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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 3

**The *airs sérieux* and the *Recueils* as
indicators of musical practice – a forensic
investigation**

3.1 Introduction

The way in which a score is notated musically and its physical format can both influence and reflect the performance practice associated with it. In this chapter, I firstly situate the *Recueils* in their publishing context, then examine the *airs sérieux* and the *Recueils* as forensic objects, looking at parameters such as vocal tessitura, voice combinations and setting, ornamentation markings, and accompaniment indications. I look at the printing format of the *Recueils* themselves, examining page layout and editorial choices in order to build up a picture of the type of singer who might have sung these airs, their technical abilities, and the context in which they were sung.

3.2 The Ballard publishing house and publication context of the *Recueils*

Well before the publication of the first *Recueil*, the Ballard publishing house had long enjoyed success. Formed in 1551, the family enterprise held the exclusive royal privilege for printing music in France.¹⁴³ Although the public face of Ballard is best known for the printing of the operas of Jean-Baptiste Lully, the firm also pioneered the idea of an anthology of works, producing the highly successful seven-volume *Airs de cour et de différents auteurs* and numerous other collections.¹⁴⁴ As well, the firm published composer-specific collections by the brightest stars of the day.¹⁴⁵

By the time it launched the *Recueils* in 1695, the Ballards could boast of a pedigree of almost one hundred and fifty years of royal association and of solid commercial success in the printing of editions of vocal airs.

In 1692, three years before the launch of the *Recueils*, Christophe Ballard foreshadowed the advent of the new collection:

*Mais comme les habiles Maistres de ce bel Art font touÿjours des Airs nouveaux, & que le Public les desire avec empressement, s'ils vouloient me les envoyer dès qu'ils les ont faits, je pourrois peut-estre en avoir assez pour en faire un petit Recueil tous les mois.*¹⁴⁶

Ballard's new endeavour was not realised immediately, however. The end of 1694 saw the launch of the transitional *Airs sérieux et à boire de différents auteurs pour les mois d'octobre, novembre et décembre 1694*, which Ballard expressed to be a trial for the *Recueils*.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ See the introduction of Guillo, *Pierre I Ballard et Robert III Ballard* from which much of this information is drawn.

¹⁴⁴ See Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 38.

¹⁴⁵ See for example the collections printed by Ballard of the works of Michel Lambert, Bertrand 'Bénigne' de Bacilly, Sébastien Le Camus, Joseph Chabanceau de La Barre and Jean-Baptiste Drouard de Bousset.

¹⁴⁶ Foreword to Ballard, XXXV. *Livre d'airs*. 'But as the skilful masters of this beautiful art are always creating new airs, and as the public desires them with such eagerness, if they would like to send them to me as soon as they are finished, I could perhaps have enough to make a small collection of them each month'.

¹⁴⁷ Note further that Goulet identifies a Ballard publication precursing this one, the *Premier recueil d'airs sérieux et à boire de différents auteurs à deux & trois parties* of 1679. See *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 38.

In the foreword to the *Recueil* of January 1695, Ballard elaborates on his conception:

*La proposition que j'ay faite dans le dernier Livre d'Airs de differents Autheurs de donner tous les mois au Public un pareil Livre de tout ce qu'il y auroit de plus beau & de plus nouveau des meilleurs Autheurs, à commencer au premier jour de la presente année 1695, a esté receuë avec tant d'applaudissement de tous ceux qui aiment la Musique, que je me vois necessairement obligé d'exécuter ma parole, en commençant de leur donner par ce premier Livre la satisfaction qu'ils ont esperé de mon service & de mon travail, qui leur doit estre d'autant plus agreable que j'ay tâché de le rendre considerable, & digne de leur approbation, tant par le choix des belles paroles, que par celui des Airs que les plus habiles & celebres Autheurs en ce bel Art y ont fait.*¹⁴⁸

The first *Recueil* in 1695 appeared at a significant moment in the affairs of the Ballards. The year before witnessed the final publication of two of its long-running, prestigious collections: the *Livres d'airs* (published annually from 1658 and consisting almost entirely of *airs sérieux*) and the *Recueils de chansonnettes de différents auteurs à deux et trois parties* (published from 1675). The *Recueils* represented a new approach for Ballard - a monthly rather than an annual publication and an eclectic collection in which *airs sérieux* were printed along with *airs à boire* and other categories of song.¹⁴⁹

The forewords of 1695 and 1692 cited above reveal several noteworthy features of the *Recueils*. Firstly, the *Recueils* were intended to take up the baton from the discontinued *Livres d'airs*, providing to the public a “*pareil Livre*” (similar book). Secondly, the *Recueils* were a responsive publication, the idea of which Ballard had proposed to the public and which had been greeted enthusiastically with “*tant d'applaudissement*” (great applause).¹⁵⁰ Further, the foreword of 1692 is revelatory of the public who bought the *Recueils*, which, according to Ballard was an avid public, waiting on the latest airs by the most skilful masters with eagerness (“*avec empressement*”).

¹⁴⁸ ‘The proposition which I made in the last *Livre d'Airs de differents Autheurs* to give to the public each month a similar book containing all that is the most beautiful and new by the best composers, to be started on the first day of this present year, 1695, has been received with so much approval by all those who like music, that I find myself necessarily obliged to execute my promise, by starting to give them by way of this first book the satisfaction of my service and work, which they had hoped for, and which should be especially pleasing since I have tried to make it worthy of consideration and of their approval, as much by the choice of beautiful texts as by the choice of airs by the most skilful and renowned authors of this beautiful art’.

¹⁴⁹ *Airs à boire* had, until that time, been printed in composer-specific collections. Ballard had also published several collections of *airs à boire*, namely *II. Livre des meslanges de chansons, airs sérieux et à boire, à 2 & 3 parties* (Paris: Christophe Ballard, 1674) and *Premier recueil d'airs sérieux et à boire de différents auteurs à deux & trois parties* (Paris: Christophe Ballard, 1679). For an overview of the genres included in the *Recueils*, see Goujon, ‘Les “Recueils d'airs sérieux”’, 45-52 and section 3.5 below.

¹⁵⁰ Further evidence of interaction between Ballard and the public is evidenced in the forewords to the *Recueils* of January 1696, September 1698 and particularly in the *Avertissement* which appears in the *Recueil* of June 1698, where Ballard specifies that his printing of several airs from the past that month was at the request of and for the satisfaction of several people who had demanded them. Similarly, in the postscript to the *Recueil* of April 1699, Ballard states that his decision to print repertoire from former times which had not yet been printed was to satisfy several people who were still looking for them.

Of the *airs sérieux* themselves within the repertoire studied, a number of sub-genres can be noted: airs based on dance rhythms, canons, airs which are classified as “*chansonnettes*”, “*printemps*”, and “*petits airs sérieux*”. The dominant characteristics of those pieces which Ballard classifies as “*airs sérieux*” in his tables of contents are their brevity (they are usually based on a two-stanza, eight-line poem in French), their binary format, their syllabic writing which typically deals with love, and their habitual setting for solo voice and continuo. The *air sérieux* was the progeny of the *air de cour*, the four or five part air dating from at least as early as the start of that century, which then evolved into the solo courtly air intabulated for lute.

The longevity of the *Recueils* was evidence of its commercial success. The prosperity of the publishing house was dependent on the firm’s reading of the desires of its clientele and the meeting of those demands, a task at which the Ballards apparently excelled.

3.2 Size and publication format

Whereas its predecessor, the *Livres d’airs*, had been presented *in-octavo*, for the monthly *Recueil*, Ballard adopted the larger, *in-quarto* format. This new, larger format was in fact instituted in 1694 for the transitional publication, the *Airs sérieux et à boire, de différents auteurs, pour le mois d’octobre, novembre et décembre*, which acted as a trial for Ballard to test consumer appetite for a more frequent publication rhythm for vocal music. In the preface to that transitional publication, Ballard stated that the new, larger format was produced “*pour la commodité de ceux qui jouent des Instruments*”.¹⁵¹ With user convenience at its centre, the larger format was evidently deemed successful by Ballard as it was retained throughout the thirty year life-span of the *Recueils*.

In practical terms, whether or not just benefiting the accompanying instrumentalist (as the paratext to the transitional publication suggests), performing from an oblong, *in-quarto* edition represents a significant “readability” advantage for all performers, providing a larger score with a longer line of musical material to read with fewer system changes for the eye to negotiate and fewer page turns. There is no doubt that for those performing from the *in-quarto Recueils*, the experience was indeed more commodious. Firstly, the *in-quarto* format measures approximately 190 millimetres high and 242 millimetres across.¹⁵² This amounts to an increase in size from the smaller dimensions of the upright, *in-octavo Livres d’airs*, which measure approximately 210 millimetres high and 148 millimetres across. With its larger page size, the size of the characters in the *Recueils* was also larger and therefore easier to read. As has been previously noted, the *in-quarto* format sits more easily on the music-stand of a harpsichord.¹⁵³

For various other vocal collections which were published concurrently with the *in-quarto Recueils*, Ballard continued to persist with an *in-octavo* format.¹⁵⁴ The fact that the change to *in-quarto* format for the *Recueils* was not a format change which was adopted by the publishing house across the board for all its vocal music reveals that printing size was

¹⁵¹ *Avis au lecteur* to the 1694 *Recueil*. ‘For the ease of instrumentalists’.

¹⁵² These measurements were taken from the leather covers of the *Recueils* when bound in their annual format.

¹⁵³ Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 41.

¹⁵⁴ See for example the *in-octavo* collections of airs listed in Ballard, *Catalogue des livres de musique*, 2.

evidently decided on a publication-by-publication basis, and that in the case of the *Recueils*, Ballard consciously chose for a larger format which lent itself to practical usage.

In his article on text and image, Alain-Marie Bassy comments that the format of a book is one of the most pertinent indicators of the way it functions;¹⁵⁵ in the context of literature rather than music printing specifically, Bassy states that small, *in-octavo* formats, on the one hand, create objects which are intimate to the owner, are easily carried around on the person, and lend themselves to private reading, whereas large formats such as *in-folio* and *in-quarto* were traditionally used for publications which became objects of society, aspiring to continuity and monumentality, with longevity in mind. The *Recueils* was certainly a collection which achieved this latter characteristic of continuity and longevity; the sheer publication span of the collection as well as the fact that in the Ballard catalogues until at least 1731, the collection of *Recueils* in its entirety (at that stage dating back thirty-six years to 1695) was still offered for sale, is a firm attestation of this.

In his description of the various publication trends in book sizes, one of the drivers identified by Bassy as at play for publishers in choosing to print in a certain book size is the economics of production cost; larger formats such as the *Recueils* were more expensive to produce, while small formats (*in-octavo* and smaller) were often favoured by publishers because of the reduced cost involved.¹⁵⁶ For the Ballard publishing house, the decision to produce the *Recueils* in a large and expensive format, replete with decorative, non-essential printed adornments, must have satisfied a commercial logic, attesting to the popularity and public support for this publication.

3.3 Moveable type

The *Recueils* which form the subject of this study are all printed in moveable type. This technique had been used by Ballard since the middle of the sixteenth century and consisted of assembling a line of music by juxtaposing individual metal musical characters, each of which contained the note or other character on a staff of lines.¹⁵⁷ These characters, which had been in use by the Ballard firm since the days when it was trading under the name “Le Roy & Ballard”, were fiercely guarded by the publishing house¹⁵⁸ as a practical means of enforcing its monopoly over the printing of music.

In the 1660s in France, *in taglio* engraving came to be used for reproducing music. This technique was already well developed in the publishing of written texts thanks to the strong presence of Flemish engravers in Paris at the start of that century. Music engraving offered many practical advantages over moveable type. Engraving allowed publishers to be more economical: the engraving process involved creating copper or tin plates which could be preserved and corrected, and this would allow publishers to re-print from the plates rather than having to go to the expense of speculatively printing larger than necessary numbers of a publication and potentially having to store stockpiles of unsold music, as was the case with moveable type.¹⁵⁹ Engravers had great skill in reproducing ornaments, phrase marks, large

¹⁵⁵ Bassy, ‘Le texte et l’image’, 148.

¹⁵⁶ Bassy, 148.

¹⁵⁷ Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 42–43.

¹⁵⁸ Guillo, *Pierre I Ballard et Robert III Ballard*, 1:208.

¹⁵⁹ Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 44.

numbers of fast notes, and dots, and the printing of complex music such as *doubles* was well suited to this technique. Engraving produced a result which has been described by Guillo as a sort of “*manuscrit édité*”.¹⁶⁰

The Ballard’s loyalty to moveable type printing persisted, however. While the Ballard *privilège* accorded to them a comfortable position which was, in principle, sheltered from competition, this comfort was at the expense of moving with trends and evolutions in printing techniques, and the Ballard’s continued use of moveable type has been cited as one reason for the eventual decline in dominance of the publishing house. Viewed alongside engraved music, with its growing competitive presence on the French publishing landscape, the presentation of the music of the pages of the *Recueils* must have seemed somewhat outmoded, even in its own time.

3.4 Page layout

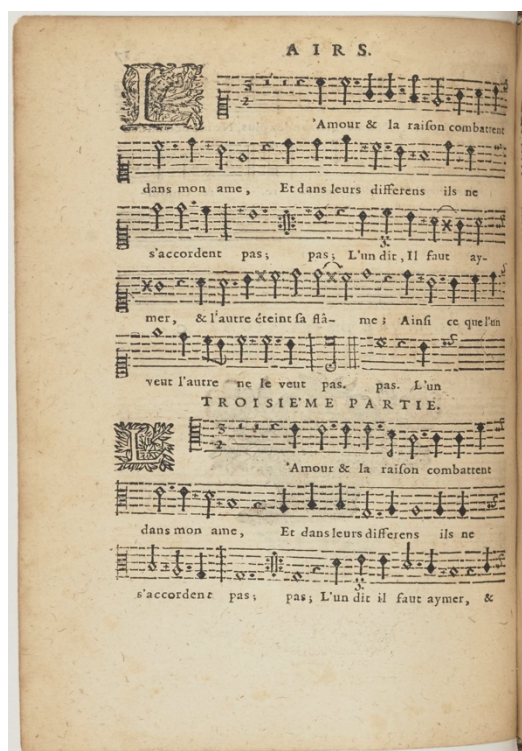
3.4.1 Score format

The airs of the *Recueils* are presented in score format rather than parts, with the bass part printed immediately underneath the melody and, in the case of multi-voiced airs, with all vocal parts vertically aligning. Bar lines are present in all airs.¹⁶¹ The added clarity offered by the size and score format of the *Recueils* is immediately discernible when comparing the air for three voices in figure 3.1 from the *Livres d’airs*, with an air for the same setting from the *Recueils* in figure 3.2.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Guillo, *Pierre I Ballard et Robert III Ballard*, 1:3.

¹⁶¹ Score format and bar lines had been introduced into the *Livres d’airs* in 1685. Both features were retained in the *Recueils*.

¹⁶² Note that in the *Livres d’airs*, the parts were printed on facing pages with the higher voice on the left page and the lower voice and/or accompaniment on the right. In the case of airs for three voices, this practice was observed and the third voice was printed at the foot of the left and right pages.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 3.1: "Amour & la raison combattent dans mon ame" from XXVIII. Livre d'airs de différents auteurs à deux et trois parties (1675), 17-18.

TRIO. Rondeau. Fin.

Que l'Amour est charmant & doux ! Aimons-nous, Iris, aimons-nous : Dans la plus char-

Que l'Amour est charmant & doux ! Aimons-nous, Iris, aimons-nous : Dans la plus char-

Que l'Amour est charmant & doux ! Aimons-nous, Iris, aimons-nous : Dans la plus char-

man- te jeunesse Qui n'a point de tendresse, Ne goûte rien de doux ; Que l'A-

man- te jeunesse Qui n'a point de tendresse, Ne goûte rien de doux ; Que l'A-

mante jeunesse Qui n'a point de tendresse Ne goûte rien de doux ; Que l'A-

DE MONSIEUR CAPPUS.

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Que mêmes traits ? que mêmes flâ- mes ? Consument nos cœurs & nos

Que mêmes traits ? que mêmes flâmes ? Consument nos cœurs & nos

Que mêmes traits ? Que mêmes traits ? que mêmes flâmes ? Consument nos cœurs & nos

ames ; Soupirez pour moy & moy pour vous. Que l'Amour.

ames ; Soupirez pour moy & moy pour vous. Que l'Amour.

ames ; Soupirez pour moy & moy pour vous. Que l'Amour.

N n

Figure 3.2: RASB 1699/12/240: "Que l'Amour est charmant & doux" by Monsieur Cappus.

Ensemble members no longer had to rely on the assiduous counting of rests required with part-book singing. Score format greatly facilitates the process of sight-reading a piece, since it allows performers to follow the other parts to find their entries. This feature undoubtedly also makes a piece ready to be performed sooner. Ballard's decision to retain score format for the *Recueils* suggests that his clientele wanted to be able to make music with others readily and sing through or perform the latest repertoire with ease. Whether the introduction of score format meant that the publication definitively moved its ambit towards the musical "everyman" is not clear, but it is consistent with such a trend.

3.4.2 Typographical ornaments

The *Recueils* abound in decorative flourishes which are non-essential to the musical reading of the collection. Lavish letters (*lettres grises*) ornament the initial letter in the title of the first air listed in the table of contents each month. They also regularly appear at the start of other sections of text, such as the *Privilège*, although in contrast to the *Livres d'airs*, no such ornaments appear at the start of each air in the *Recueils*.

Each page of the *Recueils* can accommodate three two-line systems of music and where the placement of music on the page would otherwise leave a void at the end of an air, Ballard habitually fills this space with ornamental motifs of varying sizes (floral arrangements with grotesques, lavish arrangements of fruits and flowers in urns supported by cherubs, baskets of flowers flanked by insects, diamond-shaped floral ornaments, and triangular vignettes or *culs-de-lampe*¹⁶³).

Decorative elements are present elsewhere, too. In airs printed with multiple verses where the existing spacing between each verse (and in some cases, the verse numbering) would be sufficient to delineate one verse from another, Ballard has often chosen to insert small floral motifs between verses.¹⁶⁴ The table of contents for each month's *Recueil* is adorned with a decorative banner, and the first air printed in each volume is adorned with an elaborate, illustrative banner at the top of the page, often featuring cherubs, scrolled patterns, and floral curvilinear motifs.¹⁶⁵

In the case of the January instalments of the collection, the elaborate border of the title page typically features cherubs on plinths, heraldic angels sounding straight trumpets, agricultural produce, and military and combat motifs. The title pages for the remaining months of the year are less elaborate, with the borders being smaller and consisting of a repeated floral pattern.

3.4.3 Placement of text

In the *Recueils*, the words of the song texts are generally printed under their corresponding notes, affording the singer a certain facility and ease when reading and performing. For longer words or where space would otherwise not allow words to be placed under their corresponding notes, Ballard has adopted an abbreviation policy (both abbreviating words

¹⁶³ For representative examples, see RASB 1695/1/7 (grotesques), RASB 1695/1/11 (urn supported by cherubs), RASB 1695/2/61, RASB 1695/1/15 (diamond), and RASB 1695/1/21 (triangular vignettes).

¹⁶⁴ See for example RASB 1696/1/21.

¹⁶⁵ See for example RASB 1698/10/191.

and using an ampersand to replace the word “et”) which gives precedence to maintaining this facility for the singer.

Verses subsequent to the first which are not set to *doubles* are generally printed in a block at the end of the first verse immediately below the score, although occasionally where space allows, the second verse has been printed underneath the text of the first verse within the score itself.¹⁶⁶

3.4.4 Page layout and commercial considerations

In their article on initial letters and typographical ornaments in printed music from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Guillo and Noailly demonstrate that when typesetting music, space constraints can influence the choice of size of initial letters and the development of codas and diminutions.¹⁶⁷ In particular, they describe the practical strategies which were open to type-setters when they had a small, final part of a composition run over to a subsequent page. These strategies included filling the void space on the subsequent page with ornamental motifs, using smaller than usual initial letters which covered less surface of the page in order to fit the music onto one page, simply setting the music closer together, or even editing the compositions to make them shorter.¹⁶⁸ The authors examine, in particular, a lute publication emanating from the Le Roy and Ballard house in the sixteenth century,¹⁶⁹ and identify the following space-saving strategies as at play in that publication: compacting the type to allow it to fit onto one page which forces an elimination of the final repeat sign, use of a smaller initial letter, use of a final struck chord rather than a short coda, and possibly less development of diminutions.

In the case of the *Recueils*, the same pondering over page layout as described by Guillo and Noailly must surely have taken place as an inevitable step in the process of assembling the monthly collection. As we have seen above, the *Recueils* are rich in non-musical motifs which are used to fill voids at the end of airs. In contrast to the publication considered by Guillo and Noailly, the airs in the *Recueils* do not bear ornamental initial letters, so adjusting the size of these was not open to Ballard as a space-saving option.

Without identifying and systematically comparing the *airs sérieux* of the *Recueils* with concordances in other sources, it is not possible to state definitively the extent to which Ballard has edited or abbreviated the airs in the *Recueils*. It is possible to speculate, however, that owing to the frequent occurrence of a piece's final bars on a second or subsequent page with the remaining void being filled with an ornamental figure, Ballard did not engage in the practice of shortening the brief compositions which were submitted to him. In fact, spacing appears ample rather than compacted and space-saving did not seem to be Ballard's governing imperative. As was found to be the case in the publication examined by Guillo and Noailly, typographical considerations also influenced the appearance and the make-up of the collection under study. In the case of the *Recueils*, however, the direction in which these considerations were brought to bear is a direction of

¹⁶⁶ See for example RASB 1696/3/62 and 1696/8/162.

¹⁶⁷ Guillo and Noailly, 'Typographical Ornaments in Music Prints'.

¹⁶⁸ Guillo and Noailly, 116.

¹⁶⁹ Guillo and Noailly, 117.

generous enhancement, in which the aesthetics and readability of the composition are promoted rather than economised on.

3.5 Classification of the airs

Ballard shows great care in indicating sub-categories of the *airs sérieux* in the collection. Each air receives a sub-classification (such as *Chansonnette*, *Chansonnette Sérieuse*, *Rondeau*, *Sarabande*, *Printemps*, *Petit Air*, or *Récit de Basse*) which is printed at the top of each page, above the music.

3.6 Table of contents and the role of the incipits

All but one of the monthly *Recueils* reviewed for this study includes a table of contents page.¹⁷⁰ The contents pages are found at the start of each book, usually on the first *recto* page after the title page. The exception to this rule is the January *Recueil* for each year, where the table of contents page is printed at the end of the volume, after the last air.

The table of contents categorizes and lists the airs in the *Recueils* according to three principal genres: *airs sérieux*, *airs à boire*, and *airs italiens*.¹⁷¹ In the *Recueils* studied, one air is written in dialect and listed as an *air provençal*.¹⁷² The categorization of songs is seemingly determined by semantic and linguistic considerations. For example, songs with drinking references (either explicit: *vin*, *liqueur* etc. or metaphorical: *Bacchus* etc.) are listed under the sub-heading, *airs à boire*. Sometimes, however, drinking texts are printed as additional verses to airs with otherwise serious texts and in these instances, categorization is varied; the drinking verses are sometimes accorded their own individual title and are listed under *airs à boire* in addition to their non-drinking verses appearing under the heading, *airs sérieux*.¹⁷³ On other occasions, songs with hybrid texts are simply treated as *airs sérieux* and listed as such¹⁷⁴ or listed as *airs à boire*.¹⁷⁵ Airs in Italian are without exception listed in the table of contents under *airs italiens*. Further specifications intermittently appear in the table of contents as to an air being “*pour dancer*”, for example, but these are not recorded with any regularity.

The *Recueils* also sometimes contain pieces which are purely instrumental, and these also receive unsystematic treatment when it comes to their positioning within the table of contents; some are listed under *airs sérieux*¹⁷⁶ and others, which are a component of a larger, multi-part work appear under *airs à boire*.¹⁷⁷ In other instances, instrumental pieces

¹⁷⁰ The exception is the *Recueil* of June 1695.

¹⁷¹ An exception to this rule is found in the *Recueil* of February 1698 where there is no apparent categorization of airs and all genres are listed together with no sub-heading indicating their nature. Another exception is found in the *Recueil* of October 1698, which consists in its entirety of works from *La Comédie des Curieux* and does not include a contents page.

¹⁷² See RASB 1699/7/128.

¹⁷³ See for example RASB 1699/7/125.

¹⁷⁴ See for example RASB 1699/4/78, 1697/12/1, and RASB 1697/12/225.

¹⁷⁵ See for example RASB 1698/4/2.

¹⁷⁶ See for example the *Rigaudons* and *Air Espagnol* which are expressed to have been omitted from the printing of the opera, *Amadis de Grèce*. See RASB 1699/4/74 and RASB 1699/4/76.

¹⁷⁷ This is the case with the *simphonies du divertissement* from the *Comédie du Mary retrouvé* found in RASB 1698/11/224, which makes up the majority of the *Recueil* for November 1698.

which precede and share the same musical material as sung airs and thereby effectively form an introduction to them are ignored by the table of contents completely and are not referenced there, with the page on which the vocal portion of the air begins being referenced in the table of contents as the start of the air.¹⁷⁸

With only one exception¹⁷⁹ in the *Recueils* under investigation, the entries listed in the table of contents constitute the textual incipits of the airs. This same policy of using only the textual incipits in the contents pages is at play where airs are drawn from larger works such as *Comédies*, *Pastorales*, and operas; rather than listing the name of the larger work from which the airs in question are drawn, the larger work is referenced only within the body of the volume itself.¹⁸⁰

Incipits of the *airs sérieux* are listed alphabetically with a corresponding page number. Some errors inevitably occurred.¹⁸¹ *Doubles* and subsequent verses are generally marked as such in the table of contents.¹⁸² In the earlier volumes of the publication, *doubles* and subsequent verses are also listed alphabetically by incipit in the table of contents, often therefore appearing non-adjacent to and separate from their corresponding *simple* or first verse within the alphabetical list.¹⁸³ This practice changed in October 1696, from which point onwards *doubles*, *second couplets* and subsequent verses were generally listed directly after their first verses.

Although composers or poets are not mentioned in the table of contents, composers are commonly referenced above the relevant air in the body of the *Recueil*. Poets are mentioned less frequently. Appendix 1 lists composers who are either fully named or referenced in relation to *airs sérieux* in the *Recueils* published between 1695 and 1699.¹⁸⁴ In contrast to the *Livres d'Airs*, composer attributions in the *Recueils* are standard; within the *Recueils* the subject of this study, only eighty-three airs make no mention of a composer. As noted by Goujon¹⁸⁵ in relation to the complete set of *Recueils* published between 1695 and 1724, a non-negligible proportion of composers remain in partial anonymity or, effectively, complete anonymity, as some of these composer references cryptically refer only to initial letters of surnames.

As described above, in the December 1695 publication, Ballard indicates to his readers an intention to publish at the start of the following year a free annual table of contents covering the airs printed over the course of 1695, which would allow the monthly editions to be bound into one single, annual volume.¹⁸⁶ For those taking up the offer of the annual index, Ballard envisaged the disposal of the monthly table of contents page. In the *Recueils* examined, the monthly books have indeed been bound into one annual volume with the

¹⁷⁸ See for example the instrumental *ritournelle* which precedes the air found at RASB 1697/1/4.

¹⁷⁹ See RASB 1697/10/200: "*Plusieurs Couplets sur le retour de la Foire de Besons*".

¹⁸⁰ See for example the treatment of the airs from *Mirtil et Melicerte* in the *Recueils* of February and September 1699.

¹⁸¹ See for example the *Recueils* of October and December 1696, and January 1697.

¹⁸² An exception occurs in the *Recueil* of August 1698.

¹⁸³ The *double* is, however, printed contiguous to the relevant *simple* in the body of the publication itself.

¹⁸⁴ For a full list of attributions of anonymous airs in the *Recueils*, see Goujon, 'Les "Recueils d'airs sérieux"', 2010, 59–72.

¹⁸⁵ Goujon, 'Les "Recueils d'airs sérieux"', 2010.

¹⁸⁶ *Avertissement* to the *Recueil* of December 1695.

annual table of contents at the end. The monthly table of contents pages have in fact been retained, however, and it is fortunate that Ballard's advice as to disposing of this page has not been followed, as these pages contain significant information.

The annual indexes of airs reflect the presentation of the monthly indexes; airs are listed under the categories *airs sérieux*, *airs à boire* and set out alphabetically, generally by textual incipits and occasionally by title.¹⁸⁷ In the annual index for 1695, *doubles* or subsequent verses are listed alphabetically by incipit, often appearing non-adjacent to and separate from their relevant *simple* or first verse within the alphabetical list. Reflecting the change of strategy in the monthly edition, the annual index for 1696 lists its *doubles* and subsequent verses non-alphabetically, rather, marrying them up with the entries for the relevant first verses. This practice was not systematically followed, however.

A review of the table of contents pages for the collection reveals the incipits of the airs to be the most consistently presented feature. By looking at the table of contents in isolation, a user of the collection would have been unable to carry out a search for an air by the name of its composer, unable to reliably search by voice-type or instrumental setting or number of voices or instruments, and largely unable to search by the name of the greater musical work from which a particular *air sérieux* was drawn.

The presentation of the airs in the table of contents in alphabetical order by incipit facilitated a search for airs on a textual rather than a sequential basis. It was the incipit of the air which was given pre-eminence and which one can reliably conclude either to have been crafted by Ballard into, or to have been simply reflective of, the search criteria favoured by users of the collection. The absence of reliable information as to other search parameters evidences the paramountcy of the textual incipit and suggests that these sometimes very modest compositions took on a role and status of their own; the airs were seemingly known in their own right, separate and independent from the larger works to which they belonged. The fact that an air was by a particular composer or for a particular voice-type or setting was presumably less imprinted on the musical consciousness and aural memory of the users of the collection than the words and melodic shape of the airs themselves.

3.7 Clefs as an indicator of voice types and settings

There are no explicit dedicatees to be found in the collection. However, Ballard makes implicit references in para-musical material to his target market on several occasions, expressing the *Recueils* to be, variously, "*Au Public*" and "*le Public*" (for the public),¹⁸⁸ for "*amateurs de la musique*" (those who hold an affection for music),¹⁸⁹ and for "*tous ceux qui aiment la Musique*" (all those who love music).¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ See for example *Plusieurs Couplets sur le retour de la Foire de Besons*, found in the *Recueil* of October 1697.

¹⁸⁸ *Au lecteur* to Ballard, *Recueil d'airs sérieux*, 1695, n.p.; *Au lecteur* to Ballard, *Recueil d'airs sérieux*, 1696, 3; *Avertissement* to Ballard, *Recueil d'airs sérieux*, 1698, n.p.; foreword to Ballard, *Recueil d'airs sérieux*, 1698, n.p.

¹⁸⁹ Foreword to the *Recueil* of January 1696, 3.

¹⁹⁰ Foreword to the *Recueil* of January 1695, 3.

In the absence of explicit dedicatees, it is interesting to examine the voice and ensemble combinations featured in the publication. A study of the voice-types implied by the choice of clefs provides a profile of the likely intended consumers and performers of the airs.

Table 3.1 lists in descending order the different sound combinations found in the *Recueils* under investigation, with the material in table 3.2 presenting the voice-types corresponding with these clefs. The figures indicate several trends. Firstly, the predilection of Ballard for solo song accompanied by continuo: almost 88 per cent of the *airs sérieux* examined are for solo voice and continuo, representing a drifting away from the multi-voice songs dominating the *Livres d'airs*.¹⁹¹ Secondly, the overwhelming majority of the *airs sérieux* under consideration are for the female voice. Settings for solo *bas-dessus* (a lower soprano voice using the clef ut1) and continuo are the most numerous in the collection, followed by settings for *dessus*, or a slightly higher female range with continuo (indicated by the clef sol2). The high female voice range also features in the multi-voice airs, with a preponderance of duets set for *bas-dessus* and *basse-contre* (bass), followed by duets for *dessus* and *basse-contre*. Of the male voice-types, *haute-contre* (high tenor) and *basse-contre* are the most prevalent.

¹⁹¹ In Goulet, *Poésie, Musique et Sociabilité*, 102, the author notes that the most common setting was for the 2-voiced combination of *bas-dessus* and *basse-contre* (34 percent) followed by songs scored for *bas-dessus* and continuo (30 percent) then songs for *dessus* and *basse-taille* (14 percent).

Table 3.1: Clefs as an indication of voice-type and settings

Settings	Number of airs	%
Ut1, BC	380	74.07
Sol2, BC	53	10.33
Ut1, fa4	20	3.90
Ut3, BC	10	1.99
Sol2, fa4	9	1.75
Ut1, ut1, fa4	7	1.36
Sol1, BC	5	.97
Ut1, instruments, and BC	5	.97
Ut3, fa4	3	.58
Ut1, ut1, BC	3	.58
Sol2, ut3, BC	3	.58
Sol2	2	.39
Sol2, fa3, BC	2	.39
Ut1	1	.19
Fa3	1	.19
Fa3, BC	1	.19
Sol2, fa3	1	.19
Sol2, ut1	1	.19
Fa4, ut4, BC	1	.19
Sol2, ut1, fa4	1	.19
Ut3, ut4, fa4	1	.19
Sol2, instruments, and BC	1	.19
Fa3, instruments, and <i>luth</i>	1	.19
Ut4, instruments, and BC	1	.19
Total	513	

Note: “BC” indicates “basso continuo”. The information presented in table 3.1 categorizes airs according to voice-types. Airs with obligato instruments, for example, have been listed according to their voice setting, not listed according to the instruments used. Table 3.1 does not include airs which are purely instrumental. Additionally, the information reflects the policy adopted by Ballard in assigning *doubles* and fragments of larger works a separate entry in the table of contents.

Table 3.2: Voice-types associated with the clefs listed in table 3.1

Clef	Voice-type
Sol1	<i>Dessus</i> (high soprano)
Sol2	<i>Dessus</i> (high soprano)
Ut1	<i>Bas-dessus</i> (low or second soprano)
Ut3	<i>Haute-contre</i> (high tenor)
Ut4	<i>Taille</i> (tenor)
Fa3	<i>Basse-taille</i> (low tenor)
Fa4	<i>Basse-contre</i> (bass)

As demonstrated above, the *Recueils* acted both as a mirror of current practice as well as a predictor and creator of new trends. It is not clear whether the pre-dominance of airs for high female voice was reflective of a musical practice in which women were the pre-dominant performers, or whether Ballard, in potentially transposing the airs to suit gender and voice-type, helped to create this market. The trend is, however, reflective of Bacilly's comment as to the advantages enjoyed by the higher voice ranges, in their ability to demonstrate a greater number of emotions and passions to good advantage than the lower ones.¹⁹²

Six of the serious airs from the *Recueils* have an upper instrumental part, either for violin¹⁹³ or for transverse flute¹⁹⁴ in which the instrument provides an obbligato part to the voice, or features in a *ritournelle* to the air, a setting which strongly evokes the cantata which developed and flourished in the early part of the following century.

3.8 Poetic voice

The first-person poetic voice dominates the texts of the *airs sérieux* of the collection. Occasional exceptions to this rule occur, where the narrator presents him- or herself as an external onlooker, narrating in the third-person. In these latter songs, the recounting of actions and events (as opposed to the expression of personal feelings) constitutes the principal poetic material.¹⁹⁵ The early *Recueils* also feature several airs which present pithy, general observations (usually about love). These observations are in the nature of maxims or aphorisms, such as an air from the 1696 *Recueil* which concludes that often amorous sighs betray the desires of a heart which appears to be tranquil.¹⁹⁶ Such maxims were a feature of gallant literature.¹⁹⁷

As shown above, the usership attested to by the clef indications suggests a predominance of female singers. A reading of the poetic texts implies the contrary, however; of the texts with a first-person poetic voice, the vast majority remain either explicitly or impliedly male.¹⁹⁸ It is not in any doubt, however, that women sang profane airs such as the *airs sérieux* the subject of this study. Rather, the disjuncture between text and music should be viewed against the backdrop of the prevailing salon values of *politesse* and *bienséance* (explored below in chapter 6); casting women as men created a safe space for the expression of emotions that the requirements of modesty would otherwise have silenced.

¹⁹² Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 45.

¹⁹³ RASB 1695/12/232: "*Petits oyseaux dont les chants amoureux*", RASB 1698/9/176: "*Par un jeu digne d'un Heros*", RASB 1698/10/191: "*Le Bruit éclatant des Trompettes*", RASB 1699/2/6: "*Bergers, rassemblez-vous, accourez tous*".

¹⁹⁴ RASB 1697/5/96: "*Tout parle en ces lieux de mes peines*", RASB 1697/5/97: "*Vous qui connoissez mon martire*".

¹⁹⁵ See for example RASB 1696/1/20: "*Un jour dans une grotte obscure*".

¹⁹⁶ See for example RASB 1696/2/41: "*Un cœur tranquille en apparence*".

¹⁹⁷ Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 298.

¹⁹⁸ Gordon-Seifert notes the increasing presence of the female poetic voice from 1680 onwards. Gordon-Seifert, *Music and the Language of Love*, 260–61.

3.9 Ornamentation: use of *agréments* and *doubles*

In the latter part of the seventeenth century, theoretical writings on ornamentation for instruments and voice flourished as theorists tried to codify the *agréments*. Notwithstanding this concentration of study on the subject, no coherent vocal notational convention was successfully established, and symbols and nomenclature differed from theorist to theorist.

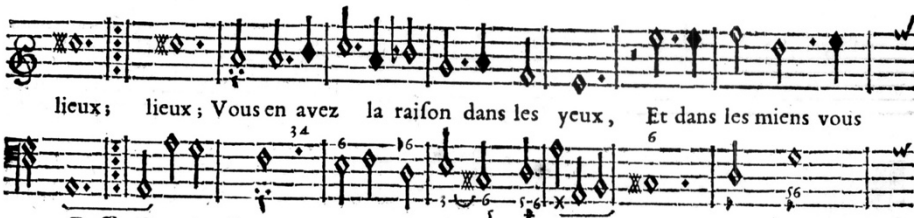
The notation of *agréments* in the early years of the *Recueils* mirrors this diversity. For example, several airs such as the one in figure 3.3 have no ornaments marked. This reflected the practice adopted in the first years of the *Livres d'airs*.¹⁹⁹ In some airs, such as the one in figure 3.4, the sole ornamentation markings consist of the symbol “+”, denoting that an ornament should be performed over that note, with no further specification as to which ornament is intended.

¹⁹⁹ Goulet notes that in the *Livre d'airs*, no ornament markings are present until 1667, when the ‘+’ indication appears. Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 111.

AIR SÉRIEUX,



Basse-Continuë.

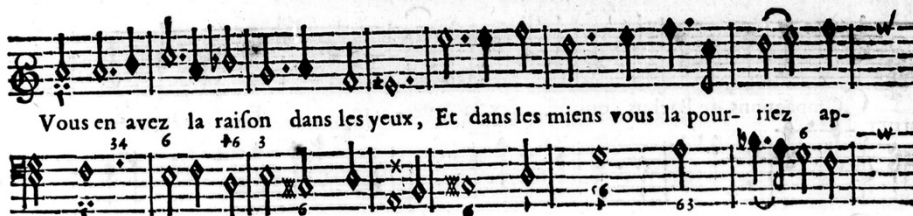


Basse-Continuë.



Basse-Continuë.

DE MONSIEUR L.



Basse-Continuë.



Basse-Continuë.



Figure 3.3: RASB 1695/7/126: "Jeune beauté qui ne sçauriez comprendre" by Monsieur L.

CHANSONNETTE DE M. DESFONTAINES. 7

UNE fille veut estre sage, L'honneur dit, ouïy, l'amour dit, non; non; Mais bien-sou-
 UNE fille veut estre sage, L'honneur dit, ouïy, l'amour dit, non; non; Mais bien-sou-
 vent l'amour a l'a- van- tage Sur l'honneur & la raison. fon.
 vent l'amour a l'av- tage Sur l'honneur & la raison. fon.

Figure 3.4: RASB 1698/1/7: “Une fille veut estre sage” by M. Desfontaines.

In other airs, alongside the “+” symbol, *ports de voix*, *coulades* and the *appuy* ornaments are indicated, written out in note form. Figure 3.5 shows such an example, with a *coulade* on the first syllable of the word “pleure”.

202 AIR SERIEUX DE MONSIEUR A*****

Qui m'oblige à feindre mō mal? Qui m'oblige à feindre mō mal? Je souffre un tourmēt sās é-

Basse Continué.

gal; Tout le jour je pleu-re & m'ennuy- c. Pas- se- ray-je en langueur le reste

Basse Continué.

de ma vi- c.

Basse Continué.

La nuit si je pense un moment
Soulager mes maux en dormant,
Soudain je m'éveille & m'écrie,
Passeray-je en langueur le reste de ma vie.

Helas! que de fōins rigoureux
Accablent un cœur amoureux,
Dont la tendre ardeur est trahie,
Passeray-je en langueur le reste de ma vie.

F I N.

Figure 3.5: RASB 1695/10/202: “Qui m'oblige à feindre mon mal” by Monsieur A*****.

Yet another approach in denoting embellishment appears in the *Recueil* of September 1695, where a symbol is used for the *appuy*, *port de voix*, and *accent*.²⁰⁰ These symbols make their debut in an air by Pierre Berthet (see bars 3, 8 and the final syllable of the word “soulager” respectively in figure 3.6) and are the subject of specific explanation in a small table of *agrément*s included by the composer on the final page of his treatise of 1695.²⁰¹ Berthet’s symbols for the *agrément*s appear regularly in the collection thereafter.²⁰² Other symbols make a strong appearance too, notably those resembling the modern mordent²⁰³ and lower mordent (referred to at the time as a *pincé*).²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ RASB 1695/9/2: “Depuis que je vous vois”.

²⁰¹ Berthet, *Leçons de musique*, 47.

²⁰² See in contrast Berthet’s air in RASB 1697/5/6: “Le Zephir, Messenger de l’aimable Printems”, where only the minimalistic “+” symbol has been used.

²⁰³ This first appears in RASB 1695/2/3: “Que l’Hyver à son gré desole la nature”.

²⁰⁴ This first appears in RASB 1695/2/5: “Vous ne sçavez que trop rendre un cœur infidelle”. On the *pincé*, see Montéclair, *Les Principes de musique* (1736), 84.

Noteworthy is the combination of markings denoting that the singer should perform a *port de voix* and *accent* over the one note, a trend which in the *Recueils* appears for the first time in Berthet's air shown in figure 3.6 and continued by others thereafter. Also noteworthy is the relative frequency of the *accent* marking in isolation. The theorists who addressed vocal ornamentation speak of the *accent* as being reserved for doleful expressions of sadness and grief, suffering and tender expressions (see appendix 5). Yet, significantly, the *accent* markings in the airs of Berthet and others appear on words which are not necessarily highly emotive or sorrowful,²⁰⁵ and, in the case of an air from the 1697 *Recueil*, the *accent* marking appears in a positively cheerful textual context on the word "*m'enchante*".²⁰⁶ The proliferation of the *accent* and its combination with the *port de voix* is startling and will be further explored in the performance observations in chapter 7.

²⁰⁵ For example, the *accent* marking appears on the words "*écoute*" and "*faits*" in RASB 1697/7/134 and on the word "*ces*" in RASB 1696/9/166.

²⁰⁶ See RASB: 1697/9/180: "*Ma liberté m'enchante*".

AIR SERIEUX.



Basse-Continuë.



Basse Continuë.

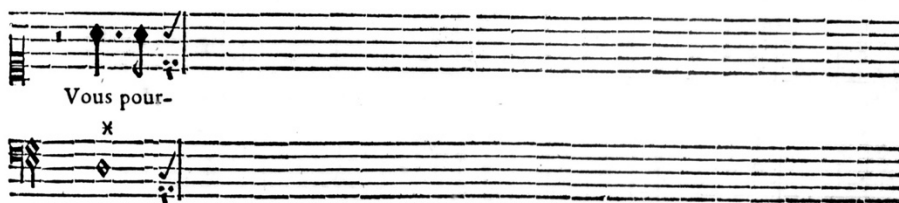


Basse-Continuë.

DE M. BERTHET.



Basse-Continuë.



Basse-Continuë.



Figure 3.6: RASB 1695/9/168: "Depuis que je vous vois je languis" by M. Berthet.

This diversity of approach persisted throughout the early years of the *Recueils*, with no discernible editorial evolution. There are several possible reasons for Ballard's silence on the question of ornamentation. In his *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter* of 1668, Bacilly attributes a paucity of ornamentation markings in vocal music generally to typographical limitations and to the fact that too many markings can hinder and obscure the clarity of an air, causing confusion.²⁰⁷ In those airs with sparse *agréments*, Ballard was possibly following Bacilly's advice on clarity, making the performance of the airs an attractive prospect for the amateur singer whose technique may not have allowed for the execution of ornate *passages*. It is also conceivable that the time constraints associated with the process of selecting airs and publishing the collection monthly meant that Ballard was content to publish the airs in the state in which they were submitted to him, without further editorial work.

The absence or lack of specificity of printed ornaments does not mean that the airs would have been performed without embellishment. On the contrary, the practice of ornamenting a vocal line had been accorded an almost sacred status by many theorists. In a comment directly addressed to the singing public three years before the start of the *Recueils*, Ballard, too, attests to the importance of ornamentation in creating pleasing movement from one note to the next.²⁰⁸ Ballard's on occasion minimalist approach could, moreover, be interpreted as his giving latitude to the singer to imagine and invent, and to showcase their ability to ornament appropriately. On this reading of the matter, the sparsely ornamented airs of the *Recueils* would not be discounted from the consideration of highly-skilled singers, but may rather have been viewed by them as a blank canvass on which to demonstrate their inventiveness.

If sparse ornament markings indicate an air's suitability for the amateur and accomplished singer alike, this is not the case for the airs in the *Recueils* which include elaborate passages to form a *double*. An example of a *simple* and its *double* are shown at figures 3.7 and 3.8 respectively. In the *Recueils* published between 1695 and 1699, twenty-two airs provide a realised *double* for their second or subsequent verse.²⁰⁹ All *doubles* in the airs examined were for female voice (*dessus or bas-dessus*). *Doubles* were not printed with any regularity: four in 1695, seven in 1696, six in 1697, two in 1698 and three in 1699. Although the melody of the *double* was typically set to the same bass line as the unadorned *simple*, this is not always the case.²¹⁰ The *double* is generally printed with its bass line underneath, allowing the singer and accompanist to follow each other's part with ease, or to assist the self-

²⁰⁷ Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 135; That the printing of *passages* was challenging in the seventeenth century has been discussed in relation to the *Livre d'airs* in Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 59.

²⁰⁸ XXXV. *Livre d'airs de differents auteurs à deux et trois parties* (1692), 79. Ballard explains that his reason for including ornaments supernumerary to the beats in a measure is to make known to the singer what the voice must do to pass pleasingly from one note to the other.

²⁰⁹ This is to be contrasted with the absence of realised *doubles* in the *Livres d'airs*. See Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité* at 58. In the *Recueils*, the *double* is typically printed immediately after the *simple*. However, see RASB 1697/10/2: "Ah! Rendez-vous, Iris," where the *double* is printed before the *simple*.

²¹⁰ See RASB1696/7/4: "Quand l'objet qui fait ma longueur", RASB 1696/9/2: "Sensible à mes douleurs", and RASB 1697/5/5: "Vous qui connaissez mon martyre."

accompanying singer.²¹¹ In the table of contents published with each month's *Recueil*, each *double* is given a separate listing and page number, and denoted "*Second Couplet*".²¹²

²¹¹ The following are exceptions to this rule: RASB1696/2/7: "*Je m'abandonne aux plaisirs*", RASB 1697/1/8: "*Pourquoy si vous m'aimez vous efforcer à feindre*", RASB 1697/8/7: "*Vos mépris, vos rigueurs, et votre longue absence*", RASB 1697/9/5: "*Tant de douceur et tant d'amour*", RASB 1698/8/3: "*Je pense voir dans ma lueur extreme*", and RASB 1698/8/4: "*Je crains souvent, ô crainte criminelle*".

²¹² See RASB 1698/8/3: "*Je pense voir dans ma lueur extreme*" and RASB 1698/8/4: "*Je crains souvent, ô crainte criminelle*", where there is no marking of "*Second Couplet*".

166

AIR SÉRIEUX

DE mes tristes accens, Ces deserts retentissent, Et ces rochers gemissent Tou-

Basse-Continuë.

chez par le recit des maux que je res- sens: sens: L'Echo, de mes peines sou-

Basse-Continuë.

pire; Et vous qui causez mon marti- re, Ingratte Iris, hélas! Vous

Basse-Continuë.

DE MONSIEUR BERTHET.

167

ne me plai- gnez pas. pas. L'Echo.

Basse-Continuë.



Figure 3.7: RASB 1696/9/166: "De mes tristes accens" (simple of RASB 1696/9/168: "Sensibles a mes douleurs") by Monsieur Berthet.

168 SECOND COUPLET.

Sensible à mes douleurs Ce clair ruisseau mur-mure, Et

Basse-Continuë.

les maux que j'endure Contraignent ces oy-seaux à plain-

Basse-Continuë.

dre mes mal-heurs: heurs: Tout prend pitié de mon mar-tire, Et vous

Basse-Continuë.

169 DE MONSIEUR BERTHET.

seule pour qui j'ex-pi-re, Cruelle Iris, he-las! Vous ne me plai-guez pas.

Basse-Continuë.

Tout prend pitié de mon mar-tire, Et vous seule pour qui j'ex-pi-re, Cru-

Basse-Continuë.

elle Iris, he-las! Vous ne me plai-guez pas.

Basse-Continuë.

The image displays two pages of a musical manuscript. The top page, numbered 168, is titled 'SECOND COUPLET.' and contains three systems of music. Each system consists of a vocal line with lyrics and a 'Basse-Continuë' (bass continuo) line. The lyrics are: 'Sensible à mes douleurs Ce clair ruisseau mur-mure, Et les maux que j'endure Contraignent ces oy-seaux à plain-dre mes mal-heurs: heurs: Tout prend pitié de mon mar-tire, Et vous'. The bottom page, numbered 169, is titled 'DE MONSIEUR BERTHET.' and contains three systems of music. The lyrics are: 'seule pour qui j'ex-pi-re, Cruelle Iris, he-las! Vous ne me plai-guez pas. Tout prend pitié de mon mar-tire, Et vous seule pour qui j'ex-pi-re, Cru-elle Iris, he-las! Vous ne me plai-guez pas.' The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'f' and 'sf'.

Figure 3.8: RASB 1696/9/168: "Sensible à mes douleurs" (double of RASB 1696/9/166: "De mes tristes accens") by Monsieur Berthet.

As well as their presence in *doubles*, *passages* sometimes also make an appearance as embellishments of repeated textual fragments within a single verse. In the airs displaying this feature, the composer has amplified a portion of the text and realises passages for the repeated portion. The repeated text ranges from the reprise of a small fragment of a line,²¹³ to the amplification of a whole line of the text²¹⁴ or to the repetition of half of the poem (which makes redundant the need for the repeat sign that was typically marked at the end of each half of a binary air).²¹⁵ The latter is demonstrated in figure 3.9.

²¹³ See RASB 1695/12/2: "*Comme une Hyrondelle en Hyver*". In this air, rather than marking the *segno* for the repeat of the second half at the first opportunity, Montéclair writes the repeat of the words, "*Mais sitost qu'en ses amours*", with added *passages* and then marks the *segno*.

²¹⁴ See RASB 1695/11/6: "*Vous chantez d'un air si touchant*".

²¹⁵ See RASB 1695/11/7: "*Bien que l'amour nous cause des allarmes*".

218 **AIR SÉRIEUX,**

Bien que l'amour nous cause des allarmes, Des plaintes, des sou-

Basse-Continuë.

pirs; Bien que l'a-mour nous cau se des al- larmes, Des plaintes

Basse-Continuë.

des soupirs; Quand une belle main vient essuyer nos lar-

Basse-Continuë.

219 **DE M DE LA BARRE.**

mes, Ah! que l'on goûte de plai- firs. Quand une bel- le main vient

Basse-Continuë.

es- fuy- er nos lar- mes, Ah! que l'on goû te de plai- firs.

Basse-Continuë.

K k

Figure 3.9: RASB 1695/11/218: "Bien que l'amour nous cause des allarmes" by M. de la Barre.

Both realised *doubles* and long-hand embellishments to textual reiterations provide insight into contemporary vocal ornamentation practice and for this alone, the *Recueils* are a valuable source of study. The singing of *doubles* and extended passages is technically challenging for the singer, requiring a suppleness and speed of voice and knowledge of and sensitivity to syllabic quantity.²¹⁶ The presence of elaborate embellishments of this nature in the *Recueils* is telling of the fact that the collection was, at least in part, directed at and patronised by the skilled practitioner.

3.10 Accompaniment

3.10.1 Solo and multi-voice airs with untexted bass lines

One of the consistent features of the *airs sérieux* under investigation (both solo airs and multi-voice airs) which have a separate, untexted bass line²¹⁷ is the presence of the marking “*Basse-Continuë*”. Usually, although not always, accompanied by figures above the non-texted bass line, this reflects the fundamental accompanying practice of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Although there appears to be no definitive printing policy as to layout and placement, when space allows, figures are predominantly placed vertically above the bass notes in descending order and generally with the largest intervals at the top. This is in accordance with the musical examples given in the French accompaniment treatises which proliferated at the end of the seventeenth century.²¹⁸ Consecutive figures pertaining to a single bass note give no hint of rhythmic interpretation, although this is usually dictated by the harmonic changes implied in the vocal line.²¹⁹

3.10.2 Sung bass lines with figures

Fifty-two of the airs in the early years of the *Recueils* are multi-voice airs. Five of these multi-voice airs include a separately written-out bass line which is untexted and which bears the indication “*Basse-Continuë*”.²²⁰ In the remainder of the multi-voice airs, it is generally the case that the bass line is texted and sung, with no “*Basse-Continuë*” indication present. In approximately six airs, however, it is clear from the presence of figures over the sung bass line that continuo accompaniment was envisaged, which would have doubled the sung bass line or could potentially have replaced the bass voice.

3.10.3 Figured bass accompaniment in France at the end of the seventeenth-century

²¹⁶ Bacilly considered these attributes necessary for executing diminutions. See Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 209.

²¹⁷ RASB 1695/4/71, RASB 1695/7/130, RASB 1695/10/194, RASB 1697/2/42, RASB 1699/2/36

²¹⁸ For a full discussion of these treatises, see Zappulla, *Figured Bass Accompaniment*.

²¹⁹ Rameau, writing later, noted that such placements should be determined by the ear. See *Treatise on Harmony*, 442.

²²⁰ RASB 1695/4/71, RASB 1695/7/130, RASB 1695/10/194, RASB 1697/2/42, RASB 1699/2/36.

Of the more than approximately 300 solo airs where the words “*Basse-Continuë*” appear under the first system, the bass line is figured in all but eleven. The facility afforded the accompanist by the predominance of bass lines which are figured and the ample supply of continuo accompaniment treatises promising fast results for diligent students suggest that Ballard was catering to the needs of the amateur as well as the proficient harpsichordist for whom these figures would have been largely superfluous. Again, we see Ballard adopting an inclusive policy in this publication, which was geared towards an audience with the widest ambit of musical proficiencies.

Although elsewhere in Europe, thoroughbass had been incorporated in compositions possibly before 1602,²²¹ French sources reveal that in that country, they were slower to adopt the concept, at least in print.²²² As early as 1647 in French printed sources, accompaniments in tablature were gradually being replaced by separate, figured parts for a thorough- or *continue* bass. Ballard, concerned with the marketability of tablature, printed Constantijn Huygens’ *Pathodia sacra et profana occupati* in that year with figured bass parts throughout, having requested that the original tablature accompaniments be rewritten as *basse continue*. Etienne Moulinié’s *Meslanges de sujets chrestiens, cantiques, litanies et motets, mis en musique à 2, 3, 4 & 5 parties avec une basse continue* of 1658 has been identified as the first composition by a French native published with a figured *basse continue*.²²³ The *Livres d’airs* had also dispensed with tablature in favour of keyboard score, with the first figured air appearing in the 1669 edition.²²⁴

Tablature, it was recognized, had been an obstacle for playing in ensembles, whereas *basse continue* minimised confusion and allowed all ensemble members to “speak the same language”.²²⁵ This same sentiment, lauding the merits of thoroughbass over tablature, was frequently echoed by composers of the time; in 1660 Nicolas Fleury remarked in the *Avertissement* to his treatise on playing *basse continue* on the theorbo that by following his rules, even those who knew nothing of the composition of music could within a month start to play *basse continue*.²²⁶ Bartolotti in 1669 remarked that by using his method, “*ceux qui sçavent la Musique, & ceux qui ne la sçavent pas, y trouveront également de la facilité, pour toucher toutes sortes d’Airs à Livre ouvert*”.²²⁷ In 1680, Perrine included in his *Livre de musique pour le lut* a new and easy method for playing the lute with notes of music. In the preface to that work, he explains that learning to play from tablature involves great difficulty and causes disaffection in the public. With his method, he explains that a child of eight or nine years old could readily acquire the skill to play music at sight on the lute.²²⁸ He also indicates that *basse continue* facilitates sociability in music-making, as it allows one to play in an ensemble setting with all sorts of other instruments, an activity which was only done irregularly up until then because of the difficulty of finding the connection between lute tablature and music and vice versa. François Champion’s attempt in 1705 to write for

²²¹ Zappulla, *Figured Bass Accompaniment*, xix.

²²² Zappulla, xviii.

²²³ Zappulla, xviii.

²²⁴ See LDDA 1669/25: “*Sous ces ombrages verts*” as identified in Goulet, *Poésie, musique et sociabilité*, 109.

²²⁵ Perrine, *Livre de musique pour le lut*, 15.

²²⁶ *Avertissement* to Fleury, *Methode*, n.p.

²²⁷ *Avertissement* to Bartolotti, *Table pour apprendre facilement à toucher le théorbe sur la basse-continuë*, n.p. ‘Those who know music and those who do not, will both find herein ease in playing all sorts of airs at sight’.

²²⁸ *Preface* to Perrine, *Livre de musique pour le lut*, n.p.

the guitar in keyboard score rather than tablature²²⁹ provides further evidence of the complexities leading to the decline in popularity of the latter. Elsewhere, in one of his later works dated 1716, Campion goes further and describes the use of tablature as “*pernicieuse pour ceux qui veulent fair quelque progres sur le Theorbe*”.²³⁰

Another attraction of figured bass over tablature was the facility it lent to transposition, proficiency at which was considered a requirement for accompanists. Already in the mid-seventeenth century, this advantage had been noted by, amongst others, Michel Lambert, who referred to it in the foreword of his books of airs:

*Il m’auroit esté facile d’ajouter la tablature du Teorbe telle que ie l’ay composée, mais ie n’ay mis a dessein que les basses continues pour la facilité des voix que l’on pourra plus aizeement accompagner en transposant quand il le faudra a la maniere accoutumée.*²³¹

In the many continuo accompaniment treatises published after this time, the requirement for the accompanist of a singer to be proficient at transposition is the subject of regular instruction and advice.

3.10.4 Accompanying Instruments

The starting point for any discussion of the likely instruments used to accompany the *airs sérieux* of the *Recueils* must be Bacilly, who expresses a clear preference (at least when accompanying the solo voice) for the theorbo over the harpsichord and viola da gamba because of its commodiousness and sweetness²³² and because it would not obscure or overpower weak and delicate voices. Referring specifically to the theorbo, Bacilly states that it is very rare to hear it played but very common to hear it being tuned,²³³ a statement which, if taken at face value, provides clues as to the likely care taken over tuning and intonation.

Certainly in performing the *airs sérieux* in the context of the salon, the preference expressed for the theorbo makes practical sense; this instrument was portable and, especially in contrast to the harpsichord, relatively small, meaning that it could be moved from room to alcove to *ruelle* with some ease. Bacilly’s comment reflects the growing trend for theorbo accompaniment (printed in musically-accessible notes rather than tablature) at the end of the seventeenth-century as compared to the lute.

Self-accompaniment on the theorbo was envisaged, too. Jacques Boyvin writes with approval about singers who accompany themselves on that instrument,²³⁴ and Bacilly positively encourages singers who wish to perfect themselves in the vocal arts to learn the

²²⁹ See further Anthony, *French Baroque Music*, 295.

²³⁰ Campion, *Traité d’accompagnement et de composition*, n.p. ‘Pernicious for those who want to make progress on the theorbo’.

²³¹ *Avant propos* to Lambert, *Les Airs de Monsieur de Lambert*, 2. ‘It would have been easy to add theorbo tablature in the way that I composed it. But on purpose, I only added basso continuo for the ease of the voices, such that one can more readily transpose, when necessary, and accompany them in the usual manner’.

²³² Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 17.

²³³ Bacilly, 22.

²³⁴ Boyvin, *Traité*, 8; as cited in Zappulla, *Figured Bass Accompaniment*, 51.

theorbo;²³⁵ in fact, Bacilly describes it as disadvantageous when the accompaniment is performed by a person other than the singer, stating that it is common for singers to encounter the situation in which there is neither a theorbo at hand nor anyone to play it.²³⁶ In at least one account in Madeleine de Scudéry's works which is set out in section 6.4 below, a young girl is said to take up the theorbo to self-accompany, reflecting Bacilly's preference.

The proliferation of accompaniment treatises which were published in the second half of the seventeenth-century reveal that the choice of continuo instruments was certainly not confined to the theorbo, however. Moreover, certain indications in the bass line of the serious airs in the *Recueils* carry implications that have significant impact on instrumental combinations.

Firstly, the harpsichord is also mentioned by Bacilly²³⁷ as a member of the continuo group, and Robert Zappulla, in his survey of French continuo practice, asserts that keyboard instruments were unmatched in their popularity for continuo realisations.²³⁸ Instruments by the Ruckers/ Couchet, Blanchet, and Hemsch families as well as by individual makers were readily available, according to Zappulla,²³⁹ with most of these being double-manual instruments.

Conventions and rules of realisation for harmonic continuo instruments are amply described in the treatises. There are two points to highlight in particular. Firstly, in reference to the theorbo, Bacilly cautions that it should be played with a sense of moderation and the accompanist should avoid showy and excessive figuration in order not to overpower the voice. Rather, it should flatter the voice and cover up its faults.²⁴⁰ Presumably, Bacilly's stricture would be pertinent for other accompanying instruments, too. Secondly, in 1732, Rameau expresses the radical view that harpsichordists need not play the bass line when there is a sustaining instrument to play that part.²⁴¹ Albeit expressed at a time which is considerably later than the publication of the airs in this study, the relevance to the performance of these airs of the practice of omitting the bass line in some circumstances has not been accorded full academic attention. Such an approach possesses many advantages for the ensemble, such as enhanced flexibility (resulting in enhanced expressive possibilities) for sustained bass instruments, and minimised intonation discrepancies between harmonic and sustained continuo instruments. It also creates a more transparent sound that would be apt for the reduced domestic dimensions of the salon, supporting rather than overpowering the non-professional singer in a performance context in which, as we will see in chapter 5, intelligibility of words and audibility were primary considerations.

Alongside the theorbo, the guitar and lute were regular staples of the seventeenth-century French continuo group. By the time the *Recueils* were published, the lute had declined in

²³⁵ Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 19.

²³⁶ Bacilly, 20.

²³⁷ Bacilly, 17.

²³⁸ Zappulla, *Figured Bass Accompaniment*, 37.

²³⁹ Zappulla, 61.

²⁴⁰ Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 19.

²⁴¹ Rameau, *Dissertation*, 17–18; as cited in Zappulla, *Figured Bass Accompaniment*, 74.

popularity,²⁴² however, owing in part to the difficulties associated with reading tablature. Zappulla notes the baroque guitar was smaller and lighter than its modern counterpart,²⁴³ which would make it a portable and therefore easy choice for spontaneous music-making. Indeed, by the 1660s and 1670s, the guitar was widely marketed to musical amateurs in Paris because it lightened the burden of tuning. The harp is mentioned as a possible further member of the plucked continuo group by Brossard in his definition of “basso continuo”,²⁴⁴ but according to Bacilly’s comments in 1668, it was already at that time no longer in use.²⁴⁵

The bass and double-bass members of the viol (*basse de viole* and *contre-basse de viole*) and violin families (the ‘cello, or, before around 1650, the *basse de violon* and the *contrebasse*) were conventionally used as sustaining instruments.²⁴⁶ Brossard also includes the bassoon and the serpent in his list of basso continuo instruments in his dictionary.²⁴⁷ He further indicates that when no figures are marked in the bass, the viola da gamba was often used.²⁴⁸ Rousseau indicates that the viola da gamba can be used to self-accompany, whereby the one performer both plays the bass line and sings,²⁴⁹ although this would no doubt be a challenging undertaking for the non-professional musician.

Although routinely used in French continuo groups for formalised performance occasions such as opera and concerts, it is less likely that continuo instruments such as the bass and double-bass members of the viol and violin families, and even the viola da gamba, were regularly heard to accompany *airs sérieux* in the salon, however. As will be demonstrated in chapter 6, in a world which shunned shows of artistic effort, artistry or preparation, and in which the singing of airs was intertwined with gallant conversation, a seemingly spontaneous breaking into song would not readily have accommodated the sense of *mise en place* required to fetch and tune an instrument. Much more likely would have been the use of the highly portable theorbo or guitar, or the harpsichord, a commonly-owned instrument amongst the wealthy at the time. As the literary accounts examined in chapter 6 reveal, unaccompanied singing in the salon was also common.

3.11 Conclusion

A forensic examination of the early *Recueils* and the format and contents of the *airs sérieux* contained within forms a rich point of departure for this study. The month after month elaboration of musical trends in the *Recueils* created a vast document, both revealing and defining current taste. The examination in this chapter of the *airs sérieux* in the *Recueils* published from 1695 to 1699 has attempted to open a window onto this world.

A world dominated by solo song for high female voice but also encompassing other vocal and instrumental combinations are the hallmarks of the collection. Beyond the binary nature of the title, the *Recueils* reveal a broad and eclectic mix of genres, settings, and

²⁴² Zappulla, *Figured Bass Accompaniment*, 48–49.

²⁴³ Zappulla, 53.

²⁴⁴ Brossard, ‘Dictionnaire’.

²⁴⁵ Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 17.

²⁴⁶ Zappulla, *Figured Bass Accompaniment*, 55–60.

²⁴⁷ Brossard, ‘Dictionnaire’.

²⁴⁸ Brossard.

²⁴⁹ Rousseau, *Traité*, 55.

styles. Attesting to the wide appeal and usage of the books, this chapter has uncovered a range of song, from solo to multi-voice airs, from unaccompanied song to mini-ensemble pieces to works performed on the lyric and dramatic stage, and from simple, unadorned melodic lines to florid *doubles*. In short, these volumes brought to the public each month a new and varied diet of music, catering to the musical everyman.

Representing a considerable evolution from the *Livre d'airs* in terms of readability and manoeuvrability, the *Recueils* were not only practical. Considerable effort was invested on the part of Ballard to make these volumes beautiful, too, revealing them to be aesthetic objects, memorializing pieces from stage repertoire, and disseminating the newest vocal works amongst an avid public. Desirable objects in themselves, the *airs sérieux* in these volumes privileged the male poetic voice yet favoured the female singing voice. Shedding light on the previously undetected prevalence of the *accent*, this chapter also presents the volumes as apt and beautiful objects for use in the world of the seventeenth-century salon.

The following chapters will further explore just how the inhabitants of this world navigated a musical landscape which presented them with opportunities to simulate stage performances of dramatic works, and which invited them to voice through the medium of song those emotions that salon values required to remain otherwise unspoken.