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Made to Please: Vaudeville and Obscene Parisian Media, 1750-1793

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Abstract

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The *vaudeville* remains an oft-overlooked genre of French song that was popularized by Paris's fairground theaters and street singers on the Pont Neuf. Many histories of French music point to the middle of the eighteenth century as the period when the vaudeville began its rapid disappearance from the city's musical landscape, following the arrival of the Italian comic *bouffons*. So thorough was the triumph of Italianate vocal music over the vaudeville that the playwright Charles Collé was moved to declare the genre "totally out of fashion" by 1768. Modern scholars have seized on this narrative, and regard the vaudeville as a stepping stone on the way toward the more innovative, cosmopolitan-sounding lyric theater of *opéra-comique*. However, by turning to collections of obscene, late eighteenth-century play collections, all of which contain "obsolete" vaudevilles, it seems clear that previous historiographic estimations of the vaudeville require re-assessment.

This dissertation offers a more holistic engagement with the different spaces where vaudevilles could be heard after 1750 by charting their circulation between public stages and private spaces, and in particular, the *théâtres de société*. My work identifies and supplies modern notation for the musical indications, known as *timbres*, which partially recovers these vaudevilles for modern audiences, and allows them to once again hear many melodies that have been largely forgotten. Close readings of two play collections intended for private theaters, the *Théâtre de campagne ou les débauches de l'esprit* (1755/1758) and the *Théâtre d'amour* (ca. 1770s), show how vaudevilles continued to attract authors even after their alleged demise on the public

theaters, especially when it came to articulations of sexuality. Obscenity became an increasingly fundamental attribute of the vaudeville during the Revolutionary period, as evidenced by three representative texts: *Les Fouteries chantantes* (1791), *L'Autrichienne en goguettes, ou l'orgie royale* (1789), and *Le Branle des Capucins ou le 1001e tour de Marie-Antoinette* (1791). Analyzing the vaudevilles contained within these works demonstrates the ongoing appeal of the genre after 1750, and shows the complex systems of intertextual reference at work in even the most vulgar of these songs.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to my committee members, Scott Paulin, Ryan Dohoney, and Sarah Maza, for their willingness to read many drafts of this project. Responding to their questions, keen insights and suggestions was my favorite part of the writing process. I would also like to thank my advisor, Drew Davies, for supporting this project, even when I personally wasn't so sure. Thank you all for coming on this very weird journey with me.

This work would not have been possible without the financial assistance of a Northwestern University Graduate Research Grant, with which I was able to make my initial forays into the archives and realize how much work there was to be done. My research was also supported by a Fulbright Fellowship to France in 2016-2017. I am ever so grateful to the sponsorship and support of Pierre Frantz at the Centre d'étude de la langue et la littérature française (16e-18e siècles) at the Sorbonne, which greatly enriched my time in Paris. The librarians at the Réserves of the BN were kind enough to only occasionally raise an eyebrow as I trawled through titles like *L'Art de foutre* day after day. The friendliness and enthusiasm of the librarians at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal made working there a joy. This last year of writing was conducted as a Visiting Scholar at Duke University, and I am especially grateful to Philip Rupprecht, Jacqueline Waeber, and Roseen Giles for being so warm and welcoming, and providing a real intellectual home away from home.

I've had the pleasure of meeting and receiving help from so many generous people while working on this project. David Charlton helped make my year in France possible, and was a friendly sounding board over coffee at the British Library. Stephen Hill passed many (many) hours with me at the Office of Fellowships, debating the ins-and-outs of this project as I applied

for grant after grant after grant. His fierce belief in this project and in me is still humbling. When I first began, Linda Austern and Tom Bauman were enthusiastic early supporters without whom this work would likely never have gotten off the ground.

I firmly believe that the musicology program at Northwestern fosters a unique community, especially among the graduate students, who have been a true family to me over the years. I could not have asked for a better cohort in Emily, Amanda, Jason, and Susan. Kyle has been a model of passion and dedication to the work we do and to the community that makes it worth doing. Colin and Patrick (Pádraig) are dearer to my heart than words can say.

My in-laws Ann and Bob have been loving and understanding as their son and I pursued our unusual goals together. I will always cherish showing them Paris for the first time. On the many stops that Tom and I would make at my grandmother Ann's house while traveling between Chicago and Iowa, her frequent refrain was: "Well, I can't say I really understand it all, but I am just so proud of the two of you." I am so lucky and so grateful to be surrounded with that kind of love.

My entire life, my mother and father, Darci and Tom, let me pursue whatever passion came my way. Whether that was playing the violin in a school district with no orchestra, ice skating, dance, gymnastics, theater, improv, or those two weeks of track in seventh grade, they always encouraged my interests, however unusual. When I needed to transfer school districts so that I could keep playing my violin, my mother drove me half an hour across town every morning so that I could get to orchestra rehearsal by 6:45 am. She would then pick me up after school and drive me to the other side of town for my lessons. She came to every concert and recital – even those terrible early ones. I am overcome, overwhelmed, *bouleversée* by their love,

their support, their trust, and most precious of all, their friendship. Not a single page of this document would have been possible without them.

Speaking of parents: My career as a musicologist began when I was a senior in high school and I enrolled in an intro to music literature class at Drake University with Eric Saylor. Over the last twelve years, it has been my privilege and honor to work with Eric as an advisee, a mentee, and a friend. Between the (quite literally) thousands of pages of my writing that he has read, the endless wealth of suggestions and questions, the bottomless moral and intellectual support that he has offered – I cannot begin to properly account for all the ways that I am indebted to him. He has been a "father-in-music" to me and for that I am eternally grateful.

To loosely paraphrase Josephine Baker: "J'ai deux amours: mon mari et Paris." While he is well aware of the latter, I would like to use this space to emphasize the former. I cannot imagine having survived my studies without Tom and his good humor, patience, understanding, and true sympathy. I have been made better by his deep curiosity about the world, his profound empathy for those who inhabit it, and his steady love. *Merci mille fois, mon coeur.*

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"Avec quelle curiosité on l'écoutait! Avec quelle avidité on l'achetait! Avec quel soin on la logeait dans sa mémoire! Avec quel plaisir on la redisait! Mais avec quelle facilité on l'oubliait pour une autre! C'est là un travers humain, français, dit-on, et surtout parisien, mais éternel, je crois."
—Auguste Font, *Favart: L'Opéra Comique et la comédie-vaudeville aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, 1894

"It's useless to accuse *opéra-comique en vaudevilles* of having not created masterpieces…There are masterpieces – we just no longer understand them."
—Philip Robinson, "Les vaudevilles: Un médium théâtrale"[1]

Introduction

In the opening scene of the anonymously authored play *Le Branle des Capucins, ou le 1001e tour de Marie-Antoinette* ("The Dance of the Monks, or the 1001st Trick of Marie-Antoinette"), the Queen of France wanders the grounds of the royal palace at Saint-Cloud, alone. "Wherever did d'Artois get this idea to visit me dressed as a monk?" she wonders aloud to herself. "And my dear Polignac, dressed in the same costume. Alas, how long ago those times seem when we, together…" She trails off suggestively. "But why dwell on painful memories…" Her tone suddenly shifts. "Damned nation, may you someday be destroyed. May I one day see you drowned in rivers of your own hateful soldiers' blood…But I'm getting lost in thought. d'Artois has arrived…I wish to banish sadness and enjoy myself fully at the expense of my old cuckold…"[2] Her excitement upon seeing her brother-in-law, the Comte d'Artois, leads her

[1] Philip Robinson, "Les vaudevilles: un médium théâtrale," *Dix-huitième siècle* 28 (1996): 433.

[2] "Où diable d'Artois a-t-il été s'aviser de venir me voir en capucin…Et ma chère Polignac dans le même costume….Hélas, Qu'il est loin ce tems où tous ensemble…Mais pourquoi s'arrêter à un fâcheux souvenir…Nation Maudite, puisses-tu être un jour anéantie. Puissé-je un jour te voir nager dans des flots de sang de tes détestables soldats…je m'égare…D'Artois est ici:…je veux banner la tristesse et m'en donner aux dépens de mon vieux cocu…" *Le Branle de Capucins, ou le 1001e tour de Marie-Antoinette* (Saint-Cloud: Imprimerie des Clair-Voyants,

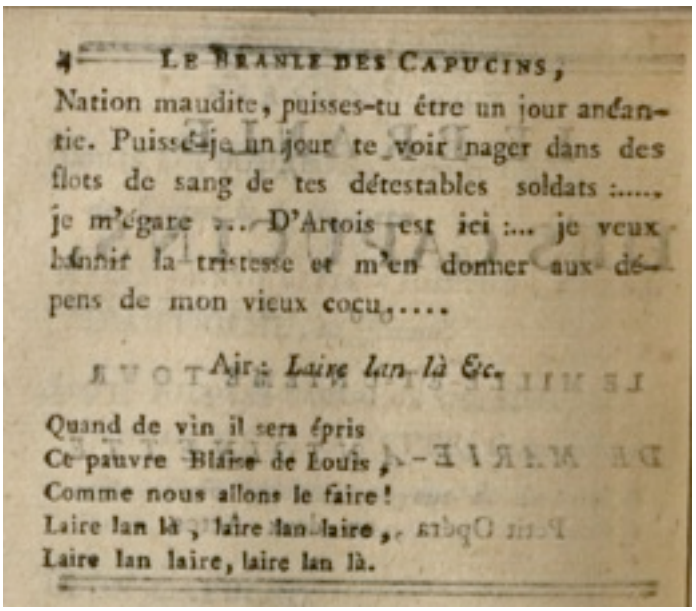
spoken soliloquy to break forth into song:

Air: *Laire lan là &c.* Quand de vin il sera épris Ce pauvre Blaise de Louis, Comme nous allons le faire! Laire lan là, laire lan laire, Laire lan laire, laire lan là.	To the tune, *Laire lan là &c.* When he's become silly with wine, This poor Louis, How we are going to do it! Laire lan là, laire lan laire, Laire lan laire, laire lan là.[3]

For a modern reader, this opening scene's depiction of a reigning queen musing in frank terms on her sexual past and planning future encounters with her lovers may seem unusually explicit for its time. From the outset of this 1791 satire of the French monarchy, Marie-Antoinette's blood-filled visions and open cuckolding of her husband evoke a figure of monstrous sexuality. On the page, this musical moment is visually distinguished from the previous text by the indication "Air," and is left-justified, in contrast with the fully-justified dialogue preceding it (Fig. i). The final two lines are nonsense words, though full of pronunciatory pleasure when paired with a lilting melody. Her pivot to song begs an obvious question: How does the "Laire lan là" go? What did it sound like? All of the indications within the text point to a sonic event, and yet…silence. What produces this silence? Posed another way, what interrupts our capacity to interpret these texts in all of their musical richness, and what can we gain by hearing them once more?

1791), 3-4. All translations are my own, unless otherwise specified. Transcriptions of archival materials have preserved the spelling and punctuation of the original sources.

[3] *Le Branle des Capucins*, 4.



4 LE BRANLE DES CAPUCINS,

Nation maudite, puisses-tu être un jour anéantie. Puisse-je un jour te voir nager dans des flots de sang de tes détestables soldats :..... je m'égare ... D'Artois est ici :... je veux bannir la tristesse et m'en donner aux dépens de mon vieux cocu,....

Air : *Laire lan là &c.*

Quand de vin il sera épris
Ce pauvre Blaise de Louis,
Comme nous allons le faire!
Laire lan là, laire lan laire,
Laire lan laire, laire lan là.

Fig. i. *Le Branle des Capucins*, Act I scene i.
Northwestern University Special Collections 842.608 T374 v.1 pt.8

Such questions highlight the disconnect between eighteenth-century texts bursting with music and our modern inability to hear or sing them. Songs like the "Laire lan là" sung by the fictionalized Marie-Antoinette appear throughout *Le Branle des Capucins*, as well as in many other contemporaneous texts. Rather than supplying notated melodies, authors relied on a combination of texted prompts (known as *timbres*) and a reader's memory of a well-known tune. When *timbres* were combined with new lyrics, the product (a contrafact) was known as a *vaudeville*.

To illustrate how this functioned, we can take a familiar text, whose melody is so well known that it is likely recalled as the words are read:

Happy birthday to you

Happy birthday to you

Happy birthday dear [Name]

Happy birthday to you

What we know today as "Happy Birthday to You" is in fact a contrafact, an updating of Patty and Mildred Hill's 1893 "Good Morning to All." When I was young, there was a common variation to these lyrics, sung to the same melody:

Happy birthday to you,

You live in a zoo,

You look like a monkey,

And you smell like one too.

Speaking from personal experience, there were few things funnier than someone getting the courage to belt out this irreverent version at a birthday party. The upending of the expected repetitive verses, the absurdist ribbing of a friend at the moment in the festivities when they are typically most celebrated—all of this contributed to the subversive thrill of taking a well-worn melody and its accumulated associations and twisting it into something unexpected.

Just as the melody to "Happy Birthday" carries within it a host of specific references and connotations, so, too, did eighteenth-century *timbres*. Beyond simply adding new verses to a well-known and catchy tune, *timbres* encouraged audiences to interpret a new instantiation of a song in relation to previous ones. In this way, particular meanings accumulated to specific *timbres*, allowing author-singers to affectively orient their audience towards the new text. For this orientation to be successful, audiences in turn needed not only a vast melodic memory, but also sophisticated interpretive strategies with which to navigate such "aural palimpsests."[4] In restoring sound to texts like *Le Branle des Capucins*, then, it is not enough to merely supply the forgotten melodies; one must also recover the dense networks of meaning attached to each tune.

[4] Robert Darnton, *Poetry and the Police: Communication Networks in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 80.

When we foreground the vaudeville's musicality, we can also begin asking questions about the role of pleasure in these texts which, as this study will demonstrate, frequently and openly foregrounded sexual content.[5]

Vaudeville and "low literature"

Though catchy and recognizable, few would refer to the song "Happy Birthday" as high art. Its limited range and highly repetitive structure are pitched to a performance level attainable by even the most musically challenged. In this way, the melody to "Happy Birthday" is similar to many of the most common eighteenth-century vaudeville tunes, which were also simple in construction. Combined with the fact that these brief, unsophisticated melodies were often paired with obscene text, it is perhaps unsurprising that vaudevilles have failed to attract the same level of scholarly attention as the operas of Rameau or Gluck, or the *opéras-comique* of Grétry or Philidor. With their recycled tunes and crass lyrics, vaudevilles might be described as musicology's "low literature."

Coming out of French cultural history, the concept of "low literature" is meant to contrast with a "summit view of eighteenth-century intellectual history," often derived from the philosophical works of Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau, among others.[6] For decades, historians

[5] Feminist musicologists like Susan McClary and Suzanne Cusick have provided important models for how we might use music and its performance to ask questions about pleasure and power, though such approaches seem to have made few inroads with scholarship on eighteenth-century music. See McClary, *Desire and Pleasure in Seventeenth-Century Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); and Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court: Music and the Circulation of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

[6] Robert Darnton, "The High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature in Pre-Revolutionary France," *Past & Present* 51 (May 1971): 81. See also Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), and *The Devil in the Holy Water, or the Art of Slander from Louis XIV to Napoleon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); as well as Chantal Thomas, *The Wicked Queen: The Origins of the Myth of Marie-Antoinette*, trans. by Julie Rose (New York: Zone Books, 1999).

like Robert Darnton have sought to interrogate the *ancien régime* "from below" by attending to less illustrious, sometimes obscene works such as *Vénus dans la cloître* and even *Le Branle des Capucins*, which often found wider audiences than more high-minded works. While musicology operates under similar assumptions regarding the ability of art to tell us something about the time and the people who make it, a similar "from below" approach to musical production of the same period in France has not materialized. Vaudevilles, then, offer a logical meeting place for musicology and French cultural studies, as a form of "low" musical production that, nevertheless, penetrated into the highest echelons of Parisian society.

Much of the eighteenth century's low literature, and by extension the works under consideration in this study, could be classified under the modern category of "pornography," in that they describe sexual activity between two (or three, or more) people in vivid detail. Many of the texts I surveyed but ultimately did not include in this study were accompanied by images of people having sex, either as illustrations of the scenes described in the text or as elaborations on what was left merely implied.[7] In categorizing the works in this study, I have opted for the slightly less charged "obscene media" over "pornography," favoring the more expansive range of sexual transgression and erotic exploration that "obscenity" permits, as well as its greater historical accuracy. The category of "pornography" as we understand it today—as sexually explicit images or words meant to incite sexual arousal—was a construction of the nineteenth century, applied in the context of creating "secret museums" and archives, kept away from the eyes of the public for their protection.[8] The word "pornography" only originates to 1769 with

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[7] Daniel T. Smith, Jr., "Libertine Dramaturgy: Reading Obscene Closet Drama in Eighteenth-Century France," (Ph.D diss., Northwestern University, 2010), 18.

[8] Walter Kendrick also evocatively describes this process of naming as "an imaginary scenario of danger and rescue, a perennial little melodrama" over the threat posed by the pornographic in its various forms throughout time. See Kendrick, *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture* (New York: Viking Press, 1987), 13 and 33-66.

Rétif de la Bretonne's *Le Pornographe*, while the word *obscenité* had existed for much longer (though the concept, of course, long predates both).[9] For book censors charged with protecting public morality in the *ancien régime*, "obscenity" was one of a constellation of legal terms for designating books that should be confiscated.[10]

The danger in reading this categorization back onto texts that predate the concept is to risk ascribing an intention to these texts that perhaps never existed. In a modern colloquial sense, "pornography" introduces a possibility for confusion by setting an expectation or threshold of explicitness for the content that many of the vaudevilles and *comédies en vaudevilles* included here would fail to meet, but such failure should not be interpreted as an absence of erotic or sexual content. "Obscene," then, in addition to being the more historically appropriate term, has the benefit in modern parlance of better describing the spectrum on which vaudevilles existed. Though the level of sexual explicitness in the poetic content varied from one vaudeville to another, comparing them allows us to see how they partook of a similar musical practice.

In considering the role of sexually explicit writings and images before the nineteenth century, Lynn Hunt has observed that such material "was almost always an adjunct to something else until the middle or end of the eighteenth century."[11] In France, this "something else" was often anticlericalism, but could also be political critique, as the many *libelles*, *vies privées*, and

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The Archives de l'Enfer of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, where many of the texts under consideration in this study are kept, is an artifact of this very impulse.

[9] Amy S. Wyngaard, *Bad Books: Rétif de la Bretonne, Sexuality, and Pornography* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2013); Lynn Hunt, "Introduction: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity," in *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800* (New York: Zone Books, 1993), 13; Joan DeJean, *Reinvention of Obscenity: Sex, Lies, and Tabloids in Early Modern France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 5-7.

[10] Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 87-88.

[11] Hunt, *Invention of Pornography*, 10.

vaudevilles in circulation at the end of the eighteenth century attest.[12] In other words, to researchers like Hunt, *Le Branle des Capucins* becomes an object of historical interest for what it reveals about political discourse in the final days of the *ancien régime*, and less so (or even in spite of) the erotic potential it contains.[13] This insistence on obscene or pornographic texts as "sex *and*" something else often ends up rhetorically privileging the "something else" as a justification for thinking about these texts at all. Vaudevilles, however, present a unique opportunity to think about the embodiment of a text's erotics via *musical* performance at a level of consideration equal to its cultural and political ramifications.

As a potential object of study, then, vaudevilles have historically had two main strikes against them: the first being their crass language and obscene subject matter; the second, their low standing in relation to *opéra-comique*, itself a "low" genre that has only attracted significant interest in recent years. In general, musicologists interested in early modern French music have tended to gravitate towards the more culturally prestigious, better-documented institutions of the Académie Royale de Musique (better known as the Opéra) and the Comédie-Italienne.[14] Meanwhile, French historians, though cognizant of the important cultural work that vaudevilles

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[12] Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 199-208.

[13] Hunt, "Political Pornography and the French Revolution," in *Invention of Pornography*, 321.

[14] For studies of the Opéra, see Mark Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution: Cultural Politics and the Paris Opéra, 1789-1794* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Olivia Bloechl, *Opera and the Political Imaginary in Old Regime France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); R.J. Arnold, *Musical Debate and Political Culture, 1700-1830* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2017). For studies on opéra-comique, see David Charlton, *Opera in the Age of Rousseau: Music, Confrontation, Realism; French Opera, 1730-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and *Grétry and the Growth of Opéra-Comique* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Darlow, *Nicolas-Etienne Framery and lyric theatre in eighteenth-century France* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2003); Philippe Vendrix, ed. *L'Opéra-Comique en France au XVIIIe Siècle* (Liege: Mardaga, 1992); and Julia Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater (1762-1793): Opéra-Comique and the Development of National Style in France" (Ph.D diss., Yale University, 2013).

and song performed in the *ancien régime*, have been largely uninterested in the actual sound of these songs and the unique ways in which melody imparted meaning to text.[15]

An important exception to these trends has been the work of the musicologist Herbert Schneider, which has been foundational to French Baroque studies in general, and to the genre of vaudeville and the musical unit of the *timbre* in particular. His monograph on the reception of Lully's music from the late seventeenth and into the eighteenth centuries, along with its accompanying thematic catalogue, demonstrates the extent to which Lully's compositions pervaded the Parisian musical landscape for nearly a century. Furthermore, Schneider shows how Lully's music penetrated into all levels of Parisian life by documenting the appearance of parodies in contemporaneous sacred and secular *chansonniers*, on the stages of the Comédie-Italienne, and at the fairs.[16] His two collected editions, *Das Vaudeville* and *Timbre und Vaudeville*, are a testament to the richness of this subject area, but suffer from a lack of consensus in methodology and object. Schneider's contribution to the collected edition *Music and the French Revolution* is his only articulation of the function of *timbres* and vaudevilles in English: "[M]elodies, their character and expression, and the words associated with them…play an important, and often key, role in the understanding of songs or vaudevilles."[17] It is from this central assumption that my study emanates.

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[15] See Lynn Hunt, *The Invention of Pornography*; Laura Mason, *Singing the French Revolution: Popular Culture and Politics, 1787-1799* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); and Chantal Thomas, *The Wicked Queen: The Origins of the Myth of Marie Antoinette,* trans. by Julie Rose (New York: Zone Books, 1999). One exception to the disinterest in sound has been Robert Darnton, who included a "digital cabaret" of vaudevilles performed by Hélène Delavault a supplement to his *Poetry and the Police*.

[16] Herbert Schneider, *Die Rezeption der Opern Lullys im Frankreich des Ancien Régime* (Tutzing: H. Schneider, 1982), 157-300, and *Chronologisch-Tematisches Verzeichnis sämtlicher Werke von Jean-Baptiste Lully* (Tutzing: H. Schneider, 1981). For an English-language summary of these works, see R. Peter Wolf, review of *Die Rezeption der Opern Lullys, Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 37 no. 1 (Spring 1984): 164-170.

[17] Herbert Schneider, "The sung constitutions of 1792: an essay on propaganda in the Revolutionary song," in *Music and the French Revolution*, ed. by Malcolm Boyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 250.

Vaudeville study in general has an endemic tendency towards piecemeal research, as it requires scholars to first identify the melodies to which the *timbres* refer. This is not always a straightforward task, as many melodies have simply been forgotten and lost. They must then assess their original context, in as much as that can be ascertained. Researchers must similarly "decode" the new text, which often engages in oblique references not readily decipherable for modern readers. Once these two pieces have been explicated, they can be reunited in order to understand how the vaudeville might have been perceived in its time. It is a time-consuming process that often leads to dead ends, so it is perhaps unsurprising that the most common approach to this form of research has been the standalone essay or article.

Apart from Schneider's work, the growing interest in *opéra-comique* over the last two decades has also yielded essays on the appearance or use of vaudevilles, though this work has been understandably circumscribed by an interest in the genre's appearance on the Opéra-Comique stages. The dissertations of Donald J. Grout and Clifford Barnes represent some of the earliest studies of the fairground theaters and are still useful sources for basic information on these companies, such as stylistic summaries, listings of performing resources (including singers and instrumentalists), and composer and administrative chronologies.[18] David Charlton's work has taken these studies even further, moving beyond positivism into the realm of criticism, particularly in *opéra-comique*'s relationship to contemporaneous literary and political currents, even putting the genre into conversation with present-day opera theory.[19]

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[18] Donald J. Grout, "The Origins of Opéra-Comique," (Ph.D diss., Harvard University, 1939) and Clifford Barnes, "The *Théâtre de la Foire* (Paris, 1697-1762), its Music and Composers," (Ph.D diss., University of Southern California, 1965).

[19] David Charlton, *French Opera 1730-1830: Meaning and Media* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), and *Opera in the Age of Rousseau: Music, Confrontation, Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Charlton's work participates in a long tradition of French-language scholarship on the genre, most notably by Michel Noiray and Philippe Vendrix.[20] More recently, Philip Robinson and Mark Darlow have situated the decline in vaudeville practice within changes in aesthetic theory that occurred in the eighteenth century. They argue that as playwrights and audiences began to favor a more seamless, immersive dramatic experience, the vaudeville began to fall out of favor due to its reliance on references that were external to the play's diegesis. In response, playwrights gravitated to the more narratively-integrated *ariette*, whose sound and structure were borrowed from Italian comic operas popularized in Paris beginning in 1752.[21] Julia Doe's work has related the development of *opéra-comique* to issues of French national identity and prestige at the end of the French monarchy. She explores how the cosmopolitan vocal style of Italian comic opera came to be incorporated into the aesthetics of French lyric theater, eventually toppling *tragédie lyrique* as the country's premier musical export.[22] Each of these studies demonstrates how much more we still have to learn about the aesthetic and affective reception of *opéra-comique* in the latter half of the eighteenth century; however, they are limited in their focus to Paris's public stages, and thus ignore the realm of amateur creation and performance that vaudeville incorporates.

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[20] Michel Noiray, "*Hippolyte et Castor* travesties: Rameau à l'opéra-comique," *Jean-Philippe Rameau: Colloque international organisé par la Société Rameau…Actes*, ed. by Jérôme de La Gorce (Paris: Champion-Slatkine, 1987), 109-125, and Philippe Vendrix, "Les enjeux théoriques de l'Opéra-Comique," in *L'Opéra-Comique au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. by Philippe Vendrix (Liège: Mardaga, 1992), 213-282.

[21] Philip Robinson, "Les vaudevilles: un médium théâtrale," in *Dix-huitième siècle* 28 (1996): 383-399; and Mark Darlow, "Vaudeville et distanciation dans l'opéra-comique des années 1750," In *La Querelle des Bouffons dans la vie culturelle française du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2005), 43-55. Darlow also develops this interpretation in *Nicolas-Etienne Framery and lyric theatre in eighteenth-century France* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2003).

[22] Julia Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 16-19.

As no established canon for the study of vaudeville currently exists, this study has drawn together scholarship from musicology, French cultural history, and literary history in order to contextualize these texts in a fuller way than they have previously received in these fields. While each discipline has dealt with vaudevilles in a marginal capacity, they frequently talk past one another. My project puts these fields into productive conversation with one another in order to create a deeper understanding of how vaudevilles produced and disseminated meaning in the eighteenth century through familiar melodies.

Performance, Reading, and Vaudeville's Uncertain Fit

As the examples of Schneider and Charlton show, interest in vaudevilles has typically centered on their appearance in lyric theater works at Paris's official, public stages. Limiting attention to just this appearance of the genre leaves out its other important guise as a genre of popular street song, written and performed by singers known as *chansonniers* who tended to gather around the Pont Neuf and public gardens like the Palais Royal.[23] Though these two modes of vaudeville circulated in different spaces, they were mutually dependent upon one another for constructions of meaning, as the first chapter of this study will explore in greater depth. The trendy private theaters at the end of the eighteenth century, known as *théâtres de société*, constituted a significant site for amateur vaudeville performance, one which is overlooked if only the city's public stages are considered.

This project incorporates theater and literary history in order to consider sanctioned, public spectacles alongside unsanctioned, informal, and/or private ones. Such an approach

[23] Darnton, *Poetry and the Police*, 72, 85.

produces a more fluid picture of the vaudeville's circulation among different theatrical spaces and social hierarchies in Paris at this time. David Trott's survey of theatrical life in Paris offers an important model for how one can study "official" and "non-official" theater together in this period, creating a useful taxonomy that I have also employed in this study.[24] The vaudeville's movement between lyric stages and the streets is further nuanced in the work of Robert Isherwood, in which he seeks to dismantle prevailing historiographic assumptions in which a wealthy minority of French people preferred and gravitated towards "high culture," while the impoverished majority flocked to the "obscenities" of the fairgrounds. While Isherwood admits that "fair entertainment was perceived as being intended for the people," he insists that by the end of the century, "popular entertainment embraced all segments of society, including the elite, however they are defined. The evidence for this is substantial."[25] Thomas Crow, writing at roughly the same time as Isherwood, came to similar conclusions. His study followed the growing popularity of the paintings of Watteau among the upper social classes, concluding that genre was no longer coextensive with class in the ways that had been prescribed in previous centuries.[26] These interruptions in generic hierarchies go a long way towards explaining the presence of vaudevilles in the salons of the wealthy as well as on the lips of Revolutionaries. While focusing on the fairground stages provides an important context for how large audiences of people heard vaudevilles in public settings, attending to the private spaces of the *théâtres de*

[24] David Trott, *Théâtre du XVIIIe siècle: jeux, écritures, regards* (Montpellier: Éditions Espaces 34, 2000). See especially his Chapter 2, "Du théâtre officiel au théâtre non officiel," 99-182.

[25] Robert Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy: Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 32-33.

[26] Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth Century Paris* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 52-55.

société offers an opportunity for considering how audiences interacted with vaudevilles in private spaces as listeners and performers.

But even as printed collections of *théâtre de société* plays can let us glimpse a world of elite amateur performance, the lack of firmly established performance histories for many of these plays raises many questions. The specific, and sexually-explicit nature of many of the stage directions (*didascalies*) raises the question of whether these were texts meant to be performed at all or if, as Daniel T. Smith, Jr., suggests, they are a form of early closet drama, occupying "a paradoxical, intermedial position between public theatre and the libertine novel."[27] The presence of vaudevilles in these plays further complicates an easy understanding of these texts as meant either for performance *or* for reading. Instead, they invite a consideration of what the presence of sonic objects like vaudevilles in printed texts can tell us about the intersection of reading practices and sound in the eighteenth century.

The eighteenth century is often referred to as the "age of revolution," and these upheavals also extended to literacy and reading. Not only were literacy levels increasing across France, but the ways in which people read also underwent fundamental shifts. In one of the earliest studies of the history of reading, Rolf Engelsing describes a *Lesenrevolution* in which eighteenth-century readers moved from reading a small number of texts many times, to reading many texts a handful of times as part of a leisure practice.[28] Further assessments by historians like Roger Chartier, Robert Darnton, and Reinhard Wittman have complicated this neat division by situating reading

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[27] Daniel T. Smith, Jr., "Libertine Dramaturgy: Reading Obscene Closet Drama in Eighteenth-Century France," (Ph.D diss., Northwestern University, 2010), 11.

[28] Reinhard Wittman, "Was there a reading revolution at the end of the eighteenth century?" in *A History of Reading in the West*. Ed. by Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier. Trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 85.

within the larger aesthetic regime of *sentimentalité*, which privileged readers' intense emotional investment in the narrative world of a text.[29] Often excluded from conversations in the history of reading are printed theatrical texts, which Julie Stone Peters demonstrates were also enormously popular during this period, forcing us to reconsider neat divisions between audible and silent modes of reading.[30] As texts that lived somewhere between live and virtual performance (via "silent" melodic memory), vaudevilles offer a locus for the history of reading and musicology to meet, investigating a practice where the printed word is capable of inducing musical performance.

When it comes to reading practices of erotic or obscene literature, Smith's research builds on that of Jean Marie Goulemot and Thomas Laqueur, who have also conducted studies into what might be called the history of the sexuality of reading.[31] Both scholars have noted the power of literature in the eighteenth-century to elicit physiological responses in readers, whether in the form of tears or sexual arousal. Such blurring of the boundaries between the world of the imagination, conjured by the text, and the "real" world, in which the reader's body existed, was a source of tremendous anxiety during the Enlightenment. Laqueur documents the many pamphlets and treatises produced during this time that demonstrate a fear that readers would come to prefer the world of fantasy and masturbatory pleasure over the heteronormative, procreative

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[29] Wittman, "Was there a reading revolution at the end of the eighteenth century?" 297-98; Robert Darnton, "Readers Respond to Rousseau: The Fabrication of Romantic Sensitivity," in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 215-256

[30] Julie Stone Peters, *Theatre of the Book, 1480-1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[31] Jean Marie Goulemot, *Forbidden Texts: Erotic Literature and its Readers in Eighteenth-Century France*, trans. by James Simpson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994); Thomas Lacqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone Books, 2003).

imperatives of "reality."[32] A parallel could be drawn between the unbidden force of the erotic text upon the imagination, and the *timbre*'s power to call forth a melodic memory. This might even be considered an erotics of the *timbre*, in its arousal of a reader-singer's musical memory, the reader-singer drawn to participate in a musical act, real or imagined.

The fictional queen's opening vaudeville in *Le Branle des Capucins* is a dense object in which the sexual, the political, and the musical have been woven, inextricably, together. The broad work of this study is to explain the logics that underpin this moment and the many others like it that appear in printed texts throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century. By recuperating the sounds and meanings that vaudevilles imparted to printed text, this study integrates them into larger historical narratives of musical production and circulation in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Borrowing an established tradition of turning to "low literature" from French cultural history reveals musical performances that were preserved and disseminated in previously overlooked texts. Vaudevilles offer a unique opportunity to see the ways in which anonymous creators made music outside of the established institutions and public theaters of Paris, forging an elaborate system of intertextual meaning that can still be recovered, should we care to listen.

Chapter Overviews

In chapter one, I describe the musical attributes of the vaudeville and its growing popularity and circulation throughout the eighteenth century. Despite the many different sources for vaudeville melodies, they often shared similar musical characteristics, such as uneven phrase

[32] Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 317-324.

lengths, rhythmic patterns derived from dances, and internal melodic repetition. These characteristics can, in many cases, be traced to the vaudeville's grounding in folk song traditions, but they also reflect the genre's ongoing connection to other oral, amateur performance practices. Melodies simply could not be too long or too virtuosic, or non-professionals would struggle to remember and perform them. After describing the musical features of the vaudeville, I present a survey of the genre in the latter half of the eighteenth century, tracing the different locations around Paris where the genre would have been heard, by whom, and in what contexts. As a genre, vaudeville relied heavily on intertextual reference building for its apprehension and appreciation, making it important to establish where Parisians were used to hearing vaudevilles in this period. Such contextual knowledge is necessary in order to interpret the appearance of vaudevilles in printed texts, as they drew upon allusions to the fairground theaters and street performers, which would, in turn, have implications for the printed vaudeville's reception.

Chapter two explores how theatrical writers and intellectuals thought about the vaudeville from the mid-eighteenth century on, situating their assumptions about the vaudeville's utility and popularity in relation to the new vocal music genre of the *ariette* after 1752. During the 1760s and 1770s, a consensus seemed to emerge between intellectual elites like the *philosophes* and theatrical writers (such as Charles Collé) that the vaudeville was effectively obsolete, though opinions differed as to whether this loss should be celebrated or mourned. This narrative has often been repeated in modern histories of eighteenth-century French lyric theater, which frequently gloss over *comédies en vaudevilles* in favor of the newer, more innovative *comédie en ariettes*, better known as *opéra-comique*. However, such declarations of the death of the vaudeville are contradicted by the genre's frequent appearance in various print media after 1750, such as newspapers, novels, play collections, and political satire, especially at the century's end.

In light of this archival record, I propose that the vaudeville underwent a transformation at the end of the century from something that was experienced primarily as an aurally (or orally) performed object to one that existed primarily on the printed page. Interpreting this transformation through the lens of the history of reading, however, reveals that the vaudeville was by no means silenced during this shift. Rather, as objects that invoke melodic referents and are imminently performable, vaudevilles reflect a period in which reading practices were themselves moving fluidly between sound and silence.

Establishing the vaudeville's sonic history in chapter one, and charting its transformation into a primarily textual object in chapter two sets up the close readings that make up the last two chapters. Chapter three takes us into the world of the *théâtre de société*, where Paris's wealthiest citizens established lavish, private theaters for their own entertainment and for their invited guests. *Théâtres de société* were a veritable fad, with playwrights hired for the express purpose of writing plays for private performance, the most famous example being Collé's writings for the private theater of the duc d'Orléans.[33] Despite the alleged distaste for vaudevilles at Paris's public theaters after the 1750s, *théâtre de société* collections continued to include them, as can be seen in the *Théâtre de campagne, ou les débauches de l'esprit* (1755/1758) and the *Théâtre d'amour* (ca. 1770s). These collections were intended for the private theaters of two of the era's most famous women: the actress Marie-Françoise Dumesnil, and the soprano Sophie Arnould. The plays meant for performance within both of these theaters were erotic in tone, from the lightly playful to the sexually explicit. While both collections could be enjoyed as texts either for performance or for silent reading (or somewhere in between), I argue that the presence of

[33] Marie-Emmanuelle Plagnol-Diéval, *Le théâtre de société: un autre théâtre?* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003), 70-79.

vaudevilles in these collections are essential to their erotic tone. The vaudeville's long association with sexual humor and obscene language at the fairgrounds sheds important light on how these plays were likely interpreted by reader-performers. In the case of Sophie Arnould, her additional career as a kept woman (or *dame entretenue*) asks us to consider the ways in which musical labor and sexual labor could be coterminal, inflecting our understanding of vaudevilles in these collections as being a central means by which sexual capital circulated in these private spaces.

Chapter four takes us into the revolutionary years, in which sexually explicit satire was a dominant trope for both pro- and anti-monarchical factions. Borrowing from the fairground logic in which sexual humor helped define boundaries of acceptable behavior, the political pornography of the Revolution used sexual slander to portray the royal family and their supporters as operating outside those boundaries. The deviant or extreme sexual behaviors attributed to various political figures served as an index of their corruption, and by extension, their unfitness to rule, thus undermining their authority. The most common target by far of these attacks was Marie-Antoinette, who, as a member of the Austrian royal family, was seen as an outsider and a spy, who manipulated the king in order to undermine France. These attacks came in many forms: engravings, fake diaries purportedly written by the queen, fictional accounts of her private life, and *comédies en vaudevilles*. Two such plays, *L'Autrichienne en goguettes, ou l'orgie royale* (1789) and *Le Branle des Capucins, ou le 1001e tour de Marie-Antoinette* (1791), take rumors of the queen's affairs with her brother-in-law and her close friend as their starting point, with the queen and her accomplices using song to manipulate Louis XVI. As in the *théâtre de société* plays, these works rely on the vaudeville's close connection with coarsely articulated sexuality to launch their critiques. Unlike the *théâtres de société*, however, where vaudevilles are

part of a sensual economy, the political pornography of the French Revolution exploited the additional layers of meaning added by the *timbre* by bringing vaudevilles together with sexual reference to directly critique political structures.

"Que chacun chante en ces bas lieux;
Le Vaudeville est fait pour plaire…"
—*Les Fouteries chantantes*, 1791

Chapter 1
Vaudeville About Town

A familiar tune and ribald lyrics: from its earliest fifteenth-century iteration to the nineteenth, these were the two basic ingredients for making contrafacts known as vaudevilles. The tunes could be drawn from folk melodies, from the Church, or from the stage at the Opéra. To these melodies, singers wrote or improvised new words that were inspired by the eternally popular topics of love and wine, or that commented on the political news and activities of the day. For much of their history, vaudevilles were standalone songs, most often composed to spread the day's news or the latest gossip. The famous chronicler of eighteenth-century Parisian life, Louis-Sebastien Mercier, described a city in which "there is no event that is not *registered* in a song by this mocking people."[34]

In addition to its role as a register of popular events, vaudeville was also an important part of French theatrical life. Today, most are familiar with the eighteenth-century vaudeville as a dramatic genre associated closely with French comic theater, particularly *opéra-comique* and opera parody.[35] During this period, the dramatic and standalone vaudeville existed side by side,

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[34] Louis-Sebastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, ed. Jean-Claude Bonnet. Vol. 1 (Paris: Mercure de France, 1994), 241 Translation in Darnton, *Poetry and the Police*, 83. Auguste Font, in his history of fairground comedies, expresses a similar sentiment: "L'événement de la veille, l'anecdote du jour devenait vaudeville le lendemain." Auguste Font, *Favart: L'Opéra-Comique et la comédie-vaudeville aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles.* (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1894), 15.

[35] Formative writings on the history of the vaudeville include Herbert Schneider, *Die Rezeption der Opern Lullys im Frankreich des Ancien régime* (Tutzing: H. Schneider, 1982); Michel Noiray, "Hippolyte et Castor travesti: Rameau

but not as parallel practices – rather, each shaped the reception of the other. This mutually constituting relationship between the "street" and the "stage" vaudeville becomes especially important when one considers the genre's relationship to sexuality, emerging as the medium of choice for the articulation of sexuality in coarse or obscene terms, both on the stage and off of it. From songs hawked in the streets, to new musical shows at royally supported theaters, vaudeville played an important role in the rich and varied song culture that made up Paris's soundscape, appealing across the city's socioeconomic spectrum.

Because vaudevilles relied on pre-existing melodies for their composition, they are routinely treated as below the level of musical analysis by musicologists. Even in the eighteenth century, Rousseau's caustic entry in his *Dictionnaire de musique* defined vaudevilles as "commonly understood to not be very musical," and usually lacking in "taste, melody, and rhythm."[36] To combat this stereotype, this chapter begins with a detailed description of the musical characteristics of vaudeville melodies and their texts based on both my own and secondary surveys of contemporaneous collections of notated melodies. Once these musical

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à l'Opéra-Comique," *Jean-Philippe Rameau: Colloque international organisé par la Société Rameau*, ed. Jérôme de La Gorce (Paris: Champion-Slatkine, 1987); Judith le Blanc, *Avatars d'opéras: Parodies et circulations des airs chantés sur les scènes parisiennes, 1672-1745* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014). Collected editions on the topics of vaudeville and *timbres* include: Herbert Schneider, ed., *Das Vaudeville: Funktionen eines multimedialen Phänomens* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1996); Schneider, ed., *Timbre und Vaudeville: Zur Geschichte und Problematik einer populären Gattung im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert.* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1999); and Schneider and Judith le Blanc, eds., *Pratiques du timbre et de la parodie d'opéra en Europe, XVIe-XIXe siècles* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2014).

[36] "L'air des *Vaudevilles* est communément peu Musical…on n'y sent pour l'ordinaire ni goût, ni Chant, ni Mesure." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, s.v. "Vaudeville," *Dictionnaire de musique*, (Paris: Veuve Duchesne, 1768), 531-532. Northwestern Special Collections, ML 100.R78 1768a. "Chant" presents particular problems in translation that are aided by citing part of Rousseau's own definition for the word: "Il est très difficile determiner en quoi la voix qui forme la parole, differe de la voix qui form le *Chant*. […] Il paroît aussi que les diverses inflexions qu'on donne à la voix en parlant, forment des Intervalles qui no sont point harmoniques, qui ne font pas partie de nos systems de Musique, & qui, par consequent, ne pouvant être exprimés en Note, ne sont pas proprement du *Chant* pour nous," 82. By accusing vaudevilles of lacking in "chant," he in effect excommunicates them from the functional world of music.

mechanics are established, this chapter will explore the vaudeville as a musical medium across Paris, noting its consistent association with sex and obscenity, regardless of venue. These sites included the Pont Neuf, early singing societies, private musical theater entertainments, and the emergent boulevard theaters of the 1760s, in addition to the vaudeville's well-established place on the comic lyric stage throughout the century. Taking this more holistic approach expands the field of musical performance across Paris and reveals how a consistent interest in obscenity and sexual subjects unites the vaudeville's different manifestations.

"V'là c'que c'est qu'de chanter un vaudeville": Musical properties of the vaudeville

Vaudevilles are created by combining three elements: *timbres*, *fredons*, and *couplets*. In the context of vaudeville, *timbres* refer to a textual citation of a melody, usually prefaced with the word "Air," followed by the name by which the melody was most commonly known (Fig. 1.1).[37]

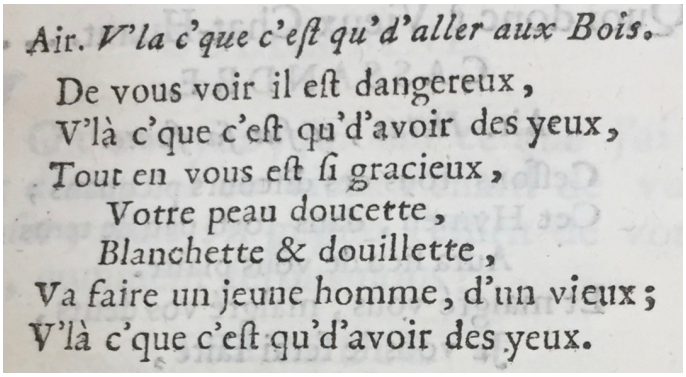
Air. *V'la c'que c'eſt qu'd'aller aux Bois.*
De vous voir il eſt dangereux,
V'là c'que c'eſt qu'd'avoir des yeux,
Tout en vous eſt ſi gracieux,
Votre peau doucette,
Blanchette & douillette,
Va faire un jeune homme, d'un vieux;
V'là c'que c'eſt qu'd'avoir des yeux.

Fig. 1.1. Vaudeville from *L'Eunuque, ou la fidèle infidelité*, featuring the timbre "V'la c'que c'est qu'd'aller aux bois." *Le Théâtre de Campagne, ou les débauches de l'esprit* (1755) BA 8BL13829.

[37] *Timbre* in the eighteenth century could also be used as a term for describing the quality of an instrument's sound or a person's voice, much as we tend to use it today. This is, in fact, the definition Rousseau provides in the *Dictionnaire de musique*, while the vaudeville-specific use of the term goes, perhaps unsurprisingly, unmentioned. "TIMBRE. On appellee ainsi, par métaphore, cette qualité du Son par laquelle il est aigre ou doux, sourd ou éclatant, sec ou moelleux," 330.

In the example above, the *timbre* is "V'la c'que c'est qu'd'aller aux Bois," a refrain from one of the numbers in Charles-Simon Favart's *La belle-mère amoureuse*, a parody of Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie* (1733).[38] *Timbres* functioned under the assumption that their title would be easily recognized, acting as a mnemonic device for recalling a melody that readers would know.[39] Usually timbres were taken from the song's incipit, though recurring refrains often furnished *timbres* as well. However, retroactively determining the melody of a *timbre* is complicated by the "recycling" approach inherent to vaudeville writing, where new lines of text supplant the old lyrics. In the event that a melody began circulating under a new incipit, this new title became known as a *faux timbre*.[40] For example, the third edition of the *Clé de Caveau*, an early nineteenth century collection of common vaudeville *timbres* and their melodies, gives two *faux timbres* for " V'la c'que c'est qu'd'aller aux Bois," while the modern vaudeville database Theaville lists eight.[41] The melody itself, or the *fredon*, remains constant, meaning a single *fredon* is capable of invoking a constellation of references, created through the melody's changing (con)texts.[42]

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[38] This *timbre* is an excellent example of the tangled paths vaudevilles can accumulate. While the melody is attributed to Antoine Dauvergne by Theaville, the same entry also indicates Michel Corrette's *25 Concertos comiques* (1743) as a musical source for the melody. The entry includes lyrics drawn from Charles-Simon Favart's parody *Hippolyte et Aricie* (1763), but also indicates that the *timbre* appeared a decade earlier in Justine Favart's *Les Amours de Bastien et Bastienne* (1753).

[39] "On entend par le mot *timbre*, la designation d'un air quelconque, en citant le premier vers de la chanson ou du couplet qui lui a donné lieu." Pierre Capelle, *La Clé du Caveau à l'usage de tous les chansonniers français* (Paris: 1816), 2nd edition, iv. Northwestern University Special Collections ML 1730. C36.

[40] The earliest instance I have found for using this term to differentiate between "original" *timbres* and those that emerge from new, popular text is in Capelle, *Clé du Caveau*, iv-v; This is the earliest reference used in Clifford Barnes, *Théâtre de la Foire (Paris, 1697-1762): Its Music and Composers*, Ph.D diss. (University of Southern California, 1965), 132-3. It is unclear if the term was in use in the eighteenth century.

[41] Pierre Capelle, *La Clé du Caveau à l'usage de tous les chansonniers français* (Paris: 1827), 3nd edition, 48.

[42] "On nomme *vaudeville* une chanson dont l'air original, devenu populaire, est appliqué à d'autres paroles. Les vers du refrain ou du premier couplet qu'on écrit en tête pour designer l'air s'appelle le *timbre*. L'air lui-même est le *fredon*." Auguste Font, *Favart: L'Opéra-Comique et la comédie-vaudeville aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles.* (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1894), 9.

The *couplets*, or versified text that were set to the *fredon*, could be about anything, though drinking, love, sex, and politics were popular subjects. If the text of the *timbre* included a refrain built on onomatopoeia, the original text of the refrain was usually preserved, or slightly altered if it produced a pun. The new *couplets* were written in relation to the original *couplets*, making vaudeville an always inherently intertextual practice. In one of the few examples of secondary literature devoted exclusively to the vaudeville, Henri Gidel asserts that "the public of the period always remembered the words that corresponded with a given *timbre*…and they put it in relation to what they were hearing sung."[43] This intertextuality was responsible in large part for the humor associated with vaudevilles, as the appearance of one melody and its associated text in an inappropriate or unexpected situation was capable of producing surprise and delight. That vaudeville authors and singers could predictably rely on their audiences to pick up on these dense layers of meaning, it then testifies to the strength of the vaudeville, as both a musical and textual object that defined an interpretive community. Using vaudevilles ensured the active participation of all members of this interpretive community, made up of authors, performers, and audience, whether in the form of humming or singing along, or through the mental labor of recognizing the *fredon*, and relating the new *couplets* to the old.[44]

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[43] "Le public de l'époque se souvient avec précision des paroles correspondant au timbre choisi – c'est toujours un air célèbre, rappelons-nous – et il les rapproche nécessairement de celles qu'il entend chanter; il se crée ainsi entre l'auteur et les spectateurs une complicité qui contribute largement à la seduction du genre." Henri Gidel, *Le Vaudeville* (Paris: Presses Univérsitaires, 1986), 32. A powerful early acknowledgement of the musical/textual integration of the *timbre* appears in Pierre Laujon's *Les A propos de société ou Chansons de M. L******, Vol. 1 (Paris: 1776): "L'on apelle *Timbre*, en style de Chansonnier, le Refrain ou le Vers qui sert à rappeler l'Air d'une Chanson." (vii) This intertextual approach as a basis for dramatic writing in *opéra-comique* is further developed in Philip Robinson, "Les vaudevilles: un médium théâtrale," in *Dix-huitième siècle, revue annuelle publiée par la Société française d'étude du 18e siècle* 28 (1996), 431-33.

[44] Barnes, "The *Théâtre de la Foire*," 156-7.

Comparative analysis of several eighteenth-century collections of vaudevilles reveals some common stylistic traits.[45] Vaudeville melodies tend to remain with the range of an octave, and very rarely go beyond the sixth above tonic. They often move in stepwise motion, though motion by thirds that outline tonic triads is not uncommon. Chromatic notes are introduced to facilitate brief modulations to the dominant, which quickly return to the tonic key. By far the most common keys for notating vaudevilles are G and D, in both the major and minor modes, though modal minor melodies do also appear (typically in dorian and aeolian). In fact, it has been suggested that minor modes were preferred for vaudeville melodies as it was thought they better captured the songs' "malicious naïveté, their sneering warmth," though a systematic confirmation of this claim has yet to be conducted, and is beyond the scope of this project.[46] Instrumental accompaniment for vaudevilles would have varied depending on the context. In dramatic contexts, as at the fairground theaters or the Comédie-Italienne, a small orchestra would have accompanied the singers on stage; in non-dramatic contexts, singing could have been accompanied, but this was not a requirement nor even necessarily expectation. The most common instruments for non-dramatic vaudeville accompaniment were the hurdy-gurdy and the violin.[47]

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[45] These collections are Jean-Baptiste-Christophe Ballard, *Clé des Chansonniers* (1717), Alain-René Lesage and Jacques-Philippe d'Orneval, *Le Théâtre de la Foire, ou l'Opéra comique* (1721, 1724, 1728), the "Airs notez" volume of the Chansonnier Maurepas, Hubert-Martin Cazin *Chansons choisies avec les airs notés* (1782), and Cappelle's *Clé du Caveau*, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th editions (1816, 1827, 1848).

[46] "Les chansons populaires proprement dites aiment le mode majeur; les vaudevilles préfèrent le mineur pour sa malicieuse naïevté, pour sa bonhomies narquoise." August Font, *Essai sur Favart et les origins de la comédie mêlée de chant* (Paris: 1864), 16. Barnes also asserts a seeming preference for the minor mode based on his surveys of Lesage and d'Orneval's *Théâtre de la Foire, ou l'Opéra-Comique* collections.

[47] Susan Louise Harvey, "Opera Parody in Eighteenth-Century France: Genesis, Genre, and Critical Function," (Ph.D diss. Stanford University, 2002), 25; Julia Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 14. For street singer accompaniment, see Robert Darnton, *Poetry and the Police: Communication Networks in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2010), 88-89; Robert Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy: Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New York: Oxford Univesity Press, 1986), 7-10.

The length of the melodies is typically short, as anything too long would interfere with their ability to be quickly recalled. The most common forms were tripartite (ABA), with frequent internal repetition of melodic motives, a feature which also contributed to easy memorization. They feature predominantly syllabic settings, which aided in making the text clearer, and perhaps led to assessments such as Rousseau's, that "one only attends to the words, [with] the melody only serving to give the text a somewhat more stressed delivery."[48] Unlike *tragédie lyrique* and later *opera buffa*, both of which prominently featured long melismas, vaudeville melodies are typically "short-breathed, conforming to the intonations of the spoken language."[49] This should not suggest, however, that vaudevilles lacked ornamentation. Both Clifford Barnes and Donald J. Grout have described the appearance of the "+" or "X" symbols above or near the notes in collections of notated melodies, which has generally been understood to indicate a *tremblement*, a *port de voix*, or a *coulé*.[50] Barnes is quick to note, however, that ornamentation would not have only been limited to those notes with signs, as "no real uniformity of interpretation existed."[51]

The simplicity of the melodic design of many vaudeville tunes was essential for the early fairground performers, who often were not trained singers. The short, repetitive structures, and narrow, stepwise melodies made singing a familiar vaudeville easy, and picking up a new tune a relatively simple task. As will be examined, these features are part of what made the vaudeville

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[48] "Comme on n'y fait attention qu'aux paroles, l'Air ne sert qu'à rendre la recitation un peu plus appuyée." Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de la musique* (1768), 333.

[49] August Font, *Essai sur Favart*, 88.

[50] *Tremblement* refers to a trill, and at the time was also known as a *cadence*, as is reflected in the definition given in Rousseau's *Dictionnaire*; both the *port de voix* and the *coulé* are interpreted as appoggiatura, with the former referring to a descending note linking two notes separated by a third, and the latter ascending, usually in anticipation of the beat. For a more thorough description of French *agréments*, see Kah-Ming Ng's contribution to the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* under the French Baroque section of "Ornaments": Kah-Ming Ng, "Ornaments: §7. French Baroque," in *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online* (2001) https://doi-org.turing.library.northwestern.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.49928.

[51] Barnes, "The *Théâtre de la Foire,*" 144.

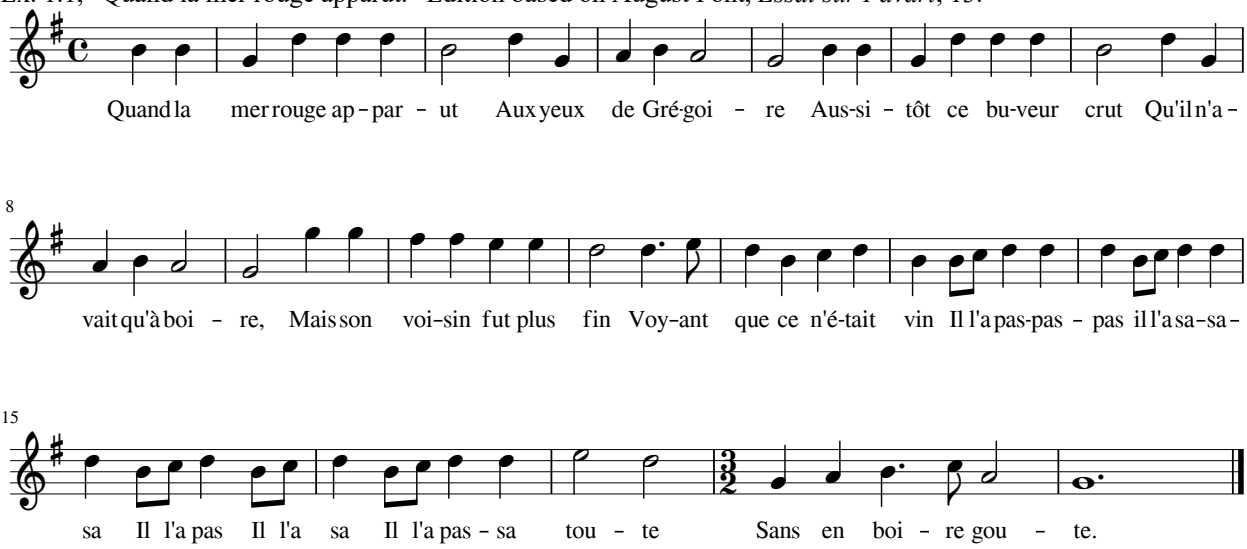
so attractive for inclusion in plays – while some troupes might have one or two designated musicians, most of the actors were not professionally-trained singers.[52] With vaudeville, however, the simplicity of their melodic lines made them as easy to sing for amateurs as for professionals. Beyond the stage, this ease of acquisition aligns with the larger practice of vaudeville itself, which was not limited only to professionals on stage, but also extended to singers in the streets, in homes, and at court.

Rousseau's belief that text was the most important feature of a vaudeville is one that has carried through into the present day. However, though text is often presented as the most important aspect of a *vaudeville*, the clarity of the words is often undermined by the rhythmic setting, which frequently interrupts the scansion of the poetic text. The importance of dance rhythms, such as the *branle* and the *gavotte*, contributed to the "mismatching" of poetic and musical emphasis, with accents often falling in the middle of a measure, rather than at the beginning. A useful example of this is the tune "Quand la mer rouge apparut" (Ex. 1.1): The melody begins in the middle of a 2/4 bar with two upbeats, following a typical gavotte rhythmic pattern. The cadence at the end of the first phrase has the singer pausing on the middle syllable of the name "Grégoire," requiring a final emphasis on the "-re," rather than the actual syllable of the name, "goire." (Mms. 3-4, 7-8). A diminution of the rhythmic pattern beginning at mm. 12 splices the verb "passa" (past tense conjugation for the verb "passer") into two nonsense syllables, "pas" and "sa," furthering obscuring poetic and phrasal unity. Beyond those derived from dance rhythms, vaudeville rhythms are generally propulsive with few moments of rest.

[52] Barnes, "The *Théâtre de la Foire*," 140.

Time signatures are usually in duple or triple meter, though simple compound meters do also occur.[53]

Ex. 1.1, "Quand la mer rouge apparut." Edition based on August Font, *Essai sur Favart*, 13.



Though endlessly adaptable, vaudeville nonetheless developed distinctive musical characteristics, usually aligned with notions of simplicity. Initially, they were simple because the folk melodies they drew upon from an oral tradition were themselves simple, making them easy to remember and to perform. By the end of the eighteenth century, these characteristics became an identifiable "vaudeville style" that composers attempted to emulate, especially on the music theater stage. Most research has been devoted to the phenomenon of the dramatic vaudeville, as it appeared on Paris's official and unofficial stages, but it is important to remember that the musical simplicity of the vaudeville contributed to an active life off stage. These two

[53] Barnes, 141. The Capelle *Clé de Caveau*, a later edition, reflects a greater variety in the notated meters chosen, with 6/8 and 3/8 appearing with great frequency.

simultaneous iterations of the vaudeville, dramatic and non-dramatic, shared the same lineage, and mutually impacted one another throughout the eighteenth century.

"Ah que le temps était bon": Origins of the vaudeville

The beginnings of the vaudeville are usually traced to the small town of Vire, roughly 200 miles due west of Paris, where they were known as *vau de vire. Vau de vire* began as a popular genre in the late fifteenth century and was infused from the beginning with a strong satirical bent, where new text was written to fit preexisting tunes. These songs tended to focus primarily on local current events, in addition to the evergreen topics of wine and love. The name most closely associated with these early songs is Olivier Basselin, a fuller or wool cleaner, who was perhaps connected to local community of Norman trouvères.[54] Basselin composed many of these *vau de vire* primarily to agitate against the invading English during one of the highpoints of the Hundred Years' War. It is believed that Basselin died in battle fighting against the English, but that the songs he wrote and sang were circulated throughout France by dispersed Normans, bearing the name of their place of origin.[55]

Accounts differ as to how *vau de vire* became *vaudeville*. Eighteenth-century sources generally attribute the shift in pronunciation to a "corruption,"[56] though Nougaret also suggests

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[54] "Dans sa forme médiévale, c'était une 'chanson gaie, chansons gaies, souvent satiriques, composes la plurpart du temps sur des airs déjà connus…[c'est probable qu'il s'associait avec les trouvères de Normandie]." Gidel, *Le Vaudeville*, 7. Both Nougaret and Chamfort speculate that it had been invented much earlier, "sous Charles-magne." Pierre Jean Baptiste Nougaret, *De l'art du théâtre en general*. 2 vols. (Paris: Cailleau, 1769), 302; Sébastien-Roch-Nicholas Chamfort and Abbé Joseph de Laporte, *Dictionaire dramatique*. 3 vol. (Paris: Lacombe, 1776), 350. See also Henri Gidel, *Le Vaudeville* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1986), 7-9.

[55] Barnes, "The *Théâtre de la Foire*," 133-4; Gidel, *Le Vaudeville*, 7.

[56] "…pour danser sur ces Chants, on s'assembloit dans le Val de Vire, ils furent appellés, dit-on, Vaux de Vire, puis par corruption *Vaudevilles*." Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de Musique*, 531. Rousseau's definition is reprinted verbatim for the "Vaudeville" entry in Chamfort and Laporte, *Dictionnaire dramatique*, 350.

that the change in name arose "to express that this type of song was very popular in the cities."[57] This important shift from a song associated with the countryside (as the *vau de vire*) to one associated with the city (as the vaudeville) can be seen by the inclusion of vaudevilles in many sixteenth-century song collections destined for use in the homes of the wealthy.[58] In his 1571 printed collection of songs for lute and voice, dedicated to the Comtesse de Retz, Adrien Le Roy indicates that the terms had once been interchangeable, offering to his dedicatee "very light courtly songs [*chansons*] (which formerly we called '*voix de ville*,' and which we now call *Airs de cour*)…"[59] The intermixing of *chansons*, *airs de cours*, and *vaudevilles* in these sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century song collections show how the vaudeville made its way for a time into courtly milieu. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, however, composers were increasingly drawn to the rhythmic flexibility offered by *musique mesurée*, which allowed for greater ease in setting poetry than the more static rhythms of the old vaudeville *timbres*.[60]

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the spelling had been standardized to *vaudeville* and the genre had lost its courtly associations, setting it apart from the *air de cour*. It was now more firmly fixed as a genre of popular song, closely associated with *le peuple Parisien*, with texts that mocked the ruling classes and related current events in an entertaining or satirical way. During the struggles between the Parlement of Paris and the Cardinal Mazarin in the mid-seventeenth century, vaudevilles developed another synonym, *mazarinades*, after the songs' most frequent target for derision. For the average person, there was no formal means for

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[57] "On l'appella long-tems *Vaudevire*, come qui dirait *Chanson faite à Vire*; ensuite par corruption, on lui donna le nom de *Vaudeville*: peut-être aussi pour exprimer que cette espèce de Chanson est fort en usage dans les Villes." Nougaret, *De l'art du théâtre en général*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Cailleau, 1769), 302.

[58] Barnes, "The *Théâtre de la Foire*," 134-35.

[59] Quoted in Georgie Durosoir, *L'Air de cour en France: 1571-1655* (Liège: Mardaga, 1991), 32.

[60] Durosoir, *L'Air de cour en France*, 63.

registering complaints when policies were enacted that materially injured them. Songs like the *mazarinades* of the Fronde became an important, and sometimes the only means for people to air their grievances and speak back to authorities, to "express their contempt for the high orders and their irritation at having to submit to a political order not run in their interests."[61] Nor did these complaints go unacknowledged; people were often arrested for the singing of songs that were obscene or too critical of the government, signaling the power these songs were believed to possess in their ability to quickly and widely spread news or unrest, even among the illiterate poor.[62] The government also frequently tried to fight fire with fire, "contribu[ting] to the cacophony by singing its case as well," even as it moved to silence the opposition.[63]

The vaudeville's return to a close connection with current events in the seventeenth century also made it a highly ephemeral category, not necessarily meant to stand the test of time. Songs remained in the public eye for as long as the scandal they related was relevant, only to disappear, quickly replaced by whatever the newest topic of conversation happened to be. The flexibility of vaudeville composition made it well-suited to this constant churn of the news cycle; familiar tunes could be recycled many times, with new lyrics fitted to them just as soon as authors could come up with them.[64] As author-singers reused the same melodies again and again, certain melodies accumulated meanings that were specific to them. Philip Robinson makes a

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[61] Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy*, 9. On the Mazarinades, see Christian Jouhaud, *Mazarinades: la Fronde des mots* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1985), and Hubert Carrier, *La presse de la Fronde: les Mazarinades*, 2 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1989).

[62] Laura Mason, *Singing the French Revolution: Popular Culture and Politics, 1787-1799* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 22; Isherwood, 9. See also Darnton, *Poetry and the Police,* where he follows the arrests of 14 individuals who were connected with the writing and circulating of poetry and *vaudevilles* critical of Madame de Pompadour in the mid-eighteenth century.

[63] Mason, *Singing the French Revolution*, 19.

[64] Gidel, *Le Vaudeville*, 10.

strong case for the vaudeville's "stickiness" by charting one of the most popular *timbres* of the 1740s and 50s, "M. le Prévot des Marchands." Robinson demonstrates that this title is actually a *faux timbre* for a much earlier song, "Air des Rochellois." The *faux timbre* emerged from a Regency-era re-texting of "Air des Rochellois" accusing, in earthy language, the municipal head of Paris of extorting his citizens. Robinson demonstrates that, in selecting "M. le Prévôt des Marchands," (the first line of the new version) for the *timbre* rather than the older "Air des Rochellois," author-singers were consciously drawing on the obscene connotations of the later version in order to impart a sense of bawdy satire to their new vaudevilles.[65] A vaudeville's accumulated meanings became as important a feature as its melodic or rhythmic qualities, with its referentiality playing an important part in its attractiveness as a genre.

Ephemerality continued to be a central feature of the vaudeville into the eighteenth century, even as the genre began to take on new dimensions through its inclusion on Paris's stages. These generic expectations—that the vaudeville be easy to sing, easy to create, and readily adaptable—cohered by the beginning of the eighteenth century, but new developments in the theatrical landscape of the capital city contributed to the vaudeville's ubiquity during this period. This also led to its bifurcation, creating dramatic and non-dramatic vaudevilles, which though differentiated by venue, continued to impact one another.

Organizing theater under the *ancien régime*

By the mid-eighteenth century, Paris's theatrical world had been structured by a system of monopolies for close to a century. These monopolies, or *privilèges*, were granted by the king

[65] Robinson, "Vaudevilles: Un médium théâtral," 435-37.

to theaters financed by the crown, and gave them the right to perform different kinds of dramatic works in an effort to regulate competition and minimize the risk of financial failure. This system by which theaters were organized according to what they could and could not perform is usually dated to Jean-Baptiste Lully's acquisition of the *privilège* for the Opéra in 1672. The crown made its first attempt at governing the rest of Paris's theatrical life in 1673, when the remnants of Molière's theater troupe were merged with a rival company following the playwright's death. But it was with Lully's ascent to power at the Opéra and his canny wielding of his *privilège* that the capital city's assorted theatrical offerings contracted to three official theaters and an assortment of fairground spectacles, each defined by the type of performance they were permitted to stage.[66]

Prior to 1673, Parisians had a variety of theaters to choose from, each offering a mix of spoken and lyric performance accompanied by musical forces of varying size. By 1680, there were only three options: the Comédiens Italiens du Roi (known as the Comédie-Italienne), established as early as 1660 and who primarily performed *commedia dell'arte* plays in Italian; the Comédie-Française, created through the fusing of two rival theatrical troupes, which possessed the exclusive right to perform French-language plays; and the Opéra, which had the sole right to performances of France's premiere lyric genre, *tragédie lyrique*. *Tragédie lyrique* came to be identified closely with the absolutist reign of Louis XIV, occupying the highest rung of the hierarchy of theatrical genres. It functioned as a form of political propaganda for the power of the monarch, and boosted France's reputation abroad as an epicenter for cultural

[66] Harvey, "Opera Parody in Eighteenth-Century France", 48-52; Jeffrey S. Ravel, *The Contested Parterre: Public Theater and French Political Culture, 1680-1791* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 95-97.

achievement and taste making.[67] As such, the Opéra was able to exert extraordinary power over the city's theatrical scene, dictating how much (or rather, how little) music was permitted on all other stages through the dispensing of exemptions to the monopoly, permitting other troupes to rent the right to musical performance for set periods of time for a fee. These exemptions were an important source of income for the Opéra, which was otherwise solely dependent on box rentals and door receipts, which were subject to the fickle tastes of audiences.[68]

Paris's theaters underwent a second round of restructuring in 1697, when the Comédie-Italienne was expelled from France over rumors that they were planning to perform a work largely understood to be slander against Louis XIV's second wife, Madame de Maintenon. The expulsion came on the heels of longstanding monopoly disputes between the Italian players and the Comédie-Française; while the Italians had purchased rights to perform song on stage from the Opéra, they still did not have the right to speak French on stage. They attempted to skirt these restrictions, initially by only adding single sentences or scenes in French. Over time, they were staging full parodies of new works playing at the Opéra and the Comédie-Française, adapting the *commedia dell'arte* practice of short, semi-improvised plays to contemporary taste by using the local language and incorporating musical sections in the form of vaudeville. These parodies earned them little affection from their rival theaters. By the time of their expulsion in 1697, the Comédiens-Italiens had amassed a large repertoire of published plays that combined semi-improvised *commedia dell'arte* practices and characters with French-language comedy and

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[67] Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 41; Ravel, *The Contested Parterre*, 97; For more on the close identification of the monarchy with French opera, see Georgia Cowart, *Triumph of Pleasure: Louis XIV and the Politics of Spectacle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

[68] Victoria Jackson*, Backstage at the French Revolution: How the Royal Paris Opera Survived the End of the Old Regime* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 111-13; 151-2.

vaudeville.[69] These plays were now fair game, and the performers at the St. Germain and St. Laurent fairgrounds seized their chance.

Vaudeville at the Fairgrounds: 1697-1745

In the eighteenth century, quotidian moments of song continued to exist and inform the singing public's relationship to vaudeville and its performance; at the same time, the century also saw the genre incorporated more fully into the theater. Earlier in the seventeenth century, the *ballet de cour* alternated spoken dialogue with sung airs, and Molière famously ended each act of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1670) with a *divertissement* written by Lully. However, it was with the Comédie-Italienne that vaudeville was integrated into the dramatic action in what we recognize today as *opéra-comique*.[70] This repertoire was deeply influenced by the *commedia dell'arte*'s reliance on bodily humor and obscene gesture for their jokes.[71] By the end of the seventeenth century, parodies of productions playing at the Opéra made up a significant portion of the Italians' repertoire, with vaudevilles providing an important structural element. When the Italians were expelled, this same body of repertoire was taken up at the fairgrounds. The importation of the Italians' repertoire from their royally sanctioned home at the Hôtel de Bourgogne to the fairground theaters was a seminal event in the history of French lyric drama.

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[69] Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy*, 81-97.

[70] Barnes, "The *Théâtre de la Foire*," 21.

[71] As Isherwood puts it, "In the fair theaters of the eighteenth century the characters were always defecating and copulating." (30). "Comme aussi que l'Arlequin et le Pierrot ont proféré plusieurs paroles obscènes et fait plusieurs gestes et postures indécentes qui blessent la pudeur et l'honnêteté publiques[sic], pour exciter les ris des spectateurs, et qu'à la fin dudit divertissement le Docteur a fait l'annonce d'un autre pareil pour demain." Émile Campardon, *Spectacles de la Foire depuis 1595 jusqu'à 1791*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Berger-Levrault et cie, 1877), 300-301.

The primary sites for the development of vaudeville as a dramatic form took place were at the fairground stages at the Foire St. Germain and the Foire St. Laurent. Located on the Left Bank, the St. Germain fairgrounds were due west of the University, ran from February 3rd through Palm Sunday, and tended to attract "better dressed, better educated, more well-to-do people."[72] With better constructed stalls to protect wares from the elements, attendees could shop for fine silver, porcelain, ivory, lace, books, paintings, and etchings. On the Right Bank during the summer months, the St. Laurent Fairgrounds were held near the Église St. Laurent, just southwest of the present-day Gare de l'Est, and offered less luxurious wares. Despite these differences in material offerings, both featured similar kinds of live performances, including marionette shows, acrobats, tight-rope dancers (*danseurs à corde*), and animal performances. The most popular of these, however, were the theater troupes.

Legally, these groups were licensed as acrobatic troupes, but they also performed excerpts from the expelled Italians' repertory. The eyewitness account of Joachim Christoph Nemeitz indicates that by 1727, it was well understood that the acrobatics were not what brought people to fairground theaters:

> The dancing on the rope is not as highly regarded as the *comedy* which comes afterward. Be aware that some of these troupes include the rump of the so-called Italian theater…Many things are permitted in the time of the fair that would not be permitted at other times, and this has allowed these 'gentlemen' to reinstate their former theater on the pretext of being tightrope performers…[73]

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[72] Barnes, "The *Théâtre de la Foire*," 24.

[73] "La danse sur la corde n'est pas de si grande consideration, que la *Comédie,* qu'ils joüent après. Savoir, il y a quelques-uns dans ces Bandes, le reste du prétendu *Théatre Italien*…L'on passe bien des choses en tems des Foires, qu'on ne laisseroit pas passer en d'autres tems; de sorte que ces Messieurs ont redressé leur premier Théatre, sous le prétexte de danser sur la corde." Joachim Christoph Nemeitz, *Soujour de Paris, c'est à dire instructions fidèles pour*

Performances by these fairground "acrobats" were wildly popular, with accounts like Nemeitz's showing that the wealthy and the poor alike enjoyed these shows. In describing the demographics of the crowd at one of the fairs, Nemeitz notes "masters with valets and lackeys, thieves with honest people, the most refined courtesans, the prettiest young ladies, the subtlest thieves, are as if intertwined together."[74] More than anything, it was the loss of wealthy audience members to the fairground shows that brought these troupes under the jealous gaze of the royal theaters, the Opéra and the Comédie-Française.

Both theaters brought petitions against the fairground performers for violations of their monopolies, but the performers were locked in a series of struggles among themselves as well. From the expulsion of the Comédiens-Italiens until the first suppression of theatrical activity at the fairgrounds in 1718, three separate troupes forged and broke alliances with one another, with allegiances shifting nearly every season. All three troupes performed at both the St. Germain and the St. Laurent fairs, and all three presented plays in French that had been developed earlier by the Italian players, to great success.[75] The balance of power and box office success shifted over these years, as certain troupes were able to purchase privileges from the Opéra to legally add song and dance to their performances. This gave them a distinct advantage over their unprivileged competitors, who could have complaints lodged against them for violating any of

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les voyageurs de Condition (Leiden, 1727), 173. Accessed via Gallica. Translation from Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth Century Paris* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 48.

[74] "Tout y est pêle-mêle, les maîtres avec les valets & laquais, les filoux avec les honêtes gens. Les courtisans les plus raffinez, les plus jolies filles, les filouz les plus subtils, sont comme entrelacez ensemble. Toute la Foire fourmille de monde, dépuis l'entrée jusqu'au bout." (171) Nemeitz, *Séjour de Pari*s, 170. Accessed via Gallica. Translation in Crow, 46. Accounts like Nemeitz's are corroborated by many other eighteenth-century descriptions of the diverse socioeconomic makeup of the fairgrounds. See Isherwood, 33-34; Crow, 52-55; Doe, 42-44. See also Jama Stilwell, "A New View of Eighteenth-Century Abduction Opera: Edification and Escape at the Parisian Théâtres de la Foire," *Music and Letters* 91, no. 1 (February 2010), 55-56.

[75] Claude et François Parfaict, *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire des Spectacles de la Foire*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Briasson, 1743), 12. Accessed via Gallica.

the various monopolies held by the official theaters, including the performing of spoken French dialogue, in addition to singing and dancing. The first of these privileges was purchased in 1708, and this is often dated as the beginnings of *opéra-comique*, with spoken dialogue interspersed with sung musical numbers. The first appearance of the name Opéra-Comique for a performing troupe appeared in 1713, with two of the troupes banding together and agreeing that each could use the name *Nouvel Opéra Comique* on their advertisements; however, by 1715, the alliance had ended. Though there was no singular troupe known as the "Opéra-Comique" until 1727, the title is a useful shorthand for the three fairground theaters during this period whose repertoire so closely overlapped.[76]

In an effort to tamp down the appeal of the fairground players (known as the *Forains*), the two official theaters prevented the *Forains* from presenting scripted plays with dialogue, and from singing songs on stage.[77] Though the petitions were intended to weaken the appeal of the *Forains*, in practice they spurred the performers on to creative workarounds to these restrictions. The most famous of these subversions was the *pièce en écritaux* (poster play). Beginning with the 1710 fairground season, only one actor had successfully negotiated an agreement with the director of the Opéra which permitted him to perform spoken dialogue and to sing on stage. This left rival troupes scrambling to compete, as they were still legally prevented from using speech and song on stage. In order to get around these restrictions without incurring further wrath from the official stages, the troupe came up with the idea of printing short pieces of dialogue in large letters on scrolls that the actors could keep in one pocket, unfurl and hold while on stage, and then place in their opposite pocket. By the 1711 season, the scrolls (or *écritaux*) also began

[76] Harvey, "Opera Parody in Eighteenth-Century France," 105; Campardon, *Spectacles de la Foire*, Vol. 2, 192.

[77] Barnes, "The *Théâtre de la Foire*," 48-49.

featuring *timbres*, whose melodies an accompanying orchestra would begin to play while plants in the audience would sing the displayed vaudeville, prompting actual audience members to join in.[78]

These *pièces en écritaux* are formative and instructive, as they represent some of the only documented moments we have of Parisians, from many backgrounds and with varying degrees of literacy, having a performative response to a textual iteration of a vaudeville. For Thomas Crow, such moments of collective performance represent instances where "concrete practices by [established cultural] orders were made unstable, by which persuasive substitutes were discovered and applied."[79] As a place where elite and popular audiences converged, the fairground theaters represented a disruptive challenge to the orders that had determined whether or not an artform was culturally legitimate for nearly a century.

Beyond the *écritaux*, texted vaudevilles appeared in many different literary genres throughout the eighteenth century, though the responses of readers to these texted vaudevilles were not recorded. Interpreting eighteenth-century texts that include texted vaudevilles through the lens of *pièces en écritaux* illuminates the performative possibilities that could have been engendered by these encounters at the fairgrounds. By displaying *timbres* and their new text on large posters, with the expectation that audiences would respond to the text by singing, the fairground theater troupes helped condition a performative, musical response to their printed

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[78] "Les Comédiens François firent cesser ces representations, qui attiroient déjà beaucoup de monde…Les Forains, ne pouvant plus parler, eûrent recours aux Ecritaux: c'est-à-dire, que chaque Acteur avoit son rolle écrit en gros caractere sur du carton qu'il presentoit aux yeux des Spectateurs. Ces inscriptions parurent d'abord en prose. Après cela on les mit en chansons, que l'Orchestre jouoit, & que les Assistans l'accoutumèrent à chanter." Lesage and d'Orneval, Preface to *Théâtre de la foire ou l'Opéra-Comique*, iv. See also Gidel, *Le Vaudeville*, 17-18; Christine Annie Fortin, "Theatre Forain, Culture Française" (Ph.D diss., University of Maryland at College Park, 1997), 36; Pierre Frantz and Alain Sandrier, eds. *Les états du plaisir: penser et dire les plaisirs au XVIIIe siècle* (Nanterre, France: Centre des sciences et de la littérature, Université Paris X-Nanterre, 2002), 153.

[79] Crow, *Painters and Public Life*, 54.

vaudevilles. Just as meanings accumulated to specific *timbres*, it is possible that the melodic memory developed by the *écritaux* might have echoed into the 1780s and 90s, as many tunes that appeared in these early fairground plays were still in use at the century's end.

The following decades would prove precarious for the fairground troupes. All theatrical performances in France were halted in 1715 upon the death of Louis XIV, and the following year, the previously-banished Comédie-Italienne troupe was recalled to Paris by Philippe d'Orleans, who was serving as Regent during the minority of Louis XV. This should have signaled the end for the *Forains*, who had commandeered the Italian players' repertory upon their exile. The Italians could take back their repertoire with the crown to back up their claims, depriving the *Forains* of the performing genre that had made them famous. However, in the years that the Italians had been away, the public taste had shifted to hearing comic plays and songs in their native language, rather than in the Italian that had been required of the official troupe.[80] Once again, the three official theaters (the Opéra, the Comédie-Française, and the Comédie-Italienne) found themselves suffering financially due to the continued success of the Opéra-Comique. In response, they banded together in order to have the fair theaters suppressed entirely, which they were able to successfully manage for the fair seasons of 1719 to 1721. This pattern continued for the entire first half of the eighteenth century – the *Forains* would return to the stages, the official theaters would lose audiences, and would then retaliate by shutting down the Opéra-Comique troupe, with suppressions occurring again in 1724, and from 1745 to 1752.

The financial threat posed by falling ticket sales at the official theaters was the primary motivator for these suppressions, but they were also prompted, in part, by perceived threats to

[80] Daniel Heartz, *Music in European Capitals: The Galant Style, 1720-1780* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 608-9.

social hierarchy and propriety. The broad appeal of early *opéra-comique* represented a destabilizing force to Parisian society on both economic and cultural fronts. Bearing royal endorsement, the three *grand théâtres* of the Opéra, the Comédie-Française, and the Comédie-Italienne were meant to represent the height of theatrical entertainment in the capital city; that the last of these often had embarrassingly low attendance resulting from competition with the *Forains* was damaging to this social order, in addition to being costly.[81] But the falling door receipts were not the only threat presented by the fairground theaters. Entertainment in eighteenth-century Paris operated along strict hierarchical guidelines, in which the entertainment one attended was expected to conform to one's class – the higher the ticket price, the more prestigious were the attendees, and the greater the status that was conferred upon them. Such was the logic of being seen in a box at the Opéra, for example.[82] With their cheap tickets, fairground entertainments were expected to only attract the lower classes; in practice, however, the audience for these shows was incredibly diverse. A decade later, a *Gazette à la main* from 1739 similarly communicated such social mixing: "there are a great many people at all the *spectacles* at the fair and especially at the Opéra-Comique where the house was full and taken up by the highest society of Paris."[83] The fairground theaters upset these rigid categories, inviting Parisians of all ranks to participate in the bawdy, satirical plays that became the *Forains*' signature.

[81] Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 38; Heartz, *Music in European Capitals*, 608.

[82] James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 34.

[83] Quoted and translated in Isherwood, 34.

Beyond the stage: Street singers

Histories of vaudeville in the eighteenth century tend to fixate on their appearance in the repertoires of the Opéra-Comique and the Comédie-Italienne, but it is important to remember that vaudevilles continued to circulate as standalone songs during this period as well. The *chansonniers*, or singers who wrote, sang, and attempted to sell printed versions of these songs, usually congregated along the Pont Neuf. Completed in 1603, this bridge was an important thoroughfare linking the Right and Left Banks of Paris. Though lacking these features today, the bridge was originally home to many businesses and private homes which rose up on either side of the structure, making the Pont Neuf not just a convenient way to traverse the Seine, but a central point in the city for both formal and informal exchange. So closely associated was the genre of vaudeville with the bridge where it was often heard that the songs themselves were often referred to as "pont neufs."[84]

Several features of the non-dramatic vaudeville had firmly cohered by the eighteenth century: that it was a satirical song about current affairs, and that it was set to a familiar melody. The accessibility of these features meant that as a compositional category, it was available to just about anyone, literate or not, from the city's poorest residents to the courtiers who regularly travelled between Paris and Versailles.[85] The sites for performing these songs were just as varied; while the Pont Neuf is one of the better-documented locations for hearing such songs, virtually every aspect of life could be and was accompanied by singing: "Aristocrats sang at court, sophisticates in salons, idlers in cafés, workers in taverns and *guinguettes*, soldiers in

[84] Mason, *Singing the French Revolution*, 20; Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy*, 5-11; Gidel, *Le Vaudeville*, 9; Barnes, "The *Théâtre de la Foire*," 136.

[85] Mason, *Singing the French Revolution*, 19.

barracks, hawkers in the streets, market women at their stalls, students in the classrooms, cooks in kitchens, nurses next to cradles…"[86] The ubiquity of vaudevilles in eighteenth-century daily life even extended into how a day's events were recorded in text. In at least one example, personal thoughts were recorded in vaudevilles, as evidenced by the diary kept and later published by Pierre-Philippe-Emmanuel de Coulanges, a correspondent of Madame de Sévigné, whose daily notes were later published.[87]

So omnipresent was the vaudeville that some sources indicate that it was even brought into the bedroom, with new and particularly erotic or explicit lyrics written to serve as a prelude to sex. In *La Gazette noire*, a periodical that existed somewhere between news and gossip, the journalist and pamphleteer Charles Théveneau de Morande described how young female hurdy-gurdy players (or *viélleuses*) would lure men to a local café for "orgies, made up of young girls and libertines already jaded by too much pleasure."[88] In order to reignite their imaginations (and loins), the *viélleuses* would sing "lustful couplets, accompanied by very expressive gestures."[89] Théveneau de Morande then provides a sample of eight songs that the hurdy-gurdy girls would sing in such settings; each is a vaudeville, featuring *timbres* that would have, by this time, had

[86] Darnton, *Poetry and the Police*, 83.

[87] Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy*, 63. Marquis de Coulanges, *Recueil de Chansons choisies. Seconde Edition, Revûe, corrigé, augmentée.* Vol. 2. (Paris: Chez Simon Benard, 1698). Archibald Church Historical Medical Collection, Galter Health Sciences Library and Learning Center, Northwestern University.

[88] Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy*, 162-3; Robert Darnton, *The Devil in the Holy Water or the Art of Slander from Louis XIV to Napoleon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 334-35.

[89] "Il y vient même de jeunes *viéleuses*[sic] qui, si vous les trouvez jolies, sont très complaisantes; du moins selon comme vous promettez de payer leur complaisance…Aux orgies, composés de filles & de jeunes libertins déja blasés par l'excès du plaisir, ces *viéleuses* cherchent à réveiller leur imagination par des couplets lascifs, qu'elles accompagnent de gestes très expressifs, & souvent spectatrices de l'effet que produit sur l'assemblée le role qu'elles jouent." Charles Théveneau de Morande, *La Gazette noire, par un homme qui n'est pas blanc; ou Oeuvres posthumes du Gazetier cuirassé* (N.P.: 1784), 214. Accessed via Gallica.

long lives both on the streets and on the stage.[90] Together the verses are directed at the character Amour, advising him in his pursuit of Iris, who rebuffs his caresses. "*Bande* ton arc, armes-toi d'une flêche" ("Draw your bow, arm yourself with an arrow") is one piece of advice given, playing on the double entendre of both advising that he string his bow with an arrow, and that he make himself aroused. Other similar reports also exist, as in a letter from the *chansonnier* François Lebas, in which he recounts seeing "women and girls of ill repute who contort themselves in the street and, sometimes drunken, expose themselves to public view, often adding things that are not in the songs and…frequently acting out what does not merit description."[91] While giving an account of the vaudeville, an early nineteenth-century history of Parisian theaters also alludes to the genre's suggestive ties to the sexual economy of the eighteenth century: "We see [the genre of vaudeville] in every kind of costume…we see it, simple and naïve, high-spirited or tender…at court and in the bedrooms of courtesans."[92] In addition to its goals of ridicule and satire, it is clear that the vaudeville also began to develop a particularly sexual valence in the eighteenth century.

The *Querelle des Bouffons* and the New Comédie-Italienne (1752-1762)

The years of the Opéra-Comique's suppression from 1745-1752 saw several events which transformed the theatrical landscape of Paris. While the *grands théâtres* had believed that the suppression would finally increase their ticket sales, the Opéra found itself still in dire

[90] The timbres that appear, in order, are: "Air de tous les Capucins du monde," "Air des Folies d'Espagne," "Ton humeur est Catherine," "Air du Confiteor," "Air du Prévôt des Marchands," and "Vit-on jamais de pareille sotisse?" (*La Gazette noire*, 215-17).

[91] Quoted in Mason, *Singing the French Revolution*, 21.

[92] Nicolas Brazier, *Histoire des Petits Théâtres de Paris depuis leur origine*. Vol 1: Fair Theatres (Paris: Allardin, 1838), 207-8.

financial straits, requiring the frequent intervention of the King to keep the institution from going under. However, by 1749, the Opéra had become such a drain on the royal coffers that Louis XV turned over control of the theater to the city of Paris, enacting a symbolic separation between the monarchy and the theatrical institution that had functioned to praise it for so long.[93] Even more significant was the arrival of Eustachio Bambini's Italian players (known as the Bouffons), with the fateful performance of Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* on the Opéra stage, previously a space reserved exclusively for the performance of French opera. Prior to the arrival of Bambini's players, decades of competition and turmoil between the Opéra-Comique and the Opéra had already begun to challenge the hegemony of *tragédie lyrique* as France's most prestigious theatrical genre. The appearance of an Italian troupe performing Italian comic opera at the Opéra seemed to indicate that *tragédie lyrique*'s position at the top of the French cultural hierarchy was truly in jeopardy. It is within these conditions that the *Querelle des Bouffons* emerges, an intellectual debate from 1752 to the Italians' departure in 1754, in which a flurry of pamphlets debated the aesthetic merits of French *tragédie lyrique* and Italian *opera buffa*, while also trying to imagine what a possible future for *tragédie lyrique* could be.[94]

The arrival of the Bouffons coincided with a shift in French taste for lyric theater, and while much has been made of the impact the Italians had on the Opéra stage, recent scholarship has shown that "[t]he greatest impact of the *querrelle des bouffons* was unquestionably

[93] Barnes, "The *Théâtre de la Foire*," 99

[94] For a thorough explanation of the various philosophical and political currents that animated the Querelle, see Cynthia Verba, *Music and the French Enlightenment, 1750-1764* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); and T.C.W Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 357-9; James H. Johnson, "The Encyclopedists and the Querelle des Bouffons: Reason and Enlightenment of Sentiment," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 10 (1986): 12-27; and David Charlton, "New Light on the Bouffons in Paris (1752-1754)," *Eighteenth Century Music* 11 no. 1 (2014): 31-54.

experienced in comic theater and not at the Opéra."[95] These impacts can be seen in the *Forains*' rapid move to produce French adaptations of the Italian works performed at the Opéra by the Bouffons. The impact of the Bouffons can also be seen in the increased number of *ariettes*, or originally-composed tunes, that began to appear in the fairground performances alongside the more traditional vaudevilles. These *ariettes* were Italianate in style, following almost exactly the structure and style of the arias featured in *La serva padrona* – balanced four-measure phrases in da capo form with clearly articulated harmonic structures. Plots became simpler, and settings and costumes began to look more realistic.[96] At the Comédie-Italienne, the core of their repertoire was still *commedia dell'arte*, though they had already begun incorporating spoken plays in French, opera parodies, and Italian-language opera as early as 1746. Following the departure of the Bouffons in 1754, however, the Comédie-Italienne greatly increased the number of Italian comic operas, in addition to hiring composers to write French-language *opéras-comiques* in an effort to compete with their fairground rivals. Nevertheless, they still found themselves continually outsold by the Opéra-Comique.[97]

The makeup of Paris's theatrical landscape was transformed once more in 1762 with the Comédie-Italienne's acquisition of the Opéra-Comique in 1762. For roughly a decade prior to this merger, all three of Paris's official theaters (the Opéra, the Comédie-Française, and the Comédie-Italienne, in descending order of prestige) had been battling with the Opéra-Comique for audience members. The *grands théâtres* made various petitions to the city: they wanted to be exempt from onerous taxes; to be able to buy out the Opéra-Comique; and, in the case of the

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[95] Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 33-4; David Charlton, *Opera in the Age of Rousseau: Music, Confrontation, Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 295.

[96] Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 35; Barnes, "The *Théâtre de la Foire*," 99.

[97] Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 13, 37; Heartz, *Music in European Capitals*, 735-6.

Comédie-Française, to permanently eliminate the fairground theaters altogether.[98] Beginning in 1761, the Comédie-Italienne began complaining that they were unable to pay their debts because the Opéra-Comique was poaching all of their audience members. They also complained that the numerous extensions granted to the fairground theaters to prolong their performance season was making it impossible for the Comédie-Italienne to compete. This complaint had a grain of truth: The *Forains* were originally only licensed to perform for three months out of the year, during the fair seasons. However, by 1761, they were playing for more than six months, and every year managed to obtain permission to prolong their engagements.[99]

At the end of 1761, the Comédie-Italienne again petitioned to take over the Opéra-Comique, this time with promises of making the repertoire more respectable, worthy of appearing on a royally-supported stage. Louis XV granted the petition at the beginning of 1762, declaring the fused group be known collectively as the Comédie-Italienne, and made them official *comédiens ordinaire du roi*, thus under the protection of the king himself. The merger was seen by the larger theaters as a win-win solution to the problem that the fairground players had posed for decades: it would conveniently eliminate the competition and, it was hoped, gain back audiences (at least the well-heeled members) in one fell swoop. As Julia Doe vividly describes it, the "union…would be equal parts merger and hostile takeover, designed to shore up the finances of the *Maison du Roi* at the expense of the fair enterprise."[100]

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[98] Barnes, "The *Théâtre de la Foire*," 124-5. The privileged theaters of Paris at this period were required to pay a "poor tax" (*droit des pauvres*) to the Hôtel-Dieu, Paris's largest hospital. These taxes subsidized medical treatment for the poor, and helped dispel any whiffs of impropriety that might still cling to the profession of theatrical performance. These taxes amounted to 25% of door receipts, though it is debatable how stringently payment at such a high percentage was actually enforced. See Michele Root-Bernstein, *Boulevard Theater and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1984), 52-55.

[99] Campardon, *Les Spectacles de la Foire*, Vol. 2, 197.

[100] Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 39.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the merger was met by the larger public with something less than enthusiasm. The primary proponents of the merger were governmental agents, notably the *gentilshommes du Maison du Roi* who oversaw relations between the theaters and the King. From their perspective, merging the unofficial Opéra-Comique with the crown-supported Comédie-Italienne would accomplish two tasks in one: it would divert ticket sales away from the fairgrounds and back into the royal coffers, and would contain the moral threat that the vulgar *Forains* posed to Parisian social order. As they were performed on the fairgrounds, *opéras-comiques* (and by extension the vaudevilles contained within them) were perceived as a force for moral corruption, particularly among the rich who, rather than attending the more appropriate Opéra or Comédie-Italienne, were slumming it at the fairgrounds. Bringing the Opéra-Comique to heel by absorbing it into the Comédie-Italienne would help elevate entertainments that were otherwise tainted by the kinds of vice associated with the fairgrounds, such as drinking and gambling, resulting in a performance more appropriate for Paris's wealthy elites.[101]

Despite these fears, *opéra-comique* as it was played on the fairgrounds was extremely popular, and many of its supporters saw its absorption by the larger theater they had abandoned as a death knell. In early 1762, the *Mémoires secrets*, the *ancien régime*'s equivalent of a modern-day gossip magazine, reported that "many people believe this union can only result in the detriment of both spectacles, & that this is a sure way to make both fail, [with good taste having only itself to blame.]"[102] The young Pierre-Jean Nougaret penned an elegy on what he

[101] Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 40-44.

[102] 13 January 1762: "Bien des gens prétendent que la reunion ne peut que contribuer au détriment des deux spectacles, & que c'est un sûr moyen de les faire tomber, le bon gout n'aura pas à s'en plaindre." Louis Petit de Bachaumont, *Mémoires secrets de Bachaumont, de 1762 à 1787*, ed. by Jules Ravenel. Vol. 1 (Brissot-Tivars: Paris, 1830), 12. Accessed via Gallica.

believed to be the end of the Opéra-Comique, describing how the troupe had been made to destroy its own face, pluck out its eyes, and set itself on fire.[103] Reports show that the government was concerned about the possibility of riots when the newly-combined troupe performed for the first time at the Hôtel de Bourgogne on February 3, 1762. Despite these misgivings and complaints about the loss of what many believed made the fair performances great, box office receipts skyrocketed at the amalgamated Comédie-Italienne in the years after 1762.[104]

But where did this leave the fairgrounds? Many understood the loss of the Opéra-Comique as the end of the fairs themselves, a fate which ironically befell the Foire St. Germain when it was nearly entirely destroyed by fire in March of 1762.[105] A new fair, the Foire St. Ovide, came to the fore in the 1760s, and while some notable *spectacles* did rent closed boxes or *loges*, the fair's changing locations and high rental costs prevented the fairgrounds from ever fully recovering from the acquisition of the Opéra-Comique.[106]

Though the two competing troupes had been presenting similar kinds of entertainments, the merger had an important impact on repertoire, shaping the genre of *opéra-comique* for decades to come. Generic transformations that had already begun in the wake of the Bouffons residency were carried out even further at the new Comédie-Italienne. Prior to the merger, both troupes had been incorporating newly-composed, Italianate *ariettes* into their writing,

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[103] Pierre-Jean Nougaret, *La mort de l'Opéra-Comique, élégie pour rire et pour pleurer, par un jeune homme de 17 ans* (N.p., 1762). Accessed via Gallica.

[104] Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 44-45; François R. Velde, "An Analysis of Revenues at the Comédie-Française, 1680-1793,"*Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago* (November 2017), 12; Mark Darlow, *Nicolas-Etienne Framery and the lyric theatre in eighteenth-century France* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2003), 44; Clarence D. Brenner, *The Théâtre Italien: Its Repertory, 1716-1793* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 11-12.

[105] Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy*, 129.

[106] Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy*, 131-149.

contributing to its dominance over the vaudeville. After the merger, a new agreement was made between the Italiens and the Opéra in 1766, in which they could no longer stage parodies of current operas, and sung recitative was not permitted between *ariettes*. Unable to stage the opera parodies, authors turned to *opéras-comique* with original plot lines, complemented by newly-composed *ariettes*.

Removing vaudevilles did not just transform the sound of *opéra-comique*; it also contributed to a larger cultural project of helping the genre shed its vulgar or obscene associations in an effort to make *opéra-comique* more genteel. Vulgar, and especially sexualized connotations had accumulated to the vaudeville over the course of its long career on the fairground stages, and was reinforced by its place on the Pont Neuf and in the mouths of *viélleuses*. With the merger of the two troupes, the "*ariettes* had a tendency to completely chase away the old French vaudeville."[107] By eliminating the vaudeville and moving the subject matter of the plays away from the more traditional double-entendres, *opéra-comique* was elevated to a genre appropriate for the wealthy patrons who were now streaming back into the Hôtel de Bourgogne in droves. By the end of the 1760s, newly-composed *ariettes* with texts written specifically to fit the melodies were the musical order of the day, and "derisive satires, equivocations, marvels, vulgarities, physical stunts, appeals to the crowd for support—all had been banished from *opéra-comique,*" along with the vaudeville.[108]

[107] "Pis encore, sous l'influence des Italiens, les ariettes avaient tendance à chaser complètement les vieux vaudevilles français." Gidel, *Le Vaudeville*, 21.

[108] Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy*, 116.

Singing societies and society theaters

It is at this point in many studies of *opéra-comique* that vaudeville fades away from the narrative, a casualty of cosmopolitanism and shifting public tastes. Certainly, in musicological studies, the simplistic vaudeville has carried less cachet than the newly-composed *ariettes* of Philidor, Monsigny, and Duni. But vaudeville, and its attendant coarse, sexual associations, did not simply disappear from Paris's musical landscape. Rather, the vaudeville and its older, fairground-style sensibilities were kept alive in private singing societies, the less frequently explored *théâtres de société*, and the boulevard theaters. It was also in these spaces that the vaudeville's close connection to a sexualized, performing body was preserved and rendered explicit, as in the play collections intended for performance at several well-known society theaters.

The combined Comédie-Italienne of this period is often represented as a "hotbed of musical innovation and generic hybridity," which generates predictable interest in the new and the innovative.[109] Taking a "detour" by following the vaudeville instead grants us access to a musical world beyond the gravitational pull of sanctioned theatrical practices. As a practice that existed somewhere between oral and literate culture, tracing the vaudeville is a difficult task for the modern historian, though efforts have been made.[110] This duality becomes an important feature for understanding the appearance of vaudevilles in political pornography later in the century, as it is through oral culture that associations with sexual license and satire accreted to

[109] Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 46.

[110] Darnton's *Poetry and the Police* is an excellent example of how difficult these networks can be to trace, but also how important vaudeville and *timbres* were to their transmission. See also Judith le Blanc, *Avatars d'opéras: Parodies et circulations des airs chantés sur les scènes parisiennes*; Daniel Heartz, "Terpsichore at the Fair: Old and new dance airs in two vaudeville comedies by Lesage," in *Music and Context: Essays for John M. Ward*, Anne Dhu Shapiro, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985); and Philip Robinson, "Vaudevilles: Un médium théâtral."

the genre. Understanding and following the vaudeville's path through the fairgrounds, theaters, streets, cafés, and homes provides a fuller picture of all the different ways in which Parisians interacted with vaudevilles.

As larger debates around national operatic styles raged across the press and their practical effects were enacted on the smaller fairground stages in the 1750s, a new node for vaudeville performance began to emerge in the form of the singing society. The *Société de diners du Caveau* (usually shortened to *Société du Caveau*) was founded in the 1730s by the era's best-known writers for the fairground theater, and later, the Comédie-Italienne: Alexis Piron, Charles Collé, Charles-François Panard, and Claude-Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon (more commonly known as Crébillon *fils* to distinguish him from his father). The Société was founded for the express purpose of preserving and performing vaudevilles "while passing the bottle and competing for laughs."[111] That it was felt necessary as early as the 1730s to preserve the vaudeville perhaps speaks to the genre's shifting place on the lyric stage, and its popularity among the economically upwardly mobile members that made up the singing society itself.[112] It is also possible that the formation of the *Société* was a reaction to the constant attempts on the part of the Opéra and the Comédie-Française to shut down the musical entertainments at the fairgrounds. The *Société* went through several iterations, first beginning in the 1730s, and then more enduringly from the 1750s to the Revolution. During this second iteration, many of the most vociferous contributors to the

[111] Darnton, *Poetry and the Police*, 84; See also Barnes, "The *Théâtre de la Foire*," 174; Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy*, 64.

[112] Darnton, *Poetry and the Police*, 114-115; Gidel, *Le Vaudeville*, 35-42.

Querelle des Bouffons were also members of the Société (notably Jean-François Marmontel and Jean Baptiste Antoine Suard).[113]

This period also sees the emergence of the fad for private, in-home theaters among the wealthy – a trend that expanded across the latter half of the eighteenth century until the political unrest of the 1790s. The *théâtre de société* was a cross between the salons of the earlier parts of the century and the singing society: usually hosted in a private residence, performances included the refined repertoire more typical of the Comédie-Française (Molière, Racine, Corneille), but coarser, more sexually suggestive material was also common, as suggested by a description in the *Mémoires secrets*:

> [Madame Guimard] would throw three suppers per week: one made up of the highest members of the Court, and all sorts of men of distinction; the other, of authors, artists, and thinkers who come to entertain this muse, a rival of [the *salonnière* Marie Thérèse Rodet] Geoffrin in this regard; finally a third group, an absolute orgy, with the most seductive, lusty girls, where luxury and debauchery are taken to their limits.[114]

These theaters were important spaces where musical and erotic performance converged, and where those who might otherwise have been audience members became performers themselves. Certain *théâtres de société* developed notoriety, notably those run by the dancer Marie-Madeleine Guimard, and by the celebrated soprano Sophie Arnould. Contemporaneous

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[113] Brigitte Level, "Poètes et musiciens du caveau," *Cahiers de l'Association Internationale des Études Françaises* 41 (May 1989): 161-176. See also Thomas Vernet, "'Avec un très profound respect, je suisi votre très humble et très obéisant serviteur': Grétry et ses dédicataires, 1767-1789," in *Regards sur la musique…Grétry en société,* ed. by Jean Duron (Wavre, Belgium: Éditions Mardaga, 2009), 63.

[114] 24 January 1768: "[Guimard] Ella aura trois soupers par semaine : l'un composé des premiers seigneurs de la Cour, et de toutes sortes de gens de considération ; l'autre, d'auteurs, d'artistes, de savants qui viennent amuser cette muse, rivale de Mme Geoffrin en cette partie ; enfin un troisième, véritable orgie, où sont invites les filles les plus séduisantes, les plus lascives, et où la luxure et la débauche sont portées à leur comble." Louis Petit de Bachaumont, *Mémoires secrets de Bachaumont, de 1762 à 1787*, ed. by Jules Ravenel. Vol. 2. (Paris: Brissot-Tivars, 1830), 317.

accounts frequently refer to these evenings of theater and song as "orgies," though it is difficult to be certain to what extent these performances served as a kind of scripted foreplay.[115]

Theater on the Boulevard du Temple

As the vaudeville fell out of favor at the Comédie-Italienne, several entrepreneurs saw an opportunity on the new Boulevard du Temple. Compared to the homes of the Opéra and the Comédie-Italienne, clustered near the Lourve at the theaters of the Palais Royal and Hôtel de Bourgogne respectively, the Boulevard du Temple was on the far northeastern edge of town. New commercial spaces were created as the result of development along the northern edge of the city, which attracted many to establish cafés, taverns, and theaters, turning the street into a new kind of fairground.[116] This effect was enhanced by the fact that many of those who had previously rented performance spaces (or *loges*) at the fairs began to establish themselves on the boulevard instead. One such *forain*, Jean-Baptiste Nicolet, had recently taken over his father's marionette troupe at the fairgrounds, and opened a small theater on the new Boulevard du Temple in 1764.[117] He soon obtained a license for presenting *danseurs à corde* and acrobatic acts, and the theater came to be called the Théâtre de Nicolet. Others quickly followed: Nicolas-Médard Audinot, an actor and playwright, established the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique in the

[115] "Un prince étranger, homme très aimable, mais un peu blasé sur les plaisirs que l'innocence appellee, avait un théâtre secret où il n'introduisait que des roués de sa petite cour et des femmes de qualité dignes d'être des courtisanes. C'étaient les saturnales de la Régence; on y jouait sans voile, les priapées de Pétrone et les orgies du *Portier*." Delisle de Sales, *Le Théâtre d'amour* (ca. 1770), 3. See also Céline Santini, "Théâtralité et exhibition dans le théâtre pornographique du XVIIIe siècle," in "De l'obscène et de la pornographie comme objets d'étude," ed. by Jean M. Goulemot, special issue, *Cahiers d'histoire culturelle* 5 (1999): 39-49; and Karl Toepfer, "Orgy Salon: Aristocracy and Pornographic Theater in Pre-Revolutionary Paris," *Performing Arts Journal* 12 no. 2 (1990): 110-136.

[116] Michèle Root-Bernstein, *Boulevard Theater and Revolution in Eighteenth Century Paris* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1984), 41-2.

[117] Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy*, 167.

theater space next door to Nicolet in 1769; the Théâtre des Associés followed in 1774; and the Variétés Amusantes in 1778. Each attempted to find a niche in order to minimize direct competition and risk financial ruin, with some specializing in pantomime, others in marionettes or child actors, acrobats, and of course, *opéra-comique*.

History began to repeat itself, as large crowds were drawn in by the cheap prices, and the return of repertoire that had disappeared from the fairground stages when the Opéra-Comique was taken over by the Comédie-Italienne. In an effort to discourage more affluent Parisians from attending these performances, an ordinance was passed in 1768 that reduced ticket prices on the boulevard, so they were no longer comparable to those at the official theaters. The intention was twofold: to make the prices so low as to be embarrassing for those who could otherwise have afforded to attend the privileged theaters, and to prevent any symbolic equivalency between the two theatrical worlds that might have been communicated by their similar price points. As with the fairgrounds, the low prices failed to dissuade the wealthy from attending. By the late 1770s, Nicolet had boxes installed in his theater, which could be rented by the season, just as the rich and fashionable had been doing at the royal theaters for over a hundred years, indicating the theater's continued popularity.[118]

The Comédie-Italienne was quick to respond to this new threat, reviving some of the old *opéras-comique en vaudevilles* beginning in 1768, likely in response to programming at the boulevard theaters.[119] When this failed to attract audiences back at the hoped-for levels, they

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[118] Root-Bernstein, *Boulevard Theater and Revolution*, 41-66.

[119] Darlow, *Framery and lyric theater*, 76; The only vaudeville revival between 1768 and 1774 was *Les Bateliers de Saint-Cloud* (Foire St. Laurent, 1743), though an older ballet-pantomime also appeared, Sodi's *Les Batteurs en grange* (Foire St. Laurent, 1752). In addition to these revivals, several new vaudeville works were introduced in the period between 1768 to 1774 (prior to the première of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide* and a new spate of vaudeville parodies), including *Arlequin marchand de proverbs* (1771), *La Ressource comique ou la Pièce à deux acteurs* (arranged by Lefroid de Méreaux, 1772), *Acajou* (arranged by Moulinghen, 1773) and *Le Retour de tendresse*

petitioned the police to prevent the performance of song or speech on the boulevard theaters. They specifically went after the Théâtre de Nicolet in 1769, seeking to stop the upstart theater from presenting works which might overlap with their own repertoire in any way. Prevented from staging *opéras-comique*, the Théâtre de Nicolet instead began performing elaborate pantomimes, often with fantastical machinery and accompanied by orchestral music and dance. These pantomimes appeared in addition to the puppet shows and acrobatic acts the theater was able to program, as the royal theaters did not hold privileges on these forms of entertainment. An *arrêt* issued by the police explicitly forbade vaudevilles, dialogue, and *ariettes*, but these restrictions were only halfheartedly followed. Though vaudevilles may have disappeared by official decree from the boulevard stages, they were still a present force on the boulevard. Complaints from all three of the royal theaters continued to appear against the boulevard theaters throughout the 1770s and 1780s, accusing the theaters of ignoring the imposed restrictions.[120]

If one was not able to catch an illicit vaudeville on a boulevard stage, they could frequently hear them in the streets and cafés outside. The *viélleuses* of the *Gazette noire* were located on the Boulevard du Temple. The Café de Foi, where rumored "vaudeville orgies" took place, had been shut down, but the *Gazette* explained that "Each [boulevard] theater has its café…and the pleasures of these theaters joins itself to the pleasures of the cafés, the food merchants, and the hurdy-gurdy girls."[121] In fact, many of the cafés had performers who played

(arranged by Moulinghen, 1774). None proved to be either a great success or massive failure, with each of the above listed performances receiving between 10 and 20 performances. Total receipts at the Comédie-Italienne saw a slight increase from 1768 to 1770, perhaps as a result of the prohibition on speech and song at the boulevard theaters, but those receipts begin to fall off again in 1770. For repertoire at the Comédie-Italienne, see Wild and Charlton, *Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique: Répertoire 1762-1972* (Paris: Éditions Mardaga, 2005), 40-43; for receipts from 1758 to 1772, see Doe, 45.

[120] Root-Bernstein, *Boulevard Theater and Revolution,* 68-69.

[121] "Chaque spectacle des boulevards a son Café…A toutes les délices des Cafés, des traiteurs, des *viéleuses*, &c. &c. se joignent les délices des spectacles. On y trouve les théâtres de *Comus* & de *Curtius*." Théveneau de Morande,

for patrons, providing an alternate site for entertainment outside the walls of the neighboring theaters.[122] The boulevards also proved an attractive location not only for theaters, but also for prostitution, with several brothels located in the neighborhood in addition to those who solicited outside the cafés, as described in *La Gazette noire*. As a result, the boulevards developed a reputation for offering some of Paris's more illicit attractions. Despite this seedy reputation, the popularity of the boulevard theaters only continued to climb as production values at theaters like Nicolet's began to rival those at the *grands théâtres*. The persistent socioeconomic mixing of elite and non-elite spectators reflected many of the spectacles' roots in fairground entertainment, which had similarly drawn in diverse audiences several decades prior.

Opera parody at the Comédie-Italienne (1770-1789)

The arrival of Christoph Willibald Gluck in Paris in 1773 ushered in another round of pamphlet wars following the première of his opera *Iphigénie en Aulide* (1774). These debates once again centered around the fate of French-language opera, with Gluckists supporting his devotion to dramatic realism. Gluck's detractors rallied around the Italian composer Niccolò Piccinni, believing that Gluck had gone too far in his willingness to make ugly noises in the name of dramatic interest. Recent scholarly assessments of these debates has revealed that aesthetically, Gluck and Piccinni had much more in common than not, with the print controversy

Gazette noire, 219. One is tempted to read into the two "&c." what other pleasures (licit and illicit) the theaters might have been joining themselves to.

[122] Théveneau de Morande was not particularly impressed by these performances. "…dans ces Cafés, c'est cette mauvaise musique qu'on entend chez *Armand*, *Caussin* & *Alexandre*. Ces détestables musiciens, d'accord avec les chanteurs & les chanteuses à la voix fausse & glapissante, vous arrachent le tympan par leurs cris discordans." *Gazette noire*, 211-12.

serving to help generate interest in performances at the Opéra.[123] More importantly for the history of vaudeville, however, was the injection of new vaudeville parodies into the repertoire at the Comédie-Italienne which followed in the wake of these performances. In an "uneasy cross-promotional endeavor between the Opéra and the Comédie-Italienne," the Italians would stage parodies of the new Gluck performances soon after their premiere at the Opéra.[124] One example was Gluck's *Alceste*, which premiered at the Opéra in April 1776, and whose parody (*La bonne femme*) was premiered at the Italian theater in July.[125] Such quick turnarounds required the consent and cooperation of the Opéra, whose administrators must have understood that in order for audiences to understand and appreciate the jokes in the parodies, they would first have needed to see the original production at the Opéra, producing a mutually-dependent relationship that centered on vaudeville parodies of operas.

It is in this period that vaudeville appears to have lost its vulgar or obscene connotations, at least on the Comédie-Italienne stage. Most symbolic of the new acceptability of vaudeville was the patronage of Louis XVI and his new wife, Marie-Antoinette, who frequently had vaudeville parodies performed for them at their various court theaters when the new queen was not in Paris to see them played at the Comédie-Italienne.[126] In her work on opera parody in

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[123] These debates are summarized in Julian Rushton, "The Theory and Practice of Piccinnissme," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 98 (1971-1972), and R.J. Arnold, *Musical Debate and Political Culture, 1700-1830* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2017). For a fuller articulation of the role the Comédie-Italienne played in public acceptance of a more Italianate style, see Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 86-142.

[124] Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 103.

[125] Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 99. For more on parodies of Gluck, see Bruce Alan Brown, "*Les reveries renouvelées des Grecs*: Facture, Function and Performance Practice in a Vaudeville Parody of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1779)" in *Timbre und Vaudeville: Zur Geschichte und Problematik einer populären Gattung im 17 und 18 Jahrhundert*. Ed. by Herbert Schnider and Elisabeth Cook (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1999), 306-343.

[126] Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 104. These included Jean-Etienne Déspreaux's parodies of Philidor's *Ernelinde, princesse de Norvège*, and of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide*, both performed at the court theater at Choisy in 1777 and 1778, respectively. See Susan Harvey, "Opera Parody in Eighteenth-Century France," 377.

France, Susan Louise Harvey describes this period as a "decline into respectability," crediting the rise of *sentimentalité* for the "defanging of the genre [of opera parody] as a critical tool."[127] As an emotional regime, *sentimentalité* privileged feeling over reason, believing that it was through the experience of intense emotion that one had discovered something true. As a literary and theatrical register, *sentimentalité* sought to provoke intense emotions in order to instruct the morals of the reader/audience.[128] Parody as a theatrical mode relies on a sense of irony, requiring an audience to make intertextual connections in order to be "in on the joke." Such ironic detachment or artifice is thought to have been increasingly at odds with the aesthetic priorities of *sentimentalité*, which privileged authenticity above all else.

In previous studies, the appearance of opera parodies on the stages of the *théâtres de société* has served as proof of how the parody genre, and by extension vaudeville, had been (literally) domesticated and rendered appropriate for polite company. However, it is only through the conflation of vaudeville with opera parody in the last years of the *ancien régime* that a narrative of "decline into respectability" emerges. Looking at play collections intended for *théâtres de société* from the 1750s through the 1780s shows that opera parodies were not the only entertainments given at these theaters, and that vaudeville was still very much operating as a musical signifier of carnivalesque sexuality, reminiscent of the fairgrounds. For Harvey, "the

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[127] Harvey, "Opera Parody in Eighteenth-Century France" 379-80.

[128] William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 154-163; Sarah Maza, "The 'Bourgeois' Family Revisited: Sentimentalism and Social Class in Eighteenth Century French Culture," in *Intimate Encounters: Love and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century France*, Richard Rand, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Mark Darlow, "Vaudeville et distanciation dans l'opéra-comique des années 1750." *La Querelle des Bouffons dans la vie culturelle française du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2005), 45-52; James H. Johnson, "Tears and the New Attentiveness," in *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 53-70. See also Emma Barker, *Greuze and the Painting of Sentiment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), and Mark Ledbury, "Intimate Dramas: Genre Painting and New Theater in Eighteenth-Century France," in *Intimate Encounters: Love and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century France*, Richard Rand, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

choice of opera parody for entertainment in these luxurious and frivolous court theaters indicates the extent to which the genre itself had degenerated."[129] For Doe, the choice of opera parody for private entertainment reflects a desire on the part of hosts to "[model] themselves after the taste of the royal court," performing opera parodies like those commanded by the king and queen.[130] Narratives of respectability, however, fail to account for the appearance of vaudevilles in obscene political pamphlets of the Revolution, where once again vaudevilles are the medium through which harsh, even obscene, critique is launched – far harsher than anything that could have appeared on any of Paris's stages. Focusing exclusively on opera parody, whether at the Comédie-Italienne or in *théâtres de société,* as a way of assessing the state and meaning of vaudeville at the end of the eighteenth century gives only a partial and ultimately flawed picture of where this musical practice was occurring and how audiences were interpreting it.

Revolution: 1789-1793

The fall of the Bastille prison in 1789 was the culmination of longstanding frustrations and anger with the existing power structure. Taxes had been raised multiple times throughout the 1780s in an effort to refill the royal treasury, which had been emptied over the course of several costly wars and while supporting the American revolutionaries. An especially harsh winter in 1788 destroyed grain crops, resulting in tremendous increases in the price of flour and leaving many of Paris's citizens starving, as bread was a central component of the French diet.[131] For

[129] Harvey, "Opera Parody in Eighteenth-Century France," 378.

[130] Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 103.

[131] Ian Davidson, *The French Revolution: From Enlightenment to Tyranny* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2016), 23. For more on the social and political conditions that contributed to the French Revolution, see William Doyle, *The Origins of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

those that made up the lower classes, the increased price of food resulted in fewer individual discretionary funds, and attendance at many of Paris's theaters suffered as a result, most notably on the Boulevard du Temple.[132] Political upheaval resulted in full jurisdiction over the Opéra being given over to the city of Paris in April of 1790, permanently severing the monarchy from the theatrical genre which had long served to promote its power.[133]

The boulevard theaters were openly flouting the Opéra's prohibitions on the performance of theatrical works with continuous music, with one theater in 1788 advertising their performances of *opéra-comique* and even opera. The Opéra's waning primacy was even being fought visually, with advertisements for performances on the boulevard theaters appearing alongside the announcements for the official theaters, a clear rebuke to an old order which had sought to meticulously separate official from non-official, rich from poor, high from low.[134] In January of 1791 the Liberty of the Theaters was enacted, which abolished the entire system of privilege that had structured Parisian theatrical life since its instigation under Louis XIV.[135] For the first time since the seventeenth century, anyone with sufficient funding could open a theater and present works of any type or genre they pleased, without having to worry about retribution from official, privileged theaters. The abolition of the privilege system, while a windfall for the smaller theaters and an act that ushered in an explosion of new theaters throughout the city, was merely the final nail in the coffin for the cultural prestige of the Opéra.

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[132] Root-Bernstein, *Boulevard Theater and Revolution*, 73-75.

[133] Mark Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution: Cultural Politics and the Paris Opera, 1789-1794* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 109-112.

[134] Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy*, 189.

[135] Victoria Johnson, *Backstage at the Revolution: How the Royal Paris Opera Survived the End of the Old Regime* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 38-9.

Vaudeville parodies continued to be staged at the Comédie-Italienne through 1793, though their popularity dropped off steeply after the troupe's move from their historic home at the Hôtel de Bourgogne to the new, lavish Salle Favart at the Palais-Royal halfway through the 1783 season (Fig. 1.2). The subject matter of many newly-written *opéras-comiques* turned increasingly towards the sentimental, as in Dalayrac's *Nina ou la folle par amour* (1786), and historical drama, as in Grétry's *Richard Coeur-de-Lion* (1784), though explicit tragedy in the style of the Opéra's repertoire was still avoided.[136] This transformation in the standing of *opéra-comique* from fairground vulgarity to fashionable sentimentalism was fully realized in the troupe's renaming in 1793, from the Comédie-Italienne to the Opéra-Comique National, a more fitting title for a troupe which could not have been accurately described as "Italian" for several decades. Though the number of *comédies en vaudevilles* at the Comédie-Italienne declined over these years, the vaudeville itself did not disappear. Instead, it was increasingly taken up in print genres for private reading or performance.

[136] Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 197-213.

Vaudeville Comedies Premiered at the Comédie Italienne, 1773-1793	
Year	Number of Vaudeville Comedies
1773	1
1774	2
1775	1
1776	4
1777	4
1778	4
1779	2
1780	6
1781	9
1782	9
1783	9
1784	6
1785	1
1786	5
1787	3
1788	2
1789	2
1790	3
1791	1
1792	1
1793	2

Fig. 1.2, Data drawn from Wild and Charlton, *Théâtre de l'Opéra Comique Paris: Répertoire 1762-1927* (Liège: Pierre Mardaga, 2005), 42-56.

The vaudeville is a very old genre, with its most salient features dating back to the middle ages. These features include the pairing of well-known melodies with newly-written text; and the subject matter of the text being current events, salacious gossip, or political invective. With the exile of the Italian Comedians from their theater in Paris in 1697, the vaudeville took on new importance as a dramatic genre, and it is this shift that has attracted most musicological attention. Longstanding disciplinary divisions, combined with the difficulty of following a semi-oral tradition nearly three hundred years after its disappearance, have contributed to the separation of vaudeville into two, seemingly separate practices: as a popular song, and as a dramatic genre.

However, focusing primarily on the vaudeville's role in the theater obscures and diminishes its continued existence as a standalone song genre, even as these two modes informed one another. Archival limitations often make it difficult to trace vaudeville in its standalone form, but it is arguably how most people, poor and rich, heard and sang vaudevilles, making it just as important to the identity of vaudeville as its theatrical versions. Taking a more holistic approach to where vaudeville was heard and how it was practiced can give us a much more accurate picture of Paris's song culture in the eighteenth century, especially during those periods when vaudeville seems to have disappeared from the city's main stages.

Just as important to this expanded consideration of the vaudeville are the ways in which this song genre intersects with sexuality. "Coarseness" comes across as a defining characteristic of the vaudeville, with the term applying equally to its musical content and its subject matter. The *timbres* came frequently, but not exclusively, from folk melodies, imparting to the songs a rustic or unrefined quality. But this "coarseness" was also an expectation for the text the melodies carried, as a quality of the language, the subject matter, or both. Whether sung along the Pont Neuf, scribbled down and shared furtively among political detractors, accompanied by a hurdy-gurdy played by a pretty woman, or performed with suggestive gestures on a fairground stage, vaudeville seemed to always carry with it a heavy *soupçon* of the sexually explicit. Earthy jokes and a realist attitude towards human sexual relations likely contributed to the success of the *Forains* in the early part of the century. These early *comédies en vaudevilles* offered a welcome change of pace from the tired offerings at the Opéra and the Comédie-Française, and created a vogue among the upper classes to recreate them at home, to embody (however briefly) through musical performance the articulation of a more frank, less refined sexuality.

A sexualized reading of the vaudeville can also contribute to understanding the Comédie-Italienne's ambivalent relationship with the genre. Premieres of *comédies en vaudevilles* waxed and waned after the merger of the Italian company with the fairground players in 1762. As Julia Doe has convincingly demonstrated, the shedding of vaudevilles from the repertoire was part of a larger effort on the part of the Italians to craft a more respectable identity, and to put distance between themselves and their less refined past. When vaudeville did reappear at the Comédie-Italienne, it was in order to put the troupe in conversation with the Opéra, to demonstrate that they, too, were capable of weighing in on the important aesthetic debates of the day. The humor in these new *parodies en vaudevilles* relied heavily on audience familiarity with the source material, and not on sexual *sous-entendres*. However, the cleaned-up vaudeville at the Comédie-Italienne was by no means the only form vaudeville took in the last decades of the *ancien régime*. Singing societies like the *Société du Caveau*, and especially *théâtres de sociétés* like those held by Sophie Arnould and Marie-Madeleine Guimard became important spaces for the composition, practice, and preservation of vaudeville in its older, more sexually explicit form. *Théâtres de société* even, allegedly, took the practice further, either using vaudeville singing as a kind of musical foreplay or as an incitement to orgy.[137] This becomes important for understanding its appearance in the political pornography of the early years of the Revolution, which was likely drawing heavily on these versions of vaudeville in order to launch its critiques.

Understanding vaudeville as a pervasive practice and a specifically musical site for the communication of a "coarse" sexuality allows us to see the musical connections between Paris's theatrical life and its later political one. Printed vaudeville collections like the *Fouteries*

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[137] See Karl Toepfer, *Theatre, Aristocracy, and Pornocracy: The Orgy Calculus* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1991), and Laurence Senelick, "The Word Made Flesh: Staging Pornography in Eighteenth-Century Paris," *Theatre Research International* 33, no. 2 (2008): 191-203.

chantantes (1791), epistolary novels purporting to be the real deal like the *Correspondance de Madame Gourdon,* and politically-motivated, obscene plays such as *L'Autrichienne en goguettes, ou l'orgie royale* do not easily fall into generic categories, but they all have one thing in common: vaudevilles. When we ignore this commonality, or leave it out of our analyses, it cuts them off from the larger social practice they were engaged with, rendering them silent in a way that is not representative to how they were experienced. Theater audiences were also in many cases readers, and vaudevilles stood within the gap created between performance and text.

Chapter 2

"We warn you that you must sing": Following Vaudeville from Stage to Page

In the 1768 edition of his collection of society plays, the playwright Charles Collé included the following footnote to the list of characters for his opéra-comique, *Joconde*:

> In France, everything is a fad: it's understood that the fad for vaudeville plays went on for over forty years. For the last fourteen years, plays with *ariettes* have been in style. Will [the plays with *ariettes*] survive for as long as those they have killed off? The French people's fickleness when it comes to what pleases them would seem to make this an easy question to answer. In any case, since today the vaudeville is thoroughly dead, it occurred to me to rewrite *Joconde* and *Le Rossignol* in prose, in order for them to better conform to the tastes of the moment, & not seem old-fashioned. […] Given the disgust with which modern music treats the melodies of the old Vaudevilles, *Joconde* & *Rossignol* will perhaps benefit in the present moment from being put in Prose. It's simple advice, which I give to those who would like to give it a try. Their success would be even more certain in this moment if some musician, helped by a capable Parodist, made these plays into plays with *ariettes*.[138]

[138] "Tout est de mode en France: celle des Pieces en Vaudevilles, s'est soutenue, pendant plus de 40 ans. Depuis près de 14 ans, les Pieces à Ariettes, ont la vogue. Vivront-elles aussi long-tems que celles qu'elles ont tuées? L'inconstances du François, dans ses plaisirs, paroît rendre cette question, facile à decider. Quoi qu'il en soit, comme le vaudeville est aujourd'hui totalement tombé, il étoit venu dans l'idée de refondre en Prose, Joconde & le Rossignol, pour se conformer au goût d'à présent, & n'avoir pas l'air antique; […] Vû le dégoût, que la musique

It is perhaps unsurprising to detect a note of bitterness in this "post-mortem," given that Collé was himself a lifelong lover and writer of vaudevilles.[139] Whatever Collé's personal feelings might have been about the diminishing status of the vaudeville, this footnote is representative of a common narrative among playwrights and commentators on theater after 1750: that the vaudeville was outdated and unfashionable, a victim of the explosive popularity of the *ariette*. Collé's note is a vivid example of the stories of the vaudeville's obsolescence that circulated in the eighteenth century, and which continue to inform scholarly opinion about the vaudeville in the present-day.[140] This story, however, relies on an important conflation - namely, the conflation of the entire song genre, vaudeville, with its theatrical/dramatic manifestation. Such a conflation has two interpretive effects: one, to overlook the vaudeville's closely-related vernacular practice outside the theaters; and two, that researchers tend to only look for vaudevilles in contexts in which live performance can be confirmed. As a result, modern musicologists have tended to concentrate their efforts on repertoire that has a definitive performance history, ultimately ignoring collections like Collé's *Théâtre de société*, to say nothing of the many other play collections of the period that contain music in the form of vaudevilles, but whose performance records are murky and uncertain.[141]

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moderne a jetté sur les airs des anciens Vaudevilles, Joconde & le Rossignol gagneroient actuellement, peut-être, à être mis en Prose. C'est un simple avis, que l'on donne à ceux qui voudroient en tenter l'essai. Leur succès seroit encore plus sûr dans ce moment-ci, si quelque Musicien aidé d'un Parodiste adroit, en faisoit des Pieces à Ariettes." Charle Collé, *Théâtre de société*, Vol. 2 (La Haye, 1768), 36. Duke University, Rubenstein Library Special Collections, 846.5 C697T t.2.

[139] Isherwood, 35-36; For more on Collé, see Marie-Émanuelle Plagnol-Diéval and Dominique Quéro, eds. *Charles Collé (1709-1783): au coeur de la République des Lettres* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2013).

[140] Mark Darlow goes so far as to claim that the vaudeville was "definitively replaced by the *ariette*" by the end of the 1750s. See Darlow, *Nicolas-Etienne Framery*, 81.

[141] Important exceptions to this general trend have been Herbert Schneider's work, especially "The Sung Constitutions of 1793: An Essay on Propaganda in the Revolutionary Song," in Malcolm Boyd, *Music in the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 236-276; and Judith le Blanc, *Avatars d'opéras: Parodies et circulation des airs chantés sur les scènes parisiennes, 1672-1745* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014).

When one actually does begin to look through play collections from these "unofficial" performance spaces, one finds that they are rather noisy documents, full of musical material. This places the vaudeville in a curious position, which when considered alongside sentiments like Collé's, among others, gives the impression of an object that is obsolete yet whose presence endures, a piece of cultural detritus whose presence extends beyond its relevance. Such obsolescence "asks us to imagine a world of the present (our present or someone else's) as littered with the cultural objects of its past," as Heather Wiebe writes on the persistence of opera in the twenty-first century.[142] When considering the vaudeville after 1750, Wiebe's conception of obsolescence provides a useful lens for contextualizing the ongoing appearance of vaudevilles in a period that frequently described them as being "dead" or "over," with varying degrees of glee or regret. Following the "obsolete" vaudeville offers an alternative to the more common narratives of innovation and experimentation that animate many studies of eighteenth century French lyric theater.[143] In so doing, new sites for study emerge among print media, such as newspapers and novels, which have not typically been pursued for their melodic content. Following these pathways reveals a process of transformation with regards to how the vaudeville was approached, disseminated, and engaged with by readers, with effects that can be seen through to the Revolution.

Tracking the vaudeville's existence beyond the stage requires first establishing what the vaudeville was being measured against: the *ariette*. Defining this emergent category of dramatic song illuminates the shifting aesthetic demands made on dramatic song in this period, and how these changes influenced vaudeville's theatrical reception in the eighteenth century. These

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[142] Heather Wiebe, "A Note from the Guest Editor," *Opera Quarterly* 25 nos. 1-2 (January 2009): 3.

[143] See Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater, " 11, 46; and Darlow, *Nicolas Etienne Framéry*, 43, 309.

demands have a long reach, often setting the terms for evaluating vaudeville's rise and fall even in modern scholarship of the genre.

Dictionaries and theatrical treatises from the eighteenth century offer important insight into contemporaneous attitudes towards the vaudeville during this exact period when its ongoing relevance was in question. While a consensus emerges from these texts that the vaudeville had indeed fallen out of favor, opinions were divided on whether this loss was to be celebrated or lamented. These ambivalent sentiments show that the vaudeville was still appealing for some people, and should serve as a caution against their erasure from French musical history after the *Querelle des Bouffons*. So lively was the struggle between vaudevilles and *ariettes* that the tension between the two genres was thematized in a 1760 play by Louis Anseaume and Charles-Simon Favart for the Opéra-Comique stage, as *The Trial of the Vaudevilles and the Ariettes* (*Le Procès des Vaudevilles et des Ariettes*). Together with dictionary entries and theoretical writings, *Le Procès* offers important insight into how the vaudeville was perceived during this period when it was alleged to have disappeared.

If the *ariette* is understood to have successfully chased the vaudeville from the theater, then charting the vaudeville after 1750 means leaving the theater behind and striking out into spaces where vaudevilles continued to leave a (literal) mark: in print. To contextualize the vaudeville's move from the stage to the page requires an understanding of eighteenth-century reading practices, which were also undergoing a transformation from a collective to more individualized experience. In this migration from a performance-centric model on the stage to a textual one, vaudevilles take on more firmly a "thing" or "object" status. As printed text, a person can quite literally hold a vaudeville in their hand, stuff it in their pocket, hand it off to

friends or ideological allies.[144] Even in its object status, however, vaudeville never renounces melodic reference as a constituent element. Though written down, sound clings to the text in the form of the *timbre*, the "unnaturally lingering voice" echoing on. [145] Through the *timbre*, vaudeville maintains its connection to performance, to sonority, and in so doing, "resists or escapes the world of things."[146] This tension, between the vaudeville's status as text object and its perpetual capacity for live performance, emerges when studying the genre's appearance and perceived utility in more traditionally "literary" texts like periodicals and novels. By focusing on this reconciliation of two seemingly contradictory approaches, a paradigmatic transformation can be perceived for the vaudeville, going from a genre closely tied to live performance to one that thrived in print, but was no less musical for that.

The *Ariette* and Shifting Aesthetics at the Comic Theater

Before the arrival of the Bouffons in 1752 and the fad for *ariettes* as described by Collé, vaudevilles and *ariettes* were two distinct vocal categories, separated primarily by venue: vaudevilles at the fairgrounds and the Pont Neuf, *ariettes* at the Opéra. Earlier in the century, the term *ariette* was used to refer to numbers with virtuosic singing in *tragedies-lyriques*, especially when it came to long melismas on particular vowel sounds, with words like "lancer," "briller," or "régner" often used for this purpose.[147] However, the term is best known today for its close

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[144] Such processes of transmission are described in Darnton, *Poetry and the Police*, 15-21.

[145] Wiebe, "A Note from the Guest Editor," 4.

[146] Ibid.

[147] David Charlton, "Ariette (Fr.)," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online* (2001) https://doi-org.turing.library.northwestern.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.01236; and M. Elizabeth C. Bartlet "Ariette (opera)," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online* (1992) https://doi-org.turing.library.northwestern.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O900180. Charlton explores the evolution of song forms in *opéra-comique* in greater detail in "The *romance* and its cognates: narrative, irony and

association with *opéra-comique*, where this new style of vocal writing for the fairground stage, combined with spoken dialogue, became a defining feature of the emergent comic genre. After the arrival and critical success of the Bouffons in 1752, playwrights and composers at both the Opéra-Comique and the Comédie-Italienne were keen to capitalize on the popularity of these Italian productions, an important feature of which was their vocal writing. Unlike the vocal writing at the Opéra, molded decades prior by Lully and which attempted to replicate the rhythms of French speech through frequent changes in meter, *ariettes* frequently adopted da capo form, and incorporated an energetic rhythmic quality. This conformed with the expectations of lightness and gaiety from the genre of *opéra-comique* more broadly, and contrasted with the long, undifferentiated recitatives characteristic of Lully.[148] By the 1760s, the term *ariette* referred to a vocal work for one or two voices that appeared specifically in an *opéra-comique*, and whose melody was newly composed with the intention of complementing the libretto. With *ariette* now an *opéra-comique*-specific term, at the Opéra, "*grand air*" emerged as designating the virtuosic vocal numbers in the earlier style.

These formal transformations were accompanied by a new approach to the way in which *ariettes* appeared in *opéras-comiques* after mid-century. In *comédies en vaudevilles* and early *opéras-comiques* vaudevilles and *ariettes* could perform various dramatic functions, appearing as prologues, exposition, or dialogue, among others. For example, Jean-Claude Gillier's *Le Parterre Merveilleux* (1732) is delivered nearly entirely in vaudevilles, with barely a break for

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vraisemblance in early opéra comique," in *French Opera 1730-1830: Meaning and Media* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000).

[148] For more on vocal writing in the operas of Lully, see Joyce Newman, *Jean-Baptiste de Lully and his tragedies lyriques* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1979), and James R. Anthony, *French Baroque Music from Beaujoyeulx to Rameau*, 2nd ed. (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1997).

spoken dialogue.[149] After roughly 1750, *ariettes* began to be integrated into the story, functioning as diegetic music or "set" songs, in which the other characters on stage acknowledge that a musical performance is occurring.[150]

The increased popularity of the *ariette* has also been interpreted as pointing to a relationship between text and music in which the music is meant to complement and enhance the text in a mutually reinforcing relationship. This set of expectations for the *ariette* arose from several emergent aesthetic trends in the eighteenth century, primarily the rise in *sentimentalité* and the novel. Preference for the *ariette* as the song form more appropriate for capturing and communicating a character's emotional state can be seen in theatrical treatises from the period, as in André-Guillaume Contant d'Orville's *Histoire de l'Opéra Bouffon* of 1768 and Laurent Garcin's *Traité du mélo-drame ou réflexions sur la musique dramatique* of 1772.

Contant d'Orville offers the following metaphor for describing the approach taken by composer Antoine Dauvergne in setting Jean-Joseph Vadé's libretto for *Les Troqueurs* (1753): "Vadé's work would have gone for nought without finding a composer clever and daring enough to engage with the first masters of Italy: for his modesty did not blind him to the fact that an *intermède*'s libretto is a kind of mannequin, made to take such ornament as music chooses to lend it."[151] The comparison suggests a different attitude towards the text/melody relationship,

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[149] Jean-Claude Gillier, *Le Parterre Merveilleux* in *Théâtre de la Foire ou l'Opéra Comique*, Vol. 9 (Paris: Chez Prault,1734), 75-84. Accessed via Gallica. See also Mary Hunter, "Jean-Claude Gillier," *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (2001) https://doi-org.turing.library.northwestern.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.11147.

[150] Bartlet, "Ariette (opera)," *Oxford Music Online*.

[151] "…mais Vadé n'avoit rien fait, s'il ne trouvoit un Musicien assez habile & assez hardi pour lutter contre les premiers Maîtres de l'Italie: car sa modestie ne lui dissimuloit pas que les vers d'un Intermède sont comme une espece de Mannequin, fait pour recevoir tous les ornemens que la Musique daigne lui prêter." Contant d'Orville, *Histoire de l'opéra bouffon*, Vol. 1 (Paris: 1768). Accessed via Gallica. Translation from David Charlton, "Continuing Polarities," *French Opera 1730-1830*, 19. Charlton points out that Contant d'Orville's book "was avowedly the work of two brothers who had spent six-monthly periods alternating in Paris on business," 19n72.

reflecting one in which the music is crafted specifically to respond to the libretto, presumably in contrast to the vaudeville, which operates through the oblique reference of the *timbre* and in which text is made to fit the pre-existing tune. In his analysis, David Charlton takes Contant d'Orville's description as representative of approaches to *opéra-comique* writ large, for both critics and composers. "In this metaphor," Charlton explains, "the word-tone balance slips over in favor of music…There is no question of singing taking over completely, but it appears that music defines the final perception of the character."[152] Also responding to Contant d'Orville's *Histoire*, Mark Darlow mobilizes the author's criticism of Nicolas Framery's *Nanette et Lucas* (1764) to demonstrate a widespread preference among eighteenth-century *opéra-comique* composers for the "expressive potential of the *ariette*, which would have been difficult to achieve in the *vaudevilles* of the *opéras-comique* of early Favart."[153] Contant d'Orville's writings demonstrate a new attitude towards the balance between text and music while suggesting music's potential for developing a character's psychology on the comic opera stage.

Belief in the *ariette*'s capacity for expressing emotion is taken to extremes by the eighteenth-century observer Laurent Garcin, who advocates for a listener's total submersion in the psychological world of the character. He likens this submersion to his experience while reading the novels of Samuel Richardson: "Richardson puts me beside his characters…I am party to their tastes, their moods, their plans, and inner debates…What Richardson was in his books, I want a composer to be in the theater."[154] Here, Garcin asks the composer, and not the

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[152] Charlton, "Continuing Polarities," *French Opera 1730-1830*, 21.

[153] Darlow, *Nicolas-Etienne Framery*, 61.

[154] "Richardson me place à côtee de ses personnages, il promène, pour ainsi dire, mes regards sur tous leurs mouvemens…je vois leurs attitudes, leurs gestes…Or ce que Richardson étoit dans ses Livres, je veux qu'un Musicien le soit au Théâtre." Laurent Garcin, *Traité du mélo-drame ou réflexions sur la musique dramatique* (1772), 119-120. Accessed via Gallica. Translation from Charlton, "Continuing Polarities," 29.

librettist, to grant him access to a character's "moods and inner debates," revealing the ways in which it was believed that *ariettes* were capable of accessing and expressing emotion. It is this particular line of sentimental argument that has most strongly contributed to the vaudeville's lack of status among scholars of post-1750 *opéra-comique*.

In more recent scholarship, both Darlow and Charlton describe the vaudeville as a dramatic device that, in opposition to the *ariette*, actively inhibits audience identification. Darlow terms this process of identification interruption *distanciation*, a quasi-Brechtian concept whereby the familiar melody of the *timbre* disrupts an immersive theatrical ideal as described by Garcin.[155] Though he allows that the use of vaudevilles in *opéra-comique* did not "preclude[e] any identification," Darlow describes the genre as generally "hostile to identification."[156] Elsewhere, Darlow explains that, "It's almost never about identification when it comes to vaudeville, insofar as an extreme stylization of this form constantly reminds the spectator that it is an act of artifice…[vaudevilles] operate at a level that is above the diegesis by making intertextual references through the chosen *timbres*."[157] In Darlow's estimation, vaudevilles become a kind of emotional prophylactic, establishing a layer of irony between spectators and spectacle.

Charlton is even less sympathetic to the vaudeville, calling into question (along the lines of Rousseau) whether they should even be considered music. His analysis operates from the

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[155] Darlow, *Nicolas Etienne Framery*, 47; This concept is developed more thoroughly in Mark Darlow, "Vaudeville et distanciation dans l'opéra-comique des années 1750," in Andrea Fabbiano, ed., *La Querelle des Bouffons dans la vie culturelle française du XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2005.

[156] Darlow, *Nicolas Etienne Framery*, 47.

[157] "Il ne s'agira presque jamais d'identification dans le cas du vaudeville, dans la mesure où l'extrême stylisation de cette forme rappelle constamment au spectator qu'il s'agit d'un artifice…[le vaudeville] opère au niveau supérieur à la diégèse, en faisant référence à des intertextes grâce aux timbre utilisé." Darlow, "Vaudeville et distanciation," 52.

assumption that "[o]ne's understanding that the music is second-hand throws attention on to the author's skill in finding amusing words…Moreover, the author's choice of a particular *fredon* casting ironic light over the current (new) words forces the audience to think in a textual, not musical, way. (The recognition of a familiar melody evokes a relatively mechanical memory response.)"[158] Such an uncharitable view of something as complex as a "memory response" is surprising, given that earlier in the same essay, Charlton traces an elaborate system of intertextual reference when it comes to actors and their performance choices: "When actor x played one role it was not an isolated action but construed against x's other roles, against which the new role was sometimes created in the first place. So specific actor-singers themselves had performative voices which flowed back through the immediate text and music and thence to some grounding in previous time."[159] These performative voices however (in Charlton's example, Justine Favart's aping of Anna Tonelli's performance style), constructed through and against other performances, are what reached audiences and contributed to the reception of a performance. It is curious, then, that Charlton is willing to extend credulity to the complexity and depth of performative voices, and not to the *fredons* of a vaudeville, which were understood to operate through similar systems of "flowing back."

Choosing to follow the vaudeville rather than the *ariette*, in addition to attending to different sources, also means taking an approach to vaudeville that dispenses with preconceived notions of their artistic or emotional inferiority. Rather than treating the genre as a stepping stone on the way to the *ariette*, this study assumes that the acts of musical memory and intertextual reference inherent to the function of vaudevilles were part of a complex affective system, one

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[158] Charlton, "Continuing Polarities," *French Opera 1730-1830*, 16.

[159] Ibid., 11.

with which eighteenth century readers and audiences were deeply familiar. While wit and *esprit* in the construction the choice of a *timbre* were valued aspects of a well-made vaudeville, the end result of such choices was, I believe, to make people feel things. We all know that one song that, no matter how many times we hear it, makes us cry, makes us think of our mom, makes us smell sunblock in July. Could it not be the case that *timbres* had just as powerful an effect on those who heard them at the end of the *ancien régime*? Operating with this as a baseline assumption offers insight into why opinions continued to be mixed with regards to the vaudeville's appeal decades after its alleged demise.

This old thing? Cataloguing attitudes toward the vaudeville

The changing status of vaudeville in Paris's theatrical culture coincided with the rise of Enlightenment thought, a period marked by the desire to categorize and define. Encyclopedias and dictionaries abounded, including on music and the theater, and offer insight into how contemporaries navigated the relationship of the vaudeville to the *ariette*. Jacques Lacombe's *Dictionnaire portatif des beaux art* of 1752 shows mixed attitudes towards the vaudeville in the earliest days of the *ariette*'s ascent, describing them as "little Poems, through which one is able to manifest gaiety, lightness of spirit, and a delicacy which forms the character that belongs to the Nation."[160] Curiously, Lacombe spends very little of the actual "Vaudeville" entry describing the songs themselves, instead devoting most of the entry to giving its history, from recounting the familiar origin story in the city of Vire, to describing the efforts of the Bishop Yves of

[160] "Nos Poètes François peuvent être proposés comme les inventeurs & les modèles de ces petits Poèmes, où ils ont fait passer la gaieté, la legereté d'esprit, & la délicatesse qui forment le caractere propre de la Nation. *Voyez Vaudeville*." Jacques Lacombe, s.v. "Chanson," *Dictionnaire portatif des beaux-arts ou abregé de ce qui concerne l'Architecture, la Sculpture, la Peinture, la Gravure, la Poésie, et la Musique* (Paris: 1752), 143-144.

Chartres to suppress the genre in the twelfth century.[161] The more qualifying descriptions of the song genre appear under entries for "Opéra-Comique" and "Chanson." In the former, he describes the merits of the poetry at the fairground theaters as coming less from a formal perspective, and more from "the choice of a subject which creates titillating scenes, playful performances, & Vaudevilles of an astute and delicate satire, with cheerful, amusing Airs."[162] Lacombe's entries are a useful starting point for seeing how Parisians understood the vaudeville just as the *ariette* was arriving on the scene. For Lacombe, the vaudeville's appeal is located in its wit (*esprit*), its capacity for satire, and its melodies.

The Chevalier de Jaucourt's 1765 definition in the *Encyclopédie* reflects more ambivalence towards the vaudeville than the interpretations offered by Darlow and Charlton might suggest, and shows how perception of the genre had changed:

> VAUDEVILLE, singular noun, masculine (*Poetry*). The *vaudeville* is a type of song, made to the tune of familiar airs, through which one can speak off-the-cuff, provided that the verses are sung, that they seem natural and have a little wit [qu'il y ait du naturel & de la saillie**]**. […] I believe, however, that our nation wins out over the others in the taste and number of *vaudevilles*; the inclination of the French for pleasure [plaisir], satire, and often even an immoderate joyfulness, has made them sometimes end even the most serious affairs with a *vaudeville*, once these affairs had begun to bore them; & and this silliness sometimes consoles them when confronted with their actual unhappiness.[163]

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[161] "Ives Evêque de Chartres reclama l'autorité du Saint Siège pour faire proscrire le *Vaudeville*; mais la malignité conserva ce Poème malgré les efforts & le zèle de ce Prélat." Lacombe, *Dictionnaire portatif*, 672.

[162] Lacombe, s.v. "Opéra-Comique," *Dictionnaire portatif*, 456-7.

[163] Louis, le Chevalier de Jaucourt, "Vaudeville," in Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.,* (University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (Autumn 2017 Edition), Robert Morrissey and Glenn Roe, eds, http://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu/, 16:861.

"Saillies," (flights of fancy), "sel," (interest, "spice,") and "esprit" (quick wit) often occur in definitions and descriptions of vaudeville, and not in a disparaging way.[164] "Esprit," in particular, referred to a person's ability to demonstrate skill in conversation or in their writing, lending vaudeville a particularly literary edge.[165] In this entry, Jaucourt comes across as torn between the vaudeville's attractions and its capacity for rendering the French people complacent. This nuance contrasts with Contant d'Orville's clear preference for musical expressivity over semantic content, written just three years after Jaucourt's definition.

By the 1770s, qualitative descriptions of the vaudeville itself had given way to defining the genre by the problems it presents for contemporary dramaturgy. In his *Traité du Mélodrame* (1772), Laurent Garcin argues for establishing firm rules for the integration and use of vaudeville on stage, desiring that the use of vaudevilles "should be proportional to the length of the drama and appropriate to the Music; this should be done such that in an *intermède*, a vaudeville is very short and simple, while in a *drame* it should be elongated, more like an Ariette."[166] Such demands that the vaudeville reflect the dramatic concerns of the play demonstrate the new desires for cohesion that scholars have argued contributed to the rise of the *ariette*. Jean-Baptiste Nougaret had voiced similar concerns two years earlier in his *De l'art du théâtre* (1769). In strong language, Nougaret declares that "Until the actor leaves the theatre, I insist on seeing them as the characters they were playing on stage. If you [the playwright] make them sing, it should be because they have a reason to."[167] Like Garcin, Nougaret desired minimal

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[164] "Esprit," in particular, referred to a person's ability to demonstrate skill in conversation or in their writing, lending praise of the vaudeville with this term a literary edge. See Darlow, "Vaudevilles et distanciation," 47-49.

[165] Darlow, "Vaudevilles et distanciation," 47-49.

[166] Laurent Garcin, *Traité du mélodrame, ou Réflexions sur la musique dramatique* (Paris: Vallat-la-Chapelle, 1772), 226-227. Accessed via Gallica.

[167] Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Nougaret, *De l'art du théâtre*, Vol. 2 (Paris: 1769), 204-5. Accessed via Gallica.

interruptions in the dramatic illusion, wanting to see *characters*, and not actors. Anything that would interrupt this illusion, as in a vaudeville where a character addresses themselves directly to the audience, would be undesirable in his conception of theatrical experience.

Staging a debate

Much like Hollywood films about Hollywood making films, the ongoing debate between *ariettes* and vaudevilles became fodder for a play on the very stage where the two song genres were competing. On 28 June 1760 at the Foire Saint-Laurent, the Opéra-Comique premiered a new work by Louis Anseaume and Charles-Simon Favart titled *Le Procès des Ariettes et des Vaudevilles*, in which two lawyers argue over the relative merits of each genre in a trial that takes places at the base of Mount Parnassus. The "Vaudeville" team, represented by their lawyer Grossel ("Great Wit"), is made up of personified vaudevilles, named by their *timbres* (Flonflon, La Commère Voire, Pierre Bagnolet, La Verdrillon, La Bonne Aventure, among many others); the "Ariette" team is represented by Goufin ("Fine Taste"), and personified compositional techniques that were frequently used in writing *ariettes*: La Ritournelle, Le Point d'Orgue, Le Monosyllabe, and Le Duo.[168]

The Vaudevilles complain, in vaudevilles, to their lawyer Grossel that they are being unfairly forced from their storefront (e.g., the stage of the Opéra-Comique) by noisy newcomers, and Grossel agrees to take up their case. After hearing several other disputes, including that of Socrates and the Philosophes v. Aristophanes and "his imitator," the judge calls forward the case of the new and old songs of the Opéra-Comique. Goufin argues "against the *flonflons*, the *farira*

[168] For more on acting during this time period, see Daniel Heartz, "From Garrick to Gluck: The Reform of Theater and Opera in the Mid-Eighteenth Century," in *From Garrick to Gluck: Essays on Opera in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. by John Rice (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2004).

don dons,…which alarms the decency of the audience."[169] He goes on: "The old couplets of the Opéra-Comique, after many years of service, were worn out, and already the Public was complaining about how obsolete they are and were beginning to abandon them…I say, good sirs, that Ariettes bring the [Fair] Spectacles back to life, and give it a brand new face."[170] The terms of the Ariettes' first objection are those of relevance, of age. Though perhaps Anseaume uses the word "caducité" as a comedic exaggeration, in the context of the characterizations of vaudevilles as obsolete just explored, it does not seem that he was far off the mark.

The two parties begin to argue over which approach is better for the expression of emotions. When Grossel accuses *ariettes* of boring audiences and causing them to lose the thread of a plot, Goufin replies "Passions! Oh! Oh! we express those just as well as you, when it suits us." Grossel then challenges Goufin to name an *ariette* "as well-suited for telling a tale as *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance*?...And the old *Joconde*? For expressing joy, do you have something equivalent to *Allons gai, toujours gai, d'un air gai*? How do you paint despair if you don't have the air *de la Palice*?"[171] Unlike modern assessments of vaudeville's capacity for emotional identification, such as those offered by Darlow and Charlton, here, Grossel insists on the vaudeville's *superiority* in communicating sentiment.

Though *Le Procès* engages the common trope of the "obsolete vaudeville," in the end, neither genre ultimately "wins" the case. Rather, both are commanded to coexist peacefully

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[169] "Contre les *flon flons,/Les farira don dons*…Qui du Spectateur,/Allarment la pudeur." *Le Procès des ariettes*, 21.

[170] "Les vieux Couplets de l'Opéra-Comique, après plusieurs années de service, étoient sur les dents, & déjà le Public se plaignant de leur caducité, commençoit à les abandonner…", *Le Procès*, 21-22.

[171] "Lequel de vos nouveaux Airs est aussi propre à faire un récit que *le Cap de Bonne-Espérance*…Et le vieux Joconde? Pour bien marquer la joye avez-vous l'équivalent d'un *Allons gai, toujours gai, d'un air gai*? Comment peindrez-vous la Désolation si vous n'avez pas l'air *de la Palice*?" *Procès*, 26.

together on the stage, "young and old couplets alike."[172] As a work of satire, one should be cautious to take the representations of either genre in *Le Procès* at face value; however, that both genres are subjected to equal amounts of satire suggests that at the heart of each accusation lies a grain of truth. For the jokes to land as satire, the characterizations must be recognizable to the audience; in which case, Grossel's insistence on the vaudeville's affective capacity should complicate depictions of the vaudeville as incapable of or hostile to emotional communication.

Despite the ruling of the fictional judge in *Le Procès*, ultimately the vaudeville lost out on the *opéra-comique* stage to the *ariette*, enjoying a brief resurgence in popularity in the 1770s as part of "cross-promotional efforts" between the Opéra and the Comédie-Italienne related to the success of Gluck.[173] This did not translate, however, to the vaudeville's disappearance from the Parisian cultural milieu. Rather, they continued to appear in print media across different genres – *chansonniers*, newspapers, novels, and plays for private use. This continued life of the vaudeville, despite the longstanding rumors of its obsolescence, requires an approach to the genre as necessarily navigating between text and live performance. An understanding of eighteenth-century reading practices is essential to begin accounting for this balancing act.

Reading/singing in the eighteenth century

The printed page emerges as the primary home for the vaudeville during a period when printing in general exploded both in production and consumption. Statistically more people across the socioeconomic spectrum were owning more books than they had in previous centuries,

[172] *Le Procès*, 29.

[173] Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 102-103.

and presses were eager to keep up with demand.[174] Alongside the historically ubiquitous religious texts, periodicals like *occasionels* and early newspapers disseminated reports of events local and foreign. The emergence of the novel as a new, popular genre has been interpreted by modern scholars as a force for changing Enlightenment conceptions of leisure and individual subjectivity, and produced a new relationship between authors and readers.[175] Printed plays were also popular items, to the extent that from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, playwrights were frequently writing with not just a stage performance in mind, but with an eye to the printed life of the play after opening night as well. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the time between a play's performance run and the publication of the text grew shorter and shorter, until eventually the printed text began to precede opening night. [176] It also became common to own plays that one might never see performed, calling into question an ability to draw distinct lines between performing and reading.[177]

As objects that emerged in relationship with live theatrical performance, a natural question might be how the readers of printed plays interacted with them outside of the theater. Historians have identified the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries as a moment of transformation in reading practices across Europe. In one of the earliest studies of the history of reading, Rolf Engelsing describes a *Lesenrevolution* in which readers moved from an intensive reading model,

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[174] For statistical breakdowns by class in France on book ownership over time, see Roger Chartier, "Urban Reading Practices, 1660-1780," in *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 183-239.

[175] Reinhard Wittman, "Was there a reading revolution at the end of the eighteenth century?" in Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, eds. *A History of Reading in the West*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 297-98; Robert Darnton, "Readers Respond to Rousseau: The Fabrication of Romantic Sensitivity," in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 215-256.

[176]Julie Stone Peters, *Theatre of the Book, 1480-1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 59-60, 74.

[177] Peters, *Theatre of the Book*, 74; Darnton, "Readers Respond to Rousseau," 254-55.

to an extensive one. The former category is characterized by reading a small number of texts over and over again, most often the Bible or other devotional manuals; the latter, by reading many texts of different genres for knowledge building and entertainment.[178] This strict division has been called into question by historians like Roger Chartier and Robert Darnton, who see the casual relationship to text suggested by the extensive model as incompatible with the intensely emotional, subjective experiences described by readers at the end of the eighteenth century.[179] Certainly the stories of Rousseau's weeping fans and the wave of suicides following the commercial success of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) would seem to complicate a picture of eighteenth century readers engaging in the Enlightenment equivalent of endless Facebook scrolling. These individualized, empathetic reactions to reading can be understood as characteristic of an emergent bourgeois concept of individuality. Drawing on Jürgen Habermas's theories of the bourgeois public sphere, Reinhard Wittman suggests that "[t]he characteristic feature of this bourgeois individuality was the way it discovered and liberated subjectivity, and strove toward constant communication…No medium could perform this function better than the printed word."[180]

The mechanics of how people read are typically constructed along two axes: solitary/silent and communal/aloud, or what Wittman has termed "unruly reading."[181] These axes are also overlaid by class and geography, with wealthier, urban readers constructed as silent, "modern" readers, and the rural poor as communal readers, relying on the few literate members

[178] Wittman, "Was there a reading revolution?" 285.

[179] Chartier, *Cultural Uses of Print*, 219-221 and Darnton, "Readers Respond to Rousseau," 249-251.

[180] Wittman, "Was there a reading revolution?" 287.

[181] Wittman, "Was there a reading revolution?" 290.

of the group to transmit the text orally. Both Wittman and Chartier have challenged these assumptions regarding reading practices as dictated by class, with Chartier convincingly arguing that portrayals of the nightly peasant *veillée*, in which the male head of a family read out loud from the Bible before bed, was a pastoralist construction and not representative of actual practice.[182] Furthermore, they have shown reading modalities in the upper classes were much more fluid, fluctuating between the silent and the "unruly," as two primary source accounts can attest.

The first comes from Luise Mejer, who in 1784 was a lady's companion in the home of the Countess of Stolberg. Here, she describes a typical day in the Countess's home, where the passage of time is punctuated with various readings:

> Breakfast is at ten o'clock. Then Stolberg reads out a chapter from the Bible, and a song from Klopstock's *Lieder*. Everyone retires to his or her bedroom. Then I dip into the *Spectator* or *Physiognomy*, and a few books the Countess has given me. She comes downstairs while Lotte translates, and I spend an hour reading her Lavater's *Pontius Pilate*. While she has her Latin lesson, I copy for her or read myself until dinner is served. After dinner and coffee, Fritz reads from the *Lebensläufen*, then Lotte comes downstairs and I read Milton with her for an hour. Then we go back upstairs and I read to the Count and Countess from *Plutarch* until teatime at around nine o'clock. After tea Stolberg reads a chapter from the Bible and one of Klopstock's *Lieder*, then it's 'goodnight'.[183]

[182] Chartier, *Cultural Uses of Print*, 226-229.

[183] Luise Mejer, letter to H.C. Boie, 1 January 1784. Quoted and translated in Wittman, "Was there a reading revolution?" 298.

Mejer's account represents a household that turns on reading, moving easily from communal reading to silent and back again, across different genres of literature.

The second, from the journal of the playwright and *vaudevilliste* Charles Collé, comes from slightly earlier in the century, and describes another "unruly" reading, this time following a dinner with friends:

> The 29th [of October], I ate dinner at the home of M. de Cury, who is sick with gout; la Bruyère read us a one-act comedy in verse, of the kind he likes, which I found really pretty; it's a society play, where there are a few lewd scenes, which maybe should not be performed in the theatre; it is very elegantly written, and in the style of high society…He also read to us an opera in three acts, called: *Le Prince de Noisy*, which in my opinion made for divine reading.[184]

Both of these scenes demonstrate reading practices that had not fixed into one particular approach, but rather seems to be dictated by the whims or needs of the small communities that readers found themselves in.

As a practice that was both individual and communal, reading began to challenge firm distinctions between private and public spheres. Lending libraries and reading societies began appearing in towns large and small across Europe, providing public spaces for the ostensibly private enjoyment of individual reading. Bookstores began incorporating *cabinets littéraires* into their business model, providing spaces where subscribers could sample new books prior to

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[184] "Le 29 [October 1748], je fus souper chez M. de Cury, qui avoit la goutte; la Bruère nous y lut une comédie en un acte et en vers de sa façon, qui me parut bien jolie; c'est une pièce de société, où il y a des situations un peu libres, et peut-être ne les passeroit-on pas au théâtre; elle est bien élégamment écrite, et dans le style du grand monde…Il nous lut aussi un opéra en trois actes, intitulé : *Le Prince de Noisy*, qui me parut divin à la lecture." Charles Collé, *Journal et mémoires*, ed. Honoré Bonhomme, Vol. 1 (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1868), 14. Accessed via Gallica.

purchasing them.[185] In addition to libraries and bookstores, where interested parties could voluntarily seek out printed texts, cities were plastered with posters announcing decrees and royal pardons, or upcoming events such as funerals and confraternity activities.[186] Despite the growing "publicness" of reading, the proliferation of furniture and even clothing related to reading in comfort attest to the ongoing dominance of the home as the primary site of reading.[187]

The reading of texted vaudevilles, whose primary referent is live public performance, puts additional pressure on the categories of public and private in the ways that they invite multiple reading strategies. While many narratives of the history of reading indicate that "unruly" reading practices became less and less common by the end of the eighteenth century, printed vaudevilles could be seen as a stubborn call-back to older, even antiquated modes of textual engagement. The *pièces en vaudevilles* that I address in subsequent chapters offered opportunities for the creation of "small publics" in private spaces. This is especially true of the *théâtres de société*, in which small communities of reader-performers can be understood as a microcosm of a larger theater-going public, even as boundaries were sharply drawn between those participating and those left out. Julie Stone Peters offers several important observations for navigating theatrical texts in this period within these intersecting matrices of public/private and silent/aloud.

First, Peters argues that a reading audience was perhaps "conceptually modelled on the more concrete theatrical audience," with the visible public of the theater allowing for an

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[185] Chartier, *Cultural Uses of Print*, 202-219.

[186] Ibid., 230.

[187] Wittman, "Was there a reading revolution?" 299.

extrapolation out to a larger, imagined reading public.[188] This collapsing of publics was perhaps grounded in how closely live theatrical performance was tied to print by the end of the eighteenth century, with print versions of plays available for purchase in the very theaters where they were being actively performed.[189] Peters is quick to observe, however, that even in so-called "closet dramas," or plays not necessarily intended to be staged, performance was still at the center of their conception: "[T]he aspiration to authorial hermeticism (via the printed text) was challenged from the beginning by playbooks that celebrated their provisional theatricality, that insisted on their own currency and implied their own extinction."[190] Such a "provisional theatricality" is effectively represented by the printed vaudeville for the ways in which it inherently allows for and relies upon multiple reading strategies.

One testament to this "provisional theatricality" and its multiple strategies can be found in Alain Lesage and Jacque-Philippe Dorneval's printed collection of *comédies en vaudevilles*. Published towards the end of the Opéra-Comique's suppression from 1719 to 1721, the first three volumes of the *Théâtre de la Foire, ou l'Opéra-Comique* are a collection of original comic works and parodies of performances at the Comédie-Française and the Opéra. The plays are printed in a form that would have been familiar to readers by this period, with sung vaudevilles differentiated from spoken dialogue by the appearance of an italicized *timbre* at the top of a block of fully-justified verse. The collection also includes notated airs at the end of each volume, so that readers who were unfamiliar with the *timbre* could look them up and know which melody was being used. Given that *timbres* could be known by many different names, it was wholly

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[188] Julie Stone Peters, *Theatre of the Book, 1480-1800: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 242.

[189] Peters, *Theatre of the Book*, 49.

[190] Ibid., 61.

possible that a reader already knew the melody but was unfamiliar with the tune under the *timbre* chosen by the playwright.

The centrality of melody to this text is made explicit in the preface, in which Lesage and Dorneval offer the following advice:

> We warn you that you must sing, & and not simply read our Couplets. Understand our verses as you would the Divertissements at the Opéra: each is made specifically for its air. Singing will inspire in you an indulgent joy. Finally, in singing them, it will be you who has put in all the effort, and we'll come out ahead. If you only read them, however, buyer beware."[191]

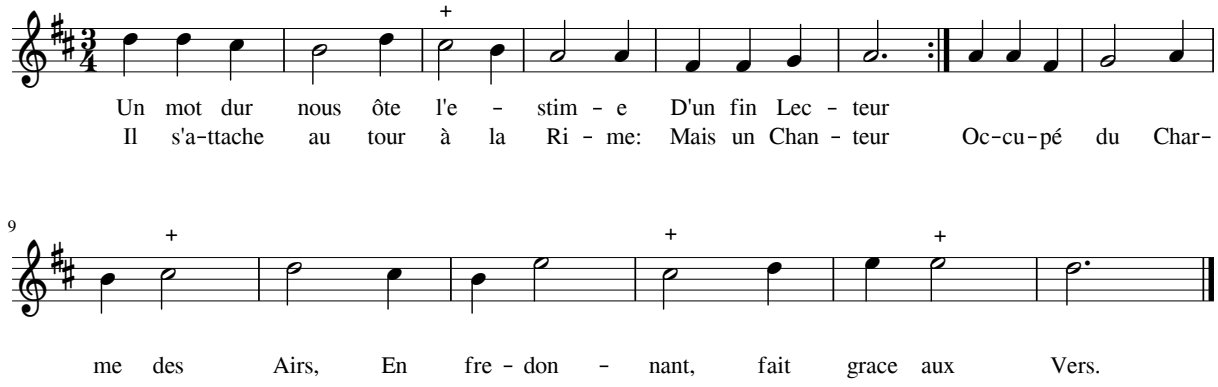
Then, as though to test readers before letting them loose on the rest of the volume's contents, the preface concludes with a vaudeville, to the melody of "Monsieur de Grimaudin" (Ex. 2.1):

Sur l'AIR 54. (*Grimaudin*)	To the tune of no. 54 (Air de Grimaudin)
Un mot dur nous ôte l'estime D'un fin Lecteur; Il s'attache au tour, à la Rime: Mais un Chanteur, Occupé du charme des Airs, En fredonnant, fait grace aux Vers.[192]	With a harsh word we remove the esteem Of a fine Reader; He is tied to the joke, to the rhyme: But a Singer, Occupied with the charm of the Air, In making melodies, gives grace to the Verses

[191] "Nous vous avertissons qu'il faut chanter, & ne pas lire simplement nos Couplets. Regardez-les comme les vers des Divertissemens d'Opera: Les uns & les autres sont fait sur des canevas. Le chant vous inspirera une gayeté indulgente. Enfin, en les chantant, vous y mettrez du vôtre, & nous aurons meilleur marché de vous: Au lieu que, si vous ne faites que les lire, vous prendrez garde à tout." Lesage and d'Orneval, *Théâtre de la Foire ou l'Opéra Comique*, 8.

[192] In modern usage, *fredonner* can mean "to hum" or to sing quietly. Given the verb's relationship to *fredon*, or specifically a vaudeville melody, in this instance I am interpreting *fredonner* as "realizing the *fredon* of a vaudeville" –that is, singing.

Ex. 2.1, “Air de Grimaudin” (edition based on Theaville)



What seems to differentiate this collection from those libretti printed to accompany performances at the Opéra, for example, is the inclusion of notated music at the end of the collection. This would have given readers no room for excuses, as it were – they were expected to sing, and if they were not familiar with the melody, there was a resource for them to consult. This short prescription indicates an awareness on the authors’ part of the multiple ways in which readers could interact with the collection, and for their part, it seems, they preferred that readers be singers, too.

With the turbulence in reading practices in the eighteenth century, then, it seems likely that vaudevilles, and the plays in which they appeared, could be read silently or sung aloud, alone or in a group, staged or not. The intersection of these different and even simultaneous approaches is best represented by the figure of the song merchant, of the kind who occupied the Pont Neuf. Engravings from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries frequently represent these entrepreneurs in the act of singing, a violin in hand on which to accompany themselves, and a bag, strapped to either their back or their belt burgeoning with printed versions of the songs they

were performing, which they would sell for low prices.[193] Visual depictions of the *marchands de chansons* include Louis Watteau's 1785 painting, *Le Violoneux*, and François Ingouf's 1780 engraving of the singer-seller Charles Minart (Fig. 2.1). Chartier describes printed songs as a genre that, among a few other print genres of the century, "presupposed a mediating voice between the written word and the hearer," in which the song merchant acted as intermediary.[194]

As texts that sat at the intersection of two performance genres, theatre and song, vaudevilles existed simultaneously as both live events and printed texts. Though they moved increasingly into the latter category after the 1750s, vaudevilles represent a sonic literary genre whose inherent musicality should not be dismissed. Beginning from a place that assumes a latent musicality allows other print media, such as newspapers and novels, to be heard as well, the impact of which makes the ubiquity of vaudeville melodies in the eighteenth century deafening. The following section will consider these non-dramatic print genres after the 1750s as sites where the vaudeville continued to thrive and produce meaning through the "obsolete" strategy of *timbres*.

[193] Chartier, *Cultural Uses of Print*, 229; Isherwood gives these prices as "two liards [per song] or three for a sou." *Farce and Fantasy*, 7.

[194] Charter, *Cultural Uses of Print*, 229.

Fig. 2.1 François Ingouf, *Charles Minart* (1780). Image accessed via Gallica.

Vaudevilles off-stage

Despite the assumptions of the vaudeville's decreasing cultural stock that are apparent in *Le Procès des Vaudevilles et des Ariettes*, vaudevilles continued to appear in different kinds of print media, including journals, published diaries, periodicals, and novels. This period also marked the rise of printed play collections intended for *théâtres de société*, whose content could be enjoyed as silent reading material, as material for amateur theatrical performance, or somewhere in between.[195] Though *comédies en vaudevilles* were being programmed less and less frequently at the Comédie-Italienne, it was not uncommon for printed play collections written for

[195] Daniel T. Smith, Jr., "Libertine Dramaturgy," 32-33.

these private theaters to include this song genre along with its unfashionable fairground melodies. While modern assessments of the vaudeville's obsolescence after 1750 rely on their disappearance from the theatrical stages, the wealth of print sources where vaudevilles continued to appear complicate that narrative.

The royal printer Jean-Christophe Ballard published *La Clef des Chansonniers, ou recueil de vaudevilles* in 1717, and in the work's subtitle, claimed to be the first to "notate and collect together vaudevilles from the last hundred years and more."[196] The veracity of the claim notwithstanding, Ballard explains his decision to publish this collection in archivist terms, as a means of preserving those older melodies on the verge of being forgotten: "[I was] persuaded that the Airs or Songs, as well as the pieces of Music which memory can no longer conjure forth after the duration of many years, would continue to please."[197] With *comédies en vaudevilles* still highly popular at the fairground stages at this time, it is also possible that Ballard sought to capitalize on the trend for *timbres* that was drawing people in. The collection stands out as being one of the few examples of printed, notated melodies where the text of the original song has been set beneath the notes, rather than printed separately. This more standard approach, in which text and melody are separated from one another, is found in the anonymously-authored *Chansonnier François, ou recueil de chansons* (1760), which filled a substantial 15 volumes. Alongside these vaudeville-centric collections were the more common collections printed after 1750: of fairground plays, Comédie-Italienne plays, and single-author collections such as those by Favart and Collé, each of which advertised notated melodies on their title pages (Fig. 2.2). When

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[196] Jean-Christophe Ballard, *La Clef des chansonniers, ou recueil des vaudevilles depuis cent ans & plus, notez et recueillis pour la première fois* (Paris: Ballard, 1717). Accessed via Google Books.

[197] "…persuadé que les Airs ou Chansons, de même que les morceaux de Musique dont la memoire n'a pû se perdre après un long cours d'années, ne cesseront jamais de plaire." Ballard, "Au Public," *La Clef des chansonniers*, ii.

considered together, these print collections and their "airs notés" tell a story about the vaudeville's popularity that is at odds with how the genre was being represented in encyclopedias and theatrical treatises.

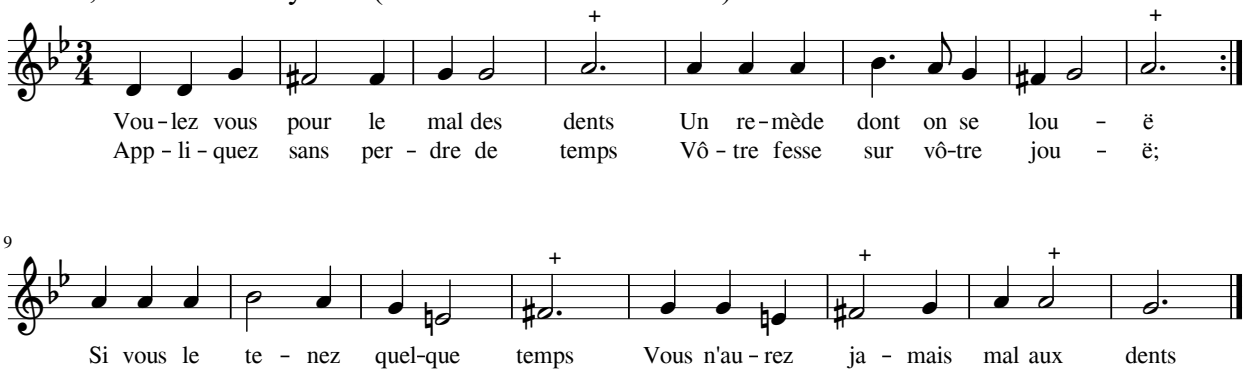
Fig 2.2, Printed *chansonniers* and *comédie en vaudevilles* collections with notated airs, 1700-1800	
Ballard, *Clef des chansonniers* (2 vols.)	1717
Lesage/Dorneval, *Le Théâtre de la foire, ou l'Opéra Comique* (9 vols.)	1721-1737
Ballard, *Les Parodies Nouvelles et les vaudevilles inconnus*	1730
Le Parodies du Nouveau Théâtre Italien (4 vols.)	1738
Le Chansonnier françois (15 vols.)	1760
Anacréon françois (2 vols.)	1780

In addition to appearing in collections assembled explicitly for the dissemination of vaudevilles like the *Chansonnier François*, vaudevilles crop up in less expected locations too. As early as 1698, the Marquis de Coulanges published a *Recueil de chansons choisies*, allegedly drawn from the diary he kept. Vaudevilles appear throughout as a soundtrack to life's quotidian aspects: giving his address to the Marquis de Montplaisir to the tune of "La Jaconde;" a joking solution to a toothache that involves applying one's bottom to their face, to the "Air des Ennuyeux" (Ex. 2.2).[198] The collection was sufficiently popular to merit reprinting twice in the eighteenth century.[199]

[198] Marquis de Coulanges, *Recueil de Chansons choisies. Seconde Edition, Revûe, corrigé, augmentée.* Tome Second. A Paris, Chez Simon Benard, ruë S. Jacques, au dessus des Mathurins, au Compas d'or. M. DC. XCVIII. Archibald Church Historical Medical Collection, Galter Health Sciences Library and Learning Center, Northwestern University.

[199] The BN has copies of these editions dating from 1710 and 1754.

Ex. 2.2, "Air des Ennuyeux" (edition based on Theaville)



Periodicals were another growing print genre over the course of the eighteenth century, emerging from the earlier practice of *nouvelles à la main*, manuscript reports of the events (and salacious gossip) at court which were copied and sent to subscribers. In an effort to crack down on the slander that circulated clandestinely around the country in this form, privileges were given by the crown to three journals, among them the *Mercure de France*, provided they stuck to the party line dictated from Versailles.[200] The *Mercure* was a literary review journal and one of the most popular periodicals of the *ancien régime*. New issues of the *Mercure* came out once a week, and in addition to essays on new literary works, included *pièces fugitives*, a genre that included ephemera such as light verse, word puzzles, riddles, and vaudevilles.[201] The vaudevilles could appear without their melodies, though the *Mercure* often included notation, as in a vaudeville written to commemorate the birth of the duc de Bourgogne, the ill-fated older brother of the future Louis XVI. Penned by a "Mr. Meslé," the notated melody fills an entire page (Fig. 2.3).[202]

[200] Robert Darnton, *The Devil in the Holy Water, or the Art of Slander from Louis IV to Napoleon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 317-320.

[201] Darnton, *Devil in the Holy Water*, 88-96.

[202] October 1751, *Mercure de France*, 171-173. Accessed via Gallica.

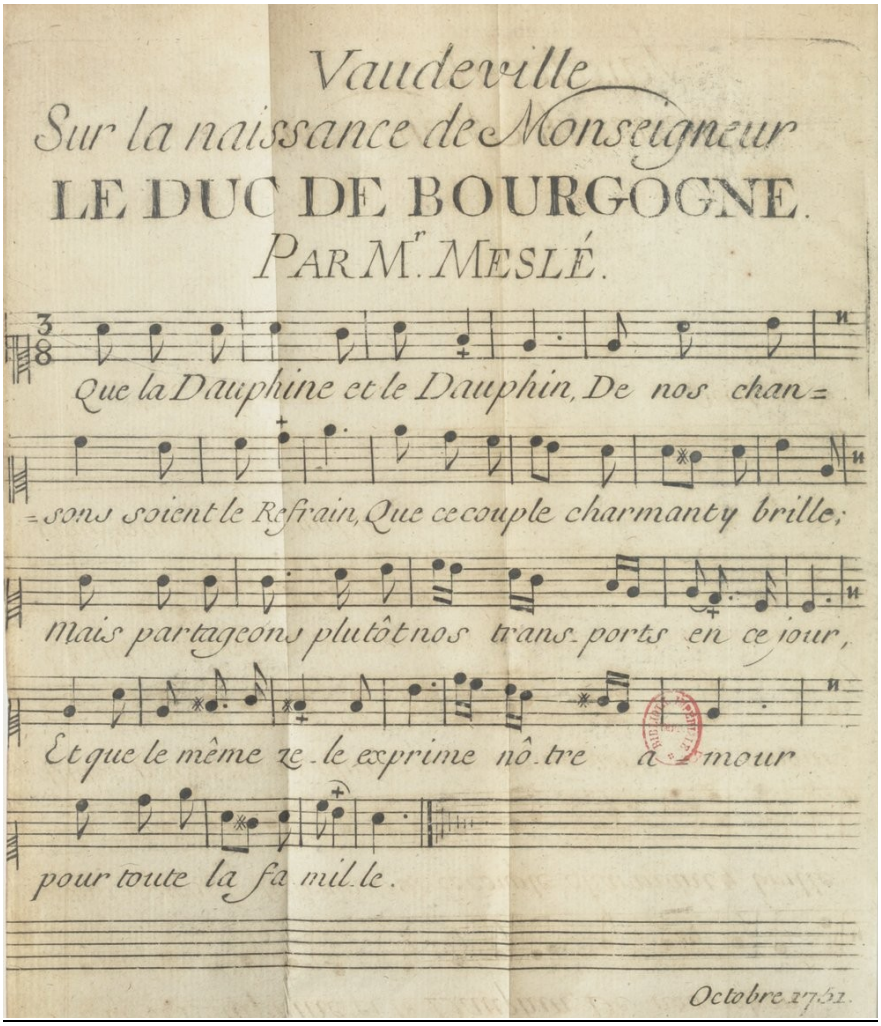


Fig. 2.3, "Vaudeville sur la naissance de Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne," *Mercure de France* October 1751. Accessed via Gallica.

As one of France's official journals, the *Mercure* would rarely have printed material that mocked the royal family, whether openly or through oblique references. This sets its contents apart from the *Correspondance secrète* and the *Mémoires secrets*, which trafficked primarily in gossip and rumor. Collectively published between 1762 and 1790, these scandal sheets compiled all of the news and gossip generated by Paris and Versailles, spreading political news and art

reviews while documenting cases of sexual impropriety, both real and rumored.[203] In addition to traditional prose reports, these journals also included vaudevilles, sometimes penned by the journal's contributors, or submitted anonymously. For example, the first seven issues of the *Correspondance secrète* in 1775 feature nearly a vaudeville a page, most centered on the ongoing drama surrounding the restitution of the Paris Parlement after their exile under Chancellor Maupeou.[204] These satirical, politically-focused songs are juxtaposed with vaudevilles on more frivolous matters, such as Madame du Barry's efforts to humiliate a perceived rival, Madame Bêche, who managed to catch the eye of "one of our young princes." The prince and Madame Bêche were found in a compromising position in "one of the rooms of Versailles, at the moment where he was pressing this woman in a most lively and energetic manner," and the episode gave rise to the included vaudeville. That the woman's name was related to "bêcher," or "to dig" was perhaps too good a pun to let pass by.[205] Though a *timbre* for this vaudeville is not given, a note immediately following the vaudeville suggests that the author has "left [the reader] in the middle of singing," suggesting that the refrain of the vaudeville was enough to conjure the melody.

Vaudevilles even appeared in novels, most famously in Denis Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau* (written mostly from 1761-2), where the nephew of the famous composer frequently bursts into long strings of vaudevilles in his discussions with the novel's protagonist, MOI. In his

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[203] Jeffrey Merrick, "Sexual Politics and Public Disorder in Late Eighteenth-Century France: The *Mémoires secrets* and the *Correspondance secrète*," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1, no. 1 (1990), 70-72.

[204] For a summary of the power struggles between Louis XV and the Paris Parlement, see Durand Echeverria, *The Maupeou Revolution: A Study in the History of Libertarianism, France 1770-1774* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985).

[205] "Un de nos jeunes princes fut surprise, il y a quelque temps, dans une des salles du château de Versailles, au moment où il pressoit cette femme de la manière la plus vive & la plus énérgique de répondre aux ses feux." 25 February 1775 *Correspondance secrètes*, 37-38. Accessed via Gallica.

analysis of this work, Scott Sanders argues that readers would not merely have read these passages in the novels, but would actually have *heard* them, with the Nephew supplying the "mediating voice" that Chartier suggests was implied in texts like printed songs and posters. [206] Sanders situates the reading of vaudevilles within "a matrix of sensibility," where "mnemonic lyrics activate aural memory, thereby stimulating a physical (kinaesthetic) imagination in the reader." [207] In *Le Neveu* specifically, Sanders argues that Diderot's deployment of vaudevilles functioned as a demonstration of the *philosophe*'s materialist philosophy, whereby responses (in this case, memory and emotions) can be elicited from the human body through the application of external stimuli (the reading of *timbres*). Though *Le Neveu* is unique in its heavy reliance on vaudevilles as a central narrative and affective device, the novel is a useful example of how thoroughly vaudevilles had been taken up as a print genre while never losing melodic reference as a functional element.

Even clandestine novels, like the anonymously-authored *La Correspondance de Madame Gourdan dite La Comtesse* (1784), incorporated the vaudeville as a way of adding to the sonic authenticity of the text, which purported to be the stolen letters of the real-life Madame Gourdan, a famous brothel madam in Paris.[208] The title page advertises a "collection of Songs for use at the Dinners hosted at the home of Madame Gourdan" that is appended to the end of the volume,

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[206] Scott Sanders, "Sound and Sensibility in Diderot's 'Le Neveu de Rameau'," *Music and Letters* 94 no. 2 (May 2013), 239-240.

[207] Ibid., 243-4.

[208] The BN catalogue gives Théveneau de Morande as the suspected author of this text, though the attribution is uncertain. See the "Avant-Propos" to the 1866 edition, attributed to Auguste Poulet-Malassis in Pascal Pia, *Les Livres de l'Enfer: Bibliographie critique des ouvrages érotiques dans leurs différentes éditions du XVIe siècle à nos jours*, 2nd ed (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1998), 160.

though vaudevilles also appear throughout the main body of the text, with many of Gourdan's correspondents including vaudevilles in their letters (Fig. 2.4).

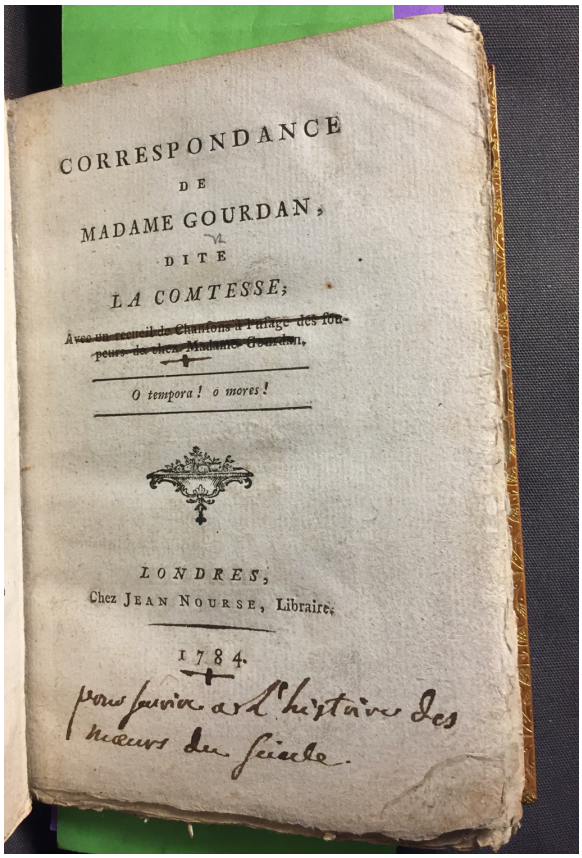

Fig. 2.4, Title page, *La Correspondance de Madame Gourdan, dite La Comtesse*, with editorial markings. British Library PC30c22.

Unlike the accusations launched against vaudevilles by Nougaret and Garcin, in which the vaudeville is an object that interrupts verisimilitude or dramatic illusion, in the *Correspondance de Madame Gourdan* the vaudevilles *contribute* to the construction of the imagined world of Madame Gourdan's brothel, allowing readers to conjure not just its sights but also its sounds. The inclusion of the *chansonnier* at the end of the novel represents an opportunity for readers to recreate for themselves, at home or in the *cabinet littéraire*, the same musical activities that took

place at the brothel, whether real or imagined. By taking seriously the melodic possibilities inherent in the *timbre* of the vaudeville, we can begin treating texts like newspapers and novels as evidence of flexible reading and musical practices.

From the mid-eighteenth century onward, the vaudeville underwent an important transformation from a genre strongly identified with live performance on the lyric stage to one found increasingly on the printed page. Among playwrights and culture critics, the vaudeville was declared dead, a thing of the past. In his assessment of the genre, the Chevalier de Meude-Monpas declared that "[The vaudeville] is no longer at all fashionable: more's the pity."[209] And yet, a casual glance through the century's print works reveals a very different story, revealing an "obsolete" practice that, nevertheless, persisted. Rather than posing a dead end for the genre, focusing on the vaudeville's "undead quality" allows us to ask questions "about the conditions of its persistence," especially in the domain of changing reading practices.[210]

Collections of printed vaudeville melodies reveal a continued investment in the *sound* of the vaudeville, and not just its connections with satire and witty verse, though these aspects continue to be found as well. In newspapers and journals, vaudevilles appear as another means of relating information about life in the *ancien régime*, recalling the singers of the Pont Neuf who would write and sell songs that capitalized on the week's gossip, only to move on to the next topic the following week. When appearing in novels, they created a depth to the imaginary world crafted by the author, as in the Neveu's madly virtuosic performances, or the songs that were imagined to follow dinner in one of Paris's most famous brothels. Such musical reading in

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[209] "Il n'est plus guère de mode: tant pire." Chevalier J.J.O de Meude-Monpas, s.v. "Vaudeville," *Dictionnaire de musique dans lequel on simplifie les expressions et les definitions Mathématiques et Physiques qui on rapport à cet Art…* (Paris: Knapen et Fils, 1787), 208-9. Accessed via Google Books.

[210] Wiebe, "A Note from the Guest Editor," 4.

otherwise literary contexts relied on the steady transformation of reading practices that happened alongside the vaudeville's emergence as a print genre, permitting readers to engage in multiple reading strategies according to their desire. The vaudeville may have been an object out of time, but its ongoing presence on the printed page reveals a genre that still held a powerful capacity to produce meaning long after its disappearance from the stage.

"On ne connait pas le XVIIIe siècle si on n'a pas étudié
ses théâtres de société…"
—Henri d'Alméras and Paul d'Estrée,
Les Théâtres libertins au XVIIIe siècle (1905)

CHAPTER 3
Vaudeville in the *théâtre de société*

Red silk embroidered in silver thread covered the box seats in the private theater of Marie-Madeleine Guimard, one of the eighteenth century's most famous dancers. Likened to "Marilyn Monroe and Margot Fonteyn rolled into one," Guimard was an accomplished prima ballerina at the Paris Opéra, and the fame she developed on stage was rivalled only by that of the theaters she kept in her lavish homes in and around Paris.[211] These sites for in-home, private entertainment, known as *théâtres de société*, were maintained by many of Paris's wealthiest denizens, as well as those who aspired to be perceived as such. Hosts would invite guests to participate as audience members or as performers, where they donned costumes and mounted the boards to act and sing in front of friends. While it is unknown how many theaters were in operation, some estimates have suggested that there were as many as 200 *théâtres de société* in Paris by the end of the eighteenth century.[212] An entire cottage industry for in-house playwrights and acting coaches sprung up in response to the *théâtromanie* that swept the city.

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[211] Wendy Moonan, "The High Altar of the Temple of Love," *New York Times* 26 March 2009. https://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/27/arts/design/27anti.html.

[212] Jean-Pierre Moynet, *French Theatrical Production in the Nineteenth Century*. Ed. by Marvin A. Carlson.Trans. by Allan S. Jackson and M. Glen Wilson (Binghamton, NY: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1976), 187.

La Guimard's private *théâtre de société* was an object of curiosity for the broader public in part because of its extraordinary cost and extravagant decorations. Her mansion at 9 avenue Chausée-d'Antin, which she referred to as a "Temple to Terpsichore," included a famous *théâtre de société* that could accommodate up to 500 people.[213] The ceiling was capped by a cupola decorated inside with *putti*, and a large indoor garden served as the theater's foyer.[214] The cost of furnishings alone ran to 27,000 livres, well above more typical budgets for furnishings even at the upper echelons of society.[215] Mostly, however, its reputation was made by the sensual plays and "veritable orgies" Guimard was rumored to host weekly in her home. According to the *Mémoires secrets*, "the most seductive, loose girls are invited [to these dinners], and luxury and debauchery are taken to the extreme."[216] A 1768 performance of Pierre Boudin's "spectacle licencieux," *Madame Engueulle, ou les accords poissards* (1754), created such a scandal that it attracted the attention of the police, who threatened to shut down the entire operation.[217] These performances attracted members of Paris's cultural elite, such as composer and playwright Charles Collé, painter Jean-Honoré Fragonard, and princes of the blood, including her patron, the

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[213] Both the *Théâtres libertins* and *La Guimard* draw their descriptions of Guimard's theater from the same manuscript account written by the architect Pièrre in 1773. See Edmond de Goncourt, *La Guimard, d'après les registres des menus-plaisirs de la Bibliothèque de l'Opéra* (Paris: G. Charpentier & E. Fasquelle, 1893), 51-52; and Henri d'Alméras and Paul d'Estrée, *Les Théâtres libertins aux XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: H. Daragon, 1905), 290-1; and David Trott, *Le Théâtre au dix-huitieme siècle*, 177-178.

[214] Karl Toepfer, "Orgy Salon: Aristocracy and Pornographic Theatre in Pre-Revolutionary Paris." *Performing Arts Journal* 12, no. 2-3 (1990): 155-7.; Jean-Pierre Moynet, *French Theatrical Production in the Nineteenth Century*. Ed. by Marvin A. Carlson .Trans. by Allan S. Jackson and M. Glen Wilson (Binghamton, NY: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1976), 186.

[215] Nina Kushner, *Erotic Exchanges: The World of Elite Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 135.

[216] 24 January 1768: "Elle aura trois soupers par semaine: …un troisième, veritable orgie, où sont invités les filles les plus séduisantes, les plus lascives, et où la luxure et la débauche sont portées à leur comble." Bachaumont, *Mémoires secrets*, ed. by Jules Ravenel, Vol. 2, 231. Accessed via Gallica.

[217] 27 July 1772: "La fameuse parade executée sur le théâtre de mademoiselle Guimard a pour titre *Madame Enguelle*, et cause beaucoup de rumeur; on craint que la police ne prenne inspections de ce spectacle licencieux, et ne le fasse fermer." Bachaumont, *Mémoires secrèts*, ed. by Jules Ravenel, Vol. 4, 16. Accessed via Gallica.

Prince de Soubise. Special box seats were constructed with grilled shutters to conceal the wealthy ladies who also attended, but whose reputations would not have survived recognition at such a spectacle.[218]

The police never followed through on their threat to close the theater. An even more scandalous work, Charles Collé's *La Verité dans le vin* (1747), his "masterpiece of dirty theater," was performed at Guimard's theater a year after the *Madame Enguelle* debacle, in September 1769.[219] Embedded within the *Mémoires secrets*'s report of the performance is a brief but vivid description of Guimard's singing voice: "In this performance, [the actors] were marvelously supported by Mlle Lafond, a dancer at the Opéra, and by the mistress of the house [Guimard], whose slightly hoarse voice – more like a death rattle when she speaks, her enemies might say – lost its unpleasantness when singing, and even became pleasing to hear."[220] Buried among the accounts of scandal and financial excess, an echo of what this infamous *théâtre* sounded like still resounds.

Théâtres de société are an important, under-researched part of the history of vaudeville in the eighteenth century, as *comédies en vaudevilles* can be frequently found within the surviving collections of plays written specifically for private theatrical performance. Such plays were written at the same time that newly-composed, Italiante *ariettes* were beginning to supplant vaudevilles on the public stages, the central venue for vaudeville performance up to that point. The appearance of vaudevilles in *théâtre de société* plays shows us that there was still an interest in vaudeville, and that the transfer of the song genre from a "low" setting (the fairgrounds) to a

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[218] d'Alméras and d'Estrées, *Les Théâtres libertins*, 296.

[219] Goncourt, *La Guimard*, 35-6.

[220] Goncourt, *La Guimard*, 85-86.

more elite one (e.g. private homes of the wealthy) did not necessitate a parallel change in tone for the vaudevilles themselves.

Scholarship of *théâtres de société* like Guimard's has typically privileged them as a site for the intersection of salon culture and libertinage, with relatively little attention devoted to the plays themselves and, more importantly for the purposes of this study, the vaudevilles that animated the performances. Because *théâtres de société* were private entertainments, records of performances were reliant on the whim of those who hosted them. As a consequence, the archival evidence is "très mal réunie et coordonnée."[221] There are two important early texts on the topic: Gaston Capon and Robert Yve-Plessis's *Paris galant au XVIIIe siècle: Les théâtres clandestins* (1905), and Henri d'Alméras and Paul d'Estrée's *Les Théâtres libertins au XVIIIe siècle* (1906). In order to construct their histories, these scholars consulted contemporaneous sources such as the *Mémoires secrets* of Bachaumont, Mercier's *Tableau de Paris,* and memoirs written by aristocrats in the early nineteenth century. While *Les Théâtres clandestins* and *Les Théâtres libertins aux XVIIIe siècle* are invaluable as some of the earliest work devoted exclusively to *théâtre de société*, more recent scholarship has treated them with a level of skepticism. Martine de Rougement believes these histories have "overestimated the scope and expansion [of obscene comedies], in the same way they infer from every meeting a love affair."[222] In his dissertation on the obscene eighteenth-century play collections, Daniel T. Smith Jr., concurs with Rougement's critiques, concluding that scholarly approaches in the twentieth century have tended to grant these earlier studies entirely too much credulity, resulting in work that "valorizes scenes of sexual display at the expense of whole plays that are not necessarily

[221] Trott, *Théâtre du XVIIIe siècle*, 167.

[222] Martine de Rougement, *La Vie théâtrale au XVIIIe siècle* (Genève: Slatkine, 1988), 307.

built around such scenes."[223] More directly, Smith asks: "Can we accept twentieth-century interpretations of eighteenth-century rumor and gossip as evidence that [erotic or obscene plays] were staged in private homes?"[224]

While the available evidence cannot answer Smith's question definitively, the presence of vaudevilles in this repertoire should make us hesitate before dismissing out of hand the possibility of their performance. Melody was an equally important player in a vaudeville's construction of meaning, making a musical response or performance an almost inevitable response to a printed vaudeville. The performative relationship between reader and *timbre* was developed through decades of vaudeville performance at the fairgrounds and in the streets of Paris. Further, these plays were being written during a period of fluctuation in reading practices, a fact that Smith acknowledges.[225] When we consider *théâtre de société* as part of a larger theatrical and literary ecosystem, the performance of vaudevilles seems more likely, and laden with additional significance. As public stages moved away from presenting older types of fairground entertainments in general and vaudevilles in particular after 1750, *théâtre de société* emerged as a site for the preservation of "obscenities" which had previously been housed at the Opéra-Comique. As private society theaters incorporated the less refined stageworks into their repertoire, vaudevilles acted as an important medium for the transfer of an obscene or coarse ethos associated with fairground performances. The singing of vaudevilles in the well-appointed theaters of the wealthy created a blurring of elite/popular cultural binaries, which could itself have been a source of pleasure.

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[223] Smith, "Libertine Dramaturgy," 42.

[224] Smith, "Libertine Dramaturgy," 42.

[225] Smith, "Libertine Dramaturgy," 29-33.

Marie-Emmanuelle Plagnol-Diéval offers a prudent assessment of these problematic late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sources. She acknowledges the likely overestimation of "liaisons amoureuses" described in these sources, as well as the ways in which dwelling on such episodes aided early twentieth-century scholars in their desire to portray the end of the *ancien régime* as a period of moral decay.[226] However, the more gossipy "who was sleeping with whom" aspects of accounts like those in *Les théâtres clandestins* can yield important information for understanding the character of a given theater, as it was often women from the official theaters, in their capacity as mistresses to wealthy aristocrats and bourgeois, who ran Paris's more famous society theaters. For example, Plagnol-Diéval shows how the repertoire at the duc d'Orléans's private theaters changed according to who his favorite was at a given moment. Thus, while the more scandalous aspects of the world of *théâtre de société* may often be overrepresented in scholarship, the talents of the dancers, singers, and actresses who attracted the attentions of wealthy male patrons impacted the material conditions of the theaters and their repertoires.

No two society theaters were identical in their tone and subject matter, as each theater reflected the interests of the individual(s) who ran them. Vaudevilles, however, were consistently and continuously used as a way of invoking sexual topics, whether as jokes, erotic explorations, or both. In order to show the variety of approaches to these private entertainments, I have selected two collections of *théâtre de société* plays from the latter half of the eighteenth century. One example from each collection will show the range of obscenity that *théâtre de société* plays could engage with, and the role that vaudeville played. The first, the *Théâtre de Campagne ou*

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[226] Marie-Emmanuelle Plagnol-Diéval, *Le Théâtre de Société: un autre théâtre?* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003), 44.

les débauches de l'esprit (1755/58), is a collection of plays and *comédies en vaudevilles* that preserve the tone of earlier fairground entertainments. While rarely sexually explicit, fairground plays relied on body humor and double entendre in order to make jokes about sex. One representative play, *L'Eunuque, ou la fidèle infidelité*, is full of such humor and is performed almost entirely in vaudevilles. By analyzing several of *L'Eunuque*'s vaudevilles, we can see how both the text and choice of *timbre* (and by extension its sonic qualities) participated in articulations of coarse sexuality. Within the space of the *théâtre de société*, vaudevilles become a musical means for circulating eroticism among performers and participants, tracing the pathways of an economy of desire operating through double-entendres and melody.

The second, Delisle de Sales's *Théâtre d'amour* (ca. 1770), is a more extreme example of just how sexually explicit such private performances could be, and thematizes the unification of musical and sexual labor. Rather than putting sexual encounters at a remove through wordplay or temporal displacement as in *L'Eunuque* (e.g., describing past encounters, or predicting future ones), plays in the *Théâtre d'amour* provide detailed instructions for how two actors should engage in sexual acts with one another via lengthy stage directions. One of the last plays in the collection, a *Dialogue érotique*, is performed entirely in song, the play being set to a single *timbre*. In addition to the meaning imparted by the choice of *timbre*, this play contains several other notable musical aspects. Most striking is that the main character of the *Dialogue érotique* is the famous soprano Sophie Arnould, and further, that it was Arnould herself who allegedly performed the work as a fictionalized version of herself. Through this play and its star, we can explore the performative conditions of a musical work as overtly sexual as this play and how Arnould's public persona as a musical star and famous mistress demand an interpretive model that accounts for both of these identities. Lastly, de Sales's approach in writing fictional sexual

encounters about real, living people can be seen as pointing the way towards the political pornography of the Revolutionary era. One key difference between *Dialogue érotique* and the later pamphlets, of course, is that the famous person depicted performing sexual acts via vaudeville in the latter is no longer a famous mistress, but the Queen of France.

Théâtre de campagne ou les débauches de l'esprit (1755/1758)

At the top of the hill that separates Montmartre from the rest of Paris, to the immediate west of Sacré Coeur, sits the Paroisse Saint-Pierre-de-Montmartre. Within this parish, on the rue Blanche, two homes once shared a garden: the first belonged to the playwright and actor Charles-François Racot de Grandval, and the other to the actress Marie-Françoise Dumesnil. The two were colleagues at the Comédie-Française, and it was likely there that they met and fell in love, before living together on the rue Blanche for 47 years until Grandval's death in 1784. In addition to sharing a home, they also kept a small theater, where Grandval "performed erotic works of his own authorship, such as *The Eunuch, or faithful infidelity*…*The New Messalina*, *The Two Biscuits*, …performed before an audience of amateurs."[227] Two of these pays, *L'Eunuque* and *Les Deux Biscuits*, appear in the *Théâtre de campagne, ou les débauches de l'esprit*, a printed collection of plays apparently intended for performance on the private Montmartre stage maintained by Dumesnil and Grandval.

Allegedly printed in London, *Le Théâtre de campagne* went through at least two editions, the first in 1755 and a second in 1758.[228] The first edition contains five plays, two authored by

[227] Gaston Capon, *Les petites maisons galantes de Paris au XVIIIe siècle: folies, maisons de plaisance et vide-bouteille, d'après des documents inédits et des rapports de police* (Paris: H. Daragon, 1902), 81-2.

[228] While it is not impossible that the book was printed in London, the obscene bent of much of the material points to this likely being a false imprint, a common practice in France at this time for printed works that were likely to be banned or suppressed. See Smith, "Libertine Dramaturgy," 36, and Patrick Wald Lasowski, "Les Enfants de la

Grandval, two by his father, the musician Nicolas Racot de Grandval, and one by Pierre Boudin (see table below).[229] The 1758 edition kept all five of these plays, adding a sixth by Grandval *fils*, *Les Deux Biscuits*. Vaudevilles appear throughout both editions: in the 1755 edition, *L'Eunuque* is followed by the notated melodies for each vaudeville cited in the play, where they are designated only by their *timbre*. The notated melodies were only included for the 1755 *L'Eunuque*, however, and were not included in the subsequent 1758 edition (Fig. 3.1).

Fig. 3.1, Table of Contents for *Le Théâtre de campagne, ou les débauches de l'esprit*

Play Title	Author
L'Eunuque, ou la fidelle infidelité, *Parade en Vaudevilles* (1749)	Charles-François Racot de Grandval (*fils*)
Agathe, ou la chaste princesse, *Tragédie* (1749)	Nicolas Racot de Grandval (*père*)
*Les Deux Biscuits, *Tragédie* (1749)	Grandval *fils*
Syrop-Au-Cul, ou l'Heureuse Délivrance, *Tragédie* (1749)	Grandval *fils*
Le Pot de Chambre Cassé, *Tragédie pour rire & Comédie pour pleurer* (1750)	Grandval *père*
Madame Engueule, ou Les accords poissards, *Comédie-Parade* (1754)	Pierre Boudin

*Only appears in the 1758 edition

In contrast to the volume's printed text, the notated melodies were written by hand. Including these melodies was no small feat; though the play is 51 pages long in the 1755 edition, it contains 74 unique *timbres*, which when written out amounted to 20 pages of "airs notés." The sheer labor required to include these notated melodies could be interpreted as a testament to the

messe de minuit," in Marie-Françoise Quignard and Raymond-Josué Seckel, eds, *L'Enfer de la bibliothèque: Eros au secret* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2007), 39.

[229] This was the same play that caused such a scandal at Mlle Guimard's *théâtre de société*.

importance of sound and even performance to these vaudevilles. While the evidence is by no means definitive, such efforts might be seen as tipping the scale towards the likelihood that they were performed. The inclusion of "airs notés" may also have been a selling point from the perspective of a publisher, potentially explaining the contradiction between the title page's claim to contain notated *timbres* in the 1758 edition and their absence from the actual text. In both cases, however, the presence (or promise) of notated melodies demonstrates an importance that was placed on a reader having a specifically *musical* familiarity with the *timbre* cited. Were the joke of the printed vaudeville limited to ironic juxtaposition between a *timbre*'s title and the new text, the effort of supplying notated melodies would be unnecessary. Several examples from *L'Eunuque* will help illustrate the important role melody plays in crafting the play's humor. Further, by showing how melody and reference play off of one another in this work, we can also see evidence of the continued life of vaudeville, despite narratives of its diminished relevance and undesirability.

Opening Pot-pourri

In both the 1755 and 1758 editions, *L'Eunuque* is preceded with an elaborately engraved title page, the author's name rendered as five asterisks, and the following epigraph: "Your spirit easily pierces through these [veils], and easily sees that it's me who follows the five Stars. [Performed at] Montmartre, 1755" (Fig. 3.2).[230] Before the play's story begins, it is preceded by four introductory vaudevilles, each addressed from the Author to a specific audience (friends, his

[230] "Ton Esprit aisément perce à travers ces Voiles, Et voit bien que c'est moi qui suis les cinq Étoiles. À Montmartre, 1755." *L'Eunuque*, n.p. The insignia of a *maréchal* (sergeant) features five stars, though the title *maréchal* could be used informally to refer to someone at the head of an organization. In the context of this epigraph, it could be that the author is implying that in "following the five Stars," he is chasing greatness, success, and/or recognition.

muse, readers, and folly, respectively).[231] The tone of each is humorous and self-deprecatory, and in practice these vaudevilles function much like the concluding appeals to the audience that closed many of d'Orneval and Lesage's fairground plays at the beginning of the century. This opening collection of vaudevilles (or *pot-pourri*, as such collections were often called) acts as a space for the author to make jokes about the play's potential for failure—to please, to entertain, to live up to the "high esteem" of its audience.

The first of these, "Epitre dedicatoire, l'Auteur à ses amis," shifts quickly from supplication to a violent threat:

EPITRE DEDICATOIRE. L'AUTEUR A SES AMIS. Air. *Grand Duc de Savoye.*	DEDICATORY EPISTLE. THE AUTHOR TO HIS FRIENDS. To the tune of *Grand Duc de Savoye*.
Agréez l'hommage De ce Pot-pourri; Chez vous, mon Ouvrage Demande un abri: Au lieu de suffrage, Si vous dites *Non*; Je casse, de rage, Ma Flute à l'oignon.	Please accept the tribute Of this little collection of works; My work asks for shelter Within your homes: Instead of putting it to a vote, If you say no; In a fury I'll break My flute off in your ass.

[231] The 1755 edition only includes the last two of these opening vaudevilles; however, the melodies for the first two appear among the notated melodies in the 1755 edition.

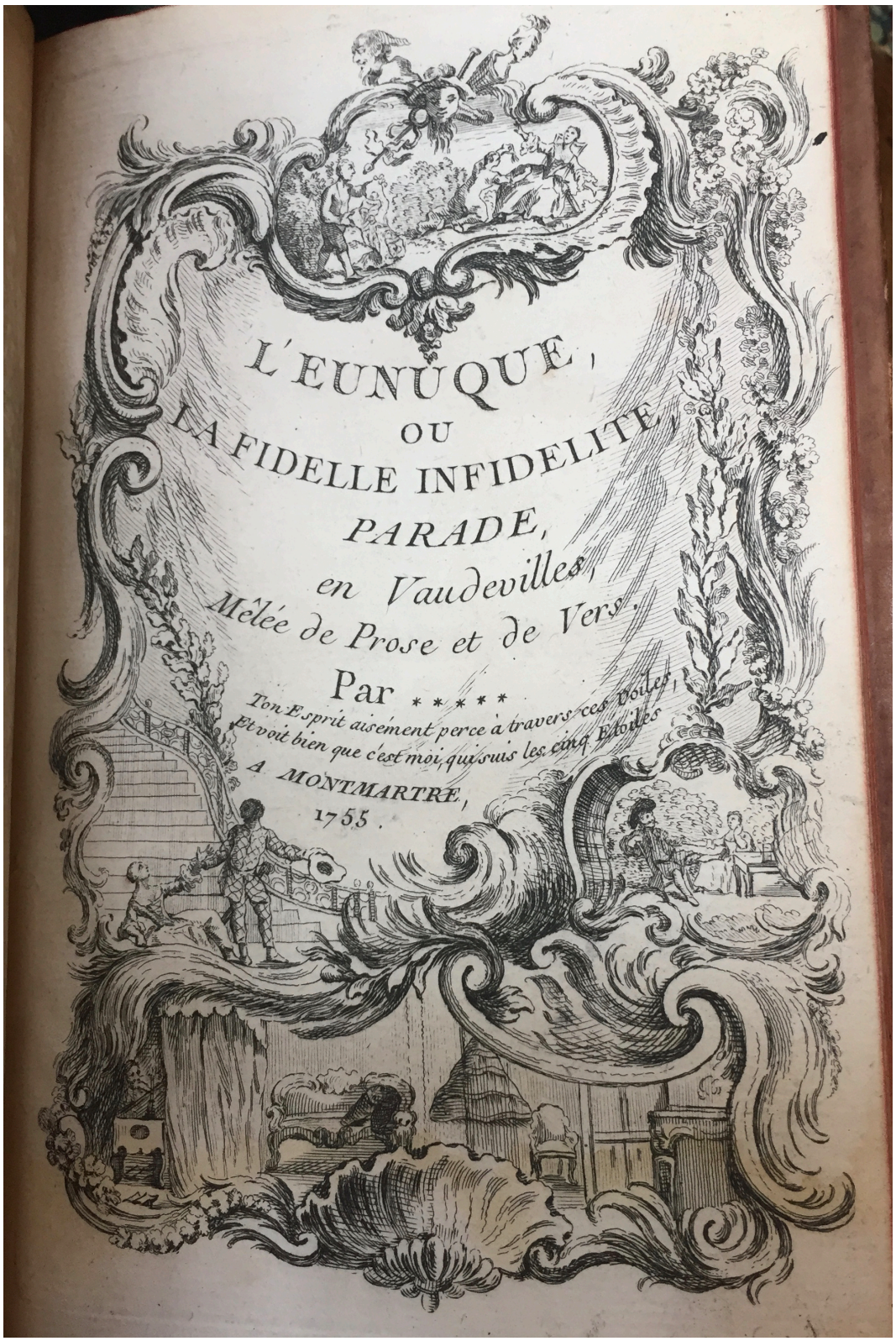

Fig. 3.2. Title page to *L'Eunuque* (1755). BA 8BL13.825. This same title page is also used in the 1758 edition.

The *timbre*, "Grand duc de Savoye," is an example of the difficulties that arise when trying to "hear" these melodies as eighteenth-century readers heard them, as there exist at least two different melodies that went by this same *timbre*. The melody supplied in the 1755 edition, and thus the one the author most likely had in mind, is in duple meter, transcribed in A minor, and moves almost exclusively in scalar stepwise motion, with the exception of the leap of a minor ninth in the thirteenth bar. Each four-bar phrase begins with an anacrusis, with an overall structure of AABC (Ex. 3.1). A second melody, also known by the *timbre* "Grand Duc de Savoye" is also known by several other names, including "Malgré la bataille" and "C'est la mère Michel qui a perdu son chat."[232] While it shares a minor mode with the first example, "Malgré la bataille" has a distinctive rhythmic character, established by consistent dotted-rhythms throughout, which distinguish it from the first (Ex. 3.2). Though "Grand Duc de Savoye" is nearly twice as long as "Malgré la bataille," the text fits easily to both timbres, increasing the potential for confusion. Early histories of the vaudeville have suggested that the minor mode was preferred for vaudevilles as better for transmitting their "sneering warmth," and in this instance the juxtaposition of either melody's simple, grave tone with the crass threat of violence was sure to produce surprise and delight for performers and audiences alike.[233]

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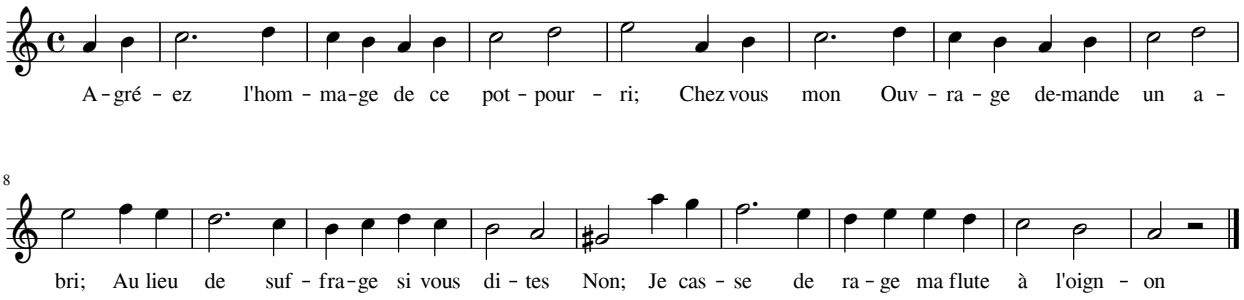
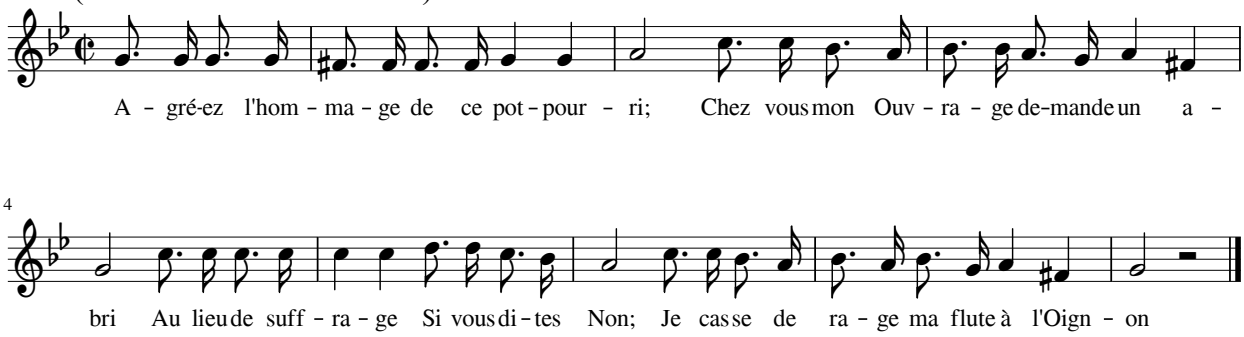
[232] Theaville lists fifteen different *timbres* for this single melody; Conrad Laforte lists twelve. See *Catalogue de la chanson folklorique française*, Vol. 6, "Chansons sur des timbres" (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1983), 302. Curiously, Theaville identifies the first melody supplied by Grandval as "La Verte Jeunesse," while Laforte lists "La Verte Jeunesse" as another *faux timbre* for "Malgré la bataille." Lesage and d'Orneval's *Théâtre de la foire, ou l'Opéra-Comique*, on which Theaville basis its editions for both melodies, does provide two distinct melodies for these two *timbres*.

[233] Font, *Essai sur Favart*, 16.

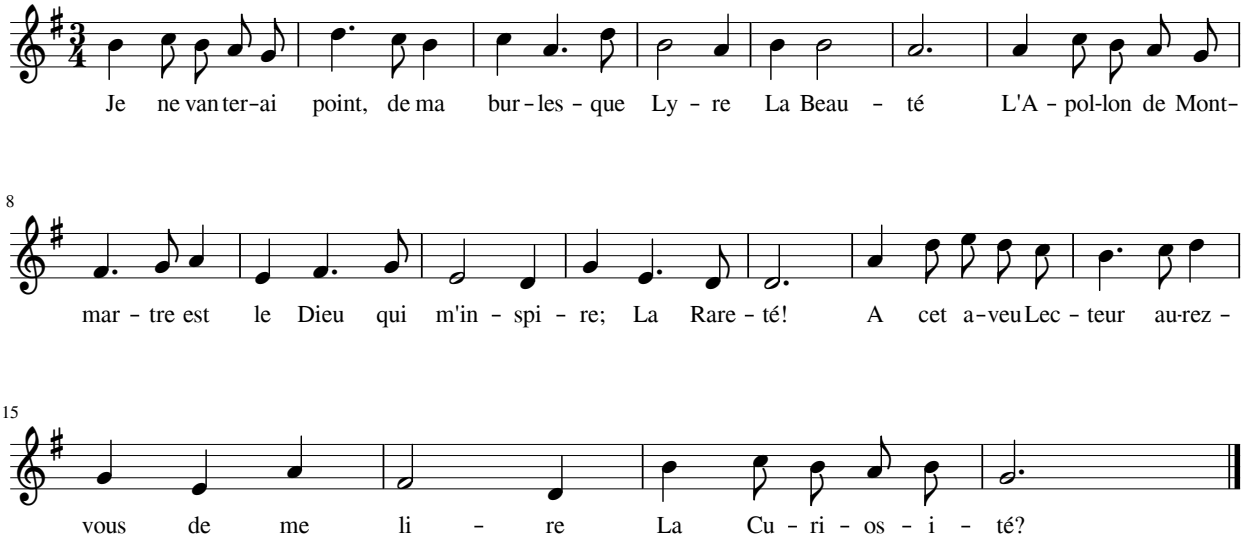
Ex. 3.1, “Grand Duc de Savoye” (edition based on *Le Théâtre de Campange*, 1755)



Ex. 3.2, “Grand Duc de Savoye”/ “Malgré la bataille” / “C’est la mère Michel qui a perdu son chat” (edition based on Theaville)



Ex. 3.3, “La beauté, la rareté, la curiosité” (edition based on Theaville)



The third vaudeville in the opening *pot-pourri*, "L'Auteur au lecteur," relies far less on the crude humor of the "Epitre dedicatoire" and could be read as Grandval *fils* praising Dumesnil, with her potentially being the "Apollo of Montmartre…who inspires me."

L'AUTEUR AU LECTEUR	AUTHOR TO THE READER
Air. La beauté, la rareté, la curiosité	To the tune: *La beauté, la rareté, la curiosité*.
Je ne vanterai point, de ma burlesque Lyre, La Beauté L'Apollon de Montmartre est le Dieu qui m'inspire; La Rareté! A cet aveu, Lecteur, aurez-vous, de me lire, La Curiosité?	With my farcical lyre, I do not praise Beauty The Apollo of Montmartre is the God who inspires me; Rarity! With this confession, Reader, have I piqued your Curiosity?

The melody for "La Beauté, la rareté, la curiosité" contrasts with "Grand Duc de Savoye." Set in triple meter, each six-bar phrase is brought to a halt by longer held notes, mimicking the way in which the poem itself is set, with the declaration of each of the title's words set off from the rest of the text. In major mode (transcribed in C major in the 1755 edition), this vaudeville seems to betray a level of sincerity that is lacking in the previous one. Rather than threating comical violence, the text of this vaudeville invites a reader-singer to indulge their curiosity and discover pleasure in the novelty of the collection's offerings. The three words of the title, "Beauty, Novelty, Curiosity," are lingered over in the melodic delivery and coincide with the endings of both the poetic and musical phrases (mm. 5-6, 11-12, 17-18).

"L'Eunuque, ou la fidèle infidelité"

The opening scene of *L'Eunuque* begins as soon as the opening *pot-pourri* ends. The plot centers on the young Isabelle, who has been waiting three years for her beloved fiancé Léandre to return from war. Isabelle's uncle, the aged Cassandre, offers to marry her instead, as he has loved her for the last 18 months. Isabelle's maid, Colombine, immediately begins mocking Cassandre for his age, his jaundice, and various other ailments she believes will prevent him from performing his husbandly duties in the bedroom, cycling quickly through four different *timbres*. Cassandre protests Colombine's cruel jests, but Isabelle joins in, adding two more melodies to the list of insults against the presumptuous old man.

"L'Eunuque, ou la fidèle infidelité" Act I, Scene I	
COLOMBINE	**COLOMBINE**
Air. *Vous qui vous moquez par vos ris.*	
Avant tout qu'il se fasse donc	First of all, he must
Traiter de sa jaunisse,	Take care of his jaundice,
Que son asthma, sa fluxion,	He must treat his asthma, his congestion,
Son cotère guérisse:	He must heal his wounds:
Après quoi ce vaillant Champion,	Once he's done all this, the brave Champion
Entrera dans la lice.	Will join the fray.
Air. *Réveillez-vous, belle endormie*.	
Que pourriez-vous faire, à votre âge,	What could you possible do, at your age,
D'un homme aussi cassé que lui?	As broken as you are?
Tenez, écoutez le langage	Listen, here's what you can expect to hear,
Que tient toujours un vieux mari?	As is the case with all old husbands:
Air. *Pour la Baronne*.	
J'ai la migraine,	I have a headache,
Ma femme, sans moi, couchez-vous;	Go to bed without me, my wife,
J'ai la migraine,	I have a headache,
Cette nuit, passez-vous d'époux:	Tonight, you'll be without your spouse;
Et tant que dure la semaine,	And so it goes the whole week long,
Il vous répète avec sa toux,	Repeating to you, with his cough,
J'ai la migraine.	I have a headache.

CASSANDRE	**CASSANDRE**
Air. *Les Trembleurs*.	
Facilement Colombine	Colombine easily
Croit que l'on peut, sur ma mine,	Believes that, based on my appearance,
Me manger à la sourdine,	One can easily
La laine dessus le dos;	Take advantage of me;
Mais je jure la mort diantre,	But I swear on damned death itself
Que je veux que l'on m'éventre,	That I would rather be torn apart
Si je ne fais dans son ventre	If I don't manage to strike back at Colombine
Rentrer ses mauvais propos	At least as hard as she hit me.
ISABELLE	**ISABELLE**
Air. *Ma raisons s'en va beau train*.	
Vainement prétendez-vous	In vain you think
Un jour être mon époux.	To be my spouse one day.
Quoi! Vieux Radoteur,	What, rambling old man,
Votre air séducteur	Does your seductive air
Peut-il plaire aux fillettes?	Work on the little girls?
Amour! quand vous blessez un coeur,	Hey Cupid! when you strike a heart,
Mettez mieux vos lunettes,	Make sure your glasses are on straight!
Lon là,	Lon là,
Mettez mieux vos lunettes.	Make sure your glasses are on straight.
Air. *Dondaine, dondaine*.	
Léandre a quitté la maison;	Léandre left our home;
Il eut sans doute une raison,	Without a doubt he had his reasons.
Dondaines, dondaines:	Dondaines, dondaines:
Polichinel, dit-on,	They say even Polichinel
A bien les siennes.	Had his reasons, too.

The sheer number of *timbres* in this brief exchange demonstrates the impressive acts of musical memory that were asked of readers and performers of *théâtre de société*. In Colombine's vaudeville alone, the performer must move from minor, to major, to minor again, and if the keys notated in the 1755 edition are observed in performance, jumping from D minor, to C major, to A minor without the aid of modulations.[234] Aiding the performer is a consistency in triple time

[234] In surveying the different volumes of the *Théâtre de la Foire ou l'Opéra-Comique* collections, Clifford Barnes points out that certain melodies appear in multiple volumes but are printed in different keys. He concludes from these variations in transcription that key relationships were important "where two or more tunes were used consecutively for one person's lines...It is probable that each *vaudeville* was to be sung in the key in which it was

signatures (3/4, 3/4, and 3/8), though a certain deftness in maneuvering from melody to melody is still essential.

Wrapped up within this musical exchange, too, is an initial articulation of the sexual values of the play and its characters: that because of his age and attendant illnesses, Cassandre is an unsuitable spouse and sexual partner for the young Isabelle. In a twist on the familiar trope of women begging off sex by faking a headache, Colombine insists through vaudeville that Isabelle would go sexually unsatisfied were she to marry Cassandre, and that such dissatisfaction is undesirable and a cause for derision. Some of these dynamics are determined by the stock characteristics of the *commedia dell'arte* figures who clearly inspired the characters of *L'Eunuque*. Colombine equates to Colombina, the trickster maid; Isabelle is one of the lovers or "inamorati"; and Cassandre represents an amalgam of the two old man characters, Dottore and Pantalone, whose role is to stand in the way of the lovers.[235] However, throughout the play, Isabelle's sexual satisfaction is treated as a valid concern, and is usually discussed through vaudevilles.

Embarrassed and furious with Colombine's insults, Cassandre storms off to find Isabelle's father, the Docteur, to announce his intention to marry Isabelle. Alone, Isabelle and Colombine discuss Isabelle's affairs and the three sons she bore from each liaison. Isabelle wants to tell Cassandre of her infidelities in order to frighten him off, but Colombine warns that in telling him, word might get back to Léandre, who would be hurt by her betrayal. Isabelle tells

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printed in each volume." Barnes, "The *Théâtres de la Foire*," 141. While vaudevilles could be and were accompanied by a small instrumental ensemble at the public theaters, it is uncertain whether they would have been accompanied in *théâtre de société* performances.

[235] Emily Wilbourne, *Seventeenth-Century Opera and the Sound of the Commedia dell'Arte* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 31-36.

Colombine that she has just the excuse should Léandre find out: she'll say she was thinking only of him as she made love day and night with Arelquin, Scaramouche, and Pantalon, and that all three of her children were given Léandre's surname. The children's names are derived from Italian *commedia dell'arte* stock characters, and are a testament to *opéra-comique*'s earliest roots, when fairground players took over the abandoned Comédie-Italienne repertoire upon their expulsion in 1697. This connection to *commedia dell'arte* is made even stronger on the title page of *L'Eunuque*, where the figures of Harlequin (in motley), Dottore (in a large black hat), Colombine and Isabelle (two young women) can all be distinguished in the two miniature scenes flanking the central shield.[236] Upon hearing of her mistress's sexual exploits, Colombine inquires as to why Isabelle and Léandre never had sex before he left; Isabelle tells her that the man you are betrothed to is the very last one you should sleep with, or he will lose interest and break off the marriage.

[236] Thorough discussion of the classic costumes associated with these stock figures can be found in Judith Chaffee and Oliver Crick, eds., *Routledge Companion to Commedia dell'Arte* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 55-69.

***L'Eunuque, ou la fidèle infidelité*, Act I, Scene ii**

ISABELLE

Je suis bien de ton avis, & nous sympatisons toutes deux à merveille. Si Léandre revient, & que mes trois grossesses lui donnent un peu d'humeur, parce qu'il n'y aura point participé, pour appaiser sa colère…

Air. *Faire l'Amour la nuit & le jour*
Je lui dirai, tout doux,
À d'autres j'eus affaire;
Mais je pensois à vous,
En m'occupant à faire
L'Amour
La nuit & le jour.

Tu en es témoin, Colombine, pusique j'ai eu l'attention de faire porter le nom de Léandre à tous mes enfans.

[…]

COLOMBINE

Mais, Mademoiselle, vous qui aimez tant l'Amour; qui prenez tant de plaisir à la faire, je m'étonne que vous n'ayez pas accordé à Léandre ce que vous avez si facilement prodigué aux autres. Est-ce qu'il ne vous a jamais pressé de…

ISABELLE

Pour faire ce faux pas, je suis trop vertueuse.
Sans doute que je suis de Léandre amoureuse;
Mais un homme choisi pour m'épouser un jour,
Avant le tems marqué ne peut cuire à mon four.
Un époux est toujour le dernier, Colombine,
De ceux qu'à nos faveurs le doux destin destine.

ISABELLE

I agree with you, and I think we're on the same page. If Léandre returns and my three pregnancies upset him because he wasn't a part of them, to soothe his temper…

Air.
I will sweetly tell him,
'Yes, I had affairs with others,
But I was thinking of you,
As I spent my time
Making love
Night and day.

You're a witness, Colombine, to the respect I paid Léandre by giving all of my children his name.

[…]

COLOMBINE

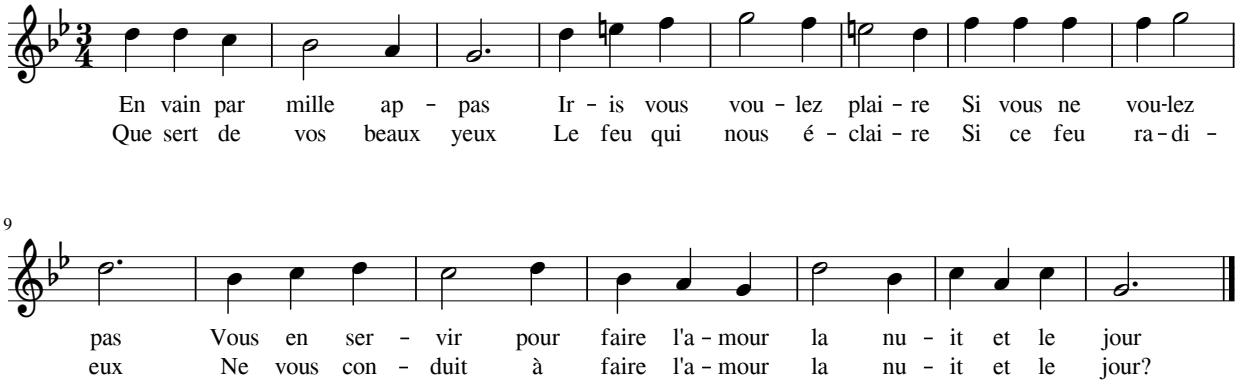
But mistress, you who loves Love so, who takes such pleasure in making it, I'm surprised that you never bestowed upon Léandre what you so easily gave away to others. Didn't he ever try to get you to…?

ISABELLE

I am too virtuous to make such a mistake.
Without a doubt, I am in love with Léandre.
But the man who is to marry me
Can't cook in my oven before the designated day.
A spouse is always the last of those, Colombine,
To whom sweet Destiny has destined our favors.

Here, the timbre "Faire l'amour la nuit et le jour" enhances the sensuality of the vaudeville, as readers would recall the original text for the song, which recounts the efforts of an amorous narrator in their attempts to seduce the beautiful Iris. Once again, it is through the sound of vaudeville that Isabelle's sexuality is justified, even as it supplies laughs for the audience. The lyrics of the original song ask, "What is the point of your beautiful features if not to use them for seduction and making love?" (Ex. 3.4) Isabelle seems to agree with the sentiment, and her logic is reinforced through this particular choice of timbre. Léandre may have disappeared, but Isabelle saw no reason to let her charms go to waste, with the *timbre*'s gavotte rhythm perhaps evoking the various "dances" she had with these lovers.

Ex. 3.4, "Faire l'amour la nuit et le jour" (With original lyrics. Edition based on Theaville.)[237]



[237] Lyrics found in *Le Chansonnier français, ou recueil de chansons, ariettes, Vaudevilles, & autres Couplets choisis,* Vol. 12 (1760), 57-62; and Jean-Baptiste-Christophe Ballard, *La clef des chansonniers, ou, Recueil des vaudevilles depuis cent ans & plus,* Vol. 2 (Ballard: Paris, 1717), 159. The later collection contains many more stanzas; here I have included the first two.

Isabelle and Colombine's conversation is cut short by the arrival of her father, the Docteur, with a Turkish eunuch in tow (actually Léandre in disguise). The Docteur has just returned from a trip to Turkey, where he begged Mohammad to make his daughter fertile.[238] The Docteur inquires as to how Isabelle and Colombine passed the time while he was away; in a series of vaudevilles filled with double entendres, the two women describe being visited by chimney sweeps, and how they "dulled many a needle" with all of their "sewing."

***L'Eunuque, ou la fidèle infidelité*, Act I, scene iii**	
LE DOCTEUR As-tu bien eu soin de faire faire les reparations nécessaires à notre maison? […]	**DOCTOR** Did you make sure to carry out the necessary repairs on our home? […]
ISABELLE Où, mon pere, sur le devant. On y était trop à l'étroit, mais à présent qu'il est élargi, tout le monde y pourra loger à son aise.	**ISABELLE** [Yes] father, on the front.* It was too tight in the front, but now that it's been widened, everyone can fit in with ease.
LE DOCTEUR As-tu bien pris garde au feu?	**DOCTOR** Did you tend to the fire[place]?**
ISABELLE Ah! mon pere, je le crains comme un ange, trois homme que j'avois pris à mon service pour cela, y ont renoncé à cause de fatigue.	**ISABELLE** Oh father, I fear it [as an angel fears hellfire], but the three men I hired to help me with that all quit from fatigue.
Air. *Ramonez-ci, ramonez-là* Le soir & la matinée, Vous m'eussiez vuë acharnée A chanter à ces gens-là, Ramonez-ci, ramonez-là La la la La cheminée du haute en bas.	Air. Night and day You would have seen me singing Tenaciously to these men Sweep up here, sweep up there,*** La la la/there there there [Sweep] the chimney from top to bottom.

[238] "Turquerie," or a general Orientalist fascination with the Ottoman empire, was common in the eighteenth-century. See Haydn Williams, *Turquerie: An Eighteenth-Century European Fantasy* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2014), and Nebahat Avcıoğlu, *'Turquerie' and the Politics of Representation* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2011).

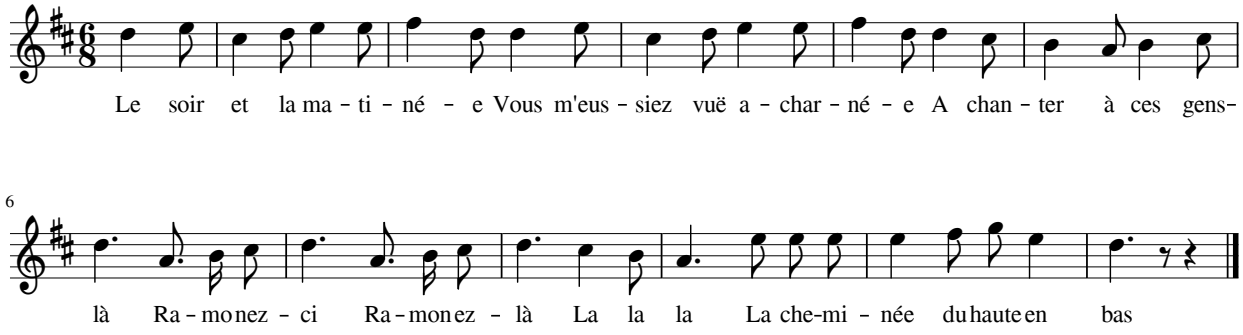
LE DOCTEUR	**DOCTOR**
Je parie que tu ne travaillois guéres, & que tu étois toujours penduë à la fenêtre de la ruë.	I bet you hardly worked at all, that you spent all of your time hanging out the front window that looks onto the street.
ISABELLE Air. *Que je regrette mon Amant!* Non, jamais je ne m'y mettois, Les voisins vous diront, mon pere, Que pour suivre mon goût, j'étois, Presque toujours sur le derrière: Là je cousois assidûment; Colombine en faisoit autant.	**ISABELLE** Air. No, I'd never put myself there, The neighbors will tell you, father, That in following my desires, I was Almost always in the back: There, I sewed diligently; Colombine did the same.
Isabelle & Colombine ensemble. Je filois, Tricotois, Et cousois, Assidûment, Colombine/Isabelle en faisoit autant.	*Isabelle & Colombine together*. I spun [yarn], I knit, And sewed Diligently, Colombine/Isabelle did the Same.
ISABELLE Aussi, je gage bien qu'il n'est guère de filles Qui se vante d'avoir épointé plus d'éguilles.	**ISABELLE** What's more, I wager that there's hardly any girls who can brag about having dulled as many needles as we have.
LE DOCTEUR Tant mieux, c'est preuve de travail. […]	**DOCTOR** So much the better, it's proof of work.

*"Sur le devant" is also a theater term, referring to being at the front of the stage, or more figuratively, in the spotlight.
**Possibly a pun on "avoir le feu," or to be filled with passion or sexual desire.
*** "Ramoner la cheminée d'une fille" is an expression for sexual intercourse.

In Isabelle's exchange with her father, sexual double entendres abound: the front door that has been "widened" in order to accommodate more people, playing off the false belief that a woman's vagina permanently expands in proportion to the number of sexual partners she has had; the three men who tired of helping Isabelle "clean the chimney"; and Isabelle's final boast of having "dulled many needles." When the vaudeville to the tune of "Ramonez-ci, ramonez-là" (Ex. 3.5) begins, the entire joke is in fact furnished by the father, with his seemingly innocent

question about the state of the chimney. The lilting 6/8 meter and emphasis on scalar movement between the first and fifth scale degrees adds a childish veneer to Isabelle's delivery, heightening the ironic distance between the words she says/sings and their received meaning. For audiences, the disconnect between the vulgarity of the phrase "ramoner la cheminée" and the infantile melody through which the phrase is delivered exaggerates the way in which Isabelle and the Doctor are talking past one another.

Ex. 3.5, "Ramonez-ci, ramonez-là" (Edition based on Theaville)

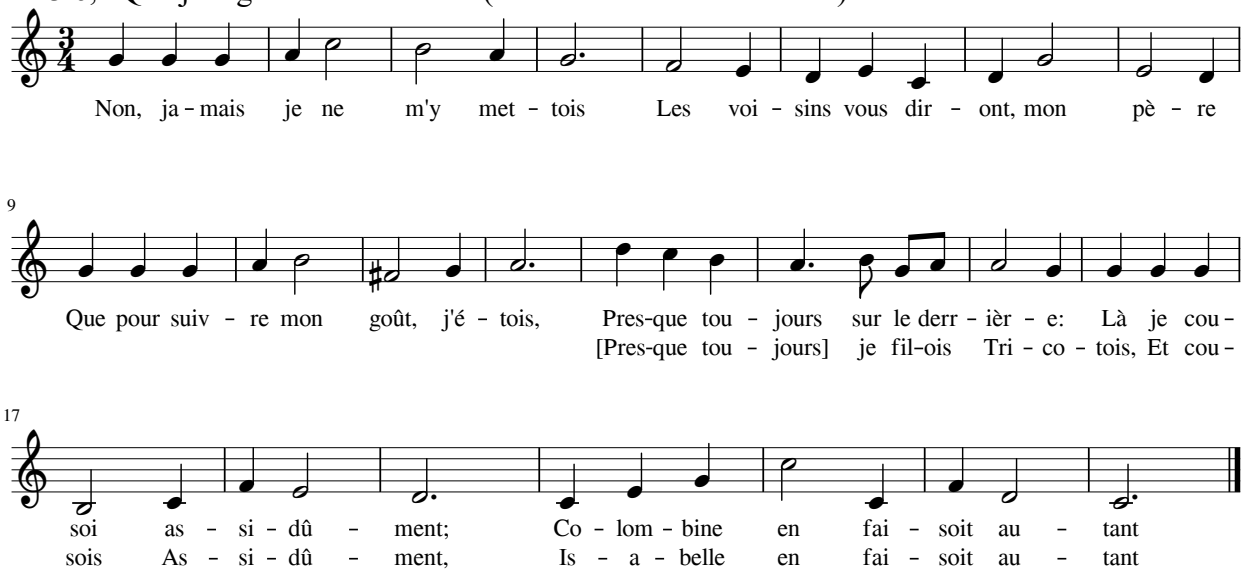


In the second of these exchanges, still more mundane household activities are coopted for their double meanings. In Isabelle's insistence that she "followed her taste" and sewed diligently "in the back [of the house]," it is not difficult to hear the pun on the various "goûts" that were often a linguistic stand-in for anal sex in the eighteenth century, as in the "goût italien," or the "goût contre nature."[239] Rather than leaning out the window and potentially flirting with men in the street below, Isabelle claims she and Colombine were engaged in the traditionally feminine

[239] Olivier Blanc, "The 'Italian Taste' in the time of Louis XVI, 1774-92," *Journal of Homosexuality* 41, no. 3-4 (2002): 69-84. For histories of homosexuality in eighteenth-century Paris, see Claude Courouve, *Vocabulaire de l'homosexualité masculine* (Paris: Payot, 1985); Jeffrey Merrick and Michael Sibalis, eds., *Homosexuality in French History and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

tasks of spinning, knitting, and sewing. While none of these verbs in themselves seem to have documented second meanings, as does "ramoner la cheminée," the in-and-out motion of a needle through thread is certainly evocative, and supplies Isabelle's final pun on having dulled needles with all of her "work."[240] The melody exemplifies the style of vaudeville *fredons*, with its irregular phrase structure of nine measures, and emphasis on the second beat. The melody's original words tell the story of a young woman who has lost her lover, and is recalling the day she spent with him and the ardor of his love (Fig. 3.3). The erotic undertones of the referent melody contribute to undermining the innocence of the two women's activities (Ex. 3.6).

Ex. 3.6, "Que je regrette mon amant" (Edition based on Theaville)



[240] The jump to sewing may also have been facilitated by a *faux timbre* for "Ramonez-ci, ramonez-là,"—"Nous avons de fines aiguilles" ("We have sharp needles"). This *faux timbre* is listed under the Theaville entry for "Ramonez-ci, ramonez-là," with its source identified as Charles-Simon Favart's *Acajou* (1748). However, I have not been able to find this *faux timbre* in any other catalogue (Clé du Caveau, Barbier and Vernillat, Laforte). Comparing the melody supplied in *Acajou* with that in *Théâtre de la Foire*, the only similarity they share is their 6/8 meter; the melody differs significantly enough that without additional evidence, it is hard to establish a firm connection between these two *timbres*.

Fig. 3.3, "Que je regrette mon amant," Original text from *Le Chansonnier français* (1760)[241]	
Que je regrette mon amant, Jusqu'au trépas il fut fidèle, Jeune, beau, bienfait & constant; Des amants le parfait modèle. Daphnis m'aimoit si tendremont, Qu'il me plaisoit infiniment.	How I miss my lover, He was loyal unto death, Young, handsome, kind and faithful; A perfect model for lovers everywhere. Daphnis loved me so tenderly, I was extremely pleased.
De son amour il me parloit Avec une douceur extreme, Cent fois le jour il répetoit, Je vous adore & je vous aime. Il le disoit si joliment, Qu'il me plaisoit infiniment.	He spoke to me of his love With an intense sweetness, He said it a hundred times a day, I adore you and I love you. He said it so well, I was extremely pleased.
Assez souvent il m'arrivoit, De m'endormir sur la verdure; Aussitôt qu'il m'y rencontroit, D'un baiser à l'instant j'étois sûr. Il le prenoit si joliment, Qu'il me plaisoit infiniment. […]	Fairly often he'd come to me, To put me to sleep/sleep with me on the grass; As soon as he met me there, With one kiss I was instantly assured. He took his kiss so well, I was extremely pleased.
Quelque-fois je lui demandois De son flageolet un air tendre, Soudain il m'en jouoit; jamais Je n'avois la peine d'attendre. Il en jouoit si joliment, Qu'il me plaisoit infiniment. […]	Once I asked him To play a sweet air on his flute, All of a sudden he began to play; Was it ever worth the wait. He played it so well, I was extremely pleased. […]

At the end of this scene, Isabelle is left alone with the mysterious eunuch, and together they lament his "altered" body. Isabelle declares her love for him, not yet recognizing his true identity, and he returns her affections. Isabelle reveals that she wishes to be married, having been rejected by three previous lovers and left with three children. Suddenly, a servant runs in and presents Isabelle with a tapestry from Léandre depicting her three sons, and the announcement

[241] *Le Chansonnier françois ou Recueil de chansons, ariettes, vaudevilles & autres couplets choisis*, Vol. 1 (N.p., 1760), 120-121. Accessed via Gallica.

that he is finally returning home. Isabelle marvels at how he could have known about the three children. Léandre then removes his disguise and reveals his true identity. He explains that he, in fact, never left Paris, and that Isabelle's three lovers had all actually been Léandre in disguise, making him the true father of her children. At this, the Docteur returns and produces a marriage contract for the lovers to sign, but alas, no one knows how to read! The play concludes with a final divertissement and contredanse.

The vaudevilles analyzed here represent only a fraction of the actual number of songs that appear throughout *L'Eunuque*. It bears repeating that over the course of this play, readers and performers are asked to remember and realize over 70 different melodies, and to fit the newly-written text to them appropriately. The inclusion of so much music in the form of vaudevilles indicates that there was still an appetite for older-style *pièces en vaudevilles*, not only as an entertainment to watch as a spectator, but as an activity to participate in as part of a *théâtre de société*. As actors at the Comédie-Française, plays like *L'Eunuque* were not what Mlle Dumesnil and Grandval *fils* typically performed in public. In the relative private of a *théâtre de société*, however, they could take pleasure in performing and singing in works whose genre and tone would not have been permitted at the Théâtre-Français.

Throughout, the sexualized tone of *L'Eunuque* is emphasized by its expression through vaudeville. The melodies of the vaudevilles would function as a portal, helping readers and singers recall the words and contexts of the melody's previous incarnations, and bringing those meanings to bear on their present appearance. Their use throughout the play, particularly when discussing Isabelle's pursuits of pleasure, harkens back to the early days of the Opéra-Comique. Such time travel is also emphasized by the use of *commedia dell'arte* characters, whether implicitly (as with Cassandre), or explicitly (as with Colombine and the Docteur). Vaudevilles in

L'Eunuque participate in the humor and the sexual tone, but usually through wordplay and double entendre. Other *théâtres de société*, however, fostered a more explicitly erotic ethos, as demonstrated by the *Théâtre d'amour* and its detailed stage directions.

Le Théâtre d'amour (ca. 1770s)

Attributed to Jean-Baptiste-Claude Delisle de Sales and dated to the late 1770s, the *Théâtre d'amour* is a collection of twelve plays, dialogues, and monologues, separated into four "parties" bound into a single volume.[242] The tome opens with a preface, presumably written by de Sales himself:

> A foreign prince, a very nice man but a bit weary with innocent pleasures, had a secret theatre, where he only permitted the rogues of his small court and women of quality, women who could be courtesans. These were the Saturnalia of the Regency; with uncovered bodies, they performed the obscenities of Petrone and the orgies of the *Portier des Chartreux*.[243]

Though today he may be considered a "D-list" *philosophe*, in the eighteenth century Delisle de Sales enjoyed a certain notoriety (albeit short-lived) resulting from charges of

[242] In the manuscript copy at Arsenal, a later hand has added a title page, black (on light brown) in a square shield: "THEATRE/ D'AMOUR". Below this shield is a second, rectangular shield: "Théâtre de société du prince d'Hénin (vers 1774)/Théâtre de la Guimard (vers 1778)." Below this shield, in black: "Quatre parties en un volume/M.S" These dates are far from confirmed, and in the modern edition of the text, Thomas Wynn has called these dates into question, believing the document is more likely the product of the first years of the 19th century. See *Delisle de Sales, Théâtre d'amour et Baculard d'Arnaud, L'Art de foutre, ou Paris foutant.* Ed. by Thomas Wynn (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2011), 25-28.

[243] "Un prince étranger, homme très aimable, mais un peu blasé sur les plaisirs que l'innocence appelle, avait un théâtre secret où il n'introduisait que des roués de sa petite cour et des femmes de qualité dignes d'être des courtisanes. C'étaient les saturnales de la Régence; on y jouait sans voile, les priapées de Pétrone et les orgies du *Portier*." *Le Théâtre d'Amour* BN Arsenal MS 9549, 3.

blasphemy that were brought against his philosophical work *De la philosophie de la nature*.[244] A devoted follower of Denis Diderot, de Sales produced a sensualist, materialist text, closely aligned with the radical ideas of thinkers like Baruch Spinoza and Claude-Adrien Helvétius, along with Diderot. He was also a fierce critic of racial prejudice, arguing in strong terms for the fundamental equality of black and white peoples, despite ongoing legal and philosophical justifications for enslavement in France's colonies. In spite of these controversial positions, *Philosophie de la nature* managed to pass the censor in 1769 (thanks to a deliberately misleading preface), and was put into circulation in 1770, where it languished in relative obscurity. When the attitudes of the Paris Parlement shifted against the *philosophe* movement more broadly, de Sales became a convenient scapegoat. Though his book had already been circulating for several years, de Sales was imprisoned on charges of blasphemy, and became a cause célèbre for the *philosophe* literati, even receiving several visits from Voltaire while in jail.[245] Upon his release from prison, he continued to try and capitalize on the fame that this episode brought him, but never regained his previous levels of recognition.

How de Sales came to meet the prince d'Hénin, Charles-Alexandre, is uncertain. It has been suggested that his earthy translations of Suetonius brought him to the attention of the prince, which could explain the predominance of "antiquity" plays in the first section of the *Théâtre d'amour*.[246] According to Capon and Yve-Plessis, it was in the interest of enlivening the post-supper performances given by the prince's mistress, Sophie Arnould, that de Sales was

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[244] Robert Darnton refers to him as a "fringe character." See Darnton, "The High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature in Pre-Revolutionary France," 51 *Past & Present* (1971): 88.

[245] Jonathan Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights, 1750-1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 673-683.

[246] Wynn, *Delisle de Sales, Théâtre d'Amour* 26.

initially brought into their circle: "According to Sophie's mood, these performances, usually improvised, lacked originality in the long run. Fate rescued the prince from embarrassment by finding him a dramatist" in the form of Delisle de Sales.[247]

Unlike the *Théâtre de campagne*, the *Théâtre d'amour* is much more sexually explicit in its language and far less wide-ranging in its musical material. The first *partie*, with titles like "Junon et Ganymède," "Anacréon," and "César et les deux Vestales," is focused primarily on a Roman-inflected eroticism, the sensual aim of each piece underlined by their generic subtitles: "comédie érotique," "pièce érotique," etc. The second, third, and fourth *parties* mix together historically-inspired works, such as a "comédie érotique" about Héloïse and Abelard, with somewhat modern "pièces érotiques," such as *Ninon et La Châtre*, recounting the tale of the famous seventeenth-century courtesan Ninon de Lenclos, and her patron, the marquis de La Châtre.

The fourth *partie*, subtitled "opuscles érotiques" ("small collection of erotic works"), contains an "Erotic dialogue to the tune from *Mirza*." Only two characters appear in this brief work, but they differ from the previous plays in the volume in that they portray currently living people: the famous soprano, Sophie Arnould, and one of her lovers, the Chevalier de Grammont. Arnould began to be associated with the prince d'Hénin beginning in the early 1770s, at the height of her popularity, and like her contemporary Marie-Madeleine Guimard, maintained a *théâtre de société* with a reputation for its sexual license. The title page of the *Dialogue érotique* describes the play as an "Erotic dialogue in 16 couplets to the tune of a melody from *Mirza*, with a sensuous pantomime." The *Dialogue érotique* covers a mere eight pages in the original

[247] Capon and Yve-Plessis, *Théâtres clandestins*, 157-158.

manuscript and is more a described encounter than a play with a plot. Featuring Sophie Arnould as both character and alleged star, the play opens with Arnould bathing, when she is interrupted by the Chevalier de Grammont (who, according to de Sales, allegedly played himself in this performance).[248] Grammont makes advances on her, and though she briefly attempts to hold him at bay, his tenderness eventually overcomes her.[249] The scene culminates in Grammont performing oral sex on Arnould, the vaudeville becoming little more than cries of ecstasy made melodic (Fig. 3.4). Though this scene was the production of de Sales's imagination, it was very much grounded in Arnould's actual reputation as one of Paris's premiere artists and "It" girls.

Fig. 3.4, "Dialogue érotique," Twelfth Couplet

GRAMMONT (il la place assise sur un fauteuil les jambes écartées et baise avec une fureur amoureuse la plus beau de ses bijoux.) Oui, tout me dit d'être plus téméraire, Ma bouche ardente ici va se poser	**GRAMMONT** (He sets her down upon a sofa, legs apart, and kisses the most beautiful of her jewels with an amorous fury.) Yes, everything is telling me to be bolder. I will put my ardent mouth here.
ARNOULD Dieu! …dieu!...(Arnould se pâme de plaisir, son amant la porte dans ses bras sur l'ottomane et reprend son[sic] heureuse position.)	**ARNOULD** Oh god! …oh god! (Arnould begins panting with desire, her lover carries her in his arms to the ottoman and resumes his happy task.)

[248] Capon and Yve-Plessis, *Théâtres clandestins*, 173.

[249] "Arnould: Quoi! … quoi! …tu n'es que tendre! Je ne crains plus de rentrer sous tes lois. *Sourire amoureux de Sophie: elle fait signe à son amant de se rapprocher*." *Dialogue érotique*, 332.

Sophie Arnould at the *Théâtre d'amour*

An opera star, a raconteur, and a highly-desired mistress, Sophie Arnould has been described as the Enlightenment's Dorothy Parker.[250] She was first discovered at the court of Louis XV when she sang for Madame de Pompadour and was quickly placed in the singing school of the Académie Royale de Musique, where she studied with two other female luminaries: La Clairon and Marie Fel. She first premiered at the Opéra in 1757, and held a twenty-year tenure there, with her greatest success coming from her performance in the titular role of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide* (1774). More than her voice, which was described as pleasant though lacking power, it was her acting which won her the most acclaim, praised for her seeming naturalness and ability to move the emotions of the audience.

Favorably reviewed in the press for her performances at the Opéra, Arnould was just as famous for her public affairs with Paris's wealthy men, most notably the Comte de Lauraguais, by whom she had two children.[251] She was a frequent fixture of Parisian gossip papers such as the *Mémoires secrets*, where the twists and turns of her romantic attachments were assiduously followed, along with her theatrical successes. Her tumultuous love life continued to stoke imaginations well into the nineteenth century, when several biographies of her were published, most famously by the Goncourt brothers.[252] Her reputation as a *bonne vivante* was sustained by the lively dinners (*soupers*) she hosted, and by rumors of her sexual relationships with other

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[250] Julian Rushton, "Sophie Arnould," *New Grove Online. Oxford Music Online* (2009) https://doi-org.turing.library.northwestern.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.01311.

[251] 1 January 1762: "Mlle. Arnoux, excédée de la jalousie de M. de Lauraguais, avoit profité de son absence pour rompre avec lui. Elle avoit renvoyé à Mad. la Comtesse de Lauraguais tous les bijoux dont lui avoit fait présent son mari, même le carosse, & deux enfans dedans, qu'elle avoit eus de lui." *Mémoires secrets*, ed. by Jules Ravenel, Vol. 1, 2-3.

[252] See *Arnoldiana, ou Sophie Arnould et ses contemporains*, ed. by Albéric Deville (Paris: Gerard, 1813), and Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Sophie Arnould d'après sa correspondence et ses mémoires inédits* (Paris: G. Charpentier and E. Fasquelle, 1893).

women, such as Françoise Saucerotte (known by her stage name Mademoiselle Raucourt).[253] Her various attributes and charms were debated in the press. "Dumont" (understood to be a pseudonym for the actor and playwright François-Marie Mayeur de Saint-Paul), in his chronicle of backstage life at Paris's main theaters, wondered cruelly:

> How is it that this enchantress [Arnould] captures hearts?
>
> With her long and thin figure;
>
> With her nasty mouth;
>
> With her big, loose teeth;
>
> With her oily, dark skin.
>
> She does have two beautiful eyes, it's true, & and it's due to this gift from nature that the Comte de Lauraguais said the following in seeing them:
>
> *O Lord, forget my ignorances and the sins of my youth*.[254]

While this vivid description can be understood as clearly in the vein of satire, similar questions as to what made Arnould so irresistible were also posed in the journal of Inspector Antoine de Sartine, the man responsible for overseeing the Department des femmes galantes (Department of Women of Pleasure) of the Paris police from 1759 to 1774.[255] Describing Arnould's romantic activities with several other men during the Comte de Lauraguais's absence,

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[253] "Arnoux[sic] vécut avec plusieurs hommes recommandables par leurs titres & dignités, moins par l'intérêt que pour couvrir son penchant naturel d'aimer les femmes; mais l'illustre *Raucourt* fut la guérir de cette délicatesse, & ces deux Tribades se font actuellement un plaisir d'instruire toute la France qu'elles se communiquement ensemble le plaisir par excellence." [François-Marie Mayeur de Saint-Paul,] *Le vol plus haut: ou l'espion des principaux théâtres de la capitale* (Memphis: Chez SINCERE, 1784), 45-6. See also Jeffrey Merrick, *Order and Disorder under the Ancien Régime*, 356-358.

[254] "Avec quels traits cette enchanteresse captive-t-elle les coeurs? Avec une figure longue & maigre; Une très-vilaine bouche; Les dents larges & déchuassées; Une peau noire & huileuse. Elle a deux beaux yeux, à la verité, & c'est en raison de ce présent de la nature que le Comte de Lauraguais disait en la voyant: *Delicta juventutis meae ne memineris, Domine*." [Mayeur de Saint-Paul,] *Le vol plus haut*, 44.

[255] Kushner, *Erotic Exchanges*, 17.

Sartine wrote: "I have to believe that these men are most interested in [Arnould] because of her talents, because I don't see anything else in her that is so attractive. I've seen her when she's getting out of bed, she has very dark, dry skin, and her mouth is always full of saliva, such that when speaking to you, she sends the cream of her speech into your face."[256]

That Arnould's love life was subject not only to public scrutiny in the form of gossip papers but also to police surveillance suggests a reframing of her romantic and artistic lives. Why would the rumored sexual activities of an opera star be of interest to the police? Nina Kushner's work on elite prostitution in Paris in the eighteenth century sheds important light on this question, demonstrating the ways in which theatrical labor and sex work were often mutually constitutive for women of the theater. The Départment des femmes galantes was created mid-century as a means of tracking the pervasive practice of mistress-keeping among Paris's wealthy in order to mitigate against potential scandal.[257] In turning to the records kept by this department, Kushner elaborates a vast world made up of *dames entretenues* (kept women) and their male patrons, and the systems of social, cultural, and sexual capital these two groups exchanged and circulated among themselves.[258] *Dames entretenues* sought to secure their place in the world by attracting the wealthiest patrons they possibly could. While beauty, charm, and a history of previous well-paying patrons were important ways in which a woman could increase her sexual capital, artistic accomplishment, particularly at the Opéra, was one of the most powerful means

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[256] "Il faut croire que ces messieurs courent après les talents de cette demoiselle, car je ne vois rien en elle qui soit si fort attrayant. Je l'ai vue au sortir de son lit, elle a la peau extrêmement noire et sèche, et a toujours la bouche pleine de salive, ce qui fait qu'en vous parlant elle vous envoie la crème de son discours au visage." 19 August 1763. Lorédan Larchey, ed., *Documents inédits sur le règne de Louis XV; ou…le journal des inspecteurs de M. le lieutenant de Police de Sartines: première série*, *1761-1764* (Brussels: E. Parent, 1863), 309.

[257] Kushner, *Erotic Exchanges*, 29.

[258] Kushner, *Erotic Exchanges*, 158-59; 187.

by which women advanced in this system. Kushner notes that the knowledge that "sexual capital accrued from membership in the Opéra was so well known, mothers wishing to establish their teenage daughters as mistresses tried to enter the girls in the Opéra school."[259] It is perhaps no coincidence, then, that one of the century's most famous mistresses was also one of "the most natural, smooth, and tender actresses who has ever appeared at the Opéra."[260]

While *dames entretenues* could increase their personal cultural and sexual capital through an institutional affiliation with the Opéra, their male patrons also benefitted from this prestige through public recognition as the supporters of talented women who performed on stage. These men accumulated social capital by "being recognized publicly as patrons of the eighteenth-century equivalent of movie stars," of whom fewer had more "star power" than Sophie Arnould.[261] Through these interlocking systems, Arnould's sexual capital was inextricable from her cultural capital as the premier soprano at the Opéra. This enmeshing of her on- and off-stage lives gives important context for the *Dialogue érotique* in the *Théâtre d'amour*, in which Arnould, performing as herself, is both a lover and a singer.

Embedded within this system of capital accumulation and exchange was the practice of gift giving between *dames entretenues* and their patrons. Gifts frequently took the form of displayable objects, such as jewelry and furniture, through which kept women could signal their sexual capital. A pair of ostentatious diamond earrings, for example, was a tangible, material indication of a woman's desirability to all who saw them, and a way of parlaying her current

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[259] Kushner, *Erotic Exchanges*, 158. Kushner estimates that "about a fifth of the kept women under police surveillance at midcentury worked in the theater," 4-5

[260] "[Arnould] est, au gré des connoisseurs, l'actrice la plus naturelle, la plus onctueuse, la plus tendre qui ait encore paru. Elle est sortie telle des mains de la nature, & son début a été un triomphe." 8 January 1762, *Mémoires secrets*, ed. by Jules Ravenel, Vol. 1, 12-13.

[261] Kushner, *Erotic Exchanges*, 187.

arrangement into a more lucrative one with a wealthier patron.[262] It is perhaps in this context that the *Théâtre d'amour* can be understood, as a gift from her patron the prince d'Hénin to enliven her *soupers*: "One was never bored at Sophie Arnould's home; one always had a good time…maybe *too* good. Seeing his love's strong penchant for galant remarks, M. d'Hénin imagined spicing up the suppers that she gave, and which he paid for, with erotic spectacles, in which the mistress of the home played the starring role."[263] Through the *Théâtre d'amour,* d'Hénin's gift brought together Arnould's most desirable quality (her talent on the lyric stage) and rendered its sexual desirability explicit. Through singing the sixteen vaudevilles of the *Dialogue érotique*, Arnould combines the desirability of her talent with an explicit eroticism as a musical means of creating and circulating desire for her among her audience.

"Dialogue érotique"

As mentioned above, de Sales references the popularity of the melody from *Mirza* in the preface to the *Dialogue érotique* being such that providing the notation was unnecessary but makes no further connections between the two works. Rather, as vaudeville authors have always done, he relies on readers to make the numerous connections between the original work and the *Dialogue* themselves. In this instance, such connections abound. Composed by François-Joseph Gossec and premiered at the Opéra 18 November 1779, the ballet *Mirza* was a ballet "in actions"

[262] Kushner, *Erotic Exchanges*, 138.

[263] "On ne s'ennuyait pas chez Sophie Arnould; on s'y amusait même beaucoup trop. Voyant le penchant determine de sa belle pour les propos galants, M. d'Hénin avait imagine de corser les soupers qu'elle donnait et qu'il payait par des spectacles érotiques dont la maîtresse de la maison interprêtait le principal role." *Théâtres clandestins*, 157-58.

that launched Gossec's career, seeing numerous performances into the nineteenth century.[264] The plot follows two men – a pirate and a French officer – on an unnamed island off the coast of North America. Mirza, a young Créole woman, is dancing at the festivities hosted by her father, the ruler of the island, when a pirate and the young French officer (Lindor) fall immediately in love with her. Lindor convinces her to meet him for a midnight rendezvous, to which she agrees. They exchange vows of love when the pirate interrupts their scene, pursued by a band of native assassins.[265] Lindor rescues the pirate, who vows never to tell of the secret tryst he stumbled upon. However, the pirate quickly grows jealous of Lindor, and attempts to abscond with Mirza. Mirza manages to escape and flees the scene, while Lindor engages the pirate in a sword fight, which culminates in the pirate being mortally wounded and falling into the sea from a high bridge. Mirza, seeing the blood in the water, fears the worst, and returns to the bridge in order to end her life and join her love, whom she believes to be drowned, only to be saved at the last second by a very alive Lindor. Mirza's father comes upon the scene, officiates their union, and a series of wedding celebrations begin.[266]

The "air" to which de Sales is referring is likely the Romance from Act II, scene 3, when Lindor and Mirza are confessing their love for one another. More significantly, it conforms to the repetitions de Sales outlines in the preface: "Each strophe of this silly erotic piece creates a dialogue, of which the male lover sings the first two lines and the female lover sings the other

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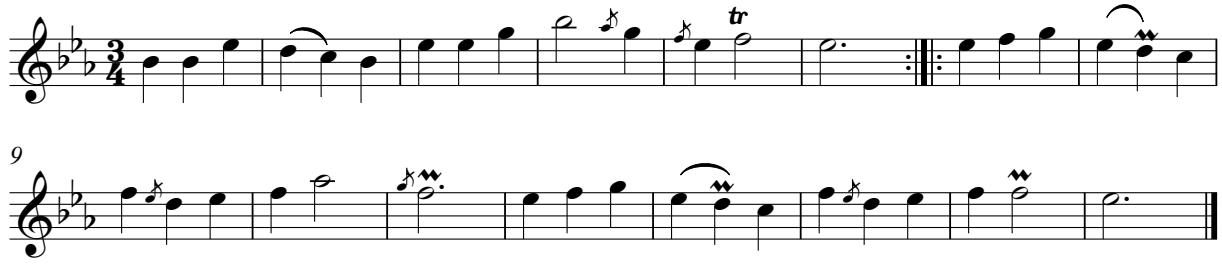
[264] Wynn, *Delisle de Sales, Théâtre d'Amour*, 182. It is important to distinguish the 1779 ballet en actions, *Mirza*, from the 1781 *La Fête de Mirza*, also written and choreographed by Maximilien Gardel, but with important differences in the plot, and with a fifth act whose music was written by Grétry, not Gossec.

[265] Depending on the version, these assassins are either "nègres" or "indigènes." See Joelle A. Meglin, "'Sauvages, Sex Roles, and Semiotics': Representations of Native Americans in the French Ballet, 1736-1837, Part One: The Eighteenth Century." *Dance Chronicle* 23, no. 2 (2000), 121-2.

[266] Alexandre Dratwicki, "Gossec et les premiers pas du ballet-pantomime français: autour du succès de *Mirza* (1779)," in Benoît Dratwicki, *François-Joseph Gossec 1734-1829* (Versailles: Centre de Musique Baroque, 2002), 104-106.

two: these two are repeated twice, according to the demands of the melody from *Mirza*, a melody known too well to notate it in a *Théâtre d'amour*."[267] The melody in the first violin line is easy to sing, with predominantly stepwise motion, or movement by thirds (Ex. 3.7).

Ex. 3.7, "Romance" from François-Joseph Gossec, *Mirza*, Act II, scene 3 (Violin I). Edition based on copy of score held at the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra, A-273 (A).



As a ballet, there were no lyrics that originally accompanied this melody; however, de Sales draws parallels between the two midnight trysts. This connection even retroactively renders explicit what audiences may have tacitly understood about Mirza and Lindor's meeting – that they were meeting in secret for sex.

The *Dialogue érotique* is a work that is self-consciously grounded in the world of the Opéra, real and fictional. De Sales takes melodic inspiration from *Mirza*, and in so doing, brings the melody's narrative associations to bear on the new narrative he has crafted. The inspiration for the plot of the *Dialogue érotique* seems to come from "true events," or at least rumors, staging a sexual encounter between the real-life opera star Sophie Arnould and her possible lover. Adding to the blurring between real-life and fiction are the pre- and postfaces that bookend the play, in which de Sales describes the circumstances of the *Dialogue*'s first performance:

[267] Delisle de Sales, *Dialogue érotique en seize couplets, Théâtre d'amour*, 327.

> The performance took place during a dinner given at Sophie Arnould's home, which I attended with the prince d'Hénin, the actress's official lover, if not her preferred one […] This dialogue was sung for the first time on a day when there was a public ball at the Opéra; almost everyone in attendance [at Arnould's dinner] dispersed around 11 pm, with the promise of reassembling around two o'clock in the morning at the ball room. […] It is important to know…that the chevalier, as it was his first encounter and he was ashamed as one is during their first time, only dared to sing the first six couplets for the crowd, where he knew no one and even disguised the names of the performers. (*Préface*, 328)

> We have seen that the first six couplets of the *dialogue érotique* [which were] sung under pseudonyms and without the pantomime which gave [the couplets] their spice, barely made an impression on the indifferent men who made up Mlle Arnould's intimate social circle. […]At the stroke of midnight, Grammont presented himself at Sophie's door, wearing not a mask but an elegant pink satin domino; a trusted maid waited for him and walked him to the dimly lit, partially-open bedroom door where, as we have seen, the actress was bathing, here the duet from the ballet *Mirza* took on a more determined character; the sixteen couplets were sung with grace by the actor, and with all skill by the actress; the pantomime in particular was carried out with ingenuity by the hero and with great audacity by the heroine… (*Postface*, 339-341)

Beginning as a concert of only the first six couplets at the beginning of the evening, the *Dialogue* sees a second performance, according to de Sales, in Arnould's room, the very setting of the

play. At such a point, does their enacting of the play constitute a "performance" any longer? Can we still call Arnould and the chevalier actors?[268] It would seem that reality and fiction collapse onto one another in this second staging, an effect that is duplicated for readers of the pre- and postfaces, for how does de Sales know how skillful the performances by the respective participants were? Unless de Sales had concealed himself in Arnould's room and witnessed the encounter, it seems that de Sales continues to blur distinctions between what he imagines and what actually happened the night of the alleged performance. He offers real people as singing characters within the narrative confines of a play, only to then mobilize the performance of the play as means to further imaginings.

But what role does melody play in de Sales's doublings? How does the singing body figure into the *Dialogue*'s narrative hall of mirrors? In crafting the "role" of Sophie Arnould, singing would play an important part in her characterization. As the famous opera diva, it was her singing and acting that launched her career, which in turn made it possible for her to attract wealthy patrons like the prince d'Hénin. It was not the arias of Gluck that Arnould sung in the *Dialogue*, however, but a simple melody that has been retexted in the style of fairground vaudeville. Such a performance scrambles genric hierarchies: an Opéra production (*Mirza*) is turned into a fairground entertainment (vaudeville), starring Arnould in a singing role that does not take full advantage of the capabilities of her voice. The mixing of expectations could itself have been a source of tremendous pleasure and entertainment, producing community by reinforcing the boundaries of who is "in on" the various jokes. That the role of Mirza was created for Marie-Madeleine Guimard, in whose *théâtre de société* this chapter began, adds further

[268] Marie-Emmanuelle Plagnol-Diéval, "Puissances du mâle: le *Théâtre d'amour* de Delisle de Sales," in Marie-Emmanuelle Plagnol-Diéval and Katherine Astbury, eds., *Le Mâle en France, 1715-1830: Réprésentations de la masculinité* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2004), 152.

layers of meaning. Both women were famous for their tremendous talents on stage at the Académie Royale de Musique, as well as for the rumors that surrounded their love lives. Both were also known for running *théâtres de sociétés*, and were perhaps among the few women of the theater who had the means to do so.[269] As in *L'Eunuque*, vaudeville is the chosen vehicle for delivering characters' sexuality, while also creating humor, though in distinctly different manners. In *L'Eunuque*, humor is created in the aesthetic tension between the sound of the melody and the message that same melody conveys; but in the *Dialogue*, the humor is created through generic tension, with a melody from the Opéra used to create lowly vaudevilles, sung by the age's greatest soprano.

Théâtres de société were sites for informal, amateur music making that has been largely overlooked in histories of eighteenth-century music. Such oversights stem in part from the difficulty of tracing the practice itself, where firsthand accounts of the performances are rare, and records are incomplete. The best sources we have for tracing private, in-home entertainments are often the published forms of the entertainments themselves – collections of plays in which we find reflected the tastes and inclinations of those who commissioned and performed them. Studying collections like the *Théâtre de campagne* and the *Théâtre d'amour* reveals an ongoing taste for comedy and parody whose roots stretch back to the early days of the Italian players on the fairground stages. This heritage is reflected not only in farcical, erotic subject matter of the plays, but also in their inclusion of vaudevilles.

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[269] Nina Kushner, *Erotic exchanges*, 229; See also Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Steven Kale, *French Salons: High Society and Political Sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

Rather than operating in a separate realm from official theater, unofficial *théâtres de société* were part of a larger theatrical ecosystem through which playwrights and actors could freely circulate. There was tremendous variety within this subset of Parisian theatrical life, and while some theaters gravitated towards an emergent canon, others took a different tack. Because society theaters were not focused on selling tickets, but rather on facilitating private entertainment, they could be more idiosyncratic in their repertoire, reflecting the interests and tastes of the individuals who ran them. This could translate into a more direct engagement with sexual themes, again as a result of the relative autonomy these private theaters enjoyed. The *Mémoires secrets* reported on scandalous or illicit performances at certain (in)famous *théâtres de société*, and while the police may have threatened to intervene (as was the case with Mademoiselle Guimard), it seems those threats were empty. Plays like *L'Eunuque* and the *Dialogue érotique* diverged from official theatrical practice in their frank treatment of sexuality, which engendered an additional difference: their reliance on vaudeville as an important medium for articulating these treatments. Given the vaudeville's long associations with illicit sexuality by this point, its appearance in performances makes sense, even as the genre of vaudeville itself was largely disappearing on the official stages.

Taking *L'Eunuque* and the *Dialogue érotique* as case studies in how vaudeville was used in *théâtre de société* performances reveals several important points. First, these plays demonstrate that in spite of its apparently dwindling importance on the public stages, vaudeville retained a certain cachet among audiences. More specifically, the genre continued to be an important resource for the production of meaning in theatrical works, particularly when it came to issues of sexuality. In looking through these examples, it becomes clear that eighteenth-century readers and performers were obliged to perform a significant amount of musical and

mnemonic labor when engaging with these texts, since they boast large melodic repertoires that are cycled through quickly. Much of the humor relied on performers and audiences being able to recognize connections between a *timbre* and a new text almost instantly. From the presence of vaudevilles in these works, we can infer that many of these texts, even the more salacious, were likely performed in some capacity, whether aloud or virtually. These plays also demonstrate the range in tone that might accompany performances. While some theaters were focused on only that which was morally edifying, others explored the limits of what might be legally tolerated.

Chapter 4

Vaudeville and Obscenity under the Revolution

Up to this point, I have considered the vaudeville's transformation from a predominantly live, performed song genre in the earlier half of the 18th century to a more textually-based, performance-ambivalent genre in the latter half. Looking at works intended for the private *théâtres de société* and the vaudevilles within them highlights this transition while also revealing continuities with past fairground practices. The strongest thread of this continuity is the vaudeville's enduring close association with sexuality, delivered in bawdy or obscene terms – a connection developed in the early decades of the century at the fairground theaters. The *Théâtre de campagne* and *Théâtre d'amour* plays can conceivably work as both scripts for live performance and as reading material to stimulate the imagination (among other things). The presence of vaudevilles, however, demands that these possibilities be held simultaneously, that even for "silently read" texts, melody has a key role to play.

With the fall of the Bastille, a new twist was added to this mixture – Revolutionary politics. Whereas *L'Eunuque* and *La Dialogue érotique* were presumably private entertainments for wealthy audiences, the texts under consideration in this chapter were meant to circulate widely and to be accessible to anyone.[270] Formally, they bear much in common with the earlier

[270] Lynn Hunt, "Pornography and the French Revolution," in *Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800* (New York: Zone Books, 1993), 302-305.

théâtre de société plays, using the genre of *comédie en vaudeville* or *opéra-comique*, but rather than eunuchs and opera stars, the Revolutionary vaudeville plays went after real, living political figures. The most common target by far was Queen Marie-Antoinette, though politicians and aristocrats also frequently appeared as characters in these works. Under the *ancien régime*, an entire branch of the French government existed to prevent the dissemination of such subversive materials; however, the provisional government established after the fall of the Bastille in 1789 never managed to establish new censorship procedures. As a result, satirical print exploded, and the cartoons that emerged in this climate have furnished some of the most indelible images of the Revolution to this day.[271] Many of the satirical works that appeared during this period fall under the modern category of obscenity through their use of coarse or vulgar language for primary obscenities (relating to human sexual organs and/or reproduction), and their obsession with documenting or exposing the sex lives of the rich and powerful.

Obscenity was an important, even dangerous tool in *ancien régime* France. In her study on literary obscenity, Joan DeJean has pinpointed the late seventeenth century as a period when not only what was considered "obscene" was in flux, but also when the consequences for producing obscenity changed. By focusing on Molière, DeJean shows that it was during this time that "obscenity" came to specifically designate representations of sexuality, and that such representations needed to be censored and kept from a larger public.[272] Both Lynn Hunt and Robert Darnton have also identified the significance of obscene literary materials in furthering

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[271] J.P. Pittion, "Introduction," in *Taking Liberties: Satirical Print of the French Revolution* (Dublin: French Nicentenary Committee, 1989), np; Hunt, 310-312

[272] Joan DeJean, *The Reinvention of Obscenity: Sex, Lies, and Tabloids in Early Modern France* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 18-19.

political agendas.[273] Hunt in particular has analyzed the efficacy of the sexually explicit mode in undermining enemies through the way in which it draws an equivalence between one's sexual practices and one's morality. It was widely understood that one necessarily followed from the other, and that if a person's sexual practices were perceived as "corrupt," it indicated that their morals were corrupted as well. The "depraved" sexual acts one could be accused of ranged from supposedly-celibate priests maintaining mistresses, to extra-marital and same-sex affairs, as in the long list of men and women Marie-Antoinette was believed to have bedded, either for political gain or in an effort to appease her insatiable sexual appetite. For those in power, such as monarchs or priests, it was expected that their morals be uncorrupted; therefore, if one's sexuality was attacked, the two related pillars of morality and authority would come toppling down with it.[274]

Such logic was not new in 1789 – similar kinds of attacks had been made against Louis XIV and Louis XV.[275] However, such attacks reached a new fever pitch when it came to Marie-Antoinette. As queen and mother figure to the country, she was a highly public woman during a period of growing unease and suspicion around women occupying positions of power.[276] Nor was her position helped by the fact that she was Austrian royalty: in the eyes of many, this made her a sworn enemy of France, whose marriage to the dauphin had been brokered by an unpopular

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[273] See Hunt, *Invention of Pornography*, and Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996).

[274] Hunt, *Invention of Pornography*, 306-308.

[275] Robert Darnton, *Devil in the Holy Water, or the Art of Slander from Louis XIV to Napoleon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvannia Press, 2010), 360-374.

[276] See Maza, "The Diamond Necklace Affair, 1785-1786," in *Private Lives, Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 168-174; Chantal Thomas, *The Wicked Queen: The Origins of the Myth of Marie Antoinette*, trans. by Julie Rose (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 21-26.

minister who was dismissed from court soon after her arrival.[277] She was despised by the common people for her extravagant spending, and viewed with suspicion as an Austrian spy by those at court. Even in her new family, she represented an obstacle to the succession of Louis's jealous and ambitious brothers. The queen was surrounded by enemies who often turned, anonymously, to the press to air their suspicions and grievances. Emerging from these smear campaigns are the works under consideration here: *Les Fouteries chantantes* (1791), *L'Autrichienne en goguettes, ou l'orgie royale* (1789), and *Le Branle des Capucins, ou le 1001e tour de Marie-Antoinette* (1791).

The primary objective of *Les Fouteries chantantes* is to offer up the imagined sexual lives of the aristocracy, the clergy, and monarchist politicians to general scorn. A combination of visual and musical portraits work together to craft fictionalized versions of these individuals that tautologically confirm what their political enemies suspected all along. Through a series of vaudevilles whose subject matter and language are worthy of Rabelais, a justificatory narrative emerges for why these public figures should be reviled. Melody, importantly, plays a crucial role in imbuing these brief stories with dense meaning through intertextual reference to contemporary *opéra-comique* and familiar folk tunes.

What sets *L'Autrichienne* and *Le Branle* apart from the many other political satires like them is their genre. They are *comédies en vaudevilles*, in which the main characters are the king and queen of France. These two are usually joined by the queen's close friend and royal governess the duchesse de Polignac, and the king's younger brother, the comte d'Artois. Together, they sing vaudevilles throughout both of these works, an act unbecoming of royalty

[277] Thomas, *The Wicked Queen*, 108-111.

given the genre's enduring low social connotations.[278] These choices alone, of writing plays where the ruling king and queen are main characters, and in which they sing vaudevilles, would be subversive enough. But both take this a step further by turning sexual rumors into central plot points. In *L'Autrichienne*, it is the *raison d'être* for the text, and though the play ends with a condemnation of the characters' actions, the sustained attention to and deep description of those actions seems to undermine such moralizing. Though tamer in its language, *Le Branle des Capucins* still relies heavily on a reader's familiarity with the rumors around Marie-Antoinette's sexual life and their specific treatment in the earlier *L'Autrichienne*, with the plot centering around the queen and her friends "dancing a branle" around a sleeping Louis XVI.

The use of the royal family as main characters and the inclusion of vaudevilles as a mode of expression complicates more traditional understandings of dramatic texts as scripts for performance. With no documented performance history, and practical limitations imposed by the sexually explicit stage directions, plays like *L'Autrichienne* and *Le Branle des capucins* occupy a liminal space between a text for reading and a script for performance. It may not have been practical or possible to mount a full staging of the play, but individual vaudevilles could be excised and circulated au/orally. Even in the instance of someone sitting and silently reading, the presence of vaudevilles in both works adds a new dimension to the mode of interaction, that of a reader-singer *hearing* the melody as they interact with the text. Functioning not just as scripts for performance, the inclusion of vaudevilles in Revolutionary satire played an important role in constructing perceptions of the royal family among a more general populace. As in the *théâtre de société* plays, the choice of *timbre* in these texts communicated information to reader-singers

[278] Doe, "French Opera at the Italian Theater," 54-58.

about how they should understand these figures as *actual people*, not only as fictional representations. Like the obscene drawings and fictional diaries about famous aristocrats, melody also functioned to condition understandings of political enemies – understandings that for many, had deadly consequences.

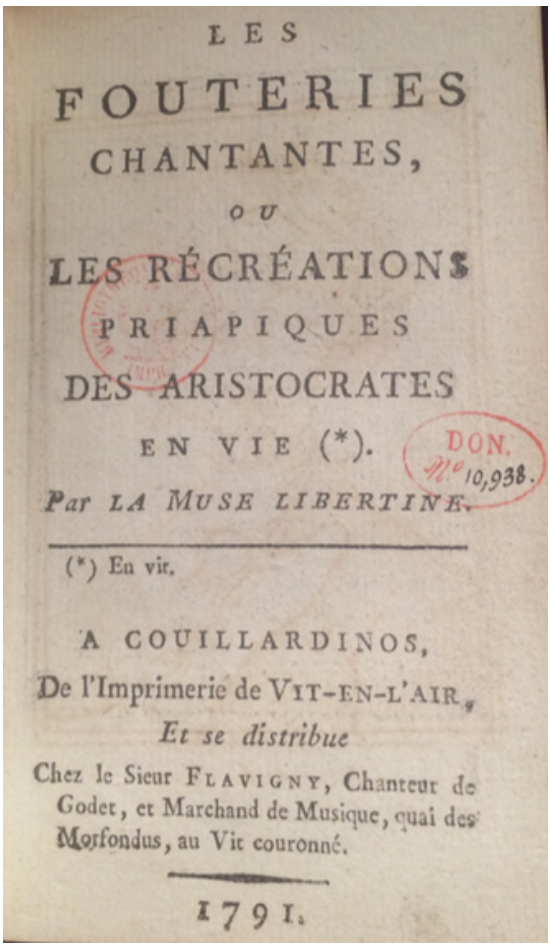
One-track Minds: *Les Fouteries chantantes*

Les Fouteries chantantes, ou les récréations priapiques des aristocrats en vie, par la muse de libertins* (1791) is a 48-page collection of twelve vaudevilles (including an introductory *pot-pourri*), and an "Advice to my lewd friend" (Conseils à mon ami paillard) in verse not set to music. Only one extant copy exists and is held at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in the *Archives d'Enfer* collection. It has been lavishly bound in red leather, decorated with stamped gold patterns along the inner edges of the covers. The title page is fanciful, offering "Ballstown" (Couillardinos) as the place of publication, and "Dick-in-the-air" (Vit-en-l'air) as the printer. A "Mr. Flavigny" is named as a distributer and seller of the collection. He is described on the title page as a "singer" or possibly seller of pots or jars (chanteur de godets). He is also named as a music seller, located on the Quai des Morfondus, known today as the Quai d'Horloge, which runs along the northwestern bank of the Ile de la Cité between the Pont au Change and the Pont Neuf. While the name might have belonged to an actual music seller, and the Quai des Morfondus was certainly real, the veracity of the location is undermined by the sign under which "Flavigny" sells his wares: the "Crowned Member" (le Vit Couronné) (Fig. 4.1).

The title page is accompanied, on the facing page, by an engraving, which plays directly with the genital-obsessed humor of the publication information. The image is a portrait of a man in profile, wearing a cutaway coat over a waistcoat and cravat, the dress of a person of wealth. A

caption at the bottom of the image confirms this status: “A Lawyer for the Clergy” (L’Avocat du clergé). This is no ordinary portrait, however, and certainly not meant to flatter the subject. It is, rather, a tête composée in the tradition of Arcimboldo, though in place of seasonal fruits, the subject’s portrait is composed of phalluses and naked human forms, some in the process of copulating. He exhales a cloud of smoke after having puffed on a phallus pipe that hangs from his mouth, itself formed from yet another phallus and a foot (Fig. 4.2). The seven other engravings in the collection are in the same style, though of different figures, sometimes specific, sometimes generic: the Comte de Mirabeau, the Cardinal de Rohan, Minister of War Jean Frédéric de la Tour-du-Pin Gouvernet, Jacques-Antoine Marie de Cazalès, Cardinal Jean-Sifrein Maury, priests who refused to pledge their allegiance to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, and the duchesse de Polignac. The portraits, made up of members and naked forms, seem to have been the inspiration for the pun embedded in the collection’s title, where “vie” (from “récréations priapiques des aristocrates en vie”) is a homonym for “vit,” slang for penis.

Fig. 4.3, *Timbres* in the Preface to *Les Fouteries chantantes*
“On compterait les Diamans”
“Du haute en bas”
“Des Folies d’Espagnes”
“Lenturelu”
“Ce mouchoir, belle Raimonde”
“Eh! j’y bien pris du plaisir”
“D’un bouquet de romarin”


LES
FOUTERIES
CHANTANTES,
OU
LES RÉCRÉATIONS
PRIAPIQUES
DES ARISTOCRATES
EN VIE (*).
Par LA MUSE LIBERTINE.
(*) En vir.
A COUILLARDINOS,
De l'Imprimerie de VIT-EN-L'AIR,
Et se distribue
Chez le Sieur FLAVIGNY, Chanteur de Godet, et Marchand de Musique, quai des Morfondus, au Vit couronné.
1791.

Figs. 4.1 and 4.2. Left, Anonymous, Arcimboldo-style portrait of an aristocrat; Right, Title page of *Les Fouteries chantantes*. BN Enfer 648.

Opening Pot-Pourri

The collection opens with a preface *en pot-pourri*, or in a series of vaudevilles, where the text is given in couplets with a new *timbre* every four to eight lines. In this preface, seven different *timbres* appear over the course of three pages, with the *timbre* in close relation to the text, commenting on or playing off of the content, and changing to suit the verses (Fig. 4.3). "Du haute en bas," "Folies d'Espagnes," and "Lenturelu" are old melodies, going back at least as far as the beginning of the eighteenth century, and were used frequently in fairground

productions.[279] Others, like "Eh! j'y bien pris du plaisir" and "D'un bouquet de romarin," were also known by other names, or *faux timbres*. In the case of "Eh! j'y bien pris du plaisir," the 1827 *Clé de Caveau* cross-lists this *timbre* with "L'autre jour dans la prairie" and "En revenant de la ville."[280]

The first two lines of the collection's opening vaudeville, "Que chacun chante en ces bas lieux," is an invocation to sing and make merry: "Let all sing in these low-down places/The Vaudeville is made to please." Despite the emphasis on sexual humor in the collection's opening page, the beginning of the volume refocuses reader-singers on the genre, framing the subsequent pleasures as a result of the vaudevilles themselves, whose function is to please. This call to sing, however, is not long dwelled upon; the narrator quickly jumps back to the subject matter announced by the collection's title, announcing sexual activity as their main business. The coarse language and sexual subject matter of the vaudeville contrasts with the lengthy, refined melody to which it is set (Ex. 4.1). The origins of "On compterait les diamants" are uncertain, but its length, less repetitive structure, brief modulation to a distantly-related minor, equal phrase lengths, and figurations resolving up to the tonic third all seem to indicate roots in an instrumental tradition, and not fairground or folk song.[281] In her study of the accompanying images, Lynn Hunt describes their message as "the 'low' lurk[ing] behind the supposedly high

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[279] Dates and frequency drawn from relevant entries at Theaville: s.v. "Du haute en bas," "Folies d'Espagnes," and "Lenturelu."

[280] Pierre Capelle, *La Clé du caveau*, 3rd edition (Paris: Janet & Cotelle, 1827), 17, 27. Entry for "Et j'y bien pris la plaisir" directs readers to see "L'autre jour dans la prairie," whose listing directs readers back to "En revenant de la ville."

[281] "On compterait les diamants" is cross-listed with another timbre, "Les Hommes perdent la raison" in Claude LaForte, *Catalogue de la chanson folklorique française*, Vol. VI, 218. That it does not appear in the Theaville database is also a strong indication that this is a late eighteenth-century *timbre* and thus does not appear in either the *Théâtre de la Foire* or *Parodies Nouveau du Théâtre-Italien* collections from which Theaville draws much of its data.

head or mind of these figures."[282] The accompanying melody plays with this mismatch of "high" and "low" as well. In the meeting of obscene linguistic content delivered via elegant melodic trappings, the opening vaudeville offers an aural correlate to the title page, in which a wealthy, powerful man is shown to be, literally, "full of it." The disjunction between surface/appearances and content is thematized, both visually and aurally, throughout *Fouteries chantantes*.

The remaining vaudevilles of the *pot-pourri* follow much the same formula, though the mismatch between musical setting and textual content is less pronounced. The second vaudeville, to the tune of "Du haut en bas," draws some of its humor from the name of the *timbre*. The "up and down" of the title is mimicked in the melody itself, with a motif of rising and falling neighbor tones around the tonic that recurs with each statement of the refrain (Ex. 4.2). An old melody, the use of "Du haut en bas" in this instance emphasizes the coarseness of the content, contrasting with the ironic juxtaposition at work in "On compterait les diamants": "Up and down/While I root through her comely charms/Up and down/In fucking I produce sighs."

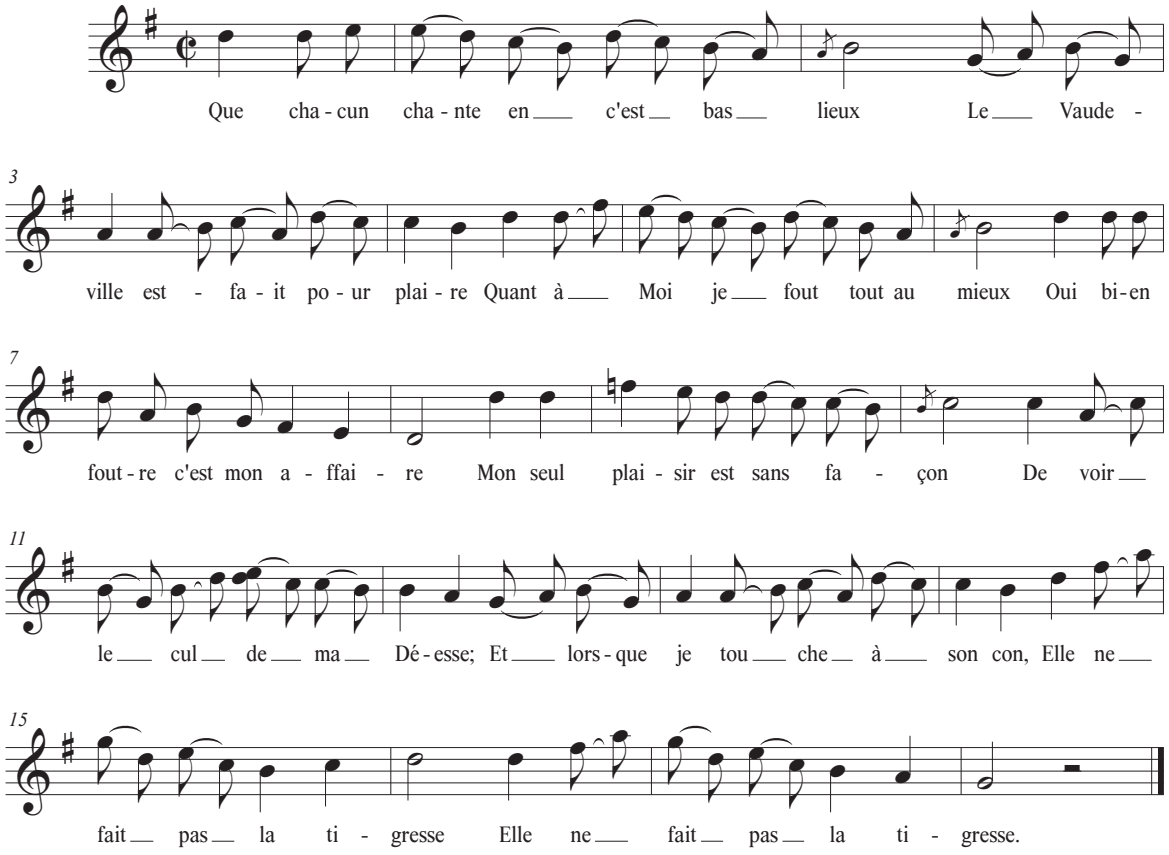
Over the course of the prefatory *pot-pourri*, the author invokes an aristocrat, a "Robinocrat,"[283] and clergymen, the narrator's primary rhetorical strategy establishes himself as one who "knows how to fuck," while the others go about it in "funny ways." These various targets are all unified in their perceived alignment with the political right. Just as the engravings undermine the authority of their subjects through their obscene construction, the vaudevilles' implications that the figures under discussion are incapable of heteronormative, penetrative

[282] Hunt, "Pornography and the French Revolution," *Invention of Obscenity*, 321.

[283] "Robinocrat" is likely derived from the term *gens de robe* or more colloquially *robins*, all terms for the class of nobles who came by their titles through careers in finance or the law. This contrasted with the much older *gens d'épée*, or nobles whose position derived from military service. See Chartier, *Cultural Uses of Print*, 192-193.

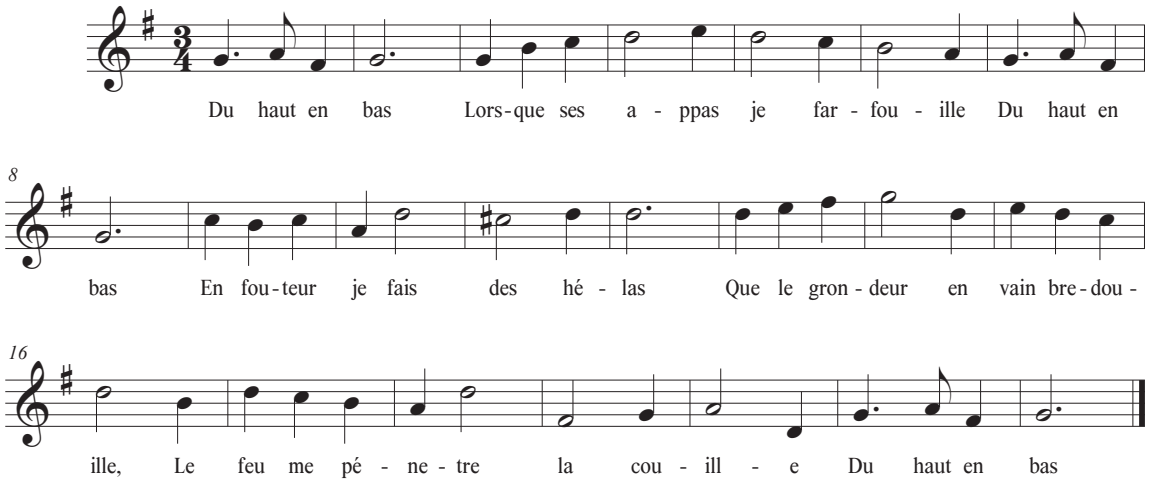
intercourse is meant to demonstrate their unfitness to govern.[284] Unlike the engravings, however, the vaudevilles, once memorized, were not as easy to confiscate and suppress.

Ex. 4.1, "On compterait les diamants" (edition based on *Clé du Caveau*, 3rd edition, no. 423)



[284] There is a vast literature on the frequent linking of non-heterosexual sexual practices with social or political corruption both during the ancien régime and in the decades after. Most relevant to this topic are Thomas, *Wicked Queen*, 119-124; Jeffrey Merrick "Sexual Politics and Public Disorder in Late Eighteenth-Century France: The *Mémoires Secrets* and the *Correspondance Secrète*," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1 no. 1 (July 1990): 68-84.

Ex. 4.2, “Du haut en bas” (edition based on Theaville)



Les Fouteries chantantes, Preface	
Air: *On compterait les Diamans*	
Que chacun chante en ces bas lieux;	Let everyone sing in these low places;
Le Vaudeville est fait pour plaire:	The Vaudeville is made to please:
Quant à moi, je fouts tout au mieux.	As for me, I think fucking is best.
Oui, bien foutre, c’est mon affaire.	Yes, a good fucking, that’s what I’m after.
Mon seul plaisir est, sans façon,	My only pleasure, without a doubt,
De voir le cul de ma Déesse;	Is to see the ass my of Goddess;
Et lorsque je touche à son con,	And while I touch her cunt,
Elle ne fait pas la tigresse. (bis)	She doesn’t seem to mind. (repeat)
Air: *Du haut en bas*	
Du haut en bas,	Up and down,
Loresque ses appas je farfouille	While I root through her comely charms
Du haut en bas,	Up and down,
En fouteur je fais des hélas!	In fucking I produce sighs!
Que le grondeur en vain bredouille,	While the scolder mumbles in vain,
Le feu me pénètre la couille	Fire penetrates my balls
Du haut en bas.	Up and down.
[…]	[…]
Air: *Eh! j’y pris bien du plaisir*	
Oui, vive un homme d’église,	Yes, long live a man of the church
Quand il a la pine en main!	When he has his member in hand!
Mais ils ont drôle de guise	But they’ve got a funny way
Pour travailler leur engin.	Of making their tool work.
L’un en tettons foutimasse;	One goes to work at breasts;
L’autre en cul, c’est sa façon.	The other’s way is by the ass.
Moi, quand je fouts une Garce;	When I fuck a whore;
Je vise tout droit au con.	I go right for the cunt.

"Foutre et Boire": Ultraroyalists and their anthems

The first full vaudeville, "Fuck and Drink, the Motto of Mirabeau the Barrel," sets its satirical sights on André Boniface de Mirabeau, brother of the politician Honoré Gabriel de Mirabeau. André served as a deputy representing the Limoges region at the Estates General of 1789, and was a staunch counter-revolutionary. The *timbre* for his vaudeville,"Que le Sultan Saladin," comes from the closing of Act I of André Grétry's *opéra-comique*, *Richard Coeur-de-Lion* (1783). The choice is fitting: performed in the opera by Blondel, the companion and minstrel to the titular King Richard, it is meant as a drinking song, a complement to the motto attributed to Mirabeau and his accompanying caricature (Fig. 4.4). "Que le Sultan Saladin" features a wide range, with repeated octave leaps midway through, and leaps in the final phrase spanning an athletic tenth (Ex. 4.3). The minor mode gives way to a contrasting B section in the relative major where the refrain is repeated.

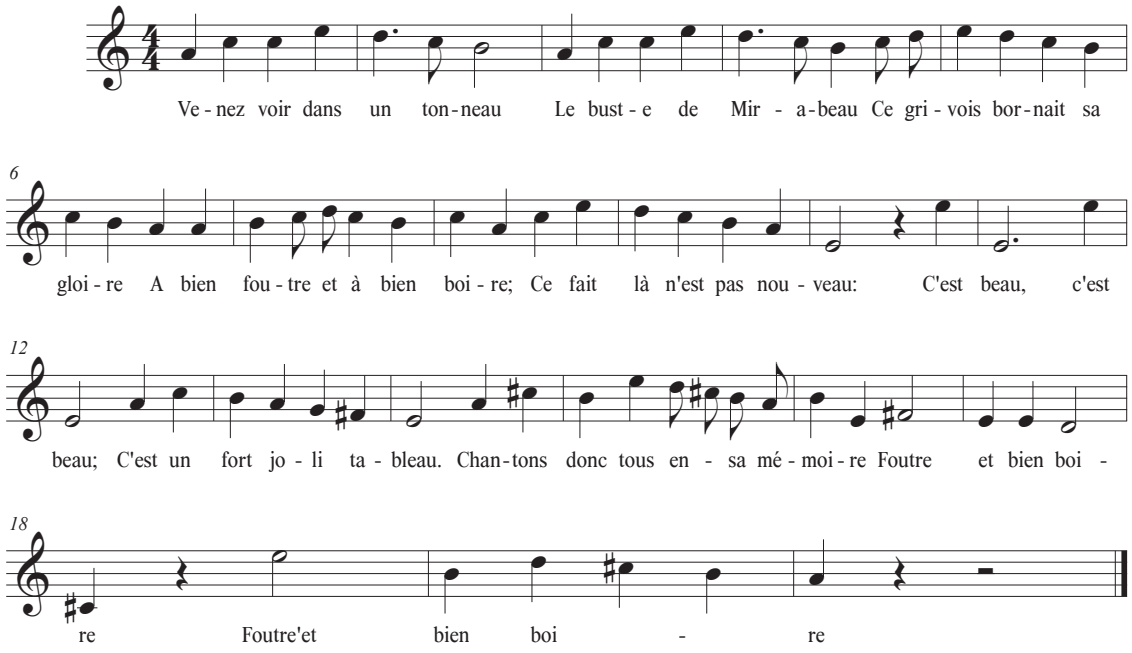
"Foutre et Boire" is a powerful example of the Russian nesting doll system of reference that animates vaudeville practice throughout the eighteenth century. At the local level, the original text, written by Michel-Jean Sedaine, offers a clear inspiration for the sensual exploits attributed to Mirabeau in *Fouteries*. The drinking song tells the tale of the Sultan Saladin gathering a group of young girls together in his garden in order to while away the morning hours. The narrator, however, "agrees with Grégoire: I prefer to drink."[285] "Grégoire" is likely a reference to yet *another* vaudeville, "Quand la mer rouge apparut." The choice of "Que le Sultan Saladin," with its embedded oblique reference to "Quand la mer rouge apparut," creates a pile-on effect, redoubling the force of the accusation that Mirabeau was a drunkard. In performance, too,

[285] "Moi je pense comme Grégoire/J'aime mieux Boire." André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry, *Richard Coeur-de-Lion: Opéra-comique en trois actes* (Paris: Heugel, 1874), 58-68.

one can aurally conjure the sound of drinking, of straining the voice (with the help of some wine) to make those difficult leaps.

Fig. 4.4, Portrait of the "Vi..Com..de Mirabeau"

Ex. 4.3, “Que le Sultan Saladin”[286]



While many *timbres* focus on a love of wine, the choice of a melody from *Richard Coeur-de-Lion* does not seem arbitrary, especially given the subject of the satire. André, unlike his more famous older brother, had been opposed to the Revolution from its beginning, and was a contributor to the pro-royalist periodical *Les Actes des Apôtres*. By June of 1790, he had emigrated to Switzerland, and established there a “Black Legion” of other *émigrés* French officers with the goal of coming to the king’s aid and reversing the tide of the Revolution.[287] This desire to rescue the king from the clutches of his enemies is exactly what animates the character

[286] Edition based on André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry, *Richard Coeur-de-Lion: Opéra-comique en trois actes* (Paris: Heugel, 1874), 58-68.

[287] William Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 302.

Blondel in *Richard Coeur-de-lion*, who has wandered Europe disguised as a blind musician in order to determine where King Richard has been imprisoned. The opera's most famous number, "O Richard, ô mon Roi" had been adopted as a de facto royalist anthem as early as 1790 in response to the ubiquitous singing of the Revolutionary "Ça ira." In describing the emergence of this aria as a pro-monarchist rallying cry, Laura Mason points out that "[r]oyalists who sang *O Richard*…were expressing their conviction that the king was being held hostage by the Revolution."[288] The choice of "Que le Sultan Saladin," then, brings with it not only the expected jokes about drinking and sexual appetites, but also, in drawing from a politically contentious work like *Richard*, more serious accusations against Mirabeau as a traitor and enemy to the Revolution.

"Un collier pour foutre un con": Rohan and the Diamond Necklace Affair

The resonances of "Quand la mer rouge apparut" in "Que le Sultan Saladin" echo across the pages into the second vaudeville, which takes "Quand la mer rouge apparut" as its melody. Titled "Precious [or Costly] Fuckeries, or A Necklace for Fucking a Cunt," this vaudeville revisits the infamous Diamond Necklace Affair of 1785, involving Marie-Antoinette, the striving courtier Cardinal Louis de Rohan-Soubise, and the con artist Jeanne la Motte (rendered in the vaudeville as "La Mothe").[289] Though from a poor family, La Motte successfully inserted herself into Paris's wealthy circles by claiming to be a descendent of the ancient Valois royal line and a

[288] Mason, *Singing the French Revolution*, 52.

[289] The following summary is based on that found in the relevant chapter of Sarah Maza's *Private Lives, Public Affairs: The Cause Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 183-188. See also Frances Mossiker, *The Queen's Necklace* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961) and Sarah Maza, "The Diamond Necklace Affair Revisited: The Case of the Disappearing Queen," in *Eroticism and the Body Politic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 63-89.

relative of the queen, and in this way was able to extract favors and money to move through society's highest echelons. It was through this already elaborate con that La Motte met her greatest mark, the Cardinal Rohan. La Motte devised a plan to take advantage of both the cardinal's great wealth and his desire for advancement at court, where he believed the queen was directly responsible for preventing him from occupying a higher office. Claiming to be a cousin to the queen, La Motte convinced Rohan to write letters pleading his case, which La Motte would deliver. In response, forged letters in the queen's hand convinced Rohan he was making progress, culminating in La Motte's orchestrating a midnight meeting between the gullible Rohan and "Marie-Antoinette"—in truth, a young woman (likely a prostitute) who La Motte had found in the Palais-Royal who bore a passing resemblance to the queen.[290] Through the use of this lookalike queen, La Motte convinced the Cardinal that his efforts had not been in vain, and leveraged this new trust into a more daring effort: a heist.

In 1772, Louis XV had commissioned a fabulous diamond necklace for his titled mistress, Madame du Berry. Upon its completion, however, the cost was so high that the King declined to purchase it. The jewelers Boehmer and Bassange attempted to sell it to Louis XVI as a gift to Marie-Antoinette, but he too was uninterested, and the queen never heard a word about it. The combination of two jewelers anxious to sell an expensive piece and a Cardinal eager to impress and please the queen is exactly what La Motte needed to pull off her new plot. La Motte convinced Rohan that, were he to purchase and gift the necklace to the queen, his fortunes at court would be secured. He jumped at the chance. A forged purchase order and the necklace were given to Rohan on 1 February 1785; that night, a "valet" for the queen arrived to deliver the

[290] Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy*, 247-8.

necklace to the palace and arrange for payments from Rohan. The valet, of course, worked for La Motte, and the necklace never made it to the queen. Instead, its 647 precious stones were removed and sold in various black markets across Paris and London.[291] Everything had gone according to plan, until Boehmler and Bassange, who had still not received payment, sent a note to Marie-Antoinette inquiring about the newest addition to her jewelry collection. The queen, of course, had no idea what they were referring to. Things quickly unraveled. Rohan was arrested 15 August 1785 as he was about to perform services at the Royal Chapel of Versailles; La Motte was apprehended soon after and a trial was quickly underway.

The significance of this particular scandal to the shift in public opinion against Marie-Antoinette in particular, and the monarchy in general, cannot be overstated. The series of assumptions about the queen that emerged as part of the public discourse on the *affaire du collier* underpin the logic and humor of "Un collier pour foutre un con," without which the vaudeville becomes at best smut, at worst unintelligible. The queen ostensibly had no involvement with this case; and yet, it was her reputation that emerged from the affair most harmed. The reasons for this collateral damage are complex, and to address each would be beyond the bounds of this study.[292] For understanding "Un collier pour foutre un con," the interpretive lynchpin seems to lay in Rohan's deception. Did La Motte's scheme work because a prostitute was able to so convincingly reproduce the queen's voice and mannerisms? If yes, this would have reflected poorly on the queen. Or was it because the queen was understood to be loose enough in her morals and conduct that it never occurred to Rohan to doubt whether he was really in the presence of the queen? Though his eventual formal charge was for "criminal temerity," Rohan

[291] Mossiker, *Queen's Necklace*, 197-235; Maza, "The Diamand Necklace Affair," 184.

[292] Many of them are articulated in Maza, *Private Lives, Public Affairs*, 185-187.

was acquitted by the Paris Parlement in May 1786, effectively shifting the blame for the confusion off of the cardinal and onto the queen, whose reputation never recovered.

By the time *Fouteries chantantes* was published in 1791, public opinion had long been firmly turned against the queen, but five years after the fact, the Diamond Necklace Affair was still a relevant cultural touchstone worthy of inclusion in this vaudeville collection. Readers of *Fouteries* would have been well acquainted with all of the sensational details of the case from the many trial briefs published during and after the case. These texts helped fuel the surge of anti-Marie-Antoinette pamphlets that offered fanciful and often sexually explicit depictions of what it was thought *really* happened the night Rohan and the queen "met."[293] It is in this tradition that "Un collier pour foutre un con" belongs.

"Fouteries Précieuse et bien chère"	
Fouterie Précieuse et bien chère Ou Un collier pour foutre un con CHANSON SERIEUSE Air: *Quand la Mer rouge apparut* D'un Cardinal trop fameux J'offre ici l'histoire; Qu'on traita tout comme un gueux, Au fort de sa gloire: Le sujet? on le sait bien; C'est que le bougre, en [un?] vaurien, De ma ma ma ma, De rie rie rie rie, De ma ma, De rie rie, Marie-Antoinette Voulait la conquête.	A precious and costly fucking Or A necklace for fucking a cunt SERIOUS SONG I offer here the story Of a too-famous cardinal; Let us treat him as a scoundrel, To the benefit of his glory: The subject? We know it well; That bugger, a good for nothing, […] Wanted to conquer Marie-Antoinette

[293] Examples of these pamphlets can be found in Hector Fleischmann, *Les pamphlets libertins contre Marie-Antoinette* (Reprint: Orthez, France: Futur Luxe Nocturne, 2011), 111-141. For more on the various trial briefs, see Maza, *Private Lives, Public Affairs*, 176-177; 190-203.

Avait-il tort ou raison?	Was he right or was he wrong?
Comme chacun pense,	As everyone thought,
Antoinette avait un con	Antoinette had a cunt
Digne d'Eminence:	Worthy of His Eminence:
Rohan, tel qu'il est décrit,	Rohan, as he's described,
Possédait un bon gros vit,	Possessed a massive member,
Vit qua qua qua qua,	[…]
Vit ré ré ré ré	
[…]	
Vit à la Françoise,	A French-style member
De taille bourgeoise.	Of a bourgeois size.
Ne songeant qu'au doux plaisir	Only thinking of the sweet pleasure
De foutre la Reine,	Of fucking the queen,
Tourmenté par ce desir,	Tormented by this desire,
Il était en peine,	He was in pain,
Et disait, dans ce besoin:	And saying, while in need:
Employons quelque moyen.	Let's find some way
Pour lui trou trou trou,	For him to
Pour lui ser ser ser	[…]
[…]	
Lui trouser la cotte,	For him to rustle a skirt,
Il choisit la Mothe.	He chose la Motte.
Cette gueuse sans façon;	At this news, this harlot,
A cette nouvelle,	Quite simply
Voulut de ce royal con,	Wanted to be the madame
Être maquerelle,	Of this royal cunt.
A Rohan elle prédit,	To Rohan she promised
Qu'il amuserait son vit;	He would amuse his member;
Que fla fla fla fla,	[…]
Que me me me me,	
[…]	
Que flame si belle,	That such a beautiful flame
Était bagatelle.	Would be a trifle.
Le paillard déjà croyait	The debauched man already believed
Branler Antoinette,	He'd screwed Antoinette,
Et qu'une Reine voudrait	And that a Queen would want
Tâter sa roupette;	To feel his balls;
L'agente par un collier,	With a necklace the agent
Fit un tour de son métier,	[Made the rounds of his profession,
Qui, dans un ca ca,	And who […]
Dans un chot chot,	
[…]	

Dans un cachot sombre Le fit mettre à l'ombre.	In a dark dungeon Threw him into the shadows.
Quand Rohan se vit enclos Dans cette bastille, Ayant son oeil à mi-clos, Bandait-il, le drille? Il disait en vrai couillon: Au cachot pour foutre un con! Mais un beau beau beau, Mais un con con con, […]	When Rohan saw himself locked up In this prison, Having his eye half closed, Would he get hard, the happy companion? He said, with real courage: Thrown in a dungeon for fucking a cunt! But a beautiful […]
Mais un con de Reine Vaut bien cette peine.	But the cunt of a Queen Is well worth this pain.
De se sauver vint à bout Sa triste Éminence. Antoinette pour qui fout A de l'indulgence, Elle plaignit ce mortel De bander en Colonel Sauvant sa ca ca, Sauvant sa lo lo, […]	He at last succeeded in saving himself, His sad Eminence. Antoinette [for whom fucking Evoked a bit of sympathy,] She took pity on this man, To get hard as a Colonel Saving her […]
Sauvant sa calotte, Fit marquer la Mothe.	Saving her cardinal, By accusing La Motte.

In this version of events, Rohan seeks out La Motte to set up a liaison with the queen, who is all too eager to help. The language is unclear as to whether Rohan has sex with the actual queen or merely thinks he has, but in the end, the queen takes pity on him and blames the whole affair on La Motte. The accompanying portrait of Rohan contains the events of the vaudeville in miniature: a young man wearing the *calotte* (skullcap) of a cardinal on both his head and back approaches a reclining nude woman, whose torso creates the subject's forehead and whose bent knee creates a nose (Fig. 4.5).

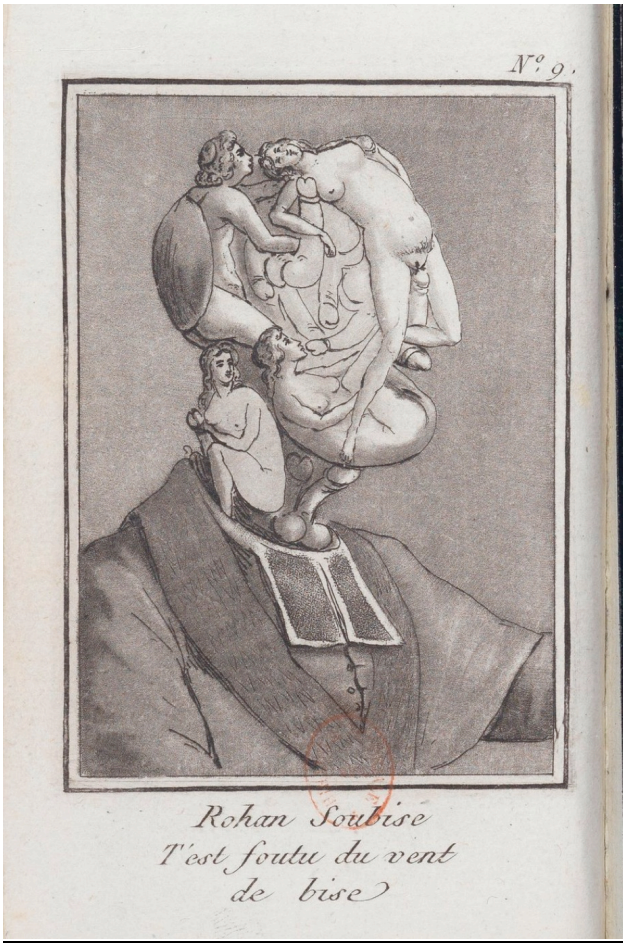
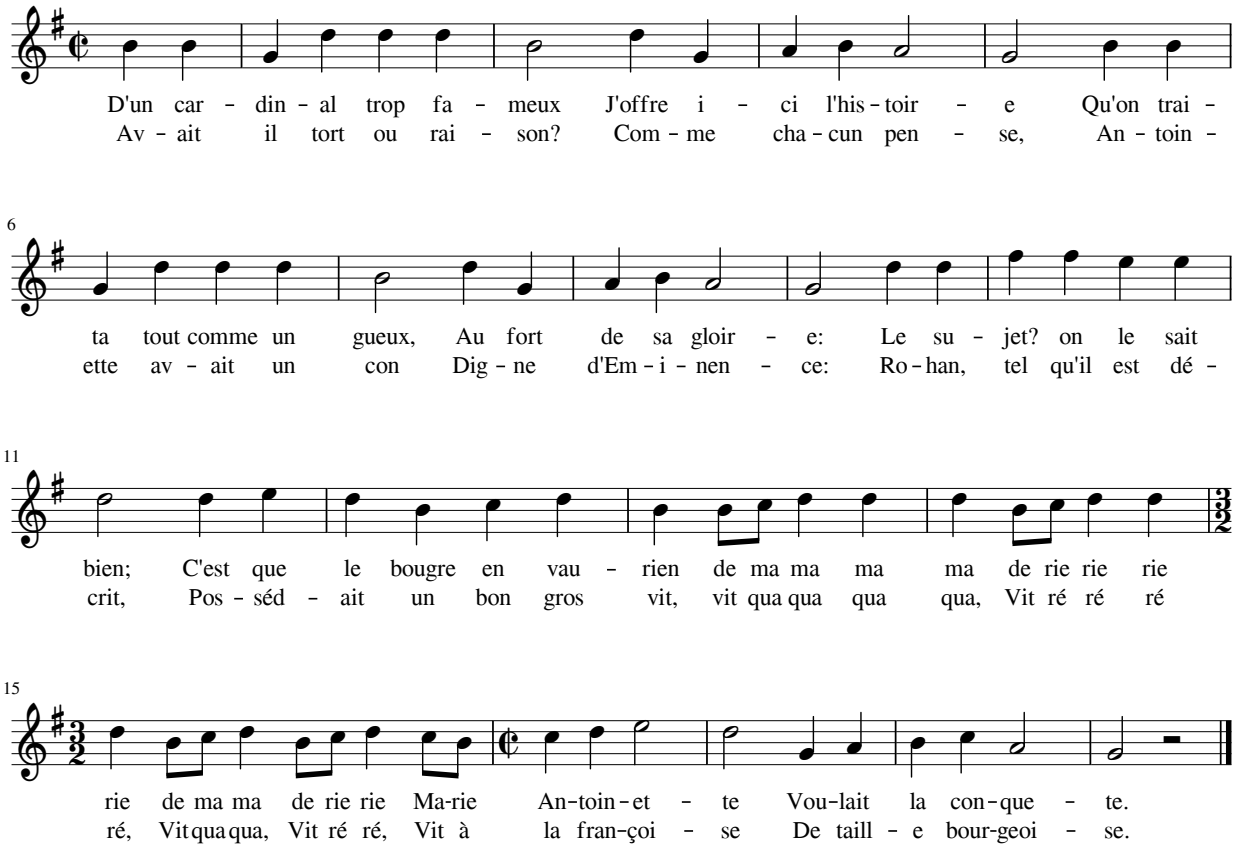


Fig. 4.5, Portrait of "Rohan Soubise"

"Fouteries précieuses et bien chère" is a reminder that perhaps not every *timbre* was chosen with equal amounts of care, that considerations like performative pleasure may have factored into these choices as well. The bawdy content of this vaudeville is enhanced by the selection of the *timbre*, "Quand la mer rouge apparut," in which a character named Grégoire, upon seeing the Red Sea, believes it is made of wine and that he must drink it up. The intertextual resonances are less strong in this instance than in "Foutre et Boire," but the rhythmic motifs of the *timbre*'s refrain create opportunities for pleasurable delivery and punning (Ex. 4.4). The melodic line primarily outlines tonic triads in the major mode, with short four-bar phrases.

Most notable, and perhaps most fun to sing, in “Quand la mer rougue apparut” are the “hiccups,” where the first word of the closing couplet is split into two syllables, each of which is repeated three times at the same pitch. This is followed by a diminution in the repetitions, bringing the syllables closer together before uniting them into a recognizable word (mms. 13-15). The result is a breathless delivery, with no obvious space for a singer to draw breath except in short gasps, mimicking the hiccupping speech of a drunk. Breaking the words down into syllables also creates opportunities for punning, or for singers to dwell on double entendres. The author of “Un collier pour foutre un con” seems not have taken advantage of second of these linguistic possibilities, instead lacing the vaudeville with obscenity throughout. Rather than creating puns, the repetition of nonsense sounds like “qua,” or “fla,” (mms. 13-15) offer a form of silly pleasure, as silly as a cardinal successfully seducing a queen. In this, the *timbre* participates in the creation of a fantasy version of both the Cardinal and the queen.

Ex. 4.4 “Quand la mer rouge apparut” (edition based on Theaville)



“La foutue gueuse,” the Comtesse de Polignac

Both “Un collier pour foutre un con” and *Fouteries*’s seventh vaudeville, “Les doléances de la Foutue Gueuse de Polignac, ou regrets sur la perte des vits de France,” take up themes of sexual impropriety that implicate Marie-Antoinette. In “Un collier,” Rohan contracts La Motte to arrange a rendez-vous between the cardinal and the queen; in “Les doléances,” Polignac brags of having “fucked the queen with one finger.”[294] By 1791, such rumors about the relationship between Polignac and Marie-Antoinette were nothing new. From her first presentation at court,

[294] “D’un doigt j’ai foutu la Reine,” *Fouteries chantantes*, 29.

the duchesse de Polignac (born Gabrielle de Polastron) had aroused suspicion, as the queen took an immediate liking to the woman. Though she came from an aristocratic family, prior to her elevation at court she had little money and was saddled with debts, with "not a decent dress to her name."[295] When Polignac, through the invitation of her sister-in-law, was presented at court in 1775, the queen was immediately struck by her, and asked that the then-comtesse remain at Versailles. Polignac was unable to afford the extravagant lifestyle necessary for life at court, so the queen settled all of her and her husband's outstanding debts and found the Comte de Polignac a prominent and, more importantly, well-paying position at court.[296] Polignac found herself on the receiving end of many such gifts from the queen, including her appointment as governess to the children of France in 1782, a position which many at court felt was above her station. These ostentatious demonstrations of favor helped fuel the rumors that Polignac and the Queen were lovers, a theme that appears frequently in texts of this genre.

"Les doléances de la foutue gueuse" is reminiscent of Leporello's "Catalogue Aria" in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, listing all of Polignac's alleged sexual skills and conquests, from the queen, to princesses, servants, abbots, pages, and even the king's youngest brother, the Comte d'Artois (Ex. 4.5). In the final stanza, she laments that in leaving France her sexual exploits will be curtailed, having no more "victories over the clitoris." Instead, she will be limited to "German pricks," a reference to Polignac's exile along with the ducs de Provence and d'Artois following the fall of the Bastille.[297]

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[295] Frances Mossiker, *The Queen's Necklace* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), 133.

[296] Fleischmann, *Les pamphlets libertins*, 187-203.

[297] Thomas, *The Wicked Queen*, 167.

Accusations of a sexual relationship between the queen and Polignac were a frequent tactic in many political pamphlets after the mid-1780s, a genre that Lynn Hunt has termed "politically motivated pornography."[298] In this genre, the depiction of sexual acts (either visually or in text) "undermined the legitimacy of the ancien régime as a social and political system."[299] Accusations of homosexuality carried particular weight, often represented as an example of aristocratic decadence. When such accusations were made against Marie-Antoinette, it also signified an unnatural sexual appetite, a voracious monster who, let unsatisfied by the men at court, turns to women.[300] In "La Fouteuse gueuse," this characterization is applied to the duchesse de Polignac.

The melody to the *timbre*, "Air de Manon Giroux," is a minor-mode *gavotte*, modulating to an unexpected cadence on the minor dominant at its midway point before quickly returning to the tonic. Pinpointing the origins of the melody are difficult, due in part to the fact that the melody was known by as many as six different *timbres*.[301] The melody's most direct antecedent appears to come from the first *chant* of Jean-Joseph Vadé's *La Pipe Cassée* of 1755, to which he gave the generic designation of a "epi-trag-poissardi-heroi-comique." In this collection of poems, Vadé transliterates the "poissard" dialect, which was associated with Paris's working classes,

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[298] Hunt, "Pornography and the French Revolution," 301.

[299] Ibid.

[300] Thomas, *The Wicked Queen*, 105-135. See also Elizabeth Colwill, "Pass as a Woman, Act Like a Man: Marie-Antoinette as Tribade in the Pornography of the French Revolution," in Deena Goodman, ed., *Marie-Antoinette: Writings on the Body of a Queen* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 139-170.

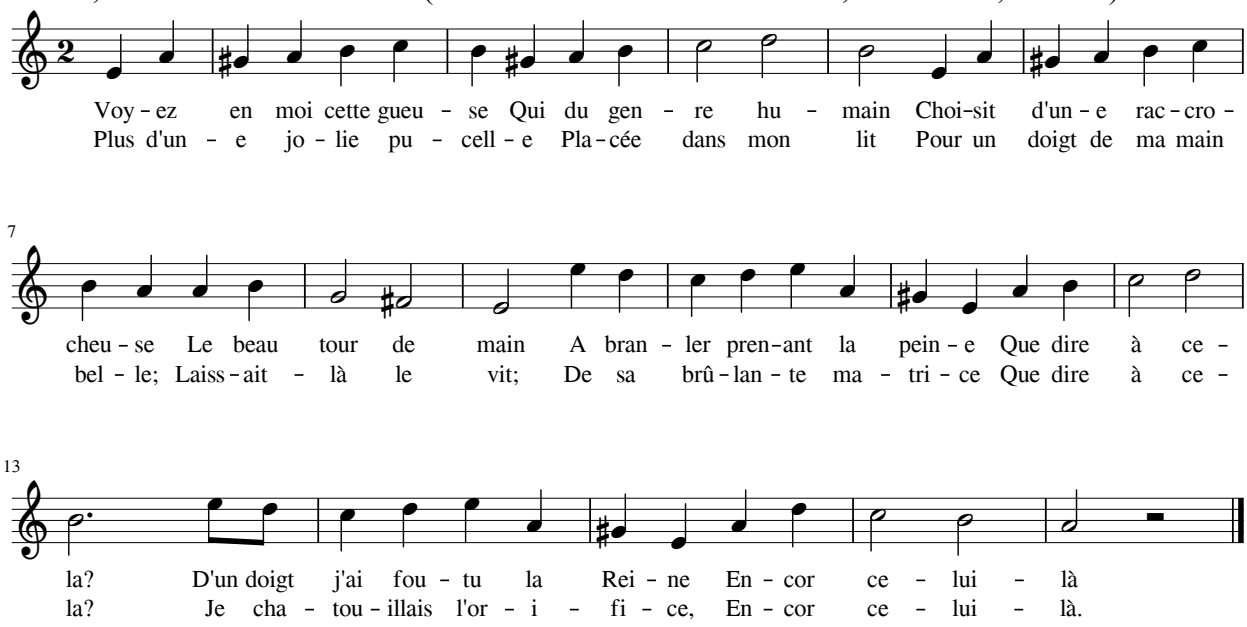
[301] These are given in Conrad Laforte, *Catalogue de la chanson folklorique française*, Vol. 6 (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1987), 152: "J'arrive à pied de province," "J'arrive à pied de Vimeux," "C' qui m'amuse dans un spectacle," "Quel cochon d'enfant," and "La Restauration de la chanson" (from a vaudeville by Béranger). The *timbre* for "Manon Giroux" seems to come from a poem by Vadé titled "L'Histoire de Manon Giroux." An 1859 collection of popular French songs includes a song titled "Manon la Couturière" whose melody bears no resemblance to that identified by Laforte. See Henri Plon, ed. *Chants et chansons populaires de la France*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Lécrivain et Toubon, 1859), n.p. However, its opening line, "Qui veut savoir l'histoire entière de mam'zelle Manon" is a separate *timbre*, catalogued as no. 498 in the *Clé de Caveau*.

especially fishmongers.[302] While the melody may sound somber, even ominous to modern ears, the tone of Vadé's poem is irreverent. A young woman, Manon, decides to leave her partner Bachot, for a wealthy man ("un homm' d'épée"). Bachot takes this announcement in stride, and the two go their separate ways for the evening; Manon becomes disruptively drunk and is arrested, while Bachot enjoys the evening as a man free to admire other women. An anglophone equivalent of the concluding moral might be, "Don't get too big for your britches," a warning that the author of *Fouteries chantantes* may have felt was not heeded by the social climber Polignac.[303] "Les doléances de la foutue gueuse" weaves together lower classed, *poissard* topoi with the more elevated rhythmic gestures of the gavotte in order to offer up a portrait of sexual depravity. In representing Polignac as a "sacrée putain," the queen was also tainted by proximity, given the closeness of their real-life relationship.

[302] Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy*, 117. *Parades* in *poissard* became something of a fad in their own right in the first half of the eighteenth century. Studies of this genre can be found in Jennifer Ruimi, *La parade de société au XVIIIe siècle: une forme dramatique oubliée* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2015), and to a lesser extent in Pierre Frantz and Sophie Marchand, *Le théâtre français du XVIIIe siècle: Histoire, textes choisies, mises en scène* (Paris: Éditions L'avant-scène théâtre, 2009) as well as Trott, *Théâtre du XVIIIe siècle*.

[303] "Qu'il ne faut pas que l'on pette/Plus z'haut que le cu." Jean-Joseph Vadé, *La pipe cassée: Poëme epitragipoissardiheroicomique* (Paris: Pierre Bonne-Humeur, [1750]), 15. *Nineteenth Century Collections Online*, http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/8nrsx8.

Ex. 4.5, "Air de Manon Giroux" (edition based on *Clé du Caveau*, 3rd edition, no. 249)



With how common libelous *vies privées* and *mémoires* of Marie-Antoinette had become by the 1790s, the absence of a vaudeville devoted to her in this collection seems conspicuous.[304] *Fouteries* may have appeared in the relatively quiet months before the royal family's failed escape plan in June 1791 and the calamity of the Champ de Mars massacre a month later. The family had been forced from their residences at Versailles in October of 1789, when crowds marched on the royal palace and demanded that the monarch reside amongst his people in Paris. From early October of 1789 until their imprisonment in the Temple in 1792, the king and queen lived under de facto house arrest in the Tuileries Palace in the heart of the capital city. Before the escape attempt to Varenne, an uneasy détente seemed to have been reached, whereby the royal family was permitted to travel around the city and even to the royal residence in Saint-Cloud, before their departure was foiled by protesting crowds. In the first half of 1791, the political

[304] Lynn Hunt observes that "there were not only more pamphlets about [Marie-Antoinette] than any other single figure…they were also, apparently, best sellers." Hunt, "Pornography and the French Revolution," 324.

climate continued to burn hot, but the king, unlike his beleaguered wife, had not yet entirely lost the love of his people. In this way, vaudevilles like "Les doléances" and "Un collier" can be understood as attacks by proxy, where Marie-Antoinette's presence is certainly felt, though her name is barely mentioned. Attacking pro-monarchists such as Mirabeau, rehearsing past scandals like the Diamond Necklace Affair, and repeating gossip about her close friends was damning enough by association. Other authors, however, did not feel such compunctions about refraining from attacking the queen directly, as the next two examples attest.

L'Autrichienne en goguettes: Silent songs, royal orgies

Printed in 1789, *L'Autrichienne en goguettes, ou l'orgie royale* is an "opéra proverbe" that has since been most commonly attributed to François-Marie Mayeur de Saint-Paul, an actor on the stages of the boulevard theaters, as well as a prolific playwright and author.[305] This short play, sixteen pages in length, is frequently cited in studies of anti-Marie Antoinette pamphlet literature for the extremes to which the story goes to yoke together perceived sexual depravity and political/moral corruption. Indeed, *L'Autrichienne* is striking for the vivacity and specificity of its language in depicting scenes of sexual intercourse, as though the author himself were directing the play from inside one's imagination.

L'Autrichienne also differs from the other examples offered here in another respect: it does not include *timbres*. Instead, the text is structured on the page similarly to an *opéra-comique* livret, with left-justified roman text indicating dialogue, and center-justified italic text indicating sung numbers, usually with titles indicative of the lyric theater ("Quatour," "Trio,"

[305] This attribution is reflected in the BNF catalogue entry for *L'Autrichienne en goguettes*. For biographic information on Mayeur de Saint-Paul, see Émile Campardon, *Les spectacles de la foire* […] Vol. 2 (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1877), 123-132.

"Choeur"). The lack of specific *timbres* might make *L'Autrichienne* seem a strange choice for analysis, given that its melodic possibilities are curtailed. Several important features of the play, however, stand out as demanding musical consideration. The first of these, as described above, are the material aspects of the text itself, and how that text is arranged on the page. Especially when compared with a page from *Le Branle des Capucins*, *L'Autrichienne*'s the generic affiliation seems difficult to ignore. At the narrative level, I will show how musical performance works to enhance a reader's understanding of who the character "Marie Antoientte" is, in the same way that vaudevilles conducted such work in *Les Fouteries*. Lacking specific melodies with which to read the text, I instead dwell on the significance of musical performance itself within the story for portraying the figures of the king, the queen, Polignac, and d'Artois. Such a reading is encouraged by the presence of a lengthy footnote on the play's title page, which I will explicate in relation to both the political and aesthetic currents of the late 1780s.

The plot centers on Marie Antoinette, Polignac, and the comte d'Artois as they scheme to trick the king into drinking too much wine so that, when he has lost consciousness, they will be free to have sex together. The play opens with a chorus of guards, who sing a brief paean to Bacchus before discussing among themselves the rumor that an orgy is to take place that evening, as "the female Ganymede is with the queen" (a reference to Polignac), as well as the king's brother.[306] The next scene takes place in the queen's Petits Apartements, where Polignac is being welcomed in by the queen and the Comte d'Artois. D'Artois begins to caress the queen, praising her "firm and elastic" body. The Queen responds by saying that if her heart were as firm as her behind, the two of them would not be together. D'Artois rejoins: "Hush you silly woman,

[306] "Il y aura un orgie cette nuit, la Ganymède femelle est avec la Reine." *L'Autrichienne*, 3.

or I'll give you and my brother a new son tonight."[307] Like the assumptions that supported the vaudevilles of *Fouteries chantantes*, *L'Autrichienne en goguettes* also trades in turning rumors about the queen's love life into the basis for jokes and story. In this instance, it was the king and queen's lack of issue for the first seven years of their marriage, from 1770 to 1777, which led to rumors that when the queen was finally pregnant that the child had really been fathered by d'Artois.[308] These three characters then break into a "trio," in which they sing in praise of "pleasure, love, and grace."[309] Following this, they are joined by the king, who complains of having been kept waiting. The queen offers him a glass of champagne, which he happily accepts. When she offers him a second, however, he declines:

L'Autrichienne en goguettes, Act I, Scene iii	
La Reine Vous ne redoublez pas?	The Queen Will you have another?
Louis Non. Je veux être sobre ce soir, il faut que je sois de bonne heure demain à mon conseil. Des sens assoupis ne laissent pas à la tête cette faculté dont elle a besoin pour juger sainement,[sic]	Louis No, I'd like to be sober tonight, I have to be on time for my meeting tomorrow with the council. Numbed senses get in the way of the mind being able to judge things properly.
La Reine Pourvu que vous siégiez, c'est tout ce qu'il faut. Votre conseil sera, comme de coutume, à sa fantaisie,[sic]	The Queen As long as you reign, that's all that's needed. Your council is at your leisure, as is custom.
Louis	Louis

[307] D'Artois: "Ah! quell cu! qu'il est ferme et élastique." La Reine: "Si j'avais le coeur aussi dur, nous ne serions pas aussi bien ensemble." d'Artois: "Taisez-vous, folle, ou je donne encore ce soir, un nouveau fils à mon frère." *L'Autrichienne*, 4.

[308] Fleischmann, *Les pamphlets libertins contre Marie-Antoinette*, 166-169.

[309] "Quand je vois autour de moi/Le plaisir, l'amour, et les graces/Me fixer sur leurs traces/C'est du bonheur suivre la loi." *L'Autrichienne*, 6.

Il est vrai que j'ai beau vouloir le bien, ces messieurs s'arrangent de façon qu'ils me font toujours faire quelques sottises. La Reine C'est encore assez pour *les grenouilles de la Seine*.	It's true that I really do want what's best, [but] these gentlemen have a way of arranging things so that they always make me do something stupid. The Queen It's still good enough for the *frogs of the Seine*.

At this, another musical number ensues, in which the king, queen, d'Artois and Polignac sing of taking advantage of their power by growing their wealth while making the goods of the Parisians disappear. This likely alludes to the mounting debt crisis in the years just prior to the Revolution, and the widespread perception that it was frivolous spending, particularly on Marie-Antoinette's part, that was bankrupting the country.[310] This quartet excites the king to finish off the bottle of champagne, which promptly knocks him out, "head resting on the table."[311] Finding themselves now alone, the queen urges her companions to take advantage of their solitude. It is at this point that the specificity of Mayeur de Saint-Paul's stage directions become most pronounced. D'Artois "slips his hand under the queen's skirt placing his middle finger upon the royal part"; with Polignac, "as the female tongues writhe together…the confidante introduces a light finger to the opening of the temple."[312] These minutely described sexual acts are also accompanied by singing, as in the "Duo Dialogue" that follows just as d'Artois has "placed a leg between the Queen's knees." The repetitions of "ah!" from both characters throughout this musical number

[310] Michel Vovelle, *The Fall of the French Monarchy 1787-1792*, trans. by Susan Burke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 75-77.

[311] "Le Roi qui a vuidé sa bouteille et les trois quarts d'une second, s'endort la tête appuyée sur la table." *L'Autrichienne*, 9.

[312] "Le Comte d'Artois: passant la main sous la jupe de la reine et établissant son doigt médius sur la partie royale…Pendant que les langues femelles s'agient…la confidante introduit un doigt léger sur la portique du temple…" *L'Autrichienne*, 10-15.

approximate sonically the immediacy and depth of the stage directions, turning the text into a multisensory object. The play concludes with a tableau, in which the queen seats Polignac on Louis's bent back, such that three are able to continue their activities on top of the king. A concluding quatrain, penned by a guard "who saw everything," summarizes the scenario succinctly: "On the back of a human monarch/I see the mother of Vice/Dive into terrible delights/A rogue of a prince, and a harlot queen."[313] This concluding thought is a common characteristic of anti-Marie-Antoinette literature of the period, as though authors needed to remind readers (perhaps themselves?) that the elaborate, imagined descriptions of the queen's private life were meant to inspire fear and horror, a proverbial bucket of cold water.

What sets *L'Autrichienne* apart from *Fouteries chantantes* is that, while it clearly engages with generic conventions for printed *opéras-comiques*, it omits a crucial element: *timbres*. The sung portions are set on the page identically to how vaudevilles were traditionally signaled in *opéra-comique* livrets, and the texts are written in versified couplets, making it easy to imagine how they would be set to song. However, the author declined to include specific melodies, instead merely invoking the idea that the characters in this play are meant to be singing. Was it the case that notated *ariettes* at some point accompanied this play? The archival evidence has not yielded a definitive answer. Instead, it may be the case that singing was meant to be yet another damning activity that the royal characters in the pamphlet engage in. Such a reading is supported by the lengthy footnote that appears on the pamphlet's title page, in which the queen's corruption and the king's impotence are framed in specifically musical terms:

[313] "Sur le dos d'un monarque humain/Je vois la mère des vices/Plonger dans d'affreuses délices/Un prince polisson, une reine catin." *L'Autrichienne*, 16.

L'Autrichienne en goguettes, Title Page	
La Reine, élève de feu Sacchini, et protectrice de tout ce qui est compositeur ultramontain, a la ferme persuasion qu'elle est bonne musicienne, parce qu'elle estropie quelques sonates sur son clavessin, et qu'elle chante faux dans les concerts qu'elle donne in petto et où elle a soin de ne laisser entrer que de vils adulateurs. Quant à Louis XVI, on peut se faire une idée de son goût pour l'harmonie en apprenant que les sons discordans et insupportables de deux flambeaux d'argent frottés avec force sur une table de marbre ont des attraits pour son oreille anti-musicale.	The Queen, a devotée of [Antonio] Sacchini, and protector of all composers from beyond the Alps [Italy], firmly persuaded that she is a good musician because she strangles out some sonatas on her keyboard, and [because she] sings out of tune in the concerts she gives in private, where she is careful to only allow vile sycophants to enter. As for Louis XVI, we can get a pretty good idea of his harmonic tastes in learning that the discordant and unbearable sounds of two silver candlesticks forcefully scraped against a marble table has certain charms for his anti-musical ear.

The citation of Sacchini in a pamphlet of this nature puts this text in dialogue with the pamphlet wars of the decades prior. Antonio Maria Gaspara Sacchini (1730-1786) was an Italian composer who arrived in Paris in the early 1780s. Sacchini was initially welcomed by supporters of Italian music as well as by Marie-Antoinette, who soon after their introduction in 1781 recommended him to the Royal Academy of Music. Though she supported Italian music, the queen was also a known "Gluckiste" – that is, a supporter of Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787), the composer par excellence of French music in the *Querelle*, despite his Bavarian roots and Bohemian upbringing. Not long after the premiere of his *Renaud* in February of 1781, Sacchini lost his Italianist friends, who saw him as a threat to the reigning champion of Italian music, Niccolò Piccini (1728-1800). Despite a growing contingency that sought his failure, the queen continued to support Sacchini until the mid-1780s, when her perceived preference for foreign composers became part of the long litany of reasons for which the public despised her.[314]

[314] Vincent Giroud, *French Opera: A Short History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 90.

The citation of Sacchini at the opening of this pamphlet, then, is not a mere cameo appearance. His position as an Italian composer is already laden with meaning – in this case, as a peddler of foreign sounds and tastes. Describing her as his "student" positions her as an apprentice to Sacchini in learning how to perform and appreciate foreign music. This presumably would not have been hard for her, being already a foreigner herself, a fact that the pamphlet foregrounds by referring to her as "L'Autrichienne" (the Austrian woman). Sacchini's dismissal from the Piccinist camp, who functioned as the primary supporters of Italian music in the *Querelle*, was sufficient for Sacchini to lose whatever anti-monarchical associations may have attached to his name and music by virtue of his being Italian, allowing him to code more generally as "foreign" rather than "Italian" and, by extension, "republican." This removes the contradictions that would otherwise seem to arise from the pairing of Marie Antoinette (as symbol of French monarchy) with Sacchini, an Italian (and by extension anti-monarchical) composer.

The position of his name almost dead center on the page, separated from "The Queen" by a few small words, points to how recognizable Sacchini's name must have been, as well as the weight it carried as a weapon of critique. One can also learn something of the reader as well – someone interested in the sexual life (real or imagined) of the monarchs, who was also familiar with Sacchini and basic musical terms (sonate, clavessin). Though a reader may not have direct access themselves to performances of Sacchini's works at the Opéra or at Versailles, nor themselves play an instrument, what these terms represented must have had caché with readers, otherwise their foregrounded presence in this pamphlet would have been more confusing than amusing. As items of relative luxury, their attachment to the queen works to situate her in a high economic status, able to afford a keyboard and music composition lessons.

In leveling the charge of supporting "all composers from beyond the Alps," it is the queen's attachment to Italy specifically that makes Sacchini the better choice, rather than Gluck,

who by the 1780s had seen significant success in Paris, and was often pitted against Piccinni in the French versus Italian debates.[315] In addition to functioning as a code word for Italy, "ultra-montain" had strong religious connotations, going back to the Wars of Religion at the end of the sixteenth century, where it was used to identify Catholics who supported the consolidation of power under the Pope.[316] As the Revolution gained momentum, much of the tenor of the political rhetoric became anti-religious, and specifically anti-Catholic, as those in the First Estate (consisting of the clergy) were often exempt from increasingly burdensome taxes levied by the crown in an effort to refill the depleted royal coffers.[317] The religious meaning of "ultra-montain" is furthered by the use of the phrase "in petto" later on in the footnote. Meaning "in private" or "in secret" in Italian, the more common Latin phrase, *in pectore*, from which it derives, referred to the secret appointment of cardinals by the Pope, where the names of the appointed cardinals are never published, typically to protect the lives of the cardinals living in hostile countries or during periods of religious strife. From 1775 to 1795, Pope Pius VI made thirteen *in pectore* appointments to the College of Cardinals, three of whose names were never published before his death.[318] This practice can be connected to the image "in petto" precedes, that of the queen, singing out of tune (likely in an Italian style) to a room made up only of "vile sycophants/flatterers," appointed, as it were, by the queen herself, beyond the eyes and ears of the French people in her private space at the Petit Trianon. Like the Pope in Rome, elevating clergy at will beyond the eyes and ears of the French people, at a far remove from Paris in the

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[315] For more on Gluck's position in the ongoing aesthetic wars between France and Italy, see Mark Darlow, *Dissonance in the Republic of Letters: The Querelle des Gluckistes et Piccinistes* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2013); and R.J. Arnold, *Musical Debate and Political Culture, 1700-1830* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2017).

[316] This etymology is reflected in the TLFiI entry for "ultra-montain."

[317] Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 32-33.

[318] Salvador Miranda, "The Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church: Consistories for the Creation of Cardinals in the 18th Century (1700---1799)." *The Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church* (Florida International University, 2019), http://www2.fiu.edu/~mirandas/consistories--- xviii.htm#PiusVI.

palace of Versailles, the queen has established an enclave where her actions go unseen and unquestioned.

The second half of the footnote is devoted to the king, and the tone in describing his musical taste is distinctly different. For Marie-Antoinette, the author focuses on her affiliation with and devotion to Italian models, and her musical aspirations. She *does* play the clavecin (though badly) and she *does* sing (though out of tune) - she is granted a musical agency that is not extended to the king. One only has "an idea" of his musical taste through the secondhand knowledge that the sound of "silver candlesticks forcefully scraping against a marble table has certain charms for his anti-musical ear." Unlike the queen, who is misguided in her belief in her musical abilities, the king's ear is *against* music, such that he not only takes pleasure in "discordant and unbearable" sounds, but is also actively hostile to more generally accepted musical sound.

Literature against the king prior to the 1790s was rarely aimed directly at the king himself. Instead, it was the king's ministers who were accused of giving him bad advice and leading him astray.[319] This is borne out in *L'Autrichienne*: Despite the queen's plan to get her husband drunk, the king refuses a second glass of champagne, explaining that he "wants to be sober tonight, I must be on time tomorrow to meet with my council. Dulled senses prevent the mind from judging well." When Marie Antoinette reminds him that the council will do whatever it likes, as is its custom, the king responds, "It's true – I want to do what's best, but these men always conspire to make me do something stupid." Unlike his wife, the king is not evil; he wants what is best for his people. However, his sense of paternal good will is thwarted by the

[319] Lisa Graham, *If the King Only Knew: Seditious Speech in the Reign of Louis XV* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 19-20.

machinations of his ministers. The king's preference for the grating of candlesticks, then, can be read as a metaphor for the bad advice of his minsters, his ear unable to distinguish between reason and cacophony. The choice of "discordant and unbearable" to describe the sounds of the candlesticks/ministers can scale up to describe the perceived political effects of the ministers' bad advice, spreading a disharmony among the people that cannot be endured.

Because the king was the sole arbiter of law, the ear of the king was a privileged site, where the desires and needs of the people were communicated and potentially acted on. More broadly, the ear as a place where language and music were perceived in order to connect people holds great significance in the works of Rousseau. In writing on Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Language*, John T. Scott explains that, for Rousseau, "language and music do not originate as the expression of our physical needs…but are the communication of 'the moral needs, the passions.'"[320] Furthermore, the emotions humans experience in hearing music can lead to moral or immoral consequences. Language and music are equated as modes of communication and morality, implying that just as there can be moral language, so too can there be moral music, which in turn produces moral effects in those who hear it. The converse, then, must be true, and this begins to get to the heart of the footnote at the beginning of *L'Autrichienne*. It is not only that Marie Antoinette "sings out of tune (*faux*)," but that the false quality of her singing has direct moral effects – in this case, corrupting ones. Through Rousseau, we can connect what seem to be the two primary modes of critique operating in *L'Autrichienne*: the queen's alleged sexual depravity as more largely representative of the court; and the cacophonous music she creates that, like the scraping candlesticks, the king enjoys. Vital to the mobilization of these

[320] John T. Scott, "Rousseau and the Melodious Language of Freedom," *Journal of Politics*, 59 no. 3 (August 1997): 807.

fears, however, is the role of music, which is exercised primarily by the queen in order to orchestrate and enact her desires.

Though only a few lines long, the opening footnote to *L'Autrichienne en goguettes* weaves together a complex network of associations, drawing on the geopolitical significance of popular debates on opera, philosophies of music and morality from the period's leading thinkers, fears of arbitrary rule, the collapse of gender binaries and its implications for private and public spheres. Bringing the role of music and the moral theorizing of Rousseau to bear on this particular pamphlet demonstrates the wide legibility of musical metaphors among the populace reading these pamphlets, and their efficacy in communicating experiences of disorder. Perhaps less obvious than the sexual acts which constitute the primary focus of pamphlets like *L'Autrichienne*, music, too, participated in a discourse of immorality directed against the monarchy and just as powerfully articulated the concerns of a populace hungry for change.

Two monks walk into a dining room: *Le Branle des capucins*

Two years after *L'Autrichienne en goguettes*, another satirical, anonymously-authored two-act *comédie en vaudeville* was printed in 1791: *The Affair of the Monks, or the 1001th Trick of Marie Antoinette* (*Le Branle des Capucins, ou le 1001e tour de Marie Antoinette*). *Le Branle des capucins* bears the marks of the tumultuous year it which it was printed, with its disdain for both the royal family and the clergy, and its setting at the royal castle in Saint-Cloud, due west of Paris. Several important events in 1791 forever changed the course of monarchy in France and the fate of the surviving royal family. The first of these was the attempt to create a new class of clergy loyal to the Revolutionary cause. This was implemented in January of 1791 when the National Assembly required all priests to swear an oath of allegiance to the constitution. In

addition to their loyalty, they were made to promise to support and uphold the sweeping redistributions of land and goods that had already been enacted against the Church the previous year. Such a requirement was not popular among the clergy and was twice formally condemned by Pope Pius VI in March and April.[321] Many priests refused to take the oath, exacerbating divisions between the emergent revolutionary State and the Church.[322] It was in the midst of these ongoing tensions that the king and his family sought to spend their Easter holidays in Saint-Cloud, rather than celebrating in Paris.

Though the royal family had in the months prior enjoyed a relative freedom of movement throughout the city, rumors began to fly as their intentions to attend Easter mass away from the watchful eyes of the people became known. It was concluded that the king wished to go to Saint-Cloud in order to worship with a recusant priest, rather than one who had taken the oath of the Constitution of the Clergy, stoking fears of counterrevolutionary plotting. On April 18, the family loaded up their carriages and were ready to depart from the Tuileries when giant crowds swarmed the palace gates in an effort to prevent the king from leaving and, it was thought, furthering his plans to fight back. Members of the National Guard, under the command of the Marquis de Lafayette, were ordered to disperse these crowds, but many of the guards took the side of the people, and refused to break them up. When it became clear that the path was not going to clear, Louis, Marie-Antoinette, and their children were obliged to descend from their carriages and walk back into the palace. That same day, the Assembly passed a series of restrictions that banished the family's personal religious (and recusant) attendants.[323]

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[321] Vovelle, *Fall of the French Monarchy*, xi

[322] Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 13.

[323] Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 44-45.

Lafayette's appearance as a character in *Branle* may be related to his unpopularity following this incident, in which he aided the king and queen in what was perceived as an escape attempt. A specific publication date is not given, but it seems likely that *Branle* appeared in the brief window between April 1791 and the dramatic events of June 20-21, when the royal family attempted an actual escape for the French border. Following their foiled Easter plains, it became clear to the monarchs that whatever control they thought they still had was rapidly disappearing. If France was to remain under the control of a king, it would require force. Between April and June, Louis and Marie-Antoinette worked closely with a confidante, Axel von Fersen, to arrange for their escape from the palace over the Belgian border, then under Austrian rule, where an army awaited the king's command.[324] While the planning was conducted in complete secrecy, the execution was unsuccessful. It was suggested to the family that they should be split up across several carriages, allowing for speedier travel and a lower likelihood of being recognized; they refused to be separated. As a result, they traveled in a large, ostentatious carriage, elaborately decorated and piled high with all of their belongings, a giveaway that they were not, in fact, the bourgeois citizens they claimed to be. It was as they changed horses outside the city of Varennes that they were recognized, and word quickly spread, such that by the time they entered the town, a crowd had gathered and the passengers were commanded to emerge from the carriage. Over the course of the evening, the city's mayor and townspeople debated what they should do, before deciding the king should remain in France. A crowd escorted the royal family back to Paris, where their security was considerably tightened. Whatever good will the king had managed to

[324] Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 45-47; Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 151.

hold on to quickly dissipated, adding fuel to the fires for abolishing the monarchy that had previously only been rare sparks.

Le Branle des capucins shares many features in common with *L'Autrichienne* and other anti-Marie-Antoinette literature of the 1790s. Like *L'Autrichienne*, *Le Branle des Capucins* centers on the sexual exploits of the queen, Polignac, and d'Artois, though with the added obstacle of a meddling Marquis de Lafayette, at this point the commander-in-chief of the newly formed National Guard and unofficial warden of the royal family during their residency at the Tuileries Palace. Marie-Antoinette and her two friends plot to trick the king into drinking too much at dinner, with the goal of then "doing the monks' dance." In order to convince His Majesty to overindulge, they decide that Polignac and d'Artois will dress as two Capuchin monks, in hooded habits with rope cords, believing that the presence of holy men will further encourage Louis to go along with their plan. As they formulate these schemes, all three frequently burst into vaudevilles, whether to deride the king, enthuse over the plan, or rail against the Revolutionaries. Upon their departure to prepare for the costumed caper, Lafayette emerges, having overheard all of their plans. He agonizes whether or not to tell the king of the queen's plans, but decides to stay silent in order to protect the honor of the king, before singing a vaudeville to the tune of "Où peut-on être mieux."

The second act opens on the dinner table, where Marie-Antoinette is seated with her husband and two monks, and the king remarks approvingly on his wife's newfound piety. One of the monks (d'Artois, in disguise) observes that the queen has not touched her drink. He begins to sing in praise of wine to the tune of the Magnificant, urging Her Majesty to drink. The queen and

the other monk join in the song, "with variations and fauxbourdon."[325] The king, "stunned by this concert," begins enthusiastically consuming his own wine, singing a brief ode to his beloved and infamous collection of locks, before retiring to a couch and falling asleep. Upon his head hitting the pillow, the queen and her two companions jump to their feet and join hands, as they begin to dance around him and sing. Their trick is interrupted by Lafayette's brisk entrance, which elicits surprise and displeasure from Marie-Antoinette and Polignac, but relative indifference from d'Artois, who announces "I've finished, I'm happy." Louis startles awake and demands to know the meaning of Lafayette's sudden appearance, to which Lafayette explains that the king has been duped. Polignac and d'Artois dismiss these accusations as the ravings of an idiot and an impostor. When Lafayette tries to point out to the king that the monks are really his brother and Polignac, Louis is persuaded that all has been a pleasant joke, and that "all should finish" with a vaudeville, in this instance set to the *timbre* "L'Amour est un enfant trompeur." A concluding "Advice to readers" offers the following lesson: "These monks full of enthusiasm/Went while praying/To kiss with ardor/The slipper of the holy father [the pope]./Those who would wish to imitate them/Know that from force of habit/Soles remain on the ground."[326]

In key ways, *Le Branle des Capucins* revisits the same themes as *L'Autrichienne*, with the queen conniving with Polignac and d'Artois to get Louis to drink too much so that the three of them can be together. While *L'Autrichienne* imagines their encounter in minutely described sexual terms, *Le Branle* represents their encounter euphemistically, having them instead "dance

[325] "Antoinette, les deux capucins, ensemble, sur le même ton, avec variations et fauxbourdon." *Le Branle des capucins, ou le 1001e tour de Marie-Antoinette* (1791), 14.

[326] "Ces capucins pleins de ferveur/Sont allés en prieres/Baiser avec ardeur/La mule du saint pere./Que qui voudroit les imiter/Sache que, à force de durer,/La semelle est à terre," *Branle des capucins*, 24.

and *do* the monks' dance at the same time."[327] The elaborate, Aretinian tableau that closes *L'Autrichienne* is here reimagined as a circle dance, the three joining hands around the sleeping king and gloating over their successful manipulation of the monarch through song and dance. However, unlike *L'Autrchienne*, which describes the king as having an "anti-musical ear" in the footnote on the title page, in *Branle* the king's ear acts as the key site where influence is made over him, particularly the music and trappings of the church.

At the opening of *Branle*, reader-audiences are introduced to a Marie-Antoinette already in the process of plotting the demise of the nation and the manipulation of the king. She awaits d'Artois, who is "coming to see [her] dressed as a monk…And my dear Polignac in the same outfit."[328] The queen curses "this damned nation," which she hopes to one day see "drowned in rivers of the blood of its hateful soldiers," when d'Artois and Polignac finally arrive.[329] Over the course of several vaudevilles, they decide to trick the king into "drinking like a fish" so that he will "sleep like a log," at which point they will do the "monk's dance."[330] The italicization in the text points jumps out, inviting readers to infer that the characters will be doing more than just dancing. Having planned their course of action, the three turn their ire onto the Marquis de Lafayette, who has been spying on the queen and who, should he recognize either d'Artois or

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[327] *Branle des capucins*, 7.

[328] "Où diable d'Artois a-t-il été s'aviser de venir me voir en capucin…Et ma chère Polignac dans la même costume…" *Branle des capucins*, 3.

[329] "Nation Maudite…Puissé-je un jour te voir nager dans les flots de sang de tes détestables soldats…" *Branle des capucins*, 4. Both d'Artois and Polignac had fled France by 1791, such that their recognition by Lafayette in the play would lead to their arrest.

[330] Antoinette:"Ensuite à table, je commence par le faire *boire comme un trou*;…et le fais *dormir comme une chouette*." […] Polignac: "Il faut gager *l'action* même de la gageure: vous danserez et *ferez* en même tems le *branle* des capucins." *Branle des capucins*, 6-7.

Polignac, would immediately inform "the criminals that are at his command."[331] Marie-Antoinette brushes aside any fears of Lafayette and the National Guard, declaring that "they will not always cause such difficulty," and begins to sing a vaudeville.[332] Once again, she insults the "infernal race" which menaces her and her family, but declares that she is not afraid of them, insisting that the royal family will once again rise up and crush their enemies.

The vaudeville melody comes from Act II, scene 12 of Philidor's *Le Sorcier* (1764), the penultimate number before the concluding chorus. It is in the style of a terminal vaudeville, in which each character sings a verse to the same melody, summarizing their narrative trajectory over the course of the play. *Le Sorcier* follows a similar story structure to Rousseau's *Le Devin du Village*: a faux-sorcerer brings together two young lovers, with various mistaken identities along the way. The melody's source in *opéra-comique* is readily apparent in its ABA structure and consistent, equal phrase lengths. Compared to the more traditional *timbres* that also appear in *Branle*, this melody is more chromatically adventurous, with the brief tonicization of G minor in m. 10 and the tritone leaps in mms.12-13 (Ex. 4.6). Whereas many of the vaudevilles considered in this chapter seem to be drawing on the specific associations attached to the borrowed source material, in this instance, the reference seems to be more general. In this number, Marie-Antoinette sounds as though she is reciting an incantation, calling down a curse upon her enemies. As such, "Vaudeville du Sorcier" paints the queen as a witch, but rather than uniting two innocent peasants, she will use her powers to put herself on the throne once more.

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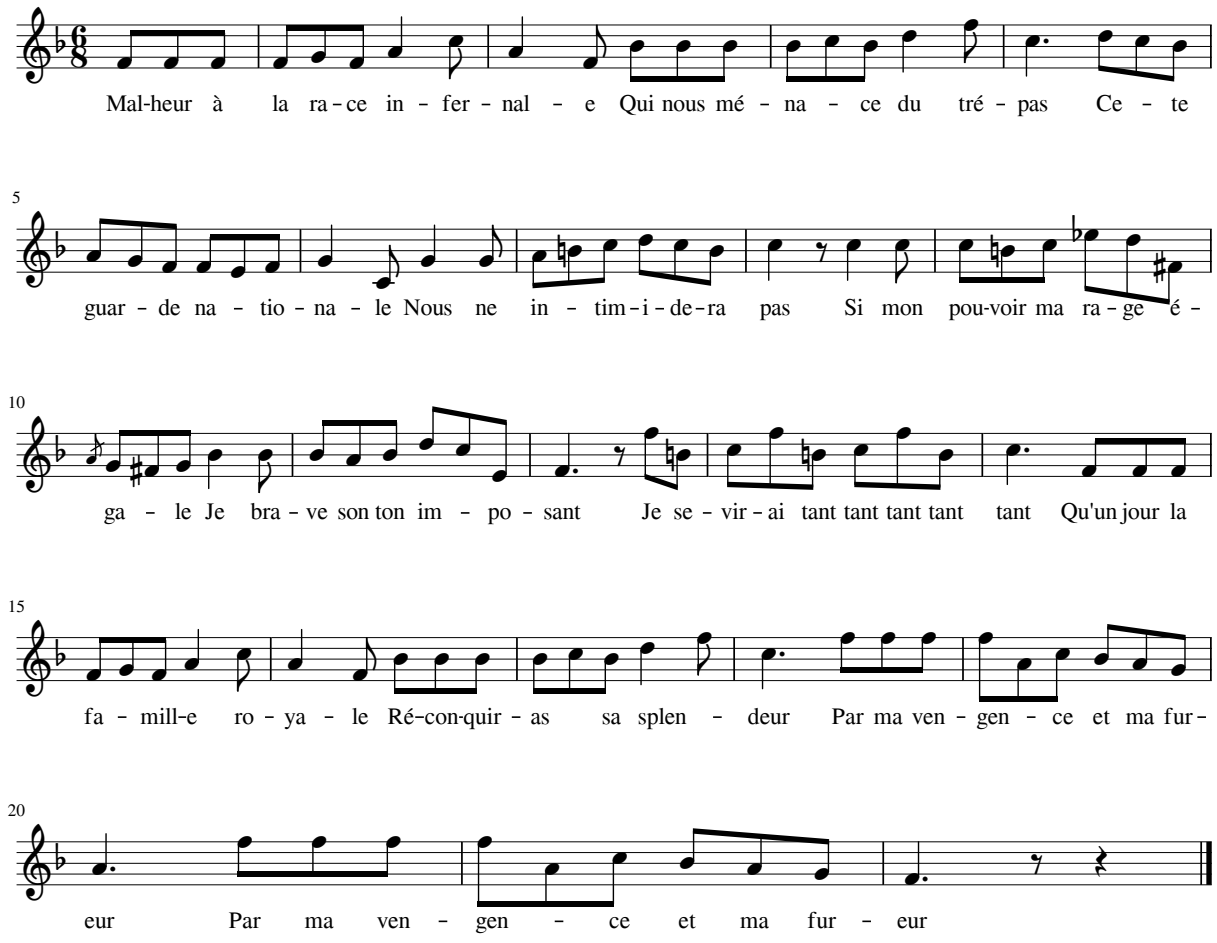
[331] "S'il vous reconnoissoit, il l'iroit bien vite dire aux bandits qu'il commande…Ils oseroient, je gage, te menacer de leur *lanterne*…" *Branle des capucins*, 8.

[332] "Ils ne feront pas toujours tant d'embarras avec leurs habits bleues…" *Branle des capucins*, 9. The "blue clothes" are likely a reference to the short, blue jackets (known as *caramagnoles*) that were fashionable during the Revolutionary era. See James Maxwell Anderson, *Daily Life During the French Revolution* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 74-77.

Le Branle des Capucins, Act I, Scene ii	
Air: *du Vaudeville du Soricer*.	
Malheur à la race infernale	Woe betide this infernal race
Qui nous menace du trépas.	Who threaten us with death.
Cette garde nationale	This national guard
Ne nous intimidera pas.	Will not intimidate us.
Si mon pouvoir ma rage égale,	If my power equals my rage,
Je brave son ton imposant.	I will stand up to their imposing tone.
Je sévirai tant tant tant tant	I will strike so so so so [hard]
Qu'un jour la famille royale	That one day the royal family
Reconquérira sa splendeur	Will reconquer its splendor
Par ma vengeance et ma fureur (bis).	Through my vengeance and my fury (repeat).

Ex. 4.6, "Vaudeville du Sorcier"[333]



[333] Edition based on François-André Danican Philidor, *Le Sorcier, comédie-lyrique en deux actes* (Paris, 1764), 150-1. Accessed via Gallica.

In Lafayette's vaudeville, the choice of "Où peut-on être mieux" as a *timbre* was a loaded one by 1791. The melody comes from scene four of Grétry's *Lucile* (1769), a domestic drama of mistaken identities, class, love, and marriage. Originally a quartet between the two young lovers and their fathers, the lyrics celebrate the tender love of a family. Its lilting melodic structure, created through gently rising and falling diatonic lines, and its long-breathed phrasing reflect its origins on the Comédie-Italienne stage, influenced by slower *opera buffa* numbers that allow singers to showcase the beauty of their voices. Its appearance in *Branle* is likely derived from its monarchical connotations, as it was adopted as early as 1789 as representative of the king's relationship to his people when it was performed for the king's first visit to Paris following the fall of the Bastille.[334] It soon became the piece played whenever the royal family attended the opera, cementing its connection with the king.[335] Though Lafayette replaces "family" with "country/nation," the pairing of the melody of "Où peut-on être mieux" with his outpouring of patriotic love characterizes Lafayette as duplicitous. The monarchical melody undermines his patriotic speech, the music giving readers and/or performers access to his "true" feelings (Ex. 4.7).

The dramatic climax of *Branle* occurs during the dinner scene in Act II, scene I, which from the very beginning is saturated with musical performance. Immediately after remarking that the queen has not drunk her wine, d'Artois (dressed as a Capuchin monk) begins to sing "to the tone of the Magnificat" (Fig. 4.6).

[334] Mason, *Singing the French Revolution*, 37.

[335] Ibid., 56.

Ex. 4.7, “Où peut-on être mieux”[336]

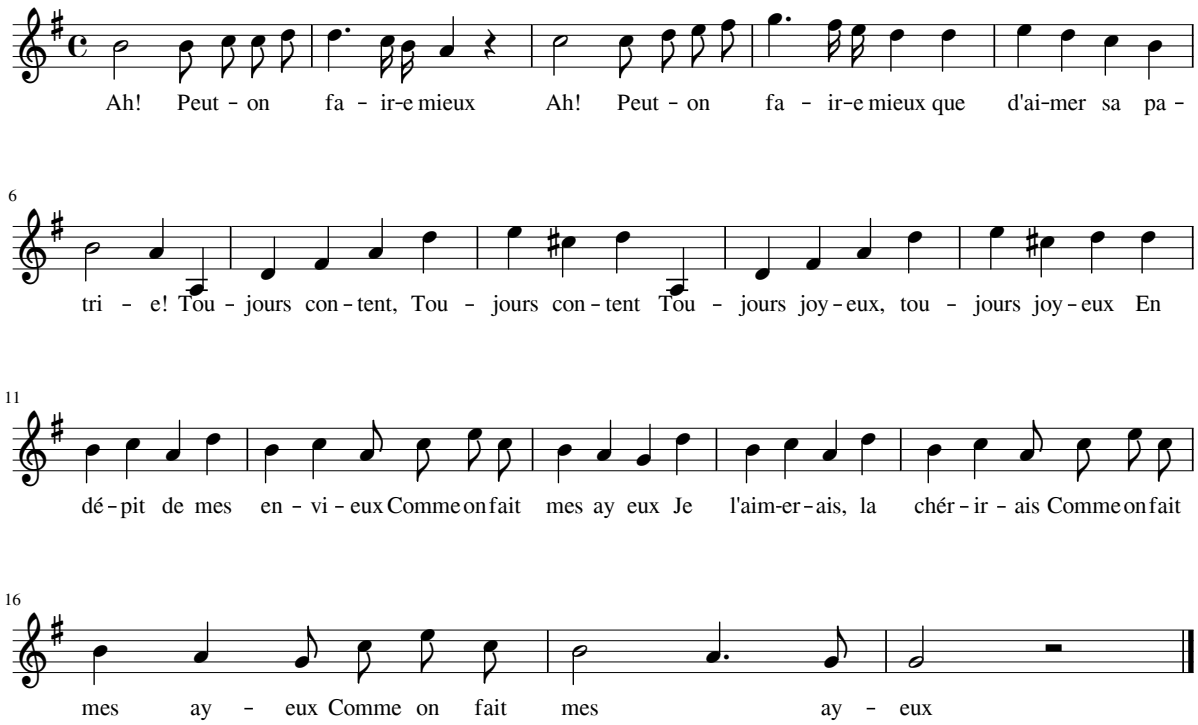


Fig. 4.6, *Le Branle des Capucin*, Act II, Scene i	
[*Il chante gravement and lentement sur le ton du Magnificat*.] Le jus us us de la treille est délicieux, C’est le meilleur présent ent des cieux eux. ANTOINETTE, LES DEUX CAPUCINS, *ensemble, sur le même ton, avec variations et fauxbourdon*. Le jus us us de la treille est délicieux, [*Ils se regardent alternativement et rient sous cap*]. C’est le meilleur présent ent des cieux eux. LOUIS, *étourdi du concert*. Eh, eh…Holà, holà. Buvons. [*Il boit*].	[*He sings seriously and slowly to the tone of the Magnificat*.] The ju u uice of the vine is delicious, It’s the greatest gi i ift from He-eaven. ANTOINETTE, THE TWO MONKS, *together, to the same tune, with variations and fauxbourdon*. The ju u uice of the vine is delicious, [*They exchange looks with one another and suppress laughter*.] It’s the greatest gi-i-ift from He-eaven. LOUIS, *astonished by the performance*. Heh heh…well well. Let’s drink. [*He drinks*].

[336] Edition based on a transcription that appears in George Grove, *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1900), 616. The original version as it appears in *Lucile* is written as a quartet for four vocal parts.

Taken from the Vespers service of the Daily Offices of the Church, the Magnificat was typically chanted in the evening as the sun set. The original text is a prayer from Mary upon learning of her pregnancy, praising God's ability to work miracles. Melodically, the Magnificat exists in many different settings, making it nearly impossible to determine which tone or setting the author had in mind. However, its connections with mysterious, even suspicious reproduction would have had multiple resonances for the contemporaneous reader-singer: it was not until seven years after Marie-Antoinette's marriage to Louis that she successfully bore a child in 1778. Though all four of her children were born by 1791, rumors continued to swirl around their paternity, particularly that of the Dauphin, the duke of Normandy.[337] The irony in this scene, of Marie-Antoinette joining in to sing to a melody associated with miraculous pregnancy, comes from the rumor that frequently appeared in anti-Marie-Antoinette literature: that the pregnancy was no miracle at all, but the result of an adulterous affair, most likely with the comte d'Artois.[338] Unlike in *L'Autrichienne*, where the suspicion is stated explicitly, in *Branle* it is the *timbre* which does the work of calling forth these associations. While Marie-Antoinette's sex life is not described with the kind of detail that appears in *L'Autrichienne*, the accusations of adultery still stand, here communicated via the melody of the Magnificat.

That the melody and its specific harmonization in fauxbourdon have such a powerful effect on the king is significant as well. Dating to the mid-fifteenth century, fauxbourdon was a style of improvised harmonization to a cantus firmus (such as the Magnificat), usually characterized by long strings of parallel fourths and/or sixths. Verses in fauxbourdon harmony

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[337] Hunt, *Invention of Pornography*, 306; Antonio Fraser, *Marie Antoinette: The Journey* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 169.

[338] Thomas, *The Wicked Queen*, 64-65.

would alternate with verses in plainchant, the harmonization acting as an embellishment of the original melody.[339] By the eighteenth century, this style of composition would have been very old indeed, with deep connotations with the Church and its authority, in which elaborate musical performance during services was part of an agenda to display the power and grandeur of both God and Church. That it is a concert of religious melody in a conservative style closely associated with worship which wins over the king, convincing him to overindulge in wine to the benefit of the queen, attests to beliefs in the king's alliance with recusant clergy, and not to the Revolution.

Upon their having successfully incapacitated the king, the queen, d'Artois, and Polignac rise from the table. "Let's begin the branle," says Polignac. The three step back from the table and, with Louis at the center, take one another's hands, and begin to dance and sing around the table (Fig. 4.7). The *danse branle* from which the play takes its name had several important resonances in the eighteenth century. A rustic circle dance, the *branle* had country associations, with dancers joining hands and forming a circle or a line, its most recognizable movement being a step to the side.[340] In his *Dictionnaire de Musique* of 1768, Jean-Jacques Rousseau defines the branle as "a type of exuberant dance, performed in a circle to a short tune in rondeau form; that is, a tune with a refrain that returns at the end of each couplet."[341] This description closely matches the scene in *Branle des Capucins*, in which the queen and her disguised guests "take one

[339] Brian Trowell, "Fauxbourdon," *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), https://doi-org.turing.library.northwestern.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.09373.

[340] Daniel Heartz and Patricia Rader, "Branle," *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), https://doi-org.turing.library.northwestern.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.03845.

[341] "Sorte de Danse fort gaie qui se danse en rond sur un Air court & en Rondeau; c'est-à-dire, avec un même refrain à la fin de chaque Couplet." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique* (Paris: Chez la Veuve Duchesne, 1768), 58.

another's hands and begin to spin around [the king] while singing in hushed voices," the invocation of "Let us do the monk's dance" servicing as the refrain, and "The monks do it like this/that" as the couplets. A *timbre* is not given to specify the melody to which the characters are singing and dancing; however the *branle coupé* of "Vive Henri IV," while not a perfect fit, accommodates the scansion of the verse more appropriately than the simple compound meters more typical of the genre, as in the "Branle de Metz" (Ex. 4.8). The example provided below only gives an idea of how this scene might have sounded, as the text and melody are not a perfect fit.

Fig. 4.7, *Le Branle des Capucins*, Act II, Scene i

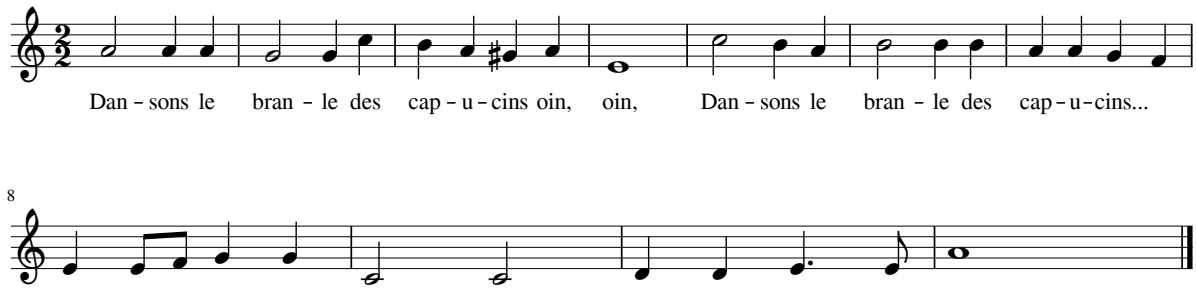
[*Ils se lèvent tous trois*.]	[*All three rise*.]
LA POLIGNAC Commençons le branle.	LA POLIGNAC Let's begin the branle.
[*Alors ils reculent la table, de manière que Louis se trouve étendu dans son fauteuil au milieu de l'appartement. Ensuite, se prenant par la main, ils tournent à l'entour de lui, en chantant, d'une voix moderée:*] Dansons le branle des capucins oin, oin, Dansons le branle de capucins. [*Ils s'arrêtent*.]	[*They step back from the table in such a way that Louis, asleep on his couch, is at the center of the room. Then, taking each other's hands, they turn around him, while singing in hushed voices:*] Let's dance the monks' dance [oink oin][342] Let's dance the monks' dance [*They stop*]
ANTOINETTE Les capucins font com…me ci…	ANTOINETTE The monks do it…like…this…
[*Tournant tous ensemble*] Dansons le branle des capucins oin, oin, Dansons le branle des capucins. [*Ils s'arrêtent*.]	[*Spinning together*] Let's dance the monks' dance [oink, oink,] Let's dance the monks' dance. [*They stop*.]

[342] The "oin oin" sound that ends the first line of the refrain seems in the tradition of many other vaudeville *timbres* whose refrains relied on nonsense words and syllables, such as "Le Faridondain." In this instance, the "oin" may be a transliteration of the repetition of the "-in" sound at the end of "capucin." I might also suggest that, since clergy were frequently depicted in satirical cartoons as pigs in robes, it may also be meant to invoke the sound a pig makes (in French, "groin groin").

D'ARTOIS Les capucins font *com…me ça*…. [*Une intervalle*]	D'ARTOIS The monks do it…like…that… [*A pause*.]

This image offered by the stage directions, of Marie Antoinette, d'Artois, and Polignac joined together around the sleeping king's body, recalls a similar tableau at the conclusion of *L'Autrichienne en goguettes*. The two texts, separated by two years, are twins to one another in several ways: both refer to themselves as "opéras," both feature the same core cast of characters, both shift between spoken and sung deliveries, both rehearse the popular rumors around the queen and her companions. These commonalities, together with the referential reading strategies that vaudevilles ask of reader-singers, suggest that *Branle* is to be interpreted in reference to *L'Autrichienne*. In doubling scenes of musical performance and bodily convergence, *Branle* is able to derive an erotic charge without recourse to the explicit language deployed in *L'Autrichienne*, slyly turning a *danse branle* into a stand-in for sexual acts.

Ex. 4.8, "Le branle des capucins"/"Vive Henri IV" (edition based on Theaville)



Obscene Revolutionary satire has fascinated historians since the days of the Revolution itself, when the first efforts were made to collect and catalogue such materials.[343] Overlooked among the sometimes scandalous, sometimes silly engravings, cartoons, poetry, faux diaries, and pamphlets that documented the era are vaudevilles, whose presence added a sonic depth and intertextual richness to items that, beginning in the nineteenth century, were dismissed as smut.[344] Just as exaggerated features in a caricature contribute to a popular understanding of a public figure, the selection of particular melodies in characterizing real people were a musical means of attempting to capture something that "felt" true, even if it was not based in fact. Even in a text like *L'Autrichienne en goguette*, which lacks specific *timbres*, the trappings of *opéra-comique* cover the work, making it difficult to dismiss out of hand its musical qualities and the ways in which music contributes to its representation of the queen and her accomplices. It is also through the palpable influence of *opéra-comique* that some of the clearest political critique is made in *L'Autrichienne*, particularly in the parsing of the French/Italian aesthetic debates.

The inclusion of specific *timbres* in *Les Fouteries chantantes* and *Le Branle des capucins* imparts a sonic element to an encounter with these texts, whether read silently or aloud, as the melody invoked by the *timbre* conditioned and influenced the content of the new couplets. *Les Fouteries chantantes* could have functioned successfully as a series of literary portraits in verse, accompanied by the "portraits en vit," without recourse to melody. The inclusion of melody, however, imparts additional, and more damning political messages against the figures targeted.

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[343] J.P. Pittion, "Introduction," in *Taking Liberties: Satirical Print of the French Revolution* (Dublin: French Nicentenary Committee, 1989), n.p.

[344] The creation of an entire *Archives d'enfer* at the BN is a testament to shifting attitudes towards obscenity and the emergence of "pornography" as a separate, special category of print. See Pascal Pia, *Les Livres de l'Enfer: Bibliographie critique des ouvrages érotiques dans leurs différentes éditions du XVIe siècle à nos jours*, 2nd ed, (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1998), 14-19.

For example, the vaudeville against André de Mirabeau, without its *timbre*, merely rehashes familiar insults: that he is fat, that he drinks too much, that he only cares for easy pleasure. The inclusion of "Que le Sultan Saladin," however, coming from an *opéra-comique* with deep connections to pro-royalist sentiment, brings out the other objectionable aspects of Mirabeau. The related themes of rescuing kidnapped kings seems too close be mere coincidence.

The language of *Le Branle des capucins* is far less obscene than in either of the other two works, and like *Fouteries*, it incorporates specific *timbres*. As in *Fouteries*, these *timbres* function to develop the character of whoever is singing them. These characterizations have real-life consequences, however, as the characters are not merely fictional people, but representations of the king and queen of France which, through the endless repetition of such portrayals, enter into the realm of myth. In her survey of anti-Marie Antoinette literature, Chantal Thomas describes the purpose of satirical texts like *Branle des Capucins* and *L'Autrichienne en goguette* as helping to construct a mythology, a demonology even, against which an emergent republic could position itself. Such texts "gave substance to an enemy painted in the colors of the Devil."[345] Over time, it becomes increasingly difficult to differentiate the "actual" monarchs from their fictional, singing selves, such that rumor created the grounds for much of the prosecution's argumentation at Marie-Antoinette's trial.[346]

It is easy in the present day to read texts like *Les Fouteries chantantes* and *L'Autrichienne en goguettes* as dirty songs and little more. As part of the economy of obscene representation that flourished in the early years of the Revolution, however, these songs

[345] Thomas, *The Wicked Queen*, 17.

[346] Thomas, *The Wicked Queen*, 20-21; Lynn Hunt, "The Many Bodies of Marie-Antoinette," in *Marie-Antoinette: Writings on the Body of a Queen* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 122-124.

contributed to how reader-singers thought and felt about political enemies. While scholarship on the obscene in France has tended to foreground the literary and the visual, the aural has gone unattended to, to the detriment of texts like those under consideration here. Focusing on the appearance of vaudeville in obscene Revolutionary satire shows how melody helped contribute to perceptions of the royal family by building on a genre whose roots in irreverence had been established nearly a century earlier.

"D'un trait de ce poème en bon mots si fertile,
Le Français, né malin, forma le vaudeville,
Agréable indiscret, qui, conduit par le chant,
Passe de bouche en bouche et s'accroît en marchant.
La liberté française en ses vers se déploie.
Cet enfant de plaisir veut naître dans la joie. […]
Il faut, même en chansons, du bon sens et de l'art."[347]
– Boileau, *L'Art de poétique*, Chant II

Conclusion

The initial stages of this project attempted to answer how eighteenth-century Parisians understood printed *comédies en vaudevilles* that openly mocked the royal family in the early 1790s. In doing so, it revealed a musical genre that has been largely overlooked and misunderstood. The act of explicating *Le Branle*'s singing queen necessitated a reconsideration of the vaudeville's place in Parisian culture after 1750—one that acknowledged the complexities at work in the meeting of *timbre* and text, and one willing to listen for music in texts whose silence had too long been assumed. Furthermore, the frequent appearance of obscene content in the lyrics of printed vaudevilles obliged an exploration of vaudeville's role in discourse about sexuality.

As a genre of song accessible to performers of any skill level, vaudevilles allow us to think about a reader-singer's capacity, through the real or imagined singing voice, to embody the eroticism that permeated these songs. Indeed, this accessibility suggests that vaudevilles

[347] "From one aspect of [satire], so rich in puns/The French, born clever, created the Vaudeville,/Pleasingly tactless, which, carried by song/Flies from mouth to mouth and gathers momentum in travelling/French license covers these verses/A child of pleasure which seeks joy to give rise to it/…/Even in songs, one must have good sense and artistry."

facilitated connections among the rungs of French cultural hierarchy, whether in parodies of Lully and Rameau on the fairground stages, or in the repetitive, simplistic structure of "Du haut en bas," with all of its bawdy connotations, sung in Marie-Madeleine Guimard's private theater. Thus, a more holistic approach to studying French song yields a clearer picture of how elite and vernacular musics circulated in Paris at the end of the *ancien régime*, bringing their relationship to audiences and their patterns of circulation into clearer focus. In this way, vaudevilles illuminate musical and interpretive communities that are not immediately intuitive.

Previous musicological scholarship has tended to dismiss vaudevilles on two grounds: first, that their function was too simplistic or sub-musical for scholarly attention; and second, that the genre was merely transitional, a stepping stone between the rougher fairground performances of the early part of the century to the more developed, musically complex, and innovative *opéra-comique* style that emerged by the century's end. Such reification of high/low generic hierarchies is ironic, given that the *comédies en vaudevilles* of the fairgrounds contributed to the disruption of those very hierarchies in the first place. To push back on the assumption that the vaudeville's content is too vulgar for inclusion in musical histories of France, my first chapter considered the vaudeville's musical characteristics, often overlooked on the grounds of the individual song's brevity and repetitive structures. When the genre's wide circulation within Paris is considered, it becomes clear that the simplicity of these elements was a feature, not a flaw, allowing vaudevilles to be quickly memorized and faithfully reproduced.

Vaudevilles circulated in two distinct modes (dramatic and non-dramatic), but each drew upon the other in creating their meaning. This dependency emerged through the sharing of melodies between the public stages and the streets. The intertextual relationships that resulted from this recycling of established tunes in unexpected settings demonstrate music's capacity for

"stickiness," in which previous iterations of a melody affected its reception or interpretation in a new context.[348] Taking the vaudeville's melody as the primary vehicle by which disparate messages were connected with one another permits us to find and apply notated modern editions of *timbres* in an effort to partially restore meanings to vaudevilles that have been largely overlooked in modern scholarship. In seeking to correct these oversights, I have sought to reconstruct interpretive strategies employed by eighteenth-century reading-listening communities in order to understand and appreciate the innumerable combinations of melody and text that constitute a vaudeville. Surveying eighteenth-century print and manuscript sources, I have furnished many of the vaudevilles in this study with modern editions of the melodies that contemporaneous reader-singers would have recognized from the *timbre*, but with which modern readers are unlikely to be familiar.

Accounting for the vaudeville's non-dramatic manifestations during this same period reveals that claims of the genre's definitive demise after the 1750s have been overstated, and are directly contradicted by the print record. This project pushes back on such simplistic historical narratives by showing how the circulation of vaudevilles between public, private, dramatic, and extra-theatrical settings kept the genre from falling completely out of favor or disappearing entirely. The history of eighteenth-century vaudevilles usually begins with a description of their popularity at the Saint Laurent and Saint Germain fairgrounds, and ends with their disappearance from those same spaces following the arrival of Italian influenced *ariettes*. Beginning with the success of Bambini's *bouffon* players in 1752, playwrights at the Opéra-Comique and the Comédie-Italienne began collaborating directly with composers to create new vocal scores for

[348] Carolyn Abbate suggests this might be an "unromantic view," in which music "exists in a state of unresolved and subservient alterity in relation to the visible world, or to language and words, as it does to culture and society." See her "Music – Drastic or Gnostic?" *Critical Inquiry* 30 no. 3 (Spring 2004): 524.

their plays. This required abandoning the earlier practice of pairing carefully selected preexisting *timbres* with text, creating amusing juxtapositions and bringing out *sous-entendres*, usually of a sexual nature. Charles Collé was moved to bemoan the fad for *ariettes*, which were steadily replacing vaudevilles as the dominant vocal genre at Paris's public theaters after 1752. In modern assessments, the decline of the dramatic vaudeville has been interpreted as a decline in vaudeville production *overall*, a conflation emerging from disciplinary biases towards opera and against vernacular musical practice.

The vaudeville's post-theatrical afterlife in print media evinces how vaudevilles shifted from a genre closely associated with live performance to one that existed primarily in texted forms after the 1750s. In Chapter 2, I tracked this transformation by documenting the vaudeville's treatment across contemporaneous musical dictionaries and theatrical treatises. These discussions reveal complicated attitudes from playwrights and *philosophes* alike towards the vaudeville's changing place in Paris's theatrical world: some, like Rousseau, never saw value in the genre, believing that its literary qualities overshadowed whatever musical charm the melody may have imparted; while others, like the Chevalier de Meude-Monpas, were sorry to see it go. Yet the fact that authors continued to compose vaudevilles later in the century indicates that the genre continued to hold some cultural sway even after they had been declared "obsolete" by cultural commentators. Their presence in newspapers, novels, and plays after 1750 demonstrate that the vaudeville's impact increasingly came from the printed page rather than performances on Paris's public stages. When these printed musical practices are assessed according to the methods described in the history of reading practices, we can see that vaudevilles were far from silent. Instead, multiple modes of reading were possible across the eighteenth century, ranging from communal recitation to silent, solitary reading, or even a mix of

both practices. Keeping these different reading practices in mind allows us to consider vaudevilles as a form of au/orality on the printed page, providing clues as to how eighteenth-century readers navigated between live performance and silent reading.

These printed media often did not include notated music, but they are teeming with sound in the form of vaudevilles, even if these are largely inaudible to us today without reconstruction. In choosing unconventionally musical texts, this project argues that we shift our focus away from composers, authors, and institutions, to instead consider how audiences understood and interacted with the musical objects of their time. To accomplish this, I turned to French cultural history as a model for contextualizing the vaudeville's print circulation and its role in Parisian life. Since musicological research has most often focused on musics whose performance histories can be firmly established, it has tended to privilege archives like those of the Opéra and, to a lesser extent, the Comédie-Italienne. As official, public stages, they have extensive records of ticket sales, actor and administration salaries, records of performance, and reviews in journals like the *Journal de Musique*, the *Mercure de France*, and the *Correspondance littéraire secrète*. Printed vaudevilles lack most of this contextualizing information, but provide many details about how Parisians thought about politics, power, and sex, and are a testament to how these ideas circulated in a musical form. Just as histories of "low literature" give us a clearer picture of what the average person was reading and complicate our understanding of literary production during the Enlightenment, this project undertakes a "low music" approach to understanding patterns of eighteenth-century musical production and circulation, decentering the Opéra as a primary driver of Parisian culture.

Chapter Three addressed case studies of eighteenth-century play collections intended for performance on the stages of private theaters known as *théâtres de société*. The appearance of

vaudevilles in these collections further supports the conclusions reached in Chapter Two regarding the vaudeville's relative popularity and functionality after 1750. Furthermore, the examples of Grandval *fils*'s *L'Eunuque ou la fidèle infidelité* and Delisle de Sales's *Dialogue érotique* show that vaudeville's close association with sexual rhetoric— a connection that was developed in the irreverent plays of the fairgrounds and "Pont Neufs" of the streets— continued to hold strong in these new settings. Plays like *L'Eunuque* and the *Dialogue érotique* capitalized on these associations with the vaudeville in order to enhance their sexually-derived humor (as in *L'Eunuque*) and emphasize their erotic nature (as in the *Dialogue érotique*). In this way, vaudevilles participated in the musical circulation of sexuality and desire in the private, eroticized space of the *théâtre de société*. Unlike the fairground theaters, where talk of sex was employed most often for laughs, the intimacy of the private society theater lent a different valence to these performances, in no small part because one could participate directly in the play's realization.

Vaudevilles participated in the circulation of desire and, by extension, sexual capital for certain *dames entretenues* in the space of the *théâtre de société*. This role for the vaudeville is of even greater interest when we consider the specific venues where it is indicated that these two plays were performed: the private theaters of two of the eighteenth century's most famous performers, Marie-Françoise Dumesnil and Sophie Arnould. If public theaters like the Comédie-Française and the Opéra were important sites for *dames entretenues* to demonstrate their desirability and attract new, potentially more powerful patrons, then the private theater created spaces where these same women could literally dramatize and/or perform that desirability.

It would be (and has been) easy to dismiss works like *L'Eunuque* and *Dialogue érotique* as mere curiosities, or even smut.[349] Furthermore, the explicit nature of some of the material has made it difficult to establish definitive performance histories for works like the *Dialogue érotique*, which could have been enjoyed as either a performed work or an erotic text. My research shows, however, that the appearance of vaudevilles in such plays is far from an isolated incident; rather, they were a common feature of play collections meant for private performance. The presence of vaudevilles in such texts demonstrates that, even with obscene media, reader-singers were engaged in sophisticated modes of interpretation in which *timbres* made readers create relationships between otherwise unrelated texts or events. In engaging reader-singers in this work, vaudevilles represent a performative possibility within the text, a musical means for envoicing and even embodying the erotics of the texts. The implications of this approach span beyond the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, with the revival of the Société du Caveau and a small publishing boom for printed vaudevilles from the establishment of the Directory in 1795 to the end of the July Monarchy in 1848. While a consideration of this phenomenon was beyond the scope of the current project, I believe I have laid the groundwork for further studies of a specifically French conception of the relationships among melody, text, obscenity, and politics, conditioned by the mechanics of the vaudeville.

Society theater vaudevilles might be understood as a transitional point between the live, public practices of the fairgrounds and the texted, overtly political creations of the early Revolutionary years. They created conditions wherein participants could freely move between roles as spectators and performers. In the case of the *Théâtre d'amour*, we see the "real world"

[349] Critiques of this nature have been leveled more generally in Nicholas Matthew and Mary Ann Smart, "Elephants in the Music Room: the Future of Quirk Historicism," *Representations* 132 no. 1 (November 2015): 61-78.

refashioned and reimagined through the lens of a *comédie en vaudevilles*, the boundaries between reality and fiction blurring.

This blurring was taken to extremes in the political vaudevilles of the early Revolutionary years. Also taken to extremes were the representations of sexual acts that appeared in these vaudevilles; while depictions of sex in the *théâtres de société* might be characterized as seductive or even inviting, when adopted by political agitators, they became rhetorical weapons wielded against those in power. Written in performance genres like the *comédie en vaudeville* and the *chansonnier*, works like *Les Fouteries chantantes, Le Branle des Capucins*, and *L'Autrichienne en goguettes* represent texts where obscenity, musical performance, and politics collide. Critics in France had long used obscenity to disparage the monarchy. Prior to 1789, these critiques were stringently policed, and those found creating or disseminating them were subject to harsh punishments. However, the lax enforcement of censorship laws (such as they existed) created a unique moment where wild, graphic reimaginations of the "priapic recreations" of the aristocracy flourished with few consequences. As with the *théâtre de société* plays, the presence of vaudevilles in these obscene, politically-inflected texts opens the possibility for performance—performance of political beliefs, of sexuality, or even of both simultaneously. In this way, vaudevilles can be used to reassert the performing, musical body of an audience in these texts, where their political and sexual content have been well-documented.

Rather than dismissing texts like *Les Fouteries chantantes* or *L'Autrichienne en goguettes* as too silly or profane to be worth our attention, I have taken the opposite approach. This project instead reveals that a vaudeville's operation relies on complex interpretive systems that weave together popular traditions from Paris's fairgrounds, elite traditions from the Opéra, private amateur traditions like the *théâtre de société*, and political discourse of the Revolutionary

years. As a fundamentally intertextual genre, vaudevilles are capable of transcending different communities—musical, interpretive, erotic—and uniting them through a shared melodic vocabulary in the form of the *timbre*, and a persistent presence of sexual metaphor. Though their meaning and implications require excavation in order to be understood in the present day, to ignore vaudevilles in the latter half of the eighteenth century is to dismiss a practice that united Parisians across the socioeconomic spectrum.

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