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Performers and composers: the members of the *petit chœur* between Lully and Rameau

Julien Dubruque

Few historical anecdotes have been more popular, especially among string players, than after-the-fact reports that Haydn and Mozart occasionally took part in string quartets together—Haydn playing the first violin, and Mozart the viola. This story’s popularity might be due to a certain understanding of these composers’ “greatness”; since their works were among the first to never have been forgotten (along with some of Handel’s sacred works in England), and they were remembered as the first great musical geniuses, whom Hoffmann qualified as “romantic,” the public does not expect them to have been involved in the performance of their works at all, much less to have done so together, since they were amateur string players. Great composers from the romantic and post-romantic eras were expected, at most, to conduct their own works; even the fact that Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven would have done so from the keyboard can still come as a surprise to a non-specialist.

Retrospectively, Lully fits rather well in this picture: a director and an entrepreneur, he may be best known for his death, which, according to the legend, was caused by his overly energetic conducting.¹ But one rarely thinks of opera composers from the French classical era as primarily performers, even though Collasse, Gatti, Marais, Lacoste, Campra, Destouches, La Barre, Bouvard, Bertin de la Doué, J.-F. Rebel, Bourgeois, Montéclair, Fr. Rebel and Fr. Francœur² did perform at the Paris Opéra day in and day out, and sometimes for decades. Let us consider the example of the 1713 *petit chœur* at the creation of Campra’s *Télèphe*: the performers’ names added by Lallemand (chief copyist from 1708 to 1751) on each orchestral part³ reveal that Jean-Féry Rebel played the harpsichord, Montéclair the double bass, Gatti the bass violin, and Campion the theorbo; we do not know for certain who conducted, but it seems very likely that Campra did so himself, as titular *batteur de mesure* that year,⁴ or in his capacity as the composer, since the *Règlement* promulgated the following year allowed composers to direct their own works.⁵

¹ Lecerf de la Viéville, 1705, vol. 2, p. 190. For a contextualization, see La Gorce, 2002, chap. 13, “Le coup de canne fatal”, especially pp. 345–48; we agree with Peter Holman’s doubts on Lully’s actual way of conducting (see Holman, 2020, 20–22).

² For a more detailed view on these composers’ activity, see table 3 below.

³ F-Po MAT-250 (117–119).

⁴ For the most complete list of the Opéra’s *batteurs de mesure*, see DOPAR, I, 387.

⁵ *Règlement 1714*, article 12.

ILLUSTRATION Légende : A. Campra, *Téléphe*, performing parts, *F-Po* MAT-250, no. 117 (“basse continue” [bass violins]), 118 (“basse continue” [harpsichord and double bass]) and 119 (“basse continue” [viola da gamba and theorbo]).

This 1713 grouping was not an extraordinary encounter, like Haydn and Mozart’s, but rather the norm, a norm that I would like to investigate in this paper. To that end, I have compiled the most recent data available from the *Dictionnaire de l’Opéra de Paris sous l’Ancien Régime (DOPAR)*, in order to produce statistics about the proportion of works created by members (“*Ordinaires*”) of the Académie royale de musique,⁶ who were not academicians properly speaking,⁷ but singers, instrumentalists, conductors and administrators employed by the Opéra. The complete results of this calculation can be found online, on HAL,⁸ as they would take too much space here.

Methodologically, I have chosen to take into account both creations and revivals, since the Paris Opéra has been a repertory theater from the very beginning, and always staged more revivals than creations until the Gluck era. My calculations are also based on the number of acts in a given work, rather than on works themselves, since the act was the basic unit for the program of a given show, and even for the authors’ financial compensation.⁹ Some composers, like Campra and Destouches, had their works first performed when they were not otherwise involved in the Opéra; in that case, I have considered such works to be by non-Opéra composers before their involvement in the administration of the Opéra, and by Opéra composers after they were involved, including the revivals of the works that they had already written. If we present the data decade by decade, each season starting after Easter, and grouping the incomplete 1670–1671 and 1791–1792 seasons with the following and preceding decades respectively, the results can be found in table 1.

Acts composed by Opéra composers	Acts composed by non-Opéra composers	No. of acts	% by Opéra composers
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⁶ Henceforth, the “Opéra”.

⁷ See, in this volume, Th. Vernet’s and L. Guillo’s articles, p. 000-000.

⁸ [Lien à insérer](#)

⁹ According to the 1714 *Règlement* (articles 16 and 17), tragedies (traditionally in 6 acts, including the prologue) were worth 100 *livres* each for the composer and the librettist, whereas ballets (traditionally in 4 acts, including the prologue) were only worth 60 *livres*, which amounts to roughly 15 *livres* per act. When works were composed by two or more composers, the number of acts has been divided equally between them. For example, *Iphigénie en Tauride* has been divided between Desmarest and Campra, and *Alcide* between Louis de Lully and Marais (three acts each). In the rare cases of late ballets where the composer is unknown, such works have not been taken into account, except if there were obvious arrangements made by the current *maître de ballet*, and therefore considered “local”.

Seasons	creation s	revivals	creation s	revivals	creation s	total	creation s	total
167 – 168 0 1	102	42	0	0	102	144	100%	100%
168 – 169 1 1	67	71	19	0	86	157	78%	88%
169 – 170 1 1	51	57	84	0	135	192	38%	56%
170 – 171 1 1	90	164	42	32	132	328	68%	77%
171 – 172 1 1	52	132	79	44	131	307	40%	60%
172 – 173 1 1	35.5	116.5	67.5	54.5	103	274	34%	55%
173 – 174 1 1	36	144.5	76	42.5	112	299	32%	60%
174 – 175 1 1	11	127.5	107	90.5	118	336	9%	41%
175 – 176 1 1	25	106	41	113	66	285	38%	46%
176 – 177 1 1	27	74.5	40	122.5	67	264	40%	38%
177 – 178 1 1	20.5	44.5	100.5	99.5	121	265	17%	25%
178 – 179 1 1	28	1	145	56	173	230	16%	13%

Table 1. Number and percentage of acts composed by Opéra and non-Opéra composers by decade.

Even if we focus solely on Opéra members who composed works for their own institution, excluding the many singers and instrumentalists who composed and published non-operatic vocal works (such as Jacques Cocherneau or Antoine Fel) or instrumental works (such as Campion), the percentage of opera composers who were also performers at the Opéra is striking: after Lully's foundational era, when almost all the works were performed by the director-composer, and before the 1770s, between one and two thirds of all works created at the Paris Opéra were composed by performers belonging to the institution (excluding the 1740s, the decade at the heart of Rameau's operatic career). If we refine the data and try to delineate periods, we find that the decline of the percentage of Opéra composers in the total of creations and revived works ratio follows a familiar pattern, that of the "ages" or "eras" of the Paris Opéra: there are the Lully, Rameau and Gluck eras and the very long or very short periods between them. The reorganized data can be found in table 2.

Seasons		Acts composed by Opéra composers		Acts composed by non-Opéra composers		No. of acts		% by Opéra composers	
		Creation	revivals	Creation	revivals	creation	total	Creation	total
1670	1687	143	90	4	0	147	237	97%	98%
"Lully's era"									
1687	1733	266.5	538.5	298.5	130.5	565	1234	47%	65%
1733	1764	73	364	218	276	291	931	25%	47%
"Rameau's era"									

ra”

176 177

4	- 4	17.5	71.5	57.5	115.5	75	262	23%	34%
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177 179

4	- 1	45	16.5	223	132.5	268	417	17%	15%
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“Gluck’s

era”

Table 2. Number and percentage of acts composed by Opéra and non-Opéra composers by traditional era.

This way of presenting the data highlights Rameau’s revolutionary effect on the history of French opera. If one excludes Rameau from the 1733–1764 period, the Opéra composers’ share in the total number of acts would be roughly the same as in the preceding one: slightly less than half. With Rameau and his operas, where “there is enough music to make ten of them,”¹⁰ a new era began, that of pure composers, musical geniuses not involved in the daily show business of the Paris Opéra. In fact, this was one of the most recurrent criticisms of his music in the eighteenth century and later: he was branded a theoretician.¹¹ This reputation was born from his *Traité de l’harmonie*;¹² he supposedly wrote music that was too learned, so it was held that he was unable to manage the mundane constraints of the show. Or as a keyboard virtuoso, he supposedly put too many semiquavers in his vocal music.¹³ Of course, this was and still is far from being the case, and Rameau cared about the public and the performers as much as any other composer.¹⁴ But it is true that he, not Rousseau, is the first full-time independent composer, free from the duties of serving the princes or the Church, and from the service as an organist¹⁵ or an instrumentalist in an orchestra.¹⁶ Unlike Campra and Destouches before him, or

¹⁰ Maret 1766, p. 64, n. 36.

¹¹ Bouissou 2014, chap. 22.

¹² Rameau 1722.

¹³ Voltaire dubbed him the specialist of “semiquavers,” (*Correspondence*, D969), the “semiquaver hero” (“le héros des doubles croches,” D971), or a “semiquaver head” (“tête à doubles croches”, D1000).

¹⁴ See in this volume Dratwicki’s article, p. 000-000.

¹⁵ How much Rameau’s revenues depended on his playing the organ at the end of his life is unclear, but it is clear that he was an “*organiste malgré lui*”; see Bouissou 2014, chap. 5: “Être ou ne pas être organiste.”

¹⁶ Following Cucuel 1913, La Pouplinière has long been considered Rameau’s main patron. But Sylvie Bouissou has showed that the first one was actually the Opéra’s director, the prince of Carignan. In both

Fr. Francoeur, Fr. Rebel, Dauvergne, Trial and Berton after him, Rameau never accepted an official role in the Opéra's administration; his only formal link with the institution was that he obtained a pension drawn on the Opéra's revenue in 1750.¹⁷ There is no evidence that he ever conducted the Opéra orchestra, though he attended the rehearsals. Even as the "composer of the King's Chamber" (*compositeur de la chambre du roi*), from 1745, he kept his obligations to a bare minimum. Before him, only Desmarest and Mouret had been such important composers for the Académie royale de musique without being members of it. It is no exaggeration to assert that Rameau embodies the first figure of the "romantic" composer in France.¹⁸ After his death, in 1764, which almost coincides with the burning of the Palais-Royal theater in 1763, and its consequences on the creative agenda, the figure of the performer-composer almost vanishes: from then until the French Revolution, fewer than one in five operas were written by members of the Opéra; and works by Berton, Trial, Granier, Desormery, Legros, Candeille, Rey and Rochefort cannot compare with those of Grétry, Gluck or Piccinni, neither in quality nor in public success. Let us consider the example of Dauvergne, a remarkable member of the institution during the second half of the century, who rose from violinist to director:¹⁹ almost all his original works were created during Rameau's lifetime. Only the appointment of Gossec in 1779 would renew the old habit of internalizing the composition of operas within the Opéra personnel.

But if we focus on the period between Lully and Rameau, which amounts to almost fifty years, *half* of the new operas created were composed by members of the Opéra. Not all members were equal: administrators, *batteurs de mesure* (conductors) and *maîtres de musique* (i.e., assistants in charge of teaching the singers their roles and/or music in general) take the lion's share, like Collasse (Lully's conductor and successor), Campra and Destouches. Next are the members of the *petit chœur*, sometimes known as *basse continue*, i.e., instrumentalists in charge of accompanying the actors in the dramatic scenes (as opposed to the *divertissements*, which involve the *grand chœur*, or full orchestra). They include Gatti, a bass violin player, Marais, a viol player, Jean-Féry Rebel, a harpsichordist, Montéclair, a double bass player. La Barre, the first solo flutist in the history of the Paris Opéra, who belonged as such to the *petit chœur*, can be counted in this group of performer-composers. The third group consists of actors: Lacoste, Bouvard and Bourgeois. Interestingly, some if not most of these performer-composers followed more or less the same path: even though there was no pre-established career advancement, a typical composer was first an instrumentalist, then a *maître de musique* and/or a conductor, and

cases, Rameau was never employed by them, strictly speaking. See Bouissou, 2014, chap. 8, "Du prince de Carignan à la Pouplinière."

¹⁷ Bouissou 2014, chap. 18, "L'affaire d'Argenson."

¹⁸ On the cult (and the critics of the cult) of the composer Rameau, see Vançon, 2009.

¹⁹ On Dauvergne, see Dratwicky 2011.

finally, in some cases, an administrator (inspector or director). Only Destouches, who was not a trained musician, was directly appointed as “inspector” in 1713, sixteen years after having composed his first work for the Opéra, *Issé* (1697). Campra was hired much sooner after his first success, *L'Europe galante*, premiered the same year as Destouches's: he became a conductor as early as 1703. But this external recruitment of successful composers remains exceptional; internal promotion was the norm, perhaps based partially on seniority. A complete list of these performer-composers can be found in table 3.

Composers	floruit at the Opéra	Function	works composed for the Opéra before recruitment or after resignation	works composed for the Opéra after recruitment
Cambert	1670–1672	conductor*		all (2)
Lully	1672–1687	director conductor*		all (25)
Collasse	1677–1694	conductor*		all (11)
Gatti	1676–1726	bass violin player*		all (2)
Marais	1675–1710	bass viol player* conductor *		all (3.5)
Lacoste	1693–1732	singing actor conductor* <i>maître de musique</i>		all (7)

Campra	1703–1735	conductor* <i>maître de musique</i> inspector	7	14
Destouches	1713-1726	inspector director	6	4
La Barre	1692–1720	flutist*		all (2)
Bouvard	bef. 1700	child actor		all (1.5)
Bertin de La Doué	1714–1734	harpsichordist*	0.5	5
J.-F. Rebel	1700–1739	harpsichordist* conductor*		all (4)
Bourgeois	1690–1717	singing actor		all (2)
Montéclair	1699–1737	double bass player*		all (2)
Aubert	1727-1752	Violinist conductor*	2	1
F. Rebel	1714–1775	violinist conductor* director inspector		all (7)
F. Francœur	1710–1767	violinist <i>maître de musique</i> director		(all) 7

		inspector		
Royer	1730–1755	<i>maître de musique</i> inspector	1	4
Plessis	1725–1762	viola (<i>taille</i>) player <i>maître de musique</i>		all (1)
Niel	1744–1771	adjunct conductor* <i>maître de musique</i>	1	1
Grenet	1720–1739	singing actor <i>maître de musique</i>		all (2)
Jéliote	1733–1755	singing actor		all (1)
Lagarde	1749–1756	singing actor conductor*	1	0
Dauvergne	1744–1790	violinist <i>maître de musique</i> conductor* director		all (11)
Blavet	1737–1758	solo flutist*		all (1)
Giraud	1752–1776	cellist* <i>maître de</i>		all (3)

		<i>musique</i>		
P.-M. Berton	1744–1780	singing actor cellist* conductor* director		all (6)
Trial	1767–1771	violinist director	1	3
L.-J. Francœur	1754–1790	violinist conductor* <i>maître de musique</i> director		all (1)
Granier	1777–1780	<i>maître de musique</i> director <i>“maître de théâtre”</i>	2	1
Gossec	1779–1784	administrator	4	9
Desormery	1772–1774	singing actor	3	0
Legros	1764–1783	singing actor		all (1)
Candeille	1767–1785	singing actor		all (4)
Rey	1767–aft. 1791	cellist* conductor*		all (2)
Rochefort	1774–aft. 1791	double bass player		all (3)

		cellist		
		conductor*		

Table 3. Performer-composers at the *Académie royale de musique* from 1670 to 1791, according to the *DOPAR*. Asterisks marks the members of the *petit chœur*.

What about outsiders? Even if half of the total creations in the 1687–1733 period were written by non-Opéra composers (and until 1764 if Rameau is not taken into account), the Opéra was more or less welcoming, depending on the season, without any apparent logic. There were 13 seasons when 100% of the created works were by Opéra composers;²⁰ conversely, there were 28 seasons when none of the new works was by an Opéra composer.²¹ In two remarkable but rather short periods, it seems that the Paris Opéra administration deliberately encouraged new composers, exterior to the institution, to write for the Opéra.²² In the mid-1690s, when it became clear that Lully's sons and Collasse could not attain the same success as the deceased founder and owner of the company, Desmarest, Charpentier, Jacquet de la Guerre, Gervais, Campra and Destouches were invited to prove their worth over a very short period of time (1693–1697). Desmarest proved successful, but he remained independent from the Opéra, obviously because he had been banned and exiled; otherwise, he might have become the new Lully. Campra and Destouches were eventually put at the head of the institution. But after their failures, Charpentier, Jacquet and Gervais were definitively excluded from the stage, or at least for a very long time: Gervais's immense success with *Hypermnestre* came 20 years after his first attempt, and he was probably allowed to try again only because he had the Regent's support, as one of his musicians.²³

Composers exterior to the Opéra again thrived during a short but remarkable period in the mid-1730s, under the new director Thuret²⁴ and the new inspector, the prince of Carignan.²⁵ From 1733 to 1736, new works were performed on the stage of the Opéra from Brassac (an amateur, like Destouches in his time), Rameau, Boismortier (both already renowned for their instrumental music), and Niel. One could almost include Duval's *Les Génies* in this trend:

²⁰ 1690–1693; 1696–1697; 1705–1707; 1709–1710; 1718–1719; 1726–1727; 1755–1756; 1760–1763.

²¹ 1689–1690; 1694–1695; 1698–1700; 1703–1704; 1711–1712; 1713–1714; 1717–1718; 1720–1721; 1722–1725; 1729–1731; 1733–1734; 1736–1737; 1739–1744; 1747–1751; 1754–1755; 1763–1765.

²² The very fact that these periods were rare and short suggests that a sort of corporatism excluded outsiders by default.

²³ Montagnier 2001, 93–95.

²⁴ *DOPAR*, IV, 817–18.

²⁵ *DOPAR*, I, 682–83.

although she was a chorus member at the Opéra, it was a rather bold decision to entrust a woman, only the second one after Jacquet de La Guerre, with the composition of a lyrical work.

These outsiders, exceptionally allowed to try their luck, successfully or not, had one thing in common: their styles, different in some way or another from the house style, were often rejected as “Italian.” It is indeed true that their taste for Italian novelties was greater than their adherence to Lullian orthodoxy. Within the first surge of “outsiders,” Charpentier’s *Médée* belonged to a very different harmonic and melodic world from those of Collasse and Desmarest.²⁶ After all, Jacquet, at the same time, was one of those who introduced the genre of the sonata in France, even if her *Céphale et Procris* showed rather little influence of it. And the rich harmony of Gervais’s *Méduse* clearly points to Italy (or, at least, Charpentier), even if Gervais otherwise sticks to the Lullian model.²⁷ Later on, Stuck accessed the Opéra stage three times; he was another musician belonging to the Régent’s circle, and, actually, an Italian by birth. But only his *Polydore* met with enough success, in 1720, to be revived in 1739.²⁸ In the second surge of “outsiders,” Rameau’s music, more than Boismortier’s, was considered “Italian,” bizarre, even “baroque.”²⁹ That Rameau’s music was eventually rejected as “French” by Rousseau must not overshadow the fact that it initially sounded so foreign to the Lullyists that they dubbed it “Italian.”³⁰

But from Lully’s era to Rameau’s, over a period that covered almost a century, the composition of operas was in large part an internal business, one that crowned the career of the troupe’s most distinguished musicians (whether conductors, accompanists, or soloists). The *petit chœur* was situated at the heart of the orchestra, grouped around the conductor’s stand and the

²⁶ Consider Lecerf de la Viéville’s (1705, II, p. 347) untimely judgment, since Charpentier’s *Médée* has had more revivals—justly so—than any of Lully’s operas since the end of the 20th century: “How successful have been those of our Masters who have been the zealous admirers of the Italians, who have ardently imitated their way of composing? Where did this lead them to? To compose works that the public and the times have deemed pitiful. What has the learned Charpentier left to ensure his legacy? *Médée*, *Saül et Jonathas*. Better that he had left nothing.” (“Comment ont réussi ceux de nos maîtres qui ont été les admirateurs zélés, et les ardents imitateurs de la manière de composer des Italiens ? Où cela les a-t-il menés ? À faire des pièces que le public et le temps ont déclaré pitoyables. Qu’a laissé le savant Charpentier pour assurer sa mémoire ? *Médée*, *Saül et Jonathas*. Il vaudrait mieux qu’il n’eût rien laissé.”)

²⁷ Montagnier 2001, 49–74 (especially pp. 51, 73); see also *DOPAR*, III, 754–56.

²⁸ It is not by chance that the genre of the cantata, considered an Italian import, was primarily illustrated by composers from the Régent’s entourage, such as Stuck (5 books), but also Bernier (7 books), Gervais, etc.

²⁹ *MF*, 1734, May, « Lettre de M. *** sur l’origine de la musique », 867–69.

³⁰ Among outsiders, members of the King’s music (*Musique du roi*) in Versailles can regularly be found. Several works by Collin de Blamont, Royer and Bury met with success in Paris too. It seems very likely that their position at court smoothed their entrée to the Opéra, especially since a lot of its eminent members, whether singers or instrumentalists, also held posts in the King’s music, and both milieux were intertwined. One fails, however, to find musical characteristics common to these court composers.

harpsichord, right next to the stage and the limelight;³¹ thus would conductors and instrumentalists perform each other's music in turn, all year long (except for a three-week break around Easter time), along with a repertoire that included Lully and some others. Collasse, Gatti, Marais, La Barre, Bertin, Rebel, Campra, Destouches and Montéclair thus played together—not all of them at the same time, of course, but at least two or three of each in the 1700s and 1710s—three times a week; they accompanied actors just above them on the forestage, including Lacoste, Bouvard, and Bourgeois. It therefore seems reasonable to suppose that the existence of a common spirit, a house style, was first forged by practice and by emulation rather than by an intellectual imitation of the Lullian canon. It might also be that the public expected a certain rendition of the recitative, and that these performer-interpreters conformed themselves to it. In any case, they must have been, as it were, native speakers of the French recitative, the mold of which had been made by Lully. The impression of familiarity, if not uniformity, that the modern listener, musician, or musicologist gets from the lyrical works of the first half of the eighteenth century is not by accident. Imitating the canon was indeed easier since it was more a routine than an entirely conscious creative act. Great books have already been written on the accepted dramaturgy of the French classical opera between Lully and Rameau;³² they are mostly based on the libretti and on the (legitimate) assumption that there existed such a consensus among writers. A similar book on the common compositional practices at the Paris Opéra remains to be written, as musicologists have traditionally tended to focus on single composers.

This is not to say that there are no differences between the writing practices of particular composers. For example, Collasse refuses to distinguish between duple and quadruple time, unlike Lully (and even, later, Rameau), and his recitative alternates only between **C** and **3**, but almost never **2** or **Cbarré**. Yet the difference in notation is hardly audible, unlike, say, Mondonville's revolutionary recitative in *Isbé* (1742) and later operas, which is almost always in **3**. Some composers, like Destouches, are quite precise in their notation of the ornaments; others neglect to include the + signs, the *ports-de-voix* and/or the *coulés*; if we accept the idea of a common style, it does not follow that composers intended such *agréments* not to be performed by the actors, but rather that they trusted them with the knowledge of the common style and the common interpretation. This may be proven by the late additions in red pencil that the *maîtres de musique* (and/or the *maîtres de chant*, if such a distinction existed) filled the singers' parts with, probably to teach them this very style.³³ Fr. Rebel, Fr. Francœur, Dauvergne and Berton are the last major representatives of this common style, well into the 1770s, a century after its

³¹ Dubruque 2011.

³² Among others, Girdlestone 1972, Kintzler 2006 (1991), Naudeix 2004a.

³³ See, in this volume, Gr. Sadler's article, p. **000-000**.

invention by Lully. They tried to preserve this recitative, identified with the French style, even if everything else had changed in the *musique*, i.e., pieces in measured time, like overtures, arias, choruses and dances, where they tended to conform to more modern tastes.³⁴ It is indeed in such movements, which are mostly found in the *divertissements*, that one composer's personal style would have been distinguished from another's. Right after Lully's death, Collasse's compositions contrast impressively with Lully's instrumental writing, whether through innovations in orchestral textures, starting with the famous tempest from *Thétis et Pélée* (1688), or his use of specific woodwinds in *Énée et Lavinie* (1690).³⁵ At the end of the period, the (old) Montéclair's inventiveness in *Jephté* (first version, 1732) differs strikingly from the (young) Fr. Rebel and Fr. Francœur's contemporaneous adherence to four-part writing, with doubling by the woodwinds for the treble and bass parts, in *Pyrame et Thisbé* (1728), even if one could hardly tell the difference between their respective recitatives.³⁶

For over fifty years after Lully's death, almost half of the new works composed and presented at the *Académie royale de musique* were composed by its most eminent members: administrators, conductors, *maîtres de musique*, accompanying instrumentalists, instrumental soloists or main actors. It may be only in this sense that the *Académie royale de musique* was an academy: not an academy of music theoreticians, but a workshop where everyone influenced each other and was influenced by the revivals of works written by their glorious predecessors. This is an almost ideal example of tradition building. Only Rameau's arrival on the stage introduced a different model, that of the genius-composer, one who was not involved in the daily making of the show. It eventually surpassed the former model, that of the performer-composer, where a group of individuals, working together daily, offered everyone the alternate roles of the accompanist, the repetiteur, the conductor and/or the composer. It was thus similar to the model in Hollywood, the world's prominent show business today: the same person can be in turn an actor, a director and a producer.³⁷ Gluck, his rivals, and his successors would only reinforce the model of the genius-composer, but that is not to say that the performer-composer disappeared forever. Until after World War II, several operas staged at the Paris Opéra remained composed by the elite of its staff, whether the director, a conductor or an instrumentalist—never more the majority of them, however, as in the first half of the eighteenth century.³⁸

³⁴ See, in this volume, Fr. Escande's article, p. 000-000.

³⁵ Dubruque 2020.

³⁶ At most one can detect Montéclair's slight tendency to avoid 2 and Cbarré in favor of 2/4 and C.

³⁷ Or even... a composer, from Chaplin to Eastwood.

³⁸ I wish to thank Marina Davies, Benoît Dratwicki and Graham Sadler for their help in writing this article.

Summary

French operas from the end of the seventeenth to the beginning of the eighteenth centuries, before the Rameau revolution, are known to have shared common aesthetics, based on the imitation of Quinault and Lully's canonic repertoire. But these common aesthetics do not only result from the composers' need to conform to a set of operatic rules or to the public's taste: they were forged within the Opéra orchestra itself, more specifically within the *petit chœur*, evening after evening. The majority of those who composed for the institution were in fact recruited among its performers' elite: more than half of the new operas created between Lully and Rameau were composed by conductors (*batteurs de mesure*: Collasse, Marais, Lacoste, J.-F. Rebel), instrumentalists from the *petit chœur* (Gatti, Marais, La Barre, J.-F. Rebel, Bertin de La Doué, Montéclair), and singers (*acteurs chantants*: Lacoste, Bouvard, Bourgeois). Conversely, the institution also recruited successful composers to become conductors (Campra) or administrators (Destouches, Campra). In this paper, I analyze the collaborative dynamics and emulation in this group of performer-composers, who stood every night side by side in the pit, at the heart of the orchestra. I also investigate how they opposed lucky or unlucky outsiders, such as Charpentier, Gervais, Stuck or Mouret, whose musical personalities tended to assert themselves under the banner of Italian music.