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

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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 Boston[4], 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 ultimatly 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 term 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 references[5].

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 works[6], and its publication in 1980 prompted a new interest in the music of Charpentier[7].

[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 recordings[8]. 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 1996 [9] – 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 productions[10]. 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 pieces[11]. 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 composer[12], the prospect of following my large-scale Lully spectacles[13] 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. Its 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 Genette[14] 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

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[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] *Thesée* (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 Pintiaux[17] 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, Lully[19]. 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 them[20]. 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 Corneille[21], 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 reflections[22]. 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 events[23]. 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.

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[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 intepretation, 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. »
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> Jean Donneau de Visé about *Les Appartements* de Versailles, *Mercure Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin,* December 1682[24].

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 performance[25]. 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 plot[27], while the final chorus addresses

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[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 work[28]. 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 courtiers[29]. 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 points[30]. 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 galeries. 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 Versailles[31], 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 Thursday[32]. 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 finished[33]. Music was present in form of concerts and dancing, and all kinds of games were also offered[34]. 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 wines[36] and liquors to exotic coffee and chocolate[37]. 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

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[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] Massaliot, 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 caffé 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 of the end of the seventeenth century that gives a hint as to what happened in each room[39]; 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 birth[42], pensioned by Louis XIV, and therefore wealthy enough to appear at court[43], 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

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[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 *apartement* chez le Roy, d'une feste ou réjouïssance, 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 « Apartement » 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 Corneille[44]. 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 mentionned 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 1681[45]. 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 courtiers[46], 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 entertainments[48]. At the end, the union of all pleasures makes the

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[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 rafraïchissemens avec profusion ; & ce qui faisoit le comble de la joïe, dit l'Académie des Inscriptions en expliquant la médaille qu'elle fit frapper ce sujet, on y joüissoit 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 monarch[50].

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 Guénégaud[51]: 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

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les Rafraïchissements, & 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 Regne 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, tragedie. Ornée de machines, de changemens de théatre, & de musique. Par T. Corneille. Representée 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. Loüis. 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 profits[54]. Beginning with *Circé*, 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* belongs[55]. 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 machinery[57]. The story cleverly combines the mechanical inventions of a nobleman and the charmed visions of his dupe, a naive 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 time[58]. 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 air[59].

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[53] Mélèse, 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, IVe partie – d'Un Siècle à l'Autre" in Dufour-Maître, 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* [magie, 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 today[61]. 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 divertissements[64]. More than any other

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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: « Memoire 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 1662[68], was especially devoted to this type of concert in 1682[69]: singers, harpsichord, theorboes, lutes, guitars, basses de viole and violins performed excerpts from the operas of Lully, the official composer of the king, and *Atys*, the king's favorite, probably more often than any other[70]. 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

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[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 Champigneulles. 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] *Atys*, 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 month[72]. 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 contents[73], and to showcase the composer's abilities to the king.

Les Fontaines de Versailles sheds therefore some original light[74] 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 organ[75]. 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: *Mercure 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'Aîné (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 gods[77] personified by the statues which were the ornaments of the waters of Versailles, Maurel[78], 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 court[80], 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 Célimène)* 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 flow[81]. 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 reality[82]. 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 mankind[84]. 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 Versailles[87].

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 mythology[89].

In the *Mercure 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

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[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 Champigneulles. 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 Digues, ses Fleuves, ses Remparts, & ses rivières, à la rapidité de ce Conquérant, que rien ne peut arrester. 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 Dessein, ny la verité des expressions. La plume ne sçauroit donner cet air majestueux & intrépide que ce grand Peintre a sçeu 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 *Mercure 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'ile 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'ile 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 Foutains 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 kingdom[94]. Such was the new status of Versailles

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[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 satyrically 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*, Œuvres, 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 1673[97]. 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

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[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 toûjours 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.

kingdom[98], and it is presented as a feast before the feast, with its own singing and dancing[99]. 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 score[101]. 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 continuity[102]. 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

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[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 soûmis, / 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] L*a 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 time[103], 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 1685[104]. At this time, the composer was working on a revival of *Le Malade imaginaire* for the Comédie-Française[105], 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 followed[106]. 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 performed[107]. 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

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[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, Representez en differents temps par l'Academie Royale de Musique.* Paris : Ballard, 1703, tome 3, p. 73.

entertainment[108]. But the king decided against attending, the party was cancelled, and the piece was not performed[109]. 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 Flora[111]. 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

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[108] *La fête de Rueil*, H. 485 pour 6 voix solistes, choeur 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 France[113]. 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 Nimes in 1682 and one in Angers in 1684, to name only a few[114]. 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 subject[119]. Charpentier retained most of the original

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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 Nimes, 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 Concurrens [*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 éloquemment à l'honneur de Sa Majesté. » in Letter of Robias Estoublon, « secrétaire de l'Académie royalle » [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 Concurrens* [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 XIV[122].

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 writers[123], 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 poem[124]. 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 boit 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 eclairer plusieurs terres, & au figuré que le Roi pourrait 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'Epigramme & 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 of 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 interêts. ». 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 Concurrens [*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. 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 prologue[125]. 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 contestants[126]. 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 aspects[127]. 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 flower[129]. All these common points seem to establish *La Couronne de Fleurs* as a dramatized evocation of the Toulouse event.

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[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 comedies[131]. 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 XIV[133]; this accomplishment allowed him to become a judge of the contest[134]. Being a lawyer from a noble family, he was also part of the social elite of the town. Appointed twice as *Capitoul*, which is similar to being the provost of the merchants[135], 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

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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 Recuëil de Pièces en vers, adressées à Monseigneur le Duc de Vendôme; et de divers Essais de différentes Poësies, 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 Recuëil de Pieces en vers, adressées à Monseigneur le Duc de Vendôme; et de divers Essais de différentes Poësies, 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 XIV[136]. 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 Lanternistes[137]. 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 *Capitoul* 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 mimes tout en usage pour y attirer beaucoup de monde ; nous ne réussîmes que trop, et la foule du people, 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 *Opera*: 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 1685[143] 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 coins[144], 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 1663[145] 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

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141 Thibault Aphrodise, or Afroidise (ca. 1656–1719). Master of music at Saint-Sermin of Toulouse from 1682 to 1719.

142 *Ouverture des Jeux floraux de Toulouse : mise en musique par le sieur Aphrodise, maistre 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 adresses 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 religion[150]. 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 turmoil[151]. Palaprat, perhaps shocked

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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 boëtes 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, MDCCLXXVI [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 Anet[152] 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 shepherds[154] 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 contest[157].

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[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 toûjours 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 Poësie 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 Poësie française par le P. Mourgues, Jesuite. Nouvelle édition, revue, corrigée & augmentée : avec plusieurs observations sur chaque Espèce de Poësie*. Paris : Jacques Vincent, 1729, p. 268.

In 1694, another member of the Compagnie des Jeux floraux, Simon de La Loubère[158], 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 academicians[159]. 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 immortality[161]. 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 Amaranthe[162]. Might this idea of the amaranth have come from Palaprat[163]? It

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[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 patents du Roy, portant le rétablissement des Jeux Floraux en une Académie de Belles Lettres ; Brevet du Roy, qui porte Confirmation des Chancelier, Mainteneurs & Maïtres 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 tarifiées 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 flêtris, & 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 Poëtes. » 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 soubs 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 ancient Séel: il sera rond, & au milieu sera debout une femme, représentant la poésie, et portent une Couronne sur sa tête, & donnan de sa main une Amarante à un Poête incline, qui luy presentra des Vers. Autour du Séel sera cette inscription : Séel des Jeux Floraux de Toulouse […] Le contre-Séel 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 two[168]. 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 Appendixe.

[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'Ovid*e *: 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 XVIIe siècle" in *Littératures classiques : Théâtre et musique au XVIIe 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 XVIIe siècle, Actes du IXe colloque du Centre International de Rencontres sur le XVIIe siècle.* Tübingen : Gunter Narr, 2007, pp. 157–168.

[168] Genest, Abbé Charles-Claude. *Dissertations sur la poësie pastorale, ou De l'idylle et de l'églogue*. 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 Guise[170]. 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 1687[171].

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

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[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 francois, 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 Françoise. 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 francois, 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 Françoise. 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 him[178], 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 creations[180]. 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 Metamorphoses 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 chorus[181]; 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 entertainment[183]. 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 music[184]. 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 pélerins 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 quleque action que l'on n'a point prévue, comme d'avoir les yeux fixement attachez sur le Christ, les sourcils élévez, & la bouche entr'ouverte. » in Felibien, 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 regret[189]. 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 character[190]. 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 1647[191]. In the seventeenth century, the

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[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 Philipe. 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 Francaise.* 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 Dassoucy[192] 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 memoires 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

triomphes ». See : Ménestrier, Claude-François. *Des représentations en musique anciennes et modernes*. Paris: R. Guignard, 1681, p. 196.

192 Charles Coypeau 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 representées avec tant de naïfveté 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 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. 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 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. 137, and « Le Soleil descendu des Cieux dans son char flamboyant […] & venant illuminer les agréables parterres & les allées à perte de veuë de son spacieux jardin» in "N° 27 La représentation n'agueres faite devant Leurs Majestez dans le Palais Royal de la tragicomedie 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 genre[197]. 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 dwelling[199]. 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 vulture[200] 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

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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 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. 137.

197 [Dacier, André.] *La Poëtique 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 Vigaranis, father and son[202], 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 chiaroscuro[206]. 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 1680s[207], 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 1684[208]. 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 genres[211]. 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 instructions[213]. In compensation, the

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[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 Françoise*. 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 espies 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 stag[215]. 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 overture[216] 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 1708[217], we know that the kind of entertainments which gave a place to the theme of the hunt were offered at Fontainebleau much earlier on[218]. 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 25e 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 « Diane[219] 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 court[224]. *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 prodigality[225]. 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

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[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 povr vers. Augmentez de plusieurs Emblemes en latin dudict Autheur, traduitcz nouvellesment en Françoys. Ordonnez par lieux communs, avec briefues explositions, & 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 dernierement 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 crûs être obligée de le porter à faire une sérieuse réfléxion sur ce qu'il examinoit. Je lui répresentai 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 ruïner 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 served[227]. Charpentier wrote two five-act operas for the Collège de Louis-le-Grand in the late 1680s[228]; an opera in miniature could easily find a place in the long days of perfromances, 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 Corneille[229], 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 opera[230]. 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 1689[231].

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

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[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 Jenvier 1685 […] à quoy je suis particulierement attachée c'est quils soyent reconnus par tout pour originaux sans contestation d'entiens pintres qu'ils soyeont de devotion ou du moins que se ne soyent que subjets modestes et honestes » 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 pleasures[232]. 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 audience[233]. 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 work[234]. 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 commissions[235].

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 1685[236] 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

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[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'accoûtument 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'etre 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 », Campra, 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 composer[237]. 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 plausible[238]. 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 Underworld[239].

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 Dauphin[241], 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.

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[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 O*rphée descendant aux Enfers* the sound of the lyre of Orpheus was expressed by the sound of one violin, in *La Descente d'*O*rphée 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 Boulay, Michel and Lully, Louis de. "Orphée, Tragédie Représentée par l'Académie Royale de Musique l'An 1690, Les Paroles de M. Du Boulay, & la Musique de M. Louis de Lully, XXV. Opéra" in *Recueil genéral des opéra représentez 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 Montaiglon ; 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.