

David Charlton

**French Opera 1730-1830:
Meaning and Media**





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CONTENTS

Preface	vii–ix	
Acknowledgements	x	
I	The <i>romance</i> and its Cognates: Narrative, Irony and <i>vraisemblance</i> in Early <i>opéra comique</i> <i>Die Opéra comique und ihr Einfluß auf das europäische Musiktheater im 19. Jahrhundert</i> , ed. Herbert Schneider and Nicole Wild. Hildesheim, 1997	43–92
II	Continuing Polarities: Opera Theory and <i>opéra-comique</i> <i>Expanded from Kein Ende der Gegensätze: Operntheorien und opéra comique. Text und Musik: Neue Perspektiven der Theorie</i> , ed. Michael Walter. Munich, 1992	1–50
III	Orchestra and Chorus at the Comédie-Italienne (Opéra-Comique), 1755–1799 <i>Slavonic and Western Music: Essays for Gerald Abraham</i> , ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown and Roland John Wiley. Ann Arbor and Oxford, 1985	87–108
IV	The Overture to Philidor's <i>Le Bûcheron</i> (1763) <i>D'Un Opéra l'autre: Hommage à Jean Mongrédien</i> , ed. Jean Gribenski, Marie-Claire Mussat and Herbert Schneider. Paris, 1996	231–242
V	'Envoicing' the Orchestra: Enlightenment Metaphors in Theory and Practice <i>Expanded from L'orchestre et la métaphore du vivant de Mozart. Mozart: Les chemins de l'Europe</i> , ed. Brigitte Massin. Strasbourg, 1997	1–32
VI	'Minuet-scenes' in Early <i>opéra-comique</i> <i>Timbre und Vaudeville. Zur Geschichte und Problematik einer populären Gattung im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert</i> , ed. Herbert Schneider. Hildesheim, 1999	156–191

VII	Motive and Motif: Méhul before 1791 <i>Music & Letters 57. Oxford, 1976</i>	362–369
VIII	Motif and Recollection in Four Operas of Dalayrac <i>Soundings 7. Cardiff, 1978</i>	38–61
IX	The French Theatrical Origins of <i>Fidelio</i> <i>Ludwig van Beethoven: 'Fidelio', ed. Paul Robinson. Cambridge, 1996</i>	51–67
X	Storms, Sacrifices: the 'Melodrama Model' in Opera <i>Expanded from The Tragic Seascape: 'Sapho' and its 12-note Chord. Jahrbuch für Opernforschung, Frankfurt am Main, 1985</i>	1–61
XI	Ossian, Le Sueur and Opera <i>Studies in Music 11. Nedlands, 1977</i>	37–48
XII	The Dramaturgy of 'Grand Opera': Some Origins <i>Trasmisione e recezione delle forme di cultura musicale. Atti del XIV congresso della Società Internazionale di Musicologia, ed. Angelo Pompilio et al. Turin, 1987</i>	853–858
XIII	On the Nature of 'Grand Opera' <i>Hector Berlioz: 'Les Troyens', ed. Ian Kemp. Cambridge, 1988</i>	94–105
XIV	'A maître d'orchestre...conducts': New and Old Evidence on French Practice <i>Early Music 21. Oxford, 1993</i>	340–353
	Addenda et Corrigenda	1–4
	Index	1–11

This volume contains xii + 374 pages

PREFACE

The present collection of essays old and new presents a mixed way of looking at French operatic history, one which avoids single-composer issues, often avoids institutional matters and manages to bypass direct consideration of the French Revolution. The Revolution, which – after all – promoted opera, cannot ultimately be treated as something divorced from its earlier and later contexts, and I have chosen here to take a longer view between the 1780s and the 1820s. The essays concentrate, furthermore, on issues lying outside the more cultivated fields of Rameau studies and neoclassicism. They deal, rather, with some of French opera's unfamiliar roots and characteristics, and attempt to develop a number of theories identifying what makes this opera tradition different from any other, and (by implication) those elements that other operatic traditions took from France: for example, its particular employment of the *romance*, its use of motivic and other organising principles, its relation to literature and politics, and the way these things were articulated through staging techniques, use of orchestras, and various dramaturgical systems. Concerning genre, the accent is on *opéra comique*, occasionally *mélodrame*, and the path to 'grand opera'. Although the collection contains some articles from before 1980, almost three-quarters of the writing within dates from the 1990s, and four studies are entirely new, VI having only recently been published by Georg Olms Verlag (I am grateful for their ready agreement to reproduce this text) and articles II, V and X being expansions specially made for this volume, deriving from earlier publications. Two of these articles (II and V) had been issued in languages other than English; and the selection as a totality now makes more accessible publications which were issued in journals no longer extant or widely found, in books now out of print, or in collections having possibly limited circulation in Britain and elsewhere.

The opportunity afforded by Ashgate to bring together these thematic studies has had the natural effect of allowing revaluations to occur, some of them in response to new developments in theory and criticism, mainly from the United States. Such absorption has found a particularly natural place in 'Continuing Polarities' (II), which had from the start been an attempt to juxtapose recent opera theory and eighteenth-century materials. The resulting dialectic has, since its original appearance in German, taken a profitable turn thanks not least to the work of Carolyn Abbate and Rose Rosengard Subotnik. Similarly, "'Envoicing" the Orchestra' (V) has been expanded to take in ideas developed in recent years by Downing Thomas, Mark Evan Bonds and Thomas Grey. The new account of what is called the 'Melodrama model' explored in 'Storms, Sacrifices' (X)

benefited from yet earlier unpublished work of my own, but also from work published since 1985 by M. Elizabeth C. Bartlet, Michael Fend, Anselm Gerhard and Emilio Sala.

As will be seen from many articles within, a collection such as this continues to justify Edward Dent's conviction that French opera is vital to a solid understanding of Romantic opera, wherever it may be found or however defined. Since Winton Dean's edition of Dent's unpublished 1937–38 lectures,¹ the musicological emphases and languages have shifted, but the need to increase our understanding of historical continuities seems to me as urgent as ever: continuities evinced in aesthetics, social practices and structural and semiotic conventions. At the same time, some provocative insights gained recently in nineteenth-century studies should be tested out in eighteenth-century opera, where they often tie in unexpectedly well with earlier findings, though may also be subject to modification by the latter. The Revolution intensified the already active mixing of dramatic genres which we sometimes think of as a Romantic phenomenon, and this is reflected within: the tendency of the following essays to work across categories and divisions is most obvious in 'Storms, Sacrifices' (X), which follows a trajectory linking 1770s Germany and France with the world of the 1820s, and takes in recitative opera, *mélodrame* and *opéra comique*. A number of other articles, as does the foregoing one, highlight generic expansions, and the operation of literature and history in shaping French opera, especially 'Continuing Polarities' (II), 'The French Theatrical Origins of *Fidelio*' (IX) and 'Ossian, Le Sueur and Opera' (XI).

The linking of meaning and media in the subtitle is intended to suggest *inter alia* how French operas, doubtless no more than others do, respond to analyses of their various narrative-systems. The term 'media' obviously signifies material elements like orchestras, choruses, acting and staging (III, IV, X, XIV): acting is particularly addressed in 'Storms, Sacrifices'. But it also signifies the way that the formal conventions linking music and words can be found to construct their own channels of signification. Some of these have been more extensively studied by others in the past, such as recurring motives (VII, VIII); others have had less attention, such as *romances* (I); still others are entirely new propositions, e.g. the concept of minuet-scenes (VI). The particular method represented in one unfamiliar *opéra comique* overture (IV) turns out to enclose an ambiguous transmission of meaning which closely anticipates earlier nineteenth-century techniques, depending for its effect on the listener's depth of appreciation of text–music correspondences in the parent opera.

A medium also implies audiences: subjective ambiguities and narrative

¹ Edward J. Dent, *The Rise of Romantic Opera*, edited by Winton Dean (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). Out of twelve chapters, including an introduction and a conclusion, four are wholly devoted to France and three partially so.

descriptions found in contemporary accounts of operatic and symphonic music are disclosed in “Envoicing” the Orchestra’ (V), where metaphors inspired by Gluck and others in the 1770s demonstrate powerful imaginative expectations by listeners. The orchestra ceased being construed as a mere accompaniment and became regarded as an equal partner in the narrative enterprise. Related practical and expressive considerations for the orchestra are located in article XIV. And as is shown by the use of musical recurring motives no less than by *mélodrame*, French opera in whatever genre had a capacity to absorb new diegetic techniques that appear to have been important for the success of its Romantic music-theatre.

The essays on articulations of political meaning in French opera (IX, XII and XIII) focus inevitably on the way private desire and public imperatives intersected in opera. In the case of ‘The French Theatrical Origins of *Fidelio*’ (IX) the pervasive medium of different prison-scenes is shown susceptible of very different political meanings, and provoke the question: did Beethoven realise that Gaveaux’s *Léonore*, of which presumably he knew, was conceived and construed in Paris as an anti-revolutionary opera? ‘Ossian, Le Sueur and Opera’ (XI) refers in passing to the Napoleonic politicisation of Ossianic subject-matter, and suggests how Le Sueur’s strangely individual music linked the old century and the new through its processes of reinterpretation of meaning.

Updated bibliographical references are found in the new essays. In the Addenda et Corrigenda at the end of this book I have also indicated some important new work modifying specific earlier conclusions: regarding ‘Orchestra and Chorus at the Comédie-Italienne’ (III) for example, Arnold Jacobshagen has found evidence which shows that the Comédie-Italienne chorus was probably larger before 1783 than I had thought. Regarding ‘On the Nature of “Grand Opera”’ (XIII) Steven Huebner has sensibly suggested abandoning my over-rigorous division between political and all other plot categories in favour of relativised degrees of balance between public and private. Anselm Gerhard’s *The Urbanization of Opera. Music Theater in the Nineteenth Century* (University of Chicago Press, 1998) has changed the musicological landscape, and one of doubtless many aspects of future area studies to which it also points is developed in the pages of article (X).

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May 1999*

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The articles in this volume, as in all others in the Collected Studies Series, have not been given a new, continuous pagination. In order to avoid confusion, and to facilitate their use where these same studies have been referred to elsewhere, the original pagination has been maintained wherever possible.

Each article has been given a Roman numeral in order of appearance, as listed in the Contents. This number is repeated on each page and quoted in the index entries.

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I

The *romance* and its cognates: narrative, irony and *vraisemblance* in early *opéra comique*

...comme il y a beaucoup de romances et de chansons, et que c'est là le grand goût du parterre, Le Sorcier a eu un succès prodigieux.¹

In the following paper I should like to investigate the origins and dramaturgy of song forms (mainly strophic, but certainly not always so) in *opéra comique*. Song forms and strophic forms are perhaps the least-studied formal elements in eighteenth-century opera of any kind. In *opéra comique*, their use was obviously closely connected with the popular purpose of the genre. At its simplest, for example, a *romance* or *chanson* or *couplet* or *air* was something that might be detached from its dramatic context and sold and performed elsewhere: ever since the foundation of the *tragédie en musique*, *airs* from opera had seemingly circulated in ways lost to view now, in a social space bridging the Académie Royale de Musique and popular (untrained) musical culture.

Strophic forms inherently imply separation from their parent opera, even more than do *airs*: the repetitive act of performing a sequence of verses was undramatic in terms of any mid-eighteenth-century opera, and especially so in those of French opera. In the latter tradition, even the symmetrical musical design of a Da Capo aria was carefully distinguished - in thought and theory - from an indigenous non-repeating vocal form such as AA'BC. How could, therefore, an operatic character sing a set of stanzas, and still maintain verisimilitude (*vraisemblance*)? Why should the exercise have even been attempted?

We cannot of course make the assumption that audiences expected to suspend their disbelief in the way we today often do in the theatre. For example, in the *opéra comique en vaudevilles* the experience of hearing parodied, pre-composed music strongly distances the audience from the characters represented, almost in the Brechtian sense of alienating them theatrically. When an actor performs everything essentially in „quotation-marks“, she or he cannot be perceived as

¹ Maurice Tourneux (ed.), *Correspondance littéraire*, January 1764, Paris 1877-82, vol. 5, p. 441.

performing naturalistically in the twentieth-century sense. It is a reasonable assumption that song-forms cannot have been unimportant in popular theatre before 1750. The interesting thing is that *romances* and cognate forms were integrated into the dramatic texture from the start of the „new“ hybrid and composed genres.

My point of departure is the seminal study by Daniel Hartz, *The Beginnings of the Operatic Romance: Rousseau, Sedaine and Monsigny*.² In a real sense, the present investigation is no more than a detailed elaboration of the evidence brought forward by Hartz, who covered a restricted period - about 1752 to 1762 - in order to pin down for the first time the way that *romances* evolved on the stage and, by implication, in the home. Hartz had no insight on the operatic incidence of strophic forms before 1752. But he finely showed the burgeoning influence of songlike elements in opera thereafter, provoked by Rousseau's *Le devin du village* (Fontainebleau, 18 October 1752), Mondonville's *Titon et l'Aurore* (Académie Royale de Musique, 9 January 1753), and the singer Pierre Jélyotte (who sang key roles in both, and who specialized in singing songs to his own guitar accompaniment). Jélyotte, considered Hartz, „may well have had an effect on composers such as Rousseau and Mondonville“.³ Although the operatic origins of the *romance* remain speculative, the popularity of Rousseau's *Dans ma cabane obscure*⁴ in *Le devin* and Mondonville's *Votre cœur, aimable Aurore* in *Titon et l'Aurore* have now been established. Originally composed as a musette, the latter „was perceived as a *romance*, and as such it led an independent existence subsequently“.⁵ Both were, as we shall see in a moment, parodied: indeed, I would like to propose a new theory granting historical significance to the first group of works to parody Rousseau's own *romance*.

² Daniel Hartz, *The Beginnings of the Operatic Romance: Rousseau, Sedaine and Monsigny*, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 15 (1981-82), p. 149-178. This article is not cited in a recent study by Rainer Gstrein, *Die vokale Romanze in der Zeit von 1750 bis 1850*, Innsbruck: Helbling 1989 (*Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft* 14). But in any case my conclusions directly oppose those of Gstrein (p. 66), who says of the early 1760s romances, „ihr Text enthält keine für den Handlungszusammenhang unmittelbar relevante Information, es handelt sich um Einlagen, die der Auflockerung dienen und Zäsuren zwischen Ereignissen schaffen.“

³ Hartz, *Operatic Romance*, p. 163.

⁴ *Le devin du village*. Intermède représenté à Fontainebleau..., Paris, Le Clerc, Rue St. Honoré, n. d., Sc. 8, p. 63. Facsimile edition in: Giuseppe Vecchi (ed.), *Bibliotheca Musica Bononiensis*, Sezione IV, no. 34, Bologna n. d.

⁵ Hartz, *Operatic Romance*, p. 161.

When we consider the operatic *romance*, we perforce engage with several variables: the literary history of the genre; the revival of interest in medieval styles during the early 18th century; new styles of *romance* poetry; their musical settings; the subject-matter considered appropriate; their infiltration of opera; the dramaturgical roles found for *romances*; and the textual and musical stylistics of operatic versions of *romance*. There is a small quantity of secondary literature on the subject, which is centred on the antiquarian, pastiche-medieval *romance* and the *style troubadour* in opera after 1765.⁶ In the present essay I shall be concerned as much with structural questions in text, music and dramaturgy as with musical style. However, I would like to begin by „resetting“ the chronology of the subject. If we are to evaluate early *romance* in opera, we should be as clear as possible about the prehistory of the subject. Up to the present, the centre of gravity of discussion has been the 1740s and 1750s, owing to the existence of three key publications: (1) Pierre Alexandre Lévesque de La Ravalière, *Les poésies du roy de Navarre* (1742); (2) François-Augustin Paradis de Moncrif, *Choix de chansons à commencer de celles du comte de Champagne, roi de Navarre* (1755-56; new edition 1757); (3) Charles de Lusse, *Recueil de romances historiques* (1767). But we should also bear in mind that the eighteenth-century fashion for the *romance* was effectively sealed in 1738, and was, besides, erected on ancient foundations. The central figure was F. A. Paradis de Moncrif [hereafter Moncrif], who issued in 1738 the influential pastiche romances *Les constantes amours d'Alix et d'Alexis*, and *Les infortunes inouïes de la... comtesse de Saulx* together with an *Imitation des chansons du...roi de Navarre* (i.e. Thibault IV, 1201-53).⁷ Moncrif's intention was to parody or recreate medieval forms; but early styles of literature had, according to Edward P. Shaw, never really lost their adherents, either in the provincial academies, or among the common people.⁸ Imitations of Clément Marot's poetic style had their own label: *style*

⁶ Georges Cucuel, *Le Moyen Age dans les opéras comiques du XVIIIe siècle*, *Revue du Dix-Huitième Siècle* 2 (1914), p. 69; René Lanson, *Le goût du moyen âge en France au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris and Brussels 1926; Théodore Gérold, *Le réveil en France, au XVIIIe siècle, de l'intérêt pour la musique profane du moyen âge*, *Mélanges de musicologie offerts à M. Lionel de La Laurencie (Publications de la Société Française de Musicologie series 2)*, Paris 1933, p. 223-34. Some further analysis is in the present writer's *Grétry and the growth of opéra-comique*, Cambridge 1986, chapter 28.

⁷ F-Pn, Rés. Ye. 3759, issued without general title page, without author's name, without date, and without a contents page, but containing both the music and poetry of these three items, the first two of which were subtitled *romance*. I am grateful to Sarah Hibberd for her assistance with this source. It is to be noted that E. P. Shaw (see next note) wrongly considered that the second of these *romances* was first published in 1751.

⁸ Edward P. Shaw, *François-Augustin Paradis de Moncrif (1687-1770)*, New York 1958, p. 124 ff.

marotique.⁹ Shaw charted „a great resurgence of popularity“ of the *style marotique* in the early eighteenth century, witnessed both in collections and in the *Mercur*, together with its associated use of obsolete words and forms, its deliberate solecisms, „employing the naïve, naturally graceful style of a *langage infantin*“.¹⁰

When we look for definitions concerning the *romance*, we find that a 1718 dictionary entry already enters the essential qualities exploited by Moncrif: „Mot tiré de l'Espagnol, et qui signifie une sorte de Poësie en petits vers, contenant quelque ancienne histoire.“¹¹ In the eighteenth-century literary context, though, Shaw thinks that Moncrif's 1738 publication (reissued in 1739) was the focal point, „as a result of which all poems containing the same subject matter and composed in similar style were labelled *romances*“. No clear terminological distinction was drawn between poem and musical setting: „The songs of Moncrif [...] set to music, came to be known as *romances*“.¹² In his opening pages, Daniel Hertz showed the influence of ancient musical tradition on the *romance* style in many of Moncrif's examples, especially the prevalence of three-bar phrases (Bransle de Poitou tradition, often signifying love) and modal inflexions (e. g. flattened leading-notes), together with short-long or iambic rhythms possibly already consciously related to known medieval trouvère transcriptions.¹³

The *romance's* special status is suggested by its absence from the eight volumes (containing 2976 pages) of songs collected and issued by Neaulme and others between 1726 and 1743.¹⁴ Moncrif specified that in its pure form the *romance* should tell a tale, and be redolent of ancient or folk-like quality: „il faut qu'il y ait

⁹ Clément Marot (1496-1544) was „responsible for the majority of reforms which the Pléiade poets later claimed as their own. He introduced into French poetry the elegy, the epigram, the eclogue, the epithalam and probably wrote the first French sonnet.“ See article Marot, in: Anthony Thorlby (ed.), *The Penguin Companion to Literature*, 2: European, Harmondsworth 1969, p. 514.

¹⁰ Shaw, Moncrif, p. 125; he describes a *Digression sur le style marotique* by Bruzen de la Martinière from 1720, which codified the poetic conventions. Moncrif would also mention Marot in his *Choix de chansons*: Hertz, *Operatic Romance*, p. 153 n. 7.

¹¹ *Nouveau dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, cited in: Hertz, *Operatic Romance*, p. 151.

¹² Shaw, Moncrif, p. 126.

¹³ Pierre Alexandre Lévesque de la Ravalière's *Les Poésies du Roy de Navarre* (2 vols, Paris 1742) had published nine musical texts in neumes by Thibaut IV de Navarre, with learned commentary, though without speculating on possible rhythmic structure.

¹⁴ *Nouveau Recueil de chansons choisies*. Seconde édition. A la Haye, chez Jean Neaulme [some vols. with P. Gosse], 8 vols., 1726-1743. The songs in each volume are classified by type as well as by title, from which the changing taste in song genres may be readily seen.

une action intéressante, & que le style en soit naïf¹⁵. This naïvety of style was to be one of the main characteristics of Rousseau's operatic *romance* *Dans ma cabane obscure*, whose popularity in turn seems to have given a fillip to the concept of operatic songs. In a telling quotation from Nougaret (1769) Hertz found evidence that *Le devin du village* was perceived as having had an influential formal role in the development of *opéra comique*.¹⁶ But by the time of Moncrif's 1755 publication, in which he gathered both his earlier *romances* and many newer ones deriving from it (their musical provenance wholly obscure), fashion had already encouraged a broadening of the concept of *romance*.

Moncrif (followed later by De Lusse) also defined the newer style of *romance* that had appeared: they were simply „Chansons amoureuses qui ont une suite de couplets“. He disapprovingly talked of them as „écrit [...] en style d'Ode“¹⁷, that is, a poem to be sung, originally using irregular metre, and simply addressed from the poet to another person. Thus they lacked the naïve flavour and narrative structure of the „archaic“ style. De Lusse called them simply „Romances tendres, érotiques ou anacréontiques“. Obviously it is important to look at the music adopted for these types before commenting upon operatic usages.

If we consider the music printed by Moncrif for his own two *romances* in 1738 (see note 7) we find that they received simply one musical style, namely the archaic triple-metre style, in minor mode, described above (the music was retained in the 1755 *Choix de chansons* for *Alix et Alexis* and is illustrated in *Pourquoi rompre* in Ex. 1 below). But the music of the second of these two *romances*, *Les infortunes inouïes de la ... comtesse de Saulx*, was later completely changed: in the *Choix de chansons* the music provided for this *romance* adopts the major mode and 2/2 metre: it is illustrated in Ex. 1 as *Sensibles cœurs*. In fact, in round terms, these two contrasting styles became main alternatives in settings of all *romances*, by the 1750s. When, for

¹⁵ Hertz, *Operatic Romance*, p. 153 n. 7: quotation from the *Seconde partie* of the *Choix de chansons*, 1756, p. 91.

¹⁶ „Dans [*Le devin du village*] on peut voir une grande partie de notre genre favori, le germe des *Romances*, des *Ariettes* et celui des *Vaudevilles*.“ Pierre Jean-Baptiste Nougaret, *De l'Art du théâtre en général, où il est parlé des spectacles de l'Europe...l'opéra sérieux, l'opéra bouffon et la comédie-mêlée-d'ariettes*, 2 vols., Paris 1769, vol. 1, p. 85 (see Hertz, *Operatic Romance*, p. 150 n. 4).

¹⁷ Commentary within the *Choix de chansons...Seconde partie*, 1756, p. 91, cited in Hertz, *Operatic Romance*, p. 153 n. 6, and also found in the *Nouvelle édition* (1757) following the reprinting of the *romance* of *Alix et Alexis*, p. 175ff.

example, we analyse the 1757 edition of *Choix de chansons*, we find that Moncrif printed seven *romances*, all falling within a section entitled *Chansons dans le goût des anciens poètes françois*, i. e. pastiches. Four were in triple time, with „archaic“ characteristics and containing between 15 and 30 stanzas apiece. The other three were in 2/2 metre, in major mode. Of these, the older *Les infortunes inouïes* was a lengthy narrative, but the two other *romances* in 2/2 contained only three and nine stanzas apiece: the *Romance de Petit* and the *Romance de Marmontel*. Moreover, these two both adopted the gavotte style of opening (a feature of some importance in our discussions below) as well as using the major mode.

Romance

Romance

Example 1: Paradis de Moncrif, *Choix de chansons...Nouvelle édition* (1757), pp. 124, 175

Sensibles cœurs and *Pourquoi rompre*

This restricted range of two basic musical types contrasted markedly with the greater musical variety allowed when ordinary *chansons* were in question: for example, those found in Moncrif's 1757 publication employed a range of 6/8, 2/4, 6/4, 3/4, and 2/2 metres.

If the „archaic“ triple-metre *romance* obviously related to medieval music, where did the „gavotte“ type of *romance* setting derive from? Analysis of musical characteristics throughout Neaulme's collections is desirable, but remains to be thoroughly pursued. In support of the notion that gavotte openings were in no sense new in French popular song, we have only to look at the vaudeville incipits gathered from the 1730s by Marguerite Falk.¹⁸ But we do find a more proximate clue in Neaulme's final volume of 1743, which - for the first time in these eight books - contained a sub-section of songs bearing the classification *Musettes et*

¹⁸ Marguerite Falk, *Les Parodies du nouveau théâtre italien* (1731). Répertoire systématique des timbres, Bilthoven n. d. [1974].

Gavottes. These are five in number: all but one are in major, and all but one are in duple metre: the latter all contain the expected gavotte opening rhythm.¹⁹ Two of the five use the first person in discussing a beloved, rather than employ pastoral characters as a generalised sentimental mask, as the others do. And the first of these two could be described as a double ode, being a pair of settings addressed from person to person, using irregular metre:

Musette

Ah, Co-lin! fi-nis, je te dis et re-dis; toujours de l'a-mour je pré-tends me dé-fen-dre

Mineur

Ber-gère a-do-ra-ble, non rien n'est pré-fé-ra-ble, Au plai-sir d'ai-mer

Example 2: Nouveau Recueil de chansons choisies. Seconde édition. Vol. 8 (La Haye, Jean Neaulme, 1743), p. 139.

The setting, as in various operatic *romances* later, amounts to a twinned pair of stanzas, reflecting the lyric's „statement-and-response“ structure; both material and modality change, with C major for the shepherdess, followed by C minor for the shepherd. Since Neaulme's publications reflected current taste, we can deduce some new kind of fashion around 1740 for sentimental songs in gavotte rhythm, probably unrelated to Moncrif's settings, but destined to merge into the *romance* tradition:

Musette

Cher sou-ve-nir, non, je ne puis te ban-rir; tu me rends mes plaisirs en rappelant ma pei-re.

Gavotte

Ouel-le flâ-me brû-le mon a-me? le sens un trouble in-con-nu.

Example 3: Nouveau Recueil de chansons choisies, Vol. 8, pp. 142, 174.

Cher souvenir and *Quelle flâme*.

¹⁹ Nouveau Recueil de chansons choisies (see note 14), vol. 8, pp. 139, 142, 163, 174, 311. The last of these in 2/4 not 2/2, but the phrase structure still makes it sound like a gavotte.

With these we may compare one of the 2/2 *romances* issued by Moncrif twelve years later, namely the *Romance de Marmontel*, which might have been familiar from publication in the *Mercury* (which Jean-François Marmontel had edited), and was to be used in the opéra comique *Annette et Lubin* in 1762.²⁰ With its memorable contour, gavotte opening, and simple but imaginative retelling of the myth of Apollo and Daphne, this piece can probably stand as a fair representative of the „gavotte“ type of *romance* as it was sung in society around mid-century. In particular it may stand as possible model for the similarly attractive *romance* by Gaviniès found in *Le prétendu* (Comédie-Italienne, 1760, discussed below), and quoted by Heartz.

Romance



L'A - mour m'a fait la pein - tu - re De Daph - né, de ses mal - heurs. J'en vais tra - cer l'a - ven -
tu - re, Puis - se la ra - ce fu - tu - re L'en - ten - dre et ver - ser des pleurs.

Example 4: Choix de chansons, p. 118

Romance de Marmontel

I have undertaken the same kind of survey as that performed for the Neaulme and Moncrif collections in a further group of compositions, not mentioned in this context by Heartz: Jean-Benjamin de La Borde's *Recueils de chansons avec un accompagnement de violon et la basse continue*.²¹ These six volumes contained between one and three *romances* each, totalling ten; other song types were also included, such as *pastorale* (one of these is discussed below). All were strophic settings. If we now look at the musical characteristics of these ten La Borde *romances*, we find that all but one fall into the twin style-categories we have identified already: either triple metre (3/4 or 3/8) with „archaic“ features; or duple (2/2) metre in major mode.

²⁰ No *Mercury* publication has yet been located, using the resources of the British Library's on-line *Catalogue of Printed Music*, however. I follow Shaw's information (see note 8) that *Mercury* published many poems in the *style marotique*.

²¹ These were issued anonymously in uniform oblong format (Chez Mr. Moria, rue Dauphine); *NGroveD* offers datings of c 1757 for the first four, then 1760 and 1761 (article La Borde, Jean-Benjamin de, vol. 10).

The *romance* and its cognates

TRIPLE TYPE		DUPLÉ TYPE		
Vol. 1 page 12	[A major]	Vol. 2 page 4	[gavotte]	[E major]
Vol. 1 page 19	[G minor]	Vol. 3 page 3	[gavotte]	[G major]
Vol. 3 page 24	[G minor]	Vol. 3 page 13	[gavotte]	[A major]
Vol. 5 page 27 (in compound 6/8 metre)	[E minor]	Vol. 4 page 13	[gavotte]	[A major]
		Vol. 5 page 5	[gavotte]	[E major]
		Vol. 6 page 18	[gavotte]	[B flat min/maj]

It must be noted that the final *2/2 romance* listed here used an exceptional kind of alternating structure, B flat minor stanzas switching with B flat major ones. This feature, which we saw a moment ago in *Ah Colin! finis*, had since appeared (although in a ternary structure) in the important musette of 1753 referred to at the start of this paper: Mondonville's *Votre cœur, aimable Aurore in Titon et l'Aurore*. Equally significantly, none of La Borde's *romances* except that in 6/8 metre was a narrative poem. He adopted instead a chiefly *galant* style, often using pastoral names, to produce ode-like meditations on aspects of love. But it is interesting how uniform La Borde's *metrical* elements are, something that must be contrasted with the widely different musical metres found in songs elsewhere throughout his six volumes. The Moncrif patterns were still accepted as basic stylistic denotations. The more liberal stylistic attitudes soon to prevail are exemplified in the fact that Favart was to borrow a beautiful triple-metre (3/4) *pastorale* from La Borde's collection and issue it as a *romance* in *Annette et Lubin* (1762).

□ Annette

Jeune et no - vice en - co - re, J'aime de bon-ne foi;

Example 5: La Borde, *Recueil de chansons* (c1757), vol.3, as parodied in Favart's *Annette et Lubin*

Jeune et novice encore (originally La Borde's *Il est donc vrai, Lucille*²²)

²² The *Pastorale* is found in La Borde's *Troisième recueil de chansons* [1757], p. 15.

In *Le devin du village* Rousseau placed the subsequently famous and influential *romance* which Hertz has fully described, *Dans ma cabane obscure*. The latter was not without certain contradictory facets. Rousseau's was „an intense lyrical outpouring“ which also „had to sum up the message of the opera“.²³ It was an avowal of love from Colin to Colette, but one also suggesting the timeless influence of nature and tradition. If we regard it from the perspective of the style elements described above, we see that musically and poetically it mixed the „archaic“ with the ode type. Melody, rhythm, phrase structure and naïveté signalled „archaic“ features, while major mode and non-narrative avowal suggested the ode style. This is not to imply that the whole did not amount to more than the sum of its parts: Rousseau's fine piece speaks for itself. But, like La Borde, Rousseau surely built on Moncrif through a personal synthesis of characteristics.

We can now approach the question of operatic usage in the 1750s, analysing each precise dramatic context. If we look again at Hertz's *opéra comique* examples, but take more account of their dramatic purpose and placing, certain patterns emerge. For clarity, and because comprehensive research on the decade still remains to be done, I have divided *romances* into (1) those deriving from Rousseau and (2) other examples. Hertz overlooked one early use of Rousseau's *romance*, in *Le calendrier des vieillards*, where it is referred to under a different incipit (*La mort de mon cher père*). Confirming their single identity, both the latter incipit and that of Rousseau's famous song are given within the text of the 1759 revision of Favart's *Tircis et Doristée* (see note 29 below). Unfortunately, the exact identity of the parody first using the words „La mort de mon cher père“ remains to be discovered, though it must lie between Autumn 1752 and 7 April 1753, the date of *Le calendrier*.²⁴

In the lists below, CI = Comédie-Italienne, FSG = Foire St-Germain and FSL = Foire St-Laurent.

1. The *romance* in *Le devin du village* and its parodies:

[4 September 1752, CI: first version of Favart's *Tircis et Doristée*: see 1759 below]

18 October 1752, Fontainebleau: *Le devin du village*. Two strophes, sung by Colin after the dénouement and his reconciliation with Colette, following a celebratory chorus and two dances. The occasion thus parallels that of the Italianate „ariette“ expected in the divertissement of a lyric tragedy or heroic pastoral at the

²³ Hertz, *Operatic Romance*, p. 159-161, with facsimile.

²⁴ This enquiry pointed towards *Les couronnes, ou Le berger timide*, a pastorelle by Jean-Julien-Constantin Renout (Comédie-Italienne, 23 December 1752), a parody of the second *entrée* of Cahusac and Dauvergne's ballet héroïque *Les amours de Tempé* (7 November 1752). But it does not in fact contain Rousseau's *romance*.

Académie Royale de Musique. At this site of maximum effect, Rousseau substitutes something naïve, unadorned and strophic; the address to the beloved is ode-like.

7 April 1753, FSG: *Le calendrier des vieillards*.²⁵

The action, derived from La Fontaine, takes place in a seraglio: the heroine, Bartholomée, has been abducted by the piratical Pagamin and placed there, though she is not entirely unhappy to have thereby escaped - temporarily - from her old tutor, Richard de Quinzica. In the beginning of scene 1 Bartholomée recounts to Fatime the story of her adoption by Richard after her own father's death. For this purpose she sings a single stanza of Rousseau's *romance* music, which is given a sentimental edge by virtue of its new words and the heroine's unhappy predicament.²⁶ In a limited sense, this parody therefore contains two characteristics that Moncrif had demanded of a true *romance*: a narrative („une action intéressante“) and „le style [...] naïf“; in its original context, Rousseau's *Dans ma cabane obscure*, whatever its other characteristics, served no narrative function.²⁷ (For *Le calendrier*'s other *romance*, see below.)

17 September 1754, FSL: *La nouvelle Bastienne*.²⁸

The intending seducer and local *seigneur*, Barbarin, has given his valet orders to spy on Bastien and Bastienne. In scene 6 the latter comes to Barbarin to report witnessing the fact that her Bastien has been seized by four men. Two stanzas are sung by her in telling this story. Once again, the Rousseau music is used for a narrative purpose („une action intéressante“), and also for an unhappy and touching effect rather than anything to do with love.

1759: *Tircis et Doristée*, „nouvelle édition“.²⁹

²⁵ Clarence D. Brenner, A Bibliographical List of Plays in the French Language 1700-1789, Berkeley 1947, new ed. New York 1979, no. 4072, credits this opéra comique to Antoine Bret and Guillot de La Chassagne, *Le calendrier des vieillards*, opéra comique en un acte..., Duchesne 1753.

²⁶ *Le calendrier des vieillards*, p. 4: „AIR. La mort de mon chere Pere: A la mort de mon pere,/ Jeune encor, sans esprit,/ Un vieux sexagenaire/ Dans sa maison me prit...“

²⁷ Heartz (*Operatic Romance*, p. 157) observes that „Many contradictions between theory and practice are present in Rousseau's musical works“; in his own definition of *Romance* in his Dictionnaire de musique, Rousseau began with the musical rather than the literary element: „Air to which is sung a little poem of the same name, divided into verses, of which the subject is ordinarily some amorous tale, and often tragic.“ A narrative was thus thought by him normal for a *romance*, if not mandatory, at least away from stage usage.

²⁸ [Louis Anseume and] Jean-Joseph Vadé, *La nouvelle Bastienne*, opéra comique en un acte, Duchesne 1754, p. 5: „AIR: Dans ma cabane obscure: J'passions dans cette av'nue,/ Causant de nos amours;/ Quatre homm' à notre vue/ S'présentent comm'des Ours...“

In scene 3 the shepherd Tircis is left alone, before dawn, waiting for his beloved. He has already told his friend Colinet of his lack of amatory success so far. As the dawn breaks he sings three strophes to Rousseau's music, urging Doristée to arrive, while describing Nature awakening around him. This invocation to the beloved gives it the style of a *Romance tendre*, in De Lusse's words, while the dramatic situation - i.e. a monologue performed together with a lighting effect - places it in line with *Titon et l'Aurore* (see below).

15 February 1762, CI: *Annette et Lubin*.³⁰

In scene 10 the drama is moving towards its high point. Annette and Lubin are first cousins who love each other and are setting up house in a rural hut. Such a union is forbidden by law, though the cousins seem totally naïve and ignorant of it. The Bailli (who has designs on Annette) and the Seigneur confront them both. A dialogued parody of the *romance de Marmontel* (see Example 4) shows the Seigneur's favourable first impressions of Annette - he shortly wants to possess her too - and Lubin's credulous faith in him. Then, at Lubin's prompting, Annette explains to the Seigneur the story of their life: the deaths of their parents, their mutual support and finally their love. She sings three stanzas of Rousseau's *romance* in doing so. Thus Mme Favart's text plays against the recent parody tradition of this *romance* as a narrative convention concerning a parent's death, but simultaneously refers back to Rousseau's *Le devin du village* and its *romance* as the musical and textual symbol of a perfect pastoral *modus vivendi*.

On 9 January 1753, the Académie Royale de Musique first gave *Titon et l'Aurore*, a *pastorale héroïque*. It is particularly interesting in our present context that the

²⁹ This piece was seen at the Comédie-Italienne between 4 September 1752 and 10 March 1753, according to Clarence D. Brenner, *The Théâtre Italien. Its repertory, 1716-1793 with a historical introduction*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1961, p. 192 ff. Libretto: [Charles Simon Favart,] *Tircis et Doristée*, pastorale; parodie d'*Acis et Galatée*... Nouvelle édition, Duchesne 1759, p. 15: „AIR: *La mort de mon cher pere, ou Dans ma cabane obscure: Ma chère Doristée,/ Je t'attends en ces lieux,/ Et mon ame attristée,/ Languit loin de tes yeux...*“

³⁰ For this perennially popular work (performed up to the Revolution and even reset, with C. S. Favart's collaboration, by Jean Egide Martini in February 1789) an engraved score was produced: *Annette et Lubin*, comédie en un Acte en Vers, Par Me. Favart. Mêleé d'Ariettes et Vaudevilles dont les accompagnements sont de Mr. Blaise, Paris, de la Chevardiere. More will be said about this crucial work below. The libretto is thought to have included the work of J. B. Lourdet de Santerre, if not Charles-Simon Favart too.

source of this work relates to a celebrated poem by Paradis de Moncrif himself.³¹ Mondonville's first act begins at dawn as the shepherd Titon waits for Aurore. When she has come, and they have reaffirmed their mutual love, a miniature divertissement takes place, in the course of which is heard the musette, *Votre cœur, aimable Aurore*, in scene 3 (no genre label attaches to this piece in the libretto produced for the premiere).³² Daniel Hertz, the first to make the musette's connection with operatic *romances*, explains as follows: „this lovely piece was perceived as a romance (and as such it led an independent existence subsequently); the reviewer of the *Mercure de France* singled it out for praise as „l'air en forme de romance chanté dans le divertissement par M. Jéliotte avec un goût inexprimable.“³³ In view of Moncrif's role in the evolution of the *romance*, it is perhaps the more understandable that this opera - in a way Moncrif's own opera - should have provoked such a remark in the *Mercure*: perhaps, coming after *Le devin du village*, it was almost expected to contain a *romance*. At any rate, as we know from Hertz, *Votre cœur, aimable Aurore* may have served as an unintended model for later operatic *romances*, both in its overall major-minor-major structure, and in adopting the rhythm of the slow gavotte, or *gavotte tendre*. As we saw above, however, both these characteristics had occurred earlier outside the theatre.

Another significant element in the equation was the stage production of the rising sun. We noted above that *Tircis et Doristée* employed its parodied *romance* from Rousseau to accompany the same pastoral moment. Several later opéras comiques would also place this particular lighting effect at significant junctures, together with either *romances* or related styles of music. It is thus relevant to mention here one of the glories of *Titon et l'Aurore*, namely the hero's opening music of Act 1, *Que l'Aurore tard à paroître*“: noble and learned in style, it is paradoxically not far from a popular song idiom in its brief, easy-to-remember contour, its gavotte opening, and its readily perceptible ABA' form. In other words, a strongly visual act opening was associated with a simple and memorable

³¹ Shaw, Moncrif, p. 132ff., explains that Moncrif's poem, entitled *Le Rajeunissement inutile, ou Les amours de Tithon et Aurore*, convinced almost all Moncrif's earlier critics that he could produce something of value. It first appeared in the *Mercure Suisse*, November 1734, p. 118-25.

³² A Paris, chez V. Delormel & Fils, 1753, p. 17; reproduced in the recording of the complete work on Erato 2292-45715-2 (1992).

³³ See p. 161 of *Operatic Romance* and n. 17; the quotation is copied from Arthur Pougin's book on the singer, *Un ténor de l'Opéra au XVIIIe siècle; Pierre Jélyotte et les chanteurs de son temps*, Paris 1905, p. 191.

solo, expressing emotions vitally related to the whole stage work (Titon's and Aurore's enduring love).

2. Other parodies and romances, thus delineated, before 1758:

23 March 1753, CI: *Raton et Rosette*.³⁴

Favart's parody of *Titon et l'Aurore* itself, *Raton et Rosette* was popular enough to be seen up to 31 August 1781 at the Comédie-Italienne.³⁵ Raton is seen before dawn, and sings the Air *Il n'est point encor l'Aurore*; the sun rises to „une simphonie“, and then in scene 2 Rosette and Raton sing a number of short parody airs and vaudevilles; after the [unidentified] *Musette de M. Blaise*, in which Raton asks his beloved to swear her fidelity, she replies in her fashion with the first stanza of [Mondonville's] *AIR, Votre cœur, aimable Aurore*; then Raton sings its second stanza: „Sans le cœur de ce qu'on aime,/ De quel bien peut-on jouir?“

Favart not only maintained the music's association with an avowal of love, but also transformed it into a twinned pair of settings shared between partners. (One may compare Ex. 2 with its gavotte opening, major mode and ode style. Originally, Mondonville had used only a single ternary design, with Titon's voice entering only for the A'.) As in *Titon et l'Aurore* itself, this musette occurs within the first wave of emotional stability expressed between the lovers, a stability which is also expressed metaphorically in each case with the rising of the sun.

7 April 1753, FSG: *Le calendrier des vieillards*

As noted earlier, the heroine, Bartholomé, has been abducted by Pagamin. The model of a reasonable middle-eastern potentate, Pagamin gives Bartholomé the choice of either leaving with Richard (her old tutor) or staying in the harem. In scene 7, indeed, she is told by Fatime that Pagamin is weeping tears for her. Yet she cannot believe that he is showing genuine feeling (she has registered her suspicion of love „dans ces climats“) and still thinks him „indifférent“. This moment of emotional vacillation is expressed in the *AIR. Romance de M. Rameau le neveu* (François Rameau), whose text and music have been cited by Hertz. The poetic mood (as just outlined) is very different to that found in established *romances*, and the text is absolutely specific to the dramatic occasion, making it difficult to export. The music is neither strophic nor ABA', but follows an AABC pattern. It blends the „gavotte“ style with the „naïve“ style, using 2/2 gavotte metre together with the g minor often favoured for the archaising style, including even a „modal“ flattened leading note in the second and the sixth bars.

³⁴ [C. S. Favart,] *Raton et Rosette, ou La Vengeance inutile...*Nouvelle Edition. Delormel [and] Prault fils, 1754.

³⁵ Brenner, Théâtre Italien, p. 406 (see note 29).

23 March 1754, FSG: *La péruvienne*.³⁶

This fantasy work opens with a dawn sequence, and is set on an island: a sea-storm and shipwreck are seen at the same time, bringing the Peruvian heroine, Zilia, ashore. It is relevant to note that scene 1, after a Baroque-sounding recitative (written out at the end of the libretto), opens with Zilia singing a parody of Colette's opening song in *Le devin du village*: though the parody expresses general unhappiness, its music of course employed a gavotte rhythm: *J'ai perdu tout mon bonheur*. The official *romance* in the work, heard in scene 6, has the same AABC form as that of Rameau *le neveu* in the *Le calendrier*. Like Rameau's, it uses the minor mode, but mixes this with the gavotte style. Neither narrative nor ode-like in poetic purpose, it instead has a moralising text, giving it the flavour of a Lully *air*. Zilia is steadfastly resisting all the topical temptations of city life that the fairy bagatelle can produce, and she wishes to assert simply: „L'insensé vit pour le monde,/ Et le sage vit pour lui.“

La Péruvienne

Dès le mo-ment qu'à bien vi-vre L'u-sa-ge ne peut por-
tra-vers de le sui-vre, Un bien de s'en é-car-
-ter. C'est un Si le pré-ju-gé me fron-de, Mon cœur dompte cet en-
-nui; L'in-sen-sé vit pour le mon-de, Et le sa-ge vit pour lui.

Example 6: *La péruvienne*, „Dès le moment“

The two last-mentioned *romances* are not discussed as a pair by Hertz, though they might indeed form part of a 1750s sub-group using traditional French non-repeating forms. Both attempted a blend of „archaic“ and gavotte styles, with a dramatic placement which in each case was quite prominent. Though the „maxim“ type of text (*La péruvienne*) had few successors (see however *Le maître en*

³⁶ *La péruvienne*, opéra comique, par M. Rochon de Chabannes, Duchesne 1754. Brenner, Bibliographical List, p. 120 (see note 25), item 10617, lists the work as that of Rochon de la Valette. See p. 21 for *romance* text: „Dès le moment qu'à bien vivre/ L'usage ne peut porter,/ C'est un travers de le suivre,/ Un bien de s'en écarter.“

droit below), the „confessional“ text of *Le calendrier* was to promote a healthy legacy.

Excursus: It is at least possible that any song called „romance“ would have been sung in a special manner, to mark it off from its context. All Hertz's examples (except *Dans ma cabane obscure!*) carry prominent appoggiaturas, especially in descending *coulé* patterns. It is by no means certain how such ornaments were rendered vocally, and there is no need to assume they were done in the same way as identical-looking ornaments in scores for the Académie Royale de Musique. There may even have been drone-like accompaniments. Drones are and were characteristic of northern European folk music styles, derived from Arabic influences in the late Middle Ages.³⁷ Allied to these was of course the musette; and we have noted above the existence of popular musettes by around 1740, not to mention Mondonville's musette *Votre cœur, aimable Aurore*. Could it have been the case that a somewhat folk-like vocal delivery characterised *romance* performance in the 1750s and before? Is this one element which helped the *Mercur de France* to define this solo as „en forme de romance“? Performed by one Baroque specialist, this same musette has a somewhat Near-Eastern flavour, produced largely through its drone, combined with its ornamentation³⁸. The historical Near-Eastern influence mentioned above also extended to vocal style, after all, a style characterised by van der Merwe as having „nasality [and] a tendency to seek expression not in dynamic changes but in graces of the shake or mordent type, glides, and microtonal inflections.“

As much is speculation. So it is worth summing up now the kind of variations in the earlier 1750s which we know a *romance* in opéra comique might display, always remembering that parodied examples of *romances* were often not labelled as such; generally „air“ sufficed for reference. Conversely, a song without any original designation might be perceived and copied as a *romance* in subsequent incarnations.

³⁷ „The systematic exploitation of drones seems to have been an invention of the Near East, whence it spread eastward to India, northward and westward into Europe, and southward into Africa.“ See Peter van der Merwe, *Origins of the popular style. The Antecedents of Twentieth-Century Popular Music*, Oxford 1989, p. 11. We note here that „During the period from about 1100 to 1400 the Arab influence in Europe left few arts or sciences untouched.[...] In both Africa and Europe many of [the] new Asian instruments were specifically designed to produce drones [...] Along with the instruments went the Near Eastern singing style“ (ibid., p. 12).

³⁸ The tenor Jean-Paul Fouchécourt, in the recording mentioned in note 32.

Definitions

The most important single observation appears to be this: that although *romances* could in theory exist either in the narrative or the ode style, in fact *all* the narrative uses of *romance* so far found in stage works before 1758, and also one of those found in *Annette et Lubin* (1762), came from a single source: Rousseau's *Dans ma cabane obscure* (which had not itself been a narrative, but had borrowed stylistically from both types). More often than not, these parodies imposed a mournful tint over Rousseau's music, sometimes because they partook of a sub-tradition associating this music with the death of a parent. When we consider the long-term importance of narrative *romances* (and cognate forms) in the Western tradition of opera, this nexus of examples in the 1750s perhaps should take on distinct and hitherto unsuspected historical significance: *Le calendrier des vieillards*; *La nouvelle Bastienne*; *Annette et Lubin*. That is, it may be that they actually contain the embryonic origins of those familiar later „set pieces“ - *romances*, *ballades*, *barcaroles*, *couplets* - which on one level stand outside their parent opera, but on another level are integrated with it through the telling of a narrative. The narratives in these three early cases, sung to Rousseau's music, are supposed true and not a fiction. Nonetheless, they stand as a coherent group, and one which realised, as it were, the diegetic implications of Rousseau's musical style, heard as it was against the conventions of the Moncrif *romance* tradition. Newly-composed narrative solos in opéra comique would soon occur which are supposed fictive; these could as a consequence be invested with a new weight of dramatic irony. *Le prétendu* (1760) had, as we shall see, great significance in this line of development, as also had *Annette et Lubin* in certain of its numbers.

Within the drama's structure, a *romance* and its parodies to 1758 could play various roles (irrespective of whether it contained narrative): from defining crucial musico-dramatic moments down to providing material for simpler replies, or making no more than a moralising assertion. Some, not all, would make verbal sense after being detached from their context. *Romances* could be found as monologues, or else be made to participate in dialogue sequences. They could be designed with one, two, or more stanzas, and these stanzas might be sung either by one soloist or shared between two characters. However, non-strophic operatic *romances* could also exist, typically as AABC forms. Finally, works at both the Académie Royale de Musique and the lesser theatres sometimes began with lighting effects picturing sunrise, and these scenes could incorporate either *romances* or similar material.

The operatic *romance* metre could be triple or duple; following Moncrif, the „naïveté“ and archaic historicism of the former could be enhanced by the use of iambic rhythms and the presence of notated *coulés*, while the more regularly-phrased second type would normally use a gavotte opening. Or there might be a mixture of these two broad types, as shown by various works considered above. What seems to be most important is that

- (1) even before 1752-53, crucial musical materials associated with the operatic *romance* were already present in songs; even the concept of a twinned statement-and-response structure is observable in 1743, together with gavotte rhythm, musette designation, and ode style of lyric (*Ah, Colin! finis*, Ex. 2);
- (2) much care was taken to integrate the pre-1758 operatic *romance* and its parody forms into the dramatic flow; it was certainly not the rule to let the action stop and musical lyricism pour forth;
- (3) many (though not all) of the dramaturgical features of later *romance* usage in opera were already in place *before* 1758 in opéra comique.

One possible further stylistic criterion should be mentioned here: it is that *romance* settings used either no introductory ritornello, or else only the smallest of ritornellos, as was the case in *Dans ma cabane obscure* with its three-bar introduction. This essential property seems to have persisted. It was perhaps partly because Mondonville's 1753 *Votre cœur* had so much instrumental material in it, that the *Mercur*e critic described it as a „musette in the form of a *romance*“, rather than as a *romance* in musette style.

I have managed to muddy the picture drawn by Hertz in his 1982 article, by seeking to emphasize context. However, some of this confusing detail can be simply be explained by considering that the 1750s was a decade when singing in company was still fashionable. In this sense, a *romance*, whether in stage work or salon, was perceived as a sub-species of *chanson* as much as something special in its own right: definitions and collections both bear this out. To judge from the following retrospective account of singing theatre music at table, by Ginguené in his article *Chanson*, one must acknowledge that composers had half an eye on the wider context of usage for their songs.

The Regency, and half the reign of Louis XV [ruled from 1715 to 1774] saw the flowering of a fairly large number of agreeable song-writers, whose strophic songs continued to be acceptable at supper in the best company [...] Towards the middle of this reign the taste for Italian music began to enter France. Imitating opera buffa, Duni, Monsigny and Philidor composed opéras-comiques [...] Several tender airs with likeable melodies scattered within their first works were soon on everyone's lips. Thus they went from theatre to table,

where love of novelty first summoned them, and where they remained, thanks to the pretension - then found everywhere - to good taste in singing.³⁹

Ginguené then draws a picture of theatre composers subsequently excluding most songs from their works („ils bannirent enfin presque totalement les chansons“) primarily because the dramatic significance of their words and their character were lost when these songs were transferred from theatre to table: „We know what the words of these *airs* were, for the most part; to remove them thus from their theatrical context was not the way to make the most of them.“⁴⁰

At the same time, „every well-bred person, urged at the table to pay his tribute to the continuing custom, would have thought to derogate if he had not regaled his guests with the tenderest and often even the most mournful *airs*.“⁴¹ Eventually the fashion for social singing „as proof of a fine education“ withered - unfortunately the author does not specify exactly when - leaving secular singing to concerts and the opera house. We may guess that this may have occurred in the later 1770s, during the more cynical times of Louis XVI.

It was presumably in this social context, with the need for new types of *chanson* and *romance* to be put into circulation, that we can understand the six song collections by Jean-Benjamin de La Borde already described. Perhaps the latter even conceived of his endeavour as a potential source for opéra comique parodies, as well as for domestic performance. One might usefully point out first, that La Borde's are homogenous collections of songs in which *romances* take an established though not predominant part; and second, that no stereotype can be found for his *romances* as regards tonality and phrase structure, mood and length. Taste was developing; considerable creative energy was invested in song production, because

³⁹ „La régence, & la moitié du règne de Louis XV virent éclore un assez grand nombre de chansonniers aimables, dont les couplets continuèrent d'être de mise dans les soupers de la meilleure compagnie. C'est vers le milieu de ce règne que le goût pour la musique italienne commença de percer en France. A l'imitation des opéras bouffons d'Italie, MM. Duni, Philidor et Monsigni composèrent des opéras comiques...Quelques airs tendres, & d'une mélodie agréable répandus dans leurs premiers ouvrages, furent bientôt dans la bouche de tout le monde. Ils passèrent ainsi du théâtre à la table, où l'amour de la nouveauté les appela d'abord, & où ils se soutinrent par la prétension au bon goût de chant qui devint alors générale.“ Pierre-Louis Ginguené, *Chanson*, Nicholas Etienne Framery and P. L. Ginguené, *Encyclopédie méthodique. Musique. Tome premier*, Paris 1791, p. 229.

⁴⁰ „On sait ce qu'étoient pour la plupart les paroles de ces airs; les détacher ainsi de leur situation théâtrale, n'étoit pas le moyen de les faire valoir.“ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁴¹ „Toute personne bien élevée, pressée de payer à table son tribut à l'usage qui subsistoit encore, auroit cru déroger si elle n'avoit régalez les convives des airs les plus tendres & souvent même les plus tristes.“ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

social singing remained fashionable. It was inevitable that the *romance*, in this atmosphere, should change gradually.

Against this background we can now consider new developments in operatic *romance* composition from the creative beginnings of Monsigny and Philidor at the seasonal Opéra comique from 1758. However, I will largely omit Duni: and in this respect my conclusions differ in substance from those of Daniel Heartz. In brief, I have found no significant contribution to the French *romance* by Duni before 1765 and *La fée Urgèle*. He simply seems not to have inclined to this style, whether or not one accepts the presence of the designation *romance* as necessary. The one early case where a designated *romance* in Duni plays an important structural role in the drama is *Nina et Lindor* (FSL, 9 September 1758).⁴² Yet the style has nothing to do with French precedents, and neither does its ABA' form, which is seemingly the first case of a ternary-form *romance* in any French dialogue opera.

Nina et Lindor is an interesting transitional work, set near Florence, and essentially pastoral in the Favart mould, while simultaneously ironising its own neoclassicism. Nina is a shepherd's daughter; Lindor of noble extraction. Nina is found at the outset alone, singing of love's pains (she has rejected Philinte, the expected partner from her village): her music is early sonata in design, G minor, *amoroso*. Exhausted, she sits on the grass. Suddenly, without seeing anything more, „On entend le son d'une Guitarre, ou d'un instrument qui l'imite“, followed by a *Romance* (*Quel amour fut aussi tendre*), sung by Lindor offstage.⁴³ There is however no pizzicato in the orchestra, but simple downward arpeggios from cellos. The style abandons French traditions for the Italian high Baroque. The text is cast in two quatrains and the formal effect is of a Da Capo aria, rather in the mode of those dignified and pained utterances by abandoned lovers in Handel's operas. The tempo is *Très lentement* with persistent dotted rhythms, in duple time. From our point of view, therefore, the interest lies in the strong dramatic placement of this *romance*, and in its abandonment of both the narrative and the ode convention. In the most direct manner possible, Nina and Lindor, who will finally marry after both being unhappy in love, receive twinned musical statements at the opening: one is designated *amoroso*, the other *romance*. Did this bold expository design develop from the idea of paired *romance* settings, already

⁴² [César-Pierre Richelet,] *Nina et Lindor, ou Les caprices du cœur*, intermède en deux actes, Avignon, Chambeau 1759. Score, *Nina et Lindor. Intermède en deux actes*. Chez l'auteur, Paris n. d.

⁴³ One is reminded of the opening of Handel's *Serse*, when the king is captivated by the sound of Romilda's voice from within a summer-house.

described? Did Richelet, the librettist, know that Favart's lovers in *Raton et Rosette* had already received parallel strophes in their parody of Mondonville's *Votre cœur, aimable Aurore*, as twinned avowals of love?⁴⁴

The native composers Monsigny, Philidor and Gaviniès, together with their various librettists, took the decision to bring French *romance* styles into the „new“ opéra comique, that is, scores chiefly composed by a single hand. Maybe this was a conscious act of policy in the search for a musical and dramatic style encompassing both Italian and French characteristics. The popular market for society songs must have played its part. At any rate, two works each from 1760, 1761 and 1762 were to contain notable *romances*, and in each case structural elements of twinning occurred. Gaviniès chose to use strophic forms (in *Le prétendu*, 1760), whereas Philidor and Monsigny adhered to the new ABA' form, except in the case of the latter's *Le roi et le fermier*. But in all cases, the incorporation of *romances* went with quite ingenious, unconventional ways of reconciling what was a separable „set number“ (i.e. for potential domestic performance) with the demands of *vraisemblance*. If these composers wanted to exploit their own penchant for attractive song, it is equally certain that in most if not all cases, great care was taken to minimise dramatic disruption⁴⁵ and indeed to capitalise cleverly upon the ideas that librettists had already exploited: various kinds of narrative; various uses of lighting effects; structural twinning; subtle references to the archaic or to other local colours. The examples of musical and

⁴⁴ Hertz makes no great claims for Lindor's *Quel amour fut aussi tendre* (Operatic Romance, p. 166), but he does leave the impression that Duni prosecuted *romance* composition with some regularity, whereas I can find no evidence for this, and would find more significance in the aspect of twinned settings, which was the librettist's responsibility as much or more than Duni's. In Duni's and Favart's *La fille mal gardée*, CI, 4 March 1758, however, there is one moment when the composer might be said to allude obliquely to French *romance* style. This occurs in scene 11 when Mme Bobinette, gulled by Nicolette and Lindor into believing Lindor is her suitor, is obliged to reply to his supposed declaration of love (the pattern of twinned settings is also present). Mme Bobinette asks Nicolette to reply in her stead - her own emotions are too powerful - and the result becomes *Mon cœur insensible*, an *ariette* in G minor, duple time, ABA' form. The straightforward rhythm and syllabic setting, carving a fairly memorable contour in music, is as near as Duni got to the French tradition at this time.

⁴⁵ Hertz's overall conclusion is misleading, therefore, in claiming that „Rousseau established the *romance tendre* on the operatic stage as an outpouring of lyrical emotion, an intense and showstopping strophic hymn to love“ (Operatic Romance, p. 177). Many were not even strophic, and we have already observed the narrative function ascribed to most of the parodies of *Dans ma cabane obscure*.

dramatic skill we shall recount below are surely important evidence for the extreme vitality of opéra comique as an art-form at this period.

Marked expansion was now to occur in the dramatic placement and role of *romances*. Monsigny's and Lemonnier's 2-act *Le maître en droit* (FSG, 13 February 1760) was an Italian-influenced comedy set in Rome.⁴⁶ Lindor has seen Lise at her window but has not yet met her face to face. In Act 1 sc. 8, Jacqueline, the duenna, persuades Lise to admit her inclinations towards him. In twinned responses which follow, Lise sings first the *amoroso* Da capo ariette *Tout me dit que Lindor est charmant*. Jacqueline then warns that as a Frenchman, Lindor may prove unreliable. In her *romance* reply, Lise asserts her belief: „On dit, pour nous faire peur, / Que l'Amour est un Dieu trompeur; / Mais / Ce Dieu plein d'attraits / Ne trompe jamais / D'Amans parfaits.“ Neither the text nor the music describes a strophic form: indeed the fourteen lines of verse, irregular in metre, are entirely non-repeating. We may guess that Lemonnier's denomination *romance* signalled the search for a novelty for the genre: a mixture of conversational response, amorous sentiment, and yet reminiscent of the tone of a maxim. Monsigny's music imposes a ternary form and uses an oboe solo, descanting against the voice (like Mondonville's oboe in *Votre cœur, aimable Aurore*). But Monsigny also adds pizzicato second violins (in triplets) and pizzicato basses. The guitar connection in *romances*, amply demonstrated by Hertz and presumably evoked here, may have occurred for the first time in this piece.⁴⁷ In any case, the musical ambition behind such an elaborated accompaniment must be noted as typical of this composer's contribution.

⁴⁶ Libretto: *Le Maître en droit*, opéra comique en deux actes, Paris, Duchesne 1760. Score: *Le Maître en droit*. Opéra bouffon en deux actes mis en musique par Monsieur +++, Paris, Chez le Sr Hue.

⁴⁷ Paradoxically, Hertz seems to overlook the pizzicato connection in this number.

Romance

Oboe

Vn II *Pincé sans archet*

Lise + Vn I
On dit pour nous fai - re peur Que l'amour est un Dieu trom - peur,

[Bass] *Pincé sans archet*

Example 7: *Le maître en droit*, „On dit, pour nous faire peur“

Lemonnier's libretto text makes it clear, furthermore, that a special lighting effect continues during the *romance*. This is consequent upon the reference in Act 1 sc. 5 of the libretto that evening is drawing in (Le Docteur: „Le jour baisse...“); by Act 2 scene 5 it will in fact be night, since the libretto specifies at the beginning of Act 2 that „L'obscurité vient par gradations, de sorte qu'il fait nuit à la scène cinquième.“

But this was not all. In a further emphasis of the *romance* melody, one probably seen together with the same lighting effect, Monsigny chose to rearrange and reorchestrate this same music for the work's entr'acte. Although entr'actes were commonly given within both plays and operas, these were very early days in the tradition of actually composing and publishing entr'actes that were designed specially for an opéra comique.⁴⁸ Monsigny now omitted both the pizzicatos and the triplets, but he also lengthened the original *romance* into a binary form structure with repeated halves, and added new dynamic patterns. It would all have helped to impress the melody upon the public mind, as well as maintain concentration and unity within the comedy: the curtain would normally have stayed up all the while. In fact one could point to longer-term structural consequences of importance in the very genre. Within a few years, composers like Grétry would be including selected melodies from an opéra comique in their overtures, often with the purpose of giving an element of dramatic meaning to

⁴⁸ Some further notes on this area are in the present author's *Grétry and the growth of opéra-comique*, chapter 15 (see note 6).

the overtures themselves.⁴⁹ Thus for Monsigny to take his *romance*, and arrange it as what we might call a „paradramatic element“ for the orchestra alone, was an exemplary invention.

Monsigny's *romance* in *Le maître en droit* effected a subtle modernisation of the French tradition in respect of melody too. Its gavotte style of opening chose neither to continue with any easy-to-sing circling around certain fixed pitches, nor to use a vocal range restricted to about an octave. Both of these had been orthodox features of *romances*. Instead, the new piece is strongly foursquare in melody, triadic in opening shape, and with much contrast between its first two phrases. Furthermore its spacious intervallic design makes it notably harder to sing than earlier examples of *romances*, and its vocal range requires good projection between middle d' and top g". It appears that Monsigny was nudging a popular or even „folk“ genre in the direction of „professional“ opera performance.

Pierre Gaviniès (1728-1800), the violin virtuoso, is hardly known today as an opera composer, yet Daniel Hertz was able to isolate the significance to the history of *romances* of his three-act intermède *Le prétendu*. Written for the Comédie-Italienne and first seen on 6 November 1760, this musically rich work (text by Antoine-François Riccoboni) maintained itself in the repertory until October 1763, and was published in score.⁵⁰ By contrast with recent farcical „low-class“ opéras comiques such as Philidor's *Blaise le savetier* and *Le soldat magicien* at the fairs, *Le prétendu* eschewed vaudevilles and was set in leisured surroundings, though it is still a comedy. Young Valère has fallen in love with Elmire but not dared to make his affections known: he has simply asked his rich uncle (who does not appear) for permission to marry. In the meantime Elmire's peppery father, Pirante, has engaged his daughter to someone else, who is to arrive the same evening. Intrigues commence. By the time Act 3 begins it is night, and candles illuminate the stage set. The Act contains two strophic numbers, both popular enough to be borrowed for inclusion in *Annette et Lubin* just over a year later (see below). First, in scene 5, Elmire and Jacinte each sing one strophe of the Air Ce

⁴⁹ See Patrick Taïeb, *L'Ouverture d'opéra comique de 1781 à 1801. Contribution à l'histoire du goût musical en France à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, doctoral dissertation, Université de Tours 1994, p. 152ff.

⁵⁰ *Le prétendu*. Intermède en trois actes... Ilme œuvre (Paris, l'Auteur etc.). Brenner, Bibliographical List (see note 25), indicates the existence of a separate libretto, but copies are rare and I have not yet examined one. *Intermède* was also the designation of *Nina et Lindor* by Duni, as well as *Le devin du village*, signifying at this juncture something Italian in flavour or character, rather than purely French. By 1765 the *Encyclopédie* registered the term as a synonym of *opéra bouffe* (see *Trésor de la langue française*, Paris 1983), X, p. 439.