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In search of a politesse du chant: Rediscovering salon vocal performance practice through the lens of the airs sérieux in the Recueils d'airs sérieux et à boire de différents auteurs, 1695-1699

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Chapter 2

Performance contexts

2.1 Introduction

The famed opulence and grandeur of the large-scale spectacles mounted at Louis XIV's court are well known and need little introduction. Less well known are those moments of music-making at court that took place in reduced architectural spaces, performances for more intimate gatherings in the royal households of the king's extended family, in educational institutions, at academies in the provinces, and in sociable gatherings (collectively, but loosely) referred to as the salon.²⁷ The development of many of these alternative fora was prompted by a mixture of historical and economic circumstances which saw the glittering court entertainments of an increasingly-pious Louis XIV gradually diminish and the once-dynamic and mobile royal court permanently retire to Versailles in 1682.²⁸ Catalysed by the "*crise de la tragédie en musique lullyste*",²⁹ we see the development not only of new performance contexts which privileged the small over the grand, but a flourishing of new vocal genres to fill the position once occupied by the *tragédie lyrique*.³⁰ The music-making that flourished in smaller, alternative performance contexts was not necessarily seeking to imitate royal entertainment;³¹ rather, such activities formed a sort of counter court system, presenting an alternate form of exclusivity to that surrounding the king at Versailles.

While other sections of this study focus on situating the *Recueils* in their publishing context, describing the hybrid contents of the *Recueils* and the place and status of the *airs sérieux* within the music presented in these volumes, this chapter similarly focuses on situation and context, yet the subject matter is more ephemeral.

The *airs sérieux* which are the subject of this study are, as we will see in the next chapter, very brief. Capable of being performed in a matter of minutes, once sung, the sonic trace vanishes. The only performance footprints are by definition *ex post facto* and anecdotal; fragmentary traces documenting the performance of *airs sérieux* are found in contemporaneous written accounts from diarists, accounts by the hand of the chronicler of the *Mercurie galant*, and fictional accounts in literature. Recently-presented archival and musicological work, while not always shedding light on specificities of repertoire sung on particular occasions, has nevertheless amply attested to the fact that vocal airs were performed within small gatherings of the royal or princely households, in a variety of aristocratic, bourgeois, and educational circles, and also on the dramatic and lyric stage.

Music-making in the salon represented an integral part of the finely-tuned social interaction which took place in those gatherings.³² As the principal focus of my study, this chapter places particular emphasis on building up a picture of the development of the Parisian salon from around 1610 to the end of the century, coinciding with the publication of the early *Recueils*. References to salon activities in primary sources have already been examined by

²⁷ As discussed below, the word "salon" has been extensively integrated into English-language descriptions of such socialised gatherings and as such will not be italicised.

²⁸ Goulet, *Les foyers artistiques*, 7–11.

²⁹ This phrase is borrowed from Manuel Couvreur. See further Couvreur, 'Marie de Louvencourt'.

³⁰ Couvreur, 25.

³¹ Goulet and Campos, 'Les foyers artistiques', 12.

³² See further Gordon-Seifert, *Music and the Language of Love*, 230–43 from which much of this information is drawn.

several modern writers,³³ and this chapter is intended not necessarily as a discovery of new evidence, but as a synthesis of their findings. Using these findings, I will describe the demography of the salon, providing an overview of typical salon participants. I will create a practical scenography of the salon, describing spatial elements relating to venue, placement of singers and listeners, all of which had a material impact on the way *airs sérieux* were performed and received.

These concrete, historiographical elements will be used as a physical framework and a backdrop to the information presented in chapter 6 which also focuses on situating the *air sérieux* – this time within its most significant but intangible context, that of social interaction and gallant conversation.

2.2 Who sang? The status of music-making and singing

In a letter dated 24 March 1695, Princess Palatine wrote that “*rien n’est tant à la mode présentement que la musique...M. le Dauphin, mon fils et la princesse de Conti en parlent durant des heures entières*”.³⁴ She further writes that fashionable society’s engagement with learning music had replaced its mania for dance.³⁵ In these short statements, the second wife of the *duc d’Orléans* captures the status of music as the leisurely pre-occupation *par excellence* of the royal, aristocratic, and the fashionable, moneyed classes in late seventeenth-century France. Music-making was particularly cherished by the wealthy bourgeoisie, who sought to access the culture which had previously been reserved for the aristocracy. The practice of music and musical pleasure became the mark of a bourgeoisie which was harmonious and ordered.³⁶ Consumption of music and the pursuit of music-making as a leisure activity were significant on a domestic level.³⁷ In step with the rapid increase in literacy numbers in the seventeenth century, the number of music lovers also grew in the second half of that century.³⁸

Singing formed a significant part of this mania for music-making. Singing was considered a fitting pastime to combat the scourge of idleness of the wealthy classes, who, deprived of political power under Louis XIV’s regime, were afforded the time and space to cultivate artistic activities to a high level.³⁹ Seventeenth-century literature is peppered with references to characters singing, and Goulet notes numerous examples.⁴⁰ In the preface to the *Recueil des plus beaux vers qui ont été mis en chant*, it is noted that the number of people who engaged in singing is “*infiny*”.⁴¹ With a similarly hyperbolic turn of phrase, in the preface to the 1706 *Nouveaux Cantiques Spirituels*, it is noted that “*Tout le monde aime le Chant...*”.⁴² That the *Recueils* were published monthly for thirty years without interruption

³³ Gordon-Seifert, *Music and the Language of Love*; Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*.

³⁴ As cited in Cessac, ‘La musique et la danse’, 61–62. ‘Nothing is as fashionable at the moment as music. M. le Dauphin, my son and the princess of Conti speak about it for hours on end’.

³⁵ As cited in the introduction to Gillier, *Livre d’airs et de simphonies*, ix.

³⁶ Piéjus, ‘La leçon de musique’, 145.

³⁷ Bianconi, *Music in the Seventeenth Century*, 69.

³⁸ Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 131.

³⁹ Note that Goulet insists that relatively well-off people who had the means to access cultural luxuries such as music represented only a narrow proportion of society. Goulet, 429.

⁴⁰ Goulet, 427–28.

⁴¹ Bacilly, *Recueil des plus beaux vers*, n.p.

⁴² As cited in Favier, ‘Plaisir musical’, 117.

attested to the fact that this publication met a need, and that there was a clientele with a regular appetite for the music contained within it.⁴³ In short, the *Recueils* themselves are the best testament to this voracious appetite for song.

The taking of private music lessons burgeoned amongst the wealthy bourgeoisie and nobility in response,⁴⁴ creating a rich world of amateur music-making inhabited by men and women who dedicated themselves seriously to the art of singing and instrumental practice.⁴⁵ The *Livre commode des adresses de Paris pour l'année 1692* attests that there was a ready supply of singing teachers to support the acquisition and perfection of the relevant skills. That publication, a sort of early telephone book, lists by profession the principal masters in various fields of activity, along with an indication of the street in the capital in which they live. In what is clearly a non-exhaustive list (see the use of the word “*etc.*”), eleven singing teachers are specified, amongst whom are several contributors to the *Recueils* studied here.⁴⁶ Goulet’s description of *maîtres de chant* positions singing teachers as influential celebrities in seventeenth-century Parisian society, who not only taught vocal technique, but also performed (such performances effectively acting as advertisements for their teaching) and composed. Interestingly, however, singing was viewed as an activity suited to women in their pre-marriage state, before being absorbed by the “*distraktion continuelle*” of their husbands.⁴⁷ Singing well was highly-prized. Goulet has noted examples from poetry and literature of the late seventeenth century which illustrate that in cataloguing a woman’s charms, the beauty of the subject’s singing voice and her physical charms were criteria celebrated in like measure.⁴⁸

Louis XIV was a keen singer and evidence abounds of the extent to which members of his family and extended family participated in vocal music-making.⁴⁹ What follows constitutes a handful of representative examples. The vocal capabilities of the music-loving Dauphine, the king’s daughter-in-law and a student of Jean-Baptiste Matho and Michel Lambert,⁵⁰ were held in high esteem. As demonstrated below in section 2.3, musical activities at court abounded, and ladies at court were, by all accounts enthusiastic singers. For example, at a royal soirée of 1699 which is evoked below, the Marquis de Dangeau reports that several of the ladies of the palace sang with the king.⁵¹ Dangeau later describes two performances of Lully’s *Alceste* staged for a small group of spectators at the *hôtel de Conti* in January 1700, in which the following figures are listed as performing: Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne, Monsieur le Duc de Chartres, Monsieur le Comte de Toulouse, the Duc de Montfort, Biron,

⁴³ Goulet demonstrates this commercial aspect in relation to the Livres d’airs in *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 119–35; In his article, Goujon suggests that publishing the collection monthly represented a significant financial advantage. Goujon, ‘Les “Recueils d’airs sérieux”’, 2010, 38.

⁴⁴ Piéjus, ‘La leçon de musique’, 107.

⁴⁵ Goulet cites the praise found in the dedications of various collections of airs from the second half of the seventeenth century as further evidence of the serious place occupied by amateur musicians. See *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 460–61.

⁴⁶ de Blégnny, *Livre commode*, 1:214-5. Singing teachers listed in the *Livre commode* who were also composers of *airs sérieux* in the *Recueils* are Honoré d’Ambruis, Jean-Baptiste Drouard de Bousset, Du Parc, Monsieur de Saint Germain, and Chevalier.

⁴⁷ Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 437.

⁴⁸ Goulet, 438–39.

⁴⁹ On the place of music in the education of members of the royal family, see further Cessac, ‘La musique et la danse’.

⁵⁰ Massip, *L’art de bien chanter*, 88.

⁵¹ As cited in Berrada, ‘La musique dans les appartements’, 59.

les deux La Vallière, the comte d'Ayen, Madame la Princesse de Conti, Mesdames de Villequier et de Châtillon et Mademoiselle de Sanzay (lady-in-waiting to the Princesse de Conti).⁵² It has been suggested that members of this same entourage were likely participants in André Campra's *Vénus, feste galante*, too, which had been mounted in 1698 at the residence of Mme la Duchesse de la Ferté, with the duchess singing a role.⁵³ Around 1700, this circle of music-loving nobility turned their hand to motets, effectively trying out repertoire which was then scheduled for later liturgical performance.⁵⁴

References to distinguished ladies and music lovers who excelled in singing are common throughout M. de Vertron's *La Nouvelle Pandore*. In her prolific correspondence, Mme de Sévigné, too, makes frequent reference to fashionable airs and operas, admits to the pleasure she takes in singing, and lays claim to being told by Le Camus that she was a good singer.⁵⁵

Music education potentially started from a young age, with both Bacilly and Mersenne advocating an early start to vocal tuition.⁵⁶ Catherine Cessac notes that the musical instruction of Louis XIV's son, the Dauphin, started at the age of ten with instruction on the lute.⁵⁷ The future Louis XV took guitar lessons with Robert de Visée from the age of nine and singing lessons with Matho from the age of ten.⁵⁸ In a description in the *Mercure galant*, a young girl is described as having been educated in all of the things which enhance a person destined for worldly society: dance, guitar, and music lessons.⁵⁹ In another issue of that journal, a young girl is said to have had the best masters to teach her to sing and play, such that she was extremely accomplished by the age of ten.⁶⁰

Although the curriculum at the *Maison Royale de Saint-Louis* at Saint-Cyr did not encompass individual music lessons for its boarders,⁶¹ singing and music was nevertheless a significant element of the girls' education. Set up by Louis XIV's second wife, Mme de Maintenon, with the aim of educating the daughters of the impoverished nobility, the school had affiliations with composers of the caliber of Nivers, Clérambault, and Moreau. Mme de Maintenon championed the spiritual air. She encouraged the singing of spiritual parodies of popular airs by her pupils, producing generations of female pupils who were exposed to song and the pleasure of singing throughout their formative years.⁶² For young men educated in the Jesuit colleges such as the *collège Louis-le-Grand*, music also played an important role. Music, as a science of proportions, was part of the *quadrivium* and thus a formal part of the theoretical learning in the curriculum. On a practical level, the twice-yearly performances in which the male students sung and danced alongside external professionals who were hired

⁵² As cited in Vernet, 'Musique et théâtre', 70–71.

⁵³ Duron, 'Nouveaux foyers', 123. The duchess was a singing pupil of Bacilly's.

⁵⁴ Vernet, 'Musique et théâtre', 71.

⁵⁵ Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 464–65.

⁵⁶ See further chapter 5, section 5.3.2.

⁵⁷ Cessac, 'La musique et la danse', 51.

⁵⁸ Cessac, 55.

⁵⁹ 'Mercure galant', June 1698, 180.

⁶⁰ 'Mercure galant', March 1698, 224.

⁶¹ Piéjus, 'La leçon de musique', 107.

⁶² See further Gordon-Seifert, 'From Impurity to Piety'.

to perform exposed the young students there to music-making at a high level from a young age.⁶³

2.3 *Airs sérieux* at court and in the royal households

Particularly after the death of Lully in 1687, small-scale concerts and music-making were frequent events in royal inner circles. The king's private chambers in his various royal residences welcomed a diverse group of instrumentalists and singers for this purpose.⁶⁴ Music-making was organised by, amongst others, the royal mistress, Mme de Montespan, and later by Mme de Maintenon. A witness account by Mlle d'Aumale indicates that three or four times per week, the latter organised musicians to come to her quarters to sing in an attempt to solace the king after the bereavement of the former queen and the Dauphine.⁶⁵ Similar reports are noted by the Marquis de Dangeau in his journal, who describes, for example, a royal soirée which took place on 13 November 1699 in the *cabinet* of Mme de Maintenon, in which singing took place.⁶⁶

The singing of *airs sérieux* was not a privilege confined to the king's inner coterie, however. *Airs* were more universally present at court. Goulet cites, for example, composer Mathieu Quinot, who refers to his 1662 book of *Airs à 4 parties* as being sung before the whole court.⁶⁷ One step removed from the king's inner circle but nevertheless within the royal orbit, at the residence of the Duc and Duchesse de Bourgogne at Marly, Dangeau's journal notes another music-making occasion which took place in 1702. On this occasion, the Duchesse de Bourgogne⁶⁸ was said to have organised the singing of *les plus beaux airs*.⁶⁹ The duchess was a music-lover and harpsichordist with a particular appreciation for secular vocal music. As the dedicatee of one of the *airs* in the *Recueils* by singing teacher M. de Saint Germain,⁷⁰ it is likely that the air in question had been performed for her in 1697 or before.

There is also evidence that *airs sérieux* of the type examined in this study were sung in the household of the king's daughter-in-law, the Dauphine. For example, the May 1688 edition of the *Mercure galant* praises the Dauphine's singing master, Jean-Baptiste Matho, whose success was evidenced by his pupil's skilful singing of "*Airs & Scenes d'Opéra, Airs de Lambert, du Camus, du vieux Boisset & autres avec les doubles*".⁷¹ Mlle Laurent, a contributor to the previous Ballard collection of *Livre d'airs*, is recorded by the *Mercure galant* as singing some of her own compositions for the Dauphine in 1686 or 1687.⁷² Goulet suggests, too, that the presence of an air entitled "*Courante de Madame la Dauphine*"⁷³ in this earlier collection, evidences the Dauphine's affection for this piece, attesting further to the place occupied by the *air sérieux* in the music-making of royal circles.

⁶³ See further Demeilliez, 'Les collègues'.

⁶⁴ Berrada, 'La musique dans les appartements', 56.

⁶⁵ Garros, *Madame de Maintenon*, 5; as cited by Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 477.

⁶⁶ As cited in Berrada, 'La musique dans les appartements', 59.

⁶⁷ As cited in Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 477.

⁶⁸ See Cessac, 'La duchesse du Maine et la duchesse de Bourgogne: d'une cour à l'autre'.

⁶⁹ As cited in Berrada, 'La musique dans les appartements', 60.

⁷⁰ RASB 1697/6/112: "*Aimable objet d'une flâme innocente*".

⁷¹ 'Mercure galant', May 1688, 205–6 as cited in Cessac, 'La musique et la danse', 53.

⁷² Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 463.

⁷³ See '*Je sers un objet rigoureux*' from the 1689 edition of Ballard, *Livres d'airs*.

The hôtel de Guise in Paris was another notable site of musical activity, which was presided over by Mlle de Guise, the sovereign princess of the house of Lorraine. Mlle de Guise maintained an orchestra of about fifteen musicians. The orchestra reportedly played nearly every day and its quality was said to surpass the music of the grandest sovereigns.⁷⁴ Étienne Loulié and Marc-Antoine Charpentier were in her service, with Charpentier residing in an apartment in the *hôtel*. Although the princess was a fan of Italian music, arrangements by Loulié of the music of Jean-Baptiste Lully were regularly played. The princess' private quarters included a "*Cabinet appelé de la Musique*", and the inventory taken after her death in 1688 notes the presence of a harpsichord in the *cabinet*, suggesting that musical activities took place there, rather than the grand reception rooms of the *hôtel*.⁷⁵

The hive of musical, intellectual, and artistic activity at the residence of the *frère cadet*, Philippe I d'Orléans and his son, Philippe II, in Saint-Cloud, constituted yet another alternative artistic space to that of the royal court. Famed for their magnificence, the more than one thousand entertainments which took place there between 1680 and 1698 alone involving theatre and music rivalled the king's offering in Versailles.⁷⁶

The musical activities sponsored by Mlle de Guise and the Orléans constituted a type of counter-institution to the lavish spectacles that had once dominated royal court life. The public, formal spectacles that took place at these two counter-institutions have been explored by several writers, yet forms and modes of smaller-scale music-making at their residences are less well documented. In my view, the airs in the *Recueils* already provide some clues, however. Several airs in the repertoire studied are stated to have been composed by "M. Gillier", and have therefore been attributed by some to *haute-contre*, violinist, and composer in the house of Orléans, Pierre Gillier.⁷⁷ One air in the collection is by Marc-Antoine Charpentier,⁷⁸ who resided in the hôtel de Guise. Given the connection between performance locus and composers, it is likely that those airs by Gillier and Charpentier may have resounded in these royal households where they worked and resided, either in private spheres of music-making or as part of more public spectacles.

In another royal household, that of the princesse de Conti, the inventory (dated 1739) of the owner's music library records the presence of a book of airs by Lambert. One writer has noted that it is not unreasonable to imagine that the music contained in the princess' library is music that was actually sung at her residence in one of the many music-making occasions at the *hôtel* which she had inherited around 1683.⁷⁹ Although Lambert's volume is of course not one of the Ballard *Recueils* the subject of the present study, its presence in the princess' music library enhances our picture of the status of the vocal air as a genre within royal circles.

⁷⁴ Berrada, 'La musique dans les appartements', 53.

⁷⁵ Berrada, 54.

⁷⁶ See further Fader, 'Monsieur and Philippe II d'Orléans'.

⁷⁷ RASB 1695/4/74: "*Charmant repos heureuse liberté*", RASB 1695/10/185: "*J'ai quitté mes Moutons, mon Chien & ma Houlette*", RASB 1696/3/46: "*Le Printemps vient déjà recommencer son cours*", RASB 1696/5/88: "*Rossignols, si les soins de l'amoureuse ardeur*". The attribution in the *Recueils* contains no forename, and it has been suggested that these airs may in fact be by Pierre Gillier's better-known younger brother, Jean-Claude. See further Gillier, *Livre d'airs et de simphonies*, ix, xiv.

⁷⁸ RASB 1695/8/156: "*Celle qui fait tout mon tourment*".

⁷⁹ Vernet, 'Musique et théâtre', 74–75.

2.4 The *air sérieux* in the provinces

The provinces abounded with small societies which were also fora for music-making. Learned academies and concert societies also sprang up, uniting professional and amateur members by the shared pleasure of making music together. The inclusion of airs in the *Mercure galant* establishes that monthly periodical as an important mode of diffusing vocal music beyond Paris.⁸⁰ The publication enjoyed a wide circulation, with the foreword to the February 1678 edition alerting provincial composers to the fact that the publication circulated “*par tout*”, allowing their potential contributions to be viewed throughout the whole of Europe within one month.⁸¹ Laurent Guillo describes the possible sources of evidence for the diffusion of Ballard publications such as the *Recueils* in the provinces, yet it remains difficult to form a clear view on this subject without further study.⁸²

2.5 Spiritual parodies and the *air sérieux*

François Berthod’s three books of *airs de dévotion* offered readers newly-written sacred texts adapted to pre-existing airs by prominent French composers.⁸³ According to Berthod, these parodies were written for women such that they could sing passionate airs while maintaining their modesty, piety, and virtue.⁸⁴ Berthod’s second book of *airs de dévotion* of 1658 is dedicated to the abbess of Notre-Dame la Royale de Maubuisson, to whom he offers the book of airs for the “*cheres & Religieuse Filles*” for them to sing in their recreation time, to exercise their voice in private in order to make their voices more flexible in singing divine praises.

Scudéry’s description of Saint-Cyr in *Nouvelle conversations de morale*⁸⁵ provides a contemporaneous source of information as to the practice of singing such airs. Scudéry notes in that work that in their recreation time, pupils at that school were permitted to sing religious songs for three-quarters of an hour each day while embroidering. They often performed concerts for each other, too, it is noted, which helped them to improve their memory, and which refined their morals.⁸⁶

The spiritual airs of Berthod were neither the first nor last contrafacta of popular song.⁸⁷ Bacilly, too, published his own books of spiritual airs in 1672 and 1679, but with newly composed works. Such was the success of Bacilly’s publications that they were republished five times between 1672 and 1703. The popularity of Bacilly’s spiritual airs mirrored the growing popularity of the genre, particularly after 1670,⁸⁸ which was attributed to the influence of Mme de Maintenon and to the desire of Catholic leaders to lead the laity to a

⁸⁰ See further Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 478–80; Duron, ‘Nouveaux foyers’, 114–18.

⁸¹ As cited in Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 127.

⁸² See further Guillo, ‘La diffusion des éditions musicales’.

⁸³ Composers whose airs were parodied by Berthod include Michel Lambert, Étienne Moulinié, and Antoine Boësset.

⁸⁴ See further Gordon-Seifert, ‘From Impurity to Piety’.

⁸⁵ Scudéry, *Nouvelles conversations*, 1688.

⁸⁶ Scudéry, 1:263–65.

⁸⁷ Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 481–82.

⁸⁸ Favier, ‘Les Cantiques spirituels savants’.

life of piety.⁸⁹ The texts of profane airs were feared as lascivious and held in suspicion of corrupting the moral rectitude of women,⁹⁰ with one writer warning that those who love profane airs and sing them run the risk of easily being led into disorder and impiety.⁹¹

An examination of possible spiritual contrafacta of the *airs sérieux* in the early years of the *Recueils* is beyond the scope of this study. However, the existence and proliferation of such spiritual parodies at the end of the seventeenth century is significant in two respects. Firstly, it represents, as noted by Goulet,⁹² the point of entry of the profane genre into the sacred world of the convent. Secondly, regarded as a safe alternative to their profane counterparts, the blossoming of the spiritual genre points to the morally dangerous effect which the passionate musical performance of these perceivedly-risqué profane lyrical texts would have been regarded to have had; the corruptible effect which the texts of the *airs sérieux* in performances were considered to have on a listener's moral well-being must have been great indeed.

2.6 *Airs sérieux* on the stage

Details are often sparse as to specific repertoire performed, yet the singing on stage of monodic airs is amply in evidence in the second half of the seventeenth century. The October 1678 edition of the *Mercure galant*, for example, describes a performance of Molière's *Les Fâcheux* outside of Paris, in which the various dramatic acts are demarcated by musical interludes. It is noted in that publication that after the third act, music was sung by one voice with theorbo.⁹³ In the same year, popular airs were inserted into the *Opéra de Frontignan*, performed for the archbishop of Toulouse.⁹⁴ Likewise, in the transcription of the *Ballet impromptu* in the *Mercure galant* of May 1678,⁹⁵ an air (described as a "*chanson*") is sung by the character, Amour. Although the music is no longer in existence, the words of the air immediately evoke the lighter poetry which characterizes the dance-meter airs in the early years of the *Recueils*.⁹⁶

Solo continuo airs of the type contained in the *Recueils* were a regular presence in spoken and sung theatrical works. Throughout the seventeenth century, music, words, and dance mingled on the French stage, co-habiting in forms such as the court ballet, the *comédie-ballet*, the *tragédie en musique*, culminating in the *tragédie lyrique*. Although not necessarily published in the *Recueils*, one has only to look at the poetry and subject matter, the simple syllabic settings and the musical brevity of airs such as "*Je languis nuit et jour*" from Act 1, scene ii of Molière and Lully's collaborative work, *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, to see how closely many airs written for the stage evoke the musical and poetic spirit of the *airs sérieux* in the *Recueils*. Without pretending to be an exhaustive review, other short solo airs with continuo accompaniment from the stage works of, for example, Jean-Baptiste Lully bearing a strong resemblance to the repertoire studied readily spring to mind: "*Amour, vois quels*

⁸⁹ Gordon-Seifert, 'From Impurity to Piety', 290.

⁹⁰ See further Gordon-Seifert, 268; Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 481–82.

⁹¹ Lalouette, *Histoire de la Comédie*, 71.

⁹² Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 480.

⁹³ As noted in Duron, 'Nouveaux foyers', 115.

⁹⁴ Duron, 116.

⁹⁵ Duron, 117.

⁹⁶ 'Mercure galant', May 1678, 177.

maux” from Act II of *Cadmus et Hermione*, “*Laissons au tendre amour la Jeunesse en partage*” from Act II of *Armide*, “*L’Art d’accord avec la nature*” from the Prologue of *Alceste*, and “*Sans Alceste*” from Act III of that same work.⁹⁷ Sung dance-meter airs from stage works also find a resounding echo in the *Recueils*, with more than fourteen *airs sérieux* in the early years of the collection expressed to be based on dance rhythms such as *menuets*, *bourrées*, *gavottes*, and *rigaudons*.

In her investigation, Goulet cites numerous examples of the presence of airs in the *Livres d’airs* which are “recycled” from dramatic works from the latter part of the seventeenth century.⁹⁸ In the case of the *airs sérieux* from the *Recueils*, a review of the table of contents pages indicates that more than twenty are from works for the stage.⁹⁹ The entire *Recueil* of October 1698, for example, is devoted to works from the *Comédie des Curieux de Compiègne* and, unusually, contains no drinking songs. The *Recueil* of the subsequent month follows this same publishing spirit, containing six separate entries from the *Comédie de Mary Retrouvé*. In his examination of the complete collection of the *Recueils*, Jean-Philippe Goujon attributes the music to both of these *comédies* to André Campra.¹⁰⁰ The February 1699 volume also presents music from the stage, drawing material from the *Comédie de Mirtile et Melicerte*, *Pastoralle Heroique* and presenting a series of *intermèdes* from that work. These musical *intermèdes* are attributed to Michel Richard de Lalande.¹⁰¹ Both *airs sérieux* and songs with drinking texts form part of the *intermèdes* presented.

Later in that year, the September *Recueil* presents a string of airs with both serious and drinking texts which are collected together from the one-act comedy, *La Nopce Interrompue*, the music and text of which were written by Charles Dufresny.¹⁰² This comedy was first staged on 19 August 1699,¹⁰³ with the music published by Ballard one month after its stage premiere, demonstrating the responsiveness of the *Recueils* and the Ballard’s speedy uptake of popular works. Interestingly, in re-producing the music from the comedy in the September 1699 *Recueil*, Ballard did not retain the scene references from the source work. Instead, he makes three new groupings in the *Recueil*, which he styled as *Scène Première*, *Scène Deuxième*, and *Scène Troisième*. Instrumental interludes and dances are published alongside the vocal airs in these new groupings, generating the distinct impression that Ballard has created a new, miniature dramatic piece which functions independently and in isolation of the original source. This re-grouping and re-shaping is reminiscent of other such editorial acts of curatorship; for example, Pierre Gillier’s grouping by tonal centre of his instrumental and vocal works in his 1697 *Livre d’airs et de simphonies*, creates the possibility for these works to be performed as small chamber concerts.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁷ Gordon-Seifert also notes this similarity, commenting that the influence of the Lully/Quinault *tragédies lyriques* on song texts and music is especially evident during the 1680s and the 1690s. See Gordon-Seifert, *Music and the Language of Love*, 299.

⁹⁸ Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 618–34.

⁹⁹ The possible editorial interventions on the part of Ballard in potentially nuancing stage airs for the consumers of the *Recueils* have not been studied.

¹⁰⁰ Goujon, ‘Les “Recueils d’airs sérieux”’, 2010, 49.

¹⁰¹ Goujon, 49.

¹⁰² Goujon, 49.

¹⁰³ Hawkins, *The French Stage*, 2:423.

¹⁰⁴ See further Gillier, *Livre d’airs et de simphonies*, xi.

The Ballards bestowed an important place in the *Recueils* to vocal works drawn from the dramatic stage until at least 1704.¹⁰⁵ The presence of such airs accords with the publishing esprit of the Ballards; an idea that the printing of a monthly volume constituted a sort of quasi public-service by making accessible the newest and best compositions to the moneyed, singing-public. The publishing of those dramatic musical fragments also represents an act of musical democratisation whereby non-professional musicians could access and perform the music of a world that they did not inhabit, bringing the entertainment enjoyed by them in the theatre as spectators into the “living room” of the moneyed everyman.

Alongside the presence in the *Recueils* of these musical interludes from dramatic works, a small handful of airs from the lyric stage and from dance genres are also included in the Ballard publications, some in parody form.¹⁰⁶ For example, the Italian air from André Campra’s *L’Europe Galante*, “*Ad un cuore*”, has been adapted to a French text and is found in the *Recueil* of February 1698.¹⁰⁷ Goujon attributes a further air to Campra from the *Recueil* of the next month; “*Soupirons, tous suivons l’Amour sans nous contraindre*” from *L’Europe Galante* is printed in that volume with a new text, “*Un indiscret découvrirait croyant vous plaire*”.¹⁰⁸ The May 1695 *Recueil* contains a solo air with traverso or violin obbligato and continuo from a *ballet* entitled *Saisons*, which was performed at the Académie royale de musique, the music for which Goujon identifies as being by Pascal Collasse.¹⁰⁹ Airs from the lyric stage, notably works by Campra, also entered the *Recueils* in the form of bacchanalian parodies. Although not examined in this study, these adaptations constitute a significant percentage of the *airs à boire* in the collection.¹¹⁰

The above are instances in which specific airs published in the *Recueils* which are extracted from dramatic or lyric works have crossed a certain threshold, leaving the stage and the sphere of the professional *acteur* or *comédien* to enter into a realm inhabited by a broader musical audience. As we shall see in chapter 3, the Ballard enterprise explicitly cast a broad net when publishing the *Recueils*, seeking to appeal to “*amateurs de la musique*” (music-lovers) and including songs which appeal to a spectrum of vocal abilities, from the amateur beginner through to the singer skilled enough to tackle the florid *doubles*.¹¹¹

2.7 *Airs sérieux, réunions mondaines* and the salon

2.7.1 The evolution of the salon throughout the seventeenth century

In their studies, Catherine Gordon-Seifert and Anne-Madeleine Goulet in particular have painted detailed pictures of music-making and sociability, providing ample evidence of the presence of singing in worldly gatherings in the second-half of the seventeenth century in

¹⁰⁵ Goujon, ‘Les “Recueils d’airs sérieux”’, 2010, 49–50.

¹⁰⁶ Airs from the lyric stage also entered the *Recueils* in the form of bacchanalian parodies. Instrumental music added to lyric works was also occasionally printed in the *Recueils*. See further Goujon, 46–50.

¹⁰⁷ RASB 1698/2/26: “*Je vous aime*”.

¹⁰⁸ RASB 1698/3/56.

¹⁰⁹ Goujon, ‘Les “Recueils d’airs sérieux”’, 2010, 55.

¹¹⁰ See further Goujon, 66–72.

¹¹¹ The embellished melody which results from the insertion of *passages* in the second or subsequent strophe of an air is known as the *double* (with the unadorned melody known as the *simple*).

Paris and the French provinces. Amongst the sociable meetings evoked are the famous salons presided over by the Marquise de Rambouillet in the *chambre bleue* in her residence near the Louvre between 1610 and 1650, and the subsequent continuation of the early incarnations of such gatherings by sponsors such as Gédéon Tallemant and his wife.

Numerous further examples of such activity sprang up in what Goulet terms the second phase (between 1650 and 1665), which witnessed gatherings hosted by Madeleine de Scudéry, Mademoiselle (the eldest daughter of Gaston d'Orléans) in the palais du Luxembourg, and Mme de La Calprenède in faubourg Saint-Germain. At the height of salon activity around 1660, Paris boasted forty salons with around 800 participants, of which 200 were writers. In the provinces, salon activity counted around 3000 participants. Evoking the popularity and indeed crowdedness of one such gathering, Goulet cites the writer Tallemant des Réaux, who commented that at one gathering of Mme de La Suze, there were so many people that it was chaos.

Many salons continued their activities in the second half of the seventeenth century and prospered. The gatherings of Mme de La Sablière, Ninon de Lenclos, and Mme Lambert, who was active from 1690, are several examples noted by Goulet.¹¹² In a letter to Madeleine de Scudéry dated 1699,¹¹³ a member of the inner circle of the Duchesse de Maine evokes gallant recreations. Catherine Cessac describes these recreations as reminiscent of the salons of Mme de Rambouillet and Mlle de Scudéry, making references to conversation, games, songs, and poetry amongst other things,¹¹⁴ providing further evidence that these worldly gatherings remained buoyant at the time of the publication of the early *Recueils*.¹¹⁵

2.7.2 Terminology – defining the salon

The starting point for any discussion of the salon and the role of vocal music in it must be one of terminology. Famously, although the word “salon” appears already in the seventeenth century, it referred simply to a large living room.¹¹⁶ It was only in 1783 that it came to describe the polite gatherings of cultured, wealthy and select society-members.¹¹⁷

The word “salon” is misleading on other counts, too, as it anchors these gatherings to an architectural space. What emerges from the writings on the salon is the contrary view. These fashionable gatherings were not necessarily venue-specific and were not bound to a physical context. Context was flexible, ranging from a large room down to the smaller proportions of the *ruelle* (the reduced area between the wall and the hostess' bed on which she would typically recline, surrounded by her guests).¹¹⁸ In short, salons took place wherever refined, worldly company gathered to exchange ideas and engage in polite

¹¹² Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 588–90.

¹¹³ Malezieu, *Les divertissemens de Seaux*, 28–55.

¹¹⁴ Cessac, ‘Les nuits de Sceaux’, 81.

¹¹⁵ Not only Paris witnessed the fashion for such sociable gatherings. Provincial cities also played host to these gatherings. See Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 589.

¹¹⁶ See further Francalanza, ‘Une occurrence du mot salon’, 699.

¹¹⁷ For a history of the usage of the word ‘salon’, see Francalanza, ‘Une occurrence du mot salon’.

¹¹⁸ Note Goulet's comment, that towards the end of the seventeenth century, the space occupied by such gatherings enlarged, moving from the *ruelle* more often to the space of a room. See *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 672.

conversation, and this could be a room, a *ruelle*, a *cabinet*, an alcove, or even an outdoors setting.

One commentator states that in the seventeenth century, the regularity of the meetings and keeping to a fixed day was an important defining feature of the salon.¹¹⁹ Many such gatherings were indeed formalised and planned occasions, taking place on a regular basis. The gathering known as the “*samedi*” of Madeleine de Scudéry, for example, took place every Saturday in her home in the Marais district from 1653 onwards.¹²⁰ Another regular weekly gathering of people for the purposes of conversation is evoked in an account from 1674 in the *Mercure galant*.¹²¹ On the other hand, a salon could equally unfold during an impromptu moment of rest or diversion during a walk with friends, as happens in Scudéry’s *Conversation de l’esperance*.¹²² Henceforth, the word “salon” will be used to describe this spectrum of sociable gatherings in which conversation, recitation of poetry, story-telling, dramatic declamation, reading aloud, the sociable composition of airs, and music-making took place, and “*salonnier*” or “*salonnière*” will refer to a salon hostess and participants, as the context dictates.

2.7.3 Admission to the salon and salon participants

Adhesion to certain shared aesthetic and moral values and conventions were the critical defining criteria of admission to these sociable gatherings¹²³ and were in fact the defining characteristics of nobility. Although these values habitually manifested themselves within people of aristocratic birth, it has been shown that nobility was a personal quality and a social grace which was not contingent on birth or economic status. Rather, nobility was a quality attributed to those whose comportment, decorum, manners, and ability to engage in gallant conversation evidenced their acceptance of certain rules and norms of behaviour. These qualities won a person entry into the refined world of the seventeenth-century salon, and once there, personal merit, as made manifest by one’s ability to navigate gallant conversation, determined hierarchy.¹²⁴ One writer cites the example of the poet Vincent Voiture, the son of a wine merchant, who exemplified aristocratic refinement and was admitted to the exclusive gatherings of the hôtel de Rambouillet.¹²⁵ In her study of the seventeenth-century French salon, Carolyn Lougee concludes that salons were in fact a cultural melting pot of diverse social elites.¹²⁶ Members of the nobility willing to submit to its social codes were admitted to this world, and they could be newly endowed or of older stock. The perimeters of the salon were porous, moreover, permitting the bourgeoisie and newly-endowed nobility access to the culture of the elites, as well as accommodating free circulation between salons.¹²⁷

¹¹⁹ Lilti, *Le monde des salons*, 65–66.

¹²⁰ Dejean, ‘The Marais’, 28.

¹²¹ ‘*Mercure galant*’, June 1674, 24–26.

¹²² Scudéry, *Conversations morales*, 1686; See also de Pure, *La Prétieuse*, 426–27 in which a conversation takes place in shaded public space next to a fountain.

¹²³ Fumaroli, ‘*Otium, convivium, sermo*’, 45.

¹²⁴ Fumaroli, *Trois institutions de la vie littéraire*, 128.

¹²⁵ Lecœur, ‘*Conversation and Performance*’, 1.

¹²⁶ Lougee, *Le Paradis Des Femmes*, 125.

¹²⁷ Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 591.

Writers and poets were one important group of participants and their entry into these worldly gatherings allowed them access to a small percentage of their readers, permitting them to judge and observe taste and worldliness.¹²⁸ Talented composers also attended salons, and they played a crucial role in setting texts to music on demand during such gatherings and diverting the company by playing the lute or singing airs.¹²⁹ Distinct from the latter group, who were involved in the act of creation and more closely melded with the social status of *salonnières*, another group of musicians also frequented salon gatherings. These were professional performers, instrumentalists and singers who were engaged and remunerated to perform for salon guests. The relationship between salon hostess and professional musician was that of client and professional. Contemporary reports of the professional musicians involved provide few names, however, and Goulet suggests that a certain distance was maintained between paid performers and guests.¹³⁰

An ambiguous relationship existed between singing and vocal training for the wealthy, leisured classes on the one hand, and singing as a professional on the other. As demonstrated above, musical training was entrenched in the education of the nobility and wealthy classes. While it was acceptable for a duchess to take singing lessons from Bacilly,¹³¹ the social status of the professional singer was far from enviable, by contrast.¹³² Bacilly himself talks of the disdain which meets people who hold themselves out to be singers.¹³³ One writer, François Raguenet, describes musicians as belonging to a lowly profession, or “*profession basse*”.¹³⁴ As figures of ridicule and raillery in literature and drama, even the prospect of mingling with musicians on a social level was considered tiresome.¹³⁵ In her essay on music, pleasure, and education at Saint-Cyr, Anne Piéjus notes that the girls singing the chorus roles in the famous production of *Esther* of 1689 were instructed that their “*air modeste*” should be their distinguishing feature, demarcating themselves thereby from the professional singers from the *Chambre du roi* who were lending their professional expertise to the production.¹³⁶ At least in the case of the girls at Saint-Cyr, rather than the activity of singing for pleasure being perceived as an evil in itself, it was the behavior that this pleasure was thought to induce (such as frivolity and vanity) which was feared.¹³⁷

2.7.4 Spatial aspects and the iconography of the salon

As part of this overview of the salon at the end of the seventeenth century, it is also important to build up a picture of the spatial aspects of these gatherings. Although typically associated with indoor gatherings in the rooms of *hôtels particuliers* of society hostesses in Paris, as discussed above, the concept of a salon was not venue-specific and could even occur outdoors, or wherever worldly people engaged in gallant exchange. In their informal

¹²⁸ Viala, *Naissance de l'écrivain*, 137.

¹²⁹ Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 599.

¹³⁰ Goulet, 593.

¹³¹ Duron, ‘Nouveaux foyers’, 123.

¹³² The negative social image of “rank and file” professional singers and musicians as vain, crude, and lacking in distinction should be contrasted with the apparent respect shown to composers in court service and to star singers.

¹³³ Bacilly, ‘Réponse’, 5.

¹³⁴ Raguenet, *Paralele des Italiens et des François*, 112.

¹³⁵ Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 593–94.

¹³⁶ Piéjus, ‘Musique, plaisir et récréation enfantine’, 110.

¹³⁷ Piéjus, 109.

incarnations in gardens, woods, and on walks, the natural possibilities are potentially boundless and only limited by the landscapes (both formal and informal) and natural phenomena of France at the end of the seventeenth century.

The formal, indoor salon settings are, of course, more restrained and quantifiable. Goulet has drawn a detailed sketch of the interior architectural spaces that recur as sites of music-making and conversation, allowing us to note the following facts.¹³⁸ The *chambre* was the place where one slept and where one received company. The *alcôve*, very much in vogue throughout the seventeenth century and sometimes used interchangeably with *ruelle*, is a sub-part of a *chambre*, which is separated from the rest of that room by a raised platform and several columns or architectural ornaments. The bed is usually placed in the *alcôve* and it is in the *alcôve* where chairs are placed for receiving company. The *ruelle* is the space between the bed and the wall. At the hôtel de Rambouillet, the hostess received salon invitees in the famous *chambre bleue*, sitting or reclined on a stately bed surrounded by her seated guests.¹³⁹ Research undertaken by Jean-Pierre Babelon reveals that this was a square room, each side measuring 7.8 metres. The *cabinet* is the most private space of the aforementioned, a retreat only found in the most beautiful apartments in palaces and large houses. It is situated beyond the *chambre*, allowing a degree of retirement and privacy, shielded from those more public spaces of *ruelle* and *alcôve*. Spaces were extensively and lavishly upholstered in multi-layers, not only for decorative reasons but as insulation from the cold. The screens, shutters, leather and fabric curtains, and heavy carpets created what Goulet describes as a “*univers capitonné*”, reinforcing the intimacy of these spaces by isolating them against the exterior cold, noise, and crowds.¹⁴⁰

Goulet further notes that the seventeenth century witnessed a considerable surge in interior decoration.¹⁴¹ In rich Parisian residences, barely a surface was left empty. Every wall was covered in paintings, sculptures, or tapestry. Representations of a fertile and varied natural world in such decorative art presented a rich physical reminder of the pastoral scenes and natural features which are repeatedly evoked in the texts of the *airs sérieux* of both the *Livres d'airs* of Goulet's study¹⁴² and the *Recueils*.

2.8 Conclusion

Alongside the formal, large-scale spectacles that dominated the first half of Louis XIV's reign, a flurry of alternative music-making activities existed, an overview of which has been presented in this chapter. These alternative musical fora included educational and religious institutions, provincial academies, satellite courts of the extended royal family, and the worldly gatherings that constituted the salon. Making their first appearance on the Parisian scene around 1610, the salon presented an alternative form of exclusivity to that surrounding the king, offering those members of the nobility and bourgeoisie who submitted to its rules the opportunity to mix and converse with their peers, artists, and writers, and, more problematically, professional musicians. Amongst the bourgeoisie and nobility, there sprang up a veritable mania for music, music lessons, and singing. Singing,

¹³⁸ Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 672–76.

¹³⁹ Babelon, *Demeures parisiennes*, 196, note 17; as cited in Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 677.

¹⁴⁰ Mérot, *Retraites mondaines*, 68; as cited in Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 676.

¹⁴¹ Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 677.

¹⁴² Goulet, 681.

along with conversation, poetic recitation, and reading aloud became a principal activity in the social, convivial atmosphere of the salon. Just as the *tragédie lyrique* had developed to “fit” the grandeur of its surroundings, so the reduced architectural space of the salon which is described in this chapter germinated, in part, its own genre – the *air sérieux*. Such was the influence and appeal of these brief airs, often themselves the product of creative salon collaborations, that singers from a wide social and vocal demographic turned their hands to performing them.

The *airs sérieux* in the early *Recueils* commanded the creative attention of composers of the likes of Charpentier and Campra, and several airs from the *Recueils* studied have been demonstrated to have been drawn from stage works. Although somewhat under the radar of academic attention, airs of the type found in the *Recueils* made appearances on the lyric and theatrical stage, forming part of larger dramatic works, too.

The placing of airs drawn from stage works at the ready disposal of the broad demographic envisaged by the Ballard publication prompts one of the major lines of inquiry underpinning this study; namely, how did these dramatic airs sound when performed by those from the moneyed, leisured classes, who, as demonstrated in this chapter, sought not to emulate but to distinguish themselves from stage professionals and stage renditions of this same music?