thebes, Creonte appears to Niobe as the god Mars, flattering the high opinion Niobe has of herself. The intervention of the real gods over the city of Thebes gives victory to his army, as the gods have destroyed the new walls of the city: Creonte enters Thebes victorious, to the sound of trumpets⁴⁸, surrounded by palm branches, as a symbol of his triumph, and laurels, a plant associated with Apollo, which is used to crown

del vano Fasto, che nel Serenissimo Cielo del vostro Soglio bella più del Sole risplende, innalza Colossi di sestesso l'Orgoglio nella memorabile peripetia di quella infelice Regnante.... » in Orlandi, Luigi. "Dedication" in *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, ... Munich: Giovanni Jecklino, 1688.

⁴⁷ Following Virgil's *Aeneid* Book VI, Manto went to Italy and gave birth to Ocnus, who founded Mantova and named it after his mother. In Dante's *Inferno* Canto XX has a long digression on the founding of Mantova. See: *Dante's Inferno: The Indiana Critical Edition translated and edited by Mark Musa*. Bloomington and Indianapolis (IN): Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 273–275.

⁴⁸ In 1688, they were 14 permanent trumpeters in the court orchestra. See: Münster, Robert. "Die Musik am Hofe Max Emanuels" in *Kurfürst Max Emanuel. Bayern und Europa um 1700. Band I...* München: Hirmer Verlag, 1976, p. 295.

the victorious (Figure 7). His first actions as a good ruler are to banish the bad magician, to bless the union of lovers, and to forgive the intrigant nurse.

With the character of Creonte, Orlandi gives a new twist to the allegory in his libretto: In the 1680s, keeping in mind that the entire Bavarian court was aware of the well-established symbolic relationship between Apollo/sun and Louis XIV, he creates in his drama a more vivid parallel between Creonte and Maximilian Emanuel; indeed, in his dedication, he alludes to the military exploits of the Prince Elector and praises also the modesty of Max Emanuel in his glorious victories, « That which all admire in him, he alone does not see himself, »⁴⁹ which he conveniently opposes to the pride of Niobe. In his praises to his patron and his portrayal of the character of Creonte, Orlandi articulates what seems to be the official propaganda for the persona of Max Emanuel with an allegorical character.



Figure 8: *Max Emanuel*
Marble statuette by Wilhelm de Groff (1676-1742) after Giuseppe Volpini (1670-1729).
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts.

All representations show the Prince Elector in military apparel, in an attitude of both command and energy. Statues by two of his favorite artists, the sculptor Wilhelm de Groff (1676-1742) or Giuseppe Volpini (1670-1729), portrays him in full armor and long cloak,

⁴⁹ « vadi hoggi di Voi decantando il Mondo ciò, che del Sole fù detto: “Quæ omnes in ipso mirantur, ipse solus non videt.” Et ecco il maggior Luminare hoggi come simbolo de vostri supremi Attributi abbattere con fulminante destra la Tebana Altezza, rappresentando non meno all’ombre atterrite dell’Asiana superbia i Lampi vittoriosi della Vostra acclamata Possanza. Ma dove à fronte di Voi, che siete i due vivi Soli del gran Cielo della Baviera, ardisco con Ali d’Icaro seguire il Volo, che spiega trionfante la Vostra Fama? Intraprendano l’ Aquile sì eccelsa Meta, & alla tarpata mia Penna solo sia Meta fortunata il publicarmi con profonda veneratione... » in Orlandi, Luigi. “Dedication” in *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, ... Munich: Giovanni Jecklino, 1688.

standing at ease, left foot forward in what on stage would have been the position of the victorious Creonte⁵⁰. His left hand is on the hilt of his sword, and the right holds the Marshal's baton of commander in chief as if giving an order⁵¹. This is a picture of a victorious military chief whose clear attributes are courage and control, two qualities to which a noble soldier should add clemency, or magnanimity, toward the vanquished (Figure 8)⁵².

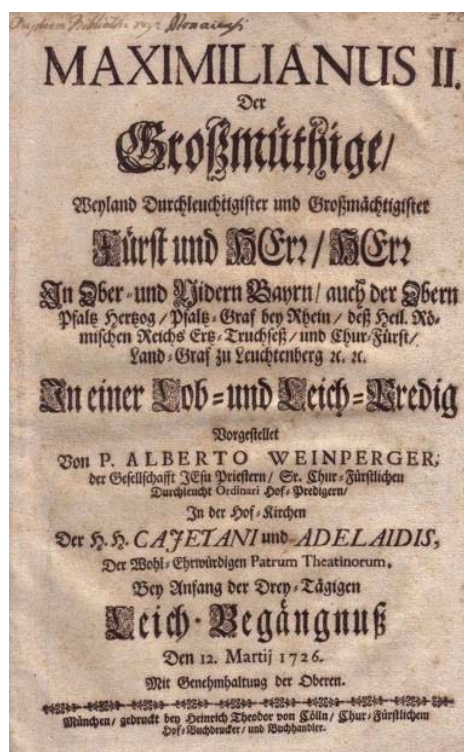


Figure 9: Title page of the funeral oration for Maximilian Emmanuel II
Munich, 1726.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Maximilian Emanuel's fame grew and spread in these years; later, in the oration, given by a Jesuit after his death in 1726, the Elector of Bavaria was called « Der Großmüthige » (The

⁵⁰ Bouffard-Veilleux, Mickaël. "Restituer la composition du corps aristocratique sur scène à l'aide du portrait: un cas où l'histoire de l'art peut contribuer à valider, nuancer ou enrichir les traités anciens" in *Restitution et création dans la remise en spectacle des oeuvres des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, Actes du colloque international Versailles, 29 mai 2008, Nantes, 30-31 mai 2008. Annales de l'Association pour un Centre de Recherche sur les Arts du Spectacle aux XVIIe et XVIIIe s. En partenariat avec Le Printemps des Arts & Centre de recherche du Château de Versailles*, éd. Jean-Noël Laurenti. Villereau : ACRAS, juin 2010, pp. 221–232.

⁵¹ This statuette is attributed to Wilhelm de Groff alone by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and is on view in the Angelica Lloyd Russell Gallery (Europe, 1700–1800), N° 142.

⁵² For Wilhelm de Groff (1676–1742), see: Volk, Peter. *Guilielmus de Groff (1676–1742). Studien zur Plastik am Kurbayrischen Hof im 18. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt: Saggio, 1966. See also: Wolf, Friedrich. "Wilhelm de Groff (1676–1742). Der Dekorkünstler des Kurfürsten Max Emanuel", in *Oberbayerisches Archiv*, 90, 1968, pp. 52–56. For Giuseppe Volpini (1670–1729), see also: *Kurfürst Max Emanuel. Bayern und Europa um 1700. Band II : Katalog der Ausstellung im Alten und Neuen Schloß Schleißheim, 2. Juli bis 3. Oktober 1976. Ausstellungsleitung von Hubert Glaser*. München: Hirmer Verlag, 1976, p. 220.

Magnanimous) Maximilianus II (Figure 9)⁵³. This noble quality, attributed to Creonte, has been already associated with the Prince elector by Steffani in his collection of motets in 1685⁵⁴, but was still important to display in front of Max Emanuel at the very beginning of 1688.

5.4 Four Cities

A new key is given by the full title of the opera: *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*. As there is no other famous character called Niobe in history or myth, the full title is not needed to help to identify the individual. Rather, the royal status immediately links the title character with the place of the action, Thebes. This precision speaks to the collective imagination and the memory as the city of Oedipus was since the beginning of time a city of maledictions. The first king of Thebes was Cadmus, after whom the city was originally called Cadmeia. Juno cursed the city after her husband Jove consorted with Europa, the sister of Cadmus. Actaeon, the great son of Cadmus, would be a victim of this curse: while hunting, he surprised Diana at her bath and was transformed into a stag by the goddess, and gruesomely torn to pieces by his own hounds (Figure 10)⁵⁵.



Figure 10: *Actéon petit fils de Cadmus et d'Hermione, métamorphosé en Cerf*.
Etching by Nicolas Larmessin (1645–1725) after a painting of Balthazar Van Lemens (1637–1704).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

⁵³ Weinperger, Albert. *Maximilianus II. Der Großmüthige, Weyland Durchleuchtigster und Großmächtigster Fürst und Herr, Herr In Ober- und Nidern Bayrn, auch der Obern Pfaltz Hertzog, Pfaltz-Graf bey Rhein, [...] In einer Lob- und Leich-Predig Vorge stellt: Don P. Alberto Weinperger [...] In der Hof-Kirchen Der H.H. Cajetani und Adelaidis, Der Wohl-Erwürdigen Patrum Theatinorum, Bey Anfang der Drey-Tägigen Leich-Begängnuß, Den 12. Martij 1726....* Cologne: Heinrich Theodor, 1726.

⁵⁴ Some of these motets celebrate Max-Emanuel war successes against the Turks. See: Timms, Colin. *Polymath of the Baroque, Agostino Steffani and His Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 28.

⁵⁵ Actaeon was the subject of short opera by Charpentier around 1684. See Chapter 3 of this present dissertation.

But the story of Thebes, as a city, started when its king Nycteus had a daughter named Antiope who fled Thebes to evade her father's wrath after finding herself pregnant with twins by the god Zeus (Jove)⁵⁶. A nearby king welcomed Antiope, and Nycteus declared war against his neighbor, but was defeated; his brother, Lycus, took the Theban throne. The new king of Thebes waged war to avenge his brother and was victorious; Lycus and his wife Dirce took their niece Antiope captive, and proceeded to treat her cruelly. Antiope later managed to escape, and was reunited with her grown twin sons, Amphion and Zethus. The twins then marched on Thebes, slew King Lycus and his wife Dirce, seized power and ruled as joint kings of Thebes. Amphion married Niobe and Zethus married Thebe, after whom the city of Thebes was named. Zethus, Thebe, and their only son died soon thereafter. As an episode of this chronicle, the story of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* starts a few years later: The libretto gives to the audience a certain knowledge of the past episodes of Theban dynasty to capture its epic nature: in the description of the «Argomento» and in the list of characters. Part erudite display, part actuality background, these informations have a broader educational aspect: Thebes was not a lost city in time for the 1688 audience of *Niobe*.



Figure 11: *Cavalcade du grand Seigneur*

French etching by Bernard Picart (1673–1733) from *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde représentées par des figures dessinées de la main de Bernard Picart: avec une explication historique, & quelques dissertations curieuses*. Volume VII.

Amsterdam: J.F. Bernard, 1723–1737.

Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The city of Thebes did not disappear during ancient times; Latin hegemony in Thebes lasted until 1458, when the Turks captured it. The Ottomans renamed Thebes « İstefe» and controlled it like they did most of the Greek peninsula. If the Ottoman power was to be an object of fascination for years to come (Figure 11) Orlandi refers to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the contemporary situation when, after describing Niobe as a « gran Mostro della superbia»—great monster/display of pride—he compares the haughty queen to « l'Asiana Superbia»,⁵⁷ the haughty Asia. The qualificative « Superbia » which can be translated by proud with the negative connotation of arrogance is clearly a reference to the Ottoman empire which dominated the middle east but extended to Asia on the east and to Greece and the Balkans to the west. The expansion was seen not only as a territorial expansion, challenging

⁵⁶ Berman, Daniel W. *Myth, Literature, and the Creation of the Topography of Thebes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

⁵⁷ See libretto *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, ... Munich: Giovanni Jecklino, 1688.

the dynastic status quo of Europe, but also a dangerous religious one⁵⁸ and Orlandi's wishes, that Maximilian Emanuel powerful arm will defeat Asia, was keeping the line of the Bavarian war propaganda.

The Great Turkish War had started in 1683 and would not end until 1699 and *Niobe* is a war opera. When the Turks besieged Vienna in 1683, the Bavarian elector came to the aid of the Austrian emperor, his future father-in-law. With Bavarian assistance, they succeeded in taking Vienna from the Turks⁵⁹. Through his great courage, Maximilian Emanuel earned a reputation as an outstanding commander⁶⁰. The Holy League was initiated in 1684 by Pope Innocent XI (1611–1689), and by 1686 it consisted of the Holy Roman Empire, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Venetian Republic, and the Russian Tsardom. The Holy League and the Ottoman Empire were fighting for territory in the east of Europe, and Max Emanuel was one of the leading figures among the military commanders. The Prince Elector took a big part in the campaign of 1686 and was notably distinguished for his success in the siege of Buda (now Budapest).

In 1687, a year before *Niobe* opened, Venetian forces took Thebes⁶¹, one of the Ottoman army's strongholds, and although Maximilian Emanuel did not take an active part in this encounter, he was himself planning a new campaign toward another important ottoman city. After the recent events at Vienna and Buda, the city of Thebes past and present served as examples to inspire Max Emanuel: Belgrade was to be the theater of the Prince Elector's most famous military exploit. The Siege of Belgrade took place in 1688, few months after *Niobe* was first performed. Belgrade was at that time a part of the Ottoman Empire and had been the Ottoman's chief fortress in Europe for just over a century. The forces of Holy League commanded by Maximilian Emanuel laid siege to the city on July 30, 1688 and subjected it to cannon fire for nearly a month. His offer to allow the Turkish garrison to surrender gained him the title of "Magnanimous". When it was refused, Maximilian ordered an assault on September 6. Maximilian, like Creonte in *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, drove the garrison from the walls and entered the city, victorious. The occupation of Belgrade by the League forces was the turning point of the Great Turkish War, which was mainly a religious war between Christian and Muslim forces.⁶²

⁵⁸ It is only in the early eighteenth century with the works of Picart and Bernard that Islam will be to the same treatment as the other religions. See: *Bernard Picart and the First Global Vision of Religion*. Edited by Lynn Hunt, Margaret Jacob, and Wijnand Mijnhardt. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010. For more information see also: Hunt, Lynn; Jacob, Margaret; Mijnhardt, Wijnand. *The Book that Changed Europe: Picart and Bernard's Religious Ceremonies of the World*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 2010. See: <https://web.archive.org/web/20100612090437/http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/picart/>

⁵⁹ The Austrian composer Johann Joseph Fux (1660-1741) commemorated the battle in his *Partita Turcarum*, which bore the sub-title, "Musical portrait of the Siege of Vienna by the Turks in 1683". For Fux's impact on dramatic music, see: Van der Meer, John Henry. *Johann Josef Fux als Opernkomponist, Proefschrift ter verkrijging van de graad van Doctor in de Letteren*. Utrecht : Rijksuniversiteit, 1961.

⁶⁰ Setton, Kenneth Meyer. *Venice, Austria, and the Turks in the Seventeenth Century*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1991, pp. 266, 269, 277, 367, 390, 392, 401, 406 and 437.

⁶¹ For the campaign of 1687, see: Finlay, George. *The History of Greece under Othoman and Venetian Domination*. London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1856, pp. 218–226 and particularly pp. 223 & 224.

⁶² For a comparable situation with the history of Athens, see: Chatziaslani, Kornilia. "Morosini in Athens" on the website "Archaeology of the city of Athens", particularly from 7th paragraph: « In August of 1687... »: http://www.eie.gr/archaeologia/En/chapter_more_8.aspx

5.5 Five Religions

With its mix of mythology, allegory, and history, *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* is rich with possible interpretations, but it remains a drama where the action revolves around a religious conflict, between Niobe and Tiresias. The story of Tiresias is told by Ovid: in a forest near Thebes, Tiresias stumbled upon a pair of mating snakes; he hit the pair with his stick and was changed into a woman. Being a woman, Tiresias became a priestess, married, and had three daughters: Manto, Historis, and Daphne. After seven years as a woman, Tiresias again found mating snakes; by hitting them once more, he was permitted to regain his masculinity⁶³. Tiresias, being the only person who had lived in both a man's and a woman's body, was the best arbiter of a dispute between Juno and Jupiter, the latter of whom stated that « In Venus deeds, The Female's pleasure far the Male's, exceeds »⁶⁴. Tiresias confirmed Jupiter's words and Juno, it is said, was so upset that she damned the one who had made the judgment to endure eternal night. As no god has the right to void what another god has done, Jupiter could not restore the priest's sight; instead, he gave Tiresias knowledge of the future, in exchange for his loss⁶⁵.



Figure 12: *Décoration de Theatre représentant le Palais d'Edipe à Thebes.*
Optical view ca 1740 by Jacques Chereau (1688 –1776),
based on a set design by Ferdinando Galli Bibiena (1656–1743).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

⁶³ Loraux, Nicole. *The Experiences of Tiresias. The feminine and the Greek Man*. Translated by Paula Wissing. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 1995.

⁶⁴ Sandys, George. *Ovid's Metamorphosis Englished, mythologiz'd, and represented in figures: An essay to the translation of Virgil's Aeneis*. Oxford: John Lichfield and Amboise, 1632.

⁶⁵ The causes of Tiresias' blindness are unclear, but the most interesting variant tells how he was blinded by Pallas Athena after stumbling onto her bathing naked. His mother, Chariclo, a nymph of Athena, begged Athena to undo her curse, but the goddess could not; instead, she « cleaned » his ears, giving him the ability to understand birdsong, thus giving him the gift of augury. This version of the myth of Tiresias is the subject of a painting of 1688, *Minerve surprise au bain par Tirésias, le frappe de cécité et lui donne le don de prophétie*, by René Antoine Houasse (1645–1710), as part of his cycle dedicated to Minerve for the castle of Trianon in Versailles.

The destiny of Tiresias is clearly presented as a series of initiations making him the custodian of a special gift and therefore, as a blind seer, his character appears in several Greek stories and tragedies based on the legendary history of Thebes, including the one of king Oedipus (figure 12), whose self-inflicted blindness echoes the one of Tiresias. Literal and metaphorical references to eyesight appear throughout the various Greek dramas featuring *Oedipus Rex*. Clear vision serves as a metaphor for insight and knowledge, but the clear-eyed Oedipus is blind to the truth about his origins and inadvertent crimes. The prophet Tiresias, on the other hand, although literally blind, "sees" the truth and relays what is revealed to him⁶⁶ and this is the role, following the examples of Euripides, Sophocles, and Aeschylus⁶⁷, that Orlandi gives to Tiresias in his « drama per musica ».

In *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, although Tiresias retains his power of prophecy, he is also the high priest of Latona. His daughter is also devoted to the goddess and to her children Apollo and Diana. Orlandi inventively opposes the paganism of Niobe, who orders her people to revere her family as gods, to the orthodoxy of Tiresias and Manto, who both reject her blasphemy. This religious debate is not just an exchange of theory; it precipitates some of the most violent scenes, bringing the opera to the proportions of a biblical drama: curse of the Prophet, sack of the Temple, and slaughter of the unfaithful. This opposition by those adhering to the old faith to the reformed religion desired by Niobe has clear parallels to the determination with which the Catholic faith opposed the newer Protestant one.



Figure 13: *Templis Calvinianorum eversis*. « Les Temples des Calvinistes démolis » and *Haeresis extincta*. « L'hérésie éteinte par le fameux Edit du 22 Octobre 1685, qui révoque l'Edit de Nantes. »

Etching of two 1685 French medals from *Recueil des Portraits des Hommes illustres, dont il est fait mention dans l'Histoire de France, commence par MM. Velly & Villaret, & continue par M. L'Abbé Garnier. Tome VI, Contenant la suite du Regne de Louis IX & un supplement pour differens Regnes*. Paris: Nyon, 1786, p. 50.

Collection of Gilbert Blin.

In the years leading up to *Niobe*, religious tensions in Europe rose to extreme levels. In France, Louis XIV issued the edict of Fontainebleau in 1685, putting an end to the tolerance

⁶⁶ « Though Oedipus' future is predicted by the gods, even after being warned by Tiresias, he cannot see the truth or reality beforehand because his excessive pride has blinded his vision... » in Haque, Ziaula and Kabir Chowdhury, Fahmida. "The Concept of Blindness in Sophocles' *King Oedipus* and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*" in *Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2013, p. 118.

⁶⁷ Tiresias appears in Euripides, *The Bacchae*; in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and in his *Antigone*; and in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*.

of Protestants that his grandfather had established in 1598 (Figure 13). The beginning of the persecution of the Protestants in France, notably with destruction of their temples, led to an exodus of Huguenots to the north of Europe. In England, the Catholic king James II loses his throne in 1687 and is replaced by Protestants William III and Mary II. Bavaria, a stronghold of Catholicism, aimed to stop Protestantism from spreading and became one of the centers of the Counter-Reformation⁶⁸.



Figure 14: *Clerc Regulier Theatin*
 Etching by Nicolas de Poilly le jeune (1675–1747),
 from *Histoire des ordres monastiques...* Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1715.
 Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Even though busy opposing the Ottoman Empire, the countries of central Europe also needed to consider domestic affairs, especially spiritual movements, as religious unrest could also come from inside. The stage, as was customary in Jesuit Theater⁶⁹, could offer a moral lesson and the terrible effect of Niobe's religious reform was an expression of growing European tensions that Max Emanuel was part of. The five principal religions in the Occident at the time—Jewish, Orthodox, Catholic, Islam, and Reformed (Protestant)—were all struggling for expansion and the right to practice their faiths. But while the struggle against the

⁶⁸ See the entry “Bavaria” in *Encyclopedia of Martin Luther and the Reformation*, edited by Mark A. Lampport. Maryland (MD): Rowman & Littlefield, 2017, Volume 2, pp. 59–61.

⁶⁹ Blanchard, Jean Vincent. *L'optique du discours au XVIIe siècle : de la rhétorique des jésuites au style de la raison moderne (Descartes, Pascal)*. Laval : Les Presses Université de Laval, 2005. For the theatre art of the Jesuits, see : Knapp, Eva and Kiliàn, István. *The Sopron Collection of Jesuit Stage Designs*. Budapest : Enciklopédia Publishing House, 1999.

Turks had united Christianity for a while, the Protestants themselves had gained a foothold in Switzerland, Germany, England, Holland, and France. New Catholic orders were created by the Church of Rome to zealously combat the influence of the Reformed religion.

Agostino Steffani, the composer of *Niobe*, was a member of one of the religious orders of the Counter-Reformation. A priest himself since 1680, he belonged to the order of the Theatins, and his missionary work in the North of Germany was later to become his principal pastoral activity. On the portrait by Gerhard Kappers (16??–1750) showing him aged sixty, in 1714⁷⁰, Steffani, then a bishop, is still wearing the simple black frock of the Theatin order, as shown on Figure 14. Founded in Rome in 1524, the main object of the Theatin order was to recall the clergy to an edifying and frugal life, which would serve as an example for the laity, and soon became a way to balance the Reformation. Supported by Pope Innocent XI, the Theatins founded oratories and hospitals, and devoted themselves to preach the Gospel and reform lax morals⁷¹. In Bavaria, the Theatine Church St. Kajetan was founded by Elector Ferdinand Maria and his wife, Henriette Adélaïde of Savoy, as a gift of thanks for the birth of the long-awaited heir to the Bavarian crown, Maximilian Emanuel, in 1662. The dynastic continuity was seen as a divine gift for the monarchy, and Orlandi makes this obsession an important part of Niobe's character.

5.6 Six Daughters and six Sons

The children of Niobe were so numerous they were called the Niobids, and the exact number differs in the many ancient sources available to us. In Homer's *Iliad*, like in Orlandi's libretto, they are twelve (six boys and six girls): « For even the fair-haired Niobe bethought her of meat, albeit twelve children perished in her halls, six daughters and six lusty sons. The sons Apollo slew with shafts from his silver bow, being wroth against Niobe, and the daughters the archer Artemis [Diana], for that Niobe had matched herself with fair-cheeked Leto [Latona], saying that the goddess had borne but twain, while herself was mother to many; wherefore they, for all they were but twain, destroyed them all. »⁷² According to Sophocles's *Antigone*, Apollodorus's *Library*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, they are fourteen children, seven boys and seven girls (figure 15). In Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women*, they are eighteen. In all variations, an even number results in an equal quantity of boys and girls, as the number of Niobe's children needs to speak to the imagination. Seneca, in his tragedy about Oedipus, gives another beautiful

⁷⁰ See:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1714_circa_Gerhard_Kappers,_Agostino_Steffani,_oil_on_canvas,_89_x_69_cm.jpg

⁷¹ For the history and the characteristics of the order of the Theatins, see: [Palazzi, Giovanni; Hélyot, Pierre; Bullot, Maximilien]. *Histoire des Ordres Monastiques, Religieux et Militaires, et des congregations séculières de l'un & de l'autre sexe, qui ont esté estables jusqu'à present; Contenant leur origine, leur foundation, leurs progrès, les événemens les plus considerables qui sont arrivés, La décadencedes uns et leur suppression, l'agrandissement des autres, par le moien des différences Reformes qui y ont esté introduites. Les vie de leurs fondateurs & de leurs Reformateurs: Avec des figures qui représentent tous les differens habillemens de ces Ordres & de ces Congregations: Suite de la troisième Partie, qui comprend toutes les différentes Congregations, & les Ordres Militaires qui ont été soumis à la Regle de saint Augustin. Tome Quatrième, Volume 4.* Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1721, pp. 78–85.

⁷² Homer. *Iliad*. Book XXIV, 605–612.

poetic twist to the number by saying that Niobe flattered her vanity over her children by also counting their shadows⁷³.



Figure 15: *Superba Niobe cum filiis interimitur a Phaebo et Diana*
German etching by Johann Wilhelm Baur (1607?–1641?),
from *Bellissimum Ovidii theatrum* Nuremberg, 1685.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

This emphasis on a large number of offspring is not only the material of myth, but it was also the measure in the 1680s. France was a prime example: Louis XIV had numerous offspring – the account above twenty, and was very proud of it, while in England, Charles II bred fifteen, all illegitimate, children. By tradition a large quantity of children was a clear expression of virility and fertility, which was appealing to the imagination of the people. While in the Ottoman Empire, the number of sons, accentuated by the quantity of wives, would create many crisis of succession, from a West European dynastic perspective, after producing an legitimate heir, many offspring, legitimized when they reach adulthood, allowed for the opportunity to create a large network of alliances through unions between children of royal families. Indeed, in 1680, the French crown prince, The Grand Dauphin, married Maria Anna Christina Victoria (1660–1690), Max Emanuel’s sister—the link between France and Bavaria was strong⁷⁴. Louis XIV was hoping Max Emanuel would return the diplomatic gesture and marry a French princess, but the Prince Elector was keen to keep a kind of independence and decided to balance the French union of his sister by marrying himself to an Austrian Princess. As Maria Antonia was also a niece of the Spanish king, the offspring of this union could give

⁷³ See: Seneca. *Oedipus*, Act III Scene I. Many thanks to Dave Cook, a Boston Early Music Festival patron, who, at an early stage of my research, has directed my attention to the various amounts of children of Niobe in classical literature and the possible relevance of their even number.

⁷⁴ Charpentier wrote *Epithalamio in lode dell’Altezza Serenissima Elettorale di Massimiliano Emanuel Duca di Baviera* (H473) in honor of the wedding. See: Hitchcock, H. Wiley. *Les œuvres de/The works of Marc-Antoine Charpentier*, *Catalogue raisonné*. Paris : Picard, 1982, pp. 343 & 344.

the Bavarian house a claim to the throne of Spain⁷⁵. The expansion of family by marriage and progeny has been at the center of Europe politics since the middle ages and an important descendant was a possibility of an expansion of dominium. In Munich *Niobe's* display of a full royal progeny slaughtered by the divine powers, a scene often chosen by illustrators of Ovid, was a display full of pathos for the audience of 1688 (Figure 16).



Figure 16: *The death of the Niobids*
Dutch etching by Bernard Picart (1673–1733)
from *Temple of the Muses (Nieuw-Erofneer Musen-Tempel)*. Amsterdam and Leipzig: Chatelain, 1733.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

When Steffani and his brother, the poet Ventura Terzago (1648–1693)⁷⁶, created the ballets for *Servio Tullio* for the Carnival of 1686, the first one to be celebrated in Munich by the newlywed couple, they showed their sense of allegory: in the first Ballet several deities, each more flattering to the couple than the one before, appear on a cloud machine. The gods announce a wondrous horoscope for the royal couple including the prediction of twelve

⁷⁵ This plan was put to a stop in 1699 at the death of Joseph Ferdinand, the son of Max Emanuel: the Bavarian dream of the Spanish inheritance was over and in 1701 the Elector choose to support France in its claim to the Spanish throne, dissociating with his father in law, Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I.

⁷⁶ The fact the two brothers do not wear the same patronym can be explained by the fact that Ventura Terzago was adopted by a brother of their mother. See: Timms, Colin. *Polymath of the Baroque, Agostino Steffani and His Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 4–6.

children, which then, as in a vision of the future, are performed by twelve dancers—six men and six women—on the stage. The horoscope was not at all farfetched, as Max Emanuel, over the course of his life, went on to have, not twelve but fourteen children with his two wives and his mistress. Of the fourteen children, seven died at an early age. In 1688, infant high mortality was still common in Europe, even in the leading class of society. The killing of the Niobids by Apollo the sun and Diana the moon may also been a cruel allegory of the death of children in one day and in one night. The passing of children although common was still a subject of enormous grief. A seventeenth century commentator remind us that Cicero (106 BC–43 BC), reflecting on the passing of his daughter⁷⁷, wrote that the metamorphosis of Niobe into a rock was nothing but an allegory of a woman whose mourning and grief have made her insensitive as a stone (see Figure 17).⁷⁸



Figure 17: *La mort de Niobé et des ses enfants*
French etching from 1651 by Michel Dorigny (1616–1665) after the painting of Simon Vouet (1590–1649)
for the « Galerie de l'Hôtel Séguier à Paris ».
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Becoming insensitive due to much grief at losing children was what happened to Maria Anna Victoria of Bavaria. The sister of Max Emanuel was expected, as Grande Dauphine of France, to give birth to many offspring. Despite multiple pregnancies only three descendants survived. After numerous miscarriages, including a first in 1681, three in 1685 and two in 1687,

⁷⁷ Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *Cicero's tusculan disputations; Also, treatises on The nature of the gods, And on The commonwealth. Literally translated, chiefly by C. D. Yonge*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877, p. 118.

⁷⁸ « Ciceron dans la 3. Tusculante, dit que la fiction de Niobe changée en rocher, n'est à son avis autre chose qu'une femme que le deuil & l'ennuy ont rendu presque insensible. » in Marolles, Michel de. *Tableaux du temple des muses tirez du cabinet de feu Mr Favereau... et gravez en tailles-douces par les meilleurs maîtres de son temps pour représenter les vertus et les vices, sur les plus illustres fables de l'antiquité, avec les descriptions, remarques et annotations composées par Mre Michel de Marolles...* Paris: A. de Sommaville, 1655, p. 351.

the year before *Niobe*, the health of the Dauphine was deteriorating rapidly. When she died in 1690, it was said that she was convinced that « that her last birth had killed her »⁷⁹ and when giving her blessing to her last son, the duke of Berry born in 1686, she murmured the verse of Racine's *Andromaque*: « Ah! my son, how pricy your life costs your mother »⁸⁰. Specified in her wedding contract by her mother in law⁸¹, the pressure put on the Dauphine to provide children finds a bitter echo on an etching of the eighteenth century: with verses attributed to her voice, the Dauphine is still remembered as a productive mother, with her three sons presented as her only title of glory (see Figure 18). In his own version to depict a mother's grief, Orlandi gives Niobe, who arrived to discover her children corpses, the most beautiful verses: «But what do I see? Are not These Children also dead? / Are these not my progeny? And are these not, / Painted with grisly palor, / These of my womb, dead wombs? »⁸².



Figure 18: Marie Christine Victoire de Bavière Dauphine de France
Etching by Étienne Jehandier Desrochers (1668–1741).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

⁷⁹ « Elle mourut persuadée que sa dernière couche lui avait donné la mort » in *Les Souvenirs de Madame De Caylus, pour servir de Supplément aux Mémoires Et Lettres De Madame De Maintenon. Avec des Notes de M. de Voltaire. Nouvelle Edition.* Maestricht: Dufour et Roux, 1789, p. 105.

⁸⁰ « O mon fils, que tes jours coûtent cher à ta mère! » in Racine, *Andromaque*, Act III, Scene 8.

⁸¹ « Le mariage de notre Fils le Dauphin avec une Princesse qui puisse donner des Successeurs à cette Couronne capables de continuer le bonheur et la félicité » in « Contrat de Mariage de Louis Dauphin de France avec la Princesse Electorale Marie Anna Christine de Baviere. Fait & passé à Munich le 30. Decembre 1679 » N° CCXI in Dumont, Jean. *Corps universel diplomatique du droit des gens; contenant un recueil des traités d'alliance, de paix, de Trêve, de Neutralité, de commerce, d'échange,...* Amsterdam: P. Brunel, 1731, pp. 449–451.

⁸² « Mâ che veggio? E non sono / Questi i Figli anco uccisi? / Non é questa la prole, e non son queste / D'atro palor dipinte / Delle Viscere mie, Viscere estinte? » in Orlandi, Luigi. "Dedication" in *Niobe, Regina di Tebe, ...* Munich: Giovanni Jecklino, 1688, Act III, Scene XII.

5.7 Seven Strings

If Niobe's reason for ambition to godliness is her fertility, her husband Anfione is, through his musical skills, also close to the gods, as at the beginning of time the first musicians were the gods. Hermes created the lyre with three strings, which he gave to Apollo, who added four more. The god of the arts extracted such harmonious sounds from it that the gods forgot their quarrels on Olympus. Hermes made for himself the Shepherd's pipe, and Pan invented the reed flute with its enchanting music. Only a small number of mortals, whose art was outstanding, could measure themselves with those divine practitioners⁸³. After Orpheus, the most renowned, comes the name of Amphion. Like his half-brother Apollo, he also received his lyre from Hermes. And like Apollo, when Amphion married Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, the Lydian king, he learned to play in the Lydian mode, a particular tuning of the diatonic scale, by adding four strings to his lyre.



Figure 19: Amphion
Dutch Etching by Bernard Picart (1673–1733)
from *Temple of the Muses* (*Nieuw-Ernfneer Musen-Tempel*). Amsterdam and Leipzig: Chatelain, 1733.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Anfione's abilities as a musician surpass his fame as a king: it is said that his singing raised the walls to protect the city of Thebes. Stones were affected by the beauty of the music

⁸³ See: *Greek and Egyptian Mythologies compiled by Yves Bonnefoy. Translated under the direction of Wendy Doniger*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

and got moved by its power of attraction, and this (e)motion was ordered: buildings were taking shape. The construction of various buildings under the power of harmony was chosen by painters and illustrators to depict Amphion (Figure 19). To show an ideal city as a backdrop was certainly also the decorative style chosen in 1688 for the sets depicting the city of Thebes of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* in Munich. Some commentators who were trying to explain the meaning of the fable of Amphion said that in truth he was an excellent musician, but there was not much magic involved, only art: having a plan to build a town, he employed all those who came from very far to hear him, and they all obeyed him gladly, if only he would touch the strings of his stringed instrument⁸⁴. Lyre or lute, magic or talent—in any case, the power of his music was architectural, and the seven gates of Thebes corresponded to the seven strings of his lyre.



Figure 19: *Amphion and Zethos*

Dutch etching by Hubertus Quellinus (1619–1687) after a design by Jacob Vennekool (c.1630–1680) of a model by Jacob van Campen (1596–1657) for the Amsterdam Town Hall, Amsterdam, 1661,

From *Secunda pars Praecipuarum effigierum ac ornamentorum amplissime Curiae Amstelrodamensis maiori ex parte in cadmium marmore effectorum per Artum Quellinium eiusdem Civitatis Statuarium*.

Amsterdam: Artus Quellinus (I), 1663 or Amsterdam: Frederik de Wit, 1668.

Collection of Gilbert Blin.

⁸⁴ « Quelques uns voulant expliquer le sens de la Fable d'Amphion qui bastit les murailles de Thebes au son de sa lyre, ont dit qu'à la vérité il estait un excellent musicien : mais qu'il y avait beaucoup de magie meslée parmy: de sorte qu'ayant dessein de bastir une ville, il y employa tous ceux qui le venoient chercher de fort loin pour l'ouïr, & lui obeissoient avec plaisir, à condition qu'il voulut toucher les cordes de son luth. » in Marolles, Michel de. *Tableaux du temple des muses tirez du cabinet de feu Mr Favereau... et gravez en tailles-douces par les meilleurs maistres de son temps pour représenter les vertus et les vices, sur les plus illustres fables de l'antiquité, avec les descriptions, remarques et annotations composées par Mre Michel de Marolles....* Paris: A. de Sommaville, 1655, p. 345.

The association of Amphion with a civic duty and showing him building a powerful city is one of the themes chosen to decorate the City Hall of Amsterdam by Jacob van Campen (1596–1657) in the 1660s⁸⁵. A relief above the door of the Chamber of Justice on the east side of the Burgerzaal shows Amphion and Zethos (see Figure 20). On the front of the composition, Amphion appears, playing his lyre, with his brother Zethus behind him. According to the myth, the stones collected by Zethos piled up automatically thanks to the playing of Amphion to form the city wall of Thebes. In the background, however, it is not the walls around Thebes but the city hall of Amsterdam which is being built. This association symbolizes on the one hand how harmony, arising here from music, promotes the growth of the building. On the other hand, it carries a message for the regents: harmony within the city government will lead to a peaceful concord among the inhabitants. The concord between them will make the city flourish and the brotherly policy, is here supported by the presence of Zethus, twin of Amphion, who had allowed the erection of the new city hall of Amsterdam. All in all, in the seventeenth century, Amphion's unfortunate fate, as depicted by Steffani's opera, does not seem to have a negative impact on the posterity of the poetic figure, the famous musician is more associated with his artistic achievements than the downfall of his dynasty.

It may be for this reason, that Orlandi and Steffani clearly chose to modify the building part of the musical myth in *Niobe*: although the creation of the walls of Thebes is initiated by Anfione, they appear during his prayer to Jupiter, his father, and are mostly due to the paternal protection of the supreme god. Steffani reserves the depiction of the ultimate musical talents of Anfione for another scene, a contemplative moment where the king is studying the harmony of the spheres. In this scene of Act II Anfione is looking for the complex order which controls the universe to inspire his singing. « Musica universalis », or music of the spheres, is a philosophical concept that regards proportions in the movements of celestial bodies—the sun, the moon, and the planets—as a form of music⁸⁶. This music was not usually thought to be literally audible, but of a mathematical nature. The fact that mathematics and music are related was clear to the Greeks, and the laws of the cosmos and of music have been compared by Pythagoras (sixth century B.C.)⁸⁷. Music was included in the « quadrivium » of subjects that are driven by logic: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. This concept of a number theory would also have been present in the education of Max Emanuel, which was essentially entrusted to the Jesuits, who have always included astronomy and music in their curriculum⁸⁸. Contemporary of the famous polymath Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680)⁸⁹, the Father Michael Pexenfelder (1613–1685), another Jesuit, dedicated in 1670 to the eight-year-old prince more than a thousand pages of *Apparatus eruditionis*, an educational compendium that offered, along

⁸⁵ For some insights about the allegorical program of Van Campen, see: De Vries, Lyckle. *Gerard de Lairesse, An Artist between Stage and Studio*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998, pp. 42–48.

⁸⁶ The concept of the music of the spheres is difficult to trace historically. For an introduction, see: Viltanioti, Irini-Fotini. *L'harmonie des Sirènes du pythagorisme ancien à Platon*. Boston and Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015, pp. 1–10.

⁸⁷ For a presentation of Pythagoras' views on music, see: Levin, Flora R. *Greek Reflections on the Nature of Music*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 5–17.

⁸⁸ For some perspective on the Jesuit curriculum, see: Blanchard, Jean Vincent. *L'optique du discours au XVII^e siècle : de la rhétorique des jésuites au style de la raison moderne (Descartes, Pascal)*. Laval: Les Presses Université de Laval, 2005.

⁸⁹ See: Godwin, Joscelyn. *Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2015.

with *Arithmetica*, *Geometria* and *Astronomia* in concise form, the basic concepts of *Musica* and its notation⁹⁰.

In Steffani's opera, after Anfione gives the regency of Thebes to Niobe, the king retreats in his « solitaria Soglia » a solitary abode, made of a series of rooms that he qualifies as « Asili di Pace », sanctuaries of Peace. Orlandi, in the list of sets, describes the space as a « Royal Museo, che ostenta la Reggia dell'Armonia ». The word « Museo » clearly refers to the *Temple of the Muses* and was the expression used for a location displaying knowledge, a place where collections of things of artistic, scientific or historic interest were available. Like the famous Musaeum at Alexandria, which included the famous Library, the royal studio of Anfione is propitious to a contemplative life retreat. But Orlandi specifies that Anfione's Royal study displays the Kingdom of Harmony. Is the « Reggia dell'Armonia » a description of the studio as a whole or is this an object in the room? The fact that in his aria Anfione calls for the Friendly Spheres, to give his lips the Harmony of their rotations⁹¹ offers some perspectives. The king clearly mentions the « Armonia delle Sfere »⁹², but, by referring to their rotations, their « giri », Orlandi may allude to the Works of Johannes Kepler (1571– 1630) who, in his *Harmonices mundi* (1619), founded celestial music, no longer on the distances between planets, but on the speed of the planets in their movements. All in all, the text suggests not only a contemplative attitude but the investigating research of an astronomer. Anfione's Museo is likely to be furnished with books and tools to study the movements of the planets and stars, and to create music. As Orlandi explains in his “Argomento”, Anfione « with a broad Vein of Genius and preeminent Judgment, had thus bound the Intelligence of the Spheres in his Music »⁹³.

Astronomy knew fast developments at the end of the seventeenth century⁹⁴ and this scene may also be a reference to the actualities of the 1680s: in these years, Saturn's rings were discovered, the elliptical movements of the orbit of Mars had been clarified and so were orbits of comets. In his popular science book *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*⁹⁵, writer Bernard le

⁹⁰ Pexenfelder, Michael. *Apparatus Eruditionis tam Rerum quam Verborum per Omnes Artes et Scientias*. Nuremberg : Sumptibus Michaelis & Joh, 1670, pp. 410–421. See : <https://www2.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/camenaref/pexenfelder.html>

⁹¹ « Sfere amiche hor date al Labro / L'Armonia de vostri giri. » in Orlandi, Luigi. *Niobe, Regina di Tebe, ...* Munich: Giovanni Jecklino, 1688, Act II, Scene 13.

⁹² The « Armonia delle Sfere » was an opera topic since the Renaissance and has already been the subject of the first of the intermezzi of Girolamo Bargagli's *La PELLEGRINA* (1589, Firenze).

⁹³ « Quello per havere con larga Vena d'Ingegno, e prerogative di Senno cosi legate l'Intelligenze delle Sfere nella sua Musica » in Orlandi, Luigi. “Argomento” in *Niobe, Regina di Tebe, ...* Munich: Giovanni Jecklino, 1688.

⁹⁴ For overviews of the developments of Astronomy at the end of the seventeenth century, see: Hoskin, Michael. *The Cambridge Concise History of Astronomy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, and Taton, René and Wilson, Curtis. *Planetary Astronomy from the Renaissance to the Rise of Astrophysics, Part A, Tycho Brahe to Newton (The General History of Astronomy, edited by Michale Hoskin, Volume 2)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

⁹⁵ Fontenelle, Bernard le Bovier de. *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*. Paris: Vve C. Blageart, 1686. This first edition contains only the first 5 evenings: « Premier soir. Que la Terre est une Planète qui tourne sur elle-même, & autour du Soleil. Second soir. Que la Lune est une Terre habitée. Troisième soir. Particularités du Monde de la Lune. Que les autres Planètes sont habitées aussi. Quatrième soir. Particularités des Mondes de Vénus, de Mercure, de Mars, de Jupiter, & de Saturne. Cinquième soir. Que les Étoiles Fixes sont autant de Soleils dont

Bovier de Fontenelle (1657–1757) had renewed in 1686 the conception of cosmos. In 1687, a year before *Niobe*, a second edition was published with the addition of « the latest discoveries which have been made in the sky ». These « Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds » offered a simple explanation of the heliocentric model of the Universe, suggested by Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) in his seminal work *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, concerning the Revolutions of the Heavenly Orbs, published in 1543. While his system was centered on the Sun, with Earth and other planets moving around it, Copernicus retained from Ptolemy of Alexandria, although in somewhat altered form, the imaginary clockwork of epicycles and deferents (orbital circles upon circles), to explain the seemingly irregular movements of the planets in terms of circular motion at uniform speeds. Although the Ptolemaic system of the Antiquity has been replaced by the Copernican system, most Jesuits did not accept the Copernican theory of a sun-centered universe but still adhered to the Ptolemaic system, which was placing earth at the center of the universe⁹⁶. The libretto of *Niobe* is not decisive about which system the « giri » of the spheres take place in, but the ideal of visual representation of the cosmos is clearly suggested.



Figure 21: Jean Gerson in his “museum”
 Etching by Guillaume van der Gouwen (ca. 1640–1720) after Bernard Picart, (1673–1733)
 from *Joannis Gersonii. Opera Omnia*. Antwerpen: Sumptibus Societatis, 1706.
 Collection of Gilbert Blin.

In 1683, the Venetian scholar Vincenzo Maria Coronelli (1650–1718) had delivered his famous globes to Louis XIV, one of the earth and one of the heavens. These globes were famous for their size and their splendid topographical illustrations, which also recorded the newest geographical discoveries and latest astronomical observations. In 1688 Coronelli issued a smaller terrestrial globe, followed shortly afterwards by a celestial globe, and sold them to several European princes. Max Emanuel ordered a comparable pair in 1693 and acquired it in Brussels in 1696, perhaps because the terrestrial globe showed his most recent triumphs in the Turkish Wars.⁹⁷ It is this type of Globe that Bernard Picart choose to represent on an

chacun éclairer un Monde ». In the edition of 1687, a 6th evening was added: «Sixième soir: Nouvelles pensées qui confirment celles des Entretiens précédents. Dernières découvertes qui ont été faites dans le Ciel ».

⁹⁶ Pexenfelder, Michael. *Apparatus Eruditionis tam Rerum quam Verborum per Omnes Artes et Scientias*. Nuremberg : Sumptibus Michaelis & Joh, 1670, pp. 410–421.

⁹⁷ For Louis’ globes, of 382 cm of diameter, see: *Les Globes de Louis XIV. Étude artistique, historique et matérielle* (Catherine Hofmann et Hélène Richard dir). Paris: BnF, 2012. For Max Emanuel’s globes, 108 cm of diameter, see: *Kurfürst Max Emanuel. Bayern und Europa um 1700. Band II : Katalog der Ausstellung im Alten und Neuen Schloß*

illustration showing the French theologian, Jean Charlier de Gerson (1363–1429)⁹⁸. Gerson was one of the most prominent catholic scholars, Chancellor of the University of Paris. The illustration by Picart (Figure 21), recalling Vermeer’s *Astronomer*, shows a scholar contemplative in his *museo* full of books, facing a window, whose glass oculus echoes the massive globe on the other side. A setting which could be the one Orlandi had in mind for his scene of Anfione as Astronomer/Musician.

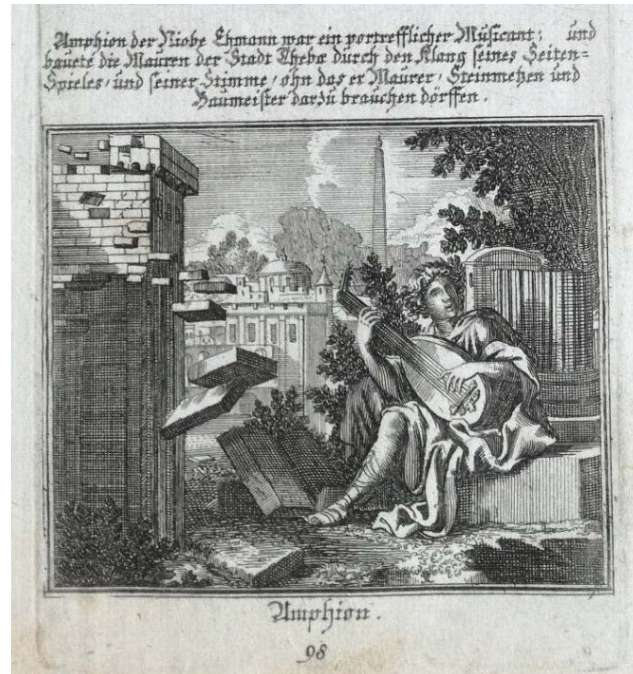


Figure 22: *Amphion*

German etching by Johann Ulrich Kraus (1655–1719)
 from *Die Verwandlungen des Ovidii: in zweyhundert und sechs- und zwantzig Kupffern*. Augsburg, n. d. [1690],
 after the engraving by François Chauveau (1613–1676) and Sébastien Le Clerc (1637–1714)
 for Isaac de Benserade’s *Métamorphoses en rondeaux*. Paris, 1676.
 Collection of Gilbert Blin.

By placing the Music of Anfione in relation to Astronomy instead of Architecture, Orlandi expands the allegory. Steffani refines this moment further by writing a complex musical number where the singing of Anfione is accompanied by the sound of four viols hidden on stage. In creating such a spatial effect, Steffani seems to indicate that Anfione is “playing” his lyre and that the music we hear (played by the hidden viols) is his doing. The path between the lyre with seven strings and the Renaissance stringed instrument is mostly a matter of time, and in much of the pictorial legacy of the myth, Amphion is shown playing a stringed instrument with a bow. Since the sixteenth century, it was quite characteristic for figures like Orpheus and Amphion to be depicted with a modern equivalent of the ancient lyre, either a lira or a lute (Figure 22). Although a seventeenth century French etching by Léonard Gaultier (1561–1635) after Antoine Caron (1520 ou 1521–1599) seems to have Amphion playing a *vihuela de arco*, the artist was likely attempting to describe a *lira da braccio*, the Renaissance instrument closely associated with Orpheus and with recitations of poetry by humanists⁹⁹ (Figure 23). This type of lira, a seven-string chordal instrument played with a bow,

Schleißheim, 2. Juli bis 3. Oktober 1976. Ausstellungsleitung von Hubert Glaser. München: Hirmer Verlag, 1976, p. 235.
 See: <http://www.bayerisches-nationalmuseum.de/index.php?id=547>

⁹⁸ Vial, Marc. *Jean Gerson: théoricien de la théologie mystique*. Paris: Vrin, 2006.

⁹⁹ Many thanks to my colleague Robert Mealy for his helpful information in these matters.

died out in the early seventeenth century, and in 1688, when Steffani chose to evoke its sound to depict Anfione's lira, it was an attempt, supported by the illusion of the music from the hidden viols, to reconstruct the mythical sound of the antique lyre.



Figure 23: *Amphion*

French etching by Léonard Gaultier (1561-1635) after Antoine Caron (1520 ou 1521–1599), from *Les Images ou Tableaux de Platte-Peinture des deux Philostrates Sophistes mis en français par Blaise de Vigenere bourbonnois enrichis d'arguments et d'annotation...et représentez en taille douce en cette nouvelle edition avec des épigrammes sur chacun d'iceux par Thomas Artus sieur d'Embry*. Paris: Guillemot, 1637. Collection of Gilbert Blin.

This scene of Amphion and the harmony of spheres was, in the context of *Niobe*, an expression of the intellectual ambition of Amphion, and it made a great impression on Pietro Torri (1650–1737), a composer who arrived in Munich in 1687¹⁰⁰. Later, in 1716, Torri presented Max Emanuel with the cantata in which Anfione's solo aria with its quartet of hidden viols is interpolated completely and without modification. To make his cantata that he titled *La Reggia dell'Armonia*, a clear reference to the set element mentioned in the libretto of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, Torri added the character of Il Tempo (Father Time) and wrote a dialogue about Harmony, between Anfione and the allegorical figure. More than twenty years after *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, Torri was paying homage to its timeless expression of the Harmony of the Spheres, associating the fame of Amphion, the mythic musician of antiquity, with the art of Steffani, the influential composer of the reign of Maximilian Emanuel. This new context, created by extracting this extraordinary piece of music from its original dramatic setting, was freed from the tragic ends of the Theban rulers, bringing it back instead to its original allegory of the eternal power of music.

¹⁰⁰ Groote, Inga Mai. *Pietro Torri, un musicista veronese alla corte di Baviera*. Verona: Della Scala, 2003.

6 *Le Carnaval de Venise*

« Ah fy, Colombine, avec ton Opera! Peut-on revenir à la Demie Hollande,
quand on s'est si long-temps servy de Baptiste? »

Regnard, *Le Divorce*¹

Starting in 1697, when André Campra (1660–1744) made himself known, « his genius [...] followed the steps of Lully & got close to him ».² Nonetheless it is not in the severe style of the tragédie en musique, created by Jean-Baptiste Lully and perpetuated by his disciples, that Campra's talent mostly revealed itself, nor in the religious music that had already earned him the position of Maître de Chapelle at Notre Dame³. That year, the composer presented *L'Europe galante*, an opera in a new style, together with the librettist Antoine Houdar de La Motte (1672–1731) at the Paris Opera. In this sung and danced spectacle, several autonomous plots were presented during a series of Entrées of equal importance, related only by the European theme specified in its title.

By giving dance a larger role in the various intrigues of a musical drama and by choosing comedy rather than tragedy, the piece was establishing a new genre rich in possibilities, and Campra's first *opéra-ballet*⁴ was destined to have an important future in his own works, and those of others during the next century. Two years later, Campra created a second *opéra-ballet*. Further, the dramatic content of one entrée from his 1697 début may have been the seed of his second opera. Campra, by reimagining the idea of the Venetian ball that concluded the entrée « L'Italie » on a new, larger scale was reinforcing, in 1699, the Mediterranean specificity of his musical art and of his sources of inspiration.

¹ These lines of Regnard sums up his 1688 opinion about the Paris opera right after the death of Lully before Campra's first work. It plays on the homophony of the noun « batiste » and the first name « Baptiste »: the batiste is a white and very fine linen cloth whereas Hollande is a much coarser canvas, and the Demi-Hollande even coarser. This is an allusion to the operas by Pascal Collasse (or Colasse) (1649–1709) judged inferior to the ones of his master Jean-Baptiste Lully. See: Regnard, Jean-François. *Le Divorce*, Act II, Scene 3, in: *Le Théâtre Italien de Gherardi, Tome II*. Paris: J.-B. Cusson & P. White, 1700, p. 166. For a full coverage of the topic, see: Blanc, Judith le. « « Peut-on revenir à la demi-Hollande quand on s'est si longtemps servi de batiste? »: les parodies d'opéras dans l'œuvre de Regnard » in Mazouer, Charles and Quéro, Dominique. *Jean-François Regnard (1655-1709)*. Paris: Armand Colin, 2012, pp. 73–92.

² Laporte, Joseph de. and Chamfort, Sébastien-Roch-Nicolas. *Dictionnaire dramatique*. Paris: Lacombe, 1776, Vol. III, p. 524.

³ For the life of Campra, see: Barthélemy, Maurice. *André Campra 1660-1744*. Arles: Actes Sud, 1995 (reedition of the 1960's book). See also more recent: Duron, Jean. « André Campra: portrait d'un jeune musicien provençal à la conquête de Paris » in *André Campra (1660-1744), Un musicien provençal à Paris*. Textes réunis par Jean Duron. Wavre: Mardaga, 2010, pp. 7–59.

⁴ I use the currently accepted term, although, when first published, both *L'Europe galante* and *Le Carnaval de Venise* are qualified as « Ballet » on the title pages of scores and librettos.

Le Carnaval de Venise is the evocative title of this original creation, sole fruit of the collaboration between Campra and the dramatist Jean-François Regnard (1655–1709)⁵. Known as an up-and-coming playwright for spoken theater, Regnard, by associating himself to Campra, was signaling here a particularly original incursion in the lyrical theater. The writer's unique contribution to the opera genre is a consequence of his two "careers": first with the Comédie-Italienne in Paris, and the more official one that subsequently overshadowed it at the Comédie-Française, where he ultimately established himself as one of the most successful dramatists after Molière. Added to his own experience as traveler in Italy, Regnard's libretto bears witness to his innovative attitude toward plot and renewed dramatic structure⁶. Campra also seemed to be concerned by this aesthetic argument and chose to place his musical production in a perspective of innovation and invention, mixing French and Italian styles⁷. Both artists are taking into consideration the ideas and works of his predecessors and the taste of their audiences.

Le Carnaval de Venise is an attempt to articulate these opposing poles: Italian and French, but also classic and modern, aristocratic and popular. The poet and the composer were, in fact, by building around new and old dramaturgical themes, reflecting on their own time and answering the desire of their royal patrons for reconciliation with Venice. To explore why and how their *opéra-ballet* was created, it was necessary to explore and examine anew various period documents. By musing on twelve of the diplomatic and artistic circumstances that surrounded its creation in Paris in January 1699, I hope to shed new light on *Le Carnaval de Venise*.

6.1 The Peace of Ryswick

[The Nine Years' War had pitted France against the Grand Alliance of the League of Augsburg, and as 1697 dawned, France was exhausted⁸. Louis XIV was still seen as a powerful man of war, yet the French king was in fact longing for peace. Hitherto the struggle had been glorious for its arms, but Louis felt his weakness facing the formidable coalition of Spain, the Holy Roman Empire (Austria), the Dutch Republic, England, and Savoy. He was therefore extremely active in exploring diplomatic ways to find an honorable solution to the conflict. In fact, the crown of Spain may have been the goal: with the Spanish king childless and infirm, the French king was hoping to obtain it legally and peacefully for his family. Louis XIV decided to change the political calculus by treating independently with some of the members of the league in the hope of isolating the Holy Roman Empire, the other main contender for the Spanish crown⁹.

⁵ See: Calame, Alexandre. *Regnard, sa vie et son œuvre*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960. For a recent approach of Regnard, see the various articles (some will be specifically referred to in this paper) in: *Jean-François Regnard (1655-1709)*, ed. by Charles Mazouer and Dominique Quéro. Paris: Armand Colin, 2012.

⁶ [Regnard, Jean-François and Campra, André]. *Le Carnaval de Venise, ballet représenté par l'Académie royale de musique*. Paris: aux dépens de l'Académie, impr. de C. Ballard, 1699.

⁷ [Campra, André]. *Le Carnaval de Venise, ballet mis en musique par M. Campra le cadet*. C. Ballard: Paris, 1699.

⁸ The War of the Grand Alliance lasted from 1688–1697. France's resources were stretched to the breaking point by the cost of fielding an army of over 300,000 men and two naval squadrons. Famine in 1692–1693 killed up to two million people in France.

⁹ See: Bluche, François. *Louis XIV*. Paris: Fayard, 1986, pp. 762–770.

With the treaty of Turin, signed between France and Savoy on August 29, 1696, the first step toward a general European peace had been made¹⁰. Its effects were soon noticeable in the French Court and the country's artistic life. To fortify the new alliance between France and Savoy¹¹, a matrimonial union was contracted between the Duc de Bourgogne (1682–1712), the eldest grandson of Louis XIV, and Marie Adélaïde of Savoy (1685–1712). This eldest daughter of Victor Amadeus II, Duke of Savoy (1666–1732) was still a girl, eleven years of age, and the marriage did not take place immediately, but she was sent to France as a warrant of peace¹². The symbol of her young presence, linked to her charming personality, gave new hope for peace and stability in Europe.



Figure 1 : *Maison Royale de Neubourg a Ryswyck*

Dutch etching by Jacobus Harrewijn (1660–1727) from Jean Baptiste Christyn (1635?–1707). *Les delices des Pais-Bas, ou, Description generale de ses dix-sept provinces, de ses principales villes & de ses lieux les plus renommez dans la situation ou il se trouvent depuis la Paix de Ryswyck*. Brussels, 1700.

Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The stipulations of the treaty with Savoy revealed to Europe the pressing need of peace. Under the mediation of neutral Sweden, negotiations started, and, in September 1697, a comprehensive peace was obtained between France and the Grand Alliance. The Treaty of

¹⁰ For the events leading to the Treaty of Turin, see: Noel, Williams Hugh. *A Rose of Savoy, Marie Adélaïde of Savoy, duchesse de Bourgogne, Mother of Louis XV*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909, pp. 44–63 (Chapter 3). See also: Storrs, Christopher. *War, Diplomacy and the Rise of Savoy, 1690–1720*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. See also: Rowlands, Guy. "Louis XIV, Vittorio Amedeo II and French Military Failure in Italy, 1689–96" in *The English Historical Review Vol. 115, No. 462 (Jun. 2000)*, pp. 534–569.

¹¹ In the Treaty of Turin, the wedding is integral part of the peace agreement: «Le Mariage de Madame la Princesse, fille de SAR se traitera incessamment pour s'effectuer de bonne foi, lorsqu'elle sera en âge, & que le contract se fera lors de l'effet du present Traité » in "Traité de Paix entre la France et le Duc de Savoye. Article III" in [Bernard, Jacques]. *Lettres historiques; Contenant ce qui se passe de plus important en Europe; Et les Réflexions nécessaires sur ce sujet. Tome XII. Mois de Juillet, 1697*. La Haye: Adrian Moetjens, 1697, pp. 715–716.

¹² Merlotti, Andrea. "La courte enfance de la duchesse de Bourgogne (1685-1696)" in *Marie-Adélaïde de Savoie (1685–1712). Duchesse de Bourgogne, enfant terrible de Versailles. Etudes sur le XVIIIe siècle ed. Fabrice Preyat*. Bruxelles: Les éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2014, pp. 29–46.

Ryswick (old spelling: Ryswyck) was named after the town in the Dutch Republic where the negotiations took place and settled the Nine Years' War (Figure 1). In October, the premiere of *L'Europe galante*, with its idyllic depictions of European Nations, offered a hopeful picture of Europe at peace, with Italy being represented by Venice¹³. In December, on her twelfth birthday, Princess Marie Adélaïde of Savoy (1685–1712) married the fifteen-year-old Duc de Bourgogne in the Palace of Versailles. The petite figure of the Duchesse de Bourgogne was directly associated with the restored peace, as the union was the starting point of the peace process and occurred only a couple of months after the treaty was signed. Among the festivities celebrating their marriage and the union of France and Savoy, a special performance of *L'Europe galante*, requested by the king, took place at court¹⁴.

6.2 French honors to Venice

With the 1697 treaty having established peace with the Grand Alliance, France turned its attention to renewing and improving diplomatic relations with various European powers. One notable renewal was in the form of a seduction attempt by Versailles of the Republic of Venice, which grew in intensity from 1697 to 1699. During and previously to the Nine Years' War, relations with Venice had been polluted by two main problems. The first was the support by Louis of the Ottoman Empire, the enemy of Venice¹⁵. The second was the industrial competition that Versailles was inflicting upon Venice, mostly to do with the production of mirrors; Versailles had been using spies and bribery to lure skilled Venetian craftsmen to France, and their production meant the French « importation » of mirrors from Venice, a significant source of prosperity for the Republic, had totally ceased¹⁶. Powers shifted, times

¹³ Welch, Ellen R. *A Theater of Diplomacy, International Relations and the Performing Arts in Early Modern France*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017, p. 195. *Europe's revels* written for the peace of 1697 is an interesting English piece to compare to *L'Europe galante*, see: Lowerre, Kathryn. "A ballet des nations for English audiences: *Europe's revels* for the peace of Ryswick (1697)" in *Early Music*. Vol. 35, n°3. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 419–433. In *Europe's revels*, the character of the Savoyard displaying of a peep show (« O raree show! ») may be an allusion to the politic "en trompe-l'oeil" of the Duke of Savoy.

¹⁴ « Il est arrivé assez souvent, que les paix que la France a conclues ont été accompagnées de mariages considérables. Celle-ci ne fera pas exceptée de cette règle [sic], quoique le mariage de M. le Duc de Bourgogne, qui se doit célébrer aujourd'hui 7. De Décembre, aît été conclu avant la Paix générale. Cette fête doit durer jusques au 22. & pendant tout ce tems [sic] toute la Cour sera toujours parée & changera d'habits plusieurs fois. Il y aura quatre bals magnifiques, & quatre représentations d'Opera, que le Roi a choisis, & qui sont *Roland*, *Armide*, les *Amours d'Apollon*, que l'on nommera l'*Opera du mariage*, & l'*Europe Galante*. » in [Bernard, Jacques]. *Lettres historiques; Contenant ce qui se passe de plus important en Europe; Et les Réflexions nécessaires sur ce sujet. Tome XII. Mois de Juillet, 1697*. La Haye: Adrian Moetjens, 1697, p. 669.

¹⁵ For the relationships between Ottoman Empire, France, and Europe, see: Faroqi, Suraiya. *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*. London & New York: I.B. Tauris & Co, 2004.

¹⁶ Colbert established the *Manufacture royale de glaces de miroirs* (Royal Mirror-Glass Factory) in October 1665. The company was created as a monopoly for a period of twenty years and would be financed in part by the State. The first mirrors were produced in 1666. By September 1672 the French manufacture was on a sufficiently sound footing for the importation of Venetian glass to be forbidden to any of Louis' subjects, under any conditions. In 1678, the company started to produce the glass for the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles. In 1683 the company's financial arrangement with the State was renewed for another two decades. However, in 1688 a rival company was created, also financed in part by the state, which used a new process that allowed it to make plate glass mirrors much bigger than the ones which the first *Manufacture* could create. The two companies were in competition until 1695, when the economy slowed down, and their rivalry became counterproductive. Under an order from the French government, the two companies were forced to merge. See: Scoville, Warren

changed, and Versailles was now seeing Venice as a possible ally to ensure support for a royal French Bourbon to succeed to the crown of Spain rather than an Austrian Habsburg.

As much of diplomacy at the time was about the sense of honor and the many ways it could be expressed, there was a movement to grant Venice more importance by giving the Republic « Extraordinary honors, which had hitherto only been given to the crowned heads »¹⁷. These honors culminated in the winter of 1698/99, when *Le Carnaval de Venise* was created. The change was noticeable in the ceremonial display around the ambassador of Venice in France, Nicolo Erizzo¹⁸. The Venetian republic received the same marks of honor given to the Kingdom of Spain or the Holy Empire. Already on Tuesday, November 11, 1698, « It has been resolved to grant to the instances and repeated prayers of the republic of Venice that their ambassadors will be conducted to the audience by a prince; they have given several great examples of their attachment to France, [...] and the King had a desire to do honor and to please the republic ».¹⁹

This desire was confirmed a few months later when the ambassador was taking his leave; he received from the king on January 24, 1699, « a box of diamonds worth 3,332 francs, [and] a chain and medals worth 6,002 francs »²⁰. A few days later, around the 14 years old Duchesse de Bourgogne (Figure 2), in one of those special moments where the breach of the stringent etiquette of the court was an expression of special favor by the king, the behavior toward the wife of the Venetian ambassador was remarkable (and remarked upon): on Tuesday, January 27, 1699, in Versailles, after an exception was granted to the Ambassadress for a question of seating precedence around the Duchesse de Bourgogne, then acting as first lady²¹: « The King came to the Duchess of Bourgogne directly after the council, approached

Candler. *Capitalism and French Glassmaking, 1640-1789*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Publications in Economics, 2006. See also: Melchior-Bonnet, Sabine. *The Mirror: A History*. London & New York: Routledge, 2002.

¹⁷ « des honneurs extraordinaires, & qui n'avaient été rendus jusques alors qu'aux têtes couronnées » in [Bernard, Jacques]. *Lettres historiques [...] Tome XV, Mois de Janvier 1699*. La Haye: Adrian Moetjens, 1699, p. 22.

¹⁸ Although little is known about his life, the magnificence of Nicolo Erizzo as ambassador is still remembered in 1709 : « On a vu depuis peu d'années N. Erizzo faire les fonctions d'Ambassadeur aux Cours de France & de Rome, & cela avec un éclat & une si grande dépence que si quelques-uns l'ont égalé, très peu l'ont surpassé dans l'un & dans l'autre. » in *Nouvelle Relation de la ville et republique de Venise, divisée en trois parties...* Utrecht: Guillaume van Poolsum, 1709, III Partie, p. 78. See also note 18.

¹⁹ « On a résolu d'accorder aux instantes et réitérées prières de la république de Venise que leurs ambassadeurs seront conduits à l'audience par un prince ; il ont allé plusieurs grands exemples de leur attachement à la France, entre autre, qu'après la mort de l'empereur Charles-Quint, Philippe II, son fils, roi d'Espagne, voulant disputer à la France la préséance qu'elle a toujours eue sur l'Espagne, ils avaient été les premiers à reconnaître notre droit, et à faire passer l'ambassadeur du Roi devant celui du roi catholique ; et de plus, ils ont fait souvenir qu'ils avaient été les premier à reconnaître Henri IV, et le Roi a eu envie de faire honneur et plaisir à la république. » in *Mémoires du marquis de Dangeau, avec des notes historiques et critiques, Tome second, 1698–1711*. Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1817, p. 26.

²⁰ « Relation de la cour de France en 1699; par le Chevalier Erizzo, ambassadeur de Venise » in *Mélanges publiés par la Société des Bibliophiles Français*. Paris: Firmin Didot, 1827, p. 80.

²¹ As the Queen died in 1683, after the Dauphine past away in 1690, la duchesse de Bourgogne was the first lady of the court. See: Ferrier, Pauline. “La duchesse de Bourgogne et les épouses des ministres du roi dans le système de cour. Fêtes, honneurs et distinctions” in *Marie-Adélaïde de Savoie (1685–1712). Duchesse de Bourgogne, enfant terrible de Versailles. Etudes sur le XVIIIe siècle ed. Fabrice Preyat*. Bruxelles : Les éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2014, pp. 163–174.

the [Venetian] ambassadress, held her in conversation for some time, and then kissed her [good-bye]. Monseigneur [the Dauphin] came next, who did the same, and then Monseigneur the Duke of Bourgogne, who also kissed her; then the Duchess of Bourgogne raised the circle [gave the signal that the assembly had ended by standing up]. The ambassadress bowed down to kiss her dress; the Duchess of Bourgogne raised her and kissed her ». On this very day, the insightful witness, the Marquis de Dangeau (1638–1720), also noted, « Monseigneur [the Dauphin] went to the opera in Paris [where *Le Carnaval de Venise* was performed], and conducted the Duke of Bourgogne and the Duchess of Bourgogne. This is the first time that the Duchess of Bourgogne has been to the Opera in Paris. In the morning she had given an audience to the ambassadress of Venice, who had come to take leave »²².



Figure 2 : *Marie Adélaïde de Savoie, Duchesse de Bourgogne*
Anonymous French etching from the seventeenth century.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

6.3 Carnival in Marly, *Le Carnaval de Venise* in Paris

It was also important for the French to flatter Venice as final negotiations had started in December between the Ottoman Empire, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Venetian Republic to stop the hostilities in the east of Europe. The news came to Versailles and was the

²² « Mardi 27, 1699, à Versailles. – Le roi alla l'après-dinée se promener à Marly. Monseigneur alla à l'opéra à Paris et y mena monseigneur le duc de Bourgogne et madame la duchesse de Bourgogne. C'est la première fois que Madame la duchesse de Bourgogne ait été à l'opéra à Paris. Le matin ici, elle avait donné audience à l'ambassadrice de Venise, qui venait prendre congé; elle fut assise dans le même rang que les duchesses, en ayant quatre au-dessus d'elle. Quand les ambassadrices paraissent la première fois, elles ont un tabouret au milieu du cercle, la dame d'honneur quand elle est duchesse sur un autre tabouret à leur gauche; mais quand les ambassadrices viennent pour prendre leur congé, la dame d'honneur ne les va point recevoir dans l'antichambre, et elles n'ont plus de place séparée, mais elles ont toujours le tabouret. Dans l'ordre, quand leur mari a pris congé, elles ne doivent plus être traitées comme ambassadrice; mais le roi a bien voulu pour cette fois ici qu'on lui fit ce traitement-là et a déclaré en même temps qu'à l'avenir toute ambassadrice qui ne prendrait pas congé la même semaine que son mari l'aura pris ne sera plus regardée comme ambassadrice dans le séjour qu'elle fera à Paris et ici. Le roi vint chez madame la duchesse de Bourgogne après le conseil, s'approcha de l'ambassadrice, l'entretint quelque temps et puis la baisa. Monseigneur vint ensuite, qui en usa de même, et puis monseigneur le duc de Bourgogne, qui la baisa aussi; ensuite madame la duchesse de Bourgogne leva le cercle. L'ambassadrice se baissa pour lui baiser la robe; madame la duchesse de Bourgogne la releva et la baisa. » in *Journal du marquis de Dangeau*. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1854-1860, Tome 7, p. 12.

talk of the Court, as the Marquis de Dangeau reports « It is sent from Vienna that the conferences for peace between the [Ottoman] Grand Seigneur, on the one hand, and the [Austrian] Emperor and his allies on the other, had begun on November 13 [1698] in a place near Karlowitz [in today's Hungary], where a house was furnished to hold the conferences »²³. Negotiations were going well in the capable hands of the Dutch and English emissaries, but, in the hope of attracting its favor, William III was championing the Austrian Empire's goals over those of Venice. « Saturday, December 20, 1698, at Versailles: It was announced that the truce was signed between the Emperor and the Grand Seigneur. The Venetians have not been much consulted in all these negotiations, and they even complain of the Emperor, who has thought more of his interests than of those of his allies »²⁴. The failure of the Austrians to adequately support the interests of the Venetians in the treaty negotiations was the opening that France had been working for.²⁵



Figure 3: *Vue de l'Entrée du Chateau de Marly*

Perspective view, anonymous French etching from the eighteenth century.

Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The creation of *Le Carnaval de Venise* in January 1699 took place amid festivities at court, most notably in Marly, the pleasure castle of the king, seen on Figure 3, where masked

²³ « Mardi 2 Décembre 1698 à Versailles. – On mande de Vienne que les conférences pour la paix, entre le Grand-Seigneur d'une part, l'empereur et ses alliés de l'autre, avaient commencé le 13 de Novembre, dans un lieu proche Carlowitz, où on a fait accommoder une maison pour les conférences. » in *Journal du marquis de Dangeau*. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1854, Tome 6, p. 468.

²⁴ « Samedi 20 Décembre 1698 à Versailles On a nouvelle que la trêve est signée entre l'empereur et le Grand-Seigneur. Les Vénitiens n'ont pas été fort consultés dans toutes ces négociations, et ils se plaignent même fort de l'empereur, qui a plus songé à ses intérêts qu'à ceux de ses alliés. » in *Journal du marquis de Dangeau*. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1854, Tome 6, p. 477.

²⁵ See texts of the treaty at: <https://archive.org/stream/generalcollectio00lond#page/308/mode/2up>

balls were being held almost every day²⁶. It is in association with these festivities that the opera of Regnard and Campra was performed on stage in Paris on Tuesday, January 20, 1699: « Wednesday, [January] 21, 1699, at Marly. The king walked all morning in his gardens; after lunch he led the Duchess of Bourgogne to the roulette [an outdoor attraction in the form of a sledge on rails]. Monseigneur the Duke of Bourgogne arrived in sufficient time to go with her. On returning from the promenade, they both donned masks in Madame de Maintenon's apartment, and asked the ladies of the palace to be masked with them. [...] Monseigneur [the Dauphin] went Tuesday from Meudon to the opera in Paris; *Le Carnaval de Venise* was played for the first time ». ²⁷ All these parties and the celebration of carnival were stimulated by the presence of the Duchesse de Bourgogne. The Princess was beautiful, smart, and courteous. Her presence brought a breath of fresh air at court, where, with an aging king, a more austere atmosphere had been established during the war. To escape from this oppressive ambiance, and to be able to indulge in Italian music and light, comical forms of opera, many circles had been created around influential personalities of the younger generation; these would gather in other places and were welcoming to a variety of creative ideas. In Versailles, the Duchesse de Bourgogne's popularity was enormous, and the court saw her youth as the living embodiment of new times²⁸.

The Marquis de Dangeau was clairvoyant enough to link the little and the larger history in an entry in his journal for Thursday, February 5, 1699, at Marly: « Monseigneur the Duke of Bourgogne and the Duchess of Bourgogne arrived here at six o'clock; they dined here, and there was a ball like the day before; but there were however more masquerades. The King has asked to have a great number of masquerade costumes brought here, and these are available to all those who wish to disguise themselves; they can make their own choice. [...] It appeared that the king was very entertained at these balls, and he remained until one hour and a half [after midnight]. It is news that the peace of the emperor with the Turks is signed; the [Austrian] Emperor guards Transylvania and all its conquests. The Turks give up to the Polish Podolia, and Kaminiac as it is. As for the Venetians, they have not signed; but they have the power to sign in six months ». ²⁹

²⁶ For an overview of « les plaisirs de Marly », see: *Divertissements à Marly au temps de Louis XIV*. Louveciennes: Musée-Promenade de Marly-le-Roi Louveciennes, 1990.

²⁷ « Le roi se promena tout le matin dans ses jardins ; l'après-dînée il mena madame la duchesse de Bourgogne à la roulette. Monseigneur le duc de Bourgogne arriva assez à temps pour y aller avec elle. Au retour de la promenade, ils se masquèrent tous deux chez madame de Maintenon et firent masquer les dames du palais avec eux. Monseigneur le duc de Bourgogne fut fort gai et divertit fort le roi, qui avait fait venir Filbert pour les amuser. Monseigneur alla mardi de Meudon à l'opéra à Paris; on joua pour la première fois le Carnaval de Venise. » in *Journal du marquis de Dangeau*. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1854, Tome 7, p. 12.

²⁸ See: Duron, Jean. « « Oüyt-on, jamais, telle muzique? »: les nouveaux canons de la musique français sous le règne de Louis XIV de 1650 à 1675 » in *Grandes Journées Lully, Naissance d'un roi. Livret-programme édité à l'occasion des Grandes Journées Lully réalisées par le Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles et Château de Versailles-Spectacles au Château de Versailles. Textes réunis par Jean Duron et Christophe Doïnel*. Versailles: Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles, 2008, pp. 11-52. See also: Goujon, Jean-Philippe. « Marie-Adélaïde de Savoie, duchesse de Bourgogne puis dauphine de France: une princesse musicienne et mécène à la cour de Louis XIV » in *Marie-Adélaïde de Savoie (1685-1712). Duchesse de Bourgogne, enfant terrible de Versailles. Etudes sur le XVIIIe siècle ed. Fabrice Preyat*. Bruxelles: Les éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2014, pp. 191–214.

²⁹ « Le Roi se promena tout le jour dans ses jardins; monseigneur le duc de Bourgogne et madame la duchesse de Bourgogne arrivèrent ici sur les six heures; ils y soupèrent, et il y eut bal comme le jour d'au paravant; mais il y eut encore plus de mascarades. Le Roi a fait apporter ici grand nombre d'habits de masques, et on n'en refuse point à tous ceux qui veulent se masquer, on leur donne à choisir. On dansa des contredanses et des danses à

6.4 Regnard, poet and fantasist

The choice of the subject of *Le Carnaval de Venise* was, in 1699, neither as innocent nor as new as its title would seem. Previously, in December 1690, the Comédie-Française had presented a play with the same name³⁰. In the divertissements of his *comédie-ballet*, Florent Carton Dancourt (1661–1725) had originally staged « in a ludicrous and ridiculous manner »³¹ all the nations then leagued against France; this satire was based on the fact that in 1687 Venice had been the scene of a meeting between members of the Augsburg league. Under the pretext of the pleasures of Carnival, the Duke of Savoy, the Elector of Bavaria, Max Emanuel, several German princes and the secret negotiators of Austria, Spain, Sweden, and Holland had assembled, taking advantage of the concealment offered by the use of masks, in order to refine the plans of the league. These plans had been signed by members of the coalition at Augsburg few months before the play premiered, and the league's object was to create a barrier to the ever-increasing power of the French king. The divertissements in the play were changed after the intervention of Louis XIV, who was leary about the diplomatic implications of such a display. The show had little success during the French carnival, possibly due to the hastily revised divertissements³².

That Regnard wrote his libretto for Campra while keeping in mind Dancourt's play is possible, as the narrative element of the divertissements of his opera ballet seems to take the exact opposite direction of what we know of the original play of Dancourt: instead of the enemies of France being featured, people from the territories newly acquired by Venice flood the stage: the *Riva di Schiavoni*, the pier next to the Doge's Palace, inspired Regnard to show the landing of natives coming from Dalmatia, on the other side of the Adriatic Sea, in *Le Carnaval de Venise*: « Bohémiennes, Arméniens & Esclavons [*schiaconi* in Italian] ». In 1699, some of these central European peoples were about to be returned to the dominion of Venice, thanks to the peace with the Ottoman Empire that had been announced in December 1698. Venice's demands were acceded to in that it would regain control of that coast of the Adriatic. The affected Slavonian peoples would bring their culture to Venice, their customs and music; Regnard takes great care to specify that the Armenians appear « with some Guitars », one of

l'allemande, où madame la princesse de Conti se surpassa; il a paru que le Roi se divertissait fort à ces bals-ci, et il a demeuré jusqu'à une heure et demie. —On a nouvelle que la paix de l'empereur avec les Turcs est signée; l'empereur garde la Transylvanie et toutes ses conquêtes. Les Turcs rendent aux Polonais la Podolie et Kaminiac en l'état qu'il est. A l'égard des Vénitiens, ils n'ont point signé; mais ils ont le pouvoir de signer dans six mois. On veut les obliger à raser plusieurs places dans les conquêtes qu'ils ont faites » in *Journal du marquis de Dangeau*. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1854, Tome 7, p. 20. The Republic of Venice signed the treaty on the 7th of February. See: *La Paix de Karlowitz, 26 Janvier 1699: les relations entre l'Europe centrale et l'Empire ottoman, sous la direction de Jean Béranger*. (Bibliothèque d'études de l'Europe centrale, tome I). Paris: Honoré Champion, 2010.

³⁰ See : *Registres de la Comédie-Française*, Page of the 29th of December 1690
http://hyperstudio.mit.edu/cfrp/flip_books/R25/index.html#page/487/mode/1up

³¹ « de manière burlesque et ridicule » in « Lettre de Louis Phélypeaux de Pontchartrain (secrétaire d'Etat de la Marine et de la Maison du roi) à Gabriel Nicolas de La Reynie (lieutenant général de police de Paris) datée du 06 décembre 1690, à Versailles » in *Correspondance administrative sous le règne de Louis XIV, recueillie et mise en ordre par G. B. Depping, Tome II. Administration de la justice – Police – Galères*. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1851. pp. 611 and 612. http://www.persee.fr/doc/corr_0000-0001_1851_cor_2_1_890_t2_0611_0000_4 (Accessed on 19 April 2017).

³² See: Blanc, André. *F. C. Dancourt, 1661-1725: la Comédie française à l'heure du Soleil couchant*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1984, p. 45. Performed only three times, the text of the play seems lost.

the numerous attempts by the poet to give Campra the possibility of incorporating extra musical colors³³.



Figure 4 : *Jean-François Regnard*
French etching by Etienne Ficquet (1719–1794)
after Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659–1743). Paris, circa 1750.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The artistic position of Campra, well launched by the success of *L'Europe galante*, with its subtle mix of French and Italian styles, made him the ideal composer for the music of such a European piece, but it is hard not to see the hand of the Dauphin in the choice of Jean-François Regnard for the libretto. The poet had been a regular contributor to the shows of the Italian comedians in Paris since 1688, had written numerous plays for them, and in 1694, he made his début at the Comédie-Française. His comedy *Le Joueur* had the honor of being performed in Versailles in 1696³⁴. The Comédie-Italienne, as with the Comédie-Française, had benefited from the protection of the Dauphine, Maria Anna Victoria of Bavaria, the wife of the son and heir of the King. However, since the death of his spouse in 1690, it was the Dauphin who had been deciding the destiny of these two companies, and his supervision was

³³ Although they do not appear in the drama, the libretto's cast list indicates also some « Espagnols ». It is possible that the « Castellans » gondoliers may have been mistaken by a printer reading a manuscript too hastily for Spanish « Castilians ». But it is also possible that an early version of the piece included Spanish in some of the divertissements. The question of the succession of the dying king of Spain was a subject of actuality. Mistake of the printer or royal censorship, these listed « Espagnols » are revelatory of the spirit in which the people of the late seventeenth century was seeing Venice: like an international metropole, with a position propitious to the meeting of different nations, the crossing of different cultures.

³⁴ *Le Joueur* has been performed in Versailles on the 31 of December 1696, as part of the festivities of the New Year's Eve (Fête de la Saint-Sylvestre). See: *Registres de la Comédie Française*.
http://hyperstudio.mit.edu/cfrp/flip_books/R38/index.html#page/501/mode/1up

benevolent³⁵. The same year, Regnard could proclaim in a play, « Finally, the Italian Theater is the center of freedom, the source of joy ».³⁶

6.5 The muses and the mummers

The free and high spirit of the Comédie-Italienne, unfortunately, went too far at a time where royal censorship was near absolute³⁷. In 1694 the Catholic Sorbonne University already complained to the Archbishop stating that « the Italian Comedians had become too free on their stage and that it would be good to again cleanse many of their plays »³⁸. When, in 1697, the Comédie-Italienne planned to perform *La Fausse prude*, the comedy was interpreted as a satire of Madame de Maintenon (1635–1719), then the secret wife of Louis XIV. The king was outraged and ordered the dismissal of the Italian troupe. In the years that followed, the Dauphin regularly demanded –in vain– that the king reopen the Italian theater. This support had two effects: some of the Italian actors stayed in Paris and moved to the stages of the temporary fairs, where their characters have been already featured³⁹, while others found employment at the Paris Opera⁴⁰, which was also under the protection of the Dauphin. At the same time, their type characters became, little by little, a part of the repertory of the French theater plays and opera librettos, and Regnard took an active role in this integration of styles.

³⁵ See: La Gorce, Jérôme de. *L'Opéra à Paris au temps de Louis XIV: histoire d'un théâtre*. Paris: Desjonquères, 1992.

³⁶ « Enfin, le Théâtre Italien est le centre de la liberté, la source de la joie... » in Regnard. *Les Chinois*, Act IV, Scene 2. See: *Les Chinois in Œuvres complètes de Regnard, Texte établi par Charles Georges Thomas Garnier*. Paris: E.A. Lequien, 1820, tome sixième, p. 59.

³⁷ The Royal censorship became official as an administration in 1706, but as early as 1701, the plays were the subject of censorship of the king: In 1701, minister Ponchartrain had written to d'Argenson, lieutenant général de police, the following letter: « Il est revenu au roi que les comédiens [française] se dérangent beaucoup, que les expressions et les postures indécentes commencent à reprendre vigueur dans leurs représentations, et qu'en un mot ils s'écartent de la pureté où le théâtre était parvenu. Sa Majesté m'ordonne de vous écrire de les faire venir, et de leur expliquer de sa part que, s'ils ne se corrigent, sur la moindre plainte qui lui parviendra, Sa Majesté prendra contre eux des résolutions qui ne leur seront pas agréables. Sa Majesté veut aussi que vous les avertissiez qu'elle ne veut pas qu'ils représentent aucune pièce nouvelle qu'ils ne vous l'aient auparavant communiquée; son intention étant qu'ils ne puissent représenter aucune pièce qui ne soit dans la dernière pureté. » quoted in Hallays-Dabot, Victor. *Histoire de la censure théâtrale en France*. Paris: E. Dentu, 1862, p. 43.

³⁸ « Rel. V, 31 déc. 1694: La Sorbonne a fait “remontre à Mr l'Archevêque [the employer of Camppra] que les Comédiens Italiens étoient trop libres sur leur théâtre et qu'il seroit bon de repurger plusieurs de leurs pieces.” » in Mélése, Pierre. *Répertoire analytique des documents contemporains d'information et de critique concernant le théâtre à Paris sous Louis XIV (1650-1715)*. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1976, p. 23.

³⁹ On the dismissal, see: Ravel, Jeffrey S. “Trois images de l'expulsion des Comédiens Italiens en 1697” in *Littératures classiques*, vol. 82, no. 3, 2013, pp. 51-60. And for the relations of Italian artists with the fairs, see: Campardon, Émile. *Les spectacles de la foire: théâtres, acteurs, sauteurs et danseurs de corde, monstres, géants, nains, animaux curieux ou savants, marionnettes, automates, figures de cire et jeux mécaniques des foires Saint-Germain et Saint-Laurent, des boulevards et du Palais-Royal, depuis 1595 jusqu'à 1791; documents inédits recueillis aux Archives nationales, Volume 1*. Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1877.

⁴⁰ We know that Elisabeth Gherardi Danneret, singer known as Babet-la-Chanteuse started in 1694 at the Comédie-Italienne and in 1697 joined the Opera, and some dancers, although not been recorded so far, may have also been employed by the Académie Royale de Musique. See: Campardon, Émile. *Les Comédiens italiens de la troupe du roi*. Paris: 1880. See also: Barthélemy, Maurice. “L'opéra-comique des origines à la Querelle des Bouffons” in *L'Opéra-Comique en France au XVIIIe siècle. sous la direction de Philippe Vendrix*. Liège: Mardaga, 1992, p. 21.

The entourage of the Dauphin, and notably his daughter-in-law, the Duchesse de Bourgogne, welcomed the playfulness of the Italian style found in the dramatist's productions⁴¹.



Figure 5: *Minerve presenting the portrait of Louis XIV*
French etching by Jean-Baptiste Masse (1687–1767),
after the painting by Antoine Coypel (1661–1722),
with the portrait of Louis XIV painted by Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659–1743).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Following in the tradition inherited from Quinault⁴² and Lully, the prologue of *Le Carnaval de Venise* glorifies the king, but it also mentions the supporter of the work, his son, the Grand Dauphin. Minerva (Figure 5), a goddess particularly associated with the military peace in the art of the seventeenth century—but also with the Acropolis of Athens, recently reconquered by the Venetians from the Turks—descends from heaven and asks the divinities of the Arts to serve the « son of the greatest King of the world », honoring the Dauphin as official patron of the Paris Opera and of the new piece. She concludes by praising the King for giving peace and calls for returning soldiers to follow love, and, by doing so, introduces the idea of the French cavalryman seducing Venetian girls, which will be developed further in the plot of the opera.

In poetic terms, this prologue, even if it retains some elements of the tradition, with gods giving a theoretical background to the human story presented in the opera, offers some

⁴¹ From 1694 to 1699, four plays by Regnard, *La Serenade*, *Le Joueur*, *Le Distrain*, *Le Bourgeois de Falaise*, were given at court. See: *Registres de la Comédie Française*.

⁴² Regnard, in his early youth, sent one of his « Épitres » to Quinault, where he asks for correction on his first libretto for a musical drama (now lost) and expressed the wish to walk in the steps of his elder. See: Regnard, Jean-François. “Épitre III” in *Œuvres de J.F. Regnard avec des avertissements sur chaque pièce par M. Garnier. Nouvelle édition. Tome quatrième*. Paris: E.A. Lequien, 1820, pp. 381–383.

new facets as well, which give it a more modern flavor and distance it from the purely mythological prologues that had previously been the norm. Its biggest innovation is the incorporation of contemporary workmen busy building the sets of a performing space in a rather inefficient way, creating a comical hiatus⁴³. Showing the backstage area of the theater or a stage in rehearsal was not new, but it anchored the show in the comedy tradition⁴⁴. Defined by this theatrical frame, the action that follows is announced as a performance, in which Minerva requests the display « by the charms of a lavish show, of all that Venice has of entertainments in the most charming season »⁴⁵. The goddess asks the various arts—Architecture, Painting, Music and Dance—to combine their creative expertise to produce a superb show that portrays the numerous events Venice offers during winter. Her simple request articulates notions of style, subject, object, place, and time, and introduces the whole enterprise.

After the prologue, the traditional mythological, pastoral, and heroic fundamentals of French opera are forsaken in favor of a modern geographical reference, in order to fire the imagination with accurate depictions of its events and appearance. To piece together these Venetian settings, Regnard takes inspiration from his memories: his travels to Italy at the end of the 1670s impressed him deeply. It was then that he discovered Venice, where he won a fortune by gambling, which allowed him to continue his long journeys to Flanders, the Dutch Republic, Denmark, and Sweden up to Lapland. *Le Carnaval de Venise* can be seen as a special account of the Italian travels of the poet, as the libretto reflects a care for accuracy and a realistic representation of events, which was scarcely to be found in the other opera librettos of the period.

6.6 Carnival in Venice

The structure of *Le Carnaval de Venise*, contrary to *L'Europe galante*, maintains a continuous plot through all of the entrées. In the genre of the French ballet, this idea was not totally new⁴⁶ but, in this *opéra-ballet*, the respect of a continuity of the action gives a new energy to the action, close to the one of a comedy for the theater. The tale is set in winter in Venice: a French cavalryman and a Venetian lady see their love affair determined by the events of Carnival. After the confusion caused by the international crowd of masquers and gamblers, a serenade that ends with a murder, an attempted suicide during a gondolier feast, and an evening at the opera house, the lovers triumph over jealous rivals, and, under the cover of a grand ball, finally flee happily to France. Starting in 1695, a series of comedic plays taking place in specific

⁴³ Dancourt in his prologue for *L'opérateur Barry*, will do the same for the Comédie-Française the next year. See: Blanc, André. *F. C. Dancourt, 1661-1725: La Comédie française à l'heure du Soleil couchant*. Paris: Editions Place, 1984, p. 91.

⁴⁴ The process is exemplified by Molière with *L'Impromptu de Versailles*, 1663. For a selection of rare French dramas from the seventeenth century with meta-theatre, see: *Aspects du théâtre dans le théâtre au XVII^e siècle, Recueil de pièces*. Introduction par Georges Forestier. Toulouse: Université de Toulouse - Le Mirail, 1986.

⁴⁵ « Minerve: Vous qui suivez mes pas, remplissez mon attente,/ Montrez par les attrait d'un spectacle pompeux/ Tout ce que Venise a de jeux / Dans la Saison la plus charmante. » in *Le Carnaval de Venise*, Prologue.

⁴⁶ Quinault and Lully had inaugurated this type of ballet with a continuous plot with *Le Temple de la Paix* in 1685; Duché and Desmarest produced other examples in 1694 with *Les Amours de Momus*, then in 1698 with *Les Fêtes galantes*, which title was betting on the similarity with *L'Europe galante*.

European towns, at explicit moments in the annual calendar such as a fair or the wine harvest, flourished at the Comédie-Française and at the Comédie-Italienne⁴⁷. Regnard and Campra depict in their opera the events of a couple of days of the carnival in Venice: the fictional actions of the characters occur in a framework of real events that punctuate its plot. The etching placed by Ballard in 1703 on the front of the printed libretto reflects this very distinction. One sees the merry maskers in the foreground (three of them with tambourines) while street players perform in the background on a temporary stage supported by trestles (Figure 6).

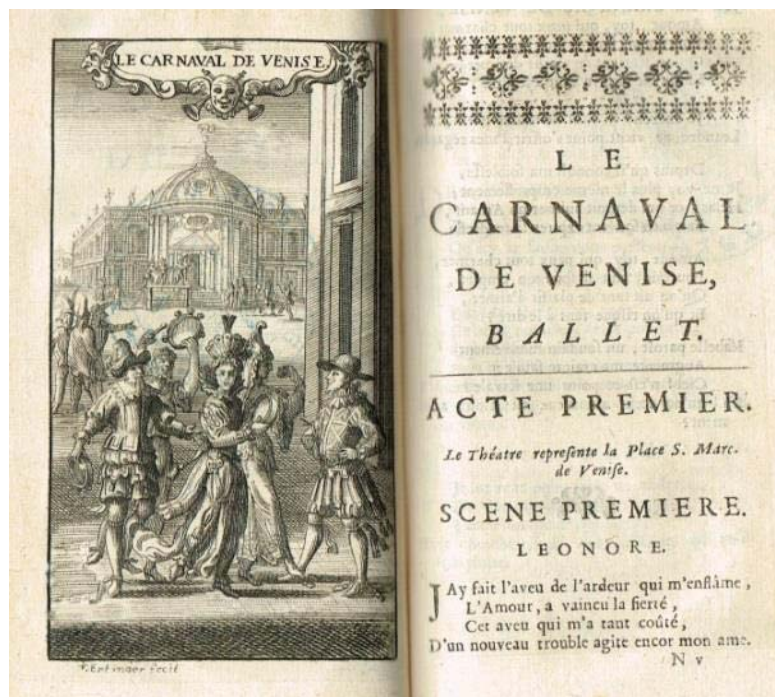


Figure 6 : Frontispiece and title page of *Le Carnaval de Venise*'s libretto, from *Recueil general des Opera representez par l'Académie Royale de Musique, depuis son établissement*, Paris, Ballard, 1703.

French etching by François Ertinger (1640–1710)⁴⁸.

Collection of Gilbert Blin.

In Italy, like in France, the period of Carnival, from Christmas to Lent, was a traditional time for numerous entertainments and spectacles⁴⁹. The festivities of the city of Venice were the most famous for their variety and quantity; the fame of its carnival was such that it gave rise to the number of accounts and testimonies in the publications of the time. Among all the « particular enjoyments » generated by the carnival, the ones of Venice were far above « all what can be done elsewhere of the most sumptuous and gallant ». The carnival of Venice

⁴⁷ 1695: *Les Promenades de Paris, La Foire de Bérons, Le Retour de la foire de Bérons, La Foire Saint-Germain, Les vendanges de Suresnes*; 1696: *Le Bourgeois de Falaise, Les Bains de la Porte Saint Bernard, Les Eaux de Bourbon, Les Momies d'Egypte, Le Moulin de Javelle*; 1698: *Les Curieux de Compiègne*; 1699: *Le Carnaval de Venise*. (This list is non-exhaustive).

⁴⁸ François Ertinger (1640–1710) engraved also frontispieces for *Le Théâtre Italien de Gherardi*. Paris: J.-B. Cusson & P. White, 1700. These engravings show a great care for transposing elements of the performance in a frontispiece and usually focus on the the last scene of the play.

⁴⁹ See: Tanguy, Camille. "Le Triomphe de la Folie sur la scène de l'Académie Royale de Musique Portrait d'une figure entre 1697 et 1718". Thesis 2014. Université Paris-Sorbonne.

attracted such a quantity of visitors « from all sides of Europe » that the vast number of foreigners reached « more than sixty thousand people »⁵⁰.

The libretto of *Le Carnaval de Venise* offers a series of actions that follow rather exactly the order of the many events punctuating the carnival. This succession of typical occurrences, which appear in a specific time sequence, would have started at sunset and ended very late in the night. All of the various events of the carnival presented in the libretto of *Le Carnaval de Venise* are described in the same order in a book published by Alexandre Toussaint Limojon de Saint-Didier (1639–1689) in 1680, *La Ville et la République de Venise*⁵¹. The entertainments dramatized by Regnard include, as they did in Saint-Didier, an international gathering, a scene about gambling, a serenade, a feast for gondoliers, a night at the opera, and a masked ball. Stretching the order of these carnival festivities over two days, Regnard had planned the divertissements of his opera from a true documentary reconstruction point of view.

6.7 Water, Gondolas and Gondoliers

Regnard mostly places the action in somewhat generic scenes rather than specific Venetian locations, choosing to depict the striking element that makes Venice unique: the special relation between architecture and water. The climax of the opera takes place on « a square in Venice surrounded by sumptuous Palaces, numerous canals, filled with Gondolas », the boats that the French audience must have already associated immediately with Venice. Gondolas were such a symbol of the city that two, accompanied by four gondoliers, were offered to the King of France in 1674. Louis XIV added them to his fleet of small European ships, destined for the canal of the park of Versailles. The quarters set aside for the sailors of these boats, next to this French « Grand Canal », were baptized « la Petite Venise »⁵².

Aside from its function as pleasure boat, the gondola was also an object of prestige for France when an Ambassador was going to present his letters of introduction to the Doge. The design for the gondola built for the magnificent official entry in 1682 of the Comte d'Avaux, ambassador of France to Venice, appeared in the *Mercure Galant* of May 1683⁵³. According to that publication, the embroideries of the gondola were by Jean Berain (1640–1711), the chief designer in France at the time and the very man who would design the sets and costumes for

⁵⁰ *Mercure Galant*, Avril 1679. Paris: au Palais, pp. 118–123.

⁵¹ See: Limojon de Saint-Didier, Alexandre-Toussaint de. *La Ville et la République de Venise*. Paris: L. Billaine, 1680.

⁵² For “la Petite Venise”, see: Fennebresque, Juste. *La petite Venise: histoire d'une corporation nautique*. Paris: Picard et fils and Versailles: Bernard, 1899. For a 1696 plan of the buildings and list of personnel, see N°66, in: *Projets pour Versailles Dessins des Archives Nationales*. Paris: Archives Nationales, 1985, p. 57. See also: Halna du Fretay, Amélie. “La flottille du Grand Canal de Versailles à l’époque de Louis XIV: diversité, technicité et prestige” in *Bulletin du Centre de recherche du château de Versailles* [Online]. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/crcv/10312> ; DOI : 10.4000/crcv.10312 (Accessed 11 May 2018).

⁵³ For the design of the ambassador’s gondola, see: *Mercure Galant*, Mai 1683. Paris: au Palais, pp. 45–50 & Plate (this plate which is often missing from *Mercure Galant*’s surviving copies, is reproduced in the publication online mentioned in the previous note). For the reception of the French ambassador, see: *Mercure Galant*, Octobre 1682, *Première partie*. Paris: au Palais, pp. 172–191. For another design by Berain (sometimes attributed to Claude III Audran), see: « Décoration d’une gondole » in *Versailles à Stockholm, Dessins du Nationalmuseum, Peintures, Meubles et Arts Décoratifs des Collections Suédoises et Danoises*. Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1985, p. 53.

Le Carnaval de Venise. Although Berain's creations are usually well documented, we have very little information about the sets for the original production of the opera. The traditional urban scenery for comedy, created by painted houses on shutters placed in perspective, must have been supported by typical Venetian elements: the city's architectural uniqueness was brought into the realm of fantasy by the addition of an exceptional set element: we know for sure that a large backdrop showing a Venetian square « Fon de la plasse de Venise »⁵⁴ was painted in 1699.



Figure 7 : *Combats à coups de Poing* : Fist fight of Gondoliers in *Carte du gouvernement militaire de la Republique de Venise: l'état de ses revenus, de ses forces, et les différentes vûës de la place de St. Marc*, detail. Dutch etching from Henri Abraham Chatelain (1684–1743), *Atlas Historique, ou nouvelle introduction a l'histoire, a la chronologie & a la geographie ancienne & moderne*, Volume 2, Number 76, Amsterdam, 1705–1721. Collection of Gilbert Blin.

But considering the lack of surviving visual documentation for the Venetian sets of *Le Carnaval de Venise*, we can only speculate on the accuracy of the visual evocation of the City of Doges undertaken by Jean Berain.⁵⁵ The opera's libretto specified a large number of sets: the action takes place in seven different spaces. It seems however that the set of « Magnificent Palaces » and of « Numerous Canals », which is the location for the gondolier celebrations, was rather exceptional, but one may wonder how a stage full of water was allowing so many people to gather for the Gondoliers celebration⁵⁶. This rejoicing is an evocation of the traditional

⁵⁴ See: Campra, André. *Le Carnaval de Venise, Comédie lyrique. Introduction by James R. Anthony, with a section on stage designs and costumes by Jérôme de La Gorce*. {French Opera in the 17th and 18th Centuries/Vol. 17}. Stuyvesant, (NY): Pendragon Press, 1989, pp. XXIV & XXV. See also: La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Berain, Dessinateur du Roi Soleil*. Paris: Herscher, 1986, p. 96 and p. 101.

⁵⁵ See: Tessin le jeune, Nicodème and Cronström, Daniel. “Correspondance” (extraits), *Les Relations artistiques entre la France et la Suède, 1693-1718*. Stockholm: AB Egnellska Boktryckeriet, 1964, p. 175.

⁵⁶ The set I designed for my production (Boston, 2017) takes this space as the main space for the performance but solves the water issue by imagining that the lagoon has frost during the fierce winter, allowing performers to walk, and dance, on the iced canal, and therefore extending the play area. This is inspired by records referring to the winters of the early eighteenth century. See the anonymous painting, attributed sometimes to Gabriel

fistfight between the two main guilds of Gondoliers and brings the image of the bridge they were competing for, as a symbol of the domination over water. The fight was a yearly spectacle in Venice taking place on the Saint Barnaba Bridge until 1705⁵⁷, and it is likely that Berain used the numerous engravings depicting it as a source for inspiration (Figure 7).

6.8 Costumes and Characters

Among the nine⁵⁸ engravings by Nicolas Bonnard that are known to depict costumes from the 1699 production of *Le Carnaval de Venise*, the one which depicts « Rodolphe, the jealous man of the opera » gives many clues about the opera as a whole. The design for this « Noble Venetian in love with Isabelle » offers an interesting key to the conception of the character (Figure 8). Notwithstanding the great ornamental richness suitable for a noble character, this costume has no resemblance to a contemporary outfit from the Venice of that period. In fact, the costume for Rodolphe makes the character resemble one from *commedia dell'arte*. It is a fanciful dress with outdated elements such as a ruff and hat that give the costume the appearance of belonging to an earlier time. It may be a carnival disguise, but more surely it is the costume of a theatrical type, as the caption indicates: the jealous one. His identity is very clearly stated: « Rodolphe ou le jaloux de l'Opéra/ Noble vénitien amoureux d'Isabelle ». The character type, « le jaloux de l'Opéra », suggests a parallel with le *Il Geloso* de la Comédie, a character found in numerous comedies since the sixteenth century. Finally, the mention of Isabelle in the title, the usual name for the « jeune première » of the Comédie-Italienne until 1695⁵⁹, brings with it the idea of a troupe with established relationships, close to the ones found in Italian comedy, Isabelle being the character of the first female lover in *Le Carnaval de Venise*.

As with Isabelle's, the first male lover's name is taken from Italian comedy. Léandre, whose Latin name comes from Greek mythology, is a very evocative choice: every night Leander swam across the sea to meet Hero, but he ultimately drowned when a storm arose one evening. When Hero saw his corpse on the shore she threw herself into the waters and perished. Also unwillingly provoking, with the fake news of his death, a suicidal attempt from his lover, in *Le Carnaval de Venise*, Léandre is defined as a « cavalier français ». ⁶⁰ This amorous

Bella (1730-1799), 'Frozen Lagoon at Fondamenta Nuove in 1708,' circa 1708–1709, oil on canvas. Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venezia.

⁵⁷ See: Urban, Lina; Romanelli, Giandomenico; Gandolfi, Fiora. *Venise en fêtes*. Paris: Éditions du Chêne, 1992, p. 119.

⁵⁸ Jérôme de la Gorce has identified eight of these engravings, but there is a ninth one: a *Castelane*, wrongly attributed to *Amadis de Grece*, which is clearly the *Castelane* appearing in the third act of *Le Carnaval de Venise*. The closeness between *Castelane* and *Castillane* led this print to be mislabeled and badly recorded (*Amadis de Grece* opens after the end of the performances of *Le Carnaval de Venise* and has some Spanish characters). For the first eight engravings, see: Campa, André. *Le Carnaval de Venise, Comédie lyrique. Introduction by James R. Anthony, with a section on stage designs and costumes by Jérôme de La Gorce*. Stuyvesant (NY): Pendragon Press, 1989. For the picture of the "Castelane dans Amadis de Grèce", see the copy hold by the Bibliothèque nationale de France: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84073342.r=Bonnart%20Robertamadis%20amadis?rk=42918;4>

⁵⁹ The stock character of Isabelle takes its name from the renowned actress Isabella Canali Andreini (1562-1604). See: Romana de' Angelis, Francesca. *La divina Isabella. Vita straordinaria di una donna del Cinquecento*. Firenze: Sansoni, 1991. Isabella was also a distinguished singer, see: Wilbourne, Emily. *Seventeenth-Century Opera and the Sound of the Commedia dell' Arte*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2016.

⁶⁰ For the definition of Cavalier, Furetière wrote (we underline) « Soldat qui sert & qui combat à cheval. Il est encore distingué du fantassin, en ce qu'on l'appelle maistre. Une telle compagnie étoit de 40. maistres ou de 40. cavaliers. Ce mot vient du Latin caballus. CAVALIER, signifie aussi, un Gentilhomme qui porte l'espée, & qui

figure may have worn a French outfit, with a cut close to that of a military man of the army of the French king, but one also typical of the first lover, a character type of French comedy, which became fashionable during the Nine Years' War, and of which Regnard made considerable use in his plays for the Comédie-Française⁶¹.



Figure 8 : *Rodolphe, ou le Jaloux de l'Opéra. Noble Venitien Amoureux d'Isabelle, du Carnaval de Venise*
French etching by Robert (1652–1733) and Nicolas Bonnart (1637–1718),
after the costume design of Jean I Berain (1640–1711) for the creation of *Le Carnaval de Venise*, 1699.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Léonore is the last of the only four characters who were given actual names by Regnard. This opera could be the first use of the name for the role of the unfortunate lover, but one that many operas would use in the decades to follow. More specifically, the name Leonore is one that had also been bestowed upon many Princesses of Habsburg,⁶² and added

est habillé en homme de guerre. C'est un brave Cavalier, un honneste Cavalier. Les Cavaliers sont communs en Italie, à cause qu'il y a plusieurs Ordres de Chevalerie » in Furetière, Antoine. *Dictionnaire Universel*, Tome I. 1690.

⁶¹ The costume for Bellecour (1725–1778) dans le rôle de Valère du *Joueur* de Jean-François Regnard (1655–1710) on the engraving after Fesch (1738–1778) et Whirsker (17??-17??) shows a traditional uniform of a « cavalier ». See: Huthwohl, Joël. *Comédiens & Costumes des Lumières, Miniatures de Fesch et Whirsker, Collection de la Comédie-Française*. Moulins: Centre National du costume de scène, 2011, p. 169.

⁶² Eleanor of Austria may refer to: Archduchesses of Austria by birth: Eleanor of Austria (1498–1558), Eleanor of Austria Duchess of Mantua (1534–1594), Archduchess Eleanor (1582–1620), Eleanor of Austria, Queen of Poland (1653–1697). But also Archduchess of Austria by marriage: Eleanor of Scotland (1433–1480), wife of Sigismund, Archduke of Austria. Eleanor of Portugal, Holy Roman Empress (1434–1467), wife of Emperor Frederick III; Eleonor Gonzaga (1598–1655), wife of Emperor Ferdinand II, Eleanor Gonzaga (1630–1686), wife of Emperor Ferdinand III.

to the fact Rodolphe was the name of many Austrian rulers,⁶³ it suggests another level of identification. The attempt to associate Austrian names with the villains plotting the death of the French character and opposing his union with the Venetian lady adds a possible political dimension to the events of the opera. Even in the light-hearted plot of *Le Carnaval de Venise*, subtle minds in touch with the current diplomatic situation could read the royal wish for the union of France and Venice, despite Austrian trouble makers.

6.9 Singing in French and Italian

The music had to be as ambitious as the libretto, and Campra, born in Aix-en-Provence and of Savoy origins (his father was native from Piedmont), was the man of the situation. Nine years after the premiere of *Le Carnaval de Venise*, the composer, in his *Premier livre de cantates françoises*, explained the Italian influence on his music. Campra, in the foreword of this 1708 score, declared that he wished « to mix with the delicacy of French Music, the vivacity of Italian Music ». He clarified that in order to manage this mix of French and Italian tastes, although he was « sure as well as others of the merits of the Italian », he attached importance « above all to keep the beauty of singing, the expression & our [French] way to recite, which is, following [his] opinion, the best »⁶⁴.



Figure 9 : *Gabriel Vincent Thevenard, Pensionnaire du Roi pour la Musique Né à Paris, le 10 Août 1669.*
French etching by Georg Friedrich Schmidt (1712–1785), after Charles-Étienne Geuslain (1685–1765).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The role of Léandre, which should have been written for a haute-contre or a tenor following the French casting tradition established by Lully for « The young, gallant Heroes, &

⁶³ From the Germanic name Hrodulf, which was derived from the elements “hrod”, fame, glory and “wulf”, wolf. It was borne famously by the Habsburg ruler of the Holy Roman Empire and Austria, Rudolf II (1552–1612).

⁶⁴ See: *Cantates Françaises Mêlées de Symphonies, Par Monsieur Campra, Livre Premier*. Paris: Christophe Ballard, 1708.

who must be loved »⁶⁵ was in fact composed for a *basse taille* (baritone) by Campra, indicating that the composer clearly had a specific performer in mind. Therefore, it is one role in *Le Carnaval de Venise* for which we may have a hint as to who played the role, since the libretto failed to provide a cast list. Gabriel Vincent Thevenard (1669–1741) was the leading singer of the Académie Royale de Musique at the time. In 1705, an opera enthusiast wrote: « Thevenard has been in possession of the roles of the first lovers in Paris for seven or eight years, and he plays them so well and so tenderly that the composers of the new operas write their first roles only for him. »⁶⁶. Thevenard was notable for playing roles that made use of his skills at making the declamatory recitatives fluid, and the portrait showing him in a comedy costume reveals that this fluidity was also much appreciated in a light repertoire (Figure 9). For *opéra-ballets* and for *tragédies*, he became a favorite singer of Campra, creating roles in at least fourteen works of the composer. The score of *Le Carnaval de Venise* is primarily in the French style, but Regnard gives Campra many opportunities to compose Italian vocal music, creating situations which, thanks to their dramatic necessity, offer Italian verses.

The origins of the serenade as a song performed by a lover, who accompanied himself on a plucked instrument and sang to his beloved from under her windows, found its way naturally to *Le Carnaval de Venise*. Regnard skillfully mixes the two languages during this gallant episode: Léandre starts alone in his mother tongue, French, and is then joined by two Venetian musicians to perform an Italian trio. This double-language structure had previously been used in various *Ballets de cour*⁶⁷ but in *La Sérénade en forme d'opéra*, performed in Fontainebleau in 1682 in front of Louis XIV, the two idioms were associated in a serenade. A testimony to the union of French and Italian tastes, this « monster » was then elaborated by two composers, the French Michel de Lalande and the Italian Paolo Lorenzani (1640–1713), each taking charge of the music of his own country⁶⁸. In *Le Carnaval de Venise*, Campra manages the feat of writing both types of music, giving another proof of his abilities to master one and the other. The slow movement of the trio, although setting Italian verses, is close to a *sommeil*, the sleeping scene of French opera. This type of musical writing had been inherited from earlier Italian models, but Lully knew how to make it his own, and the *sommeil* became a specialty of French opera—the most famous one was in *Atys*—typically with a characteristic instrumentation that included recorders.

⁶⁵ « nos tailles & nos hautes-contre dont les voix sont aussi hautes & aussi flexibles que la nature souffre & veut qu'elles le soient, sont les Heros jeunes, galans, & qui doivent etre aimés » in *Le Cerf de La Viéville*, Jean-Louis. *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique françoise, Première Partie*. Bruxelles: F. Foppens, 1705, p. 122.

⁶⁶ « Thevenard est en possession depuis 7 ou 8. ans de jouer les premiers Amans à Paris, & il les jouë si bien & si tendrement que les Compositeurs des nouveaux Opera ne font plus leurs premiers rôles que pour lui. Je me suis tantôt aperçuë dans *Tancrède* que Campra, qui doit sçavoir beaucoup de Musique Italienne, n'est gueres de leur goût sur l'avantage des voix hautes, & une grande inclination pour les basses » in *Le Cerf de La Viéville*, Jean-Louis. *Comparaison ... Première Partie*. Bruxelles: F. Foppens, 1705, pp. 114-115. This last remark stating that Campra has a great inclination for basses is corroborated by the vocal cast of *Le Carnaval de Venise* where no less than 4 on the 5 major male roles are for Basse-Tailles. Only the role of Orfeo is for a high tessitura, and, as evocative of the Venetian opera stage, should be close to the tessitura of a Castrato.

⁶⁷ Three examples are relevant to our corpus: *Le Ballet de Psyché ou de la Puissance de l'Amour* (1656), where the hell scene was sung in Italian and *Psiché* (1671) where the « plainte » was sung in Italian. *Le Ballet de la Raillerie* (1659) where a « Duo de la Musique Française et de la Musique Italienne » was coupling a French singer and an Italian one and mixing in the same duo both idioms and musical languages.

⁶⁸ « Sérénade en forme d'Opéra, meslée de Musique Françoise, & de Comédie et de Musique Italienne (...) La Musique Françoise avoit esté faite par Mr de la Lande (...) Mr Laurenzani estoit Auteur de la Musique Italienne. » in *Mercure Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin, Novembre 1682*, Paris: au Palais, 1682, pp. 344 & 345.

6.10 Serenade and Opera

Regnard was surely a fellow thinker: had not he already imagined a similar situation, and even wrote the music, in one of his plays, *La Sérénade*, for his successful début at the Comédie-Française on July 3, 1694? In this « Comedy in one act & in prose by M. Regnard, with a divertissement, Music of the same, arranged by M. Gilliers »⁶⁹, the dramatist presented a gray-bearded suitor, who, about to get married, asks for the assistance of his son's valet, Scapin. He wants the servant to help him to « give a little serenade to [his] mistress ». Scapin answers right away that he is the man for the job: « A serenade you say? You could not do better than asking me. Italian music, French one, I am a man with two hands ». The music that follows is an example of the pleasing mix of singing of these two nations: Venetian singers share the stage with French musicians.



Figure 10: *La Sérénade*

Anonymous French etching for the frontispiece of Regnard, *La Sérénade*, Paris, 1695.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The practice of the Serenade was ancient, but the assassination attempt that ensues in both the play and the opera was modern. We know that the Comédie-Française had to rent two more pistols to stage it, as the weaponry it had available lacked adequate modern firearms⁷⁰. The scene, with a contemporary feel, where the pistols are used was chosen for the

⁶⁹ « *La Sérénade, Comédie en un acte & en prose par M. Regnard, avec un divertissement, Musique du même, retouchée par M. Gilliers.* » See: Parfaict, Claude and François. *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris: contenant toutes les pièces qui ont été représentées jusqu'à présent sur les différents théâtres françois, & sur celui de l'Académie royale de musique, Volume 5*. Paris: Rozet, 1767, p. 126. Jean-Claude Gilliers (1667-1737), trained at Notre-Dame de Paris and employed by this institution at the same time as Campra, was also a double bass player at the Comédie-Française, for which he composed the music of many of Dancourt's plays. Besides *La Sérénade*, his collaboration with Regnard is documented for *Attendez-moi sous l'orme*, in 1700, and for *Les Folies amoureuses*, in 1704. The catalog of his work remains to be established.

⁷⁰ See: *Registres de la Comédie Française*: 3 Juillet 1694.
http://hyperstudio.mit.edu/cfrp/flip_books/R34/index.html#page/151/mode/1up

illustration in the first edition of the play (Figure 10). While the dominos, made especially for the show, and the masks are well in tune with the atemporal musical offering, the pistols anchor the play in the modern age, far away from the blades in use in the classical comedy and tragedy inspired by the Greek and Romans figures of Antiquity. There is enough evidence to assume that this desire for modern *couleur locale* was also present on the stage of the Paris Opera for *Le Carnaval de Venise*. That is how this opera differs most from its predecessors: by eschewing the world of myths and legends displayed in the operas of Quinault and Lully.

The desire to integrate Italian poetic and musical elements takes as its primary form an Italian opera in miniature, performed inside the final act of *Le Carnaval de Venise*. Knowing the curiosity the French had for the lyrical stage of Venice, the city to whom « one owes the invention of operas »⁷¹, the authors inserted a condensed Italian opera into their work, which they entitled *Orfeo nell'inferi*. The theme of Orpheus, and his quest for his beloved Eurydice in the underworld, was the subject of the earliest Italian operas by composers but French composers revisited the theme later in the century⁷². This mythical figure represented the union of poetry and music; his songs, which he accompanied with his lyre, had the fabulous power to charm animals, people, divinities, and even nature. In the episode of the myth used most often in the operas, the very one that Regnard and Campra chose to depict, it is Pluto, king of the Underworld, who is seduced by Orpheus's lyre. This seductive effect of music, already explored in the serenade of the previous act, is not new in opera history, but its relationship with the nationality of the music brings it closer to an aesthetic debate. Can the choice of this theme be seen as an allegory of the power of Italian music over the French audience⁷³? It is difficult to say for sure, as we do not have any document about its reception. It may also be possible that the Italian opera inserted in *Le Carnaval de Venise* was of a parodic nature, as ten years before, Regnard had written a comic play on the Orpheus quest for the Comédie-Italienne: *La Descente de Mezzetin aux Enfers*. We also know that Campra will later reuse some of the music he wrote for *Orfeo nell'inferi* in a comical piece⁷⁴. Besides, though nothing in the Italian verses Regnard composed for *Orfeo nell'inferi* reads as fully burlesque, and though Campra's music for his « Italian opera » fits the declamatory style suited to this idiom, the end of their version of Orpheus' story—with Pluto ordering his court to « sing, rejoice, dance and laugh » to entertain Euridice—offers an unconventional ending and leans towards unrestrained enjoyment. The dances of gamboling sprites, the « spirit folletti », bring clearly the all *Orfeo nell'inferi* to a festive climax. Before the opera starts, Regnard takes great care to have Léandre

⁷¹ This snapshot of Limojon de Saint-Didier is interesting because it shows how much the business opera, the way it appeared in Venice in the 1630s, was starting to dominate the conception of opera, far from his academic and princely Florentine debuts. See: Limojon de Saint-Didier, Alexandre-Toussaint de. *La Ville et la République de Venise*. Paris: L. Billaine, 1680, p. 294.

⁷² Marc-Antoine Charpentier wrote a secular cantata, *Orphée descendant aux enfers*, in 1683, and a few years later, started an opera, *La Descente d'Orphée aux enfers*. The subject had also inspired Louis Lully, the son of Jean-Baptiste, who composed the opera *Orphée*, performed at the Paris Opera in 1690. See Chapter 3.

⁷³ See: Tanguy, Camille. « Le Carnaval de Venise, l'imaginaire renouvelé de Regnard et Campra » in Regnard, Jean-François and Campra, André. *Le Carnaval de Venise, Livret de 1699, présenté par Camille Tanguy*. Paris: Académie Desprez, 2007, pp. 7–47.

⁷⁴ Harris-Warrick, Rebecca. *Dance and Drama in French Baroque Opera, A History*. Cambridge Studies in Opera. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, p. 260 and p. 285, note 51.

declare that the opera is « given to the people »⁷⁵, maybe suggesting a class and cultural disdain from the French cavalier toward a popular Venetian form of entertainment.

The « people »⁷⁶ is indeed very present in *Le Carnaval de Venise*. Starting by the « ouvriers » of the prologue to the different factions of the Gondoliers, there is definitively a strong presence of the lower classes in *Le Carnaval de Venise*, an element of modernity quite different from the shepherds or deities, the stock characters of French opera since Quinault. But does this presence stop at the end of Act III when we move to the realm of the myth of Orpheus? Like Léandre words suggested, this unruly presence of « le peuple » in the Venetian opera house is confirmed by a French witness of the time: « nothing is more singular than the pleasant blessings and ridiculous wishes that the gondoliers, who are on the parterre, make to the good singers at the end of all their scenes. They shout with all their strength: Be blessed! And be blessed the father who bred you! But these acclamations are not always contained in the terms of modesty. These scoundrels say with impunity everything that comes to their minds, being sure to make the assembly laugh, rather than displease it »⁷⁷.

Regnard's indication at the beginning of Act III stipulates: «The Theater represents a Venetian Piazza surrounded by magnificent Palaces, where there are many Canals full of Gondolas. »⁷⁸ The transition between the exterior space of the canals, where the Gondolier's feast took place, to the inside of the opera house is one of the most effective change of sets but is also very informative about the staging. « While the Violins play the entr'acte, we see a theater enclosed by a curtain descend onto the Stage, which covers all we saw before. What remains of the space up to the Orchestra contains many ranks of Loges full of different people seated to see an Opera. »⁷⁹ This didaskalia integrates time, space and most importantly, people. On the *sinfonia* in three movements Campra composed in Italian style for the entr'acte, the space was changing under the eyes of the audience. The set Berain had designed, known to us thank to a drawing by his hand, shows exactly the description by Regnard of these ranks of

⁷⁵ « on doit donner au peuple en ce jour favorable/ un spectacle où d' Orphée on retrace la Fable,/ Un Bal pompeux doit suivre ces plaisirs,/ le tumulte & la nuit serviront nos désirs. » in *Le Carnaval de Venise*, Act III, Scene 6.

⁷⁶ Furetière gives all the depth of the meanings of the world: « Nom collectif. Assemblée de personnes qui habitent un pays, qui compose une nation. [...] Se dit particulièrement des habitants d'une ville. [...] Se dit encore plus particulièrement par opposition à ceux qui sont nobles, riches, ou éclairés. [...] Se dit aussi d'une multitude de gens. » in Furetière, Antoine. *Dictionnaire Universel*, Tome I. 1690.

⁷⁷ « Ceux qui composent la musique de l'opéra s'attachent à faire finir les scenes des principaux acteurs par des airs qui charment et qui enlèvent, afin d'attirer les applaudissements de tout le théâtre. Cela réussit si bien selon leur intention, qu'on n'entend que des *benissimo* de miller voix à la fois; mais rien n'est plus singulier que les plaisantes bénédictions et les souhaits ridicules que les gondoliers, qui sont au parterre, font aux bonnes chanteuses à la fin de toutes leurs scenes. Ils crient de toutes leurs forces: *Sia tu benedetta! Benedetto el padre che te genero!* Mais ces acclamations ne sont pas toujours renfermées dans les termes de la modestie. Ces canailles disent impunément tout ce qui leur vient à l'esprit, étant assurés de faire rire l'assemblée, plutôt que lui déplaire. » in Limojon de Saint-Didier, Alexandre-Toussaint de. *La Ville et la République de Venise*. Paris: L. Billaine, 1680, p. 298.

⁷⁸ « Le Théâtre représente une Place de Venise environnée de Palais magnifiques, où se rendent quantité de Canaux couverts de Gondoles. » in *Le Carnaval de Venise*, Act III, Scene 6.

⁷⁹ « Pendant que les Violons jouent l'entre-Acte, on voit descendre un Théâtre fermé d'une toile, qui occupe toute l'étendue du premier. Ce qui reste d'espace jusqu'à l'Orquestre [sic] contient plusieurs rangs de Loges pleines de différentes personnes placées pour voir un Opera. » in *Le Carnaval de Venise*, Act III, Scene 6.

loge⁸⁰. The question to know if the audience on the drawing, with their long « tabarro », would be eventually figured by real actors or painted like the rest of the set⁸¹, is answered by the Orfeo Stage and the large space in front of it. These are empty on the drawing as it was eventually occupied by stage performers, both the Orfeo cast and audience members, including Léandre and Isabelle. Here again, with this suggested staging, Regnard shows that what he is integrating in his *Carnaval de Venise* is not only an Italian opera but the performance of one in Venice, where gondoliers interacted with opera divas and castrati in the most comical manner.

6.11 French and Venetian balls

In his libretto, Regnard takes great care to insert regularly choreographic sequences, and, to offer a rich diversity destined to raise up a renewed interest in the audience, he is creating situation which are bringing different styles of dance. Behind the prologue, whose dances are in the French style inherited from the Lullian tradition of music and choreography, the following acts shows a great variety of real social situations which in turn bring different styles of dance. In the first act, foreigners perform exotic dances from the nations, followed in the second act by gamblers and players in the scene of Fortune, who give some allegorical dances, in the tradition of the old court ballet. In the last act, popular dances with Venetian gondoliers are followed by grotesque theatrical dances in the *Orfeo*. Following the custom in Venice as well as in Versailles to end the festivities of the carnival with a magnificent masquerade, Regnard and Campra concluded their opera by incorporating a masked ball. And, because the scene of social dance is taking place during a masked ball, it integrates all others: dancers disguises were ranging from all kinds of social categories and were also inspired by the gears of various countries but were also nourished by literature, classic, with numerous references to mythology or modern, with its famous fictional characters⁸². Dancers wearing masks were often making their entrance in the ball as a coherent group introducing themselves with a special dance in accord with their disguised identity.

For the « Dernier Divertissement » of *Le Carnaval de Venise*, « The Stage represents a magnificent Room, prepared to give a Ball. The character of Carnival appears leading with him a company of Masked figures of various Nations ». The foreigners who flooded the city at the beginning of the carnival day meet again in the opera house to finish it with a « *Bal sérieux* ». Guillaume-Louis Pécour, dancing master of the Académie Royale de Musique and choreographer of *Le Carnaval de Venise*, was in charge of organizing the structure of this long dancing sequence. By the choice and the order of these dances, nothing reflected the French

⁸⁰ This design is reproduced in: Campra, André. *Le Carnaval de Venise, Comédie lyrique. Introduction by James R. Anthony, with a section on stage designs and costumes by Jérôme de La Gorce*. Stuyvesant (NY): Pendragon Press, 1989.

⁸¹ For the 2017 production in Boston I first imagined having characters in the auditorium of the theatre we were performing in, and therefore mixing with the present audience. For safety reasons and architectural constraints, I eventually mixed the stage performers with the audience painted on the set.

⁸² To see an example of a compendium of 205 masked ball costumes, see: *Neu-eröffneter Masquen-Saal, oder: Der verkleideten heydnischen Götter, Göttinnen und vergötterter Helden Theatralischer Tempel, darinnen in mehr als 200. Kupfer-Stichen vorgestellt wird, wie solche Gottheiten der Alten, bey jetziger Zeit in Opern, Comädien, Aufzügen und Masqueraden eingekleidet und präsentiert werden können ... Aus allerhand sowohl heydnisch- als christlichen Büchern colligiret, und zu finden bey Johann Messelreuter ...* Bayreuth: Gedruckt bey Joh. Lobern, 1723. See : http://www.slub-dresden.de/sammlungen/digitale-sammlungen/werkansicht/cache.off?tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=57715

court more than this serious ball⁸³, and Pécour was able to use his court knowledge, as he was also « Maître à danser de Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne », as the caption of his new portrait from the time proudly proclaims (Figure 11). It seems that Pécour's dancing-master duties to the Duchess included choreographing her masquerades at court⁸⁴, where he introduced Venetian dances, while *Le Carnaval de Venise* was being performed in Paris. As Dangeau once again witnesses, « Thursday, February 19, 1699, at Marly: There was a masquerade of the wolf's hunt which succeeded very well. There were entrées from Siamese, Basque dances, Venetian dances, and all the prettiest in the world »⁸⁵.



Figure 11 : Guillaume-Louis Pécour (1653–1729)

Louis Pécour Pensionnaire du Roi, Compositeur des ballets de l'Académie Royale de Musique, et Maître à danser de Mad.e la Duchesse de Bourgogne

French etching by François Chéreau l'aîné (1680–1729), after Robert Levrac, dit Tournières (1667–1752).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

This aristocratic ball is interrupted when Carnival, personified in the libretto as an allegorical character, wants « to add to these games a new Dance » and to « double once more » the general jubilation. The stage is then invaded by « Comic masked characters » and « figures of the same spirit ». What did these new masked figures look like? The libretto does not give more details: it is Campra who reveals their identities with a « chaconne » and a specific tune titled « Air des Masques Chinois ». For the connoisseur, these two dances, whose choreographies could be composed by Pécour more freely than the serious ball dances, strongly evoke the distinctive fantasy of Italian theater. The chaconne was a featured element of the French Lullist *tragédies*, but it could also serve to stage comical Italian characters in

⁸³ Harris-Warrick, Rebecca. "Ballroom dancing at the court of Louis XIV" in *Early Music*. Vol. 14, N°1. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 40–49.

⁸⁴ Harris-Warrick, Rebecca and Marsh, Carol G. *Musical Theatre at the Court of Louis XIV "Le Mariage de la Grosse Cathos"*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

⁸⁵ Jeudi 19 Février 1699, à Marly : « Il y eut une mascarade de chasse du loup qui réussit fort bien. Il y eut des entrées de Siamois, des danses de Basques, des danses à la vénitienne, et tout cela le plus joli du monde. Le bal dura jusqu'à 1 heure. » in *Journal du marquis de Dangeau*. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1854-1860, tome 7, p. 29.

comédies-ballets like the famous « Chaconne des Scaramouches, Trivelins et Arlequins » from *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* by Molière and Lully⁸⁶. Was the chaconne of *Le Carnaval de Venise* danced by one of the dancers who specialized in the role of Harlequin⁸⁷? It is almost certain as, like in the Italian tradition, performers would stay faithful to a character, or a comic type, for most of their career. In 1700 during a Chinese masquerade in Marly, « Des Moulins [Dumoulin] of the opera, entertained a lot in a Dance grotesque, representing a Pagode. »⁸⁸ and this may well have been the one of *Carnaval de Venise*.

6.12 World and worldly visions

The importance of the acting of the performers may be a key for understanding the presence of « Masques Chinois » in the following « Air ». The text is clear: these characters are not real Chinese people like we have seen Slaves so far through the piece, but characters disguised in Chinese costumes. The jokes in Regnard's plays, which could be rather tedious when read, give way to fantasy when embodied on stage⁸⁹. His comedies largely exploit the impostures of the servants who pretend to be someone else through disguise⁹⁰; then, like in *Le Carnaval de Venise*, disguises multiply, and the clownish verve grows even more when Regnard introduces these comic characters who are themselves in disguises. On this point the engravings of costumes by Berain provide an explanation. The « Chinois dansant à l'Opera du Carnaval de Venise », is represented with mandarin mustaches, his head dressed with a « parasol », and wears a costume with geometrical patterns reminiscent of the lozenges traditionally associated with the Harlequin costume. Comical Chinese figures, called « Pagodes », were indeed often dancing side by side with ludicrous Italian figures on the stage of the Comédie-Italienne. But more interesting, actors of the Comédie-Italienne were retaining their type character, including their mask and distinctive costumes, even when playing other characters and roles. It is therefore the characters from *commedia dell'arte*, under their « Comic Masks », who dance in this scene, and Pécour had here the opportunity to imagine a

⁸⁶ See: Laurenti, Jean-Noël. «Le contexte des danses d'Arlequin dans les comédies-ballets de Molière» in *Arlequin danseur au tournant du XVIIIe siècle, Atelier-rencontre et recherche Nantes, 14-15 mai 2004. Juin 2005, N°1. Annales de l'Association pour un Centre de Recherche sur les Arts du Spectacle aux XVIIe et XVIIIe s.* Villereau: ACRAS, juin 2005, pp. 78–83. See in the same book: Porot, Bertrand. «Les ressorts du comique musical: les chaconnes d'Arlequin au tournant du XVIIIe siècle», pp. 63–81. See also: Tanguy, Camille. «Les divertissements dansés par des personnages de la commedia dell'arte dans l'opéra-ballet entre 1695 et 1718, l'exemple des *Saisons* et des *Fêtes vénitiennes*», pp. 114–119.

⁸⁷ From 1700, at least, some dancers of the Opera specialize in roles of character, just as the Italian comedians interpreted the same character. The four Dumoulin brothers' careers offer some interesting perspective about roles and styles. See: Harris-Warrick, Rebecca. *Dance and Drama in French Baroque Opera, A History*. Cambridge Studies in Opera. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 387-390.

⁸⁸ « Le 7 Janvier [1700] il y eut un bal à Marly qui commença par un divertissement meslé de Musique et de Danses, dont le titre estoit *Le Roy de la Chine*. Ce Roy y estoit porté dans un Palanquin, & precedé d'une trentaine de Chinois, tant Musiciens chantans, que de Joueurs d'instrumens. *Le Sr des Moulins de l'Opera, y divertit beaucoup dans un Danse grotesque, represent un Pagode.* » in *Mercur Galant, Février 1700*. Paris: au Palais, p. 154.

⁸⁹ Garapon, Robert. *La fantaisie verbale et le comique dans le théâtre français du Moyen Age à la fin du XVIIe siècle*. Paris : Armand Colin, 1957.

⁹⁰ See: Mazouer, Charles, *La théâtre d'Arlequin: comédiens italiens et comédies en France au XVIIe siècle*. Fasano : Schena editore & Paris : presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2002, p. 226.

choreography mixing the French vocabulary of the « Danse Noble » with the grotesque style of Italian pantomime. The *Mercure Galant* gives us a hint of the comic capacity of these choreographies and their presence in the Masquerades created by Pécour for the Duchesse de Bourgogne: « There were, during the three days of each journey, several masquerades every day, all of which had a name and a subject. Thus they could pass for little, very ingenious comedies, represented only by actions and steps ».⁹¹



Figure 12: *Habit de Mandarin Chinois*
French etching by Jean Mariette (1660–1742), after the design of Jean I Berain (1640–1711),
for a masquerade costume for the Duc de Bourgogne (1683–1712).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The dance of the Chinese masks that takes place at the end of the piece is in the style of these « little, very ingenious comedies ». Arlequin is disguised as a « pagode », one of these decorative figures that add fantasy and color to the mystery of unknown cults⁹². The Far East was starting to be in high fashion in Europe at this time⁹³. For his début at the Comédie-Italienne in 1692, Regnard presented *Les Chinois*, in which Arlecchino disguised himself as a

⁹¹ « Il y a eu, pendant les trois jours qu'a duré chaque voyage, plusieurs Mascarades chaque jour, qui toute avaient un nom & un sujet. Ainsi elles pouvaient passer pour de petites Comédies très ingénieuses & représentées seulement par des actions et par des pas. Il y en a eu de toute sortes de caractères, et ce divertissement a été complet, parce qu'outre ces Mascarades il y eu bal tous les jours, & que rien n'a manqué de tout ce qui peut plaire aux yeux, flatter l'oreille & satisfaire le goust » in *Mercure Galant*, Février 1699, Paris: au Palais, pp. 285–286.

⁹² « Les curieux donnent aussi le nom de Pagode aux petites idoles de porcelaine qui viennent de Chine » in Furetière, Antoine. *Dictionnaire universel ... Tome III*. 1690.

⁹³ For an introduction about the vogue of taste for China, see: Jarry, Madeleine. *Chinoiseries, Le rayonnement du goût chinois sur les arts décoratifs des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*. Paris : Office du Livre et Vilo, 1981.

Chinese doctor coming out of a Chinese box followed by Mezztin as a pagode⁹⁴. The taste for China was encouraged by the recent return of the Jesuit Louis-Daniel Lecomte (1655–1728) from his mission in the east. The publication in 1696 of his controversial book about Chinese beliefs soon transformed a scholarly interest into a widespread fashion for *Chinoiserie*.⁹⁵

In 1699, Lecomte became the confessor of the Duchesse de Bourgogne, whose taste for China could already be seen in the gift she received from her husband in December 1698: a luxurious Chinese box containing a tapestry kit⁹⁶. The appearance of a Chinese on the stage of *Le Carnaval de Venise* must have excited the young Duc de Bourgogne, since we know that for the following carnival⁹⁷, during a masked ball at court, the eighteen-year-old grandson of Louis XIV ordered and wore a Chinese costume, designed by Jean Berain⁹⁸ (Figure 12). Maybe the Jesuit had something to do with it as we know that around this date the Duchesse de Bourgogne asked a confessor to design for her a Chinese lady's costume to appear in a ball given in February 1700⁹⁹. While the caption of the engraving by Bonnard showing the costume

⁹⁴ « On apporte un cabinet de la Chine, dans lequel est Arlequin en docteur chinois. » and « Une pagode c'est...une pagode. Que diable voulez-vous que je vous dise. » in *Les Chinois*, Act II, Scene 4. See: *Les Chinois in Œuvres complètes de Regnard, Texte établi par Charles Georges Thomas Garnier*. Paris: E.A. Lequien, 1820, tome sixième, p. 36 and p. 40. *Les Chinois* was created on December 13th, 1692 at the Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne, Rue Mauconseil.

⁹⁵ Lecomte in his *Nouveaux Mémoires sur l'État présent de la Chine*, printed in Paris in 1696, 1697, and 1701 defended the sentiment of the Jesuits that the Chinese have always known and worshiped the true God. But disputes had arisen between the Jesuits and the Society of Foreign Missions (Société des Missions étrangères de Paris), concerning religious ceremonies practiced in China. The Jesuits tolerated them, the missionaries of the Foreign Missions rejected them as idolater. Lecomte developed his ideas in a 1700 letter to the Duc du Maine *Sur les Cérémonies de la Chine*. The directors of the seminaries of the Foreign Missions in Paris referred these *Nouveaux Mémoires* and the letter *Sur les Cérémonies de la Chine* to the Court of Rome and to the Faculty of Theology of Paris, who censured, on October 18th, 1700, nineteen excerpts from both books and condemned most of the propositions as false and erroneous. See: *Louis Lecomte, Un jésuite à Pékin. Nouveaux mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine, 1687–1692, texte établi, annoté et présenté par Frédérique Touboul- Bouyeure*. Paris: Phébus, 1990.

⁹⁶ On the December 8th, 1698, « Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne a fait un présent à Madame la duchesse de Bourgogne, très-galant et très-agréable, d'une cassette de la Chine dans laquelle il y a tout ce qui peut servir aux personnes qui aiment travailler en tapisserie, et au milieu de la cassette une boîte en or avec des diamants, au revers de laquelle il y a le portrait du roi fort bien fait » in *Journal du marquis de Dangeau*. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1854, Tome 6, p. 472.

⁹⁷ Vernet, Thomas. « « Que Mme la duchesse de Bourgogne fasse sa volonté depuis le matin jusqu'au soir ». La duchesse de Bourgogne et les divertissements du carnaval de 1700 » in *Marie-Adélaïde de Savoie (1685–1712). Duchesse de Bourgogne, enfant terrible de Versailles. Etudes sur le XVIII^e siècle*, ed. Fabrice Preyat. Bruxelles: Les éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2014, pp. 215-232. During the 1683 celebration of carnival in Versailles, the Dauphin also worn a costume inspired by a theater play: *La Devineresse*, the play of Donneau de Visé created in 1679. This example shows the use of stage characters as inspiration for disguise and a transition of the same kind may also had prompted the Chinese costume for the Duc de Bourgogne, inspired by the costume of the character played by Arlequin in *Le Carnaval de Venise*. See: *Mercur Galant, Février 1683*, Paris: au Palais, p. 334.

⁹⁸ The drawing by Berain is kept at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Bibliothèque-musée de l'opéra, D216O-7 (78), see it online at : <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb42403784z> (Last accessed: 14 May 2018).

⁹⁹ This ball, given in Paris by Madame de Ponchartrain, was offering a similar program as in *Le Carnaval de Venise* « dans une même soirée, tous les divertissemens que l'on prend ordinairement pendant tout le cours du Carnaval; sçavoir ceux de la Comédie, de la Foire et du Bal. » in *Mercur Galant, Février 1700*. Paris: au Palais, pp. 169-170 (Berain was credited for the designs of this party, see *Mercur*, op. cit. p. 180). « Le jour que Madame la Chancelière [Madame de Ponchartrain] donna le Bal à Madame la Duchesse de *Bourgogne*, cette Princesse avait

for the duke specifies « Habit de Mandarin Chinois », a witness of the feast saw him as a « druid »¹⁰⁰ and that last testimony gives a clue about the spirit of the Air for the character dancing in *Le Carnaval de Venise*. The puzzling alternating structure of the music is following the double characterization: the light Arlequin and the pompous noble Chinese he tries to embody: Druid « derives from the fact that the Druids were formerly the Savants, and the Priests among the Gaul. They were also the Philosophers, Mathematicians, Jurisconsults, Orators, Astrologers, Physicians, and Theologians of the country »¹⁰¹. Ironically, this imposing list from the staid *Dictionnaire universel* compiled by Furetière is basically the same as what Regnard had given to Arlequin as the Chinese doctor in his play *Les Chinois*: « Do you not know that I am philosopher, orator, physician, astrologer, jurisconsult, geographer, logician, barber, shoemaker, apothecary »¹⁰². The new professions added by Regnard to the Arlequin/Chinese doctor list are typical of his dramaturgy, which frequently breaks formality with excess, creating a form of comedy based on the complicity of the character with the audience, a foundation of Italian comedy¹⁰³. With the « Masques Chinois » Regnard pulled out all the stops in his dramaturgy for his opera. *Le Carnaval de Venise* may be his most comprehensive work as it includes not only the acting style of Italian theater—style that the eighteenth century will identify as *commedia dell'arte*—but also its imagination for forms and its freedom of inspiration.

With the treaty of Ryswick in 1697 ending the Nine Years' War, France, having her eye on the Spanish crown, initiated a diplomatic effort to assure peace in Europe. Inspired by the political situation, Campra created a new genre of spectacle with *L'Europe galante*, the first *opéra-ballet*. The marriage of a princess of Savoy to one of his grandsons, the Duc de Bourgogne, was for Louis XIV the first step to renew his relations with Italy, and the young Duchesse de Bourgogne became the center of this « offensive de charme ». Venice was an ally to flatter and

envoyé dès le matin un Carosse à six chevaux à la Maison Professe pour chercher le Père le Conte; que ce Jésuite surpris lui avait demandé en arrivant, par quelle raison elle voulait se confesser dans un tems destiné à toute autre chose, & que le Princesse lui avait dit, non, mon Père, ce n'est pas pour me confesser que je vois ai mandé aujourd'hui; mais afin que vous me dessiniez promptement un habillement de *Chinoise*: je sais que vous avez été à la *Chine*, & je voudrois me masquer ce soir à la manière de Pais-là. Le Confesseur avoua ingénument qu'il avoit eu plus de commerce avec les *Chinois* qu'avec les *Chinoises*, il fallut pourtant qu'il traçât la figure, après quoi on le renvoya [à Paris], & l'on songea à travailler à la *Mascarade*. » in *Lettres historiques et galantes, de deux dames de condition, dont l'une étoit à Paris, & l'autre en Province. Où l'on voit tout ce qui s'est passé de plus particulier, depuis le commencement du siècle jusques à présent; la Relation du Congrès d' Utrecht; celle de la mort du Roi; les Harangues des Seigneurs & Officiers du Parlement. Ouvra Curieux mêlez d'Aventures. Par Madame Dunoyer. Tome premier.* Cologne: Pierre Marteau, 1718, p. 283.

¹⁰⁰ « Le Duc de Bourgogne était en Druide chinois. Il avait une jaquette grise, qui luy venait à mi-jambe; par-dessus cela, un petit manteau venant à la ceinture, bigarrée [sic] de différentes couleurs en losange, comme un habit d'harlequin, lequel couvrait une bosse artificielle. » in « Letter from Daniel Cronström to Nicodème Tessin Le Jeune 19/29 Janvier 1700. N°2 » in Tessin le jeune, Nicodème and Cronström, Daniel. *Correspondance (extraits), Les Relations artistiques entre la France et la Suède, 1693–1718*. Stockholm: AB Egnellska Boktryckeriet, 1964, p. 260.

¹⁰¹ « Ce mot vient de ce que les Druides étoient autrefois les Sçavants, les Prestres & les Sacrificateurs chez les Gaulois. Ils étoient aussi les Philosophes, les Mathématiciens, les Jurisconsultes, les Orateurs, les Astrologues, les Medecins & les Theologiens du pays. » in Furetière, Antoine. *Dictionnaire Universel, Tome I*. 1690.

¹⁰² « Ne savez vous pas que je suis philosophe, orateur, médecin, astrologue, jurisconsulte, geographe, logicien, barbier, cordonnier, apothicaire? En un mot, je suis omnis homo, c'est à dire un homme universel » in *Les Chinois*, Act II, Scene 4. See: *Les Chinois* in *Œuvres complètes de Regnard, Texte établi par Charles Georges Thomas Garnier, tome sixième*. Paris: E.A. Lequien, 1820, pp. 37–38.

¹⁰³ See: Moureau, François. *Dufresny, auteur dramatique, (1657-1724)*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1979.

seduce, and 1699 saw many diplomatic gestures toward the Republic. The masquerades taking place in Versailles during the carnival for the Duchesse de Bourgogne echoed the new *opéra-ballet* created by the Paris Opera: *Le Carnaval de Venise*.

The librettist Regnard, as with his comedies for the Comédie-Française, favored the introduction on stage of characters coming from the theatrical tradition of the Comédie-Italienne in the plot of his *opéra-ballet*. In *Le Carnaval de Venise*, the « serious » characters of this genre—the French and Venetian lovers—became the heroes of the plot, while the « comical » characters—the masked figures from all over the world and social classes—invaded the divertissements. By mixing into a tale set in Venice the serious figures « of various Nations » with the characters of commedia dell'arte, Regnard diplomatically linked here the two traditions, the French and the Italian, and Campra had set it in music of a similar dual inspiration.

The reinterpretation by French art of Italian sources was not limited to the poetic and musical domain but also expressed itself on stage by the casting and with sets, costumes, and dance. Thevenard, the first bass taille of the Paris Opera, likely sung the leading role of Léandre. Berain, the foremost designer at the time, created sets inspired by the city landscape of Venice and designed whimsical costumes, in a style which he also used at the court's masquerades. Dancer and choreographer Pécour, drawing on his experience as the Dancing Master of the Duchesse de Bourgogne and as a Paris Opera veteran, endeavored to showcase the specific talents of opera performers, singers, and dancers, certainly deriving comic effects from their physical skills, whether French or Italian inspired.

For the spectators of opera in 1699, the interest was twofold: to see once again the character types of the commedia dell'arte and to become familiar, in the mirror of the opera stage, with the Venetian manners of their time. *Le Carnaval de Venise* mixes this boisterous Italian theatrical tradition with all the musical sophistications of French opera—chorus, rich orchestration, and dance—to offer a charming yet revealing image of Venice. In their « opera for peace » Regnard and Campra convey a hedonist message, but behind the mask, it is a true makeover of the Venetian Republic that the masked diplomacy of *Le Carnaval de Venise* achieves.

7 Case Studies

These three cases are approached from the point of view of one of the elements of the staging discourse: costumes, sets and machines. Case-study 1 offers an example of the type of investigation envisaged when designing a costume for a Historically Informed staged production. In direct relation with *Acis and Galatea* it is centered on the river gods' theatrical costume in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but reveals a more general method of investigation that is applicable when costuming river gods in other pieces but also other figures. Case-study 2 is dedicated to the performance of *Psiché* in the Drottningholms Slottsteater in 1766 and provides an example of the place of scenery and stage machinery in a period performing space. Case-study 3 is dedicated to the implementation of a flying machines in my recent production of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*.

7.1 River gods theatrical costumes

“That Acis to his lineage should return;
And rowl, among the river Gods, his urn.
Straight issu’d from the stone a stream of blood;
Which lost the purple, mingling with the flood,
Then, like a troubled torrent, it appear’d:
The torrent too, in little space, was clear’d.
The stone was cleft, and through the yawning chink
New reeds arose, on the new river’s brink.
The rock, from out its hollow womb, disclos’d
A sound like water in its course oppos’d,
When (wond’rous to behold), full in the flood,
Up starts a youth, and navel high he stood.
Horns from his temples rise; and either horn
Thick wreaths of reeds (his native growth) adorn.
Were not his stature taller than before,
His bulk augmented, and his beauty more,
His colour blue; for Acis he might pass:
And Acis chang’d into a stream he was,
But mine no more; he rowls along the plains
With rapid motion, and his name retains.”

Ovid. *Metamorphoses*, Book XIII, translated by John Dryden, 1693, republished 1717¹.

In early beliefs water was of godlike nature and, in their anthropomorphic pantheon, Greek and Roman times identified the seas, but also the rivers and springs, as water gods and nymphs. The classical Greek myth of Galatea and Acis, as developed by the Roman poet Ovid, tells the story of Acis’ metamorphose into a stream: Galatea, a nymph of the sea, and the shepherd Acis loved each other but the jealous cyclops Polyphemus hurls a rock at Acis and kills him. With her divine powers Galatea changes the blood pouring from under the boulder into clear water and makes Acis immortal by transforming him into a source and therefore elevates him to a river god. In 1718, Handel composed *Acis and Galatea*, with a libretto by a group of classical inspired poets, most notably Alexander Pope, John Gay and John Hughes. The work was revived on stage several times during the eighteenth century and the water element of the myth must have been represented following the theatre practices and customs of this period. The transformation of Acis is the crowning of the piece and was likely to be represented by a change of costume for the singer: from mortal shepherd to river god.

The French Michel de Pure (1620–1680) in his *Idée des Spectacles*, published in 1668, established the importance of the « règle de convenance des habits », a system of rules for the conception of the stage costumes to guarantee a rich readability, supporting the poetic message

¹ See: Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Translated by John Dryden, and others, edited by Samuel Garth. With an introduction by Garth Tissol. Ware : Wordsworth Editions, 1998. This translation, published by Samuel Garth a year before the creation of *Acis and Galatea*, brings together works by John Dryden, and adds several tales translated by Joseph Addison, Nahum Tate, William Congreve, and Nicholas Rowe, as well as those of ten others including Sir Samuel himself. John Gay, and in a smaller proportion, Alexander Pope also contributed. (Books I and XII translated by Dryden, VIII, X-XI, XIII, and XV, by Dryden and others; II-III, by Addison; IV, by Addison and Laurence Eusden; V, by Arthur Mainwaring; VI, by Samuel Croxall; VII, by Tate and William Stonestreet; IX, by Gay and others; XIV, by Samuel Garth). Dryden already translated the story of Acis in 1693, for his *Examen Poeticum* (Third Miscellany) and this version was used by Garth. There are some striking similarities between the libretto of *Acis and Galatea* and his verses.

of the libretto. In this instruction for the appropriateness of costumes to the purpose of the spectacle, he insists that: « If the clothes are badly organized, it is impossible for the Entrées to express what they must express, and for the Spectator to have the pleasure he could take ».² Unfortunately, no period stage design for Handel's *Acis and Galatea* has been identified so far and to be able to give Acis an appropriate river god costume in a Historically Informed and/or Inspired stage production, one should try, through various European references, to trace the allegorical conventions of the period, conventions being inspired by the classics and present in literature and visual arts. The following essay tries to follow the advices and precepts articulated by Michel de Pure. In one of the rare texts explaining how the costume designer should work, when conceiving, he recommends a research which should include: « To consult at least the scientists, the curious, for Prints or for Medals »³, and, following this precept, this study is based on many visual documents. The first ones correspond to the sources De Pure recommends consulting. Since the antiquity, rivers have been depicted in the form of human shaped gods with special attributes. A few examples of Greco-Roman culture are presented in the first part of this study. During the Baroque period, illustrators of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and painters inspired by his mythological tales were re-using the iconological code established by the Romans and spread the visual elements through Europe with prints. A personal selection of this characterization is presented in the second part.

Transmutation in water occurs in other myths and this liquid element is also presented in a selection of costume designs which offers some alternative details imagined by various costume designers to represent the fluid element. As Joseph Addison noticed in 1712, « OVID [sic] in his *Metamorphosis* [sic], has shewn us how the Imagination may be affected by what is Strange. He describes a Miracle in every Story, and always gives us the Sight of some new Creature at the end of it. His Art consists chiefly in well-timing his Description, before the first Shape is quite worn off, and the new one perfectly finish'd, so that he every where entertain us with something we never saw before, and shews Monster, after Monster, to the end of the Metamorphosis... »⁴. As part of this category of "Monster after Monster", the character of the river god can be found in ballets, operas and masquerades throughout the seventeenth century and eighteenth centuries. To define what the costume of a river god, i.e. Acis, after his metamorphose, could have looked like on stage, a small compendium in the third part presents various costume designs. This selection, presented chronologically, is an extra corpus of references, which takes in consideration the circulation of ideas and style at the time in Europe: made from French documents in public collections and tries to define what constitutes the traits and marks of a river god costume. French theatre costumes, often connected with Royal patronage, were renown all over Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and it seemed fair to base such a case study on a defined corpus of influence. Since designs are from different hands over a rather long period, they should be put mentally in relation with other projects for Decorative arts of the same period to understand better the relationship between project and art work. The relation between the graphic hand of the designer and the costume as a final product will become more accurate: the hand of the

² « si les habits sont mal ordonnez, il est impossible que les Entrées expriment bien ce qu'elles doivent exprimer, & que le Spectateur y ait le plaisir qu'il pourroit prendre » in Pure, Michel de. *Idée des Spectacles Anciens et Nouveaux. Des Anciens {Cirques, Amphitheatres, Theatres, Naumachies, triomphes ; Nouveaux {Comédie, Bal, Mascarades, Carosels, Courses de Bagues & de Testes, Joustes, Exercices & Revues Militaires, Feux d'Artifices, Entrées des Rois & des Reynes*. Paris: Michel Brunet, 1668, p. 287. Permalink: <http://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/15543>

³ « consulter du moins les sçavants, les curieux, en Estampes ou en Medailles » in Pure, Michel de. *Idée des Spectacles Anciens et Nouveaux...* Paris: Michel Brunet, 1668, p. 286.

⁴ Addison. *The Spectator*, N°417, 28 June 1712.

artist used the style of his time to project a reality, and renderings of convention, as the design was to be read and executed by various craftsmen.

A conclusion is presented in the form of a list, which could take easily the shape of a Memory map, as an attempt to make a synthesis to use when creating a historically informed design for the character of a river god. By assimilating twelve fundamental elements to have in mind when designing this specific theatrical costume, and by integrating specifics about the body of the performer, the depiction of a river god would be historically accurate.

7.1.1 The definition of an iconic figure

The idea of humanizing the rivers dates back to antiquity. Virgil describing the Tiber wrote in the *Aeneid*: « Then, thro' the shadows of the poplar wood, / Arose the father of the Roman flood;/ An azure robe was o'er his body spread, / A wreath of shady reeds adorn'd his head».⁵ Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* also mentions the reeds in his depiction of the river god Achelous « Whence thus the Calydonian stream reply'd, / With twining reeds his careless tresses ty'd »⁶. These textual evidences are corroborated by abundant visual works. Hereafter examples are being presented, taken from the Roman arts of mosaic, sculpture and painting.



Figure 1: *The river Ladon and the nymph Psanis*. Imperial Roman mosaic, ca 250 - 275 AD. Antakya, Turkey, Antakya Museum.

The Roman mosaic shown on Figure 1 contains a great number of figurative symbols and is a good example of how Greco-Roman art sets up the iconological form. It depicts a river god as a half naked figure with an open vessel from which water flows. Besides its linear and polychrome precision, this work is also exemplary because the identity of the gods as rivers is confirmed by the text inscribed next to them⁷. The river god on the left is labelled as Ladon. Ladon is a known river of north-eastern Arkadia, in the Peloponnesus (southern Greece) but it was also believed to flow near Daphne, the Syrian town where the mosaic was found. The river-god Ladon is here represented opposite Psanis (or Psalis) a nymph of an Arkadian spring who, in ancient belief, may have been the wife of Ladon. Psanis is considered as one of the *Pegaeae*, a type of naiads that lived in springs. They were often considered relatives of the river gods *Potamoi*, thus establishing a mythological relationship between a river itself and its springs.

⁵ *The Aeneid* by Virgil (Book VIII, Verses 31-34) translated by Dryden, 1697.

⁶ *Metamorphoses* by Ovid (Book IX, verse 3) translated by John Gay, 1717, See note 1.

⁷ « The Ladon river, according to Syrian sources, flowed near the famed Temple of Apollo at Daphne. » in Cimok, Fatih. *Antioch Mosaics*. New York: Penguin, 2000, p. 21. This book includes the most important Antioch mosaic pavements displayed in the Hatay Archaeological Museum at Antakya, Turkey, seventeen different institutions in the USA and the Louvre. The mosaics were brought to light in and around Antioch on the Orantes (Antakya), Seleucia Pieria (Cevlik) and Daphne (Defne) in 1932–1937.

The bearded god, half naked, is crowned with reeds, and holds a horn of plenty. The cornucopia is overflowing with water while the nymph, also bare-chested, is resting on an urn pouring water and holding a reed. Although it is difficult to trace the oldest example of such portrayal, we will see these two attributes, the flooding urn and the cornucopia, alternate in depictions of river gods.



Figure 2: River god, fresco from Pompeii, Campania, Italy, Roman Civilization, 1st century AD.
Paris, Musée du Louvre.

Coming from a Pompeian fresco, the painting of Figure 2 shows an unidentified river under the appearance of an old man with a short grey beard. The reclining position leaning on an urn as an alternative to the cornucopia has become typical to indicate the source of the river. The crown of reed is echoed by the long one the god is holding in his right hand. This vegetal attribute, maybe because of the difficulty to treat it in three dimensions or the fragility of its confection, seems not to be found in Greco-Roman sculpture and will be replaced in the Baroque period by an oar, which also indicates that the river is navigable, as clearly indicated in 1645 by Cesare Ripa⁸. For example, when restoring the famous Roman statue of the Tiber, the sculptors of the eighteenth century gave an oar to the river god, but nothing indicates for sure that the god was holding one in the original setting. On the etching made by François Perrier (1590–1650) prior the restoration, the river god (Figure 3) has nothing in his hand, although the closed fist suggests he was holding something⁹. Like in the Fountain of the Nile (Figure 4), it may have been a reed. Nevertheless, the attribution of the oar seems only to be present since the late renaissance.¹⁰

⁸ Ripa, Cesare. *Iconologia*, 1645, p. 218: « Il remo dimostra esser fiume navigabile, & comodo all mercantile ».

⁹ For other designs of period witnesses see the one of Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617), kept by the Teylers Museum in Haarlem. His designs show before their restoration, in the years 1590–1591, the roman statues of the Nile and the Tiber, unearthed in 1512.

¹⁰ Tervarent, Guy de. *Attributs et symboles de l'art profane : Dictionnaire d'un langage perdu (1450–1600)*. Paris : Droz, 1997, p. 359.



Figure 3: 1638, *Le Tibre*, French etching by François Perrier (ca 1590–1650), from *Segmenta nobilium signorum e statnaru[m]*. Rome and Paris: chez de Poilly, 1638.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

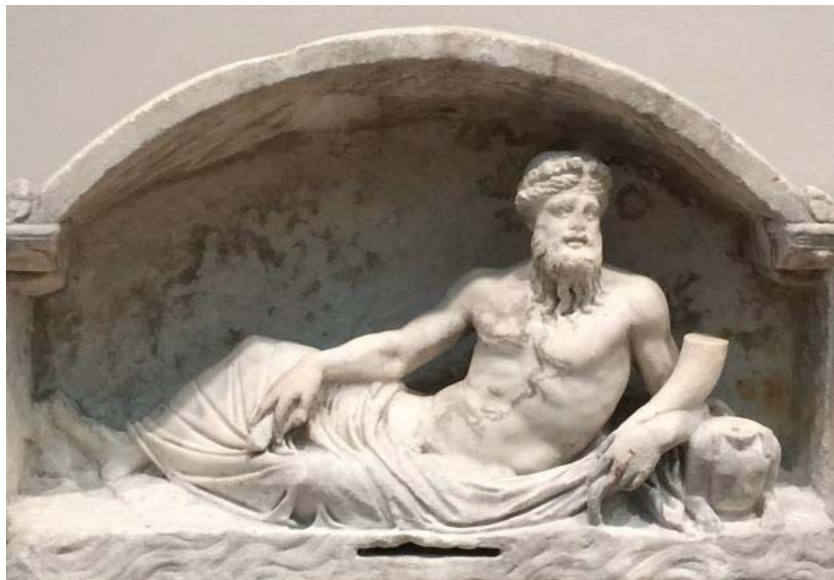


Figure 4: Fountain basin with a figure of the Nile, Roman Imperial Period, 98–138 AD.
(Photography: Gilbert Blin).
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts.

A remarkable sculpture kept in the Museum of Fine Arts of Boston shows a bearded river god who appears with wreathed hair swept back in a bun by a small crown (Figure 4)¹¹. He is in the nude apart from a cloak draped over his legs and holding a horn in his left hand. As the top is missing, it could have been filled with fruits as a cornucopia, or with water as depicted on the mosaic of Daphne (Figure 1). The right hand holds the remaining part of a stick, which could have been a reed or an oar, but as this figurative part is absent, the attribute could have been of a different nature. The god's left elbow reclines against a figure recognizable as a sphinx even if the head is missing, an Egyptian feature which suggests the identification with the Nile. Since early times, the Nile was represented as a river god of robust masculine

¹¹ <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/fountain-basin-with-a-reclining-river-god-337606>

form¹². The fertility of the mighty river, the effect of its famous flooding, is made visible by the cornucopia, a figure of abundance. Water was present in its image and reality: the god is surrounded by sculpted floating water and a slot is open beneath him where real water was flowing from. This water was received in a first basin which overflows in a second one: a simple but clear evocation of the flooding of the Nile.

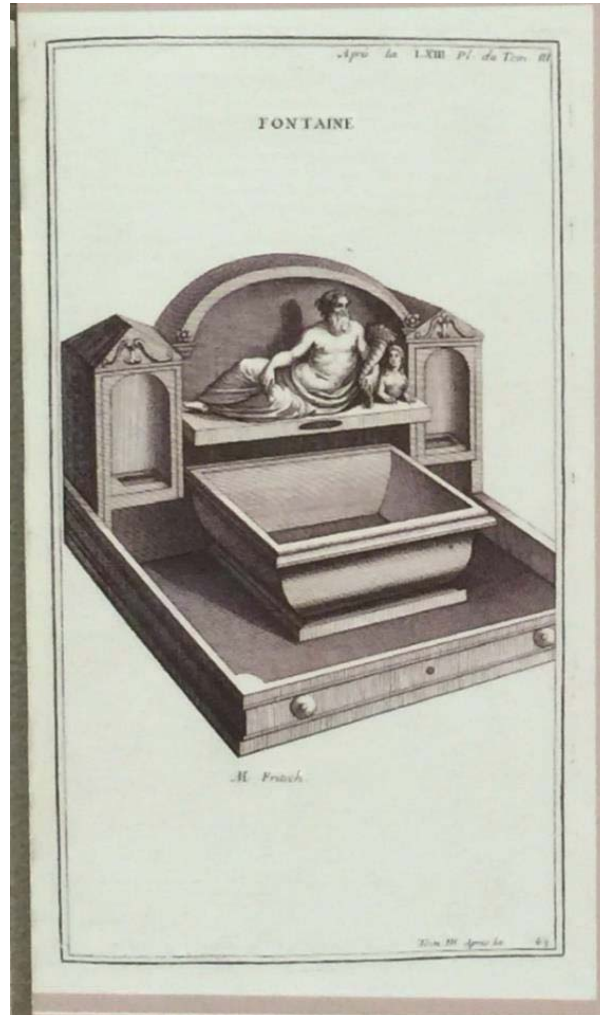


Figure 5: *Fontaine* in Montfaucon, Bernard de. *Supplément au livre de L'antiquité expliquée et illustrée en figures*. Tome III, 1724. Liv VII, Plate N° 63, after p. 168. Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The sculpture of a reclining river god kept in Boston is indeed part of a fountain believed to be designed as an ornament for the atrium of a villa¹³. Known in the late seventeenth century this fountain was drawn by M. Fritsch (?-?) for Bernard de Montfaucon (1655–1741) in his *L'antiquité expliquée et illustrée en figures*. Its engraving (Figure 5) is presented

¹² Penders, Stefan M. H. J. “Imperial Waters, Roman river god art in context”, Mphil Ancient History thesis, Leiden University, 2012, pp. 6 and 7.

¹³ Other examples of Roman fountains can be found in Morton, Henri Volam. *The Waters of Rome, with 49 colour photographs by Mario Carrieri and other illustrations*. London : The Connoisseur and Michael Joseph, 1966.

in the *Supplément* which was published in 1724¹⁴. Montfaucon describes the fountain by emphasizing how the treatment is exemplary of other representations of river gods: « The old man, half lying, is in a kind of cave, holding the cornucopia in one arm, and some fruits in the other. These half-lying old men were the ancient symbol of the rivers, as we have seen so many times; so this could be a river or a river represented here in its source ».¹⁵



Figure 6: 1638, *Le Nil*, French etching by François Perrier (ca 1590– 650), from *Segmenta nobilium signorum e statuaru[m]*. Rome and Paris: chez de Poilly, 1638. Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The presence of the cornucopia and of the sphinx can be found on one of the most famous Roman sculptures of a river god: the Vatican Nile, itself being probably a copy of a Hellenistic statue —Alexandrian in origin— which was discovered in the early sixteenth century during excavations in Rome.¹⁶ Numerous engravings showing the statue kept in the Vatican made it famous, hence its name, notably the engraving of François Perrier (Figure 6), executed before its restoration of 1774. Many copies of the statue, some of which were completed with the missing parts, adorned subsequently royal gardens and appear in the collections of the baroque era. The ideas of power and wealth are dominant, the latter notably signaled by children, supposed to symbolize the flooding of the Nile¹⁷. Pliny the Elder (23–79 AD) mentions the original black basalt sculpture in Rome in his *Natural History* explaining the signification of the sixteen babies surrounding the river god: « No larger specimen of this stone has ever been found than that dedicated by the emperor Vespasian in the temple of Peace, the subject of

¹⁴ Montfaucon, Bernard de. *Supplément au livre de L'antiquité expliquée et illustrée en figures*. Tome III, 1724. Liv VII, Plate N° 63, after p. 168.

¹⁵ « Le vieillard, couché sur son séant, est dans une espèce d'ancre, tenant la corne d'abondance sur un bras, et de l'autre quelques fruits. Ces vieillards à demi couchés étoient l'ancien symbole des fleuves, comme on a vu tant de fois ; ainsi ce pourroit bien être quelque fleuve ou quelque rivière représentée ici dans sa source. » in Montfaucon, Bernard de. *Supplément au livre de L'antiquité* Tome III, 1724. Liv VII, p. 168.

¹⁶ Draper, James David. "The River Nile, a Giovanni Volpato Masterwork." in *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, Vol. 37. New York: 2002.

¹⁷ In his 1647 *The finding of Moses* (Paris, Musée de Louvre) and his *The exposition of Moses* (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum) of the same period, Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) integrated this figure of the Nile but omitted the children.

which is the Nile, with sixteen of the river god's children playing around him, these denoting the number of cubits reached by the river in flood at its highest desirable level».¹⁸ This number represents the ideal height to which the Nile River was rising annually, and thereby was assuring abundant fertility in Lower Egypt.

7.1.2 The baroque characterization of the figure of the river god

During the Renaissance the river gods re-appear in many works of art inspired by the classical mythology. The first edition of Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* was printed without illustrations in 1593 but numerous subsequent editions were published with woodcuts and engravings. To embody various concepts, Ripa proposed for each of them a verbal description of the human allegory by giving the type of its clothing and its various symbolic paraphernalia. He does so along with the reasons why these were chosen, reasons often supported by references to classical and modern literature. The *Iconologia overo Descrittione Dell'imagini Universali cavate dall'Antichità et da altri luoghi* was a highly influential book based on Egyptian, Greek and Roman emblematic representations. The book was used by orators, artists, poets and costume designers to give substance to qualities such as virtues, vices, passions, arts and sciences, and was extremely influential in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the Italian edition of 1645, Ripa devotes a full chapter to "Rivers and first The Tiber", although without any illustration¹⁹. After quoting Virgil's description of the Tiber's crown of reeds in *The Aeneid*, Ripa adds simply « This crown of reeds that Virgil gives him suits all rivers, because this plant easily grows in wetlands ».²⁰ The iconological fortune of this treatment dominates the pictorial allegories of the Baroque era. I present here a quick overview, taking examples showing the variety of the presence of the river god figure.

A painting of 1615 by Rubens (1577–1640) is a good example of the use of these allegorical features, and their variations at the beginning of the seventeenth century to create possible distinctions in identity. Long thought as an allegory of the four continents, with the interpretation then primarily based on the four female characters, the painting of Rubens, kept in Vienna, is today rightly entitled *The Rivers*. It may be either an allegory of the old world showing the four main rivers of the ancient world, or what Christian exegesis calls the "rivers of paradise"²¹. The actual subject matter of the painting is confirmed by the printed title of the engraving of 1786 presented here (Figure 7) and which was executed when the painting, although then attributed to Martin de Vos, was hung in Paris: "Les Fleuves"²².

¹⁸ Pliny. *Natural History*, BOOK XXXVI, Alinea XI. (Accessed 11 January 2016). <http://www.masseiana.org/pliny.htm#BOOK XXXVI>

¹⁹ « Fiumi, et prima Tevere » in Ripa, Cesare. *Iconologia*. Venetia: 1645, p. 218.

²⁰ « La ghirlanda di canna che gli dà Virgilio, conviene à tutti I fiumi, perche facilmente nascono I luoghi acquosi » in Ripa, Cesare. *Iconologia*. Venetia: 1645, p. 218.

²¹ See McGrath, Elisabeth. "River-gods, Sources and the Mystery of the Nile in Rubens' Four Rivers in Vienna" in *Die Malerei Antwerpen-Gattungen, Meister Wirkungen* (International Kolloquium, Wien 1993). Cologne: Verlag Locher GmbH, 1994, pp. 72–82.

²² « Peint par Martin de Vos, Gravé par Delongueille, Grav.r du Roy/Les Fleuves/ De la Galerie du Palais Royal. /École Flamande. /Ile tableau de Martin de Vos. /Peint sur Toile, ayant de hauteur 6 pieds 11 pouces, sur 8 pieds 8 pouces de Large./ Ce tableau représente les principaux Fleuves de l'Asie et de l'Afrique avec des Nayades. Le Nil est le seul qui soit caractérisé d'une manière distincte, il est assis sur le bord du Rivage, vu par



Figure 7: 1615, *Les Fleuves*, etching by Joseph de Longueil (1730–1792) after Rubens (attributed in the past to Maarten De Vos (1532–1603)) from *Galerie du Palais Royal*, 1786. Collection of Gilbert Blin.

On the foreground the river Nile is easily identifiable by the crocodile as the Ganges may be by the tiger with the pups sucking its milk. On the second plan one can see two characters representing the Euphrates and the Tigris, the two great rivers that define Mesopotamia; while one of them seems sleepy, resting his head on the palm of his hand, maybe a position suggesting the slow course of the Euphrates, the other -The Tigris - holds an oar, showing its navigability. The Ancient Greek form Tigris (Τίγρις) meaning "tiger", if treated as Greek) was adapted from Old Persian (Tigrā). The original Sumerian name of the Tigris alludes to "running water", which can be interpreted as "the swift river", contrasted to its neighbour, the Euphrates, whose leisurely pace caused it to deposit more silt and build up a higher bed than the Tigris. All river gods are crowned by Rubens with reeds and, in the painting, draped with blue fabric. This color distinguishes them from the four female characters draped in red, whose identity is clearly of a different status than the river gods. Red is surprising, but it was already the color of the drape of the river Psanis on the Roman mosaic discussed earlier (Figure 1). The French comment under the etching identifies them clearly as « Nayades », and the colored woman in the arms of the Nile is called a "Nayade moresque", an interpretation which is supported by the pearls which adorn the black beauty and the woman behind her.

le dos, un bras appuyé sur un vase et de l'autre soutient une Nayade moresque qui se détourne. En dessous de lui on voit des enfans qui jouent avec un crocodile et qui paroissent l'animer contre une lionne qui allaite ses petits. Ce tableau forme deux groupes de figures dont les oppositions donnent lieu à un effet très piquant. L'on voit ici comme dans tous les ouvrages de ce maître cette grande manière qu'il avait prise dans l'École de Rubens son maître. La couleur en est belle et rigoureuse. La touche libre et moelleuse, et la lionne sur-tout est d'une grande beauté. La partie du clair obscur y est savamment ménagé et produit un effet très harmonieux. /Ce tableau est bien conservé. » in *Galerie Du Palais Royal. Gravée d'après les tableaux des différentes écoles qui la composent. Avec un abrégé de la vie des peintres et une description historique de chaque tableau par Mr l'abbé de Fontenai. Dédicée à S.A.S. Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans, Premier Prince du Sang, par J. Couché Graveur de son Cabinet.* Paris: J. Couche, 1786.



Figure 8: 1637, « La Thessalie », etching by Jaspar Isaac (1585?–1654), from *Les Images ou Tableaux de Platte-Peinture des deux Philostrates Sophistes mis en français par Blaise de Vigenere bourbonnois enrichis d'arguments et d'annotation...* Paris : Guillemot, 1637. Collection of Gilbert Blin.

In 1637, the book entitled *Les Images ou Tableaux de Platte-Peinture...* inherits the composite style of Renaissance art of showing on the same picture different tales²³. The book is a compendium of Greco-Roman myths presented in text and pictures. The plate illustrating Thessaly, the part of Greece where many myths took place, shows in the foreground the river god Peneus which flows in this region (Figure 8)²⁴. The figure displays firmly the two essential attributes of the classical river god as found in Roman art: a naked male god crowned with water plants and resting on an urn. The river god is using an oar, maybe to move the raft of reeds on the water. Both the oar and the urn, treated with the same level of decorative and therefore cultural refinement, contrast with the natural nudity of the river god and bring the character a step further away from “reality” (Figure 8B). This decorative treatment of the attributes and the body will be extended to the costumes of the river god by designers of the

²³ This coexistence in the same picture, of different tales, is a variation on the convention coming from the Middle Ages showing different episodes of the same story on the same image. (A convention still used in 1637 in Florence in the engravings of *Le Nozze degli Dei*). I have been using this concept in my production of *Orfeo* by Monteverdi, where the staging was integrating some events happening at the same moment in different locations on the stage: for example, the death of Euridice is happening during the celebrations of the beginning of Act II and is shown on a part of the stage. (This double action was also allowing a new depth to the character of Messagiera, who we saw being a witness of the death, before hearing her narrating it.)

²⁴ French etching by Jaspar Isaac (1585?–1654) from *Les Images ou Tableaux de Platte-Peinture des deux Philostrates Sophistes mis en français par Blaise de Vigenere bourbonnois enrichis d'arguments et d'annotation... et représentez en taille douce en cette nouvelle edition avec des épigrammes sur chacun d'iceux par Thomas Artus sieur d'Embry*. Paris : Guillemot, 1637.

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The stage appearance will articulate these three fundamental classical elements: nudity, water, and reeds through lines, patterns and colors.



Figure 8B: 1637« La Thessalie » detail of a French etching by Jaspar Isaac (1585?–1654) from *Les Images ou Tableaux de Platte-Peinture des deux Philostrates Sophistes mis en français par Blaise de Vigenere bourbonnois enrichis d'arguments et d'annotation...* Paris : Guillemot, 1637.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Beginning with the Renaissance, illustrated editions of Ovid have been showing the numerous rivers which act in the various tales in the shapes of river gods. In a series of etchings which does not seem to belong to any edition of the Ovidian text, although depicting some *Metamorphoses*²⁵, the German artist Johanna Sybilla Küsel Krausen (c.1650–1717) shows the legend of Pan and Syrinx (Figure 9)²⁶. Syrinx was a nymph of the river Ladon pursued by the god Pan. To avoid his amorous embrace, as she was a follower of Diana and dedicated to virginity, she was transformed into a reed plant by the other river nymphs. Pan discovered that when he sighed, the air passing through the reeds produced a pleasant melody. He thought to assemble the reeds with wax to make the panpipes, to which he gave the name of syrinx. This tale is the poetic reason why recorders are often used by composers during the baroque period to write for scenes where river gods and/or water nymphs are present. The reeds acquire by their double, simply visual and musical, presence then a new, almost mystical, meaning thanks to the evocation of the metamorphoses of Syrinx in reeds and the second transformation of these reeds in panpipes.

²⁵ I was not able to trace an Ovidian edition to which these four original etchings could directly relate. The three other stories illustrated in this series by Johanna Sybilla Krausen, born Johanna Sibylla Küsel, (c.1650 – 1717) are: Apollo watching king Admeto's life stock, Hercules slaughtering the cows of the island of Kos and Apollo judging the Pierides. The German text under the Pan and Syrinx's refers to the construction of the flute in the Ovidian text: « Mercurus, um den Argus um so viel desto eher einzuschäffern, erzählte demselben, wie die Flöte sey erfunden worden; daher er ihm die Begebenheit vorbrachte, wie der Pan sich in die Nympe Zyrinx verliebet, die hernach in ein Rohr verwandelt worden: aus welchem derselbe die erste Flöte gemacht.» : « Mercury, in order to put Argus to sleep as soon as possible, told him the story of how the flute was invented: thus, he told him how Pan fell in love with the nymph Syrinx who then was transformed into hollow water reeds, out of which he made the first flute. » Thanks to Matthias Zins for his help with the translation.

²⁶ See: Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book I, Verses 625–724.



Figure 9: *Pan and Syrinx*, etching by Johanna Sybilla Krausen, born Küsel (c.1650–1717).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Krausen shows Ladon as a naked god, with his urn and his oar, crowned with reeds (Figure 9B). His seating position contrasts with earlier lying positions of river gods and maybe this was an attempt of Krausen Küsel to follow Ovid's characterization of Ladon as "placid", as she also indicates in the calm surface of the water course.



Figure 9B: Ladon, detail from *Pan & Syrinx*,
etching by Johanna Sybilla Krausen, born Küsel (c.1650–1717).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

By the mid-seventeenth century the convention of the depiction of a river under the shape of a human body starts to be well established and the knowledge of its symbolism allows it to be used as an emblem. Since the Roman time, its function was often to embody a place, and the river god is still used during the Baroque period in a way of identification for a geographical point²⁷. But the reverse is also possible, and the presence of a town may lead to

²⁷ « Ainsi, les civilisations du Nord peuvent se rapprocher de celles du Sud par des traits communs et une sacralisation progressive des eux. Sources, fontaines, puits des villages sont encore liés à un culte. Dans les

identify the river. There are many examples of this convention, but the custom is especially significant in two decorative arts: the designers of the medal and the book frontispiece, by associating different Ripa's precepts, elaborate more content, by creating a grammar of the images, like the *Ballet de Cour* does.

Vis-à-vis the medals, the presence of river gods shows that the symbolization, being rather simple and economical with elements, is suitable to the small space the face of a medal offers. The numismatics record many medals where the convention to describe a real river is used. An exemplary situation is when the event the medal celebrates took place next to a river. When the river god is associated to another allegory showing a town, the viewer gains a geographical mnemonic support. This idea of localization is present in a French medal coined in 1670 to commemorate the "Embellissement & agrandissement de Paris"²⁸. It displays in the background the two scaled projects for the arches of the Porte Saint Martin and of the Porte Saint Denis on a kind of river bank made of stones. In the middle a seated figure representing the city, crowned with its walls, is holding on a left hand a ship and on her right a horn of plenty. Her left foot is supported by an urn sprouting water, the urn is presented by a reclining figure of a naked man with floating beard and locks: it is the river god of the Seine whose waters occupy the length of the composition. The figure of the woman is identified by the word "Lutetia".²⁹ After favorizing the existence of Paris, the river Seine was still a key to its subsistence in the seventeenth century and the capital's growth was depending of its river.



Figure10: Engraving after Sébastien Le Clerc (1637–1714), of the 1670 Medal *Ornata & ampliata urbe Lutetia*, from *Recueil Des Portraits Des Hommes Illustres*, 1786. Collection of Gilbert Blin.

campagnes, il n'y a pas d'incompatibilité forte entre l'habitat concerné et la présence de lieux aquatiques sacralisés. » See : « l'eau et ses usages » in Roche, Daniel. *Histoire des choses banales, Naissance de la consommation, XVIIe-XIXe siècles*. Paris: Fayard, 1997, pp. 151–182.

²⁸ Lambert, Claude-François. *Histoire littéraire du règne de Louis XIV dédiée au Roy. par M. l'Abbé Lambert. Tome Troisième*. Paris: Prault, 1751, p. 372 and p. 373.

²⁹ *Recueil Des Portraits Des Hommes Illustres dont il est fait mention dans l'Histoire de France commencée par MM. Velly & Villaret & continuée par M. l'Abbé Farnier. Tome VI, Contentant la suite du Regne de Louis XIV, & un Supplément pour différens Regnes*. Paris: Nyon l'aîné, 1786, Plate of p. 42. The motto of Paris, *Fluctuat nec mergitur*, is translated « She[the city] is tossed by the waves but does not sink ». Used since at least 1358 by the city of Paris, this motto is present in the city coat of arms depicting a ship floating on a rough sea. Both motto and arms have their origins in the river Seine boatsman's corporation: this guild ruled the city's trade as early as the Roman era.

The relation between a river and a city is also emphasized in the frontispiece of a book, designed the same year as the French medal and published in Amsterdam in 1671, devoted to the *Ystroom*³⁰. Through the eyes of a contemporary, the long poem of 4000 verses gives a picture of the prosperity of Amsterdam in relation with this water wonder. In a large allegory, Joannes Antonides van der Goes (1647–1684) shows the IJ at the mythical nuptials of Peleus and Thetis where the IJ, then considered as a river, is assigned a more important place than the Thames, the Ebro and the Seine, which leads to a violent quarrel, filled with contemporary political allusions. As shown on Figure 11, The engraving for the book, designed in 1670³¹ by Romeyn de Hoog (1646–1708), shows the IJ, and the city of Amsterdam, under the figure of a woman which is in a comparable position as the French medal depicting the Seine and Paris the same year. But, due to the medium, the pictorial treatment is at the opposite. The engraving is reproduced in the 1685 edition of the poetic works of Joannes Antonides van der Goes and I choose to present this edition, due to its lavish coloring³². The great ornate details, that the coloring of a copy of this edition kept in the collections of the Leiden University³³, emphasize an idea of opulence. The river god is shown bare torso, draped in blue, with a beautiful long undulating beard. He has an elaborate headset, with golden shells and green water plants, and as expected, he is resting on a (golden) urn and holds a (red) oar.

Since the start of the printing history, the custom was to present an elaborate frontispiece usually connected with the subject of the book and often to give keys about the way the subject was addressed by the author of the text, and this book is exemplary of this treatment. On another frontispiece (Figure 12) of a book celebrating the glory of the city of Amsterdam published in the middle of the eighteenth century, the focus has changed: the river god of the IJ, with the one of the Amstel³⁴, is in the background. They leave places to representatives of the various nations who came to offer their goods to the city, seated on a throne: an evocation of the faraway regions that brought Amsterdam its wealth. The smallest human figures of the whole composition and treated almost in shadows, the two river gods are facing each other alluding to the shape of a port: one of them, the one closer to the figure of Amsterdam, waves his oar in a gesture of triumph. Like in the 1670 engraving of Romeyn de Hoog, the two figures open to the sea where ships are sailing back to the city (Figure 12B).

³⁰ Goes, Joannis Antonides van der. *De Ystroom*. Amsterdam: Pieter Arentsz, 1671. On line at: <http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/Dutch/Renaissance/AntonidesGedichten1685.html#Ystroom> (Accessed 5 December 2017).

³¹ The engraving is signed and dated lower corner right.

³² Goes, Joannes Antonides van der. *Gedichten*. Amsterdam: Jan Rieuwertsz., Pieter Arentsz., en Albert Magnus, 1685.

³³ For another colouring and further perspective about the colouring of engravings during this period, see: Goedings, Truusje. *'Afsetter en meester-afsetters'*. *De kunst van het kleuren 1480-1720*. Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2015, p. 145.

³⁴ The two river gods were also present on maps like the one published by Hendrik de Leth, between 1736–1737, see: Hameleers, Marc. *Kaarten van Amsterdam 1538-1865*. Bussum: Thoth Uitgeverij, 2013, pp. 228–223, nr. 114.



Figure11: *Amsterdam*, Allegorical title page by Romeyn de Hoog (1646–1708) from the book of Joannes Antonides van der Goes (1647–1684) *De Ystroom*.
Leiden, Leiden University, Bibliotheca Thysiana.



Figure12B: *Amsterdam*, Allegorical title by Reinier Vinkeles (1741–1816), after Cornelis Ploos van Amstel (1726–1798) from the book of Jan Wagenaar (1709–1773) *Amsterdam, in zyne opkomst, aanwas, geschiedenissen, voorregten, koophandel, gebouwen, kerkenstaat, schoolen, schutterye, gilden en regeeringe*.
Amsterdam: I[saac]. Tirion/Yntema & Tieboel, 1760 to 1767.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.



Figure12: *Amsterdam*, Allegorical title by Reinier Vinkeles (1741–1816), after Cornelis Ploos van Amstel (1726–1798) from the book of Jan Wagenaar (1709–1773) *Amsterdam, in zyne opkomst, aanwas, geschiedenissen, voorregten, koophandel, gebouwen, kerkenstaat, schoolen, schutterye, gilden en regeeringe*. Amsterdam: I[saac]. Tirion/Yntema & Tieboel, 1760 to 1767.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

7.1.3 Costume designs for water on stage

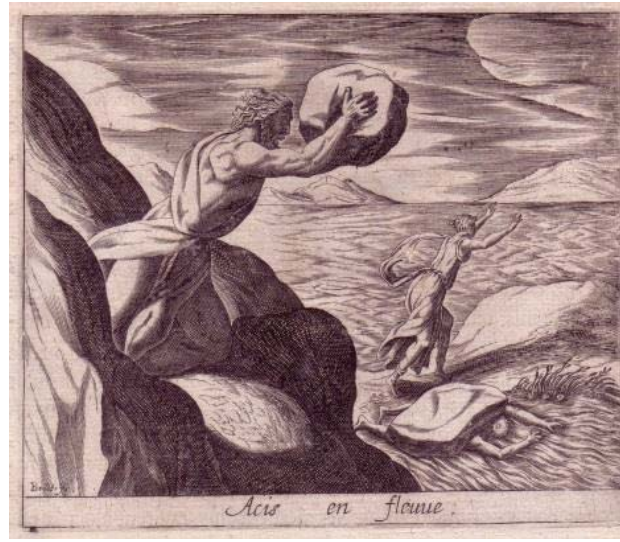


Figure 13 : « Acis en fleuve », French etching by Isaac Briot (1585–1670), after illustration by Jean Mathieu (1590–1672) for Nicholas Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide, Traduites en Prose François, et de nouveau soigneusement revues, corrigées en infinis endroits, et enrichies de figures a chacune Fable. Avec XV. Discours Contenant l'Explication Morale et Historique...* Paris : 1619, p. 385.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

In the myth of Acis the blood of the shepherd crushed under a boulder is changed by Galatea in crystalline water. This transmutation is suggested on early illustrations of Ovid's work, which often shows the shepherd after his death with blood/water coming out of his body (Figure 13). The black and white nature of engraving adds an extra dimension to the depiction of Acis' metamorphoses, as the looker can not make up his mind about the nature of the liquid pouring out of Acis' body: is it still blood or is it already water? A conundrum the painting must answer because of the obligation it has to the choice of a color for the fluid, which may explain the rarity of this subject in the art of this period.

Rare indeed, are the painted works showing the actual metamorphoses of "Acis en Fleuve"; even rarer the ones showing the change of blood in water. In *The Triumph of Galatea*, related directly to Handel's circle, Luca Giordano (1634–1705)³⁵ offers a representation of Acis as river god/water deity by showing Acis right after his metamorphoses (Figure 14). The idea of sprouting water coming from Acis's blood is depicted by Giordano as jets of water are shown coming out of his head and his nipples: the body generates the fluid.

³⁵ Dated between 1675 and 1677, this version is in The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg.



Figure 14: Between 1675 and 1677, *The Triumph of Galatea* by Luca Giordano (1634–1705), Saint Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum.

By the treatment in black and white inherent to the art of the engraving, the ambiguity water/blood is restored on the engraving by Jacques Firmin Beauvarlet (1731–1797) published around 1761–1762 and renamed *Acis et Galathée* (Figure 14B). This attempt to isolate the moment of the metamorphoses in its “out of time” essence, was more difficult to condense on a stage costume but there are few examples of this attempt. With some projects for costumes representing water, these designs for river gods are interesting because they all try to articulate the human shape with the liquid element, itself symbolized by the costume.



Figure 14B: ca 1761, *Acis et Galathée*, etching by Jacques Firmin Beauvarlet (1731–1797) after Luca Giordano (1634–1705), *The Triumph of Galatea*. Poland, Private Collection.

On stage, the moment of the metamorphoses, in its “out of time” essence and added to the fluid nature of both water and blood, was more difficult to represent, but there are few examples showing an attempt to depict water. I present here a selection of costumes which

integrate directly the idea of the liquid element in their design. It is not surprising that they are all found in the genre of the *Ballet de Cour* or conceived for Masquerades, as both events were easily merging during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These costumes have often to describe a concept, an allegory, or an idea by themselves, that the body of the masker/dancer, by its regulated movement, gave the value of a life entity.

Paradoxically, no clear depiction of water seems to be present in the costume for the character of the “Esprit aquatique” (Aquatic spirit) coming from a French court ballet, which was danced on the 29th of January 1617 at the Louvre palace in Paris. The argument, chosen by king Louis XIII (1601–1643) himself for the first royal ballet of the reign, is taken from *La Gerusalemme liberata* of Torquato Tasso (1544–1595). The brave Christian knight Renault has been seduced by the enchantments of the magician Armide who bewitched him into her enchanted gardens, before he is made free by Frankish king Godefroy. The libretto edited by Pierre Ballard, *Discours au vray du ballet dansé par le Roy [...] Avec les desseins, tant des machines & apparences différentes que de tous les habits des masques*³⁶, offers a description of the staging and some music, but also presents, as its title indicates, sets and costumes. The descriptions and engravings give us some indication of the refinement of the costumes for this ballet, costumes which can be attributed to Daniel Rabel (1578–1637)³⁷. Like many of its followers, the real subject of the ballet is the glorification of the royal person, as shows the description of the first character danced by the king, le demon du feu: « for besides that his Majesty wished to show the Queen his wife, some representation of the fires which he felt for her, he also dressed so as to purposely show his goodness to his subjects, his power to his enemies, and his Majesty to foreigners».³⁸ Louis XIII was then fifteen and a half years old, and was soon to assert himself more brutally by expelling his mother Marie de Medici (1575–1642), former regent of France and having her adviser Concino Concini (1575–1617), assassinated on the 24th of April 1617. In the Ballet, Renaud frees himself from the tyranny of Armida, and her demons, like the king frees himself of the control of the queen-mother, Marie de Medici, and her ill advisers. The ballet is known as *Ballet de la délivrance de Renaud*.

One engraving (Figure 15) presents four of the characters of the first Entrée and shows, in addition to Renault, the role played by the Duc de Luynes (1578–1621), favorite of Louis XIII, three demons, fire, air and water, left by Armide to entertain the knight³⁹. King

³⁶ [Durand, Étienne (1585–1618) ; Bordier, René (15 ?-1658?) ; Guédron, Pierre (156?–1620?)] *Discours au vray du ballet dansé par le Roy, le dimanche XXIXe jour de janvier. M. V^{te}. XVII. Avec les desseins, tant des machines & apparences différentes, que de tous les habits des masques*. Paris : Pierre Ballard, 1617.

³⁷ On Daniel Rabel, see : Christout, Marie Françoise. "Les Ballets-Mascarades des Fées de la Forêt de Saint Germain et de la Douairière de Billebahaut et l'œuvre de Daniel Rabel" in *Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, 1961, I. See also : Moureau, François. "Danses amérindiennes à la cour" in *Le Théâtre des voyages. Une scénographie de l'Âge classique*, Paris : PUPS, 2005, p. 11.

³⁸ « Car outre que sa Majesté voulut faire voir à la Reyne sa femme, quelque représentation des feux qu'il sentoit pour elle, il se vestit encores de la sorte a desseing de tesmoigner sa bonté a ses sujets, sa puissance a ses ennemis, & sa Majesté aux estrangers. » in *Discours au vray du ballet dansé par le Roy...* 1617, p. 5.

³⁹ « Renault (représenté par Monsieur de Luynes, premier Gentilhomme de la chambre de sa Majesté, et son Lieutenant general au Gouvernement de Normandie) estoit couché sur l'herbe & sur les fleurs, au dedans d'une grotte enfoncée dans le milieu de cette montaigne : Au-dessus & à l'entour de ceste grotte estoit sa Majesté, accompagnée de douze Seigneurs, representant autant de Démons laissez par Armide a la garde de son bien aymé, avec charge de lui faire passer le temps en tous les delices imaginables. » in *Discours au vray du ballet dansé par le Roy...*, 1617, p. 4.

Louis XIII was dancing « le demon du feu » while the Duc de Vendosme (1598–1629), half-brother of the king⁴⁰, was the « demon des eaux ». The costume for this « Esprit aquatique », as he is also named in the text edited by Ballard, seems to be entirely covered with reeds (Figure 15B). The engraved costume is not very detailed, but noticeable is the great collar, made from a line of stems which seem to grow from the waist up. The reeds are also used to create a second “tonnelet”, worn above a skirt made with textile, of which the hem is cut with festoons, maybe imitating the waves of water.



Figure 15: 1617, anonymous engraving (with handwriting) of the costumes attributed to Daniel Rabel, for « demon du feu » (1), « Renaud » (2), « le demon des eaux » (3) and « esprit de l'air » (4) in *Ballet de la délivrance de Renaud*. Paris, Bibiothèque nationale de France.

Although cryptic, the verses written by René Bordier (15.–1658?) for the introduction of « Monsieur le Chevalier de Vendosme representant un Esprit aquatique »⁴¹ clearly established the relation between water and fire. It is indeed in the written description of the costume of the king that we may have an indication of the material used for these reeds. After

⁴⁰ Alexandre de Vendôme (1598-1629), known as the Chevalier de Vendôme, Grand Prieur of France, second legitimized son of Henri IV of France and Gabrielle d'Estrées.

⁴¹ “D’Ou puis-je attendre qu’il succede / A mes ennuis quelque remede, / Puis qu’un Dieu cause mes tourmens, / Et que l’espoir dont je me flatte / Se voit d’une façon ingrante / Trahy mesmes des Elemens ? // J’ay cru que ma flame secrette, / Dans l’onde où j’ay fait fait ma retraitte / Pourroit s’amortir peu à peu : / Mais las ! telle est mon adventure, / Que contre l’ordre de la nature / L’eau s’accorde avecques le feu. // Jamais mon ardeur ne s’appaise, / Les glaçons se changent en braise / Par les rayons de deux beaux yeux, / Dont le feu qui dans l’eau s’allume / Ne peut en fin qu’il ne consume / Et l’onde, & la terre, et les Cieux. » in *Discours au vray du ballet dansé par le Roy...*, 1617, p. 27.

having elaborated on the allegorical relation between Fire and the king, the text gives a valuable material indication: « It was for all these reasons that he wished to cover himself with flames, and these flames were enameled and made with such an artifice, that the fire itself was made more brilliant by them, when the innumerable rays of the torches of the hall were directed on them, and that those who looked at them received the reflection ». The text adds: « His mask and hairstyle were of the same composition as his costume ».⁴² Even if the mention of «enameled» is not to be taken literally, it would mean that a thin shiny color cover was used to decorate the flames panel of the costume, the mask and headpiece⁴³. But, considering the identity of the dancer, it is possible to imagine that the flames were indeed metal covered with enamel, like jewels. Such a complex artifact may have been justified by the royal identity of the dancer and may well have been extended for the costume of his half-brother. « The diamonds crammed on the clothes, and headpieces »⁴⁴ have been the subject of astonishment of the Court. Maybe the reeds of the costume of the «demon des eaux» were also enameled and the green and brown of the foliage gained a watery appearance due to their shininess?



Figure 15B: 1617, attributed to Daniel Rabel, costume for the «demon des eaux» in *Ballet de la délivrance de Renaud*. Paris, Bibiothèque nationale de France.

⁴² « C'est pour toutes ses raisons qu'il se voulut couvrir de flammes, & ses flammes estoient esmaillées & faites avec un tel artifice, que le feu mesmes se rendoit plus esclatant par elles, lors que les rayons des flambeaux innombrables de la salle estoient adressez dessus, & que ceux qui les regardoyent en recevoient la réflexion. Son masque & sa coiffure estoient de mesme composition que son habit, & n'eust esté la douceur extremes de ses actions on eust creu que deslors fa Majesté s'estoit couverte de feu pour consommer ses ennemis. » in *Discours au vray du ballet dansé par le Roy...*, 1617, p. 6.

⁴³ « Certaine composition dont se servent les peintres, les vitriers, orfèvres & émailleur. [Émail fin. Emaux épais, émaux fins. Peinture en émail.] » in article « émail » in Richelet, Pierre. *Dictionnaire françois, Volume 1*. Genève : Widerhold, 1680.

⁴⁴ « Les diamants entassez sur les habits, & les coiffures » in *Discours au vray du ballet dansé par le Roy...*, 1617, p. 3.

The first entrée of fire and water was taking place in an elaborate set in form of a mount with different levels, « this Mountain adorned with so bizarre a beauty, filled with people so inventively masked and dressed, and so clear by the gems, and the embroidery reflecting against the opposite torches, that all thought to be in some pleasant dream, or who took for Demons those who represented them only »⁴⁵. The mention of the light effect is a good reminder that, besides outdoor tournaments, water costumes, like all ballet costumes, were seen under artificial light. Costumes designers were concerned by the effect of light on their costumes, using reflecting material on fabric and ornaments to dazzle, amaze and glorify the court dancers: « The brilliance of the jewels had for a time concealed the majesty of the faces, and suddenly afterwards, the faces making themselves known, made all neglect the enrichments of the clothes ».⁴⁶



Figure 16: 1653, costume design attributed to Henry Gissey for the « Démon de l'Eau », (representing the Phlegmatic humor), in *Ballet Royal de la Nuit, Divisé en quatre Parties, ou quatre Veilles et dansé par sa Majesté le 23 Fevrier 1653*. Waddesdon Manor, Rothschild Collection.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ « cette Montaigne ornée d'une si bizarre beauté, remplie de personnes si inventivement masquées & vestues, & si claire par les brillans, & broderies rejalissantes contre les flambeaux opposez, qui ne creut estre en quelque agreable songe, ou qui ne prit pour Démons veritables ceux qui les representoyent seulement. » in *Discours au vray du ballet dansé par le Roy...*, 1617, p. 4.

⁴⁶ « L'esclat des pierrieres cacha pour un temps la majesté des visages, & soudain apres, les visages se faisant connoistre, firent négliger les enrichissements des habits. » in *Discours au vray du ballet dansé par le Roy...*, 1617, p. 24.

⁴⁷ *Ballet de la Nuit*. Edited by Michael Burden and Jennifer Thorp. Hillsdale (NY) : Pendragon Press, 2009, p. 183.

The *Ballet de la Nuit* took place at the Palais du Louvre from the evening of February 23, 1653 and continued into the following morning when during the final, the young Louis XIV was appearing as the rising Sun. The influence of this extraordinary event where every courtier seems to have danced, including among other English gentlemen, which constituted the court of the exiled Charles II, “His Royal Highness the Duke of York”, represents another mile stone in the history of French court ballet by its length and pomposity. During the last wake of the *Ballet de la Nuit*, « from three hours after midnight until six when the Sun rises »⁴⁸, after the characters of « Sleep » and « Silence » have been praising the power of the king, the four Demons of Fire, Air, Water, and Earth do appear. They represent the four humors; or “temperaments”; of the human body: The Choleric, the Sanguine, the Phlegmatic, & the Melancholic. These humors and their disorder - “dérèglement” - give rise to various dreams⁴⁹. This complex allegory is based on ancient Greek medicine, for which each of the four humors is associated with one of the four elements and the poet Benserade in the *Ballet de la Nuit* refers to this medical knowledge.

Water is associated here with the humor phlegm, following the belief of Greek and Roman medicine. Phlegm was identified with water, since both were cold and wet. Under Hippocrates’ bodily humors theory, differences in human moods come as a consequence of imbalances in one of the four bodily fluids: blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. Galen contributed a substantial amount to the Hippocratic understanding of pathology as he promoted the typology of human temperaments. In this theory, an imbalance of each humor corresponded to a particular human temperament: blood—sanguine, black bile—melancholic, yellow bile—choleric, and phlegm—phlegmatic. The belief that water was linked to human health and physiology was still largely spread in the seventeenth century. Since the Roman time the medical power of some waters has been identified and some special sources have been also associated with health cures. After the Greco-Roman devotion, Christian pilgrimages to miraculous fountains have been taking over⁵⁰.

Henry Gissey’s design is an attempt to symbolize water (Figure 16): the body language of the character seems to fit the depiction of the phlegmatic temperament. The body is slightly bent, almost distorted, and the face of the dancer tense and sad. Looking behind his shoulder, as if being afraid, the character position refers to the description of the action in the dance: «The Dream of the Phlegmatic, from which comes stupidity & fear, expressed by a miserable, terrified of two shadows that follow him everywhere and that he cannot avoid»⁵¹. This design is therefore more than a costume design but rather a description of the dance and that fact argues for the thesis that this drawing and the other ones of the series may have been executed

⁴⁸ *Ballet de la Nuit* : “depuis trois heures près minuit, jusques à six que le Soleil se lève.” In [Benserade, Isaac de]. *Ballet royal de la Nuit, divisé en quatre Parties, ou quatre Veilles : et dansé par Sa Majesté, le 23 février 1653*. Paris : Robert Ballard, 1653. All quotes from *Le Ballet de la Nuit* are coming from this edition.

⁴⁹ *Ballet de la Nuit*, Première Entrée : « Les quatre Demons du Feu, de l’Air, de l’Eau, & de la Terre, qui représentent les quatre humeurs ou temperaments du corps humain, le Colérique, le Sanguin, le Flegmatique, & le Melancholique, d’où naissent les differens Songes ».

⁵⁰ Caulier, Brigitte. *Les cultes thérapeutiques autour des fontaines en France du Moyen Âge à nos jours*. Québec & Paris : Presses de l’Université de Laval & Beauchesne, 1990. See : « Introduction » pp. 7-14 and for the relationship with spirituality, see : pp. 26–39.

⁵¹ *Ballet de la Nuit*, « V. Entrée Le Songe du Flegmatique, d’où vient la stupidité & la peur, exprimé par un misérable, épouvanté de deux Ombres qui le suivent par tout & qu’il ne peut éviter ».

after the ballet was given, and if not by Gissey himself, with the help of his designs. The research around the expression of the character relates to the study of emotions. This aspect was present in many ballets de cour and the poet Guillaume Colletet (1596–1659) conceived, for a ballet in 1632, dance as a mean of expression, and like poetry « a real picture of our passions »⁵². This concern will become a theory of passions, under the tutorship of Charles Le Brun at the Académie in 1668.⁵³ The character seems enveloped by rivulets of water. The costume is unicolor, white silver, and its relief is evocative of the movements of streams and currents. His head set is composed as a little fountain, with a central jet, which the designer underlines in metallic paint, silver and gold to give the effect of changing reflection given by the candles of the performance (Figure 16B).



Figure 16B : 1653, detail from a costume design attributed to Henry Gissey, for the « Démon de l'Eau » in *Ballet Royal de la Nuit, Divisé en quatre Parties, ou quatre Veilles et dansé par sa Majesté le 23 Fevrier 1653*. Waddesdon Manor, Rothschild Collection.

⁵² « Car comme la Poësie est un vray tableau de nos passions, & la Peinture un discours muet veritablement, mais capable neanmoins de reveiller tout ce qui tombe dans notre imagination : Ainsi la Dance est une Image vivante de nos actions, & une expression artificielle de nos secrettes pensees. » in Colletet, Guillaume. « Preface » in *Le grand Ballet des effects de la nature. Présenté au roy. Qui doit estre dansé le lundy 27. decembre 1632. & les trois jours suivans, à deux heures pécisément, au Jeu de paume du Petit Louvre, au Marest du Temple*. Paris : Jean Martin, 1632. See also : Paquot, Marcel. “La manière de composer les ballets de cour d’après les premiers théoriciens français” in *Les divertissements de cour au XVIIe siècle*. Cahiers de l’Association Internationale des Études Françaises Juin 1957, N°9, publiés avec le concours de l’Unesco. Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 1957, pp. 184–197.

⁵³ Le Brun, Charles. *L’Expression des passions & autres conférences, Correspondance*, éd. Julien Philippe. Paris : Dédale, Maisonneuve et Larose, 1994.



Figure 17: Costume for the element of water, « Das Wasser vorstellent », attributed to Johann Christoph Dehne (fl. 1714–1726), from *Neu-eröffneter Masquen-Saal, oder: Der verkleideten heydnischen Götter, Göttinnen und vergötterter Helden Theatralischer Tempel, darinnen in mehr als 200. Kupfer-Stichen vorgestellt wird, wie solche Gottheiten der Alten, bey jetziger Zeit in Opern, Comädien, Aufzügen und Masqueraden eingekleidet und präsentiert werden können ... Aus allerhand sowohl heydnisch- als christlichen Büchern colligiret, und zu finden bey Johann Messelreuter ...*

Bayreuth: Gedruckt bey Joh. Lobern, 1723.

Dresden, Städtischen Bibliotheken.

This strange German costume (Figure 17) for a man is not a costume of a river god but of Water, as one of the four elements⁵⁴. Its German origins and its year of publication, 1723, bring it closer to Handel's *Acis and Galatea* of 1718. Likely to have been conceived for a Masquerade, as the sword indicates, the costume itself is rather generic but integrates depictions of large water animals in a shape reminiscent of classical and baroque dolphins and the regular geometry of shells and pearls for the decoration. The costume is composed in a strictly symmetrical way, but it offers an interesting variation for the headset (Figure 17B): on a small hat, a little spray of water crowns the composition in form of a little hill. The miniature picturesque landscape is form of feathers in shape of tree and a classical fountain with jets⁵⁵. The setting is built on a tricorne and the overflowing of water may likely have been figured by pearls or silver threads.

⁵⁴ This rich volume of engravings, mostly by Johann Christoph Dehne, offers Greek and Roman heroes, gods and goddesses in opera, drama, carousel and masquerades. The three other elements also exist in this series.: http://www.slub-dresden.de/sammlungen/digitale-sammlungen/werkansicht/cache.off?tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=57715 (Accessed 14 October 2015).

⁵⁵ See, for comparison, some projects for the gardens of Sceaux from Charles Le Brun, or his the circle : « Deux fontaines et un vase avec jet d'eau », Paris : Musée du Louvre, département des Arts graphiques (Numéro d'inventaire INV 30327). See : <http://arts-graphiques.louvre.fr/detail/oeuvres/1/208114-Deux-fontaines-et-un-vase-avec-jet-deau>



Figure 17B: Detail from a costume for the element of water, « Das Wasser vorstellent », attributed to Johann Christoph Dehne (fl. 1714–1726) from *Neu-eröffneter Masquen-Saal...* Bayreuth: Gedruckt bey Joh. Lobern, 1723. Dresden, Städtischen Bibliotheken.

An idea of water movement can be found on another costume from the same German book (Figure 18). The costume for the nymph Ciane allows us to see another attempt to characterize water in motion as it is actually showing the very moment of the metamorphoses, when the body of Ciane dissolves into water. The myth as told by Ovid⁵⁶ is summarized in the text beneath the figure. Both tell the story of Ciane (or Cyane, or Kyane), a nymph who tried to prevent Pluto from abducting Proserpina, her playmate. Upon failure, she dissolved away in tears (Lower right of Figure 18). The Ciane (Sicilian: Ciani) is a short river in southern Sicily, not far from Syracuse.

The name Ciane, deriving from the Greek cyanos ("azure", "dark blue" in Greek), gives also the blue color of this costume. The dress is of simple cloth while the main decorative element depicting water is an attempt to show the transformation: long tinsels represent water. The material used on the costume for this effect could be the same as the one used on some scenery pieces kept in Drottningholm: irregular silver threads on which flickering candle light would produce irregular reflections evocative of the motion of liquid⁵⁷. Besides the relation to the convention established by set designers to depict fountains in their sceneries these water jets on a costume bring the character closer to the numerous sculptures which ornate the water features since the Romans. By showing the water coming out of the body the costume designer shows the moment of metamorphoses, as moment the illustrators of Ovid were also keen to show (Figure 19)⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ See: Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5. 407–464.

⁵⁷ For an example of this kind of scenery, see “The Fountain of Love, a cascade with tinsel” for Roland of Piccini in 1781 at the Drottningholms Teater in Strömbolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsholm*. Stockholm : Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, p. 203.

⁵⁸ The idea of body fluids and the confusion with other body growth, like beard or hair, is explored by Giulio Romano in *The Labor of the Golden Fleece* in the Sala di Psichi, 1527–30, fresco. Palazzo del Te, Mantua - See more at: <http://wtfarthistory.com/post/9833155091/ejaculating-a-river-now-thats-labor#sthash.So29OvZ1.dpuf> (Accessed 7 January 2016) .

Nowadays, for example, Bill Viola explores the idea of liquefaction of the body in many of his works, e.g the one exposed at the Biennale of Venice 2007: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beMhIoeGQzQ> (Accessed 7 January 2016).

On the popular stage the German singer Helene Fischer had appeared recently in a water dress made with a



Figure 18: Costume for the water nymph « Ciane » attributed to Johann Christoph Dehne (fl. 1714–1726) from *Neu-eröffneter Masquen-Saal...* Bayreuth: Gedruckt bey Joh. Lobern, 1723. Dresden, Städtischen Bibliotheken.



Figure 19 : « Rapt de Proserpine », French etching by Isaac Briot (1585–1670) after an illustration by Jean Mathieu (1590–1672) for Nicholas Renouard, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide, Traduites en Prose François, et de nouveau soigneusement reveues, corrigées en infinis endroits, et enrichies de figures a chacune Fable. Avec XV. Discours Contenant l'Explication Morale et Historique...*, Paris : 1619, p. 139. Collection of Gilbert Blin.

complex pipe technology. See: <http://www.stufish.com/project/helene-fischer-live> (Accessed 7 January 2016). Thanks to Meriem Bahri for her helpful comments on a draft of this chapter.

A strange composite design attributed to Louis-René Boquet (1717–1814) is showing some of these features. This project (Figure 20) has been put by François Lesure in relation⁵⁹ to the Ballet *Les Éléments* of Lalande and Destouches, which premièred in the Palais des Tuileries the 22 of December 1721, and if indeed the ballet was partly revived in 1763 - during the time of Boquet's activities - it does not contain the generic character of “éléments”. It is possible that the costume may represent the *Chaos* of the Greek cosmogony⁶⁰: the exact piece requiring such a character has still to be identified. But, if the presence of the four elements is an allusion to the medical system of humors, the costume may also be an allegory of total “dérèglement des humeurs” and therefore be an allegory of global sickness, or even folly. In classical thought, the four elements water, earth, air, and fire frequently occur and this “humorous” costume is an attempt to integrate them all.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 20: Costume design attributed to Louis-René Boquet (1717-1814) for a character combining the four elements, in a French opera (ca 1770?). Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Opéra.⁶¹

Fire is burning from the stomach of the character while on his head, which is covered with a wig dressed up as small clouds, an opened cage where birds are flying away from, is

⁵⁹ Lesure, François. *L'opéra classique français*. Genève : Minkoff, 1972, planche 75, p. 95 and Lesure, François. *Deux siècles d'opéra français*. (Paris, Musée de l'Opéra, 1972), n°128, p. 64.

⁶⁰ Water was one of many “archai” proposed by the Pre-socratics, most of whom tried to reduce all things to a single substance. However, Empedocles of Acragas (c. 495 – c. 435 BC) selected four archai for his four “roots”: air, fire, water and earth. Empedocles “roots” became the four classical elements of Greek philosophy and Plato (427–347 BC) took over the four elements of Empedocles. Plato's student Aristotle (384–322 BC) developed a different explanation for the elements based on pairs of qualities. According to Aristotle, the four elements were arranged concentrically around the center of the Universe to form the sublunary sphere.

⁶¹ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8455642d>

depicting the air element. The right hand, like in a representation of Daphne's metamorphoses, is changing into a tree and symbolizes the earth element. Water sprouts from the left fingers and from the left knee of this costume. Noteworthy are the nozzle on his left shoulder and pipes which are on the arm, reminiscent of the art of the fountain maker and the water engineer. The overall style maybe a recollection of the famous composite style of Nicolas II de Larmessin (1632–1694), who himself created a costume of the fountain maker, “Le Fontainier”, for his suite of *Les costumes grotesques et les métiers*, (Figure 21).

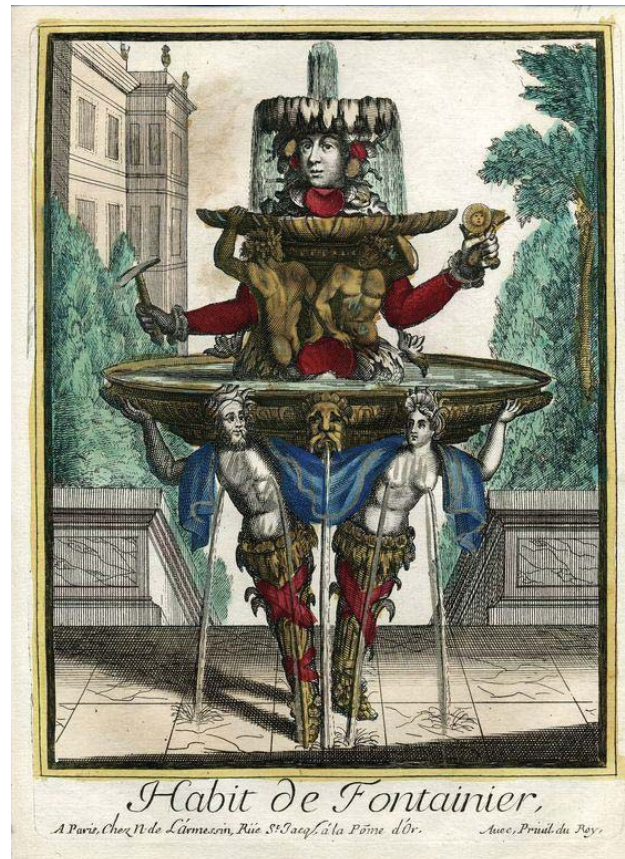


Figure 21 : « Habit de Fontainier » by Nicolas II de Larmessin (1632-1694), from *Les costumes grotesques et les métiers*, 1695.

Although the costume is not a costume for the stage, the presence of a number of elements are in concordance with the visual paradigms of the period for symbolically depicting water. The headdress is based on the same idea as in the costume for the “Démon de l’eau” in the *Ballet de la Nuit* and shows a jet of water, falling in a basin overflowing on the shoulder of the character. A wig made of shells and water plants completes the idea. The presence of sculptures on the torso, showing tritons with water plants crowns, and the upper legs, presenting a water god and a nymph, elaborate on the relation between antic sculptures and modern depictions⁶². Noteworthy in this representation, are also the two boots made of reeds, tighten together by ribbons. Like the Tritons on the bust, these reeds have been hand-colored in gold on this plate. It may not be by chance, as reeds in metal were integrated to sculpted groups and the placement in water was offering a magical effect, like can be seen in the Fountain of Venus, dating from around 1699, in the gardens of Het Loo: « we come to a Noble

⁶² The water coming from the nipples of the statue of the woman may be a reminiscence of a Roman sculpture, while the statue of the man, can be brought closer from the painting of Luca Giordano (1634–1705) *Triumph of Galatea*, dated between 1675 and 1677. See Figures 14 and 14B.

Fountain, in the middle of whose *Basin* is a Marble Statue of *Venus*, full length, and another of Cupid under her left Hand, he holding a gilded Bow. This *Statue* is supported on a small *Whale* for its a *Pedestal*, with four great giled [gilded] *Tritons* below it, a large gilded *Shell* being between each of the *Tritons*, and each *Tritons* blowing in a large *Trumpet* with one Hand, their other hand being disposed in different Postures. At the end of each *Trumpet* the Water runs out in a broad Sheet, incircling a great part of the broad end of the *Trumpet*. Also about the *Tritons* there were many gilded Rushes and Water-lily Flowers, which all contribute to the Ornament of this *Magnificent Fountain*. »⁶³ (Figure 22).



Figure 22: Unknown sculptors, fountain basin with a figure of Venus, Paleis Het Loo.
(Photography: Gilbert Blin).
Paleis Het Loo, Apeldoorn.

The reporter, the physician of king William III, and also great moral supporter of the house of Orange, apologizes for the bare style of his description of Het Loo, taking a chance to pick at the French style used for the descriptions of another famous garden of the period, the one of Versailles: « I will not here enlarge in their praise and admiration, but leave it to the Reader to make a true judgment of them from the *Description* itself, which is at least natural and plain, and as perspicuous as the nature of such *Descriptions* (sometime necessarily intricate some through the great variety of matter) will admit, tho' indeed very destitute of the Ornaments and Flourishes that are usually made in the describing [of] Great Things, to make them even

⁶³ In Harris, Walter. *A Description of the King's Royal Palace and Gardens at Loo. Together With a Short Account of Holland. In which There are Some Observations relating to their Diseases*. London: K. Roberts & T. Nutt, MDCXCIX, p.8. For other illustrations of the Venus Fountain, see also: Asbeck, Johannes Bernardus van, and Erkelens, Wies. *De restauratie van Het Loo, van paleis tot museum*. 's-Gravenhage : Staatsuitgeverij, 1976 and *Paleis Het Loo, Paleis en Tuinen, Palace and Gardens*. ed. Eelco Elzenga. Apeldoorn: Stichting 't Konings Loo, 2004.

Greater than they really are». ⁶⁴ Even, not named, the allusion to Louis the Great concludes an introduction which already included a partisan view on French Architecture⁶⁵. *Descriptions* may also be an allusion to the style used to describe the royal domain by Felibien in his *Recueil de descriptions de peintures et d'autres ouvrages faits pour le roi*, although, from the language point of view, the critic would be then unjustified as Felibien's writing style is simple and does not overuse praise.

The reeds which appear as metal on the costume of the « Fontainier » by Larmessin may be an allusion to the Bosquet du Marais in Versailles, where, since 1673, pipes made of tin plate in shape of reeds with their panicles painted in gold were seen⁶⁶: « It is a little grove where there is a large square of water longer than wide, in the middle of which is a big tree so ingeniously made that it seems natural. From the end of all its branches, an infinity of streams of water cover the Marais. In addition to these fountains, there are still a large number of others that spring from the reeds that line the sides of this square ».⁶⁷

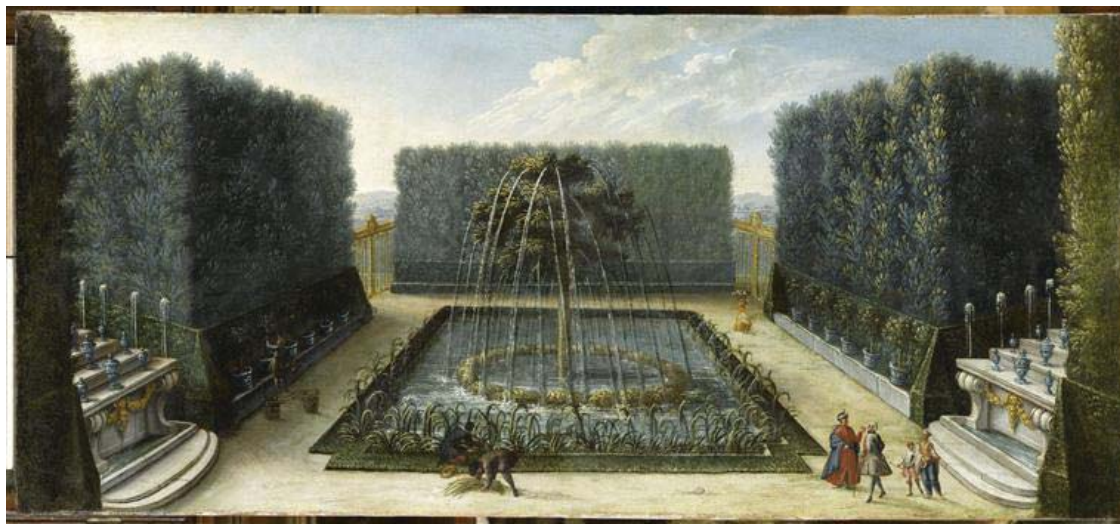


Figure 23: Eighteenth-century French School, *The Bosquet du Marais, garden of Versailles*. Versailles, Musée du Chateau of Versailles et de Trianon.

⁶⁴ In Harris, Walter. *A Description of the King's Royal Palace and Gardens at Loo...* London: K. Roberts & T. Nutt, MDCXCIX, p. 3.

⁶⁵ «And England may deservedly glory on not only the stately *Cathedrals* she has built at home, as well as in her *Palaces, Universities*, and other Publick and Private Buildings, but hath left in *France* the lasting evidences of her *Magnificence*, by erecting those stately *Nostredames* at *Paris*, at *Amiens*, at *Rouen*, &c, at a time when a great part of *France* was under the *English Dominion*, and when the rest of it did as much dread the *English Power and Courage*, as themselves have of late Years been a Terror to all their Neighbours. » in Harris, Walter. *A Description of the King's Royal Palace and Gardens at Loo...* London : K. Roberts & T. Nutt, MDCXCIX, pp. 1 & 2.

⁶⁶ « Madame de Montespan donna le dessin de la pièce de marais, où un arbre de bronze jette de l'eau par toutes ses feuilles de fer-blanc, et où les roseaux de même matière jettent aussi de l'eau de tous côtés. » in *Mémoires, contes et autres œuvres de Charles Perrault : précédés d'une notice sur l'auteur par P. L. Jacob, et d'une dissertation sur les contes de fées par Charles Athanase Walckenaer*. Paris : Charles Gosselin, 1842, p. 80.

⁶⁷ « C'est un petit bois où il y a un grand carré d'eau plus long que large, au milieu duquel est un gros arbre si ingénieusement fait qu'il paraît naturel. De l'extrémité de toutes ses branches, sort une infinité de jets d'eau qui couvrent le Marais. Outre ces jets d'eau, il y en a encore un grand nombre d'autres qui jaillissent des roseaux qui bordent les côtés de ce carré. » in Félibien, André. *Recueil de descriptions de peintures et d'autres ouvrages faits pour le roi*. Paris : 1689, p. 337.

7.1.4 Costume designs for river gods on stage



Figure 24: ca 1690, costume design for a Sea Triton by the workshop of Jean I Berain (1640–1711).
Bibliothèque Municipale de Versailles.

When looking at costume designs, the characteristic of representation of a river god since Antiquity allows a distinction between two kinds of water gods: the ones of the sea (Neptune, Triton and other sirens) and river gods. The costume in Figure 24, by the workshop of Jean I Berain (1640–1711), shows the essential elements of the stage costume of a sea divinity: fish scales, shells, presence of coral⁶⁸. In contrast, but also based on the iconology inherited from the Romans and the Renaissance, a couple of elements allows with certainty the identification of a design for a river god: an urn and/or an oar. In his treaty *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du theatre*, Ménéstrier gives in 1682 some simple indications about the costume of the river god: « The large Rivers and the smaller Rivers are presented with crowns of water leaves, with fish floating on their garments, and urns in their hand »⁶⁹. The urn, considered part of the sceneries, is not very often represented by costume designers but, as I will show, most river gods on stage during the baroque period are depicted holding oars, which indicated that the rivers are navigable or holding reeds, if the water courses are of smaller importance, like a tributary or a stream.

⁶⁸ La Gorce, Jérôme de. “Un aspect du merveilleux dans l’opéra français sous Louis XIV : les chars marins” in *La Scenografia Barocca, Atti del XXIV Congresso Internazionale di Storia dell’Arte*, a cura di Antoine Schnapper. Bologna : Clueb, 1982, pp. 65-72.

⁶⁹ « Les Fleuves & les Rivieres se representent avec des couronnes de feüilles d’eau, des poissons flottants sur leurs habits, & des urnes à la main. » in Ménéstrier, Claude-François. *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre*. Paris : René Guignard, 1682, p. 144.

The river gods can be distinguished in three kinds: mythic rivers of the underworld (Styx, Lethe, etc.), real rivers (Nile, Ladon, etc.) and more generic “river gods” who depict unspecified rivers and, more than offering special characters, are often presented as forces in relation with the element of water. Our selection tries to cover these three categories and to reveal what makes the difference between them. It may be important at this juncture to remember that French language has two very distinct words to refer to rivers: “Un fleuve” is a big river that flows into an ocean or sea (examples: The Nile, the Rhone). “Une rivière” is a natural watercourse that flows into another river, in a “fleuve”, in the sea, in a lake, or becomes lost in the sands. The flow of a “rivière” is in principle less abundant than the one of a “fleuve”, but more considerable than a stream. In French while “fleuve” is masculine, “rivière” is feminine. These genders are used by French artists quite strictly: les “Dieux Fleuves” are male, like in Roman times, and the “Rivières” are represented under female appearance. The following collection offers French designs for Dieu Fleuve/River God ranging from 1651 to 1791.



Figure 25: 1651, costume design for the “Fleuve d'Oubly” attributed to Charles and/or Henry Beaubrun or to Henry Gissey, in *Les fêtes de Bacchus*, Ballet du roi du 2 mai 1651.
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The Cabinet des Estampes in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris keeps a collection of designs of the costumes of *Les fêtes de Bacchus*, together with an original copy of the Livret by Benserade for the royal ballet of 1651. Whether these colored drawings showing all the characters were executed before the performances, as models for the tailors, or after, as a memento of this lavish *Ballet de Cour* is not known⁷⁰. The attribution made in 1866, to the

⁷⁰ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k72469z.r=Les+fetes+de+Bacchus+1651.langFR>

Beaubrun cousins, painters en vogue at this period⁷¹, can still be supported today by similarities in some paintings of the same artists, as the Beaubruns produced a number of portraits with noble seaters in masquerade costumes. But the designer could also be Henry Gissey (ca 1621–1673) who was already active at the French court⁷². Whoever the designer is, the costumes were appreciated by the English traveler John Evelyn who reported in his Diary: « the habits of the masquers were stupendously rich and glorious »⁷³.

The « Fleuve d'Oubly » (Figure 25), the river of oblivion, appears in the retinue of the « Dieu du Sommeil » among « Dreams and Fantasies, visions of Trophies, Men of Fire, Men of Ice » and other Fairies during the 19th *entrée* of the *ballet*⁷⁴. In Greek mythology, Lethe was one of the five rivers of Hades. Flowing around the cave of Hypnos and through the Underworld, the Lethe was giving complete forgetfulness to all who drank from it. Lethe was therefore also the name of the Greek spirit of forgetfulness and oblivion, with whom the river was often identified. In the Ballet of 1651, the « Fleuve de l'Oubly » was performed by the marquis de Pisy-Genlis (1617–1696), known for his ugliness. The verses which accompanied his entrance were reflecting this appearance of what looks like a casting choice⁷⁵.

On the costume, a wavy pattern on a blue material is used for the bodice. This waving effect can also be seen on the shirt. The character is holding a cane maybe reminiscent of the reed seen during the Roman period. The headset is rather detailed, and it is its composition, similar to the belt, which gives the true identity of the character of oblivion: « a tall character with a long white beard, with shoulder decorations and a belt of poppy leaves, flowers and soporific plants, head fully covered with a similar crown, bristling with a gigantic and flamboyant plume »⁷⁶. The overall costume of the river of oblivion is exemplary of how the costume designers of the *Ballet de Cour* attempted to give a visual identity to the character, even if of complex composite nature, here river god and god of oblivion. This determination to depict as clearly as possible the special character of the river god by adding elements specific to his identity finds various echoes in the work of Ménestrier. In his 1682 treaty *Des Ballets* he suggests adding « gold glitter to the Tagus because of its golden sand, since it is necessary much

⁷¹ Henri (1603-1677) and Charles Beaubrun (1604-1692) were two cousins, whose careers are virtually indistinguishable. They were both trained by their uncle, Louis Beaubrun (died 1627), and became portrait painters at the court of Louis XIII and Louis XIV. In 1648, they were among the founders of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture.

⁷² Christout, Marie-Françoise. «Sémiologie des Habits de danse : du Ballet de Cour au Ballet d'action (XVIe-XVIIIe siècles)» in *Costumes de danse ou la Chair représentée*, La Recherche en danse, 1997.

⁷³ *The diary of John Evelyn*, edited from the original mss. by William Bray. Volume I. New York & London: M. Walter Dunne Publisher, 1901. Entry of the 11th of May 1651. (Accessed 14 October 2015): <https://archive.org/stream/diaryofjohn Evelyn01eveliala#page/262/mode/2up/search/1651>

⁷⁴ « Dieu du Sommeil sortant du Temple de Bacchus suivi des Songes ou Phantosmes, Visions de trophées, d'Hommes de feu, d'Hommes de glace, du fleuve d'Oubly, & de Fées enfantant des Esprits follets » p. 20.

⁷⁵ Fournel, Victor. *Les contemporains de Molière : recueil de comédies rares ou peu connues, jouées de 1650 à 1680*. Paris : Firmin Didot, 1866, p. 317.

⁷⁶ « le Fleuve de l'oubli, un grand personnage à longue barbe blanche, avec des épaulières et une ceinture de feuilles de pavot, fleurs et plantes soporifiques, la tête amplement couverte d'une couronne analogue, hérissée d'un plumet gigantesque et flamboyant » in Fournel, Victor. *Les contemporains de Molière...*, p. 313.

as one can to express properties of things »⁷⁷. In another short text, published in 1658, Ménestrier used the same example: « The Rivers are clothed with a wavy fabric, which has to do with the color of the waters, the gold glitters are added to the Tagus because of its golden sands, they are given in their hands an urn, or a paddle, & we crown them with bulrushes, or with gladioli »⁷⁸. The river Tagus, which was renowned for its gold-bearing sands⁷⁹ gives an example, here based on geology, of customizing some recurrent elements to amplify the identity of the river. In his book *Représentations en musique* while telling about a performance taking place in Florence in 1608 Ménestrier explains that: «The stage represents the city of Florence with its neighboring hills. On one side appeared in a grotto the Arno River which is passing in the middle of Florence, leaning on his urn, crowned with Beech Tree & water leaves, holding a Cornucopia»⁸⁰. The crowning of the Arno with water leaves is assuring his identity as river god whiles the added beech leaves may symbolize the Tuscan vegetation.

Le Nozze di Peleo et di Teti, ou Les Noces de Pelée et Thetis, Comédie Italienne en Musique entremeslée d'un ballet sur le même sujet was presented in Paris in 1654 with some ballets in the court style to adjust the Italian opera to the French taste.⁸¹ Texts by Benserade for the ballet were added to the libretto of Francesco Buti set in music by Carlo Caproli (before 1620–after 1675). The performance was starting with a complex prologue, where the King of France was dancing the role of Apollo. Two river gods were appearing at the very beginning of the prologue and can be seen on the set design by Giacomo Torelli reproduced in Figure 26: « The first Scene, which serves as Prologue, is Mount Pietro of Thessaly, located between the two rivers Epidan and Onochonus, where the action takes place. [...] At the beginning of the scene are the two rivers seated on stones: over two surrounded by reeds, & other aquatic plants »⁸². One of them is shown on Figure 26B.

⁷⁷ « On donne des étoffes ondées aux Rivières, on ajouteroit des paillettes d'or au Tage à cause de son sable doré, car il faut exprimer autant qu'on peut les proprietez des choses. » in Ménestrier, Claude-François. *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre*. Paris : René Guignard, 1682, p. 144.

⁷⁸ « On habille les Fleuves d'une estoffe ondée, qui ayt du rapport à la couleur des eaux, on ajouterait au Tage des paillettes d'or à cause de ses Arènes dorées, on leur donne à la main une urne, ou une rame, & on les couronne de joncs, ou de glayeuls. » in Ménestrier, Claude-François. *L'Autel de Lyon, Consacré à Louis-Auguste, et placé dans le temple de la Gloire, Ballet dédié à sa Majesté en son entrée à Lyon*. Lyon: Jean Moulin, MDCLVIII, transcribed by Christout, Marie-Françoise. *Le Ballet de Cour de Louis XIV, 1643-1672, Mises en scène*. Paris : Picard, 1967, p. 224.

⁷⁹ See: Ovid. *Amores*, 1.15.34. See also: Juvenal. *Satires*, 3.55.

⁸⁰ « La Scene representa la Ville de Florence avec ses Collines voisines. D'un côté parut dans une Grotte l'Arne qui est le Fleuve qui passe au milieu de Florence, s'appuyant sur son Urne couronné de Hestre & de feuilles d'eau tenant une Corne d'abondance » in Ménestrier, Claude-François. *Des Représentations en musique anciennes et modernes*. Paris: Robert Pepie, 1685, p. 258.

⁸¹ Christout, Marie-Françoise. «*Les Noces de Pelée et Thétis*, comédie italienne en musique entremêlée d'un ballet dansé par le Roi (1654) » in *Baroque* [En ligne], 5 | 1972(. URL : <http://baroque.revues.org/375> (Accessed 3 August 2015).

⁸² « La prima Scena, che serve di Prologo, rappresenta il monte Pietro della Tessaglia, situato trà li due fiumi Apidano, e Onochono, dove succede l'azione.[...] All'entrata della scena sono assisi li due fiumi sudetti: sopra due sassi circondati di gionchi, & altre erbe aquose » in «Descrizione Regolare delle Machine, delle mutazioni del teatro, e incidenze dell'opera presente. Del Cavalier'Almateo" in : [Torelli, Giacomo & Silvestre, Israël.] *Décorations et machines aprestées aux nocces de Tétis, ballet royal, représenté en la salle du Petit Bourbon par Jacques Torelli, inventeur...* Paris: [s.n.], 1654.



Figure 26: 1654, engraving of Israel Silvestre (1621–1691) after a drawing from François Francart (1622–1672), showing the set by Giacomo Torelli for the prologue of *Le Nozze di Peleo e di Teti*. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Figure 26B: 1654, detail of the engraving of Israel Silvestre after a drawing from François Francart, showing the front stage left of the set by Giacomo Torelli for the prologue of *Le Nozze di Peleo e di Teti*. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Although on the engraving of Israel Silvestre (1621–1691) the river gods are shown naked, linking them to antic sculptures, these rivers were not painted element of sceneries, which may have been the idea at some point⁸³, but acted by two performers. The costume design for one of them shows indeed that the performer was dressed up. Nevertheless, the costume design for the river Epidan (Figure 27) keeps the reclining position of the body and brings the depiction close to the river gods treated by sculptures since the antiquity and spread by paintings of the baroque period. Lying on his bed, the river Epidan, as indicated by the writing, is resting on its urn, from where its waters are sprouting. Next to this urn an oar completes the props and the position follows closely the indications of the libretto in the prologue where the Epidan was appearing on one side of the stage, while on the other side, Onochonus, another river from Thessalia, was present. « L'ouverture du Théâtre paressent Apollon & les Muses sur le haut de leur Montagne, & de costé & d'autre les deux fleuves principaux de la Thessalie ».⁸⁴

⁸³ The description seems to emphasize the space component of the two rivers acting as a referent for the location of the action, as often rivers were associated with the mountains they were coming from. The reclining position was the option I took for the river god in my production of *Psyché* in 2007.

⁸⁴ Benserade, Isaac de. *Les Noces de Pelée et de Thetis*. Paris : Ballard, 1654. See : <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k717953/f3.image.r=Benserade,%20Isaac%20de.langFR>



Figure 27 : 1654, costume design by Henry Gissey for the river god Epidan in *Le Nozze di Peleo et di Teti, ou Les Noces de Pelée et Thetis, Comédie Italienne en Musique entre-meslée d'un Ballet sur le mesme sujet, dansé par sa Majesté*. Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France, Paris⁸⁵

The river Epidan was the famous witness of the Heliads' metamorphoses into poplars and like often on the illustrations of Ovid's works, the river god is identified by his reclining position and his urn. In the ballet of 1654, Epidan was sung by « le Sr Lallemand » wearing an imposing white beard showing the venerable age of the river. Noteworthy in this costume is first the color palette offered by the waving pattern, treated horizontally on the water blue and shiny white fabrics. The use of a patterned fabric is still recommended in the 1680's by Ménestrier in the various editions of his *Treaty Des Ballets*: « We give waving fabrics to Rivers »⁸⁶. But as interesting is the use of green foliage and brown apex of reeds for the crown and the trimmings around the waist, the arms and calves, covered with stockings.

The large series of costumes designed by Gissey in 1671 for the first version of *Psyché*, titled *Psyché*, contains an interesting design (Figure 28). The urn and oar present on this drawing allow the identification of this river god with the “Fleuve” who, in Act III of the *comédie ballet* by Molière and his collaborators, welcomes Psyché in its waves. Without a beard this divinity shows an unusual young face for a river god – maybe a suggestion that this seductive youth is

⁸⁵ <http://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/01-020977-2C6NU0G09GXY.html>

⁸⁶: « On donne des étoffes ondées aux Rivières. » in Ménestrier, *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre*, Paris, René Guignard, 1682, p. 144.

apt to tempt Psyché to join him⁸⁷ - and only the big urn and the oar avoid a possible confusion with the other water divinities, featured in the prologue. Montfaucon, describing the Roman fountain with a river god (Figure 5) explains in 1724: « Someone said that the rivers that disgorge immediately into the sea, are represented by elders, and rivers that flow into rivers, are expressed by young men without a beard» but he adds cautiously, reminding us of the multifaceted laws which were ruling allegory: « but this is not sure, I think contrary examples are found »⁸⁸.



Figure 28: 1671, costume design by Henry Gissey for the river god in *Psyché*. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

The costume is comparable in its structure to the one that Gissey designed for a river god in *Le Nozze di Peleo et di Teti*, but the waving pattern of the material used for the bodice and the *tonnelet* of the Epidan river is here replaced by a fabric panels simulating water plants, maybe a reminiscence of the costume of the “esprit aquatique” of the 1617 *Ballet de la Delivrance de Renaud*. Treated vertically, it finds its extension in the leaves which spread over the *tonnelet*. To fully appreciate the treatment of the legs, with a series of three leg bands made of foliage, the actor must have been walking when playing the role and not lying on a moving piece of scenery like in *Le Nozze di Peleo et di Teti*. Although the design is not colored, the presence of

⁸⁷ La Gorce, Jérôme de. “Les costumes d’Henry Gissey pour les représentations de *Psyché*” in *Revue de l’Art*, numéro 66. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1984, pp. 39-52. See also: Dock, Stephen V. “Unpublished Costume Drawings by Henry Gissey for Molière’s *Psyché*” in *Theatre History Studies, Volume XIII*, éd. Ron Engle. Tuscaloosa (AL): University of Alabama, 1993, pp. 181–207.

⁸⁸ « Quelqu’un a dit que les fleuves qui se dégorge immédiatement dans la mer, sont représenté en vieillards, & que les rivières qui se jettent dans des fleuves, sont exprimées par des jeunes hommes sans barbe ; mais cela n’est pas sûr, je crois même qu’il se trouve des exemples contraires » in Montfaucon, Bernard de. *Supplément au livre de L’antiquité expliquée et illustrée en figures*. Tome III, 1724. Liv VII, p. 168.

reeds which seems to grow behind the urn, apparently a piece of scenery, suggests a similar treatment of painted green for the costume. The headdress is comparable and made with water plants and reeds, although this time Gissey crowns it with feathers, maybe in the purpose of accentuating the “galant” side of the character.

Among the French designers of the late seventeenth century, Jean I Berain occupies the first rank, as much for the number as for the quality and diversity of designs⁸⁹. Although such an intensive production may have relied on a well-organized workshop, there is no doubt that Jean I Berain was an artist of the first rank, with a great ingenuity and a sense of grandeur and structure which seems to characterize the arts during Louis XIV’s reign. His work was also influential thanks to the numerous designs, and engravings made after them, which were circulating in France and Europe. Berain, involved in the feasts of the court and the stage performances of Lully’s operas, drew many costumes of river gods, characters present in many of the librettos of Quinault. Most of them are likely to have been conceived for revivals at the Académie Royale de Musique of *Atys*, the *tragédie en musique* that Quinault and Lully created in 1676. *Atys* is said to have been the favorite opera of Louis XIV and was called “l’Opéra du Roi”. This royal seal of approval contributed to the popularity of the piece and *Atys* was performed many times during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries⁹⁰.

Although not every revival implied new sets and costumes, there is a large number of designs, by Berain himself or coming from his workshop, which can be put in relation with one of the *Atys* divertissements. In Act IV, the river gods and the nymphs of the fountains celebrate the upcoming wedding of the daughter of the river Sangar with the son of the god of the sea, Celenus, king of Phrygia. « Le Dieu du Fleuve Sangar », the father of Sangaride, appears and welcomes his watery family and invites them to celebrate: « Troupe de Dieux de Fleuves, de ruisseaux, et de divinités de fontaines » and rejoice with singing and dancing, organized by Quinault on the similitude and difference between fleeting love and fluctuating water. Like water, their element, the river gods are protean in nature and their true spirit is like movement: they dance and sing in honor of ever-changing love. By the number of revivals of *Atys*, and the number of characters in this scene, this lavish divertissement has been generating a great deal of designs. I present here a selection of designs by Berain or his workshop and as the period of their production covers the many decades where the designer was active, I attempt to order them following their characteristics.

The first costume, in the “Grande manière” Berain uses for opera singers, was likely designed for the river Sangar (Figure 29). The designer, as he creates a costume for a singer is not anymore submitted to allow a physical freedom that the ballet costume required as Menestrier pointed it out: « the habit should not be restrictive, and should leave the body and the leg well free to dance. »⁹¹ Jérôme de la Gorce connects this project, also known by

⁸⁹ His work is better known and appreciated today thanks to the fundamental work of Jérôme de la Gorce: See La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Berain, Dessinateur du Roi Soleil*. Paris : Herscher, 1986. The following notes give several other references of works by the same author.

⁹⁰ Created in 1676, was revived in 1679, 1682, 1690, 1699, 1709, 1725, 1736. See : front page of : Quinault, Philippe. *Atys, tragédie représentée devant Sa Majesté, à Saint Germain en Laye, en 1676. & en 1682. par l'Academie Royale de Musique, en 1679. en 1690. en 1699. en 1709. & en 1725. Remise au théâtre le jedy 16. fevrier 1736*. Paris : Ballard, 1736.

⁹¹ « Que l’habit ne soit point embarrassant, & qu’il laisse le corps & la jambe bien libre pour danser. » in Menestrier. *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre*. Paris : René Guignard, 1682, p. 253.

numerous copies, including one in the Musée du Louvre⁹², with a revival of *Alys* in 1703. Even if the date cannot be asserted with total confidence, this project is likely to be from the earlier part of the career of Berain.



Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 29: ca 1703? Costume design for the river god Sangar in *Alys* by Jean I Berain (1640–1711). Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.⁹³

The figure of the river god, well defined by the costume, is at first look imposing. Imposing because the character's long white beard makes him akin to old kings, fathers, and other characters of authority in tragedy. And indeed, the river Sangar, due to its location in Lesser Asia was considered as an elder river. « Sangari, Sangarius, a River of the Lesser Asia, which arising out of the Mountain Dindymus, and flowing through the Greater Phrygia, falls into the Euxine Sea in Bithynia ». ⁹⁴ Ptolomy (c.100–c.170 AD) mentioned it under the name of Sangaris in his writings, and that may be the reference Quinault used. The connection with Phrygia is used by Quinault, as the librettist locates the action of *Alys* in this country. « Sangar, Zagari, or Sagari, or Acada, River of Asia Minor or Natoli. It is the one that Ptolemy calls

⁹² La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Berain, Dessinateur du Roi Soleil*. Préface de Jacques Thuillier. Paris : Herscher, 1986, pp. 72–74.

⁹³ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8455609s/f1.item>

⁹⁴ See: Bohun, Edmond. *A Geographical Dictionary, Representing the Present and Ancient Names of all the Countries, Provinces, Remarkable Cities, Universities, Ports, Towns, Mountains, Seas, Streights, Fountains and Rivers of the whole World...* London: Charles Brome, 1688.

Sangaris »⁹⁵. This mention by the Greco-Roman historian makes Sangar an “elder river” in the French culture of the seventeenth century. To the definition of Montfaucon, that I have mentioned before, regarding the meaning of facial hair: « Someone said that the rivers that disgorge immediately into the sea, are represented by elders », it seems that the connection with Antiquity may also trigger the imagination in the depiction of elder river.

Besides this serious background, the figure appears light, using floating drapery treated in waves on the bodice. A treatment which is emphasized by a long majestic cloak which, worn asymmetrically, (one point of attach at the shoulder, the other side at the waist), falls in sinuous lines. Despite the first impression of grandeur given by the venerable age of the character, the text and the music given to the role insist indeed on its comic side, and present the River Sangar, as another “bourgeois gentilhomme”, boasting of the rank of his future son in law. Celenus is indeed the king of Phrygia but also the son of Neptune, the supreme water god. The red color is unexpected for a river god, but the coloring of the design is not original. The pigments changed through time⁹⁶ as the hasty notes on the design confirm: « All the foliage in embroidered satin, the tonnelet in gold moiré embroidered silver, the shells in valances in form of fish in silver moiré, the scales in [?] »⁹⁷. Unfortunately, the original paper of the design has been cut and the hand-written text cropped. Nevertheless, these notes, destined to the tailor, gives us significant information: the use of “moiré”, a fabric that includes a water effect weaving and the mix of gold and silver which must have reflected candlelight during the performance.

The « Troupe de Dieux de Fleuves, de ruisseaux, et de divinités de fontaines » which follows the river Sangar is detailed in a long list in the libretto. This enumeration is clearly a direction for, or an account of, casting, staging and costuming for a specific performance, as it gives numbers and identities, genders and ages: « Douze grands Dieux de Fleuves chantants. Cinq Dieux de Fleuves jouans de la Flutte. Quatre divinitez de fontaines, et quatre Dieux de Fleuves chantants et dançants. Quatre Divinitéz de Fontaines. Deux Dieux de Fleuves. Deux Dieux de Fleuves dançants ensemble. Deux petits Dieux de Ruisseaux chantants et dançants. Quatre petits Dieux de Ruisseaux dançants. Six grands Dieux de Fleuves dançants. Deux vieux Dieux de Fleuves & deux vieilles Nymphes de Fontaines dançantes ». ⁹⁸

This impressive list is also interesting because, besides the distinction it creates between singers and dancers (and therefore offers the character a long cloak or not) it gives the difference between size (Grands Fleuves, Ruisseaux), age (Vieux/Petits), gender (Fleuves/Fontaines) and hand props (Oar/Flutes in Reed). The way the 49 characters are

⁹⁵ Moreri, Louis. *Le grand Dictionnaire Historique, ou Le mélange curieux de l'histoire sacrée et profane...*, Neuvième édition, où l'on a mis le Supplément dans le même ordre Alphabetique, corrigé les fautes censurées dans le Dictionnaire Critique de Mr. Bayle, & grand nombre d'autres, et ajouté plus de 600 Articles et Remarques importantes. Tome Quatrième. N-Z. Amsterdam & La Haye : Dépens de la Compagnie, M.DCCII.

⁹⁶ The red may have been an evocation of the fact that this river was most of the time dry, offering the sight of a dray red clay bed. See « Sangar » in Bruzen de La Martinière, Antoine-Augustin. *Le Grand Dictionnaire géographique historique et critique. Tome cinquième Q-S*, Paris : Libraires associés, 1768.

⁹⁷ “Toust les feuillages de satin brodé le tonelet moire d’or brodé argans les coquilles dans les lembrequin de poissons en moire argan les écailles dans [?] ».

⁹⁸ Quinault, Philippe. *Atys, tragedie en musique*. Paris : Christophe Ballard, 1676. Bibliothèque nationale de France, YF-686. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5448680n>

ordered in the didaskalia may also suggest an order of appearance, maybe reflecting the protocol then used in France for entrances on stage: first principal singers, followed by chorus singers and then dancers, younger first.⁹⁹



Figure 30: ca.1703 ? costume design for a river god by Jean I Berain (1640–1711)
from *Costumes de fêtes et de mascarades - Tome III* (1696 DR à 1761DR).
Paris, Musée du Louvre.

The costume (Figure 30) is quite close to the costume for the river Sangar in *Atys* (Figure 29) and could be a design for the costume of this character, or, considering the similitude of position, even a variant of the previous one. At any rate the long cloak suggests a costume for a singer, maybe, if not the river Sangar, one of the « 12 big rivers gods singing » who follow him immediately. The tall headdress, surmounted by upright water foliage, and the festooned cloak dragging on the stage elongate the silhouette. The precision of « grands » may indicate that these characters are rivers of sufficient size, where ships or boats could sail: a navigable status that the rather refined design of the oar, on this project, seems to confirm.

Another costume for a river god, in Figure 31, seems less elaborate than the others, and a certain classicist rigor seems comprised in this design. Although of a slightly different style than the two mentioned above, the design of the oar is almost the same as the one found on the previous figure. It is this oar and once more the crown of reeds which confer the character its identity as river god, as the use of the drapery in front of the torso is reminiscent of Roman art and confers to the character a serious dignity. The panels over the « tonnelet » are shaped as water plant leaves and the coloring may have accentuated the identity of the god.

⁹⁹ This order may also be in relation with a court protocol, as the rivers are associated with geographical places, and the etiquette of the French court was expressive of the respective importance of dukedom, comtés, marquisates, etc.



Figure 31: costume design for a river god attributed to Jean I Berain (1640–1711), from *Dessins Originaux et Croquis d'habillements, mascarades, scènes et décorations de théâtre, exécutés par les peintres et les costumiers du roi pour les ballets et les divertissements de la cour, depuis Henri III, et pour l'Académie royale de musique, depuis son établissement, en 1671, jusqu'à l'époque de Louis XVI.* Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

A second category of Berain designs shows costumes of river gods with a reed. Although kept in London, the costume drawing for a singer in figure 32 is clearly by the same hand and period as the costume for the river Sangar kept by the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Figure 28). The reed as hand prop indicates a river of less importance than the Fleuve Sangar but the cloak shows that the costume is for a singer. This design may be a project for one of the « Deux Dieux de Fleuves » which, with the « 12 big river gods singing » (Figure 29) that we have seen before, completes the group of male singers.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Féeries d'opéra, Décors, machines et costumes en France 1645-1765*. Paris : Editions du Patrimoine, 1997, pp. 86-87.



Figure 32: 1703? costume design by Jean I Berain (1640–1711) for a river god in *Alys*. London, Victoria & Albert Museum.

The oars present in different representations of river gods, have been rather consistent in shape and form. The regularity of their profile may come from the fact they were based on a real tool and as such had been already prompted many designs. Using ornamental figures which are characteristic of his style, Berain was also designing for the Marine Royale and the flotilla of Versailles was almost a nautical museum and included various paddles¹⁰¹. The reed as an alternative to the oar even prompted a special design showing it among other hand props (Figure 33).

A rare example where the reed and the oar get confused in one item can be found in a design by Berain in the collection of The Morgan Library and Museum (Figure 34). Wrongly titled *Protée* this design shows a costume for a river god, as performed by a singer. From the reed pole of the prop seems to grow a paddle which takes the place of the expected panicle.

¹⁰¹ For an example of Berain's design for a Gondole, see : *Versailles à Stockholm, Dessins du Nationalmuseum, Peintures, Meubles et Arts Décoratifs des Collections Suédoises et Danoises*. Stockholm : Nationalmuseum, 1985 p. 53. For the context see : Halna du Fretay, Amélie. "La flottille du Grand Canal de Versailles à l'époque de Louis XIV : diversité, technicité et prestige" in *Bulletin du Centre de recherche du château de Versailles* [Online]. Articles et études, (Accessed 2 December 2017). URL : <http://crcv.revues.org/10312> ; DOI : 10.4000/crcv.10312

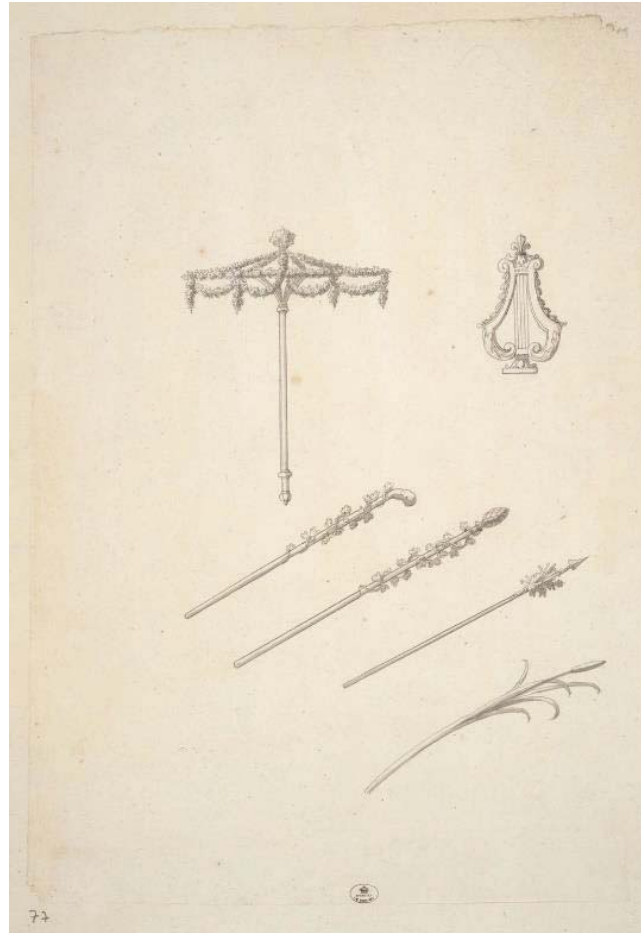


Figure 33: Design for hand props: a parasol, a lyre, a shepherd hook, a thyrsus, a spear and a reed.
Atelier des Menus Plaisirs du Roi.
Paris, Archives Nationales.



Figure 34 : *Proteus*, costume design by the School of Jean II Bérain 1674-1726.
Gift of Mrs. Donald M. Oenslager, 1982.
New York, The Morgan Library and Museum.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 35: 1703, costume design by Jean I Berain (1640–1711) for an old dancing river god in *Alys*. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.¹⁰²

This costume is remarkable due to the mask worn by the dancer, which merges with his wig, beard and headdress in a full green appearance (Figure 35). The river god almost appears like a water spirit, slightly scary and comical, and maybe one of two old river gods dancing that the libretto mentions: « Deux vieux Dieux de Fleuves & deux vieilles Nymphes de Fontaines dançantes ». The long alga and foliage which are hanging over the torso and legs may have been made with light material to move in the air, during the dance. The full green coloring also brings it closer to the bronze figures which decorate French gardens of the period, most notably statues which ornament the water features of Versailles such as the statue of the Rhône created in 1685–1688 by Jean-Baptiste Tuby (1635–1700) as seen on the Figure 35B.



Figure 35B: 1685–1688, *Le Rhône*, bronze sculpture by Jean-Baptiste Tuby, founded by the brothers Keller, placed at the "Bassin du Midi", Parc du Château in Versailles, France. Photograph: Wikipedia.

¹⁰² <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8455608c>

The little study shown on Figure 36 belongs to a large series of studies for heads and headdresses by Berain or his atelier. The bottom head shows a water god, with a headdress composed with foliage very close to the one of « old dancing river gods » designed by Berain (Figure 26): the wig seemed treated in the same foliage fashion. The wreath itself is ornate with scallop shells, which may also suggest a sea god. It is still very representative of the headset which is found on most river gods, and a part of his visual identity. In the line of Virgil and Ovid, the libretto for *Acis and Galatea* set by Handel in 1718, states: « Acis now a God appears! / See how he rears him from his Bed! / See the Wreath that binds his Head! » Wrongly catalogued as « portraits », the Bibliothèque municipale de Versailles houses a great number of these head studies, designs clearly aiming to provide some specific documentation to the workshops of the hatter, the wig maker and the mask maker.



Figure 36: ca 1690, design for two headdresses by Jean I Berain (1640–1711), top for an unidentified character and, bottom, for a river god, in Jean Berain. *Habillemens et décoration d'Opéra*, dessin n°226, N°identification: Ms F 88_E48. Versailles, Bibliothèque municipale de Versailles.¹⁰³

The puzzling design, reproduced in Figure 37, is also attributed to Jean I Berain (1640–1711) but in my view is more likely to come from the hand, or the workshop, of his son Jean II Berain (1678–1726). Its graphic style brings it clearly to the early eighteenth century. On the one hand it seems to belong to the *Ballet de Cour* style, but on the other, the long overcoat

¹⁰³ <http://banqueimages.crcv.fr/2011/fullscreenimage.aspx?rank=1&numero=22633>

seems to make dancing difficult, if not totally proscribe it, as the movement of the legs would be impaired by the length of the overcoat. The overall costume seems highly influenced by court wear and does not relate to the usual personal style of Berain for opera costumes. There is definitely nothing reminiscent of antiquity in this design and the presence of the vest suggests an inference with an everyday wear wardrobe, although the subtle scallop cut of the edge and the leafy embroidery may be an attempt by the designer to clarify the identity of the character. It is the hat, in shape of a regular tricorne which is the most surprisingly modern. Likely to have also been conceived for a masquerade, this headdress brings him closer to the German costume shown in Figure 16 showing the costume of Water, as one of the four elements.



Figure 37: 17??, costume design by Jean I Berain (1640–1711) or Jean II Berain (1678–1726) for a singing water god in an opera or a masquerade.
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Besides the green coloring, only the reeds hand prop indicates a clear relation with the usual iconography of the river god. Indeed, the plants on the hat and on the dancing shoes are colored in red, like coral, and bring this river god closer to a triton or another sea creature, enlarging the scope to water in general. Further research to locate costumes of the other elements by the same hand, as it is likely that this character was part of a larger group, is needed.

As indicated by the hand-written note on it, the costume for a “ruisseau”, seen in Figure 38, is designed by Boquet for a stream in the 1765 revival¹⁰⁴ of *Les Fêtes de l'Hymen & de l'Amour*. This title was adopted to reflect the wedding circumstances of the first performance of 1747 of *Les Dieux d'Égypte* by Louis de Cahusac (1706–1759) and Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764). The *Ballet héroïque* presents in three *entrées* the loves of the deities of the Egyptian

¹⁰⁴ Opening on the 18 of June 1765.

pantheon. The second of these *entrées* is centered on the god of the Nile and bears his name as a title, *Canope*. In this ballet Cahusac develops the narrative integration of dance in sequences indicated as « ballets figurés » in the libretto, where the dances become significant because they represent some actions without which the drama cannot progress. The dance is used in such a narrative purpose when Cahusac presents on stage the flooding of the Nile: this overflow of the river represents the peak of the *entrée*, and Cahusac plans its staging in a complex way by ordering a specific sequence of elements of theater such as scenery, machinery, light and dance.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 38: 1765, Costume design for a « ruisseau » by Louis-René Boquet (1717–1814), in *Les Fêtes de l'Hymen et de l'Amour ou les Dieux d'Égypte*. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Opéra.

The annotation: « Ballet Ruisseau » indicates a costume for a dancer performing a creek, whilst other « water gods, followers of Canope » are singing and dancing, as required by the libretto and invading the stage during the flooding of the Nile. The youth of the character is made apparent by the choice of Boquet to omit the usual beard. The costume is in a late rococo style with a use of curved lines and shells which brings, at first glance, the costume of the stream closer to the one of a sea god, more specifically to one of a triton. As often with Boquet, the hasty annotation for the tailor compensates for the fact the design is not colored: « Bodice Amadis skin color, Drapery green, scales of silver // White tonnelet, gauze of water, Shell in organza, and falls of networks and fringes of water ». ¹⁰⁵ Noteworthy is the indication

¹⁰⁵ « Corps amadis chair Draperie Verte Ecaille d'argent // tonnelet Blanc gaze Deau Coquille de gaze [Et chute] // de Reseau Et frange Deau » in manuscript notes on the design reproduced in Figure 38.

of bodice and “amadis” in skin color. The contemporary *L'Encyclopédie* gives us a definition of “Manches en Amadis”: « The Amadis sleeves are little open, are lined with the same fabric they are made, from the wrist to the top of the hand slot or opening; are narrow and apply so exactly on the arm, they do not puff, and that hardly can they wrinkle ». ¹⁰⁶ This was an attempt to express the half nudity of the river god, found in non-theatrical representations since the antiquity. By asking for a bodice and some sleeves in skin color, Boquet was following the modesty rules of “bienséance” as it was not allowed to show too much skin on the French stage. Suggesting a contrast with this natural color, the notes also indicate a green fabric with silver scales. Finally, light fabrics, gauze and organza, with fringes, are used for creating an effect of water, which may have been emphasized by their lightness during the movement of the dancer. A small headdress, crown with feathers, shows the “rank” of this river: a modest creek.

This river god is presented without any hand props. Maybe even a small reed would have limited the “port de bras” (“carriage of the arms”) that the dancers of the Paris opera were so famous for. To convince the dancers to keep the props connected with the iconological sources which delimited the characters was not always an easy task. Already in 1682, Menestrier commented on the fact that: « It is difficult today to make the dancers take symbols that are specific to the people they represent, or to the action that one would like them to express ». The dancers were entering stage with the iconological attribute of their character but « As soon as we see on the Neptune Scene with his Trident, Mercury with his caduceus & Jupiter with his lightning, that they leave them before dancing. There are only staffs of pilgrims, swords, half-spades, and some similar instruments, which we retain, and whatever one may have been convinced of, that these performances are the most characteristic of the Ballets, the Masters can hardly bear them, and if this bad taste persists, we will soon see only balls instead of those ancient Ballets, which were so famous in Greece ». ¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ « les manches en Amadis sont peu ouvertes, sont doublées de la même toile qu’elles sont faites depuis le poignet jusqu’au dessus de la fente ou ouverture de manche ; sont étroites et s’appliquent si exactement sur le bras, qu’elles ne bouffent point, et qu’à peine peuvent-elles se plisser. » in *Encyclopédie*. Édition de Genève et de Neuchâtel, 1778, in 4, t. II, p. 256.

¹⁰⁷ « on a peine aujourd’hui à leur [les danseurs] faire prendre des symboles propres aux personnes qu’ils représentent, où à l’action que l’on voudroit qu’ils exprimassent. » Still the dancers were entering on stage with their attributes but « A peine void-on sur la Scène Neptune avec son Trident, Mercure avec son caducée & Jupiter avec sa foudre, qu’ils les quittent devant que de danser. Il n’y a plus que des bourdons de pelerins, des épées, des demi piques & quelques instrumens semblables, que l’on retienne, & quoi que l’on soit persuadé que ces entrées de spectacle, soient les plus propres aux Ballets, les Maistres ont peine à les souffrir, & si ce mauvais goût persevere, on ne verra bien-tôt que des Bals au lieu de ces anciens Ballets, qui furent si celebres dans la Grece. » in Ménestrier. *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre*. Paris : René Guignard, 1682, pp. 146 and 147.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 39: 1770, costume design by Louis-René Boquet (1717–1814) for a river god in a French opera. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Opéra¹⁰⁸.

On the costume by Boquet for a River god in an unknown piece shown in Figure 39, a long reed replaces the usual oar. The absence of a beard associates the character to a younger river god, like in the design by Boquet for a “ruisseau” for the 1765 revival of *Les Fêtes de l'Hymen et de l'Amour*. But this costume is for a singer as the tall headset suggests which is confirmed by the drapery floating on the floor: long drapes were not practical for the complex legs movements in the dance of the period. The “ruisseau” is shown here as a slim adolescent, and the thin chest is treated au naturel although, like in the previous drawing by Boquet, a tight fit for the torso, with sleeves “en amadis” for the lower arms, may have been used for the “corps”. Besides his cloak, the vertical line of the costume is accentuated by the green and white stripes of the fabric, showing by comparison with the previous design, that the style of Boquet knows an evolution.

This detailed design may also have been useful for giving indications about the way the foliage of the reeds should look. By the time the project was elaborated it is likely they were made using cutouts of silk fabric, a process used for artificial flowers which knew then a major development in Europe. The *Encyclopédie* of Diderot dedicates in 1756 an article, attributed to Louis de Jaucourt (1704-1779), to the craft of the « Fleuriste Artificiel », and some plates show the cutting pieces the craftsman was using to create petals and foliage (Figures 40 and 40A). The aim was the total illusion as the definition states immediately: « FLEURISTE

¹⁰⁸ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8455359n>

ARTIFICIEL, is the one who knows how to represent by flowers, leaves, artificial plants, etc. the nature in all its productions » The writer mentions that « This art is new in France »¹⁰⁹ but after tracing back to China the origin of artificial flowers, the writer clarifies « This art is no less ancient in Italy, where the greater part of the nobility exercises it with honor. The flowers we draw from this country are better supported and are used more frequently and more generally than those of China. » He then explains which materials are used by the Italian: « These flowers are made of cocoons of silkworms, feathers, and canvases; » and gives the key of the shiny appearance of the foliage: « The greenery that accompanies them is of a dyed, gummed, and very strong canvas. They are superior to those elsewhere, in that they are stronger, and better represent the natural ones by the turn and the color which they know how to give them ».¹¹⁰

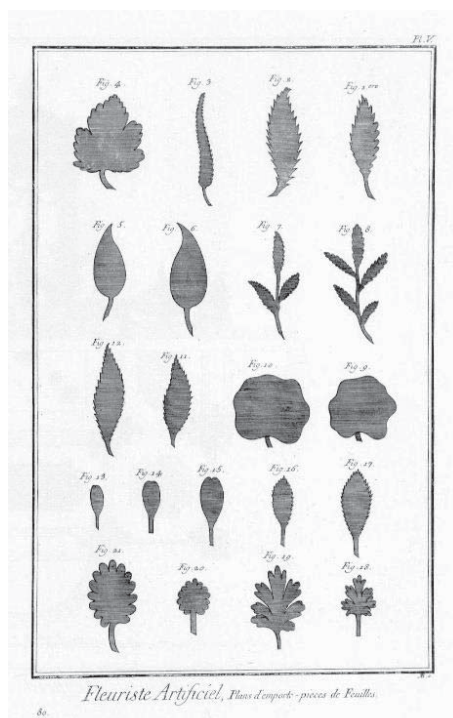


Figure 40: ca 1750, Plate V of « Fleuriste Artificiel » from *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*. Paris, 1751–1765.

The quality of Italian artificial flowers and foliage explains their success in France: « Paris florists, even those who could make them as beautiful, prefer to bring them from this country, because they have them cheaper. Italians use scissors to cut flowers, and rarely cut irons; which requires much more time for their works, and therefore makes them more expensive. These irons have only been used at the beginning of this century; it is to a Swiss that they owe their invention. These irons are very useful and shorten much the operations of

¹⁰⁹ « FLEURISTE ARTIFICIEL, est celui qui sait représenter par des fleurs, des feuilles, des plantes artificielles, etc. la nature dans toutes ses productions [...] Cet art est nouveau en France » in *Encyclopédie*, Édition de Genève et de Neuchâtel, 1778.

¹¹⁰ « Cet art n'est pas moins ancien en Italie, où la plus grande partie de la noblesse l'exerce avec honneur. Les fleurs que nous tirons de ce pays se soutiennent mieux, et sont d'un usage plus fréquent et plus général que celles de la Chine. Ces fleurs sont fabriquées de coques de vers à soie, de plumes, et de toiles ; la verdure qui les accompagne est d'une toile teinte, gommée, et très-forte. Elles sont supérieures à celles qu'on fait ailleurs, en ce qu'elles sont plus solides, et représentent mieux les naturelles par la tournure et la couleur qu'on sait leur donner. » in *Encyclopédie*, Édition de Genève et de Neuchâtel, 1778.

the artist; since, by their means, one can cut at one blow, and in an instant, several leaves which would hold more than a day to cut with scissors. These irons are piece cutters, or molds hollow and modeled on the inside of the natural leaf of the flower that they must carry ». ¹¹¹ This new method, which is still in use today ¹¹², allowed a more effective way of production both in terms of quantity and quality. The abundance of flowers and foliage on the costumes designed by Boquet may be an effect of this development.

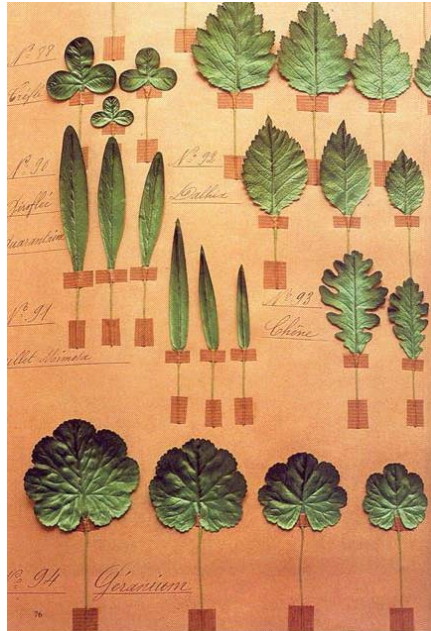


Figure 40A: Examples of foliage in the archives of Maison Legeron, Paris..

A Swedish costume for a wild man, made in the same period as *l'Encyclopedie*, shows some foliage manufactured following this craft (Figure 41). This costume¹¹³, worn in 1778 for a tournament in Drottningholm, is based on many sources, including a design from Boquet's workshop representing a « sauvage »¹¹⁴ (Figure 42) for the costume worn by Jean Dauberval in 1765 (Figure 43) in *Sylvie* the *Ballet Héroïque* by Pierre Laujon (1727–1811) with music by Jean-

111 « Les fleuristes de Paris, même ceux qui pourraient en faire d'aussi belles, aiment mieux les faire venir de ce pays, parce qu'ils les ont à meilleur compte. Les Italiens se servent de ciseaux pour découper les fleurs, et rarement de fers à découper ; ce qui demande beaucoup plus de temps pour leurs ouvrages, et les rend par conséquent plus chers. On ne s'est servi de ces fers qu'au commencement de ce siècle : c'est à un Suisse qu'on en doit l'invention. Ces fers sont fort utiles, et abrègent beaucoup les opérations de l'artiste ; puisqu'on peut par leur moyen tailler d'un seul coup, et en un instant, plusieurs feuilles qui tiendraient plus d'un jour à découper aux ciseaux. Ces fers sont des emporte-pièces, ou des moules creux et modelés en-dedans sur la feuille naturelle de la fleur qu'ils doivent emporter » in *Encyclopédie*, Édition de Genève et de Neuchâtel, 1778.

¹¹² Founded in 1880, the Maison Legeron realizes artisanal flowers in feather or silk and is anchored in the eighteenth-century tradition of quality into the tools and preparation methods. Atelier Legeron, 20 rue des Petits Champs, 75002 Paris. Thanks to Bruno Legeron for his hospitality during a research carried out in 2003.

¹¹³ Stockholm, Livrustkammaren, Inventory number: 29290 (17/162). See: Rangström, Lena. *Riddarleke och Törnerspel. Sverige - Europa*. Stockholm: Livrustkammaren, 1992, pp. 247–248.

¹¹⁴This design has often been exhibited and reproduced. See: *Deux siècles d'opéra français*. Paris : Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1972, N° 139, pp. 65-67.

Claude Trial (1732–1771) and Pierre-Montan Berton (1727–1780)¹¹⁵. Oak greeneries are used to express the sylvan identity of the character but, if the fake animal skin is replaced by a stripe fabric, one can easily imagine the same composition with water plants for a river god. This is clear when comparing this Swedish costume with the Boquet design shown on Figure 39.



Figure 41: “En vildes klädning” (a Wild man costume) worn by Duke Carl (1748–1818) in the Drottningholm tournament *Dianas fest*, 1778. Stockholm, Livrustkammaren.

¹¹⁵ *Théâtre de Cour, Les spectacles à Fontainebleau au XVIIIe siècle*. Paris : Réunion des musées nationaux, 2005, pp. 151–152.



Figure 42: costume design for a *femme Sauvage* and a *Sauvage* (Wild man) from the workshop of Louis-René Boquet. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Opéra.



Figure 43: 1765–1766, Jean Dauberval and Marie Allard in *Sylvie*, drawing by Louis Carrogis de Carmontelle (1717–1806).

Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, The Forsyth Wickes Collection, N°65 2550.,

The costume was worn by the Duke Carl (1748–1818), later king under the name of Carl XIII. Duke Carl, brother of Gustav III, was acting the part of Nessus in the tournament *Dianas fest*, on an elaborate scenario, where the Swedish court was at the same time actor and audience. Not assimilated to the character of a centaur in this spectacle, as the strict reading of the mythology would have requested, the part of Nessus is one of a faun. The costume shows how an artificial foliage made of silk was integrated in a costume, around this period. It also shows the use of a bodice (« corps ») with sleeves « en amadis » to imitate the naked body. The white part of the costume whose today discoloration is misleading, was of the same « couleur

de chair » as the pants, as the indication for fabric used for the legs attests. The usage of fabric imitating the color of the naked skin was a trend which was also used for the river god.

Sweden during the eighteenth century knew a rich theater life, welcoming artists from Italy, France and Germany. Around 1791, choreograph Jean-Georges Noverre (1727–1810) sent an open work application to Gustave III, king of Sweden¹¹⁶. He added a large set of 147 costumes designs by Boquet, as an attempt to show the new style of costumes his ballet pantomime required. One of these designs shows a costume of an “Ondin” for a dancer (Figure 44).



Figure 44: 1790, costume design by Louis-René Boquet (1717–1814) for an « Ondin » in a ballet by Noverre. Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket.

The name of the character pays tribute to the Nordic and German mythology, maybe because of the Swedish destination of the costume, but the costume is undoubtedly the one of a river god¹¹⁷. Besides the usual oar, the character offers all the characteristics which have prevailed since the seventeenth century: the use of a bodice and a *tonnelet*, made with contrasted white and green fabrics, which are combined together to make a third fabric, a striped one. The costume is punctuated with trimmings and ornaments of water plants. This vegetation is

¹¹⁶ Noverre’s application has been studied: Ginger, Irène and Modigh, Karin. “Une dernière tentative d’emploi de Noverre : le dossier de candidature au roi de Suède de 1791” in *Jean-Georges Noverre (1727–1810) Un artiste européen au siècle des lumières, Musicorum N°10*. Tours: Université de Tours, 2011, pp. 221–243.

¹¹⁷ In the Manuscript the Ondin project is placed after projects for “Galathée” and a “Triton” before the ones for a “rivière”, a “fontaine” and a “Naiade”, creating a series of 6 water gods. See: *Habits de Costumes pour l’exécution des ballets de Mr. Noverre dessinés par M.r Boquet, premier Dessinateur des menus Plaisirs du Roi de France. Tome II*, [1791], Handskrift S 254:2, Kungliga Biblioteket, National Library of Sweden. See: http://www.kb.se/soka/kataloger/regina?func=find-b&request=004053981&find_code=SYS&local_base=KBS01

also present on the simple headdress. For a better understanding of the identity of the character of his project Boquet draws some reeds in a natural setting at the feet of the character as the meaningful details of the crown size, already neo-classical in its restraint, could be missed. The influence of this style considered, the costume of the river god is defined in accordance with an iconology by then well established.

7.1.5 The stage costume of a male river god: Memo for the designer



Figure 45: 1695, « Habit de Comedien », etching by Nicolas II de Larmessin (1632-1694) from *Les costumes grotesques et les métiers*.

During the baroque and classical periods, on a stage costume whose general shape is comparable to one depicted by Larmessin around 1700 as « Habit de Comédien », in Figure 45:

1. The Costume integrates the Roman tradition establishing the representation of a river god as a male half naked crowned with a wreath made of water plants, sometime with an urn.
2. Water is suggested by shiny fabrics, of which the shimmering look take the light by reflection like the liquid element.
3. Water jets are also depicted, likely with silver threads, sometimes coming out of the body. Candlelight was emphasizing the shimmering effect of the costumes by its moving capacity.
4. The costume of the river god follows the style of the theater costume of its period and the general shape of the male baroque stage costumes: bodice close to the torso and *tonnelet* from the waist to the knees. If on stage, the River god is coming from metamorphoses, the costume may integrate some aspects of the previous identity of the character.
5. The headset is invariably made of reeds, likely artificial, and sporadically ornate with feathers, sometimes in the shape of water plants.
6. Reeds and water plants are used to ornate the costume by application of silk leaves.
7. The hair is often of a vegetal nature or evocative of liquid. Old rivers are shown with beard; young streams appear without facial hair. The bodice and its sleeves are often in the color of the skin to suggest nudity.
8. The palette is often blue in the seventeenth century but moves towards green during the eighteenth century. Blue or green associated with white and silver during both centuries.
9. Combination of colors (blue, green, silver, and white), patterns on fabric (waves, stripes) complete the characterization.
10. A long floating cloak is making the distinction between costumes for singers and costumes for dancers.
11. The feet, stockings and shoes, are most often of the same skin color as the pants.
12. There is some constancy in the attributes: the hand prop is more than often an oar but can also be a reed when the river is of less importance, like a stream.

7.2 *Psiché* at Drottningholms Slottsteater

It is fortunate that through the centuries the collection of eighteenth-century stage sets belonging to Drottningholms Slottsteater in Sweden was preserved¹. It now allows people to fully experience a medium which is fragile because belonging to the performing arts. The collection of early sets is made of a great variety of pieces. Even if the collection is composed with elements of sceneries designed for several Swedish court theatres, the most important part of the collection was built for Drottningholms Slottsteater. This group represents a total of 494 separate elements which divides in four groups according to their nature and use on stage² but the collection of Drottningholm sets also includes the stage curtain and the unique clouds scenery which, being a fixed part of the stage machinery, cannot be taken away from the theatre of Drottningholm. Many of these sets are for Drottningholm and fit its machinery, which is the only one of the eighteenth century in work order today. Without the sets, the machinery is pointless. Without the machinery, the sets lose a major part of their interest.

Dated mostly from the 1760s to 1790s, the core of the collection is also exceptionally varied in types and presents architectures, landscapes and interiors. The styles cover different styles, from baroque to early romantic, through the rococo era and then the neo-classicism. The sceneries are works from various artists: Johan Pasch (1706–1769), Jean Eric Rehn (1717–1793), Carlo Bibiena (1721–1787), Lars Bolander (1731/35–1795), Lorenz Sundström (1738–1776), Louis-Jean Desprez (1743–1804), Johan Fredrik Lindman (1743–1813), Jacob Mörck (1748–1786), Jean-Démouthène Dugourc (1749–1825), Johan Zelander (1753–1814), Emmanuel Limnell (1766–1792)... This group of Swedish, French or Italian artists not only designed these sets, but in many cases oversaw their making and more than often painted them themselves. The importance of original hands cannot be under evaluated here: these canvases, these pictures are the original artistic expression of major artists. Artists such as Johan Pasch, Jean-Eric Rehn and Louis-Jean Desprez are not only theatre painters: their theatre works take place in a larger production of decorative arts and architecture. Indeed, beside their interest in theatre history, some of the sets in this collection are in themselves magnificent pieces of painting.

The artists who painted the sets have also been working in Drottningholm domain as architects, interior designers or painters. This relationship binds the collection tightly with the

¹ Blin, Gilbert and Trotier, Rémy-Michel. *The Drottningholm's Collection of Historical Stage Sets, Perspectives on Conservation. Report after the Seminar 11-13 September 2007 organised with the generous contribution of Drottningholmsteaterns Vänner*. Paris : Académie Desprez and Stockholm : Stiftelsen Drottningholms teatermuseum, 2007.

² 216 side flats, most of the time paired, of which heights range from 2,50 to 5,90 m and widths from 1,10 to 4,30 m. All these elements, having a wooden structure, are of fixed dimensions; 26 backdrops (soft canvas, painted) of maximum dimensions 7,10 x 10 m ; 13 borders of approximative dimensions 2 x 7 m and 239 practicable elements of various shapes, makings and sizes.

buildings and the Royal Domain of Drottningholm. Drottningholms Slottsteater is the most perfectly preserved eighteenth-century theatre in the world and, in fact, the only one still functioning as a place of public enlightenment. Other theatres of the period exist, even other contemporary early stage sets. But none of these theatres still operate on a regular basis for a large audience, and none of such sets have an active playhouse of the period where they could be hosted in an authentic manner and researched in full context. By far the biggest collection in the world, the most varied in term of styles, the largest in term of time scope, the collection is also of the highest importance because of its original state. The conservation condition of the majority of the pieces is great. This situation has no equivalent amongst the few other collections existing.

Inventoried in 1777 and 1809, the stage sets remained, from 1792 to 1922, in Drottningholms Slottsteater. The flats were stowed away close to one another in the wings of the stage. Borders and backdrops were hanging from the flies. The cellar and the attic of the auditorium served as depot for other kinds of stage sets. After his “discovery” of the theatre of the Palace of Drottningholm in 1921, Art historian Agne Beijer (1888–1975) devoted his life to the study of the theatre and the Collection of Historical Stage Sets. In 1937, he published a monumental monography which made available black and white photographs of the collection to the world³: this first edition has been a reference for art and theatre historians ever since. In the 1930s and 1940s, the historical sets were used during special performances in the theatre. In the 1950s, gradually, following the need for the productions, the original sets were copied by the ateliers of the Royal Opera. These copies replace on stage the original sets which were stored in different buildings scattered over the domain of Drottningholm. In 1974, the sets were moved to their present location: a storage house built specifically for their storage near Drottningholm. It was a necessary step in the care of this collection to make the scientific inventory of it. Barbro Stribolt has devoted, from 1968 to 1998, a large part of her activity to an extensive study of the collection. This study was completed by the publication of the fully colour illustrated catalogue of the collection in 2002⁴. This thesaurus, which revealed worldwide the size and variety of the Collection and assessed its unrivalled value, has made possible this casestudy.

On Tuesday, 28th October 1766, the theatre at Drottningholm Palace officially⁵ opened for the first time with a performance of Molière’s *Psyché*. The approaching marriage of the crown prince, later to become king Gustave III, had motivated and accelerated the building of the

³ Beijer, Agne. *Slottsteatrarna på Drottningholm och Gripsholm*. Stockholm : Lindfors Bokförlag, 1937.

⁴ Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsholm*. Stockholm: Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002.

⁵ The royal family had already visited the building in July 1766, and experimented the acoustic with some dramatic and musical excerpts, all from the French repertoire: on the 8th, the prince Gustav recited a speech of Oreste from *Iphigénie en Tauride* by Guimond de la Touche and his sister the princess Sofia Albertina performed a scene from *Le Philosophe Marié* by Sedaine while Brita Horn, who served as « hovfröken » (Lady in waiting) to queen Louisa Ulrika, sung an air from *Le Roi et son fermier* by Monsigny also on a text by Sedaine. And on the 9th, some scenes of *Rhadamiste et Zénobie* by Crebillon were performed by the royal siblings. See: *Gustaf III:s Opera*. Stockholm: Aktiebolaget Gunnar Tisells Tekniska Förlag, 1923, p. 49. See also: Lewenhaupt, Inga. “Slottsteatrarna före den gustavianska tiden” in *Drottningholms slott, Från Hedvig Elenora till Louisa Ulrika*, (band I). Huvudredaktörer: Göran Alm and Rebecka Millhagen. Stockholm: Byggförlaget Kultur, 2004, pp. 368–395.

new « Kongl. Hof-Theatren »⁶. This innovative building, which had been erected on the same site as the previous Royal Court-Theatre which burnt down in 1762⁷, was intended to be inaugurated during festivities held to coincide with the arrival of the bride, Princess Sofia Magdalena of Denmark, at Drottningholm⁸. The architect, Carl Fredrik Adelcrantz, who oversaw the royal architecture, had in 1764 designed this larger and more amply equipped court theatre where more extensive productions could be put on⁹. The work elected for the opening performance was chosen therefore to correspond to the requirements of a court wedding and, at the same time, to showcase the technical marvels of the new stage¹⁰. It was decided for a French play called *Psiché*. This play of Molière, the most performed French author in Sweden during this time, is one of few of the writer which requires a lot of scenic effects, all intricately linked to the action¹¹. Since 1747, when five tapestries by Boucher on the subject were delivered to Stockholm Royal Castle, the visual appeal of the tale of Cupid and Psyche, was already well known¹². The happy end with the two lovers being united in marriage was a fitting allegory in honour of the union of the high-born couple. Molière had created a stage version of this myth for Louis XIV, who had himself chosen the subject matter but with a different agenda¹³. The double aim was then to re-open the theatre of the Tuileries Palace in Paris and to produce in 1671 a lavish show to re-use the large scenery specially made for it¹⁴.

Drottningholm's connections with this unique Parisian stage, known by the evocative name of *Salle des Machines*, are well established. In 1745 Carl Gustav Tessin had purchased a theatre model¹⁵ in Paris which he then presented to King Adolf Fredrik of Sweden. This model was, following the sale catalogue, offering a working miniature machinery on the model of the

⁶ (sic) in *Inrikes Tidningar*, 30 October 1766, quoted by Beijer, Agne. *Les troupes françaises à Stockholm, 1699–1792, Listes de repertoire*. Rédaction Sven Björkman. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1989, p. 123.

⁷ On the 25th of August 1762, during a performance in front of the royal family, fire broke up and destroyed the building. See: Hilleström, Gustaf. *Drottningholmsteatern förr och nu, The Drottningholm Theatre – Past and Present*. Foto Lennart Petersens. Stockholm: Bokförlaget Natur och Kultur, 1956, p. 7.

⁸ This arrival of the Danish princess Sofia Magdalena in Drottningholm was not an easy case, involving protocol and family issues. See the letters by Queen Louisa Ulrika from the year 1766 in Schück, Henrik. *Gustav III:s och Louisa Ulrikas brevväxling, Första Delen*. Stockholm: Nordstedt & Söners Förlag, 1919.

⁹ See: Fogelmarck, Stig. *Carl Fredrik Adelcrantz, Arkitekt*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1957, pp. 189–200 and pp. 303–313. Adelcrantz was also the official head of the French troupe in Sweden from 1754 à 1771. See in the same book p. 511.

¹⁰ This ambitious plan knew some difficulties and delays: « Adelcrantz se dédisant de tout pour le lundi, je crains encore la catastrophe pour le mardi » (Adelcrantz declining everything for this Monday, I fear again the disaster for this Tuesday) in Schück, Henrik. *Gustav III:s och Louisa Ulrikas brevväxling, Första Delen*. Stockholm: Nordstedt & Söners Förlag, 1919, p. 74.

¹¹ See: Beijer, Agne. *Les troupes françaises à Stockholm, 1699–1792, Listes de repertoire*. Rédaction Sven Björkman. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1989, p. 123.

¹² N° 154 in *Le Soleil et l'Étoile du Nord, La France et la Suède au XVIII^e siècle*. Paris: Grand Palais, 1994, p. 121.

¹³ See Chapter 2.

¹⁴ See: La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Carlo Vigarani, intendant des plaisirs de Louis XIV*. Paris: Perrin, 2005, pp. 108–116.

¹⁵ The model has originally been owned by Joseph Bonnier de la Mosson, great collector of models of machines.

theatre of the Tuileries Palace: « This Theatre or Salle des Machines is made on the model of the one which exists at the Palais des Thuilleries; one has assembled in this Machine, as much as one has been able, the various movements which serve to change the Decorations and the different Scenes of an Opera »¹⁶. Even in 1766 this mechanical marvel was to be found in the king's study at Drottningholm Palace and would surely have been at the centre of discussions about the magical spectacles which the original might have enabled¹⁷. The general conception of the building by Adelcrantz is owed to this model, as well as maybe the choice of *Psiché* for the opening performance on the new stage, as this play was undeniably linked to the *Salle des Machines*. Even if Drottningholms Slottsteater was not able to compete in size with the Tuileries stage in Paris¹⁸, its sophisticated machinery allowed Molière's lavish work to be presented with all the theatrical effects indicated by the playwright.

In the editions of Molière's drama which circulated in Sweden in the 1760s¹⁹ *Psiché, tragédie-comédie et ballet*, in five acts with a prologue, is enacted in various settings. This complicated dramatic structure, which already makes *Psiché* like a French opera²⁰, albeit without a score composed throughout, requires wide-reaching changes of scenery to the playing of musical intermèdes while the curtain remains up²¹. In 1766, the new production at Drottningholm was based on quick shifts of scenery thanks to the stage machinery²². Between the frontstage and the back wall no less than six painted pairs of side flats and flies borders could be moved at the same time, so that the previous scenery gave way to the new, and so on. These spectacular

¹⁶ « Ce Théâtre ou Salle des Machines est fait sur le modele de celui qui existe au Palais des Thuilleries; on a rassemblé dans cette Machine, autant qu'on l'a pû, les divers mouvements qui servent à changer les Décorations & les différentes Scenes d'un Opera » in Gersaint, Edme-François. *Catalogue raisonné d'une collection considérable de diverses curiosités en tous genres contenuës dans les cabinets de feu M. Bonnier de La Mosson...* Paris: Barois & Simon, 1744, p. 161.

¹⁷ N° 553 in *Le Soleil et l'Étoile du Nord, La France et la Suède au XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: Grand Palais, 1994, p. 354.

¹⁸ The depth of the Tuileries stage was of 41 meters, the one of Drottningholm is of 20 meters.

¹⁹ See : "Psiché, tragi-comédie, et ballet" dans Molière, *Œuvres, Nouvelle éd., augmentée de la vie de l'auteur & des Remarques Historiques & Critiques par Voltaire avec de très belles Figures en Tailles douces*. Tome VI. Amsterdam and Leipzig: Arkstee & Merkus, 1765. The text and the illustrations of this edition are reproducing the one of the edition published by Prault, in 1734, with some engravings by Laurent Cars (1699–1771), after Boucher (1703–1770), known as « Édition Jolly ».

²⁰ The spectacle is recorded as « Operan *Psiche* » by the *Inrikes Tidningar* dated 30 October 1766. See: Beijer, Agne. *Les troupes françaises à Stockholm, 1699–1792, Listes de repertoire*. Rédaction Sven Björkman. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1989, p. 123, note 252. See also: Schück, Henrik. *Gustav III:s och Louisa Ulrikas brevväxling, Första Delen*. Stockholm: Nordstedt & Söners Förlag, 1919, pp. 75–76: « Le Roi m'ordonne de vous faire mille amitiés et vous attend le mardi 28; c'est selon la première route, car quand il s'agit d'un opéra, il y a toujours quelque chose qui cloche. » (The King orders me to give you a thousand regards and expects you on Tuesday the 28th; this is according to the first plan, because when it comes to an opera, there is always something wrong).

²¹ See: Canova-Green, Marie-Claude. "Le symbolique du décor dans la tragédie-ballet de 1671" in *Les Métamorphoses de Psyché*. Dossier établi par Carine Barbafieri et Chris Rauseo. Valenciennes: Presses Universitaires de Valenciennes, 2004, pp. 127–142.

²² The newly composed score by Francesco Uttini (1723–1795), as the one of Lully a hundred years before, was linking act to act. Following Einar Sundström, only the orchestra parts of *Psiché* still exist at the Royal Opera Library. See: Sundström, Einar. "Francesco Antonio Uttini som musikdramatiker" in *Svensk Tidskrift för Musikforskning*. 1963. Thanks to Mattias Åkesson, Librarian at the Kungliga Biblioteket (*National Library of Sweden*) for his help on this matter.

« changements à vue »²³ enable a series of different scenes which brought Psyche – and the spectators – from a seascape to an enchanted place, and from exquisite gardens to the underworld. When Louis XIV commissioned *Psiché* in 1671 he ordered the creators to re-use the sumptuous scenery which had been created by the Vigarani, father and son, for *Ercole amante*²⁴, the opera by Buti and Cavalli, performed in 1662. In order to use the *Salle des Machines* from his remarkable production of *Psiché*, Molière had been forced to plan his future staging as soon as he was writing his first script²⁵: He had to tell the story in spaces according to the existing sets of the Vigarani, father and sons. The French stage work of the designers acquired some fame at this time and was known in Stockholm, thanks to Nicodemus Tessin the Younger (1654–1728), who collected art works from France and acquired numerous designs in Paris at the end of the seventeenth century. Among them no less than « 17 décorations d’opéra de Paris » by Vigarani which entered the Royal collection in 1754²⁶.

At Drottningholm in 1766, all the scenery needed for *Psiché* would have been made new for the first performance. Besides the importance of the royal events, which seems to dictate an up-to-date style, the size and proportions of the new stage required many and large scenic elements, not to be found in the other existing Swedish theatres in 1766. Drottningholms Slottsteater, considered rightly as a « Masterpiece »²⁷ on its inauguration, is still existing and offers a lot of resources from the period. As we have seen the building is the oldest theatre preserved in its original state of use, a condition which makes it relevant for the understanding

²³ Swedish language has kept in its vocabulary the word « changemang » and the *Svenske ordbok* of the Swedish Academy traces to 1716 the use of this word, coming from the French « changement », word used for the change between two sets.

²⁴ Vanuxem, Jacques. “Les fêtes théâtrales de Louis XIV et le baroque de la *Finta Pazzia* à *Psiché* (1645–1671)” in *Baroque* [En ligne], 2 | 1967, URL : <http://baroque.revues.org/253> ; (Accessed 13 October 2017).

²⁵ The “Avertissement” which opens the 1673 edition of the play, gives only the paternity of the « plan & la disposition du sujet » to Molière. « les vers qui se récitent dans le prologue [the spoken verses], le premier acte, la première scène du second acte, & la première scène du troisième » are also from Molière. The rest of the text is by Pierre Corneille and the words which are sung in music are by Quinault, except for the “plainte italienne”, that a tradition attributes to Lully. See: Mahé, Yann. “*Psiché* de Lully, P. Corneille, Molière & Quinault : Etudes des sources imprimées en 1671” in *Les Métamorphoses de Psiché*. Dossier établi par Carine Barbaferi et Chris Rauseo. Valenciennes : Presses Universitaires de Valenciennes, 2004, pp. 113–126. To this list, it would have been fair to add Carlo Vigarani who directed the sets and the machinery in 1671 based on the ones his father designed in 1661 for *Ercole amante*, but it seems that the relation between Molière and Vigarani was not very good, see: Mazouer, Charles. “Molière et Carlo Vigarani” in *Gaspere & Carlo Vigarani, Dalla corte degli Este a quella di Luigi XIV, De la cour d’Este à celle de Louis XIV. A cura di/ dirigé par Walter Baricchi et Jérôme de La Gorce*. Versailles : Centre de recherche du château de Versailles and Milano : Silvana Editoriale Spa, 2009, pp. 319–326.

²⁶ Tessin le jeune, Nicodème and Cronström, Daniel. *Correspondance (extraits), Les Relations artistiques entre la France et la Suède, 1693–1718*. Stockholm: AB Egnellska Boktryckeriet, 1964, pp. 322, 334 and 337. The drawings’ collection of Nicodemus Tessin the Younger forms part of the larger Tessin–Hårleman Collection (THC) at the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm. Thanks to Dr. Wolfgang Nittnaus, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, for giving me personal access to this collection during the summer of 2007.

²⁷ The famous word of the witness Claes Julius Ekeblad (1742–1808): « Det måste medges att Adelcrantz här skapat ett mästerverk » (It must be admitted that Adelcrantz has created a masterpiece) is quoted in Hilleström, Gustaf. *Drottningholmsteatern förr och nu, The Drottningholm Theatre – Past and Present*. Foto Lennart Petersens. Stockholm: Bokförlaget Natur och Kultur, 1956, p. 10.

of the technical context. Furthermore, the theatre is keeping a large collection of original sets²⁸ and among them sceneries which would probably have been made especially for its inaugural performance, an event never studied before. For this research, I compared Molière's requirements for a staged production of his *Psiché* with the oldest inventories, made in 1777 and in 1809, of the pieces of scenery kept in Drottningholm at that time. The examination in situ of the stage machinery still extant in the building²⁹ and an investigation of the set elements kept in its storage facility³⁰ enriched the process. A comparison with contemporary sources, favouring the ones kept in Swedish collections completed the research. I intend to offer here an almost complete list of sets, with an outline of the changes' effects - what the Italian designers were calling « scenario di mutazioni » and the French the « liste des changements à vue » - of the production of *Psiché* seen in 1766 at Drottningholm³¹.

7.2.1 Prologue

« The stage represents a rural landscape in the front, with the sea in the background »³², writes Molière as a direction for his Prologue. The rural landscape, traditionally adopted as a set for the *scena satyrica*, recommended by Vitruve for the pastoral play, had quickly become a typical set of Italian musical drama³³. In Drottningholm, like in Paris, it would have been presented with painted wild trees on both sides of the stage. The set described as a « Skogs Decoration med 12 Collischer », (a forest set with 12 flats), which can be found in the inventory of 1777³⁴, may have been the one which was featured in *Psiché* but is no longer extant. More informative anyway is the seascape in the background. It was created by five horizontal spirals upstage, and these were rotated by means of handles turned by the stagehands. This technique introduced by Sabbattini at the beginning of the seventeenth century³⁵ remains in use on the continent but required a very deep stage in order that the three-dimensional image might work

²⁸ For an extensive presentation of the existing eighteenth century collection of sets, see: Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsbolm*. Stockholm: Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002. The inventory transcriptions are on p. 479 and p. 480.

²⁹ Numerous visits of the machinery took place between 1988 and 2008. Thanks to the *stage masters* of Drottningholm, Kurt Mattysek and Christer Nilsson, for their insights given so generously over twenty years.

³⁰ Study visits of the Storage started in August 2003 and were conducted the following summers of 2004, 2005 and 2007 under the supervision of Inga Lewenhaupt, then Director of the Drottningholms Teatermuseum.

³¹ A summary of this research, initiated for my production of *Psyché*, opera of Lully (BEMF 2017), has been previously published without figures in 2007 in Swedish and English. See: Blin, Gilbert. "Scenery and Stage Machinery for *Psiché* at Drottningholm in 1766" in *Program 2007, Drottningholms Slottsteater*. Stockholm: Stiftelsen Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2007, pp. 71–78.

³² Molière. *Psiché*, Prologue. It is necessary to clarify that the edited text by Molière is slightly different from the one edited for the very first performance in the Salle des Machines. As the Swedish artists were likely to use the edition of 1734, called *édition Jolly*, and reprinted constantly in the eighteenth century, I refer in my notes to this version of the text but without pagination. See note 18.

³³ See Chapter 1.

³⁴ Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsbolm*. Stockholm: Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, p. 479.

³⁵ See: Sabbattini, Nicolo. *Pratique pour fabriquer scènes et machines de théâtre, Traduction de Maria Canavaggia et Louis Jouvet*. Neuchâtel: Ides et Calendes, 1942, p. 113.

to the full: it was the distance that guaranteed the illusion. The profound stage at Drottningholms Slottsteater was most definitely designed to welcome such machinery, since the far back area is not equipped with rails for side flats but opens towards a painted sky³⁶. (Figure 1A) This space is equivalent to the « lontano », the back of the stage which comes directly from the ingenuity of Italian designers. Its use to create a maritime view was anchored in the scenography of Venetian opera³⁷, which Torelli and Burnacini, before Vigarani, has introduced in Paris and elsewhere.

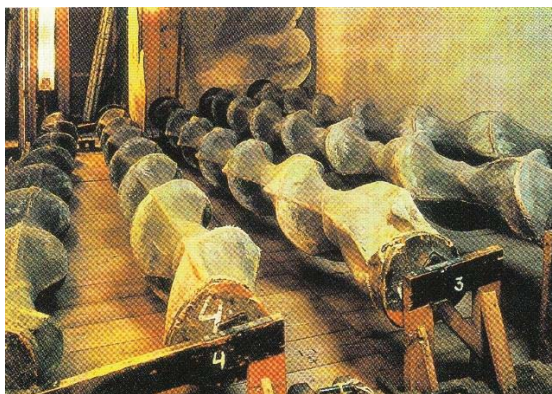


Figure 1A: Set pieces from Drottningholm collection.
Drottningholms Teatermuseum.

The goddess Venus' arrival at the end of the prologue would certainly have taken place with the assistance of stage machinery. Possibly she could have been coming out of the sea, as in the original story by the Roman Apuleius³⁸? Molière had taken some freedom with the antic tale and had Venus descending from the skies while the verses, written by Quinault for the chorus to sing, expressly for the goddess to "descend". But when *Psyché*, in its opera version of 1678, was performed in Wolfenbüttel in 1686, the printed libretto indicates that Venus was after her landing, coming from the sea: « Les Tritons amènent Venus dans une coquille au bord de la mer »³⁹. An extant piece of scenery at Drottningholms Slottsteater appears to support the hypothesis that the same was done in 1766: this painted element shows the inside of a large shell, something which since Classical times has been associated with Venus' birth from the waves⁴⁰ (Figure 1B). The element can also be the back of a small flying machine, as

³⁶ This permanent disposition prefigures the cycloramas of the nineteenth century. See: Bergman, Gösta M. *Lighting in the Theatre*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Stockholm Studies in Theatrical History 2. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1977, p. 341.

³⁷ See: Glixon, Beth L. and Glixon, Jonathan E. *Inventing the Business of Opera, The Impresario and His World in Seventeenth-Century Venice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

³⁸ Venus appears in Book IV, chapter 22 of Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, otherwise known as *The Golden Ass*.

³⁹ *Psyché Tragedie Représentée, au Theatre Ducal de Wolfenbuttel au mois d'Aoust l'année M DC LXXXVI, La musique est composée par Mons. Jean Baptiste de Lully, les Ballets par Mons. Nanquer Maistre de Dance de la Cour*. Wolfenbuttel: Bismarck, [1686], Prologue, n.p.

⁴⁰ See DTM 40/1975 in Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsholm*. Stockholm: Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, p. 285. In the inventory of 1809, this element, and its smaller companion (maybe for the front of the machine) are listed as « Tva ryggar till Säten, ett större, ett mindre föreställande Snäckor » (Two back of seats, one larger and one smaller, representing shells.).

seen on some of Berain's designs for Venus' cart⁴¹.



Figure 1B: Set piece from Drottningholm collection (DTM 40/1975), 185x190 cm.
Drottningholms Teatermuseum⁴².

It is remarkable that this first effect of the “merveilleux” was in 1766 visually expressed by a shell. The scallop shell, as a form, had become the emblem of *Rocaille*, the decorative movement still being in its full bloom in Sweden in the 1760s. The permanent decoration of the auditorium in Drottningholms Slottsteater also integrates the shell, notably in the decoration of the ceiling of the Auditorium. This decoration⁴³ was coordinated by Rehn, who, since his designs for the ceremony and celebrations around the coronation of Adolf Fredrick and Louisa Ulrika in 1751, was the most successful *Rocaille* designer in Sweden⁴⁴. Besides designing interiors, he oversaw the decorations for numerous festivities, and among them the royal wedding of 1766⁴⁵. More importantly we know, from his own hand, that Rehn, was responsible at Drottningholm for the decoration of the Spectacle as well as for its storage.⁴⁶ As such it is almost certain that Rehn, at the peak of his popularity in 1766, was the main artist of the sets for *Psiché*.

⁴¹ For Berain's designs showing the carriage of Venus see: La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Dans l'atelier des Menus Plaisirs du Roi: spectacles, fêtes et cérémonies aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*. (Paris, Archives nationales de France, 19 janvier – 24 avril 2011). Versailles: Artlys, 2010, p. 143.

⁴² This picture, and the following, showing sets from the Drottningholm collection comes from Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsholm*. Stockholm: Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002. The translation from the Swedish inventories should be credited to the same author with minor updates by me.

⁴³ This decoration was painted by Jacques Adrien Masreliez (1717 –1806).

⁴⁴ For examples of shell ornaments in the works of Rehn, see: Wahlberg, Anna Greta. *Jean Eric Rehn*. Lund: Bokförlaget Signum, 1983, pp. 44, 46, 60, 67, 68, 87, 88, 89 & 105.

⁴⁵ Rehn as festivities designer, received various commissions to celebrate the wedding, one notably from the Danish emissary. See Rehn's designs for 1766 feasts in Stockholm N° 770 & 771 in the Bukowskis 1993 *Sale: Bellinga Samlingen, Jean-Eric Rehn*. Stockholm, 6–7 Februari 1993. Stockholm: Bukowskis Auktioner Aktiebolag, p. 211.

⁴⁶ See: Wahlberg, Anna Greta. *Jean Eric Rehn*. Lund: Bokförlaget Signum, 1983.

7.2.2 Acte I and Acte II

The first act takes place in the palace of the king, the father of Psyché. « Le palais du Roi »⁴⁷ is the modest information that the later editions of Molière's play offer⁴⁸. The history of this simple indication is revelatory of the evolution of scenography, from Italian opera to French theatre play. Indeed, after the Cypress alley of the first performance of 1671, a set coming straight from *Ercole amante*, Molière opted for the indication of a City for the performances in his own theatre. For another edition, the one likely used in Sweden in 1766, Molière had finally opted for a more neutral space, still suitable for the action of the first act of *Psyché*. The « Le palais du Roi » is a « palais à volonté » (palace at will) which allows princes and princesses to debate in a realistic setting, which anchored the beginning of the story in the mortal world. In 1684, for the revival of *Psyché* at the Comédie-Française, the Bolognese painter Gioacchino Pozzoli (1651–1733) designed a palace room leading to an atrium (Figure 2)⁴⁹. In Drottningholm, the « Gula Pelare saln » (the yellow pillared hall) seems a good candidate for the set of 1766: first because the survival pair of free standing flats, remarkable by their *Rocaille* style (with a beautiful shell at the top of the fronton), is well in the style of Rehn⁵⁰. But also, because the architecture of the surviving flats suggests an atrium (Figure 2B). Frequent in Italian scenography at this period, the « Atrio Reggio » was the dramatic space reserved for action where a lot of different highborn characters would converge and converse.



Figure 2: Model set for *Psyché* by Alfred Devred (1889), based on Gioacchino Pozzoli (1651–1733) design of 1684. Paris, Comédie-Française.

⁴⁷ Molière. *Psyché*, Acte I.

⁴⁸ The set of Act I was in 1671 « La grande allée de Cypres, où l'on découvre des deux costez des Tombeaux superbes des anciens Rois de la Famille de Psyché. Cette décoration est coupée dans le fonds par un magnifique Arc de Triomphe, au travers duquel on voit un éloignement de la mesme Allée qui s'étend jusqu'à perte de veüe ». It then became in 1673: « Une grande ville, où l'on découvre des deux costez, des Palais et des Maisons de diferens ordres d'Architecture »; the urban view « Stadts Decoration med 12 Collischer och fond » featured in the 1777 inventory could also be an option if the Swedish artists decided to follow this second possibility.

⁴⁹ Pizzoli has been called in France by the Duc de Nevers in 1680; his drawing for *Psyché* is reproduced in Decugis, Nicole and Reymond, Suzanne. *Le Décor de théâtre en France, du Moyen Age à 1925*. Paris : Compagnie Française des Arts Graphiques, 1953, p. 121.

⁵⁰ Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsholm*. Stockholm: Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, pp. 153 and 154.

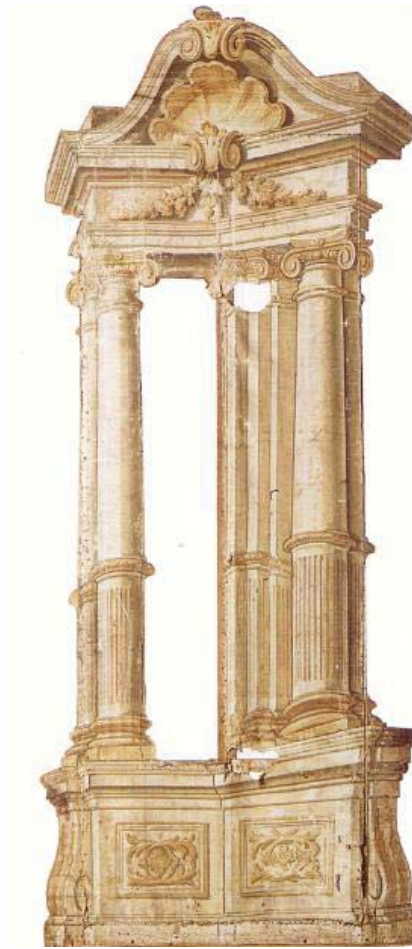


Figure 2B: Set piece from Drottningholm collection (DTM 203/1975), 380x150 cm.
Drottningholms Teatermuseum.

The « Premier intermède » shows « The stage [which] is changed into frightful rocks, and shows in the distance a horrifying solitude. It is in this desert that Psiché must be exposed to obey the oracle. A troop of afflicted people come there to deplore her disgrace ». ⁵¹ These rocks must have been close to the ones which can be seen on another famous set, also showing a sacrifice: the one Torelli designed for *Andromède* by Pierre Corneille in 1651 (Figure 3). Drottningholm's inventory of 1777 lists a « mountain's set with one backcloth and 14. Side shutters » ⁵². A very special scenery piece, with a practical ledge, like the one holding Andromède in the set of Torelli, still exists in Drottningholm's collection and may belong to this mountain's set. This large piece adds the idea of an elevation by the way the rocks are presented behind each other. And indeed, the place of sacrifice ⁵³ is mentioned by one character in *Psiché* who tells about the oracle asking for the sacrifice of Psiché on « le sommet d'un mont », on the top of a mountain. The ledge, after having supported Psiché, was may be reached by her suitors who want to follow her to death from « the top of this rock » (Figure 4).

⁵¹ « La scène est changée en des rochers affreux, & fait voir dans l'éloignement une effroyable solitude. C'est dans ce desert que Psiché doit être exposée pour obéir à l'oracle, Une troupe de personnes affligées y viennent déplorer sa disgrâce. » in Molière. *Psiché*, Premier intermède.

⁵² « Bergs Decoration med en fond och 14. Collischer. » See: Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsbolm*. Stockholm : Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, p. 479.

⁵³ Molière. *Psiché*, Acte I, Scène 5.



Figure 3: ca 1651, engraving by François Chauveau (1613–1676) of the theatre set by Giacomo Torelli (1604–1678) for Act III of *Andromède* by Pierre Corneille and Charles d’Assoucy, 1650.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.



Figure 4: Set piece from Drottningholm collection (DTM 141/1975), 350x300 cm.
Drottningholms Teatermuseum.

The two first acts, being played out in the world of the mortals, do not offer any magical stage transformations. At the end of the act II, however, Psiché is rescued by the Zephyrs and is borne up to the skies by the wind gods. These flying effects, achieved with the help of ropes, were at Drottningholm created by means of a bridge in the heights of the stage where the

artists landed. The French term for a bridge of this kind, « le ceintre »⁵⁴, was an architectonic name for the arched structure itself and became the term used for the uppermost part of the stage space, into which the hanging scenery is hoisted. Several such journeys through the skies are undertaken in Molière's play: Zephyr and Mercury make their entrances from above, and Cupid, flies away when Psyche discovers his real identity. Apart from these free flights, flying machines were used to transport the Olympian gods who have no wings, as we have already seen for Venus' first entrance.

The second intermède begins with a humorous scene where the Cyclops, led by Vulcan, are still busy decorating the palace which Cupid intends for Psyche. They are busy forging gold vases destined to adorn the « palais de l'Amour » with the help of fairies. Two such painted vases, of a original set of four, are still preserved at Drottningholm (Figure 5)⁵⁵. They offer striking resemblances, in shape and in size, with the one figured on the model that Charles-Antoine Coypel (1694–1752) painted, in 1748, for his Gobelins tapestry of *Psyché abandonnée par l'Amour*⁵⁶, a tapestry which may have served as a reference, also for the colour of the columns as we will see (Figure 6).



Figure 5: Set piece from Drottningholm collection (DTM116/1975), urn with two voluted handles and chased decoration. 40x36 cm. Drottningholms Teatermuseum.

The Cyclops and the Fairies vanishes in a trice and the palace appears in all its glory. Besides the big machine which was allowing all six pairs of shutters to change simultaneously, five small openings in the stage floor of Drottningholms Slottsteater allowed the anvils and other smithing equipment to disappear in a twinkling, since these stage components, like the gold vases were not three dimensional but consisted of flat painted pieces of scenery.

⁵⁴ The word “le ceintre” is spelled this way by Thomas Corneille in his 1678 adaptation in opera of the Molière play. Today the word is still used in French, often in its plural form, to name the part of the theatre above the stage, the fly house, where sets can be hung: “les cintres”.

⁵⁵ See: Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsbolm*. Stockholm : Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, p. 253. These vases, whose absence of vegetation pleads for an interior decoration, are equipped for a system of rails allowing them to be connected to side shutters: this mechanism may also have been used for the end of the act, when the Palace was changing quickly into a Garden, allowing the vases to disappear at the same time.

⁵⁶ This model is kept in the collections of Musée des Beaux-Arts of Lille. For a presentation in context of this tapestry destined to Dresden. See: *Le théâtre des Passions (1697–1759), Cléopâtre, Médée, Iphigénie*. Catalogue d'exposition (Présentée au musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes du 11 février au 22 mai 2011). Lyon : Fage éditions and Nantes : Musée des Beaux-Arts, 2011, p. 154. Unfortunately, the notice ignores the revivals of *Psyché*, the 1678 opéra by Lully and Thomas Corneille.



Figure 6: 1748, *Psyché abandonnée par l'Amour*.
Modello by Charles-Antoine Coypel for a tapestry of the Manufacture des Gobelins.
Lille, Musée des Beaux-Arts.

7.2.3 Acte III

One of Rehn's sets, showing a palace with blue columns and gold capitals, corresponds excellently to the « splendid courtyard, decorated with pillars of lapis lazuli and figures in gold, forming a radiantly beautiful palace »⁵⁷ which appears during the intermède between Act II and III of Molière's play. This scenery, at Drottningholm called the « Blue Pillar-Hall »⁵⁸, was irrefutably created by Rehn, as one preparatory sketch from the hand of the artist attests, and is shown on Figure 7. But it must be pointed out that the same motif with banded columns with three cubes, is already to be found in the work of Giuseppe Bibiena (1696–1757)⁵⁹ (Figure 8), itself largely disseminated by the « vues d'optique » (Figure 9). Rehn borrows from Bibiena's details of architecture but also adopted the three arched structure for the background of his set. However, Rehn opted for a central vanishing point in his symmetrical composition. By ignoring the perspective « per angolo » of Giuseppe Bibiena's original, Rehn anchors the set of Drottningholm in the classical seventeenth century French tradition which was favouring the central vanishing point.

⁵⁷ Molière. *Psyché*, Acte II, II. intermède.

⁵⁸ Item A1 in the Inventory of 1806. See: Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsbolm*. Stockholm : Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, p. 480.

⁵⁹ This set by Giuseppe Bibiena (1696–1757), was created for the nuptials of the Polish Prince in 1720, Prince Elector of Saxony, and was published in 1740 by Pfeffel. For a modern edition, see: Bibiena, Giuseppe. *Architectural and perspective designs, dedicated to His Majesty Charles VI, Holy Roman Emperor by Giuseppe Galli Bibiena, his principal theatrical engineer and architect, designer of these scenes*. With an introduction by A. Hyatt Mayor, Curator of Prints Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. New York : Dover Publications, 1964. In his introduction to the monography of Barbro Stribolt, and despite the analysis of this set by her, Per Bjurström surprisingly attributes the « Blå Pelare-Sal » to Lorenz Sundström with a reference to Francesco, not Giuseppe, Bibiena.

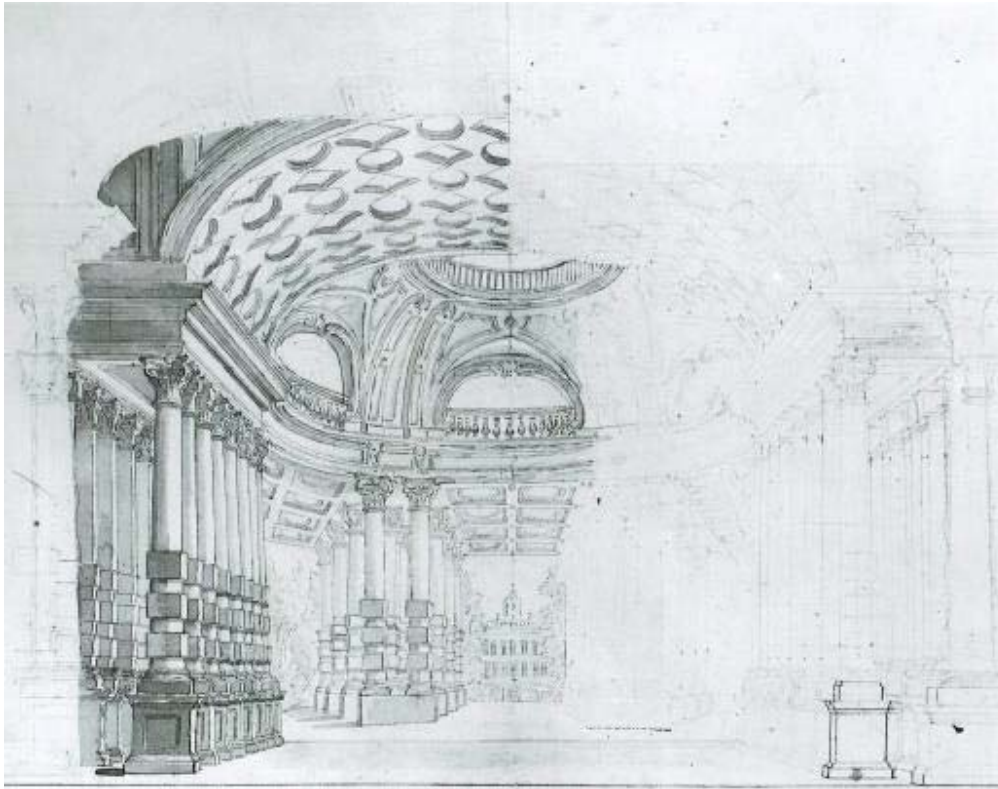


Figure 7: Jean Eric Rehn, sketch for a set for *Psiché*, Act II.
Stockholm Nationalmuseum (H871/1995).



Figure 8: 1720, set design by Giuseppe Bibiena (1696–1757) for “Scena della Festa Teatrale in occasione delli Sponsali del Principe Reale di Polonia ed Elettorale di Sassonia” Engraving by Francesco Zucchi (1692-1764), published in *Architecture, e Prospettive ... da Giuseppe Galli Bibiena, ...*, Sotto la Direzione di Andrea Pfeffel. Augsburg, MDCCXL.
Smithsonian Libraries. Gift of Abram S. Hewitt, 1931.



Figure 9: ca1750, French optical view by Dumont, *Vue représentant le Fameux Theatre de Reggio proche Modene*, reproducing the set design by Giuseppe Bibiena, for “Scena della Festa Teatrale in occasione delli Sponsali del Principe Reale di Polonia ed Elettorale di Sassonia”.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The sketch for the « palais pompeux et brillant »⁶⁰ was done by Rehn in black and white⁶¹, but the painters only needed to follow the exquisite blue and gold colour scheme prescribed by Molière, and already rendered by Coypel. This colouring was essential to produce something special which could not have been a simple « palais à volonté », an uncharacteristic palace like the one in Act I, in the carefully delineated magical settings of *Psyché*. Like the columns in the painting by Coypel, the style had to be the one of an enchanted palace coming from the world of the fairy tale, a literature style to which the 1669 novel of La Fontaine⁶², *les Amours de Psyché et Cupidon*, can be attached. This book increased the popularity of the myth and has undoubtedly played a role in the creation of Molière. By mixing the ochre and the gold with the blue colour of the lapis lazuli mentioned by Molière⁶³, Rehn creates a truly special effect, which is a rare testimony of the vibrancy of the sets of this period. The central colonnade shows a coffered vault which must have been also painted on the borders (nowadays missing). The colonnades lead to a domed circular building, an atrium, from which colonnades radiate towards a park, with a palace in the centre.

⁶⁰ Molière. *Psyché*, Acte II, II. intermède.

⁶¹ The drawing of Rehn, once in the collection Bellinga, was N° 779 during the Bukowskis 1993 Sale: *Bellinga Samlingen*, Jean-Eric Rehn. Stockholm, 6–7 Februari 1993. Stockholm: Bukowskis Auktioner Aktiebolag, p. 213. It is nowadays in the collections of National Museum of Stockholm, See also: Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsholm*. Stockholm: Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, p. 55.

⁶² La Fontaine, in his “Preface” for *les Amours de Psyché et Cupidon*, wrote: « dans un conte comme celui-ci, qui est plein de merveilleux, à la vérité, mais d'un merveilleux accompagné de badineries, et propre à amuser des enfants, il a fallu badiner depuis le commencement jusqu'à la fin; il a fallu chercher du galant et de la plaisanterie ».

⁶³ « On fit ses murs d'un marbre aussi blanc que l'albâtre. / Les dedans sont ornés d'un porphyre luisant. / Ces ordres dont les Grecs nous ont fait un présent, / Le dorique sans fard, l'élégant Ionique, / Et le corinthien superbe et magnifique, / L'un sur l'autre placés, élèvent jusqu'aux cieux / Ce pompeux édifice, où tout charme les yeux. » in La Fontaine, *les Amours de Psyché et Cupidon*, Livre 1.



Figure 10: Backcloth from Drottningholm collection (DTM407/1975), 563 x 795 cm.
Drottningholms Teatermuseum.



Figure 11: Set piece, right flat, from Drottningholm collection (DTM229/1975¹). 400x196 cm.
Drottningholms Teatermuseum.

7.2.4 Acte IV

Act IV begins in a « magnificent and delightful garden », that Molière described by means of « verdant arbours with gold terms (quadrangular pillars tapering downward and adorned on the top with the figure of the upper part of the human body), and ornate with orange tree pots »⁶⁴. This association of lattice supporting plants and flowers, gold statues and orange trees evocate the splendour of French gardens of the period where the art of gardening was perfected by André Le Nôtre⁶⁵. The « treillage », the art of creating three-dimensional structures with thin lines of wood stripes, became an object of decoration and was entrusted to workers named « treillageurs ». The treillageur had to have at least some elementary notions of architecture and to be skillful in « l'art du trait », the mastering of geometry, to design trellis as a gallery, portico, room, and other elements of construction⁶⁶. It was not long before the « treillage » fashion spread through the gardens of Europe, through engravings, notably « vues d'optique » (Figure 12). L'art du trait was also one of the basic requirement for set designers, and soon enough these artists took advantage of the multiple possibilities these tangles of lines could offer on stage⁶⁷.

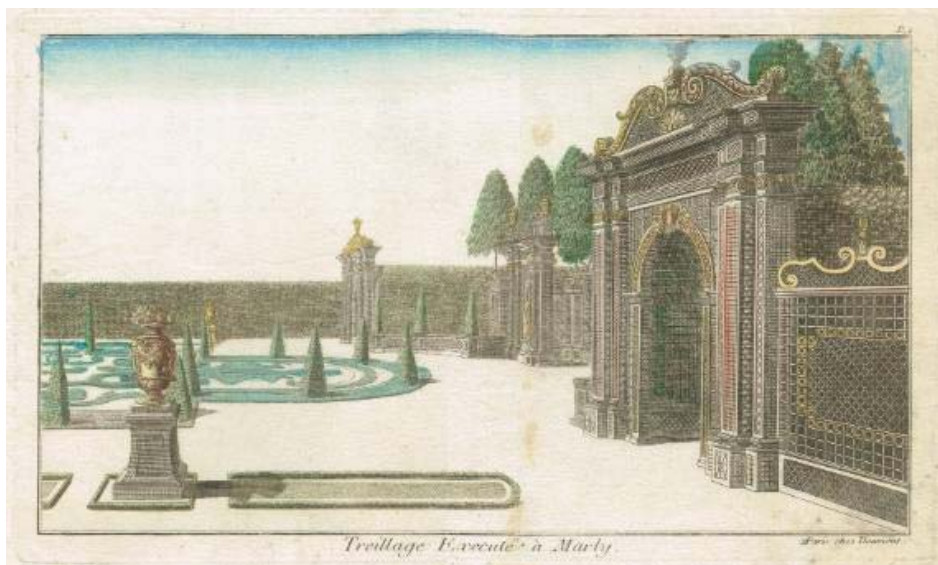


Figure 12: ca 1740, *Treillage Exécuté à Marly*, optical view by Dumont, probably after an engraving for a book on gardens. Collection of Gilbert Blin.

A document in the Swedish collection, showing the proscenium frame of the *Salle des Machines* displays what is probably the garden set for *Ercole amante*, and consequently, the same set appeared again in *Psiché* in Paris in 1671 (Figure 13). Like this document, various Garden

⁶⁴ Molière. *Psiché*, Acte IV. « Jardin superbe et charmant, agrémenté de berceaux de verdure soutenus par des termes d'or et décoré de vases d'orangers et d'arbres de toutes sortes de fruits ».

⁶⁵ See: Thompson, Ian. *The Sun King's Garden, Louis XIV, André Le Nôtre and the Creation of the Gardens of Versailles*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2006.

⁶⁶ The *bosquet de l'Enclade* in Versailles is a good example of this type of garden.

⁶⁷ La Gorce, Jérôme de. "Jardins et Décors d'Opéras Français sous Louis XIV" in *Jardins d'Opéra*. Paris : Bibliothèque nationale de France and Louis Vuitton, 1995, pp. 9–21.

sets still extant at Drottningholm show treillage arches, but also as Molière specifies, sculptural terms used as caryatids (Figures 14 and 15). The first garden set of Drottningholm clearly has a strong relation with an earlier set by Torelli for *Andromède*, whose composition (Figure 16) can be seen again in the set created by the Vigarani for *Ercole amante*: The magnificent and delightful garden corresponds also to the description given in a contract negotiated in 1660 for *Ercole amante*⁶⁸.

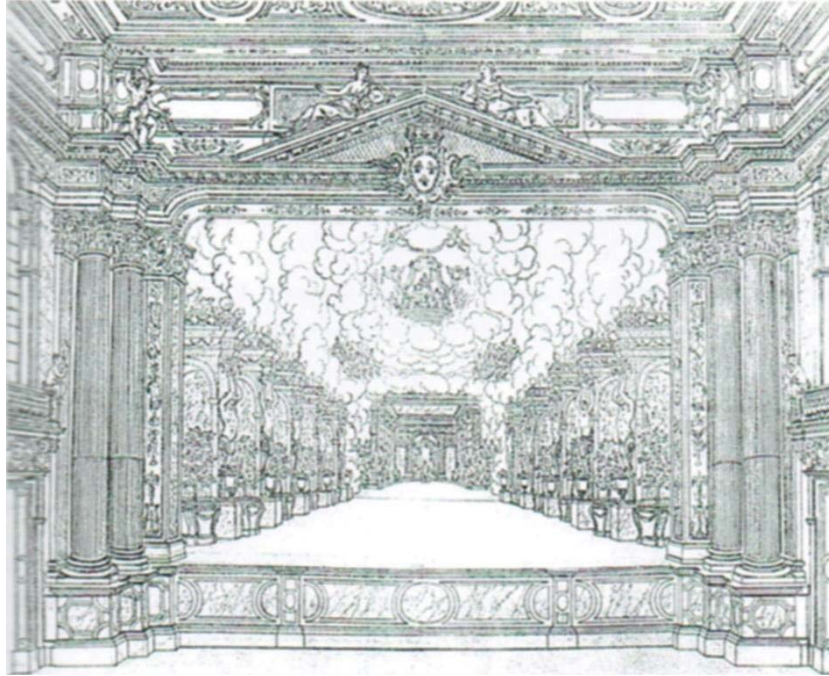
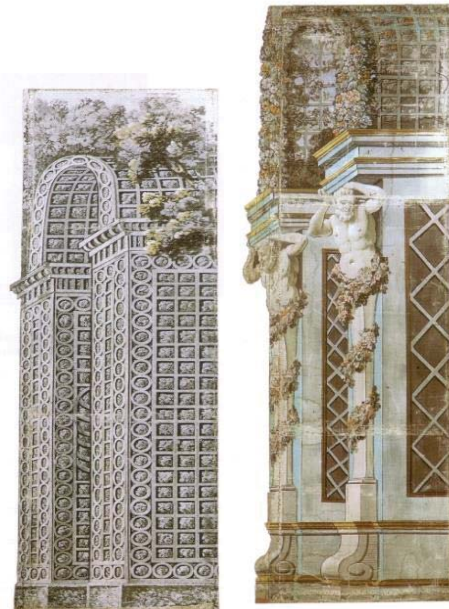


Figure 13: Drawing by workshop of Jean I Berain, scene 1 of Act III of *Ercole amante* (?). Stockholm, Kungliga Akademien.



⁶⁸ For the contract between Vigarani and the painters Charles Errard and François Francart, see : La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Carlo Vigarani, intendant des plaisirs de Louis XIV*. Paris: Perrin, 2005, p. 111.

Figures 14 & 15: Set pieces from Drottningholm collection
(DTM215/1975^G & DTM215/1975^A). 450x135 cm & 520x178cm.
Drottningholms Teatermuseum.

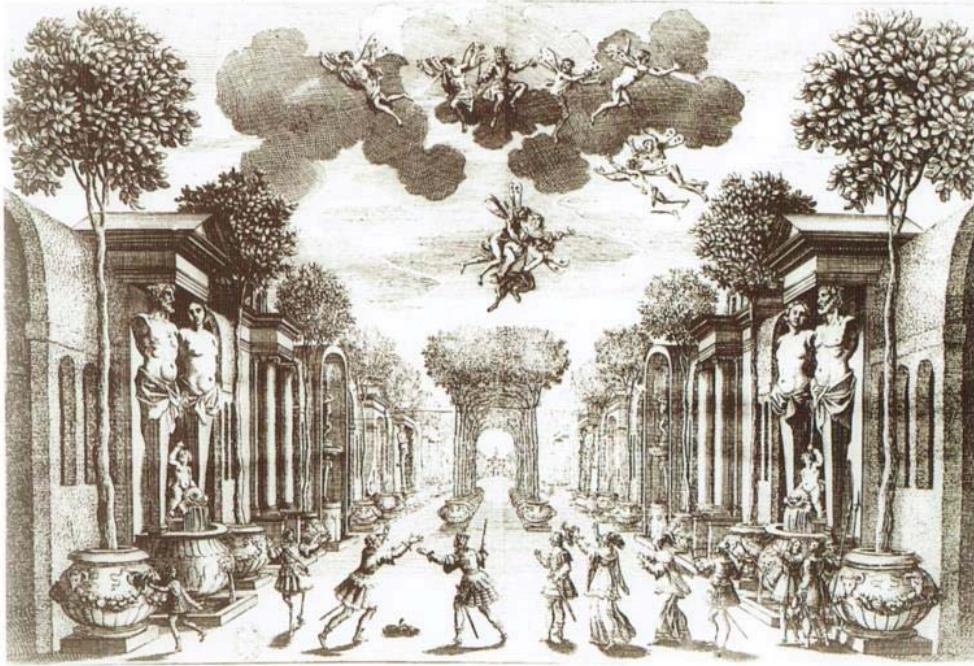


Figure 15: ca 1651, etching by François Chauveau (1613-1676) of the theatre set by Giacomo Torelli (1604 - 1678) for Scene 5, Act II, of *Andromède* by Pierre Corneille and Charles d'Assoucy, 1650.
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale.

Later, in the eighteenth century, an identical composition, ultimate witness of its popularity, was published as a “vue d’optique”. The garden is enlarged but the flying characters disappear, and the fantasist caption is inspired by the huge orange trees: « *La Superbe Orangerie du grand Seigneur à Constantinople* » (Figure 16).



Figure 16: *Vue de la Superbe Orangerie du grand Seigneur à Constantinople*, anonym optical view after an engraving by François Chauveau (1613-1676) of a theatre set by Giacomo Torelli (1604 -1678) for Act II of *Andromède* by Pierre Corneille and Charles d'Assoucy, 1650.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

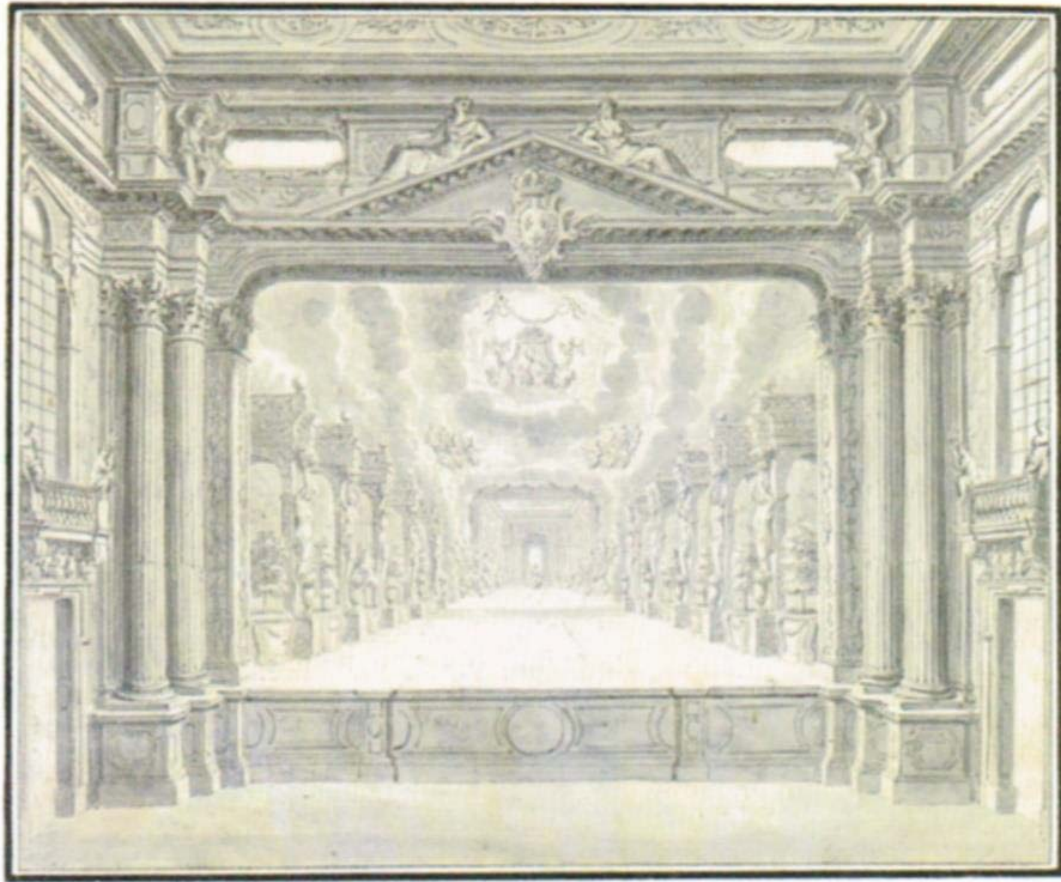


Figure 18: Drawing by the workshop of Jean I Berain, set of Act III of *Ercole amante* (?).
Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Opéra.

The *Rocaille* style of the second garden is a strong clue about its possible relevance to *Psiché* in 1766. Like the first one it presents treillage and orange trees, but, while the set inspired by Torelli was showing grey stone terms, the *Rocaille* garden displays golden statues, as Molière suggested. It shows, following the inventory of 1777, « A garden, representing a host of pavilions in so-called Italian style, a lot of hedges and trees ». This vague description is clarified by the backdrop – now lost – described in the Drottningholm 1809 inventory as « A Backcloth, representing three Pavilions, and in the middle one a figure of Neptune with a Trident/ »⁶⁹. This description follows Molière, who mentions « several rocky arches in the background, ornamented with shells, fountains and statues »⁷⁰. The pictorial elements of this scenery, evocative of an Italian grotto of the Renaissance revived in the *Rocaille* garden, agree with the visual requirements of *Psiché* and show similarities with a scenery by Giuseppe Bibiena. But now it is not only a single architectonic component which has been adopted, like for the Blue

⁶⁹ Inventory of 1809 « [A Backcloth, representing three Pavilions, and in the middle one a figure of Neptune with a Trident/ » See : Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsholm*. Stockholm: Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, pp. 45–54.

⁷⁰ Molière. *Psiché*, Acte IV.

hall, but a whole composition which can be found in the painting of the side flats (Figure 19).

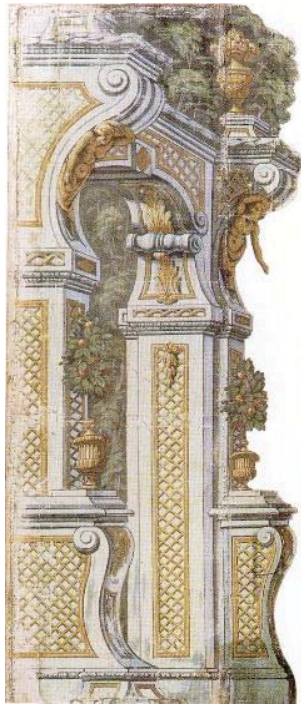


Figure 19: Set piece from Drottningholm collection (DTM212/1975¹¹). 455x183 cm.
Drottningholms Teatermuseum.

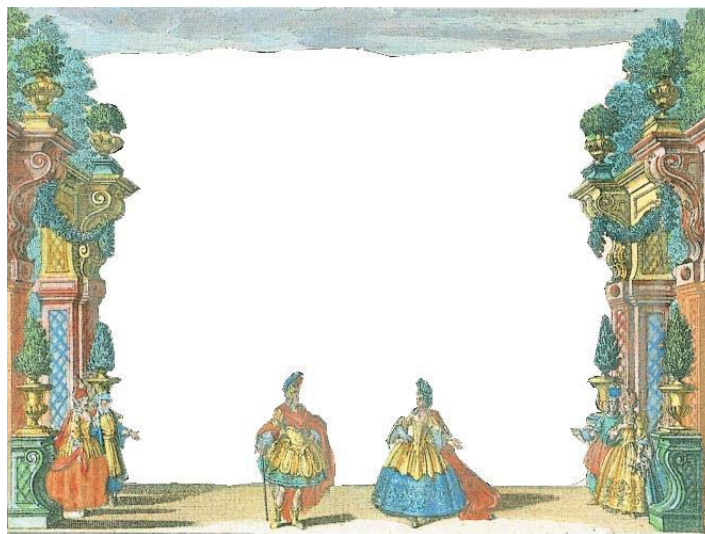


Figure 20: 1745, first sheet, of six, of a diorama scene entitled "Praesentation einer Opera",
on a design by Jeremias Wachsmuht (1712–1771), engraved by Martin Engelbrecht (1684–1756),
after a set design by Giuseppe Bibiena (1696–1757).
Drottningholms Teatermuseum.

One would like to ascribe this set to the court painter Johan Pasch, one of the pupils of the French Guillaume Taraval (1701–1750) whose large workshop for the ceilings of the Royal palace in Stockholm had both educated French and Swedish painters. This attribution to Pasch is made more probable by the fact this artist, together with Rehn, had personal contact with

Giuseppe Bibiena in Berlin, as we will see later⁷¹. Besides this personal connection, the various copies and variations inspired by the print of the Italian master would explain the similitude between compositions by Pasch and by Bibiena. For example, the garden by Bibiena even found his way, albeit without the golden terms and with a different backcloth, to one of the famous dioramas⁷² (Figure 20) printed by Martin Engelbrecht (1684–1756) in Augsburg, the same city that published Bibiena print⁷³ (Figure 21).

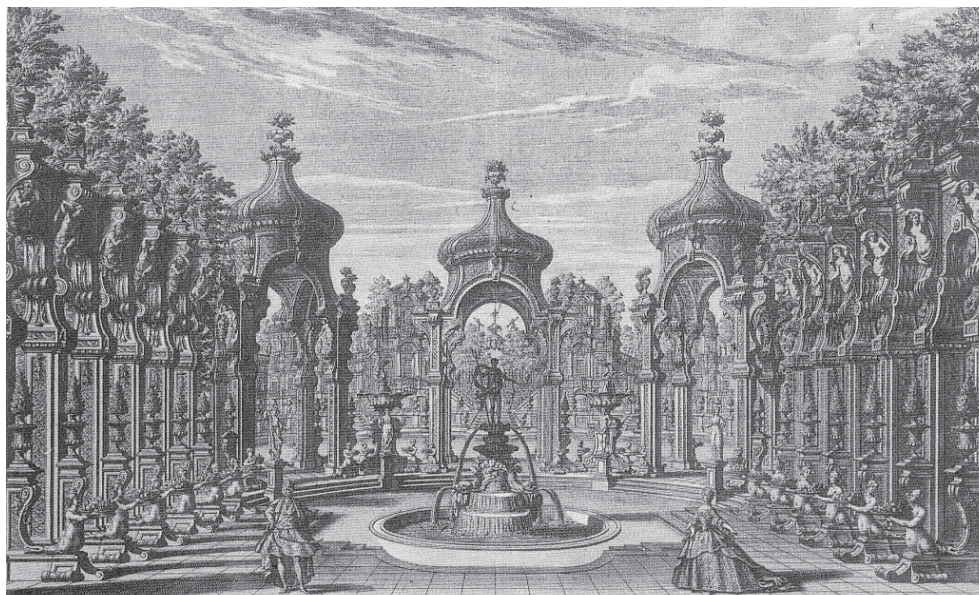


Figure 21: 1720, set design by Giuseppe Bibiena (1696–1757), published in *Architettura, e Prospettive dedicate all Maesta di Carlo Sesto imperador de' Romani, da Giuseppe Galli Bibiena, suo primo Ingegnier Teatral, ed Architetto, Inventore delle medesime, Augusta, Sotto la Direzione di Andrea Pfeffel*. Augsburg: MDCCXL. Smithsonian Libraries. Gift of Abram S. Hewitt, 1931.

In this beautiful garden Psyche tries, in the play of Molière, to investigate her lover's real identity despite the interdiction. When she finally succeeds the enchantment is broken: « Cupid flees and the garden vanishes »⁷⁴, being transformed into a « wilderness with wild river banks »⁷⁵. This spectacular « changement » coincides with the emotional climax of the piece,

⁷¹ Stribolt, Barbro. "Influence of Giuseppe and Carlo Bibiena on Swedish scenography of the eighteenth century" in *Opernbauten des Barock*. München: Icomos Heftes des deutschen Nationalkomitees XXXI, 1998, pp. 79–83.

⁷² For a general presentation of these dioramas theatres, or perspective theatres as they are also sometimes called, see: *La camera dei sortilegi, Autoritratto di una società nei diorami teatrali del '700*. Mostra diretta da Giorgio Strehler. (Milano, Museo Teatrale alla Scala, 3 dicembre 1987 – 31 gennaio 1988). Milano : Electa, 1987.

⁷³ See: Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsholm*. Stockholm : Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, p. 46.

⁷⁴ Molière. *Psyché*, Acte III, Scène III.

⁷⁵ Molière. *Psyché*, Acte III, Scène IV.

enhancing it by the striking contrast between the two places⁷⁶. Psyche has been breaking the spell and loses everything. The French expressions of « Desert » and « Solitude » used to describe such a place emphasize the loneliness of the character in it. The scenery representing the wilderness, filled with springs and waterfalls, painted by Lorenz Sundström, illustrates perfectly this sombre episode of the end of Act IV⁷⁷. Drottningholm still has some of the flats (Figures 22 & 23) and a backdrop belonging to this wilderness: «- 6 Flats deep, the 7th the Blackcloth, and a dark Cave »⁷⁸.



Figures 22 and 23: Set pieces from Drottningholm collection
(DTM231/1975^F & DTM231/1975^C), 495x162 cm and 495x165cm.
Drottningholms Teatermuseum.

⁷⁶ Coypel chose to paint the equivalent climax but bases his understanding of the spaces on the opera version of 1678, where this change happens between the blue palace and the wilderness: Coypel does not illustrate Molière's 1671 play *Psyché* but Thomas Corneille's 1678 libretto for *Psyché*.

⁷⁷ See: Stribolt, Barbro. "Ödemarken i Orpheus och Euridice" in *Program 1996, Drottningholms Slottsteater*. Stockholm: Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 1996, pp. 90–98.

⁷⁸ « En Ödemark » « 6 Kulisser djup den 7de Fonden, samt en mörk Grotta ». The inventory keeps on with this puzzling note: « / NB på Konungens Sida fattas tuan, men däremot äro 2 femmor/ ». NB on the King's Side number two is missing, but on there are 2 number fives. See: Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsholm*. Stockholm : Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, p. 77. This "missing" shutter could also suggest that the river god was appearing from the side, coming from another lateral grotto, which would have been a different type of flat? This is the direction, suggested also by the sketch of Sundström, I have chosen for my staging of Lully 1678 *Psyché* (BEMF 2017).

The heroine, grief-stricken, intends to take her life by throwing herself into the water, when suddenly « The River God » appears, « lying on a pile of reeds and leaning against an urn » ⁷⁹. Ever since the beginning of the seventeenth century the gods of rivers were shown stretched out and resting on urns from which water flowed. When Boucher was to illustrate Molière's work he chose this episode for *Psiché* (Figure 24) and we know that Queen Louisa Ulrika owned a copy of that edition in her library⁸⁰. On the engraving a grotto in the left of the composition predicts the “dark Cave” of the Drottningholm set.



Figure 24: *Psiché*, engraving by Laurent Cars (1699–1771) after François Boucher (1703–1770), Illustration for *Psiché* of Molière, *Oeuvres...* Nouvelle édition. Paris: P. Prault, 1734 [1735], known as “Edition Jolly”, illustrated by Boucher. Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The same pictorial convention for the river god was characteristic of sculpture, painting and theatre, and would certainly also have applied to performances at Drottningholm⁸¹. But how does one introduce a character unable to walk? On the stage the river could flow up from

⁷⁹ Molière. *Psiché*, Acte IV, Scène IV.

⁸⁰ The edition of Molière by Voltaire from 1765 reprints the engravings after Boucher and the text of the edition of 1734. One copy in mentioned in the library of Louisa-Ulrika in Kina Slott at Drottningholm: N°419–20. See: Setterwall, Åke; Fogelmarck, Stig; Gyllensvärd, Bo. *The Chinese Pavilion at Drottningholm*. With contributions by Sten G. Lindberg, Peter Stenberg and Walter Bauer. Malmö: Allhems Förlag, 1972, p. 217.

⁸¹ *Un fleuve et une fontaine* by Charles Joseph Natoire, respecting this code, was acquired by Tessin in 1740, and, since 1749, belongs to the Royal collections. See: N° 189 in *Le Soleil et l'Etoile du Nord, La France et la Suède au XVIII^e siècle*. Paris: Grand Palais, 1994, p. 135. For the river god appearance on the baroque stage see: Chapter 7, Study Case 1.

underneath through the trap in the middle, appearing in the grotto at the back of the lay-out of the sets. This brilliantly designed mechanism is sufficiently wide for two people and could be used first for the entrance and then for the exit, since the river is to carry Psyche on the way down to the underworld.

7.2.5 Acte V

A painted sketch by Sundström⁸² (Figure 25) shows the wilderness⁸³, but in the same picture, the artist also creates the change to the following set⁸⁴, where, according to Molière, one sees through the mouth of the cave « a burning sea with waves in constant movement »⁸⁵.



Figure 25: 1766, sketch by Lorenz Sundström for the change of sets between act III and Act IV of *Psyché*.
Drottningholms Teatermuseum.

This sea of fire gave a chance to re-use the upstage machinery, which after having been picturing a sea in the Prologue was then supposed to represent a sea of fire. The support structure stayed in place while the rollers were changed: In the inventory of 1809 we read, « 3 Rollers with red gold fabric on one and red fabric on the other representing streams of fire »³

⁸² This sketch has been misunderstood as a set design picturing one scenery, when in fact it shows a « changement à vue » in *Psyché*, presenting elements of two different sets. This confusion has made the distinction between the two ensembles of sceneries kept in Drottningholm difficult. This gouache, in the collections of the Stockholm Nationalmuseum, is reproduced in: Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsholm*. Stockholm : Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, p. 79. For more information about Sundström, see p. 38.

⁸³ « Ödemark ».

⁸⁴ Coypel before him, had also explored in his *Psyché abandonnée par l'Amour* the idea to represent a change, certainly the most spectacular of any performance of *Psyché*. But Coypel represents the set change taking place in Lully and Thomas Corneille's opera of 1678.

⁸⁵ Molière. *Psyché*, IV. intermède.

seashore Boards, with Transparencies, representing a molten Lake of Fire and Stones »⁸⁶. In Paris, in 1671, it was, among all Vigarani's sets for *Ercole amante*, the one of the underworld which Louis XIV did want to see once more⁸⁷. In Drottningholm, in 1766, the new scenery by Sundström – now incomplete – would certainly have been used for this intermède, where it was to form the framework for the sea of fire: « surrounded by ruins in flames; and right out among the troubled waves Pluto's underworld castle is to be seen through a dreadful mouth »⁸⁸. Part of this scenery also appears in the inventory of 1809: « [K. The Maw of Hades: A Backcloth with a big opening in it, painted as to represent the great maw of a Beast, with teeth above and below, and streaks of gold and red representing Flames of Fire] »⁸⁹. Unfortunately, this pierced backcloth is missing today but a composition of the same spirit, with the mouth of hell, can be found in the engraving of a famous set by Ludovico Ottavio Burnacini for *Il pomo d'oro* by Antonio Cesti (1623–1669) and Francesco Sbarra (1611–1668), performed in Vienna in 1668⁹⁰. Psyché on a « barque », probably to look like the boat on the set of Burnacini (Figure 26), was also crossing the sea of fire.



Figure 26: *The mouth of hell*, engraving of a set by Ludovico Ottavio Burnacini (1636–1707) for *Il pomo d'oro* by Antonio Cesti (1623–1669) and Francesco Sbarra (1611–1668), performed in Vienna in 1668. Cambridge (MA), Harvard University.

⁸⁶ « 3 Walsar med rödt guldtyg på enda och rödt tyg på den andra föreställande eldströmmar 3 Stradbräden, med Transparenter, forestaller en flytande Eldmassa orch Stenar » in Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsholm*. Stockholm: Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, p. 155. The lightning could also be changed thanks to colored glass set in front of the reflectors. This custom had already been explored in Europe at the beginning of the seventeenth century and Stockholm, large producer of glass in the middle of the eighteenth century, did not lack resource: Kungsholm Glasbruk, the glass factory of Kungsholm, was in production from 1676 to 1815.

⁸⁷ This point is only known to us by the eighteenth-century testimony of the writer La Grange Chancel, see: Chapter 2.

⁸⁸ Molière. *Psyché*, IV. intermède.

⁸⁹ « [K. Helfvetes Gapet: En Fond genomskuren med ett stort håll, måladt på det sätt att det f`reställer ett sort gap af ett Djur, med tänder ofvan och nedan, samt strimmor af guld och rödt föreställande Eldslågor.] » quoted in Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsholm*. Stockholm : Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, p. 160.

⁹⁰ <http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object/100554?position=0> (accessed 9 October 2017).

The dark gloom of this underworld could be supported by lighting effects, since there is a mechanism at Drottningholm to allow for rapid dimming. The ramp of the forestage can be lowered under the floor, and the rotating columns behind each side flat, equipped with wax candles and reflectors, can be turned towards the exterior of the stage⁹¹. The dimmed direct light playing over the painted surfaces of the set and the actors produced a mysterious atmosphere in this scene, which was full of countless « imps doing somersaults »⁹². The light also emphasised the supernatural aspect of the Furies, who probably came up through the trap on the right-hand side of the stage (seen from the auditorium): under this was a stair which allowed these inhabitants from the underworld to make a swift entrance⁹³.

In these hellish surroundings Psyche faints. As in the seventeenth century, it was also unseemly in the eighteenth century to lie down on the wood boards of the stage. Without doubt « le Banc de scène »⁹⁴, a set piece, was used; on this bench the actress could both lower and, more importantly, raise herself in a more refined manner. Drottningholm has kept several of these three-dimensional structures, painted to represent small slopes covered in stones or grass, which allowed the actor to occupy an appropriate posture following with the *étiquette* of the day for the character. This embankment was to be placed over the trap in the middle of the stage in order that it might disappear downwards at the apotheosis of the finale, when Jupiter settled the quarrel between the beautiful mortal and the goddess of beauty.

In Paris, in 1671, only the final tableau demanded completely new scenery and Carlo Vigarani was very proud of his clouds, which filled the whole stage space⁹⁵. In 1766, Jupiter undoubtedly came as flying *deus ex machina*, according to Molière's directions attended by « the rumble of thunder »⁹⁶, easy to achieve with the assistance of the thunder machine built in behind the framework of the proscenium of Drottningholm. Stones in a large wooden box rolled backwards and forwards and called forth a sound which was powerfully strengthened by its ingenious positioning. The ruler of the gods would certainly have arrived in the grand triumphal chariot which has been at Drottningholms Slottsteater ever since (Figure 27). In this « Gloire », the mechanical arrangement of clouds surrounding Jupiter, divided into several synchronised layers, is lowered from the fly loft. The clouds broaden out like a fan and gradually fill the field of vision. In this last piece of stage machinery, which conceals the underworld and reveals the whole stage into a vision of heaven itself, Psyche is elevated to the rank of goddess and makes her entrance with the divine multitude.

⁹¹ See: Rangström, Ture. "The Stage Machinery at Drottningholm - Instructions for use" in *Gustavian Opera, An interdisciplinary Reader in Swedish Opera, Dance and Theatre, 1771–1809*. Uppsala: Royal Swedish Academy of Music, 1991, p. 101.

⁹² Molière. *Psyché*, Acte IV, II. Entrée de ballet.

⁹³ As I experimented myself for the arrival of the furies in my 1998 Drottningholm production of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*.

⁹⁴ See: DTM 63/1975 et DTM 62/1975 in Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsholm*. Stockholm : Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, p. 256.

⁹⁵ see : La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Carlo Vigarani, intendant des plaisirs de Louis XIV*. Paris: Perrin, 2005, p. 113.

⁹⁶ Molière. *Psyché*, Acte V, Scène V.



Figure 27: Cloud machine from Drottningholms Slottsteater.
Drottningholms Teatermuseum.

No set for the heavenly realms survives in Drottningholm if we leave aside all the various clouds elements present in the collection, but a sketch by Rehn for a backcloth (Figure 28) gives an idea for this Olympus⁹⁷ : « The Palace of Jupiter descends, and reveals in the distance, by three vanishing perspectives, the other palaces of the most powerful gods of heaven »⁹⁸. This design could correspond to item X in the inventory of 1809: « A small backcloth. called in the old inscription Olympus, depicting a see-through Architecture surrounded by very red clouds ».⁹⁹ Because of the mention of columns « torsos », also called Solomonic, present on the sketch by Rehn, it is reasonable to associate to it: the « Olympus, 14 flats for a decoration, so-called, imaginary red columns Torses, with a flower garlands around; the whole rest is filled with clouds. »¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ See: N° 785 of the Bukowskis sale of the collection Bellinga. *Bellinga Samlingen, Jean-Eric Rehn*. Stockholm, 6–7 Februari 1993. Stockholm: Bukowskis Auktions Aktiebolag (Catalogue de Vente), p. 215. See: Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsholm*. Stockholm : Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, p. 482 & p. 484.

⁹⁸ Molière. *Psyché*, Acte V, intermède: « Le Palais de Jupiter descend, & laisse voir dans l'éloignement, par trois fuites de perspective, les autres palais des Dieux du ciel les plus puissants ».

⁹⁹ « X En liten Fond. kallad i gammal påskrift Olympen, föreställande en genombrunten Arkitektur omgifven af mycket röda Skyar. » quoted in Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsholm*. Stockholm : Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, p. 482.

¹⁰⁰ « X Olympen, 14 kulisser till en Dekoration så kallad, föreställande röda Colonner Torses, med Blomsterbland om ; hela resten är uppfyllt med skyar », quoted in Stribolt, Barbro. *Scenery from Swedish Court Theatres, Drottningholm Gripsholm*. Stockholm : Stockholmia Förlag - Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2002, p. 484.

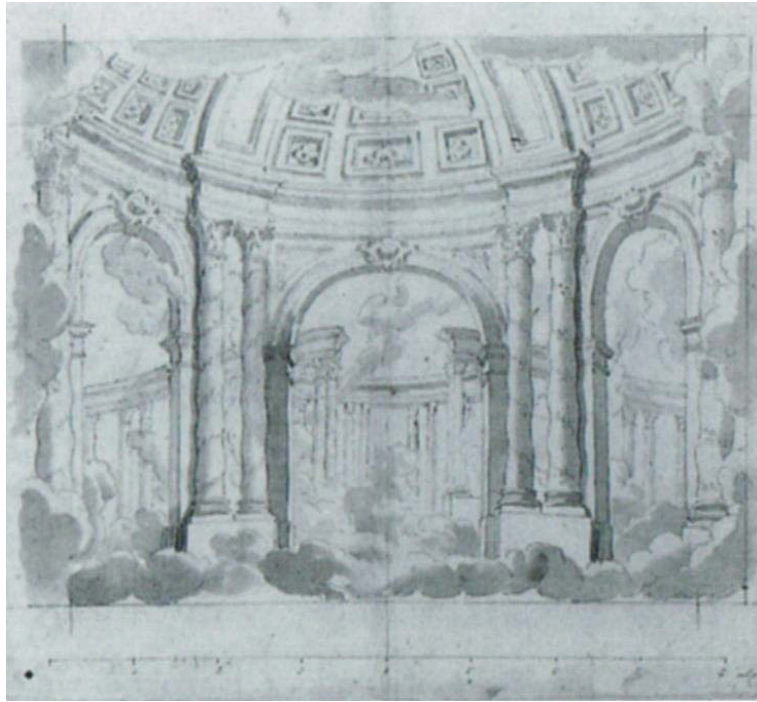


Figure 28: Rehn, set design for *Psiché*'s final intermède, 27x 30,7 cm.
Stockholm Nationalmuseum.

The machinery at Drottningholm was first ascribed to an Italian carpenter whose work is almost undocumented - Donato Stopani (17?? –17??) - who was indeed engaged in 1766 in connection with the festivities for the wedding of the prince¹⁰¹. Recent research, however, has shown the influence of Christian Gottlob Reuss (17?? –17??), master of the machinery at Dresden, via technical studies undertaken by Georg Fröman (17?? –17??), a Swedish master carpenter¹⁰². Fröman had been assigned to collect information on the art of building stage machinery¹⁰³ while he was travelling on the Continent with Rehn and Pasch, who shared the chief responsibility for the scenery for *Psiché*. Queen Louisa Ulrika had at her own expense allowed these three Swedes to be sent out to pick up technical and artistic innovations. Half as industrial spies, and half as collectors, they had journeyed through the German countries, Italy, France and the Netherlands and obtained a large amount of documentation: drawings, catalogues and memoranda, all of which were assiduously used ten years later. Drottningholms Slottsteater and its inaugural performance gained much from the European round tour of 1755 and 1756.

¹⁰¹ See: Beijer, Agne. *Drottningholms Slottsteater på Louisa Ulrikas och Gustaf III:s tid*. Stockholmsmonografier utgivna av Stockholms kommun. Stockholm: Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 1981, p. 125 and note 9.

¹⁰² See: Edström, Per Simon. "Der deutsche Machinmeister Christian Gottlob Reuss und die Bühnenmaschinerie des Drottningholmer Schlosstheaters" in *Opernbauten des Barock*, Icomos Heftes des deutschen Nationalkomitees XXXI. München: 1998, p.104–105. A summary in Swedish and English, "Den tyske maskinmästaren Christian Gottlob Reuss betydelse för utseendet på kulisssmaskineriet på Drottningholms Slottsteater" was published in *Program 1999, Drottningholms Slottsteater*. Stockholm: Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 1999, pp. 98–100.

¹⁰³ On the European Grand Tour by Rehn and his colleagues in 1755–1756 financed by the Manufakturkontoret and sponsored by Queen Louisa Ulrika, see: Wahlberg, Anna Greta. *Jean Eric Rehn*. Arlöv: Bokförlaget Signum, 1983, p. 19 and the contribution of Martin Olsson in Strömbom, Sixten. *Fem stora Gustavianer*. Stockholm: P.A. Nordsted & Söner, 1944, pp. 62–75.

As patron of this journey queen Louisa Ulrika was then able to observe the effects of the funding she had allocated for her Swedish artists, enabling them to get to know the theatres of Europe better¹⁰⁴. It is therefore highly appropriate that Drottningholm's curtain, painted by Pasch on a design by Rehn, shows a helmeted Minerva, protectress of the arts, holding up the queen's monogram: in 1766 it was indeed this well-read apotheosis that opened *Psiché*'s spectacle (Figure 29). Louisa Ulrika was so proud of *Psiché* that, to celebrate the visit of prince Heinrich of Prussia, her younger brother, the production was revived at Drottningholm on the 13th of August 1770.



Figure 29: Theatre curtain from Drottningholms Slottsteater.
Drottningholms Teatermuseum.

A comparison with other European stages of the period – Schouwburg in Amsterdam, the Berlin Hofoper, the court theatres at Dresden and Bayreuth, and also the theatre at the Palais Royal in Paris, stage of the *Académie Royale de Musique*¹⁰⁵, shows just how much Drottningholms Slottsteater owes to them. The conception of the relation between audience in an auditorium and the deep mechanical stage was inspired by the works of Vigarani in Modena and Paris. The *Salle des Machines*, which had welcomed the very first performance of *Psiché*, was in 1756 presenting the shows by Giovanni Niccolò Servandoni (1695–1766), and it is likely that the

¹⁰⁴ Rehn did numerous sketches. See: *Bellinga Samlingen*, Jean-Eric Rehn. Stockholm, 6–7 Februari 1993. Stockholm: Bukowskis Auktioner Aktiebolag, 1993, and Fröman kept a journal of the trip, see: Beijer, Agne. "Theaterzeichnungen im Reisejournal des Schlossbaumeisters Georg Fröman von seiner Reise nach Dresden und Wien in Jahre 1755" in *Bühnenformen– Bühnenräume – Bühnendekorationen*. 1974, p.77.

¹⁰⁵ In Paris, in 1656, Rehn and Pasch met the dancer Gallodier, who was then belonging to the troupe of the Académie Royale de Musique and convinced him to come to Sweden, where he had a productive career; it is more than likely that Gallodier danced in *Psiché* in 1766. See: Blin, Gilbert and Trotier, Rémy-Michel. "The Young Gallodier's Years of Apprenticeship, seen against the background of the abundant French dance life of the mid-eighteenth century" in *Program 2003, Drottningholms Slottsteater*. Stockholm: Drottningholms Teatermuseum, 2003, pp. 81–86.

Swedish artists, curious of all the last French trends, attended a rehearsal or a performance of Servandoni's lavish spectacle of *La Conquête du Mogol*¹⁰⁶. Later, in Drottningholm, Adelcrantz and his team of specialists had made up their minds to introduce all the technical possibilities of the time in their new theatre building, and to unite Giuseppe Bibiena's latest pioneering efforts with earlier Italian and traditional French techniques¹⁰⁷. It is this aspect which makes Drottningholms Slottsteater so valuable for a stage director: its capability to encapsulate a century of European theatre practice and taste.

Brilliantly inaugurated with *Psiché* by Molière, a work of utmost historical significance for the development of stage machinery¹⁰⁸, Drottningholms Slottsteater still has sufficient original stage elements today for the staging script, which outlined the changes' effects, to be reconstructed¹⁰⁹. The stage machinery there is a goldmine of technical solutions to enable the performative poetry in *Psiché* to come to life. The still extant scenery¹¹⁰ together with the descriptions in the inventories, propose to us vivid pictures of Molière's sets directions of *Psiché*. Since the *Salle des Machines* in Paris no longer exists, and since very few documents show the sets created by Vigarani, Drottningholms Slottsteater with its collections remains today a unique witness of what a baroque period performance of *Psiché* might be like. By offering a large investigation, this case study brings the principle of Historically Informed Practice into the elaboration of the sets for *Psiché*. But it also presents all the elements to take into consideration during a reflection for a staging and for the elaboration of sets for an Historically Informed production of any baroque opera. The theatre of Drottningholm offers the ideal setting of *Remaining Parts*, architecture, sceneries, machines, and archives, for a spectacle turned to the most original style but more importantly it gives the possibility of a context where the combination of *Structural* and *Performing Parts* allows a better definition of a baroque performance.

¹⁰⁶ Maybe the forthcoming book on Servandoni by Jérôme de la Gorce will give some light on the impact the set designer had on the Swedish school.

¹⁰⁷ At the end of the seventeenth century, Nicodemus Tessin (1654–1728) had acquired a large amount of designs by Berain and this collection had been likely studied by Adelcrantz. These drawings and the albums of the Prince de Carignan from the collection Tessin–Hålerman, are kept in the Nationalmuseum.

¹⁰⁸ *Psiché* knew multiple adaptations and performances. The production of London was one of the first and one well documented: see Canova–Green, Marie–Claude. “Le spectacle de Psyché à Londres en 1675” in *Gaspare & Carlo Vigarani, Dalla corte degli Este a quella di Luigi XIV, De la cour d'Este à celle de Louis XIV, a cura di Walter Baricchi & Jérôme de La Gorce*. Versailles: Centre de recherche du château de Versailles and Milano : Silvana Editoriale Spa, 2009, pp. 143–157.

¹⁰⁹ See the letter by prince Gustave to queen Louisa Ulrika of 15 July 1770 reproduced in Schück, Henrik. *Gustav III:s och Louisa Ulrikas brevväxling, Första Delen*. Stockholm: Nordstedt & Söners Förlag, 1919, p. 207. See also: Beijer, Agne. *Les troupes françaises à Stockholm, 1699–1792, Listes de repertoire*. Rédaction Sven Björkman. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1989, p. 123.

¹¹⁰ As the sets of *Psiché* were covering the quasi totality of generic spaces which can be found in the dramatic and operatic repertoires, they allowed future re–uses for a varied repertoire: despite the wedding circumstances, the choice of the piece, with its various stage components, revealed itself as a judicious investment for the future activity of the theatre, and indeed it seems the sets were used constantly after 1766, that is until the closing of the theatre in 1809.

7.3 Sets project for *Niobe* 2011

The following texts are based on the Staging and on the Machine projects for Niobe as presented in 2010 to Patrons of the Boston Early Music Festival, one year before the performance, and to the Technical team, few months before the 2011 rehearsals.

7.3.1 Characters and costumes

To explore the artistic possibilities of stage reconstruction has been one of the ambitions of my residency as Stage Director for the Boston Early Music Festival and my staging of *Niobe* was a major step in this direction. Staging an early opera is therefore a process which has a double identity for me: on the one hand, it is historical research through original documents, the manuscript score, the original libretto, and period iconography; on the other hand, the translation of these original elements in modern times is the core of my artistic approach which mixes poetic vision, modern media, and personal choices. As I noted in the introduction, the beginning of this process, which I am sharing here, is to try to define « What will we need to stage *Niobe* » in terms of both human resources and material resources. The rest is a question of designs through spatial and temporal developments.

There are 9 main singing performers listed: 3 women—Niobe, Manto, and Nerea—and 6 men. That indicates a minimum of 9 costumes for 9 characters. All of the characters, but one, are of high social rank: kings, princes, and clerics struggle for power and love amidst a war and a religious crisis. In the course of the action there are some specifications for costuming: Anfione gives his royal mantle to Clearte when he makes him the new ruler in Act I, Scene 2, though this should not require an extra costume for either. More important to the plot, in order to fool Niobe in Scene 9 of Act II, the magician Poliferno appears disguised as the god Mercury and the prince Creonte as the god Mars. The libretto also mentions a new “godlike” costume for Niobe (Act III, Scene 1). Each requires a new costume for these godly guises. These libretto-based requirements bring the list of costumes for the 9 principal roles to a minimum of 12.

The 9 Soloists are at the center of the plot and have a lot to do. The three stories that develop around the central character of Niobe—her relationship with her husband Anfione, her affairs with Clearte and Creonte, and her conflicts with Tiresia and Manto—are told through the words and actions of the 9 main characters. These 9 characters have a public role: Queen and Priest, Kings and Princes, they have authority over many people: sons and daughters, soldiers, citizens, and faithful’s. Because of the lack of extended choirs in *Niobe*, the numerous supernumeraries act throughout the piece and add an element of History and a taste of the Epic to the plot. My proposal would be to keep them and follow the instructions in the libretto as much as possible. In addition to their necessary dramatic roles, they would add to our production the element of lavishness which appears on the original prints of stage productions in Munich in the 1680s, as there is no doubt that these retinues also have a decorative appeal.

There is a large number of supernumeraries, but there is a distinction to be made between the 12 children of Niobe and Anfione, who are an essential key to the plot, and the

other supernumeraries who have a social and decorum function, each soloist having a retinue to indicate his or her rank. The Niobids are part of the myth, while the others help to establish the social status of the main characters and give their conflicts a political resonance. The critical point is that the two groups appear on stage together. At the start of Act I, the Niobids are present at the same moment as Anfione, Niobe, and Clearte with their retinue groups: some Noble Thebans, Pages, Knights, and Ladies of the Court. The stage must have been full of people with various types of costumes to show the wealth of Thebes.

Another crowd scene is the triumph of the Niobids and their extermination by the Gods. Clearte presents the children to the people of Thebes in a triumphal ceremony. To these extras one should add the gods, who do not appear on the list of supernumeraries but who are present in this scene. Latona, Apollo, and Diana who strike down from above the Niobids are thus an essential part of the action. Two specific examples illustrate the versatility of the word « Comparse »: the citizens of Thebes, whom Anfione addresses, answer him by singing «Viva Anfione, viva » which makes them a choir. And the wild beast killed by Tiberino, for which Steffani wrote special music, may have been an actor in an animal costume.

Supernumeraries should be divided into 3 groups. The first group is the 12 Niobids, the second is the group of gods and followers, and the third group is the dancers. The 12 Niobids should be treated as an entity. The children of Niobe and Anfione are not necessarily young infants: this sentimental 19th-century vision is contradicted by most of the depictions of the story in the Baroque era. Indeed, in the first scene of Act one, they appear in Warrior costumes. These costumes are meaningful as they tie together in a single picture the strength of Anfione and Niobe as parents known from the myth with their power as rulers of Thebes, the idea dominating the plot. Because of her rivalry with Latona, who had only one pair of twins, it would reinforce the meaning of the myth to show that Niobe had given birth 6 times to twin children. All the children should anyhow be twin-like: resembling 12 idealized clones of Niobe and Anfione. Having all twelve children look the same age would stretch credulity. If the Niobids are young adults, they could also be used for other supernumerary roles (Minimum: 12).

The second group of supernumeraries contains Latona, Apollo, and Diana (gods that should be able to “fly” and it should be a must to cast real twins), numerous Thebans (accompanying Anfione, Niobe, Clearte, Manto, and Tiresia), Thessalians (with Creonte), Albans (for Tiberino), and Atticans (with Poliferno). To make a retinue a retinue, a minimum of two followers is needed. That brings the total amount to a minimum of 16 extras, as all these people appear on stage at the same time at the end of the piece. This second group could be divided into singers (Minimum: 4 or 8 who can sing the chorus with Anfione), and mimes (Minimum: 8, if 8 singers; 12, if 4 singers).

The story of *Niobe* itself can be performed dramatically without any Dance. The story is told by the singers, and the dance is not linked dramatically with the plot. Ballet is not a part of the drama, but as a decorative element of style, an ornament, it does provide a release from the dramatic tension. Depriving our performance of it would be depriving the show of a color, an element of contrast. As we saw earlier, the dance element cannot be separated from a staging element especially important in Munich, the supernumeraries. Therefore, this third group of supernumeraries could be made of 6 dancers, who in addition to dancing can enhance the retinues of soloists (Minimum: 6).

Because their (lost) music was from another composer rather than by Steffani, the three Ballets appear rather straightforward at first glance, and it is tempting to consider the

dance as separated from the rest of the play: a ballet would occur at the end of each act and they would be distinct from the rest of the action. However, such an approach would be misdirected, not only because one of these ballets occurs in the middle of an act, but because another one is not listed in the printed list of the libretto. This list of dancers is better seen as an adjunct to the list of supernumeraries, as all the ballets are danced by “Compare”.

The citizens of Thebes, in the first ballet on the list, dance midway through Act II to adore Anfione as a god, but there has already been a ballet at the end of Act I that is not specified here: the hunters, recorded in the list of supernumeraries as followers of Tiberino, are dancing. The second ballet listed, for shepherds at the end of Act II, is danced by the followers of Manto (Nymphs with musical instruments in their hands) and might be joined by Tiberino’s companions (hunters) and the shepherds indicated in the list. After the Niobids are dead—though still on stage—the opera concludes with the third listed ballet, a dance of celebrating soldiers from Creonte’s army, who are first mentioned in the list of supernumeraries: “Warriors with Creonte.”

It is therefore likely that some of the supernumeraries were chosen to dance in their characters for these four ballets, or that the dancers were also acting as supernumeraries. In any case, the number of costumes needed for the ballets will be a minimum of four times the number of dancers, though these costumes would also be used by them when being supernumeraries. The same historical reference to 1688 Munich should also inspire the work on the 60 costumes for *Niobe*. There are two main ways to produce these *Niobe* costumes: either they come from the stock or are newly made. Productions of *Venus/Actéon*, *Poppea*, and *Acis* should be kept intact given the prospect for revivals. Considering that some of the costumes from the stock are already slated to be used for *Antiochus*, our planned Chamber Opera Series 3, *Dido* will certainly almost exhaust the stock in term of possibilities for the 2011 festival. It is already clear that most of the 60 costumes for *Niobe* will have to be made new.

7.3.2 Sets

To assure adequate stylistic accuracy, the sets should be composed of flat elements¹. To reduce cost, these flats can have a printed front picturing architecture represented in painted perspective. Although this process is more economical than painted sets, to do the 13 original sets would require a very consequential budget². There is no indication of any set designer in the libretto, and no prints depicting the sets of *Niobe* were published at the time. A HIP hypothesis for this omission is that the sets may not have all been newly designed: it is possible that some of the 11 sets designed by the brothers Mauro for Steffani’s *Servio Tullio* in Munich in 1686 were reused for *Niobe*. In the same way of thinking, the sets of our production of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* is another opportunity to continue the process initiated in 2008 for the project for the sets of Graupner’s *Antiochus und Stratonica*. The project for *L’incoronazione di Poppea* is the most recent fruit of this research: a permanent period frame which holds various sets was reconstructed from original documents. The system for changing sets elaborated in the frame of the project for *Antiochus* could be used first for *Niobe*.

¹ For a full Story Board of the Staging, see the page created by Rémy-Michel Trotier, my collaborator for the sets of *Niobe*: http://www.academiedesprez.org/recherche/displays/Niobe_Storyboard.htm

² On the sets of *Niobe* in 2011 in Boston, see: <https://www.classical-scene.com/2011/06/18/scene-for-bemf%E2%80%99s-niobe/>

But the strong historic component of the set calls into question the usual interactive process between designer and production team. Interactions between vision and budget induce necessary adjustments; the project therefore should present several possibilities for consideration. The sets for *Niobe*, like those designed for *Poppea*, should be conceived with a number of options that, combined in various ways, would provide a range of costs, and result in a show that is “in style,” but also in harmony with our budget. This process should be implemented with the creative involvement of the Production Manager. Finally, an extensive use of existing elements present in the BEMF stock, notably from previous productions, is recommended. In the same Baroque spirit of reuse, we should develop the stock further. It would be interesting to invest in some generic sets that could also be used in 2013 for *Antiochus* (e.g., a generic woodland, a royal palace, etc.). Both of these directions—optimization and development of the stock—can only be undertaken with the customs of the time.

7.3.3 Machines

Most of the machines are part of the action, mentioned in the sung text of the characters who comment about what is happening. Additionally, one of the special attributes of the machines in *Niobe* is that some of them function in deep relation with the music in the arias of soloists (the ultimate expression of this approach being of course the raising of the walls during Anfione’s singing), and there is also the special music written by Steffani to go with a few of the effects (for example, the arrival of Latona, Apollo, and Diana). Machines are the area where BEMF’s experience and expertise is the most limited. I propose to concentrate on machines that are absolutely necessary to the action, and also on those machines for which Steffani wrote special music. Even with this limitation, the number of mechanical systems to be implemented for *Niobe* remains quite substantial. The historical inspiration should be the guide for such an undertaking. Research on historical machinery is in progress to understand fully the historical meaning of these stage components: how they were made, but more importantly, how did they “play”.

After that, there is a need of competence to adapt our understanding of the original to systems available today. In a modern theater these machines are not a permanent part of the technical equipment. Here also there is a need for mechanical systems to make their movements happen. These mechanical systems will need to be identified, and bought, rented, or in some cases specially conceived and built. The technical competence for these systems should encompass American standards for safety, construction, and operation³.

To summarize, the staged production should first consider a Fidelity to the sources. The manuscript score and original libretto are full of information, which should be considered. The number of people on stage and the variety of sets and machines are both important. We should try to keep all the elements of the libretto and focus on the relations between them but scale down their proportions accordingly to fit our means. The context of the original performance must be of help in this process, allowing Creativity with History. For doing the sets and machines, various options—full out, eliminating one or more of the sets, eliminating one or more of the machines, scaling back on one or more elements in a set or machine—will be listed, and then artistic concerns, technical requirements, and budgetary realities will be considered when selecting from those options to make a final plan of what to include in the spectacle. From BEMF’s perspective, the production will need to see a New Involvement of the production team, so historical, artistic, and economical solutions can be achieved.

³ The flying effects were under the technical supervision of the company *Flying by FOY*. For more information, see: <http://flybyfoy.com/portfolio/professional-theatre/>

7.3.4 Flying machines

This section presents a description of all the flying effects in my staging of *Niobe* for the Boston Early Music Festival 2011. In this Internal Document, effects are presented with photographs of the model in volume of the sets I designed for the production. All the flying effects mentioned in the original libretto of 1688 are planned for our production: six flights, to which an extra one is added for the very end of the performance, following the apotheosis tradition of Italian and French operas. In total seven flights, involving five artists, take place in the production.

The Flying Machine is made of a single carriage which has 4 different “dressings”:

1. The Dragon Chariot (marked **DC**).
2. The Cloud, (**CL**).
3. The Planet Mars (**PM**).
4. The Horses Chariot (marked **HC**).

The Flying Machine can carry up to 3 adults at the same time. Role/Artists Flying in the Machine were:

1. Niobe/Amanda Forsythe
2. Creonte/Matthew White
3. Poliferno/Jesse Blumberg
4. Apollo/Frederick Metzger
5. Diana/Emy Metzger

(For safety reason, a written agreement had to be obtained from all artists involved a year in advance.)

Page and bar numbers refer to BEMF’s edition of the score: [Orlandi, Luigi, Steffani, Agostino et Ardespin, Melchior d’]. *Niobe*. [*Niobe/Regina di Tebe*] Cambridge (MA) : Boston Early Music Festival, 2010.

ACT I

First Dressing of the Machine: The Dragon Chariot DC

Scene 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (Anfione, Niobe, Clearte, Nerea).....
Scene 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 (Manto, Tiberino, Tiresia)
Scene 10, 11 & 12 (Creonte, Poliferno).....

Flight #1(a) Music p42-b14

Flight #1(a) **Dragon Chariot flies in, stops and hovers** DC
with Matthew White (Creonte) & Jesse Blumberg (Poliferno)
Speed: SLOW



Flight #1(b) Music p42-dc-b14

Flight #1(b) **Dragon Chariot flies down, lands** DC
with Matthew White (Creonte) & Jesse Blumberg (Poliferno)
who get out.
Speed: SLOW



Flight #1(c) **Music: p51-dc-b63**

Flight 1(c) **Dragon Chariot flies out** DC
with Matthew White (Creonte) & Jesse Blumberg (Poliferno)
in.
Speed: MIDDLE FAST



Scene 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 (Anfione, Niobe, Clearte, Nerea)
Scene 19 & 20 (Creonte, Poliferno)

Flight #2(a) **Music p79-II-b47.2**

Flight #2(a) **Dragon Chariot flies and land** DC
with Matthew White (Creonte) & Jesse Blumberg (Poliferno)
who get out of it.
Speed: SLOW



Flight #2(b)

Music: p85-b32

Flight 2(b)

Dragon Chariot flies out empty (on a gesture of Poliferno/Jesse Blumberg)

Speed: MIDDLE FAST

DC



Scene 21, 22, 23 (Anfione, Nerea, Niobe, Tiresia, Tiberino, Manto).....

END of FIRST ACT

INTERMISSION

During intermission: Change of the Dressing of the Machine:

The Clouds **CL** are put on the Machine

ACT II

Scene 1 (Creonte, Poliferno)

Flight #3a

Music: p116-b19

Flight #3(a) Cloud empty flies down and lands
Speed: SLOW

CL

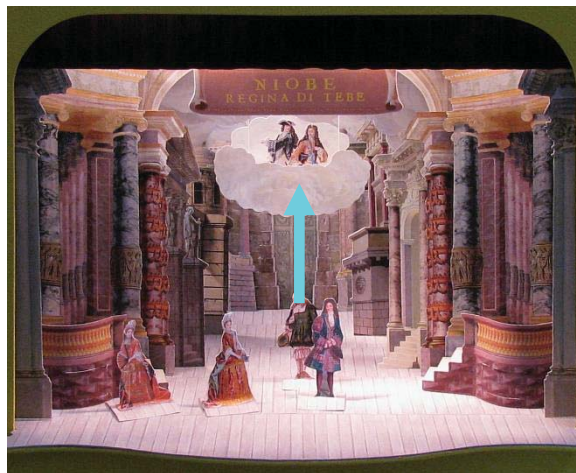


Flight #3b

Music p117-dc-b1

Flight #3(b) Cloud flies up to stay hovering above the stage
with Matthew White (Creonte) & Jesse Blumberg (Poliferno)
in.
Speed: SLOW

CL



Scene 2 (Clearte) **Creonte, Poliferno above**

Scene 3 (Niobe, Clearte, Nerea) **Creonte, Poliferno above**

Scene 4 (Anfione, Niobe, Clearte, Nerea) **Creonte, Poliferno above**

Flight #3c

Music p136-b1

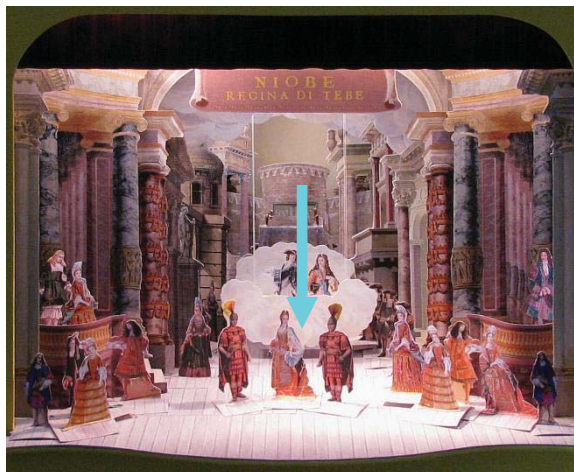
Flight #3(c)

Cloud flies down and lands

CL

with Matthew White (Creonte) & Jesse Blumberg (Poliferno)
in.

Speed: MIDDLE FAST



Flight #3(d)

Music p138-b32

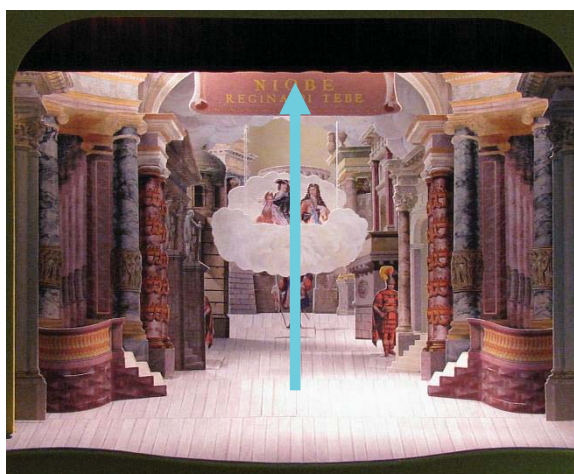
Flight #3(d)

Cloud flies up

CL

with Matthew White (Creonte), Jesse Blumberg (Poliferno)
joined by Amanda Forsythe (Niobe)

Speed: MIDDLE FAST



AFTER THIS FLIGHT WE CHANGE THE DRESSING OF THE MACHINE:
THE PLANET MARS **PM** IS PUT ON THE BACK

Scene 5 (Anfione).....

Scene 6, 7, 8 (Tiresia, Tiberino, Manto).....

Scene 9 (Niobe as Venus, Creonte as Mars, Poliferno as Mercury)

Flight #4a

Music p161-b1

Flight #4(a) Planet Mars flies in and stays up
with Matthew White (Creonte as Mars)
Speed: SLOW

PM



Flight #4(b)

Music p163-b45

Flight #4(b) Planet Mars lands
with Matthew White (Creonte as Mars) in, then going out
Speed: SLOW

PM



Flight #4(c)

Music p171-b38

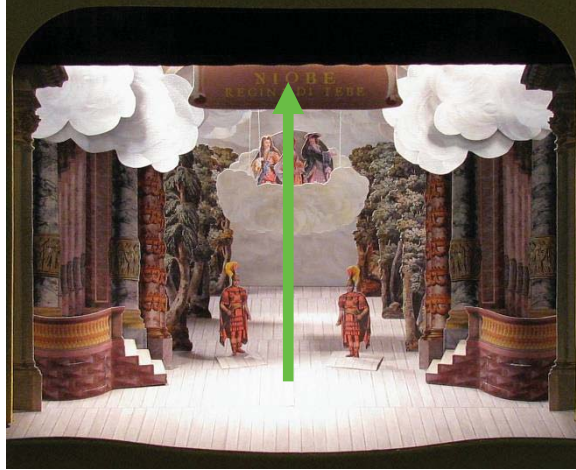
Flight #4(c)

Planet Mars flies up

with Matthew White (Mars), Jesse Blumberg (Mercury)
joined by Amanda Forsythe (Niobe)

Speed: SLOW

PM



END OF THE SECOND ACT
INTERMISSION

ACT III

Scene 1 (Creonte as Mars, Poliferno as Mercury, Niobe as Venus).....

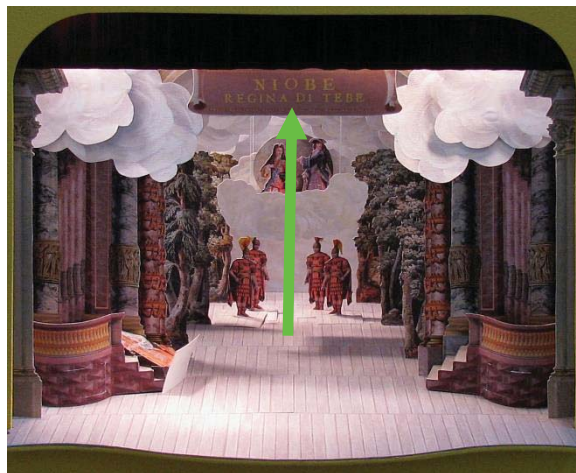
Preparation Planet Mars is down..... **PM**



Scene 2 (Creonte, Poliferno, Niobe).....

Flight #5a Music p.205-b47

Flight #5(a) Planet Mars flies up
with Matthew White (Mars) and Jesse Blumberg (Mercury)
Speed: MIDDLE FAST **PM**



AFTER THIS FLIGHT, WE CHANGE THE DRESSING OF THE MACHINE :
THE HORSES CHARIOT **HC** IS PUT ON FRONT, The CLOUD ON THE BACK

Scene 3, 4 (Niobe, Anfione).....

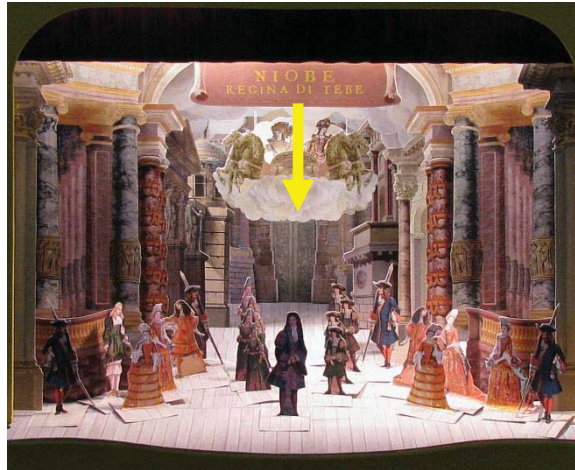
Scene 5 (Tiresia, Manto, Tiberino).....

Scene 6, 7, 8, 9 (Niobe, Clearte, Nerea, Tiresia, Manto, Tiberino)

Scene 10 (Clearte & Niobids, Apollo & Diana).....

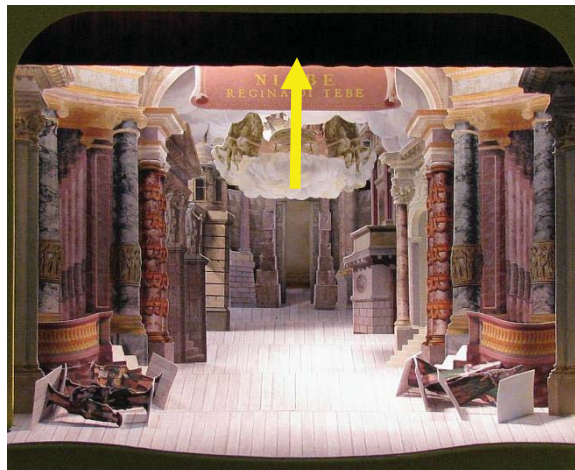
Flight #6a **Music p228-b1**

Flight #6(a) **Horses Chariot flies down and stays hovering** **HC**
with Frederick Metzger (Apollo) and Emy Metzger (Diana)
Speed: MIDDLE FAST



Flight #6b **Music p229-b15**

Flight #6b **Horses Chariot flies up** **HC**
with Frederick Metzger (Apollo) and Emy Metzger (Diana)
Speed: FAST



Scene 11, 12 (Anfione, Niobe)

Scene 13 (Creonte, Poliferno, Nerea, Tiresia, Manto, Tiberino).....

Flight #7a Music End of Chaconne
p254-b89

Flight #7(a) Horses Chariot flies down and stays hovering
with Frederick Metzger (Apollo) and Emy Metzger (Diana)
Speed: SLOW

HC



THIS WAS THE LAST EFFECT THE PERFORMANCE

Conclusion

It may be perceived as a truism to affirm that opera is a complex form of art that needs the conjunction of many layers of expression to fulfill its aesthetical ambition. Nonetheless this reality was at the center of the original conception of opera in the seventeenth century, and it would be an error to forget it when trying to create a Historically Informed staging for its performance. The diversity of its components, the simultaneity in which these expressions need to exist, and the resources required to achieve the substance of the product render opera a particular artistic occurrence. Furthermore, the ephemerality of this phenomenon makes opera an uneasy form for observation and memory: even a video recording of an opera is a woefully inadequate counterpart to the live performance it records. These variable space/time combinations reduce any attempt to analyze, practice or even write about opera, to a problematic task, but marks also the unique richness of this artistic genre. Such a singularity deserves a specific approach and this dissertation is an attempt to fulfill a clear need. Based on these prolegomena and nourished by experience, my research for a more in-depth and hands-on approach to the idea of Historically Informed staging of early opera is based on three main points: an as-thorough-as-possible exploration of the sources, the informed decision-making process which derives from it and the conscious use of knowledge for creative purpose are the elements of this approach. Each of these, necessarily, is faced by some limitations.

In this dissertation, I have tried to show how the specific links I created between historical documents known to me as an artist nourished my opera productions. In putting these interactions into words, I have sometimes taken what could be considered a sociological approach of describing the operatic work as the specific product of a cultural environment. I have also sometimes used a psychological style in the sense of describing the personality and intellectual environment of a composer or/and a librettist. In other places I have used a rhetorical device common during the period studied to structure my investigations. At all times, I have shown that each opera of the considered period and country has been another attempt to redefine the genre, using what was done before its first performance. Thereby new creative paths were proposed, from which I conclude that during the seventeenth century the genre opera is in perpetual transition, and an art which, while reproducing itself, changes as it develops, and that each piece asks for its own method of investigation and staging.

The notion of making an as-thorough-as-possible exploration of the sources is presented at length in this dissertation, being one result of my artistic research, the live productions being the core of it. In this way my research hopes to provide a new perspective on the first key period of European opera: it certainly demonstrates how the narratives present in the libretto and score of an opera cannot be dissociated from the layers of historical elements of its first performance in order not to damage its substance, its “raison d’être.” Everything written in these chapters, and in the case studies which follow them, was first revealed and

further elaborated with a special performance in mind and nourished all others thereafter. This is particularly relevant in the illustrated chapters where all illustrations are a selection, curated by my relation to the piece; what makes it even more personal is the fact that many of these visual remains can be found in my private collection. In short, what characterizes this investigation is mostly the multifaceted relationship it establishes between subjectivity and objectivity. This dissertation mirrors also that aspect of the research.

The method of experimentation that I presented in my introduction, with its relational sequence of various parts (*Remaining*, *Missing*, *Structural*, and *Performing*), has been tested in practice and proven to be fruitful. First, having in mind the notion of an as-thorough-as-possible exploration of the sources, I have shown in this study that literary analysis, archival study and material culture examination can reinforce and enrich one another and create a new understanding of operas (*Remaining parts*). The search of the unknown (*Missing parts*) was done by joining a breadth of social and political as well as artistic issues; the syncretism of these various stratas built in a construct (*Structural parts*), which in turn is alimanted by synthesizing in the performance a wide range of both familiar and unfamiliar material (*Performing parts*). This material consists of often dismissed remains and practices belonging to the performing arts, but my way of cognitive research creates in this case not only an inventory, or an index, but reveals a grammar or even a syntax.

For the question of the staging of opera per se, I also developed the notion of cultural contextualization and, by extending it to societal elements, this research aims to offer new ways, both musicological and literary, while still considering opera as a live spectacle. In turn, my practical experiences had shed new light on the selected operatic titles and, by testing some hypotheses formulated during the research process, I was able to identify, among other relevant factors, librettists, places and purposes of performance and, for some, even discover the political agenda at the time. In addition, in all the cases examined in this research, the process leading to performances revealed more meanings than first anticipated on paper, which shows that an opera, as art form, can be only fully disclosed with its performance as an objective and an outcome.

None of the chapters about specific opera titles pretend to cover everything to be found in historical sources and to be researched about the staging of the operas in question. In fact, what I aim to achieve in these chapters is to show how the interpretive process has de facto been operating as a selection of historical data in the memory, mine and that of others. In this process, not all this historical information appeared relevant at first: some data triggered imagination and creation, some only triggered new questions, leading to the search for new data. The process of historical research started conjointly with the plan to give a live performance to the piece and this objective has been the main criterion for the selection of facts; and, in doing so I created a « mémoire », a memory of the piece. The discoveries, even the hypotheses which came from them during this process, have all found a way in the final spectacles, if not by themselves, then at least by working as a constructive factor to produce an alternative expression. These notions must face three outside-the-artist limitations, which constantly interact with each other during the process: the limitations of time and of budget,

and the inherent personal limitations of the acting agents, as the collaborative nature of producing an opera does not always provide the optimal conditions for a serene work.

There first is a limitation of time because one cannot research, or rehearse, a piece's history forever, even though there is always more to discover. Between what can be planned and what cannot, time is of the essence: elaboration of a project, choice of title, phase of historical research, gestation, time of elaboration of the visual components of the production, design process, duration of rehearsals, etc., are as many moments of the creative process, when the stage director must establish a dialogue with external inputs in a specific time frame. The established belief that the stage director only acts in the rehearsal studio is a misconception. Having a performance in preparation means that the reality of the resources at my disposal, including factual (the size of performing space combined with the number of performers), financial (budgets are not unlimited) and human (the choice of partners is never unrestricted), all influence the possible use and therefore relevance of historical facts discovered during the theoretical research.

Second, the informed decision-making process which derives from the gathering of historical information is experienced by me as an expressive process. Nevertheless, as informed as it wishes to be, this decision process must fit in the current economic format of opera business. Factual and financial means are by themselves influenced by the societal conditions of the pacing of the project's preparation: if it ever was, the original economic model of the creation of an opera is no longer valid. The current economic model is unstable, and its effects are obvious on production factors: budgets fluctuate constantly. Nowadays, the conditions are not necessarily suitable to the historically informed production of opera. When creating a production of an early opera, not everything, even if perfectly historically accurate, is always possible because of the limitations of the budget. On the other hand, trying to recreate what may appear to us as the ideal conditions of its birth is already a fantasy because it is built on the myth of the perfect suitability and aptness between all expressive elements of opera (poetry, music, painting, and by extension, visual arts) and performing forces (and by performing forces, I do not mean exclusively performers but all personal attached to the making of an opera). This ultimate appropriateness seems to me a utopia comparable to the idea of a golden age. But because this idea was around when opera was created in the seventeenth century and has since remained a fundamental element of its monstrous identity as an artistic genre, it is appropriate for me to include it in any concept of staging direction.

As important as the budget are the human resources which define to a great extent the results: producers, designers and technicians all have an influence on the process, mostly because they present what always appears to be a series of personal limitations. The collaborative nature of producing an opera does not always give the optimal conditions for a cohesive work: the difference in appreciation of the historical information between performers is a prime source of limitations. Because they have not shared all the steps of the investigation, the relevance of historical information is not always clear to all of them in the same way. The utopia mentioned above is not the same for everyone, and a great amount of communication is needed between all acting agents in order to make them project co-owners. The historian's library, the designer's atelier, the performer's studio: these are very different spaces where

interactions with the historical information are dealt with at different levels. The virtual laboratory which establishes itself between all these locations should ideally be energized by the stage director and the musical director and should eventually flourish in the performing space.

Third, inside the frame dictated by these limitations, the conscious use of knowledge for creative purpose is the most difficult to circumscribe. Because of the nature of the treated object, an opera, any further attempt to describe this creative process theoretically is deemed to establish itself in an academic context which today is mostly under the auspices of musicology. Also, another established belief among the early music community is that research should preexist creative process: however, my experience as a stage director contradicts this assumption. The Historically Informed staging of an opera cannot be compared to a “painting by numbers” method, where an objective and informed reading of a libretto and a score, and academic evidences, would give birth to the true and full expression of the opera in question. This candid way to look at it is mostly due to scholars who do not practice opera and have no awareness of the series of limitations any opera stage director must overcome again and again for any performance. The concomitance of historical research and creative expression is in fact one the most thrilling parts of my interpretive process: every finding of Historical Information orients the artistic work in a more defined direction while all artistic decisions which need to be taken during the production process trigger more questions which, in turn, call for additional research. In these aleatory findings the moments of serendipity are not to be neglected, leading either to a validation or to an alternative solution to a problem.

Most of my findings in this “opera memory” ultimately had a presence in the staging of the pieces I studied: the living performance absorbed them and diffused them again, by reinvigorated reflections. Although the work of the stage director influences all aspects of the performance, the singers are the active embodiment of these reflections and as a consequence constitute for me the most essential part of any opera process and product. During a performance, singers are asked to deal with two forms of consciousness: first they have to be fully involved in the act of performing, their actual physical expression being the key of the live performance. They are given the responsibility of expressing the significance of the piece. But second, they should embody the “spirit of the period” by relating on a cognitive level with as much Historical Information as possible. My work as a stage director oscillates between these two: I aim to give singers a new awareness of their physical capacity of expressions, but I load them with period information relevant to their characters. The physical act of singing demands the full involvement of the body, but the psychological act of interpreting requires a total focus of the mind. Although singers themselves choose what is relevant in my discourse to their character, they must have an awareness that they need to establish a dialogue of concepts between them. A coherent ensemble (of singers) must appear ultimately as the vector of various meanings. Based on his interpretation of the historical sources, this singular force of expressions is the creation of the stage director.

The creative purpose of the stage director is accomplished through a substantial number of elements: he must first give an interpretation of the libretto informed by the score, leading to an interpretation for which he has to oversee the expressive functionality of stage

crafts and arts. A stage director's second task is to give a performance relevance today, for him and for the audience and in a way the stage director is the first perceiver and receiver, as he must be aware of the diverse expectations of an audience: hence my focus as a stage director on interpretive research. My dissertation exposes as many paths of research about the relations between poetry, music and visual arts as it gives new perspectives for (re)activating them in a performance, allowing each member of the audience to build his own experience by choosing what to look at, and in which order, importance, proportion, and so on. These elements, which have been tested through experimentation, and are all related to the idea of the shared necessity between all mediums involved, are part of my reflections. Although this dissertation seems to deal with the domain of ideas and historical facts and, as said above, presents only a part of my work, all these ideas are also encapsulated in the final artistic product, but only after they went through the process of emotional testing. This testing period happens both intuitively and is influenced by my artistic partners: during the designing phase with designers and during the rehearsal process with the musical director(s) and the singers. The question of how these artistic selves are then working, or functioning, is not easy to circumscribe. In my own experience, it is the self, as the object of an individual person and his or her own reflective consciousness, which is at the center of my cognitive search.

My research about the staging of baroque operas is intended as a specific contribution to the history of the Historically Informed practice movement. That it is possible to give this rich repertoire a relevance for today's audience resides first in my conviction that the performing artists of the past did not know better but certainly at least as much as we do, and if they were different in the solutions they proposed, we are at least well advised to relate directly to their questions. Baroque opera production may highlight the fallibility of definite norms and raise questions about various authenticities rather than attempting to supply answers and create a kind of orthodoxy. I believed that baroque operas were only conceived for and as performance, and my research has reaffirmed this opinion. However, the common exploration which happens during the performance should allow the spectators of today to reach their own individual understanding and appreciation of opera. Numerous occurrences in the seventeenth-century cases that I studied have repeatedly shown that a new operatic piece must acknowledge and at the same time break the artistic mold it came from. A staging, because of its function as a regulator of the ephemeral parts of the performance, offers the best opportunity to present works afresh. However, this can only be achieved through the two in-depth processes of investigation/selection and collaboration/decision-making. It is clear that today's social, economic and cultural states of affairs, including academic, rarely guarantee the necessary means for such an enterprise in the reality of financial, human and time constraints. From this I conclude that Historically Informed staging of the opera of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is not an easily defined practice but a utopia and, as such, can only be an exponential and experimental tool for creative purposes.

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Curriculum vitae Gilbert Blin

Gilbert Blin was born in 1960 in Guérande, France. During his international training years, Gilbert Blin has been intern or staging assistant for Robert Altman, Patrice Chéreau, Göran Jarvefelt, Nicolas Joël, Jorge Lavelli, Ariane Mnouchkine, Helmut Polixa, Pier Luigi Pizzi, Vittorio Rossi and Volker Schlöndorff among others. With a state scholarship, he studied in Paris at Institut d'Études Théâtrales of Université de Paris III Sorbonne Nouvelle with a syllabus centered on theater History and stage direction. After a Diplôme d'Études Théâtrales (1982) and a Licence d'Études Théâtrales (1983), he completed a Brevet d'Aptitude à l'Animation Socio-éducative (1985), before obtaining his Maîtrise d'Études Théâtrales with a *mémoire* titled « Les opéras de Rameau: pour un Théâtre des Enchantements » (1986, *Mention Très Bien*). His research has since broadened to encompass French opera and its relationship to Baroque theater, his fields of exploration as historian, stage director, and designer.

For his staging début in 1991, Gilbert Blin directed Massenet's *Werther* for the Opéra de Nancy, a production revived in 1994, with Laurent Petitgirard conducting, for Opéra-Comique in Paris. In 1995 he directed Delibes's *Lakmé* for the same house. In 1996, he was dramaturg for Bizet's *Carmen*, directed by David Radok, at the Royal Opera of Copenhagen. In 1999, Gilbert Blin was the first French stage director to be invited by the Prague State Opera for a new production of Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*, with musical direction by Vincent Monteil.

Gilbert Blin has worked extensively with the Drottningholms Slottsteater. He was French adviser for Arnold Östman's production of *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1990) and stage director for *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1992). In 2000 he founded the Académie Desprez, *Association Française pour le Rayonnement du Théâtre du Château de Drottningholm* with the goal to study this 1766 theatre. In 2002, the Friends of Drottningholms Slottsteater acknowledged his international contribution to the activities of the theatre, when he received the stipendium Henrik Nordmark from the hands of HRH Princess Victoria of Sweden.

His staged realizations of operas of the seventeenth century and eighteenth centuries include a designed and directed 2001 production of Vivaldi's *Orlando furioso* for the State Opera of Prague, and a 2003 reconstruction of Vivaldi's *Rosmira fedele* for the Opéra de Nice. Returning to the latter house in 2007, Gilbert Blin directed and designed Handel's *Teseo*, and in 2012, Alessandro Scarlatti's *Il Tigrane*, conducted by Gilbert Bezzina. For the Ensemble Baroque de Nice, he also recreated a Roman performance of Scarlatti's oratorio *La Giuditta* in 2009. Since 2006, Gilbert Blin has been also working on the original sets and costumes of Mozart operas. With Czech stage director Lubor Cukr, he presented *Le nozze di Figaro* at Opéra de Nice in 2008, and *Don Giovanni* at the Prague Estates Theatre in 2006 and 2016.

Gilbert Blin made his American début with the Boston Early Music Festival in 2001 by directing a production of Lully's *Thésée* presented at the Tanglewood Festival. He became Boston Early Music Festival's *Stage Director in Residence* in 2008 and joined as *Opera Director* the permanent artistic team of the Boston Early Music Festival in 2013.

Gilbert Blin has been invited to give lectures and/or coaching at the Ecole Centrale de Paris, Kulturama in Stockholm, the Schola Cantorum in Basel, the Royal Conservatoire of The Hague, The Juilliard School of Music in New York, and at the University of Washington in Seattle. Gilbert Blin is also the Founder and Director of the Young Artists Training Program of the Boston Early Music Festival.

Boston Early Music Festival 2007–2017

Opera productions by Gilbert Blin

NB: All opera productions are listed in the chronology of the first performance.
The opera productions discussed in this dissertation are indicated in bold font.

- **Lully's *Psyché***
2007 Festival Centerpiece Opera

BEMF *Psyché* Benefit Concerts | Narrator

April 12, 2007 French Embassy, New York, NY
April 13, 2007 French Library & Alliance Française, Boston, MA
April 14, 2007 French Library & Alliance Française, Boston, MA
June 3, 2007 Home of Gregory Bulger and Richard Dix, Dover, MA

BEMF *Psyché* Performances | Stage Director

June 12, 2007 Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA
June 13, 2007 Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA
June 15, 2007 Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA
June 16, 2007 Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA
June 22, 2007 Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, MA
June 23, 2007 Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, MA
June 24, 2007 Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, MA

BEMF *Psyché* Recording | Drama coach

June 28 – July 1, 2007 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

- **Blow's *Venus and Adonis* & Charpentier's *Actéon: The Hunting party***
2008 Chamber Opera Series

BEMF *The Hunting party* Performances | Stage Director

November 29, 2008 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA
June 13, 2009 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

BEMF *Venus/Actéon* Recordings | Drama coach

September 26 – October 2, 2009 Sendesaal Bremen, Bremen, Germany

- **Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea***

2009 Festival Centerpiece Opera

BEMF *Poppea* Benefit Concerts | Narrator

April 16, 2009 Union League Club, New York, NY

April 17, 2009 St. Botolph Club, Boston, MA

BEMF *Poppea* Performances | Stage Director and Set Designer

June 6, 2009 Boston Center for the Arts, Boston, MA

June 7, 2009 Boston Center for the Arts, Boston, MA

June 9, 2009 Boston Center for the Arts, Boston, MA

June 10, 2009 Boston Center for the Arts, Boston, MA

June 12, 2009 Boston Center for the Arts, Boston, MA

June 14, 2009 Boston Center for the Arts, Boston, MA

June 19, 2009 Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, MA

June 20, 2009 Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, MA

June 21, 2009 Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, MA

& Revival in the frame of the 2015 Festival *The Monteverdi Trilogy*:

June 9, 2015 Boston University Theatre, Boston, MA

June 14, 2015 Boston University Theatre, Boston, MA

- **Handel's *Acis and Galatea***

2009 Chamber Opera Series

BEMF *Acis* Performances | Stage Director

November 28, 2009 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

March 25, 2011 Town Hall, Seattle, WA

March 27, 2011 The Chan Centre, Vancouver, BC, Canada

April 1, 2011 The Folly Theatre, Kansas City, MO

April 3, 2011 The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, NY

April 3, 2011 The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, NY

June 18, 2011 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

June 26, 2011 Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, MA

June 27, 2011 Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, MA

November 28, 2015 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

November 29, 2015 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

BEMF *Acis* Recording | Drama coach

June 26 – July 1, 2013 Sendesaal Bremen, Bremen, Germany

- **Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas***

2010 Chamber Opera Series

BEMF *Dido* Performances | Stage Director

November 27, 2010 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

November 28, 2010 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

- **Steffani's *Niobe, Regina di Tebe***

2011 Festival Centerpiece Opera

BEMF *Niobe* Open Rehearsal | Stage Director

June 6, 2011 Emmanuel Church, Boston, MA

BEMF *Niobe* Performances | Stage Director

June 12, 2011 Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA

June 14, 2011 Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA

June 15, 2011 Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA

June 17, 2011 Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA

June 19, 2011 Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA

June 24, 2011 Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, MA

June 25, 2011 Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, MA

BEMF *Niobe* Recording | Drama coach

November 1 – 15, 2013 Sendesaal Bremen, Bremen, Germany

BEMF *Niobe* in Concert | Stage Director

November 15, 2013 Sendesaal Bremen, Bremen, Germany

January 18, 2015 Auditorio Nacional, Madrid, Spain

January 20, 2015 Le Pin Galant, Mérignac, France

January 22, 2015 Opéra Royal, Versailles, France

January 24, 2015 Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris, France

January 27, 2015 Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, Netherlands

January 29, 2015 La Halle aux Grains, Toulouse, France

January 31, 2015 Konzerthaus Dortmund, Dortmund, Germany

- **Charpentier's *La Couronne de Fleurs* & *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers***

2011 Chamber Opera Series

BEMF *Couronne/Enfers* Open Rehearsal | Stage Director

November 22, 2011 The Salem Museum & Old Town Hall, Salem, MA

BEMF *Couronne/Enfers* Performances | Stage Director

November 26, 2011 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

November 27, 2011 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

June 15, 2013 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

June 17, 2013 Shalin Liu Performance Center, Rockport, MA

March 14, 2014 McPherson Playhouse, Victoria, BC, Canada

March 15, 2014 McPherson Playhouse, Victoria, BC, Canada

March 17, 2014 The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, NY

March 18, 2014 The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, NY

BEMF *Couronne/Enfers* Recording | Drama coach

July 1 – 7, 2013 Sendesaal Bremen, Bremen, Germany

- **Monteverdi's *Orfeo***

2012 Chamber Opera Series

BEMF *Orfeo* Open Rehearsal | Stage Director

November 20, 2012 The Salem Museum & Old Town Hall, Salem, MA

BEMF *Orfeo* Performances | Stage Director

November 24, 2012 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

November 25, 2012 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

& Revival in the frame of the 2015 Festival *The Monteverdi Trilogy*:

June 13, 2015 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

June 21, 2015 Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington

- Handel's *Almira*

2013 Festival Centerpiece Opera

BEMF *Almira* Open Rehearsal | Stage Director

June 3, 2013 Emmanuel Church, Boston, MA

BEMF *Almira* Performances | Stage Director and Set Designer

June 9, 2013 Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA

June 12, 2013 Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA

June 14, 2013 Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA

June 16, 2013 Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA

June 21, 2013 Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, MA

June 22, 2013 Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, MA

June 23, 2013 Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, MA

BEMF *Almira* in Concert | Dramaturg

February 1, 2018 Sendesaal Bremen, Bremen, Germany

BEMF *Almira* Recording | Drama coach

January 20 – February 1, 2018 Sendesaal Bremen, Bremen, Germany

- Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* & *Livietta e Tracollo: The school of trickery*

2014 Chamber Opera Series

BEMF *The school of trickery* Open Rehearsal | Stage Director

November 25, 2014 The Salem Museum & Old Town Hall, Salem, MA

BEMF *The school of trickery* Performances | Stage Director

November 29, 2014 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

November 30, 2014 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

June 18, 2017 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

June 24, 2017 Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, MA

June 25, 2017 Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, MA

- **Monteverdi's *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria***

2015 Festival Centerpiece Opera of the 2015 Festival *The Monteverdi Trilogy*

BEMF *Ulisse* Performances | Stage Director and Set Designer

June 7, 2015 Boston University Theatre, Boston, MA

June 10, 2015 Boston University Theatre, Boston, MA

June 12, 2015 Boston University Theatre, Boston, MA

- **Charpentier's *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* & Lalande's *Les Fontaines de Versailles***

Versailles Portrait of a royal domain

2016 Chamber Opera Series

BEMF *Versailles Portrait* Performances | Stage Director

November 26, 2016 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

November 27, 2016 New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA

November 28, 2016 The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, NY

November 29, 2016 The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, NY

- **Campra's *Le Carnaval de Venise***

2017 Festival Centerpiece Opera

BEMF *Carnaval* Open Rehearsal | Stage Director

June 6, 2017 Emmanuel Church, Boston, MA

BEMF *Carnaval* Performances | Stage Director and Set Designer

June 11, 2017 Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA

June 14, 2017 Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA

June 16, 2017 Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA

June 18, 2017 Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA

The Reflections of Memory Summary

This dissertation documents the author's research into the Historically Informed Performance of operas from the seventeenth century and early eighteenth century.

In the introduction the author argues that opera is not only a musical genre but a combinative form which can only achieve its full identity during a staged performance. The notion of Historically Informed Performance should be a concept linked with music as much as with theatre. For this purpose, although reaffirming that the stage director must overview the expressive functionalities of opera crafts and arts, the author balances the notion of authenticity of parts with the more dynamic notion of authenticities in the relationships between parts. He also re-examines the pejorative but commonly held notion that Historically Informed Productions of opera are essentially made of objects and forms, whose capacity of reproductions of period original signals a style. He then nullifies this notion by introducing his process of interpretation as an articulation between the *Remaining parts* (score, libretto, but also stage designs and testimonies of various nature) and the *Missing parts* (the elements which cannot be traced because lost or immaterial in nature) within the frame constructed by the *Structural parts* (the conceptions of opera and art at the period) and the *Performing parts* (the ways of expression the stage had then at its disposal: sets, costumes, lights, movements, etc). The author aims to demonstrate that: A: opera is a combinative art whose potential of expression can only be fully achieved through the deciphering of various codes interrelated with each other during a performance, and B: that these identifications and articulations enable a transfer which allows the re-creation of an opera. This creative process is called by the author: *The Reflections of Memory*. This expression embodies the author's search for the artistic relevance of an opera.

Through twelve operas of the seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, which all have been staged for the Boston Early Music Festival, Chapters 1 to 6 trace a chronological exploration of baroque opera and reveal some principles the author's attitude towards staging is based upon, by placing *Remaining parts* within the frame defined by *Structural parts* to identify *Missing parts*, and establish *Performing parts*.

Chapter 1 examines the notions of space in early Italian opera: through three of the works of Monteverdi it shows the experimental capacity of the genre at its early development and confirms the importance of scenography in the Venetian conception of opera, which still predominates today. Two methods of investigations are applied: one based on a contextual study of *Orfeo* (1607), the other on an investigation of new visual sources for *Ulisse* (1641) and *Poppea* (1643). The author comes to the unexpected conclusions that: A. *Orfeo* was an experimental enterprise close to a collective modello, a form susceptible of further adjustments, and: B. if the pictorial sceneries are integral part of the Venetian opera, a HIP performance of *Poppea* could happen without any sets.

In Chapter 2 the author's aim is to expand current thinking about the beginnings of French Opera: he categorizes the final ballet of *Psyché* (1671) as a poetic structure presenting what would become the French style of operas Quinault subsequently developed with Lully.

In Chapter 3 the author identifies the work of Charpentier as an alternative voice during this absolutist period in French music history (1672 - 1687). The investigation leads him to attribute three of Charpentier's « petits operas », *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* (1683), *La Couronne de Fleurs* (1685) and *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* (1687), to three known poets and by doing so he expands the scope of their hypothetical first performances which helps in turn to re-define their original performing form.

In Chapter 4 the author turns to England and revisits two notorious «masque/operas»: Blow's *Venus and Adonis* (1683) is reexamined under its ekphratic capacity while the picture of the Augustan context of Handel's *Acis and Galatea* (1718) gives the key to its purpose and function as establishing a « genius loci ».

Chapter 5 explores the influence of Italian and French systems elsewhere in Europe. By focusing on Munich and examining in detail the allegorical meanings of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* (1688) by Steffani, the author demonstrates the double importance of Jesuit influence and military propaganda on opera in Bavaria.

Chapter 6 examines what the author identifies as a « diplomatic opera »: *Le Carnaval de Venise* (1699) by Campra. He shows that this opera ballet, taking advantage of the diplomatic circumstances, is an attempt to create a new genre, which claims with determination the right for its kaleidoscopic nature to exist next to Quinault's lasting system.

After these chapters dedicated to the investigation, dramaturgy and staging of specific pieces, three case-studies offer a complement to the method for costumes, sets, and machines. The first one explores the iconological process the figure of the river god goes through to become an opera character easily identifiable thanks to his costume.

The second case-study recreates the order of sets and machines in which *Psiché* was performed in Drottningholms Slottsteater in 1766.

A third case-study, dedicated to the staging of *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*, offers the technical list of flying effects in a production recently staged by the author.

A Conclusion offers some short remarks where the author states that if *The Reflections of Memory* wants to offer a method for investigating baroque operas from the point of view of their first performances it is also the description of an attitude towards historical sources and a creative path for productions of today. Consequently, the author concludes that Historically Informed staging can only be an exponential and experimental attempt for creative purposes and is not an easily defined practice.

The Reflections of Memory Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift doet verslag van het onderzoek door de auteur naar de historisch geïnformeerde uitvoeringspraktijk van opera's uit de zeventiende en vroege achttiende eeuw. In de Inleiding stelt de auteur dat opera niet 'slechts' een genre in de discipline 'muziek' is maar veeleer een kunstvorm die, door het feit dat hij verschillende elementen combineert, pas volledig zijn identiteit kan tonen in een geënceneerde uitvoering. Het begrip 'historisch geïnformeerd' dient daarbij van toepassing te zijn zowel op het muzikale deel van de voorstelling als op de aspecten die behoren tot het 'theater'.

Hoewel het van het grootste belang is dat de regisseur alle expressieve ambachtelijke en artistieke elementen van het operabedrijf in het oog blijft houden, brengt de auteur een gebalanceerde verhouding aan tussen de notie van de authenticiteit van de op zichzelf staande individuele onderdelen in dit proces en de meer dynamische notie van de authenticiteit van de relaties tussen die onderdelen. Hij onderzoekt tevens de breed gedragen maar in zijn ogen onjuiste notie dat historisch geïnformeerde operaproducties vooral worden gekenmerkt door periode-gebonden reproducties van objecten en vormen die zouden staan voor een relevante stijl.

Dit vooroordeel wordt weerlegd door interpretaties in dit domein te beschouwen als een gearticuleerd proces waarin de voor ons beschikbare elementen (partituur, libretto, decorontwerpen en allerlei eigentijdse getuigenissen) worden gecombineerd met de leemtes (elementen die niet meer getraceerd kunnen worden omdat ze verloren zijn gegaan of immaterieel van aard zijn), en dit alles in het frame van een 'overall' concept van opera in relatie tot de andere kunsten in de relevante periode, tezamen: de structuur. Dit geheel wordt dan weer gecombineerd met de onderdelen waarmee de regisseur de feitelijke uitvoering bepaalt, zoals decors, kostuums, belichting, posities en bewegingen op het toneel.

De auteur wil aantonen dat:

- opera een kunstvorm is waarin diverse kunstdisciplines samenkomen en bij de uitvoering waarvan slechts door het ontrafelen van de met elkaar verbonden codes de volledige expressieve potenties kunnen worden waargemaakt;
- genoemde kenmerken en articulaties een situatie creëren waarin de echte her-schepping van opera's mogelijk wordt.

Dit creatieve proces wordt door de auteur aangeduid als *The Reflection of Memory*, ofwel denken en overdenken van geschiedenis zoals vervat in ons geheugen. Deze titel omvat de zoektocht van de auteur naar de artistieke relevantie van opera's uit de betreffende periode.

Hoofdstuk 1 tot en met 6 vormen in chronologische volgorde, een ontdekkingsreis op het terrein van de barokopera, aan de hand van twaalf opera's uit de zeventiende en vroege achttiende eeuw die alle zijn geënceneerd voor het Boston Early Music Festival; ze onthullen een aantal principiële kanten van de houding van de auteur bij de enceneringen van dit repertoire. Hij doet dat door het overgeleverde en beschikbare materiaal binnen het structurele

raamwerk te confronteren met (een zoektocht naar) de ontbrekende elementen; om tenslotte dit geheel van bouwstenen te construeren tot het productiemateriaal voor de feitelijke uitvoering.

Hoofdstuk 1 onderzoekt het begrip ‘ruimte’ en ‘plaats’ aan het begin van de Italiaanse operatraditie en aan de hand van een drietal werken van Monteverdi. Het toont de experimentele status van het genre in zijn beginfase en bevestigt daarbij het belang van scenografie in het Venetiaanse concept van ‘opera’, dat tot en met heden nog steeds de boventoon voert. Er zijn twee onderzoeksmethoden gehanteerd: de eerste is gebaseerd op een contextuele studie over de *Orfeo* (1607), de andere op een onderzoek naar nieuwe visuele bronnen van *Ulissee* (1641) en *Poppea* (1643). De auteur komt tot de onverwachte conclusie dat:

- Orfeo een experiment is geweest dat dicht bij een collectief ‘modello’ stond dat nog voor verdere ontwikkeling en aanpassing open lag;
- Poppea in een historisch geïnformeerde productie ook zonder decor(s) uitgevoerd kan worden, aangezien puur geschilderde (onderdelen van) decor(s) een integraal onderdeel uitmaakten van het Venetiaanse operabedrijf.

In hoofdstuk 2 beoogt de auteur de gangbare manier van denken over de beginperiode van de opera in Frankrijk te verbreden: hij bestempelt de finale versie van het ballet van *Psiché* (1671) als een structuur die laat zien wat in een volgende fase de Franse operastijl zou worden, die later door Quinault samen met Lully is ontwikkeld.

In hoofdstuk 3 karakteriseert de auteur het werk van Charpentier als het alternatieve geluid gedurende de absolutistische periode in de Franse muziekgeschiedenis (1672 – 1687). Het onderzoek leidde er toe dat de tekst van drie van Charpentier’s ‘petits opéras’ *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* (1683), *La Couronne de Fleurs* (1685) en *La descente d’Orphée aux Enfers* (1687), kon worden toegeschreven aan drie bekende dichters. Daarmee kan bovendien het beeld van hoe deze werken mogelijk in première zijn gegaan worden verbreed, met alle gevolgen van dien voor een herdefiniëring van de vorm waarin ze werden uitgevoerd.

In hoofdstuk 4 richt de auteur zich op Engeland en bespreekt hij twee beroemde ‘masque/opéras’. *Venus and Adonis* (1683) van Blow wordt bestudeerd vanuit zijn nauwkeurig verhalende capaciteit. Het beeld dat oprijst uit de hoogverheven context van Handel’s *Acis and Galatea* (1718) reikt de sleutel aan tot de positionering van een ‘genius loci’ als doel en functie van dit werk.

Hoofdstuk 5 onderzoekt de invloed van Italiaanse en Franse operastijlen op die in andere delen van Europa. De focus ligt op München, en daarbij worden in het bijzonder de allegorische uitgangspunten van Steffani’s *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* (1688) onder de loep genomen. De belangrijke invloed van zowel het jezuïtisme als van het fenomeen ‘militaire propaganda’ op de opera-scene in Beieren wordt daarbij prangend aan de orde gesteld.

Hoofdstuk 6 onderzoekt wat de auteur kenschetst als een opera van de diplomatie: *Le Carnaval de Venise* (1699) van Campra. Hij laat zien hoe dit ‘opera-ballet’, gebruikmakend van de diplomatieke omstandigheden in de desbetreffende periode, een poging is om een nieuw

genre te creëren, dat terecht een plaats opeist naast het almaar aanwezig blijvende systeem van Quinault, door het te confronteren met het eigen caleidoscopische karakter van het ‘opera-ballet’.

Na deze hoofdstukken over het onderzoek naar en de dramaturgie en enscenering van de bovengenoemde stukken wordt een drietal casestudies behandeld die aanvullend materiaal leveren voor het methodisch omgaan met kostuums, decors en theatermachinerie.

- De eerste casestudy behandelt de iconische figuur van de ‘riviërgod’, een operafiguur die gemakkelijk herkenbaar is door zijn kostuum.
- De tweede legt uit hoe de organisatie en volgorde was van de scènewisselingen en het machinegebruik bij de uitvoeringen van *Psiché* in het Drottningholm Slottsteater in 1766.
- De derde is gewijd aan de enscenering van *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* en presenteert een overzicht van de vliegtechnieken die de auteur in zijn recente enscenering van deze opera gebruikte.

In de Conclusie vat de auteur het onderzoek samen: als dit proefschrift een methode wil aanreiken om barokopera te benaderen op basis van de uitgangspunten die een rol speelden ten tijde van de eerste uitvoering, dan is het daarmee tevens een beschrijving van de houding die men moet aannemen ten opzichte van de historische bronnen enerzijds, en anderzijds het aangeven van een creatieve weg naar de productie van dit repertoire in de huidige tijd. Als gevolg hiervan concludeert de auteur dat historisch geïnformeerde ensceneringen slechts op vertolking gerichte experimentele pogingen zijn om op creatieve wijze de gestelde doelen te bereiken; het is derhalve geen werkwijze die gemakkelijk te definiëren en vast te leggen is.

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APPENDIX : Six texts set in music by Marc-Antoine Charpentier

SELECTION EDITED AND TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY GILBERT R. BLIN

Foreword

« To speak of an interpreter means to speak of a translator.
And it is not without reason that a well-known Italian proverb,
which takes the form of a play on words, equates translation with betrayal. »

Igor Stravinsky⁴

This appendix offers the poetic texts of six compositions by Marc-Antoine Charpentier, presented here in the order they are analysed in the Chapter 3 of *The Reflections of Memory* and where the question of the attributions to Donneau de Visé, Palaprat and Thomas Corneille are discussed:

- *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* (H480)
- *La Pierre Philosophale* (H501)
- *La Couronne de Fleurs* (H486)
- *Actéon* (H481)
- *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* (H488)
- *Orphée descendant aux Enfers* (H471)

Librettos and poems have been transcribed from the *Meslanges autographes* in *Œuvres complètes de Charpentier*. Paris: Minkoff, 1996-2018. For each piece, a translation into English and a short synopsis have been added.

These translations and synopses originated from my stage productions for the Boston Early Music Festival from 2008 to 2018. The translations are following as much as possible the meaning and the order of the verses of the original French texts: the work on these translations started with the purpose in mind that they will be of use for the performers. Therefore, special attention to the order of English words was given to help the singers to memorize in an easy way the French original sequence, even if the English grammar was not perfectly respected. The other purpose of these translations is to give the singers and instrumentalists an insight in the meaning of the verses, but again more importantly, in the order this meaning is delivered. This specific way to translate is to help performers, who do not speak the French language perfectly, by giving them the possibility of understanding, at the right moment, the meaning of what they are singing or accompanying.

The goal of this approach is to give the performers, singers and continuo players, the possibility to establish a closer relation with the process of declamation. Thus, these transcriptions/translations are essential tools to prepare the dramatic and musical work on

⁴Stravinsky, Igor. *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons*. [French original text and] English translation by Arthur Knodel and Ingolf Dahl. Preface by George Seferis. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1970, pp. 168 & 169.

French declamation, following French period taste and Charpentier's individual style. For a French opera of the seventeenth century, I believe that the musical interpretation should be closely linked to the style of the poetry, and to its specific construction, not only to its general meaning.

Editions of the French texts, translations and synopses have all been reviewed for this appendix.

***LES PLAISIRS DE VERSAILLES* (H480)**

MUSIC BY MARC-ANTOINE CHARPENTIER

TEXT ATTRIBUTED TO JEAN DONNEAU DE VISÉ

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY GILBERT R. BLIN

This French libretto of *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* is copied from the original text of Charpentier's autograph manuscript (*Meslanges autographes* in *Œuvres complètes de Charpentier*, Vol. 11. Paris: Minkoff, 1998).

The free spellings used by Charpentier have been updated with reference to those employed in modern editions of Molière's plays. Capitalization has been established following the printing custom of the time : it is used to start at each new poetic line, but also emphasizes the importance of certain words.

The text of the libretto is very complex in its wording and also presents a great array of rare vocabulary : notes are added when the sense of the word needs some explanation. The dictionary of Antoine Furetière (1619–1688) has been used as a reference : Furetière, Antoine. *Dictionnaire universel, contenant généralement tous les mots françois tant vieux que modernes, et les termes de toutes les sciences et des arts... par feu Messire Antoine Furetière...* La Haye: A. et R. Leers, 1690.

LES PLAISIRS DE VERSAILLES

Synopsis

The Pleasures of Versailles

First Scene

The action takes place in the palace of Versailles, during a soirée in the *Grands Appartements* of King Louis XIV. A concert is about to begin, and La Musique, aware of having the ear of the King, asks for veneration from those present as she prepares to entertain him.

Second Scene

La Conversation arrives, and as is her wont, cannot refrain from commenting: La Musique begins to sing an air and La Conversation interrupts to praise it. Increasingly annoyed by such unwelcome ongoing comments, La Musique argues with La Conversation and threatens to storm out in anger.

Third Scene

Alarmed, the other Pleasures call upon Comus, the god of banquets, to mediate. He offers fine wine, exquisite cakes and hot chocolate. La Musique refuses – she fears chocolate will only energize La Conversation.

Fourth Scene

Comus then pleads for help from Le Jeu who offers various games, and suggests they gamble to settle their argument, but La Musique only wants silence, and La Conversation now only wants to talk and drink chocolate. La Musique and La Conversation continue their bickering until the latter explains that at court, civility is the rule: each must accommodate the other's quirks. Finally, they are reconciled – La Musique admits her outburst was only a cunning plan to poke fun at La Conversation, for the amusement of King Louis. La Musique and La Conversation agree, together with Comus and Le Jeu, to continue their roles as the Pleasures of Versailles and to entertain the great King after his recent martial labors and before the glorious ones to come.

LES PLAISIRS DE VERSAILLES

Libretto and translation

Les Plaisirs de Versailles	The Pleasures of Versailles
Personnages	Characters
La Musique	Music
La Conversation	Conversation
Comus, dieu des festins	Comus, god of feasts
Le Jeu	The god of Games
Chœur de[s] Plaisirs	Chorus of the Pleasures
<i>La Scène est dans les app.[artements]</i>	<i>The scene takes place in the apartments</i>
Ouverture	Overture
Scène Première	First Scene
La Musique	Music
Que tout cède aux douceurs de mes accords charmants. Mortels, Dieux, révérez la divine Harmonie ! C'est peu que de bannir d'entre les éléments La Discorde, mon ennemie ; Et de régler les mouvements De ces corps lumineux, dont la force infinie Fait naître les événements Des biens ou des maux de la vie.	Let all yield to the sweetness of my enchanting strains. Mortals, gods, revere the divine Harmony! It is but a small thing to banish, from among the elements, My enemy Discord; As it is to order the movements Of those luminous spheres, whose infinite power Gives birth to the events— Good or ill—of life.
Mais ce qui rend sur tant Mon sort digne d'envie C'est que du plus fameux de tous les Conquérants, J'ai la gloire d'être chérie. Mortels, Dieux, révérez la divine Harmonie ! Dans ses glorieux passe-temps ⁵ Le Monarque des lys me met de la partie. Que tout cède aux douceurs de mes accords charmants.	But above all others, what renders My fate worthy of envy, Is that I have the glory to be cherished By the most famous of all Conquerors. Mortals, gods, revere the divine Harmony! The Monarch of the lilies Counts me among his glorious pastimes. Let all yield to the sweetness of my enchanting strains.
Chœur des Plaisirs	Chorus of the Pleasures
Mortels, Dieux, révérez la divine Harmonie ! Dans ses glorieux passe-temps Le Monarque des lys la met de la partie. Que tout cède aux douceurs de ses accords charmants.	Mortals, gods, revere the divine Harmony! The Monarch of the lilies Counts her among his glorious pastimes. Let all yield to the sweetness of her enchanting strains.
Scène Seconde	Second Scene
La Musique	Music
Quel objet importun à mes yeux se présente ?	What is this unwelcome thing that appears before me?
La Conversation	Conversation
Rare fille du ciel, ne m'appréhendez pas ! Il est vrai que ma langue est un peu frétilante Mais je viens ici que pour parler tout bas, Et faire remarquer d'une façon galante De vos expressions l'adresse et les appas. Rare fille du ciel, ne m'appréhendez pas !	Rare daughter of heaven, do not dread me! It is true that my tongue is a trifle flip But I only come here to talk very softly And to draw attention, in a gallant manner, To the skill and allure of your phrasing. Rare daughter of heaven, do not dread me!

⁵ « Passe-temps »: « Passsetems. F.M. Divertissement; occupation agréable à quoy on employe son temps » (Furetière) This could be one of the first historical occurrences of the word, as its use is only fully established in 1694. This suggests a major writer as author of the libretto.

La Musique L'attention et le silence S'accordent mieux à mon projet Que votre babil indiscret Qui jamais ne finit Et qui toujours commence. Accordons-nous : parlez ! La Conversation Accordons-nous : chantez ! La Musique Et moi je me tairai. La Conversation Je vous écouterai. La Musique Je suis prête à chanter. La Conversation Si vous voulez chanter... La Musique Si vous voulez vous taire... La Conversation Je suis prête à me taire, chantez donc ! La Musique Taisez-vous ! La Conversation Je me tais pour vous plaire. La Musique Pour vous plaire, je chanterai. La Conversation Chantez-donc ! La Musique Taisez-vous ! La Conversation Je me tais pour vous plaire. La Musique Pour vous plaire, je chanterai. Amour, viens animer ma voix Sans toi, sans ta douce tendresse Je ne pourrai toucher Le plus charmant des rois. La Conversation Que cette expression a de délicatesse, Rien ne peut approcher de sa naïveté. La Musique Babillarde divinité, Pour Dieu, tenez votre promesse. Amour, viens animer ma voix. Sans toi, sans ta douce tendresse Je ne pourrai toucher Le plus charmant des rois. Mais si ta flamme	Music Attention and silence Are more in keeping with my intent. Than your indiscreet babbling Which never ends And is always starting up again. Let us agree: speak! Conversation Let us agree: sing! Music Then I shall be silent. Conversation I shall listen to you. Music I am ready to sing. Conversation If you want to sing... Music If you want to be silent... Conversation I am ready to be silent. Then, sing! Music Be silent! Conversation I am silent to please you. Music To please you, I shall sing. Conversation Sing, then! Music Be silent! Conversation I am silent to please you. Music To please you, I shall sing. Love, come animate my voice. Without you, without your sweet tenderness, I will not be able to move The most charming of kings. Conversation Such delicacy of expression! Nothing can match its naïveté! Music Babbling deity, For God's sake, keep your promise. Love, come animate my voice. Without you, without your sweet tenderness, I will not be able to move The most charming of kings. But if your flame

À mes chants donne l'âme J'aurai le bonheur D'attendrir son grand cœur⁶. La Conversation Ah ! que cette chute⁷ est heureuse Elle enlève, transporte, elle enchante les sens. La Musique Puisse, déesse caquetteuse, Si bien s'embarrasser ta langue entre tes dents Que de louer à contretemps Elle perde à jamais l'habitude fâcheuse Et devienne un exemple à la secte nombreuse De ces beaux esprits fatigant Qui pour toujours louer Assassinent les gens. Menuet La Conversation De grâce, de grâce, Encore cette courante ! La Musique C'est un menuet, un menuet, Ignorante. La Conversation Un menuet ? Je le veux bien Je meure, je meure, Si j'en savais rien Et si d'en rien savoir Je me mets fort en peine ! La Musique C'en est trop, Rompons l'entretien ! La Conversation Adieu, sociable sirène. N'allez pas de dépit faire votre cercueil⁸ Des poétiques eaux de la docte Hippocrène⁹ ! Votre perte mettrait toute la France en deuil. Adieu, sociable sirène !	Gives soul to my songs, I will have the good fortune Of moving his great heart. Conversation Ah, what a fortunate ending! It captures, transports, It enchants the senses. Music Prattling deity, may Your tongue become so entangled between your teeth That it forever loses the tiresome habit Of ill-timed praise, And become an example to the large faction Of wearisome wits Who, with their perpetual praise, Bore people to death. Minuet Conversation For heaven's sake, please, Not that courante again! Music It is a minuet, a minuet, You ignoramus. Conversation A minuet? I would be well pleased Should I die If I knew anything about it, And if I come to know anything, It would pain me greatly! Music That's it, No more discussion! Conversation Farewell, sociable siren; Don't go off in a fit of pique to drown yourself In the poetic waters of the Muses' fountain! Losing you would send the whole of France into mourning. Farewell, sociable siren!

⁶ In this case « Cœur » means both the organ, the symbol of love, but also the courage like in the famous « Rodrigue as-tu du cœur? » from Corneille. *Le Cid*, Act I, Scene 5.

⁷ Here the character of Conversation, insensitive to music, refers to the poetic wording, and the idea of the last verse: « Une chute », in French literature terminoly, refers to the element of surprise provided by the author at the end of a text, which illuminates its meaning, and can lead to reinterpret it. The desired tone can be pathetic, humorous or ironic (in this case also known as pun: pun of the epigram), it is here lyrical... This unexpected conceit is prepared to allow the vigilant reader to guess gradually the meaning of the text: Amour, toucher, flamme, attendrir, coeur.

⁸ The expression « faire son cercueil » is close enough to the modern French expression « Faire son deuil de quelque chose »: to resign to be deprived of something.

⁹ In Greek mythology, Hippocrène was the name of a spring on Mont Helicon. It was sacred to the Muses and the water was supposed to bring forth poetic inspiration when imbibed. Its Greek name literally translates as "Horse's Fountain" as it was said to have been formed by the hooves of Pegasus knocking on the ground.

Chœur des Plaisirs Arrêtez, demeurez ! Ne quittez point ces lieux Quoi, pour un discours qui vous pique, Louis, ce héros glorieux Manquerait des plaisirs que donne la musique ? Arrêtez, demeurez ! Ne quittez point ces lieux. La Musique Qu'elle finisse donc son babil odieux ! La Conversation Parler est le talent unique Que j'ai reçu des dieux, Et je veux m'en servir Malgré les envieux. La Musique Sortons, sortons. On blâmera mon peu de politique Mais je ne saurais faire mieux. Chœur des Plaisirs Arrêtez, demeurez ! Ne quittez point ces lieux Quoi, pour un discours qui vous pique, Louis, ce héros glorieux Manquerait des plaisirs que donne la musique Arrêtez, demeurez, Ne quittez point ces lieux. Scène Troisième Un Plaisir Venez, dieu des festins, Venez, dieu des festins, Apaiser leur querelle ! Comus Que vos débats Ici ne fassent point d'éclat Et je vous donnerai, mes belles, À toutes deux du chocolat¹⁰. La Musique Du chocolat ? Dieu vous en garde. De crainte qu'on en donne À cette babillarde,	Chorus of the Pleasures Stop, stay! Do not leave these grounds. Merely because of a speech that irritates you, Louis, that glorious hero, Would be deprived of the pleasures that music gives? Stop, stay! Do not leave these grounds. Music Then let her cease her odious babbling! Conversation To speak is the only talent That I received from the gods, And I want to make use of it, Despite the envious. Music Let us leave! Let us leave! They will blame my lack of diplomacy, But it's the best I can do. Chorus of the Pleasures Stop, stay! Do not leave these grounds. Merely because of a speech that irritates you Louis, that glorious hero Would be deprived of the pleasures that music gives? Stop, stay, Do not leave these grounds. Third Scene A Pleasure Come, god of feasts, Come, god of feasts, Assuage their quarrel. Comus Don't let your disputes Cause the slightest stir here, And I will give some hot chocolate To you both, my beauties. Music Some chocolate? God forbid, As I fear that you would give some To that blabbermouth.

¹⁰ Chocolate: Hot chocolate, cocoa. Cacao from America was a Spanish import in the seventeenth century and became a very fashionable drink. The drink gets official encouragement in France by French queens, princesses of Spain, Anne of Austria and Maria Theresa of Austria or by physicians, who after finding first the drink having negative effects, praised its benefits, as Nicolas de Blégné who published in 1687: *Le bon usage du thé, du café et du chocolat pour la préservation & pour la guérison des maladies*. Paris: Veuve D'Houry et Veuve Nion, 1687. France discovered chocolate in 1615 in Bayonne during the wedding of Anne of Austria, daughter of King Philip III of Spain with the King of France, Louis XIII. But it was Louis XIV and his wife Maria Theresa of Austria who brought chocolate in the habits of the court of Versailles. Chocolate is then consumed as hot beverage such as coffee. In the same way as for exotic drinks like tea or coffee, the Church pondered the question of whether it is a food or a source of pleasure. In 1662, following the work of Cardinal Francesco Maria Brancaccio (1592–1675) who published « Liquidum non frangit jejunum » (the « drink [including chocolate]- do not break the fast »), Pope Alexander VII (1599–1667) ends the theological debates: chocolate is said « maigre » and can even be drunk during Lent.

Moi-même je le dis : Je n'en veux point goûter. Son caquet échauffé Ne pourrait s'arrêter. La Conversation Le chocolat est bon, Cher Comus. Il me tarde que par votre crédit J'en puisse un peu tâter. La Musique Non Comus ! La Conversation Comus, l'écouter C'est s'amuser à la moutarde¹¹ ! Du chocolat ! La Musique Dieu vous en garde... La Conversation Que par votre crédit, J'en puisse un peu, J'en puisse un peu tâter. La Musique Son caquet échauffé Ne pourrait s'arrêter. Comus D'un vin délicieux de la côte rôtie Qui ferait rire un Jérémie¹², J'ai des bouteilles à foison. Buvez-en, je vous y convie ! Si l'on a des chagrins Il fait qu'on les oublie Et loin de troubler la raison Ce jus divin la fortifie. La Conversation Comus, le chocolat est bon. La Musique Du chocolat, Dieu vous en garde, Non Comus ! La Conversation Comus l'écouter, C'est s'amuser à la moutarde ! Du chocolat ! La Musique Dieu vous en garde... La Conversation Que par votre crédit, J'en puisse un peu,	For me, I say: I do not care to taste it. Her overheated prattle Would not stop. Conversation Chocolate is good, Dear Comus. I long, thanks to your favor, To have a little taste. Music No, Comus! Conversation Comus, to listen to her Is to waste time on trifles! Chocolate! Music God forbid. Conversation Thanks to your favor, I may have a little, I may have a little taste. Music Her overheated prattle Would never stop. Comus Of a delicious wine from Côte-Rôtie, Which would make a stern prophet laugh, I have bottles in abundance. I invite you to drink up! If you have sorrows, It makes you forget them, And far from upsetting reason, This divine liquor strengthens it. Conversation Comus, chocolate is good. Music Chocolate, God forbid, No, Comus. Conversation Comus, to listen to her Is to waste time on trifles! Chocolate! Music God forbid... Conversation Thanks to your favor, I may have a little, I may have a little taste.

¹¹ Proverbial: To waste time looking after an indifferent thing when one should spend it on a more consensual.

¹² Jérémie 35:6: King James Bible: « But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever ».

J'en puisse un peu tâter¹³. La Musique ...Son caquet échauffé Ne pourrait s'arrêter¹⁴. Comus J'ai des confitures liquides¹⁵ Que prisent les goûts les plus fins De pâtes¹⁶ et de massepains¹⁷, J'ai d'assez hautes pyramides¹⁸ Et j'en dispose ici Comme Dieu des festins. La Musique & La Conversation Nous ne voulons, Comus, Ni massepains ni tartes¹⁹. Comus Si vous ne voulez pas de ces mets délicats, Pour finir vos débats, Déesses, prenez donc des cartes, Le Dieu du Jeu qui vient En peut fournir à tas. Scène Quatrième Le Jeu Si les cartes, les dés, L'innocent trou-madame²⁰,	Music ...Her overheated prattle Would not stop. Comus I have juicy preserves Prized by the finest palates. I have many towering pyramids Of fruit jellies and marzipan And I give them here, As the God of feasts. Music & Conversation We want, Comus, Neither marzipan nor tarts. Comus If you do not want these delicacies, Goddesses, then to end your quarrelling, Take up cards: The God of Games, who comes, Can furnish plenty. Fourth Scene Games If the cards, the dice, The innocent trou-madame, The billiard, the checkers, The backgammon, the chess,

¹³ The seventeenth century spelling of the word “taster” makes it clearer for the English than for the French reader of today.

¹⁴ Chocolate had, like coffee, the reputation to energize. The Marquise de Sevigné said, in her Letter dated April 15, 1671, that Chocolate « vous flatte pour un temps, et puis il vous allume tout d'un coup une fièvre continue, qui vous conduit à la mort. » (it flatters you for a time, and then you suddenly turn on a continuous fever which lead you to death.). See: *Lettres de Madame de Sévigné de sa famille et de ses amis, Tome premier*. Paris: Hachette, 1863, p. 269.

¹⁵ The seventeenth century sees the progress in France of the culture of fruits and therefore the consummation and the art of “confiture”, to preserve in sugar, designating jams, compotes, jellies, marmalades dates from this period.

¹⁶ Furetière : « Pastes, Espèce de Confiture presque sèches qui se font avec du sucre, des fruits ou des fleurs. Des pâtes de pistaches, d'abricots, de coings, &c. » It is here in complement to « confitures liquides » of the previous verse. In today French culinary products : pâtes de fruits.

¹⁷ Made with almond powder, egg white and sugar (close to the Calissons of Aix-en-Provence).

¹⁸ It was customary to present sweets in architectural displays on the tables (see planches « Confiseur » of *L'Encyclopédie*).

¹⁹ Furetière: « Tarte [...] Pièce de four qu'on sert au dessert, & surtout aux nopces & aux baptêmes. Elle est faite de crème, ou de confitures entièrement, ou des deux ensembles, séparées par divers quartiers. [...] il y a aussi des tartes de massepain faites d'amandes pilées & glacées avec du sucre. Tarte en pomme, est une tarte faite des pommes ».

²⁰ In 1682, the game of trou-madame was located in the Salon of Mars where there were a number of small card-tables, covered with green velvet fringed with gold, and in the center was a larger table which held a trou-madame of inlaid work. Trou-madame was played by rolling little ivory balls through arcades into holes marked with numbers that indicated their point value.

Le billard²¹, le damier, le tric-trac²², les échecs, Les rafles²³ et les cochonnets²⁴ Ne sauraient dissiper Les chagrins de votre âme, Vous ne verrez jamais la fin de vos procès. Chœur des Plaisirs Si les cartes, les dés, L'innocent trou-madame, Le billard, le damier, Le trictrac, les échecs, Les rafles et les cochonnets Ne sauraient dissiper Les chagrins de votre âme, Vous ne verrez jamais la fin de vos procès. Le Jeu & Comus Pour vous apaiser donc, belles, que faut-il faire ? Le Jeu Si mes jeux attirants... Comus Si mes morceaux friands... Le Jeu & Comus ...N'ont pas de quoi vous plaire ? La Musique Il me faut du silence. La Conversation A moi du chocolat. Chœur des Plaisirs Voyez le beau sujet pour faire tant d'éclat. Comus Déesse des discours, cette tasse en est pleine. Prenez, buvez et taisez-vous si vous pouvez.	The pair-royals and the jacks Cannot dispel Your soul's sorrows, You will never see the end of your strife. Chorus of the Pleasures If the cards, the dice, The innocent trou-madame, The billiards, the checkers, The backgammon, the chess, The pair-royals and the jacks Cannot dispel Your soul's sorrows, You will never see the end of your strife. Games & Comus Then to appease you, my beauties, what must be done? Games If my attractive games... Comus If my dainty morsels... Games & Comus ...have nothing to please you? Music I must have silence. Conversation And I chocolate. Chorus of the Pleasures See what a fuss they make about such a matter. Comus Goddess of discourse, this cup is full. Take, drink, and be silent if you can. Conversation

²¹ In Louis XIV's Versailles, the Salon of Diana, named after the goddess Diana who was the goddess of the hunt, was used for billiard games during the evening soirées. In this context, the room was also known as the "chamber of applause" due to the continuous applause from the Court ladies that immediately broke out every time Louis XIV made a brilliant stroke - this happened quite often since the Sun King was very good at billiard. The pool table was covered in red velvet and trimmed with gold fringes; it was placed at the centre of the room. The floors were covered with Persian carpets.

²² Trictrac was the game of the high society both for men and women, very fashionable during the reign of Louis XIV. The book *Le traité du Jeu de trictrac, comme on le joue aujourd'hui*, edited in 1698, is printed again in 1701 et 1715 : « l'excellence, la beauté et la sincérité qui se rencontrent dans ce jeu font que le beau monde qui a de la politesse s'y applique avec beaucoup de soin, en fait son jeu favori et le préfère aux autres jeux. En effet ce beau jeu a tant de noblesse et de distinction, que nous voyons qu'il est plus à la mode que jamais. Les dames y ont une très grande attache » in *Le Jeu du trictrac comme on le joue aujourd'hui*. Paris : Charpentier, 1715, pp. 2-3.

²³ Game of dices when, as explained by Furetière, "all the three dices have the same points".

²⁴ "Le cochonnet", literally "the piglet", is the name given to the jack, the little ball of wood, used for the game of skittles, or lawn bowling. « On appelle, Jouër au cochonnet, lors qu'on jouë à la boule en se promenant, & qu'on change à chaque coup de but. On jete une balle, ou une pierre au hazard à chaque fois, qu'on appelle cochonne, & elle sert de but aux joueurs pour ce coup-là seulement. » in Furetière. For depiction of the games involving this cochonnet, see: N°174 in *Fêtes & Divertissements à la cour*. (Château de Versailles du 29 novembre 2016 au 26 mars 2017). Paris: Gallimard, 2016, pp. 192-193.

La Conversation Volontiers. La Musique C'est bien dit, Je consens qu'elle en prenne. Mon luth, ma douce voix, Puisqu'il nous est permis, Publions ce grand Roi ! Que tout le monde admire Son grand nom, la terreur De tous les ennemis De son heureux empire, Et l'amour qu'il inspire Aux peuples qui lui sont soumis. La Conversation Ah, que ce chocolat foisonne²⁵, Il n'est sucré qu'autant qu'il faut. Et je gagerais que personne N'en saurait boire de plus chaud. La Musique Eût-il été si chaud que ta langue effilée Pour quatre mois et plus en eût été brûlée ! La Conversation Tout beau ! Tout beau ! Ceci passe le jeu. Souffrez, mélodieuse dame, Que je vous chante votre gamme, Et que je me ressente²⁶ un peu. Si parler selon vous est le plus grand des crimes. Allez chanter dans les couvents, Le silence y règne en tout temps. A qui prêchez-vous vos maximes ? Prenez-vous ces beaux courtisans pour des minimes²⁷? Apprenez qu'à la Cour on s'accommode aux gens²⁸. Quoi ? Pour un mi fa sol que la musique entonne, Il ne sera permis de parler à personne ?	Willingly. Music Well said, I agree that she should have some. My lute, my sweet voice, Since it is permitted to us, Let us proclaim this great King. Let the whole world admire His great name, the terror Of all the enemies Of his happy empire, And the love that he inspires In his subjects. Conversation Ah, this chocolate is so light; It has just the right amount of sugar. And I bet that no one Could ever drink it hotter. Music If only it were so hot that your sharp tongue Would be burned for four months and more! Conversation Not so fast! This goes beyond a joke. Allow me, melodious lady, To sing your scale to you, With a touch of resentment. If to speak, according to you, is the greatest of all crimes, Go sing in the convents; Silence reigns there all the time. To whom are you preaching your maxims? Do you take these beautiful courtiers for some minims? Know that at Court one adapts to others. What? Because music would sound a mi fa sol, People will not be allowed to talk to one another? What a fine state of affairs! Don't tell me France

²⁵ « Foisonner », that Furetière gives as « abonder » is also a culinary term which suggests an augmentation of volume, of taste and flavours: « qui gonfle au cours de la cuisson ».

²⁶ Furetière: « Ressentir [...] on dit aussi “s'en ressentir”, pour s'en vanger [venger]. Je m'en ressentirai ».

²⁷ The Minims (also called the Minimi or Order of Minims, abbreviated O.M.) are members of a Roman Catholic religious order of friars founded by Saint Francis of Paola in fifteenth-century Italy. The Order soon spread to France, Germany and Spain, and continues to exist today. The name Minims comes from the Italian word minimo, meaning the smallest or the least, and their founder would call himself “il minimo dei minimi”. Francis of Paola wanted to distinguish himself as being of even less significance than the Friars Minor founded by his patron saint, Francis of Assisi. This diatribe of Conversation is taking a deeper meaning, when knowing that Charpentier was mostly a composer of religious music and had been writing for various convents in Paris.

²⁸ This idea of mutual tolerance in social relationship and is a character of civility found already in *Il Cortegiano* (*The Book of the courtier*) by Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529) and is a constant mark of the French ideal courtier. Written by Castiglione over the course of many years, it was ultimately published in 1528 in Venice just before his death. A French edition was published in 1537 in Paris. A second translation by Gabriel Chappuys was published in Lyon in 1585. In 1690, the work of Castiglione was translated again by Abbé Jean-Baptiste Duhamel. See: Castiglione, Baldassare. *Le parfait courtisan et la dame de cour / trad. nouv. de l'italien du Cte Baltasar Castiglione...* Paris: E. Loyson, 1690. See also the work of Gaciàn: *Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia* (1647) translated into French: Gracian, Baltasar. *L'Homme de Cour, Troisième Edition (Revûë & corrigée), Traduit & Commenté. Amelot, de La Houssaie.* La Haye : Abraham Troyel, 1692.

La belle chose que voilà ! Dirait-on pas que la France Tomberait en décadence Sans son ut ré mi fa sol la ? La belle chose que voilà ! Chœur des Plaisirs Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah ! La belle chose que voilà ! La Musique Déesse un peu trop chatouilleuse, Mon procédé par vous devrait être avoué²⁹ : Je n'affectai jamais cet air de précieuse³⁰ Que pour donner matière à votre humeur railleuse Et mettre en plus beau jour votre esprit enjoué. Déesse un peu trop chatouilleuse, Mon procédé par vous devrait être avoué. La Conversation Ah, s'il en est ainsi, Musique ingénieuse, J'ai tort de vous avoir joué. La Musique Si Louis en a ri³¹, Je me tiens trop heureuse. Chœur des Plaisirs Grand Roi tout couvert de lauriers, Si pour te délasser de tes travaux guerriers, Nos flutes et nos voix te semblent impuissantes, Prends nos désirs pour des effets Et puissent sans tarder tes armes florissantes, Malgré les têtes renaissantes De cette hydre³² opposée au Bonheur de la paix Remplir tes généreux souhaits.	Would fall into decadence Without its do, re, mi, fa, so, la? What a fine state of affairs! Chorus of the Pleasures Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! What a fine state of affairs! Music Overly sensitive Goddess, You should appreciate my approach: I only affected this learned air To provide material for your raillery And to show your playful spirit in the best possible light. Overly sensitive Goddess, You should appreciate my approach. Conversation Ah, if that is so, Astute Music, I was wrong to have made fun of you. Music If Louis has laughed because of it, I shall count myself happy enough. Chorus of the Pleasures Great King, all wreathed in laurels, If to relax you from your martial labors, Our flutes and voices seem powerless, Take our wishes as deeds, And, without delay, may your flourishing arms, Despite the reborn heads Of this hydra opposed to the delights of peace, Fulfill your noble desires.

²⁹ « Avouer un procédé » : agréer un procédé, apprécier un procédé, accepter un procédé.

³⁰ The French literary style called “préciosité” (French for preciousness) arose in France in the 17th century from the lively conversations and playful word games of *les précieuses*, the witty and educated intellectual ladies who frequented the *salon* of Catherine de Vivonne, marquise de Rambouillet, who offered a Parisian refuge from the dangerous political factionalism and coarse manners of nobles during the minority of Louis XIV and the violence of the Fronde (France civil war). Molière satirized the Précieuses in his comedy *Les Précieuses ridicules* in 1659. The main character of *La comtesse d'Escarbagnas* is also a précieuse and in 1672 Charpentier wrote music (H. 494) for the performance of the play in front of the king. Philippe Quinault's career was linked with Précieuses when it began at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1653. There is a possibility that this is a small attack against the librettist of Lully, which would parallel the « Utmiutsol » before.

³¹ This simple line indicates that the piece was intended to be performed in front of the king.

³² This “hydre” is likely here to point at the coalition of the countries in war with France. But as it was customary to allegory to represent heresy under the shape of a multiple headed snake: a hydra, it could also be the countries which followed the reformed religion (Protestant).

LA PIERRE PHILOSOPHALE (H501)

MUSIC BY MARC-ANTOINE CHARPENTIER

TEXT BY THOMAS CORNEILLE AND JEAN DONNEAU DE VISÉ

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY GILBERT R. BLIN

While created at the Comédie-Française on 23 February 1681, *La Pierre Philosophale* was not printed. Fortunately, the « livre de sujet », a kind of very detailed synopsis tells us the essential components of this « comédie mêlée de spectacles ». See : [Corneille, Thomas and Donneau de Visé, Jean]. *La Pierre Philosophale, comédie mêlée de spectacle...* Paris: C. Blageart, 1681. The following synopsis is made from this unique testimony while the sung text of the last intermède of *La Pierre Philosophale* is copied from the manuscript of Charpentier. See: *Meslanges autographes* in *Œuvres complètes de Charpentier*, Vol. 18. Paris: Minkoff, 2000.

LA PIERRE PHILOSOPHALE

Synopsis

The Philosopher's stone

Mr. Maugis, an adept of alchemy, is nearly bankrupt due to his search for the philosopher's stone: the « stone » able to transform base metal into gold. The Marquis, who loves Maugis' daughter but cannot gain his permission to wed her, pretends to support the father's magical obsessions by proposing him to be initiated into the mysteries of the Rose-Croix, the mystical order. Maugis, excited to belong to a secret society of Cabbalists, has to undergo a series of initiation tests, each more frightening than the last.

At the end of Act IV, Mr. Maugis believes he is finally introduced to the elemental spirits and close to discover a treasure: a gnomide and a gnome, spirits of Earth; a mermaid and a merman, spirits of Water; two salamanders, spirits of Fire; and a « sylphide » and a sylph, spirits of Air. In fact the Marquis (*Chanson du Silphe parlant à sa maîtresse*) and his accomplices are fooling the gullible man.

Eager to complete his initiation by choosing a mate among these spirits, the greedy « bourgeois » gives his preference to the gnomide, knowing she is the guardian of the subsurface richness, but expresses « grief at finding her so little ». The spirits remedy this and the gnomide, after returning for a moment to earth, the element of her birth comes back having grown so much that the spirits must stop her growth by a comic « That's enough, that's enough ».

Ultimately, he agrees to the marriage of his daughter with her suitor, but only because he believes the marquis to be a true spirit of air.

LA PIERRE PHILOSOPHALE

Act IV, Divertissement: text and translation

La Pierre Philosophale Acte IV, Divertissement Chœur des Quatre Éléments Les Sages, par un choix heureux, Aujourd'hui, nous couvrent de gloire. Chantons, célébrons la victoire Que l'Amour remporte sur eux. Vous, sur qui de cet heureux choix Vient de tomber la préférence, Joignez les charmes de la danse Au concert que forment nos voix. La petite Gnomide Ce bel âge Nous engage A n'aimer que les plaisirs. Est-ce vivre Que de ne pas suivre Le penchant de nos tendres désirs ? Sans tendresse Tout nous blesse, Jamais presque de beaux ans. Quand on aime, Ce n'est pas de même L'Amour donne un éternel printemps. Chanson du Silphe parlant à sa maîtresse [le Marquis] Je suis d'un élément léger ; Mais avec tant d'appas c'est en toute assurance Que vous pouvez vous engager. L'Amour qui sous vos lois se plaît à me ranger, Ne vous répond que trop de ma persévérance. Duo pour le Feu et l'Eau Le spectacle est assez beau De nous voir unis ensemble. On le trouvera nouveau ; Mais il me semble Que le feu peut souffrir l'eau, Lorsque l'amour les assemble. Chœur des Quatre Éléments Les Sages, par un choix heureux, Aujourd'hui, nous couvrent de gloire. Chantons, célébrons la victoire Que l'Amour remporte sur eux. Croissez, Gnomide, croissez, Il faut satisfaire un sage. Ses vœux vous sont adressés. Croissez, Gnomide, croissez Hâtez vous, paraissez. Quel éclat ! Que sur terre elle aura d'avantage ! Auprès de cette taille, auprès de ce visage, On verra peu d'objets qui ne soient effacés. C'est assez... C'est assez !	The Philosopher's Stone Act IV, Divertissement Chorus of the Four Elements The Wise Men, by a happy choice, Today cover us with glory. Let us sing, let us celebrate the victory That Love wins over them. You, upon whom this happy choice Has just fallen, Join the charms of the Dance To the Concert formed by our voices. The little Gnome girl This young age Commits us To love only the pleasures. Is it living Not to follow The inclinations of our tender desires? Without tenderness, Everything hurts, Years are rarely beautiful. When we love, This is not the same; Love gives an eternal Spring. Song of the Sylph speaking to his mistress [le Marquis] I'm from a light Element. But having so many charms, you may confidently Engage with me. Love, who is pleased to place me under your Laws, Fully vouches for my perseverance. Duet for Fire and Water It is a remarkable spectacle To see us united together. One may find it novel, But it seems to me That fire can suffer water, When Love joins them together. Chorus of the Four Elements The Wise Men, by a happy choice, Today cover us with glory. Let us sing, let us celebrate the victory That Love wins over them. Grow up, Gnome girl, grow up, One must satisfy a Wise Man. His vows are addressed to you, Grow up, Gnome girl, grow up. Make haste, appear. What brilliance! On earth, she will have every advantage! Next to this height, next to this face, We will see few objects that are not eclipsed. That's enough... that's enough!

LA COURONNE DE FLEURS (H486)

MUSIC BY MARC-ANTOINE CHARPENTIER

TEXT AFTER MOLIÈRE, ATTRIBUTED TO JEAN BIGOT DE PALAPRAT

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY GILBERT R. BLIN

This French libretto of *La Couronne de Fleurs* is copied from the original text of Charpentier's autograph manuscript (*Meslanges autographes* in *Œuvres complètes de Charpentier*, Vol. 7. Paris: Minkoff, 1996).

The librettist of *La Couronne de Fleurs* has been using some sections of the text written by Molière for the first performances of his last play, *Le Malade Imaginaire* in 1673. The libretto of Molière for the Prologue of *Le Malade Imaginaire* has been therefore used as inspiration to review capitalization of words, punctuation, lineation and stage directions. See: *Le Malade Imaginaire Comédie, meslée de Musique, & de Dance. Représentée sur le Theatre du Palais Royal. par le feu Molière. Sur la Copie.* Paris: Christophe Ballard, seul imprimeur du Roy pour la Musique, rue S. Jean de Beauvais, ou Mont Parnasse. L'An 1673.

In addition, the spellings used by Charpentier have been modified with reference to those employed in modern editions of Molière plays.

La Couronne de Fleurs **Synopsis**

The Crown of Flowers

A Grove

First Scene

Flore, the goddess of flowers, brings back spring after a terrible winter. She invites the French shepherdesses and shepherds to return to the grove, not so long since a battlefield. To celebrate the peace that Louis XIV has just given them, the goddess announces a poetry contest: to whomever most eloquently sings about the recent deeds of the king, Flore promises she will bestow a crown of flowers.

Second Scene

In anticipation of the contest, all call for Nature to be silent: birds, winds and waters should listen to their royal songs.

The poetic contest begins, and the shepherdesses and shepherds try to invent the most beautiful poem praising the king. Amaranthe compares Louis's warlike power to that of a devastating torrent flooding the countryside. Forestan speaks of Louis at the head of his army as a terrifying bolt of lightning. Hyacinthe contrasts Louis with the fabled heroes of ancient Greece, who are nothing compared with the living monarch. Mirtil asserts that future generations will have great difficulty believing the least of Louis's exploits, as they will have nothing comparable in their own day.

Third Scene

Pan, the god of shepherds, appears to call a halt to the contest, as Louis's exploits are too great a subject for pastoral voices. The shepherds obey, but they express their regrets at being unable to obtain the coveted crown of flowers. Flore decides to award each of the contestants a flower from the crown. Gods and shepherds wish that as Louis is the master of the world, he may also become the master of time and live a hundred years to see a hundred springs.

LA COURONNE DE FLEURS

Libretto and translation

LA COURONNE DE FLEURS <i>PASTORALE</i> PERSONNAGES La Déesse Flore Le Dieu Pan Rosélie, Amaranthe, Hyacinthe, Bergères Forestan, Sylvandre, Mirtil, Bergers Troupe de Bergères et de Bergers Suite du Dieu Pan (Satyres, jouant des flûtes) Deux Zéphirs dansants <i>La scène est dans un bocage.</i> Scène Première <i>Flore, Deux Zéphirs.</i> Flore Renaissiez, paraissez, Tendres fleurs sur l'herbette, Flore le souhaite. Les frimas retirés Dans leur sombre retraite, Souffrent que le printemps Rajeunisse nos champs. Vos couleurs, belles fleurs, Ne seront plus ternies le long des prairies, Et les sources de sang que la Paix a taries Ne sont plus en état De souiller votre éclat. Bergères et Bergers, accourez à ma voix, Revenez sans peur dans ce bois. LOUIS en a banni les funestes alarmes Que les cris des mourants et le fracas des armes Y faisaient régner autrefois. Si la gloire a pour vous des charmes Revenez sans peur dans ce bois. A qui chantera mieux les glorieux exploits Du fameux Conquérant qui met fin à nos larmes, Ma main destine les honneurs De cette Couronne de Fleurs. <i>Entrée de Ballet. Toute la Troupe des Bergers et des Bergères va se placer en cadence autour de Flore.</i> Scène Seconde <i>Flore, Rosélie, Amaranthe, Hyacinthe, Sylvandre, Forestan, Mirtil, Bergères et Bergers.</i>	THE CROWN OF FLOWERS <i>PASTORAL</i> CHARACTERS The Goddess Flore The God Pan Rosélie, Amaranthe, Hyacinthe, Shepherdesses Forestan, Sylvandre, Mirtil, Shepherds Company of Shepherdesses and Shepherds Retinue of the God Pan (Satyrs playing flutes) Two dancing Zephyrs <i>The action takes place in a grove.</i> First Scene <i>Flore, Two Zephyrs.</i> Flore Be reborn, appear, Tender flowers on the grass, Flore wishes it. The cold weather, having withdrawn To its somber refuge, Allows the spring To rejuvenate our fields. Your colors, lovely flowers, Will no longer be tarnished in the meadows, And the sources of blood now dried up by the Peace Are no longer able To sully your brilliance. Shepherdesses and Shepherds hasten to my voice, Return without fear to this grove. LOUIS has banished the dire sounds That the cries of the dying and the clash of arms Caused to reign here before. If glory attracts you with its charms Do not fear returning to this grove. To whomever best sings the glorious deeds Of the famous Conqueror who put an end to our tears, My hand will bestow the honors Of this Crown of Flowers. <i>Ballet Entrée. The whole Company of Shepherds and Shepherdesses move to the music and group themselves around Flore.</i> Second Scene <i>Flore, Rosélie, Amaranthe, Hyacinthe, Sylvandre, Forestan, Mirtil, Shepherdesses and Shepherds.</i>

Rosélie Puisque Flore en ces lieux nous convie À chanter de LOUIS les exploits triomphants, Rossignols, écoutez les plus beaux de nos chants Et mourez de plaisir et d'envie. Bergères Puisque Flore en ces lieux nous convie À chanter de LOUIS les exploits triomphants, Rossignols, écoutez les plus beaux de nos chants Et mourez de plaisir et d'envie. Sylvandre Trop indiscrets Zéphirs, Retenez vos soupirs Tandis que de LOUIS nous chanterons la gloire. Bergers Trop indiscrets Zéphirs, Retenez vos soupirs Tandis que de LOUIS nous chanterons la gloire. Un Berger Et vous, fontaines et ruisseaux, Gardez-vous de mêler à nos chants de victoire Le bruit importun de vos eaux. Bergers Et vous, fontaines et ruisseaux, Gardez-vous de mêler à nos chants de victoire Le bruit importun de vos eaux. <i>Les Violons jouent un Air pour animer les Bergers au combat, tandis que Flore comme juge va se placer au pied de l'arbre avec deux Zéphirs, et que le reste comme Spectateurs va occuper les deux coins du Théâtre.</i> Amaranthe Lorsqu'un torrent enflé par un soudain orage Précipite du haut des monts Ses flots bruyants dans les vallons, Rien ne s'oppose à son passage Qu'il ne ravage. Il ébranle, il renverse, il entraîne les Bois. Pasteurs et Troupeaux à la fois Tout fuit, mais vainement, la fureur qui le guide. Tel, et plus fier et plus rapide, Marche LOUIS, dans ses Exploits. Tous Tel, et plus fier et plus rapide, Marche LOUIS, dans ses Exploits. <i>Ballet. Les Bergers et Bergères de son côté dansent autour d'elle sur une Ritornelle, pour exprimer leurs applaudissements.</i> Forestan La foudre menaçant qui perce avec fureur L'affreuse obscurité de la nue enflammée, Fait, d'épouvante et d'horreur Trembler le plus ferme cœur: Mais à la tête d'une armée LOUIS jette plus de terreur. Tous Mais à la tête d'une armée LOUIS jette plus de terreur.	Rosélie Since Flore invites us to this place To sing the triumphant exploits of LOUIS, Nightingales, listen to the loveliest of our songs And die of pleasure and desire. Shepherdesses Since Flore invites us to this place To sing the triumphant exploits of LOUIS, Nightingales, listen to the loveliest of our songs And die of pleasure and desire. Sylvandre Zephyrs, so indiscreet, Suppress your sighs While we sing of LOUIS's glory. Shepherds Zephyrs, so indiscreet, Suppress your sighs While we sing of LOUIS's glory. A Shepherd And you, fountains and streams, Refrain from mixing with our songs of victory The unwelcome noise of your waters. Shepherds And you, fountains and streams, Refrain from mixing with our songs of victory The unwelcome noise of your waters. <i>The Violins play an Air to inspire the Shepherds to the contest, while Flore as judge takes her place under the [May] tree along with two Zephyrs, and the others, as Audience, go to both sides of the Stage.</i> Amaranthe When a torrent swollen by a sudden storm Rushes from the mountaintops Into the valleys with flooding waters, Nothing can stand in the path Of the ravaging torrent. It shakes, it topples, it sweeps away the Woods. Shepherds and Flocks together, All flee its fury in vain. Thus, yet even more proudly and swiftly, Marches LOUIS on his exploits. All Thus, yet even more proudly and swiftly, Marches LOUIS on his exploits. <i>Ballet. The Shepherds and Shepherdesses from her side dance around her to a Ritornelle, to express their acclaim.</i> Forestan The menacing lightning that pierces with fury The dreadful darkness of the flaming clouds, Causes even the most courageous heart To tremble with terror and horror: But, at the head of an army, LOUIS strikes even greater terror. All But, at the head of an army, LOUIS strikes even greater terror.

<i>Ballet. Les Bergers et les Bergères de son côté font encore la même chose.</i> Hyacinthe Des Héros fabuleux que la Grèce a chantés, Par un brillant amas d'illustres vérités Nous voyons la gloire effacée. Et tous ces fameux demi-dieux Que vante l'Histoire passée Ne sont point à notre pensée Ce que LOUIS est à nos yeux. Tous Et tous ces fameux demi-dieux Que vante l'Histoire passée Ne sont point à notre pensée Ce que LOUIS est à nos yeux. <i>Ballet. Les Bergers et les Bergères de son côté font encore la même chose.</i> Mirtil LOUIS fait à nos temps, par ses faits inouïs, Croire les plus beaux faits que nous chante l'histoire Des Siècles évanouis. Mais nos Neveux dans leur gloire, N'auront rien qui fasse croire Les moindres exploits de LOUIS. Tous Mais nos Neveux dans leur gloire, N'auront rien qui fasse croire Les moindres exploits de LOUIS. <i>Ballet. Les Bergers et les Bergères de son côté font encore de même, après quoi les deux partis se mêlent.</i>	<i>Ballet. The Shepherds and Shepherdesses from his side also dance.</i> Hyacinthe And those fabled heroes of ancient Greece, By a multitude of [his] illustrious deeds We see their glory now obscured. And all those famous demigods Of which History boasts Are as nothing, in our minds, Compared to LOUIS in our eyes. All And all those famous demigods Of which History boasts Are as nothing, in our minds, Compared to LOUIS in our eyes. <i>Ballet. The Shepherds and Shepherdesses from her side dance again.</i> Mirtil LOUIS, by his incredible deeds, Allows us now to believe in the fabled deeds Of the vanished Centuries. But our Descendants, however glorious, Will have nothing to allow them to grasp Even the least of LOUIS's feats. All But our Descendants, however glorious, Will have nothing to allow them to grasp Even the least of LOUIS's feats. <i>Ballet. The Shepherds and Shepherdesses from his side dance as did the others, and then the two parties mingle together.</i>
Scène Troisième <i>Pan, Satyres, jouant des flûtes, Flore et les Susdits.</i> Pan Quittez, quittez Bergers, ce dessein téméraire, Hé, que voulez-vous faire? Chanter sur vos chalumeaux, Ce qu'Apollon sur sa Lyre Avec ses chants les plus beaux, N'entreprendrait pas de dire? C'est donner trop d'Essor au feu qui vous inspire, C'est voler vers les Cieux sur des ailes de Cire, Pour tomber dans le fonds des Eaux. Pour chanter de LOUIS, l'intrépide courage, Il n'est point d'assez docte voix, Point de mots assez grands pour en tracer l'Image; Le silence est le langage Qui doit louer ses exploits. Tous Pour chanter de LOUIS, l'intrépide courage, Il n'est point d'assez docte voix, Point de mots assez grands pour en tracer l'Image;	Third Scene <i>Pan, Satyrs playing flutes, Flore, and the aforementioned.</i> Pan Give up, Shepherds, give up this bold plan. Eh! What do you intend to do? To sing with your pipes That which Apollon on his Lyre, With his loveliest songs, Would not undertake to tell? It is giving too much Elevation to the passion that inspires you, It is like flying toward the Skies with Wax wings, Only to fall to the bottom of the Waters. To sing of LOUIS's intrepid courage, There is no voice knowledgeable enough, No words grand enough to sketch the picture of it; Silence is the language That must praise his exploits. All To sing of LOUIS's intrepid courage, There is no voice knowledgeable enough, No words grand enough to sketch the picture of it;

Le silence est le langage Qui doit louer ses exploits. Rosélie Nous nous taisons: Pan nous l'ordonne. Au grand Dieu des bergers notre troupe abandonne L'intérêt le plus cher de ses justes désirs. Jugez, Reine des fleurs, quels sont nos déplaisirs: Cette soumission nous ôte une Couronne Pour qui chacun de nous a fait mille soupirs. Flore Bien que, pour étaler les Vertus immortelles D'un Roi qui sous ses pieds voit l'univers soumis, La force manque à vos esprits, Vous méritez, Bergers, que de ces fleurs nouvelles Je partage entre vous le prix: Dans les choses grandes et belles Il suffit d'avoir entrepris. Flore et Pan Dans les choses grandes et belles Il suffit d'avoir entrepris. <i>Ballet. Les deux Zéphirs dansent avec la Couronne à la main, dont ils donnent ensuite les Fleurs aux Bergères et aux Bergers.</i> Rosélie et Amaranthe Belles fleurs, tous les ans Nous vous voyons paraître Dans nos jardins et dans nos champs, Quand le printemps vous fait renaître. Tous Belles fleurs, tous les ans Nous vous voyons paraître Dans nos jardins et dans nos champs, Quand le printemps vous fait renaître. Rosélie et Amaranthe Puisse le grand LOUIS, l'Honneur des conquérants, Comme il est du monde le Maître Devenir le Maître du temps Et voir à cent hivers succéder le printemps. Tous Puisse le grand LOUIS, l'Honneur des conquérants, Comme il est du monde le Maître Devenir le Maître du temps Et voir à cent hivers succéder le printemps. <i>Dernière et Grande Entrée de Ballet. Zéphirs, Bergers, et Bergères tous se mêlent, et il se fait entre eux des jeux de danse.</i> Fin.	Silence is the language That must praise his exploits. Rosélie We silence ourselves: Pan commands us. For the great God of the shepherds our troupe forsakes The dearest pursuit of our rightful wishes. Consider, Queen of flowers, our unhappiness. This submission deprives us of a Crown For which each of us has sighed a thousand times. Flore Although, to spread the immortal Virtues Of a King who sees the subdued universe at his feet, Your spirits lack the strength, You deserve, Shepherds, that from these new flowers I share the prize among you. For in noble and beautiful things It is enough to have tried. Flore and Pan For in noble and beautiful things It is enough to have tried. <i>Ballet. The two Zephyrs dance with the Crown in their hands, and then give the Flowers to the Shepherdesses and the Shepherds.</i> Rosélie and Amaranthe Lovely flowers, every year we see you appear In our gardens and in our fields When spring makes you live anew. All Lovely flowers, every year we see you appear In our gardens and in our fields When spring makes you live anew. Rosélie and Amaranthe May the great LOUIS, the Honor of conquerors, As he is the Master of the world Become the Master of time And see a hundred winters succeeded by spring. All May the great LOUIS, the Honor of conquerors, As he is the Master of the world Become the Master of time And see a hundred winters succeeded by spring. <i>Last and Great Ballet Entrée. Zephyrs, Shepherds, and Shepherdesses all join together in dancing.</i> The End.

ACTÉON (H481)

MUSIC BY MARC-ANTOINE CHARPENTIER

TEXT ATTRIBUTED TO THOMAS CORNEILLE

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY GILBERT R. BLIN

The score of Marc-Antoine Charpentier was never published before the XXth century; the manuscript kept at Bibliothèque nationale in Paris is the only source from the time. The modern facsimile edition was therefore used for establishing the transcription of the libretto and its translations. See: *Meslanges autographes* in *Œuvres complètes de Charpentier*, Vol. 21. Paris: Minkoff, 2002.

The text written in the score includes spelling mistakes. These and the lack of punctuation make clear that the text must have been dictated to Charpentier; mistakes in particular are due to similarity of sound in French language. Apart from some rare exception, if one reads the text loud, the verses are very clear and fluid. The text has been transcribed into regular French. Uppercase letters, especially for the first words of verses and initial letters of important words, have been added following the accepted conventions of the period for lyric poetry. But in order to improve the understanding, spelling has been updated and punctuation reestablished.

The English translation proposed is a rather free adaptation in English of the libretto. This translation might especially be helpful when the order of the words is very different in French and English.

On the first page of the manuscript score there is no mention of a writer and the origin of these verses is difficult to trace. The quality of the poetry indicates an author used to the concise style of French opera, established by Quinault. But, to the difference of this writer's librettos for Lully, there are little indications for stage movements or elaborate depictions of the sets in *Actéon*. To balance this lack of material, information which was, during a Quinault/Lully's opera performance, visible on stage, or at least in the printed libretto at the disposal of the audience, the dialogues of *Actéon* present an abundance of descriptions of everything visual: the spaces, the actions, the characters. This fact leads me to think that this Pastoral may have been written for a concert performance, where all meaning had to be delivered by sound, and not designed for the operatic stage, where visual elements had the power to complement the poetry.

Thomas Corneille knew very well the story of Actaeon as he published, in 1669, a translation in verse of some of the books of Ovide's *Metamorphoses*³³. The style, used by the poet to translate the tale of Actaeon, and especially some similarities in vocabulary, are too close to the libretto of the Pastoral of Charpentier to be only a matter of chance.

³³ The edition accessible on the site of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (www.gallica.bnf.fr) is *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide, Mises en vers françois par T. Corneille de l'Academie Française*. Suivant la copie de Paris, à Liège, chez J.-F. Broncart, 1698. For the story of Actaeon, see Tome 1, pp. 151-160.

ACTÉON

Synopsis

Actaeon

First Scene

In the Gargaphie valley in Greece, the Theban prince Actaeon and a group of hunters celebrate the exhilarating delights of their pursuit on a sunny morning. A bear has been spotted, and Actaeon prays to Diana, the goddess of the hunt, to favor them with success in catching it. The murmuring of the trembling woods is interpreted as a good omen by the hunters, and the party runs after its prey.

Second Scene

Meanwhile, Diana and her companions are bathing in a nearby spring to relax after their hunt. The bath of the chaste goddess is graced by the singing and dancing of her virginal nymphs. Daphne and Hyale warn potential lovers to stay away, and Arethusa reminds all present that one should scorn Love to avoid sadness.

Third Scene

At noon, a weary Actaeon takes leave of his party to find a quiet glade to rest. The peaceful valley awakens his sensuality, yet he soon claims his true passion is for freedom and wishes to reject Love forever. Encountering the immortal bathers, Actaeon is attracted by the forbidden and attempts to hide where he can spy on them, but is soon discovered. Diana is outraged that a mortal has seen her in the nude. The goddess throws water on the hunter with a curse: may he tell his story if he can!

Fourth Scene

Actaeon is left alone to face his frightful destiny. His fear is matched only by his desperation as he sees his body being covered with fur. He is powerless against his inexorable metamorphosis into a stag and, with what is left of his human voice, begs for death.

Fifth Scene

Later, the hunters call for Actaeon, eager for him to join back their party and admire the magnificent stag the dogs have brought down.

Sixth Scene

To the hunters awed dismay, Juno descends from the heavens, and the goddess reveals that the dead stag is Actaeon, torn to pieces by his own hounds. Jove's wife explains that she engineered this horrible death to get revenge on Europa, Actaeon's Theban ancestor, for having consorted with Jove. The hunters mourn the tragic death of their young prince.

ACTÉON

Libretto and translation

ACTÉON <i>Pastorale en Musique</i> Personnages Actéon Diane Junon Aréthuse, Daphné, Hyalé, Nymphes de Diane Chœur de Chasseurs Chœur de Nymphes de Diane <i>La scène est dans la vallée de Gargaphie.</i> Scène Première. <i>Actéon, Chœur de Chasseurs.</i> Chœur de Chasseurs Allons, marchons, courons, hâtons nos pas ! Que l'ardeur du soleil qui brûle nos campagnes, Que le pénible accès des plus hautes montagnes, Dans un dessein si beau ne nous retardent pas. Actéon Déesse par qui je respire, Aimable Reine des forêts, L'ours que nous poursuivons désole ton empire, Et c'est pour l'immoler à tes divins attraits Que la chasse ici nous attire. Conduis nos pas, guide nos traits, Déesse par qui je respire, Aimable Reine des forêts. Deux Chasseurs Vos vœux sont exaucés, et par le doux murmure Qui vient de sortir de ce bois, le ciel vous en assure. Suivons ce bon augure ! Chœur de Chasseurs Allons, marchons, courons... Scène Deuxième. <i>Diane, Aréthuse, Daphné, Hyalé, Chœur de Nymphes de Diane.</i> Diane Nymphes, retirons-nous dans ce charmant bocage ! Le cristal de ces pures eaux, Le doux chant des petits oiseaux, Le frais et l'ombrage, sous ce vert feuillage, Nous feront oublier nos pénibles travaux. Ce ruisseau, loin du bruit du monde, Nous offre son onde. Déllassons-nous dans ses flots argentés, Nul mortel n'oserait entreprendre De nous y surprendre. Ne craignons point d'y mirer nos beautés !	ACTÉON <i>Pastoral in Music</i> Characters Actéon (Actaeon) Diane (Diana) Junon (Juno) Aréthuse (Arethusa), Daphné (Daphne), Hyalé (Hyale), Nymphs of Diane Chorus of Hunters Chorus of Nymphs of Diane <i>The action takes place in the valley of Gargaphie.</i> First Scene. <i>Actéon, Chorus of Hunters.</i> Chorus of Hunters Let us go, march, run, hasten our steps. Let not the sun's ardor that burns our countryside, Let not the difficult path to the highest mountains, Delay us in our fine plan. Actéon Goddess for whom I breathe, Gentle Queen of the forests, We chase the bear that ruins your empire, And it is to sacrifice it to your divine charms That the hunt draws us here. Direct our steps, guide our darts, Goddess for whom I breathe, Gentle Queen of the forests. Two Huntsmen Your wishes are granted, and in a soft murmur Emanating from this wood, the heavens assure you. Let us follow this good omen ! Chorus of Hunters Let us go, march, run... Second Scene. <i>Diane, Aréthuse, Daphné, Hyalé, Chorus of Nymphs of Diane.</i> Diane Nymphs, let us retire to this charming grove ! The crystal of these pure waters, The sweet song of little birds, The cool and the shade under these green boughs, Will make us forget our hard work. This stream, far from the noise of the world, Offers us its waves. Let us relax in its silver tide, No mortal would dare to attempt To surprise us here. Let us not be at all afraid to admire the reflection of our beauty.

Chœur de Nymphes Charmante fontaine, Que votre sort est doux ! Notre aimable Reine Se confie à vous. D'un tel avantage L'Idaspe et le Tage Doivent être jaloux. Daphné et Hyalé Loin de ces lieux, tout cœur profane ! Amants, fuyez ce beau séjour ! Vos soupirs, et le nom d'Amour, Troubleraient le bain de Diane. Nos cœurs, en paix dans ces retraites, Goûtent de vrais contentements. Gardez-vous, importuns amants, D'en troubler les douceurs parfaites. Aréthuse Ah ! Qu'on évite de langueurs Lors qu'on ne ressent point les flammes Que l'Amour, ce tyran des cœurs, Allume dans les faibles âmes ! Ah ! Qu'on évite de langueurs Quand on méprise ses ardeurs. Chœur de Nymphes Ah ! Qu'on évite de langueurs Quand on méprise ses ardeurs. Aréthuse Les biens qu'il nous promet N'en ont que l'apparence. Ne laissons point flatter Par ses appâts trompeurs Notre trop crédule espérance. Ah ! Qu'on évite de langueurs Quand on méprise ses ardeurs. Chœur de Nymphes Ah ! Qu'on évite de langueurs Quand on méprise ses ardeurs. Aréthuse Pour nous attirer dans ses chaînes Il couvre ses pièges de fleurs, Nymphes, armez vous de rigueurs Et vous rendrez ses ruses vaines. Ah ! Qu'on évite de langueurs Lorsqu'on ne ressent point les flammes Que l'Amour, ce tyran des cœurs, Allume dans les faibles âmes. Ah ! Qu'on évite de langueurs Quand on méprise ses ardeurs. Chœur de Nymphes Ah ! Qu'on évite de langueurs Quand on méprise ses ardeurs. Scène Troisième. <i>Actéon, Diane, Aréthuse, Daphné, Hyalé, Chœur de Nymphes de Diane.</i> Actéon	Chorus of Nymphs Charming fountain, How sweet is your fate ! Our beloved queen Confides in you. Of such an advantage The rivers Hydaspes and Tagus Must surely be jealous. Daphné and Hyalé Stay far from this place, all worldly hearts ! Lovers, shun this beautiful sojourn, Your sighs and the name of Love Would mar Diane's bathing. Our hearts, in the peace of this retreat, Taste true happiness. Beware, unwelcome lovers : Do not disturb their perfect sweetness. Aréthuse Ah! How much languor one avoids When one succeeds in escaping the flames That Love, tyrant of hearts, Lights in weak souls ! Ah! How much languor one avoids When one despises his fires ! Chorus of Nymphs Ah! How much languor one avoids When one despises his fires ! Aréthuse The good things he promises us Only look that way. Let us not allow, His deceitful wiles, To flatter our credulous hope. Ah! How much languor one avoids When one despises his fires ! Chorus of Nymphs Ah! How much languor one avoids When one despises his fires ! Aréthuse To lure us into his chains He covers his traps with flowers. Nymphs, arm yourselves with rigor And you will render his ruses futile. Ah! How much languor one avoids When one succeeds in escaping the flames That Love, tyrant of hearts, Lights in weak souls ! Ah! How much languor one avoids When one despises his fires ! Chorus of Nymphs Ah! How much languor one avoids When one despises his fires ! Third Scene. <i>Actéon, Diane, Aréthuse, Daphné, Hyalé, Chorus of Nymphs of Diane.</i> Actéon Friends, the shortened shadows

Amis, les ombres raccourcies Marquent sur nos plaines fleuries Que le soleil a fait la moitié de son tour. Le travail m'a rendu le repos nécessaire ; Laissez moi seul rêver dans ce lieu solitaire Et ne me revoyez que sur la fin du jour. Agréable vallon, paisible solitude, Qu'avec plaisir, sous vos cyprès Un amant respirant le frais Vous ferait le récit de son inquiétude ; Mais ne craignez de moi ni plaintes ni regrets. Je ne connais l'Amour que par la Renommée Et tout ce qu'elle en dit me le rend odieux ! Ah ! S'il vient m'attaquer, ce Dieu pernicieux, Il verra ses projets se tourner en fumée ! Liberté, mon cœur, liberté ! Du plaisir de la chasse, Quoi que l'Amour fasse, Sois toujours seulement tenté. Liberté, mon cœur, liberté. Mais quel objet frappe ma vue ? C'est Diane et ses sœurs, il n'en faut point douter. Approchons-nous sans bruit, cette route inconnue M'offrira quelqueendroit propre à les écouter. Diane Nymphes, dans ce buisson quel bruit viens-je d'entendre ? Actéon Ciel ! Je suis découvert. Diane Ah ! Perfide mortel, Oses-tu bien former le dessein criminel De venir ici nous surprendre. Actéon Que ferai-je, grands Dieux ? Quel conseil dois je prendre ? Fuyons, fuyons ! Diane Tu prends à fuir un inutile soin, Téméraire chasseur, et pour punir ton crime... Mon bras divin poussé du courroux qui m'anime, Aussi bien que de près te frappera de loin ! Actéon Déesse des chasseurs, écoutez ma défense. Diane Parle, voyons quelle couleur, Quelle ombre d'innocence Tu puis donner à ta fureur. Actéon Le seul hasard et mon malheur Font toute mon offense. Diane Trop indiscret chasseur, Quelle est ton insolence ! Crois-tu de ton forfait déguiser la noirceur Aux yeux de ma divine essence ? Que cette eau que ma main fait rejaillir sur toi	Show on our flowered plains That the sun has made half its turn. Work has made me in need of rest... Leave me alone to dream in this solitary place And do see me again only by the day's end. Pleasant dale, peaceful solitude, How much pleasure under your cypress trees A lover breathing in the cool Would tell you the tale of his worries. But fear neither complaint nor regret from me. I know Love only by Reputation And from all I have heard it seems odious to me ! Ah! If he attacks me, that pernicious god, He will see his schemes turn to smoke ! Freedom, my heart, freedom. By the pleasure of the hunt, Whatever love may do, Be always only tempted. Freedom, my heart, freedom. But what is surprising my sight ? It is Diane and her sisters; there can be no doubt. Let us approach silently, this secret path Will offer me a place from which to hear them. Diane Nymphs, what noise do I hear in that bush? Actéon Heavens ! I am discovered ! Chorus of Nymphs Ah! Perfidious mortal How dare you to contrive the criminal plan To come here to surprise us ? Actéon What shall I do, great Gods ? What counsel should I take? Let us flee, let us flee ! Diane You uselessly try to flee, Reckless hunter, and to punish your crime My divine arm pushed by the wrath that drives me Can strike you as well from afar as from close by ! Actéon Goddess of hunters, hear my defense. Diane Speak, let us see with what color, What shade of innocence, You can give to your lust. Actéon Only bad luck and my misfortune Are my whole offense. Diane Too indiscreet hunter, How insolent you are ! Do you hope to disguise the darkness of your crime To the eyes of my divine essence ? Let this water which my hand throws upon you Teach your kind to attack me !

Apprenne à tes pareils à s'attaquer à moi ! Chœur de Nymphes Vante-toi maintenant, profane, D'avoir surpris Diane Et ses sœurs dans le bain ! Va pour te satisfaire, Si tu le peux faire, Le conter au peuple Thébain ! Scène Quatrième. <i>Actéon seul.</i> Actéon Mon cœur autrefois intrépide, Quelle peur te saisit ? Que vois-je en ce miroir liquide ? Mon visage se ride, Un poil affreux me sert d'habit, Je n'ai presque plus rien de me forme première, Ma parole n'est plus qu'une confuse voix... Ah ! Dans l'état où je me vois, Dieux qui m'avez formé du noble sang des rois, Pour épargner ma honte Ôtez moi la lumière. <i>Plainte</i> Scène Cinquième. <i>Actéon en cerf, Chœur de Chasseurs.</i> Chœur de Chasseurs Jamais troupe de chasseurs Dans le cours d'une journée Fut-elle plus fortunée, Jamais troupe de chasseurs Reçut-elle en un jour du ciel plus de faveurs. Actéon, quittez la rêverie, Venez admirer la furie De vos chiens acharnés sur ce cerf aux abois. Quoi ! N'entendez-vous pas nos voix ? Que vous perdez, grand Prince, à rêver dans un bois, Croyez qu'à nos plaisirs vous porterez envie, Et dans tous le cours de la vie, Un spectacle si doux ne s'offre pas deux fois. Scène Sixième. <i>Junon, Actéon en cerf, Chœur de Chasseurs.</i> Junon Chasseurs, n'appellez plus qui ne vous peut entendre ! Actéon, ce héros à Thèbes adoré, Sous la peau de ce cerf, à vos yeux Déchiré et par ses chiens dévoré, Chez les morts vient de descendre. Ainsi puissent périr les mortels odieux Dont l'insolence extrême Blessera désormais, des dieux La puissance suprême. Chœur de Chasseurs Hélas, Déesse, hélas ! De quoi fut coupable Ce héros aimable	Chorus of Nymphs Boast now, heathen, Of having surprised Diane And her sisters in the bath ! Go satisfy yourself, If you can, Tell it to the Thebans ! Fourth Scene. <i>Actéon alone.</i> Actéon My once-intrepid heart, What fear seizes you ? What do I see in this liquid mirror ? My face wrinkles, An ugly fur becomes my clothing, I almost have nothing left of my original form, My speech is but a confused voice... Ah! Finding myself in this state, Gods who made me from the noble blood of kings, Spare my shame Take my life. <i>Plainte</i> Fifth Scene. <i>Actéon as a stag, Chorus of Hunters.</i> Chorus of Hunters Never a troupe of hunters In the course of one day Has been so fortunate ! Never a troupe of hunters Received in a day so much favor from the heavens. Actéon, abandon the musing, Come admire the rage Of your ferocious dogs on this stag at bay. What ! Do you not hear our voices ? You are missing so much, great prince, dreaming in a wood. Be sure that you will envy our pleasures, And in a lifetime Such a sweet sight is not offered twice. Sixth Scene. <i>Junon, Actéon as a stag, Chorus of Hunters.</i> Junon Hunters, call no more the man who cannot hear you ! Actéon, that hero adored in Thebes, Under the skin of that stag, Torn apart before your eyes and devoured by his dogs, Descends to the dead. So will odious mortals die Whose extreme insolence Will hurt, henceforth, The supreme power of the Gods. Chorus of Hunters Alas, Goddess, alas! What was the crime Of this charming hero That he merited the horror of such a cruel demise ?

Pour mériter l'horreur de si cruel trépas ? Junon Son infortune est mon ouvrage. Et Diane en vengeant l'outrage Qu'il fit à ses appas N'a que prêté sa main à ma jalouse rage. Oui, Jupiter, perfide époux, Que ta charmante Europe au ciel prenne ma place Sans craindre mes transports jaloux. Mais si jusqu'à son cœur n'arrivent pas mes coups, Actéon fut son sang et je jure à sa race Une implacable haine, un éternel courroux. <i>Elle s'envole.</i> Chœur de Chasseurs Hélas, est-il possible Qu'au printemps de ses ans ce héros invincible Ait vu trancher le cours de ses beaux jours ? Quel cœur, à ce malheur, ne serait pas sensible ? Faisons monter nos cris jusqu'au plus haut des airs. Que les rochers en retentissent, Que les flots écumants des mers, Que les Aquilons en mugissent, Qu'ils pénètrent jusqu'aux Enfers. Actéon n'est donc plus. Et sur les rives sombres, Le modèle des souverains, Le soleil naissant des Thébains, Est confondu parmi les ombres. FIN.	Junon His misfortune is my doing. And Diane, in avenging the outrage Which he did to her charms Merely loaned her hand to my jealous rage. Yes, Jupiter, perfidious husband May your charming Europa take my place in the heavens Without fear of my jealous transports. But if my blows cannot quite reach her heart, Actéon was her blood and I vow to her race An implacable hatred, an eternal wrath. <i>She flies off.</i> Chorus of Hunters Alas, is it possible That in his springtime this invincible hero Has seen the course of his beautiful days cut short ? What heart would be indifferent to this sad event ? Let us raise our cries to the highest air, May the rocks resound, May the foaming waves of the seas, May the cold winds roar, May they enter hell. Actéon is no more, And on the somber banks, The model of sovereigns, The rising sun of the Thebans, Is lost amongst the shadows. THE END.

LA DESCENTE D'ORPHÉE AUX ENFERS (H488)

MUSIC BY MARC-ANTOINE CHARPENTIER

TEXT ATTRIBUTED TO THOMAS CORNEILLE

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY GILBERT R. BLIN

The libretto of *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* has been transcribed from the manuscript of Charpentier. See: *Meslanges autographes* in *Œuvres complètes de Charpentier*, Vol. 13. Paris: Minkoff, 1999.

La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers **Synopsis**

The Descent of Orpheus to the Underworld

Act I *A Grove*

First Scene

The nymphs attend their friend Euridice during the preparations for her wedding with Orphée. Daphné, Aréthuse, and Enone invite nature to join in the rejoicing, but while picking flowers to make a wedding crown for her future husband, the bride is bitten by a poisonous snake.

Second Scene

Orphée arrives with the shepherds just in time to hear the last words of his beloved. Euridice dies, and Orphée laments with the shepherds. Overwhelmed by the sadness of his own wretched fate, Orphée decides to take his life.

Third Scene

The god of poetry and music, Apollon, suddenly appears and restrains Orphée. Apollon tells his son that Euridice can be restored to life: Orphée's songs will be able to move Pluton, god of the dead, and he will thus be able to win her back. Orphée decides to undertake the descent to the Underworld, and the nymphs and shepherds mourn the death of Euridice.

Act II *The Underworld*

First Scene

Three condemned criminals – Ixion, bound to a wheel in constant rotation; Tantale, condemned to an everlasting hunger and thirst; and Titye, whose liver is perpetually eaten by vultures – mourn their terrible fate.

Second Scene

Orphée has reached the Underworld, and the three culprits experience relief from their eternal punishments: the songs of Orphée soothe both the torturing furies and the damned.

Third Scene

Pluton and Proserpine, king and queen of the Underworld, appear. Pluton is surprised to see a mortal alive in the dominion of the dead and warns about the possible consequences of such an irregular presence. Orphée explains that Euridice is the object of his quest. Proserpine is moved, and so are the ghosts: they ask him to tell them more about

his troubles. Orphée recounts the tale of Euridice's untimely death and asks that his beloved be returned to life.

Pluton refuses, but Orphée reminds him that it is just a matter of time before Euridice will be returned to him. Proserpine and the shades intercede on Orphée's behalf; she tells him to use all the charms of his singing to affect Pluton. Orphée recalls how Pluton abducted the fair Proserpine from the earth because of his love for her. Pluton finally yields, and promises that Euridice will follow her faithful lover back to the world above. But the god makes a condition: Orphée's gaze must not fall upon his beloved before they have left the dominion of eternal night. After a moment of doubt, wondering how he will succeed at such a difficult test, Orphée begins his journey back to the light with Euridice.

Fourth Scene

The inhabitants of the Underworld regret his departure, but they derive great consolation from the sweet memory of his enchanting voice.

Act III

Not extant

LA DESCENTE D'ORPHÉE AUX ENFERS

Libretto and translation

LA DESCENTE D'ORPHÉE AUX ENFERS	THE DESCENT OF ORPHEUS TO THE UNDERWORLD
PERSONNAGES	CHARACTERS
Orphée Euridice	Orphée (Orpheus) Euridice (Eurydice)
Daphné, Enone, Aréthuse, Nymphes	Daphné (Daphne), Enone (Oenone), Aréthuse (Arethusa), Nymphs
Le Dieu Apollon La Déesse Proserpine Le Dieu Pluton	The God Apollon (Apollo) The Goddess Proserpine (Persephone) The God Pluton (Pluto)
Ixion, Tantale, Titye, criminels coupables	Ixion (Ixion), Tantale (Tantalus), Titye (Tityus), condemned criminals
Chœur de Nymphes, chantantes et dansantes Chœur de Bergers, chantants et dansants Chœur de Furies Chœur d'Ombres Heureuses Fantômes dansants	Chorus of Nymphs, singing and dancing Chorus of Shepherds, singing and dancing Chorus of Furies Chorus of Happy Shades Dancing Phantoms
Premier Acte <i>[La scène est dans un bocage.]</i>	First Act <i>[The action takes place in a grove.]</i>
Scène Première <i>Euridice, Daphné, Enone, Aréthuse, Chœur de Nymphes chantantes et dansantes.</i>	First Scene <i>Euridice, Daphné, Enone, Aréthuse, Chorus of Nymphs, singing and dancing.</i>
Daphné Inventons mille jeux divers, Pour célébrer dans ce bocage De deux parfaits époux le charmant assemblage.	Daphné Let us invent a thousand games, To celebrate, in this grove, The delightful union of two perfect spouses.
Chœur de Nymphes Inventons mille jeux divers, Pour célébrer dans ce bocage De deux parfaits époux le charmant assemblage.	Chorus of Nymphs Let us invent a thousand games, To celebrate, in this grove, The delightful union of two perfect spouses.
Daphné Que nos chansons percent les airs Et que nos pas légers en impriment l'image Sur l'herbe de ces tapis verts.	Daphné May our songs fly through the air And may our light steps leave their impression Upon these green carpets of grass.
Chœur de Nymphes Que nos chansons percent les airs Et que nos pas légers en impriment l'image Sur l'herbe de ces tapis verts.	Chorus of Nymphs May our songs fly through the air And may our light steps leave their impression Upon these green carpets of grass.
<i>Entrée des Nymphes.</i>	<i>Entrée of the Nymphs.</i>
Enone et Aréthuse Ruisseau qui dans ce beau séjour D'un printemps éternel entretient la verdure, Pour flatter Euridice et lui faire la cour Mêle à nos chants ton doux murmure. Et vous petits oiseaux,	Enone and Aréthuse Stream, which in this beautiful abode Preserves the verdure of an eternal spring, To please and pay court to Euridice Mingle your gentle murmuring with our singing. And you small birds,

Si vous voulez lui rendre hommage, Accordez votre doux ramage Au bruit charmant des eaux. <i>La Même Entrée des Nymphes se recommence comme ci-devant.</i> Euridice Compagnes fidèles, Je vois sous vos pas Mourir les appas De cent fleurs nouvelles. Ah! Ménagez mieux Ces dons précieux Des soupirs de Flore Et des pleurs de l'Aurore. Epargnez leurs attraits naissants: Je les prétends offrir au héros que j'attends. Couchons-nous sur la tendre herbe, Et mêlons à la violette Le vermeil de la rose et le blanc du jasmin. Nous en ferons une couronne Que je lui mettrai de ma main: Sa constance en est digne et l'Hymen me l'ordonne. Daphné et Chœur de Nymphes Qu'il se croira fortuné, Ce héros tendre et fidèle, De se voir couronné Par une main fidèle. Euridice Ah! Enone L'on ne goûte point de plaisirs sans douleurs, Chère compagne, et les plus fines Ne peuvent éviter la pointe des épines En se jouant avec les fleurs. Euridice Soutiens moi, chère Enone, un serpent m'a blessée, Je n'en puis plus, je tombe, et du venin pressée... Scène Seconde <i>Orphée, Troupe de Bergers chantants et dansants, et les susdites.</i> Orphée Qu'ai-je entendu? Que vois-je? Chœur de Nymphes et de Bergers O comble des malheurs! Orphée Quoi? Je perds Euridice? Euridice Orphée, adieu, je meurs. Orphée Ah! Bergers, c'en est fait, il n'est plus d'Euridice. Ses beaux yeux sont fermés pour ne jamais s'ouvrir.	If you want to pay her homage, Tune your gentle voices To the charming sound of the waters. <i>The Same Entrée of the Nymphs is repeated.</i> Euridice Faithful companions, Beneath your footsteps I see the charms perish Of a hundred new flowers. Ah! Take better care Of these precious gifts Of Flore's sighs And of Aurora's tears. Spare their nascent charms: I intend to offer them to the hero whom I await. Let us lay down on the tender grass, And mingle with the violet The red of the rose and the white of the jasmine. We shall make a crown That I will place on his brow: His constancy deserves it, and Hymen commands me to do so. Daphné and Chorus of Nymphs How fortunate he will think himself, This tender and faithful hero, To see himself crowned By a faithful hand. Euridice Ah! Enone One does not taste pleasures without pains, My dear companion, and even the most careful Cannot avoid the tips of the thorns When one plays with flowers. Euridice Support me, dear Enone, a snake has wounded me, I cannot stand, I am falling, and overcome by its venom... Second Scene <i>Orphée, a Troupe of Shepherds singing and dancing, and the aforementioned.</i> Orphée What did I hear? What do I see? Chorus of Nymphs and Shepherds O height of misfortune! Orphée What? I must lose Euridice? Euridice Orphée, farewell, I die. Orphée Ah! Shepherds, it is over, Euridice is no more. Her beautiful eyes are closed, never to open again.

Impitoyables Dieux, vous la laissez mourir: Quelle rigueur, quelle injustice! L'infortunée à peine entrain dans ses beaux jours Et vous en terminez le cours. Chœur de Nymphes et de Bergers Ah, {Bergers/Nymphes}! C'en est fait, il n'est plus d'Euridice. Ses beaux yeux sont fermés pour ne jamais s'ouvrir. Impitoyables Dieux, vous la laissez mourir, Quelle rigueur, quelle injustice! L'infortunée à peine entrain dans ses beaux jours Et vous en terminez le cours. <i>Entrée de Nymphes et de Bergers désespérés.</i> Orphée Lâche amant, pourrais-tu survivre À la Nymphé qui t'a charmé? Non! Tu ne l'as jamais aimée Si tu diffères de la suivre. Mourons! Destin jaloux qui rompt de si beaux nœuds, Malgré toi le tombeau nous rejoindra tous deux. Scène 3ème <i>Apollon et les susdits.</i> Apollon Ne tourne point, mon fils, ce fer contre toi même, C'est répandre mon sang que de verser le tien. J'entre dans ta douleur, ton tourment est le mien, Suis mes conseils plutôt que ta fureur extrême. Orphée Hélas! Un malheureux qui perd tout ce qu'il aime, Après le coup affreux d'un si funeste sort Doit-il pas se donner la mort? Apollon Mon fils, ne perds point l'espérance. Va, pour ravoïr ta Nymphé, implorer la puissance Du prince ténébreux qui règne chez les morts. Va lui faire sentir la douce violence De ces charmants accords Où je dressais tes mains dans ta plus tendre enfance. Tes chants adouciron ce tyran des Enfers. Tout barbare qu'il est, touché de ta demande, Ne doute point qu'il ne te rende La Nymphé que tu perds. <i>Apollon poursuit sa carrière.</i> Orphée Que d'un frivole espoir c'est flatter mon supplice! N'importe, essayons tout pour ravoïr Euridice. Chœur de Nymphes et de Bergers Juste sujet de pleurs, Malheureuse journée. Sont ce là les douceurs Que les nœuds d'un saint hyménée Promettaient à ces jeunes cœurs?	Pitiless Gods, you let her die: What cruelty, what injustice! The poor Nymph had barely attained her prime And you end her life's course. Chorus of Nymphs and Shepherds Ah! {Shepherds/Nymphs}, it is over, Euridice is no more. Her beautiful eyes are closed, never to open again. Pitiless Gods, you let her die: What cruelty, what injustice! The poor Nymph had barely attained her prime And you end her life's course. <i>Entrée of desperate Nymphs and Shepherds.</i> Orphée Cowardly lover, can you outlive The Nymph who charmed you? No! You never loved her If you delay in following her. Die! Jealous Fate, who breaks such beautiful bonds, Despite you, the grave will reunite the two of us. Third Scene <i>Apollon and the aforementioned.</i> Apollon Do not turn this sword against yourself, my son: It would be shedding my own blood to spill yours. I join your grief; your torment is my own. Follow my advice instead of your extreme fury. Orphée Alas! A wretch who loses everything he loves, After the terrible blow of such a fatal destiny, Should he not take his own life? Apollon My son, do not lose hope. To recover your Nymph, go, appeal to the power Of the prince of darkness who rules the dead. Go, make him feel the gentle power Of that enchanting harmony In which I trained your hands from earliest childhood. Your songs will soften this tyrant of the Underworld. Barbaric though he is, when touched by your request, Do not doubt that he will return The Nymph that you lost. <i>Apollon continues on his course [across the sky].</i> Orphée How this feeble hope is increasing my torment! No matter, let me try everything to get Euridice back. Chorus of Nymphs and Shepherds True cause of tears, Unhappy day. Are these the sweet delights That the ties of holy wedlock Promised these young hearts?

<i>Entrée de Nymphes et de Bergers désespérés.</i> Chœur de Nymphes et de Bergers Juste sujet de pleurs, Malheureuse journée. Sont ce là les douceurs Que les nœuds d'un saint hyménée Promettaient à ces jeunes cœurs? <i>Fin du Premier Acte.</i>	<i>Entrée of desperate Nymphs and Shepherds.</i> Chorus of Nymphs and Shepherds True cause of tears, Unhappy day. Are these the sweet delights That the ties of holy wedlock Promised these young hearts? <i>End of the First Act.</i>
Second Acte <i>L'Enfer</i> Scène Première <i>Tantale, Ixion, Titye, Furies.</i> Ixion, Tantale et Titye Affreux tourments, gênes cruelles, Qu'en ces lieux nous souffrons sans espoir de secours, Renaissantes douleurs, peines toujours nouvelles, Hélas, durerez vous toujours? Scène Seconde <i>Orphée, Fantômes dansant et les susdits.</i> Orphée Cessez, cessez, fameux coupables, D'emplir ces tristes lieux de cris réitérés. Les tourments que vous endurez Aux rigueurs de mon fait ne sont point comparables. Cessez, cessez, fameux coupables, D'emplir ces tristes lieux de cris réitérés. Ixion, Tantale et Titye Quelle touchante voix, quelle douce harmonie Suspend mon rigoureux tourment? Tantale Ni ces fruits, ni ces eaux ne me font plus d'envie. Ixion Je respire, ma roue arrête en ce moment. Titye De mes cruels vautours la faim semble assouvie. Ixion, Tantale et Titye Mortel, qui que tu sois, Si ton cœur est sensible à notre long martyre, Recommence à mêler au doux son de ta lyre Les tendres accents de ta voix. Orphée Je ne refuse point ce secours à vos larmes, Heureux si ces tristes accents Sur vos maux si puissants Pour attendrir Pluton, avaient les mêmes charmes. Heureux si ces tendres accents	Second Act <i>The Underworld</i> First Scene <i>Tantale, Ixion, Titye, Furies.</i> Ixion, Tantale, and Titye Terrible torments, cruel tortures, Which we suffer here with no hope of help, Ever-recurring pains, ever-new punishments, Alas, will you go on forever? Second Scene <i>Orphée, dancing Phantoms, and the aforementioned.</i> Orphée Cease, cease, you notorious criminals, To fill this mournful place with your continual cries. The torments that you suffer Cannot be compared with the harshness of my fate. Cease, cease, you notorious criminals, To fill this mournful place with your continual cries. Ixion, Tantale, and Titye What touching voice, what delightful harmony Suspends my harsh torment? Tantale No longer do these fruits nor these waters fill me with desire. Ixion I can breathe again; my wheel has suddenly stopped turning. Titye My cruel vultures' hunger seems assuaged. Ixion, Tantale, and Titye Mortal, whoever you are, If your heart is touched by our endless martyrdom, Once again combine the sweet sound of your lyre With the tender strains of your voice. Orphée I do not refuse to bring relief to your woes; I would be happy if these mournful strains, With such power to assuage your suffering, Could have the same charms in touching Pluton. I would be happy if these tender strains

Le portaient à finir les peines que je sens. Chœur des Furies et de Criminels Il n'est rien aux Enfers qui se puisse défendre De leurs charmes vainqueurs. Juges en par les pleurs Que tu nous vois rependre. Attendris nos barbares cœurs. Calme nos cuisantes douleurs. C'est ce qu'il n'appartient qu'à toi seul d'entreprendre. Que tes chants ont d'appas, qu'ils sont pleins de douceurs! Il n'est rien aux Enfers qui se puisse défendre De leurs charmes vainqueurs. <i>Entrée des Fantômes.</i> Scène Troisième <i>Pluton, Proserpine, Ombres heureuses chantantes et dansantes, et les susdits.</i> Pluton Que cherche en mon palais ce mortel téméraire? Ose-t-il en troubler le silence éternel? Prévoit-il ce qui suit son dessein criminel? Connait-il le danger qu'on court à me déplaire? Orphée Je ne viens point ici, Monarque des Enfers, Pour faire aucune violence Aux lieux soumis à ta puissance, Ni poussé du désir d'apprendre à l'univers Qu'Orphée a mis Cerbere aux fers. L'unique et cher objet pour qui mon cœur soupire, Euridice... A ce nom je sens manquer ma voix, Ma lyre, en cet instant, muette sous mes doigts, Ne peut plus exprimer mon rigoureux martyre. Soupirs, ardents soupirs, c'est à vous à le dire. Proserpine Pauvre amant, quel cœur de rocher Ne se laisserait pas toucher Aux tendres accents de ta plainte? Chœur d'Ombres Heureuses Pauvre amant, quel cœur de rocher Ne se laisserait pas toucher Aux tendres accents de ta plainte? Proserpine Donne relâche à tes soupirs, Raconte tes malheurs sans crainte, Je partage tes dé plaisirs. Chœur d'Ombres Heureuses, de Coupables et de Furies Donne relâche à tes soupirs, Raconte tes malheurs sans crainte, Nous partageons tes dé plaisirs. Orphée Euridice n'est plus, et mon feu dure encore. Cette naissante fleur ne faisait que d'éclore. Hélas! Dans son plus beau printemps Un serpent a fini sa triste destinée,	Could cause him to end my torments! Chorus of Furies and Criminals No one in the Underworld can resist Their victorious charms. Judge their power by the tears That you see us shed. Soften our inhuman hearts. Calm our burning pains. It belongs to you alone to undertake it. Your songs have such delights, how full of sweetness they are! No one in the Underworld can resist Their victorious charms. <i>Entrée of the Phantoms.</i> Third Scene <i>Pluton, Proserpine, Happy Shades singing and dancing, and the aforementioned.</i> Pluton What is this foolhardy mortal seeking in my palace? Does he dare to disturb the eternal silence? Does he see what will follow his criminal intention? Does he know the danger one runs in displeasing me? Orphée I do not come here, O Prince of the Underworld, To do any violence To the places under your power, Nor am I driven by the wish to tell the world That Orphée has put Cerberus in fetters. The sole and dear object for which my heart yearns, Euridice... At this name I sense my voice failing me, My lyre, suddenly, falling mute beneath my fingers, Can no longer express my harsh martyrdom. Sighs, ardent sighs, it is for you to speak of it. Proserpine Poor lover, what heart of stone Would not be affected By the tender strains of your plaint? Chorus of Happy Shades Poor lover, what heart of stone Would not be affected By the tender strains of your plaint? Proserpine Cease your sighing, Relate your misfortunes without fear, I share your sorrows. Chorus of Happy Shades, Condemned Ones, and Furies Cease your sighing, Relate your misfortunes without fear, We share your sorrows. Orphée Euridice is no more, yet my flame lives on. This youthful flower was only just blooming. Alas! In her most beautiful springtime A serpent ended her mournful destiny

Sur le point qu'elle allait par un doux hyménée Récompenser mes feux constants. Ah! Laisse-toi toucher à ma douleur extrême, Rends-moi, Dieu des Enfers, cette rare beauté, Le jour m'est odieux sans la Nymphé que j'aime, Redonne-lui la vie, ou m'ôte la clarté. Pluton Le destin est contraire à ce que tu souhaites. Epoux infortuné, finis tes vains regrets, Les ombres qui me sont sujettes De l'empire des morts ne retournent jamais. Proserpine Ah! Puisqu'avant le temps la rigueur de la Parque A tranché le fil de ses jours, Permits qu'elle revive, ô souverain monarque, Et qu'elle en achève le cours. Chœur d'Ombres Heureuses Permits qu'elle revive, ô souverain monarque, Et qu'elle en achève le cours. Orphée Tu ne la perdras point, hélas, pour me la rendre. Tout mortel est soumis à la loi du trépas, Et ma chère Euridice aura beau s'en défendre, Il faut que tôt ou tard elle rentre ici bas. Ah! Laisse-toi toucher à ma douleur extrême, Rends-moi, Dieu des Enfers, cette rare beauté, Le jour m'est odieux sans la Nymphé que j'aime, Redonne-lui la vie, ou m'ôte la clarté. Pluton Quel charme impérieux m'incite à la tendresse? Et me fait plaindre son tourment? Pluton, aurais-tu la faiblesse De te laisser toucher aux regrets d'un amant? Proserpine Courage, Orphée, étale ici les plus grands charmes De tes accents mélodieux. Le plus inflexible des dieux Ne retient qu'à peine ses larmes. Chœur d'Ombres Heureuses, de Coupables et de Furies Courage, Orphée, étale ici les plus grands charmes De tes accents mélodieux. Le plus inflexible des dieux Ne retient qu'à peine ses larmes. Orphée Souviens-toi du larcin que tu fis à Cérès, Souviens-toi que l'Amour, Dans les yeux pleins d'attraits De ton Épouse incomparable, Choisit le plus beau de ses traits Dont le coup su percer ton cœur impénétrable. C'est par ce coup heureux dont ton cœur fut blessé,	As she was about to reward my constant ardor With the sweet ties of marriage. Ah! Let yourself be moved by my extreme pain, Return to me, God of the Underworld, this rare beauty. The light is hateful to me without the Nymph that I love: Restore her to life, or shroud me in darkness. Pluton Destiny is opposed to all your wishes. Unfortunate husband, end your vain regrets, These shadows that are my subjects Can never return from the empire of the dead. Proserpine Ah! Since the harsh Fates Severed her life's thread before her time, Allow her to live again, O sovereign king, And let her pursue its course. Chorus of Happy Shades Allow her to live again, O sovereign king, And let her pursue its course. Orphée You will not lose her, alas, in restoring her to me. Every mortal is subject to the decree of death, And my dear Euridice will resist it in vain. Sooner or later she will have to return here. Ah! Let yourself be moved by my extreme pain, Return to me, God of the Underworld, this rare beauty. The light is hateful to me without the Nymph that I love: Restore her to life, or shroud me in darkness. Pluton What imperious spell incites me to tenderness, And makes me pity his torment? Pluton, would you have the weakness To be moved by the regrets of a lover? Proserpine Take heart, Orphée, display the greatest charms Of your melodious strains. The most unyielding of gods Can scarcely hold back his tears. Chorus of Happy Shades, Condemned Ones, and Furies Take heart, Orphée, display the greatest charms Of your melodious strains. The most unyielding of gods Can scarcely hold back his tears. Orphée Remember the theft you made from Ceres, Remember how Cupid, In the attractive eyes Of your matchless spouse, Chose his finest dart To pierce your invulnerable heart. By this happy blow, with which your heart was wounded,

C'est par ces yeux charmants d'où ce trait fut lancé Que le fidèle Orphée à tes pieds te conjure De soulager l'excès des peines qu'il endure. N'ont ils plus les appas dont tu fus enchanté? Ah! Laisse-toi toucher à ma douleur extrême, Rends-moi, Dieu des Enfers, cette rare beauté, Le jour m'est odieux sans la Nymphé que j'aime, Redonne-lui la vie, ou m'ôte la clarté. Pluton Je cède, je me rends, aimable Proserpine, Conjuré par vos yeux je n'ai plus de rigueur. Voyez ce que peut sur mon cœur Votre beauté divine. Retourne à la clarté du jour, Orphée amoureux et fidèle, Je vais tirer des mains de la Parque cruelle L'objet de ton amour. Sors triomphant de l'empire des ombres, Euridice suivra tes pas. Mais pour la regarder ne te retourne pas, Que tu ne sois sorti de ces demeures sombres. Sinon je la reprends par un second trépas. <i>Pluton et Proserpine disparaissent.</i> Orphée Amour, brûlant Amour, pourras tu te contraindre? Ah! Que le tendre Orphée à lui même est à craindre. <i>Il sort.</i> Scène 4eme <i>Ombres Heureuses, Coupables, Furies et Fantômes dansant.</i> Chœur d'Ombres Heureuses, de Coupables et de Furies Vous partez donc, Orphée? Ah! Regrets superflus! Soulagement trop court, Plaisirs trop peu durables, Hélas, vous êtes disparus Comme des songes agréables. Demeurez toujours avec nous, Charmante impression de cette voix touchante Qui nous ravit, qui nous enchante. Ixion, Tantale et Titye Tant que nous garderons un souvenir si doux Le bonheur des Enfers rendra le Ciel jaloux. Chœur d'Ombres Heureuses, de Coupables et de Furies Demeurez toujours avec nous, Charmante impression de cette voix touchante Qui nous ravit, qui nous enchante. Tant que nous garderons un souvenir si doux Le bonheur des Enfers rendra	By these charming eyes, from which this dart was fired, Faithful Orphée begs you at your feet To soften the excessive torments he suffers. Do they no longer have the charms that beguiled you? Ah! Let yourself be moved by my extreme pain, Return to me, God of the Underworld, this rare beauty. The light is hateful to me without the Nymph that I love: Restore her to life, or shroud me in darkness. Pluton I yield, I give in, lovely Proserpine. Beseeched by your eyes, I no longer feel any harshness. See what power your celestial beauty Has over my heart. Return to the brightness of daylight, Loving, faithful Orphée. I shall take back from the hands of the cruel Fates The object of your love. Leave this empire of shades triumphantly, Euridice will follow your steps. But do not turn around to look at her, Until you have quit this somber realm. Or else I will reclaim her for a second death. <i>Pluton and Proserpine disappear.</i> Orphée Love, burning Love, will you constrain yourself? Ah! How the tender Orphée must fear himself. <i>He exits.</i> Fourth Scene <i>Happy Shades, Condemned, Furies, and Dancing Phantoms.</i> Chorus of Happy Shades, Condemned Ones, and Furies You are leaving then, Orphée? Ah! Futile regrets! Relief too brief, Pleasures too fleeting, Alas, you have vanished Like pleasant dreams. Stay with us forever, Beguiling effect of this touching voice That ravishes and enchants us. Ixion, Tantale, and Titye As long as we retain so sweet a memory, The happiness of the Underworld will make the Heavens jealous. Chorus of Happy Shades, Condemned Ones, and Furies Stay with us forever, Beguiling effect of this touching voice That ravishes and enchants us. As long as we retain so sweet a memory, The happiness of the Underworld will make

le Ciel jaloux. <i>Entrée des Fantômes.</i> Chœur d'Ombres Heureuses, de Coupables et de Furies Demeurez toujours avec nous, Charmante impression de cette voix touchante Qui nous ravit, qui nous enchante. Tant que nous garderons un souvenir si doux, Le bonheur des Enfers rendra le Ciel jaloux. <i>Fin du 3^e Acte.</i> [Le Manuscrit de Charpentier s'interrompt ici.]	the Heavens jealous. <i>Entrée of the Phantoms.</i> Chorus of Happy Shades, Condemned Ones, and Furies Stay with us forever, Beguiling effect of this touching voice That ravishes and enchants us. As long as we retain so sweet a memory, The happiness of the Underworld will make the Heavens jealous. <i>End of the Second Act.</i> [The Manuscript of Charpentier ends here.]

ORPHÉE DESCENDANT AUX ENFERS (H471)

MUSIC BY MARC-ANTOINE CHARPENTIER

TEXT ATTRIBUTED TO THOMAS CORNEILLE

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY GILBERT R. BLIN

The text of *Orphée descendant aux Enfers* has been transcribed from the manuscript of Charpentier. See: *Meslanges autographes* in *Œuvres complètes de Charpentier*, Vol. 6. Paris: Minkoff, 1996.

ORPHÉE DESCENDANT AUX ENFERS

Text and translation

Orphée descendant aux Enfers	Orpheus descending to the Underworld
Récit d'Orphée sur le violon Orphée Effroyables Enfers où je conduis mes pas, Aucun de vos tourments n'égale mon supplice ! Hélas ! Ou rendez-moi mon aimable Eurydice, Ou laissez-moi descendre aux ombres du trépas. Ixion & Tantale Quelle douce harmonie a frappé mon oreille ? Et de tous mes tourments a calmé la rigueur ? D'où vient que je soupire et qu'au fond de mon cœur De mes jeunes amours la flamme se réveille ? Orphée Vos plus grands criminels, rongés par des vautours Sur leurs tristes rochers, endurent moins de peine Qu'un malheureux amant que la Mort inhumaine Sépare pour jamais de ses tendres amours. Ixion & Tantale Ne cherchons plus d'où vient cette tendresse Qui remplit notre cœur d'une douce allégresse ! L'Amour, dont le divin flambeau Éclaire cet amant dans la nuit du tombeau, Nous a frappés d'un rayon de sa flamme. Orphée, Ixion & Tantale Hélas ! Rien n'est égal au bonheur des amants : Pour peu que l'Amour touche une âme, Elle ne ressent point tous les autres tourments.	Récit d'Orphée sur le violon Orphée Frightful underworld where I guide my steps, None of your torments can equal my punishment. Alas! Either give me back my beloved Eurydice, Or allow me to descend into the shadows of death. Ixion & Tantale What sweet harmony strikes my ear And soothes all rigors of my torments? From whence, so that I sigh and, in the depths of my heart, The flame of my youthful love revives? Orphée Your greatest criminals, gnawed by vultures On their sad rocks, endure less pain Than an unhappy lover whom inhuman Death Separates forever from his tender beloved. Ixion & Tantale Let us cease to search for the source of this tenderness That fills our hearts with gentle joy. Love, whose divine torch Enlightens this lover in the darkness of the tomb, Has struck us with the radiance of his flame. Orphée, Ixion & Tantale Alas! Nothing is equal to the happiness of lovers: Once love touches a soul, It can feel no other torments.

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