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

Blin, G.R.

Citation

Blin, G. R. (2018, December 12). *The reflections of memory : an account of a cognitive approach to historically informed staging*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/68030>

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Issue Date: 2018-12-12

6 *Le Carnaval de Venise*

« Ah fy, Colombine, avec ton Opera! Peut-on revenir à la Demie Hollande,
quand on s'est si long-temps servy de Baptiste? »

Regnard, *Le Divorce*¹

Starting in 1697, when André Campra (1660–1744) made himself known, « his genius [...] followed the steps of Lully & got close to him ».² Nonetheless it is not in the severe style of the tragédie en musique, created by Jean-Baptiste Lully and perpetuated by his disciples, that Campra's talent mostly revealed itself, nor in the religious music that had already earned him the position of Maître de Chapelle at Notre Dame³. That year, the composer presented *L'Europe galante*, an opera in a new style, together with the librettist Antoine Houdar de La Motte (1672–1731) at the Paris Opera. In this sung and danced spectacle, several autonomous plots were presented during a series of Entrées of equal importance, related only by the European theme specified in its title.

By giving dance a larger role in the various intrigues of a musical drama and by choosing comedy rather than tragedy, the piece was establishing a new genre rich in possibilities, and Campra's first *opéra-ballet*⁴ was destined to have an important future in his own works, and those of others during the next century. Two years later, Campra created a second *opéra-ballet*. Further, the dramatic content of one entrée from his 1697 début may have been the seed of his second opera. Campra, by reimagining the idea of the Venetian ball that concluded the entrée « L'Italie » on a new, larger scale was reinforcing, in 1699, the Mediterranean specificity of his musical art and of his sources of inspiration.

¹ These lines of Regnard sums up his 1688 opinion about the Paris opera right after the death of Lully before Campra's first work. It plays on the homophony of the noun « batiste » and the first name « Baptiste »: the batiste is a white and very fine linen cloth whereas Hollande is a much coarser canvas, and the Demi-Hollande even coarser. This is an allusion to the operas by Pascal Collasse (or Colasse) (1649–1709) judged inferior to the ones of his master Jean-Baptiste Lully. See: Regnard, Jean-François. *Le Divorce*, Act II, Scene 3, in: *Le Théâtre Italien de Gherardi, Tome II*. Paris: J.-B. Cusson & P. White, 1700, p. 166. For a full coverage of the topic, see: Blanc, Judith le. « « Peut-on revenir à la demi-Hollande quand on s'est si longtemps servi de batiste? »: les parodies d'opéras dans l'œuvre de Regnard » in Mazouer, Charles and Quéro, Dominique. *Jean-François Regnard (1655-1709)*. Paris: Armand Colin, 2012, pp. 73–92.

² Laporte, Joseph de. and Chamfort, Sébastien-Roch-Nicolas. *Dictionnaire dramatique*. Paris: Lacombe, 1776, Vol. III, p. 524.

³ For the life of Campra, see: Barthélemy, Maurice. *André Campra 1660-1744*. Arles: Actes Sud, 1995 (reedition of the 1960's book). See also more recent: Duron, Jean. « André Campra: portrait d'un jeune musicien provençal à la conquête de Paris » in *André Campra (1660-1744), Un musicien provençal à Paris*. Textes réunis par Jean Duron. Wavre: Mardaga, 2010, pp. 7–59.

⁴ I use the currently accepted term, although, when first published, both *L'Europe galante* and *Le Carnaval de Venise* are qualified as « Ballet » on the title pages of scores and librettos.

Le Carnaval de Venise is the evocative title of this original creation, sole fruit of the collaboration between Campra and the dramatist Jean-François Regnard (1655–1709)⁵. Known as an up-and-coming playwright for spoken theater, Regnard, by associating himself to Campra, was signaling here a particularly original incursion in the lyrical theater. The writer's unique contribution to the opera genre is a consequence of his two “careers”: first with the Comédie-Italienne in Paris, and the more official one that subsequently overshadowed it at the Comédie-Française, where he ultimately established himself as one of the most successful dramatists after Molière. Added to his own experience as traveler in Italy, Regnard's libretto bears witness to his innovative attitude toward plot and renewed dramatic structure⁶. Campra also seemed to be concerned by this aesthetic argument and chose to place his musical production in a perspective of innovation and invention, mixing French and Italian styles⁷. Both artists are taking into consideration the ideas and works of his predecessors and the taste of their audiences.

Le Carnaval de Venise is an attempt to articulate these opposing poles: Italian and French, but also classic and modern, aristocratic and popular. The poet and the composer were, in fact, by building around new and old dramaturgical themes, reflecting on their own time and answering the desire of their royal patrons for reconciliation with Venice. To explore why and how their *opéra-ballet* was created, it was necessary to explore and examine anew various period documents. By musing on twelve of the diplomatic and artistic circumstances that surrounded its creation in Paris in January 1699, I hope to shed new light on *Le Carnaval de Venise*.

6.1 The Peace of Ryswick

[The Nine Years' War had pitted France against the Grand Alliance of the League of Augsburg, and as 1697 dawned, France was exhausted⁸. Louis XIV was still seen as a powerful man of war, yet the French king was in fact longing for peace. Hitherto the struggle had been glorious for its arms, but Louis felt his weakness facing the formidable coalition of Spain, the Holy Roman Empire (Austria), the Dutch Republic, England, and Savoy. He was therefore extremely active in exploring diplomatic ways to find an honorable solution to the conflict. In fact, the crown of Spain may have been the goal: with the Spanish king childless and infirm, the French king was hoping to obtain it legally and peacefully for his family. Louis XIV decided to change the political calculus by treating independently with some of the members of the league in the hope of isolating the Holy Roman Empire, the other main contender for the Spanish crown⁹.

⁵ See: Calame, Alexandre. *Regnard, sa vie et son œuvre*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960. For a recent approach of Regnard, see the various articles (some will be specifically referred to in this paper) in: *Jean-François Regnard (1655-1709)*, ed. by Charles Mazouer and Dominique Quero. Paris: Armand Colin, 2012.

⁶ [Regnard, Jean-François and Campra, André]. *Le Carnaval de Venise, ballet représenté par l'Académie royale de musique*. Paris: aux dépens de l'Académie, impr. de C. Ballard, 1699.

⁷ [Campra, André]. *Le Carnaval de Venise, ballet mis en musique par M. Campra le cadet*. C. Ballard: Paris, 1699.

⁸ The War of the Grand Alliance lasted from 1688–1697. France's resources were stretched to the breaking point by the cost of fielding an army of over 300,000 men and two naval squadrons. Famine in 1692–1693 killed up to two million people in France.

⁹ See: Bluche, François. *Louis XIV*. Paris: Fayard, 1986, pp. 762–770.

With the treaty of Turin, signed between France and Savoy on August 29, 1696, the first step toward a general European peace had been made¹⁰. Its effects were soon noticeable in the French Court and the country's artistic life. To fortify the new alliance between France and Savoy¹¹, a matrimonial union was contracted between the Duc de Bourgogne (1682–1712), the eldest grandson of Louis XIV, and Marie Adélaïde of Savoy (1685–1712). This eldest daughter of Victor Amadeus II, Duke of Savoy (1666–1732) was still a girl, eleven years of age, and the marriage did not take place immediately, but she was sent to France as a warrant of peace¹². The symbol of her young presence, linked to her charming personality, gave new hope for peace and stability in Europe.



Figure 1 : *Maison Royale de Neubourg a Ryswyck*

Dutch etching by Jacobus Harrewijn (1660–1727) from Jean Baptiste Christyn (1635?–1707). *Les delices des Pais-Bas, ou, Description generale de ses dix-sept provinces, de ses principales villes & de ses lieux les plus renommez dans la situation ou il se trouvent depuis la Paix de Ryswyck*. Brussels, 1700.

Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The stipulations of the treaty with Savoy revealed to Europe the pressing need of peace. Under the mediation of neutral Sweden, negotiations started, and, in September 1697, a comprehensive peace was obtained between France and the Grand Alliance. The Treaty of

¹⁰ For the events leading to the Treaty of Turin, see: Noel, Williams Hugh. *A Rose of Savoy, Marie Adélaïde of Savoy, duchesse de Bourgogne, Mother of Louis XV*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909, pp. 44–63 (Chapter 3). See also: Storrs, Christopher. *War, Diplomacy and the Rise of Savoy, 1690–1720*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. See also: Rowlands, Guy. “Louis XIV, Vittorio Amedeo II and French Military Failure in Italy, 1689–96” in *The English Historical Review Vol. 115, No. 462 (Jun. 2000)*, pp. 534–569.

¹¹ In the Treaty of Turin, the wedding is integral part of the peace agreement: «Le Mariage de Madame la Princesse, fille de SAR se traitera incessamment pour s’effectuer de bonne foi, lorsqu’elle sera en âge, & que le contract se fera lors de l’effet du present Traité » in “Traité de Paix entre la France et le Duc de Savoye. Article III” in [Bernard, Jacques]. *Lettres historiques; Contenant ce qui se passe de plus important en Europe; Et les Réflexions nécessaires sur ce sujet. Tome XII. Mois de Juillet, 1697*. La Haye: Adrian Moetjens, 1697, pp. 715–716.

¹² Merlotti, Andrea. “La courte enfance de la duchesse de Bourgogne (1685-1696)” in *Marie-Adélaïde de Savoie (1685–1712). Duchesse de Bourgogne, enfant terrible de Versailles. Etudes sur le XVIIIe siècle ed. Fabrice Preyat*. Bruxelles: Les éditions de l’Université de Bruxelles, 2014, pp. 29–46.

Ryswick (old spelling: Ryswyck) was named after the town in the Dutch Republic where the negotiations took place and settled the Nine Years' War (Figure 1). In October, the premiere of *L'Europe galante*, with its idyllic depictions of European Nations, offered a hopeful picture of Europe at peace, with Italy being represented by Venice¹³. In December, on her twelfth birthday, Princess Marie Adélaïde of Savoy (1685–1712) married the fifteen-year-old Duc de Bourgogne in the Palace of Versailles. The petite figure of the Duchesse de Bourgogne was directly associated with the restored peace, as the union was the starting point of the peace process and occurred only a couple of months after the treaty was signed. Among the festivities celebrating their marriage and the union of France and Savoy, a special performance of *L'Europe galante*, requested by the king, took place at court¹⁴.

6.2 French honors to Venice

With the 1697 treaty having established peace with the Grand Alliance, France turned its attention to renewing and improving diplomatic relations with various European powers. One notable renewal was in the form of a seduction attempt by Versailles of the Republic of Venice, which grew in intensity from 1697 to 1699. During and previously to the Nine Years' War, relations with Venice had been polluted by two main problems. The first was the support by Louis of the Ottoman Empire, the enemy of Venice¹⁵. The second was the industrial competition that Versailles was inflicting upon Venice, mostly to do with the production of mirrors; Versailles had been using spies and bribery to lure skilled Venetian craftsmen to France, and their production meant the French « importation » of mirrors from Venice, a significant source of prosperity for the Republic, had totally ceased¹⁶. Powers shifted, times

¹³ Welch, Ellen R. *A Theater of Diplomacy, International Relations and the Performing Arts in Early Modern France*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017, p. 195. *Europe's revels* written for the peace of 1697 is an interesting English piece to compare to *L'Europe galante*, see: Lowerre, Kathryn. "A ballet des nations for English audiences: *Europe's revels* for the peace of Ryswick (1697)" in *Early Music*. Vol. 35, n°3. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 419–433. In *Europe's revels*, the character of the Savoyard displaying of a peep show (« O raree show! ») may be an allusion to the politic "en trompe-l'oeil" of the Duke of Savoy.

¹⁴ « Il est arrivé assez souvent, que les paix que la France a conclues ont été accompagnées de mariages considérables. Celle-ci ne fera pas exceptée de cette reigle [sic], quoique le mariage de M. le Duc de Bourgogne, qui se doit célébrer aujourd'hui 7. De Décembre, aît été conclu avant la Paix générale. Cette fête doit durer jusques au 22. & pendant tout ce tems [sic] toute la Cour sera toujours parée & changera d'habits plusieurs fois. Il y aura quatre bals magnifiques, & quatre représentations d'Opera, que le Roi a choisis, & qui sont *Roland*, *Armide*, les *Amours d'Apollon*, que l'on nommera l'*Opera du mariage*, & *l'Europe Galante*. » in [Bernard, Jacques]. *Lettres historiques; Contenant ce qui se passe de plus important en Europe; Et les Réflexions nécessaires sur ce sujet*. Tome XII. *Mois de Juillet, 1697*. La Haye: Adrian Moetjens, 1697, p. 669.

¹⁵ For the relationships between Ottoman Empire, France, and Europe, see: Faroqi, Suraiya. *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*. London & New York: I.B. Tauris & Co, 2004.

¹⁶ Colbert established the *Manufacture royale de glaces de miroirs* (Royal Mirror-Glass Factory) in October 1665. The company was created as a monopoly for a period of twenty years and would be financed in part by the State. The first mirrors were produced in 1666. By September 1672 the French manufacture was on a sufficiently sound footing for the importation of Venetian glass to be forbidden to any of Louis' subjects, under any conditions. In 1678, the company started to produce the glass for the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles. In 1683 the company's financial arrangement with the State was renewed for another two decades. However, in 1688 a rival company was created, also financed in part by the state, which used a new process that allowed it to make plate glass mirrors much bigger than the ones which the first *Manufacture* could create. The two companies were in competition until 1695, when the economy slowed down, and their rivalry became counterproductive. Under an order from the French government, the two companies were forced to merge. See: Scoville, Warren

changed, and Versailles was now seeing Venice as a possible ally to ensure support for a royal French Bourbon to succeed to the crown of Spain rather than an Austrian Habsburg.

As much of diplomacy at the time was about the sense of honor and the many ways it could be expressed, there was a movement to grant Venice more importance by giving the Republic « Extraordinary honors, which had hitherto only been given to the crowned heads »¹⁷. These honors culminated in the winter of 1698/99, when *Le Carnaval de Venise* was created. The change was noticeable in the ceremonial display around the ambassador of Venice in France, Nicolo Erizzo¹⁸. The Venetian republic received the same marks of honor given to the Kingdom of Spain or the Holy Empire. Already on Tuesday, November 11, 1698, « It has been resolved to grant to the instances and repeated prayers of the republic of Venice that their ambassadors will be conducted to the audience by a prince; they have given several great examples of their attachment to France, [...] and the King had a desire to do honor and to please the republic ».¹⁹

This desire was confirmed a few months later when the ambassador was taking his leave; he received from the king on January 24, 1699, « a box of diamonds worth 3,332 francs, [and] a chain and medals worth 6,002 francs »²⁰. A few days later, around the 14 years old Duchesse de Bourgogne (Figure 2), in one of those special moments where the breach of the stringent etiquette of the court was an expression of special favor by the king, the behavior toward the wife of the Venetian ambassador was remarkable (and remarked upon): on Tuesday, January 27, 1699, in Versailles, after an exception was granted to the Ambassadors for a question of seating precedence around the Duchesse de Bourgogne, then acting as first lady²¹: « The King came to the Duchess of Bourgogne directly after the council, approached

Candler. *Capitalism and French Glassmaking, 1640-1789*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Publications in Economics, 2006. See also: Melchior-Bonnet, Sabine. *The Mirror: A History*. London & New York: Routledge, 2002.

¹⁷ « des honneurs extraordinaires, & qui n'avaient été rendus jusques alors qu'aux têtes couronnées » in [Bernard, Jacques]. *Lettres historiques [...] Tome XV, Mois de Janvier 1699*. La Haye: Adrian Moetjens, 1699, p. 22.

¹⁸ Although little is known about his life, the magnificence of Nicolo Erizzo as ambassador is still remembered in 1709 : « On a vu depuis peu d'années N. Erizzo faire les fonctions d'Ambassadeur aux Cours de France & de Rome, & cela avec un éclat & une si grande dépence que si quelques-uns l'ont égalé, très peu l'ont surpassé dans l'un & dans l'autre. » in *Nouvelle Relation de la ville et republique de Venise, divisée en trois parties...* Utrecht: Guillaume van Poolsum, 1709, III Partie, p. 78. See also note 18.

¹⁹ « On a résolu d'accorder aux instantes et réitérées prières de la république de Venise que leurs ambassadeurs seront conduits à l'audience par un prince ; il ont allé plusieurs grands exemples de leur attachement à la France, entre autre, qu'après la mort de l'empereur Charles-Quint, Philippe II, son fils, roi d'Espagne, voulant disputer à la France la préséance qu'elle a toujours eue sur l'Espagne, ils avaient été les premiers à reconnaître notre droit, et à faire passer l'ambassadeur du Roi devant celui du roi catholique ; et de plus, ils ont fait souvenir qu'ils avaient été les premier à reconnaître Henri IV, et le Roi a eu envie de faire honneur et plaisir à la république. » in *Mémoires du marquis de Dangeau, avec des notes historiques et critiques, Tome second, 1698–1711*. Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1817, p. 26.

²⁰ « Relation de la cour de France en 1699; par le Chevalier Erizzo, ambassadeur de Venise » in *Mélanges publiés par la Société des Bibliophiles Français*. Paris: Firmin Didot, 1827, p. 80.

²¹ As the Queen died in 1683, after the Dauphine past away in 1690, la duchesse de Bourgogne was the first lady of the court. See: Ferrier, Pauline. “La duchesse de Bourgogne et les épouses des ministres du roi dans le système de cour. Fêtes, honneurs et distinctions” in *Marie-Adélaïde de Savoie (1685–1712). Duchesse de Bourgogne, enfant terrible de Versailles. Etudes sur le XVIIIe siècle ed. Fabrice Preyat*. Bruxelles : Les éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2014, pp. 163–174.

the [Venetian] ambadress, held her in conversation for some time, and then kissed her [good-bye]. Monseigneur [the Dauphin] came next, who did the same, and then Monseigneur the Duke of Bourgogne, who also kissed her; then the Duchess of Bourgogne raised the circle [gave the signal that the assembly had ended by standing up]. The ambadress bowed down to kiss her dress; the Duchess of Bourgogne raised her and kissed her ». On this very day, the insightful witness, the Marquis de Dangeau (1638–1720), also noted, « Monseigneur [the Dauphin] went to the opera in Paris [where *Le Carnaval de Venise* was performed], and conducted the Duke of Bourgogne and the Duchess of Bourgogne. This is the first time that the Duchess of Bourgogne has been to the Opera in Paris. In the morning she had given an audience to the ambadress of Venice, who had come to take leave »²².



Figure 2 : *Marie Adélaïde de Savoie, Duchesse de Bourgogne*
Anonymous French etching from the seventeenth century.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

6.3 Carnival in Marly, *Le Carnaval de Venise* in Paris

It was also important for the French to flatter Venice as final negotiations had started in December between the Ottoman Empire, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Venetian Republic to stop the hostilities in the east of Europe. The news came to Versailles and was the

²² « Mardi 27, 1699, à Versailles. – Le roi alla l'après-dinée se promener à Marly. Monseigneur alla à l'opéra à Paris et y mena monseigneur le duc de Bourgogne et madame la duchesse de Bourgogne. C'est la première fois que Madame la duchesse de Bourgogne ait été à l'opéra à Paris. Le matin ici, elle avait donné audience à l'ambadrice de Venise, qui venait prendre congé; elle fut assise dans le même rang que les duchesses, en ayant quatre au-dessus d'elle. Quand les ambadrices paraissent la première fois, elles ont un tabouret au milieu du cercle, la dame d'honneur quand elle est duchesse sur un autre tabouret à leur gauche; mais quand les ambadrices viennent pour prendre leur congé, la dame d'honneur ne les va point recevoir dans l'antichambre, et elles n'ont plus de place séparée, mais elles ont toujours le tabouret. Dans l'ordre, quand leur mari a pris congé, elles ne doivent plus être traitées comme ambadrice; mais le roi a bien voulu pour cette fois ici qu'on lui fit ce traitement-là et a déclaré en même temps qu'à l'avenir toute ambadrice qui ne prendrait pas congé la même semaine que son mari l'aura pris ne sera plus regardée comme ambadrice dans le séjour qu'elle fera à Paris et ici. Le roi vint chez madame la duchesse de Bourgogne après le conseil, s'approcha de l'ambadrice, l'entretint quelque temps et puis la baisa. Monseigneur vint ensuite, qui en usa de même, et puis monseigneur le duc de Bourgogne, qui la baisa aussi; ensuite madame la duchesse de Bourgogne leva le cercle. L'ambadrice se baissa pour lui baiser la robe; madame la duchesse de Bourgogne la releva et la baisa. » in *Journal du marquis de Dangeau*. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1854-1860, Tome 7, p. 12.

talk of the Court, as the Marquis de Dangeau reports « It is sent from Vienna that the conferences for peace between the [Ottoman] Grand Seigneur, on the one hand, and the [Austrian] Emperor and his allies on the other, had begun on November 13 [1698] in a place near Karlowitz [in today's Hungary], where a house was furnished to hold the conferences »²³. Negotiations were going well in the capable hands of the Dutch and English emissaries, but, in the hope of attracting its favor, William III was championing the Austrian Empire's goals over those of Venice. « Saturday, December 20, 1698, at Versailles: It was announced that the truce was signed between the Emperor and the Grand Seigneur. The Venetians have not been much consulted in all these negotiations, and they even complain of the Emperor, who has thought more of his interests than of those of his allies »²⁴. The failure of the Austrians to adequately support the interests of the Venetians in the treaty negotiations was the opening that France had been working for.²⁵



Figure 3: *Vue de l'Entrée du Chateau de Marly*
Perspective view, anonymous French etching from the eighteenth century.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The creation of *Le Carnaval de Venise* in January 1699 took place amid festivities at court, most notably in Marly, the pleasure castle of the king, seen on Figure 3, where masked

²³ « Mardi 2 Décembre 1698 à Versailles. – On mande de Vienne que les conférences pour la paix, entre le Grand-Seigneur d'une part, l'empereur et ses alliés de l'autre, avaient commencé le 13 de Novembre, dans un lieu proche Carlowitz, où on a fait accommoder une maison pour les conférences. » in *Journal du marquis de Dangeau*. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1854, Tome 6, p. 468.

²⁴ « Samedi 20 Décembre 1698 à Versailles On a nouvelle que la trêve est signée entre l'empereur et le Grand-Seigneur. Les Vénitiens n'ont pas été fort consultés dans toutes ces négociations, et ils se plaignent même fort de l'empereur, qui a plus songé à ses intérêts qu'à ceux de ses alliés. » in *Journal du marquis de Dangeau*. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1854, Tome 6, p. 477.

²⁵ See texts of the treaty at: <https://archive.org/stream/generalcollectio00lond#page/308/mode/2up>

balls were being held almost every day²⁶. It is in association with these festivities that the opera of Regnard and Campra was performed on stage in Paris on Tuesday, January 20, 1699: « Wednesday, [January] 21, 1699, at Marly. The king walked all morning in his gardens; after lunch he led the Duchess of Bourgogne to the roulette [an outdoor attraction in the form of a sledge on rails]. Monseigneur the Duke of Bourgogne arrived in sufficient time to go with her. On returning from the promenade, they both donned masks in Madame de Maintenon's apartment, and asked the ladies of the palace to be masked with them. [...] Monseigneur [the Dauphin] went Tuesday from Meudon to the opera in Paris; *Le Carnaval de Venise* was played for the first time ». ²⁷ All these parties and the celebration of carnival were stimulated by the presence of the Duchesse de Bourgogne. The Princess was beautiful, smart, and courteous. Her presence brought a breath of fresh air at court, where, with an aging king, a more austere atmosphere had been established during the war. To escape from this oppressive ambiance, and to be able to indulge in Italian music and light, comical forms of opera, many circles had been created around influential personalities of the younger generation; these would gather in other places and were welcoming to a variety of creative ideas. In Versailles, the Duchesse de Bourgogne's popularity was enormous, and the court saw her youth as the living embodiment of new times²⁸.

The Marquis de Dangeau was clairvoyant enough to link the little and the larger history in an entry in his journal for Thursday, February 5, 1699, at Marly: « Monseigneur the Duke of Bourgogne and the Duchess of Bourgogne arrived here at six o'clock; they dined here, and there was a ball like the day before; but there were however more masquerades. The King has asked to have a great number of masquerade costumes brought here, and these are available to all those who wish to disguise themselves; they can make their own choice. [...] It appeared that the king was very entertained at these balls, and he remained until one hour and a half [after midnight]. It is news that the peace of the emperor with the Turks is signed; the [Austrian] Emperor guards Transylvania and all its conquests. The Turks give up to the Polish Podolia, and Kaminiac as it is. As for the Venetians, they have not signed; but they have the power to sign in six months ». ²⁹

²⁶ For an overview of « les plaisirs de Marly », see: *Divertissements à Marly au temps de Louis XIV*. Louveciennes: Musée-Promenade de Marly-le-Roi Louveciennes, 1990.

²⁷ « Le roi se promena tout le matin dans ses jardins ; l'après-dînée il mena madame la duchesse de Bourgogne à la roulette. Monseigneur le duc de Bourgogne arriva assez à temps pour y aller avec elle. Au retour de la promenade, ils se masquèrent tous deux chez madame de Maintenon et firent masquer les dames du palais avec eux. Monseigneur le duc de Bourgogne fut fort gai et divertit fort le roi, qui avait fait venir Filbert pour les amuser. Monseigneur alla mardi de Meudon à l'opéra à Paris; on joua pour la première fois le Carnaval de Venise. » in *Journal du marquis de Dangeau*. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1854, Tome 7, p. 12.

²⁸ See: Duron, Jean. « « Oüyt-on, jamais, telle muzique? »: les nouveaux canons de la musique français sous le règne de Louis XIV de 1650 à 1675 » in *Grandes Journées Lully, Naissance d'un roi. Livret-programme édité à l'occasion des Grandes Journées Lully réalisées par le Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles et Château de Versailles-Spectacles au Château de Versailles. Textes réunis par Jean Duron et Christophe Doïnel*. Versailles: Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles, 2008, pp. 11-52. See also: Goujon, Jean-Philippe. « Marie-Adélaïde de Savoie, duchesse de Bourgogne puis dauphine de France: une princesse musicienne et mécène à la cour de Louis XIV » in *Marie-Adélaïde de Savoie (1685-1712). Duchesse de Bourgogne, enfant terrible de Versailles. Etudes sur le XVIIIe siècle ed. Fabrice Preyat*. Bruxelles: Les éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2014, pp. 191–214.

²⁹ « Le Roi se promena tout le jour dans ses jardins; monseigneur le duc de Bourgogne et madame la duchesse de Bourgogne arrivèrent ici sur les six heures; ils y soupèrent, et il y eut bal comme le jour d'aparavant; mais il y eut encore plus de mascarades. Le Roi a fait apporter ici grand nombre d'habits de masques, et on n'en refuse point à tous ceux qui veulent se masquer, on leur donne à choisir. On dansa des contredanses et des danses à

6.4 Regnard, poet and fantasist

The choice of the subject of *Le Carnaval de Venise* was, in 1699, neither as innocent nor as new as its title would seem. Previously, in December 1690, the Comédie-Française had presented a play with the same name³⁰. In the divertissements of his *comédie-ballet*, Florent Carton Dancourt (1661–1725) had originally staged « in a ludicrous and ridiculous manner »³¹ all the nations then leagued against France; this satire was based on the fact that in 1687 Venice had been the scene of a meeting between members of the Augsburg league. Under the pretext of the pleasures of Carnival, the Duke of Savoy, the Elector of Bavaria, Max Emanuel, several German princes and the secret negotiators of Austria, Spain, Sweden, and Holland had assembled, taking advantage of the concealment offered by the use of masks, in order to refine the plans of the league. These plans had been signed by members of the coalition at Augsburg few months before the play premiered, and the league's object was to create a barrier to the ever-increasing power of the French king. The divertissements in the play were changed after the intervention of Louis XIV, who was leary about the diplomatic implications of such a display. The show had little success during the French carnival, possibly due to the hastily revised divertissements³².

That Regnard wrote his libretto for Campra while keeping in mind Dancourt's play is possible, as the narrative element of the divertissements of his opera ballet seems to take the exact opposite direction of what we know of the original play of Dancourt: instead of the enemies of France being featured, people from the territories newly acquired by Venice flood the stage: the *Riva di Schiavoni*, the pier next to the Doge's Palace, inspired Regnard to show the landing of natives coming from Dalmatia, on the other side of the Adriatic Sea, in *Le Carnaval de Venise*: « Bohémiennes, Arméniens & Esclavons [*schiaivoni* in Italian] ». In 1699, some of these central European peoples were about to be returned to the dominion of Venice, thanks to the peace with the Ottoman Empire that had been announced in December 1698. Venice's demands were acceded to in that it would regain control of that coast of the Adriatic. The affected Slavonian peoples would bring their culture to Venice, their customs and music; Regnard takes great care to specify that the Armenians appear « with some Guitars », one of

l'allemande, où madame la princesse de Conti se surpassa; il a paru que le Roi se divertissait fort à ces bals-ci, et il a demeuré jusqu'à une heure et demie. – On a nouvelle que la paix de l'empereur avec les Turcs est signée; l'empereur garde la Transylvanie et toutes ses conquêtes. Les Turcs rendent aux Polonais la Podolie et Kaminiac en l'état qu'il est. A l'égard des Vénitiens, ils n'ont point signé; mais ils ont le pouvoir de signer dans six mois. On veut les obliger à raser plusieurs places dans les conquêtes qu'ils ont faites » in *Journal du marquis de Dangeau*. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1854, Tome 7, p. 20. The Republic of Venice signed the treaty on the 7th of February. See: *La Paix de Karlowitz, 26 Janvier 1699: les relations entre l'Europe centrale et l'Empire ottoman, sous la direction de Jean Béranger*. (Bibliothèque d'études de l'Europe centrale, tome I). Paris: Honoré Champion, 2010.

³⁰ See : *Registres de la Comédie-Française*, Page of the 29th of December 1690
http://hyperstudio.mit.edu/cfrp/flip_books/R25/index.html#page/487/mode/1up

³¹ « de manière burlesque et ridicule » in « Lettre de Louis Phélypeaux de Pontchartrain (secrétaire d'Etat de la Marine et de la Maison du roi) à Gabriel Nicolas de La Reynie (lieutenant général de police de Paris) datée du 06 décembre 1690, à Versailles » in *Correspondance administrative sous le règne de Louis XIV, recueillie et mise en ordre par G. B. Depping, Tome II. Administration de la justice – Police – Galères*. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1851. pp. 611 and 612. http://www.persee.fr/doc/corr_0000-0001_1851_cor_2_1_890_t2_0611_0000_4 (Accessed on 19 April 2017).

³² See: Blanc, André. *F. C. Dancourt, 1661-1725: la Comédie française à l'heure du Soleil couchant*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1984, p. 45. Performed only three times, the text of the play seems lost.

the numerous attempts by the poet to give Campra the possibility of incorporating extra musical colors³³.



Figure 4 : *Jean-François Regnard*
French etching by Etienne Ficquet (1719–1794)
after Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659–1743). Paris, circa 1750.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The artistic position of Campra, well launched by the success of *L'Europe galante*, with its subtle mix of French and Italian styles, made him the ideal composer for the music of such a European piece, but it is hard not to see the hand of the Dauphin in the choice of Jean-François Regnard for the libretto. The poet had been a regular contributor to the shows of the Italian comedians in Paris since 1688, had written numerous plays for them, and in 1694, he made his début at the Comédie-Française. His comedy *Le Joueur* had the honor of being performed in Versailles in 1696³⁴. The Comédie-Italienne, as with the Comédie-Française, had benefited from the protection of the Dauphine, Maria Anna Victoria of Bavaria, the wife of the son and heir of the King. However, since the death of his spouse in 1690, it was the Dauphin who had been deciding the destiny of these two companies, and his supervision was

³³ Although they do not appear in the drama, the libretto's cast list indicates also some « Espagnols ». It is possible that the « Castellans » gondoliers may have been mistaken by a printer reading a manuscript too hastily for Spanish « Castilians ». But it is also possible that an early version of the piece included Spanish in some of the divertissements. The question of the succession of the dying king of Spain was a subject of actuality. Mistake of the printer or royal censorship, these listed « Espagnols » are revelatory of the spirit in which the people of the late seventeenth century was seeing Venice: like an international metropole, with a position propitious to the meeting of different nations, the crossing of different cultures.

³⁴ *Le Joueur* has been performed in Versailles on the 31 of December 1696, as part of the festivities of the New Year's Eve (Fête de la Saint-Sylvestre). See: *Registres de la Comédie Française*.
http://hyperstudio.mit.edu/cfrp/flip_books/R38/index.html#page/501/mode/1up

benevolent³⁵. The same year, Regnard could proclaim in a play, « Finally, the Italian Theater is the center of freedom, the source of joy ».³⁶

6.5 The muses and the mummers

The free and high spirit of the Comédie-Italienne, unfortunately, went too far at a time where royal censorship was near absolute³⁷. In 1694 the Catholic Sorbonne University already complained to the Archbishop stating that « the Italian Comedians had become too free on their stage and that it would be good to again cleanse many of their plays »³⁸. When, in 1697, the Comédie-Italienne planned to perform *La Fausse prude*, the comedy was interpreted as a satire of Madame de Maintenon (1635–1719), then the secret wife of Louis XIV. The king was outraged and ordered the dismissal of the Italian troupe. In the years that followed, the Dauphin regularly demanded –in vain– that the king reopen the Italian theater. This support had two effects: some of the Italian actors stayed in Paris and moved to the stages of the temporary fairs, where their characters have been already featured³⁹, while others found employment at the Paris Opera⁴⁰, which was also under the protection of the Dauphin. At the same time, their type characters became, little by little, a part of the repertory of the French theater plays and opera librettos, and Regnard took an active role in this integration of styles.

³⁵ See: La Gorce, Jérôme de. *L'Opéra à Paris au temps de Louis XIV: histoire d'un théâtre*. Paris: Desjonquères, 1992.

³⁶ « Enfin, le Théâtre Italien est le centre de la liberté, la source de la joie... » in Regnard. *Les Chinois*, Act IV, Scene 2. See: *Les Chinois in Œuvres complètes de Regnard, Texte établi par Charles Georges Thomas Garnier*. Paris: E.A. Lequien, 1820, tome sixième, p. 59.

³⁷ The Royal censorship became official as an administration in 1706, but as early as 1701, the plays were the subject of censorship of the king: In 1701, minister Ponchartrain had written to d'Argenson, lieutenant général de police, the following letter: « Il est revenu au roi que les comédiens [française] se dérangent beaucoup, que les expressions et les postures indécentes commencent à reprendre vigueur dans leurs représentations, et qu'en un mot ils s'écartent de la pureté où le théâtre était parvenu. Sa Majesté m'ordonne de vous écrire de les faire venir, et de leur expliquer de sa part que, s'ils ne se corrigent, sur la moindre plainte qui lui parviendra, Sa Majesté prendra contre eux des résolutions qui ne leur seront pas agréables. Sa Majesté veut aussi que vous les avertissiez qu'elle ne veut pas qu'ils représentent aucune pièce nouvelle qu'ils ne vous l'aient auparavant communiquée; son intention étant qu'ils ne puissent représenter aucune pièce qui ne soit dans la dernière pureté. » quoted in Hallays-Dabot, Victor. *Histoire de la censure théâtrale en France*. Paris: E. Dentu, 1862, p. 43.

³⁸ « Rel. V, 31 déc. 1694: La Sorbonne a fait “remontre à Mr l'Archevêque [the employer of Campra] que les Comédiens Italiens étoient trop libres sur leur théâtre et qu'il seroit bon de repurger plusieurs de leurs pieces.” » in Mélése, Pierre. *Répertoire analytique des documents contemporains d'information et de critique concernant le théâtre à Paris sous Louis XIV (1650-1715)*. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1976, p. 23.

³⁹ On the dismissal, see: Ravel, Jeffrey S. “Trois images de l'expulsion des Comédiens Italiens en 1697” in *Littératures classiques*, vol. 82, no. 3, 2013, pp. 51-60. And for the relations of Italian artists with the fairs, see: Campardon, Émile. *Les spectacles de la foire: théâtres, acteurs, sauteurs et danseurs de corde, monstres, géants, nains, animaux curieux ou savants, marionnettes, automates, figures de cire et jeux mécaniques des foires Saint-Germain et Saint-Laurent, des boulevards et du Palais-Royal, depuis 1595 jusqu'à 1791; documents inédits recueillis aux Archives nationales, Volume 1*. Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1877.

⁴⁰ We know that Elisabeth Gherardi Danneret, singer known as Babet-la-Chanteuse started in 1694 at the Comédie-Italienne and in 1697 joined the Opera, and some dancers, although not been recorded so far, may have also been employed by the Académie Royale de Musique. See: Campardon, Émile. *Les Comédiens italiens de la troupe du roi*. Paris: 1880. See also: Barthélemy, Maurice. “L'opéra-comique des origines à la Querelle des Bouffons” in *L'Opéra-Comique en France au XVIIIe siècle. sous la direction de Philippe Vendrix*. Liège: Mardaga, 1992, p. 21.

The entourage of the Dauphin, and notably his daughter-in-law, the Duchesse de Bourgogne, welcomed the playfulness of the Italian style found in the dramatist's productions⁴¹.



Figure 5: *Minerve presenting the portrait of Louis XIV*
French etching by Jean-Baptiste Masse (1687–1767),
after the painting by Antoine Coypel (1661–1722),
with the portrait of Louis XIV painted by Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659–1743).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Following in the tradition inherited from Quinault⁴² and Lully, the prologue of *Le Carnaval de Venise* glorifies the king, but it also mentions the supporter of the work, his son, the Grand Dauphin. Minerva (Figure 5), a goddess particularly associated with the military peace in the art of the seventeenth century—but also with the Acropolis of Athens, recently reconquered by the Venetians from the Turks—descends from heaven and asks the divinities of the Arts to serve the « son of the greatest King of the world », honoring the Dauphin as official patron of the Paris Opera and of the new piece. She concludes by praising the King for giving peace and calls for returning soldiers to follow love, and, by doing so, introduces the idea of the French cavalryman seducing Venetian girls, which will be developed further in the plot of the opera.

In poetic terms, this prologue, even if it retains some elements of the tradition, with gods giving a theoretical background to the human story presented in the opera, offers some

⁴¹ From 1694 to 1699, four plays by Regnard, *La Serenade*, *Le Joueur*, *Le Distrain*, *Le Bourgeois de Falaise*, were given at court. See: *Registres de la Comédie Française*.

⁴² Regnard, in his early youth, sent one of his « Épitre » to Quinault, where he asks for correction on his first libretto for a musical drama (now lost) and expressed the wish to walk in the steps of his elder. See: Regnard, Jean-François. “Épitre III” in *Œuvres de J.F. Regnard avec des avertissements sur chaque pièce par M. Garnier. Nouvelle édition. Tome quatrième*. Paris: E.A. Lequien, 1820, pp. 381–383.

new facets as well, which give it a more modern flavor and distance it from the purely mythological prologues that had previously been the norm. Its biggest innovation is the incorporation of contemporary workmen busy building the sets of a performing space in a rather inefficient way, creating a comical hiatus⁴³. Showing the backstage area of the theater or a stage in rehearsal was not new, but it anchored the show in the comedy tradition⁴⁴. Defined by this theatrical frame, the action that follows is announced as a performance, in which Minerva requests the display « by the charms of a lavish show, of all that Venice has of entertainments in the most charming season »⁴⁵. The goddess asks the various arts—Architecture, Painting, Music and Dance—to combine their creative expertise to produce a superb show that portrays the numerous events Venice offers during winter. Her simple request articulates notions of style, subject, object, place, and time, and introduces the whole enterprise.

After the prologue, the traditional mythological, pastoral, and heroic fundamentals of French opera are forsaken in favor of a modern geographical reference, in order to fire the imagination with accurate depictions of its events and appearance. To piece together these Venetian settings, Regnard takes inspiration from his memories: his travels to Italy at the end of the 1670s impressed him deeply. It was then that he discovered Venice, where he won a fortune by gambling, which allowed him to continue his long journeys to Flanders, the Dutch Republic, Denmark, and Sweden up to Lapland. *Le Carnaval de Venise* can be seen as a special account of the Italian travels of the poet, as the libretto reflects a care for accuracy and a realistic representation of events, which was scarcely to be found in the other opera librettos of the period.

6.6 Carnival in Venice

The structure of *Le Carnaval de Venise*, contrary to *L'Europe galante*, maintains a continuous plot through all of the entrées. In the genre of the French ballet, this idea was not totally new⁴⁶ but, in this *opéra-ballet*, the respect of a continuity of the action gives a new energy to the action, close to the one of a comedy for the theater. The tale is set in winter in Venice: a French cavalryman and a Venetian lady see their love affair determined by the events of Carnival. After the confusion caused by the international crowd of masquers and gamblers, a serenade that ends with a murder, an attempted suicide during a gondolier feast, and an evening at the opera house, the lovers triumph over jealous rivals, and, under the cover of a grand ball, finally flee happily to France. Starting in 1695, a series of comedic plays taking place in specific

⁴³ Dancourt in his prologue for *L'opérateur Barry*, will do the same for the Comédie-Française the next year. See: Blanc, André. *F. C. Dancourt, 1661-1725: La Comédie française à l'heure du Soleil couchant*. Paris: Editions Place, 1984, p. 91.

⁴⁴ The process is exemplified by Molière with *L'Impromptu de Versailles*, 1663. For a selection of rare French dramas from the seventeenth century with meta-theatre, see: *Aspects du théâtre dans le théâtre au XVIIe siècle, Recueil de pièces*. Introduction par Georges Forestier. Toulouse: Université de Toulouse - Le Mirail, 1986.

⁴⁵ « Minerve: Vous qui suivez mes pas, remplissez mon attente,/ Montrez par les attraits d'un spectacle pompeux/ Tout ce que Venise a de jeux / Dans la Saison la plus charmante. » in *Le Carnaval de Venise*, Prologue.

⁴⁶ Quinault and Lully had inaugurated this type of ballet with a continuous plot with *Le Temple de la Paix* in 1685; Duché and Desmarest produced other examples in 1694 with *Les Amours de Momus*, then in 1698 with *Les Fêtes galantes*, which title was betting on the similarity with *L'Europe galante*.

European towns, at explicit moments in the annual calendar such as a fair or the wine harvest, flourished at the Comédie-Française and at the Comédie-Italienne⁴⁷. Regnard and Campra depict in their opera the events of a couple of days of the carnival in Venice: the fictional actions of the characters occur in a framework of real events that punctuate its plot. The etching placed by Ballard in 1703 on the front of the printed libretto reflects this very distinction. One sees the merry maskers in the foreground (three of them with tambourines) while street players perform in the background on a temporary stage supported by trestles (Figure 6).

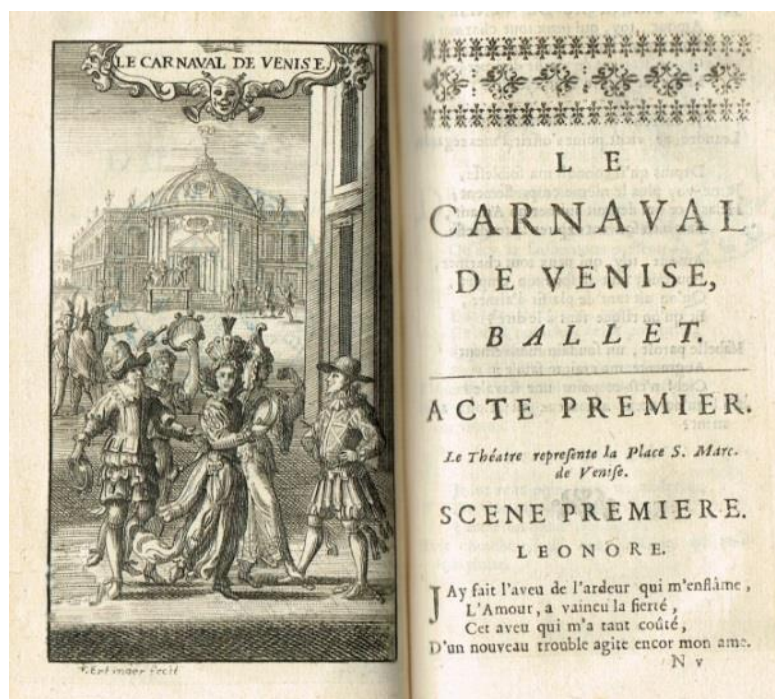


Figure 6 : Frontispiece and title page of *Le Carnaval de Venise*'s libretto, from *Recueil general des Opera representez par l'Académie Royale de Musique, depuis son établissement*, Paris, Ballard, 1703.

French etching by François Ertinger (1640–1710)⁴⁸.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

In Italy, like in France, the period of Carnival, from Christmas to Lent, was a traditional time for numerous entertainments and spectacles⁴⁹. The festivities of the city of Venice were the most famous for their variety and quantity; the fame of its carnival was such that it gave rise to the number of accounts and testimonies in the publications of the time. Among all the « particular enjoyments » generated by the carnival, the ones of Venice were far above « all what can be done elsewhere of the most sumptuous and gallant ». The carnival of Venice

⁴⁷ 1695: *Les Promenades de Paris, La Foire de Bézoins, Le Retour de la foire de Bezons, La Foire Saint-Germain, Les vendanges de Suresnes*; 1696: *Le Bourgeois de Falaise, Les Bains de la Porte Saint Bernard, Les Eaux de Bourbon, Les Momies d'Egypte, Le Moulin de Javelle*; 1698: *Les Curieux de Compiègne*; 1699: *Le Carnaval de Venise*. (This list is non-exhaustive).

⁴⁸ François Ertinger (1640–1710) engraved also frontispieces for *Le Théâtre Italien de Gherardi*. Paris: J.-B. Cusson & P. White, 1700. These engravings show a great care for transposing elements of the performance in a frontispiece and usually focus on the the last scene of the play.

⁴⁹ See: Tanguy, Camille. “Le Triomphe de la Folie sur la scène de l'Académie Royale de Musique Portrait d'une figure entre 1697 et 1718”. Thesis 2014. Université Paris-Sorbonne.

attracted such a quantity of visitors « from all sides of Europe » that the vast number of foreigners reached « more than sixty thousand people »⁵⁰.

The libretto of *Le Carnaval de Venise* offers a series of actions that follow rather exactly the order of the many events punctuating the carnival. This succession of typical occurrences, which appear in a specific time sequence, would have started at sunset and ended very late in the night. All of the various events of the carnival presented in the libretto of *Le Carnaval de Venise* are described in the same order in a book published by Alexandre Toussaint Limojon de Saint-Didier (1639–1689) in 1680, *La Ville et la République de Venise*⁵¹. The entertainments dramatized by Regnard include, as they did in Saint-Didier, an international gathering, a scene about gambling, a serenade, a feast for gondoliers, a night at the opera, and a masked ball. Stretching the order of these carnival festivities over two days, Regnard had planned the divertissements of his opera from a true documentary reconstruction point of view.

6.7 Water, Gondolas and Gondoliers

Regnard mostly places the action in somewhat generic scenes rather than specific Venetian locations, choosing to depict the striking element that makes Venice unique: the special relation between architecture and water. The climax of the opera takes place on « a square in Venice surrounded by sumptuous Palaces, numerous canals, filled with Gondolas », the boats that the French audience must have already associated immediately with Venice. Gondolas were such a symbol of the city that two, accompanied by four gondoliers, were offered to the King of France in 1674. Louis XIV added them to his fleet of small European ships, destined for the canal of the park of Versailles. The quarters set aside for the sailors of these boats, next to this French « Grand Canal », were baptized « la Petite Venise »⁵².

Aside from its function as pleasure boat, the gondola was also an object of prestige for France when an Ambassador was going to present his letters of introduction to the Doge. The design for the gondola built for the magnificent official entry in 1682 of the Comte d’Avaux, ambassador of France to Venice, appeared in the *Mercure Galant* of May 1683⁵³. According to that publication, the embroideries of the gondola were by Jean Berain (1640–1711), the chief designer in France at the time and the very man who would design the sets and costumes for

⁵⁰ *Mercure Galant*, Avril 1679. Paris: au Palais, pp. 118–123.

⁵¹ See: Limojon de Saint-Didier, Alexandre-Toussaint de. *La Ville et la République de Venise*. Paris: L. Billaine, 1680.

⁵² For “la Petite Venise”, see: Fennebresque, Juste. *La petite Venise: histoire d’une corporation nautique*. Paris: Picard et fils and Versailles: Bernard, 1899. For a 1696 plan of the buildings and list of personnel, see N°66, in: *Projets pour Versailles Dessins des Archives Nationales*. Paris: Archives Nationales, 1985, p. 57. See also: Halna du Fretay, Amélie. “La flottille du Grand Canal de Versailles à l’époque de Louis XIV: diversité, technicité et prestige” in *Bulletin du Centre de recherche du château de Versailles* [Online]. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/crcv/10312> ; DOI : 10.4000/crcv.10312 (Accessed 11 May 2018).

⁵³ For the design of the ambassador’s gondola, see: *Mercure Galant*, Mai 1683. Paris: au Palais, pp. 45–50 & Plate (this plate which is often missing from *Mercure Galant*’s surviving copies, is reproduced in the publication online mentioned in the previous note). For the reception of the French ambassador, see: *Mercure Galant*, Octobre 1682, *Première partie*. Paris: au Palais, pp. 172–191. For another design by Berain (sometimes attributed to Claude III Audran), see: « Décoration d’une gondole » in *Versailles à Stockholm, Dessins du Nationalmuseum, Peintures, Meubles et Arts Décoratifs des Collections Suédoises et Danoises*. Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1985, p. 53.

Le Carnaval de Venise. Although Berain's creations are usually well documented, we have very little information about the sets for the original production of the opera. The traditional urban scenery for comedy, created by painted houses on shutters placed in perspective, must have been supported by typical Venetian elements: the city's architectural uniqueness was brought into the realm of fantasy by the addition of an exceptional set element: we know for sure that a large backdrop showing a Venetian square « Fon de la plasse de Venise »⁵⁴ was painted in 1699.



Figure 7 : *Combats à coups de Poing* : Fist fight of Gondoliers in *Carte du gouvernement militaire de la Republique de Venise: l'état de ses revenus, de ses forces, et les différentes vûës de la place de St. Marc*, detail. Dutch etching from Henri Abraham Chatelain (1684–1743), *Atlas Historique, ou nouvelle introduction a l'histoire, a la chronologie & a la geographie ancienne & moderne*, Volume 2, Number 76, Amsterdam, 1705–1721. Collection of Gilbert Blin.

But considering the lack of surviving visual documentation for the Venetian sets of *Le Carnaval de Venise*, we can only speculate on the accuracy of the visual evocation of the City of Doges undertaken by Jean Berain.⁵⁵ The opera's libretto specified a large number of sets: the action takes place in seven different spaces. It seems however that the set of « Magnificent Palaces » and of « Numerous Canals », which is the location for the gondolier celebrations, was rather exceptional, but one may wonder how a stage full of water was allowing so many people to gather for the Gondoliers celebration⁵⁶. This rejoicing is an evocation of the traditional

⁵⁴ See: Campra, André. *Le Carnaval de Venise, Comédie lyrique*. Introduction by James R. Anthony, with a section on stage designs and costumes by Jérôme de La Gorce. {French Opera in the 17th and 18th Centuries/Vol. 17}. Stuyvesant, (NY): Pendragon Press, 1989, pp. XXIV & XXV. See also: La Gorce, Jérôme de. *Berain, Dessinateur du Roi Soleil*. Paris: Herscher, 1986, p. 96 and p. 101.

⁵⁵ See: Tessin le jeune, Nicodème and Cronström, Daniel. “Correspondance” (extraits), *Les Relations artistiques entre la France et la Suède, 1693-1718*. Stockholm: AB Egnellska Boktryckeriet, 1964, p. 175.

⁵⁶ The set I designed for my production (Boston, 2017) takes this space as the main space for the performance but solves the water issue by imagining that the lagoon has frost during the fierce winter, allowing performers to walk, and dance, on the iced canal, and therefore extending the play area. This is inspired by records referring to the winters of the early eighteenth century. See the anonymous painting, attributed sometimes to Gabriel

fistfight between the two main guilds of Gondoliers and brings the image of the bridge they were competing for, as a symbol of the domination over water. The fight was a yearly spectacle in Venice taking place on the Saint Barnaba Bridge until 1705⁵⁷, and it is likely that Berain used the numerous engravings depicting it as a source for inspiration (Figure 7).

6.8 Costumes and Characters

Among the nine⁵⁸ engravings by Nicolas Bonnard that are known to depict costumes from the 1699 production of *Le Carnaval de Venise*, the one which depicts « Rodolphe, the jealous man of the opera » gives many clues about the opera as a whole. The design for this « Noble Venetian in love with Isabelle » offers an interesting key to the conception of the character (Figure 8). Notwithstanding the great ornamental richness suitable for a noble character, this costume has no resemblance to a contemporary outfit from the Venice of that period. In fact, the costume for Rodolphe makes the character resemble one from *commedia dell'arte*. It is a fanciful dress with outdated elements such as a ruff and hat that give the costume the appearance of belonging to an earlier time. It may be a carnival disguise, but more surely it is the costume of a theatrical type, as the caption indicates: the jealous one. His identity is very clearly stated: « Rodolphe ou le jaloux de l'Opéra/ Noble vénitien amoureux d'Isabelle ». The character type, « le jaloux de l'Opéra », suggests a parallel with *Il Geloso* de la Comédie, a character found in numerous comedies since the sixteenth century. Finally, the mention of Isabelle in the title, the usual name for the « jeune première » of the Comédie-Italienne until 1695⁵⁹, brings with it the idea of a troupe with established relationships, close to the ones found in Italian comedy, Isabelle being the character of the first female lover in *Le Carnaval de Venise*.

As with Isabelle's, the first male lover's name is taken from Italian comedy. Léandre, whose Latin name comes from Greek mythology, is a very evocative choice: every night Leander swam across the sea to meet Hero, but he ultimately drowned when a storm arose one evening. When Hero saw his corpse on the shore she threw herself into the waters and perished. Also unwillingly provoking, with the fake news of his death, a suicidal attempt from his lover, in *Le Carnaval de Venise*, Léandre is defined as a « cavalier français ». ⁶⁰ This amorous

Bella (1730-1799), 'Frozen Lagoon at Fondamenta Nuove in 1708,' circa 1708–1709, oil on canvas. Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venezia.

⁵⁷ See: Urban, Lina; Romanelli, Giandomenico; Gandolfi, Fiora. *Venise en fêtes*. Paris: Éditions du Chêne, 1992, p. 119.

⁵⁸ Jérôme de la Gorce has identified eight of these engravings, but there is a ninth one: a *Castelane*, wrongly attributed to *Amadis de Grece*, which is clearly the *Castelane* appearing in the third act of *Le Carnaval de Venise*. The closeness between *Castelane* and *Castillane* led this print to be mislabeled and badly recorded (*Amadis de Grece* opens after the end of the performances of *Le Carnaval de Venise* and has some Spanish characters). For the first eight engravings, see: Campura, André. *Le Carnaval de Venise, Comédie lyrique. Introduction by James R. Anthony, with a section on stage designs and costumes by Jérôme de La Gorce*. Stuyvesant (NY): Pendragon Press, 1989. For the picture of the "Castelane dans Amadis de Grèce", see the copy hold by the Bibliothèque nationale de France: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84073342.r=Bonnart%20Robertamadis%20amadis?rk=42918;4>

⁵⁹ The stock character of Isabelle takes its name from the renowned actress Isabella Canali Andreini (1562-1604). See: Romana de' Angelis, Francesca. *La divina Isabella. Vita straordinaria di una donna del Cinquecento*. Firenze: Sansoni, 1991. Isabella was also a distinguished singer, see: Wilbourne, Emily. *Seventeenth-Century Opera and the Sound of the Commedia dell' Arte*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2016.

⁶⁰ For the definition of Cavalier, Furetière wrote (we underline) « Soldat qui sert & qui combat à cheval. Il est encore distingué du fantassin, en ce qu'on l'appelle maistre. Une telle compagnie étoit de 40. maistres ou de 40. cavaliers. Ce mot vient du Latin caballus. CAVALIER, signifie aussi, un Gentilhomme qui porte l'espée, & qui

figure may have worn a French outfit, with a cut close to that of a military man of the army of the French king, but one also typical of the first lover, a character type of French comedy, which became fashionable during the Nine Years' War, and of which Regnard made considerable use in his plays for the Comédie-Française⁶¹.



Figure 8 : *Rodolphe, ou le Jaloux de l'Opéra. Noble Venitien Amoureux d'Isabelle, du Carnaval de Venise*
French etching by Robert (1652–1733) and Nicolas Bonnart (1637–1718),
after the costume design of Jean I Berain (1640–1711) for the creation of *Le Carnaval de Venise*, 1699.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

Léonore is the last of the only four characters who were given actual names by Regnard. This opera could be the first use of the name for the role of the unfortunate lover, but one that many operas would use in the decades to follow. More specifically, the name Leonore is one that had also been bestowed upon many Princesses of Habsburg,⁶² and added

est habillé en homme de guerre. C'est un brave Cavalier, un honneste Cavalier. Les Cavaliers sont communs en Italie, à cause qu'il y a plusieurs Ordres de Chevalerie » in Furetière, Antoine. *Dictionnaire Universel, Tome I*. 1690.

⁶¹ The costume for Bellecour (1725–1778) dans le rôle de Valère du *Joueur* de Jean-François Regnard (1655–1710) on the engraving after Fesch (1738–1778) et Whirsker (17??-17??) shows a traditional uniform of a « cavalier ». See: Huthwohl, Joël. *Comédiens & Costumes des Lumières, Miniatures de Fesch et Whirsker, Collection de la Comédie-Française*. Moulins: Centre National du costume de scène, 2011, p. 169.

⁶² Eleanor of Austria may refer to: Archduchesses of Austria by birth: Eleanor of Austria (1498–1558), Eleanor of Austria Duchess of Mantua (1534–1594), Archduchess Eleanor (1582–1620), Eleanor of Austria, Queen of Poland (1653–1697). But also Archduchess of Austria by marriage: Eleanor of Scotland (1433–1480), wife of Sigismund, Archduke of Austria. Eleanor of Portugal, Holy Roman Empress (1434–1467), wife of Emperor Frederick III; Eleonor Gonzaga (1598–1655), wife of Emperor Ferdinand II, Eleanor Gonzaga (1630–1686), wife of Emperor Ferdinand III.

to the fact Rodolphe was the name of many Austrian rulers,⁶³ it suggests another level of identification. The attempt to associate Austrian names with the villains plotting the death of the French character and opposing his union with the Venetian lady adds a possible political dimension to the events of the opera. Even in the light-hearted plot of *Le Carnaval de Venise*, subtle minds in touch with the current diplomatic situation could read the royal wish for the union of France and Venice, despite Austrian trouble makers.

6.9 Singing in French and Italian

The music had to be as ambitious as the libretto, and Campra, born in Aix-en-Provence and of Savoy origins (his father was native from Piedmont), was the man of the situation. Nine years after the premiere of *Le Carnaval de Venise*, the composer, in his *Premier livre de cantates françaises*, explained the Italian influence on his music. Campra, in the foreword of this 1708 score, declared that he wished « to mix with the delicacy of French Music, the vivacity of Italian Music ». He clarified that in order to manage this mix of French and Italian tastes, although he was « sure as well as others of the merits of the Italian », he attached importance « above all to keep the beauty of singing, the expression & our [French] way to recite, which is, following [his] opinion, the best »⁶⁴.



Figure 9 : *Gabriel Vincent Thevenard, Pensionnaire du Roi pour la Musique Né à Paris, le 10 Août 1669.*
French etching by Georg Friedrich Schmidt (1712–1785), after Charles-Étienne Geuslain (1685–1765).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The role of Léandre, which should have been written for a haute-contre or a tenor following the French casting tradition established by Lully for « The young, gallant Heroes, &

⁶³ From the Germanic name Hrodulf, which was derived from the elements “hrod”, fame, glory and “wulf”, wolf. It was borne famously by the Habsburg ruler of the Holy Roman Empire and Austria, Rudolf II (1552–1612).

⁶⁴ See: *Cantates Françaises Mêlées de Symphonies, Par Monsieur Campra, Livre Premier.* Paris: Christophe Ballard, 1708.

who must be loved »⁶⁵ was in fact composed for a *basse taille* (baritone) by Campra, indicating that the composer clearly had a specific performer in mind. Therefore, it is one role in *Le Carnaval de Venise* for which we may have a hint as to who played the role, since the libretto failed to provide a cast list. Gabriel Vincent Thevenard (1669–1741) was the leading singer of the Académie Royale de Musique at the time. In 1705, an opera enthusiast wrote: « Thevenard has been in possession of the roles of the first lovers in Paris for seven or eight years, and he plays them so well and so tenderly that the composers of the new operas write their first roles only for him. »⁶⁶. Thevenard was notable for playing roles that made use of his skills at making the declamatory recitatives fluid, and the portrait showing him in a comedy costume reveals that this fluidity was also much appreciated in a light repertoire (Figure 9). For *opéra-ballets* and for *tragédies*, he became a favorite singer of Campra, creating roles in at least fourteen works of the composer. The score of *Le Carnaval de Venise* is primarily in the French style, but Regnard gives Campra many opportunities to compose Italian vocal music, creating situations which, thanks to their dramatic necessity, offer Italian verses.

The origins of the serenade as a song performed by a lover, who accompanied himself on a plucked instrument and sang to his beloved from under her windows, found its way naturally to *Le Carnaval de Venise*. Regnard skillfully mixes the two languages during this gallant episode: Léandre starts alone in his mother tongue, French, and is then joined by two Venetian musicians to perform an Italian trio. This double-language structure had previously been used in various *Ballets de cour*⁶⁷ but in *La Sérénade en forme d'opéra*, performed in Fontainebleau in 1682 in front of Louis XIV, the two idioms were associated in a serenade. A testimony to the union of French and Italian tastes, this « monster » was then elaborated by two composers, the French Michel de Lalande and the Italian Paolo Lorenzani (1640–1713), each taking charge of the music of his own country⁶⁸. In *Le Carnaval de Venise*, Campra manages the feat of writing both types of music, giving another proof of his abilities to master one and the other. The slow movement of the trio, although setting Italian verses, is close to a *sommeil*, the sleeping scene of French opera. This type of musical writing had been inherited from earlier Italian models, but Lully knew how to make it his own, and the *sommeil* became a specialty of French opera—the most famous one was in *Atys*—typically with a characteristic instrumentation that included recorders.

⁶⁵ « nos tailles & nos hautes-contre dont les voix sont aussi hautes & aussi flexibles que la nature souffre & veut qu'elles le soient, sont les Heros jeunes, galans, & qui doivent etre aimés » in *Le Cerf de La Viéville*, Jean-Louis. *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique française, Première Partie*. Bruxelles: F. Foppens, 1705, p. 122.

⁶⁶ « Thevenard est en possession depuis 7 ou 8. ans de jouer les premiers Amans à Paris, & il les jouë si bien & si tendrement que les Compositeurs des nouveaux Opera ne font plus leurs premiers rôles que pour lui. Je me suis tantôt aperçuë dans *Tancredi* que Campra, qui doit sçavoir beaucoup de Musique Italienne, n'est gueres de leur goût sur l'avantage des voix hautes, & une grande inclination pour les basses » in *Le Cerf de La Viéville*, Jean-Louis. *Comparaison ... Première Partie*. Bruxelles: F. Foppens, 1705, pp. 114-115. This last remark stating that Campra has a great inclination for basses is corroborated by the vocal cast of *Le Carnaval de Venise* where no less than 4 on the 5 major male roles are for Basse-Tailles. Only the role of Orfeo is for a high tessitura, and, as evocative of the Venetian opera stage, should be close to the tessitura of a Castrato.

⁶⁷ Three examples are relevant to our corpus: *Le Ballet de Psyché ou de la Puissance de l'Amour* (1656), where the hell scene was sung in Italian and *Psyché* (1671) where the « plainte » was sung in Italian. *Le Ballet de la Raillerie* (1659) where a « Duo de la Musique Française et de la Musique Italienne » was coupling a French singer and an Italian one and mixing in the same duo both idioms and musical languages.

⁶⁸ « Sérénade en forme d'Opéra, meslée de Musique Française, & de Comédie et de Musique Italienne (...) La Musique Française avoit esté faite par Mr de la Lande (...) Mr Laurenzani estoit Auteur de la Musique Italienne. » in *Mercure Galant dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin, Novembre 1682*, Paris: au Palais, 1682, pp. 344 & 345.

6.10 Serenade and Opera

Regnard was surely a fellow thinker: had not he already imagined a similar situation, and even wrote the music, in one of his plays, *La Sérénade*, for his successful début at the Comédie-Française on July 3, 1694? In this « Comedy in one act & in prose by M. Regnard, with a divertissement, Music of the same, arranged by M. Gilliers »⁶⁹, the dramatist presented a gray-bearded suitor, who, about to get married, asks for the assistance of his son's valet, Scapin. He wants the servant to help him to « give a little serenade to [his] mistress ». Scapin answers right away that he is the man for the job: « A serenade you say? You could not do better than asking me. Italian music, French one, I am a man with two hands ». The music that follows is an example of the pleasing mix of singing of these two nations: Venetian singers share the stage with French musicians.



Figure 10: *La Sérénade*

Anonymous French etching for the frontispiece of Regnard, *La Sérénade*, Paris, 1695.
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The practice of the Serenade was ancient, but the assassination attempt that ensues in both the play and the opera was modern. We know that the Comédie-Française had to rent two more pistols to stage it, as the weaponry it had available lacked adequate modern firearms⁷⁰. The scene, with a contemporary feel, where the pistols are used was chosen for the

⁶⁹ « *La Sérénade, Comédie en un acte & en prose par M. Regnard, avec un divertissement, Musique du même, retouchée par M. Gilliers.* » See: Parfaict, Claude and François. *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris: contenant toutes les pièces qui ont été représentées jusqu'à présent sur les différens théâtres françois, & sur celui de l'Académie royale de musique, Volume 5.* Paris: Rozet, 1767, p. 126. Jean-Claude Gilliers (1667-1737), trained at Notre-Dame de Paris and employed by this institution at the same time as Campra, was also a double bass player at the Comédie-Française, for which he composed the music of many of Dancourt's plays. Besides *La Sérénade*, his collaboration with Regnard is documented for *Attendez-moi sous l'orme*, in 1700, and for *Les Folies amoureuses*, in 1704. The catalog of his work remains to be established.

⁷⁰ See: *Registres de la Comédie Française*. 3 Juillet 1694.
http://hyperstudio.mit.edu/cfrp/flip_books/R34/index.html#page/151/mode/1up

illustration in the first edition of the play (Figure 10). While the dominos, made especially for the show, and the masks are well in tune with the atemporal musical offering, the pistols anchor the play in the modern age, far away from the blades in use in the classical comedy and tragedy inspired by the Greek and Romans figures of Antiquity. There is enough evidence to assume that this desire for modern *couleur locale* was also present on the stage of the Paris Opera for *Le Carnaval de Venise*. That is how this opera differs most from its predecessors: by eschewing the world of myths and legends displayed in the operas of Quinault and Lully.

The desire to integrate Italian poetic and musical elements takes as its primary form an Italian opera in miniature, performed inside the final act of *Le Carnaval de Venise*. Knowing the curiosity the French had for the lyrical stage of Venice, the city to whom « one owes the invention of operas »⁷¹, the authors inserted a condensed Italian opera into their work, which they entitled *Orfeo nell'inferi*. The theme of Orpheus, and his quest for his beloved Eurydice in the underworld, was the subject of the earliest Italian operas by composers but French composers revisited the theme later in the century⁷². This mythical figure represented the union of poetry and music; his songs, which he accompanied with his lyre, had the fabulous power to charm animals, people, divinities, and even nature. In the episode of the myth used most often in the operas, the very one that Regnard and Campra chose to depict, it is Pluto, king of the Underworld, who is seduced by Orpheus's lyre. This seductive effect of music, already explored in the serenade of the previous act, is not new in opera history, but its relationship with the nationality of the music brings it closer to an aesthetic debate. Can the choice of this theme be seen as an allegory of the power of Italian music over the French audience⁷³? It is difficult to say for sure, as we do not have any document about its reception. It may also be possible that the Italian opera inserted in *Le Carnaval de Venise* was of a parodic nature, as ten years before, Regnard had written a comic play on the Orpheus quest for the Comédie-Italienne: *La Descente de Mezzetin aux Enfers*. We also know that Campra will later reuse some of the music he wrote for *Orfeo nell'inferi* in a comical piece⁷⁴. Besides, though nothing in the Italian verses Regnard composed for *Orfeo nell'inferi* reads as fully burlesque, and though Campra's music for his « Italian opera » fits the declamatory style suited to this idiom, the end of their version of Orpheus' story— with Pluto ordering his court to « sing, rejoice, dance and laugh » to entertain Euridice— offers an unconventional ending and leans towards unrestrained enjoyment. The dances of gamboling sprites, the « spirit folletti », bring clearly the all *Orfeo nell'inferi* to a festive climax. Before the opera starts, Regnard takes great care to have Léandre

⁷¹ This snapshot of Limojon de Saint-Didier is interesting because it shows how much the business opera, the way it appeared in Venice in the 1630s, was starting to dominate the conception of opera, far from his academic and princely Florentine debuts. See: Limojon de Saint-Didier, Alexandre-Toussaint de. *La Ville et la République de Venise*. Paris: L. Billaine, 1680, p. 294.

⁷² Marc-Antoine Charpentier wrote a secular cantata, *Orphée descendant aux enfers*, in 1683, and a few years later, started an opera, *La Descente d'Orphée aux enfers*. The subject had also inspired Louis Lully, the son of Jean-Baptiste, who composed the opera *Orphée*, performed at the Paris Opera in 1690. See Chapter 3.

⁷³ See: Tanguy, Camille. « Le Carnaval de Venise, l'imaginaire renouvelé de Regnard et Campra » in Regnard, Jean-François and Campra, André. *Le Carnaval de Venise, Livret de 1699, présenté par Camille Tanguy*. Paris: Académie Desprez, 2007, pp. 7–47.

⁷⁴ Harris-Warrick, Rebecca. *Dance and Drama in French Baroque Opera, A History*. Cambridge Studies in Opera. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, p. 260 and p. 285, note 51.

declare that the opera is « given to the people »⁷⁵, maybe suggesting a class and cultural disdain from the French cavalier toward a popular Venetian form of entertainment.

The « people »⁷⁶ is indeed very present in *Le Carnaval de Venise*. Starting by the « ouvriers » of the prologue to the different factions of the Gondoliers, there is definitively a strong presence of the lower classes in *Le Carnaval de Venise*, an element of modernity quite different from the shepherds or deities, the stock characters of French opera since Quinault. But does this presence stop at the end of Act III when we move to the realm of the myth of Orpheus? Like Léandre words suggested, this unruly presence of « le peuple » in the Venetian opera house is confirmed by a French witness of the time: « nothing is more singular than the pleasant blessings and ridiculous wishes that the gondoliers, who are on the parterre, make to the good singers at the end of all their scenes. They shout with all their strength: Be blessed! And be blessed the father who bred you! But these acclamations are not always contained in the terms of modesty. These scoundrels say with impunity everything that comes to their minds, being sure to make the assembly laugh, rather than displease it »⁷⁷.

Regnard's indication at the beginning of Act III stipulates: «The Theater represents a Venetian Piazza surrounded by magnificent Palaces, where there are many Canals full of Gondolas. »⁷⁸ The transition between the exterior space of the canals, where the Gondolier's feast took place, to the inside of the opera house is one of the most effective change of sets but is also very informative about the staging. « While the Violins play the entr'acte, we see a theater enclosed by a curtain descend onto the Stage, which covers all we saw before. What remains of the space up to the Orchestra contains many ranks of Loges full of different people seated to see an Opera. »⁷⁹ This didaskalia integrates time, space and most importantly, people. On the *sinfonia* in three movements Campra composed in Italian style for the entr'acte, the space was changing under the eyes of the audience. The set Berain had designed, known to us thank to a drawing by his hand, shows exactly the description by Regnard of these ranks of

⁷⁵ « on doit donner au peuple en ce jour favorable/ un spectacle où d' Orphée on retrace la Fable,/ Un Bal pompeux doit suivre ces plaisirs,/ le tumulte & la nuit serviront nos désirs. » in *Le Carnaval de Venise*, Act III, Scene 6.

⁷⁶ Furetière gives all the depth of the meanings of the world: « Nom collectif. Assemblée de personnes qui habitent un pays, qui compose une nation. [...] Se dit particulièrement des habitans d'une ville. [...] Se dit encore plus particulièrement par opposition à ceux qui sont nobles, riches, ou éclairés. [...] Se dit aussi d'une multitude de gens.» in Furetière, Antoine. *Dictionnaire Universel, Tome I*. 1690.

⁷⁷ « Ceux qui composent la musique de l'opéra s'attachent à faire finir les scenes des principaux acteurs par des airs qui charment et qui enlèvent, afin d'attirer les applaudissements de tout le théâtre. Cela réussit si bien selon leur intention, qu'on n'entend que des *benissimo* de mille voix à la fois; mais rien n'est plus singulier que les plaisantes bénédictions et les souhaits ridicules que les gondoliers, qui sont au parterre, font aux bonnes chanteuses à la fin de toutes leurs scenes. Ils crient de toutes leurs forces: *Sia tu benedetta! Benedetto el padre che te genero!* Mais ces acclamations ne sont pas toujours renfermées dans les termes de la modestie. Ces canailles disent impunément tout ce qui leur vient à l'esprit, étant assurés de faire rire l'assemblée, plutôt que lui déplaire. » in Limojon de Saint-Didier, Alexandre-Toussaint de. *La Ville et la République de Venise*. Paris: L. Billaine, 1680, p. 298.

⁷⁸ « Le Théâtre représente une Place de Venise environnée de Palais magnifiques, où se rendent quantité de Canaux couverts de Gondoles. » in *Le Carnaval de Venise*, Act III, Scene 6.

⁷⁹ « Pendant que les Violons jouent l'entre-Acte, on voit descendre un Théâtre fermé d'une toile, qui occupe toute l'étendue du premier. Ce qui reste d'espace jusqu'à l'Orquestre [sic] contient plusieurs rangs de Loges pleines de différentes personnes placées pour voir un Opera. » in *Le Carnaval de Venise*, Act III, Scene 6.

loge⁸⁰. The question to know if the audience on the drawing, with their long « tabarro », would be eventually figured by real actors or painted like the rest of the set⁸¹, is answered by the Orfeo Stage and the large space in front of it. These are empty on the drawing as it was eventually occupied by stage performers, both the Orfeo cast and audience members, including Léandre and Isabelle. Here again, with this suggested staging, Regnard shows that what he is integrating in his *Carnaval de Venise* is not only an Italian opera but the performance of one in Venice, where gondoliers interacted with opera divas and castrati in the most comical manner.

6.11 French and Venetian balls

In his libretto, Regnard takes great care to insert regularly choreographic sequences, and, to offer a rich diversity destined to raise up a renewed interest in the audience, he is creating situation which are bringing different styles of dance. Behind the prologue, whose dances are in the French style inherited from the Lullian tradition of music and choreography, the following acts shows a great variety of real social situations which in turn bring different styles of dance. In the first act, foreigners perform exotic dances from the nations, followed in the second act by gamblers and players in the scene of Fortune, who give some allegorical dances, in the tradition of the old court ballet. In the last act, popular dances with Venetian gondoliers are followed by grotesque theatrical dances in the *Orfeo*. Following the custom in Venice as well as in Versailles to end the festivities of the carnival with a magnificent masquerade, Regnard and Campra concluded their opera by incorporating a masked ball. And, because the scene of social dance is taking place during a masked ball, it integrates all others: dancers disguises were ranging from all kinds of social categories and were also inspired by the gears of various countries but were also nourished by literature, classic, with numerous references to mythology or modern, with its famous fictional characters⁸². Dancers wearing masks were often making their entrance in the ball as a coherent group introducing themselves with a special dance in accord with their disguised identity.

For the « Dernier Divertissement » of *Le Carnaval de Venise*, « The Stage represents a magnificent Room, prepared to give a Ball. The character of Carnival appears leading with him a company of Masked figures of various Nations ». The foreigners who flooded the city at the beginning of the carnival day meet again in the opera house to finish it with a « *Bal sérieux* ». Guillaume-Louis Pécour, dancing master of the Académie Royale de Musique and choreographer of *Le Carnaval de Venise*, was in charge of organizing the structure of this long dancing sequence. By the choice and the order of these dances, nothing reflected the French

⁸⁰ This design is reproduced in: Campra, André. *Le Carnaval de Venise, Comédie lyrique. Introduction by James R. Anthony, with a section on stage designs and costumes by Jérôme de La Gorce*. Stuyvesant (NY): Pendragon Press, 1989.

⁸¹ For the 2017 production in Boston I first imagined having characters in the auditorium of the theatre we were performing in, and therefore mixing with the present audience. For safety reasons and architectural constraints, I eventually mixed the stage performers with the audience painted on the set.

⁸² To see an example of a compendium of 205 masked ball costumes, see: *Neu-eröffneter Masquen-Saal, oder: Der verkleideten heydnischen Götter, Göttinnen und vergötterter Helden Theatralischer Tempel, darinnen in mehr als 200. Kupfer-Stichen vorgestellt wird, wie solche Gottbeiten der Alten, bey jetziger Zeit in Opern, Comædien, Aufzügen und Masqueraden eingekleidet und präsentiert werden können ... Aus allerhand sowohl heydnisch- als christlichen Büchern colligret, und zu finden bey Johann Messelreuter ...* Bayreuth: Gedruckt bey Joh. Lobern, 1723. See : http://www.slub-dresden.de/sammlungen/digitale-sammlungen/werkansicht/cache.off?tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=57715

court more than this serious ball⁸³, and Pécour was able to use his court knowledge, as he was also « Maître à danser de Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne », as the caption of his new portrait from the time proudly proclaims (Figure 11). It seems that Pécour's dancing-master duties to the Duchess included choreographing her masquerades at court⁸⁴, where he introduced Venetian dances, while *Le Carnaval de Venise* was being performed in Paris. As Dangeau once again witnesses, « Thursday, February 19, 1699, at Marly: There was a masquerade of the wolf's hunt which succeeded very well. There were entrées from Siamese, Basque dances, Venetian dances, and all the prettiest in the world »⁸⁵.



Figure 11 : Guillaume-Louis Pécour (1653–1729)
*Louis Pécour Pensionnaire du Roi, Compositeur des ballets de l'Académie Royale de Musique,
 et Maître à danser de Mad.e la Duchesse de Bourgogne*
 French etching by François Chéreau l'aîné (1680–1729), after Robert Levrac, dit Tournières (1667–1752).
 Collection of Gilbert Blin.

This aristocratic ball is interrupted when Carnival, personified in the libretto as an allegorical character, wants « to add to these games a new Dance » and to « double once more » the general jubilation. The stage is then invaded by « Comic masked characters » and « figures of the same spirit ». What did these new masked figures look like? The libretto does not give more details: it is Campra who reveals their identities with a « chaconne » and a specific tune titled « Air des Masques Chinois ». For the connoisseur, these two dances, whose choreographies could be composed by Pécour more freely than the serious ball dances, strongly evoke the distinctive fantasy of Italian theater. The chaconne was a featured element of the French Lullist *tragédies*, but it could also serve to stage comical Italian characters in

⁸³ Harris-Warrick, Rebecca. "Ballroom dancing at the court of Louis XIV" in *Early Music. Vol. 14, N°1*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 40–49.

⁸⁴ Harris-Warrick, Rebecca and Marsh, Carol G. *Musical Theatre at the Court of Louis XIV "Le Mariage de la Grosse Cathos"*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

⁸⁵ Jeudi 19 Février 1699, à Marly : « Il y eut une mascarade de chasse du loup qui réussit fort bien. Il y eut des entrées de Siamois, des danses de Basques, des danses à la vénitienne, et tout cela le plus joli du monde. Le bal dura jusqu'à 1 heure. » in *Journal du marquis de Dangeau*. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1854-1860, tome 7, p. 29.

comédies-ballets like the famous « Chaconne des Scaramouches, Trivelins et Arlequins » from *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* by Molière and Lully⁸⁶. Was the chaconne of *Le Carnaval de Venise* danced by one of the dancers who specialized in the role of Harlequin⁸⁷? It is almost certain as, like in the Italian tradition, performers would stay faithful to a character, or a comic type, for most of their career. In 1700 during a Chinese masquerade in Marly, « Des Moulins [Dumoulin] of the opera, entertained a lot in a Dance grotesque, representing a Pagode. »⁸⁸ and this may well have been the one of *Carnaval de Venise*.

6.12 World and worldly visions

The importance of the acting of the performers may be a key for understanding the presence of « Masques Chinois » in the following « Air ». The text is clear: these characters are not real Chinese people like we have seen Slaves so far through the piece, but characters disguised in Chinese costumes. The jokes in Regnard's plays, which could be rather tedious when read, give way to fantasy when embodied on stage⁸⁹. His comedies largely exploit the impostures of the servants who pretend to be someone else through disguise⁹⁰; then, like in *Le Carnaval de Venise*, disguises multiply, and the clownish verve grows even more when Regnard introduces these comic characters who are themselves in disguises. On this point the engravings of costumes by Berain provide an explanation. The « Chinois dansant à l'Opera du Carnaval de Venise », is represented with mandarin mustaches, his head dressed with a « parasol », and wears a costume with geometrical patterns reminiscent of the lozenges traditionally associated with the Harlequin costume. Comical Chinese figures, called « Pagodes », were indeed often dancing side by side with ludicrous Italian figures on the stage of the Comédie-Italienne. But more interesting, actors of the Comédie-Italienne were retaining their type character, including their mask and distinctive costumes, even when playing other characters and roles. It is therefore the characters from *commedia dell'arte*, under their « Comic Masks », who dance in this scene, and Pécour had here the opportunity to imagine a

⁸⁶ See: Laurenti, Jean-Noël. «Le contexte des danses d'Arlequin dans les comédies-ballets de Molière» in *Arlequin danseur au tournant du XVIIIe siècle, Atelier-rencontre et recherche Nantes, 14-15 mai 2004. Juin 2005, N°1. Annales de l'Association pour un Centre de Recherche sur les Arts du Spectacle aux XVIIe et XVIIIe s.* Villereau: ACRAS, juin 2005, pp. 78–83. See in the same book: Porot, Bertrand. «Les ressorts du comique musical: les chaconnes d'Arlequin au tournant du XVIIIe siècle», pp. 63–81. See also: Tanguy, Camille. «Les divertissements dansés par des personnages de la commedia dell'arte dans l'opéra-ballet entre 1695 et 1718, l'exemple des *Saisons* et des *Fêtes vénitienes*», pp. 114–119.

⁸⁷ From 1700, at least, some dancers of the Opera specialize in roles of character, just as the Italian comedians interpreted the same character. The four Dumoulin brothers' careers offer some interesting perspective about roles and styles. See: Harris-Warrick, Rebecca. *Dance and Drama in French Baroque Opera, A History*. Cambridge Studies in Opera. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 387-390.

⁸⁸ « Le 7 Janvier [1700] il y eut un bal à Marly qui commença par un divertissement meslé de Musique et de Danses, dont le titre estoit *Le Roy de la Chine*. Ce Roy y estoit porté dans un Palanquin, & precedé d'une trentaine de Chinois, tant Musiciens chantans, que de Joueurs d'instrumens. Le Sr des Moulins de l'Opera, y divertit beaucoup dans un Danse grotesque, represent un Pagode. » in *Mercurie Galant, Février 1700*. Paris: au Palais, p. 154.

⁸⁹ Garapon, Robert. *La fantaisie verbale et le comique dans le théâtre français du Moyen Age à la fin du XVIIe siècle*. Paris : Armand Colin, 1957.

⁹⁰ See: Mazouer, Charles, *La théâtre d'Arlequin: comédiens italiens et comédies en France au XVIIe siècle*. Fasano : Schena editore & Paris : presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2002, p. 226.

choreography mixing the French vocabulary of the « Danse Noble » with the grotesque style of Italian pantomime. The *Mercure Galant* gives us a hint of the comic capacity of these choreographies and their presence in the Masquerades created by Pécour for the Duchesse de Bourgogne: « There were, during the three days of each journey, several masquerades every day, all of which had a name and a subject. Thus they could pass for little, very ingenious comedies, represented only by actions and steps ».⁹¹



Figure 12: *Habit de Mandarin Chinois*
French etching by Jean Mariette (1660–1742), after the design of Jean I Berain (1640–1711),
for a masquerade costume for the Duc de Bourgogne (1683–1712).
Collection of Gilbert Blin.

The dance of the Chinese masks that takes place at the end of the piece is in the style of these « little, very ingenious comedies ». Arlequin is disguised as a « pagode », one of these decorative figures that add fantasy and color to the mystery of unknown cults⁹². The Far East was starting to be in high fashion in Europe at this time⁹³. For his début at the Comédie-Italienne in 1692, Regnard presented *Les Chinois*, in which Arlecchino disguised himself as a

⁹¹ « Il y a eu, pendant les trois jours qu'a duré chaque voyage, plusieurs Mascarades chaque jour, qui toute avaient un nom & un sujet. Ainsi elles pouvaient passer pour de petites Comédies très ingénieuses & représentées seulement par des actions et par des pas. Il y en a eu de toute sortes de caractères, et ce divertissement a été complet, parce qu'outre ces Mascarades il y eu bal tous les jours, & que rien n'a manqué de tout ce qui peut plaire aux yeux, flatter l'oreille & satisfaire le goust » in *Mercure Galant*, Février 1699, Paris: au Palais, pp. 285–286.

⁹² « Les curieux donnent aussi le nom de Pagode aux petites idoles de porcelaine qui viennent de Chine » in Furetière, Antoine. *Dictionnaire universel ... Tome III*. 1690.

⁹³ For an introduction about the vogue of taste for China, see: Jarry, Madeleine. *Chinoiseries, Le rayonnement du goût chinois sur les arts décoratifs des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*. Paris : Office du Livre et Vilo, 1981.

Chinese doctor coming out of a Chinese box followed by Mezztin as a pagode⁹⁴. The taste for China was encouraged by the recent return of the Jesuit Louis-Daniel Lecomte (1655–1728) from his mission in the east. The publication in 1696 of his controversial book about Chinese beliefs soon transformed a scholarly interest into a widespread fashion for *Chinoiserie*.⁹⁵

In 1699, Lecomte became the confessor of the Duchesse de Bourgogne, whose taste for China could already be seen in the gift she received from her husband in December 1698: a luxurious Chinese box containing a tapestry kit⁹⁶. The appearance of a Chinese on the stage of *Le Carnaval de Venise* must have excited the young Duc de Bourgogne, since we know that for the following carnival⁹⁷, during a masked ball at court, the eighteen-year-old grandson of Louis XIV ordered and wore a Chinese costume, designed by Jean Berain⁹⁸ (Figure 12). Maybe the Jesuit had something to do with it as we know that around this date the Duchesse de Bourgogne asked a confessor to design for her a Chinese lady's costume to appear in a ball given in February 1700⁹⁹. While the caption of the engraving by Bonnard showing the costume

⁹⁴ « On apporte un cabinet de la Chine, dans lequel est Arlequin en docteur chinois. » and « Une pagode c'est...une pagode. Que diable voulez-vous que je vous dise. » in *Les Chinois*, Act II, Scene 4. See: *Les Chinois in Œuvres complètes de Regnard, Texte établi par Charles Georges Thomas Garnier*. Paris: E.A. Lequien, 1820, tome sixième, p. 36 and p. 40. *Les Chinois* was created on December 13th, 1692 at the Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne, Rue Mauconseil.

⁹⁵ Lecomte in his *Nouveaux Mémoires sur l'État présent de la Chine*, printed in Paris in 1696, 1697, and 1701 defended the sentiment of the Jesuits that the Chinese have always known and worshiped the true God. But disputes had arisen between the Jesuits and the Society of Foreign Missions (Société des Missions étrangères de Paris), concerning religious ceremonies practiced in China. The Jesuits tolerated them, the missionaries of the Foreign Missions rejected them as idolater. Lecomte developed his ideas in a 1700 letter to the Duc du Maine *Sur les Cérémonies de la Chine*. The directors of the seminaries of the Foreign Missions in Paris referred these *Nouveaux Mémoires* and the letter *Sur les Cérémonies de la Chine* to the Court of Rome and to the Faculty of Theology of Paris, who censured, on October 18th, 1700, nineteen excerpts from both books and condemned most of the propositions as false and erroneous. See: *Louis Lecomte, Un jésuite à Pékin. Nouveaux mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine, 1687–1692, texte établi, annoté et présenté par Frédérique Touboul- Bouyeure*. Paris: Phébus, 1990.

⁹⁶ On the December 8th, 1698, « Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne a fait un présent à Madame la duchesse de Bourgogne, très-galant et très-agréable, d'une cassette de la Chine dans laquelle il y a tout ce qui peut servir aux personnes qui aiment travailler en tapisserie, et au milieu de la cassette une boîte en or avec des diamants, au revers de laquelle il y a le portrait du roi fort bien fait » in *Journal du marquis de Dangeau*. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1854, Tome 6, p. 472.

⁹⁷ Vernet, Thomas. « Que Mme la duchesse de Bourgogne fasse sa volonté depuis le matin jusqu'au soir ». La duchesse de Bourgogne et les divertissements du carnaval de 1700" in *Marie-Adélaïde de Savoie (1685–1712). Duchesse de Bourgogne, enfant terrible de Versailles. Etudes sur le XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Fabrice Preyat. Bruxelles: Les éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2014, pp. 215-232. During the 1683 celebration of carnival in Versailles, the Dauphin also worn a costume inspired by a theater play: *La Devineresse*, the play of Donneau de Visé created in 1679. This example shows the use of stage characters as inspiration for disguise and a transition of the same kind may also had prompted the Chinese costume for the Duc de Bourgogne, inspired by the costume of the character played by Arlequin in *Le Carnaval de Venise*. See: *Mercure Galant, Février 1683*, Paris: au Palais, p. 334.

⁹⁸ The drawing by Berain is kept at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Bibliothèque-musée de l'opéra, D216O-7 (78), see it online at : <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb42403784z> (Last accessed: 14 May 2018).

⁹⁹ This ball, given in Paris by Madame de Ponchartrain, was offering a similar program as in *Le Carnaval de Venise* « dans une même soirée, tous les divertissemens que l'on prend ordinairement pendant tout le cours du Carnaval; sçavoir ceux de la Comédie, de la Foire et du Bal. » in *Mercure Galant, Février 1700*. Paris: au Palais, pp. 169-170 (Berain was credited for the designs of this party, see *Mercure*, op. cit. p. 180). « Le jour que Madame la Chancelière [Madame de Ponchartrain] donna le Bal à Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne, cette Princesse avait

for the duke specifies « Habit de Mandarin Chinois », a witness of the feast saw him as a « druid »¹⁰⁰ and that last testimony gives a clue about the spirit of the Air for the character dancing in *Le Carnaval de Venise*. The puzzling alternating structure of the music is following the double characterization: the light Arlequin and the pompous noble Chinese he tries to embody: Druid « derives from the fact that the Druids were formerly the Savants, and the Priests among the Gaul. They were also the Philosophers, Mathematicians, Jurisconsults, Orators, Astrologers, Physicians, and Theologians of the country »¹⁰¹. Ironically, this imposing list from the staid *Dictionnaire universel* compiled by Furetière is basically the same as what Regnard had given to Arlequin as the Chinese doctor in his play *Les Chinois*: « Do you not know that I am philosopher, orator, physician, astrologer, jurisconsult, geographer, logician, barber, shoemaker, apothecary »¹⁰². The new professions added by Regnard to the Arlequin/Chinese doctor list are typical of his dramaturgy, which frequently breaks formality with excess, creating a form of comedy based on the complicity of the character with the audience, a foundation of Italian comedy¹⁰³. With the « Masques Chinois » Regnard pulled out all the stops in his dramaturgy for his opera. *Le Carnaval de Venise* may be his most comprehensive work as it includes not only the acting style of Italian theater—style that the eighteenth century will identify as *commedia dell'arte*—but also its imagination for forms and its freedom of inspiration.

With the treaty of Ryswick in 1697 ending the Nine Years' War, France, having her eye on the Spanish crown, initiated a diplomatic effort to assure peace in Europe. Inspired by the political situation, Campra created a new genre of spectacle with *L'Europe galante*, the first *opéra-ballet*. The marriage of a princess of Savoy to one of his grandsons, the Duc de Bourgogne, was for Louis XIV the first step to renew his relations with Italy, and the young Duchesse de Bourgogne became the center of this « offensive de charme ». Venice was an ally to flatter and

envoyé dès le matin un Carosse à six chevaux à la Maison Professe pour chercher le Père le Conte; que ce Jésuite surpris lui avait demandé en arrivant, par quelle raison elle voulait se confesser dans un tems destiné à toute autre chose, & que le Princesse lui avait dit, non, mon Père, ce n'est pas pour me confesser que je vois ai mandé aujourd'hui; mais afin que vous me dessiniez promptement un habillement de *Chinoise*: je sais que vous avez été à la *Chine*, & je voudrois me masquer ce soir à la manière de Pais-là. Le Confesseur avoua ingénument qu'il avoit eu plus de commerce avec les *Chinois* qu'avec les *Chinoises*, il fallut pourtant qu'il traçât la figure, après quoi on le renvoya [à Paris], & l'on songea à travailler à la *Mascarade*. » in *Lettres historiques et galantes, de deux dames de condition, dont l'une étoit à Paris, & l'autre en Province. Où l'on voit tout ce qui s'est passé de plus particulier, depuis le commencement du siècle jusques à présent; la Relation du Congrès d' Utrecht; celle de la mort du Roi; les Harangues des Seigneurs & Officiers du Parlement. Ouvra Curieux mêlez d'Aventures. Par Madame Dunoyer. Tome premier. Cologne: Pierre Marteau, 1718, p. 283.*

¹⁰⁰ « Le Duc de Bourgogne était en Druide chinois. Il avait une jaquette grise, qui luy venait à mi-jambe; par-dessus cela, un petit manteau venant à la ceinture, bigarrée [sic] de différentes couleurs en losange, comme un habit d'harlequin, lequel couvrait une bosse artificielle. » in « Letter from Daniel Cronström to Nicodème Tessin Le Jeune 19/29 Janvier 1700. N°2 » in Tessin le jeune, Nicodème and Cronström, Daniel. *Correspondance (extraits), Les Relations artistiques entre la France et la Suède, 1693–1718*. Stockholm: AB Egnellska Boktryckeriet, 1964, p. 260.

¹⁰¹ « Ce mot vient de ce que les Druides étoient autrefois les Sçavants, les Prestres & les Sacrificateurs chez les Gaulois. Ils étoient aussi les Philosophes, les Mathematiciens, les Jurisconsultes, les Orateurs, les Astrologues, les Medecins & les Theologiens du pays. » in Furetière, Antoine. *Dictionnaire Universel, Tome I*. 1690.

¹⁰² « Ne savez vous pas que je suis philosophe, orateur, médecin, astrologue, jurisconsulte, geographe, logicien, barbier, cordonnier, apothicaire? En un mot, je suis omnis homo, c'est à dire un homme universel » in *Les Chinois*, Act II, Scene 4. See: *Les Chinois* in *Œuvres complètes de Regnard, Texte établi par Charles Georges Thomas Garnier, tome sixième*. Paris: E.A. Lequien, 1820, pp. 37–38.

¹⁰³ See: Moureau, François. *Dufresny, auteur dramatique, (1657-1724)*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1979.

seduce, and 1699 saw many diplomatic gestures toward the Republic. The masquerades taking place in Versailles during the carnival for the Duchesse de Bourgogne echoed the new *opéra-ballet* created by the Paris Opera: *Le Carnaval de Venise*.

The librettist Regnard, as with his comedies for the Comédie-Française, favored the introduction on stage of characters coming from the theatrical tradition of the Comédie-Italienne in the plot of his *opéra-ballet*. In *Le Carnaval de Venise*, the « serious » characters of this genre—the French and Venetian lovers—became the heroes of the plot, while the « comical » characters—the masked figures from all over the world and social classes—invaded the divertissements. By mixing into a tale set in Venice the serious figures « of various Nations » with the characters of commedia dell'arte, Regnard diplomatically linked here the two traditions, the French and the Italian, and Campra had set it in music of a similar dual inspiration.

The reinterpretation by French art of Italian sources was not limited to the poetic and musical domain but also expressed itself on stage by the casting and with sets, costumes, and dance. Thevenard, the first bass taille of the Paris Opera, likely sung the leading role of Léandre. Berain, the foremost designer at the time, created sets inspired by the city landscape of Venice and designed whimsical costumes, in a style which he also used at the court's masquerades. Dancer and choreographer Pécour, drawing on his experience as the Dancing Master of the Duchesse de Bourgogne and as a Paris Opera veteran, endeavored to showcase the specific talents of opera performers, singers, and dancers, certainly deriving comic effects from their physical skills, whether French or Italian inspired.

For the spectators of opera in 1699, the interest was twofold: to see once again the character types of the commedia dell'arte and to become familiar, in the mirror of the opera stage, with the Venetian manners of their time. *Le Carnaval de Venise* mixes this boisterous Italian theatrical tradition with all the musical sophistications of French opera—chorus, rich orchestration, and dance—to offer a charming yet revealing image of Venice. In their « opera for peace » Regnard and Campra convey a hedonist message, but behind the mask, it is a true makeover of the Venetian Republic that the masked diplomacy of *Le Carnaval de Venise* achieves.