

THE CANTATRICE AND THE PROFESSION OF SINGING  
AT THE PARIS OPÉRA AND OPÉRA COMIQUE,  
1830–1848

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## ABSTRACT

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This dissertation explores the profession of singing and the representation of female singers at the Paris Opéra and the Opéra Comique during the July Monarchy, 1830-1848. Professional operatic singing afforded women the opportunity to overturn entrenched ideas about labour by earning high salaries and assuming social, gender, and sexual roles that were forbidden for most other women. Their testing of the acceptable boundaries of feminine behaviour—even in an industry that depended upon their participation and complicity—meant that their position, both in the workforce and in society-at-large, was fragile. I present the *cantatrice* as a waged labourer in the context of her peers by considering all female singers (primary, secondary singers, and even “failures”) and provide a thorough analysis of the quotidian complications of the profession, tracing career trajectories from training and debuts through to retirement. Drawing on a wealth of biographies, journalistic reviews, fictional stories, and iconography, I reveal cultural tensions that underlay the diverse and contradictory representations of these artists in this period. Through the scrutiny of the primary source record in addition to an analysis of critical reception during momentous life and career events—for example the debut, contract negotiation, the retirement benefit concert, and marriage—I uncover evidence of professional agency and thus reveal the different ways in which these women actively participated in the construction and promotion of their celebrity. I argue that we might better view the *cantatrice* as an icon of emerging female emancipation rather than a victim of a patriarchal industry.





## RÉSUMÉ

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Cette thèse examine la profession d'artiste lyrique et la représentation des cantatrices à l'Opéra de Paris et à l'Opéra Comique pendant la Monarchie de Juillet (1830-1848). À cette époque, travailler dans le domaine du théâtre lyrique permettait aux femmes de transcender les stéréotypes du monde du travail en gagnant des salaires élevés et en adoptant des rôles sexuels et sociaux inaccessibles à la plupart des autres femmes. Même si la participation et la complicité des chanteuses étaient essentielles au fonctionnement du théâtre lyrique, celles-ci n'en transgressaient pas moins les limites de la conduite considérée comme acceptable pour une femme au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, ce qui rendait leur situation précaire aussi bien au travail qu'en société. Dans cette thèse, je présente la cantatrice en tant que travailleuse salariée et je la replace dans le contexte de ses pairs en tenant compte de toutes les chanteuses (de premier aussi bien que de second plan, et même les « échecs »). Je livre également une analyse approfondie des complications quotidiennes de l'emploi en suivant les carrières des chanteuses de leur formation et leurs « débuts » jusqu'à leur retraite. En me basant sur un grand nombre de biographies, d'articles de presse, de récits de fiction et de portraits, je montre comment les représentations diverses et contradictoires des cantatrices révèlent des tensions au sein de leur culture et de leur société. Par un examen minutieux de documents d'archives, joint à une analyse de la réception critique de certains événements importants de la carrière et de la vie d'une chanteuse—comme les « débuts », la négociation d'un contrat d'engagement, les concerts bénéfice au moment de la retraite et le mariage—, je mets au jour les traces du pouvoir exercé par les chanteuses dans leur métier, et je révèle les manifestations diverses de la participation des femmes dans la construction et la promotion de leur célébrité. Je conclus qu'au lieu de considérer la cantatrice comme une victime de la domination masculine, on pourrait plutôt l'envisager comme une icône du féminisme naissant.



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## INTRODUCTION

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In *Les beautés de l'Opéra, ou Chefs-d'œuvre lyriques* (1845), Théophile Gautier and his collaborators presented the history of opera and ballet through its creators—not the composers or the librettists, but rather those female artists who performed the main roles.<sup>1</sup> Individual portraits of the women are placed beside drawings of important scenes, and descriptions of the female characters mingle freely with biographical details of their real-life interpreters. The authors knew their prospective audience well: for many spectators in nineteenth-century Paris, these women *were* opera. And yet, today, singers hover in the background of much critical discourse on French opera. As they became ephemeral presences in the construction of work-centered history, the lives and careers of these performers and their influence on musical culture have largely been neglected.

### THE CANTATRICE IN THE PARISIAN THEATRICAL LANDSCAPE

In nineteenth-century Paris, an opera *habitué*—a regular opera-goer—carefully distinguished between two kinds of female singers: the *chanteuse* and the *cantatrice*. Marie and Léon Escudier, two prominent nineteenth-century music critics, claimed that although “*chanteuse*” might be the feminine form of *chanteur*, it certainly did not have the same meaning. A *chanteuse* could be a wandering street singer, accompanied by the discordant noise of a barrel organ, or an amateur whose voice was as out-of-tune as her teacher’s violin scraping out fashionable operatic airs. Only the one who had a beautiful voice, thorough musical knowledge, and a perfect understanding of the art of singing was a *cantatrice*.<sup>2</sup> But there was no masculine version of *cantatrice*, even though critics and spectators certainly distinguished between the professional and the amateur male singer, and between the skilled and the mediocre.

<sup>1</sup>Gautier, Chasles, and Janin, *Les Beautés de l'Opéra, ou Chefs-d'œuvres lyriques illustrés par les premiers artistes de Paris et de Londres*.

<sup>2</sup>“CHANTEUSE. Ce mot est le féminin de chanteur, suivant l'Académie; il devrait par conséquent avoir la même signification. Le vocabulaire musical la lui refuse. La musicienne ambulante, qui mêle sa voix au bruit discordant de l'orgue de Barbarie, est une chanteuse. Celle qui parvient à fixer dans sa tête les airs de Grétry et de Dalayrac, à force de les entendre râcler sur un aigre violon est encore une chanteuse. Mais nous appelons cantatrices les personnes qui unissent à une belle voix la doctrine musicale et une connaissance parfaite de l'art du chant.” Escudier and Escudier, *Dictionnaire de musique: théorique et historique*, 110.

Similar to the Italian term “prima donna” that indicates all at once the singer’s position at the theatre, her status as an artist, and personal character, this category of exceptional female singers indicates the special status women were accorded in French operatic culture.

Calling a female singer a *cantatrice* indicated her position not only in the top ranks of her profession but also in the theatrical hierarchy. There were three main lyric theatres in Paris during the July Monarchy—the Académie royale de musique (hereafter referred to as the Opéra), the Opéra Comique, and the Théâtre Italien—that were clearly differentiated by genre, language, administration, and roster of singers.<sup>3</sup> These theatres were predominantly run as franchised entrepreneurship (meaning they were managed by a state-appointed director for personal profit) with partial state subvention. The Théâtre Italien produced Italian opera and had a troupe of mostly Italian-born singers; the singers at the Opéra and Opéra Comique sang French opera (*grand* and *petit opéra*, and *opéra-comique*, respectively), were mainly French-born and trained, and usually remained in France during their careers. The latter two theatres also differed in many respects—repertoire, frequency of performance, length and genre of operas, institutional structure, and artistic personnel hierarchy—which in turn shaped the performers’ experiences at the theatre and their career trajectories. In his study on Parisian opera audiences, Steven Huebner finds that the social and professional composition of the subscription audience at the Opéra and the Théâtre Italien were roughly similar, with about 30% having noble titles, and the rest drawn from the upper middle classes. While there were slightly fewer aristocrats subscribing to the Opéra Comique, it was still surrounded by an aura of prestige.<sup>4</sup> According to the theatre hierarchy of the period, the lyric theatres were positioned at the top (along with the state-supported spoken theatres), followed by the boulevard theatres that did not receive state funding. This hierarchy is most clearly visible in performance listings published in theatrical journals. In 1844, *Le Mercure des théâtres*, for example, published the theatres’ programmes in the following order: Opéra, Théâtre Français, Opéra Comique, Théâtre Italien, Odéon (second Théâtre Français), Théâtre du Vaudeville, Théâtres des Variétés, Gymnase Dramatique, Théâtre du Palais-Royal, Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin, La Gaîté, l’Ambigu-Comique, Cirque-Olympique, and Les Folies. The hierarchy determined the relative prestige of the different genres. Thus *grand opéra* had a higher status than *opéra-*

<sup>3</sup> A fourth theatre, the Théâtre de la Renaissance, produced opera during a brief period from 1838 to 1840. See Everist, “Theatres of Litigation: Stage Music at the Théâtre de la Renaissance, 1838-1840.”

<sup>4</sup> Huebner, “Opera Audiences in Paris, 1830-1870.”

*comique*, which was ranked above *vaudeville*; the most physical genres—acrobatics and circus-type performances—occupied the lowest positions.<sup>5</sup> Seat pricing also reflected the theatres' position in the hierarchy. A guidebook printed sometime after 1852 listed the ticket prices for all the theatres in the capital. At the Opéra, seat prices ranged from 2.50 francs to 10 francs; the Opéra Comique was slightly lower with prices ranging from 1.50 francs to 7 francs. At the Théâtre des Variétés, the cheapest seats were had at 75 centimes and the most expensive, 6 francs, and at the Folies, there was a wide choice of seats from 30 centimes to 1.50 francs.<sup>6</sup> Huebner notes that, given the average wages for workers and the cost of living at mid century, even a ticket at 2 francs was out of reach for many artisans and workers.

Performers were ranked according to the prestige of their theatre, the cultural capital of their trade (dancers, actors, singers, acrobats), and their position in the hierarchy of their home theatre (leads, understudies, *coryphées*, chorus members, *corps de ballet*). Overall, theatre women were placed along a continuum of respectability, with operatic singers at the top and dancers at the bottom, although status at the theatre and celebrity could trump the rankings by trade. *Paris-actrice*, one of several monographs from the period on theatre *mœurs* (morals and practices), held singers in higher esteem and suggested they had better prospects for social mobility: "The *chanteuse* is definitively the only actress who gets married in a completely authentic manner, with a dowry and everything that follows. The other actresses form hardly anything other than theatre or fantasy unions."<sup>7</sup> And yet female singers were not only designated as *chanteuses* or *cantatrices*; they were also variously called *actrices*, a general term that encompassed actresses, singers, and dancers, or even *les femmes de l'Opéra*, one that specified just the female performers at the Paris Opéra. Such categories were loaded terms. *Actrice*, for example, was often used pejoratively to indicate a certain stereotype: a woman of questionable morals who used her sexual power to advance her theatrical career—hence the more respectable term for an actress was actually *comédienne*. The term *actrice* effectively erased theatre hierarchies and associated singers with the larger community of performing women; thus a respected Opéra singer found herself temporarily placed in the same class as the *rat*, whom Nestor Roqueplan (Opéra director from 1847 to 1854) characterized as a

<sup>5</sup>These genres were all mandated by the state and written into the directors' *cahier des charges*. For the most complete discussion of France's theatrical laws in the nineteenth century and a description of Parisian theatres, see Wild, *Dictionnaire des théâtres parisiens au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

<sup>6</sup>*Guide dans les théâtres et salles de concerts de Paris*, F-Pn C-790.

<sup>7</sup>"La chanteuse est en définitive la seule actrice qui se marie d'une façon parfaitement authentique, avec une dot et tout ce qui s'ensuit. Les autres actrices ne font guère que des unions de fantaisie et de théâtre." Delord, Frémy, and Texier, *Paris-Actrice*, 54-55.

poor, young, half-starved ballet student at the Opéra who would later resort to prostitution,<sup>8</sup> as well as the *actrice surnuméraire*, the second-rate actress who, according to Louis Couailhac, was more concerned with the action off-stage than on, wore cashmeres and diamonds bought by her admirers, drank too much champagne, and eventually left the stage to become a (higher-class) prostitute.<sup>9</sup>

*Cantatrice, chanteuse, actrice*: three ways—among many others—of labeling a female singer. Such labels carry specific cultural meanings and position the singer in particular ways in the cultural landscape among other classes of theatre performers. As the main character in this dissertation, it is essential to situate the singer within the context of Parisian theatrical culture and, most important, in the context of her profession, considered both broadly as theatrical performance and narrowly as operatic singing. The figure of the prima donna has been the subject of an area in opera research that is beginning to flourish; however, issues of representation—how the artist was perceived and portrayed by her contemporaries—has been privileged over an examination of her work; that is, what it took to make a living as a professional singer. Broad study of the singing profession provides a thorough understanding of the quotidian complications of “the job,” brings much needed attention to the role that institutions and genre play in shaping perceptions of singers, and allows an appreciation of singers’ individual contributions to the works themselves—all important issues for musicology as well as studies of performance practice.

This dissertation is a study of the profession of singing, operatic culture, and the representation of theatre women employed at the Paris Opéra and the Opéra Comique. The July Monarchy is an important period in the history of Parisian lyric theatre as it was a time of significant artistic development with the rise of grand opera and institutional change. Early in the 1830s, the state opera houses changed from full to partial subvention and managers became intensely competitive and market oriented. A plethora of changes resulted. Salaries for primary singers increased while job security diminished and retirement pensions vanished, the singer-troupes lost their stability and artists were increasingly hired on short-term contracts, and directors became more involved in promotion and publicity. By 1850, the theatre landscape was significantly transformed. During this same period, a burgeoning musical and theatrical press contributed to an emerging celebrity culture that influenced the public’s perception of female singers.

<sup>8</sup>Nestor Roqueplan, *Nouvelles à la main* (December 1841), quoted in “Rat d’Opéra,” in Pougin, *Dictionnaire historique et pittoresque du théâtre et des arts qui s’y rattachent*, 637–638.

<sup>9</sup>Couailhac, *Physiologie du théâtre, à Paris et en province*, 24–27.



Through meticulous study of the primary source record I uncover new perspectives on the social, economic, and cultural status occupied by these artists and supply a context for discussing the contemporary representation of the more prominent performers. By considering the whole profession of singing, including many secondary singers and even “failures,” I draw attention toward women as a prominent class of professional musicians. The current scholarly trend that focuses upon a small number of prima donnas, often with higher earning power and status, skews our understanding of the socio-economic power—or lack thereof—of singers in general: lower-ranking performers of both sexes earned considerably less than their upper-ranking colleagues, had less control over their working conditions, and often performed twice as often. My study draws on scholarly trends in feminist history pioneered by Joan Scott (among others) that have aimed not only to restore women to existing histories but also to expand traditional notions of historical significance to include personal and subjective experiences;<sup>10</sup> this approach contextualizes women’s experiences in the operatic world, thus producing a more nuanced appreciation of their diverse struggles. Taking as principle an understanding of gender as a constitutive element of social relationships and a way of signifying relationships of power, I explore how gender ideologies influenced the singers’ careers as well as the representation of their achievements. My approach also considers how class difference shaped singers’ social and professional mobility, and I demonstrate how inequalities among the women’s experiences occurred not only along gender lines but also through the strict hierarchical structure at the institutions that replicated class divisions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

With its focus on female singers at the Opéra and the Opéra Comique, my dissertation contributes to the field of feminist musicology that has been dedicated to studying the role of women in music and in musical culture, as well as to the growing field of performer-based opera scholarship. Gender and sexuality studies have been an important catalyst in the development of performer-based opera scholarship, as one of the most important and influential strands of research has been the examination of gender and sexuality in opera and dramatic music. A series of polemical studies in the 1990s focusing on the representation of women in opera forced musicologists

<sup>10</sup>Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis.” For an overview on the different approaches and trends in feminist history, see Morgan, “Introduction. Writing Feminist History: Theoretical Debates and Critical Practices.”

to confront the multiple and often insidious ways in which gender and class inequalities have been inscribed in the plots and even the music of opera (and other musical genres). Catherine Clément's *Opera, or The Undoing of Women* (1979/1988), Susan McClary's seminal monograph, *Feminine Endings* (1991), and her opera handbook on Bizet's *Carmen* (1992) had a galvanizing effect on habitual forms of discourse in the discipline, as they suggested not only how works from the canon might be thought to reflect and (re)produce patriarchal structure, but also how musicology might re-inscribe and replicate these same structures with its methodological tools and vocabulary, and the (often uncritical) promotion of the canon that overlooks the contributions of women composers, performers, and patrons.<sup>11</sup> The responses from musicologists to McClary's and Clément's claims about misogynistic portrayals of women in opera produced new research that has sought—in myriad different ways—to address how musical and operatic conventions engage in gender and sexual politics.

Clément's and McClary's monographs focused primarily on female characters, but scholars quickly looked beyond the costumes and the sets to study the performers who brought to life the characters that so fascinated their contemporary and future audiences. Until recently, musicological research on the prima donna has generally taken two forms: either as biographical study of the most well-known, top-ranking singers, or an examination of the various (and often negative) myths and stereotypes of the prima donna. The first approach has a fairly long history, as biographical collections describing the lives and careers of these women have been produced since the nineteenth century. Besides those French collections that I discuss below, there were several English-language collections produced from the mid-nineteenth century; one of the first landmark publications was *Queens of Song* (1865) by Ellen Creathorn Clayton, who produced a kind of group history of prima donnas, as Hilary Poriss and Rachel Cowgill have recently discussed.<sup>12</sup> These biographical collections devoted to women singers have become a category in musicological literature, with some devoted to historical singers and others to contemporary divas. But as Susan Rutherford has pointed out, such discourse concentrates typically upon a single question, "the phenomenon of a particular singer's fascination and artistry."<sup>13</sup> Singers are

<sup>11</sup> Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*; McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*; McClary, *Georges Bizet, "Carmen."*

<sup>12</sup> Clayton, *Queens of Song*. "Introduction," in Cowgill and Poriss, *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*, xxvii-xxix.

<sup>13</sup> Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 2.

rarely if ever considered as a class, and scholars do not reconstruct specific aspects or the institutional structures of their working environment.

Scholars using the second approach have sought less to discuss singers as working women, and instead have focused on their representation in various media, in order to explore how contemporary (and current) audiences and critics perceive the prima donna. The ways in which the prima donna is represented reveal various aspects of a culture's gender and sexual politics, as the prima donna forces her public to consider—and admire—a woman enacting social, gender, and sexual roles that were forbidden for most other women. Margaret Miner thus explores the female singer in the nineteenth-century literary genre of opera-house mysteries in her “Phantoms of Genius: Women and the Fantastic in Opera-House Mysteries” (1994), Heather Hadlock, in her monograph *Mad Loves: Women and Music in Offenbach's Les contes d'Hoffmann* (2000), examines how Offenbach and his co-creators portrayed the prima donna in his opera, and Sylvie Jouanny examines the depiction of theatre women in literature in her *L'Actrice et ses doubles: figures et représentations de la femme de spectacle à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (2002).<sup>14</sup> Susan Leonardi and Rebecca Pope's *The Diva's Mouth: Body, Voice, Prima Donna Politics* (1996) positions the figure of the prima donna (or here, the diva) in a variety of contexts to explore her significance for writers, listeners, and readers. They examine “the complex gender politics inherent in the diva stereotype, the complicated sexual politics inherent in opera, the feminist and queer reworking of those politics, [and] the implicit gender and sexual politics of the diva.”<sup>15</sup> Scholars such as Wayne Koestenbaum in *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire* (1993), and Terry Castle in “In Praise of Brigitte Fassbaender (A Musical Emanation)” (1993), by positioning themselves as a queer scholar and opera fan, bring sexuality and desire to the fore and reveal the significant erotic component of the fascination with divas.<sup>16</sup> Their work is also a performance of diva culture, a reminder of the intensity and complexity of the relationships that form between the prima donna and her fans.

In recent years, scholars have sought to combine these two approaches to focus on actual singers—on their life, career, roles—and their cultural significance to show the contributions of these women to the works they performed, to operatic culture in

<sup>14</sup>Miner, “Phantoms of Genius: Women and the Fantastic in the Opera-House Mystery”; Hadlock, *Mad Loves: Women and Music in Offenbach's “Les contes d'Hoffmann”*; Jouanny, *L'actrice et ses doubles: figures et représentations de la femme de spectacle à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

<sup>15</sup>Leonardi and Pope, *The Diva's Mouth: Body, Voice, Prima Donna Politics*, 7.

<sup>16</sup>Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire*; Castle, “In Praise of Brigitte Fassbaender.”

general, and to the creation (and sometimes destruction) of diva myths. Mary Ann Smart's article, "The Lost Voice of Rosine Stoltz" (1994), was a pioneering work in this regard.<sup>17</sup> In it she demonstrates how singers' influential role in the creation of operatic works has been minimized through the perpetuation of negative myths in biography. Uncovering the traces of Rosine Stoltz's voice, considered broadly, Smart substitutes a new image, that of the prima donna collaborating with the composer, and actively involved in the creation of her own myths. Susan Rutherford took up Smart's challenge and expanded its scope with her monograph *The Prima Donna and Opera, 1815-1930* (2006), in which she examines the lives and careers, as well as the literary representations, of female singers from Europe, England, and North America.<sup>18</sup> Her work is one of the first to include not just the primary singers, but also secondary and amateur singers, in the quest to explore what it took to "make it" as an opera star. In her monograph, *Changing the Score: Arias, Prima Donnas, and the Authority of Performance* (2009), Hilary Poriss explores how prima donnas used their artistic and professional agency to influence the works they performed through the practice of aria insertion. Rather than dismissing the practice as a mere tool of self-promotion, she argues that the singers took great care in choosing the arias to craft musically and dramatically effective works. Many of the contributors to the recent essay collection, *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century* (2012), edited by Rachel Cowgill and Poriss, explore these new avenues in prima donna studies and examine a whole range of issues, including singers' influence on the feminist movement and politics, celebrity culture, promotion, and image-making, and purposely push the public/private boundary—in other words, they present the prima donna variously as working woman, mother, wife, lover.<sup>19</sup>

This double consideration of prima donna and working woman, reality and myth, construction and representation, has been the objective of my research from the outset. My dissertation thus contributes to the field of performer-based opera scholarship and gender and feminist studies as the first book-length study of female singers at the Opéra and Opéra Comique. It addresses a significant lacuna in opera scholarship and prima donna studies that have generally tended to privilege Italian performers as well as the Anglo-American and Italian opera scene, focus on top-ranking singers, and overlook the importance of operatic institutions.

There has been virtually no in-depth study of the profession of singing and singers

<sup>17</sup>Smart, "The Lost Voice of Rosine Stoltz."

<sup>18</sup>Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*.

<sup>19</sup>Cowgill and Poriss, *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*.

in Paris—including male singers—in the nineteenth century;<sup>20</sup> however, there are several excellent articles on French singers during the July Monarchy that have made important contributions to our knowledge of these singers and operatic institutions. Karin Pendle unearthed biographical data on several of the primary and secondary female singers in “A Night at the Opera” (1986) and outlined the various struggles these women faced during their professional careers.<sup>21</sup> Mary Ann Smart’s “Roles, Reputations, Shadows” (2003) concentrates on several star singers (male and female) at the Opéra during the height of grand opera and highlights their individual legacies and contributions to the genre.<sup>22</sup> And in one of the rare articles devoted to Opéra Comique performers, Olivier Bara’s “The Company at the Heart of the Operatic Institution” (2009) describes the role type system in use at the theatre and how singers’ vocal and dramatic idiosyncrasies became encoded in the repertoire.<sup>23</sup>

Most general histories of French opera and studies of individual theatres mention singers only in passing; these sources, however, provide essential information on the social structures and the artistic contexts of Parisian music drama. A portion of my discussion of the institutional framework of the Opéra and the Opéra Comique relating to singers’ training, debuts, professional life, and retirement relies on Albert Soubies and Charles Malherbe’s *Histoire de l’Opéra-Comique* (1892/1978), William Crosten’s *French Grand Opera* (1948), Patrick Barbier’s *Opera in Paris* (1995), Olivier Bara’s *Le théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique* (2001), as well as two important essay collections on French opera and institutions, David Charlton’s *Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera* (2003) and Mark Everist and Annegret Fauser’s *Music, Theater and Cultural Transfer* (2009).<sup>24</sup> There have been a number of publications on individual theatres in recent years that broaden our understanding of the Parisian theatre landscape and situate better the particular cases of the Opéra and Opéra Comique: T.J. Walsh’s *Second Empire Opera: The Théâtre Lyrique* (1981), Janet Johnson’s dis-

<sup>20</sup>There is very little written on male singers, and this is another lacuna in the musicological literature that needs to be addressed. A few scholars have recently put forth studies on male *divos*: see Henson, “Victor Capoul, Marguerite Olagnier’s *Le Saïs*, and the Arousing of Female Desire”; Potter, *Tenor: History of a Voice*; and Henson, “Special Issue: The divo and the danseur: On the Nineteenth-Century Male Opera and Ballet Performer.”

<sup>21</sup>Pendle, “A Night at the Opera: The Parisian Prima Donna, 1830-1850.”

<sup>22</sup>Smart, “Roles, Reputations, Shadows: Singers at the Opéra, 1828-1849.”

<sup>23</sup>Bara, “The Company at the Heart of the Operatic Institution: Chollet and the Changing Nature of Comic-Opera Role Types during the July Monarchy.”

<sup>24</sup>Soubies and Malherbe, *Histoire de l’Opéra-Comique: la seconde salle Favart, 1840-1887*; Crosten, *French Grand Opera: An Art and a Business*; Barbier, *Opera in Paris, 1800-1850: A Lively History*; Bara, *Le théâtre de l’opéra-comique sous la restauration: enquête autour d’un genre moyen*; Charlton, *The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera*; Fauser and Everist, *Music, Theater and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830-1914*.

sertation “The Théâtre Italien” (1988), Jean Mongredien’s eight-volume series, *Le Théâtre-Italien de Paris 1801-1831: chronologie et documents* (2008), Everist’s *Music Drama at the Paris Odéon* (2002) and his “Theatres of Litigation: Stage Music at the Théâtre de la Renaissance, 1838-1840” (2004).<sup>25</sup>

My research methodology, particularly for the first four chapters of my dissertation that enacts a social history of the singing profession, has been modeled on recent social histories of singers and theatre performers. John Rosselli’s *Singers of Italian Opera* (1992) and Rutherford’s *The Prima Donna and Opera*, examine the basic stages of singers’ careers and provide valuable information on their training, debuts, contracts, salaries, working conditions, and retirement.<sup>26</sup> Although neither gives much consideration to French singers and operatic institutions, they do provide an important context for the profession in Europe and comparison for the French system. F.W.J. Hemmings’s *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France* (1993) remains an indispensable source for theatre practices and the acting profession, particularly for his examination of actors’ social origins, training, salaries and contracts, and the social ostracism they faced.<sup>27</sup> Lenard Berlanstein’s “Women and Power in Eighteenth-Century France: Actresses at the Comédie Française” (1994) and his monograph on theatre women, *Daughters of Eve* (2001), highlight issues of class, discuss some mundane but often perplexing theatre and administrative practices, shed light on aspects of the job (such as the debut, contracts, tours, retirement), and situate the diverse experiences of women in the theatre.<sup>28</sup> Many of the constructs Berlanstein develops for characterizing theatre culture help to explain some of the more baffling contemporary perspectives such as a disdain for married actresses, an issue that I have found replicated with singers. In her monograph *Comédiennes* (2001), French historian Anne Fugier-Martin discusses hundreds of theatre women’s careers from their training to retirement.<sup>29</sup> The main drawback to her and Berlanstein’s work is that they subsume all theatre women under the category “actress”—much like writers of the nineteenth century—which means that the differ-

<sup>25</sup>Walsh, *Second Empire Opera: The Théâtre Lyrique, 1851-1870*; Johnson, “The Théâtre Italien and Opera and Theatrical Life in Restoration Paris, 1818-1827”; Mongredien, *Le Théâtre Italien de Paris, 1802-1831, chronologie et documents*; Everist, *Music Drama at the Paris Odéon, 1824-1828*; Everist, “Theatres of Litigation: Stage Music at the Théâtre de la Renaissance, 1838-1840.”

<sup>26</sup>Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera: The History of a Profession*; Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*.

<sup>27</sup>Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France*.

<sup>28</sup>Berlanstein, “Women and Power in Eighteenth-Century France: Actresses at the Comédie-Française”; Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the fin de siècle*.

<sup>29</sup>Martin-Fugier, *Comédiennes: les actrices en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*.



ences between actresses, singers, and dancers, their experiences in their profession, and their reception, have not been well established—something my dissertation seeks to address. Finally, I have also drawn on Tracy C. Davis’s article “The Actress in Victorian Pornography” (1989) and her monograph *Actresses as Working Women* (1991).<sup>30</sup> Although she focuses on performing women in Victorian England, she reveals how contemporary perspectives on the actress were shaped by a whole range of published sources, from caricatures in the penny press to erotic portraits of actresses in pornographic materials; this has provided me with a useful methodology for analyzing similar texts produced in France.

This dissertation relies above all on extensive archival research. To clarify singers’ social status, working conditions, and economic power I have examined minutes of meetings, correspondence, contracts, personnel lists, pay records, and rehearsal and performance schedules from the Opéra and Opéra Comique archives located at the Archives nationales de France (*F-Pan*) and the Bibliothèque de l’Opéra in Paris (*F-Po*). Determining institutional practices relating to artists’ contracts, auditions, debuts, role assignments, vacation time, benefit concerts, and retirement pensions, requires the examination of various *arrêtés*, theatre regulations, administrative papers, and royal ordinances. Two specialized libraries house collections that bring together diverse published and archival sources that have been of particular importance to this project: the Bibliothèque de l’Opéra (*F-Po*) with its dossiers d’artistes and the Arts du Spectacle, a department of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (*F-Pn*), with the Rondel collection of *articles de presse*. These contain press clippings for many artists and often include letters, biographical pamphlets, marriage certificates, and contracts. The department of Arts du Spectacle also holds a wealth of iconography (engravings and costume designs for the roles the singers created). The Opéra’s archives are vastly more complete during this period than those of the Opéra Comique, as much of the latter were burned in the fire that destroyed the Salle Favart (the Opéra Comique’s home from 1840) on 25 May 1887. This lacuna means that much of the Opéra Comique’s administrative policy on singers has had to be intuited from other documentary sources—particularly the press—and that information on artists’ salaries, performing schedules, contracts, and performing practices are based on the few source documents that survive.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Davis, “The Actress in Victorian Pornography”; Davis, *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture*.

<sup>31</sup>For an overview of the archival sources that exist for the Opéra and the Opéra Comique for this period, see Wild, “Le théâtre lyrique français du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle dans les collections de la Bibliothèque de l’Opéra,” and Bartlet, “Archival Sources for the Opéra-Comique and Its ‘Registres.’”

The Bibliothèque nationale de France holds many nineteenth-century theatre histories, biographies, and memoirs, as well as music, biographical, and theatre dictionaries. These have been very important resources for piecing together historical theatre practices and for shedding light on contemporary perceptions of performers. Nineteenth-century theatre dictionaries provide definitions and explanations (and often squeeze in a variety of anecdotes) of contemporary theatre terminology (*l'argot théâtral*). The dictionaries range widely in tone and scope: the *Dictionnaire des coulisses* (1832) is anecdotal and gossipy, Bouchard's *La langue théâtrale* (1878) provides a detailed appendix of reprinted theatre laws and legislation and a documentary history of theatre, and Arthur Pougin's *Dictionnaire historique et pittoresque du théâtre* (1885) includes long, detailed dictionary entries that show the evolution of the terminology throughout the century.<sup>32</sup> A number of memoirs published from the 1840s to the 1860s fulfilled a similar goal as the opera-house mysteries examined by Margaret Miner, in which the narratives present themselves as “a semifictionalized guidebook to the mysterious intricacies—behind the scenes, on stage, and in the audience—of the Paris Opéra.”<sup>33</sup> Those penned by Charles de Boigne, Nestor Roqueplan, and Louis Véron, for example, show obvious delight in revealing the backstage secrets of various performers—particularly the women—while also providing essential information on the workings of the institution.<sup>34</sup> Another document in the same spirit, although it went unpublished during the nineteenth century, is Louis Gentil's *Les cancans de l'Opéra*, which he had originally signed as *une habilleuse* (a female dresser). Gentil was the Opéra's *contrôleur* of materials from 1835 to 1848 and lived right next to the theatre, where he could observe all the comings and goings of the personnel. *Les cancans* is a collection of hundreds of short essays, written mainly from 1836 to 1838, that reveal many of the day-to-day workings of the Opéra, insightful information on the institution, and catty gossip on the performers and administration.<sup>35</sup>

The musical and theatrical press is essential to our understanding and appreciation of operatic culture. Thus, I have relied considerably on the contemporary press that contains reviews of singers' debuts, opera premières, and benefit concerts, in-

<sup>32</sup>*Dictionnaire des coulisses, ou vade-mecum à l'usage des habitués des théâtres contenant une foule d'anecdotes et de révélations piquantes*; Bouchard, *La langue théâtrale: vocabulaire historique, descriptif et anecdotique des termes et des choses du théâtre*; and Pougin, *Dictionnaire historique et pittoresque du théâtre et des arts qui s'y rattachent*.

<sup>33</sup>Miner, “Phantoms of Genius: Women and the Fantastic in the Opera-House Mystery,” 122.

<sup>34</sup>Boigne, *Petits mémoires de l'Opéra*; Roqueplan, *Les coulisses de l'Opéra*; and Véron, *Mémoires d'un bourgeois de Paris*.

<sup>35</sup>This manuscript has since been edited and published as Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l'Opéra*.



formation on their contractual status with the theatre, reports on provincial and foreign tours, gossip, and speculation. I have examined several journals in comprehensive detail: these include *Courrier des théâtres*, *L'Europe musicale et dramatique*, *La France musicale*, *La Gazette musicale de Paris*, *La Mélomanie*, *Le Ménestrel*, *Le Monde dramatique*, *La Revue musicale*, *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, and *La Sylphide*. I also refer frequently to reviews and feature articles from another dozen journals that I have consulted, albeit in a less extensive manner. Finally, I have consulted the press collections produced by the Francophone Music Criticism (FMC) network. Co-managed by Mark Everist and Katharine Ellis, the FMC network has created a number of important collections of reviews on opera premières and reprisals, as well as the writings of prominent critics (Joseph d'Ortigue, Camille Saint-Saëns, Paul Dukas, Blaze de Bury). As an adjunct to the dissertation, I have compiled an anthology of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century journalistic criticism on twenty-five male and female opera singers active in Paris during the nineteenth century (some of who figure in the present study). This anthology is available to readers and can be accessed via the FMC network's homepage, [www.music.sas.ac.uk/fmc](http://www.music.sas.ac.uk/fmc).

#### FACTS, FICTIONS, FANTASIES: SINGERS IN THE PUBLIC EYE

The wide variety of published and archival documents permits the reconstruction of the professional careers of many female singers during the period and allows us to peer into the details of their lives on and off the stage through the eyes of their contemporaries. Then, as now, opera-goers and the general public were interested in the people who graced the stage and brought to life the characters of contemporary opera. Theatre women were a common preoccupation, much more so than their male colleagues, and the amount of material devoted to recounting their lives, careers, successes and failures, and the *bruits de coulisses* (backstage gossip), is staggering and—for the researcher—often overwhelming. Understanding the different types of material published about singers and the range of perspectives within each type is an essential task if we are to understand the cultural significance of the *cantratrice*. The manner in which singers are depicted in the specialty music press, for example, differs significantly from the more anecdotal biographical dictionaries that promise their readers gossip and scandal. At the same time, the speciality music press often printed serial fiction that circulated some of the most damning stereotypes about female singers. Careful framing of the sources provides us with a more nuanced understanding of the singers' cultural presence. The resulting picture is nec-

essarily multiple and fragmented, revealing a multitude of different representations that compete and jostle with one another.

Historical data is not situated in abstract space; rather, it is projected and shaped by documentary sources, and thus it is necessary to have a good grasp on the sources themselves. To bring these documents to life and to familiarize twenty-first-century readers with these period documents to which I will be frequently referring throughout the dissertation, I examine three types of sources in detail in the following section: biographical dictionaries and biographical serial publications, the press, and serial fiction. These are some of the most important documents for the reconstruction of singers' lives and careers, and they reveal the extraordinary range of contemporary attitudes toward and perspectives on theatre women.

### *Biographical dictionaries and biographical serial publications*

In the biographical dictionary, the author provides a short two- to three-line biography summing up the most pertinent details about artists from theatres across Paris. In comparison to the male artists, entries on the women emphasized their physical attributes (or lack thereof) and age, and often credited their success to their sensual qualities or to the influence of a protector or the *claque*. In Maurice Alhoy's *Grande biographie dramatique* (1824), the entry on Laure Cinti-Damoreau (at this time Mlle Cinti) began with, "Pretty little thing, who has a pretty little voice, a pretty little face, a pretty little foot, a pretty little waist," and claimed that she "owed Rossini a large part of her glory."<sup>36</sup> Marie-Julie Boulanger owed part of her success to the "Messieurs du lustre," also called the "entrepreneurs de réputation" and otherwise known as the *claque*.<sup>37</sup> Mme Desbrosses, an older singer at the Opéra Comique, was "a fat mama" who *used to* "delight the *parterre* with her effortless singing, her animated acting, her perfect diction." She was nevertheless praised in her performance of the *duègne*, a role-type more suited to her age than that of the *amoureuse*.<sup>38</sup> The dictionaries are often tiny—no bigger than a deck of cards—and cheaply produced. Theatre historian Lenard Berlanstein traces the printing of the first theatre dictionaries to the late eighteenth-century, although he maintains that they did not become a distinctive

<sup>36</sup>"Jolie petite être, qui a une jolie petite voix, une jolie petite figure, un joli petit pied, une jolie petite taille. [...] Elle doit à Rossini une grande partie de sa gloire." Alhoy, *Grande biographie dramatique, ou Silhouette des acteurs, actrices, chanteurs, cantatrices, danseurs, danseuses, etc., de Paris et des départements*, 82.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 53-54.

<sup>38</sup>"Cette grosse maman à mine réjouie faisait autrefois les délices du parterre par son chant facile, son jeu animé, sa diction juste; aujourd'hui on la voit encore avec plaisir sous le manteau des duègnes." *ibid.*, 111. See Appendix D for a glossary of role-types at the Opéra Comique.

genre until the early nineteenth century. He claims that the dictionaries' promises of scandalous detail were instrumental in the early construction of celebrity: "The marketing formula was to turn an uninformed public into a cognoscenti. For the price of the book, the readers could share privileged information about celebrated persons."<sup>39</sup> The *Nouveau dictionnaire théâtral* (1827, rev. 1829), for example, promised 1,001 "truths" on actors, singers, and dancers, and provided home addresses for theatre performers in the back pages, which, according to Berlanstein, "held out the promise of a personal encounter."<sup>40</sup>

The biographical serial publication was a more selective collection. Catering to the reading public's seemingly insatiable thirst for information on female performers, several authors created compilations dedicated to Paris's "pretty actresses." Edouard Loydreau, in *Jolies actrices de Paris* (1843), justified the premise of his book by claiming "beauty should be immortalized," and provided descriptions of beautiful theatre women selected from theatres across Paris, from the Opéra to the Délassements-Comiques.<sup>41</sup> Other writers sought to produce collections with an elevated tone, thus imparting more respectability to the literary genre as well as to the performers themselves. In the preface to his *Galerie biographique des artistes dramatiques des théâtres royaux*, Adolphe Laugier claimed that he would not discuss performers' private lives, nor would he furnish any scandalous details. His selection of performers matched his lofty tone (only those from the royal theatres were included) and he directed his book to "men of taste."<sup>42</sup> Thus the authors modified the tone of the collection according to the gender of the targeted audience: Loydreau's more frivolous collection, with its emphasis on the performers' beauty, was addressed to *lectrices*.

Maria Ines Aliverti credits the biographical serial publication, which began in the eighteenth century, with helping actors achieve a respectable social status. Before

<sup>39</sup>Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the fin de siècle*, 211. This type of theatre dictionary continued to be produced through the second half of the nineteenth century, for example, Darthenay, *Les acteurs et les actrices de Paris: biographie complète*.

<sup>40</sup>*Nouveau dictionnaire théâtral, ou Mille et une vérités sur les acteurs, actrices, chanteurs, cantatrices, danseurs, danseuses, de Paris, suivi d'une table alphabétique, par théâtre, des noms et addresses de tous les artistes*. Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the fin de siècle*, 212.

<sup>41</sup>To avoid hurting the amour-propre of these women—and because the concern was with beauty, not talent—Loydreau ordered the biographical entries alphabetically, rather than according to the theatrical hierarchy (as was usual). Loydreau, *Jolies actrices de Paris en l'an de grâce 1843: esquisses biographiques*. These publications devoted to actresses continued to be produced throughout the second half of the century: See Mahalin, *Les jolies actrices de Paris*; and Savard, *Les actrices de Paris*.

<sup>42</sup>"Nous ambitionnons un succès plus durable, et surtout plus honorable. Nous désirons être lus par tous les hommes de goût." Laugier, *Galerie biographique des artistes dramatiques des théâtres royaux*.

1750, she notes that the authors were seldom concerned with performers' private lives, and more interested in the actor as a public person, associated with his or her most celebrated roles. Emphasizing the excellence of their art consequently affected the perception of their moral character, Aliverti insists: "The excellence of art is a substitute for the excellence of virtue that was not supposed to appertain to actors."<sup>43</sup> Several collections in this spirit were published in the nineteenth century. In the preface to the *Galerie théâtrale* (1834, rev. 1873), the authors invoked the weight of history to emphasize the seriousness of their collection; even so, the authors felt it necessary to defend their anthology devoted exclusively to theatrical performers who were plagued by social ostracism and accusations of immoral behaviour:

In barbaric times, an unjust prejudice blackened the art of the actor, and we still see, to the shame of our era, this prejudice exerting its influence among us. And of what crime are they guilty to merit such treatment? Is it a public offense, an assault against religion, moral or law to perform the sublime compositions of the likes of Corneille and Racine? [...] Give back morals [*mœurs*] to the actresses, and what reproach could you make to those societies that consecrate themselves to theatrical declamation?<sup>44</sup>

The hiccup appears at the end: it seems the only thing keeping the theatre from being cleared of charges of immorality is the (questionable) moral character of the actresses. All the same, the authors went to great lengths to improve the image of theatrical performers by creating a luxurious collection containing lengthy biographical articles and engravings (black and white, some coloured) of the featured artists, a selection of the most celebrated performers from the royal theatres with only a handful drawn from boulevard, as well as famous historical artists from previous centuries. The title page is elegant and elaborate, with iconographic symbols of theatre and music, and the god Apollo featured as the patron saint. The engraved portraits featured

<sup>43</sup> Aliverti, "Major Portraits and Minor Series in 18th-Century Theatrical Portraiture," 235.

<sup>44</sup> "Dans des temps barbares, un injuste préjugé flétrissait l'art du comédien, et nous voyons encore, à la honte de notre siècle, ce préjugé exercer son influence parmi nous. Et de quel crime sont-ils donc coupables pour mériter un pareil traitement? Est-ce un délit public, un attentat contre la religion, la morale ou les lois que de représenter les sublimes compositions des Corneille et des Racines? Ce qui est licite à Rome est-il donc défendu à Paris? Et ne se souvient-on pas que ce fut un cardinal qui établit notre théâtre, que des cardinaux ont eux-mêmes composé des tragédies et des comédies, et qu'autrefois, quand les grands seigneurs avaient leur place sur la scène même, on y réservait le banc des évêques. Rendez des mœurs aux actrices, et quel reproche aurez-vous à faire aux sociétés qui se consacrent à la déclamation théâtrale?" Preface to *Galerie théâtrale ou Collection des portraits en pied des principaux acteurs des premiers théâtres de la capitale*, 1:iii-iv.

the artists in one of their current or most famous roles, in costume, some seemingly in mid-gesture.<sup>45</sup> Toward the mid nineteenth century, some biographical serial publications began to focus not only on the excellence of the performer's art, but also on her private life, as a way of proving her virtuous moral character. In Etienne Arago's biographical essay on Julie Dorus-Gras in *Galerie des artistes dramatiques*, he noted that she never aspired to those "easy triumphs" of Sophie Arnould (an eighteenth-century Opéra singer who apparently led a notorious lifestyle). He made sure to mention her marriage to an Opéra violinist, and closed his notice by underscoring her modesty and avoidance of intrigue.<sup>46</sup>

### *The Press*

By the 1830s, journals and newspapers increasingly devoted more space to theatrical performers, about a decade after Jean Mongredien claims the press finally began publishing short career résumés of new singers.<sup>47</sup> The printed press expanded quickly and flourished during the July Monarchy. Emmanuel Reibel notes that between 1828 and 1841, the number of daily papers grew from fourteen to twenty-eight, and in 1836, the price of papers decreased.<sup>48</sup> The specialist musical press grew and centered around three main journals: *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* (which resulted from the amalgamation of two journals, *La Gazette musicale de Paris* begun by publisher Maurice Schlesinger in 1834 and François-Joseph Fétis's *Revue musicale* that ran from 1827 to 1835), *La France musicale* (published by the brothers Léon and Marie Escudier), and *Le Ménestrel* (produced by the Heugel publishing house).<sup>49</sup> In these journals, a team of critics reviewed opera premières and reprises, debut and retirement performances, concerts, and salon music, wrote articles on composers, musicians, and singers, and kept their *Nouvelles* section stocked with theatre gossip.

<sup>45</sup>These kinds of collections continued to be produced throughout the century. The *Galerie des artistes dramatiques* (1841-1848) included drawings by Alexandre Lacauchie and four-page biographical articles on theatre performers from royal and boulevard theatres (including dancers). The *Nouvelle galerie des artistes vivants* (1855) focused on current artists and called upon the great names in literature (Alexandre Dumas, Étienne Arago, Fiorentino, Hippolyte Lucas, Jules Janin, Paul de Kock, and Théophile Gautier, among others) to write the biographical notices on the performers.

<sup>46</sup>Arago, "Mme Dorus-Gras (Dans *Robert le diable*).” X. Eyma and A. de Lucy's biographical notice on the singer also distinguishes her as an *artiste*, who kept herself separate from the intrigue that went on in the *coulisses*. See Eyma and Lucy, "Cantatrices. Mme Dorus-Gras."

<sup>47</sup>"Introduction," in Mongredien, *Le Théâtre Italien de Paris, 1802-1831, chronologie et documents*, 1:11.

<sup>48</sup>Reibel, *L'écriture de la critique musicale au temps de Berlioz*, 24-25.

<sup>49</sup>See Katharine Ellis's seminal monograph for an excellent overview and discussion of the specialist music press and French criticism in the nineteenth century. Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France: "La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris," 1834-1880*.

But as H. Robert Cohen reminds us, *la presse musicale* was not limited to specialized music reviews, but also the *feuilletons* in daily newspapers, such as the *Journal des débats*, articles in literary periodicals, satirical reviews, and fashion magazines, as well as engravings and portraits in the illustrated press.<sup>50</sup>

The representation of singers in the press depended on the critic, the journal, and the type of press item. Picking up a copy of *La France musicale* or *La Revue et gazette musicale*, one might read about singers in a biographical sketch, in a review of a new opera and, turning to the back pages, in the gossipy *Nouvelles* section. There the tone becomes chattier and we delve into the day-to-day goings-on in the Parisian theatrical world, finding out about rehearsals for a new work, the strengths and weaknesses of new debutants, the provincial and foreign travels of a main artist on tour, and the rumblings of intrigue in the *coulisses*, as well as births, deaths, marriages, illnesses, and pregnancies. The boundary between private and public essentially disappears, as well as that between fact and rumour. In 1843, *La France musicale* announced that Rosine Stoltz and director Léon Pillet were leaving for Havre and that Stoltz was rumoured to have an indisposition that could last nine months.<sup>51</sup> Two years after Cornélie Falcon definitively retired from the Opéra's stage after losing her voice, *La Mélomanie* printed a "Fausses nouvelles" section that claimed she had recovered her voice while in Moscow and might be returning to sing at the Opéra.<sup>52</sup> Given the rumours surrounding her tour to Moscow with Laure Cinti-Damoreau and her activities while there, readers were probably wondering exactly how "false" this news item was.

One might invoke the adage that any publicity is good publicity, and certainly it seems that many in the theatre industry made careful arrangements to make sure their names appeared and their laurels were crowned in the press. Theatre directors depended on positive reviews of their works and performers to encourage strong attendance and box-office receipts. Although André Michael Spies claims that the Tout-Paris—a group of several hundred well-connected and influential people who attended all the major theatre and society events<sup>53</sup>—and professional critics could di-

<sup>50</sup>Cohen, "The Nineteenth-Century French Press and the Music Historian: Archival Sources and Bibliographic Resources."

<sup>51</sup>"Madame Stoltz et M. Pillet sont partis lundi pour le Havre. On dit madame Stoltz atteinte d'une indisposition qui durerait neuf mois, si elle existait réellement." *La France musicale*, 16 April 1843.

<sup>52</sup>"Cornélie Falcon, qui a retrouvé ses sublimes accents, fait, en ce moment, les délices des Moscovites. L'Académie royale de musique vient de lui adresser les plus brillantes propositions." *La Mélomanie*, 17 April 1842.

<sup>53</sup>Anne Martin-Fugier dates the term to 1820 and cites various contemporary definitions of the "Tout-Paris," one of which was from *Le Siècle* in 1837 that claimed it to be a group of four to five hundred people, comprised of dandies, literary figures (male and female), and all kinds of celebrities

rectly affect repertoire decisions, particularly for those directors sensitive to critical opinion, directors were not simply at the whim of the critic's pen; they often took matters into their own hands and bought positive reviews.<sup>54</sup> One way to legitimate paying off the press was to buy dozens of subscriptions to a journal. Soubies noted that in the Opéra's expenses one could find evidence of the purchase of eighty subscriptions to one journal; as each subscription cost 52 francs, this amounted to a subsidy of 4,160 francs a year for the sole aim of "hearing one's praises being sung."<sup>55</sup> In his *Code théâtral*, James Rousseau simply stated that a good administrator must take care of the journalists, for at least a quarter of readers would adopt a journal's published opinions without further reflection.<sup>56</sup> Most directors paid off the press with free tickets, some stamped clearly with "journalist" so that the theatre personnel would know to be extra polite;<sup>57</sup> during première performances, the theatre basically belonged to them, the librettists shook their hands, and the directors were exceptionally kind.<sup>58</sup> Just as singers typically paid the claque to assure warm reception, they also had certain arrangements with critics. Charles Maurice, the editor of *Courrier des théâtres*, reprinted a letter from Laure Cinti-Damoreau in which she thanked him for his amiability that he proved on a daily basis: indeed, one finds nothing but glowing praise for Cinti-Damoreau in his journal.<sup>59</sup>

Emmanuel Reibel and Katharine Ellis have shown how the critic often had to tailor his or her opinions to fit with the journal's political and aesthetic points of view and, in the case of the specialist music press, uphold the "house" composers whose works were also sold by the publishing house that functioned as the parent company for the journal.<sup>60</sup> Jann Pasler's article on the critical reception of Debussy's *Pelléas*

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that attended the most important society events in the capital: theatre premières, soirées at the Opéra, horse races, important receptions. See Martin-Fugier, *La vie élégante, ou la formation du Tout-Paris, 1815-1848*, 125-126.

<sup>54</sup>Spies, *Opera, State and Society in the Third Republic, 1875-1914*, 153.

<sup>55</sup>"[C]'était donc une rente annuelle de 4,160 francs servie par l'administration à seule fin d'entendre chanter ses louanges; le journal ne coûtait guère plus à son directeur." Soubies and Malherbe, *Histoire de l'Opéra-Comique: la seconde salle Favart, 1840-1887*, 1:92.

<sup>56</sup>Rousseau, *Code théâtral, physiologie des théâtres, manuel complet de l'auteur, du directeur, de l'acteur et de l'amateur, contenant les lois, règles et applications de l'art dramatique*, 65-66.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 110.

<sup>58</sup>Lodoys Sibille, "Spectacles de Paris. Physiologie du spectateur," *Le Monde dramatique*, vol. 2 (1836), 140.

<sup>59</sup>"Mille remerciements, mon cher Charles Maurice, pour votre bonne volonté; mon aimable Directeur m'envoie à l'instant une loge pour les Italiens. Je vous prie donc de me réserver pour une autre fois toute la gracieuseté dont vous me donnez des preuves quotidiennes. Mille, etc., L. Damoreau Cinti, 6 octobre 1832." Descombes, *Histoire anecdotique du théâtre, de la littérature et de diverses impressions contemporaines, tirée du coffre d'un journaliste, avec sa vie à tort et à travers*, 2:42.

<sup>60</sup>Reibel, *L'écriture de la critique musicale au temps de Berlioz*, 44-50; Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France: "La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris," 1834-1880*, 1-7.



*et Mélisande* in 1902 is a herculean attempt to grapple with all the different factors that influenced a critic's printed opinion: "[...] the political orientation of the paper or journal, the social status of its readers, the perspective guiding the reader's interest in opera, and the critics' profession outside journalism (composition, literature, administration)."<sup>61</sup> Taking a closer look at biographical articles in a few journals reveals the different ways in which the critics might present the subject for their readers. Around 1840, a number of journals began offering a set of biographical articles focused on theatre performers, similar in spirit to those offered in biographical serial publications, and some even included engraved portraits to mimic more closely collections such as the *Galerie théâtrale* examined above. The rather sudden appearance of these series demonstrates the increasing interest in artists' lives, careers, and, most important, their "character." As Henri Blanchard put it, "The details of the struggles that [the artists] experienced and still experience, this look into their character, this appreciation of their talent, are of an undisputed general interest."<sup>62</sup>

The biographical series in the two specialist music journals, *La Revue et gazette musicale* and *La France musicale*, focused almost exclusively on principal singers from the Théâtre-Italien and the Opéra. The selective choice of singers reinforced the divide between lyric theatres—the fact that Opéra Comique performers were mostly excluded reinforced the popular conception that those artists were singing actors rather than singers *tout court*—as well as the hierarchies within the theatres, as only primary artists were spotlighted. Demonstrating its pro-Italian bias, *La France musicale* began its series with the Italian artists and finished with four French artists who were known for their Italianate singing style. Penned by the Escudier brothers, the series was conceived as a study of singers and the art of singing rather than a biographical study. In that spirit, they focused on the singers' training, vocal qualities and method.<sup>63</sup> *La Revue et gazette musicale* followed suit with its own series on

<sup>61</sup> Pasler, "Pelléas and Power: Forces behind the Reception of Debussy's Opera," 263. Pasler categorizes each journal as "large circulation daily newspapers" (*Le Matin*), "other daily newspapers" (*Le Figaro*, *La Presse*), and "journals" (*La Revue musicale*, *Le Théâtre*), and identifies readers' taste and social composition, the critic and his or her profession and taste.

<sup>62</sup> "Ces détails sur les luttes qu'ils ont soutenues et qu'ils soutiennent encore dans la carrière, ce coup d'œil sur leur caractère, cette appréciation de leur talent, sont d'un intérêt général dont tout le monde demeure d'accord." Henri Blanchard, "Mme Damoreau. Galerie de *La Gazette musicale*. (Quatrième et dernier article)," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 15 November 1840.

<sup>63</sup> The Escudier brothers published the series (with minor revisions) as *Études biographiques sur les chanteurs contemporains* in 1840, along with a portrait of each singer. The studies were preceded by an "esquisse sur l'art du chant," another adaptation of previously published articles, that further educated their readers on what they perceived as the ideal singing voice, vocal training, and, of course, *bon goût* in vocal art. Escudier and Escudier, *Études biographiques sur les chanteurs contemporains, précédées d'une esquisse sur l'art du chant*.



“the elite primary interpreters of vocal art in Europe,” i.e. French and Italian principal artists. Written by Henri Blanchard, the articles tended more toward “serious” biographies enumerating the artists’ training, initial successes, repertoire, and vocal and dramatic talent. Remarks on a singer’s character were typically quite general. Take for example Blanchard’s description of Laure Cinti-Damoreau. In addition to her natural gifts, Cinti-Damoreau had a complaisant, yet lively character; when she attended musical soirées, sporting a simple *toilette* and coiffure, she went almost immediately to the piano to perform some of her own compositions.<sup>64</sup> Blanchard thus brought out his subject’s character, but only in relation to her identity as an artist. Certainly, the biographical series allowed the two music journals to reinforce and propagate their definition and expectations of vocal, dramatic, and musical excellence, but they also essentially proclaimed that these singers were worthy models, deserving recognition for their talent as professional artists.

The biographical series in the fashion journal *La Sylphide* struck a different tone. Subtitled *Journal des modes, de littérature, de théâtre et de musique*, the journal was comprised of fashion columns, concert and theatre reviews, articles on fine arts and literature, serial fiction, poetry, and portraits of women wearing the latest fashions. The introductory preface to the fourth volume of *La Sylphide* is addressed to the *lectrices* from “all the classes of the aristocracy, fortune, and taste.”<sup>65</sup> These *lectrices* apparently had a taste for performing women: the journal’s prospectus promised its upper-class readers revelations on the life and talent of contemporary successful artists and, true to its word, began a biographical series on theatre and musical artists in its second issue. *La Sylphide*’s “Artistes modernes” series is composed almost entirely of women: dancers, singers, musicians, and an actress appear alongside Rossini, two bourgeois male musicians, and the tenor Poultier who shot to fame with his Opéra debut. The selected artists were decidedly attractive to an upper-crust audience, *à la mode* by virtue of being recently hired and enjoying successful debuts. In the articles, beside the typical life and career outline seen in the musical journals are long passages devoted to the women’s beauty and anecdotal material on how they were “discovered.”

In Arnould Frémy’s biographical article on Célestine Nathan-Treilhet, an Opéra

<sup>64</sup>Henri Blanchard, “Mme Damoreau. Galerie de *La Gazette musicale*. (Quatrième et dernier article),” *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 15 November 1840. Portraits of the singers, drawn by Devéria, and exclusively available to the journal’s subscribers, accompanied each study.

<sup>65</sup>“*La Sylphide* ainsi composée s’adresse à toutes les classes d’aristocratie, de fortune et de goût, à toutes les personnes qui font quelque cas de la mode, de la littérature, de la musique et du théâtre.” M. de Villemessant, “Introduction,” *La Sylphide*, vol. 4 (1841): 3.

singer in the 1840s, he claimed that, unlike many *actrices* who maintained their acting personas off-stage, Nathan-Treilhet separated “the woman” from “the artist”: once she stepped off the stage, she left behind her professional persona and took comfort in the simple effusions of domestic delights.<sup>66</sup> By emphasizing her devotion to her art and her recent marriage to a painter, Frémy reassured his upper-class readers that Nathan-Treilhet would remain firmly in her place and did not aspire to infiltrate a class to which she did not belong. All the same, her personal and physical qualities speak to her moral worth, and her professional talent is balanced by a simple home-life; in short, Nathan-Treilhet could safely be admired because she was a respectable woman. Her portrait reflects her place among these high-class readers; she is tastefully dressed in a simple gown, without jewels, only a simple chain adorning her neck, she sports a sleek hairstyle, and has a serious, perhaps even timid, facial expression. Her portrait is typical of those in the series, which are simple, black and white drawings, showing the women performers in ordinary dress, with simple coiffure and *toilette*, and thus differ dramatically from the lavish chromolithographs of upper-class women wearing spectacular gowns. For Aliverti, portraits of actors in ordinary dress appeared in the early eighteenth century and were constructed to emphasize the moral qualities and social aspirations of the performers, “as if they could be assimilated to other portraits of genteel and fashionable persons.”<sup>67</sup> The portraits of the singers in the biographical series in *La France musicale* and *La Revue et gazette musicale* similarly depict the artists “en bourgeois,” suggesting this was a common tendency during this period and perhaps a way of differentiating the series published in the press from those in collected editions that were conceived more as monumental tributes to the artists in their most cherished roles. And although portraits of theatre performers in ordinary dress were not necessarily new, the mass diffusion of such images, along with the biographical articles that express increasing concern with the person behind the role, was an important innovation and a significant factor in the creation of celebrity.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup>“Plus d’une actrice est redoutable dans sa vie privée: elle conserve hors de la scène le pli tragique et laisse percer le cothurne sous la robe de chambre. Rien de pareil chez Mme Nathan-Treilhet: bonne et simple sans la moindre réminiscence scénique dans son intérieur, elle sait rappeler par ses manières que toutes ses illusions ne sont pas au théâtre, [...] alors qu’aux voix publiques et solennelles de la scène succèdent les simples effusions de la félicité domestique.” Arnould Frémy, “Artistes modernes. II. Mme Nathan-Treilhet,” *La Sylphide*, vol. 1 (1840), 22-23.

<sup>67</sup>Aliverti, “Major Portraits and Minor Series in 18th-Century Theatrical Portraiture,” 234-235.

<sup>68</sup>Perhaps “mass” diffusion is a slight overstatement, given that journals such as *La Revue et gazette musicale* and *La France musicale* printed, in 1845, 798 and 2,142 copies, respectively, much less than *Le Siècle* that printed 34,966 copies the same year (Cohen, “The Nineteenth-Century French Press and the Music Historian: Archival Sources and Bibliographic Resources,” 139). However, consid-

### *Serial fiction*

Journals and newspapers printed fictional stories in serial form, sometimes as a *feuilleton* and thus clearly separated from the other columns, and other times sandwiched among other standard items, such as theatre reviews and artists' biographies. As Margaret Miner has pointed out, the close proximity with "real" news items meant "these fantastic stories had every chance of being closely associated with—if not actually taken for—everyday pieces of news from the musical world in Paris."<sup>69</sup> Stories written about female singers and actresses were quite common. While much serial fiction proposed to take the reader "behind the scenes" and expose the secrets of the operatic world, the stories often had the opposite effect and further emphasized the aura of mystery that surrounded the theatre and its performers. As these stories reflected and shaped contemporary perspectives of professional women and provided a space for fantasizing about them, they are very valuable sources to which I turn frequently throughout the dissertation.

A number of contemporary writers claimed that the image of the *actrice* was much improved by mid-century; however, the actress in fictional accounts still posed a danger to society, particularly to young, gullible men. Henri Blanchard's "L'actrice et l'étudiant," printed in *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* in 1844 begins dramatically: a doctor is called in to rescue a young man who is trying to commit suicide by asphyxiation.<sup>70</sup> Saved in the nick of time, Jules agrees to tell the doctor what pushed him to such limits—his love affair with the beautiful actress Palmire had gone sour. In the final instalment of the story ("Catastrophe"), Jules and the doctor attend a Cirque-Olympique performance in which Palmire is performing and becomes fatally wounded. The doctor is called in to help. He purposely gives bad medical advice and Palmire dies. Reflecting on his decision, the doctor states: "This woman was a fatal influence [...]; her life is a dangerous mistake of nature. Why would I prolong this error when the consequences of an fortuitous accident could deliver us from it?"<sup>71</sup>

Jules was not the only young man who had his life almost ruined by an *actrice*.

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ering the number of journals publishing biographical series—often accompanied by these kinds of portraits—one cannot ignore the fact that these portraits would reach a fairly wide audience.

<sup>69</sup>Miner, "Phantoms of Genius: Women and the Fantastic in the Opera-House Mystery," 133. Katharine Ellis discusses a number of fictional stories printed in *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* (although only one has to do with a singer) in her article, Ellis, "The Uses of Fiction: Contes and nouvelles in the *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 1834-1844."

<sup>70</sup>Henri Blanchard, "L'actrice et l'étudiant," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 14, 21, 28 January, 4 and 25 February 1844.

<sup>71</sup>"Cette femme a été fatale à mon fils; sa vie est une erreur dangereuse de la nature. Pourquoi prolongerais-je cette erreur quand les suites d'un accident fortuit peut nous en délivrer?" Henri Blanchard, "L'actrice et l'étudiant: VII. Journalisme; VIII. Pianisme; IX. Caprices divers; X. M. Oscar; XI.

Félix Roubaud's "L'amoureux d'une sirène," printed in *La France théâtrale* in 1845, is set in 1757 and refers to historical performers, theatrical practices, and concert series, thus reinforcing the perception of its authenticity.<sup>72</sup> It tells the story of Georges de Cahusac, a young nobleman, who is about to marry to Marie de Laundun, a beautiful, sweet, blond-haired, blue-eyed noblewoman. An affair with the Opéra singer Camille Fel, however, transforms Georges into an obsessive lover and he abandons his fiancée. Eventually forced to witness Camille's infidelity, he goes insane and is committed to an asylum. His faithful fiancée Marie disguises herself as a nun and cares for Georges in his final days; she dies minutes after his death. Camille does not escape punishment, and she spends the rest of her days in utter misery and poverty.

Not all singer-fiction demonized singers to such a degree. Louis Jousserandot's "La Stephana," printed in *La Sylphide* in 1841-1842, tells the story of Inès, a rich orphan who becomes a famous prima donna.<sup>73</sup> She is abandoned by her unfaithful lover, Stephano, and eventually dies in a Hoffmannesque manner while singing a ballad from her childhood. And in Edouard Monnais's *Portefeuille de deux cantatrices*, initially printed in serial form in *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* in 1844 and 1845, the two female singers lead successful careers and end up happily married.<sup>74</sup> If it had not been printed as a *feuilleton* and clearly separated from the rest of the journal's content, Monnais's fictional tale might easily have been mistaken as a true story. Set in the 1820s just as Rossini's works began creating a storm in Paris, it tells the story of two singers, Clothilde, a prima donna at the Opéra, and Esther, her orphaned goddaughter who became a singer in the provinces and eventually took her *marraine's* place as the star singer in Paris. It is a fascinating look into theatre *mœurs*, habits, and intrigue, and much of the tale is told in epistolary form as Clothilde and Esther recount their often-harrowing experiences as professional singers to one another.

Some articles and features purposely straddled fiction and fact, playing up the ambiguities and making it almost impossible to easily separate the "real" theatrical world from its fictions—and its mysteries. For example, Paul Scudo's feature article, "Histoire d'une cantatrice," in *La Sylphide*, tells of the discovery, training, debuts, and

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Les suites d'un galop; XII. Révélation; XIII. Catastrophe," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 25 February 1844.

<sup>72</sup>Félix Roubaud, "L'amoureux d'une sirène," *La France théâtrale*, 27 February 1845, 2, 6, 9, 13, and 16 March 1845.

<sup>73</sup>Louis Jousserandot, "La Stephana," *La Sylphide* vol. 5 (December 1841-May 1842).

<sup>74</sup>Smith, *Portefeuille de deux cantatrices*. The work was originally published as a *feuilleton* in *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* from 6 October 1844 to 18 May 1845.

successful career of the singer Rose Niva.<sup>75</sup> Only in the final lines does he reveal that he was actually giving the biography of Rosine Stoltz, the *première chanteuse* at the Opéra. As it contains all kinds of personal details and anecdotes, it is hard to know if the “biography” is in fact nothing more than an embellished story. Even more ambiguous is “Mœurs dramatiques: Lettres d’une actrice sur l’intérieur des coulisses et les foyers d’acteurs à Madame la duchesse de \*\*\*,” published as the front-page feature in *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* in five issues in 1840.<sup>76</sup> This series of articles produced what Marian Smith has termed a “hierarchy of proximity,” allowing those reading the newspaper to vicariously experience the titillating happenings of the *coulisses*, all the while enveloping the world behind the stage with mystery.<sup>77</sup> A young noblewoman, who had been forced to seek employment as an actress once her family lost its fortune, writes to her childhood friend about what exactly goes on in the foyers and behind the scenes; her use of the familiar *tu* further lends the impression that the reader has access to a private conversation. Her discussion of singers at the Opéra Comique contains some tantalizing pieces of gossip, reinforcing the association of theatre women and scandal. The charming Jenny Colon “seems to have decided to continue her respectable *role* as a married woman,” the pretty Mlle Berthault enjoys certain benefits at the Opéra Comique, “but she does not overly abuse them,” and Mlle Rossi [Rossi-Caccia] “is certain to have excellent roles in all the operas of M. Scribe. If you ask me why, I will tell you that I know nothing, or that you are quite indiscreet.”<sup>78</sup>

## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Just as the wide range of sources on singers in the nineteenth century blend together fact, fiction, and fantasy, my examination of the lives and careers of these artists necessarily considers their experiences as working women along with the public’s diverse and manifold perceptions of this class of performers, all the while looking between

<sup>75</sup>Paul Scudo, “Histoire d’une cantatrice,” *La Sylphide*, 6 and 13 February 1841.

<sup>76</sup>“Mœurs dramatiques: Lettres d’une actrice sur l’intérieur des coulisses et les foyers d’acteurs à Madame la duchesse de \*\*\*,” *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 12 January, 2, 9, 16, and 25 February 1840.

<sup>77</sup>Smith, “About the House,” 217.

<sup>78</sup>“La charmante Jenny-Colon paraît décidée à continuer son respectable *rôle* de femme mariée; mademoiselle Bertaut, à la physionomie vive, engageante, à l’œil espagnol, jouit, dit-on, dans ce théâtre, d’un crédit qu’on ne sait trop à quoi attribuer, mais dont elle n’abuse pas trop; [...] mademoiselle Rossi est certaine maintenant d’avoir d’excellents rôles dans tous les opéras de M. Scribe. Si tu me demandes pourquoi, je te dirai que je n’en sais rien, ou que tu es bien indiscreète” (emphasis mine). “Mœurs dramatiques: Lettres d’une actrice sur l’intérieur des coulisses et les foyers d’acteurs à Madame la duchesse de \*\*\*. Deuxième lettre,” *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 2 February 1840.

the cracks to find evidence of the women's creative agency. Thus while some chapters focus more on details of the profession and others on representation, I am continually concerned with situating the singers within the dynamic conversations that surrounded them. I have divided the dissertation into two main sections. The first (Chapters 1 through 4) traces the career path of singers from their initial training and debuts to their professional life at the theatres and eventual retirement, and the second (Chapters 5 and 6) explores issues of critical appraisal, image-making, and the development of celebrity.

In Chapter 1, I draw on a wide range of biographical material and archival records to determine singers' social origins and detail the vocal training they received. Theatre professionals typically emerged from the working class, the petty bourgeoisie, the middle classes, and theatre families; female singers came from the artist-musician class in greater numbers than their male colleagues as the disproportion of employment opportunities led more women to a career on the stage. I reveal how singers' beginnings in biographical articles were constructed according to standardized narratives that presented justifications for a woman's entry into the theatre milieu: the middle-class singer who took to the stage after her family lost its fortune; the young prodigy, often discovered by a famous singer or composer, who could not ignore her calling; the *enfant de la balle* (child of a theatre performer) literally born into the métier, her talent "bred in the bone." The second section of the chapter describes the training singers received in private tuition and at the Conservatoire de musique in Paris. More than half of the singers who worked at the Opéra and Opéra Comique were trained at the Conservatoire, whose vocal programme was the only curriculum that offered equal education to men and women. To reconstruct the students' training at the Conservatoire, I draw on personnel files, class lists, administrative documents, and correspondence, as well as vocal treatises, press articles, and performance reviews.

The second chapter presents the debut phenomenon in the Parisian theatres. The main launching point in an artist's career, the debut was a significant event in French theatre culture. Public interest and critical attention tended to focus on the more promising singers of both genders, but more interest surrounded the female debutantes. In fictional and anecdotal sources, writers concentrated on the women's physical appearance and highlighted their fragility, inexperience, and dependence on male protectors to succeed. I demonstrate how such gendered critique infiltrated critical writings and how men and women were confronted with different measurements for success. Drawing on theatre regulations, administrative documents, and

the contemporary press, I outline the history of the debut and detail the debut process beginning with the singers' initial auditions, selection of repertoire, contracts at the theatre, and preparation. I identify general trends in the critical reception to show what was perceived as necessary for a successful debut, and reveal that talent by no means guaranteed success. Debutantes had to skilfully negotiate rivalries and tensions with the current troupe, visit influential critics to assure positive reception, pay the *claque*, and seek the support of the more influential singers. Using the debuts of Catinka Heinefetter and Noémie de Roissy as two case studies, I argue that female singers demonstrated remarkable agency in the orchestration of their success and suggest that the influence of protectors has been over-exaggerated.

Chapter 3 examines the facets of professional life at the Opéra and Opéra Comique, outlining standard and exceptional contractual obligations, salaries, performance schedules, and rehearsals, as well as more mundane concerns ranging from singers' health and maternity leave to dealing with the *claque*. I draw particular attention to the hierarchies that played an important role in singers' experiences at the theatres, as they determined the singers' different obligations and their degree of control over performing schedules and issues of leave, as well as their financial compensation. The institutions went through a profound change in their management in the early years of the July Monarchy, and this significantly affected the career trajectories of the singers. Directors became increasingly market oriented and, once retirement pensions were abolished and singers had less incentive to remain faithful to a single theatre, hiring decisions changed dramatically. By the 1840s, the opera troupes had lost their stability and artists were increasingly hired on short-term contracts. By examining the changing shape of singers' careers both before and after the July Revolution, and concentrating particularly on those from the lower- and middle-ranks, I reveal the often-overlooked role the institutions played in the careers of the singing personnel.

The fourth chapter explores the endings of singers' careers. The first section provides a contextual overview on retirement according to theatre law and discusses the loss of retirement pensions and the resulting effect on the singers' careers. I then focus on the retirement benefit concerts of several artists from the Opéra and the Opéra Comique. The retirement benefit gave the performer one last chance to put her stamp on the roles she had created or shaped. In addition to selecting the repertoire and performers for the event, archival documents show that singers also created press releases and invitations. These concerts provide an exceptional opportunity to study singers' role in publicity and image making during the final moments of their career

in a theatrical milieu obsessed with youth and beauty. I situate the selected repertoire within the performers' œuvre and interrogate how these career "highlights" affected public perception of their earlier artistic contributions, and show how the reasons for retirement (vocal deterioration, age, drop in popularity) influenced a singer's critical reception at the moment of her adieu. The chapter ends with a discussion of singers' activities after retirement, showing how many turned to concertizing, teaching, or devoting themselves completely to their family life.

In Chapter 5, I turn to issues of image making and reception. The chapter focuses on two star singers at the Opéra: Cornélie Falcon (1814-1897), the dramatic soprano who left an indelible mark on the grand opera repertoire during her short career from 1832 to 1838, and Rosine Stoltz (1815-1903), the mezzo-soprano who replaced Falcon at the theatre once she retired and accrued a notorious reputation as the Opéra's all-powerful prima donna. Drawing on the work of Richard Dyer and his analysis of the star phenomenon in the Hollywood film industry, I analyze the creation of Falcon's and Stoltz's star images, and trace their changing shape throughout their careers. Cornélie Falcon is an important figure of study as she is one of the first singers actively promoted by the Opéra administration—thus revealing important changes in managerial approach—and her star image was carefully managed to appeal to a wide audience. Her youth and beauty stirred the passions of the *parterre* while her fragility, modest demeanor, and virtuous reputation conformed to the increasingly rigid dictates of bourgeois morality. Ending her career young, beautiful, and silent after losing her vocal powers further reinforced and preserved her image. Falcon's idiosyncratic performance style and star image remained strongly attached to her most important creations, and for that reason, I argue, the Opéra struggled to find a replacement for Falcon after her retirement. Rosine Stoltz, initially hired to replace Falcon, quickly abandoned her predecessor's roles and turned her energies toward developing new roles tailored to her strengths. Stoltz's public image did not have the same chiaroscuro as Falcon, and the mezzo-soprano was often perceived as being an incarnation of her most famous role—the king's favourite—and her personality a reflection of her vocal and histrionic qualities. At their deaths, the star images of the two singers could not have been more diametrically opposed, even though they shared many similar artistic, vocal, and dramatic qualities: Falcon as the beautiful, modest, talented soprano who gave her life to her music, and Stoltz as the wilful, tempestuous prima donna who bent the will of composers and her colleagues to serve her artistic aspirations.

The final chapter of the dissertation examines theatre criticism, fiction, archival



documents, and stage works to show how changed social and political contexts reshaped women's positions within and outside the operatic theatre. I address the (mis)conception that theatre women were uniformly chastised for their failure to conform to the domestic ideal and I explore the multiple and diverse responses to the threat of the *maladie morale*, the infiltration of bourgeois morality in the performing world. I describe how boundaries between performers' private and professional lives were continually blurred and how this affected what Berlanstein has termed the "erotic culture" of the stage. To contextualize these debates I discuss how contemporary marriage and divorce laws and the rights afforded to women under the Civil Code influenced the professional and personal lives of female singers at the Opéra and the Opéra Comique. I show how these debates migrated from the critical press onto the stage with Daniel-François-Esprit Auber's *L'Ambassadrice* (1836), an *opéra-comique* that grapples with the problems that occur for the future husband, the singer, and her audience when a *cantatrice* attempts to change her lifestyle. Finally, I suggest that behind these concerns lurked a general anxiety around women's power in theatrical culture and expose the critical trend that undermined the seriousness of their artistic accomplishments by instead focusing on their salaries, leisure activities, and the perks of being a star.

I have compiled short biographies for all the women singers discussed throughout the dissertation in Appendix A, including their full name, birth and death dates (if known), and the date-range of their employment at the Opéra and Opéra Comique. The biographical data has been gleaned from a vast array of sources, mostly archival documents, the press, and nineteenth-century theatre dictionaries in addition to a few current dictionaries and encyclopedias of singers. All the translations of the French texts are my own; the original language text can be found in the footnotes. Please note that an ellipsis in square brackets indicates a textual omission, and an ellipsis without square brackets reflects the punctuation in the original text.



## TRAINING FOR AN OPERATIC CAREER

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### 1.1 A STAR IS BORN

A young laundress, a joyful child, carried clothing to the clients, singing with her songbird voice; she was ten years old:

*A la barrière du Maine  
On mange de bons goujons...  
Bons!*

She lived gaily and carefree like a bird in the forest, chiming out her songs daily, never feeling the difficult constraints of a life of deprivation and hard work to which she and her mother were condemned.

One day, around 1827, a young artist, a teacher at Choron's school of singing, overheard by chance the poor, young worker tossing her joyful songs to the wind.

"Do you like to sing, mademoiselle?" asked the young man.

"Sometimes, monsieur," responded the young girl.

"Do you know music?"

"No, monsieur."

"My pretty child, with a voice like yours, that's a real misfortune."

"But how to go about it? Monsieur, I am far from being rich enough to learn music."

"Mademoiselle, if you would permit me to see your parents, I could show you a school where you would be admitted without paying any fees."

Soon the young Victorine figured among the most intelligent students of Choron. Her contact with polite society allowed her to shed little by little her rough and hard exterior. She was around sixteen years old; very slender for her age, skinny even, she had dark eyes full of fire and a natural spirit that made up for her lack of early education.

With small feet, a mouth that was a little large but poeticized with an adorable smile: that was Victorine whom the venerable father Choron baptized with the most romantic of names, Rose Niva. It was under this very name that the young girl experienced the first intoxications of success.<sup>1</sup>

The chance discovery of Rosine Stoltz's latent talent that happily led to the acquisition of a musical education and, eventually, a long and successful career, was not an isolated case. If we are to believe the anecdotes included in a number of biographical dictionaries and biographical serial publications, some of the best-known singers of the period got their "break" in this same manner. Marie Cabel (1827-1885, née Dreulette) was outside her home one day when she was overheard singing.<sup>2</sup> The woman asked the nine-year-old girl where she had learned to sing. Cabel responded that she had never been taught, but that her father, a music lover, had started teaching her piano. The woman predicted that Cabel would have a brilliant future career and declared her an artist. Only then did she reveal her identity: she was Pauline Viardot. The dying composer, Carl Maria von Weber, discovered Anna Thillon (1819-1903, née Hunt).<sup>3</sup> One evening in London, Weber passed by a home where he heard what he believed to be an angel singing. He ran to the window and saw a young girl, blond like a cherub, singing a Scottish national air. He entered the home, held the girl in his arms, and turning to Thillon's mother, he insisted that she provide a musical education for her daughter who would one day become a great singer. Her mother smiled arrogantly, knowing such a future was impossible because of their aristocratic

<sup>1</sup>"La petite blanchisseuse, la joyeuse enfant portait le linge aux pratiques, chantant avec sa voix de fauvette, elle avait dix ans: A la barrière du Maine/ On mange de bons goujons.../Bons! Vivant gaie et insouciant comme l'oiseau dans les bois, égrenant chaque jour ses refrains, sans ressentir l'étreinte douloureuse de la vie de privations et de travail pénible à laquelle sa mère et elle étaient contraintes de se plier. Un jour, vers 1827, un jeune artiste, professeur à l'école de chant du digne Choron, entendit par hasard la pauvre et jeune ouvrière jeter au vent ses joyeuses chansons. – Vous aimez à chanter, mademoiselle? lui dit le jeune homme. – Quelquefois, monsieur, répondit la jeune fille. – Savez-vous la musique? – Non, monsieur. – Ma belle enfant, avec une voix comme la vôtre, c'est un vrai malheur. – Comment faire? monsieur, je suis loin d'être riche pour apprendre la musique. – Mademoiselle, si vous voulez bien me permettre de voir vos parents, je leur indiquerai une école où vous serez admise sans payer aucune rétribution. Bientôt la jeune Victorine figura au nombre des élèves les plus intelligentes de Choron. Au contact d'une société plus polie, la jeune élève se dépouilla peu à peu de ses dehors encore abrupts et anguleux. Elle avait environ seize ans; très élancée pour son âge, maigre, elle avait des yeux noirs pleins de feu et un esprit naturel qui rachetaient l'absence d'éducation première. Un pied mignon, une bouche un peu grande, mais poétisée par un adorable sourire: telle était alors Victorine, que le vénérable papa Choron baptisa des noms plus romantiques de Rose Niva. C'est sous ce dernier nom que la jeune fille connut les premiers enivres du succès." Thurmer, *Les reines du chant*, 183-184.

<sup>2</sup>Savard, *Les actrices de Paris*, 40-41.

<sup>3</sup>Philippon and Huart, "Mme Anna Thillon."

origins, but thanked the ailing composer nonetheless. Weber's benevolent action turned out to be his last: he died that very night. But his prediction came true. The family lost its fortune and Anna ended up using her musical talent to embark on a successful operatic career in France and England.

These singers were born stars: all they needed was the sanction of a respected musical authority—a vocal pedagogue, a prima donna, a dying composer—to unleash their talent. Such anecdotes grappled with the mysterious origins of musical ability and reveal the influence of an emerging Romantic ideology of the artist-genius that supplanted the old paradigm of the musician as craftsman. Were musicians born with their gifts? Did they inherit their talent from their parents? Could anyone be an artist? These questions were perhaps more pressing for those writing the biographies of female singers as they sought to explain what motivated a woman to pursue a professional stage career, to exchange money for her musical talent normally reserved for an intimate circle of family, friends, and potential husbands.<sup>4</sup> She might be more easily forgiven for crossing class boundaries if by pursuing professional singing she responded to the call of art that could not be ignored.

Turning to the representation of female singers in serial fiction and novels of the period, we find that that a professional stage career—even one at a prestigious opera house—is presented as incompatible with middle-class mores. No singer from a well-to-do family pursued professional singing unless there had been a sudden reversal of fortune or her parents had died, leaving her orphaned and thus without a family to shame; otherwise, fictional singers were born into poverty but used their talent to become professional artists, thus overcoming social and economic hardships. The latter case is so common in the literature that the “street singer turned prima donna” might be seen as a veritable type. The singer-actress Palmire in Henri Blanchard's “L'actrice et l'étudiant” (*La Revue et gazette musicale*, 1844) claimed she was of noble birth, but was shown to be an illegitimate child.<sup>5</sup> George Sand's Consuelo was raised by her mother and the two sang in the streets throughout Europe to earn their living; Consuelo eventually pursued her musical education with the composer-pedagogue Porpora and sang in the theatre.<sup>6</sup> La Romanina in Mélanie Waldor's “La cantatrice” (*La Sylphide*, 1844) was a “femme du peuple” who became a prima donna; she later returned to sing in the streets to raise money for medical care for her ungrateful lover,

<sup>4</sup>F.W.J. Hemmings mentions that the question of whether acting was naturally “bred in the bone” or simply a matter of following in a parent's footsteps was topical in the nineteenth century. See Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France*, 151.

<sup>5</sup>Blanchard, “L'actrice et l'étudiant.”

<sup>6</sup>Sand, *Consuelo*.

as she had sold all of her belongings to pay his bills.<sup>7</sup> Inès from Louis Jousserandot's "La Stephana" (*La Sylphide*, 1842), was a seventeen-year-old orphan, whose family had been *commerçants* and had made their wealth in the new world; she sang first in the streets and later pursued vocal studies to begin a new life once her lover abandoned her.<sup>8</sup> Esther Saunier in Edouard Monnais' *Portefeuille de deux cantatrices* (1845) was left orphaned after the death of her mother and became an indentured servant for her uncle; she left this unhappy situation to work as a laundress before finally asking her *marraine*, the prima donna Clothilde, for help.<sup>9</sup> Although these stories reveal the discordance of middle-class values and professional singing, they also communicate the idea of an "aristocracy" of talent and social mobility in capitalist society. The "rags-to-riches" plot archetype used in many of these stories reflects a new dominant myth of the nineteenth century where people believed they could change their social destiny by working hard, and using their talent and the possibility of higher earnings to their advantage. At the very least, the myth provided a goal to strive for, whether each person could actually change his or her life.<sup>10</sup>

## 1.2 THE SOCIAL ORIGINS OF THEATRE PERFORMERS

The family origins for many singers during this period are unknown, particularly for those in the lower ranks who rarely became the subject of biography. Almost all the birth certificates for singers born in Paris during this period were destroyed during the Commune in 1871; therefore, we must rely on a *mélange* of anecdotes, biographical accounts, and the data contained in the Conservatoire de musique's records. Beginning in 1835, the registration rolls listed the father's occupation for many of the students, providing us with some information on the social class of those who attended the institution and eventually landed careers at the main lyric theatres.<sup>11</sup>

From the data in the Conservatoire's records and various other sources (mostly biographical articles and press reviews), I have compiled a table listing the family

<sup>7</sup>Waldor, "La cantatrice." La Romanina's benevolence reveals another trend in singer-biography, that of highlighting the prima donna's philanthropy and generous spirit. For an illuminating discussion of this trend, see Poriss, "Prima Donnas and the Performance of Altruism."

<sup>8</sup>Jousserandot, "La Stephana."

<sup>9</sup>Smith, *Portefeuille de deux cantatrices*. The work was originally published as a feuilleton in *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* from 6 October 1844 to 18 May 1845.

<sup>10</sup>Literary critics have examined the rags-to-riches plot archetype in nineteenth-century American literature where it has been associated most strongly with the American writer Horatio Alger, Jr. (1832-1899), a prolific writer whose juvenile literature often traced the rise of young men from humble backgrounds to middle-class security through their hard work and honest behaviour. See, for example, Tebbel, *From Rags to Riches: Horatio Alger, Jr., and the American Dream*.

<sup>11</sup>*F-Pan AJ*<sup>37</sup> 352-353.

backgrounds for thirty-eight female singers from the Opéra and the Opéra Comique (Table 1.1). The data is summarized in Table 1.2. The categories of professions correspond by and large to the societal divisions outlined in a study by Adeline Daumard and used in Steven Huebner's article on nineteenth-century opera audiences.<sup>12</sup> I have retained the French name where possible to maintain a higher degree of specificity that better reflects the diverse reality of the middle classes.<sup>13</sup> The terms *propriétaire* and *rentier* were used to designate those individuals whose income was mainly generated from investments. *Négociant* refers to all manners of entrepreneurs, including those in financial industries, manufacturing, and commerce. I have placed those in the liberal professions (doctors, lawyers, architects), *fonctionnaires* (civil servants), and employees (wage-earners who were not in the trades) in the same category. The category *militaire* encompasses those still in service and retired. I have used the term *boutiquier* to refer to those working in the skilled trades (*boulangier, épicier, coiffeur, peintre, graveur*). This last category encompasses the *petite bourgeoisie*, not much different from those in the working classes, although as Huebner notes, some individuals had enough moveable capital to qualify as an elector.<sup>14</sup> Those working as musicians, singers, actors, or as theatre directors have been placed in the artist-musician class. The one singer who has been identified as having noble family origins has been listed in the category "noble." And finally, those singers who were "illegitimate" (their births not being recognized by their biological fathers) have been listed as having "no father." If the mother's profession is known, I have included it in the statistics. Unfortunately in the Conservatoire's records (and generally in the contemporary literature on singers), the mother's profession was only listed if there was no declared father or if she were a musician or theatre performer; many theatre women were married to other performers, which was common during the period (see Chapter 6 for a discussion of marriage in the theatre). In Table 1.1, there are two singers without a declared father; in one case, the mother's profession is not stated, and in the other, she is listed as a *rentière*.

<sup>12</sup>Daumard, *La bourgeoisie parisienne de 1815 à 1848*; Huebner, "Opera Audiences in Paris, 1830-1870."

<sup>13</sup>This is to avoid what William Weber so aptly identified in the title of his article, Weber, "The Muddle of the Middle Classes." I have chosen to use the term "middle classes" to acknowledge the diversity of this class and to avoid using the term "bourgeoisie" that is so fraught during the July Monarchy. In the early nineteenth century, a person was called "bourgeois" if she or he did not belong to the nobility; wealth and occupation were secondary considerations. As Cobban points out, "It was only subsequently that the term was associated essentially with industrial, mercantile, or financial capitalists as opposed to the landowning class, which then came to be treated as a survival of the feudal order." See Cobban, "The 'Middle Class' in France, 1815-1848."

<sup>14</sup>Huebner, "Opera Audiences in Paris, 1830-1870," 212.

Table 1.1: Family origins of female Opéra and Opéra Comique singers

| Singer*                 | Parents' profession(s)                                                                            |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Barthélemy, Elian       | Father: Auguste Barthélemy, poet<br>Mother: chorister (Opéra)                                     |
| Beaussire, Honorine     | Father: Lemerrier, <i>agent comptable</i> for the military                                        |
| Boulanger, Marie Julie  | Parents were in commerce                                                                          |
| Cabel, Marie*           | Father: cavalry officer in French army;<br>later an accountant for Belgian theatres               |
| Capdeville, Marie       | Father: Marie-Jean Capdeville, <i>rentier</i>                                                     |
| Cinti-Damoreau, Laure   | Father: foreign language teacher<br>Mother: engraver                                              |
| Colon, Jenny*           | Father: Jean Colon, music teacher and tenor<br>Mother: Marie Dejean-Leroy, singer (Opéra Comique) |
| Courtot, Emilie         | Father: Courtot, <i>propriétaire</i>                                                              |
| Dameron, Pauline        | Father: Georges Dameron, <i>cabaretier</i> (innkeeper)                                            |
| Darcier, Célestine      | Mother: Adélaïde Augustine Darcier (no profession listed)                                         |
| Descot, Geneviève       | Father: Robert Jean Baptiste Descot, <i>propriétaire</i>                                          |
| Dobré, Marie            | Father: Jean François Dobré, <i>militaire pensionnaire</i>                                        |
| Dorus-Gras, Julie       | Father was a musician and conductor                                                               |
| Falcon, Cornélie        | Father: Pierre Falcon, tailor                                                                     |
| Fargueil, Anaïs         | Father: Jean-Paul Fargueil, singer (Opéra Comique)                                                |
| Garcia, Eugénie*        | Father: Mayer, <i>négociant</i>                                                                   |
| Heinefetter, Catinka*   | Musician family                                                                                   |
| Janicot, Laure          | Father: Janicot, <i>rentier</i>                                                                   |
| Jawureck, Constance     | Father: musician (German origin)                                                                  |
| Julian, Eliza           | Father: Elie Julian, <i>marchand</i>                                                              |
| Jullienne, Eugénie      | Father: <i>constructeur mécanicien</i>                                                            |
| Lebrun, Annette*        | Father: Louis Sébastien Lebrun, tenor and composer<br>Mother: Caroline Percillier, singer (Opéra) |
| Lavoye, Louise          | Father: Lavoye, <i>musicien gagiste</i> (garde royale)                                            |
| Lavoye, Marie           | Father: Lavoye, <i>musicien gagiste</i> (garde royale)                                            |
| Méquillet, Sophie*      | Mother from a noble Bavarian family                                                               |
| Morin-Lebrun, Louise    | Father: Louis Sébastien Lebrun, tenor and composer<br>Mother: Caroline Percillier, singer (Opéra) |
| Moisson, Joséphine      | Father: Baptiste Moisson, flour tradesman                                                         |
| Nau, Dolorès            | Parents were Spanish colonists in Saint-Dominique                                                 |
| Potier, Marie           | Mother: la marquise de Cussy (née Menestrier), singer (Opéra)                                     |
| Pradher, Félicité*      | Father: singer and theatre director                                                               |
| Revilly, Antoinette     | Father: Étienne Revilly, musician                                                                 |
| Rieux, Angéline         | Father: Antoine Rieux, surgeon                                                                    |
| Roissy, Noémie de*      | Father: physician in Paris                                                                        |
| Rossi-Caccia, Giovanna* | Mother: Marianna (Cornélie) Rossi, singer (Théâtre Italien)                                       |
| Roullié, Julie Léocadie | Mother: Marie-Jeanne Roullié, <i>rentière</i>                                                     |
| Stoltz, Rosine*         | Mother: Clara Stoll, <i>boulangère</i><br>Father: Florentin Noël, <i>concierge</i>                |
| Widemann, Anna*         | Father: Jean Guillaume Jung, <i>luthier</i>                                                       |
| Zévaco, Thérèse         | Father: Philippe Zévaco, employee (hôtel royal des meslin)                                        |

\*Those marked with an asterisk did not study at the Conservatoire de musique.



Table 1.2: Family origins of female singers (statistical summary)

| Parent's occupation                                  | Number | %     |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Noble                                                | 1      | 2.6   |
| <i>propriétaire/rentier(-ère)</i>                    | 6      | 15.8  |
| <i>négociant</i>                                     | 2      | 5.3   |
| Liberal professions, <i>fonctionnaire</i> , employee | 4      | 10.5  |
| <i>Militaire</i>                                     | 5      | 13.2  |
| <i>boutiquier</i>                                    | 6      | 15.8  |
| Artist-musician                                      | 13     | 34.2  |
| No father                                            | (2)    | (5.3) |
| Single mother without listed profession              | 1      | 2.6   |
| Total                                                | 38     | 100   |

About half of the singers (50%) came from artist-musician families and the petty bourgeoisie; the other half (47.3%) came from the more prosperous middle classes (and a few from the upper middle-classes). These statistics are rather intriguing, as they reveal that the middle classes in fact furnished many performers for the stage. Susan Rutherford claims professional female singers increasingly came from the middle and upper classes in the nineteenth century, but only after 1850.<sup>15</sup> A little over one-third (34.2%) came from the artist-musician class, a class defined by its participation in artistic production and dependence on work to earn a livelihood. Considering the small proportion of this group in society at large, the percentage of women coming from the artist-musician class is quite high, although not as high as suggested in Nancy Reich's study of female musicians of the nineteenth century. There she found that of thirty-six musicians studied, twenty-seven were from the artist-musician class: an astounding 75%.<sup>16</sup> The difference lies in the sample selection—she included singers, pianists, composers, and instrumentalists—although even if we narrow her selection to just the singers, the percentage from the artist-musician class is still very high (70%). Reich also chose the best-known, higher-ranking female musicians from all of Europe and throughout the century; most of these musicians enjoyed long, successful careers. My sample ranges from *premières chanteuses* to lower-ranking understudies, some of who disappeared only after a few years on the national stage or continued their careers in the provinces. It thus shows a different picture: a slice of the entire profession of female singers, not just the most successful. All the same, the figures suggest that daughters of musicians and theatre professionals were quite likely to follow in their parents' footsteps.

<sup>15</sup>Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 16.

<sup>16</sup>Reich, "Women as Musicians: A Question of Class," 126.

During this period, many of the singers who eventually had careers at the Opéra and the Opéra Comique completed their musical education at the Paris Conservatoire de musique; however, the reverse is not true, in that not all those who attended the Conservatoire pursued professional careers. Music lessons were part of the standard education for middle- and upper-class women. Pianistic and vocal skill were highly coveted qualities that helped assure good marriage prospects and, more mundanely, provided a means for women to fill the long hours spent at home; those who did not take lessons privately sometimes attended a conservatory to learn these skills.<sup>17</sup> Nancy Reich has suggested that middle- and upper-class women attended conservatories but generally left the musical world once they married; “Women who used their conservatory diploma to join the profession were most often from the artist-musician class—women who came from families traditionally in music or theatre and who would have entered that world with or without a conservatory education.”<sup>18</sup> Was the difference between a female Conservatoire student who had a singing career and one who did not a matter of class? It does not appear to be so. In fact, looking at the social classes of those students who did not sing at one of the three main Parisian lyric theatres, we find that the social composition does not differ significantly.

Table 1.3: Family origins of Conservatoire students registered between 1835 and 1842 who did not sing at the Opéra or Opéra Comique

| Parent's occupation(s)                               | Number | %     |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| <i>propriétaire/rentier(-ère)</i>                    | 10     | 19.6  |
| <i>négociant</i>                                     | 4      | 7.9   |
| Liberal professions, <i>fonctionnaire</i> , employee | 6      | 11.8  |
| <i>Militaire</i>                                     | 5      | 9.8   |
| <i>boutiquier</i>                                    | 13     | 25.5  |
| artist-musician                                      | 13     | 25.5  |
| No father                                            | (3)    | (5.9) |
| Total                                                | 51     | 100   |

Table 1.3 lists the family occupations of those female students who registered for at least one year at the Conservatoire between 1835 and 1842. Those from the artist-musician class and the petty bourgeoisie make up 51% of the total, and 49% came from the middle classes; thus, very similar statistics to those presented in Table 1.2, although with a higher percentage in the *boutiquier* category and less from the artist-musician class. Some of these students did continue on to perform at other theatres,

<sup>17</sup>Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 47-57, 103-109.

<sup>18</sup>Reich, “Women as Musicians: A Question of Class,” 134.

and I have been able to identify sixteen women who at least attempted a professional career. Four of the sixteen came from the artist-musician class; the other twelve came from families ranging from property owners to the petty bourgeoisie. Irma Crosnier (b. 1820-190?) studied voice but ended up in the boulevard theatres and performed for over forty-five years;<sup>19</sup> her father was a *rentier*. Mélanie Morel (b. 1828), whose father was a *négociant*, debuted unsuccessfully at the Opéra and pursued a career in the provinces. Daughter of a *rentier*, Constance Philippine Janssens (b. 1816) eventually married Opéra singer Prosper Dérivis; she sang in concerts and in the provinces. Many students left the Conservatoire without a trace after only a year or two of study. Certainly, some left for marriage: Eugénie Monsanto, daughter of a *propriétaire*, withdrew after three years of study once she became Madame Gautier. Only rarely does one come across a titled woman pursuing music lessons at the school.<sup>20</sup> A description of the audience in attendance at the Conservatoire's annual competitions supports these statistics; the author claimed that the public, mostly family members of the students, was fairly modest, but still respectable:

The society that attends the Conservatoire's competition is certainly a respectable one, but it does not shine in the pursuit of an elegant *toilette*. The women, mothers or sisters of the artists who take part in the battle, do not purchase their hats from Herbault; the men do not have their clothing tailored by Staub, nor their canes from Thomassin. They are those brave and honest artists who think of giving their lessons rather than taking airs of fashion; who do not pass their time spending their savings on an orderly outfit, calculating only too well the price of an hour, and who would not be at the Conservatoire if this were not the time for holiday for their students of all conditions.<sup>21</sup>

How do female singers compare with others working in the theatre milieu? Louise Robin-Challan has examined birth certificates for over one hundred dancers during

<sup>19</sup>"Crosnier, Mme Irma aînée (femme Gauthier)," in Lyonnet, *Dictionnaire des comédiens français (ceux d'hier): biographie, bibliographie, iconographie*, 406-407.

<sup>20</sup>The daughter of the Comtesse de Moret d'Erlo was listed among the students during the 1832-1833 school year. *F-Pan AJ*<sup>37</sup> 151.

<sup>21</sup>"La société qui assiste aux exercices du Conservatoire n'est assurément pas une des moins respectables; mais elle ne brille point par la recherche d'une toilette élégante. Les dames, mamans ou sœurs des artistes qui prennent part à la lutte achètent leurs chapeaux ailleurs que chez Herbault; les hommes n'ont point leurs habits taillés par Staub, ni des cannes de Thomassin. Ce sont de braves et honnêtes artistes qui songent à donner leurs leçons plutôt qu'à prendre des airs de fashion; qui ne passent point leur temps à disposer l'économie d'une tenue bien ordonnée, calculant trop bien le prix d'une heure, et qui même ne seraient point au Conservatoire si ce n'était à cette époque le temps des vacances pour leurs élèves de toutes les conditions." *La Revue musicale*, 23 August 1835.

the first half of the nineteenth century and finds that most emerged from working-class families: “they belonged to the class of bushel and candle makers, publicans, clothes dealers, washerwomen, concierges, ragmen, people scrubbing floors and doing obscure jobs living from one day into the next, usually far away from the Chaussée d’Antin in miserable lodgings, dark attics or a porter’s lodge.”<sup>22</sup> Most actors and actresses came from families drawn from the class of urban artisans, with occupations as “jewelers, glassmakers, hatters, cobblers, joiners, carpenters, coach-painters, saddlers, and clever fashioners of fancy goods.”<sup>23</sup> Hemmings estimates that one-eighth of actors came from acting families;<sup>24</sup> Robin-Challan has found that a similar proportion of male and female dancers (seventy-seven of 516) came from families employed (often for several generations) at the theatre, suggesting a surprisingly high rate of endogamy.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, an actor coming from a middle-class family was relatively common during this period. In fact, Hemmings claims that the middle class furnished actors and actresses in rough proportion to their numbers in the population, and not always because of the loss of the family’s fortune; even some daughters and sons of industrialists and army officers, who were just under the gentlemen-farmers according to the social hierarchy of the period, joined the acting profession.<sup>26</sup>

The upper classes did not furnish actors in great numbers until the end of the century. Hemmings attributes the new prestige in the theatre profession and the influence of the trade depression for the increased participation of the so-called *grande bourgeoisie*.<sup>27</sup> Lenard Berlanstein similarly notes a decisive shift in the social milieu of recruitment for female acting students at the Paris Conservatoire, from working class to middle class, but not until the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>28</sup> Up until that moment, most contemporary commentary on the social origins of female stu-

<sup>22</sup>Robin-Challan, “Social Conditions of Ballet Dancers at the Paris Opéra in the 19th Century,” 20. Jennifer Anne Dawson has also found that most children who entered the Opéra’s École de danse came from working-class or theatre families. Dawson, “Danseuses as Working Women,” 9.

<sup>23</sup>Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France*, 170.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 150.

<sup>25</sup>Louise Robin-Challan, “Danse et les danseuses à l’Opéra de Paris, 1830-1850” (PhD diss., Université de Paris VII, 1983), 213-214, cited in Dawson, “Danseuses as Working Women,” 10.

<sup>26</sup>Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France*, 157-158.

<sup>27</sup>ibid., 170. Rutherford claims that this shift occurred early, around 1850, when an increasing number of middle- and upper-class women embarked theatrical careers; she emphasizes their active participation in amateur music circles as an important motivation. Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 73, 82.

<sup>28</sup>Berlanstein, “Cultural Change and the Acting Conservatory in Late Nineteenth-Century France.” Berlanstein takes his data from a selection of years from 1835 until 1913. Beginning in the 1880s, writers began remarking on the embourgeoisement of the student body at the Conservatoire, although the changes are not reflected in the statistics until around 1900. Berlanstein also credits changing

dents emphasized their poverty and popular origins. Comparing the statistics on female vocal students to female acting students at the Conservatoire is quite revealing. Berlanstein also examined the Conservatoire's registration records and noted the father's profession for male and female acting students during the nineteenth century. Table 1.4 reproduces Berlanstein's statistics for the women from 1835 to 1838. Although Berlanstein does not discuss how he divided the categories of professions, some comparison can still be made. Only 6.4% of female students came from theatre families; most came from the working classes ("Workers," 35.4%) that Berlanstein perhaps erroneously generalizes as the "labouring poor." Over 47% still came from the middle classes: property owners, merchants, employees, and professionals. A higher percentage of female acting students were born out of wedlock and Berlanstein claims that some of the mothers—although they listed their profession as *rentière*—were actually known courtesans or in the sex trade.<sup>29</sup> He notes that the family backgrounds of male Conservatoire students were significantly more bourgeois during the entire period and did not show much change at the turn of the century. In 1835-1838, only 15.1% of male students came from the working classes and 17% had fathers who were property owners; there were much higher percentages of families listed as professionals and employees.<sup>30</sup> Berlanstein warns against using the data from the Conservatoire to generalize about actors' origins, as many thespians never attended the institution but instead simply gained experience through performance. He unfortunately does not specify how many of these students continued on to have acting careers.

Table 1.4: Family origins of female Conservatoire students (dramatic arts branch), 1835-1838. Statistics taken from Berlanstein, "Cultural Change," 592.

| Father's occupation | Number | %    |
|---------------------|--------|------|
| Property owner      | 2      | 4.2  |
| Merchant            | 11     | 22.9 |
| Professional        | 2      | 4.2  |
| Employee            | 8      | 16.7 |
| Worker              | 17     | 35.4 |
| Theatrical          | 3      | 6.2  |
| No father           | 5      | 10.4 |
| Total               | 48     | 100  |

attitudes toward women in the acting profession for motivating more middle- and upper-class women to pursue an acting education at the Conservatoire.

<sup>29</sup>*ibid.*, 592-593. He claims that Sarah Bernhardt's mother, a known courtesan, declared her profession as a property owner.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 593.

There were essential distinctions between the acting, dancing, and singing professions that played a determining role in the diversity of performers' family origins. While acting was a skill more often than not acquired through on-stage experience, the technique required for professional operatic singing necessitated rigorous study. Such training called for years of training, either in private tuition or in a public institution, and a fairly significant financial investment by the singer's family, unless a family member could provide the training. This could explain why many singers came from the middle classes and the artist-musician class. Parents already in the industry could quickly identify early signs of musical talent, and many taught their children music from an early age. Prestige also played a role. In general, the more prestigious the theatre, the more training and talent a performer required. An artist with a passable voice, attractive physique, and penchant for acting could get along just fine at a boulevard theatre such as the Vaudeville or the Variétés, but would never succeed at the Opéra, Opéra Comique, or the Théâtre Italien. Dancers also pursued rigorous training, and the Opéra had its own ballet school, the *École royale de danse*.<sup>31</sup> However, as a profession that relied on bodily labour and physical spectacle in a manner much more evident than that of singing, dancing was considered generally less prestigious than operatic singing. Dancers' costumes revealed their legs—a body part more sexualized than a woman's shoulders or neck—and the skirts got increasingly shorter during the period.<sup>32</sup> Anecdotal writings on dancers also emphasized their physical labour. In Albéric Second's *Petits mystères de l'Opéra*, the danseuse Lélia tells him of all the physical torture a dancer must endure during her training;<sup>33</sup> in his memoirs, Charles de Boigne described the dancer coming off stage, out of breath, exhausted, dripping with sweat, her face twisted from a smile to a grimace from the effort.<sup>34</sup> Descriptions of their physical efforts were often accompanied by comments on their lack of education and inability to read and write, as well

<sup>31</sup>For information on the *École royale de danse*, see Dawson, "Danseuses as Working Women," 7-77. For a brief institutional history of the Acting Conservatoire in Paris and a description of the training, see Guibert, "Musique et l'art dramatique: le paradoxe de la formation de l'acteur." First established as a royal school in 1786, Napoléon I set down the definitive organization of the acting branch of the Conservatoire in 1808.

<sup>32</sup>Robin-Challan notes that Véron shortened the dancers' skirts in 1831 to uncover half of their calves, and Duponchel approved of shortening the skirts even further for Marie Taglioni and the corps de ballet in the ballet-pantomime *La Sylphide* (1832). Robin-Challan, "Social Conditions of Ballet Dancers at the Paris Opéra in the 19th Century," 25. Of course, singers who performed the role of the page found that critics paid much attention to the shape of their legs.

<sup>33</sup>Second, *Les petits mystères de l'Opéra*, 149-153.

<sup>34</sup>Boigne, *Petits mémoires de l'Opéra*, 33.

as their poverty and dependency on protectors.<sup>35</sup> Descriptions of singers' "work," by contrast, focused on their vocal exercises and hours of scales but suggested these were much more tiresome for their neighbours than for the singers themselves.<sup>36</sup> And most singers were assumed to know how to read and write—in fact, Conservatoire students were not admitted unless they already had these skills—as well as read music, and were generally considered more educated. The continuum of respectability of theatre professions thus also reflected the cultural privileging of the mind over the body. In short, for a daughter from a middle-class household, to pursue a dancing or acting career would have been much more risqué; to attempt a professional career in singing at least would have made good use out of the music lessons she would have likely already been taking.<sup>37</sup>

Such are the statistics, but what about the stories? Most biographical articles from the period discuss the singers' beginnings, whether they were discovered at a young age or had their talent honed through years of study at the Conservatoire. After reading through a few dozen of these accounts, one finds that the stories of their first steps in their profession begin to take the shape of standardized narratives that presented justifications for the woman's entry into the theatrical milieu. Operatic singing on a national stage was perhaps more prestigious than dancing or acting, but it still was waged labour. The stories surrounding singers' beginnings range from anecdotes of poor, young girls being saved from a life of misery upon the discovery of their musical talents, to women who enter the theatrical world as the only resort to save their family from destitution. Such "excuses" reveal that the social stigma of a theatrical career was significant for operatic singers, particularly the women. What is more, the stories told of these singers differ little from those narrated in singer-fiction, revealing that easy mingling of fact and fiction as the column boundaries between biographical articles, reviews, and serial fiction in journals of the period were mentally erased.

<sup>35</sup>Robin-Challan, "Social Conditions of Ballet Dancers at the Paris Opéra in the 19th Century," 22–26.

<sup>36</sup>Roqueplan, *Les coulisses de l'Opéra*, 6.

<sup>37</sup>The added prestige singing in opera came with a higher salary. This can be observed by considering that Conservatoire students, whose salaries were legislated by the state for the first three years of their employment at one of the royal theatres, were accorded salaries over two times higher if they were hired at a lyric theatre. In 1855, a Conservatoire student would earn 4,000 francs for her first year of employment at a lyric theatre, but only 1,800 francs at the Théâtre-Français or Théâtre de l'Odéon. See "Arrêté concernant les conditions d'admission des élèves, 6 octobre 1855," in Pierre, *Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation, documents historiques et administratifs recueillis ou reconstitués*, 286–287.



### 1.3 CHILD PERFORMERS, OR *LES ENFANTS DE LA BALLE*

As I have already noted, over one-third of female singers came from the artist-musician class, a much higher percentage than that of theatre performers in general (12.5%). Gender is an important factor in the statistical discrepancy. Hemmings reminds us that the disproportion of employment opportunities led more women than men born into theatre families to turn to acting: “The reason was not, as was commonly held at the time, that acting comes more naturally to girls than to boys; it was simply that boys had a much wider choice of employment, and even if they expressed a desire to go on to the stage, as often as not their parents, knowing from personal experience the trials and disappointments they risked, actively discouraged them.”<sup>38</sup> Female singers from the artist-musician class probably faced less social ostracism than those coming from the middle classes.<sup>39</sup> Biographers did not question the propriety of a singer continuing her family’s trade; in fact, they drew attention to their heredity, highlighting the role of the parent-artist in the singer’s early music education. These *enfants de la balle* (as the French called them) typically began their careers as children: Hemmings suggests that many were forced into their *métier* before they truly had the choice or even felt the call.<sup>40</sup> A statement by Gilbert-Louis Duprez confirms Hemmings’ claim, albeit in a less sinister fashion. In his memoirs, he discussed how his daughter Caroline Duprez (1832-1875) had practically no choice but to follow in her mother’s (soprano Alexandrine Duperron) and his own footsteps: “My daughter, born as one might say in music, was brought up in an artistic milieu, endowed with the best dispositions, having also received a carefully prepared musical education; she thus had to take only one step to become, excellent musician that she was, an artist and a distinguished one at that.”<sup>41</sup> Caroline Duprez sang in the provinces first under her father’s supervision, and then performed at the Opéra Comique in the 1850s.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup>Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France*, 153.

<sup>39</sup>See Reich, “Women as Musicians: A Question of Class,” for her excellent discussion of the different challenges faced by female musicians of different classes.

<sup>40</sup>Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France*, 151. Hemmings claims that “*enfants de la balle*” was first used to refer to the ball boys in the tennis courts.

<sup>41</sup>“Ma fille, née pour ainsi dire dans la musique, élevée au milieu d’artistes, douée des plus belles dispositions, avait en outre reçu l’éducation musicale la plus soignée; elle n’avait donc qu’un pas à franchir pour devenir, d’excellente musicienne qu’elle était, artiste et artiste distinguée.” Duprez, *Souvenirs d’un chanteur*, 196-197.

<sup>42</sup>For information on Caroline Duprez’s performing career, see also Comtesse de Bassanville, “Caroline Duprez,” in *Les théâtres de Paris*; Georges Bell, “Caroline Duprez,” in *Nouvelle galerie des artistes dramatiques vivants* (Paris: À la librairie théâtrale, n.d.). Both are held in her dossier of press articles in *F-Pn*, articles de presse, RO-5075.



Biographical articles sometimes exaggerated a singer's artistic heredity, as in the case of Jenny Colon. According to her contemporary biographers, Colon (1808-1842) was *literally* born at the theatre while her parents were performing. Étienne Arago claimed that Colon was born at nine o'clock to the sound of her father Jean Colon, a music teacher and tenor, singing a *rondeau*. Her mother, Marie (née Anne Dejean-Leroy) stopped in the middle of her performance to give birth backstage with the help of the theatre's doctor. The female choristers took turns cradling the newborn. "What an omen!" exclaimed Arago, "There was never more reason to believe in a pre-destiny."<sup>43</sup> By eight years of age, Colon could sight-read music. She received little formal training, apart from solfège and vocal exercises from a method book, and instead learned by performing children's roles in the provinces. Her parents eventually took her and her elder sister Éléonore to audition for Louis-Antoine-Éléonore Ponchard at the Conservatoire, but rather than accepting them as students, he offered them contracts at the Opéra Comique (including their mother who performed *duègne* roles). The sisters debuted together in *Les deux petits Savoyards* in April 1822. Colon devoted her whole life to the stage, performing at state and boulevard theatres, in Paris and in the provinces, and in all different genres, vaudeville, *opéra-comique*, and grand opera (at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels).

Félicité Pradher (1800-1876, née More) was initially taught by her father, a provincial theatre director and *basse-taille*, and began her career as a child performer. At five years of age she performed the role of Jeannette in *Le Déserteur*, at ten she sang in *L'Athénée*, and five years later, she debuted officially at the theatre in Montpellier. In 1816 she was hired as the *première chanteuse* at the theatre in Rouen, but was quickly solicited by the Opéra Comique, where she sang until her retirement in 1835.<sup>44</sup> Catinka (Kathinka) Heinefetter (1819-1858), one of six sisters who made her career as a singer, studied music with her elder sister Sabine (1809-1872) who sang at the Théâtre Italien and had an international career. Heinefetter continued her studies with Ponchard in Paris and sang at the Paris Opéra from 1840 to 1842. Julie Dorus-Gras (1805-1896, née Van Steenkiste) began music lessons with her father, a conductor and musician, and performed in concerts before finally entering the Paris Conservatoire in December 1821 with a scholarship paid by her hometown of Valenciennes. Her brother also continued the family trade, playing the flute in the Opéra orchestra where Dorus-Gras sang from 1830 to 1845. Anaïs Fargueil (1819-1896) was the daughter of the Opéra Comique singer Jean-Paul Fargueil. She also

<sup>43</sup> Arago, "Jenny Colon-Leplus (Dans *La Reine d'un jour*)."

<sup>44</sup> "Mlle More (Mme Pradher), rôle de Claire."

studied at the Conservatoire and debuted on the same stage as her father in 1835.<sup>45</sup> Constance Jawureck (1803-1858) was born in Paris to a German musician. After studying at the Conservatoire with Charles-Henri Plantade<sup>46</sup> and Pierre Garat, she debuted at the Opéra in 1822 in *Aladin, ou la Lampe merveilleuse*. Her sister sang in the boulevard theatres.<sup>47</sup>

Musician families continued to thrive and provide professional performers—particularly their daughters—for the national stages well into the second half of the nineteenth century. Besides the famous Garcia family that created two international operatic stars, Maria Malibran (1808-1836) and Pauline Viardot (1821-1910), as well as the vocal pedagogue, Manuel Garcia  *fils*  (1805-1906), who revolutionized the study of vocal science, there were a number of other musical dynasties.<sup>48</sup> Zoé Prévost (1802-1861) came from a musical family that continued to grow. Her brother Eugène-Prosper Prévost (1809-1872), a musician and composer, married Jenny Colon's elder sister, Éléonore. Zoé had a daughter with the Opéra Comique tenor Jean-Baptiste Chollet; Caroline Prévost (b. 1828) attended the Conservatoire and began her performing career alongside her mother in the early-1850s at the Opéra Comique.<sup>49</sup> The mother of Delphine Ugalde (1829-1910, née Beaucé) had been an actress and singer, her father a music seller, and her grandfather a musician and composer. Delphine's daughter Marguerite and her granddaughter Jeanne Ugalde both became professional singers.<sup>50</sup> Marie-Sophie Ponchard (1792-1873, née Callault) married fellow Opéra Comique singer and Conservatoire instructor Ponchard early in her career;

<sup>45</sup>Anaïs Fargueil lost her vocal capabilities after an illness and could not continue her career at the Opéra Comique; she moved to the Théâtre du Vaudeville where she performed until 1883 and created her own emploi (*les Fargueil*). See "Fargueil, Mlle Anaïs, Cornélie," in Lyonnet, *Dictionnaire des comédiens français (ceux d'hier): biographie, bibliographie, iconographie*, 2:26-27.

<sup>46</sup>Charles-Henri Plantade (1764-1839) was a singer, pianist, composer, and voice teacher. He taught at various schools in Paris, including the Conservatoire from 1799-1807 and from 1812-1816. Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens, et bibliographie générale de la musique*, 7:70-71.

<sup>47</sup>"Jawureck (mademoiselle)," in Alhoy, *Nouvelle grande biographie dramatique, ou Silhouette des acteurs, actrices, chanteurs, cantatrices, danseurs, danseuses, morts et vivants, de 1825 à 1830, de Paris et des départements, suivie des adresses des acteurs et actrices*, 147-148.

<sup>48</sup>For the some of the most authoritative biographies of this family of singers, see Radomski, *Manuel Garcia (1775-1830): Chronicle of the Life of a bel canto Tenor at the Dawn of Romanticism*; Fitzlyon, *The Price of Genius: A Life of Pauline Viardot*; and Bushnell, *Maria Malibran: A Biographer of the Singer*.

<sup>49</sup>Olivier Bara has noted that Caroline Prévost also married Achille Montaubry, Chollet's successor at the Opéra Comique. He claims that theatre families "influenced the evolution of staged musical events and ensured stability and continuity in the face of institutional and administrative chaos within the theater." Bara, "The Company at the Heart of the Operatic Institution: Chollet and the Changing Nature of Comic-Opera Role Types during the July Monarchy," 13.

<sup>50</sup>"Ugalde, Mme Gabrielle, Delphine, Elisabeth, née Beaucé, femme Varcolier," in Lyonnet, *Dictionnaire des comédiens français (ceux d'hier): biographie, bibliographie, iconographie*, 2:690. See also various press articles on Delphine Ugalde in *F-Pn RO-5796* (articles de presse).

their son, Charles Ponchard (b. 1824) sang at the Opéra Comique and married the Opéra singer Cécile Pijon (dite d'Halbert, b. 1821).<sup>51</sup> Laure Cinti-Damoreau (1801-1863) married Charles Damoreau, a provincial tenor, and their daughter, Fanny-Marie Cinti-Damoreau (b. 1834), studied at the Conservatoire and sang briefly at the Opéra in the early 1860s.<sup>52</sup> The Opéra Comique singer and Conservatoire instructor Théodore-François Moreau-Sainti (né Moreau, 1799-1860) married the actress Mlle Sainti (after which they both took the name Moreau-Sainti) and their daughter Marie-Lucile Moreau-Sainti eventually sang at the Opéra in the 1850s.<sup>53</sup>

#### 1.4 THE WORKING CLASSES AND THOSE WHO CHOSE TO WORK

Berlanstein has suggested that the miserable beginnings of theatre women were often exaggerated because upper-class society found actresses coming “from the lower depths of society” rather exotic, as they had “tarnished, titillating reputations.”<sup>54</sup> Singers with families coming from the reaches of the labouring poor were rare, but two singers were singled out as having rather miserable beginnings. Rosine Stoltz and Célestine Darcier depended on the help of well-placed people to provide their musical education and the necessary contacts to gain entrance into the most prominent theatres in Paris. Those who wrote about these singers tended to emphasize the assistance of male protectors; we are left to imagine the unfortunate consequences—a life of continued hardship and poverty—should their benefactors not have remarked their talent at a young age. Célestine Hyacinthe Darcier (1822-1870) was the illegitimate daughter of Adélaïde Augustine Darcier. According to Raymond Deslandes in his collection *Les jolies actrices de Paris*, her musical training began only after a chance discovery.<sup>55</sup> A dentist encountered the young girl on the stairway of his building and was immediately struck by her beauty—not her voice, it would seem. Resolved to polish this diamond in the rough, the man became her protector and hired a host of teachers for her education, including Mme Beretheer to teach her

<sup>51</sup>“Ponchard, Charles, Marie, Auguste,” in *ibid.*, 2:540.

<sup>52</sup>Fanny-Marie Cinti-Damoreau married Jean-Baptiste Théodore Weckerlin, a composer and musicologist, in 1856. Her operatic career was relatively brief and undistinguished. Caswell, “Mme Cinti-Damoreau and the Embellishment of Italian Opera in Paris: 1820-1845,” 480.

<sup>53</sup>On the tenor Moreau-Sainti, see Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens, et bibliographie générale de la musique. Supplément et complément*, 2:238. Marie Lucile Moreau-Sainti signed a three-year contract with Crosnier, and her yearly salary was an impressive 30,000 francs. Contract signed 28 February 1855 in *F-Pan* F<sup>21</sup> 1058.

<sup>54</sup>Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the fin de siècle*, 37.

<sup>55</sup>“Mlle Darcier,” in Deslandes, *Les jolies actrices de Paris: notices biographiques, illustrées par Jules David*, 3-8.

music. Darcier began her career singing in concerts on rue de la Grenelle<sup>56</sup> and was eventually presented to Crosnier, then director at the Opéra Comique, in December 1839. The anecdote of her career beginning was unusual for a singer and much more typical of those told of actresses. This perhaps has more to do with the source—a collection of biographical articles on “the pretty actresses of Paris”—that shaped her biography into one that conformed better to cultural expectations of actresses. Deslandes, for example, omitted the fact that Darcier attended the Conservatoire for a year before she began performing at the Opéra Comique to acquire the training necessary for an opera singer. Originally hired as an *accessoire*, she progressed quickly and eventually became one of the theatre’s favourite *premières chanteuses*.

The best-known rags-to-riches case is that of Rosine Stoltz (1815-1903), the subject of the anecdotal sketch cited at the beginning of the chapter. She was born Victoire Noël in Paris to Florentin Noël and Clara Stoll, who worked as concierges on the boulevard Montparnasse.<sup>57</sup> Her father died in 1829, leaving her mother to raise Rosine and her siblings by working as a *boulangère* in Montmartre.<sup>58</sup> Stoltz’s biography reads like a series of lucky breaks where someone noticed her talent and provided her with a promotional opportunity. Whether it was her discovery by one of Alexandre Choron’s vocal instructors or a recommendation by the nuns at the convent where she was supposedly educated, Rosine Stoltz eventually entered Choron’s Institution royale de musique religieuse and studied until the age of 16. In 1832, she joined the opera chorus at the Théâtre royal de la Monnaie in Brussels and began performing small roles once the director discerned her vocal talents. She sang in the provinces and in Amsterdam before returning to Brussels in 1835 to sing main roles in grand opera. According to Fétis, she was initially disappointed by her poor reception and sought his opinion. Fétis recommended vocal study with Guillaume Cassel (1794-1836), a former student of Garat and Talma and instructor at the Conservatoire in Brussels, to correct her method and equalize her middle register.<sup>59</sup> The following year Adolphe Nourrit, in Brussels on a temporary contract, performed the role of Éléazar alongside Stoltz playing Rachel from *La Juive* and immediately recommended her

<sup>56</sup>According to James Johnson, there was a concert series called Concerts rue Grenelle that offered public performances of symphonies and private concerts of women performers (spectators limited to the families to respect the rules of propriety); this ran, however, only during the early 1800s. Perhaps a concert series of this type was revived during this period? See Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History*, 201.

<sup>57</sup>Bord, *Rosina Stoltz*, 24. For an excellent discussion of Rosine Stoltz and singer-biography, see Smart, “The Lost Voice of Rosine Stoltz.”

<sup>58</sup>Bord, *Rosina Stoltz*, 30-31.

<sup>59</sup>“Stoltz, Rosine,” in Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens, et bibliographie générale de la musique*, 8:145-147.

to debut at the Opéra. She debuted in August 1837 in the same role and sang as a *première chanteuse* until 1847.

For those from the working classes who were expected to help support their families by working, performing in the theatre was much preferable to other professions open to women in the nineteenth century. A career in the theatre allowed women much more freedom and independence and the opportunity to make a high salary and regular wages; it did not encroach upon a male labour market (men could not be actresses, after all); a theatre-woman's education and skills were valued, not dismissed; and for some, it could be used as a springboard into marriage.<sup>60</sup> Except in unusual circumstances, women from the middle classes were not expected to have careers.<sup>61</sup> Marriage was *the* female livelihood. Some careers were grudgingly tolerated, but a career in the theatre stretched the limits of middle- and upper-class sensibilities. As Tracy Davis puts it, "[...] actresses—virtually by definition—lived and worked beyond the boundaries of propriety. Victorians were deeply suspicious of women whose livelihood depended on skills of deception and dissembling, and the circumstances of actresses' work belied any pretences to sexual *naïveté*, middle-class immobility, or feeble brain power."<sup>62</sup>

Middle-class women often had a good musical education and experience as amateurs that could ease the transition to the professional circuit; the social stigma, however, remained a considerable hindrance. One author from the *Galerie théâtrale* (1834) noted that although the literary *philosophes* had made efforts to rehabilitate the profession of the *comédienne*, most bourgeois families remained skeptical.<sup>63</sup> Biographers seemed compelled to proffer an explanation for the presence of these women on the stage, something that we do not find in biographies for women from the artist-musician class or lower-working classes. Besides emphasizing the singer's impressive musical talent that all but obligated them to take up a career, many biographers highlighted the role of the parent—particularly the father—in forming these skills. Marie Cabel's father was an officer in the French cavalry who later did some accounting for Belgian theatres: he taught her solfège. Born to parents who worked in commerce, Eliza Julian (b. 1819, later Julian Van Gelder) first studied with her

<sup>60</sup>Davis, *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture*, 18.

<sup>61</sup>Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work, and Family*.

<sup>62</sup>Davis, *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture*, 3.

<sup>63</sup>"Mme Boulanger, rôle de la servante, dans *Emma*," in *Galerie théâtrale ou Collection des portraits en pied des principaux acteurs des premiers théâtres de la capitale*. One wonders to whom the author might be referring, however. The most prominent 18th-century philosophe, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, did much harm to the reputation of actresses (and to the female sex in general). See Chapter 6 for a discussion of Rousseau and his views on women and actresses.

father, another amateur musician, and later pursued her studies at the Paris Conservatoire with Martin and Gilbert-Louis Duprez.<sup>64</sup> Louise Lavoye (1823-1897) and her sister Marie (b. 1828) were initially taught by their father Benoît, a musician in the royal guard; their mother Anne-Marie-Liberté Courtant was from an established Dunkerkist family. The sisters were later admitted at the Paris Conservatoire and sang at the Opéra Comique in the 1840s.<sup>65</sup> For these middle-class singers, the central role of the father in the acquisition of their musical skills sanctioned—at least in part—their entry into the theatre profession. Having a “good” father who was actively involved in their training not only proved beyond doubt that they were, in fact, legitimate children, but also showed evidence of a certain level of social standing and respectability. In Escudier’s biographical article on Eugénie Garcia (1815-1880, née Mayer) during her debuts at the Opéra Comique, he claimed she had been given an education normally provided for those from the “société du grand monde,” but once her family experienced a reversal in fortune, her father advised her to devote herself exclusively to music.<sup>66</sup> Henri Blanchard’s article, however, does not make the same excuses, simply claiming her father was a *négociant* and that she was given a brilliant musical education, which included lessons from Manuel Garcia *père*, and then her future husband, Manuel Garcia *fil*s.<sup>67</sup>

A financial setback that motivated an otherwise respectable woman to launch a career was by far the most common excuse.<sup>68</sup> After her father’s death, Marie Cabel taught singing lessons to the daughters of rich *boutiquiers* in Liège until she was discovered by Georges Cabel (née Cabu), her future husband. She studied singing with him and then traveled to Paris in 1847 to launch her career.<sup>69</sup> Caroline-Joséphine Grassari (b. 1798, née Gérard), the daughter of the Baron Gérard, a lieutenant general, and Anne-Christine Tournaye, turned to the theatre after her parents divorced

<sup>64</sup>Samuel Roger, “Artistes modernes. XI. Mlle Elisa Julian,” *La Sylphide*, vol. 2 (1840), 213-215.

<sup>65</sup>Lemattre, *Mademoiselle Louise Lavoye, célèbre cantatrice dunkerquoise*. This biographical pamphlet can be located in *F-Po*, dossier d’artiste, Louise Lavoye.

<sup>66</sup>“Madame Eugénie Garcia a reçu l’éducation d’une jeune personne qui est destinée à vivre dans la société du grand monde. [...] La famille de Mme Garcia, qui a été d’abord Mlle Mayer, ayant éprouvé des revers de fortune, son père lui a conseillé de se livrer exclusivement à l’étude de la musique.” Escudier, *La France musicale*, 8 December 1839.

<sup>67</sup>Henri Blanchard, “Pauline et Eugénie Garcia. Galerie de la Gazette musicale,” *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 25 October 1840.

<sup>68</sup>Susan Rutherford remarks that “many biographical items and fictional portrayals in the earlier part of the period emphasise that it was only the need for money, following a family’s financial disaster, that had persuaded an otherwise respectable girl to enter the profession.” Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 188. See also Davis, *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture*, 74.

<sup>69</sup>“Marie Cabel,” in Savard, *Les actrices de Paris*, 39-47.



and her mother lost her remaining fortune. After two and a half years of private study in Paris, Grassari debuted at the Opéra in 1816. As a further measure to protect Grassari's reputation, her biographer even added that the singer had refused the help of several protectors.<sup>70</sup> Augustine Eugénie Jullienne (b. 1820) was the daughter of a *constructeur mécanicien* in Rouen who lost his once-considerable fortune.<sup>71</sup> She launched her career with the help of a local singing teacher in Rouen and sang at the Paris Opéra. The parents of Maria Dolorès Nau (1818-1891) were once-rich Spanish colonists who took refuge in the United States after leaving Saint-Dominique.<sup>72</sup> After moving to Paris in July 1832, Nau entered the Conservatoire, studied with Laure Cinti-Damoreau, and debuted at the Opéra in 1836. Sophie Méquillet (b. 1822) was from a noble Bavarian family that experienced the cold wind of adversity; she put her excellent musical education to work and began singing in Parisian salons and concerts, and teaching voice lessons. Her modest career took off once the famous tenor Rubini gave the singer some lessons and sent her to Italy to complete her education; once in Naples Adolphe Nourrit, only weeks before his tragic suicide in 1839, convinced her to begin a professional career in the theatre.<sup>73</sup>

Biographers similarly proffered excuses for male singers who came from privileged families, but in a remarkably different tone. The father of Théâtre Italien bass Louis Lablache (1794-1858) was a *négociant* in Marseille, but he lost his fortune during the revolution in Naples in 1799 after moving his business there and dies soon after.<sup>74</sup> Joseph Napoléon accorded the family his protection and Louis entered the Conservatoire in Naples to begin his music education at the age of twelve. Subtle differences emerge here: Lablache's entry into the theatrical milieu was not out of desperation to save his family from destitution, and his family's reputation was already protected through the patronage of Joseph Napoléon. Paul Barroilhet (1810-1871) came from a family employed in commerce in Bayonne. His father wanted Barroilhet to become a *négociant*, but he bravely defied his family's urgings to follow his heart and his talents: "He was born a musician: nothing could turn him away from his vocation."<sup>75</sup> Headstrong, determined, courageous, forging his own path,

<sup>70</sup>"Mlle Grassari," in Laugier, *Galerie biographique des artistes dramatiques des théâtres royaux*, 19-22.

<sup>71</sup>"Nouveaux engagements à l'Opéra," *La France musicale*, 24 August 1845.

<sup>72</sup>Doinet, "Artistes dramatiques. Dolorès Nau. II."

<sup>73</sup>Ben, "Biographie des artistes. Mademoiselle Méquillet." For an excellent summary of her travels and early successes in Italy, see Z.Z., "Des cantatrices françaises en Italie. Sophie Méquillet."

<sup>74</sup>Castil-Blaze, "Lablache," *Revue de Paris*, June 1832, 177-192.

<sup>75</sup>"Il était né musicien; aucune influence n'aurait pu le détourner de sa vocation. Il avait un goût bien arrêté pour le chant, et son esprit ne pouvait se façonner à la vie uniforme du comptoir." Escudier,

choosing his own destiny—such qualities transform Barroilhet into a hero, not an embarrassment to his family. Mario similarly showed much rebellion by defying his aristocratic family to pursue a theatrical career. Born Giovanni Matteo, Cavalière de Candia (1810-1883), Mario de Candia debuted at the Opéra in 1838 and later sang at the Théâtre Italien. His family was apparently livid once they found out about his performing career and forbade him from using the family's name; thus he became known simply as Mario. His family's drama certainly did not harm his career. In fact, the press spent as much time discussing his noble birth and the struggles with his family as they did his talent.<sup>76</sup>

Although female singers were not often characterized as rebels, exceptions certainly exist. One family, who apparently did not experience a financial setback, was reputedly quite taken aback when their daughter decided to pursue a career in opera. Born to "honest" parents who worked in commerce, Marie-Julie Boulanger (1786-1850, née Halligner) was originally destined to continue in their line of work.<sup>77</sup> A vivacious spirit with a penchant for the dramatic arts, Boulanger did not intend on staying behind a counter. Her first attempts to convince her parents to send her to the Paris Conservatoire were met with little enthusiasm. She required the intervention of a friend on her behalf before her family allowed her to pursue her career. (Such careful documentation of their hesitancy in the biographical account was perhaps another tactic for protecting the family's reputation.) Accepted at the Conservatoire with a prestigious scholarship, Boulanger won prizes in singing and in *comédie lyrique* and debuted at the Opéra Comique in 1811, where she remained until her retirement in 1846.

### 1.5 TRAINING A SINGER: PRIVATE TUITION

In Henri Blanchard's "L'actrice et l'étudiant," published in 1844 in *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, Palmire de Sabran decides to launch an operatic career. She had started in the ballet corps and the chorus at the Opéra, and then became an actress and vaudeville singer in the boulevard theatres. But Palmire wants to become rich and believes that as *première chanteuse*, her fortune would be made. Explaining her plan to Jules, the young student who becomes infatuated with the actress, she claims

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"Études biographiques sur les chanteurs contemporains. 2e série. Paul Barroilhet," *La France musicale*, 7 March 1841.

<sup>76</sup>See, for example, Paul Payne, "Mario de Candia," *Le Monde dramatique*, 3 February 1839.

<sup>77</sup>"Mme Boulanger, rôle de la servante, dans *Emma*," in *Galerie théâtrale ou Collection des portraits en pied des principaux acteurs des premiers théâtres de la capitale*.



that six months should suffice for a transformation from vaudeville singer to prima donna:

I am an adequate musician, and I play the piano fairly well; however, by working seriously for six months, I could reach one of our great operatic stages. Oh my friend, if you only knew what a beautiful thing is the art of singing! What delicious emotions it gives, and what pleasure we feel to spread these feelings to an enthusiastic audience! Oh my! I feel in me the anticipation of success.... Yes, I will succeed; and when I become a singer of the first order, able to demand sixty or eighty thousand francs in annual salary, then we can dream of uniting. What charm in this existence filled with private happiness and public approval!<sup>78</sup>

Palmire's chameleon-like character (and her fatal influence on Jules, her innocent admirer and lover) holds a central place in the story, and readers probably snickered at her naïveté and ignorance of vocal training. All the same, given the number of fictional accounts depicting poor street singers becoming prima donnas with nary a few vocal lessons with some famous pedagogue, Palmire was likely far from the only person who thought such a transformation could occur almost overnight.

Singers at the Opéra Comique and the Opéra either pursued their training at a public institution such as the Paris Conservatoire or took private lessons and honed their skills by singing on concert stages and in provincial and foreign theatres. Musical education took much longer than six months—most singers trained for most of their adolescent years—and it did not come cheaply, particularly private tuition. In a letter to Opéra director Duponchel, Hortenzy de Paun explained that her parents, originally from Brussels, brought her to Paris and left her under the supervision of Monsieur and Madame Varin so that she could pursue her dream of a stage career.<sup>79</sup> She found that lessons from reputable singing teachers in Paris were expensive and her financial resources were almost gone. In a letter that included the recommendations of her two singing teachers, Bordogni and Ponchard, she asked Duponchel if

<sup>78</sup> “[J]e suis suffisamment musicienne, et je joue pas trop mal du piano; or, en travaillant sérieusement pendant six mois, je puis aborder une de nos grandes scènes lyriques. O mon ami, si vous saviez combien l’art du chant est une belle chose! Quelles délicieuses émotions il vous donne, et quel plaisir on éprouve à les répandre sur un auditoire enthousiasmé! Eh bien! je sens en moi comme une prévision de succès.... Oui, je réussirai; et quand je serai une cantatrice de premier ordre, pouvant exiger soixante ou quatre-vingt mille francs d’appointements par an, alors nous songerons à nous unir. Quel charme dans cette existence mêlée de bonheur intime et de suffrages universels!” Henri Blanchard, “L’actrice et l’étudiant,” *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 4 February 1844.

<sup>79</sup> Undated letter in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 193 (dossier de Paun [Depau, Depaw]).

he would consider hiring her immediately. Her bold request must have worked: she signed a four-year contract 30 January 1838.<sup>80</sup> A cash advance of 1,000 francs on 15 February 1838 confirmed the singer was in great financial difficulty.<sup>81</sup>

There were well over one hundred private music instructors in Paris in 1830-1831 according to the listings compiled by Adélaïde de Place; of those, about thirty-five specialized as singing teachers (*professeur de chant* or *professeur de musique vocale*).<sup>82</sup> “Private” lessons were actually taught to a group of singers and never to men and women together. Rates for two lessons a week (each lesson running two to three hours in length) were 20 to 25 francs a month. J. Catrufo, for example, taught singing and vocalization for women on Mondays and Thursdays from nine until twelve o’clock, with two students per hour, and charged 20 francs a month.<sup>83</sup> One might imagine that lessons with the best teachers in Paris cost considerably more, especially if a student wanted individual attention or intensive training. Conservatoire instructor Bordogni charged 45 francs a month for vocal lessons, about twice that of other singing instructors, although this still seems to be the price for private group lessons.<sup>84</sup> Frédéric Chopin’s private piano lessons in Paris, for example, were quite expensive. He charged 20 francs—30 francs if he taught in the student’s home—*per lesson* that ran from forty-five minutes to an hour (and sometimes even longer for the more gifted students), and could be given one to three times a week. His fees reflected his particular situation: his clientele were mainly drawn from the upper classes and teaching was his main source of income. It seems he made some concessions for those with talent but without the financial resources, as some of his students maintained that he taught them practically free of charge.<sup>85</sup>

For those like Hortenzy de Paun who did not have family in Paris, they would have to pay their room and board during their training or find a patron willing to underwrite the cost. Marie-Louise Flécheux (1813-1842) lived a stone’s throw from the Opéra on rue Le Peletier with her mother and sister and, by sheer luck, was discovered by a “bienfaiteur.” This protector asked one of his friends, M. Castelli, to provide the girl voice lessons. Although she had been living with her family in Paris, it seemed that the young singer needed a different domicile from which she could pursue her studies more freely. Marie Flécheux moved in to the home of the comtesse de

<sup>80</sup>Contract signed 30 January 1838 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 193 (dossier de Paun [Depau, Depaw]).

<sup>81</sup>Notice of salary advance taking place 15 February 1838 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 193 (dossier de Paun [Depau, Depaw]).

<sup>82</sup>Place, “L’enseignement privé.”

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>85</sup>Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by His Students*, 6-7.

B\*\*\* in September 1831 and continued her lessons with Castelli, all the while singing in magnificent soirées. After five months, she changed patrons and moved in with the widow Madame de la Cressonnière and soon after began her studies at the Paris Conservatoire.<sup>86</sup>

Some of these private instructors did not necessarily have proper credentials to teach voice lessons. Singer and vocal pedagogue Stéphen de la Madeleine warned potential voice students that many instructors offering lessons were originally from a privileged class but had experienced a reversal in fortune; drawing on their previous musical education, they believed they could make a living by teaching.<sup>87</sup> Besides the charlatans, there were also a plethora of different teaching methods that overwhelmed the potential student. Turning once again to the descriptions of vocal training in singer-fiction, we can survey the progress of Jules, the young student from Blanchard's "L'actrice et l'étudiant" who decides to follow Palmire on her musical path and transform himself from a bass into a tenor, the vocal-type *à la mode* after Gilbert-Louis Duprez's sensational debuts in 1837 at the Opéra. Jules describes in colourful detail the different penchants of his various teachers: "One gave me a complete course in physiology, another one a treatise in aesthetics; this one spoke of anatomy [...]. I learned from all these men how to open my mouth excessively wide, to show my teeth, to say with twenty different inflections of tenderness, *I love you!*"<sup>88</sup> There was a veritable explosion of vocal method books in France during this period and by 1861, Oscar Comettant declared: "There exist sixty-six different methods of singing published in France! It is assuredly too many."<sup>89</sup>

Those desiring a stage career required not only voice lessons but also training in opera or *déclamation lyrique* and the dramatic arts (*l'art dramatique*). Such training was not easy to find outside institutions such as the Conservatoire and was often

<sup>86</sup>"Mlle Flécheux," *La Romance, journal de musique*, 13 June 1835.

<sup>87</sup>Stéphen de la Madeleine, "De l'enseignement public et particulier du chant. Introduction," *La France musicale*, 7 June 1840. Born Étienne-Jean-Baptiste-Nicholas Madeleine (1801-1868), the pedagogue wrote a number of important vocal treatises, including *Physiologie du chant* (Paris: Desloges, 1840) and a series entitled, *Études pratiques de style vocal* (Paris: Albanel, 1868), where he annotated several famous operatic airs, notating phrasing, dynamics, timbre, in an attempt to give students in written form what they could normally only learn orally through lessons with a teacher. See Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens, et bibliographie générale de la musique. Supplément et complément*, 2:68-69.

<sup>88</sup>"L'un me faisait un cours complet de physiologie; l'autre un traité d'esthétique; celui-là me parlait d'anatomie [...] J'appris de tous ces gens-là à ouvrir démesurément la bouche, à montrer les dents, à dire avec vingt inflexions différentes de tendresse: Je vous aime!" Henri Blanchard, "L'actrice et l'étudiant," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 4 February 1844.

<sup>89</sup>Oscar Comettant, *L'Art musical*, 3 January 1861, quoted in Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 92.

simply gained through experience singing on the stage. However, *La Mélomanie* announced in 1843 the creation of private opera classes by two instructors, M. Moronvalle and M. Morin, the latter a Conservatoire instructor in *déclamation lyrique* (*opéra-comique* section).<sup>90</sup> These classes would familiarize students with the repertoire, give them stage experience, and teach them acting skills. Students would perform operas and *opéras-comiques* with chorus and orchestra, with weekly performances at a local theatre. Each night, Moronvalle would help the singers prepare their roles, and rehearse the chorus and orchestra. Three times a week, Morin would give lessons in *déclamation lyrique* and *mise en scène*. The cost of participating in such a programme was reasonable, given the intensity of the training involved: students were charged 25 francs a month. Such offerings speak of a growing market aimed at attracting aspiring singers from the middle classes, perhaps in recognition of the number of singers coming from this sector of society.

Private vocal instructors provided not only lessons but also their influence in professional circles. Unless the singer had already made a name for herself by performing in public or private concerts—and even that usually required the support from an influential insider—teachers could smooth the path to get the singer hired at a theatre and at the best conditions. Claire Célestine Nathan-Treilhet (1815-1873, née Nathan) benefited from the influence of her teacher, Duprez. Born to an Italian mother in Marseille, Nathan-Treilhet studied privately with M. Arnaud before coming to Paris to study with Duprez.<sup>91</sup> Although it appears she had little to no experience singing on the stage, she was hired at the Opéra 15 December 1838 on a five-year contract and salary beginning at 10,000 francs a year—exceptionally high for such a debutante. In the press coverage on her recent hire, Escudier disputed the favouritism seemingly granted to her by the Opéra administration and claimed that the money meant to pay her salary should be used to pay other well-deserving artists.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>90</sup>“Cours de déclamation lyrique,” *La Mélomanie*, 14 May 1843. Laurent-Joseph Morin (b. 1805) began teaching *déclamation lyrique* classes in 1835 (*opéra-comique*) and also gave classes in *lecture à haute voix*; he was an instructor at the Conservatoire until his retirement in 1865. His treatise on pronunciation was published in 1852: Morin, *Traité de prononciation indiquant les moyens d’obtenir une bonne émission de voix, de corriger les accents vicieux, et tous les défauts de prononciation. Seule méthode employée au Conservatoire*.

<sup>91</sup>Arnould Frémy, “Artistes modernes. Mme Nathan-Treilhlet. II,” *La Sylphide*, vol. 1 (1839), 20-23.

<sup>92</sup>*La France musicale*, 17 January 1839.

## 1.6 VOCAL STUDY AT THE PARIS CONSERVATOIRE

The majority of singers at the Opéra and the Opéra Comique during this period completed at least part of their training at the Paris Conservatoire. The Conservatoire was founded on 3 August 1795, absorbing the professors and teaching missions of two very different establishments, the Institut national de musique (founded by Bernard Sarrette) and the École royale de chant et de déclamation (originally under the direction of composer François-Joseph Gossec).<sup>93</sup> Bernard Sarrette served as director for the new establishment from October 1795 until 1814 when the Bourbons who came back into power deposed him.<sup>94</sup> The institution's initial goal was to furnish singers for French state theatres, instrumentalists for the various orchestras, and musicians for the army, although the Conservatoire was often criticized for being unable to recruit and train the singers and musicians necessary (particularly those from the provinces).<sup>95</sup> Luigi Cherubini served as director of the Conservatoire from 1822 to 1842 and played an instrumental role in addressing the problems with vocal pedagogy.<sup>96</sup> Daniel-François-Esprit Auber succeeded him from 1842 until 1871.

To study at the Conservatoire, one had to pass an audition and be admitted by the members of the administrative council. Having the right connections helped one's chances of being accepted. In the Conservatoire's record books, recommendations for the students were carefully noted, and were usually made by Conservatoire instructors, professional musicians, and composers.<sup>97</sup> Having a pretty face and figure—for men and women—was another essential quality. In her study on Cherubini's directorship, Anik Devriès-Lesure points out his significant attention to the candidate's physique.<sup>98</sup> This principle was reflected in the Conservatoire's regulations. For example, those older than twenty-one were not accepted at the *pensionnat*

<sup>93</sup>Hondré, "Le Conservatoire de Paris en quête de sa mission nationale (1795-1848)," 83.

<sup>94</sup>ibid., 84. On the founding of the École royale de chant, see Noiray, "L'École royale de chant, 1784-1795: crise musicale, crise institutionnelle."

<sup>95</sup>At the turn of the nineteenth century, directors in Paris and the provinces found themselves in a crisis situation by the lack of trained lyric singers. The Conservatoire began scouring the provinces for suitable voices, but the project failed due to a lack of examiners in the province and no forethought as to where to lodge the provincial singers once they were brought to the capital. This last problem was partially rectified by the creation of the *pensionnat* in 1806, although the scholarship program was still not finalized. Hondré claims that this event, along with another failed recruitment drive in 1816, demonstrated the weakness of establishing the Paris Conservatoire as the national center of musical education without any supporting schools in the provinces. Hondré, "Le Conservatoire de Paris en quête de sa mission nationale (1795-1848)," 91-92.

<sup>96</sup>On Cherubini's directorship, see Devriès-Lesure, "Cherubini directeur du Conservatoire de musique et de déclamation."

<sup>97</sup>See *F-Pan* AJ<sup>37</sup> 151-153.

<sup>98</sup>Devriès-Lesure, "Cherubini directeur du Conservatoire de musique et de déclamation," 82.

unless they had “a very beautiful voice, an attractive physique,” and showed great promise.<sup>99</sup>

Once accepted, students had to follow their studies until the administrative council deemed them complete. Education was free, other than the cost of books and instruments necessary for practice at home.<sup>100</sup> Each class typically ran for two hours at a time between 8:30am and 3:30pm and was offered two to three times a week. Vocal students followed a program divided into different levels, beginning their studies with solfège classes, then progressing to vocalisation classes (wordless singing), and finally opera scenes. By 1835, vocalisation classes were discontinued and merged with singing classes (*chant*) as the administration realized the inefficiency of dividing the instruction of wordless and texted song.<sup>101</sup> Opera classes, called *déclamation lyrique*, in which instructors drawn from the state theatres taught grand opera (*tragédie lyrique* or *opéra*) and *opéra-comique*, were open only to the most talented singers, such as those having won a prize at the Conservatoire’s annual competition.<sup>102</sup> Other classes opened during the period include *morceaux d’ensemble* (ensemble study), *étude des rôles* (role study), *maintien théâtrale* (a movement class), and *lecture à haute voix* (spoken declamation, intended to correct the pronunciation of those students coming from the provinces with undesirable accents).<sup>103</sup> Male students also took fencing classes.

Students under ten years of age or unable to read and write were not admitted, and those older than twenty-two were accepted only if they were very talented and could finish their studies in two years.<sup>104</sup> Class sizes became smaller as the degree of specialization increased: solfège classes were limited to twelve students, singing

<sup>99</sup> “[...] à moins qu’ils ne soient doués d’une très belle voix, d’un physique avantageux, et qu’ils n’annoncent pour le chant des dispositions qui fassent concevoir de grandes espérances.” “Arrêté portant règlement pour les pensionnats d’hommes et de femmes, 20 juillet 1825,” in Pierre, *Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation, documents historiques et administratifs recueillis ou reconstitués*, 297-298. Those hired by the Conservatoire to scour the provinces to find suitable singers in 1817 were given a table to fill out that listed the candidate’s qualities; “Ensemble du physique” came before “nature de la voix” and all other information about the voice. See “École royale de musique et de déclamation,” in *ibid.*, 284.

<sup>100</sup> “Règlement de l’école royale de chant et de déclamation, 5 juin 1822,” in *ibid.*, 245.

<sup>101</sup> Devriès-Lesure, “Cherubini directeur du Conservatoire de musique et de déclamation,” 80.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> The *maintien théâtral* class was offered to all the pensionnaires, as well as students in lyric and spoken declamation; *étude des rôles* was offered to lyric declamation students; *lecture à haute voix* for those lyric declamation students needing to correct their pronunciation. *F-Pan AJ*<sup>37</sup> 153, Année 1845.

<sup>104</sup> “Règlement du Conservatoire royal de musique et de déclamation, 9 novembre 1841,” in Pierre, *Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation, documents historiques et administratifs recueillis ou reconstitués*, 252.



classes to six. Conservatoire instructors typically taught four classes of two hours each week, three of which were devoted to all their students and the fourth reserved for those showing the most promise or preparing their debuts.<sup>105</sup> Lessons were taught in a group setting and students suffered from the lack of individual attention. Music critic Escudier remarked that, in a class of eight to twelve vocal students, each student received at most only fifteen minutes every two days (or twenty-five hours total during the forty-week academic year).<sup>106</sup> The Opéra's vocal personnel (*chefs de chant*) and the *directeur de la scène* monitored the students' progress each month; the administration had the right to ask a student to debut immediately if the need arose for a singer.<sup>107</sup> Juries took place three times a year (December, March, and June) for voice students and the results determined the students' placement in classes such as lyric declamation, and granted them permission to compete for prizes in the Conservatoire's annual competition.

During the July Monarchy the Conservatoire offered a *pensionnat* for ten to twelve male vocal students only, with their lodging, clothing, and food provided by the state; the *pensionnat* for women had been opened in 1822 but was closed by Cherubini only five years later. Upon completing their education, these students effectively re-paid the state by agreeing to debut and sing at one of the royal theatres.<sup>108</sup> Two-thirds of the *pensionnaires* were trained to sing at the Opéra, the rest for other theatres.<sup>109</sup> A place in the *pensionnat* was lucrative, as it provided the student a complete musical and literary education. The *pensionnaires* took classes in solfège, vocalisation, singing, piano, piano accompaniment, spoken and lyric declamation. Additionally, they studied French and Italian grammar, the rules of versification and prosody in the two languages, history, geography, and dance.<sup>110</sup> By all appearances, women studied the same subjects when the female *pensionnat* was open in the 1820s, although the classes for their additional subjects (non-music) were segregated, like their musical studies.<sup>111</sup> Once the school judged the student capable of singing opera, the

<sup>105</sup> "Arrêté du 25 janvier 1818," in *ibid.*, 268.

<sup>106</sup> Escudier, *La France musicale*, 13 August 1843.

<sup>107</sup> "Création de classes des études de l'opéra, 27 octobre 1818," in Pierre, *Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation, documents historiques et administratif recueillis ou reconstitués*, 291.

<sup>108</sup> A decree passed in 1828 determined that all *pensionnaires* had to perform at one of the royal theatres for three years; by 1855, this condition was extended to all Conservatoire students. "Arrêté, 11 septembre 1828; Arrêté, 6 octobre 1855," in *ibid.*, 286-287.

<sup>109</sup> "Arrêté portant règlement pour les pensionnats d'hommes et de femmes, 20 juillet 1825," in *ibid.*, 297-298.

<sup>110</sup> "Règlement du 12 février 1807," in *ibid.*, 292-294.

<sup>111</sup> Article 15, "Il y aura pour les études additionnelles des élèves hommes et des élèves femmes deux classes tout à fait séparées." "Règlement du 12 février 1807," in *ibid.*, 293.

teachers assigned her an *emploi* (role type) that she was to study until her debuts. Opera students performed a number of diverse roles within their *emploi*, accompanied by orchestra, and judged by the instructors and inspectors who eventually decided their readiness to debut. Once a *pensionnaire* debuted, he or she remained for an additional year in the *pensionnat*.

In the 1831 “Lettre de la Commission de surveillance auprès de l’Opéra-Comique et du Conservatoire de musique,” the authors criticized the Conservatoire’s prudery, taking the institution to task for its separation of the sexes to the detriment of the students’ education.<sup>112</sup> According to the authors, the Conservatoire’s moral reform could be traced to the first years of the Restoration. With the exception of ensemble classes, classes were segregated according to sex; male and female students had separate entrances into the building and had to be accompanied by a person of the same sex to the school. Conservatoire regulations forbade casual communication between the sexes.<sup>113</sup> The *pensionnat* for women established in the 1820s was not situated on the Conservatoire grounds and had half the number of available spots as the male *pensionnat*.<sup>114</sup> Although the women taking vocal studies received an education virtually equal to that of their male colleagues—a remarkable opportunity in the early nineteenth century—their conduct was carefully controlled. A decree passed in 1823 for the female *pensionnaires* forbade them from speaking to any male student and from singing in the hallways, and required them to dress and act modestly.<sup>115</sup> A female supervisor accompanied and supervised the women *pensionnaires* at all times. Their reading material was monitored and they were forbidden from reading in their beds at night; in addition, the supervisor read any letter written or received at the *pensionnat*. Another document in 1825 underlined the importance of constant supervision, and specified their dress during their attendance of public concerts or theatre: white dresses, a ribbon for a belt, simple *coiffure*, no obvious jewels.<sup>116</sup> The female *pensionnat* was never able to fill all of the six spots available and was closed early to cut costs, although the authors of the 1831 letter claim the closure was motivated by fears of possible immoral conduct.

<sup>112</sup>“Lettre de la Commission de surveillance auprès de l’Opéra-Comique et du Conservatoire de musique,” in Lesure, *La Musique à Paris en 1830-1831*, 223-226.

<sup>113</sup>“Règlement de l’école royale de chant et de déclamation, 5 juin 1822,” in Pierre, *Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation, documents historiques et administratifs recueillis ou reconstitués*, 245.

<sup>114</sup>“Arrêté portant règlement pour les pensionnats d’hommes et de femmes, 20 juillet 1825,” in *ibid.*, 297-298.

<sup>115</sup>“Règlement du 14 août 1823,” in *ibid.*, 305-306.

<sup>116</sup>“Règlement des devoirs particuliers des demoiselles du Pensionnat,” 1 April 1825 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>37</sup> 359.



Throughout the period, mothers normally accompanied their daughters to their classes, although they were only allowed to enter if the class was open to men and women.<sup>117</sup> This was one means of protecting the reputations of their daughters who were by and large destined to sing on the public stage. Lenard Berlanstein has claimed that the obvious and regulated supervision of Conservatoire students was an effort to rehabilitate the public image of theatre performers, claiming that the public perceived female Conservatory students as inherently immoral: “According to Edmond de Goncourt, they drew suspicious looks on the street even when they wore simple black dresses. To him, they appeared to be more advanced in their training as courtesans than as artists.”<sup>118</sup>

### 1.7 PEDAGOGICAL REFORMS AT THE CONSERVATOIRE

With the Conservatoire’s inception in 1795, Sarrette sought to instigate vocal pedagogy that could be used to train singers destined for the lyric theatres.<sup>119</sup> The Conservatoire’s vocal method, *La méthode de chant du Conservatoire*, produced in 1804, was a step in this direction; it unifies Italian vocal principles with those of French declamation and pronunciation.<sup>120</sup> Other than a few French recitatives, the vocalises (called *sofèges*) and arias are almost all written by Italian composers, and the arias in Italian; the emphasis on vocalise (also evidenced in the institution’s offering separate vocalisation classes) was likely proposed as a corrective to French vocal style. One has a hard time imagining a student producing the infamous *urlo francese* after following its precepts.<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless, it was never adopted as the unique method at the school, and by 1822 there were over ten different method books used in vocalisation and singing classes.<sup>122</sup> Not only did the methods change with each level, but

<sup>117</sup> *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 24 July 1836.

<sup>118</sup> Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the fin de siècle*, 133-134.

<sup>119</sup> Hondré, “Le Conservatoire de Paris en quête de sa mission nationale (1795-1848),” 84-86.

<sup>120</sup> Mengozzi, *Méthode de chant du Conservatoire de musique*.

<sup>121</sup> See Nirouet, “La méthode de chant du Conservatoire de musique de l’an XII(1804).” Patrick Barbier describes the French bark as an aesthetic of French opera that resembled more sung theatre than Italian melody, requiring “singers to force their voices, exaggerating diction and articulation at the cost of vocal beauty and refinement.” Barbier, *Opera in Paris, 1800-1850: A Lively History*, 137.

<sup>122</sup> For vocalisation and singing classes, the Conservatoire de Paris used: *La Méthode de chant du Conservatoire*, *les Exercices de Crescentini*, *les Solfèges d’Aprile*, *les Solfèges de la Barbiera*, *les Cantates de Scarlatti*, *les Cantates de Porpora*, *les Duos de Durante*, *les Duos et Trios de Clari*, *les Duos de Steffani*, and *les Psaumes de Marcello*. “Règlement de l’école royale de chant et de déclamation, 5 juin 1822,” in Pierre, *Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation, documents historiques et administratifs recueillis ou reconstitués*, 249. For more information on the Conservatoire’s method books, see Hondré, “Les méthodes officielles du Conservatoire.”

also with each instructor. An article in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in 1809 deplored that each professor sang (or shouted) in a different manner, and the student never knew which to follow.<sup>123</sup> And although most of the method books were either Italian or followed Italian vocal principles, some instructors still taught according to the French school. In a letter to the editor of the *Revue musicale de Paris* in 1831, Paul Richard painted a rather dismal—although perhaps exaggerated—picture of the Conservatoire's vocal training:

A student is admitted; if he is not yet a musician, he is sent first for polishing in a solfège class, and then continues on to what we call a vocalisation class. There between his hands we place the vocalises of Crescentini or some other master that he will work on under the direction of his instructor; to say it in a word, he will sing untexted music. After spending about a year at this drudgery, he enters the singing class. There it is not vocalises or textless arias that he must study, but rather singing itself. If you are a tenor, you will spend six to eight months learning an aria by Grétry (*Du moment qu'on aime on devient si doux* [*Zémire et Azor*]); if you have a low voice, it will be the aria *Du malheur, auguste victime* [Sacchini, *Œdipe à Colonne*] that would be chosen. Do you wish to obtain the approval of the masters and win prizes? Then be an imitator, copy what you hear, do not make a single inflection that your master does not make, and after four years of dwelling on your three debut roles, you will pass three times completely unnoticed at Feydeau [Opéra Comique] or at the Opéra; but the fourth time, your role will not have been spelled out by your teacher, you are no longer an imitator, and this time the public will hiss at you.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>123</sup> *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 23 August 1809, cited in Mongredien, "Les premiers exercices publics d'élèves (1800-1815)," 29.

<sup>124</sup> "Un élève est admis: s'il n'est pas assez musicien, on l'envoie d'abord se dégrossir dans une classe de solfège, puis il passe dans ce qu'on appelle une classe de vocalisation. Là on lui met entre les mains les vocalises de Crescentini ou de tout autre maître qu'il travaille sous la direction de son professeur; pour tout dire en un mot, on le fait chanter sans paroles. Après avoir passé environ un an à cette besogne, il entre dans la classe de chant. Là ce ne sont plus des vocalises, des airs sans paroles qu'on fait étudier, c'est du chant pour tout de bon. Si vous êtes ténor, on vous fera apprendre pendant six ou huit mois l'air de Grétry: *Du moment qu'on aime on devient si doux*; si votre voix est grave, c'est l'air *Du malheur, auguste victime*, que l'on choisira. Voulez-vous obtenir l'approbation des maîtres et remporter des prix? faites-vous imitateur, copiez ce que vous entendez, ne faites pas une inflexion que votre maître ne fasse; et après avoir ainsi ressassé pendant quatre ans vos trois rôles de début, vous passerez trois fois inaperçu à Feydeau ou à l'Opéra; mais à la quatrième, votre rôle ne vous a pas été épilé par le maître, vous n'êtes plus même un imitateur, et cette fois le public vous sifflera." P.R. [Paul Richard], *Revue musicale*, 30 April 1831.

In the “Rapport sur les réformes à introduire dans l’enseignement,” written on 27 December 1827, the authors outlined the mounting grievances against the Conservatoire’s out-of-fashion vocal training that produced singers ill-equipped to please the public’s changing taste, and discussed the new reforms.<sup>125</sup> After the death of the celebrated singer and Conservatoire instructor Pierre Garat (1762-1823), considered the best interpreter of French vocal style harmonized with Italian technique, the Conservatoire turned toward the Italian instructors in hopes that their methods would improve vocal pedagogy. On the advice of Rossini, the inspector of singing from 1826, La Rochefoucauld decided to hire three Italian voice teachers, Davidde Banderali, Giulio Bordogni and Felice Pellegrini, and retired three instructors who taught according to the French method, Charles-Henri Plantade, Felice Blangini, and Henri-Philippe Gérard. The lyric declamation class was split into two, one class for *tragédie lyrique* and the other for *opéra-comique*. The former instructor, Baptiste, was re-assigned, and the two new classes taught by Adolphe Nourrit and Michelot, respectively.<sup>126</sup> Reforms also addressed a weakness introduced in 1821 in the Conservatoire’s training program where students changed instructor (and vocal method) as they progressed to each new level of singing.<sup>127</sup> Instructors held the right to direct the studies of one male and one female student from beginning to end, assuring a continuity of method and style.

The Conservatoire’s reforms created much debate among pedagogues and music critics, captured in a series of articles and letters in Fétis’ *Revue musicale* in 1831. Fétis noted the great haste that accompanied vocal training and advocated a return to traditional vocal education, one that reflected the pedagogy of the eighteenth-century Italian school. Ideally, vocal training would take five to six years, beginning with the basics (*la mise de voix*), vocalisation, breathing, and then articulation; after such study, the students would be capable of improvising ornamentation, employing expressive devices, and choosing the correct style.<sup>128</sup> Berlioz echoed Fétis’ concern nearly fifteen years later, noting that as singers’ musical education began much later than that of instrumentalists, the process was sped up and essential skills were not

<sup>125</sup>“Rapport sur les réformes à introduire dans l’enseignement, 27 décembre 1827,” in Pierre, *Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation, documents historiques et administratifs recueillis ou reconstitués*, 350-352.

<sup>126</sup>Fétis claimed that the greatest vocal faults were taught at the lyric declamation level. Successively taught by Lainez, Adrien, and Baptiste aîné, the instructors used methods suited to the old repertory that supposedly often led to vocal decline before singers had the chance to sing their first debut. Fétis, “Considérations sur les réformes nouvelles opérées dans l’École Royale de Musique,” *Revue musicale*, vol. 2, no. 48 (January 1828).

<sup>127</sup>Garaudé, “Correspondance,” *Revue musicale*, 14 May 1831.

<sup>128</sup>Fétis, “Sur l’enseignement du chant,” *Revue musicale*, 23 March 1834.

acquired.<sup>129</sup> Others noted that singers were hired much too early and, at their debuts and early in their careers, unable to meet the public's expectation. Exacerbating the problem was the institution's insistence on early specialization, where students learned only a narrow set of roles within their *emploi* rather than acquiring the skills to conquer a wide repertory.<sup>130</sup>

Paul Richard, who participated in this debate, described the ideal vocal school: independent, run by a single professor who could teach the great Italian vocal tradition and assisted by a number of teachers who taught according to the same method, and with a *pensionnat* that included an equal number of paying and non-paying students (the latter of whom would repay their education by giving the school a percentage of their future earnings).<sup>131</sup> His description almost perfectly matched Alexandre Choron's school, the Institution royale de musique classique, the only other institution that trained singers during the 1820s.<sup>132</sup> Originally founded in April 1817 and intended as a feeder school to the Paris Conservatoire, Choron's school was much smaller than the Conservatoire and given a separate task: to train singers for the Chapelle royale and chorus members for the national theatres.<sup>133</sup> La Rochefoucauld decided to establish the school as a separate institution in 1825, equal to the Conservatoire. He renamed Choron's school the Institution royale de musique religieuse and implemented its mission to train church musicians; thus, the Conservatoire and Choron's school became two separate training grounds for secular and sacred music, respectively.<sup>134</sup> The school unfortunately did not survive long into the July Monarchy. Louis Philippe's government closed the Chapelle royale at the Tuileries palace, cut the budget to the Conservatoire, and completely withdrew funding for Choron's school. Lacking funding and students, the school closed in July 1834 shortly after Choron's death.

The place of Choron's school vis-à-vis the Conservatoire was debated in the early 1830s as the government tried to decide whether to close the school; significantly, the debates sharpened the focus on problems at the Conservatoire and how that institu-

<sup>129</sup>[Berlioz], "Un reproche adressé au Conservatoire," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 20 August 1848.

<sup>130</sup>P.R. [Paul Richard], "Correspondance. 8e lettre," *Revue musicale*, 27 August 1831.

<sup>131</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup>For an excellent discussion of Choron's school and contemporary debates over vocal pedagogy, see Ellis, "Vocal Training at the Paris Conservatoire and the Choir Schools of Alexandre-Étienne Choron: Debates, Rivalries, and Consequences." She points out that the success of Choron's school shook the Conservatoire's reputation and probably motivated the latter's reforms during the late 1820s.

<sup>133</sup>*Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>134</sup>*ibid.*, 135. La Rochefoucauld's distinction between sacred and secular was formally erased in 1831, as Choron's school was renamed "classique," replacing "religieuse."

tion might learn from Choron's example.<sup>135</sup> Choron approached musical education in a more holistic manner than the Conservatoire. Rather than organizing classes successively, Choron had them scheduled throughout a daily program of study.<sup>136</sup> His pedagogical materials were unabashedly Italian and he based his repertoire on pre-1800 Italian sacred and secular works. Although Choron also taught according to method books, the difference lay in the fact that he authored them all.<sup>137</sup> The school's smaller size lent itself to Choron's approach: in 1830, there were sixteen men, six women and four children in semi-pension in the school's *pensionnat*, in addition to sixty to eighty external students drawn from the poorer neighborhoods in Paris.<sup>138</sup> (The Conservatoire counted almost 300 students the same year.) A few of the period's best-known singers were trained at Choron's school: tenor Pierre Wartel (although he began and finished his studies at the Conservatoire), Rosine Stoltz, Marie Élisabeth Massy (1814-1875, née Gicomasci), and Gilbert-Louis Duprez.

Although critics complained of the Conservatoire's shortcomings well into the 1840s, they did acknowledge some improvement in the vocal department. The new director, Auber, added three new singing classes and expanded the number of entry examinations from once a year to four times a year, thus increasing the number of vocal students.<sup>139</sup> By the early 1840s critics remarked the large number of qualified students competing for prizes at the annual *concours*. For critics at *La France musicale*, the main problem now was the lack of music education institutions outside of Paris. Escudier claimed that most tenor voices were born in the Midi, yet few had the

<sup>135</sup>A commission led by the Duc de Choiseul, Royer-Collard, Armand Bertin, Edmon Blanc and Cavé wrote a report in 1831 advising the government to associate it with the Conservatoire. Most of the report dwells on problems at the Conservatoire—namely, the institution's inability to train capable singers and musicians for the state theatres—and suggests possible reforms. Reforms include the organization of a search to find good voices, the establishment of a women's *pensionnat*, the elimination of vocalisation classes, the revival of the *exercices publics* and the utilization of Conservatoire talents for official ceremonies and concerts. According to the chef de la troisième division's report to the Minister 18 November 1831, they refused to eliminate vocalisation classes (although this eventually occurred) and establish a women's *pensionnat*, and the proposition of introducing Choron's school as a branch of the Conservatoire was summarily rejected; the other reforms appear to have been accepted. See Lesure, *La Musique à Paris en 1830-1831*, 223-226.

<sup>136</sup>Ellis, "Vocal Training at the Paris Conservatoire and the Choir Schools of Alexandre-Étienne Choron: Debates, Rivalries, and Consequences," 131.

<sup>137</sup>*Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>138</sup>Lesure, *La Musique à Paris en 1830-1831*, 219.

<sup>139</sup>Escudier, *La France musicale*, 13 August 1843. Alexis Azevedo confirms the improvements in the vocal department in his article on the Conservatoire's annual *concours*. Azevedo, *La France musicale*, 11 August 1844.

financial means necessary of moving to Paris, even to receive free musical education, and the *pensionnat* only accepted a dozen students.<sup>140</sup>

## 1.8 STAR PROFESSORS AND THEIR METHODS

Among the *professeurs de chant* at the Conservatoire during this period figured the Italian singers who were hired on the hopes they would improve vocal technique: Felice Pellegrini (1774-1832, taught 1829-1832), bass; Davidde Banderali (1789-1849, taught 1828-1849), tenor buffo; Jean-Marc Bordogni (1788-1856, taught 1819-1823, 1830-1856), tenor. Of the three, Bordogni had the best reputation and taught some of the most important singers of the period (at the Conservatoire and privately), including Laure Cinti-Damoreau, Cornélie Falcon, Constance Jawureck, Anna Thillon, and Marie Lavoye.<sup>141</sup> Almost all the other vocal instructors of the period were singers (or former singers) at the Opéra or the Opéra Comique. Louis-Antoine-Éléonor Ponchard (1787-1866, taught ca. 1817-1857), was an Opéra Comique singer who dedicated himself to teaching after his retirement from the theatre in 1837.<sup>142</sup> Two of his more successful students included Marie Flécheux, who won first prize in singing in 1835 and obtained a contract at the Opéra the same year, and Antoinette Jeanne Révilly (1822-1899), who took first prize in *déclamation lyrique* in 1840 and sang at the Opéra Comique from 1840 to 1875. Although Edouard Monnais declared Ponchard's teaching method "narrow and stingy,"<sup>143</sup> Harel claimed that as a vocal instructor, he had no equal. Nicholas-Jean Blès Martin (1768-1837) was one of the best-known Opéra Comique singers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth cen-

<sup>140</sup>Escudier, *La France musicale*, 13 August 1843. He also criticized the upper age limit (20 years of age) to enter, saying that male voices in particular are often not formed until this time, and that the required three years to complete one's study is not long enough. By this time, there were several branches opened in the provinces: Lille and Toulouse in 1826, Metz and Marseille by 1841. These schools basically functioned as preparatory schools. They taught the students solfège and vocalisation, then passed them on to the Paris Conservatoire to finish their education. See Hondré, "Les succursales du Conservatoire ou les jalons d'une relation Paris-province."

<sup>141</sup>*La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 24 April 1836.

<sup>142</sup>Louis-Antoine-Éléonor Ponchard studied at the Conservatoire and debuted successfully at the Opéra Comique in 1812. Harel remarked that although the women were not interested in seeing the singer in 1812 (a reference to Ponchard's mediocre looks), they certainly pressed to hear him later in his career. His talent for expressive singing made up for a mediocre vocal timbre and received the accolades of the connoisseurs. See "Ponchard (Opéra-Comique)," in Harel, *Dictionnaire théâtral, ou Douze cent trente-trois vérités sur les directeurs, régisseurs, acteurs, actrices et employés des divers théâtres*, 246-247; Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens, et bibliographie générale de la musique. Supplément et complément*, 2:358.

<sup>143</sup>*La France musicale*, 3 May 1840.



turies who created the *emploi baryton Martin*; he taught from 1832 until just before his death in 1837.

Two other Opéra stars also became pedagogues at the Conservatoire: Gilbert-Louis Duprez and Laure Cinti-Damoreau (1801-1863), the only woman to teach singing at the institution during this period. Her appointment came with some resistance from the Pair de France, who felt hiring a woman would set a bad precedent. The Duc de Choiseul, however, came to her defense in a remarkable letter, and asked the Pair de France not to discriminate against her because she was a woman.<sup>144</sup> The Conservatoire was one of the few institutions that paid its male and female employees equally for equal work, although female instructors were only permitted to teach female students.<sup>145</sup> Manuel Garcia  *fils*  (1805-1906), the inventor of the laryngoscope and one of the most sought-after voice teachers of the nineteenth century, joined the teaching roster in the 1840s. He taught from 1842 to 1850 and then left to continue his teaching career at the Royal Academy of Music in London. Some of the best-known singer-actors from the Opéra and the Opéra Comique gave the *déclamation lyrique* classes. Singled out by Arthur Pougin as an artist known for his skill in *déclamation musicale*, Opéra tenor Adolphe Nourrit (1802-1839) directed the *tragédie lyrique* section from 1828 until 1838.<sup>146</sup> Opéra bass Prosper Dérivis (1808-1880) replaced Nourrit once he left the Conservatoire until Nicholas Levasseur (1791-1871) took over the class in 1840.<sup>147</sup> Laurent-Joseph Morin (b. 1805), who taught *lecture à haute voix*, instructed the *opéra-comique* section and was later joined by Théodore-François Moreau-Sainti (1799-1860), a tenor at the Opéra Comique.

<sup>144</sup>The Conservatoire was looking to replace M. Regnault, who stepped down from his position as professeur de chant. The comité d'enseignement suggested Paër, Blangini, Laure Cinti-Damoreau, and Mlle Empaire (who taught solfège and vocalisation). The Pair de France wrote to the Duc de Choiseul, and in response to the suggestion of appointing Cinti-Damoreau, claimed: "[...] sans doute, cette dame a un talent de première ligne qui justifie très bien la proposition de la commission; mais il semble peu convenable d'appeler une femme au professorat en titre, et sans / retracer ici tous les inconvénients qui en peuvent résulter, ce serait je pense, un mauvais précédent à établir. J'ai donc cru devoir choisir entre MM. Paër et Blangini." Letter signed le Pair de France, Ministre du Commerce et des travaux publics, November 1832 in *F-Pan* F<sup>21</sup> 1294. In a remarkable letter—labeled confidential—the Duc de Choiseul wrote back and strongly defended Cinti-Damoreau. Letter from the Duc de Choiseul, 4 December 1832 in *F-Pan* F<sup>21</sup> 1294. (The Duc de Choiseul was the president of the Commission de surveillance, the legislative body that oversaw the Opéra and the Conservatoire de musique from 1831 to 1835.) Cinti-Damoreau was awarded the position in 1833.

<sup>145</sup>By 1840, Laure Cinti-Damoreau was earning 2,000 francs a year, exactly the same salary as her colleagues Ponchard, Banderalli, and Bordogni. See Pierre, *Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation, documents historiques et administratifs recueillis ou reconstitués*, 420-435, for the tables listing the instructors and their salaries from 1830 to 1900.

<sup>146</sup>"Déclamation musicale," in Pougin, *Dictionnaire historique et pittoresque du théâtre et des arts qui s'y rattachent*, 268.

<sup>147</sup>A second section in *tragédie lyrique* was taught by Pierre-Marie-Nicholas Michelot (1786-1856).

Karen Sell points to three important developments in nineteenth-century vocal pedagogy: the need to cultivate more powerful voices to compete with large orchestras and dense orchestration, the loss of the art of ornamentation and improvisation, and the increasing influence of vocal science.<sup>148</sup> These developments can be seen in the vocal training at the Conservatoire in the 1840s. First-hand reports on the actual teaching that went on inside the Conservatoire's classrooms during this period are unfortunately rare. However, three vocal professors—Manuel Garcia  *fils* , Cinti-Damoreau and Duprez—created treatises from which we can gain much insight into their methods and their contribution to these trends in vocal pedagogy. Duprez's treatise, *L'art du chant* (1846), was adopted for singing classes at the Conservatoire by the Comité des études.<sup>149</sup> Divided into three parts, the first, "Style large d'expression et de la force," focuses on proper  *mise de voix*  or vocal placement through a series of graduated exercises. Of note is Duprez's emphasis on properly utilizing the power of the chest voice and pulling the register up as far into the head register as possible without force. (Duprez, of course, has been touted as the creator of the chest high C, although, as John Rosselli points out, such a feat was probably not completely new.)<sup>150</sup> The second part teaches vocal agility and the third turns to issues of expression (diction, recitative). The treatise has a strong emphasis on this third component: Duprez classified singers according to those who excelled in "vocalisation" and in "expression," which his contemporaries often used for distinguishing singers of the Italian and French schools. The inclusion of many works by eighteenth and nineteenth-century French composers reveals an emphasis on national tradition. Besides the inclusion of a number of Italians (Porpora, Piccinni, Sacchini, Paisiello, Cimarosa, Spontini, Nicolo, and Rossini), the treatise features works by Lully, Rameau, Grétry, Gluck, Monsigny, Méhul, and Boieldieu. Finally, the treatise includes a final section with  *points d'orgue*  by many well-known singers who performed in Paris: Giuditta Pasta, Benedetta Rosmuda Pisaroni, Maria Malibran, Laure Cinti-Damoreau, Fanny Tacchinardi-Persiani, Julie Dorus-Gras, Dolorès Nau, Manuel Garcia  *père* , Giovanni Battista Rubini, Antonio Tamburini, Nicholas Levasseur, and Paul Barroilhet.

Manuel Garcia  *fils*  completed the first and second edition of his *Traité complet de l'art du chant* during his tenure at the Paris Conservatoire.<sup>151</sup> Although he drew

<sup>148</sup>Sell, *The Disciplines of Vocal Pedagogy: Towards an Holistic Approach*, 32.

<sup>149</sup>Duprez, *L'art du chant*, 1.

<sup>150</sup>Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera: The History of a Profession*, 177. Gregory Bloch sheds further light on the development of the myth around Duprez and his vocal technique in Bloch, "The Pathological Voice of Gilbert-Louis Duprez."

<sup>151</sup>Garcia, *Traité complet de l'art du chant*.



from his father's pedagogical approach and adapted a number of his exercises, Garcia *filis* distinguished his method by placing more emphasis on physiological and anatomical knowledge of the voice. Readers of his treatise—and, one imagines, his students—had to acquire a precise understanding of vocal anatomy to follow his instructions. He included lengthy passages describing the anatomy of the vocal apparatus, vocal types, timbres, breathing, and the blending of registers. In the preface to the first edition he defended his decision not to include vocalises because they require the student to have conquered all the difficulties of singing (vocal placement, legato singing, ornamentation) except that of pronunciation. Instead, he included hundreds of exercises that isolate one “technique” at a time. Escudier summarized the “Garcia method” as one that provided the singer with all the fundamental materials for singing and then left her to develop her own style and expression. For that reason, Adolphe Nourrit, Jean Antoine Just Géraudy,<sup>152</sup> Eugénie Garcia, Maria Malibran, and Pauline Viardot all possessed a distinctive style and yet their voices had the same fundamental qualities: confident delivery, rounded tone, pure execution, and firm accentuation.<sup>153</sup> His refinement of the “Garcia method” and his success as a pedagogue in France was in no way affected by his relatively short tenure at the Conservatoire. Even his scientific findings—particularly his approach to the various timbres and registers of the voice—were widely accessible from the early 1840s. Summed up in his *Mémoire sur la voix humaine*, the Escudier brothers published the work in four installments in *La France musicale* in May 1841.<sup>154</sup>

Unlike her colleagues who included many suggestions and directions to the singer, Cinti-Damoreau simply presented the exercises and gave very little instruction in her treatises. She did, however, add her voice to the contemporary debate over the growing scientific approach to vocal pedagogy in her introduction, and insisted that “belles théories” do not produce good singers; rather, beautiful voices are created through the practice of graduated exercises under the supervision of an experienced teacher.<sup>155</sup> Her first published treatise, *Méthode de chant* (1849), carries a dedication

<sup>152</sup>Géraudy (1808-1869) studied with Manuel Garcia *père*, then Manuel Garcia *filis* after the former died in 1832. He became a concert singer and taught students in Paris and in Brussels where he was an instructor at the Conservatoire. He gave lessons to Dolorès Nau, Jenny Colon, and Catinka Heinefetter. Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens, et bibliographie générale de la musique. Supplément et complément*, 1:372-373.

<sup>153</sup>Escudier, “Théâtre royal de l’Opéra Comique,” *La France musicale*, 8 December 1839.

<sup>154</sup>Garcia’s “Mémoire sur la voix humaine” was first presented to the Académie des Sciences on 16 November 1840. Gregory Bloch cites its later publication (in truncated form) in the medical newspaper *L’Esculape: Gazette des médecins-practiciens* (9 and 23 May 1841); it also appeared in full in *La France musicale* where it was the front-page feature article for a month (9, 16, 23, 30 May 1841).

<sup>155</sup>Cinti-Damoreau, *Méthode de chant composé pour ses classes du Conservatoire*, 1.

to her students at the Conservatoire and we might assume that it reflects her style of instruction at the institution. It favours the older Italian school of vocal pedagogy by emphasizing vocal agility and ornamentation and borrows some exercises created by Rossini. The treatise is organized like many early nineteenth-century method books with graduated exercises that increase in complexity, beginning with vocal placement and then moving to legato singing, arpeggios, chromatic scales, and cadenzas.

Cinti-Damoreau's second treatise grapples with the rise of vocal science and the students' desire to cultivate a larger and more powerful voice. Her *Nouvelle méthode* (c.1859), dedicated to students just beginning their vocal study, includes a slightly longer introduction where she outlined general instructions on proper *mise de voix*, practicing habits, posture, breathing, legato singing, intonation, and blending of registers. Anticipating her readers' desire to imitate the current fashion of singing, Cinti-Damoreau warned that true expression does not arise from shouting. "One can sing in a large style, without shouting," she asserted, "and a simple, well-phrased, inspired melody, can have a greater power of expression than all the exertion imaginable."<sup>156</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century there were several dozen method books on the market. The increasing pressure to distinguish one method from the next and exploit any overlooked niche becomes evident in her *Nouvelle méthode*. Published by Heugel in 1859, a preface by the editor claimed that the method was the only one that responded to a crucial gap in the market—the beginning singer—and would not ruin these delicate voices, as might other vocal methods designed for advanced singers.<sup>157</sup> Careful development of the vocal range, note by note, through scales and other practical exercises was the "secret" to Cinti-Damoreau's approach. Knowledge of complex, scientific theories of the voice was unnecessary to sing well, he reassured his readers, and Cinti-Damoreau was the glorious living proof. Following Heugel's preface and Cinti-Damoreau's introduction were four pages of advertisements for scores sold by the publisher, including other method books, solfège, vocalises, and other elementary exercises, romances, choral music, religious and salon music, and nocturnes—in short, those genres typically gendered "feminine" during the period, thus suggesting that the targeted market was predominantly women from the middle classes.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>156</sup>"On peut chanter très largement, sans crier; et une simple mélodie bien phrasée, bien sentie, a souvent une plus grande puissance d'expression que tous les efforts imaginables," Cinti-Damoreau, *Développement progressif de la voix. Nouvelle méthode de chant, à l'usage des jeunes personnes*.

<sup>157</sup>J.-L. Heugel, "Préface des éditeurs," in *ibid*.

<sup>158</sup>On the musical repertoire gendered "feminine," see Ellis, "Female Pianists and Their Male Critics in Nineteenth-Century Paris"; Head, "'If the Pretty Little Hand Won't Stretch': Music for the Fair Sex in Eighteenth-Century Germany"; and Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre*.

## 1.9 FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE STAGE

Although the Conservatoire functioned as a feeder school for the state theatres, students did not have many opportunities to perform publicly during most of the period and were often criticized for their lack of experience during their debuts. And yet students who performed outside the Conservatoire without first gaining permission from the director could be expelled from the institution or faced heavy fines.<sup>159</sup> F.W.J. Hemmings claims many students worked around this clause by performing in the provinces under pseudonyms.<sup>160</sup> They were at least permitted to observe performances. Several of the state houses (opera and spoken theatre) had a box available on certain nights for up to six students preparing for their debuts or working actively on roles.<sup>161</sup>

Cherubini did consider the preparation of students for public performance a priority and so he briefly re-instated the *exercices des élèves* in 1823.<sup>162</sup> They ran such a deficit that they were quickly abandoned. In the meantime, the Société des concerts was inaugurated in 1828 and put under the direction of Habeneck; however, the concert series was independent and did not offer current Conservatoire students the occasion to participate.<sup>163</sup> Officially re-instated in 1841, the *exercices* included occasional public performances (by invitation only) and monthly private performances of entire lyric works, or at the very least in large fragments. The Conservatoire's role as a "conservatory" influenced the choice of works that demonstrated preference for the operas of Rossini, Mozart, and Gluck. Those performed most frequently between 1841 and 1862 (the last year of the *exercices*) include Rossini's *Le Comte Ory* and *La Gazza ladra*, Gluck's *Orphée*, and Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*. Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *Moïse*, Méhul's *L'Irato*, Hérold's *Marie*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Adam's *La Marquise* and Gluck's *Armide* were performed two to three times. The Conservatoire went to great lengths and expense to replicate as best as possible a "real" performance. Costumes, accessories, and wigs were rented, the *mise en scène* included

<sup>159</sup>"Arrêté de 16 novembre 1825," in Pierre, *Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation, documents historiques et administratif recueillis ou reconstitués*, 273.

<sup>160</sup>Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France*, 178.

<sup>161</sup>"Admission des élèves aux représentations des théâtres subventionnés," in Pierre, *Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation, documents historiques et administratif recueillis ou reconstitués*, 292.

<sup>162</sup>Material for this paragraph was taken from "Exercices des élèves. (Concerts et représentations.) Première notice historique (extrait de *L'histoire des concerts publics depuis le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, mémoire présenté par Constant Pierre, au concours ouvert pour le prix Bordin, et couronné par l'Académie des beaux-arts, en 1900)," in *ibid.*, 460-476.

<sup>163</sup>For a complete history of this concert series, see Holoman, *The Société des concerts du Conservatoire, 1828-1967*.

changes of stage *décoration*, stagehands were hired, and the performances had full orchestral accompaniment. High expenses, disruptions of regular classes, and problems with the students' *amour-propre* (the distribution of primary and secondary roles apparently led to rivalries between singers) led the Conservatoire to abandon the *exercices* once again in 1862. The usefulness of these *exercices* might also be questioned considering the repertoire choices. The absence of grand operas currently in the Opéra's repertoire is glaring and the *opéras-comiques* were not representative of those most frequently performed at the Opéra Comique. Gluck's operas went unperformed from the mid-1820s until 1859 (1861 at the Opéra) and only Mozart's *Don Giovanni* had been successfully revived at the Opéra during the period. The students were certainly not gaining experience singing the repertoire they would be expected to perform upon their debuts at the theatres.

Perhaps one of the most important moments for the Conservatoire students was their participation at the annual competitions held in early August. Juries composed of members of the teaching committee and outside specialists judged the students' progress and awarded the much-coveted prizes that opened the door to contracts at the state theatres and stirred up much publicity, as the specialty music press always published reports on the competition and the names of the winners.<sup>164</sup> First-prize winners earned the right to debut at the Opéra or the Opéra-Comique. As the competitions offered an opportunity to judge the students' public performing skills and assess their suitability on the stage, the directors of the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique typically attended the competitions.<sup>165</sup> The competition also offered students perhaps their first real experience of being critiqued by journalists, an exercise that they would have to suffer throughout their entire careers and that was particularly painful at the beginning. As a description of the event in the *Revue musicale* in 1835 suggests, the students were not judged only on their vocal capabilities:

In secondary school, we judge the competitors outside their presence and on written compositions where they had time for reflection. [...] But at the *Conservatoire de musique* things happen in a different manner. It's a young girl, often timid, who must boldly confront the scrutinizing looks of a large audience who is first concerned with the tidiness of her

<sup>164</sup>The jury for the singing competition in 1841 was composed of Cherubini, Habeneck, Halévy, Carafa, Kuhn, Levasseur and Barroilhet; for opera and *opéra-comique*, Cherubini, Carafa, Provost (an actor from the Théâtre-Français), Edouard Monnaïs, and Leborne judged the candidates. *La France musicale*, 8 August 1841.

<sup>165</sup>Pillet's and Crosnier's absences from the August 1841 competition were noted in the press as unusual and irresponsible. J. Nicolo, *La France musicale*, 8 August 1841.

hairstyle, the elegance of her figure, and the freshness of her dress, who wish most of all that she is pretty, and who judge her after such important considerations. It's also a young man, less easy to frighten away, but who, not having much experience appearing in public, is equally unsettled, especially if his blue outfit is made from ordinary cloth and if his boots are not well shined.<sup>166</sup>

Henri Blanchard's assessment of the female competitors in 1840 reveals the kind of attention paid to their looks: Mlle Blanchet "possesses a Jewish face and a *mezzo contralto* voice," Mlle Mélanie Morel has "very pretty blond hair" and beautiful soprano voice, Mlle Hermance Révilly is a "beautiful brunette, tall, and well-proportioned" whose voice lacks lightness, Mlle "Caudron, Goudron ou Beaudron is a very nice and pretty brunette, with beautiful dark hair, whose voice is impressive, and who articulates well," and Mlle Lavoye, the "gracious blond," sang with as much charm as assurance.<sup>167</sup> Those reading Blanchard's article might have wondered if there were any male competitors at all, as he devoted all but a few lines to "this long series of Damoreaus and Grisis in blossom." The male students were also subjected to a critique of their looks, but to a much lesser degree. Gustave Roger, a fine tenor who was also famous for his good looks, was lightly criticized in 1837 for not taking enough care with his physical presentation,<sup>168</sup> and M. Battaille praised in 1847 for having "a handsome figure, a beautiful voice, and all the necessary cleverness." In the same 1847 review, the critic noted M. Gueymard had the right height and physique,

<sup>166</sup>"Au collège, on juge les concurrents hors de leur présence et sur des compositions écrites qu'ils ont eu le temps de réfléchir. [...] Mais au *Conservatoire de Musique* les choses se passent d'une manière toute différente. C'est une jeune fille, quelquefois timide, qui doit venir hardiment affronter les regards scrutateurs d'une assemblée nombreuse qui s'inquiète d'abord de l'ordre de sa coiffure, de l'élégance de sa taille et de la fraîcheur de sa robe, qui veut avant tout qu'elle soit jolie, et la juge souvent d'après d'aussi puissantes considérations. C'est encore un jeune homme, moins facile à effaroucher, mais qui, n'ayant encore que très peu d'habitude de paraître en public, est également fort ému, surtout si son habit bleu est d'un drap commun et si ses bottes ne sont pas bien cirées." *La Revue musicale*, 23 August 1835.

<sup>167</sup>"Mademoiselle Blanchet, la première de cette longue série de Damoreau et de Grisi en herbe, est entrée en matière. Mademoiselle Blanchet possède une figure juive et une voix de *mezzo contralto* [...] Mademoiselle Mélanie Morel, qui a eu plusieurs voix pour le second prix, a de fort jolis cheveux blonds et une voix de soprano dont elle se sert avec beaucoup de facilité. [...] Mademoiselle Hermance Révilly est une belle brune, grande et bien faite, dont la voix manque un peu de légèreté dans le trait et la cadence: mais qui émet le son avec beaucoup d'âme. [...] Mademoiselle Caudron, Goudron ou Beaudron, est une petite brune fort gentille, à beaux cheveux noirs, dont la voix est impressionnable, et qui articule bien. [...] Mademoiselle Lavoie [Lavoye], gracieuse blonde, élève de madame Damoreau, et deuxième prix de 1839, a dit un air de Robert le diable avec autant de charme que de sûreté." Henri Blanchard, *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 16 August 1840.

<sup>168</sup>*La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 13 August 1837.

whereas M. Reynard was shorter than Duprez, but still acceptable despite this disadvantage.<sup>169</sup> Such an experience nevertheless prepared the singers for the next step in their career, the debut, where they were subjected to intense critical and public scrutiny.

<sup>169</sup>“M. Battaille possède un beau physique, une belle voix, toute l’intelligence désirable [...]. M. Gueymard a pour lui la taille, la physionomie: M. Reynard est plus petit que Duprez; mais on l’acceptera malgré ce désavantage.” P.S. [Paul Smith], *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 8 August 1847.

## THE DEBUT AND DÉBUTANTES: LAUNCHING A CAREER

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“Au théâtre, il n’y a que le premier pas qui coûte.”

Marie Escudier, *La France musicale*, 9 December 1838.

It’s a terrible ordeal for a woman, barely twenty-two years old, to debut for such an assembly [the Parisian public]. The most skilled actresses [...] still experience a certain fright upon taking the stage. What must one feel, then, standing in front of a group of strangers, when one has little experience, and one has to sing all the while having a heart pounding with fear!<sup>1</sup>

Thus Hippolyte Lucas imagined the experience of Rosine Stoltz during her debuts at the Opéra in 1837. Stoltz was no beginner: in her early twenties, she was far from being the youngest singer to debut on such a grand stage and had already sung for a few years in the French provinces and in Amsterdam, and as a *première chanteuse* at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels. Nevertheless, an artist was at her most vulnerable at her debuts. Arnould Frémy claimed that even Duprez trembled during his wildly successful Opéra debuts the same year.<sup>2</sup>

Every singer had to submit to the debut process each time she or he was engaged at a new theatre, regardless of experience, talent, or anticipated success. Even the star singer Laure Cinti-Damoreau had to endure this ritual upon taking the stage at the Opéra Comique in 1836, two decades after she began her career at the Théâtre Italien. Singers at their very first debut were young, typically between nineteen and twenty-three years old. Those with sufficient talent, beauty, and promise would quickly secure their contract and launch their career. Those who failed, however, were condemned to repeat the process at another theatre. As the artistic troupes at the Opéra

<sup>1</sup>“C’est une terrible chose pour une femme, à peine âgée de vingt-deux ans, qu’un début devant une pareille assemblée. Les actrices consommées, et depuis longues années, éprouvent encore à leur entrée en scène une certaine émotion. Qu’est-ce donc qu’on doit ressentir lorsqu’on arrive devant un monde inconnu, qu’on a peu d’expérience encore, et qu’il s’agit de chanter, pendant que le cœur palpite d’effroi! Il faut être à la fois au drame extérieur dans lequel on joue un rôle et au drame intérieur qui se passe en soi.” Lucas, “Mme Rosine Stoltz (Dans *La Favorite*),” 3.

<sup>2</sup>Frémy, “Artistes modernes. II. Mme Nathan-Treillet,” 21.



and Opéra Comique were relatively stable during this period, a debutant—promising youth, freshness, novelty—provoked much interest. The theatrical and musical press overflowed with reviews of debuts that detailed the physical and artistic merits of both male and female singers; however, it was the *débutante* that captured the most attention. Anecdotal sources imbued the debut practice with eroticism and idealized the debutante as an object of fantasy. In the article “Le Ministre et la débutante” from *Le Monde dramatique*, the debut season blossoms with flowers and bouquets, and the debutantes, descending en masse upon the theatres, are portrayed as young virgins, fresh as spring leaves.<sup>3</sup> They perform for the pleasure of the thousand pairs of eyes that avidly follow their bodies on stage; their inexperience only adds to their pleasure and charm. Talent, skill, artistry, and musicianship are but secondary considerations. By emphasizing the women’s beauty and highlighting their fragility, nervousness, and naïveté, the debut becomes akin to a sexual rite where debutantes are initiated into theatrical culture.

In this chapter I present the history of the debut in France and outline the debut process in the lyric theatres. One quickly realizes that talent alone did not assure a successful debut. What is more, men and women were confronted with different expectations and measurements for success: an ideal debutante had to be young, beautiful, modest, demure—at least on stage—in addition to being an exceptional singer. Launching a career required careful negotiation of theatre intrigue and rivalries, building relationships with critics, wise repertoire choices, and astute management of the *claque*. Contemporary sources tended to downplay women’s agency and instead emphasized the necessary intervention of important men. Delving into fictional and anecdotal sources, the critical press, and singers’ correspondence, I show that, rather than relying on the influence of protectors, many female singers took an active role in constructing their future careers.

## 2.1 THE HISTORY OF THE DEBUT SYSTEM

Larousse’s *Grand dictionnaire universel* defined a theatrical debut as “the first trials of an actor engaged by the administration of a theatre, and performed in front of the public to be accepted or rejected by them.”<sup>4</sup> The debut system, in one shape or another, had been in place in French theatres from the late seventeenth century. Under the direction of Jean-Baptiste Lully, Opéra singers appeared for the first time during

<sup>3</sup>Armand, “Le Ministre et la débutante. Histoire d’hier,” *Le Monde dramatique*, vol. 7 (1838), 54–58.

<sup>4</sup>Larousse, “Début,” 202.



the prologues before performing in the main body of the five-act operas.<sup>5</sup> According to the 1714 “Règlement au sujet de l’Opéra,” singers, dancers, and members of the orchestra at the Académie royale de musique had to prove their worth in several performances and receive the support of the public before being officially accepted into the troupe.<sup>6</sup> A rather bizarre system evolved around 1730 whereby the artist, dressed as a gallant shepherd, would debut by singing either *Exsurgat Deus* or Lalande’s famous *Amen* at one of the *concerts spirituels* during the Easter season. Only in the mid- to late-eighteenth century could singers finally choose their own costume and sing airs (in French) for their debuts.

Appointing the right artists could ensure high box office receipts and successful reception of new and revived works. In Italy, impresarios hired performers for a single opera, a group of operas, or an entire season; should an artist fail to please, the contract was either cancelled or the artist was simply not re-engaged.<sup>7</sup> The state-funded theatres in Paris, however, offered much longer contracts. Prior to the July Monarchy, artists were essentially hired for life (usually fifteen to twenty years); after 1830, contracts typically ranged from one to five years (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of contracts). Should the administration not choose wisely, the theatre and its public could be stuck with a mediocre artist on the payroll for quite some time. To avoid having a performer rejected by the audience after already being engaged by the theatre, Jean-Pierre Muller suggests that directors had begun using a system of debuts as a way of testing the players with the audience and press before the hiring process was complete.<sup>8</sup> Once the state opera houses changed from full to partial subvention early in the July Monarchy, managers became intensely competitive and market oriented. In short, they could not afford to ignore the audience’s taste.

By the nineteenth century, the debut had evolved into a short series of trials—the three-debut system—in which the aspiring singer performed three complete roles, often in the more challenging repertoire.<sup>9</sup> The practice was enshrined in theatre law, exemplified by the 1812 Moscow decree put forth by Napoléon during the First

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>See article 18, “Règlement au sujet de l’Opéra. À Marly le 19 novembre 1714,” in Noinville, *Histoire du théâtre de l’académie royale de musique en France depuis son établissement jusqu’à présent*.

<sup>7</sup>Glixon and Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera: The Impresario and His World in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 173–214; Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi: The Role of the Impresario*.

<sup>8</sup>Müller, “L’usage des “trois débuts” dans l’art lyrique au 19e siècle.”

<sup>9</sup>Constant, *Code des théâtres à l’usage des directeurs, des artistes, des auteurs, des maires et adjoints, de la magistrature et du barreau*, 97. Debuts could technically include any number of performances and roles, but unless a number was specified in the artist’s contract the default number was always three.

Empire.<sup>10</sup> Section 3 of the *Décret* lists the regulations concerning debuts for the Théâtre-Français, specifying the season (mid-April to October 31), the number of roles (three), rehearsal requirements, and strict fines in the event of absences. The rules governing the debut at the Opéra and the Opéra Comique were quite similar. The Opéra's "Règlement de 1821" further specified that the director chose one of the three debut roles and that each role could be performed twice.<sup>11</sup> The Minister for the Royal Household approved all requests for debuts and held the authority to extend or cut short the debut process. The 1824 regulations concerning debuts at the Opéra Comique differed only in a few matters: the debut season took place between 1 May and 1 October and the administration had the authority to prolong the debuts by selecting three additional roles.<sup>12</sup> As theatre law stipulated that an artist's contract was considered binding only after a successful debut, singers were obligated to submit to the debut ritual each and every time they sought employment at a new theatre.<sup>13</sup> By the middle of the nineteenth century, the three-debut system became a ritual firmly anchored into theatrical culture throughout France.

## 2.2 OBTAINING A DEBUT

Prior to the July Monarchy, state theatres in need of a new singer could present an artist with an *ordre de début*.<sup>14</sup> Those typically called to debut were Conservatoire students or provincial artists whose talents had sparked the interest of state theatre managers. These orders attest to the state's desire to concentrate talent in the cap-

<sup>10</sup>"Décret sur la surveillance, l'organisation, l'administration, la comptabilité, la police et la discipline du Théâtre-Français," in "Décret sur la surveillance, l'organisation, l'administration, la comptabilité, la police et la discipline du Théâtre-Français." Known as the Moscow decree of 1812, this set of theatre regulations made by Napoléon during the First Empire pertained specifically to the Théâtre-Français; however, the other state-sponsored theatres were also legally bound to these regulations until they developed their own regulations (which they did in the 1820s).

<sup>11</sup>"Règlement de 1821," in *F-Po P.A.* 1821.

<sup>12</sup>See Chapitre 5, "Débuts et Réceptions," in "Ordonnance du roi du 30 mars 1824" in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1053.

<sup>13</sup>Constant, *Code des théâtres à l'usage des directeurs, des artistes, des auteurs, des maires et adjoints, de la magistrature et du barreau*, 98.

<sup>14</sup>See article 61 in "Décret sur la surveillance" and article 29 in "Ordonnance du roi." Several primary singers were initially called to the theatres through these orders—Caroline Grassari (née Gérard) in 1816 and Julie Dorus-Gras in 1830 at the Opéra, and Marie-Julie Boulanger in 1811 at the Opéra Comique. As the references I have for these orders to debut all date prior to the July Monarchy, I assume that the practice was abandoned in the 1830s—at least for those issued to performers in the provinces. The state theatres likely still used their right to call Conservatoire students to debut immediately should an urgent need for a singer arise. See "Création de classes des études de l'Opéra (27 octobre 1818)," in Pierre, *Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation, documents historiques et administratifs recueillis ou reconstitués*, 291.

ital. Provincial theatre directors had little choice but to obey and relinquish their most talented performers; singers likewise were forced to comply. For those already engaged at another theatre, an order could cause contract complications and career upsets. What is more, the increase in status that came from being employed at a more prestigious theatre did not necessarily assure an increase in salary or a better position. Félicité Pradher (née More), hired by Corréard at the theatre in Rouen, was contracted to begin performing in April 1816. She received an order to debut at the Opéra Comique in June 1816 from the Duc d'Aumont, the theatre's director and gentilhomme de la Chambre du Roi from 1814 to 1824. Facing conflicting contractual demands (her contract at Rouen stipulated that she must pay an indemnity should she break the agreement), Pradher continued performing in Rouen. Upon receiving a second order, she left Rouen to debut at the Opéra Comique. The move to Paris cost her almost half her salary and a better position. Whereas in Rouen she was hired as a *première chanteuse* and earned 5,500 francs a year, the Opéra Comique employed her as an understudy with an annual salary of only 3,000 francs. Once she was promoted to *sociétaire* three years later (and began earning a higher salary), Corréard began legal proceedings against her: he charged Pradher with breaking her contract and demanded 5,500 francs indemnity.<sup>15</sup>

For those singers who had not been served an order to debut, they would first have to pass a successful audition before getting a debut. To obtain the initial audition, a singer had to provide the theatre with her *titres à l'admission*—prizes at the Conservatoire, achievements at other theatres in the province or abroad, satisfactory press reports, and recommendations from teachers or other artists.<sup>16</sup> As the Conservatoire de musique was the feeder school for the state theatres, students had a much easier time obtaining initial auditions and debuts. Those having won prizes at the institution's annual competition earned the right to debut at the Opéra or the Opéra Comique following the termination of their program.<sup>17</sup> The *pensionnaires* (those

<sup>15</sup>Much confusion arose from the 1812 Moscow decree (see note 10) pertaining to the theatre regulations for the Théâtre-Français. It seemed that theatre directors and performers were unsure whether these regulations pertained only to the Théâtre-Français or to all state theatres. In the documents relating to the court case, the lawyer for Félicité More argued that all the royal theatres fell under the same legislation and that an order to debut was therefore legally binding for the Opéra Comique and Opéra as well. "On a prétendu que ce décret en était applicable qu'au théâtre français. Mais il faut savoir que les règlements généraux ont toujours été applicable à tous les comédiens du Roi... On a vu constamment les trois grands théâtres jouir des mêmes privilèges, les comédiens de ces théâtres prendre les mêmes titres, et se placer sous la même autorité. L'art de la déclamation lyrique a été comme celui de la déclamation parlée, surveillée et protégé par nos Rois qui dans leurs bontés se soumirent à la tête de tous nos plaisirs." *F-Pn* n.a.f. 3044.

<sup>16</sup>"Une audition de postulants à l'Opéra," in Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l'Opéra*, 280-282.

<sup>17</sup>Wild, *Dictionnaire des théâtres parisiens au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 331. Those singers winning first prize in

whose education, and room and board were fully state-funded) were in fact obliged to contract themselves for three years at one of the royal theatres, thereby effectively reimbursing the state for their musical education.<sup>18</sup> Other singers had to depend on the influence of their instructors, family connections, and even protectors to get their first “break.” Rosine Stoltz procured an audition and debut at the Opéra in 1837 with the recommendations of Adolphe Nourrit and François-Joséph Fétis.<sup>19</sup> The critic E. Deschamps from *La Revue et gazette musicale* wrote a letter of recommendation for Marie Cabel. Claiming that the young, intelligent singer could learn a role in only ten days, he suggested Cabel would be an excellent replacement for Arsène Charton at the Opéra Comique.<sup>20</sup> He added that his colleagues enthusiastically supported the singer. The mayor of Lyon wrote to the directeur général des beaux-arts in support of Lucile Henriette Mondutaigny, an eighteen-year-old Lyonnaise studying at the Paris Conservatoire.<sup>21</sup> She had obtained success in concerts and he insisted that the moment had now arrived to grant her an audition and debut at the Opéra. Mondutaigny won first prize in singing at the Conservatoire’s *concours* in August 1844 and debuted—albeit unsuccessfully—at the Opéra in November.

Eugénie Jullienne’s application for an audition at the Opéra in face of a veritable lack of such *titres à l’admission* attracted the notice of the critic Escudier, who then devoted a lengthy portion of an article to introduce the singer otherwise unknown to the Parisian public.<sup>22</sup> Daughter of a mechanical engineer [*constructeur mécanicien*] in Rouen, Jullienne enjoyed a privileged upbringing, including an extensive musical education, until the loss of her father’s fortune forced her to embark on a theatrical career. After a year of study with Maillot, a local vocal instructor, and concert

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singing at the annual Conservatoire competitions had the right to debut at the state lyric theatres; in 1832, Cherubini asked the minister of commerce and public works to extend this right to all *pensionnaires*, whether or not they had won a prize.

<sup>18</sup>The state even standardized salaries for the Conservatoire’s students, which tended to be fairly low. Their salaries started at 2,400 francs and increased to 3,000 for the second year and to 3,600 for the third. “Arrêté concernant l’engagement à souscrire par les pensionnaires et l’élévation du taux des appointements à payer par les théâtres royaux: 11 septembre 1828,” in Pierre, *Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation, documents historiques et administratifs recueillis ou reconstitués*, 286.

<sup>19</sup>Fétis insisted that it was his letter of recommendation for Stoltz that convinced Duponchel to hire the artist. See “Rosine Stoltz,” in Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens, et bibliographie générale de la musique*, 8:145–147. For information on Nourrit’s role in Stoltz’s initial hire, see Lucas, “Mme Rosine Stoltz (Dans *La Favorite*).”

<sup>20</sup>Letter to the director [likely Emile Perrin] from E. Deschamps, dated 13 December (no year), in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1137.

<sup>21</sup>Letter from the maire de Lyon, député du Rhône, to the directeur général des beaux-arts, 19 April 1844 in *F-Pan F*<sup>21</sup> 1064.

<sup>22</sup>“Nouveaux engagements à l’Opéra,” *La France musicale*, 24 August 1845.

appearances in Rouen, Jullienne set her sights on Paris. She arrived at the Opéra accompanied only by her little-known instructor and her father. Léon Pillet reportedly would not grant her an audition in the theatre and instead insisted on a private audition in his apartments. (The sexual insinuation of this intimate encounter with the Opéra's director would not likely have gone unnoticed.) Obviously pleased with her performance, Pillet granted her an official audition. Her voice, vibrant and mellifluous, was compared those of Caroline Branchu and Cornélie Falcon, and although Jullienne was considered fairly plain, Escudier insisted she became beautiful when she sang. Jullienne passed the second audition and began her debuts in the autumn of 1845.

The Opéra and Opéra Comique held auditions year-round. The musical and theatrical press regularly reported on these auditions, providing advance notice for upcoming debuts, and fueling the audience's seemingly insatiable desire for young, fresh voices. At the Opéra, a committee comprised of the conductor, the singing coaches, the director, and other invited guests (members of the press, a few members of the troupe) oversaw the audition that normally took place in the theatre, accompanied by piano or string quartet.<sup>23</sup> Auber, Meyerbeer, and other composers often attended these auditions, perhaps scouting new voices for their operas. The person to please was François Habeneck, the Opéra's *chef d'orchestre* from 1824 to 1846, who had an extraordinary ear for judging the voice, its capacity to fill the theatre, and its dramatic and musical potential. Few singers actually passed the audition. In a period of twenty months, only one of the ten tenors who auditioned was called back. Women faced much stiffer competition as they auditioned in greater numbers. Of the thirty-some women who auditioned during the same time-period, four were successful—Rosine Stoltz, Hortenzy de Paun (dite Varinsky [de Varny]), Célestine Nathan (Nathan-Treilhet) and Miss Stuart (an English actress who did not continue on to debut).<sup>24</sup> Others were accepted but charged with further vocal study. The Opéra asked Marie Angéline Rieux, a seventeen-year-old student of Duprez, to

<sup>23</sup>Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l'Opéra*, 69; and *F-Po* P.A. 1821. The committee for the audition held October 12, 1826, for example, included the administrator Raphaël de Frédot Duplantys, the director of personnel Dubois, Rossini, and three *chefs de chant*, Alexandre Piccini, Augustin Saint-Aubin, and Moreau. For each candidate, the committee judged their voices, their physical appearance and general suitability for the theatre. Of the four men auditioned, Lemonnier, a young, well-proportioned basse-taille who sang with good technique and was currently employed at the Théâtre de l'Odéon, was accepted unanimously to debut at the Opéra; Renaud and Baron were to be placed in the choir at the Théâtre Italien, and Lefebvre was encouraged to continue his studies and audition once again. *F-Pan*, AJ<sup>13</sup> 118, IV (Examens et auditions).

<sup>24</sup>"Une audition de postulants à l'Opéra," in *ibid.*, 280-282.

enter the Conservatoire to perfect her technique. Once she had the approval of the teaching committee, she could debut at the theatre.<sup>25</sup>

During the July Monarchy there was no particular debut season; debuts occurred throughout the year as positions in the theatre opened up. Opéra director Henri Duponchel's 1835 *cahier des charges* required him to maintain a complete troupe of singers at all times: for the men, two first-order tenors, two second-order tenors, a first-order baritone or *basse chantante*, two first- and two second-order *basse-tailles*; for the women, two first-order sopranos, two replacement sopranos, and two other singers, either mezzo-soprano or contralto.<sup>26</sup> Changes in management usually provoked a round of debuts as the new director sought to revitalize the troupe. Directors had to tread carefully, as debuts could either draw or repel the audience. As singers mostly debuted in the current repertoire, directors could not risk alienating the audience by over-producing operas with young and inexperienced singers nervously filling the lead roles.<sup>27</sup> Gilbert-Louis Duprez's 1837 debut in *Guillaume Tell* was a notable exception. Prior to his debut, the opera was rarely performed in its entirety; instead, the second act was often presented as an evening "opener" before a ballet.<sup>28</sup> After Duprez's wildly successful debut, the opera re-claimed its initial popularity and became an important testing ground for new tenors.<sup>29</sup>

In contrast to provincial theatres, singers debuting at the Paris lyric theatres actually signed contracts with the theatre administration *prior* to their debuts. If the debut failed to please the public and the theatre administration, directors had two options. They could keep the artist on the payroll for the duration of the contract and only allow the singer to perform on rare occasions, or they could pay a penalty and cancel the engagement prematurely.<sup>30</sup> Beginning with Léon Pillet's directorship in 1840, Opéra contracts included increased protection for the administration, giv-

<sup>25</sup>Contract dated 1 May 1838 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Rieux).

<sup>26</sup>See article 36 in Duponchel's *cahier des charges* (15 August 1835), in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 180.

<sup>27</sup>Muller notes how this was particularly problematic in the provinces, where debuts (an annual event) often took up the first six weeks in a six-month season; new repertoire could only be introduced once the debuts were finished. This was less of a problem for theatres such as the Opéra and Opéra Comique, where debuts occurred year-round and the current troupe was continually working on new repertoire. Müller, "L'usage des 'trois débuts' dans l'art lyrique au 19e siècle." See also the discussion of debuts in Rowden, "Decentralisation and Regeneration at the Théâtre des Arts, Rouen, 1889-1891."

<sup>28</sup>For a description on the practice of *morcellement* during this period, see Everist, "Grand Opéra-Petit Opéra: Parisian Opera and Ballet from the Restoration to the Second Empire."

<sup>29</sup>"Ce rôle d'Arnould sera désormais l'écueil de tous les ténors, et nous ne croyons pas qu'après Duprez, il s'en trouve un seul qui y obtienne un succès complet," *La France musicale*, 16 November 1845.

<sup>30</sup>Louis Gentil claimed that directors during the 1830s had the right to break the contract after the debuts by paying a fee equal to six months' salary. "Une audition de postulants à l'Opéra," in Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l'Opéra*, 280-282.



ing the director the right to break the contract at the end of the first year without penalty (and without reciprocity). Opéra Comique contracts under Crosnier's direction (1834-1845) stipulated that singers found unsuccessful after the third debut would simply be dismissed from the theatre, without penalty. Opéra contracts in 1849 included a similar stipulation.<sup>31</sup> What remains unclear, however, was who determined the debutant's lack of success. Léon Pillet attempted to dismiss Eugénie Jullienne after her third debut. In her response to the director, the singer boldly contested his decision. "When I signed my contract I had no intention of letting you be the sole arbiter to determine success or failure," she wrote. "I do not nor do I have to consent to the termination of my contract. I don't admit a failure that cannot be proven given that during my debuts the public and the press were always favourable toward me."<sup>32</sup> Rather than simply dismissing the artist, Pillet modified Jullienne's contract in such a way that allowed her to remain officially attached to the theatre for one year, albeit without a salary, in exchange for the freedom to perform in Parisian concerts and a two-month *congé*.<sup>33</sup> Jullienne eventually left Paris to sing in the provinces but was re-hired at the Opéra in September 1848.

Once engaged to debut, the artist selected her repertoire. Conservatoire students chose their debut roles in consultation with their vocal instructors and often began studying them early in their program. Sometimes directors insisted on choosing the debut repertoire: Opéra director Duponchel, for example, specified in Angéline Rieux's contract that he would choose the three roles.<sup>34</sup> At the Opéra, debutantes typically chose main roles from the more popular works among the current repertoire (*Guillaume Tell*, *Robert le diable*, *La Juive*, *Les Huguenots*, *La Favorite*). Some of the younger, less-experienced singers chose only secondary roles or main roles in smaller operas: Elian Barthélemy (b. 1819) debuted as Urbain (*Les Huguenots*), Jemmy (*Guil-*

<sup>31</sup>Critics generally concurred with these measures. One critic insisted that, in the best interest of the theatre and the audience, contracts should be signed only after a successful debut. *La France musicale*, 16 June 1839.

<sup>32</sup>"Lorsque j'ai signé mon engagement je n'ai point entendu laisser à vous seul arbitre la faculté de décider du succès ou de l'insuccès. Je ne suis ni ne dois consentir à la résiliation de mon engagement; n'admettant point l'insuccès que rien ne peut prouver puisque dans mes débuts le public et la presse m'ont été constamment favorables." Letter to Léon Pillet from Eugénie Jullienne, dated 12 November 1845 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Jullienne [Jullienne]).

<sup>33</sup>Such a modification was better than an outright termination, but still favoured the administration financially. That being said, Jullienne probably needed more experience, and the agreement allowed her to participate in Parisian concert life and perform at provincial theatres, all the while remaining attached to the Opéra (even without a salary) with the possibility to re-take the stage (which she did). Contract dated 24 November 1845 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Jullienne [Jullienne]).

<sup>34</sup>This might have occurred because Rieux was a minor (17 years old) when she debuted. Contract dated 1 May 1838 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Rieux).

*laume Tell*) and Jeannette (*Le Philtre*) in 1838; Céline Cayot (b. 1812) sang the roles of Isolier (*Le Comte Ory*) and Jemmy for her 1836 debuts; Marie-Sybille Drouart debuted as Thérésine (*Le Philtre*). In contrast to debutants at the Opéra, singers at the Opéra Comique often had the opportunity to debut in a newly written opera. Perhaps a potentially risky investment for the theatre, premièring a role was nevertheless a highly valued initiation process for new singers at the Opéra Comique. A critic at *La Revue et gazette musicale* insisted that “It’s the new roles, and written for their voices, that one must await for those singers who arrive from the provinces, before establishing a definitive judgment on the merit of their voice and their method, on their talent as actors, and on the resources that they could offer in the interest of art.”<sup>35</sup> In 1832, Marie Massy (1814-1875) premiered the role of Agathe in Hérold’s *La Médecine sans médecin* for her third debut; Marie-Ambroisine-Minette Potier premiered in Ambroise Thomas’s *Carline* for her debuts in March 1840.<sup>36</sup> Juliette Borghèse (b. 1818), a French singer who had a fairly well-established career in Italy (where she had Italianized her name from Bourgeois to Borghèse), premièred the role of Marie in Donizetti’s highly anticipated *La Fille du régiment* in 1840.<sup>37</sup> Eugénie Garcia (née Mayer) debuted in the title role of Coppola and Girard’s *Eva* in 1839. It seems the Opéra Comique wanted the star singer to debut only in newly-written roles, but between her health problems, the theatre’s difficulties mounting Boieldieu  *fils* and Grisar’s *Opéra à la cour* (originally intended as her second debut and eventually premièred with Anna Thillon singing the main role), and then a pregnancy that kept her from the stage, the public waited for months for a chance to hear the singer in another role.

In the 1830s singers still studying at the Conservatoire or foreign artists requiring language study were often given months of paid preparation at the Opéra. Singers had access to the theatre’s rehearsal scores, took lessons with the *chef de chant*, and participated in rehearsals with the other singers and musicians. Marie Flécheux and Marie Anasthesie Leroux, both students at the Conservatoire, were paid 100 francs a month until their first debut, after which their salaries were increased.<sup>38</sup> First en-

<sup>35</sup>“C’est à des rôles nouveaux, et écrits pour leurs voix, qu’il faut attendre des chanteurs qui arrivent de province, avant d’asseoir un jugement définitif sur le mérite de leurs voix et de leurs méthodes, sur leur talent d’acteur, et sur les ressources qu’ils peuvent offrir dans l’intérêt de l’art.” *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 1 May 1836.

<sup>36</sup>*La France musicale*, 28 February 1840.

<sup>37</sup>*La France musicale*, 16 February 1840.

<sup>38</sup>Flécheux was contracted 1 October 1834, before she had finished her studies at the Conservatoire. She won the first prize in singing in August 1835 and debuted as Alice in *Robert le Diable* in November 1835. Up until the date of her first debut (chosen by Véron), the Opéra paid Flécheux 100 francs a month; her salary was thereafter increased to 3,000 francs for the following year. Contract signed



gaged at the Opéra in January 1836, Dolorès Nau spent five months preparing for her debuts. She was initially considered for the role of Urbain in *Les Huguenots*, which would have placed her in the rare position (at the Opéra anyways) of premiering a role for her debuts. The page-role was entrusted instead to Marie Flécheux and Nau became the understudy for Marguerite, the role premièred by Julie Dorus-Gras. Meanwhile, Nau studied her three chosen roles for her debuts with Adolphe Nourrit's assistance: Marguerite, Mathilde (*Guillaume Tell*) and la Comtesse (*Le Comte Ory*). (As luck would have it, Nau ended up having to step in for Flécheux and performed the role of Urbain for her first debut.<sup>39</sup>) Such lengthy—and paid—preparation became the exception in the 1840s. With an eye ever turned toward maximizing profit, Opéra directors typically signed contracts with singers that officially began only with their first debut.<sup>40</sup>

According to scattered press reports Léon Pillet neglected to provide some debutantes the mandatory dress rehearsal before each of their debut roles and singers were forced to debut *à l'improviste*. Overall, this practice seemed to be the exception. The dress rehearsal served an important role for the theatre administration as an opportunity to test the singers one last time before their public debut and it was never in the theatre's best interest to skip this crucial step.<sup>41</sup> The artist typically had lessons with the *chef de chant* and rehearsals with the other singers in addition to a full dress rehearsal.<sup>42</sup> Anne-Céline-Ernestine de Lapommerai, who debuted in the role of Catarina in *La Reine de Chypre* 24 April 1857, received four private lessons,

1 October 1834 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Flécheux). Similarly, Mlle Marie Anasthasie Leroux was hired by Pillet while still a student at the Conservatoire; her contract, signed 29 December 1846, stipulated that her debuts must occur within one year and gave the singer an interim salary of 100 francs a month to finish her studies. Contract signed 29 December 1846 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Leroux).

<sup>39</sup> Flécheux fell ill before a *représentation extraordinaire* (a Sunday performance) in May 1836; Nau was called in last minute to step in. "Revue dramatique. Académie royale de musique," *La Quotidienne*, 9 May 1836.

<sup>40</sup> Contracts for Mlle Rieux (1838), Sophie Méquillet (1842), Cécile Pijon (1845) and Mlle Rabi (1846) stipulated that the debuts would begin either immediately before or concurrent with the contract's start date. *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossiers Rieux, Méquillet, Pijon, Rabi).

<sup>41</sup> In a letter to Duplantys, M. la Rochefoucauld granted a debut to Mlle Desvignes on the basis of her successful piano audition for the position of *double* (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of the various positions in the singer-troupes at the theatres). However, he stated that she must not be engaged before the administration was certain that she would contribute positively to the theatre; further, her debut should be preceded by a full dress rehearsal to assure that the debutante was, in fact, capable of performing her chosen role, la Grande prêtresse from *La Vestale*. Letter dated 29 March 1826 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 117. The Opéra's "Règlement de 1821" specified that a debutant could not even be announced on the posters before he or she was ready in all three roles. *F-Po P.A.* 1821.

<sup>42</sup> As the Opéra's *livres de bord* (daily record books) during this period are lacking, I used those from the 1850s as a model.

four rehearsals, and a full dress rehearsal in the weeks preceding the debut (Table 2.1). Rehearsals for her following performances in *Guillaume Tell* and *Armide*) began immediately following her first debut. Fromental Halévy's attendance at the rehearsals for *La Reine de Chypre* might even indicate that the composer adapted the role to conform better to the debutante's abilities.<sup>43</sup> (Halévy had worked as *chef de chant* at the Opéra for about a decade, but had retired from that position in 1840.<sup>44</sup>)

Table 2.1: Mlle de Lapommerai's debut rehearsal schedule, 1857. (F-Po RE 40)

|          |                 |                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 25 March | Rehearsal       | 12:45 in the foyer, with MM. Roger, Coulon, MM. Vauthrot* and Girard** ( <i>La Reine de Chypre</i> )                                                        |
| 26 March | Lesson          | 12:45 in the foyer ( <i>La Reine de Chypre</i> )                                                                                                            |
| 6 April  | Lesson          | 12:45 in the foyer, with M. Van den Neuvel*** ( <i>La Reine de Chypre</i> )                                                                                 |
| 9 April  | Rehearsal       | 12:45 in the theatre, with MM. Roger, Coulon, Marié, Bonnehée ( <i>La Reine de Chypre</i> )                                                                 |
| 13 April | Lesson          | 12:45 in the foyer, with M. Van den Neuvel ( <i>La Reine de Chypre</i> )                                                                                    |
| 18 April | Lesson          | 12:30 in the foyer, with M. Van den Neuvel ( <i>Guillaume Tell</i> )                                                                                        |
| 20 April | Rehearsal       | 12:30 in theatre, with MM. Roger, Bonnehée, Coulon, Marié, MM. Halévy, Girard, and Van den Neuvel ( <i>La Reine de Chypre</i> , 1st, 2nd and 5th acts)      |
| 21 April | Rehearsal       | 12:45 in the foyer, then 1:45 in the theatre, with MM. Roger, Bonnehée, Coulon, Marié, MM. Halévy, Girard, and Van den Neuvel ( <i>La Reine de Chypre</i> ) |
| 23 April | Dress rehearsal | 1:45 in the theatre (rehearsing only those parts of the opera in which Catarina appears)                                                                    |
| 24 April | Debut           | <i>La Reine de Chypre</i>                                                                                                                                   |
| 25 April | Rehearsal       | 12:45 in the foyer, with M. Bonnehée, M. Vauthrot at the piano, and M. Leroy                                                                                |
| 27 April | Rehearsal       | 12:45 in the foyer, with M. Bonnehée, Mme Sauters, M. Leroy, M. Vauthrot at the piano, M. Van den Neuvel ( <i>Armide</i> )                                  |
| 28 April | Rehearsal       | 12:15 in the theatre, with M. Bonnehée, Mme Sauters, M. Leroy, M. Vauthrot at the piano, M. Van den Neuvel ( <i>Armide</i> )                                |
|          | Lesson          | 12:45 in the foyer ( <i>Guillaume Tell</i> ) [Cancelled]                                                                                                    |
| 29 April | Rehearsal       | 12:45 in the theatre, with M. Vauthrot at the piano ( <i>Armide</i> )                                                                                       |

\*François Vauthrot, *chef de chant des rôles* from 1856 to 1871

\*\*Narcisse Girard, *chef d'orchestre* from 1846 to 1860

\*\*\*Aimé Van den Heuvel, *accompagnateur des rôles* from 1856 to 1858

<sup>43</sup>The practice of modifying certain passages to fit a singer's voice better was still in practice during this period, although these modifications were increasingly less tolerated. Consider Henri Panofka's article on Annette Lebrun's debuts in Rachel and Valentine. Several pieces were transposed lower for the contralto (although the critic did not specify which ones), and Panofka insisted that these transpositions disfigured the composer's intentions: "ce n'est point par caprice qu'un auteur écrit un chant dans un ton ou dans un autre, et il n'y a pas identité entre la majeur et si majeur [...] enfin, le si d'en haut de Mlle Falcon produisait un tout autre effet que le sol d'en haut de Mlle Lebrun." "Débuts à l'Opéra," *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 9 September 1838.

<sup>44</sup>For an excellent examination of Halévy's "behind-the-scenes" work at the Opéra as *chef de chant* and composer, see Hallman, "Fromental Halévy within the Paris Opéra: Composition and Control."

### 2.3 UNSUCCESSFUL DEBUTS

A public debut quickly unveiled an artist's weaknesses—poor vocal method, inexperience, inadequate acting skills, insufficient projection, or an unattractive physique. Many of those rejected were young Conservatoire students who had the right to debut but lacked the necessary qualities and experience. After winning the first prize in singing at the annual competition, Francise Cornu debuted as Isabelle in *Le Pré aux clercs*; critics claimed she had insufficient acting talent and vocal charm to sing at the Opéra Comique.<sup>45</sup> During her debuts at the same theatre, Mlle Henchoz was critiqued as having “an exterior that had nothing seductive about it, a small reedy and often out-of-tune voice, an organ insufficient during the dialogue and very little intelligence during the debut.”<sup>46</sup> Critics voiced dismay over the number of poor debutants from the Conservatoire and insisted that the Opéra and the Opéra Comique were not theatres for students.<sup>47</sup> The comments pointed to a longstanding problem that plagued state theatre directors for much of the nineteenth century. The Opéra and the Opéra Comique depended upon the Conservatoire to furnish the theatres with new talent; however, the students lacked the necessary experience to step directly into lead roles or even perform adequately as replacement singers. Later in the century the minister of public instruction and religion, Benjamin-Joseph-Agénor Bardoux, would propose a two-year apprenticeship system for those singers not yet ready to succeed in the operatic profession but needing more experience: “Between the Conservatoire, which is a school, and the Opéra, which is a museum, a single step is not enough; we need at least two, as much for our young singers as for our composers.”<sup>48</sup>

Failure at one of the primary lyric theatres did not constitute a complete rejection from their *métier*; rather, unsuccessful debutants typically moved along the theatre hierarchy and found employment in provincial or boulevard theatres. Having recently arrived from the provinces, Mlle Carlès replaced Elian Barthélemy as Urbain in *Les Huguenots* for her first (and only) debut. She left town the next day to take

<sup>45</sup> *La France musicale*, 3 January 1841.

<sup>46</sup> “Mlle Henchoz continue de jouer malgré son peu de succès. Un extérieur qui n’a rien de séduisant, une petite voix grêle et souvent fausse, un organe insuffisant dans le dialogue et fort peu d’intelligence dans le début, telle est Mlle Henchoz qui ne paraît pas devoir être jamais autre.” *La Revue musicale*, 26 April 1835.

<sup>47</sup> See Marie Escudier, “Chronique des théâtres lyriques,” *La France musicale*, 22 July 1838; “Théâtres,” *La Sylphide*, 16 April 1842; and *La France musicale*, 13 June 1847.

<sup>48</sup> Bardoux, “La restauration du Théâtre-Lyrique,” *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 17 November 1878, quoted in Ellis, “Systems Failure in Operatic Paris,” 70.

up a contract in Gand, a smaller theatre more suitable to her experience.<sup>49</sup> Mme Place, similarly, was engaged at the theatre in Amiens following her unsuccessful debuts at the Opéra Comique.<sup>50</sup> Mélanie Morel, a student of Barroilhet, showed promise in her debut as Rachel from *La Juive*, but not enough to hold onto her contract. Mixed reviews followed her two appearances: hailed by critics at *La France Musicale* as having a magnificent voice with brilliant, supple high notes, and an intelligent stage presence, critics at *La Mélomanie* chastised the singer for tending to push her voice.<sup>51</sup> Three months after her initial debuts, the press announced her engagement at the theatre in Lyon.<sup>52</sup> A contract in Marseille in 1844 soon followed, along with another in Lille for the 1845-1846 season.

While some debutantes obviously did not have the skills necessary to perform at the Opéra and the Opéra Comique, the failure of talented singers can be perplexing and perhaps indicative of other, more elusive factors. Céline Cayot debuted 13 May 1836 to lukewarm reviews, but apparently had a fine mezzo-soprano voice and acting skills. She signed a contract with the Opéra, but performed only eight times between her first debut and 14 December 1836; she reportedly left the theatre after encountering some difficulties with friends of Duponchel.<sup>53</sup> Lucile Henriette Mondutaigny was described during her debuts in 1847 as a young, beautiful, capable musician with excellent stage comportment, and yet the critic seemed to search for reasons why she would not succeed: “but she is missing the warmth, the drive, this *laisser-aller*, in one word, that sweeps the crowd along and commands enthusiasm. The talent of this young and beautiful singer certainly has a future.”<sup>54</sup> Perhaps her timing was off. Mondutaigny debuted in Rosine Stoltz’s roles after the latter left the theatre amid controversy in 1847. For some critics, the debutante’s vocal and dramatic style too closely paralleled that of Stoltz. She luckily found success elsewhere. A few months later, she was singing *La Juive* and *La Favorite* at the theatre in Lille to much acclaim.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>49</sup>*La France musicale*, 30 May 1841.

<sup>50</sup>*La France musicale*, 19 August 1838.

<sup>51</sup>*La France musicale*, 17 April 1842; “Académie royale de musique,” *La Mélomanie*, 14 April 1842.

<sup>52</sup>*La Mélomanie*, 10 July 1842.

<sup>53</sup>Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l’Opéra*, 113.

<sup>54</sup>*La France musicale*, 16 May 1847.

<sup>55</sup>*La France musicale*, 6 June 1847.

## 2.4 DEBUTS IN THE PROVINCES

Those singers who left the capital to try their luck in the provinces encountered a completely different ambience for their debuts. Provincial theatres hired artists only for a single season and contracts were never finalized until after the singer's successful debuts. A flurry of debuts opened each season; for the provincial *habitués*, it was the most important time of the year.<sup>56</sup> Music critic and composer Adolphe Adam described the process in colourful detail to his Parisian readers.<sup>57</sup> Prior to the event, theatre-goers hotly debated the relative merits of the debutants—their physical appearance, habits, conversation—that is, everything except their artistic talents. The outcome was determined even before the first performance, and “On the theatre's opening day, the *parterre* divided into two camps; one had not yet heard the artists, and already there were plots for or against them.”<sup>58</sup> Adam's article reinforced stark divisions between the two theatrical audiences, pitting provincial barbarism against Parisian civility. Provincial audiences participated enthusiastically during the actual debut performance, voicing their approbation or disapproval loudly (and occasionally accompanied by projectiles).<sup>59</sup> And if the audience decided to reject the debutant,

It starts with *hush* and other unequivocal signs of malcontent; then hissing, ironic or energetic acclamations are thrown in with violence and incredible cohesion; feet are stamped steadily and loudly on the parquet, popular refrains burst forth in chorus from all corners of the room, and all of this is followed by horrible and dreadful din that has no difficulty covering the voice of the unfortunate victim.<sup>60</sup>

The fate of the debutant was typically put to some kind of vote. The Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels established a vote system in 1854 to replace the traditional custom of hissing and applause; however, once audience members began purchasing

<sup>56</sup>Müller, “L'usage des “trois débuts” dans l'art lyrique au 19<sup>e</sup> siècle,” 184–185. Debut season was sometimes extended for a number of months if there were many successive, unsuccessful debuts. For an excellent description of debuts in the provinces and the effect upon the repertoire and theatre season, see Rowden, “Decentralisation and Regeneration at the Théâtre des Arts, Rouen, 1889–1891.”

<sup>57</sup>Adolphe Adam, “Un début en province,” *La Revue musicale*, 27 December 1835.

<sup>58</sup>“Le jour de l'ouverture du théâtre, le parterre se partage en deux camps; on n'a pas encore entendu les artistes, et déjà il y a cabale pour ou contre eux: on ne les juge encore que sur leur physique, parce qu'on a été les examiner au café de la Comédie: leur mise, leurs habitudes, leur conversation, tout a été un objet d'étude et a contribué à prévenir le jugement des habitués.” Adam, “Un début en province.”

<sup>59</sup>Larousse, “Début,” 203.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*

large numbers of seats to sway the vote, the former practice was reinstated.<sup>61</sup> In the provinces the audience's judgment was supreme, its reaction either permitted the debutant to secure her/his contract or condemned the artist to leave the theatre and begin the procedure elsewhere. Forced to subject themselves to this difficult trial, debutants bore a heavy burden.

Charles Constant characterized the Parisian debut as a less antagonistic exercise, with an audience typically filled with the debutants' friends and "entrepreneurs de succès" (the *claque*), and critics took over the responsibility of officially judging the aspiring performers in their press reviews.<sup>62</sup> For their part, the Parisian audience voted with their attendance. Unsuccessful debutants were coldly received, quietly dismissed and quickly forgotten. A successful debutant, however, could draw *le Tout-Paris* to witness the event.

## 2.5 IN THE COULISSES

Debutants had to negotiate carefully potential rivalries and tensions between members of the current troupe. Singers "loaned" their roles to debutants for their debuts and it was expected that, once finished, the singer would re-take possession of her role.<sup>63</sup> Eliza Julian wrote to the Opéra administration that, Catinka Heinefetter having already performed Rachel in *La Juive* three times for her debuts, she should be able to sing the role at its next performance.<sup>64</sup> Singers were seemingly wary of successful debutantes who might usurp their position and claim public attention. Cornélie Falcon's spectacular debut in the role of Alice from *Robert le Diable* in July 1832 brought the audience in droves to an already popular work. Julie Dorus-Gras,

<sup>61</sup>Müller, "L'usage des "trois débuts" dans l'art lyrique au 19<sup>e</sup> siècle," 175.

<sup>62</sup>"A Paris les débuts d'acteurs se passent avec beaucoup plus de calme; la salle est ordinairement remplie d'amis, les entrepreneurs de succès sont à leurs places, et c'est la presse qui le lendemain se charge d'apprécier le talent des débutants ou d'en signaler les défauts et les faiblesses." Constant, *Code des théâtres à l'usage des directeurs, des artistes, des auteurs, des maires et adjoints, de la magistrature et du barreau*, 96. Adam even suggested that competition among Parisian theatres forced directors to choose singers who were guaranteed to succeed from the start. Adam, "Un début en province," 421. Larousse stated that debuts in Paris were merely a formality. Larousse, "Début," 202-203. Alfred Bouchard also claimed that debuts in Paris were of little importance and did not draw large crowds as they did in the provinces; such seems to have been the case in the second half of the century. Bouchard, *La langue théâtrale: vocabulaire historique, descriptif et anecdotique des termes et des choses du théâtre*, 79.

<sup>63</sup>According to the Opéra's "Règlement de 1821," *premiers sujets* (those in charge of primary roles) could be asked to give up a certain role to a debutant or a *double* for two performances, but only after the tenth performance after a première or the fifth performance after a reprisal. See article 90 in *F-Po P.A.* 1821.

<sup>64</sup>Letter from Julian to the director dated 8 February 1841 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Julian).



the original creator of Alice, suddenly found herself in Falcon's shadow and forced to share her role with the debutante.

After a period of relative stability in the Opéra's troupe of singers in the early 1830s, personnel shifts occurred with the departure of Laure Cinti-Damoreau in 1835 and Cornélie Falcon in 1838. Having created roles in some of the most popular works of the repertoire and favoured by the public, the singers were not easily replaced. Rather than simply seeking two new sopranos, the administration needed to find singers who could replicate—as close as possible—their idiosyncrasies. The debutante did not have an easy task. Debuting in roles created by previous singers invited immediate comparison to the original. Célestine Nathan (Nathan-Treilhet), a young, talented singer from Marseille and a student of Duprez, debuted as Rachel, Valentine, and Mathilde in the summer of 1839. With a powerful soprano voice and dramatic skills, audience and critics alike hoped she might prove to be the next Falcon. Rumors abounded prior to her debut that the Opéra had finally found its Messiah. Her first debut proved disappointing. Marie Escudier chastised the singer for performing Rachel for her first debut: a dangerous decision, he said, considering the heights Falcon achieved in the role.<sup>65</sup> Unable to reproduce Falcon's performance, Nathan also did not have the vocal skill to effectively create a new interpretation. With her second debut, the critics softened, realizing that they had placed too much pressure on the debutante to conform to their memory of Falcon as Rachel and recognizing that Nathan, still young and inexperienced, should be judged impartially on her own merit.<sup>66</sup> Nathan eventually left the theatre to perform in the provinces, but returned to the Opéra in 1841, this time as Rosine Stoltz's understudy.<sup>67</sup>

The Opéra hired German-born soprano Catinka Heinefetter in April 1840 and provided the singer with months to study the French language and perfect her pronunciation before her debuts.<sup>68</sup> Eventually taking place in January 1841, her debuts in the role of Rachel were much encouraged by the public and the critics. Duponchel

<sup>65</sup>"Deux débuts: Naples et Paris," *La France musicale*, 26 May 1839.

<sup>66</sup>"Chronique musicale," *La France musicale*, 13 [sic, 23] June 1839.

<sup>67</sup>Mlle Mondutaigny also suffered from the comparison to the singer she was hoping to succeed. Debuting for the second time at the Opéra in May and June 1847, Mondutaigny performed Rosine Stoltz's roles from *La Reine de Chypre* and *Robert Bruce*. The debutante was critiqued for slavishly imitating Stoltz's performance style. Particularly in the role of Catarina from *La Reine de Chypre*, in which Stoltz had placed her cachet so perfectly, Mondutaigny apparently reproduced even the most insignificant detail of gesture, declamation, and vocal style. "Théâtres," *La Sylphide*, 29 May 1847.

<sup>68</sup>Heinefetter first took lessons from Géraldy; the Opéra later arranged for Ponchard to continue her voice lessons and Michelot to teach the singer proper accentuation and stage comportment. Escudier, "Académie royale de musique. Mlle Heinefetter. Mme Stoltz. M. Duponchel, M. L. Pillet et les intrigues de l'Opéra," *La France musicale*, 10 January 1841.

and Pillet had initially signed a lucrative contract with the soprano, promising her a salary of 20,000 francs a year. A second contract, signed by Pillet just weeks after her debuts, reduced her annual salary to 16,000 francs. *La France musicale* critic Escudier suspected that this reduction was calculated to push Heinefetter to leave the theatre. Rumor had it that Rosine Stoltz refused to share the stage with another talented singer and, using her influence with Léon Pillet, connived to diminish any competition. Escudier attributed Stoltz's influence to the rejection of two strong debutantes and to the fact that Pauline Viardot, who had supposedly indicated interest in singing at the Opéra, had not been hired.

## 2.6 THE DEBUTANTE AND HER CRITICS

One of the more anecdotal theatre dictionaries, the *Dictionnaire des coulisses* (1832), defined "Début" as "The goal to which tend the efforts of all those desiring a career in the theatre. Women have much more luck than men. First of all, they do not have to prove their talent; they only need a pretty face and complaisance."<sup>69</sup> The different expectations are clear: men needed talent, while talent was only one quality among many for women (and not necessarily the most important). Such comments belittled the skills of female artists and yet they contained a grain of truth. Without doubt, to succeed on the national lyric stages, a debutante required solid musical training and exceptional vocal abilities. But beauty, youth, freshness, and modesty were indispensable qualities for the debutante in French theatrical culture and rarely went without mention in critical writings on singers, even in the most respected musical and theatrical press.

Théophile Gautier's review of Catinka Heinefetter's debut serves as an ideal example, beginning with an extended description of her physique followed by a brief description of her voice. (See Figure 2.1 for a portrait of Heinefetter.) The paragraph is worth quoting in full as it demonstrates the kind of detailed physical analysis to which female singers were subjected:

<sup>69</sup>"But vers lequel tendent les efforts de tous ceux qui se destinent au théâtre. Les femmes ont beaucoup plus de chances que les hommes. D'abord, elles n'ont pas besoin de faire preuve de talent; elles doivent seulement avoir une jolie figure et des complaisances." *Dictionnaire des coulisses, ou vademecum à l'usage des habitués des théâtres contenant une foule d'anecdotes et de révélations piquantes*, 36. Following the various appearances of the word "début" throughout this dictionary is remarkably telling. The debut is mentioned in the definitions of *beauté*: "Moyen de début infaillible. La beauté n'est pas le talent, mais elle y supplée souvent..." and *régie*: "Lieu où sont établis les bureaux du régisseur, et où se décident le plus souvent les débuts des jolies actrices. Un sofa est le meuble obligé d'une régie."



Mademoiselle Catinka Heinefetter has a large stature; she has broad shoulders, well sculpted, a majestic figure [*tournure*], a thin and wispy waist that does not seem to indicate the force and the fullness of the other proportions that suit what we call at the theatre *l'emploi des reines*. Her whole person is somehow robust and energetic: her regular and beautiful features, her black eyebrows, her radiant eye, and her straight nose are accentuated in such a way as to produce an effect from afar. Her hands are fairly nice, although a little large. As for her feet, we suspect them to be German, because, throughout the entire piece, we watched out for them without ever managing to see them. Her dresses were of a suspect length. Gossip aside, this does not prevent her from being a beautiful young woman, with a theatrical and tragic appearance well-suited to the vast stage at the Opéra. Since mademoiselle Falcon, no one has better represented the beautiful Jewess Rachel with a more satisfying and convincing physique, and that, by the excellent reason that mademoiselle Heinefetter is Jewish herself and very beautiful.<sup>70</sup>

He finished the review with remarks on her performance and some words of advice, suggesting that the singer should forget her lessons and studied gestures and cultivate a more natural pantomime. Gautier found much more charm in her naïve awkwardness, and recalled Pauline Viardot's debut at the Théâtre-Italien where she, too, demonstrated an "adorable gaucherie."<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup>"Mademoiselle Catinka Heinefetter est d'une stature élevée; elle a les épaules larges, bien modelées, la tournure majestueuse, la taille plus mince et plus dégagée que ne semblent l'indiquer la force et l'ampleur des autres proportions qui conviennent à ce qu'on appelle au théâtre l'emploi des reines. Toute sa personne a quelque chose de robuste et d'énergie; ses traits réguliers et beaux, ses sourcils noirs, son œil éclatant, son nez droit, sont accentués de manière à produire de l'effet à distance. Ses mains sont assez belles, quoique un peu grandes; quant à ses pieds, nous les soupçonnons d'être allemands; car, pendant toute la durée de la pièce, nous les avons guettés assidûment sans pouvoir parvenir à les apercevoir. Ses robes sont d'une longueur suspecte, médisance à part, ce qui ne l'empêche pas d'être une belle jeune femme, d'un aspect théâtral et tragique tout à fait convenable pour la vaste scène de l'Opéra. Depuis mademoiselle Falcon, personne n'avait représenté la belle juive Rachel avec un physique plus satisfaisant et plus vraisemblable, et cela, par l'excellente raison que mademoiselle Heinefetter est juive elle-même et fort belle: aussi les applaudissements israélites ne lui ont pas manqué. Les douze tribus avaient là leurs représentants: il est juste de dire que les chrétiens y ont mêlé leurs bravos à plusieurs reprises." Gautier, *Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans*, 2:90-92.

<sup>71</sup>Théophile Gautier certainly stands out as one of the critics who paid the most attention to the physique and beauty of female theatre performers, and his journalistic writings are filled with long descriptions like this one for actresses, singers, and dancers. See, for example, his entries on female performers in Gautier, *Portraits contemporains*, and Gautier, Chasles, and Janin, *Les Beautés de l'Opéra, ou Chefs-d'œuvres lyriques illustrés par les premiers artistes de Paris et de Londres*. For an analysis of



Figure 2.1: Catinka Heinefetter. From *La Sylphide* (9 January 1841), lithography by Auguste Legrand, 20cm x 16cm. BnF, département Musique, Est.HeinefetterK.002

Escudier's review of Claude Marié<sup>72</sup> and Mme Roulle's (née Louise-Émilie Peignat) debuts in *La Juive*—occurring during the same performance—provides an exceptional opportunity to compare directly the critical treatment of male and female singers.<sup>73</sup> Escudier felt that both singers could easily take their place among the great singers at the Opéra, Marié sharing the tenor repertoire with Duprez and Louise

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Gautier's criticism of male and female dancers, and his attention to performers' bodies, see Clark, "Bodies at the Opéra: Art and the Hermaphrodite in the Dance Criticism of Théophile Gautier."

<sup>72</sup>Claude Marie Mécène Marié (1811-1879) was a double-bassist in the Opéra Comique and Théâtre Italien orchestras before becoming a professional singer. He debuted at the Opéra Comique and the Théâtre de la Renaissance before his debut at the Opéra in June 1840. His daughter, Célestine Galli-Marié (1840-1905), famously created the title role in Bizet's *Carmen* in 1875.

<sup>73</sup>Escudier, "Académie royale de musique. Débuts de M. Marié et Mme Roulle dans *la Juive*," *La France musicale*, 7 June 1840.

Roulle taking over Cornélie Falcon's repertoire. Escudier avoided any reference to Marié's physical appearance, but devoted much space to Roulle's physique: "She has a charming and graceful appearance; she is relatively short, but well formed: the proportions are harmonious, and indicate her vocal power."<sup>74</sup> He even criticized her choice of hairstyle: "We must alert her, however, that her Chinese hairstyle [*coiffure à la chinoise*] is not proper for a Jewess: the headbands à la Rachel are historic."<sup>75</sup> Escudier employed the journey trope typical of male biography by encouraging Marié to "walk straight toward the goal he wants to attain," and justified his numerous suggestions by claiming "If M. Marié did not seem capable of holding a high rank among our most remarkable singers, we would not take the time to make these observations."<sup>76</sup> Such justification was not, however, offered to Roulle. In short, two capable singers, two successful debuts, but clearly different critical treatment.

One of the greatest challenges for the debutante was finding a way to demonstrate her abilities modestly and without any evidence of pretension. Louise Lavoye, who won two first prizes in singing and in opéra-comique at the Conservatoire, was criticized for her ambitious choice of debut roles, *Henriette (L'Ambassadrice)* and *Angèle (Le Domino noir)*. The critic from *La Mélomanie* conceded that her successful performance of *Henriette* justified her audacity in debuting in a role performed to such perfection by her vocal instructor Cinti-Damoreau; however, he advised her to refrain from bold feats such as rising to a high E-flat in the final air of the first act.<sup>77</sup> A second review in June 1843 continued in the same vein, warning Lavoye not to get caught up in the praise that they previously addressed to her, but rather to take it as encouragement to continue working.<sup>78</sup> The review in *La Sylphide* went

<sup>74</sup>"Sa physionomie a du charme et de la grâce; sa taille est plutôt petite que grande, mais elle est bien prise: les proportions en sont harmonieuses, et annoncent la puissance de son organisation vocale." Escudier, "Débuts de M. Marié et Mme Roulle dans la Juive."

<sup>75</sup>"Nous devons cependant l'avertir que sa coiffure à la chinoise n'est pas de mise pour une juive: les bandeaux à la Rachel sont en quelque sorte historiques." Escudier, "Débuts de M. Marié et Mme Roulle dans la Juive."

<sup>76</sup>"Si M. Marié ne nous paraissait appelé à tenir un rang très élevé parmi nos plus remarquables chanteurs, nous ne prendrions pas la peine de lui adresser ces observations; aujourd'hui son avenir ne doit plus laisser d'inquiétude à personne; qu'il marche droit vers le but qu'il veut atteindre, écoutant les conseils désintéressés, se défiant des éloges exagérés, foulant aux pieds les rivalités et les jalousies de métier; la gloire et les succès le suivront certainement dans cette route, par où sont passés tous les grands artistes. Quant à son jeu, il est naturel et correct, entraînant et distingué: il n'y a pas un de ses gestes qui ne soit vrai et de bon goût, et, par le temps de drame échevelé qui plane sur nos théâtres, il faut savoir tenir compte de ces précieuses qualités." Escudier, "Débuts de M. Marié et Mme Roulle dans la Juive."

<sup>77</sup>"Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. Reprise de l'Ambassadrice. Débuts de Mlle Lavoye," *La Mélomanie*, 16 April 1843.

<sup>78</sup>"Jusqu'à ce que nous puissions parler d'elle dans un autre rôle, nous lui recommanderons de ne pas trop se laisser aller aux éloges qu'on lui adresse, et de ne les prendre en général que comme des

much further, beginning with a long tirade about young Conservatoire students who tried to leap directly into difficult roles established by celebrated singers at the main lyric theatres.<sup>79</sup> After praising Lavoye's voice and technique, the critic went on at length to detail her main faults: over-ornamenting the compositions and not paying enough attention to pronunciation, nuance, and expression—nor, it seemed, to the “art of costuming,” graceful poses, and elegant stage comportment. He asserted that, in short, she did not possess the spirit and warmth necessary for her roles and instead turned them into concert pieces.

Lavoye's main error seemed to lay in her ambition. The critic at *La Sylphide* judged the other debutantes at the Opéra Comique much less harshly, and admitted that although he was severe with Lavoye, he would be more indulgent with “the modest talents that doubt themselves and do not search to fly before having tried out their wings.”<sup>80</sup> Mlle Sarah, for example, was praised later in the same article for singing more modest roles, better suited to her vocal capabilities.<sup>81</sup> In a similar case, Angéline Rieux was also criticized during her debuts at the Opéra for over-estimating her abilities by performing the role of Alice.<sup>82</sup> By contrast, Elian Barthélemy debuted only in secondary roles and chose two trouser roles (Urbain in *Les Huguenots*, Jemmy in *Guillaume Tell*). Critics at *La Revue et gazette musicale* found her lack of pretension curious, but noted that she was well-received.<sup>83</sup> In a follow-up note the critic approved of her prudence, wryly remarking that the art of avoiding failure almost always lay in its anticipation.<sup>84</sup> Debating in page roles at least won the support of many

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encouragemens. Elle a beaucoup à faire encore; sa voix ne se pose pas toujours d'une manière sûre; les terminaisons de ses phrases sont trop molles; sa voix se presse souvent, comme pour se débarrasser d'une tâche, et l'expression est rarement sentie. Du reste, Mlle Lavoye est une artiste d'avenir; mais pour arriver à la haute réputation qu'elle est en droit d'envier, elle doit se bien pénétrer qu'il faut de l'étude, et beaucoup d'étude.” “Chronique des théâtres lyriques. Opéra-Comique,” *La Mélomanie*, 18 June 1843.

<sup>79</sup>“Théâtre royal de l'Opéra-Comique. Les débutants. Mlle Lavoye. Mlle Masson. Mlle Sarah. M. Carlo. M. Duvernoy. M. Dunon,” *La Sylphide*, 16 September 1843.

<sup>80</sup>“Il se peut qu'on nous trouve bien sévères à l'égard de Mlle Lavoye, à qui le travail pourra bien donner quelques-unes des qualités qui lui manquent, notamment la grâce des poses, l'élégance du maintien, et l'art du costume qu'elle ignore complètement; mais nous mesurons notre critique à l'ambition des débutants, et nous réservons toute notre indulgence pour les talents modestes qui doutent d'eux-mêmes et ne cherchent pas à plaindre avant d'avoir essayé leur ailes.” “Théâtre royal de l'Opéra-Comique. Les débutants,” *La Sylphide*.

<sup>81</sup>“Les débuts de Mlle Sarah, qui n'aspire qu'à chanter des rôles modestes, et qui a plus d'esprit et d'intelligence qu'il n'en faut pour les jouer avec beaucoup de charme, doivent aussi être classés parmi les débuts heureux. Mlle Sarah possède une voix peu étendue, mais agile et d'un timbre agréable, qui conviendra parfaitement dans les petits rôles secondaires de l'ancien et du nouveau répertoire.” “Théâtre royal de l'Opéra-Comique. Les débutants,” *La Sylphide*.

<sup>82</sup>*La France musicale*, 20 October 1839.

<sup>83</sup>*La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 2 September 1838.

<sup>84</sup>“Quelques habitués de coulisses, qui en possèdent tout le machiavélisme, expliquent ainsi la mod-

*habitués* who enjoyed the tantalizing display of a young singer's legs. One critic noted that the fine contours of Dolorès Nau's legs during her impromptu debut as Urbain was an early predictor of success.<sup>85</sup>

The problem of matching ambition to (perceived) abilities was exacerbated by the growing press attention that surrounded upcoming debuts. For Cornélie Falcon's 1832 debuts at the Opéra, Véron placed advance announcements in the press that prepared the public for an outstanding debutante and an overwhelming success. The critic F. Danjou suggested that these "previews" had since become a trend—debutants and new operas were being assessed even before their first performance.<sup>86</sup> Such was the problem with Angéline Rieux's debuts, Danjou declared. Proclaimed a star and the Opéra's new prodigy, Rieux was "simply a young and very pretty student, gifted with a pure voice and a beautiful timbre; a good musician, full of zeal, but needing long hours of study to cultivate the precious gifts that she possesses."<sup>87</sup> In short, she could not live up to the reputation built up for her. Danjou admitted that if she were meant to sing secondary roles while she cultivated her talent, he would have congratulated the Opéra on its new acquisition and predicted an exciting future for the pretty debutante. Singers thus increasingly faced high expectations to create a sensation during their debuts. Most often, audience members left disappointed, and the singers bore the brunt of the criticism for their overly lofty goals.

Singers depended on good publicity and also on the help of the *claque* during their debuts in hopes of swaying the opinion of the audience and critics in their

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estie qui retient Mlle Barthélemy dans un emploi aussi secondaire. Avant de s'attaquer aux grands rôles du chant, elle a voulu, pour le cas où le succès ne répondait pas à ses tentations, s'assurer une honorable retraite; nous ne saurions qu'approuver cette prudence. Prévoir les échecs, c'est presque toujours l'art de les éviter." *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 9 September 1838.

<sup>85</sup>"Revue dramatique. Académie royale de musique," *La Quotidienne*, 9 May 1836.

<sup>86</sup>F. Danjou, "Académie royale de musique. Début de mademoiselle Rieux dans *Robert-le-Diable*," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 13 October 1839. Danjou complained that failures no longer existed; instead, success was proclaimed in advance and merely ratified at the première. The problem, however, was those "successful" works often disappeared as audience attendance dwindled. His comments indicate that the practice of reviewing works (and debuts) at the final dress rehearsal rather than at the première performance had begun by this time.

<sup>87</sup>"Mlle Rieux était annoncée depuis très longtemps comme un prodige, comme une merveille, tandis qu'elle était tout simplement une jeune et fort jolie élève, douée d'une voix pure et d'un beau timbre; bonne musicienne, remplie de zèle, mais ayant besoin de cultiver par de longues études les dons précieux qu'elle possède. Aussi est-il arrivé que son inexpérience, ses études incomplètes ont trahi ses efforts, et qu'elle n'a pas été tout-à-fait à la hauteur de la réputation qu'on lui avait fait. Si mademoiselle Rieux n'est pas destinée à remplir immédiatement des rôles importants, si elle doit élever dans l'ombre le grand talent qu'elle doit avoir un jour, nous nous hâterons de déclarer que c'est une acquisition précieuse pour l'Opéra, et nous prédirons un très bel avenir à la jolie débutante." F. Danjou, "Début de mademoiselle Rieux dans *Robert-le-Diable*."

favour.<sup>88</sup> Louis Véron confirmed that debutants, their family, or their protectors paid the claque in accordance with their pretensions and aspirations.<sup>89</sup> “The claque is thus organized,” explained a critic at *La France musicale*, “to hiss an actor, to keep silent, and to clap. As you might well imagine, the price increases in proportion to the demand.”<sup>90</sup> Obvious support from the claque, however, often irritated the critics and the connoisseurs. In a review of tenor Mario de Candia’s Opéra debut, a critic from *La France musicale* fumed that the audience’s enthusiasm during first performances was always “tellement chauffé” that one could not be sure of one’s own feelings.<sup>91</sup> Better to wait for subsequent performances where the true public is in attendance, the critic advised, so as not to confound the success of the author with that of the actor. Annoyed by the obvious claque support during Annette Lebrun’s debuts at the Opéra, Henri Panofka asked if artists had completely lost their conscience by preferring the applause of the claque to the nobility of their art.<sup>92</sup>

## 2.7 ORCHESTRATING SUCCESS

Tucked between notices of recent debuts and performers’ activities in the provinces appeared a short anecdote in the *Nouvelles* section of *La Sylphide*. The tale goes as follows: A distinguished and redoubtable music critic negotiates a contract for his young protégée, a talented singer whose nervousness unfortunately gets the better of her when she sings in public. The day of her debut, the director approaches the critic at the very moment when the debutante is singing terribly out of tune. He demands an explanation. The critic assures the director that her singing improves in the ensembles. The director thinks for a minute and then laughs. “Your part in our agreement is much larger than mine,” he concludes, “because you have consented to write articles for me, and I am not obliged to let your student sing more than once. All I have to do is pay her salary, isn’t that right?”<sup>93</sup>

<sup>88</sup>Crosten, *French Grand Opera: An Art and a Business*, 41-48.

<sup>89</sup>Véron, *L’Opéra de Paris, 1820-1835*, 202.

<sup>90</sup>“[...] car, la claque est ainsi organisée: tant pour chuter un acteur, tant pour garder le silence, et tant pour l’applaudir. Comme bien vous l’imaginez, le tarif augmente en proportion des exigences.” Marie Escudier, *La France musicale*, 12 August 1838.

<sup>91</sup>“Début de M. Mario, à l’Opéra, dans *Robert le diable*,” *La France musicale*, 2 December 1838.

<sup>92</sup>Henri Panofka, “Débuts à l’Opéra,” *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 9 September 1838.

<sup>93</sup>“On raconte qu’un de nos aristarques les plus distingués et les plus redoutables dans la critique musicale a fait engager de confiance, à un de nos théâtres lyriques, une jeune cantatrice qui possède beaucoup de talent sans doute dans l’intimité, mais dont l’émotion paralyse les moyens aussitôt qu’elle se trouve devant plusieurs personnes. Le jour du début, le directeur du théâtre en question ayant rencontré l’aristarque au moment où la débutante chantait on ne peut plus faux, lui dit: – Mais, mon cher, écoutez donc votre protégée; est-ce qu’elle a perdu la tête et la voix? – Oh! ce n’est encore rien,



The anecdote's placement just after the report of Mlle Sarah's debut at the Opéra Comique likely raised some brows. Although the critic insisted that Mlle Sarah was a good singer and certainly a fine actress, the reader might well have questioned the impartiality of her review. Had this critic been bought by a theatre director? Or perhaps by the debutante? Were it not already apparent, the anecdote reinforced the perception that talent alone rarely guaranteed success in the theatre. Debutants sought support from influential sources—vocal instructors, composers, other singers, critics, the theatre's *claque*—to help launch their careers. Marie Massy's debuts at the Opéra Comique, for example, took place during the same evening as the famous baritone Martin's final adieu performance on 6 October 1832, assuring the young debutante a full house and a sympathetic audience. Duprez and Nourrit lent their star power and influence by performing alongside their protégées, Célestine Nathan and Cornélie Falcon, respectively, during their debuts.

It is often assumed that theatre women depended primarily upon the support of a protector who provided “sexual partnership, management of business and financial affairs, and social and professional patronage.”<sup>94</sup> Certainly, a protector could smooth the way for the young debutante by helping her secure a debut, creating favourable conditions between the artist and the administration—even influence audience and journalistic opinion to assure her success. Jennifer Dawson finds that this was the case for many female dancers at the Opéra during this period and outlines the economics of exchange that resulted. In an ideal situation, “the *danseuse* gained the financial assistance and advocacy required to launch a successful career; the protector garnered the social esteem of one powerful enough to keep an Opéra *danseuse* as his mistress.”<sup>95</sup> Hemmings declares that an actress could scarcely survive without a protector during the nineteenth century, the problem being that theatres placed the financial burden on actors for costumes required for contemporary dramas (only period costumes were supplied by the management).<sup>96</sup> Actresses were at a particu-

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répondit la critique, attendez les morceaux d'ensemble, ce sera bien autre chose, allez. Le directeur prit la chose on ne peut mieux: il partit d'un grand éclat de rire et ajouta: – Cet engagement-là en est un plus pour vous que pour moi, car vous vous êtes engagé à me faire des articles, et moi je ne suis pas engagé à faire chanter votre élève plus d'une fois; pourvu que je lui paye ses appointements, c'est tout ce que vous demandez, n'est-ce pas?” “Variétés-Nouvelles,” *La Sylphide*, September 1843.

<sup>94</sup>Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 137; see esp. 135–37 for her discussion of the *protettori* and their role in the careers of women singers.

<sup>95</sup>Dawson, “Danseuses as Working Women,” 184. See her chapter, “The Danseuse and her Protector: Economies of Exchange within the Terrain of Female Waged Labor,” 183–294, for a full discussion.

<sup>96</sup>Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France*, in particular his chapter “The Difficult Life of the Actress,” 199–209.



lar disadvantage because they required more costume changes and more elaborate dress.

Fictional stories and even some operatic works about singers during the period reinforced the perception that male protection was essential for launching a career. Auber, Scribe, and Mélesville's one-act *opéra-comique*, *Concert à la cour, ou La Débutante*, was the œuvre of choice for many debutantes from its première in 1824 until 1842. Debuting as the debutante Adèle not only provoked a delightful *mise en abyme*, but also allowed strong singers with weak acting skills to demonstrate their vocal virtuosity in the air, "Venise dans ses murs." The *opéra-comique* conveys a rather idealized conception of the debut. After having perfected her vocal ability in Italy, young, pretty Adèle has arrived at the court in Stuttgart to launch her career. However, the reigning prima donna, Carline, is married to the court music director, Astuccio, who has guarded her from potential rivals. The couple grants the young singer an audition, although, coincidentally, they are the only members of the hiring committee in attendance. Adèle performs her Carnival air to such perfection that Carline, forgetting herself, almost splits the vote in favour of the debutante. Astuccio recommends further study and dismisses Adèle. The prince Frédéric, however, is charmed by the singer's youth and beauty and agrees to help—although he has yet to hear her sing. Frédéric orders her debut to take place in the court theatre where clapping (and hissing) were not permitted. Unable to use the influence of the claque against the debutante, Astuccio is forced to change tactics; instead, he creates disorder in the orchestra to throw off the singer. Victor, Adèle's sweetheart, convinces the prince and the courtiers to give her one more chance, and she repeats her performance with Victor at the piano. The prince declares her success, forbids Astuccio from court intrigue, marries Adèle and Victor, and hires Adèle as the new prima donna. Enlisting all the qualities of the ideal debutante—youth, beauty, talent, modesty, humility, and virtue—Adèle manages to triumph over theatre intrigue. She insists (naïvely) that her success must come from her talent alone: when the prince Frédéric offers the support of the claque she immediately rejects his proposition. Yet throughout the work Adèle remains passive and depends on the men around her to orchestrate her triumph. Could the Opéra Comique audience believe that the singer performing Adèle came to her position in any other manner?

Edouard Monnais' *Portefeuille de deux cantatrices* described the problems encountered by the young singer Esther during her debut in Bordeaux.<sup>97</sup> Prior to her

<sup>97</sup>Smith, *Portefeuille de deux cantatrices*. The work was originally published as a feuilleton in *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* from 6 October 1844 to 18 May 1845. Appearing weekly (and oc-

debut, Esther is introduced to a powerful theatre subscriber who declares that he has been the lover of every prima donna for the past six years and offers his services as protector to Esther. Chaste, virtuous, and naïve, Esther rejects his offer; angered, the *habitué* promises that her debut will fail. Esther seeks the advice of the theatre's director. He tells her that by rejecting the man's advances, she has broken one of the first rules of the theatre: the necessity of maintaining "diplomatic" relations with the subscribers. Desperate to save her budding career, Esther changes strategy and encourages the aspiring lover not to lose hope. Her debut is a success.

The anecdotal article "La débutante" in the journal *Petits mystères de théâtre: Chroniques des coulisses* (1855), virtually ignores the title character to focus instead on the off-stage collaborations by her male protectors.<sup>98</sup> The young, blond-haired, blue-eyed Anasthasie Mitouflet, too inexperienced for the Opéra Comique, has set her sights on the provinces. The day of her debut, the subscribers gather in a local café to discuss the merits of the new debutante. An argument breaks out between two men: one vaunts having been her lover while she was a student at the Conservatoire, and another, claiming to be her brother, defends the debutante's honour. The former is forced to recant his claim and state that he has never met the debutante; the latter then laughs and reveals that he has never "met" her either. News of the men's exchange spreads quickly in the hours preceding the debut. Upon taking the stage, Anasthasie is greeted by thunderous applause: the audience reception boosting her confidence, she sings and performs to perfection and is enthusiastically acclaimed at the opera's conclusion. The anecdote reinforces the dubious reputation of singers by insinuating that the debutante has garnered support in the town by sleeping around with the local *abonnés*. In the end, it seems, the only way to succeed is by pleasing the community of men who exercise control in the theatre milieu.

The role of the protector, at least for female singers at the Opéra and the Opéra Comique, has perhaps been exaggerated. Granted, there were some who likely depended on protectors, particularly to help with the financial costs associated with the debut. Debutants were expected to furnish their costume, coiffure, wigs, and

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casionally bi-monthly) for eight months, the fictional series was likely widely read by the journal's subscribers; we can only speculate, however, as to its impact on readers' perceptions of female performers and the theatre industry. Edouard Monnais (1798-1868) was a music critic, author, and theatre administrator. From 1 December 1839 to the end of May 1840, he co-directed the Opéra with Duponchel. He later replaced Léon Pillet as commissaire royal at the Commission spéciale des Théâtres royaux when Pillet took over the directorship of the Opéra. Under the pseudonym Paul Smith, Monnais wrote a number of anecdotal works about the theatre and theatrical culture, including *Les Filles d'Opéra et les Virtuoses de table d'hôte* (1846) and *Esquisses de la vie d'artiste* (1844).

<sup>98</sup>"La débutante," *Petits mystères de théâtre: Chroniques des coulisses* (Paris: Impr. d'Aubusson et Kugelman, 1855), 8.

footwear. Conservatoire students were given a sum of money following a successful debut to help offset the costs incurred with the new position, receiving 500 francs if engaged at one of the royal theatres and 250 francs for provincial theatres.<sup>99</sup> These bursaries likely covered only a portion of the cost: a letter on behalf Mlle Calvé, a Conservatoire student highly recommended by Rossini, was sent to the minister asking for an extra 200 francs to help the young singer pay for costumes for her debuts at the Opéra Comique.<sup>100</sup> According such weighty influence to the protector, however, has obscured a network of other influential people and institutional apparatuses utilized by singers. More important, it has effaced the role of the singer herself in organizing and controlling her success.

“It is not easy to debut at the Opéra, even for a young *cantatrice* with a beautiful voice and recognized talent, who has been contracted in advance and paid well by the theatre’s administration,” asserted Hector Berlioz in his *Les grotesques de la musique*, although not without a touch of sarcasm.<sup>101</sup> In this fictional account, Berlioz documented a debutante’s frustrations in choosing her repertoire amid rivalries at the theatre, rounding up all the *premiers sujets* reluctant to rehearse the opera, and visiting the critics in advance of the debut to secure their support. The first critic she petitions is “un capricieux, un entêté,” fearsome and easily offended, who crushes debutants in his reviews should they have the misfortune of upsetting him. Bad news: he declares that the opera she has chosen gives him horrible intestinal pains. The second critic is much kinder—and luckily more influential—and promises his full support. Berlioz’s story reminds us of the complex networks between performers, directors, and the press. Could such a pact between critic and debutante have resulted in Théophile Gautier’s lengthy, glowing review of Catinka Heinefetter, or Escudier’s spotlight on Eugénie Jullienne, a veritable unknown in Paris before her Opéra debuts? It also reveals the political skills required by singers to negotiate these networks of power and influence. In this account, the debutante did not have a protector who took care of these arrangements—she did them herself. We might consider how this version that emphasizes the singer’s active role in organizing her success might be closer to the truth.

<sup>99</sup>Pierre, *Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation, documents historiques et administratif recueillis ou reconstitués*, 298.

<sup>100</sup>Letter dated 21 December 1834 in *F-Pan* F<sup>21</sup> 1293 (dossier Calvé).

<sup>101</sup>“Ce n’est pas chose facile de débiter à l’Opéra, même pour une jeune cantatrice douée d’une belle voix, dont le talent est reconnu, qui est d’avance engagée et chèrement payée par l’administration de ce théâtre, et qui a par conséquent le droit de compter sur le bon vouloir du directeur et sur son désir de la produire en public le plus tôt et le mieux possible.” “La débutante. Despotisme du directeur de l’Opéra,” in Berlioz, *Les grotesques de la musique*, 172-178.

During this period interviews were exceptionally rare and singers unfortunately lacked a direct voice in the press. Women were at a particular disadvantage. Spoken for by male critics and writers, the perceptions of debutantes in published material communicated a strong male bias that served to reinforce contemporary gender ideologies. Probing Catinka Heinefetter and Noémie de Roissy's correspondence reveals the work and the initiative that these debutantes took in starting their careers, and suggests that they probably were not the only singers who took such steps to garner the necessary support for their debuts. Heinefetter's initial three-year contract with the Opéra required that her debuts occur by early November 1840. She first petitioned to have her debuts delayed a week in light of her instructor's two-month absence and the subsequent interruption in her preparations.<sup>102</sup> A second delay was requested in order to assure that Gilbert-Louis Duprez would be able to perform alongside Heinefetter during her debuts. (She even offered to give up her salary for November and December 1840 to secure this second delay.) In the meantime, she asked if her thrice-weekly lessons could take place in the theatre itself.<sup>103</sup> Her debuts finally began 4 January 1841. To maintain heightened audience interest and exclusivity during her debuts, the administration asked the singer not to perform at a musical *matinée* in the days prior to the event.<sup>104</sup> The Opéra administration provided Heinefetter with eighty tickets, which she decided to use during her debuts to create her own private *claque*.<sup>105</sup> Her friends must not have been subtle in their support: in his review, Théophile Gautier claimed that the "twelve tribes" were in attendance at her debut as Rachel (Heinefetter was Jewish).<sup>106</sup> To boost her reception, she finally asked Pillet to lend her the use of the Opéra's *claque* (which had initially been promised by Halévy, likely in his capacity as *chef de chant*).<sup>107</sup> Escudier had remarked upon the *claque*'s inactivity during her first debut performance and attributed it to the jealous influence of Rosine Stoltz. He noted her later performances were much more warmly received.<sup>108</sup>

Noémie de Roissy (b. 1824) appeared rather unexpectedly on the stage at the Opéra 17 May 1841 (see Figure 2.2 for a portrait of the singer). For the continua-

<sup>102</sup> Letter to the director dated 26 October 1840 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Heinefetter).

<sup>103</sup> Letter to the director, received on 20 November 1840 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Heinefetter).

<sup>104</sup> Letter to Heinefetter from the director dated 8 January 1841 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Heinefetter).

<sup>105</sup> Letter to the director dated 8 February 1841 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Heinefetter).

<sup>106</sup> "[...] aussi les applaudissements israélites ne lui ont pas manqué. Les douze tribus avaient là leurs représentants: il est juste de dire que les chrétiens y ont mêlé leurs bravos à plusieurs reprises." Gautier, *Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans*, 2:91.

<sup>107</sup> Letter dated 4 April 1841 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Heinefetter).

<sup>108</sup> Escudier, "Académie royale de musique. Mlle Heinefetter."

tion of her debuts, Catinka Heinefetter was to perform the role of Alice in *Robert le diable*; unable to sing due to illness, she was replaced at the last minute by Roissy. Described as a “cantatrice de passage,” Roissy debuted *à l'improviste* (without rehearsal). She repeated the performance two weeks later to promising reviews. Praised for her excellent musicianship and confident participation in the ensembles, with strong acting abilities and a focused, penetrating voice, the critics at *La France musicale* found Roissy to be an excellent asset for the Opéra in secondary roles.<sup>109</sup> Rather atypically, the debutante was praised for her boldness on stage. The critic described de Roissy as a performer who took her art seriously, her singing and gestures revealing an internal fervor “more violent than reasonable” and a certain recklessness in tackling the role’s vocal difficulties.<sup>110</sup> In a situation that would make the most courageous musician tremble, Roissy was “a true demon on stage.” Over the next few months, Roissy performed in new roles with little or no rehearsal and often, it seems, to replace Rosine Stoltz.<sup>111</sup> She had been officially engaged at the Opéra in June 1841, her debuts having satisfied both the public and the administration. She remained at the Opéra as a *remplacement* until she resigned in September 1847.

Roissy had played her cards well. Her debuts had prevented the necessity of a *relâche*, placing the singer in a respectable bargaining position. A letter to Léon Pillet in early June reveals an ambitious and forthright singer, who presented herself as a valuable resource for the theatre. She first reveals that she had recently turned down yet another opportunity to accept a lucrative contract in Naples because she was committed to Paris for family reasons and believed her voice was best suited to grand opera. Roissy confessed that although it was potentially damaging to her artistic reputation and her health to debut unprepared, she wanted to convince the administration of her courage and devotion.<sup>112</sup> She then proposed the conditions for a year-long contract that, she felt, considered the administration’s best interests and well as her own: five months at 1,000 francs per month, one month unpaid leave,

<sup>109</sup> *La France musicale*, 6 June 1841.

<sup>110</sup> “On voit qu’elle a pris son art au sérieux; car son chant et sa pantomime décèlent continuellement une ardeur intérieure plus violente que raisonnable; sa voix, hardie, pénétrante, pointue, loin de redouter les difficultés, les recherche, les aborde avec témérité, et réussit dans l’exécution des traits les plus imprévus, si non les mieux combinés, [...]. Il y a de quoi faire trembler les musiciens les plus intrépides! En un mot, c’est un vrai démon sur la scène.” *La France musicale*, 6 June 1841.

<sup>111</sup> Roissy replaced Elian Barthélemy in *La Favorite* on 1 September, and then Rosine Stoltz in *Le Comte Ory* two days later. *La France musicale*, 5 September 1841.

<sup>112</sup> Letter to director dated 9 June 1841 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Roissy).



Figure 2.2: Noémie de Roissy. From *La Sylphide* (1841), lithography by Gèdre. *F-Pn*.

and another six months at 1,500 francs per month, for a total of 14,000 francs.<sup>113</sup> Her letter is reproduced in Appendix B.

She followed up with another letter asking to meet with Pillet to discuss the conditions of her engagement.<sup>114</sup> Her contract was signed less than two weeks later with the following conditions: the singer was engaged for two years, with an annual salary of roughly 8,000 francs and two months unpaid leave.<sup>115</sup> The singer obviously made some concessions, but her tactic worked. Roissy ended up singing at the Opéra for seven years and earned a respectable income of about 10,000 francs a year.

Roissy's letter sheds some light on her performance style and her critical reception. Remarkably confident off stage in her dealings with the administration, her enthusiasm and zeal also came across on stage. Whereas some debutantes were re-

<sup>113</sup>De Roissy stated that she was willing to take a second month *congé*, and reduce her salary to 12,500 francs for the year.

<sup>114</sup>Letter to director dated 9 June 1841 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Roissy).

<sup>115</sup>Contract signed 18 June 1841 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Roissy).



proached for being overconfident, Roissy's boldness was praised—at least initially. A critic from *La France musicale* later warned the singer not to become emboldened with the praise she had received and to pay more attention to constructive criticism, and repeated that she should be kept well within her abilities as a secondary singer.<sup>116</sup> The favour that she received at the Opéra came into question years later. Albéric Second claimed that François Benoît, the Opéra's *chef de chant des rôles* from 1840 to 1850, was known for the protection he accorded Roissy.<sup>117</sup> Benoît could have influenced Roissy's reception at the theatre: as the *chef de chant*, he would have sat on the panel of judges at auditions, helped rehearse the singers for their roles, and advised the administration on casting choices. Ultimately, Roissy's determination and success found a more acceptable explanation—the powerful and necessary influence of men.

## 2.8 MAKING THEIR OWN WAY

A debut effectively announced a singer's intention to become a professional singer: ambition, zeal, boldness were thus indispensable qualities at the launching of a career. And yet the debut structure that required performers to be publicly accepted into the theatrical community reinforced their vulnerability—especially for the women. Critical and anecdotal writings presented debutantes as relatively powerless and dependent upon men, prone to using backhanded methods to obtain a debut. Such representation of debutantes can perhaps be seen as a way of containing women's power, at least until they became professional singers and more influential in the theatre community. But it has also enforced the common perception that debutantes were shepherded through the debut system by powerful protectors. The alternative view proposed in this chapter, however, reveals that many singers demonstrated remarkable agency and took control of their careers from the very beginning. Significantly, both Catinka Heinefetter and Noémie de Roissy were not prima donnas with established careers and circles of influence; rather, they were just starting to establish themselves in the Parisian theatre milieu. And these were not isolated examples, as we will discover in the following chapters. Their example encourages reconsideration of a larger debate: were theatre women of the nineteenth century merely victims of a patriarchal industry or icons of emerging female emancipation?

<sup>116</sup>*La France musicale*, 27 June 1841.

<sup>117</sup>Second, *Les petits mystères de l'Opéra*, 170–171.



## PROFESSIONAL LIFE

Quelles peuvent être dans l'avenir les fantaisies et les variations d'une femme et d'un artiste?

Je ne le sais, et qui pourrait à cet égard rien garantir?<sup>1</sup>

In September 1846, Cécile Pijon's irate father sent a letter to president of the Commission des théâtres royaux, pleading for him to intervene on behalf of his daughter who faced an increasingly difficult situation at the Opéra. Initially hired in July 1845 for three years, Mlle Pijon (b. 1821, dite d'Halbert) was called into director Léon Pillet's office and informed that she would have to take a pay cut or risk losing her position. M. Pijon was as angry at Pillet's attempt to save on the already measly earnings of a lower-ranking singer as he was that Pillet's assurances of protection for his daughter from influential insiders were ultimately not respected. Apparently a few months prior to this incident, M. Pijon was so shocked at Pillet's exclusive power to cancel Cécile's contract after the first year with little more than a month's notice—certainly not enough time to make alternative employment arrangements—that he had asked an influential family friend with important connections in the theatre to intervene.<sup>2</sup> With letters sent to the right people, M. Pijon managed to straighten everything out once again on his daughter's behalf. Cécile sent a letter expressing her gratitude to Pillet for retracting his proposition to reduce her salary (which was actually raised) and another boldly asking to extend the raise of 600 francs to the subsequent years of her contract.<sup>3</sup> Her protectors kept a close eye on the situation: the Minister of foreign affairs (apparently a good friend of Pijon's father) sent a letter to the director in 1846 asking him for his indulgence with regard to Pijon.<sup>4</sup> In 1847, the director even allotted Pijon a "secret" gratification of 500 francs a year: he asked Pijon for her utmost discretion not to reveal the details of this bonus to the other singers.<sup>5</sup> Com-

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Pillet dated 2 July 1845 in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Pijon dite d'Halbert).

<sup>2</sup>Her contract was consequently modified, granting both Pillet and Cécile the power to cancel. See the new clause on the back of her contract dated 2 July 1845 in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Pijon dite d'Halbert).

<sup>3</sup>Letter to the director dated 15 July (no year) in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Pijon dite d'Halbert).

<sup>4</sup>Letter to the director dated 26 September 1846 in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Pijon dite d'Halbert).

<sup>5</sup>Letter to Pijon dated 17 September 1847 in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Pijon dite d'Halbert).

pared to other singers of her rank, Pijon enjoyed a higher degree of control over the terms of her employment, although this control was largely due to her father's influence and the protection of his friends. Even so, her employment was almost always under threat. Cécile Pijon encountered more problems when Pillet resigned. In their effort to economize, the new directors Henri Duponchel and Nestor Roqueplan canceled her contract. Although her file does not hold any more letters in her defense, a one-year contract from 1848-1849 suggests the singer's protectors were once again called in.

Even Cécile Pijon's initial hire depended upon the help of some well-placed people. A letter to Pillet from one of these protectors assured the director that Pijon was probably *majeure* and capable of legally signing a contract and, to his knowledge, was likely very devoted to a theatrical career, even given her family's misgivings.<sup>6</sup> "But what might come of the fantasies and vacillations of a woman and an artist?" he exclaimed, "I don't know, and who can guarantee anything in this regard?"

What the author of this letter had originally intended as a quip toward the inconsistencies of women—particularly women artists—might actually serve as a motto for the period, albeit simplified: nothing was guaranteed. From 1830 to 1850, the institutions of the Opéra and Opéra Comique underwent a transformation that considerably affected the professional lives of the singers. Contemporary writings and current scholarship have tended to consider only the experiences of star singers and their earnings. This narrow focus on salaries during the period has obscured myriad other significant changes that affected all artists from the stars to those lowest on the theatre hierarchy. Such changes influenced the theatres' hiring practices and, as a result, the career trajectories of the artists. The adoption of short-term contracts allowed artists more opportunities to negotiate lucrative benefits, but directors also tightened their control over their employees' contractual obligations. Singers achieved more career mobility, but lost their job security. Star performers wielded impressive cultural and economic power, but their middle- and lower-ranking colleagues often suffered in the shadows with little recognition and measly compensation. This chapter shifts the focus by examining the changing experiences of the lower- and middle-ranking singers as well as the star performers, and highlights the often over-looked, but all-important, role the institutions played in shaping the careers of the singing personnel.

<sup>6</sup>Letter to director dated 2 July 1845 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Pijon dite d'Halbert).

### 3.1 THE END OF AN ERA

The singing troupes at the Opéra and Opéra Comique prior to the 1830 July Revolution were cohesive and stable—and stagnant, many would probably have added. Careers typically spanned fifteen years to over three decades. Mme Albert sang at the Opéra for seventeen years, Caroline Branchu (1780-1850) for twenty-six years, Anne Aimée Armand (1774-1840) for nineteen; at the Opéra Comique, Mme Desbrosses (1763-1856) sang for fifty-four years from 1776 to 1829, and Mmes Crétu, Aglaé Gavaudan, Moreau, Pradher, and Lemonnier performed at the theatre upwards of twenty years. Long, prosperous careers resulted from the theatres' strict hierarchy, promotion based on a combination of seniority and merit, and long contracts. Organized as a society of artists until 1828, the artistic personnel at the Opéra Comique were divided into three classes: *sociétaire*, *pensionnaire*, and *acteur à l'essai*.<sup>7</sup> After their debuts, singers were hired as an *acteur à l'essai* and, after a successful trial year, were usually promoted to *pensionnaire*. The promotion came with *feux* (a performance bonus) and the right to a retirement pension upon completion of fifteen years of service.<sup>8</sup> A further promotion to *sociétaire* gave the singer a share in the company's profits and the right to participate in the organization and the running of the theatre, although this responsibility was handed to a director in 1824. Opéra singers were also clearly ranked as *premier sujet* (primary singer, main roles), *remplacement* (secondary singer, secondary roles and main roles in smaller works), and *double* (stand-in, the smallest roles and last-minute replacements).<sup>9</sup> Generally, singers began as

<sup>7</sup>The society of artists was temporarily re-formed from 1832 to 1834. See Olivier Bara's discussion of the theatre's society of artists in Bara, *Le théâtre de l'opéra-comique sous la restauration: enquête autour d'un genre moyen*, 26-32.

<sup>8</sup>Opéra Comique artists were further classified according to the degree of control they exercised over their roles. Those ranked as *chef d'emploi* were principal singers whose roles became their property while at the theatre; a *double* was an understudy and therefore only performed when the *chef d'emploi* was ill or absent. By 1827, some small changes were introduced that allowed a *pensionnaire* as well as a *sociétaire* to hold the *chef d'emploi* and advancement in the theatre was to be based on merit, not seniority. Royal ordinance signed 17 July 1827 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1053. See note 49 below for a short discussion of the history of *feux*.

<sup>9</sup>The terms used for the three positions at the Opéra can be misleading and have often been misinterpreted. Hervé Lacombe, for example, translated *remplacement* as stand-in and *double* as understudy in his chapter, Lacombe, "The 'Machine' and the State," 30. Arthur Pougin's *Dictionnaire* helps to clear up some of the confusion that has resulted. A *remplacement* would replace a *premier sujet*, and a *double* would replace a *remplacement*. What causes the confusion is the common use of *double* or *doublure* to refer to the performer who becomes an understudy for a main role. Important roles in new works were often doubled in this fashion, to avoid an unnecessary *relâche* in the event of an illness or absence of a *premier sujet*. See "Double (acteurs en)" in Pougin, *Dictionnaire historique et pittoresque du théâtre et des arts qui s'y rattachent*, 304. Castil-Blaze similarly declared that "Chef d'emploi, remplacement, double, c'est ainsi que le règlement de ce théâtre avait toujours classé le premier, le second, le troisième des sujets du chant." Castil-Blaze, *L'Académie Impériale de*

*doubles* and climbed the theatre hierarchy until they finally achieved the ranking of *premier sujet* where their employment was virtually guaranteed for fifteen years, after which they were eligible to receive a full pension.<sup>10</sup> Most singers moved swiftly into the upper echelons at the Opéra: both Caroline Joséphine Grassari (b. 1798, née Gérard) and Louise Dabadie (1804-1877, née Leroux) were promoted all the way to *premier sujet* within five years of their initial debuts.<sup>11</sup>

By the mid-1820s at the Opéra such promotion was increasingly difficult, as the theatre sought to reform its outmoded vocal style and repertoire that could not compete with other lyric and boulevard theatres. Those singers who represented the old style became victims of these changing fashions and found their upward mobility thwarted. Cornélie Quiney (Figure 3.1) encountered much frustration during her time at the Opéra and never managed to achieve the rank of *premier sujet*. She debuted in May 1820 and was hired as a *double*. Her promotion to *remplacement* finally came in January 1824 and only after repeated petitions to the administration and the Vicomte Sosthène de La Rochefoucauld (director of the Department of Fine Arts from August 1824) by her father on her behalf and the singer herself.<sup>12</sup> Her numerous pleas to sing main roles were ignored, and she was eventually informed by M. Dubois, the *directeur de la scène* from 1824 to 1826 that, for reasons of economy, a *double* would be given a main role before her: the Opéra, it seems, wished to avoid paying the *remplacement's* *feux*.<sup>13</sup> However, the *doubles* were rarely prepared to replace a singer at the last minute. Frustrated with the all-too frequent necessity of a *relâche* (cancellation of a performance) when the primary singer was unavailable, La Rochefoucauld insisted that the understudies should learn the part at the same time as the *premiers sujets*, a view seconded by the *chefs de chant*.<sup>14</sup> The roles for

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*Musique, histoire littéraire, musicale, chorégraphique, pittoresque, morale, critique, facétieuse, politique et galante de ce théâtre, de 1645 à 1855* 2:254.

<sup>10</sup>According to the Opéra's "Règlement de 1821," the last version of the institution's rules that governed life at the theatre before the changes in 1831, a *double's* contract expired after five years. Should he or she not have been promoted to *remplacement* or *premier sujet*, the singer would have to leave the theatre. See the section on "Chant," article 56 in "Règlement de 1821" in *F-Po* P.A. 1821.

<sup>11</sup>Grassari was quickly promoted to *remplacement* after her debuts in 1816 and became a *premier sujet* by 1821. Hired as a *double* in 1821, Louise Dabadie was promoted to *remplacement* in 1822 and to *premier sujet* in 1826. *F-Po* PE 2.

<sup>12</sup>See letters dated 21 November 1821, 10 June 1822, and 11 February 1824 in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 128, and 18 December 1824 in *F-Pan* F<sup>21</sup> 1058.

<sup>13</sup>Letter dated 10 March 1825 in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 128. A report from the Opéra administration confirms her claim, although they defended their decision by saying they wished to encourage the *doubles* by providing them with more performing opportunities; saving 30 francs on *feux* was just a bonus. See the report dated 9 March 1825 in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 128.

<sup>14</sup>Letter from La Rochefoucauld to Duplantys, 1 March 1826 in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 116; undated letter to the Opéra administration from the *chefs de chant* in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 116. It seems that understudies also

which the *doubles* and *remplacements* were responsible were clearly laid out a document entitled “Distribution des rôles pour les remplacements et les doubles.” In the document, Quiney was assigned sixteen roles, although as of 1825 she had only performed eight of them.<sup>15</sup> The administration finally accorded the singer an audition in 1826 to determine whether she should be promoted to primary singer. The *chefs de chant* determined that her vocal capabilities were insufficient for the higher rank, but she was given a *gratification* (bonus) of 800 francs to reward her devotion to the theatre.<sup>16</sup>

Why might Quiney have encountered so many obstacles during her career at the Opéra? A critic at the *Courrier des théâtres* intimated in 1824 that her pretension far surpassed her talent and had created a barrier between the singer and the administration.<sup>17</sup> Quiney’s file is full of letters to the administration pleading for fair treatment, recognition, and the opportunity to perform. The negative interpretation of her assertive behaviour as pretentious indicates that the singer was pushing the acceptable limits of her rank and her gender, a problem that Quiney seemed to sense as she continually invoked her virtue, lack of protection, and avoidance of theatre intrigue in her correspondence. Her letter in 1825 appealing to the administration to consider the public’s opinion of her performance of Hypermnestre from *Danaïdes*, rather than that of the “biased” committee, claimed: “When an artist arrives at the rank where I am without protection, without intrigue, it is to the public alone that she calls for judgment, otherwise she should quit the art that she can no longer cultivate with honourable independence.”<sup>18</sup> Laugier’s biographical article on Quiney in 1827 portrayed the singer as a model of good morals, sincerity, filial respect, and talent, who in no way benefited from the favours of protection.<sup>19</sup> Her father’s active involvement in her career and negotiations with the administration also indicates a concern for gender propriety. He came to her defense several times, even writing to Charles Maurice, the editor-in-chief of *Courrier des théâtres*, to defend his daughter’s reputation after

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lacked updated scores. The *chefs de chant* complained that the revisions Rossini made to *Le Siège de Corinthe* were not reflected in the rehearsal scores, and they could not teach what lay only in the memories of the performers who sang in the opera. Report from the *chefs de chant*, 28 September 1826 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 116.

<sup>15</sup>“Distribution des rôles pour les remplacements et les doubles,” undated document in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 116.

<sup>16</sup>See letters dated 24 April 1826 and 17 October 1826 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 117.

<sup>17</sup>Press clipping, “Iphigénie en Aulide. Début de Madame Messin. Flore et Zéphyre,” dated 18 June 1824 from the *Courrier des théâtres* in *F-Pn RO*-5471 (articles de presse de Mme Messin).

<sup>18</sup>“Quand un Artiste est arrivé au Grade où je suis sans protection, sans intrigue, c’est au Public seul qu’il appartient de le Juger, ou bien il doit quitter un Art qu’il ne peut plus cultiver avec une honorable indépendance.” Letter dated 26 October 1825 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 128 (piece no. 832).

<sup>19</sup>Laugier, *Galerie biographique des artistes dramatiques des théâtres royaux*, 62-65.



Figure 3.1: Cornélie Quiney (later Mme Baptiste-Quiney): Académie royale de musique. *F-Pn* Gallica

an anonymously authored biographical dictionary claimed the young singer made malicious comments about well-known prima donnas at the Théâtre Italien.<sup>20</sup>

But above all, Quiney had unfortunate timing. She specialized in the Opéra's "old" repertoire—that is, operas written and performed mainly before the arrival of Rossini's adaptations for the French stage (*Le Siège de Corinthe*, *Le Comte Ory*, *Moïse*) and the development of grand opera. The Opéra was in an artistic slump in the 1820s, seen as outdated by its contemporaries, neither able to compete with the popular works coming out of the secondary theatres nor with the exceptional success of the Théâtre Italien. Rossini's works garnered more interest and eventually led the way toward the Opéra's aesthetic renewal. With the success of Auber's

<sup>20</sup>Press clipping, "Correspondance à M. Ch. Maurice, directeur du *Courrier des théâtres*, Paris, le 23 juin 1826" in *F-Pn* RO-5600 (articles de presse de Mlle Quincy [Quiney]).



*La Muette de Portici* in 1828, Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* in 1829, and the "hits" of the 1830s (Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* in 1831 and *Les Huguenots* in 1836; Halévy's *La Juive* in 1835), the repertory shifted dramatically to exclude most works produced before 1828 (with the exception of Rossini's operas). Tables 3.1 and 3.2 show the extent of the change.<sup>21</sup> Quiney performed over seventy times in 1825; by 1828, her performances had dropped to a handful a year, and none are recorded in 1829.<sup>22</sup>

Table 3.1: Operas performed in 1826 at the Opéra

| Opera                                                                 | Première date | # of perf. |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| <i>Fernand Cortez</i> (Le Sueur)                                      | 1809          | 18         |
| <i>Le Caravane du Caire</i> (Grétry)                                  | 1784          | 14         |
| <i>Aladin ou La lampe merveilleuse</i> (Benincori, Habeneck, Isouard) | 1822          | 13         |
| <i>Le Siège de Corinthe</i> (Rossini)                                 | 1826          | 13         |
| <i>La Vestale</i> (Spontini)                                          | 1807          | 11         |
| <i>Le Rossignol</i> (Lebrun)                                          | 1816          | 11         |
| <i>Orphée et Eurydice</i> (Gluck)                                     | 1774          | 9          |
| <i>Armide</i> (Gluck)                                                 | 1777          | 8          |
| <i>Œdipe à Colone</i> (Sacchini)                                      | 1787          | 7          |
| <i>Les Prétendus</i> (Lemoyne)                                        | 1789          | 7          |
| <i>Mystères d'Isis</i> [ <i>Die Zauberflöte</i> ] (Mozart)            | 1801          | 7          |
| <i>Le Devin du village</i> (Rousseau)                                 | 1752          | 6          |
| <i>Olympie</i> (Spontini)                                             | 1819          | 5          |
| <i>Lasthénie</i> (Hérold)                                             | 1823          | 5          |
| <i>Iphigénie en Tauride</i> (Gluck)                                   | 1779          | 4          |
| <i>Stratonice</i> (Méhul)                                             | 1792          | 3          |
| <i>Le Triomphe de Trajan</i> (Le Sueur)                               | 1807          | 3          |
| <i>Aristippe</i> (Kreutzer)                                           | 1808          | 3          |
| <i>La Belle au bois dormant</i> (Carafa)                              | 1825          | 3          |
| <i>Pharamond</i> (Berton, Boieldieu, Kreutzer, Le Sueur)              | 1825          | 3          |
| <i>Didon</i> (Piccini)                                                | 1783          | 2          |
| <i>Arvire et Evelina</i> (Rey, Sacchini)                              | 1788          | 2          |
| <i>Virginie</i> (Berton)                                              | 1823          | 2          |
| <i>Les Deux Salem</i> (Daussoigne)                                    | 1824          | 2          |
| <i>Alceste</i> (Gluck)                                                | 1776          | 1          |
| <i>Tarare</i> (Salieri)                                               | 1787          | 1          |
| <i>Anacréon chez Polycrate</i> (Grétry)                               | 1797          | 1          |

With the change in repertoire came also a reform in vocal aesthetic, necessary for the performance of Rossini's operas as well as those Italianate roles in early grand opera (Elvire from *La Muette de Portici*, Isabelle in *Robert le diable*, Marguerite in *Les Huguenots*, for example). Prior to Rossini's "revolution," explained Castil-Blaze,

<sup>21</sup>Performance statistics for these tables were taken from [chronopera.free.fr](http://chronopera.free.fr), an online database created by the C.N.R.S. and the Bibliothèque de France. The statistics are not foolproof, as the researchers have taken the performance listings from the record books in the archives; these sometimes did not reflect last minute changes that were announced in the press.

<sup>22</sup>Performance statistics gleaned from the *registres de feux* in *F-Po* RE 261, 262, and 263.



Table 3.2: Operas performed in 1830 at the Opéra

| Opera                                        | Première date | # of perf. |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| <i>Le Comte Ory</i> (Rossini)                | 1828          | 31         |
| <i>La Muette de Portici</i> (Auber)          | 1828          | 31         |
| <i>Guillaume Tell</i> (Rossini)              | 1829          | 24         |
| <i>Le Dieu et la bayadère</i> (Auber)        | 1830          | 20         |
| <i>Le Rossignol</i> (Lebrun)                 | 1816          | 10         |
| <i>François Ier à Chambord</i> (Ginestet)    | 1830          | 8          |
| <i>Fernand Cortez</i> (Le Sueur)             | 1809          | 7          |
| <i>Moïse et Pharaon</i> (Rossini)            | 1827          | 6          |
| <i>Orphée et Eurydice</i> (Gluck)            | 1774          | 2          |
| <i>Oedipe à Colone</i> (Sacchini)            | 1787          | 2          |
| <i>Aristippe</i> (Kreutzer)                  | 1808          | 2          |
| <i>Aladin</i> (Benincori, Habeneck, Isouard) | 1822          | 2          |
| <i>La Vestale</i> (Spontini)                 | 1807          | 1          |
| <i>Le Siège de Corinthe</i> (Rossini)        | 1826          | 1          |

there was no singing at the Opéra: “[...] actors paid attention to the exact pronunciation of the text, to acting, to the delivery of the voice, of a declamation more or less true, but singing was neglected.”<sup>23</sup> The declamatory style (derogatorily referred to as *urlo francese*) was thus replaced—or, at the very least, softened—by Italian method modeled by those singers trained to sing Italian opera who were then hired at the Opéra. With a limpid, flexible, brilliant soprano voice capable of the most complex embellishments, Laure Cinti-Damoreau (née Cinthie Montalant) was one of the few French singers to achieve success at the Théâtre Italien in the 1820s. Although still employed at the Théâtre Italien, she began singing at the Opéra in 1825 while the two theatres were jointly administered. A report on the state of singing at the Opéra in the late 1820s noted the remarkable effect Cinti-Damoreau had during her first performances:

In the three times she had appeared we could observe how the singers and the orchestra softened their noisy racket, and what brilliant success! [...] Cinti’s simple presence provides inspiration for our composers who will want to create roles for her, being thus delighted to finally have a woman who *sings*.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> “[...] les acteurs s’occupaient de l’exacte prononciation des paroles, du jeu de scène, de l’émission de la voix, d’une déclamation plus ou moins vraie, mais le chant vocal était négligé.” Castil-Blaze, *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 3 July 1836.

<sup>24</sup> “Dans les trois fois qu’elle a paru on a pu remarquer combien les chanteurs et l’orchestre ont adouci leur bruyant tapage, et quel brillant succès! [...] La présence seule de Cinti est un stimulant pour nos compositeurs qui a l’envie lui feront des rôles, enchantés qu’ils sont d’avoir enfin une femme qui *chante*” (my emphasis). “Quelques observations sur l’Académie royale de musique” in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 180.

She premièred main roles in Rossini's French adaptations and in his grand opera *Guillaume Tell* composed specifically for the Opéra and proved, insisted Castil-Blaze, that a French opera could be sung. Along with Nicholas Levasseur, another Frenchman from the Théâtre Italien, and Adolphe Nourrit, who studied with famous pedagogue and Rossinian tenor Manuel Garcia *père*, the three artists regenerated the art of singing at the Opéra and inspired their colleagues to abandon the French “bark” while still keeping true to French declamation.

Table 3.3: Female personnel at the Opéra in 1826, 1830, and 1837

| 1826                       | 1830                   | 1837                 |
|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Bibre (1826-1828)          |                        |                      |
| Frémont (1824-1827)        |                        |                      |
| Grassari (1816-1828)       |                        |                      |
| Lebrun (1825-1827)         |                        |                      |
| Lemesle (1825-1826)        |                        |                      |
| Noël (1824-1827)           |                        |                      |
| Cinti-Damoreau (1826-1835) | Cinti-Damoreau         |                      |
| Dabadie (1821-1835)        | Dabadie                |                      |
| Jawureck (1822-1837)       | Jawureck               |                      |
| Gosselin-Mori (1826-1837)  | Gosselin-Mori          |                      |
| Quiney (1820-1836)         | Quiney                 |                      |
|                            | Lavry (1830-1832)      |                      |
|                            | Dorus-Gras (1830-1845) | Dorus-Gras           |
|                            |                        | Falcon (1832-1838)   |
|                            |                        | Flécheux (1832-1838) |
|                            |                        | Morin (1837-1840)    |
|                            |                        | Nau (1836-1853)*     |
|                            |                        | Stoltz (1837-1847)   |
|                            |                        | Widemann (1835-1842) |

\*Nau did not perform continuously at the theatre during this period.

The change in repertoire with the rise of grand opera and the influx of new stars, along with the transition to the new entrepreneurial system in 1831 provoked a gradual clearing out of the singing personnel specializing in the older repertoire. Table 3.3 lists the female singers at the Opéra in 1826, 1830 and 1837. Louise Dabadie, Constance Jawureck, and Augusta Gosselin-Mori continued performing into the 1830s by adapting to the demands of the new repertoire. They premièred many of the secondary roles in the new works: Dabadie sang Sinäi in *Moïse et Pharaon*, Jemmy in *Guillaume Tell*, and Arvedson in Auber's *Gustave III*; Gosselin-Mori performed Marie in *Moïse*, Ragonde in *Le Comte Ory*, and Edwige in *Guillaume Tell*; Jawureck took the roles of the page Isolier in *Le Comte Ory* and Jeanette in Auber's *Le Philtre*. In a bid to remain marketable, Quiney transformed herself from a mediocre soprano into a very capable contralto. Unfortunately, it did not improve her position. Quiney

sang some excerpts from Rossini's *Tancredi* and *Semiramide* for a committee in 1829. They found that while her voice had improved and she showed the capacity to sing the new repertoire, the position of contralto did not (yet) exist at the Opéra.<sup>25</sup> Quiney remained on the roster until 1836, but rarely performed. In 1833 she obtained a leave of absence of twenty months, an arrangement not without precedent at the Opéra when the director did not want a particular artist to perform but could not easily dismiss him or her. A notice was even placed in the *Revue musicale* announcing Quiney's availability to sing at other theatres, along with her contact details.<sup>26</sup>

The director Duponchel eventually forced her into retirement before she had finished her fifteen-year service and, although she vehemently disputed his decision, she could not negotiate an extension.<sup>27</sup> Duponchel also forced Gosselin-Mori into retirement in 1837.<sup>28</sup> With Louise Dabadie's voice beginning to show the wear of almost fifteen years singing the old repertoire, the singer retired in July 1835 with her husband Henri Dabadie, an Opéra baritone, even though she had not accumulated enough years of service to receive her full pension. Constance Jawureck left the Opéra in 1837 to sing in Brussels but vocal deterioration forced her retirement in 1840.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.2 INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

The second quarter of the nineteenth century brought dramatic changes to the Opéra and Opéra Comique. With the shift in regime after the July Revolution and the new democratic principles upon which it was based—as well as a prevailing mood of liberalism—the government loosened its control over the Opéra and handed manage-

<sup>25</sup>Report dated 18 August 1829 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 122, III. See also a discussion of her voice and her transformation into a contralto in Stephen de la Madelaine [Étienne-Jean-Baptiste Madelaine], "De l'enseignement public et particulier du chant. (Deuxième article.) Classification des voix. II," *La France musicale*, 14 June 1840.

<sup>26</sup>The peculiar press announcement reads: "MM. les directeurs et correspondans de théâtres n'apprendront pas sans intérêt que Mme Baptiste-Quiney, artiste de l'Académie royale de musique, vient d'obtenir un congé de vingt mois. Cette dame, qui possède une très belle voix de contralto, qui chante également bien l'italien et le français, et qui a obtenu récemment un grand succès dans les concerts historiques de M. Fétis, rendra les plus grands services au directeur qui l'engagera. MM. les directeurs et correspondans de théâtres peuvent s'adresser à M. Quiney, rue du Helder, n. 12, ou à Mme Baptiste-Quiney elle-même, poste restante, à Milan." *Revue musicale*, 14 September 1833. A similar arrangement was made with Joséphine Glossop, a soprano originally hired with impressive salary conditions, but who performed less than a handful of times during the duration of her contract. The affair ended in the courts.

<sup>27</sup>See correspondence between Quiney and the administration in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 186.

<sup>28</sup>See correspondence dated 31 January 1837 and 26 May 1837 in *F-Pan F*<sup>21</sup> 1061.

<sup>29</sup>Edouard Fétis, *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 20 June 1858.

ment over to a *directeur-entrepreneur*. No longer a part of the Royal Household, the Opéra came under the sphere of the Minister of the Interior who appointed a private contracting-director to manage the theatre (for personal profit) and act on the government's behalf.<sup>30</sup> By 1824, the Opéra Comique had fallen under the management of a director; the society of artists was dissolved in 1828 and, after a brief re-appearance from 1832 to 1834 under the management of Paul Dutreih, permanently disbanded in May 1834.

François-Joséph Fétis condemned the new entrepreneurial system in a series of articles published in January 1841.<sup>31</sup> Rather than regenerating the theatres, he claimed, a disastrous situation had emerged wherein the vested interests of the theatre administration and the artistic personnel were irrevocably split. He spoke with nostalgia of the Opéra Comique's former society of artists where the theatre's success had been virtually guaranteed as the personnel had a shared, vested financial interest. Retirement pensions assured fidelity to the theatre. A stable troupe of artists allowed the establishment of a solid repertory. The composers and librettists benefited from working with an established group of singers, and the singers from having roles tailor-made for them. All this was broken under the new system. The pension system abolished, artists no longer had any reason to remain attached to the theatre for long contracts and directors were no longer obligated to retain them (see Chapter 4 for a description of the retirement pension system). Artists fought for the highest wages for the least amount of work so as to not lose their vocal abilities prematurely; directors took little interest in the artistic development of their personnel and thought only of obtaining high receipts and profits. Fétis maintained that a host of other problems resulted: rapidly inflating salaries, instability in the singing troupes, declining performance quality, and the loss of talented singers to provincial and foreign theatres. His solution? Place the Opéra back under the direct control of the government, managed by an artist-musician (not an entrepreneur), and re-establish long contracts and retirement pensions. Reconstitute the Opéra Comique's former artists' society or at the very least create a *cahier des charges* that best imitated its principles. And finally, bring salaries under control through government-legislated salary caps.

Fétis was not alone in criticizing theatre management during the period, nor was

<sup>30</sup>Lacombe, "The 'Machine' and the State," 26-27.

<sup>31</sup>Fétis, "Réflexions mélancoliques sur la situation actuelle et future des théâtres lyriques. Budget," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 3 January 1841; idem, "Réflexions mélancoliques sur la situation actuelle et future des théâtres lyriques (suite et fin)," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 21 January 1841.

he alone in identifying liberalism as the root of the problem and concentrating on the destructive effects of rapidly rising salaries. Immediately following Fétis's first article was one by Edouard Monnais where he claimed that before, one had to preach economy to artists, and now one had to preach moderation.<sup>32</sup> He chastised singers for commanding high fees that would eventually cause the financial ruin of Parisian lyric theatre. A satirical article penned by "les deux naturalistes" (likely the Escudier brothers) in *La France musicale* the same year described a tourist's visit to the Paris Opéra.<sup>33</sup> Once there he witnessed the shambles of a rehearsal, singers past their prime, weak middle-ranking singers, and the tyrannical reign of Rosine Stoltz. "[V]oilà bien l'effet de l'industrialisme qui s'est glissé partout," exclaimed his guide. In an article in *La France théâtrale*, Constant Berrier claimed that artists' talent was determined according to their salaries, and that these salaries were out of control in the new economic environment.<sup>34</sup>

The critics' comments expose a fundamental quandry faced by theatre administrations in the nineteenth century: how to assure artistic quality *and* financial viability of the theatres. The idea behind shorter contracts was to encourage the regeneration of the artistic troupe, eliminating those older or weaker performers and hiring younger, more talented singers, and thus keep the artistic personnel on their toes to produce better, less careless performances. Certainly, long-term contracts were a large financial investment for a theatre company, and should the performer no longer produce his or her art sufficiently well to draw a large audience, the theatre risked a financial loss. The implementation of these free-market strategies in theory cut down on expenses by eliminating such potentially disastrous investments; however, the Opéra ended up spending *more* on its artistic personnel after the change to a franchised entrepreneurship. Upon taking over as director in 1831 Louis Véron retired or made redundant about a quarter of the theatre's employees and cut musicians' salaries (mostly those in the chorus and orchestra, although a few singers found their salaries suddenly reduced). Even so, the budget for *artistes du chant* increased from 204,279 francs for the 1831-1832 season to 256,100 francs by the 1834-1835 season.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Paul Smith [Edouard Monnais], "Petite morale à l'usage des grands artistes," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 3 January 1841.

<sup>33</sup>Les deux naturalistes, "Muséum musical, ou Mœurs de l'Opéra. Préface," *La France musicale*, 14 March 1841.

<sup>34</sup>R. [Constant Berrier], "Des appointemens des artistes," *La France théâtrale*, 29 February 1844.

<sup>35</sup>For a discussion of the Opéra's finances under the directorship of Louis Véron, particularly his salary cuts and artistic expenses, see Drysdale, *Louis Véron and the Finances of the Académie Royale de Musique*.

### 3.3 FROM PARIS TO THE PROVINCES

As Fétis and his contemporaries pointed out, hiring practices at the Opéra and the Opéra Comique changed dramatically in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Although their criticism centered on rapidly rising salaries as the most significant and detrimental effect of the changes, the shift from long-term to short-term contracts at both theatres should be regarded as equally important. Under the old system at the Opéra, the *premier sujets* and *remplacements* agreed to a service of fifteen (later twenty) years as per the theatre's regulations; *doubles* held temporary contracts of two to five years in length.<sup>36</sup> During Lubbert's direction, some of the main artists (Cinti-Damoreau, Levasseur, Nourrit, Dupont, Lafont, Gosselin-Mori) had negotiated individual contracts (*traités particuliers*) in which they determined salary and benefits separately; these contracts were between five to eight years in length and stretched the Opéra's regulations, particularly on the question of vacation time (*congé*).<sup>37</sup> When Véron took over as director in 1831, he confirmed that the singers and dancers either had *traités particuliers* or were engaged with the Opéra according to its regulations.<sup>38</sup> The Opéra Comique was similarly managed during its organization as a society of artists. *Sociétaires* and *pensionnaires* had to put in fifteen years of service to receive a pension; *acteurs à l'essai* had one-year contracts.<sup>39</sup> With the dissolution of the society of artists at the Opéra Comique, the change to a franchised system at the Opéra where directors were accountable to their *cahier des charges*, and the abolishment of the retirement pension system that required lengthy service in or-

<sup>36</sup>The copy of the Opéra's "Règlement de 1821" held at the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra shows revisions made in the mid-1820s. In the 1821 version, singers who were engaged after their successful debuts began as a *double* and agreed to a fifteen-year service. They could only remain in the rank of *double* for five years; if they were not promoted, they would have to leave the theatre. After fifteen years of service, Opéra singers could receive their full pension. In the revised *règlement*, singers were engaged after their debuts in a contract of two to five years in length. If promoted to *remplacement* or *premier sujet*, they had to put in twenty years of service before receiving their retirement pensions. See "Chapitre IV, De l'admission" in *F-Po* P.A. 1821. The few surviving contracts for Opéra singers in the 1820s held at the Archives nationales reflect these changes. Mlle Bibre and Mlle Frémont, both *doubles*, signed two-to-three year contracts. See their contracts, signed 14 April 1826 and 2 December 1824, respectively, in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 125.

<sup>37</sup>See undated document titled, "Chant" in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 192.

<sup>38</sup>Prior to 1831 at the Opéra, the artists would have negotiated these details with the director, who then would have had to seek approval from the Royal Household. Otherwise, salaries and other benefits were assigned according to the Opéra's regulations. Louis Véron remarked on this fact when he took over as director: "Quant au personnel, les sujets de la danse et du chant se trouvaient liés avec l'Opéra, soit par des traités particuliers, soit par les règlements du théâtres, qui leur garantissaient la durée de leur engagement et le chiffre de leurs appointemens." Véron, *Mémoires d'un bourgeois de Paris*, 3:146

<sup>39</sup>See the "Ordonnance du roi du 30 mars 1824" and "Ordonnance du roi faisant suite à celle du 30 mars 1824" in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 1053.

der to qualify, the long contracts were abandoned. Directors typically engaged artists on contracts of one to three years in length and enjoyed much more freedom (and power) to fire their personnel. For Adolphe Lacan who wrote about theatre legislation in the 1850s, this meant that the “duration of contracts were henceforth based on changeable whim or the calculation of interests of the moment.”<sup>40</sup>

As a result, performers’ career trajectories and patterns shifted.<sup>41</sup> No longer required to remain at one theatre for upwards of fifteen years, singers had much more freedom of mobility and frequently changed their place of employment. Fétis identified these changing trends in 1841 and noted that artists now began their careers at the main theatres only to finish them in the provinces. It had not always been so: “From 1809, Ponchard, Levasseur, Madame Rigaut sparkled in the Conservatoire concerts, and they did not debut at the Opéra Comique and the Académie royale de musique until 1813 and 1814. [...] All these artists were *doubles* and *remplaçants* for a long time. [...] There was much less of the inflated pretension of our [current] debutants.”<sup>42</sup> Fétis was perhaps a bit harsh on the debutants, many of who came from the Conservatoire and held the right according to the institutions’ rules to debut in the state theatres. And career trajectories for the primary singers who were eventually hired at the Opéra and the Opéra Comique had not actually changed that much. What had changed was that the practice of cultivating and mentoring singers from their debuts until their eventual promotion to primary singer had been abandoned.

Consequently, upward mobility within the theatres’ hierarchies had all but disap-

<sup>40</sup>Lacan and Paulmier seconded Fétis concerns, noting that the abolition of pensions would overturn the tradition of long contracts that allowed young artists to perfect their talents: “Le système de retenues et de pensions qu’avaient organisé les précédents règlements attachait les artistes au théâtre pour une longue période de temps, les talents s’y fixaient et pouvaient s’y perfectionner. Le lien des pensions une fois brisé, la durée des engagements se trouvait désormais livrée à la mobilité du caprice et aux calculs de l’intérêt du moment.” Lacan and Paulmier, *Traité de la législation et de la jurisprudence des théâtres*, 2:382

<sup>41</sup>Noting how many singers “disappeared from the public eye after a decade or less,” Karin Pendle suggested that the most likely cause besides a “retreat to the provinces” or marriage was that the singers began their careers at a very young age and burned out quickly, not having the technique nor the physique to fill the large halls without strain. Pendle, “A Night at the Opera: The Parisian Prima Donna, 1830-1850,” 79. Such a remark unfortunately re-circulates the stereotype of women’s physical weaknesses or lack of technique, and it also suggests that a career in the provinces and abroad was somehow a sign of failure. Provincial and foreign contracts were often more lucrative than those in the capital. And women were not beginning their careers any earlier than the previous generation; singers from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century began their careers in their late-teens and early-twenties.

<sup>42</sup>“Dès 1809, Ponchard, Levasseur, madame Rigaut, brillaient dans les concerts du Conservatoire, et ils ne débutèrent à l’Opéra-Comique et à l’Académie royale de musique qu’en 1813 et 1814. [...] Tous ces artistes furent long-temps doubles et remplaçants. [...] Il y a loin de là aux prétentions exagérées de nos débutants.” Fétis, “Réflexions mélancoliques sur la situation actuelle et future des théâtres lyriques (suite et fin),” *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 21 January 1841.



peared. Those with less or no experience were hired into the middle ranks and felt much frustration in the utter lack of possibility for advancement. Primary singers at the Opéra were mainly outside hires, singers who had already spent years singing in the provinces, in concerts, or at other theatres. Julie Dorus-Gras, *première chanteuse* at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels from 1827 to 1830, was hired as *premier sujet* in 1830. Rosine Stoltz became the new *première chanteuse* in 1837 after singing for several years in the provinces and abroad. Jeanne Anaïs Castellan and Pauline Viardot, both hired to sing in Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète* in 1849, had years of prior experience and moved straight into the top positions at the theatre with high salaries and star contracts. There were a couple of exceptions. Conservatoire laureate Cornélie Falcon was initially contracted as a *remplacement* in 1832 (as per the Conservatoire's regulations), but her rapidly rising salary and the creation of several main roles within a year of her initial hire quickly repositioned the singer as a *premier sujet*. Dolorès Nau was also hired straight out of the Conservatoire in 1836. She doubled Dorus-Gras for several years while slowly amassing a small roster of newly created, albeit minor role—Zélia in Auber's *Le Lac des fées* (1839), Jeanne in Halévy's *Le Drapier* (1840), Annette in the Opéra's translation of Weber's *Der Freischütz* (1841), George Douglas in Donizetti's *Marie Stuart* (1844)—before finally taking over the older singer's position upon her retirement in 1845. She left the Opéra periodically between contracts to take up employment in the provinces and abroad.

Singers who could not find the right “fit” in the Parisian theatres or became frustrated with the lack of performing opportunities eventually set their sights on the provinces. The increasing mobility of singers became possible in large part because of the technological advances in the transportation system. Travel to and from the capital became more comfortable and less expensive with the development of the French railways in the 1840s.<sup>43</sup> Performing conditions in the provinces, however, were not the same as in Paris. The troupes changed each year, which meant even less stability, and the daily pace was perhaps even more hectic according to Edouard Monnaie: “For example, rehearsals begin at 9:30 in the morning and finish at three; one has just enough time to eat, to return to the theatre to get in costume, and then perform all evening; that leaves the night to learn one's roles.”<sup>44</sup> Still, the

<sup>43</sup> Although the railways began construction in 1823, passenger service was not put into place until 1832. Yves Leclercq, *Le Réseau impossible: la résistance au système des grandes compagnies ferroviaires et la politique économique en France, 1820-1852* (Geneva: Droz, 1987), 14, quoted in Everist, *Music Drama at the Paris Opéra, 1824-1828*, 19

<sup>44</sup> “Par exemple, les répétitions y commencent à neuf heures et demie du matin, et finissent à trois heures; on n'a que le temps de dîner, de revenir au théâtre pour s'habiller, pour jouer toute la soirée;

provinces held the promise of an elevated position and stage experience. While a middle-ranking singer at the Parisian theatres might perform the odd main role in the more popular operas, main roles in smaller operas, and secondary roles, she had the potential to be a *première chanteuse* in the provinces and thus gain the experience essential for building a career. Anna Widemann (1815-1864, née Jung) started out as a chorister at the Opéra just in time to begin the long and intensive rehearsals for Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*. She earned a mere 700 francs that year.<sup>45</sup> A new five-year contract was drawn up in 1837, promoting the singer to *artiste du chant* and almost tripling her salary.<sup>46</sup> She debuted in Donna Elvira from *Don Juan* in August 1838 and although the role was not ideally suited to her contralto voice, music critic Henri Panofka noted her clear, powerful, expressive singing.<sup>47</sup> Only a few years prior, Cornélie Quiney had given up trying find a place at the Opéra for her contralto voice; Widemann fared only slightly better. She was assigned small roles in *Guido et Ginevra* (une dame), *La Vendetta* (Maria), and *La Reine de Chypre*; and Rosine Stoltz handed off her role in *Le Lac des fées* to the singer in 1839.<sup>48</sup> Otherwise, she sang secondary roles in *Guillaume Tell*, *Le Comte Ory*, and *Les Huguenots*. Unlike many lower-ranking singers at the Opéra, she could not complain of a lack of performing opportunities—she performed between 60 to 80 times a year between 1839 and 1842—and by 1841-1842 her *feux* earnings effectively quadrupled her meager annual salary of only 2,000 francs.<sup>49</sup> Widemann likely tired of being the Opéra's workhorse with few benefits and no recognition. There was little room at the Opéra for two contraltos and Rosine Stoltz was known for not wanting her roles to be doubled.<sup>50</sup> Widemann held no fantasies of replacing the star singer and so left the Opéra

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il reste la nuit pour apprendre ses rôles." Édouard Monnaïs, *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 8 September 1839.

<sup>45</sup>Widemann's salary was quite low, even for a member of the opera chorus. In 1830, the salary range for her voice type (second dessus) was 600 to 1,600 francs. Of the twelve second dessus singers, nine of them made 1,200 francs. *F-Po OP*-19-836.

<sup>46</sup>Contract dated 18 January 1837 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Widemann).

<sup>47</sup>Henri Panofka, "Débuts à l'Opéra," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 9 September 1838.

<sup>48</sup>*La France musicale*, 11 August 1839.

<sup>49</sup>Castil-Blaze claimed that *feux* actually came from the eighteenth-century practice of providing singers with bread, wine, and meat; these food items were later replaced with a fixed monetary sum for each performance. He maintained that the artists' loges backstage were not heated nor lighted, and this bonus went towards candles and wood for a fire, hence the name *feux*. Castil-Blaze, *Mémorial du grand-opéra, épilogue de l'Académie royale de musique, histoire littéraire, musicale, chorégraphique, pittoresque, morale, critique, facétieuse, politique et galante de ce théâtre, de 1645 à 1847*, 48-49.

<sup>50</sup>Stoltz was suddenly indisposed after the second act of *La Favorite* and could not continue the performance. Rather than calling in an understudy to take her place, another work was given instead. The critic insisted that this curious procedure proved that Stoltz refused to have an understudy for her roles, so as to not ever find herself in the position of being overshadowed by her understudy. *La France musicale*, 8 August 1841.

in the summer of 1842 to embark on a career in the provinces and abroad. In 1843, she was singing Léonor in Donizetti's *La Favorite* in Lille in January, in Gand in March, and in Bordeaux in May; she debuted at the theatre in Toulouse in 1844 to much acclaim in the same role.<sup>51</sup> She sang for a year at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in 1850-1851 as *première forte chanteuse contralto*, singing Stoltz's repertoire and appearing in the role of Fidès in the Brussels' première of Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*. She even crossed the Atlantic for a tour to the United States in 1852-1853 that included stops in Boston and New Orleans.<sup>52</sup>

Anna Widemann was fortunate to be a talented contralto at a moment when the repertoire was finally expanding due to the popularity of Stoltz's roles and those later created by Pauline Viardot. Others singers specializing in Falcon's repertoire also managed to carve out satisfactory careers in the provinces. Catinka Heinefetter performed barely more than a year at the Opéra and sang only a handful of times once her debuts in Falcon's emploi were finished. She took exception to the fact that Rosine Stoltz was assigned Agathe in the Opéra's translation of Weber's *Der Freischütz*—a role that she, a German singer, specialized in and was initially promised as her debut role—and refused to be Stoltz's understudy.<sup>53</sup> Once her contract ended in 1842 she took up the position of *première chanteuse* at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels.<sup>54</sup> She managed to continue performing even after a disastrous event threatened to cut her career short: a quarrel between her two lovers ended in the death of one and Catinka was defamed in the press and denounced in the legal proceedings in the spring of 1843.<sup>55</sup> Nathan-Treilhet was in Brussels for a series of performances and filled in for Heinefetter while the singer briefly hid from the public eye.<sup>56</sup> Charles de Boigne snidely remarked that Heinefetter's career ended with the affair. Such was not the case, however. The public in Bordeaux received the singer with enthusiasm during the summer and autumn of 1843 and her performances of Rachel at the Grand Théâtre in Marseille in December 1844 were deemed "epoch-making."<sup>57</sup> After singing in Marseille on and off until 1848, she was heard in Toulon and Lyon,

<sup>51</sup> See various *Nouvelles* for reports on her provincial tours in *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 29 January 1843; 2 April 1843; 28 May 1843; and 15 September 1844.

<sup>52</sup> The singer died in February 1864 at the age of 49, survived by her two sons. *La Revue et gazette musicale*, 24 February 1864.

<sup>53</sup> Letters to Pillet dated 7 May 1841 and 11 May 1841 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194.

<sup>54</sup> "On assure que l'engagement de Mlle Catinka Heinefetter, qui expire au mois d'avril, ne sera pas renouvelé. C'est le sort qui attend toutes les cantatrices de l'Opéra, auxquelles le véritable public a voué son admiration ou son estime." *La France musicale*, 23 January 1842.

<sup>55</sup> The entirety of this incident is gleefully recounted in Boigne, *Petits mémoires de l'Opéra*, 230-237.

<sup>56</sup> *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 26 March 1843.

<sup>57</sup> *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 12 January 1845.

in Hamburg and Berlin in 1850, and back in Marseille in 1852 to sing Fidès. Before her retirement in 1858, she had also added Norma and Desdemona to her roster of roles.<sup>58</sup>

In 1841, Eliza Julian found her Opéra contract cancelled, not due to sickness or because she did not please the public, but instead due to vague reasons of “economy.”<sup>59</sup> She expressed her dismay at Pillet’s decision in a letter in February, and rightly so, given her success during her debuts in Falcon’s roles in 1840. Once it became apparent that his decision was intractable, she demanded that her one-month *congé* take place during the final month of her contract.<sup>60</sup> Taking leave of the Opéra at the end of April fortunately coincided with the beginning of the season at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, where she debuted in May 1841.<sup>61</sup> She sang in Marseille in October 1842, then in Lille the following September.<sup>62</sup> In January 1844 she was in Bordeaux, and upon her return to Lille she married M. Van Gelder, a piano instructor. Lyon followed in 1845–1846, Toulouse in August 1846, and 1847 found her once again at the Paris Opéra and contracted by the new directors Duponchel and Roqueplan to sing Hélène in Verdi’s *Jérusalem*. Her one-year contract over, she left for London where she took up singing Italian opera at Her Majesty’s Theatre under the name of Mlle Giuliani, performing the role of Elvira in Verdi’s *Ernani* and Adalgisa in Bellini’s *Norma*. Her next stop in Paris was at the Théâtre Italien where she performed *Norma* once again, and then the peripatetic singer was off to Belgium, Holland, and Spain.

Singing in the provinces not only opened up opportunities to perform main roles, but also permitted singers to cross genres more easily, as provincial theatres almost always presented a combination of *opéra-comique*, grand opera, vaudeville, and spoken theatre. Several Opéra Comique singers thus became better known as grand opera singers in the provinces. Clara Margueron (b. 1804) perfected her vocal technique in Italy and then debuted at the Opéra Comique as Camille in Hérold’s *Zampa*

<sup>58</sup>Heinefetter eventually died of a heart condition in December, just months after her retirement, at the age of 37. *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 2 January 1859.

<sup>59</sup>Letter dated 28 February 1841 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Julian). She was far from the only singer laid off as a cost-saving measure. A critic from *Les Coulisses* noted that by 1842, nine singers found their contracts cancelled or not renewed (Dupont, Serda, Dérivis, Alizard, Anna Widemann, Catinka Heinefetter, Dolorès Nau, Elian Barthélemy, and Eliza Julian), leaving only a few singers to carry the weight of the repertoire. The total savings to the administration was 136,000 francs. See *Les Coulisses*, 30 October 1842.

<sup>60</sup>Letter dated 26 March 1841 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Julian).

<sup>61</sup>Isnardon, *Le Théâtre de la Monnaie depuis sa fondation jusqu’à nos jours*, 311–312.

<sup>62</sup>Jacques Gheusi, “Legendaires: Elise Julian Van Gelder (1819-?): La créatrice d’Hélène de Jérusalem,” *Opéra international* (February 1984), in Eliza Julian’s dossier d’artiste, *F-Po*.

in 1832. Within a year of her debuts she was considered one of the most promising young singers.<sup>63</sup> Even so, she left the Opéra Comique in 1835 to sing at the theatre in Marseille. For the 1836-1837 season, her earnings were listed in the press at an astounding 25,000 francs.<sup>64</sup> She found much success singing in *Les Huguenots* and *La Juive* and was soon hired as the *première chanteuse* at the theatre in Amsterdam.<sup>65</sup> In Bordeaux she added Alice from *Robert le diable* to her roster of roles and, gaining confidence from her success in the genre, even auditioned for the Opéra at the end of the 1840-1841 season.<sup>66</sup> Her audition was not successful, however. She fell back on her thriving career in the provinces and was soon heard singing in Nantes in 1842-1843 as the *soprano sérieuse*. Her former colleague at the Opéra Comique, Louise Peignat (b. 1815), followed a similar path. Peignat debuted at the Opéra Comique in 1834.<sup>67</sup> Pretentious and having little talent according to one critic,<sup>68</sup> the singer's contract was not renewed after her first year. Four years later, Peignat was singing grand opera and opéra-comique in Toulouse under her married name, Mme Roulle.<sup>69</sup> She debuted *à l'improviste* at the Opéra in the role of Rachel from Halévy's *La Juive* in 1840 alongside the debutant Marié, who was eventually hired. Mme Roulle was not hired, her salary demands supposedly being too high for the Opéra (Escudier defended the singer, noting that she was asking for 20,000 francs even though she had been earning 30,000 francs a year in Lyon). She pursued contracts all over the provinces in the 1840s—Lyon, Marseille, Nîmes, Toulouse, Liège, Montpellier—and eventually returned to Paris in the 1850s to sing in concerts.

By far the most versatile singer of the period was Jenny Colon, who moved freely between vaudeville, *opéra-comique*, and, at the end of her career, grand opera. Born into a theatre family in 1808, Colon began singing children's roles alongside her sister Éléonore at the Opéra Comique in April 1822. Her sister and mother remained at the theatre for most of the 1820s. Not content singing secondary roles, Colon left in 1823 for the Théâtre du Vaudeville and from the mid-1820s until the mid-1830s, developed her career in the boulevard theatres, singing at Théâtres des Variétés, the Vaudeville, and Théâtre du Gymnase, and in London for one season in 1829 with her husband at the time, the actor Lafont (their marriage was annulled sometime

<sup>63</sup>“Cette actrice, qui est très jeune, deviendra l'un des plus fermes soutiens de notre Opéra-Comique.” Monglave, *Petite biographie des acteurs et actrices de Paris*, 46-47.

<sup>64</sup>*La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 5 July 1836.

<sup>65</sup>*La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 29 October 1837.

<sup>66</sup>*Le Monde dramatique*, 27 May 1841.

<sup>67</sup>*La Revue musicale*, 16 February 1834.

<sup>68</sup>*La Gazette musicale de Paris*, 17 May 1835.

<sup>69</sup>*La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 10 June 1838.

before 1830).<sup>70</sup> In 1836, her reputation made, she returned to the Opéra Comique and became one of the theatre's star singers. Recognized predominantly for her talent as an actress, Jenny Colon supposedly had been training her flexible, clear voice and her progress was remarkable. A critic at *La France musicale* claimed that Colon was best suited to the Opéra Comique, possessing the double quality of charming actress and fine singer.<sup>71</sup> She left the theatre in 1840 and, after a brief tour through the provinces where she sang Sirésille from *Le Domino noir* (initially created by Laure Cinti-Damoreau), she was hired at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels as the *première chanteuse à roulades*. There she conquered the light soprano roles from the grand opera repertoire, Elvire from *La Muette de Portici* and Isabelle from *Robert le diable*, and earned 3,500 francs a month during her eight-month contract. Her foray into grand opera was unfortunately short-lived. Upon her return to Paris at the end of her contract, Colon fell ill and died in June 1842.

#### 3.4 EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE OPÉRA AND THE OPÉRA COMIQUE

Singers' new mobility also meant there were more exchanges between the Opéra and the Opéra Comique, a testament to the increasing emphasis on vocal artistry at the latter theatre. Directors at the Opéra Comique also took advantage of the new system to hire star singers already active at other Parisian theatres, in the provinces, and abroad. Although a couple other singers had moved between the Opéra and the Opéra Comique in the 1830s (Marie Caroline Morin-Lebrun and her sister Annette Lebrun, for example), the most high profile exchange was that of Laure Cinti-Damoreau, who had already sung at the Théâtre Italien and the Opéra before taking up employment at the Opéra Comique from 1836 to 1841. With the public's attention increasingly turned toward Cornélie Falcon and Julie Dorus-Gras prepared to take over the light soprano repertoire, Cinti-Damoreau left the Opéra in 1835. The news of her migration to the Opéra Comique initially stunned Parisian theatregoers. The *Gazette musicale de Paris* reported the first rumblings of her defection in March 1835 and quoted a verse from Corneille's *Cinna*: "Monté sur le faite, on aspire à descendre (Having reached the peak, one aspires to descend)."<sup>72</sup> Once the news had been confirmed, critics at the *Revue musicale* re-focused attention on how

<sup>70</sup>Rinsler, "Un portrait inconnu de Jenny Colon."

<sup>71</sup>*La France musicale*, 8 March 1840.

<sup>72</sup>*La Gazette musicale de Paris*, 8 March 1835. The full quote from Corneille reads, "L'ambition déplaît quand elle est assouvie, / D'une contraire ardeur son ardeur est suivie; / Et comme notre esprit, jusqu'au dernier soupir, / Toujours vers quelque objet pousse quelque désir, / Il se ramène en soi, n'ayant plus où se prendre, / Et, monté sur le faite, il aspire à descendre."



the theatre would benefit from her influence—through her “feu sacré” or “fluide artistique”—bequeathing nothing less than the Midas touch to the famous cantatrice: “A great artist animates everything that surrounds him [/her].”<sup>73</sup> Their feeling was that Opéra Comique performers would make more effort to improve their singing out of fear of appearing ridiculously inferior to their new colleague. And Cinti-Damoreau lost nothing of her star status with the Opéra Comique’s offer of a four-year contract with 25,000 francs in annual salary, 300 francs in *feux*, and a two-month *congé*, even if she now performed at a less prestigious institution.<sup>74</sup>

Cinti-Damoreau’s surprise move caused some consternation and raised fears of future battles over artists between the royal theatres.<sup>75</sup> Correspondence between the Minister of the Interior and the Royal Theatre Commission reveal that Opéra director Duponchel had been authorized to offer Cinti-Damoreau a significant salary increase to convince the singer to stay, but his offers were refused.<sup>76</sup> Such competition between theatres was an inevitable consequence of the theatres’ adoption of an entrepreneurial system, the report concluded, and the state should respect the directors’ liberty; all the same, the commission was loathe to see state subventions squandered in expensive contract skirmishes over top-ranking artists.<sup>77</sup> (The paradox of the new administrative arrangement is evident. Although the government provided subventions for the royal theatres, the subventions became insufficient because of the new administrative regime that the government had approved; theatre direc-

<sup>73</sup>“Un grand artiste anime tout ce qui l’entoure; il communique à ceux qui l’approchent un peu de ce qu’on appelle, en style prétentieux et fade, le feu sacré, et de ce que nous nommerons, pour nous servir du vocabulaire à la mode, le fluide artistique.” “Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique. Cosimo. Engagement de Mme Damoreau,” *La Gazette musicale de Paris*, 25 October 1835.

<sup>74</sup>Although artists’ salaries were all too often exaggerated in the press, these salary conditions are perfectly reasonable considering her earnings at the Opéra. Unfortunately, her contracts are not among those of her colleagues at the Archives nationales, and so we must rely on these secondary reports. Louis Gentil put her salary at 48,000 francs plus benefits, and claims that Cinti-Damoreau sang only 30-40 times a year. “Madame Damoreau-Cinti,” in Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l’Opéra*, 161-162.

<sup>75</sup>A letter to the Minister of the Interior from the director of the Royal Theatre Commission stated: “[...] mais si le bruit public et des rapports particuliers ne l’abusent pas, ce qui vient de se passer relativement à Mme Damoreau menace de se renouveler, et l’engagement précipité de cette cantatrice ne serait que le prélude d’une guerre imprudente entre les Directeurs de deux Théâtres Royaux.” Letter dated 12 November 1835 in *F-Pan* F<sup>21</sup> 1096.

<sup>76</sup>According to a press report, Cinti-Damoreau and Duponchel had already agreed on her salary and *feux*, but Duponchel could not guarantee Cinti-Damoreau’s condition of premiering three new works a year. The Opéra Comique could make this guarantee. *La Gazette musicale de Paris*, 25 October 1835.

<sup>77</sup>See an undated document (likely from November 1835) entitled, “Engagement de Mme Damoreau à l’Opéra-Comique,” and the letter from the Royal Theatre Commission to the Minister of the Interior dated 12 November 1835 in *F-Pan* F<sup>21</sup> 1096.



tors, constantly battling financial losses, soon began pressuring the government to increase the subventions.)

Cinti-Damoreau's presence at the Opéra Comique had a profound impact on the theatre's repertoire and the administration's hiring decisions in the years following her retirement in 1841, even if her presence on stage did not necessarily have an extraordinary impact on the theatre's receipts.<sup>78</sup> She had never been known for having strong acting abilities, but she supposedly had excellent spoken declamation skills, even if she spoke a little too softly, and it seems the Opéra Comique audience was willing to overlook her dramatic deficiencies for her phenomenal vocalisation. Expectations for the singers' vocal abilities had been raised substantially and replacing the *cantatrice* with a Conservatoire student—even a young protégé like Louise Lavoye, who also happened to be Cinti-Damoreau's pupil—was considered unacceptable for some critics.<sup>79</sup> In short, one needed to replace a star with another star, one capable of singing the coloratura soprano roles written for Cinti-Damoreau by Auber, particularly Henriette in *l'Ambassadrice* (1836), Sirésille in *Le Domino noir* (1837), and the title role in *Zanetta* (1840).

Perhaps in anticipation of the prima donna's departure, Opéra Comique director Crosnier began searching for a replacement who might possess Cinti-Damoreau's powerful combination of exquisite vocal technique, experience, reputation, and star power. A "wealth of female singers to despair all the operatic theatres in France"<sup>80</sup> debuted at the theatre between 1839 and 1841. Juliette Borghèse (originally Bourgeois, Italianized to Borghèse) premièred Marie in Donizetti's *La Fille du régiment* (1840), but due to a contract dispute, she did not remain;<sup>81</sup> Jeanne-Anaïs Castellan (1819-1858), a French singer who began her career in Italy, was supposed to debut in Ambroise Thomas's *Carline* but cancelled her contract (supposedly worth over

<sup>78</sup>*La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 6 March 1836.

<sup>79</sup>"Théâtre royal de l'Opéra-Comique. Les débutants," *La Sylphide*, 16 September 1843.

<sup>80</sup>"Nous allons avoir incessamment à ce théâtre un luxe de cantatrices à désespérer toutes les scènes lyriques de France. Grand sera l'embarras de nos auteurs et de nos compositeurs au milieu de ce gracieux essaim de rossignols blonds et bruns, dont chacun fera valoir son genre de séduction et ses brevets de capacité. Comment résister au murmure si suave et si fin d'une Damoreau, au gosier séduisant et coquet d'une Jenny-Colon? comment se soustraire au timbre métallique et brillant d'une Rossi, à la désinvolture vocale d'une Prévost, aux élans dramatiques d'une Garcia? Et notez que l'Opéra-Comique n'a pas encore dit son dernier mot: voici venir Mlle Castellan et Mlle Borghèse, que d'officieux échos portent aux nues, comme si nos provisions n'étaient pas amplement faites pour l'hiver!" "Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. *Eva*," *Le Ménestrel*, 15 December 1839.

<sup>81</sup>Critic Charles Froment noted she was a very confident debutante who easily conquered the public with her brilliant voice and acting skill in his review, "Début de Mlle Borghèse," *L'Echo du foyer*, 13 February 1840.

40,000 francs a year) over a dispute with Crosnier about the addition of an air.<sup>82</sup> Eugénie Garcia debuted in *Eva*, a newly written two-act opera by Girard and Coppola, in 1839. Garcia (née Mayer) married Manuel Garcia  *fils*, her vocal instructor, and began her operatic career in Italy; her sister-in-law Maria Malibran was the first to encourage Eugénie to embark on a professional career and even arranged her initial debuts at the theatre in Novara.<sup>83</sup> Soubies claimed Eugénie's annual salary at the Opéra Comique was an astonishing 78,000 francs, which meant the young star earned more than Cinti-Damoreau. Recurring illness and a pregnancy kept Eugénie from the stage and the recently hired Anna Thillon eventually replaced her in what was to be her second creation, *L'Opéra à la cour*. Born in England as Anna Hunt, the singer married her French voice instructor and began her career in Nantes and Clermont. Anténor Joly, the director of the Théâtre de la Renaissance, hired Anna Thillon and she quickly became "one of our most fashionable singers."<sup>84</sup> Thillon left the Renaissance for the Opéra Comique and debuted in Auber's *La Neige* in August 1840. Crosnier gambled on his newest hire; foreign singers rarely ever sang in a genre that impenitently revealed an accent rarely tolerated in a French theatre. The audience forgave the beautiful, blond Thillon her English accent and even found it endearing. Anna Thillon replaced Cinti-Damoreau as Auber's collaborator—and, rumour had it, in his sentiments—and took the role of Catarina in his *Diamants de la couronne* initially written for the aging prima donna.<sup>85</sup> Thillon left the Opéra Comique for the Princess Theatre in London in 1845 and the position of *première chanteuse* fell to singers with less vocal brilliance and star status until Delphine Ugalde, another pupil of Cinti-Damoreau, debuted in *Le Domino noir* in 1848.

Cinti-Damoreau was not the only singer who performed at both the Opéra and the Opéra Comique during the period, although few could boast a career that included all three Parisian lyric theatres. Those singers who made the switch usually first tried out the new genre in the provinces before returning to Paris. Annette Le-

<sup>82</sup>*La France musicale*, 12 January 1840. Marie-Ambroisine-Minette Potier took over the role for her Opéra Comique debut.

<sup>83</sup>*La France musicale*, 8 December 1839.

<sup>84</sup>"Désormais, Mme Anna Thillon compte au rang des cantatrices parisiennes; car Paris ne voudra plus céder, même à l'Italie, la jeune prima donna qui, dans le court espace de quelques mois, a su se créer une si brillante réputation, et devenir une de nos actrices les plus à la mode." Philippon and Huart, "Mme Anna Thillon."

<sup>85</sup>Critic Ed. Thierry claimed that Thillon's beauty trumped Cinti-Damoreau's vocal skill and lamented the whims of public taste and the public's ingratitude: "[...Auber] compta sur ses doigts l'âge de Mme Damoreau, n'ayant pas à compter le chiffre des recettes. Ce jour-là aussi, M. Auber s'avisa que de beaux yeux valaient bien une belle gamme chromatique [...] et, comme il ne peut pas y avoir deux reines dans un seul royaume, Mme Damoreau fut détrônée." Ed. Thierry, *Le Monde musical*, 17 February 1842.

brun debuted at the Opéra Comique in 1834 and eventually created a small number of secondary roles, including Anna in *La Grande duchesse* (1835) and Paquita in *La Marquise* (1835). Her dramatic contralto voice, however, was not suited to the genre that had little to offer such a voice-type, and she left the theatre in 1836. Two years later, she debuted as Rachel at the Opéra and was hired in Falcon's *emploi* for three years. Marie Massy found much success at the Opéra Comique in the early 1830s and created roles in a several new works: Agathe in *La Médecine sans médecin* (1832), Nicette in *Le Pré aux clercs* (1832), Nice in *Ludovic* (1833), Catherine in *Lestocq* (1834), and Nancy in the Opéra Comique's adaptation of Weber's *Der Freischütz, Robin des bois* (1835). She left the theatre for the provinces and, after marrying Opéra Comique singer Hébert, eventually debuted at the Opéra as Madame Hébert-Massy in Dorus-Gras's roles in 1847 and remained into the early 1850s.<sup>86</sup> Elise Oscarine Masson debuted at the Opéra Comique in 1843, but her voice was considered too powerful for the theatre. She first went to Toulouse, then spent 1845-1847 in Nantes in the position of *premier soprano (forte chanteuse)*, and finally debuted in 1847 at the Opéra in Stoltz's *emploi*. Sophie Grimm began her career at the Opéra Comique in 1846, moved to the Opéra where she created the main role in Clapisson's *Jeanne la folle* in 1848, and then returned to the Opéra Comique to create the roles of Rafaëla in *Haydée* and Olivia in *Le Songe d'une nuit d'été*.<sup>87</sup>

### 3.5 ARTISTS' SALARIES

The increase in singers' mobility between theatres placed some artists in the enviable position of negotiating high salaries. In correspondence with the administration, singers sometimes mentioned that they were being offered tantalizing contracts in the provinces or abroad, likely to gain a better bargaining position. Salaries increased throughout the period, as theatres sought to engage those artists who would draw Parisians *en masse* and guarantee high receipts. The biggest changes were seen at the Opéra. Tables 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6 compare the salaries for women and men at the Opéra in 1823, 1829, and 1844-1845.<sup>88</sup> Salaries climbed steadily during the 1820s even though, before 1831, salaries were legislated and required final approval by the state.

<sup>86</sup>"Académie royale de musique," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 26 September 1847.

<sup>87</sup>*La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 17 August 1879.

<sup>88</sup>The Opéra followed the calendar year for its administrative books from 1823 to 1830, and then from 1831 the Opéra's "year" ran from 1 June to 31 May. Please note that the salary tables in this chapter are basically reproductions of the Opéra's salary tables in the archives, to which I have added exact *feux* earnings. I have therefore decided to maintain the ordering of artists from the source documents, which, more often than not, reflect the hierarchy in the theatre, and sometimes the order in which artists were hired. However, Table 3.7 is an exception. Rather than following the organization from

Table 3.4: Opéra salaries in 1823. (*F-Po* RE 261 and PE 2)

| Singers—men      | Emploi                | Salary | Grat. | Feux | Total feux | Total  |
|------------------|-----------------------|--------|-------|------|------------|--------|
| Dérivis          | 1 <sup>er</sup> sujet | 10,000 | 4,000 | 50   | 5,200      | 19,200 |
| Nourrit (père)   | 1 <sup>er</sup> sujet | 10,000 | 4,000 | 50   | 4,700      | 18,700 |
| Bonel            | Rempl.                | 7,000  | —     | 30   | 2,610      | 9,610  |
| Cloy             | Rempl.                | 5,500  | —     | 20   | 600        | 6,100  |
| Prévost fils     | Rempl.                | 6,000  | —     | 30   | 2,520      | 8,520  |
| Dabadie          | Rempl.                | 6,000  | —     | 30   | 3,150      | 9,150  |
| Lafeuillade      | Rempl.                | 7,200  | —     | 30   | 810        | 8,010  |
| Nourrit, Adolphe | Rempl.                | 7,200  | —     | 30   | 2,640      | 9,840  |
| Pouilley         | Double                | 3,000  | —     | —    | —          | 3,000  |
| Singers—women    |                       |        |       |      |            |        |
| Branchu          | 1 <sup>er</sup> sujet | 10,000 | 4,000 | 50   | 2,400      | 16,400 |
| Albert           | 1 <sup>er</sup> sujet | 10,000 | —     | 50   | 1,750      | 11,750 |
| Grassari         | 1 <sup>er</sup> sujet | 10,000 | —     | 50   | 4,100      | 14,100 |
| Paulin           | Rempl.                | 7,200  | —     | 30   | 690        | 7,890  |
| Dabadie          | Rempl.                | 7,200  | —     | 30   | 540        | 7,740  |
| Régy             | Double                | 4,500  | —     | —    | —          | 4,500  |
| Quiney           | Double                | 3,500  | —     | —    | —          | 3,500  |
| Jawureck         | Double                | 1,800  | —     | —    | —          | 1,800  |

The highest salary awarded to a *premier sujet* was 10,000 francs a year; directors got around this salary cap by awarding *gratifications* and all *premiers sujets* and *remplacements* had their salaries increased through *feux*, a performance bonus. When Laure Cinti-Damoreau began singing exclusively for the Opéra in 1826, she went straight to the top of the hierarchy and earned 25,000 francs a year—10,000 francs in salary and 15,000 francs in *gratifications*, plus 200 francs in *feux*—and her salary in 1829 was the highest at the theatre at 44,200 francs. By 1829, the salary gap between the top-ranking and middle-ranking singers of both sexes widened, particularly for the women. In 1844-1845, the stars were earning salaries up to around 60,000 francs a year, and in the upper tier salaries ranged widely from 25,000 to 60,000 francs. Middle-ranking singers of the mid-1840s had made significant strides in their earnings, with salaries almost twice those in 1829. The lowest-ranking singers, who were probably little more than *coryphées*,<sup>89</sup> saw little to no increase during the period.

Salaries were influenced by gender in the 1820s and, one might argue, throughout the entire period. In 1823 and 1829, the men received higher pay than the women of

the archival document (which in this case is rather disorganized), I have ordered this table according to the singers' salaries, to make for easier comparison with the other tables.

<sup>89</sup>Arthur Pougin defined the *coryphée* in nineteenth-century opera as a male or female singer from the chorus who, having more experience or a better voice, sometimes separated from the ensemble to sing a solo and then returned to his or her place in the chorus. See "Coryphée," in Pougin, *Dictionnaire historique et pittoresque du théâtre et des arts qui s'y rattachent*, 244.

Table 3.5: Opéra salaries in 1829. (*F-Po* RE 263 and PE 2)

| Singers—men     | Emploi                | Salary | Grat.  | Feux | Total feux | Total  |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--------|--------|------|------------|--------|
| Nourrit         | 1 <sup>er</sup> sujet | 10,000 | 12,000 | 100  | 9,700      | 31,700 |
| Dabadie, aîné   | 1 <sup>er</sup> sujet | 10,000 | 2,000  | 50   | 6,750      | 18,750 |
| Levasseur       | 1 <sup>er</sup> sujet | 10,000 | 5,000  | 50   | 3,750      | 18,750 |
| Bonel           | Rempl.                | 3,600  | —      | 30   | 1,740      | 7,350  |
| Prévost         | Rempl.                | 8,000  | —      | 30   | 3,030      | 11,030 |
| Dupont          | Rempl.                | 9,000  | —      | 40   | 4,437      | 13,437 |
| Prévost (Ferd.) | Rempl.                | 7,200  | —      | 30   | 3,930      | 11,130 |
| Lafont          | Rempl.                | 9,500  | —      | 35   | 2,345      | 11,845 |
| Valère          | Rempl.                | 9,500  | 1500   | 30   | 2,220      | 11,720 |
| Massol          | Rempl.                | 5,000  | —      | 25   | 3,225      | 8,225  |
| Trévaux         | Double                | 2,400  | —      | —    | —          | 2,400  |
| Singers—women   |                       |        |        |      |            |        |
| Cinti-Damoreau  | 1 <sup>er</sup> sujet | 10,000 | 15,000 | 200  | 19,200     | 44,200 |
| Dabadie         | 1 <sup>er</sup> sujet | 10,000 | 4,000  | 50   | 3,900      | 17,900 |
| Glossop         | 1 <sup>er</sup> sujet | 10,000 | 6,200  | 50   | 1,680      | 17,880 |
| Mori            | Rempl.                | 7,200  | —      | 35   | 2,750      | 9,950  |
| Baptiste-Quiney | Rempl.                | 7,200  | —      | 30   | 0          | 7,200  |
| Jawureck        | Rempl.                | 7,200  | —      | 30   | 2,610      | 9,810  |
| Dejean          | Double                | 1,800  | —      | —    | —          | 1,800  |

the corresponding rank. Discrepancies between the sexes are perhaps more difficult to see in the 1840s; singers were not as clearly ranked in the administrative documents as theatre practices changed and legislation that governed salaries and contracts for the personnel was abandoned. Voice-type and ranking within that voice type gained in prominence in the mid-1830s. A personnel list produced around 1836 effectively “translated” the former ranking system into another currently in use (see Table 3.7).<sup>90</sup> The differences between the sexes in the 1830s and 1840s were the greatest in the lower ranks. According to Table 3.7 (which does not include *feux*), a male *double* could earn anywhere from 1,200 to 6,000 francs, whereas a female *double* made only 1,200 to 3,000 francs. In 1844-1845, the lowest-ranking men earned almost twice that of the lowest-ranking women, and the male stars earned as much or more than their female colleagues.

Tables 3.8 and 3.9 list the salaries for Opéra Comique singers around 1829 and during the 1846-1847 season.<sup>91</sup> The scarcity of surviving administrative documents

<sup>90</sup>Although this document has been reproduced in Lacombe, “The ‘Machine’ and the State,” there were a number of errors that have been corrected here (for example, Laurent-Grandidier’s salary was erroneously listed as 7,200 rather than 1,200).

<sup>91</sup>The salary tables for the Opéra Comique singers are also reproductions of archival documents, and I have again elected to preserve the order of the source tables. The Opéra Comique’s system of *emplois* changed during the period, as the tables also show. By the 1840s (Table 3.9), male singers were classified more often according to their voice-type rather than role type, although the role types

Table 3.6: Opéra salaries during the 1844-1845 season. (*F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 229 and *F-Po* PE 4)

| Singer          | Salary | Feux                  | Total feux | Total  |
|-----------------|--------|-----------------------|------------|--------|
| Duprez          | 40,000 | 240                   | 20,640     | 60,640 |
| Barroilhet      | 50,000 | [150] <sup>*</sup>    | 0          | 50,000 |
| Levasseur       | 25,000 | 100/200 <sup>**</sup> | 12,400     | 37,400 |
| Massol          | 15,000 | 125                   | 13,000     | 28,000 |
| Marié           | 14,060 | 160                   | 9,940      | 24,000 |
| Serda           | 10,624 | 56                    | 5,992      | 16,616 |
| Canaple         | 10,200 | 50                    | 4,900      | 15,100 |
| Prévost (Ferd.) | 7,200  | 40                    | 5,360      | 12,560 |
| Benoit          | 7,120  | 30                    | 3,390      | 10,510 |
| Brémond         | 6,256  | 39                    | 4,212      | 10,468 |
| Gardoni         | 6,736  | 34                    | 2,992      | 9,728  |
| Latour          | 6,000  | —                     | —          | 6,000  |
| Menghis         | 4,000  | —                     | —          | 4,000  |
| Koenig          | 1,500  | 15/30 <sup>***</sup>  | 2,715      | 4,215  |
| Obin            | 3,000  | —                     | —          | 3,000  |
| Martin          | 2,400  | —                     | —          | 2,400  |
| Stoltz          | 30,000 | 300                   | 30,300     | 60,300 |
| Dorus-Gras      | 25,000 | 200                   | 16,800     | 41,800 |
| Nathan-Treilhet | 15,000 | —                     | —          | 15,000 |
| Méquillet       | 9,333  | 55/67                 | 6,491      | 15,824 |
| Dobré           | 10,000 | 52                    | 4,784      | 14,784 |
| Nau             | 10,000 | 52                    | 4,176      | 14,176 |
| De Roissy       | 6,060  | 35                    | 2,940      | 9,000  |
| Laurent         | 1,600  | —                     | —          | 1,600  |
| Nordet          | 1,200  | —                     | —          | 1,200  |

<sup>\*</sup>Barroilhet had to perform seven times a month; each refusal cost him 150 francs, and each additional performance gave him 150 francs in feux.

<sup>\*\*</sup>Levasseur received 100 francs in feux for each *petit opéra* and 200 francs for a *grand opéra*

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>Koenig received 15 francs to sing *coryphée* and 30 francs to sing roles.

during this period makes salary comparisons difficult. As the 1829 figures do not show how much those artists receiving *feux* actually made, we can only compare base salaries which, interestingly enough, were not that different from Opéra singers during the same year. And, like their colleagues at the Opéra, male singers gen-

for the female singers were usually retained, albeit sometimes with a different typology than in the 1820s and 1830s. Thus, for example, the administration clearly distinguished between a *cantatrice* and an *amoureuse*, thus differentiating those stronger singers specializing in more florid singing (such as Louise Lavoye) from those who were known more for their talent as actresses (such as Célestine Darcier). This shift from role types to voice-types at the Opéra Comique was also reflected in artists' contracts. In contracts from the 1820s (and some from the early 1830s), an artists' *emploi* was clearly demarcated; in later contracts, there was no longer space allotted to defining the *emploi*, although sometimes it was simply added in. See Appendix D for a description of the role types in use at the Opéra Comique.

Table 3.7: Salaries and emplois at the Opéra in 1831 and 1836. ("Etat du personnel de l'Académie Royale de Musique pour le Chant, la Danse, l'Orchestre," *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 181)

| Appoint.<br>31 mai 1831 | Noms               | Emplois       | Appoint<br>1 juin 1836 | Observations                                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 10,000                  | Nourrit            | Premier sujet | 25,000                 | Ténor de 1 <sup>er</sup> ordre                  |
| 2,000                   | Lafont             | Premier sujet | 20,000                 | Ténor de 1 <sup>er</sup> ordre                  |
| 10,000                  | Dupont             | Remplacement  | 8,000                  | Ténor de 2 <sup>e</sup> ordre                   |
| –                       | Wartel             | Double        | 6,000                  | Ténor de 2 <sup>e</sup> ordre                   |
| –                       | Raguenot           | Double        | 4,000                  | Ténor de 2 <sup>e</sup> ordre                   |
| 7,200                   | Ferdinand Prévôt   | Remplacement  | 7,200                  | Baryton de 1 <sup>er</sup> ordre                |
| 7,200                   | Massol             | Remplacement  | 7,200                  | Baryton de 1 <sup>er</sup> ordre                |
| –                       | Bernadet           | Double        | 3,000                  | Baryton de 2 <sup>e</sup> ordre                 |
| 10,000                  | Levasseur          | Premier sujet | 25,000                 | Basse taille de 1 <sup>er</sup> ordre           |
| –                       | Dérivis            | Remplacement  | 15,000                 | Basse taille de 1 <sup>er</sup> ordre           |
| 8,000                   | Prévost            | Remplacement  | 4,500                  | Basse taille de 2 <sup>e</sup> ordre            |
| –                       | Serda              | Remplacement  | 8,000                  | Basse taille de 2 <sup>e</sup> ordre            |
| –                       | Martin             | Double        | 1,200                  | Basse taille de 3 <sup>e</sup> ordre            |
| 2,400                   | Trévaux            | Double        | 3,300                  | Ténor de 3 <sup>e</sup> ordre                   |
| –                       | Gras-Dorus         | Premier sujet | 25,000                 | 1 <sup>er</sup> dessus de 1 <sup>er</sup> ordre |
| –                       | Falcon             | Premier sujet | 25,000                 | 1 <sup>er</sup> dessus de 1 <sup>er</sup> ordre |
| 9,000                   | Jawureck           | Premier sujet | 10,000                 | 1 <sup>er</sup> dessus de 2 <sup>e</sup> ordre  |
| –                       | Flécheux           | Remplacement  | 4,000                  | 1 <sup>er</sup> dessus de 2 <sup>e</sup> ordre  |
| –                       | Nau                | Double        | 3,000                  | 1 <sup>er</sup> dessus de 2 <sup>e</sup> ordre  |
| 7,200                   | Gosselin-Mori      | Premier sujet | 7,200                  | Contralto de 1 <sup>er</sup> ordre              |
| 1,800                   | Laurent-Grandidier | Double        | 1,200                  | Contralto de 2 <sup>e</sup> ordre               |
| –                       | Cayot              | Double        | 1,500                  | 1 <sup>er</sup> dessus de 3 <sup>e</sup> ordre  |

erally earned more than female singers. The 1846-1847 figures include *feux* and provide a better picture of income. Opéra Comique stars earned, on average, half as much as Opéra stars, and Opéra Comique salaries in general were lower than those at the Opéra, even though Opéra Comique singers generally performed at least twice as often as Opéra singers. The highest salary (31,500 francs) was earned by the star tenor Roger; Louise Lavoye, the star female singer, earned just over 20,000. Salary discrepancies between the sexes are most apparent here. Seven male artists earned over 10,000 francs, whereas only three female artists broke the 10,000-franc ceiling, and after that, salaries dropped off significantly. Some caveats are necessary. The only precise salary information available in the Opéra Comique's archives does not include those years during which some of the biggest female stars were employed (Laure Cinti-Damoreau, Eugénie Garcia, and Anna Thillon). Estimates of their salaries published in the contemporary press were quite high: Cinti-Damoreau was rumoured to have earned 60,000 francs a year and Eugénie Garcia's salary was



listed as 78,000 francs.<sup>92</sup> Although Cinti-Damoreau most likely earned a similar salary to that which she received at the Opéra, estimates of Garcia's earnings were probably over-inflated. The star tenor Roger's salaries give us a better idea of the upper ceiling for most Opéra Comique stars, if we consider that salary practices probably followed those at the Opéra where top male and female stars typically earned roughly the same salary—at least until 1850.

Table 3.8: Opéra Comique salaries ca. 1829. (*F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 1053)

| Singers—men      | Emploi                                                                                        | Req. # of perf | Feux  | Salary |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|--------|
| Ponchard         | 1 <sup>er</sup> haute-contre, Elleviou                                                        | —              | —     | 18,000 |
| Lemonnier        | 1 <sup>er</sup> haute-contre, Elleviou, 1 <sup>er</sup> amoureux                              | 20             | 25    | 10,000 |
| Moreau-Sainti    | 1 <sup>er</sup> ténor, Elleviou, Ponchard                                                     | 18             | —     | 12,000 |
| Thianni          | ténor, Colins                                                                                 | —              | 10-15 | 4,000  |
| Huet             | Oncles, pères, Philippe                                                                       | —              | —     | 10,000 |
| Genot            | Martin, Philippe, Elleviou, Ponchard                                                          | —              | —     | 8,000  |
| Damoreau         | Philippe, Gavaudan                                                                            | 20             | 25    | 5,000  |
| Chollet          | Martin                                                                                        | 18             | —     | 15,000 |
| Tilly            | Martin, 1 <sup>ers</sup> comiques                                                             | —              | 10    | 8,000  |
| Féréol           | Trial, Lesage, Moreau, Laruelle                                                               | 20             | —     | 8,000  |
| Belnie           | Trial, Laruelle, Moreau                                                                       | —              | 6-10  | 5,000  |
| Fargueil         | Trial, Laruelle, Vizentini, Lesage                                                            | —              | —     | 4,000  |
| Boullard         | 1 <sup>er</sup> basse-tailles (toutes genres)                                                 | —              | —     | 8,000  |
| Henry            | Basse-tailles (toutes genres)                                                                 | 20             | —     | 8,000  |
| Cavé             | Lemonnier, Lafeuillade, Ponchard ( <i>double</i> )                                            | —              | —     | —      |
| Louvet           | Utilités (toutes genres)                                                                      | —              | —     | 3,000  |
| Singers—women    |                                                                                               |                |       |        |
| Lemonnier        | Mères Dugazon, mères nobles                                                                   | 15             | 25    | 10,000 |
| Rigault          | Amoureuses, 1 <sup>res</sup> chanteuses                                                       | 15             | —     | 12,000 |
| Pradher          | 1 <sup>res</sup> amoureuses sans roulade, paysannes, travesties                               | 18             | 25    | 10,000 |
| Casimir          | 1 <sup>res</sup> chanteuses, 1 <sup>re</sup> Dugazon, Boulanger (1 <sup>res</sup> chanteuses) | 15             | —     | 12,000 |
| Prévost          | Amoureuses, 1 <sup>res</sup> chanteuses                                                       | 20             | 22    | 10,000 |
| Colon [Éléonore] | 1 <sup>re</sup> chanteuse, paysannes, soubrettes, Boulanger                                   | 20+            | 15    | 7,000  |
| Colon, mère      | Duègnes                                                                                       | —              | —     | 3,000  |
| Mariette         | 2 <sup>e</sup> ou 3 <sup>e</sup> amoureuses, travesties                                       | —              | —     | 2,400  |
| Henry Leroux     | 1 <sup>re</sup> chanteuses, 1 <sup>er</sup> ou 2 <sup>e</sup> Dugazon, travesties             | —              | 10    | 4,000  |
| Bordes           | Rôles d'enfants (travesties ou non)                                                           | —              | —     | 1,500  |

Overall, singers were the highest-paid employees at the theatres. The ballet *su-jets* (equivalent to an *artiste du chant*) were similarly divided into *premier sujet*, *remplacement*, and *double*, and the salary ranges (in 1830) were only slightly lower, with those at the top of the hierarchy making 6,000 to 10,000 francs in annual salary (without including their *feux*) and those at the lower end earning 1,400 to 4,300

<sup>92</sup> Albert Soubies and Charles Malherbe, *Histoire de l'Opéra-Comique. La Seconde salle Favart, 1840-1860* (Paris: Librairie Marpon et Flammarion, 1892), 31.

Table 3.9: Opéra Comique salaries, 1846-1847 season. (*F-Pan* F<sup>21</sup> 1096.)

| Singers—men   | Emploi                        | Salary | Feux   | Total  |
|---------------|-------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Roger         | Ténor                         | 12,000 | 19,500 | 31,500 |
| Chollet       | Ténor                         | 5,250  | 9,550  | 14,800 |
| Audran        | Ténor                         | 10,000 | 10,000 | 20,000 |
| Mocker        | Ténor                         | 9,000  | 9,000  | 18,000 |
| Moreau-Sainti | Ténor                         | 5,333  | 2,667  | 8,000  |
| Emon          | Ténor                         | 6,000  | -      | 6,000  |
| Carlos        | Ténor                         | 2,400  | -      | 2,400  |
| Jourdan       | Ténor                         | 4,000  | -      | 4,000  |
| Ste.Foy       | Ténor                         | 8,000  | -      | 8,000  |
| Montaubry     | Ténor                         | 3,000  | -      | 3,000  |
| Duvernoy      | Ténor                         | 3,600  | -      | 3,600  |
| Henry         | Basse                         | 12,000 | 780    | 12,780 |
| Grignon       | Basse                         | 8,000  | 780    | 8,780  |
| Grard         | Basse                         | 6,240  | 5,760  | 12,000 |
| Hermann       | Basse                         | 6,000  | 5,760  | 11,760 |
| Bussine       | Basse                         | 5,000  | -      | 5,000  |
| Chaix         | Basse                         | 5,000  | -      | 5,000  |
| Riquier       | Laruelle                      | 8,000  | -      | 8,000  |
| Victor        | Laruelle                      | 4,200  | -      | 4,200  |
| Palianti      | Utilités                      | 2,700  | -      | 2,700  |
| Garin         | Utilités                      | 3,000  | -      | 3,000  |
| Singers—women |                               |        |        |        |
| Prévost       | Duègne                        | 3,600  | 7,200  | 10,800 |
| Lavoye        | Cantatrice                    | 8,000  | 12,000 | 20,060 |
| Felix         | Cantatrice                    | 4,800  | 1,200  | 6,000  |
| Darcier       | Amoureuse                     | 10,000 | 5,400  | 15,400 |
| Révilly       | Ingénuités                    | 6,000  | 1,800  | 7,800  |
| Potier        | Amoureuse, ingénuités         | 3,500  | 4,500  | 8,000  |
| Delille       |                               | 6,000  | -      | 6,000  |
| Ste. Foy      | Ingénuités                    | 3,000  | -      | 3,000  |
| Blanchard     | 1 <sup>re</sup> mère; Dugazon | 1,800  | -      | 1,800  |
| Marie Lavoye  | Dugazon                       | 4,000  | -      | 4,000  |
| Martin        |                               | 3,000  | -      | 3,000  |
| Roulier       | Dugazon                       | 3,000  | -      | 3,000  |
| Karr          |                               | 3,000  | -      | 3,000  |
| Lemercier     | 1 <sup>re</sup> chanteuse     | 4,500  | -      | 4,500  |
| Allouel       |                               | 2,400  | -      | 2,400  |
| Grimm         | Dugazon                       | 3,000  | -      | 3,000  |
| Levasseur     |                               | 3,000  | 1,550  | 4,550  |

francs.<sup>93</sup> Members of the Opéra chorus earned 600 to 1,800 francs a year. Male singers earned slightly more than their female colleagues. Of the twenty-five women in the chorus, fifteen of them (60%) earned 1,100 francs or more in salary; of the thirty-six men employed, twenty-one (58%) earned a salary equal to or above 1,300

<sup>93</sup>This figure and those following have been taken from "Détail du personnel, des artistes, employés et préposés pour servir à la formation des états mensuels, 1830" in *F-Po* OP-19-836.

francs. In the orchestra, musicians earned between 800 and 3,000 francs, with the average salary around 1,500 francs. The *chef d'orchestre* Habeneck was paid 8,000 francs. Other Opéra employees (costume makers, stage hands) earned 500 to 1,300 francs, although some salaries up to 7,000 francs stand out in the *service des décorations*. Salaries for the musicians of the orchestra and in the chorus at the Opéra Comique in 1845-1846 are quite similar to those at the Opéra fifteen years prior, suggesting that salaries during the period were fairly stable.<sup>94</sup> The *chef d'orchestre* Girard made 8,000 francs while most of the orchestral players earned 1,000 to 1,500 francs. Singers in the chorus were paid 600 to 1,200 francs (although some tenors earned up to 1,800 francs). The choral director, Lebel, earned only 3,000 francs.

The *artistes du chant* at the Opéra and the Opéra Comique earned not only, on average, more than their colleagues in the orchestra and the chorus, but also several times more than most working women in Paris during the period. René Gonnard estimated the average daily earnings to be between 1.50 francs (annual salary of 360-435 based on the contemporary norm of 240-290 working days) and 2.50 francs (600-725 annually) for women working in various industries in Paris in 1853.<sup>95</sup> (Gonnard cautioned against calculating annual wages using the daily wage as many women were laid off for months at a time during the “saison morte” or low season,<sup>96</sup> a phenomenon that did not affect singers at these particular theatres.<sup>97</sup>) Some of the more skilled female workers, for example a *modiste* or hat seller, might earn up to 500 francs a month or 6,000 francs a year. Jacques Rougeri estimates the daily wages for men who worked as skilled artisans between 1830 and 1847 in Paris to fall between 2.50 francs (600-725 annually) and 4.50 francs (1,080-1,305 annually).<sup>98</sup> Even those in the lower ranks of public service did not earn much above skilled artisans, as the average annual salary in 1856 was 1,300 francs.<sup>99</sup> It is worth considering cost of living at the time to get a better sense of how far these salaries could go. A Parisian worker's family of four during this period consumed annually, on average, 770 kilos of bread, 150 kilos of meat, and 315 litres of wine: the cost for these items in 1853 was

<sup>94</sup>Figures for the Opéra Comique employees taken from “États des appointemens” for the 1845-1846 season in *F-Pan* F<sup>21</sup> 1096.

<sup>95</sup>Gonnard, *La femme dans l'industrie*, 102.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>97</sup>That being said, Opéra Comique singers were paid only two-thirds of their salaries during the summer months when the theatre's receipts were at their lowest; one-third was added to their pay in the autumn. See the Opéra Comique contract in Appendix C.

<sup>98</sup>Rougeri, “Remarques sur l'histoire des salaires à Paris au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle.”

<sup>99</sup>Guiral, *La Vie quotidienne en France*, 31; quoted in Huebner, “Opera Audiences in Paris, 1830-1870,” 220.

508 francs.<sup>100</sup> Standard rents were relatively low, about 160 francs annually for the artisanal class.<sup>101</sup> Working women would have had a hard time making ends meet, especially if they were the sole wage earners with children. According to Joan Scott and Louise Tilly, 25% of women in France worked in 1866 and most were young and single.<sup>102</sup> The women typically sent most if not all their wages to their families; those who were married combined their earnings with their husband's.

For women, then, employment in the theatre was highly coveted, particularly at these prestigious institutions that could generally guarantee—at least for the duration of the artist's contract—a salary well above that of women in other industries. Such salaries promised women not only financial independence but also social mobility, for the artist as well as her family. The authors of the anecdotal *Paris-Actrice* claimed that artists “these days” did not intend for their children to become theatrical artists, but rather members of the bourgeoisie, and used their earnings to provide their children a better education.<sup>103</sup>

### 3.6 CONTRACTS

Salaries are not the only—nor the best—indication of disparity between singers. Higher-ranking artists generally achieved much greater control over all aspects of their performing careers, including pay, work schedules, holiday time, and repertoire. With the change to a franchised system, the newly hired personnel found their employment governed by short-term contracts in which these items were all up for negotiation. In reality the royal theatres adopted a commercialized hiring scheme that had been in place in most provincial theatres from the eighteenth century and even in the royal theatres for the lower-ranking artists.<sup>104</sup> Contracts allowed artists a great deal of liberty and, at times, the upper hand, should they—like Opéra Comique singer Zoé Prévost—know how to play the game.

Zoé Prévost debuted in February 1821 as Lucette from *La Fausse magie* and, as an *actrice à l'essai*, was given a one-year contract. Trouble began brewing barely six months after her debuts. Prévost adamantly refused the *sociétaires*' request that she

<sup>100</sup>Huebner, “Opera Audiences in Paris, 1830-1870,” 220.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>Scott and Tilly, “Women's Work and the Family in Nineteenth-Century Europe.”

<sup>103</sup>Delord, Frémy, and Texier, *Paris-Actrice*, 19-20.

<sup>104</sup>For an excellent discussion of theatre contracts and contract law during the eighteenth century, see Clay, “Provincial Actors, the Comédie-Française, and the Business of Performing in Eighteenth-Century France.”

sing in the chorus and as a *coryphée*.<sup>105</sup> A letter from M. Garot, the secretary of the *sociétaires*' committee, insisted that, according to her contract, she was obligated to accept *any* assigned role.<sup>106</sup> Prévost outlined her grievances about her new contract for the 1822-1823 season in another letter to the committee in October 1821.<sup>107</sup> She pointed out that her salary (2,400 francs a year and 600 francs in *gratification*) was lower than two men hired at the same time (Dupont and Duvernoy apparently made 4,000 francs), a situation particularly unfair considering that a woman's *toilette*—for which all Opéra Comique singers were financially responsible—was much more costly than a man's. She claimed she could be required at any moment to perform a role for which she may not be able to afford the costs involved (costumes, coiffure, shoes, and *toilette* [which includes personal grooming, make up, and accessories]). Like Cornélie Quiney at the Opéra, Prévost found her repeated appeals for fair treatment and opportunity for advancement ignored. But, unlike Quiney, Prévost found a bold way to make her complaints heard. She signed a contract with the Théâtre du Vaudeville in February 1823 with better conditions: 4,500 francs in salary, primary roles (*amoureuses* and *coquettes*), and no trouser roles.<sup>108</sup> Her plan worked. The *sociétaires* at the Opéra Comique re-negotiated her contract, raising her salary and clearly marking her *emploi* as *jeunes amoureuses* and *chanteuses*.<sup>109</sup>

Each theatre prepared its own contracts, which changed with every directorship, and used a fairly standard set of clauses that were to be modified according to its current practices. In a typical contract, a singer agreed to perform any day and time as well as any role deemed suitable to her abilities at the director's behest; to be on time and present for all rehearsals; to remain in Paris (or even at the theatre) on performance days, whether engaged to perform or not; to renounce her salary and the right to contract at another theatre during the duration of an emergency closure;<sup>110</sup> to provide a medical certificate in case of illness and inability to perform; not to perform at another theatre or concert without written permission from the director; and to continue her service at the theatre even if involved in a legal dispute with the administration. The Opéra Comique additionally required its artists

<sup>105</sup> Letter dated 7 September 1821 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1059 (dossier Prévost).

<sup>106</sup> Letter dated 8 August 1821 *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1059 (dossier Prévost).

<sup>107</sup> Letter dated 26 October 1821 *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1059 (dossier Prévost).

<sup>108</sup> Contract with the Théâtre du Vaudeville dated 5 February 1823 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1059 (dossier Prévost).

<sup>109</sup> Contract dated 25 March 1823 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1059 (dossier Prévost).

<sup>110</sup> Although the Opéra rarely closed, the Opéra Comique had a number of closures during the late 1820s and early 1830s until Crosnier took over the directorship in 1834 and the theatre's fortunes began improving. Frequent closures left the artists in a dire position, without any pay and contractually obligated not to perform elsewhere.

to provide their own costumes for all contemporary roles—including shoes, make-up, wigs, and other accessories—and only provided “character” costumes for period pieces or those in an exotic setting. As Zoé Prévost herself attested, such a requirement was particularly onerous for the actress whose costumes were not only more expensive but also subject to quickly changing fashions.<sup>111</sup> At the same time, providing one’s own costumes was an important means by which singers could exercise creative license with the visual representation of the characters and it offered an opportunity for them to stand out among their colleagues.<sup>112</sup> To these clauses others were added and subtracted over the years as directors sought to concentrate their power and to dismiss unwanted artists without penalty.<sup>113</sup> (See Appendix C for the complete text of contracts from the Opéra during Pillet’s directorship and the Opéra Comique during Crosnier’s directorship.)

The contract was, as Susan Rutherford has written, the main vehicle for enshrining a singer’s rank, and can be seen as the litmus test for an artist’s status at certain moments of her career.<sup>114</sup> Only higher-ranking singers changed the standard clauses to protect their interests; the others left them untouched and only negotiated their salaries and vacation time—probably they did not have enough clout to engage in such hard bargaining. With the departure of star singer Laure Cinti-Damoreau in 1835, Opéra singer Julie Dorus-Gras took over her colleague’s position and thus was assured a strong position in contract negotiations. Too strong for the Duc de Choiseul, who reacted quickly to denounce the contract that she had negotiated with director Duponchel in February 1836. The proposed contract was three years long, with an annual salary of 25,000 francs and 100 francs in *feux*—higher than any other female singer, the Duc de Choiseul noted in his letter to the Commission spéciale des théâtres royaux (Adolphe Nourrit, however, was provided exactly the same salary and *feux*). In addition, he strongly advised against any contract longer than eighteen months that would have surpassed Duponchel’s directorship (as it was fixed at the

<sup>111</sup>F.W.J. Hemmings writes that in 1892, an actress might spend her entire salary (12,000 to 15,000 francs) on costumes and accessories for a single play; for this reason, the financial aid provided by protectors was almost a necessity. Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France*, 201.

<sup>112</sup>Some singers, it seemed, went to extremes with rich, ornate costumes that little suited the role in question. An *arrêté* was passed in 1827, stating that singers must accept all costumes provided by the Opéra Comique and the director must approve any modification. Arrêté dated 2 March 1827 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1060. Heavy fines were issued for those costumes (provided by the artist) deemed too rich or elegant and therefore unsuitable for the character.

<sup>113</sup>Pillet, for example, introduced a clause that gave him the exclusive right to cancel an artist’s contract at the end of the first year, with one to three months’ prior notice; in the late 1840s, Opéra Comique director Basset added the same clause to artists’ contracts.

<sup>114</sup>Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 167. See her discussion of the *convenienze*, 161–179.

time) and would place unnecessary hardship on the following director. He also expressed moral dismay at the singer's demands, claiming that it was "very regrettable to see artists expressing such exaggerated pretension" and that "no administration could hope for success if it must purchase the participation of artists, even the most useful, at so high a price."<sup>115</sup> Without the authorization for this contract, Duponchel had to negotiate another one. This latter contract was reduced to eighteen months, with the same salary and *feux*, and only fifteen days of *cong  *.

The Duc de Choiseul's attempt to contain star singers' contractual demands did not have much lasting effect. Dorus-Gras's next few contracts reclaimed the advantages that she had lost and added some more. In her contract that ran from 1837-1840, her *feux* was increased to 200 francs and her *cong  * to two months annually.<sup>116</sup> The following contract (1840-1843) added even more clauses. Should Dorus-Gras not be assigned a main role in the next two grand operas, she would then be accorded a third month of holiday. And should she not be giving a main role in Meyerbeer's new opera—the impatiently awaited *Le Proph  te*—then Dorus-Gras could cancel her contract by giving three months' notice. The singer also had the right to a benefit concert, to be held during the final year of her contract (this concert eventually became her retirement benefit concert, held in May 1845).<sup>117</sup> Dorus-Gras clearly delineated her repertoire and control over her roles. In addition to negotiating high salary, *feux*, and several months of holiday for her provincial and foreign tours,<sup>118</sup> Dorus-Gras freely changed many of the standard clauses in the theatre's contract. During a closure of the Op  ra, Dorus-Gras would receive half her salary rather than nothing at all; in the case of extended illness, she would receive her full salary for three months (rather than only one month) and half for the following three months (rather than nothing); she crossed out the clause that allowed the administration to cancel her contract without reciprocity after the first year; and she changed the terms that determined the beginning and ending of her *cong  *.<sup>119</sup> For a complete reproduction of this contract, see Figure 3.2.

By mid-century, star contracts were often handwritten and tailored to the singer's

<sup>115</sup>"Qu'il est d'ailleurs tr  s regrettable de voir les artistes exprimer des pr  tentions si exag  r  es. Qu'aucune administration ne pourrait esp  rer de succ  s s'il lui fallait acheter si ch  rement le concours des artistes m  me les plus utiles." Letter from the Duc de Choiseul to the Commission sp  ciale des th   tres royaux, dated 25 February 1836 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 190.

<sup>116</sup>Contract signed 1 November 1837 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 193 (dossier Dorus-Gras).

<sup>117</sup>Contract signed 8 November 1840 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 193 (dossier Dorus-Gras).

<sup>118</sup>She specified all the roles in her repertoire (albeit for a previous contract) in the "Suppl  ment    l'engagement de Madame Dorus-Gras," signed 2 March 1836 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 193 (dossier Dorus-Gras).

<sup>119</sup>Contract dated 8 November 1840 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 193 (dossier Dorus-Gras).



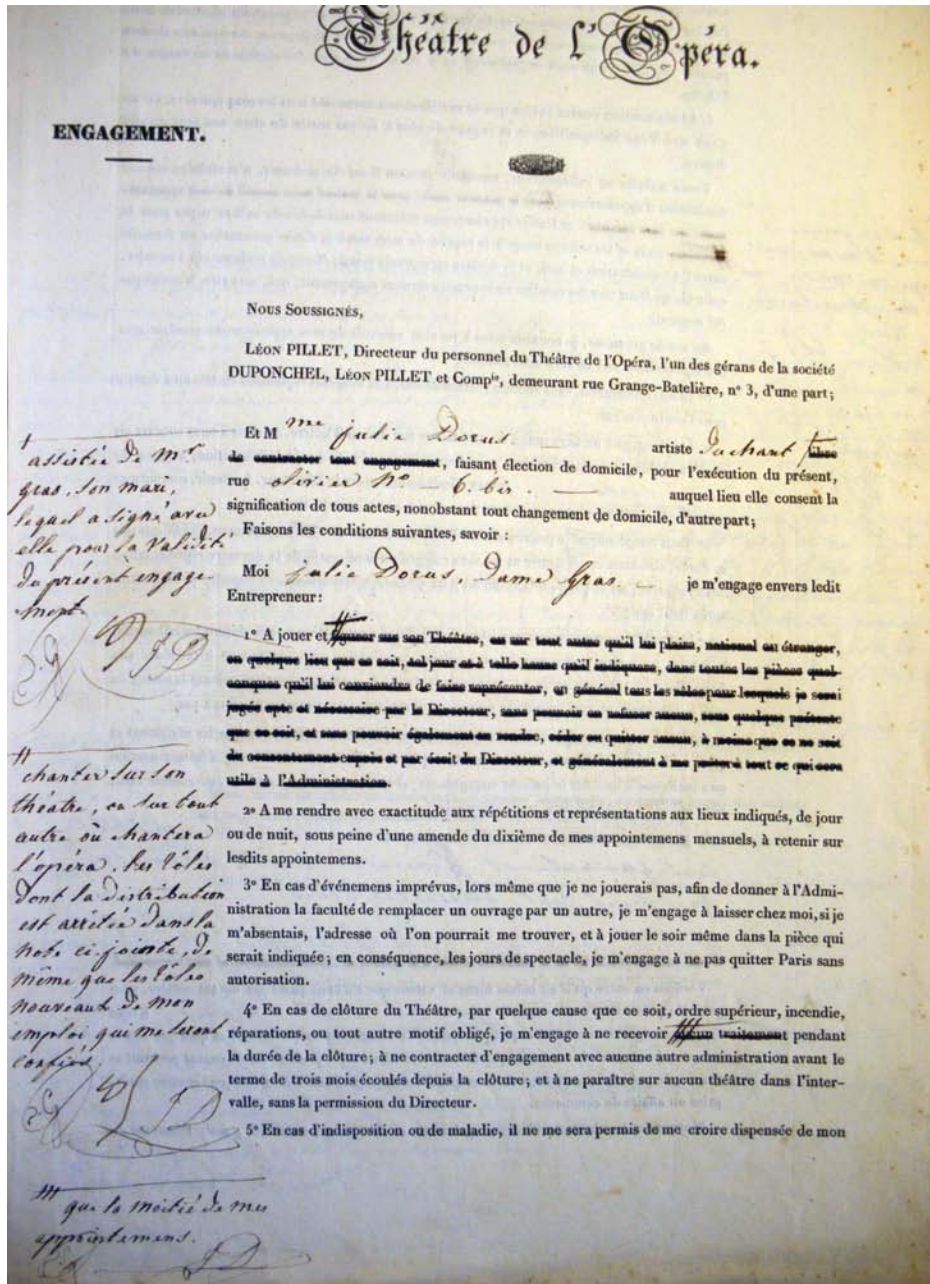


Figure 3.2: Julie Dorus-Gras's 1840 contract at the Opéra. (F-Pan AJ<sup>13</sup> 193.)

particular situation. Jeanne Anaïs Castellán (1819-1858) was hired at the Opéra in January 1849 to sing the role of Berthe in Meyerbeer's much-anticipated grand opera, *Le Prophète*, opposite Pauline Viardot in the role of Fidès.<sup>120</sup> The administration's desperation to guarantee her participation just four months before the première placed them in the position of having to work around her current contract and duties at the

<sup>120</sup>Contract with Duponchel and Roqueplan, signed 31 December 1848 in F-Pan AJ<sup>13</sup> 193 (dossier Castellán).

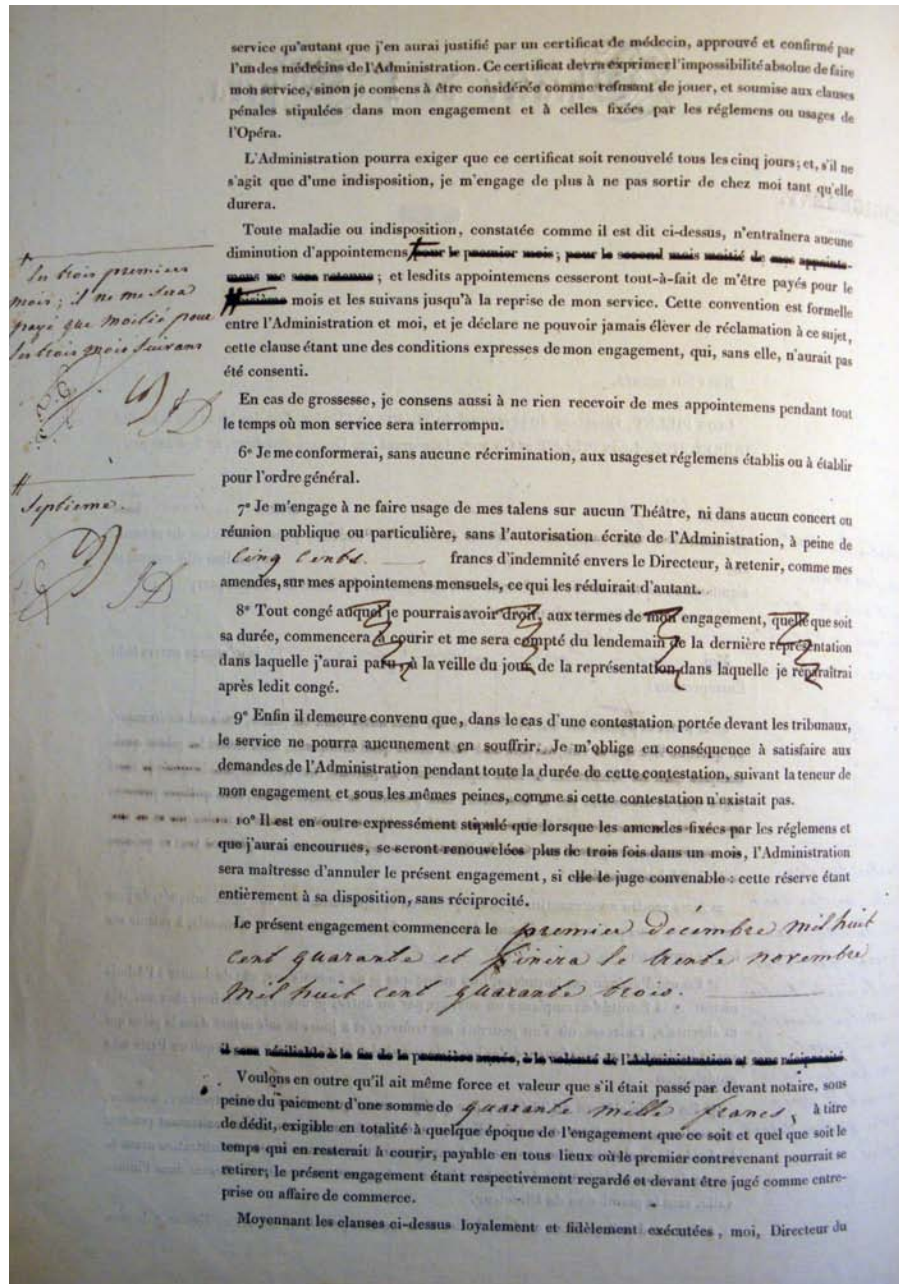


Figure 3.2: (continued)

Théâtre Italien, where she was engaged to sing from the season's opening until April (*Le Prophète* premièred 16 April 1849). Should she still be singing with the Théâtre Italien when rehearsals for Meyerbeer's opera began, she would receive 1,500 francs a month as compensation and rehearsals would be scheduled around her work schedule at the rival theatre. Once she could officially debut at the Opéra in the roles listed in her contract, her salary increased to 4,000 francs *a month*. In exchange for these conditions, Castellan agreed to accept the score of *Le Prophète* as it stood, although



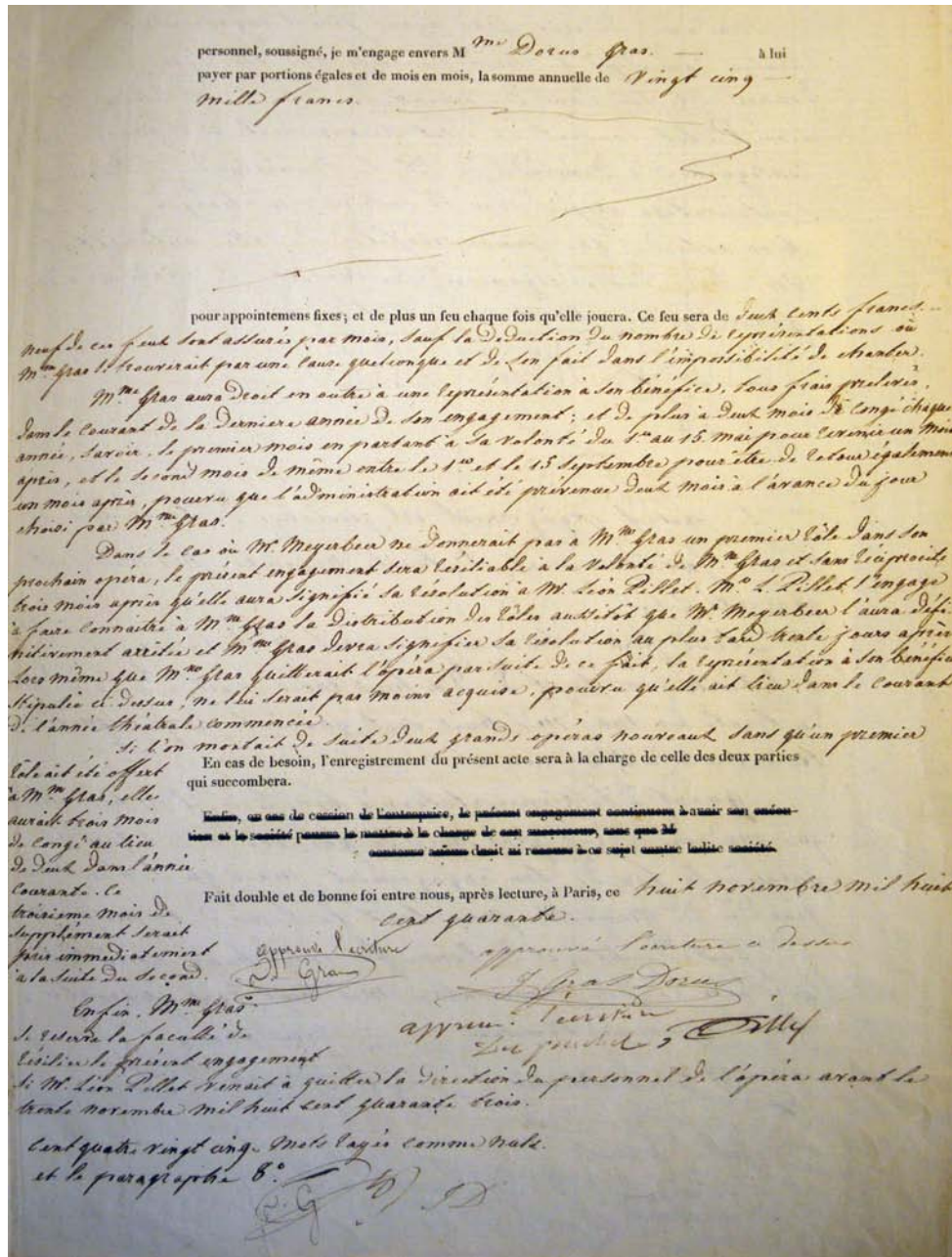


Figure 3.2: (end)

she did request the introduction of a single movement cavatina during the first act (which Meyerbeer apparently composed for the singer in the final months before the première).<sup>121</sup> Finally, the artist held the right to cancel her contract with the Opéra

<sup>121</sup> John H. Roberts notes that Berthe “acquired a showy and dramatically unjustified *cavatine* at the beginning of Act I, composed at the insistence of Castellan.” Roberts, “Meyerbeer: *Le Prophète* and *L'Africaine*,” 219.

in September, giving the administration two-months' notice, and could take a two-month (unpaid) *congé* anytime after mid-July.

The changes in the administration of the vocal personnel and in the career trajectories of singers set the tone for the second half of the nineteenth century. Star contracts underwent further modification as artists demanded similar salary levels and working conditions as they would have received during their *congés* in the provinces. Salaries certainly increased, but, more importantly, the pay schedule changed and contract lengths shrunk even further: singers first requested to be paid per month, and later per performance, in contracts that were usually no longer than a few months. Sophie Cruvelli was hired at the Opéra in 1854 by director Nestor Roqueplan and received 100,000 francs over eight months and four months unpaid *congé*.<sup>122</sup> The following year the new director Crosnier hired Marietta Alboni, la Comtesse Pepoli, in 1855 for only three months to sing the roles of Fidès, Léonor (*La Favorite*), Rosina from *Il barbiere di Seviglia*, among others, and was paid 14,000 francs a month for twice-weekly performances.<sup>123</sup> Alboni was compensated with 1,500 francs for each performance exceeding the weekly allotment. In 1861, Pauline Viardot signed a contract (with the permission of her husband Louis Viardot) for only four months with the Opéra, from November 1861 to March 1862. She had been hired for the revival of Gluck's *Alceste* in the wake of her success with *Orphée* at the Théâtre Lyrique in 1859.<sup>124</sup> Instead of negotiating a fixed salary and *feux*, she was simply paid 1,000 francs per performance and was promised six performances a month. Considering the salaries paid the previous decade, her salary request must have seemed like a steal; however, it also reflected her declining performing capabilities—her voice was not what it used to be. Her performance of *Alceste* was, overall, not considered very successful.<sup>125</sup> The opera was performed seventeen times from October 1861 to the end of her contract in March 1862, and was paired with a ballet beginning with the second performance.

On the other side of the spectrum, lower-status singers were at the whim of the di-

<sup>122</sup>Contract signed 5 November 1853 in *F-Pan* F<sup>21</sup> 1055 (dossier Cruvelli). Her extremely high salary and lucrative benefits caused quite a stir in the Parisian press. See, for example, *Le Ménestrel* 11 November 1853. There the critic justified her salary in part by claiming that Cruvelli might be able to produce high receipts, and that she filled a position left empty since Falcon's departure, that of the dramatic soprano. Cruvelli left the Opéra suddenly in October 1854. News of her impending marriage to Baron Georges Vigier was announced a week after her notice of defection. The singer returned within a month to fulfill her contract at the Opéra and later participated in the French adaptation of Verdi's *Les Vêpres siciliennes* in 1855.

<sup>123</sup>Contract signed 21 May 1855 in *F-Pan* F<sup>21</sup> 1055 (dossier Alboni).

<sup>124</sup>Contract signed 11 November 1861 in *F-Pan* F<sup>21</sup> 1059 (dossier Viardot).

<sup>125</sup>*Dwight's Journal of Music*, 30 November 1861.

rectors who, increasingly during the period, often took the liberty of re-negotiating their contract before its termination. For young stars like Cornélie Falcon whose 1832 contract was renegotiated to triple her salary after her successful debuts, this practice worked in their favour. For others like Joséphine-Clady Moisson (b. 1823), this led to her early dismissal. Moisson was trained at the Paris Conservatoire where she won a second prize in grand opera in 1844. The Opéra hastily sought an engagement with the young singer in April 1846, on the condition that she accept the standard Opéra contract and break her recently-signed engagement with the theatre in Rouen.<sup>126</sup> An official three-year contract was signed a week later with director Pillet.<sup>127</sup> Moisson was hired to replace Rosine Stoltz at a moment's notice and even partway through an opera, and any other singer performing a role that suited her voice. Once her debuts were finished, the young singer had to quickly learn a number of small roles, including Ragonde from *Le Comte Ory* and Edwige from *Guillaume Tell*. Her salary was fixed at 3,000 francs (and increased by 3,000 francs each year) of which two-thirds were allotted in fixed appointments and one-third in *feux*.<sup>128</sup> Moisson had to wait until her third year to receive a one-month *congé*, the timing of which was at the director's discretion. The Opéra administration re-negotiated the conditions of her contract just before her first year was finished, freezing her salary at 3,000 francs (rather than raising it for her second year), and reserving the right to cancel her contract as of August 1847 (six months later). Similar to other young, lower-ranking female singers like Cécile Pijon, Moisson did not directly contest her poor treatment at the theatre. Instead, a letter written on her behalf in April 1847 took issue with the director's re-negotiation of her contract and her treatment in general at the theatre; although receiving enthusiastic praise from both the press and the public for the quality of her voice, she was left to wither in an inferior position, with a low salary insufficient for supporting her family who depended on her income. The plea went unheeded, and Duponchel and Nestor Roqueplan, looking to

<sup>126</sup>Contract dated 15 April 1846 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Moisson).

<sup>127</sup>After singing in some concerts in the capital, Moisson appeared on the stage in an impromptu debut in the role of Pythonisse in Mermet's *David* (libretto by Alexandre Soumet and F. Mallefille), an opera that quickly disappeared from the repertoire after only eight performances. Her first debut as Rachel in *La Juive* took place 5 August 1846; her second debut as Valentine in *Les Huguenots*, however, was overshadowed by the arrival of Giovanna Rossi-Caccia at the Opéra and her debut in the same role.

<sup>128</sup>This division of salary between fixed salary and *feux* was typical of Pillet's directorship as it allowed him to control singers' salaries more carefully. With this division, he could deduct money from their pay should they not perform a given number of times (if the missed performance was the artist's fault), and thus did not treat the *feux* as a true performance bonus.

cut costs once their term as joint-directors began in August, “regretfully” terminated her contract citing reasons of economy.<sup>129</sup>

### 3.7 CONGÉS

The *congé* became increasingly lucrative during the period. Early in the century, artists would take their holiday during the summer months, the theatres’ low season, when many Parisians left for their own holidays in the provinces: the Opéra Comique’s regulations in 1824 in fact stipulated holidays could only occur from May until October.<sup>130</sup> Beginning in the late 1820s, main artists negotiated their holiday time individually with the director in their contracts. According to Duponchel’s *cahier des charges* of August 1835, the artists’ *congés* could occur at any time of the year as long as Duponchel maintained the personnel necessary to perform the repertoire.<sup>131</sup> Thus Dolorès Nau, as Dorus-Gras’s direct understudy, had to be available to replace the singer during her holiday; in exchange, she was allowed to sing in concerts throughout Paris and at provincial theatres for one year without obtaining special permission.<sup>132</sup> Holiday was reserved mostly for higher-ranking artists who typically received at least one month each year; lower-ranking singers might receive a month of *congé* once every two to three years, as was the case of Opéra Comique singer Léocadie Lemerrier whose contract assured her one month to be taken in the third year of her contract.<sup>133</sup>

“Holiday” is certainly misleading, as artists did anything but relax. Instead they sang at provincial or foreign theatres and, as they were usually paid per performance, often tried to squeeze in as many performing dates as possible. Louis Gentil claimed that the *congé* was terribly abused at the Opéra: wanting to make as much money as possible during their time away from the theatre, artists would begin resting their voices two weeks before the *congé* began and return exhausted and unable to perform.<sup>134</sup> The price directors were willing to pay to buy back an artist’s holiday sug-

<sup>129</sup>Document dated 16 July 1847, likely the draft of an official termination given to the young singer. *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Moisson).

<sup>130</sup>Article 65 in the Opéra Comique’s “Ordonnance du Roi du 30 mars 1824” in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1053. At the Opéra, artists were accorded one *congé* every three years (four *congés* maximum in fifteen years), up to two months at a time. Opéra “Règlement de 1821” in *F-Po P.A.* 1821.

<sup>131</sup>See article 28 in Duponchel’s *cahier des charges*, 15 August 1835, in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 180.

<sup>132</sup>Contract signed 20 January 1844 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Nau).

<sup>133</sup>Contract for Mlle Lemerrier, 1 May 1847 to 30 April 1850 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1136.

<sup>134</sup>With the principal artists away for sometimes two months at a time, rehearsals schedules were disrupted and new works jeopardized. See “Les artistes en congé,” in Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l’Opéra*, 443–445.



gests just how profitable a *congé* could be. Opéra Comique director Basset paid Célestine Darcier 10,000 francs to buy back her two-month holiday in 1847, and Opéra singer Célestine Nathan-Treilhet was given an amount equivalent to the pay she would have received from a provincial theatre during her thirty-five-day holiday: 12,000 francs.<sup>135</sup> Julie Dorus-Gras was allowed two months in holiday in her 1837 contract with Duponchel, but had to pay the director 3,000 francs for the second month; her projected income during her *congé* must have been sufficiently high to justify this curious arrangement.<sup>136</sup> Opéra Comique singer Anna Thillon's six-week holiday was spent singing at the Princess Theatre in London where she supposedly earned 12,000 francs.<sup>137</sup> In 1854 Rosine Stoltz estimated that her one-month holiday in London would have earned her 30,000 francs, almost three times the amount she was paid by the Opéra to forgo her *congé* and to return to Paris after the sudden departure of Sophie Cruvelli.<sup>138</sup>

For middle-ranking artists the *congé* was a means of supplementing mediocre wages. Artists' normal salaries were normally suspended and performers thus depended entirely on the monies earned during their *congé* for subsistence. During her employment at the Opéra, the contralto Annette Lebrun earned little more than 4,000 francs a year and was rarely given any opportunities to perform. Her contract assured her one-month holiday per year. She unfortunately fell ill during her holiday in Brest and, as she was forced to cancel over half of her performances, she only made 2,500 francs, most of which was then spent on medical and traveling costs. Duponchel had already given the contralto an advance of 1,500 francs but, as she had no money from her holiday to repay him, she had to forfeit a month in salary. She then proposed that he accord her fifteen more days of holiday and she would use her profits to pay him the balance.<sup>139</sup> She spent her next *congé* in March 1840 at the theatre in Nantes. There she was provided a salary that, as she wrote in a rather scathing letter to Pillet, "the insufficiency of my contract [with the Opéra] rendered necessary" and that her experience at the provincial theatre contrasted entirely with "my precarious position at the Opéra."<sup>140</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Agreement signed 12 January 1847 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1136 (dossier Darcier); contract signed 15 December 1838 and undated document listing the negotiated price of her holiday in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Treilhet-Nathan).

<sup>136</sup> Contract signed 1 November 1837 with Duponchel in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 193 (dossier Dorus-Gras).

<sup>137</sup> "Variétés—Nouvelles," *La Sylphide*, 23 September 1843.

<sup>138</sup> Letter dated 20 December 1854 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195.

<sup>139</sup> Letter dated 19 August (no year) from Lebrun to Duponchel in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Annette Lebrun).

<sup>140</sup> Undated letter from Lebrun to Duponchel in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Annette Lebrun).



## 3.8 LABOUR

The Opéra and the Opéra Comique operated year-round, which meant that most lower-ranking singers—who rarely qualified for the coveted *congé*—sometimes worked for years without break. Defining and controlling one's working conditions was a luxury that few singers had. Opéra Comique singers were kept very busy with the theatre's nightly performances of two to three operas for a total of four to five acts. The increased performance demands were clearly spelled out in their contracts. Artists were obligated to learn their roles very quickly: for those works already in the repertoire, singers had four days to prepare a one-act opera, six days for a two-act and ten days for a three-act opera. Singers had to perform at least eighteen times a month, including six "double" performances (two operas in an evening), for a possible total of twenty-four opera performances. Higher-ranking singers like Félicité Pradher negotiated limits on the number of performances per month (maximum fifteen, four of which could be doubled with single-act operas) and appended a list of roles for which she was responsible to avoid the onerous task of preparing a role last minute.<sup>141</sup> Lower-ranking singers often sang almost every evening. Olivier Bara notes that, the further down the hierarchy the singer, the more stage time was required of him or her.<sup>142</sup> Although far from being a secondary singer, Marie-Julie Boulanger was required to perform twenty evenings per month, ten of which could contain two operas, for a possible total of thirty operas.<sup>143</sup>

The Opéra ran performances three times a week with the occasional Sunday "extraordinary performance" and produced either a four- or five-act *grand opéra* or a *petit opéra* (two to three acts) paired with a ballet. Singers sought to limit their performances of the vocally taxing grand opera to no more than seven or eight per month, although many lower-ranking artists—and choosy star singers—often did not perform the number of operas guaranteed by their contracts. For those in the beginning stages of their careers, long periods of low activity were detrimental and all too common for many young Opéra singers, as one critic pointed out: "those actors who debut do not have, especially at the Opéra, enough opportunities to perform to make rapid progress."<sup>144</sup> Marie-Sybille Drouart was hired at the Opéra in 1842 on a two-year contract to take over those roles previously sung by Elian Barthélemy and to act

<sup>141</sup> Contract dated 25 July 1830 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1059 (dossier Pradher).

<sup>142</sup> Bara, "The Company at the Heart of the Operatic Institution: Chollet and the Changing Nature of Comic-Opera Role Types during the July Monarchy," 17.

<sup>143</sup> Contract dated 20 September 1830 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1059 (dossier Boulanger).

<sup>144</sup> "[C]ar, pour former les chanteurs lyriques, de même que les comédiens, il faut la pratique de la scène, et les acteurs qui débutent n'ont pas, surtout à l'Opéra, assez d'occasions de se produire pour

as Nathan-Treilhet's understudy. Only four months into her contract, the singer was languishing in the background with few to no performance opportunities. She wrote to Pillet (after already presenting herself numerous times at his office to no avail) to let him know that she has been prepared to sing all five assigned roles for some time and, without the opportunity to perform, cannot convince the administration of her devotion, zeal, and work ethic.<sup>145</sup> She sang a total of six times during the second year of her contract, which was subsequently not renewed.<sup>146</sup>

Table 3.10 shows the number of *feux* each artist had been paid and the number of actual performances they were involved in during the 1844-1845 season. Although *feux* were originally intended as a performance bonus and thus accorded each time a singer performed, most singers were guaranteed a certain number of *feux* per month (often six to eight), which placed the onus on the theatre to provide sufficient performance opportunities.<sup>147</sup> Rosine Stoltz and Claire-Marie Dobré both were paid for twice as many performances as they actually performed, although for very different reasons. Table 3.11 shows the roles performed by the artists during the 1844-1845 season. (Singers are ordered according to the theatre's hierarchy, gleaned from various source documents.) The total number of performances is listed in the second column; in the third column, the initial number in parentheses indicates the number of times the artist performed the listed role, and the second number indicates the total number of times the opera was performed during the season. Rosine Stoltz, the highest-paid primary female singer during this period, concentrated her energies on two new roles, Desdemone in the French adaptation of Rossini's *Otello* and the title role in Donizetti's *Marie Stuart*, and sang almost every performance of her other most successful creations (*La Favorite*, *La Reine de Chypre*, *Lazzarone*, and *Dom Sébastien*). By contrast, Dobré shared the position of Dorus-Gras' understudy with Dolorès Nau and therefore had much less control over her performance schedule. (With Dorus-Gras' retirement in May 1845, Dobré and Nau were each assigned certain roles from the older singer's repertoire and were promoted to *premier sujet*.) Sophie Méquillet was a veritable workhorse, singing ninety-five times and pre-

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faire de rapides progrès." "Correspondance particulière," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 26 March 1843.

<sup>145</sup> Letter dated 18 July 1842 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 193 (dossier Drouart).

<sup>146</sup> Performance numbers have been gleaned from the records of *feux* paid during the 1843-1844 season in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 229.

<sup>147</sup> If the theatre did not provide the required number of performance opportunities, the singer still received all her *feux*; however, if she refused to perform, fell ill or left on holiday, *feux* was not accorded.

mièring secondary roles in three new operas. Even so, she earned just a few hundred francs more than her colleague Dobré and only a quarter of Rosine Stoltz's salary.

Table 3.10: Feux paid and number of performances at the Opéra during the 1844-1845 season. (*F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 229)

| Singers    | Number of feux paid | Number of performances |
|------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Stoltz     | 101                 | 59                     |
| Dorus-Gras | 84                  | 64                     |
| Méquillet  | 101                 | 95                     |
| Nau        | 63                  | 47                     |
| Dobré      | 92                  | 42                     |
| Roissy     | 84                  | 52                     |

### 3.9 HEALTH

Claire Célestine Nathan-Treilhet stands out in Table 3.11 with a mere six performances. The 1844-1845 season proved to be particularly difficult for the singer, who suffered complications from childbirth, recurring illness, and vocal problems. Duponchel initially hired Nathan-Treilhet in March 1839 but the contract was cancelled the following year and she left to sing in the provinces and in Brussels.<sup>148</sup> Pillet re-hired Nathan-Treilhet in June 1841 as the understudy for Dorus-Gras and Rosine Stoltz—a peculiar *emploi* given the dramatically different voice-types of the two singers.<sup>149</sup> In the interim, Nathan had married M. Treilhet, a young painter. Her new status as a married woman likely explains the striking out of a clause recently added to contracts for the women, one that forced singers to renounce their salary for any interruption to their service during a pregnancy. Surprisingly, the clause did not discriminate between married and unmarried women at a time when pregnancy was viewed as a natural consequence of marriage.<sup>150</sup> According to the Opéra's regulations of 1821, unmarried pregnant singers lost half of their wages during an interruption of their service.<sup>151</sup> A married woman's leave for pregnancy and childbirth was typically treated like a prolonged absence; such was the case of Cinti-Damoreau who interrupted her service in 1829 for three months during the pregnancy and birth of

<sup>148</sup>Contract dated 15 December 1838 in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 195.

<sup>149</sup>Contract from 1 June 1841 to 31 May 1844 in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 195.

<sup>150</sup>Susan Rutherford speculates that, as directors were obligated to continue paying married women who took maternity leave, this might have led to a prejudice against employing married women. Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 195.

<sup>151</sup>The revised version of the Opéra's "Règlement de 1821" sought to revoke their entire salaries after an absence of three months. See *F-Po* P.A. 1821.

Table 3.11: Number of performances and roles performed by Opéra singers during the 1844-1845 season. (*F-Pan A*)<sup>13</sup> 229)

|                 |    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Stoltz          | 59 | Premières: Desdemone, <i>Othello</i> (11/11); Marie Stuart, <i>Marie Stuart</i> (19/19)<br>Léonore, <i>La Favorite</i> (11/11); Caterina, <i>La Reine de Chypre</i> (7/7); Beppo, <i>Lazzarone</i> (5/5); Zayda, <i>Dom Sébastien</i> (3/5); Lazzarillo, <i>Xacarilla</i> (2/2); Odette, <i>Charles VI</i> (1/1)                                                                                                                                                |
| Dorus-Gras      | 64 | Premières: Bérengère, <i>Richard en Palestine</i> (10/10); Elisabeth, <i>Marie Stuart</i> (13/19)<br>Mathilde, <i>Guillaume Tell</i> (8/9); Marguerite, <i>Les Huguenots</i> (8/12); Comtesse Adèle, <i>Le Comte Ory</i> (7/9); Elvire, <i>La Muette de Portici</i> , (5/6); Alice, <i>Robert le Diable</i> (5/11); Marie, <i>Le Serment</i> (3/6); Baptista, <i>Lazzarone</i> (2/5); Isabeau, <i>Charles VI</i> (1/1)                                          |
| Méquillet       | 95 | Premières: Émilie, <i>Othello</i> (11/11); Edith Plantagenet, <i>Richard en Palestine</i> (10/10); Anna Kennedy, <i>Marie Stuart</i> (19/19)<br>Agathe, <i>Freyschütz</i> (10/11); Edwige, <i>Guillaume Tell</i> (8/9); Ragonde, <i>Le Comte Ory</i> (7/9); <i>La Reine de Chypre</i> (7/7); Valentine, <i>Les Huguenots</i> (6/12); Léonor, <i>Stradella</i> (6/6); Rachel, <i>La Juive</i> (4/8); Anaï, <i>Moïse</i> (4/7); Zayda, <i>Dom Sébastien</i> (3/5) |
| Nau             | 47 | Premières: George Douglas, <i>Marie Stuart</i> (19/19)<br>Ninka, <i>Le Dieu et la bayadère</i> (5/7); Isabelle, <i>Robert le Diable</i> (5/11); Annette, <i>Freyschütz</i> (4/11); Baptista, <i>Lazzarone</i> (3/5); La Comtesse Adèle, <i>Le Comte Ory</i> (2/9); Marie, <i>Le Serment</i> (2/6); Thérésine, <i>Le Philtre</i> (2/4); Ritta, <i>Xacarilla</i> (2/2); Eudoxie, <i>La Juive</i> (1/8); Marguerite, <i>Les Huguenots</i> (1/12)                   |
| Nathan-Treilhet | 6  | Valentine, <i>Les Huguenots</i> (2/12); Agathe, <i>Freyschütz</i> (2/12—one performance was interrupted); Rachel, <i>La Juive</i> (1/8); Thérésa, <i>Guérillo</i> (1/6)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Dobrée          | 42 | Première: Elisabeth, <i>Marie Stuart</i> (6/19)<br>Annette, <i>Freyschütz</i> (7/11); Eudoxie, <i>La Juive</i> (6/8); Isabelle, <i>Robert le Diable</i> (6/11); Thérésa, <i>Guérillo</i> (5/6); <i>Renégat de Tanger</i> (3/3); Marguerite, <i>Les Huguenots</i> (2/12); Mathilde, <i>Guillaume Tell</i> (2/9); Pamyra, <i>Le Siège de Corinthe</i> (1/1); Elvire, <i>La Muette de Portici</i> (1/6); Concert (1/1)                                             |
| Roissy          | 52 | Urbain, <i>Les Huguenots</i> (12/12); Inès, <i>La Favorite</i> (11/11); Isolier, <i>Le Comte Ory</i> (9/9); Jemmy, <i>Guillaume Tell</i> (9/9); Sinaï, <i>Moïse</i> (7/7); Alice, <i>Robert le Diable</i> (1/11); Marie, <i>Le Serment</i> (1/6); Thérésa, <i>Guérillo</i> (1/6); Concert (1/1)                                                                                                                                                                 |

her second child.<sup>152</sup> The unmarried Zoé Prévost received her regular salary for only a month during her absence following the birth of her and Henry Chollet's daughter, Caroline Prévost. Any subsequent month would cost the singer 636.70 francs

<sup>152</sup>This view was upheld by a tribunal in Nancy in 1845, which ruled that Madame Bernard was entitled to her stipend during her month's absence for childbirth: "having employed a married woman the impresario should have foreseen the 'probably interruption of service' through the arrival of children." Quoted in Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 195. Cinti-Damoreau's pregnancy caused the postponement of the première of *Guillaume Tell* in 1829. The Opéra initially considered replacing the singer, but the disastrous debut of Mme Maraffa-Fischer, her proposed replacement, convinced the administration to simply wait for Cinti-Damoreau's return in April 1829. *La Revue musicale*, 3 February 1829. Cinti-Damoreau's absence can be confirmed in *F-Po RE* 263.

in lost salary.<sup>153</sup> (As her salary at the time was around 1,300 francs a month, the administration simply followed the clause on medical leave in her contract that stipulated any leave of absence due to illness past one month would result in a reduction by half of the singer's pay.) The change in policy at the Opéra seems to have begun in the 1830s when Duponchel added a handwritten clause to the contract for Anna Widemann (who was married) stating that her payment would be suspended in the case of an absence due to pregnancy.<sup>154</sup> By revoking their right to receiving paid or semi-paid maternity leave, the Opéra administration left women with the difficult choice of either avoiding pregnancy or losing a substantial part of their income.<sup>155</sup>

Nathan-Treilhet contracted small pox in 1843 and a long convalescence reduced her service. A pregnancy followed in 1844 and she suspended performances abruptly in late March 1844.<sup>156</sup> After a difficult birth, she became very ill and traveled to Marseille, her hometown, to regain her health. Upon her return in November, Nathan sang only four times in two months due to continued illness and vocal strain. A committee comprising of Léon Pillet, Habeneck, and five of the Opéra's physicians (Baude, Vidal, de Cassis, Piron, and Sibille) met 26 December 1844 to determine whether the singer was in sufficient health and had the vocal capacity to fulfill her position at the theatre. The decision was negative. Another prolonged absence followed from January to May 1845 and Pillet began searching for a way to dismiss the artist. Adolphe Crémieux intervened on the singer's behalf, saying that Nathan-Treilhet would renounce her salary that, after two months of prolonged sickness, would not have to be paid according to her contract.<sup>157</sup> Nathan-Treilhet finally gave her notice in November 1845, asking only that Pillet grant her a benefit concert—a condition stipulated in her contract from 1843.<sup>158</sup> Perhaps in response to this prolonged dispute between Nathan-Treilhet and the administration, the following clause

<sup>153</sup>The undated document listing the conditions of her leave for reasons of childbirth was pinned to her contract signed 25 August 1828 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1059 (dossier Prévost).

<sup>154</sup>Opéra contract signed 18 January 1837 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Widemann).

<sup>155</sup>Louis Gentil claimed that Marie Flécheux and Cornélie Falcon had abortions during the 1830s and that they consequently suffered vocal alterations; both women were unmarried. See Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l'Opéra*, 117, 345-348, and 478-480.

<sup>156</sup>"Représentations de Mme Treilhet-Nathan" in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Treilhet-Nathan).

<sup>157</sup>This might be Adolphe Crémieux (1796-1880), Jewish lawyer and writer (Nathan-Treilhet was also Jewish). There was a Crémieux who held a salon in Paris, but I cannot confirm if it is the same person. Nathan-Treilhet sang at a benefit concert mounted by Crémieux in Chinon. *Le Ménestrel*, 25 October 1846.

<sup>158</sup>"A la fin de son engagement elle aura droit à une représentation à son bénéfice en partage avec l'administration. [...] Dans le cas où le présent engagement ne serait pas renouvelé, la représentation à bénéfice accordée à Mme Treilhet lui appartiendra en entier." Contract signed 26 June 1843 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Treilhet-Nathan). I have not come across any press reports of this benefit concert, and therefore do not believe it actually occurred.

was added to contracts: “In the case where, by cause of sickness, accident or any other, my voice undergoes an alteration that no longer permits me to fulfill properly the position for which I was engaged, the present contract can be cancelled by the Director.”<sup>159</sup>

The practice of giving artists *feux* for each performance was intended to encourage singers to faithfully perform in every required performance and, according to some, discourage false claims of sudden indispositions: “What we call *feux* [...] is preventative medicine for theatres. [...] One cannot imagine the marvelous effect this system of encouragement has on the physical state of artists. Migraines, fainting spells, colds no longer existed in those theatres that use *feux*.”<sup>160</sup> The common association between illness and artistic caprice meant that those refusing to sing while indisposed unfortunately earned a bad reputation. Female singers were stereotyped as being the worst offenders for feigning illness, usually for reasons of *amour-propre*. Generally speaking, Charles de Boigne declared, lead artists like Nourrit, Duprez, and Levasseur enjoyed good health and if by chance they fell ill, the administration spared them the insult of sending a doctor to confirm the illness; but women singers often fell ill, particularly in the middle of those performances when their rival received an ovation.<sup>161</sup> According to the terms of their contracts, Opéra and Opéra Comique singers were obligated to have all their absences due to illness confirmed by a member of the theatre’s team of doctors. At the Opéra in 1836, the medical team consisted of five doctors, two surgeons, and one pharmacist.<sup>162</sup> The position of *médecin de l’Opéra* was highly coveted, not only for the prestige and privilege of being attached to a royal institution but also, Louis Gentil suggested, for the pleasure of encountering so many women.<sup>163</sup> Besides treating the employees when they became sick or injured during rehearsal or performances, the doctor’s main activities were

<sup>159</sup>“Dans le cas où soit par maladie, par accident ou par une cause quelconque, ma voix viendrait à subir une altération qui ne me permettrait plus de tenir convenablement l’emploi pour lequel je suis engagée, le présent engagement pourra être résilié par le Directeur. L’altération devra être constatée par trois Médecins, choisis, un par la direction, un par l’artiste, le troisième, par les deux autres, et prononçant à la majorité des voix: les parties se soumettant d’avance à cette décision.” Article 6 in the contract for the *artistes du chant* under Pillet’s direction in the mid to late 1840s. (The contract for the Opéra in Appendix C is from the early 1840s and thus does not contain this clause.)

<sup>160</sup>“Ce qu’on appelle feux et suppléments de feux est la médecine préservative des théâtres. [...] On n’imaginerait pas le merveilleux effet de ce système d’encouragement sur l’état physique des artistes. Les migraines, les vapeurs, les enrouements, n’existent plus dans les théâtres où l’on fait l’usage des feux.” *Paris, ou le Livre des cent-et-un*, 58.

<sup>161</sup>Boigne, *Petits mémoires de l’Opéra*, 272.

<sup>162</sup>Dawson, “Danseuses as Working Women,” 131. For her full discussion of the Opéra’s doctors, see 129–135.

<sup>163</sup>142–143 Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l’Opéra*, “Les médecins du théâtre,” in.



that of policing employees. When informed of a singer's ill health, the doctor on-call visited the artist at her home, administered an examination, prescribed the necessary treatments, and reported back to the administration on the nature and extent of the illness.

The surveillance of female artists' bodies led inevitably to the supervision and medicalization of their sexuality and sexual health, as doctors were called in to confirm the credibility of their various indispositions that prevented them from performing. Many women chose not to sing or limited their performances while menstruating.<sup>164</sup> Catinka Heinefetter, for example, complained of dizziness and a marked decrease in her vocal capabilities, and wrote to Pillet to inform him of her inability to perform. Sibille, one of the Opéra's doctors, was sent to check on the singer. In his report, he noted the singer's complaints and wrote that they were probably justified, but that he could not confirm them.<sup>165</sup> Star soprano Sophie Cruvelli avoided the potentially humiliating exercise of having frequent doctor visits by including a clause in her contract that excused the singer from performing during such "critical" times.<sup>166</sup> The Opéra's doctors reported directly to the theatre's administration in relation to the artists' health, which meant that any code of confidentiality between doctor and patient was ignored.<sup>167</sup> As the (sexual) health of female performers was made fully transparent to the theatre director, such details could—and did, in the case of Nathan-Treilhet—affect decisions in relation to their employment at the theatre.

### 3.10 DISCIPLINE

Such strict policing of artists' health reveals the shift in nineteenth-century medicine toward a biomedical model that viewed the human body as a vulnerable site for disease requiring categorization, control, and surveillance, as Michel Foucault de-

<sup>164</sup>Susan Rutherford notes that Ernico Rosmini, who wrote on Italian theatre legislation in the late nineteenth century, even "maintained that theatrical law should recognize that during menstruation singers' voices underwent certain modifications; and that some prima donnas were medically advised to request rest or the omission of particularly difficult or tiring arias." Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 194.

<sup>165</sup>See Heinefetter's letter to the director dated 2 April 1841, and Sibille's report dated 3 April 1841 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Heinefetter).

<sup>166</sup>Contract dated 5 November 1853 in *F-Pan F*<sup>21</sup> 1055 (dossier Cruvelli).

<sup>167</sup>Jill Harsin has shown that medical confidentiality was restricted to male members of the bourgeoisie. See Harsin, "Syphilis, Wives, and Physicians: Medical Ethics and the Family in Late Nineteenth-Century France."



scribed in *The Birth of the Clinic*.<sup>168</sup> The changing understanding of the body and illness, and the role society—through its medical practitioners—needed to play in the policing of public health meant that the human body entered into the field of power and became subjugated by what Foucault termed the “medical gaze.” In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault posits that discipline became used as a general formula of domination in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the science of discipline became concretized in the nineteenth century through the rise of industrialization.<sup>169</sup> In his view, discipline works coercively, producing docile bodies by limiting the body’s movement through space, often through repetitive exercise, controlling one’s activity with timetables and spatial limitations, and enforcing strict hierarchies to maximize the composition of force and power. In a capitalist context, bodies become commodities and require surveillance: they have to be controlled. The working environment and policing of singers exemplified Foucault’s concept of discipline. The theatre regulated the artists’ daily movements with regular rehearsal times, performance call-times, and performances, and restricted their freedom to travel on performance days; artists who were sick were forced to remain at home until they were ready to return to work. Transgressions were punished with fines and disciplinary measures. Artists could be fired for not following the theatre’s rules and regulations. Such organization and disciplinary measures were calculated to maximize the theatre’s efficiency, production, and profits.

Besides performing schedules, many aspects of artists’ professional lives were regulated and much of their time was spent in rehearsal and preparations for new and current roles. The *chefs de chant* at both theatres ran daily rehearsals for the current repertoire.<sup>170</sup> Beginning in 1826, for example, the *chefs de chant* at the Opéra helped those artists wishing to rehearse their parts from 11am to 3pm, and ran rehearsals for the evening’s opera at 1pm on all performance days. On non-performance days, the *chefs de chant* gave lessons only from 11am to noon, after which rehearsals for

<sup>168</sup>Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception* For an enlightening discussion of medicine, the body, opera, and opera singers, see Hutcheon and Hutcheon, *Bodily Charm: Living Opera*.

<sup>169</sup>Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.

<sup>170</sup>There were normally three *chefs de chant* at the Opéra. The first *chef* was responsible for notifying artists of performances and documenting their participation. On performance days, the *chefs de chant* had to be at the theatre at 6pm to assure that the performing artists were present and to make sure the *doubles* were in attendance in case they were needed. They helped to direct the chorus during performances, assured that the artists made all their entrances and exits appropriately, and even had to make sure the artists were dressed appropriately in their costumes. They kept track of the artists’ progress and made recommendations on hiring and role assignment. See the “Règlement de 1821,” Chapters 1 and 2 of the section entitled “Chant,” *F-Po P.A.* 1821.

new works began.<sup>171</sup> Strict rehearsal guidelines were spelled out the same year at the Opéra Comique as the administration sought to improve the singers' role preparation.<sup>172</sup> Two classes were offered—a singing class and a role class—under the direction of the professor of singing, *chef du chant*, piano accompanist, and violinist (*répétiteur du violon*). The singing class took place three times a week from 10-12pm, and the role class daily from 10-4pm, in which every artist was expected to rehearse his or her roles for the evening under the supervision of the *chef de chant*. And then there were additional rehearsals for new works. In 1836 the Opéra Comique mounted twelve new works totaling twenty-two acts, while the Opéra premiered two new grand operas, *Les Huguenots* and *La Esmeralda*. The slow turnover of operas meant that Opéra artists rehearsed fewer new works, but the lower number was compensated by the length and intensity of rehearsals. Louis Véron described the laborious process of studying a new opera, which began with the main artists studying their roles separately with the composer, followed by rehearsals accompanied by a string quartet, then rehearsals with orchestra before returning to rehearsals with quartet and piano where recitatives and mise en scène were included, and finally rehearsals with full orchestra, décor, and costume.<sup>173</sup> Mark Everist notes that four months of rehearsal were required for Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* in 1831, while the first soloist rehearsals for *Les Huguenots* began eight months before the première in 1836.<sup>174</sup>

Theatrical contracts generally limited artists' freedom of movement, travel and leisure, and monetary fines were imposed for any transgressions.<sup>175</sup> Directors required singers to be available day and night for rehearsals; artists did not receive financial compensation for the extra hours of rehearsing, but were fined for being late or absent. Louis Gentil claimed that the money generated in fines increased substantially during the late 1830s—suggesting that the directors were using the system

<sup>171</sup> Arrêté on rehearsals dated 8 February 1826 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 117. The daily record books for rehearsals during the July Monarchy have unfortunately not survived. Those from 1857 reveal a similar rehearsal schedule, although much more detailed—individual lessons, ensemble rehearsals, rehearsals for debutantes, and new works are all carefully scheduled every day of the week, including Sundays. See *F-Po RE* 40.

<sup>172</sup> Bara, *Le théâtre de l'opéra-comique sous la restauration: enquête autour d'un genre moyen*, 52.

<sup>173</sup> Véron, *L'Opéra de Paris, 1820-1835*, 181-182.

<sup>174</sup> Everist, "Rehearsing Opera: Conditions and Context, Paris 1780-1850." My thanks to Mark Everist for sharing his manuscript with me.

<sup>175</sup> Fines for various rule transgressions at the Opéra were far from a nineteenth-century phenomenon. In the "Règlement au sujet de l'Opéra" (1714), a singer might be fined for refusing a particular role, causing a disruption, or appearing late to rehearsal or performances. Fines were deducted directly from the performer's pay. Noinville, *Histoire du théâtre de l'académie royale de musique en France depuis son établissement jusqu'à présent*.

as a way of generating revenue—and he stated that the women were penalized more than their male colleagues, as they could be fined for forgetting the smallest accessory for their (often very elaborate) costumes and *coiffures*.<sup>176</sup> At the Opéra, the fine for arriving late to a rehearsal was 10% of the singer's monthly salary—anywhere from 20 to more than 200 francs. Sophie Grimm, for example, was fined 20 francs for being fifteen minutes late for the rehearsal on 2 November 1848 and making three hundred people wait.<sup>177</sup> Fines for performing outside their contracted theatre were also based on the singer's earnings. Singers at the Opéra Comique were fined a month of their salary and *feux*, whereas Opéra singers were fined anywhere from 100 to 500 francs depending on their salary range (and, it seems, the possibility for recidivism).<sup>178</sup> Should one decide to take the risk and perform elsewhere, one would have to be sure that the financial and professional benefits of the performance were worth the fine. In the mid-1840s, Paul Barroilhet and Dolorès Nau were both assigned fines of 300 francs and 500 francs, respectively, for singing in a soirée without permission.<sup>179</sup> Barroilhet was fined less than Nau, even though he earned double her base salary. Nau had an established concert career when she re-signed at the Opéra in 1844 and although she was given free reign to perform in concerts for the first year of her contract, this privilege was revoked in the second and third years. The administration likely chose the maximum fine to create a strong deterrent. Still, the lesser fine for Barroilhet, especially considering his salary (over 50,000 francs by 1844-1845), might very well be evidence of preferential treatment.

Theatre administration dealt fairly harshly with those singers who took leave without permission. In 1826, Marie Sophie Ponchard (1792-1873), *sociétaire* at the Opéra Comique, took an unauthorized leave of absence from Paris. After receiving a complaint from the theatre's director Pixérécourt, the Duc d'Aumont issued an *arrêté* stating that Ponchard would be fined (perhaps severely) for her absence and was ordered back to work.<sup>180</sup> Similarly, Marie-Virginie Casimir, another Opéra Comique *sociétaire* who left the theatre without permission in July 1827, found herself stripped of her status as a *sociétaire* and subject to fines. Contractually obligated to perform at the Opéra Comique for a period of fifteen years, the Duc d'Aumont

<sup>176</sup>“Les amendes,” in Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l'Opéra*, 277-278.

<sup>177</sup>“Académie Royale de Musique. Rapport” in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194.

<sup>178</sup>Singers with an annual salary less than 3,000 francs were typically assigned a fine of 100 francs; those with salaries between 3,000 and 9,000 francs a fine of 300; and those with salaries over 10,000 francs a fine of 500. The fine amounts were written directly into artists' contracts.

<sup>179</sup>See the report no. 100 (*Amendes*) by the *chefs de chant* held in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 230.

<sup>180</sup>Arrêté dated 27 September 1826 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1060.

approved her re-admittance at the theatre—although only as a *pensionnaire*—and outlined the conditions for her re-engagement for the following three years.<sup>181</sup>

Artists at the Opéra Comique faced heavy fines when their absence prevented the performance of an opera or the substitution of another; in the former case, the artist was fined the highest receipt for that particular opera, and in the latter, the difference in receipt for the substituted opera (based on the highest receipts). In case the administration needed to change the evening's playbill at the last minute, singers were expected to be available and ready to perform every performance day, even if they were not scheduled to perform. Opéra singers had their *feux* revoked on those occasions when they refused to sing and, by all appearances, these refusals occurred regularly. In February 1846 eight singers (Duprez, Gardoni, Marié, Barroilhet, Serda, Brémond, Dolorès Nau, and Mme Betty) had *feux* revoked: the total amounted to over 1,300 francs in "savings" for the theatre.<sup>182</sup> And while not technically a fine, the largest penalty singers faced was that attributed for leaving the theatre before the contract was finished. The hefty indemnity (*dédit*) established in the contract and usually amounting to two to five times the artist's annual salary discouraged singers (and directors, for that matter) from breaking the contract.<sup>183</sup>

Incurring too many fines could result in the termination of a contract. In the 1830s at the Opéra, a director could cancel an artist's contract without penalty if the artist had accumulated six fines in a month. Given the number of possible infractions with fines at the theatre, directors could easily heap on fines and dismiss singers they no longer wanted to pay. By the 1840s, the number of fines tolerated was reduced to three per month. This was just one of many changes to artists' contracts during the period that basically served as an "escape clause" for directors wishing to protect their interests by allowing them to cancel engagements without having to pay the *dédit*.

<sup>181</sup> Arrêté dated 30 July 1827 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1060.

<sup>182</sup> See the report no. 111 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 230.

<sup>183</sup> According to Clay, the *comédiens du roi* in the eighteenth century felt that, in the best interests of artists, directors and the public, contracts should not be easily over-turned; the Comédie-Française endorsed stiff fines and legal action for those attempting to escape their responsibilities. Clay, "Provincial Actors, the Comédie-Française, and the Business of Performing in Eighteenth-Century France," 660.

## 3.11 THE CLAUQUE

A critic at *La France musicale* outlined the three basic actions of the claque: to hiss, to keep silent, and to applaud.<sup>184</sup> The claque would often be called in to *chauffer* the reception of a mediocre opera and encourage certain artists. That did not prevent the claqueurs from having discerning taste: in an article on the claques at Parisian theatres in *Le Monde dramatique*, the author noted that the claque at the Opéra Comique sometimes emerged from the theatres with hands red from enthusiasm all the while bitterly critiquing the opera.<sup>185</sup> Charles de Boigne noted that although it was fashionable to critique the claque, one had to admit that it provided indispensable services to theatre culture in general and to the performers in particular. Those artists who did not have some sort of agreement with the claque eventually felt its sting with one of the worst receptions possible—utter silence.<sup>186</sup> Performers received a certain number of tickets each time they performed and they often passed these along to the leader of the claque: at the Opéra, this was Auguste Levasseur during Véron's and Duponchel's directorships in the 1830s. Many artists paid monthly fees to the claque, ranging from 30 to 200 francs, according to Castil-Blaze, to *soigner* or "take care of" their entrances and exits.<sup>187</sup> Laure Cinti-Damoreau appeared to have benefited from this practice while she sang at the Opéra Comique: Henri Blanchard noted that the claqueurs "create what we call in the language of the trade, an entry for Madame Damoreau;" in other words, "ils la *soignent*."<sup>188</sup> Cinti-Damoreau had paid Auguste handsomely while she sang at the Opéra, buying three bursts of applause and insisting her colleagues Nourrit and Falcon receive only two, at least according to Louis Gentil; Cornélie Falcon, by contrast, refused to pay Auguste, and viewed the claque with disdain.<sup>189</sup> Charles de Boigne claimed that some artists (and here he singled out the *danseuse* Lise Noblet) even gave Auguste their nightly *feux*.

The claque's support not only meant more applause and curtain calls, but could also influence a singer's chances of getting re-hired at the theatre with improved ben-

<sup>184</sup>"[...] car, la claque est ainsi organisée: tant pour chuter un acteur, tant pour garder le silence, et tant pour applaudir." *La France musicale*, 12 August 1838.

<sup>185</sup>"Mœurs dramatiques. Physiologie et statistiques des claqueurs de Paris. Opéra-Comique. L'Opéra. Les Italiens. Le prince de Syracuse. M. Harel. Le solitaire," *Le Monde dramatique*, vol. 2 (1836), 312-314.

<sup>186</sup>For a lengthy description of the claque at the Opéra, see Boigne, *Petits mémoires de l'Opéra*, 84-96.

<sup>187</sup>Castil-Blaze, *L'Académie Impériale de Musique, histoire littéraire, musicale, chorégraphique, pittoresque, morale, critique, facétieuse, politique et galante de ce théâtre, de 1645 à 1855*, 2:404.

<sup>188</sup>"Des gens doués d'une bienveillance à toute épreuve, les claqueurs enfin, puisqu'il faut les nommer par leur nom, font, ce qu'on appelle en termes du métier, une entrée à madame Damoreau; ils la *soignent*." J.J.J. Diaz [Henri Blanchard], *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 25 December 1836.

<sup>189</sup>"L'entreprise de la claque," in Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l'Opéra*, 170-171.

efits. Louis Véron noted that when artists' contracts were coming up for renewal, they paid for some extra services in an attempt to get higher wages (all the while fooling the poor theatre director):

Toward the end of the contract and at the moment of renewal, more than one artist, to trick both the public and the director, asked Auguste, in return for monetary compensation, for a momentary increase of success, that might also increase or at least maintain the amount of their salary. [...] A mediocre artist manages his voice or polishes his dance steps for a few performances; he receives from Auguste an unusual protection; some friends positioned in the orchestra show their admiration for this talent in progress. The director's *camarilla* [schemer] [...] insists on this artist's future. "Take some precaution," he adds, "don't let this one escape: England will build him a bridge of gold and Russia will offer him a high salary with a pension." Always fearful of upsets and the triumphs of jealous rivalries, the director decides to make a sacrifice, and once the brilliant contract is signed, the great talent and the celebrity of the day that caused so much racket evaporate: the trick has been played.<sup>190</sup>

The tables could be easily turned. Castil-Blaze revealed that claque was sometimes paid by the administration to hiss an artist whose contract was coming up for renewal; it was a diplomatic way of convincing the artist to leave the theatre.

The claque generally supported the higher-ranking artists because they filled the main roles in the more popular operas: "all the main roles must be fêted, called back, [...] it was their right."<sup>191</sup> All the same, those secondary artists who found favour with the director sometimes managed to garner more support. Véron gloated how he managed to come up with a system of ranking the level of applause Auguste was to shower on secondary artists, but in such a way that he would not have to openly reveal

<sup>190</sup>"Vers la fin des engagements et au moment de les renouveler, plus d'un artiste, pour tromper tout à la fois le public et le directeur, demandaient d'Auguste, à prix d'argent, un surcroît de succès momentané, qui pu sinon accroître au moins faire maintenir le chiffre de ses appointements. [...] Un artiste médiocre soigne sa voix ou travaille ses pas pendant quelques représentations; il reçoit d'Auguste une protection inaccoutumée; quelques amis placés à l'orchestre s'affichent par leur admiration pour ce talent en progrès. La camarilla du directeur [...] insiste sur l'avenir de cet artiste. 'Prenez vos précautions, ajoute-t-on, ne le laissez pas échapper; l'Angleterre lui fait un pont d'or et la Russie lui offre de gros appointements avec une pension.' Redoutant toujours les folies et les triomphes des rivalités jalouses, le directeur se décide à des sacrifices; et lorsqu'un brillant engagement est signé, s'évanouissent ce grand talent et cette célébrité d'un jour qui avaient causé tant de bruit: le tour est joué." Véron, *L'Opéra de Paris, 1820-1835*, 201-202.

<sup>191</sup>Ibid., 207.



his favourites.<sup>192</sup> Although theatre directors, composers, and librettists all used the *claque* to their benefit, any criticism of the *claque* fell on performers who, according to their critics, preferred the applause of the *claque* to the glory of attaining the noble purpose of art.<sup>193</sup> Accusing singers of using the *claque* was one way of suggesting that their success lacked public or popular support. Critics at *La France musicale* claimed, for example, that the Opéra's *claque* essentially became slaves fêting Rosine Stoltz's glory in the 1840s and remaining silent when her rivals performed.

### 3.12 THE DIFFICULT LIFE OF THE CANTATRICE

Singers drew on support from specific individuals—even institutions like the *claque*—to protect their position, assure advantageous contract conditions, and pursue their performing careers. These steps were necessary given the market conditions and the precarious position many artists were in, particularly lower-ranking singers. Some like Cornélie Quiney, who was without an influential protector and instead depended her father and her own bargaining skills, were not able to negotiate better working conditions, performance opportunities, advancement, and recognition. Others like Cécile Pijon d'Halbert (who later married the tenor Charles Ponchard, the son of two Opéra Comique singers) luckily had family friends with important connections whose influence protected the singer during her time at the theatre. A decade later, Céline de Lapommeraié wrote to the Impératrice Eugénie asking for her protection at a crucial moment in her career at the Opéra when her contract was coming up for renewal. Already having the protection of the Emperor's wife, Lapommeraié asked if she would put in a few kind words to the Ministre d'État, who would then “without a doubt” renew the singer's contract with “advantageous conditions.” Should she not be re-hired, Lapommeraié claimed, she would be forced to leave the capital, a move that would compel her to renounce her position as *chanteuse de la chapelle* that the Impératrice had procured for her and, what is more, it would place her family for whom she was the sole financial provider in a difficult situation.<sup>194</sup>

The loss of long contracts and virtually guaranteed employment for up to two

<sup>192</sup> Véron, *L'Opéra de Paris, 1820-1835*, 207.

<sup>193</sup> Henri Panofka chided singers for having no conscience: “Un artiste doit donc être tout à fait sans conscience? Les applaudissements de la *claque* remplacent-ils la gloire d'atteindre au noble but de l'art, et dans un engagement favorable sous le rapport financier, faut-il ne voir qu'un brevet de nullité?” *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 9 September 1838.

<sup>194</sup> “[...] je viens donc supplier votre majesté de dire un mot en ma faveur à Mr le Ministre d'État, qui sans nul doute, voyant qu'elle daigne me porter quelque intérêt me réengagera à des conditions avantageuses. Si je n'obtiens pas le nouvel engagement que je désire, je ne serai pas seule à souffrir, je serai obligée de m'éloigner, de m'engager même à l'Étranger et pour ma famille dont je suis le seul



decades at the Opéra and the Opéra Comique meant that most singers were forced into adopting a peripatetic lifestyle unless they had the necessary influence or protection that would assure more stable employment. For women, changing theatres on a regular basis was a particularly onerous task as contemporary mores required women to travel with a family member or spouse to protect their reputation. It also made the task of providing for one's family more difficult, especially if the young woman had to leave the family home. One finds amid the piles of contracts, *arrêtés*, pay schedules, budgets, reports on singers, and statements of theatre receipts, a few documents that reveal a glimpse of what it meant for many female singers to pursue professional singing careers under such conditions. Many lower ranking singers without protection insisted on the fact that they were the sole providers for their family in a bid to save their job; their determination to stay in the field would have been motivated by the fact that theatre work was lucrative for women, as they could earn a salary much higher than in any other industry. Joséphine Clady Moisson, for example, had fought to save her position at the Opéra to no avail by insisting on this fact in 1847. Her contract terminated, she pursued her career in the provinces and abroad, demonstrating her artistic resolve and her financial need for employment. Daughter of a flour miller, Moisson was likely one of those many women sent by her family to use her skills in the theatre to contribute to the family's revenue. In 1854, she appealed directly to the Opéra once again for an audition, not having recourse to a protector. She outlined her career since her departure from the Opéra in 1847, an exhausting series of cities: "After my departure from the Opéra, I performed in Amiens, Lille, Poitiers, Geneva, Dijon, Bordeaux, and with great success in the repertoire of *La Juive*, *La Favorite*, *Charles VI*, *Robert le diable*, etc. Since then I have studied the new operas, which permits me to ask you for a position among your *pensionnaires*."<sup>195</sup> Her appeal, however, was not successful, perhaps because of unfortunate timing. That same month Rosine Stoltz was rehired at the Opéra and the administration likely saw no reason to hire the lesser-known contralto from the provinces. Moisson likely re-packed her bags and headed for another theatre. Perhaps she moved on abroad, to England or even North America, or perhaps she changed strategy and decided to marry and retire from public performance. For singers, with retirement also came a

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soutien, ce sera un véritable malheur!" Letter to the Impératrice Eugénie dated 29 March 1858 in *F-Pan* F<sup>21</sup> 1057.

<sup>195</sup>"Après ma sortie de l'Opéra, j'ai joué à Amiens, Lille, Poitiers, Genève, Dijon, Bordeaux et avec grand succès le répertoire de *la Juive*, *la Favorite*, *Charles VI*, *Robert le Diable*, &. Depuis j'ai étudié les opéras nouveaux; ce qui m'autorise à vous demander une place parmi vos pensionnaires." Letter to the director dated 3 August 1854 in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 453.

kind of silence, even for the stars, as once out of the limelight the public and critics had little interest in their private lives.

## RETIREMENT: CREATING THE PERFECT ENDING

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In his review of Castil-Blaze's French translation of Weber's *Eurianthe*, premiered at the Opéra 6 April 1831 and the first opera produced under Louis Véron's directorship, Jules Janin took the liberty of devoting much space to the current state of affairs at Paris's premier theatre. The new management system at the Opéra, he claimed, was promising renewal. And just as the theatre itself would soon receive a dramatic face-lift (which was completed for the first performance in three acts of *Guillaume Tell* in June 1831), Janin called for the rejuvenation of the theatre's personnel:

The privileges are dead. The first of them all, the right of seniority—absurd privilege of the theatre's society members that kills all your pleasures with ugliness and decrepitude, and feeds you a diet of old faces, broken voices, knock knees—is dead. From now on there is a place for youth, beauty, fresh and pure voices. It is time for the Opéra to renew itself; it is time to retire the heavy Zephyrs, the toothless Flores, the pot-bellied Venuses. [...] Everywhere one sees only women with pockmarks, raised shoulders, large heads out of proportion with the body, agedness, malaise, without grace, no sign of youth anywhere; the theatrical world is dying of old age, there is no young, warm blood in the veins; [...] the old folks retire, with the appearance of the torches reduced to ash to borrow Horace's expression, regretting that they have been old for a long time.<sup>1</sup>

Weber's opera was initially intended to mark another moment of renewal and change as the première was to be the main feature of Louise-Thérèse-Antoinette Lemon-

<sup>1</sup>“Les privilèges sont morts. Le premier de tous, le droit de l'ancienneté, absurde privilège des sociétaires de théâtre, qui frappe tous vos plaisirs de laideur et de caducité, vous mettant au régime des vieux visages, des voix cassées, des genoux cagneux, est frappé de mort. Place désormais à la jeunesse, à la beauté, aux voix fraîches et pures. Il est temps que l'Opéra se renouvelle; il est temps de mettre à la retraite les lourds Zéphyrs, les Flores édentées, les Vénus au large ventre. [...] C'est que nous ne voyons partout que femmes grêles, épaules trop hautes, grosse tête et sans mesure avec le corps, vieillesse, malaise, aucune grâce, de la jeunesse nulle part; c'est que ce monde théâtral meurt de vieillesse; c'est qu'il n'a plus dans les veines de sang jeune et chaud; [...] c'est que les vieillards se retirent en regrettant, à l'aspect de ces flambeaux réduits en cendre, selon l'expression d'Horace, combien ils sont vieux depuis long-temps.” Jules Janin, *Journal des débats*, 11 April 1831.

nier's retirement benefit concert, held exceptionally on the prestigious Opéra stage, in celebration of her twenty-three years of service at the Opéra Comique.<sup>2</sup> At the last minute, her benefit was postponed indefinitely and the première of *Eurianthe* instead took place 6 April 1831. Over the next few years, signs of renewal appeared, particularly in the vast number of young debutants, fresh from the Conservatoire, who graced the stage throughout the period. Youthful singers and dancers promised to help rid the institution of its reputation as old-fashioned and outdated, and to attract the public that had abandoned the theatre for the boulevard. For one critic who hid his identity under the pseudonym A. de B., this transition in favour of youth could not come quickly enough. "There are still too many old people next to the young at the Opéra," the critic complained. Given that the theatre had retired its old repertoire, it should retire its old singers along with it. And youth was particularly essential for the heroines: "Juliet, Desdemona, Alice, la Vestale: there are creations worthy of musicians for the sole reason that they are young, pure, virginal; roles of inspiration and not science, sacred enthusiasm and not cold calculation, that require high and sublime foreheads, sonorous and frank voices, voices of fifteen-year-olds, burning hands, perfumed breath, and faces where paleness is a mark of beauty." Composers did not write for worn-out voices, the critic insisted; musical passion is ardent and exaggerated, it does not talk, it acts and to act, one must be young. "If there is one place on Earth where old age should be forever banished," he snarled, "it's the theatre." He advised those "vieilles cantatrices" to imitate the old Athenians, to descend from the stage and sit silently in the hall.<sup>3</sup>

Jules Janin and A. de B. focused much of their criticism on women who bore the burden of representing youth (the virginal debutante) and old age (the haggard, pock-marked performer). Women generally suffered more pressure than men to be young and beautiful and to take their leave before the ravages of time transformed them completely. "We express the desire to see newer, pretty people under the stage lights

<sup>2</sup>Everist, "Translating Weber's *Euryanthe*: German Romanticism at the Dawn of French Grand Opéra," 75-76.

<sup>3</sup>"Il y a encore à l'Opéra trop de vieux à côté des jeunes: à côté de Mlle Falcon il y a Mme Dabadie; à côté de M. Levasseur, M. Dabadie. [...] Juliette, Desdémone, Alice, la Vestale; voilà des créations dignes des musiciens, par cela seule qu'elles sont jeunes, pures, et virginales; rôles d'inspiration et non pas de science, d'enthousiasme sacré et non de froid calcul, qui veut des fronts élevés et sublimes, des voix franches et sonore, des voix de quinze ans, des mains brûlantes, des haleines embaumées, et des visages où la pâleur soit belle à voir. [...] S'il est un endroit sur la terre d'où la vieillesse doit être bannie à tout jamais, c'est le théâtre. [...] Que les vieilles cantatrices imitent les vieillards d'Athènes; qu'elle se couronnent de myrtes et de roses; qu'elles viennent s'asseoir silencieusement dans la salle, et le public les respectera dans leur loge, où il aimera mieux, n'en doutez pas, les voir que sur la scène." A. de B. "Les jeunes cantatrices," *La Gazette musicale de Paris*, 4 October 1835.

replacing the older, charming women who will now be ornamental,” announced the critics from *La Mélomanie*, “*One must be of one’s era*: this enlightening truth is principally applicable to female singers and female dancers.”<sup>4</sup> Such a double standard did not escape the Comtesse Dash, who pointed out that the public avoided calling the seventy-two-year-old Opéra Comique singer Martin “vieux” while applying the term easily to Comédie Française actress Anne-Françoise-Hippolyte Mars (known simply as Mlle Mars, 1779-1847).<sup>5</sup> Those who chose to pursue long careers had to contend with competition from young, beautiful debutantes and the derogatory remarks in the press—especially if the older singer refused to change her repertoire or *emploi*. Marie-Virginie Casimir (1801-1888), for example, began her career at the Opéra Comique in the 1820s and, apart from a few brief absences to take up contracts in the provinces, was still singing the same roles in the 1840s. Upon her *rentrée* in October 1843, a critic at *La Sylphide* suggested that her performance of Isabelle in *Le Pré aux clercs*—a role she had created—was perhaps a “little young” for the singer, even though her voice was, admittedly, still fresh and brilliant.<sup>6</sup> A few off-key notes were probably just the result of nervousness, the critic added maliciously, and after a few performances the singer would likely create roles “plus marqués.” The soprano did not let the critic’s snide remarks shake her confidence in her talent and was eventually rewarded for her tenacity. Three years later, Casimir had become indispensable as the theatre, lacking another prima donna capable of supporting the entire weight of the repertoire left by Cinti-Damoreau and Anna Thillon, depended upon the older singer to fill those roles that the younger debutantes did not yet have the technique and experience to sing.<sup>7</sup>

In a genre that matched singers’ vocal and physical characteristics to that of the characters they performed, such discrepancies of age were not easily tolerated. At the same time, the role-type system at the Opéra Comique accommodated ageing singers

<sup>4</sup>“C’est là un ordre de choses excellent à échanger contre un meilleur; ainsi, lorsque nous demandons s’il est encore des femmes, dans la condition d’effet extérieur, dans le sens de représentation, pris au positif, nous exprimons le vœu de voir de jolies personnes plus nouvelles remplacer aux feux de la rampe les charmantes femmes plus anciennes qui en font aujourd’hui l’ornement; nous voudrions des aspects plus contemporains. *Il faut être de son époque*, cette lumineuse vérité est principalement applicable aux cantatrices et aux danseuses.” “Les Femmes de l’Opéra,” *La Mélomanie*, 9 January 1842.

<sup>5</sup>Dash, *Mémoires des autres*, 4:161.

<sup>6</sup>“Mme Casimir a reparu mercredi à l’Opéra-Comique dans le *Pré aux Clercs*. Le rôle d’Isabelle est devenu un peu jeune pour Mme Casimir dont la voix est pourtant encore fraîche et vibrante, et qui vocalise toujours avec une agilité merveilleuse. Malgré quelques intonations un peu hasardées qu’il faut sans doute mettre sur le compte de l’émotion, le public a fait fort bon accueil à son ancienne prima donna qui, après quelques reprises des rôles de son répertoire, s’occupera sans doute de créer des rôles plus marqués.” *La Sylphide*, 14 October 1843.

<sup>7</sup>*L’Etoile, revue du progrès*, March 1846, 44.

more easily than grand opera. Marie-Julie Boulanger, who debuted in soubrette and *amoureuse* roles in 1811, finished her career performing the *duègne* (for illustration of Boulanger in these two *emplois*, see Figure 4.1). She began singing the *jeune duègne* in the mid-1830s and, according to a critic from the *Revue musicale*, was so pained by the change that she considered retirement.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, she continued performing and soon settled into her new *emploi*, creating memorable roles such as that of Madame Barnek, Henriette's aunt and a former opera singer, in Auber's *L'Ambassadrice* in 1836. She continued creating new, albeit secondary roles throughout the 1830s and early into the 1840s, although her new productions became few and far between during her final years at the theatre. Casimir began singing the *duègne* in the mid-1840s and continued for the remainder of her career that stretched into the late 1860s. She sang the role of Madame Barnek in a revival of *L'Ambassadrice* in December 1865, and small roles in other revivals of the old repertoire: Grétry's *Les Méprises par ressemblance* (1786; August 1858) and Boïeldieu's *Les Voitures versées* (1820; May 1868).<sup>9</sup>



Figure 4.1: (left to right) Marie-Julie Boulanger, as Jenny in Boïeldieu's *La Dame blanche* (1825) and as La Duchesse de Granval in Thomas' *Le Perruquier de la régence* (1838) (Boulanger is on the far left). F-Pn, ICO-PER-3193

Such exceptionally long careers were virtually unheard of at the Opéra during the period, apart from a handful who sang for about fifteen years, including Con-

<sup>8</sup>*Revue musicale*, 19 April 1835.

<sup>9</sup>See reviews of these productions in *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*: 1 August 1858; 31 December 1865; 3 May 1868. Casimir's final benefit concert took place in December 1877, although receipts were surprisingly low, only 2,000 francs. See *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 23 December 1877. Casimir died in 1888.



stance Jawureck (1822-1837), Cornélie Quiney (1820-1836), Julie Dorus-Gras (1830-1845), and Dolorès Nau (1836-1842; 1844-1853). As we have seen, the administrative changes in the early years of the period included the abolition of long contracts and retirement pensions, two things that had guaranteed extended careers and stable artistic troupes. Prior to the changes, Opéra Comique *sociétaires* were guaranteed a retirement pension of 1,500 francs after fifteen years of service, an amount that was often boosted by another 1,500 francs drawn from the society's funds.<sup>10</sup> After the *sociétaires* gave up the theatre's management to a director, their pensions were to be managed by the state and written into the *grand livre*. However, Louis-Philippe's government initially refused to honour these pensions after the change in regime in 1830. Only after much lobbying were the Opéra Comique artists finally granted their pensions in 1835, although they would be the last artists to receive them during the period.<sup>11</sup> While the Royal Household directly managed the Opéra, retirement pensions were simply considered part of the cost of running the theatre. Artists were initially granted a pension after ten years of service; this was raised to fifteen years in 1784 and again to twenty years in 1793.<sup>12</sup> During those moments when the theatre slipped into the hands of entrepreneurs, however, the administration of the pension plan changed. By the early nineteenth century, artists began contributing a portion of their salaries to their pensions, usually between 2-5%. According to the pension legislation outlined in 1811, male artists could retire by the age of 42 after twenty years of service; female artists could retire at 40 years of age and the same length of service.<sup>13</sup> Once the administration of the theatre was placed under the Minister of the Interior and managed by a directeur-entrepreneur in 1831, only those artists who were hired prior to June 1831 and had been contributing to their pension funds could keep their pensions. Their contributions were fixed thereafter at 5% regardless of salary.<sup>14</sup> The next time Opéra artists were offered retirement pensions was in 1856 under the Second Empire, and only those who made less than 40,000 francs and had completed twenty years of service were eligible.<sup>15</sup>

All this begs the question: what did singers without pensions do? The increase in salary levels for middle- and upper-ranking artists probably offset some of the financial burden, although this depended on their capacity to set money aside for

<sup>10</sup>See the "Ordonnance du roi du 30 mars 1824" in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1053.

<sup>11</sup>*La Revue musicale*, 18 January 1835.

<sup>12</sup>See the few undated documents (post-1831) on the Opéra's pension system in *F-Pn n.a.f.* 3043.

<sup>13</sup>See the "Décret du 20 janvier 1811" in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 175.

<sup>14</sup>Lacan and Paulmier, *Traité de la législation et de la jurisprudence des théâtres*, 2:380-382.

<sup>15</sup>*Caisse spéciale de pensions de retraites. Décret du 14 May 1856 by Napoléon* (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1856), held in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1135.



retirement. At least one artist was known for her diligence in planning for the future. Although he mocked her frugal habits, Louis Gentil noted that Julie Dorus-Gras wanted to accrue enough “for her old age by depriving herself of the pleasures of life.”<sup>16</sup> Singers increasingly went on tours to the provinces and abroad during their *congés* and in between contracts. These tours could be quite lucrative and a healthy supplement to artists’ savings. Once Adolphe Nourrit decided to retire from the Opéra in 1837, he explained his plan to go on tour for a year or so to supplement his pension in a letter to a friend (having been hired prior to 1831, Nourrit was one of the few artists who still held the right to a pension): “My contract with the Opéra finishes in the month of March; I will have my retirement performance, I will sort out my pension that I have earned with sixteen years of service, and I will finish with a tour in the departments that should, in a year or fifteen months, provide me with more savings that I could produce in four years at the Opéra.”<sup>17</sup>

Nourrit was, of course, a privileged premier sujet who already had a high salary, comfortable performing conditions, and an established reputation in Paris. For those lower-ranking artists who could not boast such advantages, the loss of retirement pensions must have been quite devastating. Singers could only continue performing as long as their voices and physical capabilities allowed and should they be unable to pursue a career long enough to provide for their retirement, they could face destitution. A journalist from *La Mélomanie* even noted that some older artists committed suicide rather than live in poverty.<sup>18</sup> For this reason, Baron Taylor organized the Association des artistes musiciens in 1839 (it was officially established in 1842). The association required its members to pay a monthly fee to help build its funds (in 1842, this was set at 50 centimes), which were also supplemented with fundraising concerts and lotteries. From these funds, the association would provide temporary aid to artists who fell ill or became injured, and retirement pensions for those members who could not continue their performing career and were in desperate need of an income; non-members could also receive the help of the society in dire cases, or when an artist died and left a widow and children in need.<sup>19</sup> In 1845, the association gave

<sup>16</sup> “[...] qu’elle veut s’amasser du bien pour ses vieux jours en se privant de toutes les douceurs de la vie.” “Madame Dorus-Gras,” in Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l’Opéra*, 123

<sup>17</sup> “Mon engagement avec l’Opéra finit au mois de mars prochain; je prends ma représentation de retraite, je fais régler ma pension, que j’ai gagnée par seize ans de service, et je finis par une tournée départementale, qui doit, en un an ou quinze mois, me rapporter plus d’économies que je n’en puis faire en quatre ans à l’Opéra.” Letter to Monsieur Hiller, 25 October 1836 in Quicherat, *Adolphe Nourrit: Sa vie, son talent, son caractère, sa correspondance*, 3:26-28.

<sup>18</sup> “De l’avenir des artistes,” *La Mélomanie*, 24 December 1842.

<sup>19</sup> The association’s statutes were reprinted in *La Mélomanie*, 26 February 1843.

eight artists and musicians retirement pensions of 200 francs annually—certainly not enough to live on, but a welcome supplement for otherwise meager savings. One of the recipients was a former Opéra Comique singer, M. Jeansin, aged sixty-seven.<sup>20</sup>

Besides their salaries, savings, and lucrative tours, premier artists enjoyed yet another advantage over their lower-ranking colleagues: the right to a retirement benefit concert. These are best seen as gala evenings where artists would pocket earnings that could reach over 20,000 francs. Not only were these events extraordinary occasions to make an exceptional amount of money in one evening, but they were also a moment during which an artist and her public fêted her career and legacy. Offered as the final performance of an artist’s career in the theatre, the retirement benefit concert offers a rare glimpse into singers’ evaluations of their artistic contributions and their feelings about their imminent departure, in addition to contemporary perceptions on ageing in the theatre.

#### 4.1 “DISJUNCTI MEMBRA PARTÆ”: THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY BENEFIT CONCERT

Eight days in advance, a meter-long poster tells the public to get ready for a dramatic solemnity. Mademoiselle Mars will lend the beneficiary the influence of her admirable talent; Madame Cinti-Damoreau will let us hear her ravishing voice; Paul will stun us with his amazing feats; Potier will make us explode with laughter with his witty expressions.... In short, nothing will be missing. Half the theatre is soon rented by those people who can be found anywhere there is a crowd and who attend a performance according to fashion—not to watch, but to be seen. Such people know exactly what they are doing, and it is not for them that these performances are such pitfalls, but for those gullible people that we see everywhere, who, tempted by the names and the titles of the works, believe that in one single evening and at one theatre, they will attend all the theatres of Paris and see all that is interesting and new that they contain. After having stood in line for several hours, one pays for a ticket three times what it is worth; one finds, with great difficulty, a small corner where one is tightly packed in; one admires an act of an old tragedy that is known by heart, a few fragments of an opera that is

<sup>20</sup>P.S. [Edouard Monnais], *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 26 January 1845.

already worn out, some outmoded dances, and one returns home at two o'clock in the morning wondering what had been seen, and yawning like Apollo at the classic verses of Mr. Baour-Lormian.<sup>21</sup>

James Rousseau's colourful description sums up the main features of nineteenth-century benefit concerts (*représentation à bénéfice*): a potpourri of fragments of operas, comedies, ballets; performances by fashionable artists drawn from all different Parisian theatres; high ticket prices; and the attendance of those high-society members who go mainly to be seen. A benefit concert was basically a performance given in honour of an artist who would reap the evening's earnings, but the concert could take many different forms with regard to its programming and the financial arrangement between the theatre administration and the artist. The first recorded benefit concert in France took place in 1735 and was given in honour of Mlle Gaussin, an actress who had lost all of her possessions in a fire.<sup>22</sup> Although a scattering of examples exist in the eighteenth century, benefit concerts were much more common in the nineteenth century where they became used as a means of increasing artists' salaries. During the Restoration at the Théâtre Italien, for example, artists were accorded an annual (or sometimes bi-annual) benefit concert and typically promised a certain sum of money. Should the concert's receipts fall short of the amount, the administration would make up the difference.<sup>23</sup> Such a lucrative arrangement was,

<sup>21</sup>"Huit jours à l'avance, une affiche longue d'une aune engage le public à se tenir prêt pour une solennité dramatique. Mademoiselle Mars doit prêter au bénéficiaire l'appui de son admirable talent; madame Cinti-Damoreau fera entendre sa voix ravissante; Paul nous étonnera par ses tours de force; Potier nous fera pouffer de rire par ses spirituelles grimaces... Enfin rien n'y manquera. La moitié de la salle est bientôt louée par ces figures que l'on rencontre partout où doit se trouver la foule, et qui vont au spectacle par ton, non pas pour voir, mais pour se faire regarder. Ceux-là savent bien ce qu'ils font, et ce n'est pas pour eux qu'une telle représentation est un écueil; mais pour ces gens crédules, comme on en voit tant, qui, alléchés par des noms et des titres de pièces, pensent qu'en une seule soirée et dans une seule salle, ils font assister à tous les théâtres de Paris, et voir tout ce qu'ils renferment de piquant et de nouveau. Après avoir fait queue pendant plusieurs heures, on paie un billet trois fois ce qu'il vaut; on trouve, à grande peine, un petit coin où l'on est serré comme dans un étau; on admire un acte d'une vieille tragédie que l'on sait par cœur; quelques morceaux d'un opéra qui est déjà usé sur les orgues; quelque pas d'un ballet suranné, et l'on rentre chez soi à deux heures du matin, en se demandant ce que l'on a vu, et en bâillant comme Apollon aux classique vers de M. Baour-Lormian." Rousseau, *Code théâtral, physiologie des théâtres, manuel complet de l'auteur, du directeur, de l'acteur et de l'amateur, contenant les lois, règles et applications de l'art dramatique*, 126-128.

<sup>22</sup>Richard Macnutt, "Benefit," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, edited by Stanley Sadie. Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/0900523> (accessed March 13, 2012).

<sup>23</sup>Mongredien, *Le Théâtre Italien de Paris, 1802-1831, chronologie et documents*, 1:34. The practice at the Théâtre Italien seemed to follow that in Italy. See Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera: The History of a Profession*, 82-84 and 142-143, for a description of Italian singers' benefit concerts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

of course, only available to primary artists, those fashionable singers who performed main roles and already held advantageous contracts.

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, benefit concerts were mainly intended to reward high-ranking artists at the Opéra and the Opéra Comique for their long service. According to an *arrêté* passed in 1815 at the Opéra, only premiers sujets had the right to a benefit after twenty-five years of service; lower-ranking singers were only granted this right if they had been injured on the job and could no longer continue working.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, the sociétaires at the Opéra Comique were granted a concert after twenty years of service.<sup>25</sup> Even so, the number of benefit concerts increased during the 1820s to the point where a critic at the *Revue musicale* claimed that the public dragged their feet to the performances, tired of paying so much for so little pleasure.<sup>26</sup> The increase reflected the theatres' changing management practices. During final years of the Restoration and throughout the July Monarchy the benefit concert became a bargaining point in artists' contracts, no longer just a reward at the end of their long service. Julie Dorus-Gras's three-year contract in 1840 with Duponchel promised her a benefit concert where she would take all the profits from the evening (minus expenses).<sup>27</sup> This financial arrangement was that most commonly practiced at these theatres, particularly for the retirement benefit, but others existed. Opéra Comique director Basset promised Célestine-Hyacinthe Darcier a benefit in her name where she would be given 5,000 francs and the administration would take the rest of the profits.<sup>28</sup> Louis Véron worked out a similar arrangement with Adolphe Nourrit where the singer would receive 6,000 francs and Véron pocketed the rest.<sup>29</sup> Jeanne Anaïs Castellan's 1849 contract at the Opéra assured her an astounding monthly salary of 4,000 francs. In return, Castellan agreed to let the Opéra administration give a *représentation extraordinaire* in her name while renouncing her claim to any of the profits.<sup>30</sup> Thus directors sometimes used benefit concerts as fundraising efforts for the themselves and the theatre; adept theatre-goers quickly

<sup>24</sup>“Règlements sur les représentations à bénéfice” dated 16 November 1815 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 175.

<sup>25</sup>“Ordonnance du roi du 30 mars 1824” in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1053.

<sup>26</sup>*Revue musicale*, vol. 6 (1830), 585.

<sup>27</sup>Contract signed 8 November 1840 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 193 (dossier Dorus-Gras).

<sup>28</sup>Contract signed 4 July 1847 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1136 (dossier Darcier).

<sup>29</sup>Contract signed 29 September 1832. Reproduced in Quicherat, *Adolphe Nourrit: Sa vie, son talent, son caractère, sa correspondance*, 3:393-394.

<sup>30</sup>The clause in her contract reads: “Si les Directeurs jugent à propos de donner une représentation extraordinaire Mme Castellan consent à ce que cette représentation soit annoncé au bénéfice de Mme Castellan sans que le produit de cette représentation lui soit attribuer, cette clause résultant d’une transaction faite par les parties contractantes sur la question des appointements.” Contract signed 31 December 1848 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 193 (dossier Castellan).

identified the ruse once they saw the posters advertising a benefit concert for an anonymous artist.<sup>31</sup> Other kinds of benefits included those for the widows and families of artists who suddenly passed away, for the theatre's pension fund, and for the poor.

Given the strong financial incentives, artists were motivated to produce a programme that would attract a fashionable crowd willing to pay ticket prices often two to three times higher than an ordinary performance.<sup>32</sup> Benefit concerts thus became gala events offering a potpourri of fragments of popular works from all different genres and theatres in Paris. One critic at *Le Constitutionnel* wryly labeled such offerings "*disjuncti membra partæ*," with "heads of operas and legs of ballets" mixed in with comedies and opéras-comiques, all guaranteed to satisfy the public's curiosity.<sup>33</sup> At his retirement benefit concert, Opéra Comique singer Huet proposed the following programme: Dalayrac's *Picaros et Diègo*, a one-act *opéra-comique*, with Chollet, Ponchard, and Félicité Pradher; Scribe and Mélesville's three-act comedy *Valérie* performed by Mlle Mars, Armand, Firmin, Monrose, and Mlle Dupuis from the Théâtre Français; fragments from the last two acts of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* performed by Henriette Smithson and the actors from the Théâtre Anglais; and the vaudeville *La Réunion d'artistes* with an additional musical numbers (including a scene from Rossini's *Tancredi* sung by Mme Schutz) and a divertissement performed by the Opéra's dancers inserted in the middle.<sup>34</sup> Laure Cinti-Damoreau's benefit concert at the Opéra on 8 January 1830 included fragments drawn from Auber's *Le Concert à la cour*, Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto*, and Persuis's *Nina, ou la Folle par amour*.<sup>35</sup> Her programming was apparently quite reserved in comparison with many other benefit concerts according to one critic who praised the singer for respecting her talent and the reputation of the Opéra. She counted on the attraction of the participating artists and the unusual distribution of roles. In Auber's *opéra-comique*, Cinti-Damoreau performed the role of Adèle originally created by Antoinette Eugénie Rigaut, Constance Jawureck replaced Marie-Julie Boulanger in her role, Lafont performed the prince and Graziani the Italian impresario Astuzzio. The beneficiary dazzled her audience with Adèle's virtuosic air "Le carnaval de Venise" and an (unidentified) interpolated Italian aria. Cinti-Damoreau's addition of another

<sup>31</sup> *Les amours: Galanteries et passe-temps des actrices, ou Confessions curieuses et galantes de ces dames rédigées par une bayadère de l'Opéra*, 7.

<sup>32</sup> Ticket prices for benefit concerts at the Opéra were announced on the bottom of the posters and were usually accompanied by a notice stating that subscriptions were suspended.

<sup>33</sup> A., *Le Constitutionnel*, 3 May 1843.

<sup>34</sup> *Revue musicale*, vol. 2 (1827), 472-476.

<sup>35</sup> *Revue musicale*, vol. 6 (1830), 585-588.

aria followed a practice that Hilary Poriss has identified in the Italian tradition of some benefit concerts where, rather than offering a potpourri, the programme included the performance of a regularly scheduled opera “spiced up” with substitute or inserted arias.<sup>36</sup> The performance of a trio from *Il matrimonio segreto* with three celebrity singers, Maria Malibran, Henriette Sontag, and Cinti-Damoreau, became legend and was mentioned in biographies of Cinti-Damoreau for decades after.<sup>37</sup> Finally, the fragment from *Nina* offered the curious participation of Léontine Fay, the celebrated actress at Théâtre du Gymnase, as pantomime dancer.

These concerts attracted some of the glitziest audiences in Paris. The Opéra literally glittered the evening of a benefit concert, the Vicomte Charles de Launay tells us: “the parterre full of elegant people, the orchestra strewn with princes, the galleries decorated with journalists; the boxes decked out with all the Parisian beauties and authorities; almost-ministers everywhere, celebrities of all ages and kinds; women covered in jewels, feathers, flowers all the way up to the fourth row of boxes, fashionable deputies.”<sup>38</sup> These events were fashionable because they were to mark special occasions—such as the celebration of a well-loved celebrity—and a charitable event, where the upper classes could publicly demonstrate their philanthropy. The attendance of high society in such numbers at these events was, in the first instance, probably the result of people wanting to be seen, as James Rousseau’s above quote made clear. Going to one of these concerts marked attendees as members of a particular class, and promised the possibility of rubbing elbows with royalty, nobles, and members of the bourgeois elite. At Cornélie Falcon’s retirement benefit concert in 1840, the King Louis-Philippe kept his *loge* and paid the artist 432 francs for its rental that evening. Also in attendance were the Prince de Chimay, the Duc d’Orléans (whose *loge* rental came to 192 francs), and the Minister of the Interior; librettists Scribe and Mélesville came, as did Louis Véron, who had initially hired the singer.<sup>39</sup> At the

<sup>36</sup>Poriss, *Changing the Score: Arias, Prima Donnas, and the Authority of Performance*, 26–28. This practice continued in other benefit concerts. Cinti-Damoreau inserted the air de la Fauvette in the performance of Gaveaux’s opéra-comique *Le Bouffe et le tailleur* performed at the dancer Ferdinand’s benefit concert at the Opéra in 1833. See *Revue musicale*, 30 March 1833.

<sup>37</sup>See, for example, Fétis’s biographical article on the singer. “Damoreau (Mme Laure-Cinthie Montalant),” in Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens, et bibliographie generale de la musique*, 2:419–429.

<sup>38</sup>“L’Opéra resplendissant, le parterre semé d’élégants, l’orchestre jonché de princes, les galeries ornées de journalistes; les loges parées de toutes les beautés et autorités parisiennes; des presque ministres partout, des célébrités de tout âge et de tout genre; des femmes couvertes de bijoux, de plumes, de fleurs jusque aux troisièmes rangs de loges, des députés fashionables.” Vicomte Charles de Launay, *La Presse*, 6 April 1837.

<sup>39</sup>The names of the attendees are taken from the attendance records, “Bordereau de recette générale” in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 209 (dossier Falcon).



Opéra, the best seats in the house (*stalles d'orchestre* and the first row of boxes) went for 20 francs, whereas on a normal night the same ticket cost 9 francs, and the cheapest seats were sold at 5 francs. Such prices added to the glamour and exclusiveness of the event, and might be seen as a way of encouraging the upper classes to attend.

The concentration of the society's who's who at one evening's performance—in addition to the fact that many theatres loaned out their best artists—meant that other performances were less well attended, at least by those who could afford the high-priced tickets. This seems to have caused some troubles for the boulevard theatres in the 1830s and led to a pact between the directors of the Théâtre du Vaudeville, Théâtres des Variétés, Théâtre du Gymnase, and the Théâtre du Palais-Royal. They agreed to limit the number of benefit concerts at each theatre to six per year and refuse to lend out their artists or repertoire to any of the other theatres.<sup>40</sup> The presentation of a variety of genres on the concert menu—vaudeville, *opéra-comique*, spoken theatre—also put the theatres in competition, at least for the evening. Special permission was actually required. Theatre legislation from 1806 specified the genres that could be performed at each theatre, and in Louis Véron's *cahier de charges*, a clause stipulated that written permission from the Commission de surveillance was required for the performance of any other genre, even for a benefit concert.<sup>41</sup> Thus for Cinti-Damoreau's 1843 benefit at the Opéra, the artist had to declare her concert programme and receive official authorization from the Minister of the Interior in order for the concert to proceed.<sup>42</sup> Louis Véron found that benefit concerts negatively affected the receipts at the theatre for the preceding and following performances. Regular rehearsals were also interrupted to allow for rehearsal time for the benefit, and the Opéra personnel involved in the special performance—including performers, orchestral musicians, stage hands, ballet and singing masters—were distracted from their ordinary duties. For that reason, he claimed that he refused many requests for outside artists to hold their benefits at the Opéra, including Mlle Mars and Mlle Duchenois, and even refused to lend the services of Opéra artists (who required the permission of the director to perform in any concert held at another theatre). The beautiful, *coquette* Félicité Pradher, however, was granted this latter privilege in a moment of weakness, admitted Véron, as she flattered his admiration

<sup>40</sup>See the document dated 6 November 1836 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1040.

<sup>41</sup>"Le Directeur ne pourra introduire aucun autre genre même dans les représentations à bénéfice, sans l'autorisation expresse et par écrit de la Commission de surveillance." Louis Véron's *cahier de charges*, 28 February 1831 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 180.

<sup>42</sup>See the official permission slip titled "Représentation extraordinaire" and dated 22 April 1843 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 210 (dossier Cinti-Damoreau).



for a particular *danseuse charmante* by requesting her participation, as well as that of Nourrit, Levasseur, and Cinti-Damoreau, in her benefit concert to be held at the Opéra Comique.<sup>43</sup>

Benefit concerts were extraordinary moments where artists were given complete agency and control over programming, choice of artists, ticket prices, and publicity. The exact delegation of these rights was often outlined in the artist's contract. Félicité Pradher's 1830 contract with M. Boursault outlined the conditions of her benefit in remarkable detail, which once again revealed the singer's skill in negotiation. The Opéra Comique administration provided the singer with the theatre, the lighting used for a regular performance, as well as all the personnel, including the actors, chorus, orchestra, and all other required employees. In return, Pradher paid the theatre 1,000 francs from her earnings; the rest was hers to keep. She set the ticket prices and had free reign over the choice of repertoire; she could even choose works that had not yet appeared on the stage. Artists from other theatres could participate, including those who had already retired. In short, every detail was left to the beneficiary.<sup>44</sup>

Inviting celebrated artists from other Parisian theatres guaranteed a larger crowd and rewarded those who wanted the proverbial more bang for their buck. “The public is not as generous as it may seem,” admitted Théophile Gautier, “It would like to say goodbye to a well-liked artist, to reward a long and glorious service, but that requires a little more for the money [spent]: one pays a *stalle* at 20 francs, and consumes 40 francs of dramatic fodder. Risking indigestion, one swallows a theatre at every bite, the Opéra, the Théâtre Italien, the Théâtre Français, the Vaudeville [...]. What a gargantuan appetite!”<sup>45</sup> Invited artists could increase the concert's receipts, but also ate

<sup>43</sup>Véron, *Mémoires d'un bourgeois de Paris*, 3:193-195.

<sup>44</sup>Clause 12 in her contract reads: “Une représentation [sic] sera donnée au bénéfice de Mad<sup>e</sup> Pradher, sur le théâtre royal de l'opéra Comique, aux prix où il lui plaira de fixer les places, dans le courant du quinze janvier au trente mars de l'année mille huit cent trente trois. L'administration mettra à sa disposition: la salle éclairée comme aux représentations [sic] ordinaires, ainsi que tous les pensionnaires, acteurs, des chœurs et de l'orchestre, et tous les employés gagés par elle, et Mad<sup>e</sup> Pradher ne payera pour tous frais que la somme de mille francs qui seront prélevés sur la recette qu'elle fera. Mad<sup>e</sup> Pradher aura le choix pour cette représentation [sic] des ouvrages et des artistes à quelque théâtre qu'ils appartiennent. Des artistes retirés pourront y paraître, et Mad<sup>e</sup> Pradher pourra même y faire représenter [sic] des ouvrages qui n'auront pas été donnés, entière faculté lui est laissée à cet égard.” Contract signed 25 July 1830 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 1059 (dossier Pradher).

<sup>45</sup>“Le public n'est pas si généreux qu'il en a l'air; il veut bien dire adieu à un artiste aimé, récompenser de longs et glorieux services, mais il tâche d'en avoir un peu plus que pour son argent: il paye sa stalle vingt francs, et consomme quarante francs de pâture dramatique. Au risque d'avoir une indigestion, il avale un théâtre à chaque bouchée, l'Opéra, les Italiens, les Français, le Vaudeville, *la Favorite*, *Lucie de Lammermoor*, *Horace*, *le Père Turlututu*, le bal masqué de *Gustave*. Quel appétit de Gargantua!” Gautier, *Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans*, 4:131

into the beneficiary's budget. Although it appears that many performed for free,<sup>46</sup> there was still an expectation for some perks: free tickets, transportation, and, according to the anonymous author of *Les amours*, a celebratory dinner given two or three days after the event by the artist to thank those who participated.<sup>47</sup> Artists from the host theatre, however, were not paid for their participation as they were required by their contracts to perform in any concert or performance given at the theatre.<sup>48</sup> This mandatory participation sometimes caused troubles, as Hector Berlioz discovered during his benefit concert at the Théâtre Italien 24 November 1833; as the concert dragged on after midnight, only those orchestral musicians he had hired from the Opéra remained, the others having left during the choral performances.<sup>49</sup> He also naïvely forgot to pay off the *claque*. Marie Dorval had been hired to perform Dumas's *Antony* along with her Théâtre-Français colleague Firmin. Expecting that Henriette Smithson, Berlioz's wife, would have amassed support for her performance in scenes from *Hamlet*, Dorval built up her own troupe of supporters by giving her free tickets and those she probably had purchased to her loyal friends. The *parterre* acclaimed the French actress and called her back at the end of the work; Smithson was politely applauded, but was not called back. Invited artists were thus keen to protect their reputation even though they obviously benefited from the free publicity. Beneficiaries risked being pushed out of the limelight by their more famous colleagues, as the Opéra singer Jean-Étienne Auguste (Eugène) Massol unfortunately discovered during his retirement benefit in 1845. Massol only sang in one of the numbers proposed that evening, the second and third acts of the French translation of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* where he took the role of Ashton opposite Dolorès Nau's Lucia and the Opéra Comique tenor Gustave Roger's Edgardo. All the attention in the reviews

<sup>46</sup>Martin-Fugier, *Comédiennes: les actrices en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 58.

<sup>47</sup>*Les amours: Galanteries et passe-temps des actrices, ou Confessions curieuses et galantes de ces dames rédigées par une bayadère de l'Opéra*, 7-8.

<sup>48</sup>The first clause in Opéra contracts under Véron's direction stated: "A jouer et figurer sur son Théâtre, ou sur tout autre qu'il lui plaira, tel jour et à telle heure qu'il indiquera, dans toutes les pièces quelconques qu'il lui plaira de faire représenter, en général tous les rôles pour lesquels je serai jugé convenable et nécessaire par le Directeur, sans en pouvoir refuser aucun, sous quelque prétexte que ce soit, et sans pouvoir également en rendre, céder ou quitter aucun, à moins que ce ne soit du consentement exprès et par écrit du Directeur, et généralement à me prêter à tout ce qui sera jugé utile à l'Administration." A similar condition was also spelled out in the Opéra's "Règlement de 1821," article 113: "Toutes les fois qu'il est accordé par le Ministre, au profit d'un sujet attaché à l'établissement, une représentation à bénéfice sur le théâtre de l'Académie, non seulement la salle est mise à la disposition du bénéficiaire, mais cette représentation devient un devoir pour tous les artistes, employés et préposés." *F-Po P.A.* 1821.

<sup>49</sup>Berlioz, *Mémoires de Hector Berlioz, membre de l'Institut de France: comprenant ses voyages en Italie, en Allemagne, en Russie et en Angleterre, 1803-1865, avec un beau portrait de l'auteur*, 1:296-300.

focused not on the beneficiary, but instead on Roger’s attempt to prove himself a singer of grand opera (Roger eventually became the Opéra’s star tenor in 1849).<sup>50</sup>

After constructing the concert programme and confirming participation of the invited performers, the artist set about garnering support from the press and the public. The singer created a press release announcing the programme and highlighting the contributions of individual performers. The few surviving press announcements held at the Archives nationales for the retirement benefit concerts given at the Opéra used generic phrases such as “A grand and beautiful performance will take place” and “the composition of the performance is one that will strongly excite the public’s curiosity,” suggesting that singers based their text on a standard template. From there, however, they added phrases to highlight particular aspects of the evening. Dorus-Gras, for example, brought attention to the status of those who would be attending her retirement concert and highlighted the concert’s luxury which, as we will see, was also reflected in her programming: “the interesting composition of the spectacle, united with the acute and sincere regrets that will follow this great singer, will not fail to attract a large and select public” (Figure 4.2).<sup>51</sup> This press release was then given to critics and editors from dozens of Parisian journals in hopes of acquiring advance publicity. (The announcements were also possibly given to high-profile subscribers and rich families. John Rosselli notes that this was the practice in early nineteenth-century Italy, and one that the famous contralto Rosamunda Pisaroni followed for her benefit in 1818: “The first step was a printed slip which the singer had had distributed to the houses of all opera subscribers and other leading citizens.”<sup>52</sup>) Artists included a note along with the printed announcement, asking editor or critic’s compliance for the insertion of the press release. The artists (and the theatre) kept track of the journals and newspapers they contacted. Both Dorus-Gras’s and Cinti-Damoreau’s dossiers for their retirement benefits contain a list of journals and the date they were contacted. In Cinti-Damoreau’s case even the names of the critics and editors are included. To sweeten the deal further and soften those hardened critics into giving a positive review, the beneficiary provided journalists

<sup>50</sup>See, for example, Paul Smith [Edouard Monnais], *La Revue et gazette musicale*, 26 October 1845; *Le Ménestrel*, 26 October 1845; and *Journal des débats*, 20 October 1845.

<sup>51</sup>“La composition piquante du spectacle, réunie aux vifs et sincères regrets que doit laisser après elle cette grande cantatrice, ne peut manquer d’attirer à cette solennité un public nombreux et choisi.” Undated press announcement in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 210 (dossier Dorus-Gras).

<sup>52</sup>Pisaroni also stood in the entry to the theatre in costume, holding a bowl by her side into which the attendees placed cash. Gifts of a more “personal” nature (flowers, lace, jewels) were sent directly to her lodgings, Rosselli notes. Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi: The Role of the Impresario*, 11–12.

with free tickets, often for some of the best seats in the house. The Escudier brothers at *La France musicale* received two *stalles d'amphithéâtre*; they rewarded Dorus-Gras with a teaser placed in the *nouvelles* section listing the program of this “interesting soirée” on 4 May 1845, two days before her benefit, and a glowing review a few days after.<sup>53</sup> Cinti-Damoreau invited thirty-eight journal critics and editors for a total of forty-three free tickets. She began contacting the press on 5 April 1843, over two weeks before her concert.<sup>54</sup>

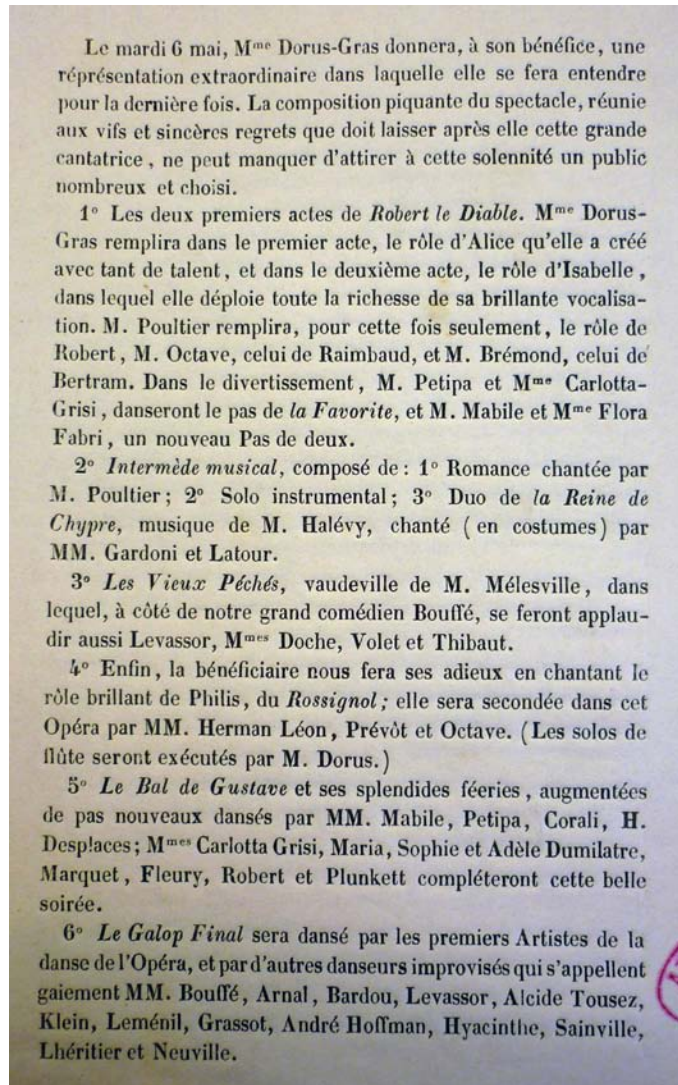


Figure 4.2: Julie Dorus-Gras's press announcement. (F-Pan AJ<sup>13</sup> 210)

Besides the publicity provided by the press, artists used posters announcing their programme to publicize their benefit concert to the general public, and then printed

<sup>53</sup> *La France musicale*, 4 May 1845 and 11 May 1845.

<sup>54</sup> See the lists in F-Pan AJ<sup>13</sup> 210 (dossier Damoreau).

handbills for the evening’s performance. Dorus-Gras devoted 585 francs of her budget on the printing of posters and programmes, much more so than her colleagues. She apparently requested her posters to be printed in an extraordinarily large format that was not actually authorized, as it would impede the display of other posters.<sup>55</sup> In her bid to create an evening of luxury, Dorus-Gras also incurred some of the highest expenses that, unfortunately, were not offset by very high receipts. Table 4.1 shows the total revenue, expenses, and profits for benefit concerts held at the Opéra during the period. Auguste Luchet, in his anecdote “Une représentation à bénéfice,” esti-

Table 4.1: Earnings for benefit concerts held at the Opéra. (*F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 209 and 210)

|                                     | Revenue | Expenses | Profit    |
|-------------------------------------|---------|----------|-----------|
| Adolphe Nourrit, 1 April 1837       | 24,322  | 2,958.76 | 21,363.34 |
| Laure Cinti-Damoreau, 19 April 1838 | 24,804  | 3,702.77 | 21,101.23 |
| Cornélie Falcon, 14 March 1840      | 17,690  | 2,594.56 | 15,095.44 |
| Laure Cinti-Damoreau, 22 April 1843 | 18,371  | 5,287.20 | 13,083.80 |
| Julie Dorus-Gras, 6 May 1845        | 17,132  | 4,683.25 | 12,448.75 |
| Eugène Massol, 18 October 1845      | 18,467  | 3,294.80 | 15,172.20 |
| Rosine Stoltz, 22 April 1847        | 12,110  | 2,301.08 | 9,808.92  |

mated the total costs for a benefit to be 2,400 francs: “Theatre rental, 1,500 francs. [...] Fees for the artists, orchestra, posters, instruments, cars for the Messieurs and Mesdames from the other theatres: 600 francs. Copyright and all other rights: 300 francs.”<sup>56</sup> Table 4.1, however, reveals that the total costs for a lyric benefit concert ranged from 2,300 francs to over 5,000 francs. The details of these costs are shown in Figure 4.3 that reproduces the document listing the fees incurred for Dorus-Gras’s retirement benefit 6 May 1845. As an Opéra employee, she did not have to pay to rent the theatre;<sup>57</sup> however, she had to pay for the extra participation of Opéra personnel (dancers, orchestral musicians, chorus all received a small nominal fee for their performance, but the *artistes de chant* were not paid any extra); the extra work by the costumers, set designers, and machinists; heating and lighting; police, firemen, and the municipal guard; the poor tax (one of the highest expenses); and copyright. Some other curious expenses include indemnities to other unspecified entrepreneurs, and over 50 francs for the Théâtre des Variétés (likely for the participation of Bouffé and

<sup>55</sup>Undated letter from the Imprimerie de Vinchon in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 210 (dossier Dorus-Gras).

<sup>56</sup>“Puis, le voilà qui calcule et qui s’épouvante de son calcul: – Loyer de la salle, quinze cents francs. [...] Frais d’artistes, d’orchestre, d’affiches, d’instruments, de voitures pour messieurs et mesdames des autres théâtres; six cents francs. – Droits d’auteur et tous les autres droits; trois cents francs. Total: deux mille quatre cents francs.” Luchet, “Une représentation à bénéfice,” 73.

<sup>57</sup>No longer attached to any of the royal theatres for her 1843 benefit concert, Cinti-Damoreau had to pay for the rental of the Opéra, which totaled 2,500 francs. See list of expenses in *F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 210 (dossier Damoreau).



use of the comédie-vaudeville *Les Vieux péchés*). Artists had the choice of raising seat prices to raise the receipts and offset the operating costs, although they were taking a gamble whether their reputation and the proposed programme would create enough interest to entice people to come. Julie Dorus-Gras more than doubled seat prices for her retirement benefit and receipts came to 17,132 francs; Rosine Stoltz did not raise seat prices, but still made a respectable 12,110 francs.<sup>58</sup>

*Bordereau des frais de la représentation au bénéfice  
de M<sup>lle</sup> Dorus-Gras, du Mardi 6 Mai 1845.*

2. 1<sup>re</sup> a. de Robert-Lukmieu - Les vieux péchés - Le Postiguon - Le Bal de Gustave.

| Designation de la Dépense                           | Somme<br>à payer | Observations |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1. Frais aux artistes de l'orchestre et de la danse | ...              | p. réméré    |
| 2. Elèves des ballets                               | 67               |              |
| 3. Costumes des Chœurs                              | 234 84           |              |
| 4. ... des Ballets                                  | 123 33           |              |
| 5. ... des Choristes                                | 164 52           |              |
| 6. Compar...                                        | 53 78            |              |
| 7. Cultures et Compétitions                         | 140              |              |
| 8. Frais d'entretien des Costumiers                 | 180              |              |
| 9. ... des Décorations                              | 254 21           |              |
| 10. Frais de Costumes, Accessoires                  | 124 23           |              |
| 11. Indemnité à divers Entrepreneurs                | 204 40           |              |
| 12. Droit des Indigènes                             | 844 86           |              |
| 13. Service de la Salle et de l'Orchestre           | 224              |              |
| 14. Officiers, Suppléants                           | 585 50           |              |
| 15. Chauffage à l'huile                             | 155 24           |              |
| 16. ... au gaz                                      | 225 52           |              |
| 17. Copie de musique                                | 12               |              |
| 18. Frais de Service                                | 72               |              |
| 19. ... des pompes                                  | 87 15            |              |
| 20. ... des pompes                                  | 17 50            |              |
| 21. Chauffage au bois                               | 75               |              |
| 22. ... à la vapeur                                 | 13 50            |              |
| 23. Frais divers, Chauffage de Service              | 52 60            |              |
| 24. ... au feu                                      | 15 30            |              |
| 25. Honoraires du préposé à la location             | 99               |              |
| <b>Total</b>                                        | <b>4781 46</b>   |              |

à déduire de la recette de la représentation ci-dessus

Précédente à la somme totale de quatre mille sept cent quatre-vingt  
un francs, quarante six centimes, le 6 Mai 1845

Re Directeur  
J. P. Dufour

Figure 4.3: Julie Dorus-Gras's expenses for her benefit, 6 May 1845. (F-Pan AJ<sup>13</sup> 210)

<sup>58</sup>See the financial reports in their respective dossiers in F-Pan AJ<sup>13</sup> 210. Maria Malibran almost tripled the seat prices at the Théâtre Italien for her benefit concert 3 April 1830 and receipts were over 10,000 francs; Sabine Heinefetter, a talented singer but less idolatized by the public, did not raise ticket prices for her benefit just a few days prior and only made a little over 3,600 francs. Mongredien, *Le Théâtre Italien de Paris, 1802-1831, chronologie et documents*, 1:34.

## 4.2 THE RETIREMENT BENEFIT CONCERT

There were some traditions and rituals in retirement concerts that set them apart from regular benefits. One of the most often programmed fragments after 1833 was the *bal masqué* from the fifth act of Auber's opera *Gustave III*: the ballerina Marie Taglioni concluded her benefit concert with the fragment in April 1835, as did Adolphe Nourrit in 1837, Julie Dorus-Gras in 1845, and Eugène Massol in 1845 and in 1858. In the opera, the ball scene functions as an extended *divertissement* that precedes King Gustave's assassination. Sarah Hibberd has analyzed the ball scene as "the suspended present," a moment of pure spectacle, during which the audience forgets the political drama, and instead enjoys a brief period of frivolity, escapism, and nostalgia.<sup>59</sup> It was one of the audience's favourite scenes from the opera and had been excerpted and performed independently very early in the opera's performance history. Its popularity derives in large part from its references to popular upper-class entertainment. Maribeth Clark discusses how the *bal masqué* was made to reflect the Opéra's balls that were brought back under Véron's directorship:

Although *Gustave*'s ball distorted the audience's reflected image, the resemblance between the configuration of the space within the stage world and what one would experience at the Opéra during its balls encouraged identification with the theatrical production. When the curtain rose, the audience saw maskers in boxes peering at a costumed crowd below, filling the stage much like the participants at the Opéra ball would position themselves within the Salle de l'Opéra.<sup>60</sup>

The *bal masqué* ended with a *galop*, a dance that was invented in the 1820s and still popular in the 1830s, in which all the artists participated; rumour had it that some upper-class women penetrated the Opéra's *coulisses* during performances to dance the final *galop*.<sup>61</sup> As an added attraction, the singers who programmed the work

<sup>59</sup>Hibberd, *French Grand Opera and the Historical Imagination*, 76. See her chapter, "Gustave III: Politics as Spectacle," 57-82, for her interpretation of the ball scene and the opera in light of past and contemporary political events.

<sup>60</sup>"[T]he masked ball referred to the past glory of France at the same time that it suggested the new social mobility possible under a constitutional monarchy." Clark, "The Role of *Gustave*, ou *Le bal masqué* in Restraining the Bourgeois Body of the July Monarchy," 205.

<sup>61</sup>See, for example, "Mœurs dramatiques: Lettres d'une actrice sur l'intérieur des coulisses et les foyers d'acteurs à Madame la duchesse de \*\*\*," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 12 January 1840: "Ce galop mit en mouvement, non seulement toutes les jambes dansantes de l'Opéra, mais encore l'imagination de plusieurs dames de la haute société dont tu fais partie. Plus d'une comtesse et d'une marquise demandèrent à pénétrer dans les coulisses de l'Opéra à la faveur du domino protecteur de tous les plus étranges caprices qui puissent passer par des têtes féminines."



advertised the fact that there would be at least one *pas nouveau*, usually performed by some of the theatre's premier dancers. (Clark has noted that the *bal masqué* was frequently revised in this manner throughout the 1830s.) Artists used this piece to end their benefit concert for several reasons: it was popular with the upper classes who could imagine themselves on stage; it provided a satisfying and dynamic end to the evening (that often stretched into the wee hours of the morning); and finally, the reflexive qualities of the ball scene in addition to the massed number of bodies on stage—particularly during the final *galop* where all the performers participated—was a way of performing an imagined community and dramatizing public support for an artist saying her adieus.

The importance of gathering a community of artists in support of the retiring singer on stage is also shown by the procession that concluded some benefit concerts as an acknowledgement of the theatres' fraternity. After the *bal masqué*, Adolphe Nourrit's retirement benefit concert in April 1837 concluded with this traditional *cérémonie* where artists, in costume and representing all the main Parisian theatres, processed in honour of the beneficiary. Once the audience caught sight of Nourrit, flanked by Mlle Mars and Monrose from the Théâtre Français, the theatre resounded with thunderous applause. Nourrit chose his companions well, gesturing to his esteemed position in the community of artists. For her 1843 benefit at the Opéra, Laure Cinti-Damoreau substituted the second act from Adam's ballet *La Jolie fille de Gand* for *Gustave's* masked ball, but also ended the spectacle with *une cérémonie*. While some critics viewed such traditions as excessive and merely flattering the artist's *amour-propre*, they created an indelible image of popular support and success, and were perhaps one way of encouraging the public to view the artist's career retrospectively through rose-coloured glasses. They also crowned an evening calculated to evoke feelings of nostalgia and regret for the retiring artist.

Archival documents reveal the meticulous care with which artists oversaw every detail of their benefit concert. While certainly such careful organization would likely have been shown for any such event given the financial incentive and the important effect it could have on an artist's professional reputation, artists likely doubled their efforts for the preparation of their final performance. Superficially, a retirement concert program differed little from an ordinary benefit concert: the same arms and legs of operas, ballets, comedies, vaudevilles, and concert pieces shared their fleeting moments in the spotlight and celebrated artists from across Paris lent their star power and reputation for a packed audience teeming with the upper crust of society. And yet closer examination reveals an obvious concern with highlighting specific

moments of the artist's career and creating a spectacle that reflected aspects of the singer's artistic persona that had been built up over the course of her career. Retirement concerts give us a rare glimpse—almost through the singer's own eyes—of her perceptions and evaluation of her career, as well as how she might want the public to remember her. The following section examines several retirement concerts to explore how artists balanced financial and artistic concerns, and to determine what was considered necessary for a concert to be successful. Perusing the critical reception, we find that financial success did not necessarily go hand-in-hand with artistic success, at least as the critics were wont to pronounce it. Critics were often reluctant to express admiration unless the programme or the performance went beyond the normal expectations for this kind of concert, thus elevating it from its status as a commercial crowd-pleaser.

#### 4.3 NOSTALGIA AND THE CELEBRATION OF THE PAST

Louise Lemonnier (1789-1866, née Regnault) debuted at the Opéra Comique in 1808 after having begun her career at sixteen years of age in her hometown of Rouen.<sup>62</sup> She married fellow Opéra Comique singer Lemonnier by 1818 and was often credited for helping her husband improve his musical technique.<sup>63</sup> She continued singing even after having finished her twenty years of service required to earn her full pension,<sup>64</sup> although her decision to remain on the stage was not to everyone's taste. The anonymously authored and eminently gossipy *Biographie théâtrale* (1829) claimed that the singer once had a delicious voice, good technique, and a pretty head—"qualities that make an actor"—but that someone should "advise her to perform only the *emploi* of the mother, then to retire, and all will be well."<sup>65</sup> Her retirement benefit concert that was to have premièred Weber's *Eurianthe* finally took place the following year

<sup>62</sup>"Lemonnier (Louise-Thérèse-Antoinette Regnault-Bonsecours, femme)," in Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens, et bibliographie générale de la musique. Supplément et complément*, 2:98-99.

<sup>63</sup>Alhoy, *Grande biographie dramatique, ou Silhouette des acteurs, actrices, chanteurs, cantatrices, danseurs, danseuses, etc., de Paris et des départements*, 213-214.

<sup>64</sup>According to the list of pensions eventually accorded to Opéra Comique *sociétaires*, Louise Lemonnier was given a pension of 4,000 francs, almost double that of her husband, who received only 2,250 francs. See *Revue musicale*, 18 January 1835.

<sup>65</sup>"Ajoutez-y une voix délicieuse autrefois, une méthode agréable encore, une jolie tête, les qualités qui font les comédiens; conseillez-lui de prendre tout-à-fait l'emploi des mères, puis sa retraite, et tout ira bien." *Biographie théâtrale, pour l'année 1829, contenant: les adresses des acteurs et actrices, chanteurs et chanteuses, danseurs et danseuses, les comités d'administration, et les prix des places, de tous les théâtres de la capitale*, 73-74.

on 22 March 1832 at the Opéra Comique.<sup>66</sup> Unable to offer the novelty of a première, Lemonnier decided instead to concentrate on the old repertoire that recalled the theatre's golden age during the First Empire and early Restoration—Boïeldieu's *Le Calife de Bagdad* (premiered in 1800) and Nicolo's *Lully et Quinault* (premiered in 1812)—and drew on the powerful influence of some of her old colleagues. Martin, one of the most celebrated Opéra Comique singers of the period and who created his own *emploi* (*baryton Martin*), performed the role of Lully. Although his voice revealed “the inevitable effect of time,” his head-voice that had made him famous was still fresh and smooth.<sup>67</sup> In the interlude between the two *opéras-comiques*, several retired *sociétaires* appeared, including Chenard, Lesage, Mme Desbrosses, and Mme Moreau. The past became the focus of celebration, and consequently Louise Lemonnier managed to evoke the one powerful sentiment that virtually guaranteed the evening's success: nostalgia. The beneficiary's own performance at her soirée received nary a word; instead, the critic at the *Revue musicale* focused the review on the glorious reunion of Opéra Comique singers. He (likely Fétis) waxed nostalgic on the difference between the Opéra Comique in 1832 and twenty years earlier, noting that the old performers, those “venerable remains of the old Opéra Comique found the ancient theatre of their glory quite changed.”<sup>68</sup> Witnessing the performance of older artists was important for the younger generation, insisted the critic, as it effectively controlled the ambitions of young singers who try to make their reputation too quickly; as for the spectators, it allowed them to compare directly the talents of the previous to the current generation of artists. In short, Lemonnier's retirement benefit was a successful tribute to old glories, and served to situate firmly the beneficiary among her celebrated colleagues.

Marie-Julie Boulanger, who debuted only three years after her colleague Louise Lemonnier, celebrated a thirty-five year career at her retirement concert in May 1846 at the age of sixty. She proposed an eclectic programme with the participation of the most famous artists of the day: actor Frédérick Lemaître (1800-1876) opened the evening with an act from *Les Mystères de Paris* and ended with the first act from *Don*

<sup>66</sup>“La représentation de Mme Lemonnier, qui devait avoir lieu aujourd'hui jeudi à l'Académie royale de Musique, est remise indéfiniment.” *Le Figaro*, 31 March 1831.

<sup>67</sup>“Car enfin, il le faut bien avouer, l'organe de Martin a fini par éprouver l'effet inévitable du temps, après avoir résisté beaucoup au delà du terme ordinaire. [...] Mais si le larynx, qui joue le rôle principal dans ce genre de voix, a pris la raideur de la vieillesse, il n'en est pas de même de la voix de tête qui se forme dans les parties supérieures et moelleuses du tuyau vocal: les sons que Martin en tire son encore d'une fraîcheur, d'un velouté remarquable, et l'adresse qu'il met à les moduler rappelle encore ses beaux jours.” *La Revue musicale*, 24 March 1832.

<sup>68</sup>“[...] ces vénérables restes de l'ancien Opéra-Comique ont trouvé l'ancien théâtre de leur gloire bien changé.” *La Revue musicale*, 24 March 1832.

*César de Bazan*;<sup>69</sup> Opéra singer Julie Dorus-Gras performed fragments of Auber's *Les Diamants de la couronne* and *Le Cheval de bronze* and Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*; Étienne Arnal (1794-1872) from the Théâtre du Vaudeville performed in the comedy *Riche d'amour*;<sup>70</sup> Jacques Offenbach played the cello pieces entitled *Prière* and *Boléro*;<sup>71</sup> and Boulanger performed Boïeldieu's *Ma Tante Aurore* (premiered in 1803) alongside current Opéra Comique star tenor Gustave Roger. Unlike her colleague's benefit, *Ma Tante Aurore* was the only aspect of the concert that recalled the past; rather than calling upon the older generation of Opéra Comique singers, Boulanger surrounded herself with contemporary artists. And rather than drawing attention to herself, Boulanger highlighted the achievements of others during the concert, an act that the critic at *La France musicale* found much in harmony with the artist's personality. Touched by the public's expressions of pleasure and regret at her performance of the *Tante Aurore*, Boulanger—"so good, so gracious, so completely lacking egotism and vanity"—seemed to be even more touched by the warm reception of her colleague, the tenor Roger.<sup>72</sup> Those with white or grey hair who first saw the singer young, gracious, and adorable, wrote the critic from *Le Mercure des théâtres*, found their eyes reddened with tears at the end of the evening.<sup>73</sup> Surprisingly, the beloved Opéra Comique singer was unable to draw a full house, and her concert was not a financial success.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps she had simply waited *too* long to retire. In his *Code théâtral* of 1829, Rousseau advised artists to choose the moment of their retirement wisely: "the public must be treated like a frivolous and forgetful mistress, to whom it is better to leave regrets than to expose oneself to her indifference."<sup>75</sup> Fétis claimed that Boulanger's voice had undergone an abrupt change in the

<sup>69</sup>An actor at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin during this time, Lemaître premiered the role of Don César in *Don César de Bazan* and Jacques Ferrand in *Les Mystères de Paris* in 1844; both works were very successful, particularly the first, which had over ninety performances that year. "Lemaître," in Lyonnet, *Dictionnaire des comédiens français (ceux d'hier): biographie, bibliographie, iconographie*, 2:338-347.

<sup>70</sup>Étienne Arnal was an actor who performed primarily in the boulevard theatres (Vaudeville, Variétés, Palais-Royal) and known for his comic abilities. "Arnal," in *ibid.*, 1:44-47.

<sup>71</sup>These are likely the first and final movements from his *Grande scène espagnole*, op. 22 (1840), for cello and orchestra.

<sup>72</sup>"L'excellente et spirituelle actrice a dû être touchée des témoignages de regrets qui lui ont été prodigués. Mais elle est si bonne, si bienveillante, si dépourvue d'égoïsme et de vanité, qu'on la voyait plus pénétrée du chaleureux accueil fait à son camarade Roger, que des applaudissemens sympathique dont toute la salle la comblait." *La France musicale*, 17 May 1846.

<sup>73</sup>*Le Mercure des théâtres*, 17 May 1846.

<sup>74</sup>Hector Berlioz, *Journal des débats*, 24 May 1846.

<sup>75</sup>"Un comédien sensé n'attendra jamais, pour se retirer du théâtre, que l'âge ait entièrement paralysé son talent. Le public doit être traité comme une maîtresse légère et oublieuse, à laquelle il vaut mieux laisser des regrets que de s'exposer à son indifférence." Rousseau, *Code théâtral, phys-*

mid-1830s, which prompted many predictions of her imminent retirement (some even erroneously referred to her 1836 benefit as her retirement concert); the last few years of her career were but a time of regret.<sup>76</sup> Boulanger, it seems, had the misfortune of retiring already half-forgotten by the Parisian public.

#### 4.4 TASTE AND EXTRAVAGANCE

Such was the fate that Laure Cinti-Damoreau and Julie Dorus-Gras probably wanted to avoid. Both left the theatre while they were still in full possession of their vocal faculties and they designed programmes that emphasized their talent as vocalists. Julie Dorus-Gras, a veritable pillar at the Opéra from her debuts in 1830, found herself in a situation where, like many other (albeit younger and less-experienced) singers in the 1840s, her contract had been cancelled prematurely. Halfway through a three-year contract that would have kept her at the Opéra until 30 November 1846, Pillet exercised his right to end her engagement.<sup>77</sup> Her popularity had been waning for some time, although she could still count herself as one of Paris's primary artists.

Perhaps in defiance of her forced early departure from the Opéra, Dorus-Gras compiled an extravagant programme, comprised of a wide variety of genres and the participation of celebrities from diverse Parisian theatres, calculated to attract a well-heeled public (Figure 4.4). The soirée opened with two acts from *Robert le diable* with a curious twist. In the first act, Dorus-Gras appeared as Alice, reclaiming the role she had initially created but had become overshadowed with Cornélie Falcon's performance for her debut in July 1832. In the second act she sang Isabelle, the role she had taken over upon Cinti-Damoreau's departure in 1835. Poultier, a tenor who had attracted much attention in the early 1840s with his unusual career leap from cooper in Rouen to tenor at the Paris Opéra, took the role of Robert.<sup>78</sup> A musical interlude followed, with performances by Poultier and the Batta brothers on piano

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*iologie des théâtres, manuel complet de l'auteur, du directeur, de l'acteur et de l'amateur, contenant les lois, règles et applications de l'art dramatique*, 63.

<sup>76</sup>Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens, et bibliographie générale de la musique*, 2:41.

<sup>77</sup>Pillet sent Dorus-Gras a letter 27 February 1845 informing her of his decision, see *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 189 (contains the undated draft letter); the singer responded with a simple acknowledgment the same day, *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 193 (dossier Dorus-Gras). The fact that it was Pillet who cancelled Dorus-Gras's contract thus proves that the singer did not decide to leave the Opéra because she was fed up with Rosine Stoltz, as has often been contended.

<sup>78</sup>Placide-Alexandre-Guillaume Poultier (1814-1887) was given a five-year contract at the Opéra by Duponchel and Monnais and provided with a host of professors to build his musical and dramatic technique before his debut in *Guillaume Tell* in 1841. Pillet, however, supposedly withdrew all of this pedagogical support upon taking over directorship of the Opéra. At the end of his contract, Poultier sang for a time in the provinces, but was called back to the Opéra in 1847 where he sang until 1851; he returned once again in 1855, but devoted the rest of his career to concertizing and performing

and cello. Then the star comic actor Bouffé performed Mélesville's one-act vaudeville *Les Vieux péchés* alongside Eugénie Doche (who would later take the main role in Dumas' *La Dame aux camélias*), followed by an adaptation of Lebrun's one-act opera *Le Rossignol*.<sup>79</sup> The opera had been performed from its première in 1816 until the early 1830s as an evening's "opener" before a ballet; otherwise, according to Larousse and Clément, it was simply an excuse for two virtuosos to get applauded.<sup>80</sup> Dorus-Gras sang the role of Philis and was accompanied by her brother, a flutist in the Opéra's orchestra, for the virtuosic aria "Toi qui nous plaît," originally created by Mme Albert and the flute virtuoso Tulou. Noémie de Roissy sang the role of Lubin in trousers (revealing "one of the best shaped legs at the Opéra"<sup>81</sup>), and Ferdinand Prévôt was called out of his retirement to sing Mathurin, Philis's father. The *bal masqué* ended the concert, augmented with new *pas* by Opéra stars Mabilille and Carlotta Grisi and other dances by Sophie and Adèle Dumilâtre, Mlle Plunkett, and Louise Fitzjames.

Her programme choices reinforced her image as a vocal virtuoso and highlighted the early years of her career: she first sang Philis for her debuts at the Opéra and premièred *Robert le diable* in November 1831. But they also reinforced her performance weaknesses. Although a talented and technically-capable singer, her performances nevertheless often came across as wooden and cold. Thus while her extravagant programming on the evening of her final performance at the Opéra happily entertained the audience, the public was not moved. Edouard Monnais actually opened his review by remarking that no one cried, but thanks to Bouffé's participation, there was much laughter.<sup>82</sup> For another reviewer, the concert was simply in keeping with Dorus-Gras's particular art: "The former title of *cantatrice à roulades* that we gave to this *emploi* perfectly characterizes her nature. On must, in order to have a variety of effects, also have diversity in the specialties; [...] in *Les Huguenots*, while Valentine expresses tragic emotions, the queen Marguerite must sing of pleasure and love with a brilliant lightness."<sup>83</sup>

But for Berlioz, the evening merely proved her art's ultimate superficiality. His

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freelance for theatres throughout France and Europe. Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens, et bibliographie générale de la musique. Supplément et complément*, 2:367-368

<sup>79</sup>The quartet was omitted and the opera "trimmed," according to Paul Smith's [Edouard Monnais] review in *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 11 May 1845.

<sup>80</sup>Clément and Larousse, *Dictionnaire des opéras (dictionnaire lyrique), contenant l'analyse et la nomenclature de tous les opéras et opéras-comiques représentés en France et à l'étranger depuis l'origine de ce genre d'ouvrages jusqu'à nos jours*, 598.

<sup>81</sup>"On lui avait improvisé un costume de berger qui mettait en relief une jambe des mieux tournées de l'Opéra." *Le Corsaire-Satan*, 8 May 1845.

<sup>82</sup>P.S. [Edouard Monnais], *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 11 May 1845.

<sup>83</sup>*Le Moniteur des arts*, no. 15 (1845), 119.



Figure 4.4: Julie Dorus-Gras's programme, 6 May 1845. (*F-Pan A*)<sup>13</sup> 210)

review opened by stating that her soirée d'adieux differed from others in that regret and sadness did not darken the evening's splendour for the public or for the beneficiary.<sup>84</sup> Although he initially declared she was a rare example of a virtuoso singer who was also a consummate musician with good taste, his praise basically amounted to saying she sang in tune. His distaste for her style was signaled with the phrases “ces broderies mélodiques,” “chant orné,” and “le genre léger,” key terms Katharine Ellis has identified in his criticism that he used to damn “the exquisite, the decorative and the touching”—particularly Italian opera and its singers—and to prioritize “the monumental, the unadorned and the searingly emotional.”<sup>85</sup> His review actually

<sup>84</sup>“Cette soirée d'adieux avait cela de particulier que les regrets et la tristesse n'en assombrissaient l'éclat ni pour le public ni pour la bénéficiaire. Elle différerait essentiellement en effet des représentations de cette espèce. [...] La représentation de Mme Gras-Dorus n'éveillait aucune des idées qui attristent d'ordinaire ces solennités.” Hector Berlioz, *Journal des débats*, 17 May 1845.

<sup>85</sup>“La pureté de son goût dans le choix des traits et des ornemens est irréprochable, et elle sait ne faire usage qu'à propos de ces broderies mélodiques dont l'emploi déplacé est destructeur de la grandeur du style autant que de l'expression. Le chant orné et le genre léger forment son domaine principal, il est vrai; mais si les cantatrices dramatiques, à la voix sympathique et vibrante, sont rares,



revealed Dorus-Gras's *lack* of taste with her resurrection of *Le Rossignol*, a "bawdy, mocking, vulgar" opera.<sup>86</sup> Overall, for Berlioz, the whole evening, with its "excessive" programme (the evening stretched from 7 p.m. to 2 a.m.), served simply to amuse the public and had nothing in common with true art. He ended his review with a résumé of Dorus-Gras's earnings—fifty bouquets of flowers and over 20,000 francs in receipts—as a reminder that this was, above all, a commercial affair.<sup>87</sup> Berlioz's review furnishes yet another example of how singers—particularly women—were condemned as non-artists who merely pandered to the public with the unique objective of earning money.

Cinti-Damoreau managed to escape such bitter criticism even though she had held not one, but two retirement benefit concerts. The first was given at the Opéra Comique on 8 May 1841 to celebrate her retirement from the theatre; another benefit followed at the Opéra on 22 April 1843, as the artist seemed to want to re-do her adieus from the stage of Paris' premier theatre. At both benefits she proposed programmes that served as a kind of career overview. In 1841, she presented fragments from two *opéras-comiques*, the first act of Auber's *L'Ambassadrice* and the last act of *Le Domino noir*, and a grand opera, the second act of Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*. According to one critic, she had intended to perform fragments from *Il barbiere di Siviglia* to represent her career beginnings at the Théâtre Italien, but the performers who were to participate were in London.<sup>88</sup> The performance of exclusively French works pleased some critics who claimed Cinti-Damoreau wished to pay her adieus as an artist who was "completely French."<sup>89</sup> Her selection of Rossini's work was clever, as it doubly referenced her time singing Italian opera and, perhaps more importantly, her role in bringing an Italianate vocal method and Rossini's works to the Opéra in the late 1820s. The inclusion of two works by Auber meant that the concert also fêted the composer, an odd tribute considering that the singer had left the Opéra Comique

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il faut convenir que les virtuoses de la force de Mme Gras-Dorus, à la fois musiciennes consommées, vocalistes irréprochables, d'un goût sûr, heureuses dans leur plus grandes hardiesse, ne laissent jamais concevoir à l'auditeur de doutes sur la justesse des sons, sont loin d'être communes, en France comme ailleurs." Hector Berlioz, *Journal des débats*, 17 May 1845. Ellis, "Berlioz, the Sublime, and the Broderie Problem."

<sup>86</sup>"Un petit opéra égrillard, goguenard, paillard, qui n'a rien de commun avec l'art." Berlioz, *Journal des débats*, 17 May 1845.

<sup>87</sup>Dorus-Gras actually made only 17,132 francs in receipts that evening; see Table 4.1.

<sup>88</sup>*Le Constitutionnel*, 14 May 1841.

<sup>89</sup>"[...] il ne manquait qu'un morceau italien pour rappeler complètement les trois phases de sa carrière théâtrale; mais en nous disant adieu, madame Damoreau avait voulu se montrer toute Française." P.S., *La France musicale*, 16 May 1841.

because he had given “her” role of Catarina from *Les Diamants de la couronne* to her rival Anna Thillon, the much younger and very beautiful English singer.

Her programme in 1843 realized what had not been possible in 1841: a veritable performance of her career in which Cinti-Damoreau promoted her image as the ever-adaptable *artiste*. The critic from *La Revue et gazette musicale* interpreted her programme in exactly these terms:

In her benefit performance, Mme Damoreau wanted to appear in the three genres that she had performed one after the next, but following the reverse order, beginning with opéra-comique and finishing with Italian opera. Thus the first act from *L'Ambassadrice* led the way; the first act of *La Muette* came next, and in third was *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Mme Damoreau successively assumed three very different characters and she did not stop there: she reappeared again in a musical interlude, not as an opera singer, but as a concert singer, the final role that she is destined to play for quite some time, the final role in which her delectable talent promises an enduring supremacy.<sup>90</sup>

The evening was rounded out with the second act of the ballet *La Jolie fille de Gand*, followed by the traditional procession (Figure 4.5). As they had been in 1841, critics were inspired by the event's programme to provide a biography of the singer in their reviews, tracing her glorious career path from the Théâtre Italien to the Opéra during the dawn of grand opera and finally to the Opéra Comique where she created some of Auber's most celebrated works.<sup>91</sup>

Her repertoire choices were quite clever as they all contained reflexive references to singers, singing, and the theatre to celebrate her position as Paris's *première cantatrice*. In *L'Ambassadrice*, Cinti-Damoreau played the role of the prima donna Henriette, a character who was inspired by the singer Henriette Sontag. The first act of the *opéra-comique* underscores Henriette's identity as a singer with its use of diegetic song. Her opening *couplet*, “Il est, dit-on, un beau jeune homme,” is, according to the

<sup>90</sup>“Dans la représentation à son bénéfice, Mme Damoreau a voulu se montrer dans les trois genres tour à tour essayés par elle; mais en suivant un ordre inverse, en commençant par l'opéra-comique et en finissant par l'opéra italien. Ainsi le premier acte de *L'Ambassadrice* a ouvert la marche; le premier acte de *la Muette* est venu en second lieu, et en troisième le *Barbier de Séville*. Mme Damoreau a revêtu successivement trois caractères bien divers, et elle ne s'en est pas tenue là: elle a reparu encore dans un intermède musical, non plus en cantatrice dramatique, mais en cantatrice de concert, dernier personnage qu'elle est destinée à jouer longtemps, dernier rôle dans lequel son délicieux talent lui assure une supériorité durable.” A.Z., *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 30 April 1843.

<sup>91</sup>See, for example, *Le Ménestrel*, 9 May 1841; *La France musicale*, 16 May 1841; *Le Monde musical*, 14 May 1841; *Le Constitutionnel*, 3 May 1843; *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 30 April 1843.



Figure 4.5: Laure Cinti-Damoreau's programme, 22 April 1843. (F-Pan AJ<sup>13</sup> 210)

work, a popular song, and her duet with the tenor Bénédict, “Et pourquoi donc; c’est la musique,” is a rehearsal of the ensemble they are to perform that evening. The act ends with Henriette’s virtuosic air, “Dieu! que viens-je de lire?” that highlights Cinti-Damoreau’s vocal flexibility and exquisite intonation. Although the reviews did not mention which fragments from Rossini’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia* were performed, one is tempted to assume that Cinti-Damoreau chose the lesson scene, one which, as Hilary Poriss has shown, was often a site for aria substitution.<sup>92</sup> The lesson scene that

<sup>92</sup>The review in *La France musicale* (30 April 1843) mentioned simply that Barroilhet and Cinti-Damoreau performed an air and a duet from the opera; the duet was likely Rosina and Figaro’s duet “Dunque io son” from the first act. See Chapter 5 “Che vuol cantare? The Lesson Scene of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*,” in Poriss, *Changing the Score: Arias, Prima Donnas, and the Authority of Performance*, 135-168.

foregrounds the performance of music and the performer as “singer” would also have nicely complemented Auber’s *L’Ambassadrice*. Elvire in Auber’s *La Muette de Portici* does not sing diegetic song; however, performing opposite the mute Fenella calls attention to Elvire’s voice and her capacity to speak (or sing).<sup>93</sup> Indeed, Maribeth Clark has pointed to several instances of diegetic song in the opera (the celebratory songs for Elvire and Alphonse’s wedding in the first act and the Neapolitan’s fishing community’s choruses and barcarolles in the second act), as well as to the “heightened vocal expression in moments of overwhelming emotion” (Elvire’s prayer and Masaniello’s lullaby in the fourth act) that effectively mark Masaniello, Elvire, and Pietro as “singers of songs.”<sup>94</sup> The first act of *La Muette de Portici* contains Elvire’s virtuosic entrance aria, but one of the main highlights is Fenella’s pantomime scene where Elvire provides the verbal translation of the mute’s monologue. To add further interest to this piece, one of her programme’s curiosities included the casting of Rosine Stoltz as Fenella. (The evaluation of Stoltz’s pantomime skill depended almost entirely on each journal’s opinion of the singer, thus she was completely panned in *La France musicale* and praised in *La Revue et gazette musicale*, *Le Corsaire*, and *La Tribune dramatique*.<sup>95</sup>)

Cinti-Damoreau’s programming, however, had the unintended consequence of highlighting one of her main faults: an overly homogeneous performance style. Her biographers generally felt compelled to defend the singer for her tendency to privilege vocal beauty over dramatic truth and specificity. In one of the most emphatic defenses of the singer, Henri Blanchard claimed that Cinti-Damoreau “had attained celebrity through her pure method, invariable and sufficiently expressive to articulate all inspirations of the heart.”<sup>96</sup> In the biographical *esquisse* provided in one review, the critic similarly claimed that her creations at theatres as different as the Théâtre Italien and the Opéra Comique all had the same brilliance and flavour. In other words, Cinti-Damoreau’s creations all sounded the same and she did not demon-

<sup>93</sup>Mary Ann Smart posits that Elvire’s florid vocal idiom contrasted with Fenella’s noble muteness, thereby allowing Auber to indulge the audience’s desire to hear Cinti-Damoreau’s coloratura while associating that particular style of singing with “an unsympathetic ‘other woman.’” Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera*, 39; see her chapter “Wagner’s Cancan, Fenella’s Leap: *La Muette de Portici* and Auber’s Reality Effect,” 32–68, for her full discussion of this opera.

<sup>94</sup>Clark, “The Body and the Voice in *La Muette de Portici*,” 126.

<sup>95</sup>See Escudier, *La France musicale*, 30 April 1843; A.Z., *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 30 April 1843; *Le Corsaire*, 28 April 1843; and *La Tribune dramatique*, 30 April 1843.

<sup>96</sup>“[...] elle est arrivée à la célébrité par sa méthode pure, invariable et suffisamment expressive pour dire toutes les inspirations du cœur.” Henri Blanchard, “Mme Damoreau. Galerie de La Gazette musicale. (Quatrième et dernier article),” *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 15 November 1840.

strate much artistic growth and change.<sup>97</sup> And while some critics declared her retirement a tragedy for the public and for a singer still at the height of her vocal capacities, others expressed some impatience with Cinti-Damoreau for remaining in the spotlight too long. One critic claimed that her performance that evening proved that her place was no longer at the Opéra, nor at the Opéra Comique, but at the Conservatoire. “Madame Damoreau’s talent has grown amid successes and struggles,” the critic continued, “It has increased with long experience sown with triumphs and flowers, but she has just enough voice left to produce students.”<sup>98</sup> A critic at *La Sylphide* noted, after her 1841 retirement concert, that the public, true to its fickle nature, quickly forgot the prima donna in its enthusiastic ovation two days later for Mme Rossi-Caccia, the soprano who took over some of Cinti-Damoreau’s roles at the Opéra Comique. He bitterly decried the extreme fuss made over singers at their adieus, noting that the same emotion rarely follows the death of great writers, statesmen, and captains—in other words, great men—and asserted that Cinti-Damoreau was already at the twilight of her talent when she left the Opéra in 1835.<sup>99</sup>

#### 4.5 MOURNING A LOST ARTIST

No other artist—other than Adolphe Nourrit—managed to evoke such intense public expressions of loss and mourning during her final performance at the Opéra as Cornélie Falcon. The circumstances surrounding her retirement played a significant role and the concert became a monumental event in later writings. Her simple programming played a key role in her concert’s critical reception: Falcon performed large segments of two operas that held significant meaning in her career, and included a short entr’acte. There was no plethora of genres representing all the theatres in Paris, and no guest artists. With her streamlined programme and dignified performance, critics claimed it differed in every way from other “vulgar” benefit concerts.

Cornélie Falcon’s retirement differed from the others discussed here, as she left

<sup>97</sup>“En aucun temps, dans aucune de ces émigrations, le succès et le talent de Mme Damoreau n’ont pâli; le soleil de la comtesse de Noir-moutier est aussi pur et aussi brillant que celui de Rosine; les couronnes de Mathilde et d’Angèle, d’Isabelle et de l’ambassadrice, ont le même éclat et le même parfum.” *Le Constitutionnel*, 14 May 1841. Olivier Bara has found similar criticism of the Opéra Comique tenor Jean-Baptiste Chollet in the last years of his career. Bara, “The Company at the Heart of the Operatic Institution: Chollet and the Changing Nature of Comic-Opera Role Types during the July Monarchy,” 26-27.

<sup>98</sup>“Le talent de madame Damoreau a grandi au milieu des succès et des luttes; il s’est accru d’une longue expérience semée de triomphes et de fleurs; mais il lui reste juste assez de voix pour faire des élèves.” Press clipping, dated 1843 in *F-Pn* RO-4982 (articles de presse, Cinti-Damoreau).

<sup>99</sup>*La Sylphide*, 9 May 1841.



the Opéra after singing only six years on the national stage. She had spent two years before her official retirement in the south of France and Italy in a desperate effort to save her voice that had likely suffered from overuse (see Chapter 5 for a full case study of Falcon). Once it had become apparent that the damage was irreparable, she chose to retire from the theatre. In April 1839, Falcon and Duponchel cancelled her previous contract that originally extended to 1840 (although the director had to pay Falcon her full salary until December 1838—there appear to have been some arguments over payment during her medical leave), and agreed to the terms of a retirement benefit concert.<sup>100</sup>

The press began announcing her benefit concert several months before 14 March 1840 when it finally took place and there was much confusion as to whether it would be her comeback performance or her last. It is unlikely that Falcon and the administration truly held out hope that she could take up her former post, especially considering the final arrangement she had signed with Duponchel in 1839, but the ambiguity was maintained by the fact that the posters simply announced a “représentation extraordinaire au bénéfice de Mlle Falcon” with no mention of her “retraite” (Figure 4.6). The critic A. Specht claimed that the spectators were all quite convinced that they would “repair the broken chain of their musical emotions,” especially when they saw Falcon take the stage, as young and as beautiful as they remembered her.<sup>101</sup> Critics also noted that the programming was not typical of a retirement benefit concert: the first two acts of *La Juive*, the fourth act of *Les Huguenots*, and a *divertissement* composed of five dances. Perhaps Falcon had been inspired by her former teacher’s programming. Adolphe Nourrit retired from the Opéra in 1837, where he had held the position of primary tenor from the 1820s, in face of potential rivalry with the newly hired tenor, Gilbert-Louis Duprez. His retirement benefit concert in April 1837 had a very simple programme: the second act of Gluck’s *Armide*, the last three acts of *Les Huguenots*, and the *bal masqué* from Auber’s *Gustave III*, followed by a procession. The concert offered a skeletal summary of his career at the theatre: Nourrit had debuted in Gluck’s *Iphigénie en Tauride* in 1821 and revived *Armide* in 1825 alongside soprano Caroline Branchu, and his one of his last creations at the theatre had been Raoul from *Les Huguenots*. The operas Falcon chose for her

<sup>100</sup>Contract dated 19 April 1839 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Falcon).

<sup>101</sup>“[...] et tous ceux qui l’ont pu s’y sont rendus avec la presque certitude de renouer la chaîne brisée de leurs émotions musicales. A l’apparition de la cantatrice, aussi belle, nous allions dire aussi jeune que nous l’avions vue la dernière fois, les acclamations affectueuses se sont élevées de tous les coins de la salle.” A. Specht, “Académie royale de musique: Représentation au bénéfice de Mlle Falcon,” *L’Artiste* (1840), 213.

programme represented her greatest creations during her short career, and would remain attached to her name into the twentieth-first century. For some critics, her simplified programming had nothing to do with “vulgar benefit concerts” that heaped heterogeneous elements and eccentric, dramatic novelties to excite public curiosity, claimed one critic; instead, it was “an artistic solemnity, a kind of jury composed of the high Parisian society, called to decide the future of a great singer, worthy of much public interest.”<sup>102</sup>

**ACADEMIE ROYALE DE MUSIQUE.**  
*Les bureaux seront ouverts à 6 heures. On commence à 7 heures très-précises.*  
**Aujourd'hui Samedi 14 Mars 1840.**  
**REPRÉSENTATION EXTRAORDINAIRE.**  
*et BENEFICE DE*  
**Mlle FALCON.**  
 LES DEUX PREMIERS ACTES DE  
**LA JUIVE**  
 Opéra, paroles de M. SCRIBE, musique de M. HALEY, divertissements de M. Tagliani, décorations de M<sup>rs</sup> Dietrich, Despléchin, Sehan et Léon Feuchère.  
**M. DUPREZ**  
 remplira le rôle d'ÉLÉAZAR.  
 M<sup>rs</sup> DORUS-GRAS celui d'ÉDOUARD; M<sup>rs</sup> FALCON celui de RACHEL; M. ALEXIS celui de LÉOPOLD; et M. DERIVIS celui du CARDINAL; M<sup>rs</sup> FERDINAND-PREVOT, WARTEL, MOLINIER, TREVAUX, DARRENI, MARTIN, CHARPENTIER, HENS et GOYON rempliront les autres principaux rôles.  
 DANSE: M<sup>rs</sup> SIMON, QUÉRIAU, CORAILL, M<sup>rs</sup> ROLAND, FORSTER.  
**DIVERTISSEMENT**  
 COMPOSÉ DE:  
 1<sup>er</sup> Pas de deux dansé par M. MERANTE et M<sup>rs</sup> BILANGY. 4<sup>es</sup> Les Ballets de Gail, dansé par M<sup>rs</sup> NOBLET et ALEXIS.  
 2<sup>es</sup> Pas Styrien, dansé par M. CORAILL et M<sup>rs</sup> ANGE DUMILATRE. 5<sup>es</sup> Sultane, dansée par M<sup>rs</sup> SIMON, QUÉRIAU, C. MARILLÉ, DESPLACES 2<sup>es</sup>, M<sup>rs</sup> ROLAND, FORSTER, MERCIER, SCHEIN DUMILATRE.  
 3<sup>es</sup> Pas de deux dansé par M. LACON PETIPA et M<sup>rs</sup> LOISE FITZJAMES.  
 LE 1<sup>er</sup> ACTE DES  
**HUGUENOTS**  
 Opéra, paroles de M. SCRIBE, musique de M. MEYERBEER, décorations de M<sup>rs</sup> Sehan, Léon Feuchère, Despléchin et Dietrich.  
**M. DUPREZ**  
 remplira le rôle de RAOUL.  
 M<sup>rs</sup> FALCON celui de CATHERINE; M<sup>rs</sup> CORAILL, DERIVIS, WARTEL, ALIZARD, MOLINIER, TREVAUX, MARTIN et HENS rempliront les autres principaux rôles.  
 Les Abonnements et les Entrées de faveur sont généralement suspendus.  
 (Les Dames seront admises aux Stalles d'Orchestre.)  
 PRIX DES PLACES EN LOCATION:  
 Stalles d'Orchestre, d'Amphithéâtre et de Galerie des Femmes 20 f.  
 Avant-Scène du Récit-Cloué des Femmes et 1<sup>re</sup> de face 24  
 Récit-Cloué et 1<sup>re</sup> Loges de face 18  
 Récit des Femmes, Avant-Scène des Hommes, 2<sup>es</sup> Loges de face 20  
 Amphithéâtre des Quatrième Loges de côté et Cinquième de face 15 f.  
 Troisième Loges de côté et Quatrième de face 12  
 Parterre, Quatrième Loges de côté et Cinquième de face 7  
 Amphithéâtre des Quatrième Loges de côté et Cinquième de face 5  
 Stalles de face, 1<sup>re</sup> Loges de face, 2<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 3<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 4<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 5<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 6<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 7<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 8<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 9<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 10<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 11<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 12<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 13<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 14<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 15<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 16<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 17<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 18<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 19<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 20<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 21<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 22<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 23<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 24<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 25<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 26<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 27<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 28<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 29<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 30<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 31<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 32<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 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686<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 687<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 688<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 689<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 690<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 691<sup>es</sup> Loges de face, 692



that although Falcon still had some beautiful low and high notes, there was almost nothing left of her middle register. Resigned to continue the performance, she put all her energy into her pantomime and demonstrated a marked improvement of her already accomplished acting skills. In his review, Hector Berlioz encouraged Falcon to seek out a position at the Théâtre Français, insisting that she could save her theatre career by switching to spoken drama.<sup>103</sup> Théophile Gautier was one of the few critics who held out some hope that Falcon's voice could still be saved and he counseled more rest, Italian sunshine, and confidence in her youthful body.<sup>104</sup> A. Specht actually reprimanded the singer for her audacity at appearing on the Opéra's stage with her voice in its still-damaged state, and claimed that her performance revealed an extreme lack of discretion.<sup>105</sup>

Review after review recounted the audience's anguish, pain, and extreme discomfort in witnessing this young, beautiful singer display for all of Paris her broken voice. "Last Saturday's performance at the Opéra will leave sad memories in the minds of all the spectators," *Le Figaro's* critic recounted, "From eight until eleven o'clock in the evening, there were many choked sighs, many tears furtively wiped away, and if everyone did not feel as badly as the beneficiary and Madame Damoreau, who had to be removed from her *baignoire*, there was no one who did not feel her/his heart sadly oppressed in the presence of the cruel misfortune that has befallen Mlle Falcon at the beginning of her glorious career."<sup>106</sup> The critic might as well have been describing the reactions of those attending a funeral, which in many ways was how the event was interpreted. Critics effectively buried the artist with their words of farewell. The *Figaro* critic feared that the bouquets offered to Falcon at the end of her performance were but flowers on a tomb. For Hector Berlioz, her concert was four long hours of agony watching a young virtuoso reappear before her admirers only "to die before their eyes: because the loss of her voice for a *cantatrice*, is that not death?"<sup>107</sup> Everything about the evening signified that the concert was, in fact,

<sup>103</sup>Hector Berlioz, "Théâtre de l'Opéra. Représentation au bénéfice de Mlle Falcon," *Journal des débats*, 17 March 1840.

<sup>104</sup>Théophile Gautier, "Académie royale de musique. Représentation de Mlle Falcon," *La Presse*, 18 March 1840.

<sup>105</sup>Specht, "Académie royale de musique," 214.

<sup>106</sup>"La représentation de samedi dernier à l'Opéra laissera de tristes souvenirs dans l'esprit de tous les spectateurs. De huit heures à onze heures du soir, il y a eu bien des soupirs étouffés, bien des pleurs essuyés furtivement, et, si tout le monde ne s'est pas trouvé mal ostensiblement comme la bénéficiaire et madame Damoreau, qu'on a été obligé de transporter hors de sa baignoire, il n'est personne qui n'ait senti son cœur douloureusement oppressé en présence de la cruelle infortune qui a frappé Mlle Falcon au début de sa glorieuse carrière." "Théâtres," *Le Figaro*, 19 March 1840.

<sup>107</sup>"[...] pendant quatre longues heures, par la jeune et belle virtuose qui, si long-temps absente, n'a

constructed as a moment of public mourning for the loss of an artist: processions and comedies would have been grotesquely out of place.

Critics could also not resist linking her tragic fate—and artistic death—with that of Adolphe Nourrit in their reviews of her benefit. The works she performed that evening were also two of Nourrit's greatest creations; his recent suicide less than a year prior and the odd discordance of seeing Nourrit's rival Duprez singing opposite Falcon might have provoked the evocation of the singer's memory. The critic from *L'Indépendant* noted that Falcon abruptly ended her brilliant career at the Opéra just as Nourrit retired, never again to be seen: her "destiny seemed to be attached to that of her illustrious master," and Falcon had to leave the theatre as well.<sup>108</sup> In his full two-page feuilleton dedicated to her benefit concert, Berlioz recalled seeing Falcon at Nourrit's funeral, sobbing in the corner of the church, "this artist who did not know how to die, despite an even greater and unexpected unhappiness than that which affected her model."<sup>109</sup>

#### 4.6 MAKING AMENDS

From Falcon's retirement that covered the artist in flowers and tears we end with that of Rosine Stoltz and her concert that, by comparison, went almost unnoticed. The few lines wedged in between other news items in the major journals nonetheless spoke of a respectable evening, good attendance, and fine performances by the beneficiary. Like several other artists, Stoltz retired from the Opéra years before her actual retirement from the stage; however, her departure did not leave the same intensity of regret nor did she have the same support from her colleagues. The growing criticism of the power she supposedly wielded at the Opéra over the hiring (and firing) of artists and the repertoire reached a fevered pitch with the *Robert Bruce* debacle, when Stoltz angrily threw torn fragments of her handkerchief at the parterre along with some colourful retorts in response to their boos and hisses (see Chapter 5 for a case study on the singer). Rosine Stoltz gave her resignation in March 1847. In a letter to M. de Coigny, the president of the Commission des théâtres royaux, Stoltz

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reparu devant ses nombreux admirateurs que pour mourir sous leurs yeux; car la perte de sa voix, pour une cantatrice, n'est-ce pas la mort?" Berlioz, "Théâtre de l'Opéra."

<sup>108</sup>"Tout-à-coup, cette jeune fille, à laquelle de si brillantes destinées étaient promises, s'arrêta dans sa carrière. Nourrit s'était retiré de l'Opéra, qui, hélas! ne devait plus le revoir. Peu de temps après, son élève, dont la destinée semblait attachée à celle de son illustre maître [...] fut obligée de cesser son service." Press clipping from *L'Indépendant* dated 18 March 1840 from *P-Pn* RO-5119 (articles de presse, Falcon).

<sup>109</sup>"[...] cette artiste, qui savait ne pas mourir, malgré un malheur plus grand et plus inattendu que celui qui frappa son émulé; c'était Mlle Falcon." Berlioz, "Théâtre de l'Opéra."

declared that she was prepared to pay the indemnity for breaking her contract, which extended until June 1848, rather than remain at the Opéra as an object of suspicion, and seen as an obstacle to the theatre's prosperity.<sup>110</sup> Her retirement benefit concert took place 22 April 1847, under much different performing circumstances than those of her colleagues. Although she had ironically regained public favour with the announcement of her retirement, given the circumstances she could not produce the same kind of extravagant soirée. Ticket prices were not raised. There were no guest performers drawn from other Parisian theatres. There were no other genres offered for variety, other than an added *divertissement* performed by the Opéra's main ballet dancers. And Stoltz carried the weight of the entire performance, singing in all three opera excerpts that were some of her most performed and most successful during her career: Marliani's one-act opera *La Xacarilla*, the second act of Halévy's *Charles VI* with the famous card scene, and the third and fourth acts of Donizetti's *La Favorite* (Figure 4.7). None of her colleagues, other than Opéra artists who were obligated by their contracts to perform, lent their support or participation.<sup>111</sup> Gustave Roger wrote how Stoltz had approached him to sing the second act of *Le Comte Ory* and in the fourth act of *La Favorite*. Although he had some difficulty passing up the chance of certain success in *La Favorite* on a stage where he was destined to sing two years later, he refused. As did other artists: "[...] she was obligated to base her concert only on her [performance], because all the artists had refused [to participate]. This woman, I can tell you, never rendered any service for other artists; she wanted to surround herself with Parisian celebrities to show that she was well liked among the artists and that she left accompanied by their wishes and regrets. Nothing. Solitude, complete isolation."<sup>112</sup>

Remarkably, even under these performing conditions, the evening was successful. Parisians had come out in droves to the performance, the theatre was packed full and scalpers were selling orchestral stalls at sixty francs apiece, according to one report.<sup>113</sup> The financial report from the evening confirms the reviews. Even without raising

<sup>110</sup>"Je l'ai déclaré formellement à M. le directeur, et crois devoir en informer la commission, bien décidée à plutôt payer mon dédit que de rester plus long-temps exposée au soupçon d'être un obstacle à la prospérité de l'Opéra." Letter reprinted in *La France musicale*, 21 March 1847.

<sup>111</sup>According to one critic, Stoltz had been "Privée des auxiliaires sur lesquels elle avait cru pouvoir compter d'abord, réduite à ses propres forces." *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 25 April 1847.

<sup>112</sup>"Le fait est qu'elle n'a rien de tout cela; elle est obligée de faire sa représentation à elle seule, parce que tous les artistes ont refusé. Cette femme, que je sache, n'a jamais rendu aucun service aux artistes; elle voulait s'entourer des illustrations parisiennes pour faire dire qu'elle excitait des sympathies parmi les artistes et qu'elle partait accompagnée de leurs vœux et de leurs regrets. Rien. Solitude, isolement complet." Roger, *Carnet d'un ténor*, 170.

<sup>113</sup>*La France théâtrale*, 24 April 1847.



Figure 4.7: Rosine Stoltz's programme, 22 April 1847. (*F-Pan* AJ<sup>13</sup> 210)

ticket prices, Stoltz made 12,110 francs in receipts. Critics in fact praised Stoltz for showing restraint, taste, and modesty in her programming and seat pricing. Her programme where she appeared, as one critic noted, “as a young boy, as a young girl, and as a young woman,” was a “résumé of sorts of all her dramatic creations” during her almost decade-long career at the Opéra; it also emphasized her dramatic abilities, her youth (she was thirty-two years old), and her capacity to play both comic and tragic characters.<sup>114</sup> The evening became an act of peace, a reconciliation of sorts between Stoltz and her public, a burial of the disagreements of the past and a celebration of happy memories and the future. The critic at *Le Ménestrel* noted that

<sup>114</sup>“Ces trois ouvrages permettaient à madame Stoltz de se montrer successivement sous la forme d’un jeune garçon, d’une jeune fille et d’une jeune femme. C’était en quelque sorte le résumé de toutes ses créations dramatiques.” *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 25 April 1847.

even her enemies regretted the loss of her talent during the concert.<sup>115</sup> For the critic at *Le Constitutionnel*, the farewell evening went a long way toward erasing negative memories of the past, and was exactly what it should have been:

[F]ull of respect, expansiveness, and cordiality. The public did not remember anything except the artist's good days; the artist listened, this time, only to wise advice; no more protests, no more epistles, no more impatience and vain revolts. Just a resignation in good taste, a resolute desire to do well, a perfect performance, often inspired, always lively; there lies the great secret of this supreme ovation, of this honest and solemn amnesty.<sup>116</sup>

In Eugénie Pérignon's pamphlet in praise of the singer, one of three published within months of her retirement in 1847,<sup>117</sup> she drew attention to Stoltz's emotional response and gratitude toward her public. The performance did not end with the traditional processional ceremony of artists; instead, the artist alone was called back to the stage to receive the audience's ovation. Rosine Stoltz warmly thanked her public and stated: "And if I cannot prove to you all that I feel, do not forget that I will always carry you in my heart."<sup>118</sup>

In addition to the flowers and bouquets the audience rained doves—considered a symbol of peace—on the singer.<sup>119</sup> In another supportive pamphlet written by Corneille Cantinjou, *Les adieux de madame Stoltz*, the author included a portrait of the singer during the final moments of her farewell concert, covered in bouquets and crowns, and two doves flying above her head—even one perched peacefully on her finger—that immortalized this moment of reconciliation and making amends (Figure 4.8). The lithograph appears to have been based on that by Gabriel Lépaulle (1804-1886) from 1840-1841 that depicts Stoltz and Duprez in the final moments of

<sup>115</sup>*Le Menestrel*, 25 April 1847.

<sup>116</sup>"Les adieux, d'un part et d'autre, eût été ce qu'ils devaient être, pleins de convenance, d'expansion et de cordialité. Le public ne se souvenait plus que des beaux jours de l'artiste; l'artiste n'avait écouté, cette fois, que de sages conseils; plus de protestations, plus d'épîtres, plus d'impatiences et de révoltes vaines; mais une résignation de bon goût, un irrésoluble désir de bien faire, un tenue parfaite, de l'inspiration souvent, de l'entrain toujours; voilà le grand secret de cette ovation suprême, de cette franche et solennelle amnistie." *Le Constitutionnel*, 27 April 1847.

<sup>117</sup>Pérignon, *Rosine Stoltz*; Lemer, *Rosine Stoltz: Souvenirs biographiques et anecdotiques*; and Cantinjou, *Les adieux de madame Stoltz*. The pamphlets are all held in *F-Po* dossier d'artiste, Rosine Stoltz.

<sup>118</sup>"Merci à vous tous!... Et si je ne puis vous témoigner tout ce que j'éprouve, n'oubliez pas que je vous porte à jamais dans mon coeur." Pérignon, *Rosine Stoltz*, 42.

<sup>119</sup>Releasing doves was a new custom at the theatre, supposedly borrowed from the Italians. See *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 25 April 1847.



the fourth act of *La Favorite*, with the monastery in the background and gravestones as a visible reminder of Léonor's impending death (Figure 4.9). Alphonse Farcy's lithograph shows Stoltz resurrected, the triumphant artist shedding her role (and her past) to return to receive the public's acclaim and adoration. Stoltz left soon after the concert for contracts in the provinces and abroad, but returned for a one-year contract at the Opéra in 1854-1855. Perhaps the success of her farewell concert influenced the administration's decision to re-hire the singer, and she indeed managed to erase enough of the ills to be offered a second chance.



Figure 4.8: Lithograph by Alphonse Farcy of Stoltz at her benefit concert, from Corneille Cantinjou, *Les adieux de Mme Stoltz*. (F-Po, dossier d'artiste, Rosine Stoltz)



Figure 4.9: Lithograph by Gabriel Léopaulle of Stoltz and Duprez in the fourth act of *La Favorite*. (BnF, Gallica)

#### 4.7 FROM SOUND TO SILENCE

What sorrowful celebration is a final performance! How the great artist must be heartbroken in crossing the stage [...]. And he sings, and with superhuman effort finds his voice and his youthful verve, he excites transports until then unknown. The stage is covered in flowers like a half-closed tomb. Trembling with a thousand contradictory sensations, he



slowly leaves. We want to see him again, he is called back with loud cries. [...] It's his last joy, it's his glory, his love, his genius, his life that shudder as they expire. Come then, poor great artist, brilliant meteor at the end of your journey, come hear the supreme expression of our affectionate admiration [...]; you will remember this moment forever, and we will have forgotten it tomorrow.<sup>120</sup>

In his feuilleton devoted to reviewing Falcon's benefit concert, Berlioz waxed poetic—although not without a touch of his characteristic sarcasm—on the final moments in a singer's career. For most artists, however, the retirement benefit concert was not their final performance and this was increasingly the case during the period. Certainly, those who left the stage after exceptionally long careers took their retirement immediately. Marie-Julie Boulanger, having sung at the Opéra Comique for over thirty-five years, retired definitively from the stage after her benefit in 1846 and returned only to support her son, the composer Ernest Boulanger, and his performed works; she died just a few years later of an aneurysm in July 1850.<sup>121</sup> Others like Laure Cinti-Damoreau, Julie Dorus-Gras, and Rosine Stoltz took advantage of their celebrity and reputation to embark on provincial and foreign tours and make some extra money for their official retirement that came sometimes many years later: Rosine Stoltz, for example, still gave occasional performances in the 1860s. Dorus-Gras performed in the provinces and in London until the early 1850s; after that she appeared infrequently, often just making a guest appearance at a benefit concert. Sometime before 1856, Dorus-Gras took up full-time residence in a château in Étretat, a small coastal town in Northern France.<sup>122</sup>

For an increasing number of artists during the period, their retirement went virtually unnoticed, as Arthur Pougin remarked in his entry on "Retraite" in his *Dictio-nnaire*. Under the old system, when artists performed with a theatre for ten, twenty, even thirty years, they would receive a retirement benefit concert to crown their achievements and mark their retirement from the stage. With the abolition of the

<sup>120</sup>"Quelle douloureuse fête que celle d'une dernière représentation! Comme le grand artiste doit avoir le cœur navré en parcourant et la scène et les secrets réduits de ce théâtre dont il fut long-temps le génie tutélaire, le roi, le souverain absolu! [...] Et il chante, et par un effort surhumain retrouvant sa voix et sa verve juvéniles, il excite des transports jusqu'alors inconnus. On couvre la scène de fleurs comme une tombe à demi fermée. Palpitant de mille sensations contraires, il se retire à pas lents. On veut le voir encore, on l'appelle à grands cris. [...] C'est sa dernière joie, c'est sa gloire, son amour, son génie, sa vie, qui frémissent en s'éteignant à la fois. Viens donc, pauvre grand artiste, météore brillant au terme de ta course, viens entendre l'expression suprême de nos affections admiratives [...]; tu te souviendras de cette heure toujours, et nous l'aurons oubliée demain." Berlioz, "Théâtre de l'Opéra."

<sup>121</sup>*La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 28 July 1850.

<sup>122</sup>*La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 14 September 1856.

pension system and long contracts, “actors have become nomads; they do not care more for one theatre than another, are one day here, another there, move about at will, abandon a more important theatre for a less honourable one that pays more, thinking only of money and caring little for the public and its affections. What results is that the retirement of an actor is nothing more than an event perfectly indifferent to all, and that goes completely unnoticed.”<sup>123</sup> In general, lower-ranking artists fell into the lifestyle described by Pougin, as they had even fewer possibilities for long contracts and celebratory concerts, and often disappeared from the stage without a trace. Noémie de Roissy, who sang at the Opéra for most of the 1840s, performed Italian opera in London at the Princess Theatre in 1848, then sang in Barcelona in 1850, Livorno in 1855, and returned to Paris where she debuted unsuccessfully at the Théâtre Italien; she then left to perform in Venice in 1856. The last trace of the singer is in Geneva in 1857, and after that press reports on her travels are hard to find. The Opéra contralto Anna Widemann had a successful career in the provinces in the 1840s and toured to the United States in the early 1850s. Upon her return to France she sang in Rouen in 1854, and by 1857 she was just singing in some concerts in Paris. She drops out of the press until February 1864 when an obituary notice announced she had died at the age of forty-nine and was survived by two sons.<sup>124</sup>

A number of singers had children who eventually pursued theatrical careers and one imagines that might have occupied some of their time during their retirement. Dolorès Nau left the Opéra in 1853 and went on a long and successful tour to North America. Upon her return to Paris in 1856, she gave up singing on the stage. She had no choice, it seems, as she had lost her voice completely by 1857.<sup>125</sup> She thus devoted herself to teaching and managing her daughter’s career. Pauline Nau attended the Conservatoire de musique in 1864 and debuted alongside Adelina Patti at the Royal Italian Opera house in London in 1867 and was described “without hyperbole, as a miniature copy of what her mother was.”<sup>126</sup> (Two other debuts followed, one at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels and another at the Opéra Comique in 1869, but because of her thin voice and inexperience she was not very well received.) Cinti-

<sup>123</sup>“Aujourd’hui, les comédiens sont devenus nomades; ils ne tiennent pas plus à un théâtre qu’à un autre, sont un jour ici, un autre là, se déplacement à volonté, abandonnant une scène importante pour une moins honorable qui les paiera un peu plus cher, ne songent qu’à l’argent et ont fort peu de souci du public et de son affection. Il en résulte que la retraite d’un comédien n’est plus qu’un événement parfaitement indifférent à tous, et qui passe complètement inaperçu.” “Retraite,” in Pougin, *Dictionnaire historique et pittoresque du théâtre et des arts qui s’y rattachent*, 652-653

<sup>124</sup>*La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 24 February 1864.

<sup>125</sup>*La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 20 September 1857.

<sup>126</sup>*Dwight’s Journal of Music*, 17 August 1867.

Damoreau's daughter Fanny-Marie also tried to launch a singing career in the 1860s, but it seemed to be rather short-lived.

Cinti-Damoreau continued concertizing in the 1840s after her retirement from the stage, and held a final concert d'adieu with Marie Pleyel, who came out of her retirement to accompany the singer, in February 1848.<sup>127</sup> She then completely devoted herself to her teaching at the Conservatoire where she had been an instructor of singing from 1833. Many of her students at the Conservatoire went on to have successful careers: Jeanne-Anaïs Castellan, Dolorès Nau, Marie-Ambrosine-Minette de Cussy (Mme Henri-Potier), Geneviève-Clémentine Descot, Louise Lavoye, Thérèse-Joséphine Zévaco, Mlle Petit-Brière, and Mlle Kar all sang professionally in Parisian and provincial theatres. She took her retirement from the Conservatoire in April 1856, and after a long, painful illness, died in 1863. Turning to teaching was fairly common for singers after leaving their professional careers. Marie Potier retired from the stage in 1847 and devoted herself to teaching, becoming the *professeur-adjoint* for her former teacher Cinti-Damoreau's singing class until the latter's retirement. Sophie Méquillet had pursued an exhausting career in the provinces after leaving the Opéra in 1845; in just under a decade, she had performed in Caen, Lyon, Marseille, Nîmes, The Hague, Brest, Rouen, Munich, Brussels, and Liège. She retired in 1854 and took up teaching (which had been her intention prior to taking up a stage career).<sup>128</sup> Marie Hébert-Massy had begun her career at the Opéra Comique before turning to the provinces (Marseille, Rouen, Lyon, Bordeaux, Lille, Liège, Toulouse) and sang at the Opéra in the late 1840s. Around 1854 she stopped performing and became a professor at the Conservatoire in Toulouse.

There were some who left for marriage or simply to devote themselves to their families and private lives. This had been Adolphe Nourrit's original intention when he first decided to retire. In a letter to a friend, Nourrit justified his decision by claiming he would have had to retire in four or five years anyways, and doing so early gave him a head start on projects such as assuring a stable financial situation for his five daughters and promoting the music of his favourite composer, Franz Schubert.<sup>129</sup> Célestine Darcier left the Opéra Comique after her marriage to Marty-Mamignard in 1850 and was not seen on the stage again apart from a brief re-appearance in 1852. Annette Lebrun married the marquis de Montréal in the 1840s but there were still some reports of her performing in England and France until 1855. Cornélie

<sup>127</sup>Fétis, "Concert d'adieu de Mme Cinti-Damoreau. Mme Pleyel," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 13 February 1848.

<sup>128</sup>*La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 5 January 1854.

<sup>129</sup>Letter to Monsieur Hiller, 25 October 1836. Reproduced in Quicherat, *Adolphe Nourrit*, 3:26-28.

Falcon married François Malançon after leaving the Opéra and devoted herself to her family life and teaching, although she did sing in some concerts in Paris in the 1840s and went on a tour to Russia with Cinti-Damoreau in 1841-1842. In a gesture of generosity and goodwill, the French government had decided to award Cornélie Falcon with a retirement pension (even though she had been hired after 1831) of 1,500 francs a year.<sup>130</sup> Her income along with that of her husband (who was an *associé d'agent de change*) meant that they probably lived quite comfortably: they had an apartment on the rue de la Chaussée d'Antin close to the Opéra and a home in le Vésinet (today, a suburb of Paris, then, in the countryside) where they spent their summers. Falcon apparently loved the woods and spent much of her time visiting neighbours and lending a hand to the poor families who lived nearby.<sup>131</sup>

"Tell me what is a voice-box, that no longer serves its purpose? What is a singer, who can no longer sing?"<sup>132</sup> The silence at the centre of singer biography in the nineteenth century that Mary Ann Smart has so astutely identified is perhaps the greatest at the end, but should not be considered as reflective of any true muteness on the part of these women. Their continued participation in concerts, teaching, composition (Laure Cinti-Damoreau and Rosine Stoltz published a number of songs and *romances*), and support of their children and students in their musical and theatrical careers should not be overlooked, even if it cannot be precisely documented.

<sup>130</sup>"M. Cavé, chef de la division des beaux-arts, vient de provoquer une décision ministérielle qui accord à Mlle Falcon une pension de 1,500 fr. C'est, nous le disons avec plaisir, un acte de bon goût et une bonne action, bien que cette fiche de consolation soit bien faible pour compenser la perte d'une voix qui était une fortune." Richard, "Encore un mot à propos de Mademoiselle Falcon," *La France musicale*, 5 April 1840.

<sup>131</sup>Barthélemy Braud, *Une reine de chant: Cornélie Falcon*. Extrait du *Bulletin Historique de la Société scientifique et agricole de la Haute-Loire* (Le Puy-en-Velay: Imprimerie Marchessou, 1913), 31.

<sup>132</sup>"Dites-moi ce que c'est qu'un larynx, qui ne peut plus servir à rien? Qu'est-ce qu'un chanteur, qui ne peut plus chanter?" Edouard Monnais, "Le foyer. Comment finissent les artistes. Un chanteur et un souffleur," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 15 August 1839.



## PARIS'S FAVOURITE AND "LA FAVORITE": THE LEGACIES AND BURDENS OF STAR IMAGES

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In the middle of his discussion of Rosine Stoltz's participation in the Opéra's production of Rossini's *Othello* in September 1844, Jules Janin broke off abruptly and exclaimed, "Oh Mlle Falcon! Mlle Falcon, how we miss her!"

She was charming, she was so young, she obeyed all Nourrit's and Meyerbeer's guidance. Grand roles were written for her; she had the look, she had the voice, she had that chaste tenderness, she had the eloquence of beauty! If we could have kept her, within two years Meyerbeer would have given his *Prophète*.... She was gone in a day; her voice flew away suddenly and without warning; a sad and unfortunate event for someone of such merit.<sup>1</sup>

Why might Janin have evoked the memory of Cornélie Falcon in a review of an opera she never sang, over four years after her final performance at the Paris Opéra? His reference to Falcon had little to do with the Opéra's newest production and everything to do with Stoltz. A few lines before Janin launched into this passionate recollection of the lost soprano, he defended Stoltz from recent criticism by claiming that, as the Opéra's only lead female singer, she alone shouldered the weight of the theatre's successes and failures. He lamented the absence of a younger, more talented singer who, with the energy and spirit of a twenty-year-old, could take better charge of this battle. Janin's comments thus reveal perhaps one of the most difficult obstacles Stoltz had to surmount during her rocky career: the memory of that star, Cornélie Falcon.

This review was just one of many writings that linked the fates of the two singers. Rosine Stoltz debuted at the Opéra in August 1837 in Falcon's *emploi*, just months

<sup>1</sup>"O Mlle Falcon! Mlle Falcon, comme elle nous manque! Elle était charmante, elle était toute jeune, elle obéissait à toutes les indications de Nourrit et de Meyerbeer. Pour elle s'écrivaient les grands rôles; elle avait le regard, elle avait la voix, elle avait la chaste tendresse, elle avait l'éloquence de la beauté! Nous l'eussions gardée, que depuis deux ans Meyerbeer eût donné son *Prophète*.... Elle s'est perdue en vingt-quatre heures; sa voix s'est envolée brusquement et sans prendre congé; triste et malheureuse façon pour une personne de ce mérite, de rester cinquante ans de sa vie isolée, perdue, tremblante dans ce rude sentier des beaux-arts qui, pour elle, n'avait plus que des chefs-d'œuvre, des louanges et des fleurs." Jules Janin, *Journal des débats*, 16 September 1844.



after her vocal troubles began. Almost two years of vocal rest in the south of France and Italy did not restore what had been lost and Falcon's retirement benefit concert in March 1840 revealed an irrevocably damaged voice. The torch was passed, regretfully, to Stoltz, who had been hired as Falcon's *remplacement*. But Falcon's shadow loomed large. Her sudden departure from the spotlight while still young, beautiful, and at the height of her career meant that her audience and critics retained a particularly nostalgic image of the singer. Hence Janin's slips of memory: Stoltz was actually younger than Falcon who, at the time of his article, was thirty years old. And according to many reviews during her career, Falcon's energetic, passionate style meant that she often lacked exactly that "chaste tenderness" that Janin seemed to recall. But perhaps Janin was in fact referring more to the singer herself who was famous for her modest, submissive behaviour, than to the professional performer. Her image had effectively been whitewashed and frozen in time, her name immortalized as a voice-type, designating the dramatic soprano *falcon*. For all those singers who were called to debut in Falcon's most beloved roles, they not only had to prove themselves worthy as artists, but also capable of carrying the weight of her legacy, an almost impossible burden.

This chapter examines the creation and evolution of Falcon's star image from her debuts to her early retirement, and suggests that it influenced—and became influenced by—the construction and reception of Stoltz's problematic image during her own career at the Opéra. I borrow the term "star image" from Richard Dyer's seminal monograph *Stars* (1979) that theorizes the phenomenon of the Hollywood star.<sup>2</sup> The application of his model rests on the assumption that we can indeed call certain nineteenth-century singers "stars." Dyer considers stars a characteristic feature of bourgeois theatre that was then imported into cinema in the twentieth century; the emergence of theatrical stars is therefore dated from the eighteenth century and is often associated with actors such as Garrick, Talma, Rachel, and Sarah Bernhardt. These artists differed from those of the previous generation who were completely identified with their roles. Instead, Garrick performed familiar characters (particularly Shakespearian roles) but managed to promote himself as an individual as well as an exponent of the character, effectively creating, for example, Garrick's Richard III. In this way, Dyer claims, "the early stars are not only embodiments of triumphant individualism but also already raise the notion of difference between self [...] and role."<sup>3</sup> A star thus has what Dyer calls "coherent continuousness," which refers to the

<sup>2</sup>Dyer, *Stars*.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 91.

fact that behind the various roles there is one person who is embodying them all.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, stars are often typecast and can be seen as ideal projections of certain roles. In that sense the role and the persona merge in a kind of symbiosis, and at times might be hard to separate from the roles he or she performs.

The analysis of a star image considers how the various texts of promotion, publicity, works (films, operas, plays), and criticism and commentaries build the image into a complex totality.<sup>5</sup> Granted, during this period there was not the same kind of institutionalized promotion and publicity as we find later in the century and especially in the twentieth century when film studios began actively promoting their films through their stars using a wide variety of media. Nevertheless, the ever-burgeoning printed press and the large number of memoirs, anecdotal sources, and portraits provide us with a range of material from which we can get a sense of the initial construction and, most important, the transformation of star images as singers encountered different challenges in their careers and personal lives. Dyer's model emphasizes the chronological dimension of the star image and claims that images often change—sometimes drastically—over time. To his model I have added a consideration of how one star's image might affect that of another. Although scholars have examined the issue of rivalries in operatic and film history to reveal their artificiality and strategic role in publicity and theatre administration,<sup>6</sup> few have explored how the relationship between an artist and her successor might affect their respective critical reception.

The extraordinary wealth of reviews, images, and biographical articles from their debuts to their deaths—in addition to the curious way in which they were often connected—make Cornélie Falcon and Rosine Stoltz ideal candidates for extended analysis of their star images. I place particular emphasis on the initial construction and continual transformation of these images to expose the quandary one unavoidably encounters when attempting to produce a singular, ahistorical "reading" of these celebrities. Cornélie Falcon has often been interpreted as a leading performer of quiet, domestic heroines because of her renowned modesty and virtue; and yet, as we discover, contemporary reviews of her performances reveal a singer whose impassioned style troubled the interpretation of these characters as passive and submissive. A clearer understanding of the contradictory elements that make up a star persona is

<sup>4</sup>Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*, 9.

<sup>5</sup>For Dyer's discussion of stars as images, see part two of *Stars*, "Stars as Images," particularly Chapter 6, "Stars as Specific Images," 66-85.

<sup>6</sup>See, for example, Aspden, "The 'Rival Queens' and the Play of Identity in Handel's *Admeto*," and Lugowski, "Norma Shearer and Joan Crawford: Rivals at the Glamour Factory."

essential for pursuing the kind of opera scholarship proposed recently by Mary Ann Smart, Susan Rutherford, and Steven Huebner, who have explored, albeit in different ways, how singers' vocal and histrionic particularities—even details of their personal and professional lives—become written into certain roles that they created or interpreted.<sup>7</sup> It also reminds us of that the work of history and biography is inherently messy, and that the disorder should be celebrated, not dismissed.

### 5.1 THE CREATION OF A STAR

Ce n'était pas un début, c'était un triomphe, chose rare dans les fastes de l'Opéra!<sup>8</sup>

Cornélie Falcon's debuts serve as an example of the rising star system that accompanied the Opéra's administrative change from financing under the king's civil list to private management subject to market forces in the Parisian theatrical world. The new entrepreneurial spirit likely influenced the handling of her debuts, as Falcon did not simply debut—she was *launched*. Whether it was Opéra director Louis Véron's intention from the beginning to launch the singer, as French musicologist and archivist Charles Bouvet has contended,<sup>9</sup> Falcon's debuts became a kind of public-relations event for the Opéra. Véron witnessed Falcon's clean sweep at the Conservatoire's annual competition in August 1831 when she won two of the most coveted awards: first prizes in singing and *déclamation lyrique*. Quickly realizing the artistic and financial potential of Falcon at the Opéra, Véron sought to engage her.<sup>10</sup> Although her first debut did not occur until almost a year later, the timing was chosen carefully. Véron—or Adolphe Nourrit, depending on whose version of events one chooses—wanted Falcon to debut in Meyerbeer's wildly successful *Robert le diable*, first premiered 21 November 1831;<sup>11</sup> however, a virulent strain of cholera had temporarily chased the primary artists and many Parisians from the city.<sup>12</sup> Their patience paid off. A number of significant events happily coincided with her debut on 20 July

<sup>7</sup>Smart, "The Lost Voice of Rosine Stoltz"; Rutherford, "La cantante delle passioni: Giuditta Pasta and the Idea of Operatic Performance"; and Huebner, "La princesse paysanne du Midi."

<sup>8</sup>"Mlle Falcon, rôle d'Amélie dans *Gustave III*," in *Galerie théâtrale ou Collection des portraits en pied des principaux acteurs des premiers théâtres de la capitale*.

<sup>9</sup>Bouvet, *Cornélie Falcon*, 24.

<sup>10</sup>Such is Bouvet's contention; Falcon's first contract at the Opéra did not begin until 1 July 1832. Contract held in *F-Pn AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Falcon).

<sup>11</sup>Bouvet claimed the decision was Véron's, as he wanted a production that he had mounted during his directorship. Bouvet, *Cornélie Falcon*, 25. L. de Peyrès gave the credit to Nourrit in his *Cornélie Falcon* [1870] in *F-Pn RO*-5119, pièce 5 (articles de presse, Falcon). Conservatoire students typically chose their debut roles with their professors; Adolphe Nourrit had been Falcon's *déclamation lyrique* instructor.

<sup>12</sup>Véron, *Mémoires d'un bourgeois de Paris*, 3:171.

1832: Parisians cautiously returned to the capital as the cholera outbreak subsided; a favourite opera that had been absent for three months came back to the stage; Nourrit, Nicholas Levasseur, and Laure Cinti-Damoreau returned from their extended leaves; and Julie Dorus-Gras appeared for the first time in the role of Isabelle, leaving the role of Alice that she had created to the debutante. As one critic put it, "If, with all of that, the theatre was not packed, the Opéra's reasons for existence would be shattered."<sup>13</sup> To drum up excitement for the new debutante, Véron began a publicity campaign by placing notices in the press, announcing the arrival of the new star.<sup>14</sup> The *Courrier des théâtres* began publicizing Falcon's debut 11 June 1832, almost six weeks prior to the actual event: "There is a rumour that Mlle Falcon will debut at the Opéra. We have heard the young singer at the Conservatoire concerts. She is pretty, first of all. We will hear the rest."<sup>15</sup>

Falcon's debut was immediately pronounced a success by the press, an epoch-making event, and was attended by *le Tout-Paris*.<sup>16</sup> Years later and as one way of conferring an almost mythical status on the event, Barthélemy Braud and Charles Bouvet both published an excessively long list of celebrated attendees, which included all the major figures in literature, theatre, music, and politics.<sup>17</sup> Men placed their handkerchiefs on the ends of their canes and waved them in the air,<sup>18</sup> and the audience expressed their enthusiasm by calling back the singer at the opera's conclusion; *redemandage* was so rare at the time that some felt it was the work of the claque, a veritable institution at the Opéra during the July Monarchy.<sup>19</sup> From that day, Comtesse Dash asserted, "Cornélie Falcon became the public favourite."<sup>20</sup>

Launching Falcon was not only about maximizing financial gain for the theatre;

<sup>13</sup>"Si, avec tout cela, la salle n'avait pas été comble, toute condition de l'existence serait anéantie pour l'Opéra." *Courrier des théâtres*, 21 July 1832.

<sup>14</sup>Bouvet, *Cornélie Falcon*, 26. Barthélemy Braud suggested that Véron was first to use press announcements to spark the Parisians' curiosity: "Véron, le directeur de l'Opéra, qui fut le premier à innover l'annonce et qui était passé maître ès-réclames, avait su par des notes habilement glissées dans les journaux piquer la curiosité parisienne, en affirmant qu'une brillante étoile venait de se lever au firmament théâtral." Braud, *Une reine du chant: Cornélie Falcon*.

<sup>15</sup>"Il bruïte à l'Opéra que Mlle Falcon va débiter. On a entendu cette jeune chanteuse dans les exercices du Conservatoire. Elle est jolie, d'abord. Nous entendrons le reste." *Courrier des théâtres*, 11 June 1832. Three other teasers followed on 25 and 27 June and 11 July.

<sup>16</sup>*L'Entracte*, 21 July 1832.

<sup>17</sup>Bouvet, *Cornélie Falcon*, 28. Neither Braud nor Bouvet indicate how they acquired such a detailed list of attendees. Contemporary press reports confirm a full house. See *Courrier des théâtres*, 21 July 1832. Comtesse Dash remembered things quite differently, claiming no one knew of the debut and that the theatre was not even full. She attributed the low attendance to the fact that it was the summer season. Dash, *Mémoires des autres*, 4:157.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>*Courrier des théâtres*, 21 July 1832 and 27 July 1832.

<sup>20</sup>Dash, *Mémoires des autres*, 4:157.

it was also a tactic used by the administration to best manage and present an extraordinary—and unusual—debutante. Only 18 years old, just having finished her education at the Conservatoire and without any prior theatrical engagements, Falcon distinguished herself from other debutantes by leaping almost immediately into the position of *première chanteuse*. As she was not hired to replace another artist but in fact was a new addition to the troupe, her inclusion caused some friction with Julie Dorus-Gras and her devoted fans.<sup>21</sup> Finally, her vocal and dramatic talents contrasted sharply with those currently in vogue at the Opéra; her vocal type was so unusual that she in fact bequeathed her name to it—the French *soprano falcon*—and created a new position at the Opéra—the dramatic soprano. (This designation long outlived Falcon's career: in his opera, *La Reine de Saba*, premièred in 1862, Charles Gounod used the designation "chanteuse falcon" for the role of Balkis; Jules Massenet even designated le prince Charmant in his 1899 *Cendrillon* as a *falcon* or "soprano de sentiment.")<sup>22</sup> As Falcon's artistic difference and boldness might have startled her contemporary audience, her debut required more careful framing. The close attention from the press, the support from the administration, the *rentrée* of popular Opéra singers, the reprise of a new opera, the audience filled with the who's who of Paris all lent weight in favour of her debut by creating a frame of legitimacy around the young singer.

The choice of repertoire for her first debut was instrumental in the creation of her star image. Remaining more or less within the boundaries of a chaste, divinely inspired character, Falcon could exploit the dramatic side of the role in order to showcase her unique vocal and acting talents. Originally conceived as an *opéra-comique*, Meyerbeer and Scribe transformed *Robert le diable* into a five-act work for the Opéra when the Opéra Comique commission fell through due to changes in directorship.<sup>23</sup> Karin Pendle notes that the role of Alice was consequently expanded from a simple peasant girl to a stronger and more dramatic figure.<sup>24</sup> Alice's new dramatic force,

<sup>21</sup>Dorus-Gras was upset with the new debutante's success, and there was talk of canceling her contract. *Courrier des théâtres*, 25 September 1832. Falcon and Dorus-Gras eventually shared the role of Alice and Véron claimed that this was a constant source of tension between the two singers. Véron, *L'Opéra de Paris, 1820-1835*, 126.

<sup>22</sup>In the cast lists of the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, for example, the singer designated for the role-type was listed as either *première chanteuse falcon* or *forte chanteuse falcon*, clearly identifying the role-type as a lead soprano with a strong, dramatic voice. The designation *falcon* was used until the late 1880s at the theatre, and associated with roles of this type that Falcon never sang, like Balkis from Gounod's *La Reine de Saba* (1862), and Sélika in Meyerbeer's *LAfricaine* (1865).

<sup>23</sup>For discussion of the opera's genesis and relationship to the original *opéra-comique*, see Everist, "The Name of the Rose: Meyerbeer's *opéra-comique*, *Robert le Diable*"; and Pendle, *Eugene Scribe and French Opera of the Nineteenth Century*, 427-455.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 443.

however, remained rooted in her moral and religious conviction, her strength derived from a heavenly, maternal source, Robert's mother Berthe.

Cornélie Falcon and Julie Dorus-Gras, the role's creator, had very different vocal and acting styles and therefore produced contrasting versions of the same role. Most sources concurred that Dorus-Gras had a fine flexible voice with an almost mechanical correctness and fairly wooden acting style; one critic called her cold ("la froide Mlle Dorus")<sup>25</sup> and Charles de Boigne likened her voice to an instrument.<sup>26</sup> Etienne Arago felt that the singer's lack of passion arose from her physique rather than from a lack of emotional sensibility: "[...] her whole person seems to reveal her incapacity for energetic situations; this is not to say that she is missing sensibility [...]. It is the lack of muscular energy and not a lack of soul that defeats Madame Dorus."<sup>27</sup> Arago's review recycled several common tropes—the woman as physically weak, passive, and confined to (the limitations of) her body—that suggested Dorus-Gras' dramatic capabilities were limited by her gender. His logic implies that for a singer like Falcon to have a more active, dynamic style, she would also have to take on stereotypically masculine characteristics. Indeed, critics often attributed a kind of aggression to Falcon's powerful voice. Consider Castil-Blaze's description: "Mlle Falcon attacks the note boldly, sustains it, holds it, masters it without effort, and gives it the most appropriate inflection for the sentiment she wants to express."<sup>28</sup> Not only did she sing audaciously but also her voice had a very tangible, even *physical* effect on her listeners according to another critic:

Magnificent and superb, the voice of Mlle Falcon, with her powerful intonations, creates a visceral reaction, arouses, commands admiration. It is a strong voice, colossal, with supernatural brilliance, whose dramatic vibration causes goose bumps, sends a shiver throughout the body, and, like all that is great and beautiful, crushes, annihilates. Full of enthu-

<sup>25</sup> *Courrier des théâtres*, 11 July 1832.

<sup>26</sup> Boigne, *Petits mémoires de l'Opéra*, 163.

<sup>27</sup> "Non, madame Dorus ne peut pas fouiller bien avant dans les passions; son œil bleu reflète naturellement un ciel pur et serein, et ses blonds cheveux ne sauraient convenir au front des Euménides; sa parole n'est pas stridente, sa personne toute entière semble trahir son insuffisance pour les situations énergiques; il n'est pas à dire pour cela qu'elle manque de sensibilité; on en dépense plus peut-être dans les personnages à teintes douces, à émotions délicates, que dans les rôles à éclats de voix et à grandes évolutions du corps. C'est l'énergie musculaire et non pas l'énergie de l'âme qui fait défaut à madame Dorus." Arago, "Mme Dorus-Gras (Dans *Robert le diable*)."

<sup>28</sup> "Mlle Falcon attaque la note hardiment, la tient, la serre, la maîtrise sans effort, et lui donne l'accent le plus convenable au sentiment qu'elle veut exprimer." Castil-Blaze, *L'Académie Impériale de Musique, histoire littéraire, musicale, chorégraphique, pittoresque, morale, critique, facétieuse, politique et galante de ce théâtre, de 1645 à 1855*, 2:236-237.



siasm and well trained, her singing addresses itself to the masses with its eloquent warmth, it makes [one] quiver by its boisterous energy. She has such heart-rending accents, such true-to-life gestures that the public, electrified, rises spontaneously as if hit by an electric shock.<sup>29</sup>

Henri Blaze de Bury suggested that the two different versions of Alice produced by the singers corresponded with the character's dual nature: "one is submissive and timid, the other energetic, violent, enthusiastic. Mlle Dorus saw only the first side in this role and developed it until the day Mlle Falcon revealed all the force, inspiration and male strength that exist in Meyerbeer's creation."<sup>30</sup> He thus divided the two interpretations along gender lines, with Falcon producing a more dynamic version that was received as more masculine. Blaze de Bury was not the only critic who conferred masculine qualities onto Falcon's performance style. Comtesse Dash described Dorus-Gras's Alice as more "naïve, sweet, perhaps more the woman in the role than Falcon, whose voice has more fullness."<sup>31</sup> For the role of "the little girl," Castil-Blaze preferred the blond Dorus-Gras' more naïve, less vigorous style to Falcon's more energetic, sometimes exaggerated performance: "This young person gets carried away with her inspirations, and does not yet know the extent of her force. It's [like] an athlete who shakes your hand as a sign of affection, and who, unknowingly, tortures you by crushing your fingers in his lion's paw."<sup>32</sup> Although Blaze de Bury read Falcon's performance as an exploitation of the dual nature that already

<sup>29</sup>"Magnifique et superbe, la voix de Mlle Falcon ébranle vos plus profondes entrailles par ses intonations puissantes, arrache, commande l'admiration. C'est une voix forte, colossale, aux éclats naturels, dont la vibration dramatique donne la chair de poule, fait courir un frisson par le corps, et comme tout ce qui est grand et beau écrase, anéantit. Pleine de fougue et d'entraînement, son chant s'adresse aux masses, par sa chaleureuse éloquence, elle fait tressaillir par sa remuante énergie. Elle a des accents si déchirants, des gestes si effrayants de vérité que le public électrisé se lève spontanément, comme frappé d'une commotion électrique." "Mlle Falcon," in Gurgy, *Biographie des acteurs de Paris*.

<sup>30</sup>"Il y a dans le caractère d'Alice deux natures bien distinctes: l'une est soumise et timide, l'autre énergique, violente, enthousiaste. Mlle Dorus n'a vu dans ce rôle que la première, et l'a développée jusqu'au jour où Mlle Falcon a révélé tout ce qu'il y avait de force, d'aspiration et de mâle puissance dans cette création de Meyerbeer qui, un jour, en extase devant son interprète, oublia, comme il l'avait déjà fait à Berlin devant une autre de ses interprètes, de battre la mesure." Hans Werner [Ange-Henri Blaze], *Revue des deux mondes*, 15 November 1835.

<sup>31</sup>"Mme Dorus était une Alice naïve, douce, peut-être plus la femme du rôle que Falcon, dont la voix avait plus d'ampleur." Dash, *Mémoires des autres*, 3:240.

<sup>32</sup>"On croit peut-être que Mlle Falcon a donné au rôle d'Alice une existence nouvelle, et qu'elle a de beaucoup surpassé Mlle Dorus; non, et je ne crains pas de le dire; j'aime mieux, pour ce rôle de petite fille, les blonds cheveux de Mlle Dorus, ses accents moins vigoureux mais plus naïfs, sa pantomime suffisamment dramatique. Mlle Falcon a voulu donner plus d'énergie à l'expression de ce personnage. Plusieurs fois elle a réussi, mais sa manière n'est pas exempte d'exagération. Cette jeune personne se laisse entraîner par ses inspirations, et ne connaît pas encore la portée de sa force. C'est un athlète qui vous donne une poignée de main en signe d'amitié, et qui, sans s'en douter, vous met à la torture en écrasant vos doigts sous sa patte de lion ou de homard." Castil-Blaze, *Le Constitutionnel*, 28 July 1832.

existed within the character, for Castil-Blaze, Falcon over-stepped the role's boundaries. And yet in doing so, Falcon put her stamp on the role, creating Falcon's Alice, like Garrick's Richard III. Her interpretation received the approval of the work's creator: upon hearing Falcon sing the role of Alice, Meyerbeer declared his œuvre finally complete.<sup>33</sup>

Falcon's passionate, expressive, perhaps exaggerated performing style was at odds with her personality, at least as it was perceived by her public. Instead, she came across as humble, young, and somewhat naïve—the personality one would associate more readily with Dorus-Gras given the descriptions of her vocal and dramatic style. One critic was particularly delighted with the debutante's modesty and praised her for directing the honours of her success to her instructor and colleague, Nourrit.<sup>34</sup> And although her initial awkwardness on stage conflicted with her dramatic sensibility, this "minor fault" was much preferable to "excessive confidence."<sup>35</sup> Jules Janin's multiple references to Falcon as "a little girl"—while certainly condescending—accentuated her youth and made her feat of leaping straight into the top rank seem that much more remarkable.<sup>36</sup> Castil-Blaze provocatively claimed that Falcon "knew how to please the public;"<sup>37</sup> his comment leads one to consider the extent to which Falcon might have actively promoted an image that she felt would succeed with her Parisian audience. By emphasizing those qualities prized in women—deference, modesty, humility, youth, beauty—she could temper and frame her more unusual characteristics.

I would like to suggest that the balance between submissiveness and virtue on the one hand and artistic audaciousness on the other that was so integral to Falcon's star image was also quite fragile and required some resourcefulness to maintain. Mary Ann Smart has contended that Falcon's reputation for chastity and virtue made her the chief exponent of domestic heroines, and that she "barely needed to open her

<sup>33</sup>Bouvet, *Cornélie Falcon*, 31. Meyerbeer came to watch Falcon perform in the opera in September 1832. *Journal des artistes*, 23 September 1832.

<sup>34</sup>"[...] des applaudissements unanimes ont encouragé les efforts et constaté le succès de Mlle Falcon qui, redemandée après la chute du rideau, est venue, modeste, recevoir un hommage dont elle semblait vouloir reporter l'honneur à son maître, Nourrit, qui l'accompagnait." *Journal des Femmes*, 28 July 1832.

<sup>35</sup>"Mieux vaut encore ce léger défaut qu'une excessive assurance." *Journal des femmes*, 4 August 1832.

<sup>36</sup>"Mlle Falcon [...] s'est mise tout d'un coup, vendredi, et par un seul début, au premier rang des chanteuses de l'Opéra. [...] Bref, cette petite fille a obtenu un immense succès." Jules Janin, *Journal des débats*, 22 July 1832.

<sup>37</sup>"Mlle Falcon a su plaire au public; les connaisseurs ont apprécié son talent, ils s'attendent à voir ses défauts s'effacer peu à peu, et ses qualités devenir de jour en jour plus solides et plus brillantes." Castil-Blaze, *Le Constitutionnel*, 28 July 1832.

mouth to bring the role of Valentine to life."<sup>38</sup> And yet, as the reviews from her debut reveal, her passionate performing style threatened to overwhelm the boundaries of the roles she played. In fact, during her debuts, critics predicted that Falcon needed new roles, "great roles that demanded more energy than grace, more force than softness; she will have more brilliance than charm."<sup>39</sup> Such comments do not seem to characterize "domestic heroines."

Of her three most famous roles—Alice, Rachel (*La Juive*), and Valentine (*Les Huguenots*)—that of Rachel proved to be the most influential on Falcon's visual image. Critics hailed Falcon as a "grande tragédienne" in *La Juive*.<sup>40</sup> Rachel's dual nature of Christian and Jew, of loyal daughter and fallen woman, complemented Falcon's own chiaroscuro. Unlike Alice whose purity and innocence are uncontested, Rachel has a liaison with a married, Christian man, even though she is unaware of his marital and religious status. Rachel's own Christian identity is shockingly revealed by her adoptive father Éléazar moments before her death. Even so, Hallman suggests that her loyalty to Éléazar and to the Jewish faith made Rachel a Jewess in more than name only.<sup>41</sup>

The boundaries between character and performer became blurred: some contemporary critics even believed Falcon was actually Jewish.<sup>42</sup> In performance Rachel's sexuality was emphasized through Oriental exoticism.<sup>43</sup> Her costume, with its head-dress and flowing scarves, visually captured Rachel's Otherness that made the character so fascinating (Figure 5.1). Descriptions of Falcon as *la Juive* contain a tantalizing *mélange* of innocence and sensuality. Consider Philarète Chasles's retrospective description in 1845:

The eagle eye glitters with liquid flame; the steel waist is supple in its strength; the complexion is dark and ardent; the long black hair flows in

<sup>38</sup>Smart, "Roles, Reputations, Shadows: Singers at the Opéra, 1828-1849," 113.

<sup>39</sup>"Par la nature de sa voix et par le caractère de sa manière, Mlle Falcon paraît appelée à briller dans les grands rôles qui demandent plus d'énergie que de grâce, plus de force que de douceur; elle aura plus d'éclat que de charme, du moins si on peut en juger par ce que nous avons entendu jusqu'à présent." *Journal des femmes*, 4 August 1832.

<sup>40</sup>Consider, for example, François Stoepel, *La Gazette musicale de Paris*, 1 March 1835; Édouard Fétis, *La Revue musicale*, 1 March 1835; Jules Janin, *Journal des débats*, 25 February 1835; J.B.P., *Gazette des salons* (1835), 172-174. The opera contains several scenes that permitted Falcon to showcase her dramatic talent: her duet with Léopold in Act II when he reveals he is Christian; her reaction in Act III when she discovers he is married; and her fear and her bravery in the Act V when she and Éléazar are condemned to death.

<sup>41</sup>Hallman, *Opera, Liberalism, and Antisemitism in Nineteenth-Century France*, 204.

<sup>42</sup>Chasles, "Notice sur *La Juive*," 5. Falcon was Catholic; she was sent to the Visitandine's convent for her early education.

<sup>43</sup>Hallman, *Opera, Liberalism, and Antisemitism in Nineteenth-Century France*, 213-234.

the wind. But it is not that dull and lackluster hue with which northern climates endow the complexion and hair of their daughters; it is ebony drenched in sunshine.<sup>44</sup>

The portrait published along with Chasles' description (Figure 5.2) has Falcon wearing a somewhat less cumbersome headdress and demurely looking to her right. One hand pulls her veil down slightly to reveal the curve of her neck, the other is caught in mid-movement—is she pulling away from someone? or fighting the urge to reach out? Her pose has fluidity, further accentuated by her flowing garments, and this sense of motion contrasts with her containment in a room with a closed window. In the passage from which this quotation is taken, Chasles did not clearly state whether he was describing Falcon, Rachel, or Falcon as Rachel. Not that it mattered, anyway: she became Rachel.<sup>45</sup> Portraits of Falcon as *la Juive* circulated widely and stood for the singer *tout-court* (Figure 5.3). Her visual image, imbued with exoticism and, by extension, the qualities typically associated with the exotic Other (sensuality, passion, femininity, submissiveness, danger), underscored the tension within her star image. Chasles claimed that Falcon, who appeared like Judith in front of Scribe, inspired the librettist and he wrote the opera with her in mind.<sup>46</sup> It also affected the perception of her physical beauty: the adjective “oriental” appeared in almost every description of the singer thereafter.<sup>47</sup> Reviews of her performance were infused with the same mix of innocence and passion. François Stoepel wrote: “her incisive voice, full of purity, force, and sweetness as needed, accompanied each of her inspirations; her gestures, always as quick as thought, all the same left nothing wanting with re-

<sup>44</sup>“L’œil d’aigle étincelle de flamme liquide; la taille d’acier est souple dans sa force; le teint est brun et ardent; la longue chevelure noire flotte au vent. Mais ce n’est pas cette nuance mate et terne que les climats du Nord prêtent au teint et aux cheveux de leurs filles; c’est de l’ébène trempé dans le soleil.” Chasles, “Notice sur *La Juive*,” 5.

<sup>45</sup>In one review, Falcon *was* Rachel, as all of Rachel’s characteristics were also those of Falcon: “Éléazar, juif riche, et ardent ennemi des chrétiens, a une fille. Voici son portrait. De grands yeux vifs, de beaux cheveux noirs, un profil fier, une figure expressive et passionnée, enfin Melle Falcon.” *Le Corsaire*, 25 February 1835, from Leich-Galland, *La Juive: dossier de presse parisienne (1835)*, 21.

<sup>46</sup>In the Book of Judith, she is a Jewish widow who gains access to the tent of the enemy Holofernes where she plies him with alcohol until he loses consciousness, and then decapitates him. The reference to Falcon as Judith is curious, given Judith’s sexual and political power, but in relation to Rachel, it makes sense as it resonates with nineteenth-century conceptions of the feminine exotic Other as sexualized and dangerous. Was Chasles trying to emphasize Falcon’s own sensuality and exoticism by associating her with Judith?

<sup>47</sup>“Son teint chaud et uni lui donnait l’air de ces belles Orientales des tableaux anciens.” Dash, *Mémoires des autres*, 4:157–158. Théophile Gautier claimed Falcon resembled a daughter of Jephthah, if she were not the daughter of Jephthah herself, and described her beauty as “orientale.” “Mademoiselle Falcon,” in Gautier, *Portraits contemporains*, 396–398; the original notice appeared in *Le Figaro*, 5 January 1838 in the series “Galerie des belles actrices.”

gard to naturalness or grace."<sup>48</sup> Jules Janin felt she "sang like she acted," and that her "young soul came out of all her pores" as she performed tenderness, passion, joy, suffering, resignation.<sup>49</sup>



Figure 5.1: Falcon as Rachel in *La Juive* (F-Pn 4-ICO-PER-9166)

Anselm Gerhard has dubbed Valentine "the obedient daughter," passive, submissive, a "reflection of the blinkered bourgeois idea of womanhood" taken from *opéra-comique* and opera buffa;<sup>50</sup> however, reviews from the première suggest that not everyone viewed the character in these same terms. Like Rachel, Valentine's innocence is somewhat tainted by her adulterous love for Raoul and her second marriage

<sup>48</sup>"[...] sa voix incisive, pleine de pureté, de force et de douceur, quand il le faut, seconde à merveille chacune de ses inspirations; ses gestes toujours rapides comme la pensée, dans l'emporment de la passion, n'ont jamais cependant rien laissé à désirer sous le rapport du naturel ou de la grâce." François Stoepel, *La Gazette musicale de Paris*, 1 March 1835.

<sup>49</sup>"Mlle Falcon a chanté comme elle a joué. C'est une jeune âme qui sort par tous les pores, et qui se fait jour de toutes parts. Qui dirait, à la voir jouer ainsi, à la voir tour à tour tender, passionnée, heureuse, souffrante, résignée, que cette enfant, qui est une grande tragédienne, n'a jamais vu jouer Talma?" Jules Janin, *Journal des débats*, 25 February 1835.

<sup>50</sup>Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, 177-181.





Figure 5.2: Portrait of Falcon as Rachel in *La Juive*, from *Les beautés de l'Opéra*

and religious conversion that follow on the heels of the discovery of her husband's murder. The critic from *La France* claimed that no musical beauty could make up for the repugnance of the end of Act V: "But in *Les Huguenots*, who can care about the spectacle of this scene where Valentine, barely a widow with the Duke of Nevers's assassination, gives up the faith of her fathers to throw herself into the arms of her lover." He linked Valentine to Rachel, whom he found equally distasteful, and suggested that these shocking situations served only to showcase Falcon's dramatic skills:

At this same theatre we have already seen a young girl, daughter of a Catholic prelate and born in the Christian faith, prefer to die in the Jewish faith under the pretext of an absurdly motivated devotion, devised solely to debase or blacken the dogmas and the rites of our fathers' re-





Figure 5.3: Falcon as Rachel in *La Juive* (F-Pn 4-ICO-PER-9166)

ligion, and all that in order to obtain the most vivid accents from the muse who holds the lyre in these dramas.<sup>51</sup>

Overall, most critics did interpret Valentine as she was first described in Raoul's Act I *romance*, "Plus blanche que la blanche hermine"—submissive, innocent, and

<sup>51</sup>"Mais dans les Huguenots, qui peut s'intéresser au spectacle de cette scène où Valentine, veuve à peine du duc de Nevers assassiné, abjure la foi de ses pères pour se jeter dans les bras de son amant sous les auspices du valet de celui-ci, ce fougueux hérétique Marcel, dont elle reçoit la bénédiction nuptiale. Quel prestige musical, quels mélodieux accens, quels harmonieux accords peuvent balancer à l'oreille, ce que ce tableau cause de répugnance aux yeux et de dégoût à l'esprit? [...] Déjà nous avons vu sur le même théâtre une jeune fille, issue d'un prélat catholique et née dans la foi chrétienne, préférer mourir dans celle des juifs, sous le prétexte d'une dévotion motivée d'une manière absurde et uniquement imaginé pour rabaisser ou flétrir et les dogmes et les rites du culte de nos pères, tout cela dans le but d'arracher de plus vifs accens à la muse qui tient la lyre de ces drames." *La France*, 9 March 1836. This critic was not alone in his skepticism and distaste for Valentine. See also *La Gazette de France*, 4 March 1836.

naïve; however, some found Falcon's performance did not emphasize these qualities enough. Like her interpretation of Alice, Falcon somewhat overstepped the boundaries of the character. Gustave Planche felt her performance lacked elegance and grace, particularly in the fourth act. When Raoul begins ceding to Valentine's pleas in their duet, rather than being "affectionate and submissive," Falcon demonstrated "too much strength and pride; her approach, rather than being sultry and attentive, was full of pomposity and almost virile."<sup>52</sup> Planche's reservations about Falcon's overly energetic performance begin, of course, just as Valentine finally gains a more forceful musical presence. As Gerhard has pointed out, Valentine lacks much musical material before the third act and as the opera was performed at the première, she does not have any solo numbers at all (her fourth act *romance* was restored in most later productions, however);<sup>53</sup> her silence thus suggests a submissive character. I would like to argue that, given Falcon's strong dramatic presence, this limited musical expression did not mean that it was less effective. In Act II, for example, Valentine sings only in the final ensemble when she expresses her outrage at Raoul's rejection, and yet Planche noted that Falcon beautifully expressed the character's contradictory emotions—regret, indignation, pride, and frailty—better than Scribe could ever have imagined.<sup>54</sup> Having Falcon appear onstage for some time before opening her mouth to sing also emphasized her powerful *physical* presence, allowing the public time to appreciate her beauty and her confident stage movement.

One can clearly identify Falcon in George Sand's interpretation of Valentine in her famous letter to Meyerbeer on *Les Huguenots* from her *Lettres d'un voyageur*. For Sand, Valentine was anything but passive: "This tall, dark, courageous, enterprising, impetuous girl, scorning the protection of her honour like that of her person, and passing from a catholic fanatic to the serenity of a protestant martyr, is she not also a strong and generous character, worthy to take her place next to Marcel?"<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup>"Il y avait dans son amour pour Raoul quelque chose d'impérieux et d'irrésistible; mais, quand il céda à la prière, la voix de Valentine, au lieu d'être caressante et soumise, gardait encore trop de force et de fierté; sa démarche, au lieu d'être voluptueuse et empressée, était pleine d'emphase et presque de virilité." Gustave Planche, *Chronique de Paris*, 6 March 1836.

<sup>53</sup>According to a review in *La France musicale*, 10 June 1838, Valentine's fourth-act romance was being performed in the Opéra's current production of *Les Huguenots*.

<sup>54</sup>"Au second acte, quand Raoul refuse de l'épouser, elle a été belle d'étonnement, de confusion et de colère; elle a bien exprimé les deux sentiments contradictoires entre lesquels son cœur se partageait, le regret et l'indignation; elle a été tour à tour fière et gémissante, comme le voulait son personnage, bien que M. Scribe ne l'eût pas rêvé." Planche, *Chronique de Paris*, 6 March 1836.

<sup>55</sup>"Cette grande fille brune, courageuse, entreprenante, exaltée, méprisant le soin de son honneur comme celui de sa vie, et passant du fanatisme catholique à la sérénité du martyr protestant, n'est-ce pas aussi une figure généreuse et forte, digne de prendre place à côté de Marcel!" This description is taken from Sand's famous eleventh letter to Meyerbeer (Geneva, September 1836) in Sand, *Lettres*

## 5.2 LOSING A VOICE, BECOMING A MYTH

During the second presentation of Niedermeyer's *Stradella* in March 1837, Falcon lost her voice and the performance had to be cancelled. She resumed her service after a few days' rest and later went on tour to Rouen, Lyon, and Compiègne.<sup>56</sup> Vocal troubles continued to plague the singer, and she went on medical leave in November 1837. Fantastic stories in Hoffmannesque style began to circulate about the various treatments she underwent to recover her voice. In February 1839, a critic from *La Revue et gazette musicale* reported a new invention by the physician M. Tabarié, a chamber built out of copper and glass into which rarified air was pumped. After two hours of breathing this thin air, "le charme" began and patients found their health much improved.<sup>57</sup> Falcon supposedly recovered her voice in the chamber, but struggled to sing once outside. In another story, Théophile Gautier reported hearing that Falcon's voice was beautiful by day, but by precisely five o'clock it would fly mysteriously away.<sup>58</sup>

Falcon finally accepted defeat and negotiated a final benefit concert with Duponchel that ultimately took place 14 March 1840 (discussed in Chapter 4). She lost the passionate power signified by her voice and what remained of her star image—her beauty, youth, modesty, virtue—took over. Mary Ann Smart has suggested that, "the fact that her career ended in a kind of noble *muteness*, resonated particularly well with the persona that had been built up for her in the press."<sup>59</sup> Although her unique performing style was not forgotten, it was diluted somewhat as retrospective descriptions of the singer placed more emphasis on her subdued, submissive qualities. A number of anecdotes confirming Falcon's legendary chastity and righteous modesty circulated in these later sources. Blaze de Bury insisted that her purity was highly respected by her public and those composers who wrote roles for her:

Also, what passion! What triumphs! And, with the elegies heaped upon her, with the enthusiasm from the artists, the public, what delicate reserve! What respectful feeling! As if we feared, by presenting the singer with too noisy a homage, desecrating the purity of the young girl! The

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*d'un voyageur*, 325. In the opera, Marcel is a Huguenot and Raoul's servant. Marcel is strongly characterized, both musically, as he has his own musical emblem (the recurrence of the tune of "Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott") and is often accompanied by the bassoon and double basses, and dramatically, as his importance in the action belied his servant status.

<sup>56</sup>Bouvet, *Cornélie Falcon*, 117.

<sup>57</sup>*La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 10 February 1839.

<sup>58</sup>Théophile Gautier, "Galerie des belles actrices. Mlle Falcon," *Le Figaro*, 5 January 1838.

<sup>59</sup>Smart, "Roles, Reputations, Shadows: Singers at the Opéra, 1828-1849," 116.

masters themselves conformed to this idea that enforced honesty, and Meyerbeer worked to downplay certain traits [deemed] too bold from his vision of the character Valentine.<sup>60</sup>

It is difficult to reconcile the critic's comments with the earlier reviews that described Falcon's bold style and her veritable *lack* of delicacy. And yet he was far from the only critic to insist on her fragility and sensitivity.<sup>61</sup> Her biographers Braud and Bouvet both claim that it was Falcon who pushed for changes to the fourth-act duet between Valentine and Raoul in *Les Huguenots*.<sup>62</sup> The original duet had the recently married Valentine confessing her love to Raoul as a conscious step to prevent him from leaving and Raoul eager to consummate their love just as a massacre was about to start. In the revised version, Valentine's admission is presented as inadvertent and the language of lust is much toned down.<sup>63</sup>

Reports of Falcon's moral rectitude extended from her professional into her personal life. Braud recounted how Falcon had befriended Pierre Schamel-Roy, a costumer at the Opéra. Schamel-Roy often helped Falcon quickly escape to her backstage *loge* after a performance, and thus avoid encountering her many admirers who were prone to making unwanted advances.<sup>64</sup> Comtesse Dash similarly claimed that Falcon had earned a reputation for "good behaviour and cruelty" from her admirers for burning their love letters and coldly rejecting their offers.<sup>65</sup> Her virtue was seen

<sup>60</sup>"Et dans les éloges dont on la comblait, dans cet enthousiasme des artistes, du public, quelle réserve délicate! quelle respectueuse émotion! comme si on eût craint, par de trop bruyants hommages rendus à la cantatrice, de profaner la pureté de la jeune fille! Les maîtres eux-mêmes se conformaient à ce sentiment qu'impose l'honnêteté, et Meyerbeer s'efforçait d'atténuer à son intention certains traits trop hardis du caractère de Valentine." Bury, *Meyerbeer et son temps*, 99-100.

<sup>61</sup>His comments were often repeated in obituary articles on Cornélie Falcon. See, for example, Tout-Paris, "Cornélie Falcon," press clipping dated 25 February 1897 in *F-Pn* RO-5119 (articles de presse, Falcon). Charles Bouvet claimed Falcon's irreproachable behaviour was notorious, and had it not been so, the journals would have reported her misconduct. Bouvet, *Cornélie Falcon*, 134.

<sup>62</sup>"La scène entre Valentine et Raoul au quatrième acte des Huguenots était primitivement d'un caractère assez osé pour froisser la susceptibilité de Mlle Falcon, qui en fit part à Nourrit qui s'en fut trouver l'auteur en lui disant que cela n'était point en harmonie avec la couleur grave des deux derniers actes." Braud, *Une reine du chant: Cornélie Falcon*, 19-20. See also Bouvet, *Cornélie Falcon*, 99. Louis Quicherat maintained that it was Nourrit who was initially unimpressed with the duet, and that Falcon agreed. Quicherat, *Adolphe Nourrit: Sa vie, son talent, son caractère, sa correspondance*, 1:197.

<sup>63</sup>For a discussion of the changes to this duet, see Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, 191-193; and Huebner, "Italianate Duets in Meyerbeer's Grand Operas," 229-234.

<sup>64</sup>Braud, *Une reine du chant: Cornélie Falcon*, 27-28.

<sup>65</sup>"Sa réputation de sagesse et de cruauté, qui se maintint pendant bien des années, lui donnait, pour adorateurs, tous les hommes qui l'écoutaient. Quelle avalanche de déclarations, en vers et en prose, elle recevait chaque jour et qu'elle jetait au feu! Sa vie ressemble un peu à une vieille légende." Dash, *Mémoires des autres*, 4:157-158.

as integral to her art and several people suggested that her unique vocal talent in fact arose from her legendary chastity. Blaze de Bury wrote: "We unfortunately do not adequately understand what extraordinary energy the voice borrows from certain special conditions, and that the vestals of art are the true queens. There lies the secret of the all-powerful influence exerted at different times by Mlle Falcon and by Jenny Lind."<sup>66</sup> Such a strong association of chastity and vocal power meant that the loss of one signaled the loss of the other. The Comtesse Dash was likely referring to this idea when she claimed that, "One might have believed that a fairy had given the gift of her genius and her voice with certain conditions that, no longer being fulfilled, led to the removal of one and the other."<sup>67</sup> The gossip "habilleuse" Louis Gentil suggested her sexual activities led to the loss of her voice. A series of devastating anecdotes show the singer in an adulterous relationship with her future husband, Malançon, who was still married; in these, Falcon's vocal problems are brought on by her romantic troubles as well as complications from an abortion.<sup>68</sup>

Although Gentil's contentions are by far the most extreme, they were echoed in a novel many felt was inspired by Cornélie Falcon's life and career.<sup>69</sup> In Emmanuel Gonzalès *La vierge de l'Opéra* (1879), the *première chanteuse* Flora possesses Falcon's famous qualities of Orientalized beauty, passionate dramatic style, and, above all, love only for her art: "this great singer, this adored tragic actress, this queen, was the most honest girl on Earth."<sup>70</sup> Flora soon falls from these lofty moral heights. She is seduced by a vulgar, gambling skirt-chaser, Étienne Vaucresson, and her utter devotion to him leads to her demise. Faithfully tending to him during an illness, she falls ill; she loses her voice completely when her greedy lover forces her to sing for a benefit concert where he is to take all the proceeds. Like Falcon, Flora reappears one last time in her own retirement concert and, besides a few brilliant notes that recall her

<sup>66</sup>"On ne sait malheureusement plus assez quels ressorts inouïs la voix emprunte à certaines conditions spéciales, et que les vestales de l'art y sont les vraies reines. Là fut le secret de la toute-puissante influence exercée à diverses périodes par mademoiselle Falcon et par Jenny Lind." Bury, *Meyerbeer et son temps*, 100.

<sup>67</sup>"On eût pu croire que quelque fée lui avait fait don de son génie et de sa voix, à de certaines conditions qui, n'étant plus remplies, devaient lui ravir l'un et l'autre." Dash, *Mémoires des autres*, 4:158. Charles Séchan also intimated such reasoning when, after quoting Blaze de Bury's comment about Falcon as a vestal, he claimed: "Jusqu'à quel point cette théorie est-elle vraie, et dans quelle mesure l'art défend-il aussi jalousement à ses interprètes d'écouter battre leur cœur?" Séchan, *Souvenirs d'un homme de théâtre, 1831-1855*, 318.

<sup>68</sup>Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l'Opéra*, 119-120, 140-141, 345-348, 478-480.

<sup>69</sup>Parisis, *La vie parisienne: la ville et le théâtre*, 97.

<sup>70</sup>Gonzalès, *La vierge de l'Opéra*, 13.



former glory, reveals her ruined voice.<sup>71</sup> The punishment for her moral transgression is death—not just silence—and Flora dies in poverty, misery, forgotten by her unfaithful lover but lovingly tended by the artist Paul, her childhood friend whose career is launched by the portrait he paints of her during the height of her career. Reality blurs with fiction as this engraving is printed in the novel; those familiar with Falcon's image must have been struck by the uncanny resemblance with Flora's dark eyes and dark hair, and her head wrapped in a veil not unlike Rachel's headdress (Figure 5.4). Even more than the portrait of Falcon as Rachel in figure 5.3, this portrait focuses closely on the woman's face, producing an effect not unlike the "close-up" in cinema that some film historians consider so essential to the creation of stardom.<sup>72</sup>

"The prima donna is a child-voice," Catherine Clément writes, "If the voice disappears, the public mourns the child. Although a body remains, and a voice still able to speak ... that does not count. The opera family displays its mourning, while Cornélie Falcon, having banished portraits of herself and scores, shuts herself away until her death."<sup>73</sup> Falcon did not die until 1897, almost sixty years after her last performance at the Opéra, although her contemporaries did what they could to make her biographical narrative echo more closely those of literary and operatic heroines. Falcon became a proper bourgeois woman with her retirement at age twenty-six. She married François Malançon, a widower with a son, had two properties outside of Paris and an apartment at 38 rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin, a stone's throw from the Opéra. Falcon taught piano and voice lessons, sang in private concerts in the court of Louis Philippe and for the Duke of Nemours, and toured with Cinti-Damoreau to Russia in the winter of 1841-42. Even so, later accounts condemn her to silence and a complete withdrawal from music and in doing so, they give Falcon the death that should have come with the loss of her voice: "Better one hundred times over for an artist to die rather than to fail, much better to die like Malibran at the height of her powers."<sup>74</sup> In Parsis's *La Vie parisienne*, Falcon declared herself dead in 1840 at her benefit concert that revealed her broken voice to all of Paris.<sup>75</sup> Camille Bellaigue recounted his visits to the singer in her final years and spoke of her profound emotional reaction to his performance of Bizet's *Carmen*, played on her piano at home. Her musical sensibilities were stronger than ever, but carefully tucked away, as her career's traumatic end

<sup>71</sup>The description of her retirement benefit concert is an uncanny parallel of Falcon's own, see *ibid.*, 79-80.

<sup>72</sup>Dyer, *Stars*, 15.

<sup>73</sup>Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, 31.

<sup>74</sup>"Mieux vaut cent fois pour un artiste la mort que la défaite, mieux vaut mourir comme la Malibran en plénitude de ses forces." Braud, *Une reine du chant: Cornélie Falcon*, 29-30.

<sup>75</sup>Paris, *La vie parisienne: la ville et le théâtre*, 100.





Figure 5.4: Portrait of Flora, from Gonzalès, *La vièrge de l'Opéra*. *F-Pn*.

had turned her life's passion into a painful reminder of loss.<sup>76</sup> Her biographer Braud suggested that Falcon actively erased her past and her former identity as a singer; in doing so, she became virtually invisible:

With a lofty demeanor, distinguished as well as simple and silent, she had a strongly noble manner and recalled infinitely less the singer that

<sup>76</sup>Bellaigue insinuated that although Falcon lived near the Opéra, she remained closed off from the musical and theatrical world. Camille Bellaigue, "La Falcon," undated press clipping in *F-Pn* RO-5119 (articles de presse, Falcon). At least one article refuted this, claiming instead that Falcon was very much involved in theatrical culture as a spectator and interested in the lives of current composers. See Fernand Bourgeat, "Nos étoiles d'autrefois," press clipping dated August 1892 in *F-Pn* RO-5119 (articles de presse, Falcon).

she was than a discrete and polite society woman. She arranged herself in such a way as to make one believe that she was no longer there.<sup>77</sup>

### 5.3 RIVALS AND REPLACEMENTS

Rosine Stoltz debuted in August 1837 in the role of Rachel from *La Juive*, just months after Falcon's vocal troubles began. In many ways, her debut resembled that of Falcon's: the *Courrier des théâtres* began publishing announcements of the upcoming debut a few days prior;<sup>78</sup> the debutante had Adolphe Nourrit's support and influence (he had been instrumental in her initial hire), although with his recent retirement it was Duprez who performed alongside her; and reviews highlighted her dramatic abilities, declamation skill, modesty on stage, and beauty. In Théophile Gautier's review, one could have easily have substituted Falcon's name for Stoltz's: he praised her magnificent soprano voice, her pretty face and figure, he noted her dramatic energy, he criticized her exaggerated style, and he cautioned her to preserve her voice from overuse.<sup>79</sup> Stoltz chose Valentine for her second debut and Isabelle from *Robert le diable* for her third, the only departure from Falcon's *emploi*. Critics quickly accepted the debutante as Falcon's *remplacement*, an excellent stand-in for those times when Falcon was sick or on holiday.<sup>80</sup> Jules Janin suggested that the Parisian public welcomed Stoltz readily because Falcon had not left the theatre (she was on tour in Rouen at the time); it was not yet a question of Stoltz replacing Paris's beloved singer.<sup>81</sup>

Fétis's review of Stoltz's performance of Rachel in 1836 in Brussels suggests either she had made some effort to imitate the role's creator or that their performing styles were simply very similar: "I do not know who might have indicated [to Stoltz] certain objectives that Falcon had in the role, but she has seized upon them very well."<sup>82</sup> Once Falcon had left the theatre to rest her voice in Italy, some critics declared Stoltz the only other singer who could produce the same emotional effect in *La Juive*

<sup>77</sup>"De maintien haut, distingué autant que simple et silencieuse, elle avait fort grand air et rappelait infiniment moins la chanteuse qu'elle avait été qu'une femme d'une société discrète et polie. Elle s'était arrangée de façon à faire croire qu'elle n'était plus là." Braud, *Une reine du chant: Cornélie Falcon*, 34.

<sup>78</sup>Rosine Stoltz debuted 25 August 1837; *Courrier des théâtres* began announcing her debut two days prior, 23 August 1837. From that moment, there were almost daily tidbits about Stoltz in the news section of the journal until mid-September.

<sup>79</sup>Gautier, *Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans*, 1:33.

<sup>80</sup>*La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 10 September 1837.

<sup>81</sup>Jules Janin, *Journal des débats*, 27 August 1837.

<sup>82</sup>"Je ne sais qui a pu lui indiquer quelques intentions de Mlle Falcon dans ce rôle, mais elle a fort bien saisi ce qu'on lui en a dit. Si c'est d'elle-même qu'elle les a trouvées, il faut l'en féliciter." Fétis, *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 24 January 1836.

and *Les Huguenots*.<sup>83</sup> Henri Blanchard placed Stoltz after Falcon in a brilliant line of French lyric actresses and favourably compared Stoltz to Madame Dorval and Rachel. Stoltz performed with all her soul, explained Blanchard, and although her gestures were less studied than those of Rachel, they were inspired and passionate.<sup>84</sup> Besides singing two of Falcon's greatest creations, she performed the role of Donna Anna in the theatre's 1838 reprise of *Don Juan* (Falcon had also successfully revived the role in 1834), and sang the role of Léonore in the new three-act version of Niedermeyer's *Stradella*.<sup>85</sup> During her first two years at the Opéra, Stoltz seemed destined to walk in Falcon's footsteps: they shared the same repertoire, they were both talented actresses, they had strong, dramatic voices that excelled in a declamatory style of singing rather than florid vocalization, and they were young, beautiful women. One biographer found enough similarities between two singers to justify braiding together their life and career histories in a chapter on the French lyric school. In Thurner's *Les reines du chant*, both singers are prodigies and discovered at a young age, both have fervent performance styles, and both suffer difficult events on stage that lead to their regretful retirement—as if they were both condemned by the evil eye: "Was it an unusual connection of that fateful *jettatura* [evil eye], with Falcon foundering in the good Niedermeyer's *Stradella*, and Stoltz faltering in the arrangement of *Robert Bruce*?"<sup>86</sup> Given these startling resemblances, the critics and the public might have expected Stoltz to possess the other qualities that made up Falcon's star image.

Critics were fairly positive toward Stoltz as Falcon's temporary replacement in the early years of her career, perhaps because there was still hope that Falcon would recover and reclaim her place. Things changed by 1840: Stoltz had abandoned Falcon's repertoire and the *emploi* was handed to a series of debutantes, and Falcon retired definitively from the stage. Taking a moment to look at the critical reception of the singers who debuted in Falcon's roles, we find that critics searched for a singer who possessed not only her vocal and dramatic talents, but also certain aspects of her star image. Falcon had created what Susan Rutherford has termed a "definitive

<sup>83</sup>"Après notre admirable Falcon, dont la plus déplorable fatalité nous a privés, nulle autre que Mme Stoltz ne pouvait nous émouvoir aussi profondément dans le rôle si éminemment pathétique de Rachel." *Le Novateur*, 3 March 1839. For her interpretation of Valentine, see J.N.S., *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 20 February 1840.

<sup>84</sup>Henri Blanchard, *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 11 January 1846.

<sup>85</sup>*La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 8 July 1838.

<sup>86</sup>"Singulier rapprochement de cette espèce de jettatura fatidique de ce bon Niedermeyer écrivant *Stradella*, où sombra Mlle Falcon et arrangeant *Robert Bruce* où défailloit Mme Stoltz?" Thurner, *Les reines du chant*, 188. Later reviews would also compare the two singers' sudden disappearance from the stage. See press clipping, Furetières, "Une grande oubliée," from *Le Soleil*, dated 31 July 1903 in *F-Po*, dossier d'artiste, Stoltz.

performance,” one that was impossible to replicate with another singer in the role.<sup>87</sup> Célestine Nathan-Treilhet first debuted in May 1839 in Falcon’s roles and struggled to meet the public and critics’ fastidious expectations. The critic F. Danjou mentioned that the recent memory of Falcon’s brilliant career and the public’s despair at possibly losing their beloved singer made Nathan-Treilhet’s debuts that much more important as she was being hailed as the “next Falcon.”<sup>88</sup> The debutante could not erase the memory of Falcon even though the Escudier brothers insisted she was the most promising replacement.<sup>89</sup> Catinka Heinefetter found much success performing Rachel, in large part because her Jewish origins were perceived to give her interpretation an even stronger sense of authenticity.<sup>90</sup> Still, Heinefetter’s voice did not have the same power and her gestures lacked Falcon’s sobriety.<sup>91</sup>

A mezzo-soprano,<sup>92</sup> Stoltz apparently abandoned Falcon’s roles because she struggled with their range and tessitura; years later, Castil-Blaze and Charles de Boigne would declare that Stoltz sang the roles of Rachel and Valentine with difficulty and were relieved once Nathan-Treilhet (and later, Catinka Heinefetter and Sophie Méquillet) took over Falcon’s roles.<sup>93</sup> Given the critical reaction to the debutantes, one might also speculate whether Stoltz had abandoned Falcon’s roles because she did not want to be continuously compared to the lost soprano. At the same time, leaving these roles to young, beautiful debutantes to create her own set of roles generated

<sup>87</sup>Rutherford, “‘La cantante delle passioni’: Giuditta Pasta and the Idea of Operatic Performance,” 136.

<sup>88</sup>F. Danjou, *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 26 May 1839.

<sup>89</sup>*La France musicale*, 23 June 1839; idem, 27 October 1839. Nathan-Treilhet returned to the Opéra in 1841 and reclaimed Falcon’s *emploi*, and shared it with Sophie Méquillet when the latter began her career at the Opéra in 1842. The Opéra’s performance records for the main female singers in the 1840s show that Nathan-Treilhet and Méquillet shared Falcon’s roles: Valentine, Rachel, Amélie (*Gustave III*), and Léonore (*Stradella*). See F-Pan AJ<sup>13</sup> 192.

<sup>90</sup>Gautier, *Histoire de l’art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans*, 2:90–92. Nathan-Treilhet was also Jewish and was best received in the role of Rachel as well. Curiously, though, Philarète Chasles claimed Nathan-Treilhet had more “Western grace” (“une grâce plus occidentale”) than Falcon as Rachel, even though only Nathan-Treilhet was actually Jewish. See Chasles, “Notice sur *La Juive*,” 5.

<sup>91</sup>Press clipping dated 10 January 1841 from *Le Voleur* and signed as Fr. G. in F-Pn RO-5240 (articles de presse, Heinefetter). The remark about gesture is peculiar, as Falcon was often criticized for her rapid and excessive gestures.

<sup>92</sup>I take her vocal designation from Mary Ann Smart’s article, “Stoltz, Rosine,” in Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/26833> (accessed April 10, 2012). Many of her contemporaries called her a contralto. See, for example, Castil-Blaze, *L’Académie Impériale de Musique, histoire littéraire, musicale, chorégraphique, pittoresque, morale, critique, facétieuse, politique et galante de ce théâtre, de 1645 à 1855*, 263–264.

<sup>93</sup>Boigne, *Petits mémoires de l’Opéra*, 177; Castil-Blaze, *L’Académie Impériale de Musique, histoire littéraire, musicale, chorégraphique, pittoresque, morale, critique, facétieuse, politique et galante de ce théâtre, de 1645 à 1855*, 263–264.



another problem: it meant that the Opéra needed two lead female singers of almost the same type, one a dramatic soprano, and the other a dramatic mezzo-soprano. The Opéra's repertoire of the 1830s required two female leads, but of a different vocal type (a dramatic soprano and a light soprano). The spotlight was rapidly getting crowded. *Robert le Diable*, *La Juive*, and *Les Huguenots* held a strong position in the Opéra's repertoire throughout the period: in 1841, for example, they accounted for forty-four of 171 performances. Falcon may no longer have been at the theatre, but her roles and her replacements remained and competed for the public's attention. Leaving Falcon's roles was an admission that she was not the next Falcon; instead, Stoltz became her rival, albeit once removed. By 1839 Stoltz had already threatened to leave the theatre in face of rivalry with Nathan-Treilhet, and rumours began brewing in the early 1840s that Stoltz was using her influence with director Léon Pillet to oust every new debutante.<sup>94</sup>

#### 5.4 CONSTRUCTING LA FAVORITE

Rather than following in her predecessor's footsteps, Stoltz forged a parallel path. Like Falcon, she gave her name to a voice-type and created her own *emploi*. The *stoltz*, less commonly known today than the *falcon*, was used by some nineteenth-century theatre historians to designate a dramatic mezzo-soprano or contralto, particularly one singing Stoltz's main repertoire.<sup>95</sup> Her most important creation, Léonor in Donizetti's *La Favorite*, premièred on 2 December 1840, launched her to stardom and became her main vehicle for most of her career. Compared to the heroines played by Falcon, Léonor has the most dubious reputation, although she demonstrates many of the same qualities as Rachel and Valentine: faithful, kind, self-sacrificing. Léonor is King Alphonse's mistress. She falls in love with Fernand, a novice monk who left the monastery because of his love for Léonor. Her past, however, is unknown to him. He is eventually granted Léonor's hand in marriage, as the King is

<sup>94</sup>See *La France musicale*, 17 January 1839; 17 August 1839; 27 October 1839. On the rivalry with Heinefetter (and other debutantes), see *La France musicale*, 10 January 1841.

<sup>95</sup>G. Heylli, for example, separates the "fortes-chanteuses Falcon" from the "fortes-chanteuses Stoltz," revealing the differences between the two *emplois* in terms of vocal range, tessitura, and repertoire. Heylli, *Foyers et coulisses. Histoire anecdotique des théâtres de Paris: Opéra*. In a letter to the Opéra administration in 1854, Clady Joséphine Moisson claimed that she specialized in the *emplois* of "falcon" and "stoltz," suggesting that the "stoltz" had become a definitive role-type by this time. See letter dated 3 August 1854 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 453. Although Léonor from *La Favorite* is best characterized as a mezzo-soprano role, the roles of Catarina in *La Reine de Chypre* and Odette in *Charles VI* lay a bit lower and were considered contralto roles by her contemporaries. See Castil-Blaze, *L'Académie Impériale de Musique, histoire littéraire, musicale, chorégraphique, pittoresque, morale, critique, facétieuse, politique et galante de ce théâtre, de 1645 à 1855*, 2:264.

under political pressure from the church to renounce his mistress. Léonor's attempt to warn Fernand of her past is thwarted by the King. He discovers the truth only after their marriage; he rejects Léonor and returns to the monastery. Léonor follows him, they reconcile, and she expires in his arms. Stoltz received enthusiastic praise for her performance. Berlioz admitted the role would do her much honour,<sup>96</sup> and Henri Blanchard claimed that, in the third act when Fernand rejects Léonor, "the pantomime of Madame Stoltz is one of a *comédienne* who has reflected profoundly on her art."<sup>97</sup> Her next major creation was Catarina in Halévy's *La Reine de Chypre* (1842), a woman betrothed against her will to Lusignan, the King of Cyprus, to become the highly contested Queen of Cyprus.

Just as Falcon's contemporaries began reading her life through her main roles, they also merged Stoltz's biography with those of the women she played. Mary Ann Smart has shown how references to Stoltz as "la favorite" became a "convenient and not-too-libelous shorthand for the protection she was said to receive from the 'king' of the Opéra," director Léon Pillet.<sup>98</sup> And in a letter to his sister about his feuilleton on the première of *La Reine de Chypre*, Berlioz claimed that Pillet was unhappy with his criticism of "*sa Reine*," whose despotism was impeding performances of Weber's *Der Freischütz*.<sup>99</sup> While the blurring of life and roles reinforced the more attractive aspects of Falcon's star image, it had the opposite effect for Stoltz. Her star image essentially became the negative version of Falcon's, particularly as nostalgia for the lost soprano burgeoned after her retirement benefit concert in 1840. Such distinctions between the two singers were carried into their visual representation. Even though the singers shared similar features, images of Falcon emphasize softness and fluidity whereas Stoltz's features are sharp, chiseled, hard (Figure 5.5). Whereas Falcon was known for her modesty, humility, and submission to her fellow colleagues, Stoltz was remembered for her dominance over the theatre and its personnel. The perks she allegedly received ranged from complete control over the hiring and firing of artists to repertoire and casting choices. And yet Cornélie Falcon enjoyed some favouritism of her own with director Duponchel, who elegantly furnished her backstage *loge* that

<sup>96</sup>Hector Berlioz, *Journal des débats*, 6 December 1840.

<sup>97</sup>"Nous le répétons: la pantomime de madame Stoltz à ce moment est celle d'une comédienne qui a réfléchi profondément sur son art." Hector Berlioz, "Madame Stoltz et Barroilhet dans la Favorite," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 14 January 1841.

<sup>98</sup>Smart, "The Lost Voice of Rosine Stoltz," 37.

<sup>99</sup>"Le directeur n'est pas, lui, tout à fait si content, à cause de quelques mots que j'ai lâchés sur *sa Reine* dont le despotisme empêchait les représentations du *Freischütz*. Je l'ai emporté, la Reine a été obligée de céder son rôle à Mme Nathan, et le *Freischütz* va reparaitre de temps en temps." Berlioz, *Correspondance générale*, 2:715.



she used as a place to receive fellow artists and other people.<sup>100</sup> While Stoltz was chastised for her high salary demands, Falcon's last contract with Duponchel had awarded the singer the exact same salary.<sup>101</sup> Critics pointed out Stoltz's "diva" antics that included a refusal to have her roles doubled (so as to not find herself in her understudy's shadow);<sup>102</sup> Falcon refused to sing in *petits opéras* and shortened operas (those subjected to *morcellement*) that were used as evening "openers" before a ballet and Pillet insisted that Falcon's best-known roles were never doubled either.<sup>103</sup> And although her contemporaries and modern scholars have claimed that Stoltz's refusal to share the stage almost single-handedly did away with the convention of two female leads, one virtuosic and one lyrical, these changes were already underway during Falcon's reign.<sup>104</sup>

Negative comments toward Stoltz in the press gained a life of their own. From as early as 1840, several Parisian journals spread gossip and criticism that ranged from accusations of intrigue to stories of debauchery.<sup>105</sup> One of the most shocking was Stanislaw Champein's slanderous pamphlet against Stoltz published under the false cover of the fictive "Mémoires inédits de Fugantini" in his journal *Le Musicien* in 1842. These "memoirs" claimed that Stoltz had had three illegitimate children whom she eventually sold to a Jew. Although Stoltz was never explicitly named, one excerpt's title, "Comme quoi la maîtresse de mon ami fit accroire qu'elle avait été la favorite d'un roi," left no question of the memoir's subject. The boundary between fact and fiction disappeared completely as negative reviews of Stoltz's performances and reports of her influence over the theatre filled those pages not taken up by the

<sup>100</sup>"La loge de Cornélie Falcon," *L'Europe musicale et dramatique*, 30 November 1845; "Inauguration de la loge d'un premier sujet," in Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l'Opéra*, 158-159. After Falcon left the theatre definitively, Stoltz actually took over her loge, supposedly moving out most her predecessor's elegant furniture. *ibid.*, 159, fn. 4.

<sup>101</sup>Falcon's last contract, from 1 June 1837 to 30 May 1840, gave her 30,000 francs a year in fixed salary and 300 francs in *feux*. See her contract dated 30 May 1834 (which was used as a template and updated for her 1837-1840 contract negotiated 31 October 1836 with Duponchel) in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Falcon) and *F-Po PE* 3. By 1842, Stoltz was earning the exact same salary and *feux*. See *F-Po PE* 3.

<sup>102</sup>Berlioz, *Journal des débats*, 26 December 1841.

<sup>103</sup>Letter to Falcon dated 9 November 1837 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 194 (dossier Falcon). For Pillet's contention, see the excerpt of his report on his directorship reproduced in *La France musicale*, 7 February 1847.

<sup>104</sup>Smart, "Roles, Reputations, Shadows: Singers at the Opéra, 1828-1849," 122-123. Both Niedermeyer's *Stradella* and Bertin's *La Esmeralda* have one main female lead.

<sup>105</sup>The Escudier brothers at *La France musicale* were always critical toward Stoltz and published numerous articles on the intrigue she was allegedly involved in at the theatre. Other journals include *Les Coulisses*, a rather gossipy "petit journal" that ran in the 1840s, and *La France théâtrale*, which published anecdotes every so often about Stoltz's rivalries with the younger debutantes; see, for example, "Fragment d'une comédie," *La France théâtrale*, 14 November 1844.



Figure 5.5: Portrait of Rosine Stoltz (F-Pn, 4-ICO-PER-24774)

memoirs.<sup>106</sup> Stoltz eventually filed a defamation lawsuit against Champein and he was sentenced to one year in prison and a large fine; he had to pay the singer six thousand francs and print the court's judgment in *Le Musicien* and three other journals of her choice.<sup>107</sup>

Stoltz's sympathizers used the power of the press during her tumultuous career at the Opéra to propose an alternative image of the artist. As gossip about the singer began to spread, a curious feature story penned by Paul Scudo, "Histoire d'une cantatrice," was printed in *La Sylphide* in February 1841.<sup>108</sup> It tells the story of Ramier,

<sup>106</sup>"Les Mémoires inédits de Fugantini" ran on 9 and 23 October 1842 and 6 and 13 November 1842 in *Le Musicien*. It seems that Champein's journal, *Le Musicien*, was created only to disparage her: from the very first issue in September 1842 until the last only three months later, almost every page had a nasty anecdote or review of Stoltz.

<sup>107</sup>*La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 27 November 1842. Champein responded by beginning a series of articles outlining Stoltz's negative qualities. *Le Musicien*, however, stopped abruptly in mid-December.

<sup>108</sup>Paul Scudo, "Histoire d'une cantatrice," *La Sylphide*, 6 and 13 February 1841. Scudo (1806-1864), musician and composer, also contributed to several journals. This story had a rather long life and some influence on Stoltz's reception in the 1850s, as it was translated into English and published in *The Musicales World* in November and December 1852.

a musician and pedagogue at Choron's school, and his transformation of the young, destitute, coarse-mannered Rose Niva into a modest, polite, and very accomplished singer. Ramier eventually falls in love with his brilliant student but discovers she has fallen for a fellow singer, Rifaut. He leaves Paris broken-hearted. By chance, Rose Niva spots her former teacher in attendance during a concert and she breaks down, unable to continue singing. He rushes to help her and they make peace, but he leaves immediately after the concert. Years later, he returns to Paris and witnesses her extraordinary debuts at the Opéra. The true identity of the *cantatrice* was revealed only in the final lines: Rose Niva was, in fact, Rosine Stoltz. The story recycles many familiar stereotypes circulating in singer-fiction—the poor street-singer who becomes a prima donna, the singer as siren, the psychological breakdown of the male hero—which certainly complicates any straightforward, positive reading. At the same time, Rose Niva is presented as naïve and unaware of Ramier's true feelings, a woman who overcame a difficult upbringing and whose dedication to her art and submission to her teacher allowed her natural talent to flourish. The romantic portrayal of Stoltz combated the negative image of *la favorite* as she was portrayed in the press while reinforcing certain aspects of Donizetti's opera, such as Fernand's desperate love for Léonor, his discovery of her relationship with another, Léonor's tainted past, and the final reconciliation between Léonor and Fernand. The authorship of the story lent weight to its authenticity: composer and music critic Paul Scudo had also been a student at Choron's school and thus could have witnessed these events firsthand.

Mme Eugénie Pérignon wrote a pamphlet championing the singer in 1844, not long after the première of the French adaptation of *Othello*. She described Stoltz's performance as nothing less than "perfection," dramatic, savagely truthful, and passionate. But rather than reading the singer through her roles, she instead portrayed Stoltz as the misunderstood artist. Pérignon described how Stoltz embodied all the extreme emotions of her characters to such a degree that, at Léonor's death in Act V of *La Favorite*, Stoltz truly fainted away, and it was only as tears fell from her eyes that she could finally awaken from the painful oppression of the scene.<sup>109</sup> A Romantic artist, a kind of divinity, Stoltz had a talent and genius that burned and consumed her like a fever. Pérignon also offered a glimpse of the woman, relating her visits to

<sup>109</sup>"Dans *la Favorite*, à la fin du cinquième acte, au moment où elle tombe expirante dans les bras de Fernand; à la suite de cette scène de délire et d'amour, à cette fièvre d'exaltation succède une prostration complète; un évanouissement véritable vient l'accabler, et, succombant à la force de ses émotions, ce n'est qu'au moment où des larmes brûlantes sortent de ses paupières, qu'elle échappe à cette douloureuse oppression." Pérignon, *Mme Stoltz*, 12.

Stoltz's salon where she found the singer extremely intelligent, well-read, gifted in conversation, imaginative, but with a nervous disposition that revealed her strong artistic spirit.

Her public image became seriously compromised during the première of Rossini's pastiche *Robert Bruce* in December 1846; the *parterre* hissed and booed the singer who tore her handkerchief, threw the fragments at her insulters, and fled the stage. Although all the press reports concur on Stoltz's passionate reaction, they disagree on what exactly provoked some members of the audience to express disapproval in the first place. In his review in *La France musicale*, Escudier adamantly praised Rossini's score as "admirable, sublime in its details and as a whole,"<sup>110</sup> and thus insisted that the public's discontent had everything to do with the singer and, more precisely, with the administration's championing Stoltz via the use of the *claque*:

These romans, these shameless merchants of bravos and applause, clapped their hands, covered the noise of the orchestra; but from all sides, HISSING was heard; the more the *claque* applauded, the more the public's discontent exploded; in the middle of this tumult of whistles and bravos, what did the singer do? The commotion that came to her ears made her forget the respect she owed herself and the respect she owed the public. Instead of controlling her anger, she ripped her handkerchief in two and threw it on the stage; and as the hissing continued, Madame Stoltz pronounced a little extra [*allocation*] of which only these words reached us: *if you continue I will not sing*. Oh! well, the *claque* fell silent, and the whole theatre disapproved the artist's conduct.<sup>111</sup>

What was even worse, continued Escudier, was that the next day the journals were filled with excuses for the singer, claiming that someone shouted humiliating insults: no well-bred person would actually have made such comments and nothing should excuse Stoltz's behaviour on the Opéra's stage. In a similar recounting of the incident, Charles de Boigne declared that the public protested *en masse* against "une

<sup>110</sup>*La France musicale*, 10 January 1847.

<sup>111</sup>"Les romains, ces marchands éhontés de bravos et d'applaudissemens, battent des mains, couvrent le bruit de l'orchestre; mais de toutes parts, des CHUTS se font entendre; plus la *claque* applaudit, plus éclate le mécontentement du public; au milieu de ce tumulte de sifflets et de bravos, que fait la cantatrice? Le carriollonnage qui arrive à ses oreilles lui fait oublier le respect qu'elle se doit à elle-même et le respect qu'elle doit au public. Au lieu de comprimer sa colère, elle déchire son mouchoir en deux et le jette sur la scène; et comme les sifflets continuent, madame Stoltz prononce une petite *allocation* dont ces quelques mots seulement sont arrivés jusqu'à nous: si vous continuez je ne chanterai pas. Oh! alors la *claque* elle-même fait silence, et toute la salle désapprouve la conduite de l'artiste." Escudier, "Académie royale de musique. Robert Bruce. Madame Stoltz," *La France musicale*, 3 January 1847.

chanteuse trop puissante" and in one evening, "paid her with interest the arrears of a bad humour accumulated over eight years."<sup>112</sup>

According to *Le Ménestrel*, Rosine Stoltz was the victim of a few agitators in the audience who hissed and insulted her, although the critic could not completely dismiss her violent response: "her talent alone should have avenged her from these meaningless insults."<sup>113</sup> Théophile Gautier faulted the claque, saying that the polite Parisian public would have received Stoltz's intonation issues (she supposedly dropped a quarter tone) with cold silence but for the claque's inappropriately timed applause. The hissing was addressed toward the claque, not to the singer, and a battle of applause and whistling ensued between the claque and those frustrated with the claque. An insult from the *parterre* pushed her over the edge.<sup>114</sup> Hector Berlioz admonished the artist for not simply addressing herself to the public and explaining that she was still suffering from illness but was doing her best—the public would have warmly encouraged her, he asserted. He nevertheless suggested that the stormy evening was the result of years of bad management, poor casting choices, and an inferior singing troupe.<sup>115</sup> In a moment of rare generosity toward Stoltz, Castil-Blaze also insisted that the blame lay not on her, but on the multi-authored pastiche and thus by extension the administration who commissioned it, and claimed the public was expressing its distaste for the work.<sup>116</sup> Rosine Stoltz wrote a long letter of defense that was printed in several journals. She claimed that she had been the target of people who were conspiring her downfall; she had received several menacing letters to this effect up to the evening of the première. At the première she was still not fully recovered from a chest ailment. Ill, nervous from the intimidating letters, she admitted that she could not control her emotions once the hissing started, but that she directed her complaint to the administration's box, where she exclaimed: "But you

<sup>112</sup>"Dans Robert Bruce, le public se souleva en masse contre une chanteuse trop puissante: en une seule soirée, il lui paya avec usure l'arriéré d'une mauvaise humeur accumulé pendant huit ans." Boigne, *Petits mémoires de l'Opéra*, 326-327.

<sup>113</sup>"Son talent seul devait la venger d'insultes sans valeur." "Académie royale de musique. Robert Bruce, opera en trois actes, paroles de MM. Alphonse Royer et Gustave Vaez, musique de Rossini," *Le Ménestrel*, 3 January 1847.

<sup>114</sup>Gautier, *Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans*, 5:5-11.

<sup>115</sup>Hector Berlioz, "Théâtre de l'Opéra," *Journal des débats*, 2 and 3 January 1847.

<sup>116</sup>Castil-Blaze, *L'Académie Impériale de Musique, histoire littéraire, musicale, chorégraphique, pittoresque, morale, critique, facétieuse, politique et galante de ce théâtre, de 1645 à 1855*, 275-276. Corneille Cantinjou also claimed that there was much anger toward the administration for presenting a pastiche, and concurred that this was the real motivation for the hissing. See Cantinjou, *Les adieux de madame Stoltz*, 27-28.

hear that I am being insulted! ...it's intolerable! I am finished!"<sup>117</sup> And in response to those who even accused her of having tried to attack Dolorès Nau in a fit of jealousy when she received an ovation at the end of the second act, Stoltz insisted she was simply trying to protect her colleague from the curtain that was about to fall on her head.

Three pamphlets published soon after her resignation from the Opéra in April 1847 tried to salvage a public image that lay in tatters. Given recent events, Eugénie Pérignon changed tactics in her new pamphlet. Rather than highlighting Stoltz's fiery artistic temperament, she instead emphasized Stoltz's piousness, religiosity, and benevolence. Stoltz loved doing charitable deeds as others loved luxury; it brought comfort to her heart. The sumptuous and elegant décor of her apartment was balanced by the observation that Stoltz hung only religious paintings while also revealing her good taste in painters: Rembrandt, Murillo, de Vinci, Raphaël.<sup>118</sup> A carving of Christ was placed in an alcove above her bed. A huge bundle of box-tree branches (*buis*), traditionally used in Easter celebrations in the Catholic tradition (*pâques fleuries*), could also be found in her apartment and revealed Stoltz's intensely devout spirit:

This object, recalling the spirit of one of the most solemn feasts of our saintly religion, reveals the intimate secret of this artistic soul who, each evening, while falling asleep, worn out by the fatigue and triumphs of the stage, her eyes fixed on this sacred object, raises thus to the heavens her prayers and murmurs, while closing her lids, pious phrases that contrasted with the profane customs of the day.<sup>119</sup>

Pérignon closed her biography with a letter from Stoltz who expressed her appreciation for the author's sympathetic portrayal.

Music journalist Julien Lemer published a full-length pamphlet and a long excerpt was also printed in *La Sylphide*.<sup>120</sup> He began by describing his outrage at being asked to produce two anonymous articles on Stoltz, one positive and one negative,

<sup>117</sup>"Mais vous entendez qu'on m'insulte! ...c'est intolérable!... je suis brisée!" *Journal des débats*, 2 and 3 January 1847.

<sup>118</sup>Pérignon, *Rosine Stoltz*, 37, in *F-Po*, dossier d'artiste, Stoltz.

<sup>119</sup>"Cet objet, rappelant à la pensée une des fêtes les plus solennelles de notre sainte religion, révèle le secret intime de cette âme artistique qui chaque soir, s'endormant brisée par les fatigues et les triomphes de la scène, les yeux fixés sur cet objet sacré, élève ainsi vers le ciel ses prières, et murmure, en fermant la paupière, des paroles pieuses contrastant avec les habitudes profanes de toute la journée." *ibid.*, 38.

<sup>120</sup>Lemer, *Rosine Stoltz: Souvenirs biographiques et anecdotiques*. See also Julien Lemer, *La Sylphide*, 31 April 1847.



for a collection of biographical articles on famous actresses; the editor would then see if Stoltz were willing to pay more than her enemies to keep the negative article from being published. His defense of the artist mainly rested on the attribution of Stoltz's unpopularity to the work of a hired clique, but like Pérignon, he also tried to clean up the singer's image by emphasizing her nun-like behaviour. Stoltz rarely went out, nor did she often receive guests. Her piano was scattered with scores dear to her heart, the sacred music of Jomelli, Clari, and Pergolesi, composers she was introduced to during her study at Choron's school. The portrait of Stoltz printed with the article in *La Sylphide*, a simple pencil drawing, presents a visually softened image of the artist as *la favorite* (Figure 5.6). Her gaze is lowered, her face expressing sadness and regret, and she wears the costume from the fifth act when Léonor disguises herself as a monk. Stoltz's normally sharp facial features are also softened, her face rounder, her gaze less intense.

Corneille Cantinjou's pamphlet attempted to refute every possible critique and accusation, from Stoltz's influence over Pillet to her rivalries with other female singers. But whereas the other two ended their defense by evoking "the woman," her private self, and her personality off stage, Cantinjou embarked on a detailed description of the singer's furnishings in her apartment, which were publicly displayed and sold only days after her retirement concert. Cantinjou had toured the prima donna's home and studied her belongings, trying to understand the artist from her material belongings, as if the detritus left behind somehow held the key. One room was decorated with green velour—was she thinking of the two heroines Valentine (*Les Huguenots*) and Marie Stuart (Donizetti's *Marie Stuart*)? he asked.<sup>121</sup> The bronze Christ in her room—not the one carved in ivory on her headboard—was for *Benvenuto Cellini*, he insisted: "Once one possesses a Christ by the celebrated Florentine [Cellini] could one perform Ascanio without inspiration and without completely identifying with the character?"<sup>122</sup> Cantinjou maintained that Stoltz was a diligent artist who strove to understand fully the characters she portrayed by engaging in historical study (much like Nourrit and, later, Pauline Viardot) and by collecting objects to focus her dramatic inspiration—a way of associating the singer with the historicism of the genre in which she specialized. At the end of his minute inventory of her belongings he insisted that it was evident how Stoltz stood out from the ordinariness

<sup>121</sup> Cantinjou, *Les adieux de madame Stoltz*, 64.

<sup>122</sup> "Lorsque l'on possède un Christ du célèbre Florentin peut-on jouer Ascanio sans inspiration et sans être parfaitement identifié avec ce personnage?" *ibid.*, 67.



Figure 5.6: Portrait of Rosine Stoltz as Léonor from *La Favorite*, from *La Sylphide*. F-Pn,

of her rivals: in fact, she should become a model for anyone wishing to attain her degree of superiority.<sup>123</sup>

Cantinjou concluded his pamphlet with the reproduction of several elegies to the singer, and appended a final note reporting that Stoltz had given 8,000 francs to a small agricultural town that would, in exchange, carve her name in bronze. His energetic defense of the singer falls flat and rings almost false in these final pages, plainly revealing his utter failure to capture a sympathetic portrait of the woman. Instead, what emerges is an image of Stoltz as a cold, solitary artist, as isolated in her own home as she was at the theatre. Could this have actually been his intent?

<sup>123</sup> “[...] il doit être évident, pour quiconque aura lu avec quelque attention la très succincte description que nous avons donnée du mobilier de Mme Stoltz, combien cette noble artiste l’emporte sur le commun de ses rivales, tellement que l’on pourrait, avec toute raison, la proposer pour modèle à toutes les personnes qui pourront atteindre son degré de supériorité.” *ibid.*, 68.

Defending Stoltz, it seems, was not easy. Why might the negativity surrounding the singer have been so resolute? Certainly, gossip begets gossip; stories are re-circulated without necessarily having any factual foundation. Stoltz's supposed liaison with Léon Pillet has never been definitively proven true or false; in all the biographies and articles written about the singer, no one has yet to turn up any kind of love letter or other exchange that might reveal an intimacy beyond that normally accrued after years of working closely together in a professional environment. And it is important to identify which journals printed the most ferocious criticism. One of the most vocal, the Escudier brothers' *La France musicale*, had always been pro-Italian and promoted those operas, musical works, composers, and musicians supported by their publishing house. In an article from October 1846, Escudier actually admitted that Stoltz was a thorn in his side because of his commercial interests: "The music editor, like the singer, like the impresario, needs the enthusiasm of the public."<sup>124</sup> Often away from the theatre touring the provinces and Italy, it seems that Stoltz was not doing her job promoting those works that the Escudier brothers published and sales were sagging. Escudier used the opportunity, however, to sing the praises of Duprez who was steadfast in his loyalty to the theatre; in the last pages of the issue was an also advertisement for Duprez's method book, *L'Art du chant*.

Stoltz was also inextricably associated with the deplorable conditions at the theatre and her "abdication" was seen as the only possible way to save the Opéra. Mary Ann Smart has shown how Stoltz became a convenient scapegoat for the artistic decline at the Opéra and the focus of everyone's frustrations.<sup>125</sup> Even if Stoltz had exercised "despotic" control over the theatre for her own flagrant self-promotion, she could not alone have produced the kind of troubles that plagued the theatre. The Opéra's troupe in the 1840s was a shadow of what it had been in the 1830s: Falcon had lost her voice and retired from the stage, Cinti-Damoreau had left for the Opéra Comique, Nourrit was dead, Duprez's voice was already showing wear, Levasseur was ready for retirement, Dorus-Gras was appreciated for her vocal skills but unable to provoke any enthusiasm. The great successes of the 1830s had lost their luster, and few works of the 1840s could boast the same kind of popularity (aside from *La Favorite*). But dethroning the alleged king and queen of the Opéra did not produce much improvement and some critics actually expressed regret at the loss of singer soon after her departure. In one of his letters, Berlioz claimed that the Opéra would

<sup>124</sup>"L'éditeur de la musique, tout comme le chanteur, tout comme l'impresario, a besoin de l'enthousiasme de la foule." Escudier, "Les derniers triomphes de Mme Stoltz," *La France musicale*, 11 October 1846.

<sup>125</sup>Smart, "The Lost Voice of Rosine Stoltz," 38-39.

probably not do any better with Stoltz gone, and that Duponchel and Roqueplan's direction would fall into the same traps as Pillet's.<sup>126</sup> A few months after her retirement, a critic from *La Revue et gazette musicale* admonished the excessive praise accorded to Elise Oscarine Masson (d. 1867), the new debutante in Stoltz's emploi, and claimed that the reaction against Stoltz had gone too far: "Just because an artist was put in the position of banishing herself from the theatre, and cannot be called back, is that a reason to forget the talent that she had, the originality with which she marked certain roles?"<sup>127</sup>

Her talent and artistic merit—even if many considered them best confined to her most famous creations—appear to have been fairly well acknowledged and appreciated. Much of the negativity surrounding Stoltz had less to do with her artistic merit and more with the woman herself. A month after her retirement benefit, the editors at *La Revue et gazette musicale* weighed in on the debate around the singer, regretting her behavior, but also regretting the loss of her talent, which, like after the departure of Falcon, would leave a void at the theatre:

We have never stopped giving justice to the talent of Madame Stoltz, all the while regretting that she sometimes used it in a manner ill-suited to her nature. From there, for her, much useless strain [*fatigues*], that from the artist extended to the woman. We will not say more: we have as little taste for the acts of accusation as for the apologetic pleas, and we believe that outside a small circle one cares very little [about these issues]. Without a doubt, the retirement of Madame Stoltz leaves a void that could have been even greater had her last creations been more fortunate.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>126</sup>"Voilà l'Opéra débarrassé de madame X..., mais Dieu sait s'il marchera moins mal pour cela. Tout le monde pense que ce sera exactement de même que sous Pillet." See letter 1135 in Berlioz, *Correspondance générale*, 3:461.

<sup>127</sup>"En vérité, c'est une exagération d'enthousiasme poussée jusqu'à l'ingratitude: la réaction va trop loin. Parce qu'une artiste s'est mise en position de se bannir elle-même d'un théâtre, et ne pouvoir plus y être rappelée, est-ce une raison pour oublier le talent dont elle a fait preuve, le caractère d'originalité dont elle a marqué certains rôles?" R., *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 26 September 1847.

<sup>128</sup>"Une abdication est toujours chose grave; cependant, comme nous avons cru devoir nous abstenir de toute intervention dans la polémique, dont celle-ci paraît être la conséquence, de même nous nous garderons d'en approfondir et d'en discuter les motifs. Nous n'avons jamais cessé de rendre justice au talent de madame Stoltz, tout en regrettant qu'elle l'employât parfois d'une manière peu conforme à sa nature. De là, pour elle, beaucoup de fatigues inutiles, beaucoup de travaux infructueux, et dans le public, dans la presse une irritation, qui de l'artiste s'est étendue jusqu'à la femme. Nous n'en dirons pas plus: nous avons aussi peu de goût pour les actes d'accusation que pour les plaidoyers apologétiques, et nous pensons qu'au-delà d'un petit cercle on s'en occupe médiocrement. Sans aucun doute, la retraite de madame Stoltz laissera un vide, qui eût encore été plus grand si ses dernières créations eussent été plus heureuse." "Note du rédacteur," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 21 March 1847.

Their carefully worded statement plainly revealed how the criticism of Stoltz extended to her as a woman. And indeed, the attacks on Stoltz mixed the personal with the professional: her alleged relationship with Pillet, her influence over her colleagues, her moral reputation. In response, her supporters focused their attention on Stoltz's personal qualities. But as much as they emphasized her generosity, religiosity, and intelligence, they could not dislodge the singer's established image as abrasive, jealous, solitary. Whereas Falcon had an off-stage persona that emphasized her modesty, virtue, and kindness that both contrasted with and complemented her passionate and enthusiastic performance style, Stoltz's private and professional personæ were seen as one and the same. For Stoltz, the symbiosis of the singer and her roles—and, just as important, her vocal and dramatic qualities that were seen as a revelation of her personality—meant that she could not create an alternative or complementary image. In his feuilleton on *Robert Bruce*, Berlioz described Stoltz's style in such detail that it is worth citing in full:

Mme Stoltz, particularly suitable for the characters of impetuous and bold women with violent emotions or for representing young boys with dashing figures, possesses incontestable qualities of an actress even though the role-type itself is not characterized by a very pure taste, but she has nothing that might constitute naïveté, candor, simple tenderness, even less does she have simple grace, kindness. [...] I speak only of the actress. Now let's look at the singer. Mme Stoltz possesses the voice of a brilliant mezzo-soprano, beautiful and even pleasant in the middle [register], tired and hard in the upper [register], a not so noble timbre in the low [register], agile enough for certain simple vocalises, powerful enough to battle with the vocal and instrumental masses, missing some precision in intonation, for which the natural emission is always under pitch, and consequently errs in its accuracy [of pitch]. [...] In sum, today the singing of Mme Stoltz makes one experience, even for those listeners with the least sensitivity, a constant worry and quite often a very painful sensation.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>129</sup>"Mme Stoltz, convenable surtout pour les caractères de femme impétueux, hardis, aux passions violentes, ou pour représenter de jeunes garçons aux fringantes allures, possède des qualités d'actrice incontestables bien que l'emploi n'en soit pas toujours réglé par un goût bien pur, mais elle n'a rien de ce qui constitue la naïveté; la candeur, la simple tendresse, encore moins a-t-elle la grâce ingénue, la gentillesse. [...] Je ne parle que de l'actrice. Maintenant examinons la cantatrice. Mme Stoltz possède une voix de mezzo-soprano éclatante, belle et même sympathique dans le médium, fatiguée et dure dans le haut, d'un timbre peu noble dans le grave, assez agile pour faire certaines vocalises simples, assez forte pour lutter avec les masses vocales et instrumentales, manquant de fixité dans les intonations, dont



Not much had changed since 1837 (other than her voice probably being less worn out) when Louis Gentil characterized the singer as sensitive, intelligent, yet nervous, her manners common; her voice as hard, sharp, but also beautiful.<sup>130</sup> Stoltz thus had nothing of Falcon's chaste tenderness, her charm, or her eloquence that Jules Janin warmly remembered in 1844; even her voice, which was probably showing some wear, revealed obstinacy and made the audience uncomfortable. Everything about Stoltz, from the stories told about her to the characters she excelled in depicting to her performance style reinforced her negative image.

### 5.5 LA FAVORITE'S REDEMPTION

Perhaps the most effective attempt to rehabilitate her image came in 1854. Stoltz toured for several years in the French provinces and abroad after her "abdication" from the Opéra in 1847, as her contemporaries would later call it. Then in 1854, the Opéra administration under the direction of Nestor Roqueplan called back its artist, offering Stoltz a one-year contract at a respectable salary of 54,000 francs.<sup>131</sup> She made her *rentrée* in *La Favorite*, the opera about which Théophile Gautier claimed the rights of authorship actually belonged to her, not Donizetti.<sup>132</sup> The public enthusiastically welcomed the singer back, and critics hailed her performance as a success, claiming her voice had improved in the middle and lower registers and was generally more agile and flexible.<sup>133</sup>

She reclaimed her former creations, *La Favorite*, *La Reine de Chypre*, and *Charles VI*, but one of the most important moments was her performance of Fidès in Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète* in 1855. Stoltz had been blamed continuously in the 1840s as the reason why the première of Meyerbeer's work had been delayed indefinitely. As the story went, the composer refused to give Fidès to Stoltz and Pillet refused to have any

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l'émission naturelle est toujours au-dessous du diapason, et pèchant en conséquence par la justesse. [...] En somme, aujourd'hui le chant de Mme Stoltz fait éprouver, à l'auditeur même le moins délicatement organisé, une inquiétude constante et très souvent une sensation fort douloureuse." Berlioz, "Théâtre de l'Opéra," *Journal des débats*, 2 and 3 January 1847.

<sup>130</sup>"Ce n'est pas que Mme Stoltz soit sans mérite, elle sent vivement et avec intelligence, mais sa chaleur est nerveuse et ses effets communs. Sa voix duriusculé, haute, aiguë comme une pointe de fer, est belle sans distinction." "Physiologie d'une chanteuse," in Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l'Opéra*, 260.

<sup>131</sup>This was the salary requested by Stoltz per the letter written by Roqueplan, 3 July 1854 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Stoltz). See also contract signed 12 August 1854 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195 (dossier Stoltz). It still was much lower than that she was able to earn during her tours. Stoltz later sang in Lisbon where she earned 24,000 francs in just three months, in addition to a number of other perks. See engagement 15, dated 27 December 1855 from her autograph letters held in in *F-Pn VM BOB* 23662.

<sup>132</sup>Théophile Gautier, *La Presse*, 16 September 1854.

<sup>133</sup>See, for example, R., *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 3 September 1854; J.-L. Heugel, *Le Ménestrel*, 17 September 1854.



singer other than Stoltz perform the role, and so Meyerbeer withheld the opera until Stoltz left the stage and Pillet resigned his directorship.<sup>134</sup> This was not exactly the case. Already in 1840, Meyerbeer preferred Pauline Viardot for Fidès, as he wrote the part for a true contralto (which he did not feel Stoltz was at the time), and did not feel Stoltz's character and style matched those of Fidès.<sup>135</sup> In 1843, Meyerbeer seemed to have changed his mind and accepted Stoltz as Fidès.<sup>136</sup> Due to various reasons, the opera was continually postponed and by 1845 when Meyerbeer was again interested in possibly putting the opera into rehearsal at the Opéra, he (and Eugène Scribe, the librettist) found the conditions at the theatre deplorable, and decided once again to wait.<sup>137</sup> More evidence reveals that Meyerbeer was not against Stoltz in the role, as he later recommended Stoltz as Fidès (along with Viardot and Tedesco) to the director at La Scala in 1854 when he was contemplating mounting *Le Prophète*.<sup>138</sup> In a letter to Stoltz in December 1854, Meyerbeer granted his permission for the singer to make certain cuts to the part so that it would lay better in her range, and said that he read in the newspapers of her great success in the role in Turin.<sup>139</sup> Unfortunately, Meyerbeer did not discuss her revival of the role at the Paris Opéra in April 1855 in his diaries. But judging from press reports, her interpretation of Fidès was well received and she was praised for putting her own individual stamp on the role.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>134</sup>Robert Ignatius Letellier refers to Rosine Stoltz as Pillet's "powerful mistress," and claimed that, "While he never actually clashed with Pillet, one can detect an awkwardness in the relationship, an awkwardness intensified by the stranglehold Stoltz exerted on the artistic appointments behind the scenes." Meyerbeer, *The Diaries of Giacomo Meyerbeer*, 2:12. Even though the documents reveal that Meyerbeer's reasons for hesitating to mount his opera under Pillet's directorship were various (and had as much to do with finding suitable male as well as female singers—he was unhappy with Duprez as Jean and Dorus-Gras as Berthe, for example), scholars continue to promote the idea that the blame lay on Stoltz.

<sup>135</sup>See the various quotes on the casting of Fidès from Meyerbeer's letters and diary that are reprinted in Armstrong, "Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*: A History of Its Composition and Early Performances," 110-112.

<sup>136</sup>In November 1843, Meyerbeer drew up a draft contract for his opera that stipulated Stoltz would take the part of Fidès, and that she should hold the part exclusively for forty performances; if she became ill, Meyerbeer would have to approve her replacement. See discussion of this draft contract in *ibid.*, 151-152; and Meyerbeer, *The Diaries of Giacomo Meyerbeer*, 2:84-85.

<sup>137</sup>Armstrong, "Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*: A History of Its Composition and Early Performances," 158.

<sup>138</sup>Meyerbeer, *The Diaries of Giacomo Meyerbeer*, 3:276. According to Henri Blaze de Bury, Meyerbeer actually wrote the lead role of *L'Africaine* with Stoltz in mind. See Bury, *Meyerbeer et son temps*, 134-135.

<sup>139</sup>Becker and Becker, *Giacomo Meyerbeer: A Life in Letters*, 151.

<sup>140</sup>For two excellent descriptions of her interpretation of the role in comparison to other singers, see R., *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 8 April 1855; and E. Viel, *Le Ménestrel*, 8 April 1855.

Berlioz even asserted that the role fit Stoltz perfectly; he commended her superior acting skills and noted that her improved vocal agility was a pleasant surprise.<sup>141</sup>

Her return to the Opéra was not without controversy, and a dispute between Stoltz and the administration over her *congé* pushed the artist to give her resignation only four months into her contract; she eventually retracted it, the two parties made a pact of peace, and she fulfilled her entire contract.<sup>142</sup> Perusing reviews of the singer in 1854-1855, her comeback seemed to promise a rehabilitation of Stoltz's reputation. She was actually praised in *La France musicale*—the journal that had ceaselessly critiqued the singer in the 1840s—for her public encouragement of a young debutant, M. Néri-Baraldi, in the role of Fernand in *La Favorite* (although the critic could not help pointing out that Stoltz appeared particularly bejeweled in rubies during the third act, gifts she had acquired from the royal family in Rio de Janeiro during her recent tour).<sup>143</sup> Articles that reviewed her performing career diplomatically brushed over the scandals of the 1840s in favour of her present artistic endeavours.<sup>144</sup> *The Musical World* reprinted a biographical sketch of Stoltz, penned by Giacomelli from *La France musicale*, where he simply mentioned that those with genius “sometimes deviate from the right road.” Discussion of *La Favorite* dominated the article and Stoltz was, once again, represented according to her most famous role. Giacomelli noted that the role's difficulty lay in Léonor's transformation from a mild, weak, pathetic girl at the outset of the opera to a sublime heroine at the end:

The artist, however, triumphed over all these obstacles. [...] it is upon this confused and undecided groundwork that Mad. Stoltz has sketched so clear, vigorous, and beautiful an outline. The sketch is the result of a highly intelligent organization, energetic judgment, and simple and profound sentiment; we recognise in it the artist who knows her own strength, who sees with her own eyes, and can render clearly the tones she perceives, as well as the artist who can model, dispose, light up a

<sup>141</sup>“Quelques passages du rôle de Fidès sont un peu trop graves peut-être pour sa voix qui n'est pas un contralto proprement dit; mais tout le reste lui convient à merveille.” Hector Berlioz, “Théâtre de l'Opéra. Débuts de Mme Stoltz dans le Prophète,” *Journal des débats*, 17 April 1855.

<sup>142</sup>For details on this disagreement, see correspondence between Stoltz and the administration in her dossier in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195; notices of her resignation and subsequent accord with the administration were announced in *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 17 December 1854 and 7 January 1855. A critic from *The Musical World* noted that Stoltz was having trouble rounding up the 50,000 francs for the indemnity, and the Opéra administration figured that her appearance as Fidès would be lucrative; the critic speculated that an arrangement would likely arise. *The Musical World*, 6 January 1855.

<sup>143</sup>Marie Escudier, *La France musicale*, 7 January 1855.

<sup>144</sup>R., *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 3 September 1854.

thought, and endow it with life. *La Favorite* thus conceived assumes a definite signification: it is the fall of a woman, and her redemption—a veil whose two extremes are white and pure, one of them being raised by the hand of Innocence, and the other by that of Forgiveness.<sup>145</sup>

Given the circumstances and the long critical history of reading Stoltz as Léonor, one assumes that the critic in fact sought to portray her as the fallen but redeemed woman. He did claim, after all, that Stoltz's characteristic trait was her drama, and that drama was "a creation founded upon the living reproduction of a real action." And perhaps that was exactly the image that Stoltz wanted to create: Stoltz as Léonor at the end of the opera, redeemed and forgiven.

Stoltz's correspondence during this time reveals a woman passionate for her art and continually searching for new challenges. She wrote to the minister barely a month into her contract asking if the administration had thought of trusting her with a new creation. Brimming with excitement over the various possibilities, she outlined her idea of bringing Gluck's masterpiece *Orphée* back to the stage with a woman in the title role, explaining that, as the work had been transposed for *haute-contre*, it shared the same range as that of a contralto. Should the commission not wish to have the main role of such a serious work performed in travesty, Stoltz suggested reviving Gluck's *Armide*, a work she had studied during her education at Choron's school.<sup>146</sup> Neither work was mounted at the Opéra that year. But just as Pauline Viardot premiered the role of Fidès that Stoltz had been eyeing for years, so too did she eventually perform the role of Orphée in the Théâtre Lyrique's revival in 1859 with Berlioz, and in Gluck's *Alceste* at the Opéra in 1861. Flora Willson has recently discussed how the creation of *Orphée* lent an almost mythic dimension to her image by emphasizing Viardot as "classique"—a quality already present in her star persona but particularly highlighted by the performance of an opera that was also "classique."<sup>147</sup> Given Stoltz's controversial star image, it seems doubtful that she would have even been assigned the role, although in an 1855 letter to the director of the Opéra Comique Berlioz mentioned Stoltz's interest in the role and that she would likely be willing to sing excerpts in their planned concert.<sup>148</sup> If Stoltz had sung the role, might it have saved her image?

<sup>145</sup>"Rosina Stoltz," *The Musical World*, 6 January 1855.

<sup>146</sup>See her letter to the Minister dated 1 October 1854 in *F-Pan AJ*<sup>13</sup> 195.

<sup>147</sup>Willson, "Classic Staging: Pauline Viardot and the 1859 *Orphée* Revival."

<sup>148</sup>Fauquet, "Berlioz's Version of Gluck's *Orphée*," 195.

## 5.6 NEGOTIATING CULTURAL CONTRADICTIONS

In Richard Dyer's discussion of the ideological work of the star phenomenon, he suggests that star images are often related to contradictions in ideology. For example, American society in the 1950s generally considered women's sexuality as "wrong" and therefore extraordinary; at the same time, it required women to be sexy, ordinary, and pure. He points to the case of Marilyn Munroe, whose blend of sexiness and innocence effected "a magical synthesis of these opposites."<sup>149</sup> Marilyn Munroe's sexy/innocent synthesis can also be seen as a condensation of the flux of ideas about morality and sexuality in mid century America, a representation of the cultural tensions that marked that particular era.<sup>150</sup> Briefly considering the ways in which Falcon's and Stoltz's star images reflected or represented cultural contradictions of nineteenth-century France sheds some light on the reasons why only Falcon succeeded in maintaining a positive image. (An examination of these cultural ideologies is taken up in detail in Chapter 6.)

Cornélie Falcon managed to attenuate any fears of women in powerful positions, even though she was the highest-paid female singer in her final year at the theatre. In her case, the continual support of the Opéra's director, her colleagues, and the public throughout her career legitimized her quick rise to stardom as the natural result of her talent, rather than the ruses of someone conniving behind the scenes. But perhaps most important, Falcon's star image succeeded in achieving a synthesis of contradictory cultural ideologies. In the nineteenth century, professional theatre women faced increasing pressure to conform to the dictates of bourgeois morality that prescribed certain roles and idealized qualities for women. By emphasizing some of these qualities—modesty, humility, purity—Falcon conveyed her acceptance of such strictures and became (albeit partially) this "ideal" bourgeois woman, all the while pursuing a professional career out of the home and on the national stage; her total adoption of a bourgeois lifestyle after her retirement from the stage retrospectively confirmed this part of her image. Her reputation for chaste behaviour protected the singer from accusations that she might have used her sexual power for professional advancement, her naïveté and innocence softening her status as a woman with significant financial and cultural power. And yet she also satisfied her contemporaries' desire for sensuality in the theatre with her passionate performance style and, in particular, by her portrayal of the exoticized Rachel from *La Juive*. Her

<sup>149</sup>Dyer, *Stars*, 26.

<sup>150</sup>*ibid.*, 31. For his complete case study on Marilyn Monroe, see "Monroe and Sexuality," in Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*, 17-63.

youth and beauty, highlighted by clever costuming, her passionate acting skills, and her confident stage presence, pleased her public, and the spectators could indulge in fantasies about pretty actresses while watching her perform. She was certainly no Marilyn Munroe, but Falcon boasted her own tantalizing mélange of domestic virtue and artistic passion.

Rosine Stoltz, by contrast, could not mitigate her image as a powerful prima donna. Even though Stoltz seemed to have made peace with her public and her critics during her comeback at the Opéra in 1854-1855, the negative image of the singer circulated in the 1840s has proved, unfortunately, more durable. Memoirs and biographical articles published in the second half of the century, and even obituary articles written after her death in 1903, repeated the well-worn stories about her tyrannical reign over the theatre and the *Robert Bruce* debacle; any mention of her successful return in the 1850s is often omitted entirely.<sup>151</sup> As Mary Ann Smart has pointed out, much of the negative discourse surrounding the singer can be attributed to contemporary attitudes toward powerful and creative women, particularly those like Stoltz who resolutely refused to be—or, more aptly, appear to be—submissive, modest, and humble.<sup>152</sup> Professional power was easily linked with sexual power and promiscuity: two of her early twentieth-century biographers, Gustave Bord and Arthur Pougin, used Stoltz's alleged affairs as a way of proving her inherent immorality and destructive influence. Bord's 1909 biography of the singer further entrenched the malicious gossip that had circulated around the singer for most of her career, gleefully enumerating illegitimate children, numerous affairs, and artistic failures.<sup>153</sup> Pougin's series on the singer in *Le Ménestrel* in 1909 conveyed a similar image, and the seventh and final installment dedicated to the artist's "character" also dwells on her subsequent marriages and numerous affairs.<sup>154</sup> Stoltz was portrayed as a woman who used her sexuality (via her supposed romantic liaison with Léon Pillet) to achieve professional advancement and financial security, securing main roles in the new operas, a high salary, and exclusivity as the theatre's primary female singer. If this was indeed the case, Stoltz was simply doing what many of her contemporaries believed actresses did.

<sup>151</sup> See, for example, Beauvoir, *Les disparus*, 89-92; Banville, *Critiques*, 375-376; Duprez, *Souvenirs d'un chanteur*; Escudier, *Mes souvenirs*; Boigne, *Petits mémoires de l'Opéra*. A press clipping signed by E.G. and dated July 1903, "A propos de Madame Stoltz. L'incident de Robert Bruce," relished the infamous incident in all of its stormy details; see the press clipping in *F-Pn* RO 5729 (articles de presse, Rosine Stoltz). Virtually all the obituaries contained in her dossier d'artiste at the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra, with the exception of *Le Figaro*, 31 July 1903, portray the singer negatively.

<sup>152</sup> Smart, "The Lost Voice of Rosine Stoltz," 38.

<sup>153</sup> Bord, *Rosina Stoltz*.

<sup>154</sup> See Arthur Pougin, *Le Ménestrel*, 28 August, 4, 11, 18, and 25 September, 2 and 9 October 1909.

But without a star image that would conceal such actions (even in part), she exposed the artificiality of the system. Theatre women were thus plagued with double standards: on the one hand, the public believed actresses used their influence behind the scenes to get ahead, and on the other, the public decried those artists whose privileged positions were not the result of legitimate talent, public support, and the critics' approval.





## THE CANTATRICE AND THE MALADIE MORALE

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In 1835, Henri Blanchard wrote a provocative article entitled “Les actrices mariées,” published in the theatre journal *Le Monde dramatique*. The article opened with a mock conversation conveying the critic’s concern with morality in Parisian theatres. Was he about to launch into a tirade on performers’ libertine lifestyles and their detrimental effects on public morality? Not at all. Instead, Blanchard voiced concern over bourgeois morality that infiltrated the theatres and led women artists to adopt a virtuous lifestyle. He linked what he perceived as a wilting of the dramatic arts to an *increased* number of married actresses:

“Do you know why dramatic art is disappearing? Why the beautiful flower of our civilization wilts on its stem in our brilliant capital of France?”

“My word, no.”

“Because actresses are getting married.”

“What a paradox! Then you are not in favour of this laudable, respectable, sacred bond? ... But what about morality?”

“Ha! It is very much a question of morality of these pretty women! Of women artists, exceptional in our social order! What, do you not see that these seductive fairies, these fascinating sylphs, with their enchanting [vocal] organs, naïve grace, and voluptuous glances, who bring chaos to your mind and trouble in your heart, are depoetizing themselves at will? [...] I condemn this monomania for marriage, this scandalous neglect of the rights of the public, this *maladie morale* that takes away all of our pretty actresses and that saps, destroys all of our illusions.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>“Savez-vous bien pourquoi l’art dramatique s’en va? Pourquoi cette belle fleur de notre civilisation s’étiole sur sa tige en notre brillante capitale de France? – Non, ma foi. – Parce que les actrices se marient. – Quel paradoxe! Ainsi vous n’êtes point partisan du lien estimable, respectable, sacré?... Mais la morale cependant.... – Eh! il est bien question de morale à propos de jolies femmes! de femmes artistes, exceptionnelles dans notre ordre social! Quoi, ne voyez-vous pas que ces séduisantes fées, ces sylphides prestigieuses, à l’organe enchanteur, à la grâce naïve, aux regards voluptueux, qui portent le désordre dans nos idées, le trouble dans nos cœurs, se dépoétisent à plaisir! Les voilà qui deviennent femmes de ménage; elles s’appellent madame Allan, madame Volnys, madame Rossi.... Mort et enfer! comme on disait naguère dans une langue passée de mode; je stigmatiserai de mon

While perhaps tongue-in-cheek, Blanchard's comments underlined an issue that preoccupied a number of critics during the nineteenth century; that is, how theatre women's difference from other women was vital to theatre culture.

The prima donna has long been considered essentially distinct from other women, her ambiguous position in society uneasily tolerated. With hectic performing schedules, difficult working conditions, and various other exigencies of professional theatre life, singers often had trouble conforming to dominant social norms.<sup>2</sup> Louis Gentil claimed that all women wanting to make a career of singing must renounce the sweetness of private life: burdened by the necessity of making a lifetime's wages in a decade or so, female singers had no time for sickness, marriage—even friends.<sup>3</sup> Their existence on the fringes of acceptable feminine behavior—whether by choice or by necessity—has often led to discursive strategies in various media (novels, serial fiction, critical reviews, theatrical works) that represented professional theatre women as incapable of fulfilling stereotypical feminine roles. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's vitriolic diatribes against actresses in his *Lettre à d'Alembert* (1758) made it clear that a woman who performed for others publicly—and, even worse, for money—could not possibly possess any of those qualities so essential to her sex.<sup>4</sup> As Rebecca Pope and Susan Leonardi put it, "What the diva can't be [...] is wife, good woman, true woman. Divahood kills womanhood."<sup>5</sup>

Bad wife, bad mother, bad woman. With the rise of bourgeois morality in post-revolutionary France, women of all classes were increasingly defined by their roles as wives and mothers. Throughout the nineteenth century, women artists faced many challenges in negotiating a space for their creative efforts in gendered public and private spheres. Nancy Reich has suggested that the increased emphasis on the home as the proper sphere of the woman must have caused considerable conflict for the

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indignation cette monomanie de mariage, ce scandaleux oubli des droits du public, cette maladie morale qui s'est emparée de toutes nos jolies actrices, et mine, détruit toutes nos illusions." Henri Blanchard, "Mœurs dramatiques. Les actrices mariées," *Le Monde dramatique*, vol.1 (1835), 53.

<sup>2</sup>Susan Rutherford discusses how the representation of the prima donna as a siren in the nineteenth century was a way of signifying her unusual position in society, particularly her sensuality, her vocal power, and her position on the public stage. Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 43

<sup>3</sup>"La prima donna," in Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l'Opéra*, 504-505. Ernest Feydeau echoed this assertion over 30 years later. He claimed that the prima donna was a slave to her art and everything else in her life—children, husband, lovers—were but an afterthought. Ernest Feydeau, "Christine Nilsson," *Revue internationale de l'art et de la curiosité*, no. 4 (15 April 1869), 267-86.

<sup>4</sup>Rousseau, *Lettre à d'Alembert*, 140-144. The moral danger, according to Rousseau, was not restricted only to the woman who chose to prostitute herself through public performance; in fact, she corrupted all of society. He signaled out her potentially effeminizing effect on men who shared her company and those who watched her performance onstage. His conclusion: actresses should be banned from theatre *tout-court*. See 137-45 for his discussion of women and the theatre.

<sup>5</sup>Leonardi and Pope, *The Diva's Mouth: Body, Voice, Prima Donna Politics*, 13.

professional woman musician who had to leave and earn a salary.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, female performers were increasingly subjected to the dictates of bourgeois morality and castigated for their failure to conform. And yet there remained an appreciation of their different role in the public sphere. Blanchard and some of his contemporaries felt that theatre women occupied an exceptional position in Parisian society; not only should they be exempt from fulfilling the roles prescribed for middle- and upper-class women, but their place outside ordinary society was actually essential to theatre culture.

“[T]he actress must be an actress; the dancer, a dancer in all the meaning of the word [...]. She must sublimate herself by dint of danger and obstacles, live the life of her rank and of her caste.”<sup>7</sup> So Roger de Beauvoir claimed in his tirade on the infiltration of bourgeois morality in the theatre and the ensuing attempts to reform actresses according to dominant social values or *mœurs*, a term that refers at once to morals, manners, habits, customs, and everyday life. Many theatre critics and writers sought to keep theatre *mœurs* distinct from societal *mœurs* and thereby approached the question of women as public figures accordingly. This chapter examines the role that matrimony played in the reception of singers and how it affected—and perhaps defined—the eroticized space of the theatrical stage.<sup>8</sup> To contextualize these debates I discuss contemporary marriage laws and the rights afforded to women under the Civil Code and how they impacted the professional and personal lives of female singers at the Opéra and Opéra Comique. Drawing on various texts from the period, including Daniel-François-Esprit Auber’s *opéra-comique* *l’Ambassadrice* (1836), I explore the multiple and diverse responses to the threat of the *maladie morale*, and the tensions that resulted in the representation of theatre women, married or single.

<sup>6</sup>Reich, “Women as Musicians: A Question of Class.”

<sup>7</sup>“Seulement il faut que l’actrice soit actrice; la danseuse, danseuse dans toute l’acception du mot, c’est-à-dire que sa vie, qui ne peut triompher du préjugé, aille au gré du préjugé et des orages! Il faut qu’elle se fasse sublime à force de dangers et d’écueils, qu’elle vive la vie de son rang et de sa caste, qu’elle n’échappe pas à sa mission par le suicide à la mode, le mariage!” Roger de Beauvoir, “Des filles d’Opéra. 1770. Mademoiselle Laguerre,” *Le Monde dramatique*, vol.2 (1835), 11. Roger de Beauvoir, *nom de plume* of Édouard-Roger de Bully (1809-1866), was a French writer and critic. His passionate stance against the marriage of actresses became rather ironic in hindsight: he married the actress Léocadie Doze in 1847. They legally separated less than two years later.

<sup>8</sup>Here I am borrowing Lenard Berlanstein’s term, which served as a chapter title: “The Erotic Culture of the Stage,” from Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the fin de siècle*. He is not alone in identifying this essential element of theatre culture. The pervasive connection of eroticism to the Victorian theatre is a central concern in Tracy Davis’s monograph, published a decade prior. See Davis, *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture*.

## 6.1 GENDER, MARRIAGE, AND MORALITY IN THE JULY MONARCHY

A strongly delineated gender order emerged out of the political turmoil of the 1789 Revolution and the shift from Old Regime autocracy to nineteenth-century representative government. The “modern” French woman was to inhabit a private sphere, newly created to contain her, and the “modern” man the public sphere of citizenship.<sup>9</sup> The political regimes were fundamentally gendered: the Old Regime was feminized, associated with the corruption of powerful women—the ruinous influence of Marie-Antoinette and meddling courtesans was often singled out.<sup>10</sup> In the new government model, politics were to be asexual, thus precluding women’s involvement (men, of course, were not considered to be sexed beings).<sup>11</sup> Such changes to the gender system were prepared in the late eighteenth century by philosophers and moralists who emphasized the “natural” differences between men and women and argued for the distinctive social roles they should play. The writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*Émile, ou De l’éducation* and *Lettre à d’Alembert*) had a large role to play in the construction of these gender ideologies. Rousseau extolled the traditional, patriarchal family and advocated the exclusion of women from active participation in political life; he defined the natural woman as dependent, subordinate, and imbued with qualities of shame and modesty that made her at the same time chaste and sexually appealing to her husband.<sup>12</sup> We can only speculate on the extent to which his ideas affected the beliefs and attitudes of those who read his works, but his contemporary Mary Wollstonecraft certainly recognized the danger posed to women by the popularity of the *philosophe*’s writings.<sup>13</sup>

The subordination of women in French society was officially entrenched in law with the creation of the Civil Code of 1804, often considered one of Napoléon’s greatest achievements. Still deprived of legal functions on account of being female, unmarried women and widows were the least disadvantaged as long as they had an income of their own. The Code was particularly restrictive to married women. Legislation on marriage and the family in the Code had been borrowed almost wholesale from the 1768 “*Traité de la puissance du mari sur la personne et les biens de la femme*,”

<sup>9</sup>Foley, *Women in France Since 1789: The Meanings of Difference*, 2.

<sup>10</sup>McMillan, *France and Women, 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics*, 27.

<sup>11</sup>Foley, *Women in France Since 1789: The Meanings of Difference*, 7.

<sup>12</sup>Susan Okin argues that Rousseau’s definition of the “natural” woman ignored sociocultural influences on gender formation and even went against his own philosophy of the natural. Okin, “Rousseau’s Natural Woman”

<sup>13</sup>Thomas, “Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Sexist?,” 196.

written by Robert-Joseph Pothier, which began by stating, “The dominance of the husband over his wife consists, by natural law, in the husband’s right to exact from her all the duties of obedience due to a superior.”<sup>14</sup> Women were obliged by the Code to obey their husbands, they could only live where their spouses elected to reside, and they had little to no control over property and assets. Although the Code originally retained the right to divorce (one of the most significant items of revolutionary legislation on the family, first established in September 1792), a number of restrictions were introduced, and grounds for divorce were reduced to three: degrading criminal sentences, adultery, and physical abuse.<sup>15</sup> The Code enforced disproportionate punishment for the crime of adultery. One of the only “excusable” reasons for murder—for which the murderer received a prison sentence and not the death penalty—was if a husband killed his adulterous wife or her lover upon finding them *in flagrante delicto*.<sup>16</sup> A man could only be charged with adultery if discovered with his lover in the marital home, but he would risk merely a fine; a woman charged with adultery faced three months to two years in prison for her first offense (and recidivism doubled prison sentences). James McMillan claims that the laws on adultery were particularly repressive because they were sustained by social custom and convention: the double standard that tolerated male infidelity while prescribing fidelity for women was integral to the bourgeois ethic that became dominant in the post-revolutionary years.<sup>17</sup>

The family was at the heart of the bourgeois social order and increasingly promoted as the ideal throughout the century—even for the aristocracy. The royal family during the Bourbon Restoration failed to project an image of domestic intimacy and the nurturing mother; Jo Burr Margadant has argued that this weakness in their self-presentation was among the problems that led to their eventual demise with the

<sup>14</sup>“La puissance du mari sur la personne de la femme consiste, par le droit naturel, dans le droit qu’a le mari d’exiger d’elle tous les devoirs de soumission qui sont dus à un supérieur.” Cited in Mainardi, *Husbands, Wives, and Lovers: Marriage and Its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France*, 6-7. Mainardi claims that the Civil Code was, in many ways, more restrictive toward women than the Old Regime had been, as it essentially reestablished *puissance paternelle* and *puissance maritale*, in addition to closing off any legal loopholes offered by the former legal codes. See her discussion of marriage laws and customs from the Old Regime to the Restoration in the chapter, “Introduction: To Laugh or To Weep,” 1-19.

<sup>15</sup>McMillan, *France and Women, 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics*, 37.

<sup>16</sup>Tetu, “Remarques sur le statut juridique de la femme au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle,” 5-17.

<sup>17</sup>McMillan, *France and Women, 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics*, 39. Mainardi explores the increasingly strict attitudes toward female adultery in the nineteenth century and declares that one of the main causes was the Code, which abolished primogeniture and instituted equal inheritance, thereby requiring husbands to pass their property on to all children conceived within a marriage—even those conceived in adulterous relationships.



Revolution of 1830.<sup>18</sup> The subsequent regime handled these family symbols more successfully. The “King of the French,” Louis-Philippe, proudly showed visitors the bed he shared with Queen Marie-Amélie, a woman who portrayed the image of the bourgeois mother more convincingly.<sup>19</sup> Marriage was viewed as the natural goal of all women during the July Monarchy, regardless of class, even though the kind of marriage—either *le mariage de raison* (arranged marriage) or *le mariage d’inclination* (marriage for love)—was under debate.<sup>20</sup> A single woman was thus an object of suspicion, and some married just to escape public rebuke.<sup>21</sup> Women were charged with the task of moral education in the household, a role invested with enormous power as the underpinning of the public (masculine) world and a method for sustaining the domestic model for their daughters. The dissemination of such ideological formations continued through various media in the nineteenth century, including etiquette manuals and women’s magazines such as the *Journal des femmes*.<sup>22</sup> Susan Grogan points out that the emphatic rhetoric asserting appropriate models of female behavior suggests that the ideal was not necessarily reality. Working-class and peasant women could hardly achieve the domestic ideal, and many women from the middle classes remained actively involved in family businesses.<sup>23</sup> “The domestic discourse was clearly not hegemonic as a description of women’s lives in the early nineteenth century,” Grogan concludes, “but it could not be ignored.”<sup>24</sup> Those women who lived

<sup>18</sup>Margadant, “The Duchesse de Berry and Royalist Political Culture in Postrevolutionary France.”

<sup>19</sup>Foley, *Women in France Since 1789: The Meanings of Difference*, 47.

<sup>20</sup>For a rich examination of nineteenth-century French perceptions of adultery, the debate over arranged marriages and marriages of mutual inclination, and their representation in conduct manuals, novels, plays, caricatures, and painting, see Mainardi, *Husbands, Wives, and Lovers: Marriage and Its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France*

<sup>21</sup>McMillan quotes the case of a female author who claimed that “the problems facing a woman who wanted to make her way independently in the world were so great that even a mediocre husband was preferable to none.” McMillan, *France and Women, 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics*, 58.

<sup>22</sup>The literature offers insights into bourgeois ideals and aspirations, although Foley cautions that such prescriptive material cannot be taken as a sure guide to social reality. Foley, *Women in France Since 1789: The Meanings of Difference*, 30. Such magazines frequently published articles that reinforced the cultivation of particular feminine ideals. For example, Midevil claimed that the most important qualities for a woman were moderation, patience, and resignation, all of which allowed her to cater better to the needs of her husband and her children. Midevil, “Philosophie, métaphysique et morale. 3e article. De la vertu,” *Journal des femmes*, 15 September 1832.

<sup>23</sup>Recent scholarship cautions against strict application of the concept of separate spheres; public and private spaces often intermingled, and many women moved with relative freedom from the private to semiprivate and even into the public, professional sphere. For an excellent review of the background of the term “separate spheres” and the changing academic trends in its usage, see Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History”

<sup>24</sup>Grogan, “‘Playing the Princess’: Flora Tristan, Performance, and Female Moral Authority during the July Monarchy,” 78.

outside the norm were thus all too aware of their transgression and often felt the need to explain and justify their decisions.

## 6.2 “UN MARIAGE SORTABLE”: MATRIMONY IN PARISIAN LYRIC THEATRES

[U]n gentil garçon, un bon camarade... que nous aimons toutes... et lui qui n'est pas bien avancé; toi qui n'as encore que deux mille florins d'appointemens... c'était bien, c'était un mariage sortable... Car maintenant dans les arts, on épouse toujours, tant il y a de mœurs...<sup>25</sup>

Charlotte to Henriette, Act I, scene iii, *l'Ambassadrice*

If we are to believe contemporary reports, more theatre women than ever were actually conforming to social norms and choosing to get married. Without more precise statistics from earlier periods, it is difficult to confirm the claim that marriage was definitively on the rise, but matrimony was, at the very least, becoming much more visible.<sup>26</sup> A number of well-known singers at different lyric theatres took spouses during this period: Laure Cinti-Damoreau, Henriette Sontag, Julie Dorus-Gras, Maria Malibran, Giulia Grisi, Jenny Colon, and Pauline Viardot.<sup>27</sup> According to the marriage statistics shown in Table 6.1, about half of the female singers from the Opéra and the Opéra Comique were married during their careers at these theatres between 1830 and 1850; however, many if not most of the primary singers were married. In Table 6.2, I have listed the details of these marriages, and indicated the primary artists with an asterisk.

And yet entering into a marital contract restricted women's professional activities and freedom. A married woman could not act autonomously under the Civil Code.

<sup>25</sup>Scribe and Saint-Georges, *L'Ambassadrice, opéra-comique en trois actes*.

<sup>26</sup>A cursory look at the marital status of female singers at the Opéra from the mid-eighteenth to the early-nineteenth century tentatively confirms the assertion that most singers were unmarried (at least during their careers). Definitive statistics are difficult to obtain, as biographical information on many of these singers is scant. Often the only indication we have of marital status is the (sometimes inconsistent) use of the title Mademoiselle and Madame.

<sup>27</sup>Laure Cinti (1801-1863, née Montalant) married Charles Damoreau in 1827; Henriette Sontag (1806-1854, née Gertrud Walpurgis Sonntag) and Count Carlo Rossi were married in 1828; Julie Dorus (1805-1896, née van Steenkiste) wed Simon Victor Gras in 1833; Maria Malibran (1808-1836, née Garcia) married Charles de Bériot (her second husband) in 1836; Giulia Grisi (1811-1869) married Count Gérard de Melcy in 1836; Jenny Colon (1808-1842) wed the flautist Gabriel Leplus in 1838; and Pauline Garcia (1821-1910) and Louis Viardot married in 1840. Cinti-Damoreau was legally separated in 1834, and Giulia Grisi's marriage ended unhappily although she was unable to get a divorce; she later took as companion the Italian tenor Mario de Candia.

Table 6.1: Marriage statistics for female singers at the Opéra and the Opéra Comique, 1830-1850

| Total singers | Married singers | Unmarried singers* |
|---------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 66            | 32              | 34                 |

\*Eight singers at the Opéra and the Opéra Comique married after their tenure at these theatres; many continued their careers in the provinces or abroad.

Table 6.2: Married singers, 1830-1850

| Singer                         | Husband's name and profession                           | Date of nuptials |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Beaussire, Aurélie             | Beaussire                                               | c.1844           |
| Boulanger, Marie-Julie*        | Frédéric Boulanger, voice instructor (Conservatoire)    | c.1810           |
| Capdeville, Marie              | Horn                                                    | 1840             |
| Casimir, Marie-Virginie*       | Casimir Compans, composer                               | c.1820           |
| Castellan, Jeanne-Anaïs*       | Enrico Giampetro, singer                                | 1840             |
| Cinti-Damoreau, Laure*         | Charles Damoreau, singer (Opéra Comique)                | 1827             |
| Colon, Jenny*                  | Gabriel Leplus, flutist (Opéra Comique)                 | 1838             |
| Dabadie, Louise Zulmé*         | Henri-Bernard Dabadie, singer (Opéra)                   | 1822             |
| Dorus-Gras, Julie*             | Simon Victor Gras, violinist (Opéra)                    | 1833             |
| Garcia, Eugénie*               | Manuel Garcia, <i> fils </i> singer and vocal pedagogue | c.1835           |
| Glossop, Joséphine*            | Joseph Glossop, impresario at La Scala                  | c.1827           |
| Gosselin, Augusta*             | Gosselin, ballet dancer (Opéra)                         | c.1829           |
| Hébert-Massy, Marie            | Hébert, singer (Opéra Comique)                          | c.1835           |
| Julian, Eliza*                 | Van Gelder, piano professor                             | 1844             |
| Jullienne, Augustine Eugénie   | Dejean                                                  | 1847             |
| Laurent, Françoise             | Laurent, inspector (Théâtre-Français)                   | c.1831           |
| Lavry, Clara                   | Lavry                                                   | c.1829           |
| Lemonnier, Louise*             | Louis-Auguste Lemonnier, singer (Opéra Comique)         | c.1810           |
| Margueron, Marie Clara         | Margueron                                               | c.1832           |
| Morin, Marie Caroline          | Morin, Conservatoire professor                          | c.1827           |
| Nathan-Treilhet, Célestine*    | André-Eugène-Antoine Treilhet, painter                  | 1839             |
| Pijon, Cécile (dite d'Halbert) | Charles Ponchard, singer (Opéra Comique)                | c.1848           |
| Ponchard, Sophie*              | Louis Ponchard, singer (Opéra Comique)                  | c.1820           |
| Potier, Marie                  | Henri Potier, singer (Opéra Comique)                    | c.1837           |
| Pradher, Félicité*             | Louis-Barthélemy Pradher, pianist and composer          | c.1820           |
| Quiney, Cornélie               | Baptiste                                                | c.1827           |
| Rossi-Caccia, Giovanna*        | Carlo Caccia, sculptor                                  | 1840             |
| Stoltz, Rosine*                | Alphonse-Auguste Lescuyer, <i> régisseur </i>           | 1837             |
| Thillon, Anna*                 | Claude Thillon, voice instructor and conductor          | c.1836           |
| Ugalde, Delphine*              | Ugalde, musician                                        | c.1847           |
| Viardot, Pauline*              | Louis Viardot, writer and theatre director              | 1840             |
| Widemann, Anna                 | Fritz Widemann                                          | c.1835           |

Her husband's permission was required to take up employment and her earnings became his property. For a singer, this meant that her contracts were legal only with her husband's signature. Legal separation was the only recourse to ending a mar-

riage once divorce was abolished in 1816 under the Restoration.<sup>28</sup> However, even legally separated, women had to seek permission from their former husbands to perform and sign contracts.<sup>29</sup> A married woman lost her financial independence, as a husband could demand the whole or part of her earnings.<sup>30</sup> In the case of Opéra star Rosine Stoltz, her estranged husband, Alphonse-Auguste Lescuyer, insisted on receiving a share of her earnings and deducted 1,250 francs a month from her salary, leaving the singer with the rest (less than 850 francs). The theatre administration was also required to inform Lescuyer of her monthly earnings.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the marital problems encountered by some, marriage remained an attractive option, as it helped to protect a woman's reputation, particularly during performing tours in the provinces or abroad. Former Opéra director Nestor Roqueplan speculated that the increase of married singers during the July Monarchy was the result of political and economic changes. He noted that the tendency to marry rose as the aristocracy became increasingly separated from the theatre after the 1789 Revolution, reinforcing the necessity for economy and strategic positioning. Female artists, left without the financial protection of their once generous admirers, were forced to make a living solely from their art.<sup>32</sup> Certainly with women's increasing professionalization as musicians, singers, and actresses during the nineteenth century, the cultivation of a bourgeois lifestyle that included marriage could provide a stable career foundation. Choosing a partner in the same industry was ideal, as a woman's husband might better tolerate hectic rehearsal, concert, and performing schedules. Such was the reality of many singers, as shown in Table 6.2: Julie Dorus

<sup>28</sup>Initially established by law in France in 1792 and inscribed in the Civil Code, a divorce was granted by mutual consent (a simple declaration in front of a police officer sufficed) or if one of the spouses cited grounds of adultery or condemnation of undue suffering. See Tetu, “Remarques sur le statut juridique de la femme au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle,” 12-14.

<sup>29</sup>Charles Constant adds that husbands had the right to revoke their permission at any time. Constant, *Code des théâtres à l'usage des directeurs, des artistes, des auteurs, des maires et adjoints, de la magistrature et du barreau*. The Opéra Comique soprano Mme Capdeville-Horn failed to obtain legal separation from her husband, but was granted the ability to sign her own contracts without his intervention. “Nouvelles,” *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 4 September 1842.

<sup>30</sup>René Gonnard strongly condemned this law, lamenting that when men invoked their right to take their wife's salary, they placed her (and usually their children) in a very vulnerable situation. A woman could reclaim the rights to her earnings by asking the court for a *séparation du corps*; however, the court often took a long time to come to a decision. Gonnard, *La femme dans l'industrie*, 118-119.

<sup>31</sup>*F-Pn*, Département de Musique (Mme Stoltz, lettres autographes, engagement, pièce 15). Stoltz's contract assured her a salary of 3,000 francs a year and 300 francs in *feux*, with six *feux* guaranteed per month; in effect, the Opéra could guarantee Stoltz a salary of only 833.33 francs a month after her husband's deduction. In 1842, a new agreement specified that Lescuyer could only deduct 200 francs monthly from Stoltz's salary: this new agreement held until Stoltz's retirement from the theatre in 1847.

<sup>32</sup>Roqueplan, *Les coulisses de l'Opéra*, 33-36.

and Jenny Colon married orchestral musicians; Louise Dabadie, Sophie Ponchard, Marie Hébert-Massy, and Marie Potier married fellow singers; and Françoise Laurent, Joséphine Glossop, and Rosine Stoltz married men working in the theatre industry. F.W.J. Hemmings suggests that the rarity of marriages outside of the theatre profession further attests to the social ostracism faced by actors and actresses, particularly during the early nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup>

### 6.3 THE MALADIE MORALE AND ITS VICTIMS

French critics and writers in the 1830s and 1840s reacted to the increasing bourgeois influence on the theatre, which had far-reaching and, for some, devastating effects. Albéric Second's opera-house mystery *Les petits mystères de l'Opéra* (1844) exposed the new reality behind the scenes and disrupted romanticized illusions about the theatre. In the story, Second falls asleep during a performance at the Opéra only to awake well after its conclusion. He attempts to leave but instead stumbles upon the strange world of the *coulisses*—the fantasy of most theatregoers. During his adventures, he converses with the *danseuse* Lélia and hears the bad news: the *coulisses* have become bourgeois. The veteran subscribers find the theatre without mystery, novelty, or sensual appeal; the new generation of subscribers is less wealthy and does not enjoy the same privileges of privacy for their amorous trysts.<sup>34</sup> Religiosity has come back in favour, and one sees wedding bands on fingers. And as for the women of the Opéra, they are, for the most part, “honest bourgeois women and virtuous citizens.”<sup>35</sup>

Critics writing for *Le Monde dramatique* brought these concerns to their public in a series of provocative articles on “mœurs dramatiques,” published during the mid-1830s.<sup>36</sup> The authors recounted the disturbing changes that bourgeois morality had produced on theatre women: ordinary, married, the mother of a family, the actress was now as virtuous as a nun, covering both her neck and her behaviour in

<sup>33</sup>Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France*, 204-205. Annette Lebrun was one of the few exceptions. She married the marquis de Montréal and managed to continue her performing career. Castil-Blaze, *L'Académie Impériale de Musique, histoire littéraire, musicale, chorégraphique, pittoresque, morale, critique, facétieuse, politique et galante de ce théâtre, de 1645 à 1855*, 2:334-336.

<sup>34</sup>Second, *Les petits mystères de l'Opéra*, 158.

<sup>35</sup>“Quant à vos femmes d'Opéra de 1844, ce sont, pour la plupart, d'honnêtes bourgeoises et de vertueuses citoyennes.” *ibid.*, 22.

<sup>36</sup>Blanchard, “Les actrices mariées,” Roger de Beauvoir, “Des belles actrices,” *Le Monde dramatique*, vol. 1 (1835), 276-78; *ibid.*, “Les belles actrices. 2e article,” *Le Monde dramatique*, vol. 1 (1835), 337-38; *ibid.*, “Des filles d'Opéra,” “Mœurs dramatiques. Des actrices d'esprit,” *Le Monde dramatique*, vol. 2 (1835), 12-13; “Mœurs dramatiques. Des actrices d'esprit (suite),” *Le Monde dramatique*, vol. 2 (1835), 41-44.

a veil of decency.<sup>37</sup> The names of those recently married were sadly enumerated: Mesdames Allan, Volnys, Rossi, Pradher, Doche, Thénard, Leménil, Dorus-Gras.<sup>38</sup> Critics lamented the loss of their cherished performers to matrimony; they looked with nostalgia to past times when actresses apparently remained single throughout their careers and were sexually promiscuous. By the early eighteenth century, theatre women had replaced court ladies as the principal female participants in aristocratic libertinism; details of their affairs were circulated in official police records as well as in pornographic and erotic literature such as *La chronique scandaleuse des théâtres*, which recounted the sexual adventures (both hetero- and homosexual) of female theatre performers, including Opéra singers Mme Saint-Huberty, Mlles Gavaudan, Maillard, and Joinville.<sup>39</sup> But the erotic culture of the stage was far from being a distant memory. In reality, some female performers pursued sexually liberal lifestyles while others preferred *la vie bourgeoise*.<sup>40</sup> There was still a strong association of sex and the theatre. Tracy C. Davis has argued that, through the wide-availability and continued publication of erotica featuring female performers, Victorian popular cul-

<sup>37</sup>“De nos jours, hélas! l’actrice est régulière, mariée, mère de famille, elle mérite le prix Monthyon. Elle a un notaire, un château, un mari et des enfans. Elle joue à la Bourse, elle vit retirée chez elle, elle a un agent de change qui fait ses affaires; son grand dérangement, celui que la médisance lui reproche, consiste en un souper chez Véry ou un voyage à Calais. L’actrice est vertueuse comme une soeur de charité, elle couvre son cou et sa conduite du voile scrupuleux de la décence; la cornette blanche du couvent, le confessionnal et St-Sulpice l’attendent un jour.” Beauvoir, “Des belles actrices,” 276.

<sup>38</sup>Mme Allan-Despréaux (1810-1856), née Louise Rosalie Ross, dite Despréaux, actress at the Comédie Française and the Gymnase. She married the actor Allan in August 1832. Mme Volnys (1810-1876), née Jeanne Louise Baron, actress at the Gymnase. In September 1832, she wed Claude François Charles Jody, dite Volnys, an actor. Mme Rossi was Henriette Sontag (see note 27). Mme Pradher (1800-1876), née Félicité More, Opéra Comique singer. She married the composer Pradher in November 1820. Mme Doche (1798-1836), née Anne Dussert, actress. In March 1830, she married Doche, the chef d’orchestre at the Vaudeville. Mme Thénard (1809-1861), née Gabrielle Raymonde Bousignes, Opéra Comique singer and then an actress at the Vaudeville. She married Etienne Thénard, an Opéra Comique singer, in April 1827. Mme Leménil [Lemesnil] (d. 1887), née Elisa Clarisse Gougibus. An actress at the Gaîté and Palais-Royal, she married the actor Leménil. The biographical information on the actresses was taken from Lyonnet, *Dictionnaire des comédiens français (ceux d’hier): biographie, bibliographie, iconographie*.

<sup>39</sup>Berlanstein claims that novels written about libertinism in the eighteenth century often erased the role played by theatre women, as the authors apparently felt it was unacceptable to show the intimate connections between the aristocracy and stage women. According to records kept by the Parisian police of the official lovers of actresses from the royal theatres, all but a handful of actresses between the ages of seventeen and forty had at least one lover and almost half of those above the age of forty had lovers. Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the fin de siècle*, 39-43, 53; *La chronique scandaleuse des théâtres, ou Les aventures des plus célèbres actrices, chanteuses, danseuses, figurantes, etc.*

<sup>40</sup>Anne Martin-Fugier explores the private lives of theatre women in a chapter in her monograph, noting that some actresses took many lovers while other had lifelong companions (whom they sometimes married). See the chapter, “À la ville,” in Martin-Fugier, *Comédiennes: les actrices en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 191-240.



ture persisted in ascribing depravity and sexual indiscretion to actresses even while the theatre was being morally rehabilitated.<sup>41</sup> Like its counterpart in England, the connection between the actress and scandal was maintained through a wide variety of documents in France. An obvious example from the 1830s is the anonymous *Les amours: galanteries et passe-temps des actrices, ou Confessions curieuses et galantes de ces dames rédigées par une bayadère de l'Opéra*, wherein female singers and actresses from the state and boulevard theatres detailed their most passionate sexual encounters.<sup>42</sup> However, even seemingly benign publications such as the biographical dictionary connected eroticism with the stage by promising eager readers intrigue and insider gossip, concentrating on the women's physical beauty and sensuality, and including performers' home addresses in the final pages (which suggested the possibility of a personal encounter). And as Marian Smith has remarked, the mere mention of the dancers' *foyer* at the Opéra immediately imported all of its alluring qualities; it provided readers with the vicarious experience of looking at the dancers and allowed them to dream of having a more intimate rendezvous.<sup>43</sup>

In a bid to protect the theatre's erotic culture from encroaching bourgeois values, Roger de Beauvoir championed the single, sexually promiscuous actress as essential to art. He wrote a tribute to the eighteenth-century Opéra singer Marie-Joséphine Laguerre (1755-1783), a woman whose rumored libertine lifestyle was now idealized as part of the "good old days."<sup>44</sup> Beauvoir's article traced her rags-to-riches career path from poor chorister to *première chanteuse* and spoke of her excessive lifestyle, which apparently contributed to her death. Far from condemning the artist for alcoholism, the critic defended her, claiming it released her artistic passion. The audience of 1776 would exclaim, *Laguerre will be divine tonight: she is intoxicated!* Beauvoir criticized those who looked upon such singers with disdain and attempted to redeem them by

<sup>41</sup>Davis, "The Actress in Victorian Pornography"; and Davis, *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture*.

<sup>42</sup>*Les amours: Galanteries et passe-temps des actrices, ou Confessions curieuses et galantes de ces dames rédigées par une bayadère de l'Opéra*. It goes without saying that such scandalous material on the sexual adventures of male theatre performers is virtually nonexistent.

<sup>43</sup>Smith, "About the House," 217.

<sup>44</sup>Beauvoir, "Des filles d'Opéra." Marie-Joséphine Laguerre was a French soprano who joined the Opéra as a chorister in 1771-72. By 1776, she was singing main roles. As a reminder of how modern sources continue to reproduce negative stereotypes of female singers with the continued association of these women with scandal, Julian Rushton claims, in his Grove online article, that her early death "was apparently the result of loose living; at the second performance of Piccinni's *Iphigénie*, she was incoherent through drink and was imprisoned until the following performance." Rushton, "Laguerre, Marie-Joséphine," in *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/15831> (accessed November 3, 2011).

advocating morality in the theatres. What actually suffered under this new moral regime, he insisted, was art:

That is moral, but where is the benefit for art? A singer as the mother of a family, a virtuous tenor as a national guard, that is fine, but where in this narrow circle of thought do we encounter fervor, the inspired actress in the housekeeper who cooks and hangs on to her husband [...]? Is there any chance for glory and inspiration in this unnatural regularity? Who is the real master, the husband or the public? Sing and perform for one or the other, but choose.<sup>45</sup>

Roger de Beauvoir's comments raise fundamental questions about the relation of a performer to her public and between her professional persona and private identity. How does a singer's personality and lifestyle affect her performance style? Does an awareness of her personal life and marital status impact her critical reception?

Richard Sennett argues that the changes occurring in public culture reinforced the dominant perception that an artist's personal and professional personas were practically interchangeable.<sup>46</sup> In eighteenth-century Paris and London, there was a distinct culture of public interaction that organized community life: the artifice of the public persona, the "public man," allowed residents to separate their public behavior from their private, domestic life. With the emergence of liberal capitalism and secularization in the nineteenth century, urban dwellers increasingly retreated from civic life, hiding their subjectivity in public behind a mask and communicating their "authentic self" only through private, domestic, interpersonal relationships. By contrast, public figures (politicians, artists, actors) were to project the very authenticity and expressiveness so carefully guarded by the silent spectator. Transparency and sincerity were expected: politicians, for example, were judged as credible if they aroused "the same belief in their personalities which actors did when on stage."<sup>47</sup>

The practice whereby performers specialized in a particular role type rather than playing diverse or contrasting roles further strengthened this association, lending weight to the perception that theatre women were as wicked as the characters they

<sup>45</sup>"Cela est moral, mais où est le profit pour l'art? Une cantatrice mère de famille, un ténor vertueux et garde-national, cela est bien, mais où rencontrer l'élan dans ce cercle étroit d'idées, l'actrice inspirée dans la femme de ménage, qui fait sa cuisine, et s'accroche à son mari comme un avocat du palais? Y a-t-il dans cette régularité factice, des chances de gloire et d'entraînement? Quel est le vrai maître du mari ou du public? chantez et jouez pour l'un ou pour l'autre, mais choisissez." Beauvoir, "Des filles d'Opéra," 10.

<sup>46</sup>Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 196.

performed.<sup>48</sup> Théophile Gautier in fact claimed that although domestic qualities were fine for the *bourgeoise*, they were useless to the actress.<sup>49</sup> Without the tumultuous emotions arising from a liberal lifestyle, virtuous theatre women were thought incapable of communicating heightened passion. The eighteenth-century actress Madame Vestris defended her colleagues' licentious behavior by claiming that "a woman who must constantly restrain the urging of the heart would soon extinguish the sacred fire that allows the abandon, the delirium of passion, that produces grand effects on stage."<sup>50</sup> These connections between morality on and off the stage put theatre women in an awkward position. If the public performance of passion supposedly revealed actual lived experience, those actresses wishing to protect their moral reputation might hesitate to perform "immoral" roles.<sup>51</sup> Rousseau's question—how could a woman playing the role of the *amoureuse* or the *coquette* not eventually succumb to the temptation of performing these same roles once offstage?—thus continued to plague this generation of performers.<sup>52</sup> Insisting that one could perform an emotion without ever having experienced it did not rectify the problem. Katherine Kolb Reeve has shown that, at least in Berlioz's criticism, women performers generally faced an impossible situation when it came to the appropriate display of emotion during a performance.<sup>53</sup> The artist had two choices: "She can be sincere, assuming and submitting to the emotions she embodies—in which case she risks her sanity

<sup>48</sup>A number of theatre companies used the role type system, including the Opéra Comique. Role types were often designated by the names of characters or artists, such as "Dugazon," "Martin," or "Trial," typically referring to the name of the performer who created the type. Use of the role type system allowed an efficient identification of vocal and dramatic profiles and was particularly important in provincial theatres where there was a rapid turnover of artists. For information on the role type system at the Opéra Comique, see Bara, "The Company at the Heart of the Operatic Institution: Chollet and the Changing Nature of Comic-Opera Role Types during the July Monarchy." The critical practice that connected a singer's personality with her dramatic capacities continued throughout the nineteenth century. Consider E.D.'s comments in 1869 on Christine Nilsson's portrayal of Marguerite from Gounod's *Faust*: "Mlle Nilsson est une actrice en même temps qu'une cantatrice à la condition toutefois que les rôles seront d'accord avec son tempérament et—si j'ose m'exprimer ainsi—avec le type de sa figure. Ne lui demandez ni les rugissements de la passion ardente, ni les violences, ni les colères, ni tous les transports de l'âme humaine agitée, remuée, secouée. La femme ne connaît aucune de ces crises et l'artiste ne s'en rend même pas compte intellectuellement." E.D. "Trois portraits. Mlle Nilsson," *La Chronique illustrée*, 11 March 1869.

<sup>49</sup>"[...] toutes ces qualités domestiques, fort bonnes pour des bourgeoises, ne valent rien pour des comédiennes." Gautier, *Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans*, 1:126.

<sup>50</sup>Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the fin de siècle*, 75–76. Madame Vestris, née Françoise-Marie-Rosette Gourgaud (1743–1804), was the sister of Comédie-Française actor Jean-Baptiste-Henri Gourgaud, known as Dugazon (1746–1809).

<sup>51</sup>Gautier felt the situation under the bourgeois moral order could become fatal to theatrical art should actresses start refusing certain compromising roles or performing conditions—or even to perform at all. Gautier, *Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans*, 1:50.

<sup>52</sup>Rousseau, *Lettre à d'Alembert*, 143–144.

<sup>53</sup>Reeve, "Primal Scenes: Smithson, Pleyel, and Liszt in the Eyes of Berlioz."

and even her life; or she can ‘fake it,’ in which case she is a calculating manipulator and a ‘prostitute’—and therefore *deserves* to die” (emphasis in original).<sup>54</sup> The idea that an honourable woman could perform certain erotic roles threw into question the preservation of social order based on strict gender roles, as it revealed the possibility that idealized qualities such as femininity could be “performed” and not truly “lived.”

For some critics, the problem was not just that theatre women were modifying their lifestyle and marrying but that these domestic activities began slipping into the printed press.<sup>55</sup> Such publicity wreaked havoc on the erotic culture of the stage and was not universally welcomed. Many late nineteenth-century journalists found themselves in the awkward position of reporting the respectable, uneventful aspects of actresses’ daily lives and thus creating a situation where “theater women would lose their aura of sexualized glamour and take on a bourgeois ordinariness.”<sup>56</sup> Blanchard lamented that listening to Giulia Grisi (1811-1869) would have a much different effect if he knew that she was married:

When I listen to our lovely Grisi [...], I tell myself she is free, an artist, capricious like all pretty women. In one of the moments of her beautiful dramatic inspirations, her eyes cross mine, and [...] I tell myself: Maybe!... Why not? [...] Suppose at that very moment I received a grand, printed letter, stating: “Mlle Grisi has the honour to ask you to take part in her marriage [...]” Oh! Then I would renounce dilettantism and all musical faith; I would [...] never put a foot again inside the Théâtre Italien.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup>*ibid.*, 226. The belief that identifying too closely with one’s roles could be fatal to a performer appears to have been quite widespread. Comtesse Dash felt that Maria Malibran died for this very reason: “Lorsqu’elle chantait un rôle, elle s’identifiait tellement avec le personnage, qu’elle en ressentait toutes les impressions. Elle pleurait véritablement; elle souffrait, elle aimait, elle mourait. Comme ne fut-elle pas usée en même temps!” Dash, *Mémoires des autres*, 4:211.

<sup>55</sup>Berlanstein places the birth of celebrity culture in the eighteenth century, stating that it grew in tandem with the public sphere: “The theatergoing public and the underground reading public knew a good deal about theater women’s personal lives and were eager to know more.” Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the fin de siècle*, 57. The widespread publication of private details of artists’ lives, however, did not begin until the second half of the nineteenth century. Richard Sennett compares the different treatment of the French actresses Rachel and Sarah Bernhardt, who led careers a generation apart. Even though the public knew of Rachel’s private life (including her relationship with Opéra director Louis Véron), they still “separated the actress from the private woman.” With Sarah Bernhardt, who began her career in the 1860s shortly after Rachel died, interest in her private life was widespread. Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 211-212.

<sup>56</sup>Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the fin de siècle*, 112.

<sup>57</sup>“Lorsque j’entends notre belle Grisi (vous comprenez ce mot notre, qui permet, entretient

Actresses were warned: should they marry, they could kiss their public goodbye. For Blanchard, the solution was simple: "All young, pretty, talented actresses should be public domain, not exclusive [property] of a husband; [...] public domain, just as Diane the huntress and Venus of Medicis in our museums are available for our admiration."<sup>58</sup> Within the eroticized space of the theatre, this conception of the female singer as "public property" was inherently sexualized. Single and available, she articulated an open territory upon which the (male) spectator could impose fantasies in a play of imagination and desire considered essential to theatrical culture. Once married, however, a woman was considered the property of her husband and consequently lost something of her extraordinary status as a servant of art.

The marital status of male artists did not occasion the same kind of commentary. Theatre writers did not question how male performers developed the passions to excel in their roles; they could be excellent fathers and husbands and still perform passion and intrigue.<sup>59</sup> In a rare article on the married male artist, Edouard Monnais directed his comments to the composer, not the performer.<sup>60</sup> He devoted most of the article to describing the ideal qualities of the artist's wife, thus shifting the question of marriage to the issue of spousal suitability. Should the artist's inspiration wither or his works suffer, the fault could then be transferred readily to his wife and her inability to support her husband properly. The singer's husband, however, was frequently the subject of derision, mocked for his relative powerlessness in the face of

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l'espérance), je me dis elle est libre, artiste, capricieuse comme toute jolie femme. Dans un des intervalles de ses belles inspirations dramatiques, son regard a rencontré le mien, elle y a vu l'appréciation de son admirable talent, le culte que je professe pour sa personne, mélange de grâce naïve, enfantine, d'impétuosité italienne, d'audace, de fierté, de cette folie si poétiquement musicale qu'elle déploie tour-à-tour dans Desdemona, Semiramide ou Anna Bolena; et alors je me dis: Peut-être!... Pourquoi pas?... Dites, si vous voulez, que je suis pourvu d'un incommensurable amour-propre, que m'importe? Eh bien! supposez qu'en ce moment je reçoive une grande lettre imprimée, et ainsi conçue: Mademoiselle Grisi a l'honneur de vous faire part de son mariage avec M. Mathieu, du Vaudeville; ou M. Hyacinthe, des Variétés; ou même M. Dupont, de l'Académie royale de musique (ceci sans porter le moindre préjudice à la réputation et au talent de ces estimables artistes), oh! alors j'abjure le dilettantisme et toute religion musicale; je me fais vaudevilliste ou funambuliste, et ne mets plus le pied au Théâtre-Italien." Blanchard, "Les actrices mariées," 53. Grisi, of course, married Count Gérard de Melcy the following year.

<sup>58</sup>"Pour moi, je le soutiens, tout actrice jeune, jolie, ayant du talent, doit être du domaine public, et non de celui d'un mari exclusivement; je dis du domaine public, comme dans nos musées la Diane chasserresse, la Vénus de Médicis sont livrées à notre admiration." Blanchard, "Les actrices mariées," 53-4. Beauvoir echoed this idea elsewhere: "vous n'avez qu'un maître, un maître vrai, le public! Il est votre maître et votre sultan." Beauvoir, "Des filles d'Opéra," 11.

<sup>59</sup>Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the fin de siècle*, 110.

<sup>60</sup>Paul Smith [Edouard Monnais], "Esquisses de la vie d'artiste. III. Le mariage," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 17 April 1842.

his wife's celebrity, talent, and socioeconomic and cultural power.<sup>61</sup> In one article on this figure, the *mari de la cantatrice* passively watches his wife receive compliments from those who are obviously her lovers.<sup>62</sup> Forced to swallow his jealousy and pride to maintain conjugal peace, he steps aside, shares his wife with her admirers, and remains in the shadow of her brilliant career.<sup>63</sup>

The married diva in the last example makes a mockery of the institution of marriage, providing fuel for those conservatives who supported the Civil Code's repressive laws against female adultery. The story thus hints at another reason for advocating against marriage in the theatre: to protect the nontheatrical world from the contaminating influences of immoral stage women. Porousness between the stage and bourgeois life created dangerous cross-contamination. Not only did it allow "fallen" theatre women to corrupt the cherished image of domesticity, but it also permitted women from the middle classes to slip through and attempt professional careers.<sup>64</sup> Marriage in this case was vital for saving the bourgeois woman from the perils of a public career and for returning her to her proper sphere. In the cautionary tale, "Le demon de la mélomanie," published in *La France musicale* in 1848, the amateur female pianist Eugénie Bernard's attempt at a professional career fails miserably, leaving the woman poverty-stricken, ill, and alone in Italy. Thankfully, her fiancé, Émile Renaud, arrives and convinces Eugénie that a public career is best left to those women suited to the difficulties of the lifestyle: "The turbulence of the artist's life can suit only a few women with exceptional personalities and characters. But what suits all women are the gentle affections, the comfort, and the peace of the domes-

<sup>61</sup>Berlanstein remarks that a husband was given two choices: "either tolerate the admirers who would inevitably surround his wife or withdraw and give her 'the most complete liberty.'" He claims that some husbands were rumored to have even managed their wives' love affairs for profit. Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the fin de siècle*, 109.

<sup>62</sup>"Croquis de mœurs musicales. Le mari de la cantatrice," *Le Ménestrel*, 28 April 1839.

<sup>63</sup>In another article, the husband similarly forfeits his independence, career, identity, even masculinity, to support his wife. A. Specht, "Mœurs musicales. Le mari de la cantatrice," *La Revue et gazette musical de Paris*, 14 November 1841. Nestor Roqueplan claimed that the theatre woman's spouse typically put all of his efforts into managing her career, at his personal and professional detriment. See Roqueplan, *Les coulisses de l'Opéra*, 83-92.

<sup>64</sup>Katharine Ellis reveals the problems encountered by female pianists when they brought a domestic feminine accomplishment onto the public stage. See Ellis, "Female Pianists and Their Male Critics in Nineteenth-Century Paris." Annegret Fauser highlights the issue of class in addition to gender in her examination of women composers and performers. See Fauser, "'La Guerre en dentelles': Women and the 'Prix de Rome' in French Cultural Politics," and Fauser, "Creating Madame Landowska." Margaret Miner has found that "opera-house mysteries" (her term) also operated as cautionary tales warning women not to attempt professional careers at the Opéra unless they possessed true genius. See Miner, "Phantoms of Genius: Women and the Fantastic in the Opera-House Mystery."



tic foyer. Those are the elements of happiness that nothing can destroy.”<sup>65</sup> Eugénie agrees to abandon her career and returns to the domestic foyer as a married woman, thus sealing the barrier between the two worlds. Catastrophe avoided.

Julia, the heroine in another story, was not so lucky. In “Il ne faut pas jouer avec le feu,” published in *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* in 1837, Julia’s professional singing career consumes her fragile spirit, pushes her to reject her marriage, and eventually kills her.<sup>66</sup> Once the rich, beautiful daughter of a nobleman, she marries Dupré, an amateur tenor and a lawyer who loves her fortune more than the woman. The 1789 Revolution leaves her family destitute and her father—her only living relative—dies from grief. Dupré’s love for his young wife fades and he becomes infatuated with one of his clients, a star singer. Upon the discovery of her husband’s infidelity, Julia resolves to enact revenge by becoming a famous prima donna: “But yet I have been told ... that I also have a pure and suave voice ... I am also beautiful ... well then! I will work without rest ... and maybe one day I will rival this woman! Yes, I will fight ... and we will see which one of us will win....”<sup>67</sup> Julia has her debut at a benefit concert where her rival will also be singing. She is more beautiful than ever and sings superbly; the audience is moved and Dupré, recognizing his wife, declares his love for her reborn. But she rejects him and says it is too late. She has tasted glory and desires nothing else: “They were all there for me ... I was their queen ... I was their idol ... it was truly beautiful.”<sup>68</sup> Her nervous and fragile disposition, however, cannot handle the excessive abundance of her art, and the narrator of the story cries out: “Jeune femme, il ne fallait pas jouer avec le feu....” He then sadly recounts Julia’s unfortunate end: “Three months after, the divorce was pronounced between her and Dupré. Julia, now free, abandoned herself entirely to her passion for music, and became a famous singer who fascinated Italy at the end of the last century. But her passionate heart, her burning soul, destroyed too early this marvelous person.

<sup>65</sup>“Les agitations de la vie d’artiste peuvent convenir à quelques femmes d’une organisation et d’un caractère exceptionnels. Mais ce qui convient à toutes, ce sont les douces affections, l’aisance et la paix du foyer domestique. Ce sont là des éléments de bonheur que rien ne peut détruire.” C.V., “Le démon de la mélomanie,” *La France musicale*, 23 January 1848. This short story is also discussed in Ellis, “Female Pianists and Their Male Critics in Nineteenth-Century Paris,” 353–355.

<sup>66</sup>Margeanville, “Il ne faut pas jouer avec le feu,” *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 3, 10, and 17 September 1837.

<sup>67</sup>“Mais on me l’a dit pourtant ... à moi aussi ma voix est pure et suave ... moi aussi je suis belle ... eh bien! je travaillerai sans relâche ... et peut-être un jour je vaudrai cette femme! Oui je lutterai ... et nous verrons qui de nous deux l’emportera....” Margeanville, “Il ne faut pas jouer avec le feu,” *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 10 September 1837.

<sup>68</sup>“Ils étaient tous pour moi... j’étais leur reine... j’étais leur idole... c’était beau vraiment.” Margeanville, “Il ne faut pas jouer avec le feu,” *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 17 September 1837.

She died at thirty years of age.”<sup>69</sup> Besides the story’s obvious claim that women were simply incapable of supporting true musical genius, it also suggests that Julia’s rejection of her proper destiny as a faithful, modest, married woman—particularly for someone of her class—played an important role in her tragic end.

Thus at issue was also the importance of maintaining class distinctions. For Blanchard, Gautier, and Beauvoir, all marriage in the theatre appeared to be undesirable; for others, marriage was tolerated as long as theatre women kept within their social class. Marriages between singers and aristocrats rarely ever succeeded in serial fiction of the period. In Louise Fusil’s “Le prince et la chanteuse,” published in *La France musicale* in 1841, a vain prima donna finds herself ultimately rejected by her princely lover, her former lover, and her impresario.<sup>70</sup> Two French singers stop for the night at a prince’s chateau on their travels to an Italian theatre in Warsaw. The prince falls for the prima donna, Caroline Nebel, who temporarily renounces her contract to instead enjoy the riches and attentions of her new lover. Their tryst lasts three months. Rumors begin circulating that the prince has married the singer. Horrified by the news, the prince abruptly leaves Caroline, who decides to return to the stage. But upon her arrival in Warsaw she finds that she has been replaced as a prima donna at the theatre and in the affections of the tenor, Georges Labitte. Caroline pays a high price for her transgression, losing two lovers, her reputation, and her job.

The prima donna fares somewhat better in Edouard Monnais’ *Portefeuille de deux cantatrices*, a novel that maintains class distinctions and the division between the theatrical and nontheatrical worlds while flattering the fantasies of the male spectator.<sup>71</sup> Clothilde is a Parisian prima donna and *marraine* to Esther, a recently orphaned girl with a promising voice. The older singer provides her with a musical education and, once Esther begins her career in the provinces, counsels her on theatre life and *mœurs*. “Maintain your independence as much as you can. If at all possible, do not get married,” cautions Clothilde. “A married woman must be faithful for the honour of her husband, and in the theatre, virtue means nothing; we either don’t believe in it, or we make a mockery of it.”<sup>72</sup> As if to underline the warning, Esther witnesses

<sup>69</sup>“Trois mois après, le divorce fut prononcé entre elle et Dupré. Julia, demeurée libre, s’abandonna entièrement à sa passion pour la musique, et devint la célèbre cantatrice qui émerveilla l’Italie à la fin du dernier siècle. Mais son cœur passionné, son âme de feu, détruisirent de bonne heure cette organisation merveilleuse. Elle mourut à trente ans.” Margeanville, “Il ne faut pas jouer avec le feu,” *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 17 September 1837.

<sup>70</sup>Louise Fusil, “Le prince et la chanteuse,” *La France musicale*, 10 and 17 October 1841.

<sup>71</sup>Smith, *Portefeuille de deux cantatrices*.

<sup>72</sup>“Garde tant que tu pourras ton indépendance. Ne te marie que si tu ne peux faire autrement, parce qu’une femme mariée doit être vertueuse pour l’honneur de son mari, et qu’au théâtre on ne tient nul compte de la vertu; on n’y croit pas, ou on la tourne en ridicule.” *ibid.*, 19.

the catastrophic debut of a female singer—fat, married with three children, rejected completely by the public in Bordeaux. But the singers still cannot escape the influence of bourgeois morality. Clothilde leaves Paris and settles in Italy with the tenor Gaston; the two artists, devoted to the theatre and to each other, eventually decide to marry. Her former protector, Count de Réval, falls in love with Esther and also proposes marriage. She delays her decision for a year to test the strength of his intentions; his friend Stéphen meanwhile tries to dissuade the count from marrying the singer. A year later, ruined by his lifestyle of gambling and mistresses, Stéphen changes his mind and fully endorses his friend's union. Esther quits the stage to become a countess. The final scene has the two couples reunited in Naples, singing the praises of their newfound domestic bliss.

Monnais's story thus begins by declaring the incompatibility of matrimony with the life in the theatre only to end with a double marriage. Only Esther, by far the more virtuous of the two singers, can marry an aristocrat, although in doing so she must abandon her career, thus closing the fissure between the aristocratic and theatre worlds. Her class ties, however, are likely not that disparate from those of her husband; Esther had entered the singing profession only because she was orphaned and left without any resources, and her impeccable morality is revealed as exceptional in the theatre world (perhaps indicating she is not truly "one of them"). Clothilde must marry according to her social caste, having had a number of lovers (including, of course, Esther's future husband—a *clin d'œil* toward the sexual double standard of the July Monarchy). Count de Réval gets the best of all worlds: sexual adventures with theatre women and a marriage with the sole chaste, beautiful, utterly domesticated *cantatrice*.

#### 6.4 A PRIMA DONNA ASSERTS HER INDEPENDENCE, OR EVERY PERSON IN HER RIGHTFUL PLACE

The issue of matrimony in the theatre took centre stage—literally—on 21 December 1836, with the première of Daniel-François-Esprit Auber's *L'Ambassadrice* at the Opéra Comique.<sup>73</sup> The choice of performance location was apt. For most of the nineteenth century, the Opéra Comique was considered a family-oriented, bourgeois the-

<sup>73</sup>The libretto was co-written by Eugène Scribe and Henri de Saint-Georges. *L'Ambassadrice* was premièred at the Opéra Comique on 21 December 1836 and enjoyed an immediate success. It was performed almost one hundred times in its first year and regularly until about 1860.

atre.<sup>74</sup> Proper morality was communicated through plots that typically centered on matrimony. In keeping with the comic mode, an *opéra-comique* always ended with the triumph of virtue and innocence, the consolidation of social harmony, and a socially appropriate marriage.<sup>75</sup>

With a twist on the standard formula, Auber's *L'Ambassadrice* centres on the socially *inappropriate* marriage of a prima donna, Henriette, to an ambassador, the Duke of Valberg. The plot rang familiar to Parisians—the connection made obvious by the prima donna's given name—and, with their curiosity sufficiently piqued, the public came in droves to the opening performances. Eugène Scribe's libretto took inspiration from the marriage of Count Rossi, an Italian ambassador, to Henriette Sontag, the German-born soprano who sang at the Théâtre Italien in Paris in the late 1820s. Their union was initially kept secret, and the count's family was reluctant to accept the singer of comparatively low birth. The King of Prussia conferred the noble title of von Lauenstein on Sontag once news broke of her marriage; her new social title forced her into retirement until the loss of Count Rossi's fortune during the 1848 revolution brought her back on the stage.<sup>76</sup> In the *opéra-comique* the distinctions between theatre and reality were confounded further, as the cast of performers displayed uncanny resemblances to their counterparts on stage. Marie-Julie Boulanger, fifty years old at the première, was compelled because of her age to perform the *duègne*, Mme Barnek, an ageing, former opera singer and Henriette's aunt. Jenny Colon, the blond, blue-eyed singer who performed in the boulevard theatres and was rumoured to have had a number of lovers throughout her career, was the coquettish Charlotte.<sup>77</sup> And finally, Laure Cinti-Damoreau, only recently separated

<sup>74</sup>Lodoys Sibille declared that, "L'Opéra-Comique, par cette raison qu'il est genre national, plaît infiniment à la classe bourgeoise, qui ne veut entendre chanter à ses filles que des airs d'opéra-comique." Sibille, "Spectacles de Paris. Physiologie du spectateur," *Le Monde dramatique*, vol. 2 (1835): 137-140, here 138. Olivier Bara claims that the Opéra Comique reoriented itself toward the middle bourgeoisie and became a family-oriented theatre by presenting works that reflected their moral values, emphasizing good taste and moderation. Bara, *Le théâtre de l'opéra-comique sous la restauration: enquête autour d'un genre moyen*, 205. André Michael Spies notes that the directors of the Opéra Comique advertised their house as "the family theatre par excellence, where even the most scrupulous can confidently escort their wives and children." Spies, *Opera, State and Society in the Third Republic, 1875-1914*, 92.

<sup>75</sup>Bara, *Le théâtre de l'opéra-comique sous la restauration: enquête autour d'un genre moyen*, 333. This is true of *opéra-comique* for much of the nineteenth century, but beginning in the 1850s some *opéras-comiques* became much more serious and sometimes even tragic. For a discussion of the "elevation" of *opéra-comique* in the second half of the century, see Speare, "The Transformation of Opéra Comique: 1850-1880."

<sup>76</sup>For contemporary biographical material on Sontag, see Clayton, *Queens of Song*, 286-304; Escudier and Escudier, "Mme Sontag"; and Gautier, *L'Ambassadrice: biographie de la Comtesse Rossi*.

<sup>77</sup>In a biographical article on Jenny Colon, the author "accidentally" slipped in a quick mention of some backstage rumours of her love life, reinforcing the connection between sexual scandal and

from the tenor Charles Damoreau, was a star singer prized for her flawless technique and devotion to her art; she performed the role of Henriette.<sup>78</sup>

The *opéra-comique* opens with Mme Barnek reading Henriette's fan mail while her niece prepares her role. The *seconde chanteuse*, Charlotte, enters and reveals that the tenor in their opera troupe, Bénédict, is in love with the soprano, Henriette. In one of many references toward the contemporary marriage debates, Charlotte advocates the union: marriage is *de rigueur* in the theatre, what with all the morality and manners. However, another suitor has piqued Henriette's interest. Her admirer finally reveals himself as the Prussian ambassador and proposes marriage. In an aria that displays many of Cinti-Damoreau's technical capabilities, Henriette weighs the benefits of a socially advantageous marriage against the loss of her reign and glory on the stage.<sup>79</sup>

The seductions of a new social position prevail. Act II shows Henriette in a magnificent home waiting for the ambassador's return. Their marriage awaits final approval from the king; in the meantime, the ambassador has presented Henriette to his family but has concealed her true identity and former vocation. The prima donna soon discovers that during his mission to Vienna the ambassador courted Charlotte, Henriette's coquettish replacement; it seems his desire for Henriette began to wane as soon as she stepped off the stage and into the domestic foyer. The opera troupe, with Charlotte as the new lead, has arrived in town for the theatrical season. Frustrated with aristocratic snobbery, devastated by the ambassador's infidelities, and sorely missing the stage, Henriette vows revenge on her future husband and former costar.

In Act III, Charlotte feigns a cold and withdraws from the evening's performance to meet secretly with the ambassador in his box. Mme Barnek enters the loge and discovers Charlotte and the duke in a scandalous *tête à tête*. At that moment Henriette surprises everyone by appearing onstage as Charlotte's replacement, disguised as a debutante from Paris. The audience receives the singer enthusiastically; Charlotte is furious; the duke is flabbergasted. The *mise en scène* for this scene recreates (and

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actresses: "J'ai même entendu parler d'un banquier hollandais, et puis d'une liaison, et puis d'une infidélité, et puis d'une rupture... Mais tout cela, c'est dans le secret des coulisses, tout cela, c'est derrière le rideau, je ne me permettrai pas de le soulever." Of course, it was the fact that these titillating activities were "just behind the curtain" that made them so exciting. "Mlle Jenny Colon, rôle de Marie (dans *L'Oncle rivale*)," in *Galerie théâtrale ou Collection des portraits en pied des principaux acteurs des premiers théâtres de la capitale*.

<sup>78</sup>The male roles held much less interest than the female roles. At the première, Moreau-Sainti performed the role of duke of Valberg, Roy that of Fortunas, and Couderc the role of the tenor Bénédict.

<sup>79</sup>Act I, scene xii, "Dieu! que viens-je de lire?"

effectively doubles) the erotic gaze so essential to theatre culture (Figure 6.1). The intimate space of the opera box is placed centre stage and through the grill we can see the “staged” stage, the performers, and the audience. The ambassador and Charlotte observe Henriette perform; the Opéra Comique audience, of course, would be watching the two performers observing the prima donna on stage. Henriette confronts the two during the *entr’acte*. Initially upset with Henriette’s disregard for aristocratic social etiquette, the ambassador is seduced by her performance and pleads for her forgiveness. Henriette refuses. Destroying the letter that authorizes their marriage as well as the contract assuring her one half of the duke’s fortune, she calls for everyone to return to their proper places, she on the stage and the duke in the king’s *loge*. She declares the opera’s moral lesson: for one’s glory and happiness, the true artist must never cease being an artist.<sup>80</sup>

*L’Ambassadrice*, an *opéra-comique* performed by opera singers about opera singers performing opera, creates a *mise en abyme* that breaks the distinctions between theatre and reality, between performers and the personas they enact. This reflexive theatricality forces the audience to connect the issues presented in the opera with “real life.” What lessons, then, does this opera communicate? At first glance, the opera seems to end in a manner wholly atypical of the genre, as the ambassador’s infidelities are exposed and the marriage is annulled.<sup>81</sup> So why did the opera end in this manner, particularly at a theatre known for its Cinderella stories? Was it a creative reimagining of what Henriette Sontag should have done? A comment on the impropriety of such a union?

The impossibility of the aristocratic marriage has little to do with Henriette’s virtue, as she proves herself to be as honourable and faithful as Esther in Monnaï’s *Portefeuille de deux cantatrices*. Instead, it is an inherent incompatibility of a prima

<sup>80</sup>Such doubts on the prima donna’s ability to forever silence her voice, her desire for glory, and her love for the stage were expressed in 1835 with reference to Sontag’s marriage to the Count Rossi in Blanchard’s “Les actrices mariées,” 53: “Croyez-vous que la charmante Sontag, qu’on nomme maintenant la comtesse de Rossi, ne regrette pas le temps où sa voix pure, flexible et hardie, enlevait tous les suffrages, arrachait des cris d’enthousiasme aux Parisiens dans *la Cenerentola* et la donna Anna du *Don Giovanni*, qu’elle nous disait d’une manière si poétique et si digne de Mozart? La croyez vous plus heureuse d’être la femme de je ne sais plus quel obscur diplomate, ambassadeur de Prusse, que lorsqu’elle s’enivrait du parfum des fleurs qu’on lui jetait, et de l’encens des louanges délicates que lui prodiguait l’élite de la société européenne?”

<sup>81</sup>The critic Édouard Lemoine suggested, however, that Henriette and Bénédict were likely to marry. There is no indication in the libretto or the score, so any suggestion of an impending marriage was likely communicated in the *mise en scène*—Lemoine claimed that Henriette threw Bénédict a promising look—and encouraged by the critic’s familiarity with the genre’s typical denouement. “Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique. *L’Ambassadrice*, opéra-comique en 3 actes de MM. Scribe et Saint-Georges, musique de M. Auber,” *Le Siècle*, 25 December 1836.



donna's talent, lifestyle, and class with aristocratic *mœurs* that prevents Henriette from exchanging the stage for the salon. While the work satirizes the aristocracy through the figure of the ambassador's sister, Countess Augusta de Fierschemberg, a dull woman who cares only for titles, prestige, and stuffy aristocratic manners, the whole of Act II is preoccupied with showing how awkwardly Henriette fits into this lifestyle. Henriette's marriage based on passion is also a problem. Patricia Mainardi has argued that many plays during this period, particularly those penned by Scribe, portrayed the dangers of a *mésalliance* (the mixing of social classes), which was often felt to be the result of *le mariage d'inclination*, rather than *le mariage de raison* (preferred by the bourgeoisie), which assured mutually advantageous financial and property arrangements.<sup>82</sup> In the final ensemble after Henriette's rejection of the marriage contract, the relieved countess repeats the phrase, "Chacun enfin reprend son rang" (Everyone finally returns to his or her rank). The opera ultimately suggests that, at least for singers, social class is immutable: a lowborn actress can only perform the countess; she will never truly become one. And neither should she, argued at least one Parisian critic. Theatre reviewers took advantage of the opera's reflective theatricality to launch into attacks on prima donnas, theatrical culture, and marriage in the theatre. The critic at the *Journal des débats* wrote a bitter attack against a singer who dared to exchange her reign on the stage for a noble title. He effectively called such a woman a prostitute, having already sold herself to an impresario only to sell herself—this time for nothing—to a husband.<sup>83</sup>

Although *l'Ambassadrice* might appear to promote Henriette's independence by letting the singer choose her own path, preferring stardom and glory to domestic confinement, it is not out of concern for her well-being. The *opéra-comique* instead seeks to preserve not only class distinctions but also the erotic culture of the stage by encouraging female performers to stay within the confines of the theatre. Con-

<sup>82</sup>See her chapter, "For Money or For Love: Theatrical Alternatives," 119-148 in Mainardi, *Husbands, Wives, and Lovers: Marriage and Its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France*. She claims that the bourgeoisie would bring their sons and daughters to Scribe's plays to educate them on the dangers of marriages of passion and the *mésalliances* and unhappiness that would ultimately result. See esp. 131-138 where she discusses Scribe and Varney's two-act vaudeville *Le Mariage de raison*, premièrèe at the Théâtre du Gymnase 10 October 1826.

<sup>83</sup>"Je ne sais rien de plus faux et de plus malheureux qu'un pauvre femme qui échange ainsi sa gloire et sa puissance de chaque soir, contre une gloire plus vaine encore, contre une puissance plus futile! Elle se vendait par contrat à un impresario; elle se donne pour rien par contrat, et un contrat éternel, à un mari!" "Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique," *Journal des débats*, 26 December 1836. Other critics, however, took exception to the opera's suggestion that people were bound to their social class. See J.J.J. Diaz [Henri Blanchard], "Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique: L'Ambassadrice, opéra comique en trois actes, musique de M. Auber, libretto de MM. Scribe et Saint-Georges (première représentation)," *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 25 December 1836.



Figure 6.1: *L'Ambassadrice*, Act III, scene ii. F-Pn.

fronting the duke in his loge at the opera, Charlotte astutely describes the dynamic so essential to theatre culture: “What you love about us [...] is less the woman than the actress. You adore each night Ninette and Desdemona, but, unfortunately, your passion extinguishes with the play, and even the greatest artist in the world will not find herself loved better than an ordinary woman on the day when, like Henriette, she descends from her throne.”<sup>84</sup> Even Henriette has been successfully interpellated into this ideology. She reveals that seeing her admirer in his loge—fixing her with his gaze—vastly improves her performance.<sup>85</sup> *L'Ambassadrice* implies that theatre thus functions best when this erotic economy is in place: in this case, the male admirer gazes freely at the single and available female singer, who in turn produces an inspired, passionate performance. The work further insinuates that society at large functions best when singers are confined to the theatrical world and do not meddle

<sup>84</sup> Act III, scene ii: “Tenez, monsieur le duc, je me suis dit souvent que ce que vous aimez en nous, vous autres grands seigneurs, c'était moins la femme que l'actrice [...] vous adorez chaque soir Ninette, Desdemone, mais, par malheur, votre passion finit souvent avec la pièce, et la plus grande artiste du monde ne sera pas plus aimée qu'une femme ordinaire le jour où, comme Henriette, elle descendra du trône.” Scribe and Saint-Georges, *L'Ambassadrice, opéra-comique en trois actes*.

<sup>85</sup> Act I, scene xvii: “Ecoutez Bénédicte...à vous qui êtes mon ami...je dirai franchement ce que j'éprouve...malgré moi, le soir, je le cherche des yeux.... Et quand je ne le vois pas, la salle me semble vide. [...] mais c'est que quand il est là, au balcon, il me semble que je chante mieux...et puis, un applaudissement de lui me fait plus plaisir que tous ceux de la salle entière.” *ibid.*

in the culture of domesticity or aspire to a class that ultimately does not belong to them.

### 6.5 MARRIAGE AND MATERIAL CULTURE: THE WORK OF A STAR

Protecting the erotic culture of the stage was an important reason for encouraging female artists to remain single, but it is not the whole story. If we probe a little further, we find that this concern with marriage also reveals anxieties surrounding the increasing economic and cultural power of the *cantatrice*. Consider the representation of Opéra singer Julie Dorus-Gras. Although generally positive, her critical reception was never overly enthusiastic.<sup>86</sup> Her reputation, however, was impeccable—perhaps overly so. In comparison with her female colleagues, her seemingly mundane marital situation and lifestyle drew an inordinate amount of commentary. Charles de Boigne wrote: “The life of Mme Gras passed simply, without stain, without joy, and without children, divided among her husband, her household, and her theatre.”<sup>87</sup> For Albéric Second, she became the emblem of the Opéra’s capture by the bourgeoisie. In his novel, Second finds himself at the door to the singer’s loge just as a boy emerges carrying an empty plate. It turns out that Dorus-Gras ate veal each night before a performance: the more dramatic the role, the richer the cut and larger the portion.<sup>88</sup> Second follows with an anecdote, describing the experience of a young man who visited her home in hopes of seeing *une femme d’Opéra*. After being invited in by the servant, he overheard the singer in conversation with her cook, discussing the large order of veal for the week, the different ways that it should be prepared, and how to economize given the rising price of bread. The young man fled, his illusions dashed.<sup>89</sup>

Dorus-Gras was represented as the new married theatre woman imagined and feared by Roger de Beauvoir, Henri Blanchard, and their contemporaries, a woman whose main concerns were her home, her fortune, and her domestic duties—not her art. The inspiration for her roles was supposedly drawn from her consumption of rich meat rather than a spirited lifestyle or drink, and only in proportion to the role.

<sup>86</sup>Contemporary biographical articles on the singer attested to her extraordinary vocal skill and mediocre acting skills. See Escudier, “Études sur les artistes contemporains. Deuxième série. Artistes français. 9e étude. Mme Dorus-Gras,” *La France musicale*, 8 March 1840; Arago, “Mme Dorus-Gras (Dans *Robert le diable*)”; Eyma and Lucy, “Cantatrices. Mme Dorus-Gras”; and Pontécoulant, “Mme Dorus-Gras.”

<sup>87</sup>“La vie de Mme Gras s’est écoulée pure, sans tache, sans joie et sans enfants, entre son mari, son ménage et son théâtre.” Boigne, *Petits mémoires de l’Opéra*, 167.

<sup>88</sup>Second, *Les petits mystères de l’Opéra*, 221.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 218–225.

Described as “cold” by Charles Maurice Descombes and “lifeless” by Henry Chorley, Dorus-Gras’s mediocre dramatic skills were indirectly equated to an equally uninspiring bourgeois lifestyle.<sup>90</sup> And yet, far from being the ideal *bourgeoise*, Dorus-Gras relentlessly pursued her career for over twenty years, maintained an active performance schedule, and toured extensively. Digging a little deeper, we discover that much criticism centered on her work habits and her ability to earn financial security and independence by working within the new economic system. Boigne claimed that the singer had “her salvation and her fortune at the same time, two things that rarely go together at the Opéra.”<sup>91</sup> Louis Gentil caricatured the singer as an *épargneuse*, pointing to curious habits such as washing her own linen to avoid paying a domestic servant and denying herself life’s pleasures to assure a more comfortable retirement: “Work and profits!” he exclaimed. “That’s her motto.”<sup>92</sup> It is telling that Dorus-Gras’s image figured, along with those of the composer Ferdinand Hérold and theatre director and writer François-Antoine Harel (1789-1846), in the frontispiece for an edition of Louis Véron’s *Mémoires d’un bourgeois de Paris*, engraved by Charles Geoffroy (1819-1882) (Figure 6.2). In the portrait, Dorus-Gras wears a lace cap that clearly identified her as a married woman and thus her assumption of bourgeois morality.<sup>93</sup>

Bitter attacks on singers’ salaries regularly accompanied discussions of marriage in the theatre. Blanchard claimed that married actresses spoke only of their *feux*, their husband’s *feux*, and their upcoming *congé* together.<sup>94</sup> All the *premiers sujets* at the Opéra were married or would be soon, declared Roqueplan, and were preoccupied with increasing their capital through investments.<sup>95</sup> For Théophile Gautier, the purchase of a chateau inevitably followed marriage and childrearing.<sup>96</sup> Hector Berlioz scornfully professed that these *cantatrices ménagères* refused to accept anything less than 100,000 francs a year. “What more do you want?” Berlioz demanded.

<sup>90</sup>See, respectively, “Nouvelles de Paris,” *Courrier des théâtres*, 22 June 1832, and Chorley and Newman, *Thirty years’ musical recollections*, 87.

<sup>91</sup>“Elle a fait son salut et sa fortune en même temps, deux choses qui marchent rarement de front à l’Opéra.” Boigne, *Petits mémoires de l’Opéra*, 167.

<sup>92</sup>“[...] du travail et des profits! Voilà sa devise!” “Mme Dorus-Gras,” in Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l’Opéra*, 123. Dorus-Gras sang for fifteen years at the Opéra; during the last few years of her service, she earned around 50,000 francs a year and negotiated two months of *congé* each year so that she could go on lucrative provincial and foreign tours.

<sup>93</sup>George Biddlecombe claims that these lace caps indicated the marital status of women in nineteenth-century portraiture. Biddlecombe, “Sheet Music Illustration and Popular Song as Promotional Vehicles for Nineteenth-Century Female Opera Singers.”

<sup>94</sup>Blanchard, “Les actrices mariées,” 54.

<sup>95</sup>Roqueplan, *Les coulisses de l’Opéra*, 36-37.

<sup>96</sup>Gautier, *Histoire de l’art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans*, 1:49.





Figure 6.2: Frontispiece from Véron's *Mémoires d'un bourgeois de Paris*. F-Pn ICO-PER-7992

“Why must you have a million francs or more? It’s just monstrous, it’s a disease.”<sup>97</sup> Such comments paralleled the general trend of criticizing artists’ rising salaries. Although male singers such as star tenor Gilbert-Louis Duprez drew criticism for commanding high fees, the focus inevitably centered on women.<sup>98</sup> Castil-Blaze’s 1855 history of the Opéra included a long list of wealthy female singers and dancers titled “Académiciennes devenues grandes ou riches dames.”<sup>99</sup> His use of the feminine form precluded the inclusion of any rich *académicien*.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>97</sup>“Mais quel besoin d’avoir tant d’argent quand on n’est qu’une cantatrice? Quand vous avez maison de ville, maison de campagne, l’aisance, le luxe, le sort de vos enfants assuré, que vous faut-il donc de plus? Pourquoi ne pas se contenter de cinq cent mille francs, de six cent mille francs, de sept cent mille francs? Pourquoi vous faut-il absolument un million, plus d’un million? C’est monstrueux cela, c’est une maladie.” “Madame Stoltz et Madame Sontag,” in Berlioz, *Les grotesques de la musique*, 243.

<sup>98</sup>For example, the *Nouvelles de Paris* section in the journal *Courrier des théâtres* was filled with bitter statements about Duprez’s salary when he was hired by the Opéra in 1837.

<sup>99</sup>Castil-Blaze, *L’Académie Impériale de Musique, histoire littéraire, musicale, chorégraphique, pittoresque, morale, critique, facétieuse, politique et galante de ce théâtre, de 1645 à 1855*, 334–336 The list begins with female performers in 1684 and continues with those currently in the theatre in 1855.

<sup>100</sup>Nérée Desarbres published a similar list of women who married into the upper classes and be-

“And that is how these positive ideas borrowed from society came to depoetize and materialize art,” roared Blanchard in the final lines of his attack on married actresses.<sup>101</sup> Thus theatre women shouldered the blame for these two often connected developments: rising salaries and the commercialization of art. The phenomenon of the married actress was one indication among many that the theatre was changing; it signified the intrusion of material culture and entailed a reconceptualization of singers’ work. In his research on film stars, Paul MacDonald discusses the different representations of “star work”: acting as complex, psychological, and physically intense, and acting as “organized leisure time.”<sup>102</sup> The latter typically focuses on the perks of the profession—such as owning expensive cars, mansions, yachts—and devalues the actual labor of acting. We find a similar discourse here. Critics increasingly concentrated on the advantages of professional singing—high salaries, country homes, good food, domestic comfort—that undermined the singers’ artistic contributions. A few spoke up in defense of performers. Memoirs written by those involved in theatre administration in the mid-nineteenth century exposed another “truth” behind the scenes.<sup>103</sup> The beautiful, smiling ballerina became a sweaty, injured, exhausted woman offstage.<sup>104</sup> The *cantatrice* eschewed glamorous balls and soirées to return home early wrapped in warm clothes and using balms to ward off sickness.<sup>105</sup> These images hold their own kind of romanticism by showing dedicated

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came rich. He claimed that men sometimes married “grandes dames,” but rarely became millionaires like the women. Desarbres, *Sept ans à l’Opéra: souvenirs anecdotiques d’un secrétaire particulier*, 175–180. For yet another list of female Opéra performers who married into the aristocracy, see Lyden, *Le théâtre d’autrefois et d’aujourd’hui: cantatrices et comédiens*, 1532–1882, 83–88.

<sup>101</sup>“Et c’est ainsi que les idées exclusivement positives s’étant emparées de la société, viennent matérialiser l’art et le dépoétiser.” Blanchard, “Les actrices mariées,” 54.

<sup>102</sup>Paul MacDonald, “Supplementary chapter: Reconceptualising Stardom,” in Dyer, *Stars*, 176–200, esp. 194–199. His discussion of the two conceptualizations of star work, exemplified with Al Pacino and Robert De Niro being prized for their intellectual film acting while Sharon Stone is shown riding a limousine 300 yards to her expensive trailer, tellingly demonstrates the role of gender in evaluating the work of actors.

<sup>103</sup>Consider the memoirs and anecdotes written by those involved in the theatre that began appearing around the 1850s: Boigne, *Petits mémoires de l’Opéra*; Roqueplan, *Les coulisses de l’Opéra*; Séchan, *Souvenirs d’un homme de théâtre*, 1831–1855; Second, *Les petits mystères de l’Opéra*; Véron, *Mémoires d’un bourgeois de Paris*; Gentil’s journal (Tamvaco, *Les cancans de l’Opéra*).

<sup>104</sup>“Mais la danseuse! Après son pas, elle n’est pas même une gravure après la lettre! Epuisée, haletante, presque morte, elle se soutient à peine; elle souffle comme une machine à vapeur; son visage, peint à la colle, a déteint et ressemble à un arc-en-ciel; son corsage est mouillé, souillé par la sueur; sa bouche grimace, ses yeux sont hagards; quel spectacle!” (emphasis in original) Boigne, *Petits mémoires de l’Opéra*, 33.

<sup>105</sup>“Ils n’imagineront jamais que la chanteuse, ayant passé la journée à filer des sons (exercice tellement odieux aux voisins, qu’il est une cause de résiliation de bail), chanté péniblement le soir dans trois ou cinq actes, sort furtivement de son théâtre, enveloppée de vêtements chauds, et va se réfugier dans son lit, contre les maux de gorge, extinctions de voix, et autres calamités qui affligent la gent musicienne.” Roqueplan, *Les coulisses de l’Opéra*, 6.



performers slaving for their art. But such defense of performers' labour—particularly that of women—seemed to have been a hard sell. Berlioz, for one, scoffed at the idea that art was the primary concern of these “singers of millions.”<sup>106</sup> As always, it seems, singers and women fared the worst. One cannot forget that during these same years the hyper-masculine, womanizing, public virtuoso, initially derided for turning art into a mere commercial venture, was being transformed into the male genius, the untouchable *artiste*.<sup>107</sup>

## 6.6 EXCEPTIONAL WOMEN

Everyone imagines that our lifestyle is so easy, that we have nothing to do but enjoy success and pleasure. It's precisely the opposite: we are obligated to fight incessantly, to balance on the edge of an abyss partially obscured by flowers. And once we fall, no one offers a hand to help us out. They laugh at our virtues, they take advantage of our weaknesses, and, on top of all of that, they scorn us.

Clothilde to Esther about the difficult life of the *cantatrice*.<sup>108</sup>

These debates on marriage and the new obsession with materialism in the theatre emerged at a time when an increasing number of women were becoming more socially, economically, and artistically powerful. Susan Rutherford claims that during the first half of the nineteenth century the prima donna enjoyed her most influential moment in operatic history with enormous control over artistic, financial, and compositional matters.<sup>109</sup> Such influence was, however, hard earned; it entailed hard

<sup>106</sup>“Madame Stoltz et Madame Sontag,” in Berlioz, *Les grotesques de la musique*, 245. Choristers and orchestral musicians were, for Berlioz, exempt from this snide remark. He dedicated his *Grotesques* to the choristers at the Opéra, whom he depicted as underpaid and overworked and, along with the instrumentalists, the true servants of art.

<sup>107</sup>Franz Liszt is, of course, the prime example. For a discussion of the changing attitudes toward virtuosity and its relation to art in the nineteenth century, see Leppert, “Cultural Contradiction, Idolatry, and the Piano Virtuoso: Franz Liszt”; Kramer, “Franz Liszt and the Virtuoso Public Sphere: Sight and Sound in the Rise of Mass Entertainment”; Ellis, “Liszt: The Romantic Artist”; and Deaville, “A Star is Born? Czerny, Liszt, and the Pedagogy of Virtuosity.”

<sup>108</sup>“Le monde s' imagine que notre existence à nous est la plus facile de toutes, que nous n'avons qu'à nous abandonner au courant des succès et des plaisirs. C'est précisément le contraire: nous sommes obligées de lutter sans cesse, de nous retenir sur le penchant d'un abîme que les fleurs nous cachent plus ou moins; et une fois que nous y sommes tombées, personne ne nous tend la main pour en sortir. Si l'on rit de nos vertus, on profite de nos faiblesses, et on nous méprise par-dessus le marché.” Smith, *Portefeuille de deux cantatrices*, 19.

<sup>109</sup>Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 162.

work and the careful negotiation of competing pressures. Female artists were increasingly expected to conform to dominant social norms, but they also had to fulfill the spectator's fantasies for licentious women. They had to earn a living, but they were also reprimanded for turning art into a commercial affair.

In one of the articles from *Le Monde dramatique's* series on the actress and *mœurs dramatiques*, Roger de Beauvoir berated theatre women for neglecting their first duty: to be beautiful. "There are not enough pretty actresses," he complained. Rather than painting their lips red, they cover their fingers in ink, read novels, and dream of George Sand's glory. "Read your roles less, read Madame Sand less, and paint your nails pink like the women of Péra!" he commanded.<sup>110</sup> Nail and lip painting—the adornment of the female body, already considered superficial—might also be seen as a form of *broderie* or embellishment, a physical equivalent to melodic ornamentation, which, as Katharine Ellis has shown, was often condemned by critics such as Berlioz for perverting the purity of a musical work; this condemnation fell particularly hard on female singers and was used to justify their failure as "true" artists.<sup>111</sup> The image of the beautiful diva further exposes a tension at the centre of discourse on the prima donna of the nineteenth century, one that condescendingly viewed performing women as merely decorative, pretty objects to behold—all the while being essential to the male experience of art, an eroticized interpretive vessel that served as the link between the spectator and the artwork.

Beauvoir's reference to George Sand's perilous influence reveals much about these debates. For Beauvoir and many other nineteenth-century critics, marriage somehow rendered the theatre woman mundane and removed her from the special position that she ought to occupy: property of her husband, she was no longer a public servant of art, nor could she freely participate in the erotic culture of the stage. In other words, the actress existed for either her public or her husband. And yet there existed an alternative, perhaps envisaged by those reading George Sand and refusing to paint their nails pink, one eventually proposed by Sand herself in her novel *Consuelo* (1842–1843), inspired by the talented, intelligent, exceptionally skilled, famously *not* pretty Pauline Viardot.<sup>112</sup> Like many of Sand's heroines, *Consuelo* embodies an ideal and therefore is burdened by an inherent contradiction: she is at once the perfect

<sup>110</sup>"[...] mais nous avons trop peu de belles actrices. La plupart sont de véritables bas-bleu, qui au lieu des lèvres roses de Boucher veulent avoir de l'encre aux doigts, lire des romans, et rêver la gloire de Mme Sand. [...] Lisez moins vos rôles, lisez moins Mme Sand, et peignez-vous les ongles en rose comme les filles de Péra!" Beauvoir, "Des belles actrices," 278.

<sup>111</sup>Ellis, "Berlioz, the Sublime, and the Broderie Problem."

<sup>112</sup>Sand, *Consuelo*.

woman—chaste, devoted, faithful—and a true artist—proud, independent, free.<sup>113</sup> Her voice and virtue transform her plainness into beauty, her exceptional talent inspires love more than passion, and she succeeds where many others have failed in leading an honourable existence in the theatre. Refusing to take part in the theatre's erotic culture by insisting that art, not *coquetterie*, be her only concern, she also refuses the domestic foyer by avoiding marriage with Count Albert until moments before his death. The poor *zingarella* becomes the comtesse de Rudolstadt, but she insists on keeping the marriage secret, having no interest in wealth nor in titles that would only complicate her one true desire—compelled as an *artiste* and *cantatrice*—to live her art.

When asked by Count Christian, Albert's father, if she had any attachments that could potentially detract from a union with his son, Consuelo is astounded, and replies simply, "I have a purpose, a vocation, a profession. I belong to the art to which I have been consecrated from my childhood."<sup>114</sup> Perhaps most rebellious was her insistence in placing art at the centre of her world. And perhaps she had more real-life counterparts than Viardot. Theatre women, more than ever, occupied an exceptional position in society, challenging the perception of the actress as merely a beautiful object of fantasy, performing exclusively for the pleasure of others. Somewhere between—or apart from—the sexually liberal singer and the married *bourgeoise* stood these women, struggling to negotiate a place for themselves among competing social pressures and choosing to perform not for a husband or the public, but perhaps for themselves.

<sup>113</sup>Consuelo finds herself burdened by her devotion to others, the love for her art, and the difficulties of balancing the idealized qualities of a woman with that of an artist: "Si je suis née pour pratiquer le dévouement, Dieu veuille donc ôter de ma tête l'amour de l'art, la poésie, et l'instinct de la liberté, qui font de mes dévouements un supplice et une agonie; si je suis née pour l'art et la liberté, qu'il ôte donc de mon coeur la pitié, l'amitié, la sollicitude et la crainte de faire souffrir, qui empoisonneront toujours mes triomphes et entraveront ma carrière." Sand, *Consuelo*, 697.

<sup>114</sup>"Mais, monseigneur, reprit Consuelo stupéfaite, j'ai un but, une vocation, un état. J'appartiens à l'art auquel je me suis consacrée dès mon enfance." *ibid.*, 459. The passage that follows further underscores her dedication to her art and, more than her reluctance, her *inability* to leave her vocation for the domestic sphere. Consuelo continues: "Je n'ai encore éprouvé que d'horribles souffrances dans cette carrière orageuse [the professional theatre]; mais je sens pourtant que je serais téméraire si je m'engageais à y renoncer. C'a été ma destinée, et peut-être ne peut-on pas se soustraire à l'avenir qu'on s'est tracé. Que je remonte sur les planches, ou que je donne des leçons et des concerts, je suis, je dois être cantatrice. A quoi serais-je bonne, d'ailleurs? où trouverais-je de l'indépendance? à quoi occuperais-je mon esprit rompu au travail, et avide de ce genre d'émotion?" *ibid.*, 459-460.

## CONCLUSION

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“L’actrice est l’expression de la société.”<sup>1</sup> So the authors of *Paris-actrice* end their *esquisse* on these women who preoccupied the thoughts, dreams, and fantasies of their contemporaries, and have become an object of scholarship in our own time. Throughout the book, the authors vacillate between depicting the actress as sexual object (“General rule: All kept women these days are actresses, more or less”) and as a frugal *bourgeoise* (“We find the actress at present much too wholesome, often stingy; it has been said that she overuses the savings bank”).<sup>2</sup> In the end they determine that she is, above all, a reflection of society—calculating, self-interested, cautious—and a product of the characters she presents on stage—the “actrice pot-au-feu” essentially invented by Eugène Scribe. Over a century later, Catherine Clément’s description of the prima donna is in some ways strikingly similar, although it is opera that turns her into a vessel: “the femme fatale, the empty woman, in costume, on stage, off stage, the bearer of destiny that will never be merely a life because all around her opera’s magic creates its powerful effects, swells all her actions to overflowing, transforming them into dramatic art.”<sup>3</sup> An empty woman, a bearer of destiny, a product of an author’s imagination, an object of fantasy, public property.... Seen this way, the *cantatrice* reflects the image of society back upon itself and, in doing so, she becomes but an empty shell.

Clément continues: “The prima donna comes from somewhere else, as if exile were necessary for her to become famous. [...] Foreigners are necessary to assume the strangeness of a woman who is not really a woman, the perfect disembodied mannequin, whose voice is all that is alive.”<sup>4</sup> The physical presence of the singer is discarded in favour of her voice, the locus of her power. Carolyn Abbate uses this idea to empower the female singer, claiming her voice deflects the patriarchal gaze from her body to her sound, and wrestles away authorial power from the librettist and composer.<sup>5</sup> But the singer of the nineteenth century—at least, before the age

<sup>1</sup>Delord, Frémy, and Texier, *Paris-Actrice*, 94.

<sup>2</sup>“Règle générale: Toute femme entretenue est aujourd’hui actrice plus ou moins”; “On trouve la comédienne d’à présent beaucoup trop rangée, souvent avare; on se plaint qu’elle abuse de la caisse d’épargne.” *ibid.*, 45-46, 93.

<sup>3</sup>Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, 25.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>5</sup>Abbate, “Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women.”

of recording—cannot directly share her voice, and thus her power, with us. Without a voice, Clément's disembodied mannequin threatens to disintegrate. Those left to speak of her—for her—in stories, critical reviews, portraits, biographies, memoirs, anecdotes, and letters, turn the singer into a reflection of themselves—their fantasies, their ideals. Perhaps as scholars we make the same mistakes, albeit with good intentions, and these women become our heroines, the virtuous, hardworking, brave, talented, generous, selfless goddesses who struggle and suffer for their art. Certainly, I can point to dozens of singers I have studied during my research who are supreme examples of this kind of artist. But it is still an image, a representation, pieced together from bits and pieces of this and that about these performers who were real women, who took the stage to sing and perform before the eyes of their contemporaries and who went home after the performance to rest, eat, drink, tidy the house, and maybe tuck in a child or chat idly with her partner before she turned in for the night.

It's that uncanny moment we all have as historians when, while sifting through piles of letters and contracts and scribbled notes and administrative papers, we remember that a flesh-and-blood hand put pen to paper and wrote those words. That a pair of eyes followed the trail of her celebrity through the newspaper columns and cared about what was written, felt the sting of negative criticism, the elation of a glowing review. That a heart sank when reading about her dismissal from the theatre due to a director's desire to save a few francs, and that dread swept over her, as she wondered where she would find another position, how she would make ends meet in the meantime, and whether it was really worth it to continue in the business. It's during that moment when I feel extraordinarily humble sorting through the slips of papers that give mere clues as to who these women actually were, and hope that my re-telling of their stories has done them justice.

I initially embarked on the dissertation thinking I would focus on the main singers of grand opera: Laure Cinti-Damoreau, Julie Dorus-Gras, Cornélie Falcon, and Rosine Stoltz. But after a first research trip to the libraries and archives in Paris, I changed my mind, and decided to discuss singers as a class. Perhaps it was the sheer volume of material available or seeing their names appearing all over the contemporary press that made all these other artists seem so integral to the history of the operatic profession, even though their time in the spotlight was sometimes fleeting. Certainly, the secondary singers—even the failures—provide an essential “background” context from which we can explore more precisely how and why the primary singers stood out. But above all, these performers were vital to the industry. The Opéra and the Opéra Comique depended upon the work of the lower-ranking singers to sing

secondary roles, main roles in the smaller operas, and to fill in—often at a moment’s notice—for a lead singer. They took over main roles from the repertoire once the original creator had retired or left the theatre, they often went off to perform these same roles in the provinces and abroad, and some of them were even involved in important premières and revivals in other cities. A number of them sparked the interest of journalists and opera-goers, and enjoyed modest celebrity status. Focusing on the whole profession of women singers provides us with more comprehensive understanding of the industry and the role institutions played in shaping artists’ careers, as well as issues of consumption, spectatorship, and theatre traditions (for example the debut or the retirement benefit concert). And it proffers an alternative image of the figure of the *prima donna* who, rather than being solitary or empty or larger-than-life, was in fact part of a community of female artists, of women working in a cultural field shaped by hierarchical structures and patriarchal ideologies.

Cultural and historical contexts are critical for writing women’s history; exploring the position of the *cantatrice* in Parisian society requires not only an examination of her representation in reviews, memoirs, fictional stories, and iconography, but also a thorough understanding of her labour, theatre practices and laws, institutions, state policy, marriage laws; that is to say, an approach that considers image-making, critical reception, and the construction of celebrity in combination with more mundane issues, those day-to-day activities in which the singers were engaged. Too often the working woman has been completely eclipsed by the *prima donna*, a critical tendency that has a long history. During the July Monarchy, the fantasy was much preferred to reality. Even those who pulled away the curtain to reveal the “real” theatre woman simply re-circulated common stereotypes, and many struggled to separate the person from the artist (and from the roles they performed). In his biographical portrait of Adolphe Nourrit, Fromental Halévy suggested that it was the actor who could not extricate himself from his life on stage: “But the actor back in the foyer is still an artist. The life of the theatre, fictitious for others, enters completely into his real life, in his business life; there is no intermission and no tomorrow for him; he forever lives this life, and he cannot separate himself, as we might believe, by taking off the costume of the role he just played.”<sup>6</sup> A theatre performer’s *métier* thus saturates her existence, it defines her, shapes her, and—if we are to believe contemporary writings—sometimes even kills her. This partly explains the utter silence surround-

<sup>6</sup>“Mais l’acteur rentré dans ses foyers est resté artiste. La vie du théâtre, factice pour les autres, entre tout entière dans sa vie réelle, dans sa vie d’affaires; elle n’a pour lui ni entr’actes ni lendemain; il vit toujours de cette vie, et il ne s’en sépare pas, comme on pourrait le croire, en quittant le costume du rôle qu’il vient de jouer.” Halévy, *Derniers souvenirs et portraits*, 125-126.



ing singers once they officially retired from performing, and the disdain for married actresses and their domestic activities off stage.

But positioning the *cantatrice* as a working woman is essential if we want to consider issues of agency, and try to grapple with the question I posed at the end of Chapter 2, an important issue for gender studies in music as well as for women's history: were these women victims of a patriarchal industry or icons of emerging female emancipation? Certainly, theatre institutions replicated many of the patriarchal structures that existed in the nineteenth-century social order: a powerful administration composed entirely of men; a strict, sometimes insurmountable hierarchy that determined artists' salaries, performance opportunities, and degree of control over their labour; and contract clauses that discriminated against women (with regard to pregnancy, maternity leave, and paying for costumes and accessories). Critical reviews of women's performances that highlighted their physical attributes contributed to the sexualization of this class of performers, undermining their talent, skill, and intelligence. The exclusivity and concentration of power in the hands of a few theatre administrators meant that those who wanted to make it depended on protectors, influential insiders, and well-connected family friends. And yet female opera singers—even those in the lower ranks—earned far more than women in other industries. Upward mobility within the theatre hierarchy was possible, and middle- and upper-ranking female singers earned as much and sometimes more than their male colleagues. Many women eschewed going through the middle man and engaged in forthright and bold correspondence with theatre directors and administrators, successfully negotiating better salaries and working conditions. Singers influenced the construction of their public image through astute choice of roles, on- and off-stage comportment, concert appearances, strategic positioning within certain artistic and social circles, and the exploitation of economies of exchange (in other words, their relationships, in whatever form they took, with protectors, journalists, colleagues, composers, teachers, and administrators). Thus these women acted on their own behalf, in their own best interests, and sought to have successful, fulfilling careers, albeit within an often limited range of agency.

I choose to think of these women as icons of emerging female emancipation. Certainly, it is a view that fits my ideals as a feminist scholar, but I do believe that it best reflects the experiences of many of these women. Some of the best examples are often those lesser-known, all-but-forgotten secondary singers, or the more famous singers under a slightly different guise. Zoé Prévost, whose feisty letters to the *sociétaires* managing the Opéra Comique during the early years of her career

shed light on the unfair burden of female singers who had to pay more for their costumes and *toilette* but earned less than their male colleagues. Noémie de Roissy, who boldly threw herself on stage at the Opéra by debuting *à l'improviste* and then dictated contract conditions to the director. Eugénie Jullienne, who dared to contest the director's decision to cancel her contract after her debuts. Marie-Julie Casimir and Marie-Julie Boulanger, who defied those who desired to see only young bodies on stage by singing on stage into their sixties. Jenny Colon, who had the courage and talent to cross so many operatic and theatrical genres, launching her career in *opéra-comique* and vaudeville only to end it singing grand opera. Laure Cinti-Damoreau, the first female voice teacher at the Conservatoire, who taught and encouraged so many women to pursue professional singing careers.

In my dissertation I have sought to position the *cantatrice* within the larger field of women's work, and to fill the lacuna in women's and labour history that has often overlooked female wage earning in the theatre. At the same time, I have situated these working women within their profession as operatic singers to reveal their contributions to and influence on nineteenth-century Parisian theatrical culture. A comprehensive understanding of their work in the industry is essential for establishing more clearly their artistic and aesthetic contributions to the works they created and performed, evening after evening, in Paris, in the provinces, and abroad. But perhaps one of the most important goals of this dissertation is also one of the most humble: to acknowledge and celebrate the work of a community of female artists who struggled amid a complex web of negative stereotypes, conflicting expectations, and restrictive gender and class ideologies to pursue a professional career in opera.



## BIOGRAPHIES OF THE SINGERS

*Barthélemy, Élian Adélaïde Victoire (1819-?). Opéra: 1838-1842*

Soprano. Élian Barthélemy began her studies at the Paris Conservatoire in 1835 with François Louis Henry, Laurent-Joseph Morin, and Adolphe Nourrit, and won the second prize in singing in 1837 and a first prize in 1838. She debuted at the Opéra in 1838 as Urbain in *Les Huguenots*, Jemmy in *Guillaume Tell*, and Jeannette in *Le Philtre*. She performed at the Opéra from 1838 until 1842. During that time, she sang mainly secondary and trouser roles. She created small roles in Auber's *Le Lac des fées* (1839), Halévy's *Le Drapier* (1840), and, most notably, the role of Inès in Donizetti's *La Favorite* (1840). When her contract was not renewed in 1842, she left for the provinces. In 1843, she sang in Bordeaux, then took the position of *première chanteuse légère de tous genres* at the theatre in Rouen for the 1844-1845 season.

*Beaussire, Honorine Aurélie (née Lemerrier, dite Mme Betty) (1822-?). Opéra: 1845-1846*

Soprano. Aurélie Beaussire came from a middle class family (her father was an *agent comptable* in the military), and was given a good musical education from a young age. She began singing in musical salons, and eventually decided to pursue a professional singing career. She studied at the Paris Conservatoire from 1842 to 1844 and took singing lessons with Gilbert-Louis Duprez. She was hired at the Opéra with a one-year contract from 1845 to 1846 and debuted in Falcon's roles (Valentine in *Les Huguenots*, Alice in *Robert le diable*, and Rachel in *La Juive*) in February 1845. Although the critics hailed her as an excellent singer, with a beautiful, even voice, good intonation, and a very attractive physique, her contract was not renewed in 1846. Her attempt to get rehired at the theatre in 1847 (she debuted again in the role of Valentine, under the name of Mme Betty) was unsuccessful. Her sister, Léocadie Lemerrier, sang at the Opéra Comique from 1846 to 1849.

*Berthault, Julie (Mme Beck) (d. 1854). Opéra Comique: 1837-1840*

Soprano. Julie Berthault received voice lessons from Laure Cinti-Damoreau. She sang for some time in the provinces: she was *première chanteuse à roulades* in Toulouse and then in Brussels for the 1836-1837 season. She then debuted at the Opéra Comique in January 1837 in the roles of Zerline from Auber's *Fra diavolo* and Betly from Adam's *Le Chalet*. She created the roles of Berthe in Grisar's *L'An Mil*, Mme Montbazon in E. Prévost's *Le Bon garçon* (1837), Brigitte in Auber's *Domino noir* (1837), Charlotte in Leborne's *Lequel?* (1838), Justine in Boïeldieu's *Marguerite* (1838), Célia in Bordèse's *La Mantille* (1838), Tiennette in Monpou's *Le Planteur* (1838), Simonne in Adam's *La Reine d'un jour* (1839), Hermance in Clapisson's *La Symphonie ou Maître Albert* (1839), Marie in Girard's *Eva* (1839), Coraline in Clapisson's *La Peruche* (1840), and Duchesse Châteauroux in de la Moskowa's *Le Cent-suisse* (1840). Due to continuing vocal problems, she abandoned the Opéra Comique for the spoken theatre, and performed at the Théâtre de l'Odéon and the Théâtre du Vaudeville from 1841 to 1847. She married the composer Beck by 1849, but continued her performing career. In January 1854 she performed in Rouen, and died only a few months later.

*Borghèse, Juliette Euphrosine (née Bourgeois) (1818-?). Opéra Comique: 1840*

Soprano. Juliette Bourgeois studied voice privately with Nicholas Levasseur. She sang for some time in Italy and changed her name to Borghèse. She was hired at the Opéra Comique and debuted in the role of Marie in Donizetti's *La Fille du régiment* in 1840, but did not stay long at the theatre. She then embarked on a tour to North America where she would spend most of her career, singing under the name Euphrasie Borghèse. In 1844, she sang with an Italian opera troupe in New York, and in 1845, she became the *directrice* of the Italian troupe during its stay in New Orleans. She sang in Vienna in 1846-1847, and then in Madrid in 1848. Borghèse returned to North America in 1849, and was singing in Boston in 1853. She returned to Paris in 1854 to sing in concerts.

Juliette Borghèse should not be mixed up with Juliette Bourgeois, née Borghèse (b. 1834), who sang at the Théâtre Lyrique from 1856 to 1858, and sang grand opera into the 1860s.

*Boulanger, Marie-Julie (née Halligner) (1786-1850). Opéra Comique: 1811-1846 (non-continuously)*

Soprano. Marie-Julie Boulanger began her vocal studies at the Conservatoire in 1806, and took lessons with Charles-Henri Plantade and Pierre-Jean Garat. She won the first prize in singing in 1809 and in *opéra-comique* in 1810. Before she began her professional career, she married Frédéric Boulanger (1777-?), a singing instructor at the Conservatoire. Boulanger debuted at the Opéra Comique in 1811 and obtained such success that her debuts were extended for an entire year. A brilliant singer, she was also a skilled actress, and excelled in the role types of the soubrette. Biographers often singled out her portrayal of the servant in Auber's *Emma* (1821), Jenny in Boïeldieu's *La Dame blanche* (1825), and Louise in Isouard's *Rendez-vous bourgeois* (1807) as some of her finest roles (created and interpreted). She created the roles of Pamela in Auber's *Fra diavolo* (1830), Ritta in Hérold's *Zampa* (1831), Madelon in Auber's *La Marquise de Brinvilliers* (1831), Miss Burlington in Hérold's *La Médecine sans médecin* (1832), Mme Barnek in Auber's *L'Ambassadrice* (1836), Mme Marcant in Batton's *Le Remplaçant* (1837), Jacinthe in Auber's *Le Domino noir* (1837), the title role in Carafa's *Thérèse* (1838), Lady Pekinbrook in Adam's *La Reine d'un jour* (1839), La Marquise in Donizetti's *La Fille du régiment* (1840), Manuela de Villaréal in Halévy's *Le Guitarrero* (1841), and La Marquise in Adam's *Cagliostro* (1844) (a very selective list). In the mid 1830s, she began experiencing vocal troubles; these, in addition to her age, forced her to abandon the role type she had cultivated since her debuts and focus on that of the *duègne*. She took her retirement in 1846 after a thirty-five year career, and was granted a pension that she had earned as a *sociétaire* while the theatre was still organized as a society of artists. She died suddenly of an aneurysm in 1850. Her sister, Sophie Halligner, was an actress at the Odéon and l'Ambigu-Comique, and married Frédérick Lemaître in 1826. Her son, Ernest Boulanger (1815-1900), was a composer. Her granddaughters, Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979) and Lili Boulanger (1893-1918), were both musicians and composers.

*Cabel, Marie-Josèphe (née Dreulette) (1827-1885). Opéra Comique: 1849, 1856-1860, 1864-1870.*

Soprano. Marie Cabel's father was a cavalier officer in Napoléon's army and later became a theatre agent in Brussels. She studied with Louis-Joseph Cabel (né Cabu) in Brussels and later married him, although the marriage did not last much longer than a few years (they obtained a divorce). Upon arriving in Paris, she sang in some



concerts, studied briefly at the Paris Conservatoire, and then made her debut at the Opéra Comique in 1849 in *Le Val d'Andorre* as Georgette and *Les Mousquetaires de la Reine* as Athénaïs. She then sang at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels from 1850 to 1852, and spent some time touring the French provinces (notably Lyon, Strasbourg, Geneva). Upon returning to Paris, she sang at the Théâtre Lyrique from 1853 to 1855, debuting in Adam's *Le Bijou perdu* (1853) and then premiering Clapisson's *La Promise* (1854) and a number of other works. During her time at the theatre, she went on tour with the troupe to London. She then moved back to the Opéra Comique in 1856 to sing the title role in Auber's *Manon Lescaut*, then the title role in Meyerbeer's *Dinorah* in 1859. She returned to the Théâtre Lyrique from 1861 to 1863, then once again at the Opéra Comique from 1864 to 1870 where she created the role of Philine in Thomas's *Mignon* (1866). She toured the French provinces and sang in Brussels in 1870, then sang in concerts and *opéra-comique* in London. She took her retirement in 1877. Her brother Edouard Dreulette (1832-1888) also studied at the Paris Conservatoire and sang at the Opéra Comique, the Théâtre Lyrique, and Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels.

*Camoin, Cécile Louise Marie (1812-1855). Opéra Comique: 1832-1835.*

Cécile Camoin studied at the Paris Conservatoire and won two prizes in 1831, in vocalisation and *opéra-comique*. She debuted at the Opéra Comique in early 1832 as Adèle in *Concert à la cour*. She created the roles of Christina in Gomis's *Le Portefaix* (1835), Henriette in Halévy's *L'Éclair* (1835), and Angéla in Auber's *Actéon* (1836). She married the pianist José Miro y Anoria in 1836. She pursued a career in the provinces, and was known particularly for Catarina in Auber's *Les Diamants de la couronne*, written for Cinti-Damoreau, but created by Anna Thillon. She performed in Valenciennes and Anvers in 1838, took a contract in Stuttgart in 1839, and sang in The Hague in 1840. Returning to the French provinces, she sang in Toulouse in 1842, and in Lyon during the 1842-1843 season. She remarried in 1845, this time to the bass Didot, who sang in Toulouse. She continued singing in the French provinces and aboard, taking contracts in Amsterdam and Brussels. She died in Montpellier at the age of forty-two.

*Capdeville, Marie Désirée Clari (Mme Horn) (1821-1872). Opéra Comique: 1841.*

Marie Capdeville entered the Paris Conservatoire in 1836 and began taking lessons from Louis Ponchard. She won the first prize in singing in 1839 and the first prize in opera in 1840. She got married in September 1840 to M. Horn; she attempted

to obtain a separation in 1842, but was refused, although the courts granted her the right to contract freely without his permission. She debuted at the Opéra Comique in 1841 in the role of Zarah from Halévy's *La Guitarrero*, but did not remain long at the theatre. Besides the role of Zarah, she created the role of Dorothée in Adam's *La Main de fer* (1841). She sang often in concerts in Paris in the 1840s.

*Casimir, Marie-Virginie (née Dubois) (1801-1888). Opéra Comique: 1823-1868 (non-continuously).*

Soprano. Marie-Virginie Casimir studied with Blangini at the Paris Conservatoire where she met her husband Casimir Compan. She made her debut at the Opéra Comique in Dalayrac's *La Maison à vendre*, just three weeks after her husband debuted as Blondel in *Richard Coeur de lion*, in 1821. The artists did not succeed in their debuts at that time, but she returned two years later and debuted in Boïeldieu's *Le Nouveau seigneur* and Isouard's *Jeannot et Colin* in 1823. She sang the role type of the *première chanteuse à roulades* in many of the most popular operas of the period. She even debuted in *La gazza ladra* at the Théâtre Italien in Paris in 1832, a testament to her skills as a virtuoso singer. Casimir sang at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels from 1837 to 1840, and earned the highest salary of all the singers in 1837—an impressive 27,000 francs. After a year singing in Toulouse, she returned to Brussels for the 1842-1843 season. Casimir then made her *rentrée* at the Opéra Comique in 1843 where she remained for a few years. In 1847-1848 she sang at the theatre in Rouen, then devoted herself increasingly to singing in concerts. She returned to the Opéra Comique in 1858 and sang until 1866, although only in minor roles. Some of her creations include (a non-exhaustive list): Eliska in Adam's *Danilowa* (1830), Camille in Hérold's *Zampa* (1831), Isabelle in Hérold's *Le Pré aux clercs* (1832), Antonia in Adam's *Le Proscrit* (1833), Anna in Weber's *Robin des bois* (1835), Stella in Auber's *Le Cheval de Bronze* (1835), and Irta in Gomis's *Rock le barbu* (1836). She held one final benefit concert 1877, but the concert did not produce very high receipts. Her brother Paul Dubois was a well-known violinist.

*Castellan, Jeanne Anaïs (1819-1858). Opéra: 1849-1850.*

Soprano. Jeanne Castellan studied at the Paris Conservatoire with Laure Cinti-Damoreau, Jean-Marc Bordogni, and Adolphe Nourrit and won the first prize in singing and the second prize in opéra-comique in 1836. She then left to pursue her career in Italy where she sang in Turin, Venice, Florence, Rome, and Milan. She married the tenor Enrico Gianpietro in 1840, and then went on tour with him to Mexico, New

Orleans, Boston, and New York until 1844. After singing in concerts in London in 1844, she sang at Her Majesty's Theatre in London in 1845, and in Saint-Petersburg from 1844 until 1846. News of her success reached Paris, and she was hired at the Théâtre Italien in 1847. Remarkd also by Meyerbeer, she was contracted by the Opéra to sing the role of Berthe in *Le Prophète* in 1849. She performed at Covent Garden in London from 1848 to 1853, singing *Le Prophète*, Gounod's *Sapho*, and the première of Spohr's *Jessonda*. She later sang in Vienna, Berlin, and New York. In 1859 she went on tour of Germany and sang mostly Italian opera. She took her retirement around 1859 at the end of the tour.

*Cayot, Céline-Joséphine (1812-?). Opéra: 1836-1837.*

Mezzo-soprano. Céline Cayot studied at the Paris Conservatoire where she won the second prize in singing in 1830. She debuted first at the Théâtre des Variétés in the role of Agathe in *Deux éducations*, and sang on that stage from 1831 until 1833. She then debuted at the Opéra in 1836 as the page Isolier in Rossini's *Le Comte Ory*. She sang only a handful of times before her contract was ruptured after encountering some problems with friends of Duponchel. She left Paris to pursue a career abroad, beginning in Anvers in 1841, singing soubrette roles. She performed in Gand in 1843, Brussels from 1853 to 1855, and returned to the Théâtre du Vaudeville in Paris to perform from 1856 to 1861. She was in Turin from 1862 to 1865, and then returned to Paris by 1867.

*Cinti-Damoreau, Laure (née Cinthie Montalant) (1801-1863). Opéra: 1826-1835; Opéra Comique: 1836-1841.*

Laure Cinti-Damoreau began her studies in piano at the Conservatoire, but was not permitted to study voice. She studied voice privately with Charles-Henri Plantade, and sang in salons, notably the salon of Queen Hortense. Angelica Catalani soon contracted Cinti-Damoreau to sing at the Théâtre Italien, with the intent of having her eventually replace Joséphine Mainvielle-Fodor. She debuted in January 1816 in *La cosa rara*. During the Théâtre Italien's closure, she sang in London, then returned to sing at the Théâtre Italien upon its re-opening in 1819. Her first son, Antoine Hippolyte, was born in 1820. Having sung and created some of Rossini's works at the theatre, she was then asked to sing in his works at the Opéra while the two theatres were jointly administered. She sang Pamira in *Le Siège de Corinthe* in 1826, Anaï in *Moïse et Pharaon* in 1827, the Comtesse Adèle in *Le Comte Ory* in 1828. She married the tenor Vincent-Charles Damoreau (1793-1863) in 1827 during a brief hiatus

in Brussels due to a contract dispute with the Opéra, and then returned to create Elvire in Auber's *La Muette de Portici* and Mathilde in Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*. Her second son was born in 1829, Jean-Charles-Émile, and her daughter in August 1834, Fanny Marie Cinti. Cinti-Damoreau separated from her husband in December 1834. During her time at the Opéra, she created roles in Auber's *petits-opéras*, Ninka in *Le Dieu et la bayadère* (1830), Térézine in *Le Philtre* (1831), and Marie in *Le Serment* (1832), in addition to several roles in grand opera, Isabelle in Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* (1831) and Délie in Cherubini's *Ali baba* (1833). In 1835, she left the Opéra and took up a contract at the Opéra Comique, debuting in Auber's *Actéon* in January 1836. She created several memorable *opéras-comiques* by Auber during her time at the theatre, including Henriette in *L'Ambassadrice* (1836), Angèle in *Le Domino noir* (1837), and the title role in *Zanetta* (1840). With the hire of Anna Thillon in 1840, Cinti-Damoreau was pushed aside in favour of the younger singer and thus decided to retire from the theatre. She had a retirement benefit concert in 1841 at the Opéra Comique. She toured to the provinces, and went to Saint Petersburg with Cornélie Falcon in the winter of 1841-1842. She later toured to the United States with the violinist Alexandre-Joseph Artôt in 1843-1844. Cinti-Damoreau continued concertizing in Paris and France throughout the late 1840s, and held a concert d'adieux with Marie Pleyel in 1848. She then devoted herself entirely to her teaching at the Conservatoire where she had been hired as the first female voice instructor in 1833. She wrote two vocal treatises, *Méthode de chant* (1849) and *Nouvelle méthode de chant* (c.1859), and composed dozens of *romances*. She retired from teaching in 1856. Her son Jean-Charles-Émile died in 1852. Her daughter married the composer Jean-Baptiste-Théodore Wekerlin in 1856, and had a brief career as a professional singer in the 1860s.

*Colon, Éléonore (Mme Prévost-Colon) (1807-?). Opéra Comique: 1822-1830.*

Éléonore Colon debuted alongside her sister Jenny Colon in *Les Deux petits Savoyards* in 1822 at the Opéra Comique. Unlike her sister, who quickly moved on to perform on the boulevard stage, Éléonore Colon remained at the Opéra Comique until about 1830, where she performed mainly secondary roles. She married Eugène-Prosper Prévost, Zoé Prévost's brother, a composer, by 1832, as she sang at The Hague under the name Prévost-Colon. She seems to have spent the rest of her career in the provinces and abroad. For the 1837-1838 season, she sang in Marseille; in 1839, she performed in Nantes; Toulouse in 1840 and Marseille in 1841; and in 1843, she was in Nice. By 1854, she was singing the role type of the *mère Dugazon* in

Marseille. During the 1860s, she appeared in Carcassonne, Montpellier, Toulouse, Nîmes, and Nantes. She retired in 1869 with a small pension in Nantes.

*Colon, Jenny (Mme Leplus) (1808-1842). Opéra Comique: 1822; 1836-1840.*

Soprano. Her mother Marie Anne Dejean-Leroy Colon, was a singer specializing in the *emploi* of the *duègne*; her father Jean Colon a music teacher and tenor. Jenny Colon debuted alongside her sister Éléonore at the Opéra Comique in *Les Deux petits Savoyards* in April 1822. The next year she was performing at the Théâtre du Vaudeville. Around 1827, she left to perform in London with the actor Pierre-Chéri Lafont, whose brother was singer at the Opéra, and they supposedly got married either in England or prior to the tour in France. They later had their marriage annulled, although a son was born during their time together. She took a contract at the Théâtre des Variétés, and then performed briefly at the Théâtre du Gymnase. She returned to the Variétés, and created a number of important roles at the theatre. She began earnestly training her voice, and debuted at the Opéra Comique in the title role in Grisar's *Sarah* in 1836. She enjoyed much success at the theatre, premiering the roles of Émilie in Godefroid's *Le Diadesté* (1836), Charlotte in Auber's *L'Ambassadrice*, Marie in Batton's *Le Remplaçant* (1837), Paulette in Onslow's *Guise* (1837), Sylvia in Monpou's *Piquillo* (1837), Angélique in Adam's *Le Fidèle berger* (1838), Agathe in Thomas's *Le Perruquier de la régence* (1838), Judith in Clapisson's *La Figurante* (1838), Inès in Bordèse's *La Mantille* (1838), Jenny in Monpou's *Le Planteur* (1839), Isella in Halévy's *Les Treize* (1839), and Francine in Adam's *La Reine d'un jour* (1839). The poet Gérard de Nerval fiercely admired the singer, which also lent to her celebrity, although there are conflicting reports as to whether their relationship was simply platonic. He founded *Le Monde dramatique* in 1835 and, before her debuts at the Opéra Comique in 1836, likely penned the flattering biographical article on the singer (some even claimed her founded the theatre journal simply to sing her praises). She married Gabriel Leplus (1807-1874), a flutist in the orchestra in April 1838. Colon broke her contract in 1840 to go on tour to the provinces (Rouen, Bordeaux), and then signed a contract at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels where she sang the light soprano roles in grand opera (Isabelle in *Robert le diable* and Marguerite in *Les Huguenots*) as well as *opéra-comique*. She died, likely of tuberculosis, in Paris in 1842.

*Courtot, Émilie Emma (1827-?). Opéra: 1848-1849.*

Émilie Courtot studied at the Paris Conservatoire where she obtained the first prize in opera in 1845 and the first prize in singing in 1846. She sang in concerts in Paris and was eventually contracted to sing at the Opéra. She debuted in 1848 in the role of the bohémienne in Benoist's *L'Apparition* and sang for a year at the theatre, notably participating in the première of Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète* in 1849. She apparently left the Opéra to pursue a more lucrative performing opportunity in Rouen in 1849. She returned to the capital where she was often heard in concerts from 1851 to 1859.

*Cruvelli, Sophie (1826-1907). Opéra: 1854-1855.*

Soprano. Born Johanne Sophie Charlotte Crüwell in Bielefeld. Sophie Cruvelli studied with Bordogni in Paris and Francesco Lamperti in Milan. She made her debuts in Venice in Verdi's *Attila* and Bellini's *I Puritani* in 1847. She Italianized her name to Sofia Cruvelli in 1848 for her London debut at Her Majesty's Theatre. She sang in Berlin, Milan, Genoa, and then made her Paris debut at the Théâtre Italien in 1851 as Elvira in Verdi's *Ernani* and sang at the theatre until 1853. In 1854, she transferred to the Paris Opéra where she sang Falcon's roles (Rachel in *La Juive*, Valentine in *Les Huguenots*) and Julia in *La Vestale*. She returned to London briefly, then came back to the Opéra where she created the role of Hélène in Verdi's *Les Vêpres Siciliennes* in 1855. She married the Baron Vigier and retired the following year. Her sister, Friederike Marie Crüwell (1824-1868), was a mezzo-soprano.

*Dabadie, Louise Zulmé (née Leroux) (1804-1877). Opéra: 1821-1835.*

Dabadie began studying music in her hometown of Boulogne-sur-mer, and then travelled to Paris in 1817 to finish her vocal studies. She was admitted to the Conservatoire and took lessons with Charles-Henri Plantade and Arnold Adrien. She won the first prize in singing in 1819 and the second prize in piano in 1823. Although she apparently received several propositions from the Opéra in 1819, Dabadie hesitated beginning a stage career and instead taught singing and piano lessons, and sang in concerts. She eventually debuted at the Opéra in the role of Antigone in *OEdipe à Colonne* in January 1821. She was quickly promoted from *remplacement* to *premier sujet* and sang main roles (what her contemporaries referred to as the role of the princess) in the theatre's old repertoire; she also sang as the *première chanteuse* in the chapelle du roi. She married her colleague at the Opéra, baritone Henri-Bernard Dabadie (1797-1853) soon after her debuts at the theatre. Once Cinti-Damoreau started singing at the Opéra, Dabadie was relegated to a secondary po-



sition—although her biographers claimed she filled the position honourably—and doubled Cinti-Damoreau in many of her Rossinian roles. In the Opéra's new repertoire, she created the roles of Sinaï in *Moïse*, Jemmy in *Guillaume Tell* (1829), Églantine in Weber's *L'Eurianthe* (1831), and Arvedson in Auber's *Gustave III* (1833). She retired in 1835 and took up teaching.

*Dameron, Pauline Eulalie* (1825-1890). *Opéra*: 1846-1860.

Pauline Damoreau began her studies at the Paris Conservatoire in 1842 and studied with Duprez; she won the first prize in *opéra-comique* in 1845. She then debuted at the Opéra in 1846 as Alice from *Robert le diable* and Mathilde in *Guillaume Tell*. She created the roles of Zeptèle in Auber's *L'Enfant prodigue* (1850) and the princess in his *Zerline ou la Corbeille d'oranges* (1851), as well as a role in Gounod's *La Nonne sanglante* (1854). Dameron sang at the theatre into the 1860s. She became the composer Auber's companion and was constantly at his side during the last few years of his life.

*Darcier, Célestine Hyacinthe (Mme Marty Mamignard)* (1822-1870). *Opéra*: 1840-1850, 1852.

Soprano, dugazon. Her birth name was apparently Célestine Lemaire, but she began her career under the name of Mlle Darcier. She studied with Mme Béreither in Paris, and then entered the Paris Conservatoire in November 1838 where she began taking lessons from Davidde Banderali. She debuted at the Opéra Comique in 1840. During her career at the theatre she created a number of roles, including Mina in Luce's *L'Élève de Presbourg* (1840), Louise in de la Moskowa's *Le Cent-suisse* (1840), Pepa in Monpou and Bordès's *La Reine Jeanne* (1840), Mariette in Adam's *La Rose de Peronne* (1840), Diane in Auber's *Les Diamants de la couronne* (1841), Blanca in Colet's *L'Ingénue* (1841), Adeline in Girard's *Les Deux voleurs* (1841), Zoé in Clapisson's *Le Code noir* (1842), Jeannetot in Adam's *Le Roi d'Yvetot* (1842), Estrelle in Mazas's *Le Kiosque* (1842), the page in Balfé's *Le Puits d'amour* (1843), Cathérine in Adam's *Lambert Simnel* (1843), Mina in Thomas's *Mina* (1843), Griselda in Flotow's *L'Esclave de Camoëns* (1843), Herminie in Balfé's *Les Quatres fils Aymon* (1844), Berthe de Simiane in Halévy's *Les Mousquetaires de la reine* (1846), Henriette in Reber's *La Nuit de Noël* (1848) and Rose de mai in Halévy's *Le Val d'Andorre* (1848). She left the theatre briefly in 1848 to sing at the Théâtre du Vaudeville due to a quarrel with the Opéra Comique's director, but returned to the Opéra Comique once she was offered better contract conditions. She married around 1850 and changed her name to Mme Marty

Mamignard. She left the stage after her marriage, but returned briefly in 1852 to sing in Grisar's *Le Carillonneur de Bruges* in 1852. Her brother, Joseph Darcier (c.1820-1883?) was a well-known operetta singer, having been one of the main interpreters of Offenbach's operettas in Paris.

*Desbrosses, Marie (1763-1856). Opéra Comique: 1776-1822.*

Mezzo-soprano. Marie Desbrosses debuted at the age of 13 in the role of Justine in Philidor's *Le Sorcier* at the Comédie-Italienne, and sang at the theatre (other than some brief excursions to the provinces) for almost five decades. She created roles in Lesueur's *Le Caverne* (1793), Boïeldieu's *Ma Tante Aurore* (1803), Isouard's *Lully et Quinault* (1812), and Méhul's *La Journée aux aventures* (1816). Although she took her retirement around 1822, she returned to create the role of Marguerite in Auber's *La Dame blanche* (1825).

*Descot, Geneviève Clémentine (1821-?). Opéra Comique: 1840-1843.*

Geneviève Descot studied at the Paris Conservatoire with Laure Cinti-Damoreau, beginning around 1837. She took the first prizes in singing and in *opéra-comique* in 1840. In October 1840, she debuted in Adam's *Le Chalet* and Hérold's *Le Pré aux clercs* at the Opéra Comique, where she was engaged to sing for three years. She created several small roles during her short time at the theatre, including Berthe in Boïeldieu fils's *La Main de fer* (1841), Fiamma in Boulanger's *Le Diable à l'école* (1842), Christina in Mazas's *Le Kiosque* (1842), and Rosalie in Thomas's *Angélique et Médor* (1843). She sang briefly in Rouen in 1843, but objected to having to submit to the three-debut trial in order to continue singing at the theatre for the new season. She continued her career in the provinces, and sang at the theatre in Nantes as the *soprano légère* for the 1846-1847 season.

*Dobré, Marie Rosalie Claire (1818-1899?). Opéra: 1839-1848.*

Soprano. Marie Dobré entered the Paris Conservatoire in 1835 and began taking voice lessons from Jean-Marc Bordogni. She won the first prize in singing in 1838 and the first prize in opera in 1839. She debuted at the Paris Opéra in 1840 and remained at the theatre until August 1848. During that time, she doubled Julie Dorus-Gras's roles, and then shared them with Dolorès Nau once Dorus-Gras retired in 1845. She created just two small roles, Lucrezia in Thomas's *Le Comte de Carmagnola* (1841) and la Comtesse in Flotow's *L'Ame en peine* (1846). While singing at the Opéra, Dobré became a mainstay in Parisian concert life, and with the termination

of her contract in 1848, she turned her attention completely to singing in concerts. She briefly toured the provinces in 1850. Dobré eventually returned to sing on the stage in Saint Petersburg in 1853 and at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels in 1854-1855. She returned to her concert career, and was still listed as singing in the early 1860s.

*Dorus-Gras, Julie (née Van Steenkiste) (1805-1896). Opéra: 1830-1845.*

Soprano. Born Julie Aimée Josèphe Van Steenkiste (dite Dorus), she was first educated by her father, a flutist and orchestral conductor in their hometown of Valenciennes. She later obtained a scholarship from the town to study at the Paris Conservatoire, where she studied with François-Louis Henry and Joseph-Marc-Marie-Félix Blangini, and won the second prize in vocalisation and the first prize in singing in 1823. She sang for some time in the chambre du roi and in concerts. The Comte de Lidelkerke, royal commissioner for the theatre in Brussels, convinced the director to hire the singer. Not having been trained in theatre arts, Dorus-Gras studied lyric declamation with Cassel for about six months and then began performing at the Théâtre de la Monnaie as *première chanteuse* for the 1827-1828 season. Dorus-Gras left Brussels during the political turmoil of 1830 and was called to debut at the Opéra. She debuted as the Countess in *Le Comte Ory* in late 1830. She married Victor Gras (1800-1876), a violinist in the Opéra orchestra, in April 1833. Upon Cinti-Damoreau's departure in 1835, Dorus-Gras took over her roles, and was the principal light soprano at the theatre for much of the period. She created a number of important roles in the repertoire, including Alice from Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable*, Oscar in Auber's *Gustave III* (1833), Donna Elvire in Mozart's *Don Juan* (1834), Eudoxie in Halévy's *La Juive* (1835), Marguerite in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* (1836), Teresa in Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini* (1838), Ginevra in Halévy's *Guido et Ginevra* (1838), Ritta in Marliani's *La Xacarilla* (1839), Pauline in Donizetti's *Les Martyrs* (1840), Nizza in Thomas's *Le Comte de Carmagnola* (1841), Minna in Dietsch's *Le Vaisseau fantôme* (1842), Isabeau de Bavière in Halévy's *Charles VI* (1843), and Bérengère in Adam's *Richard en Palestine* (1844). Léon Pillet cancelled her contract in 1845, and she took her retirement from the Opéra's stage. She sang in the provinces and in London in the late 1840s. She retired from singing definitively around 1852 and retired to her château.

*Drouart, Marie-Sybille (?-?). Opéra: 1842-1844.*

Marie Drouart began singing in the salons in Paris in 1837. She was first hired to sing at the Théâtre de la Renaissance, where she debuted in the title role of *La Chaste Suzanne* in January 1840. Later that same year she auditioned at the Opéra; however, she did not debut at the Opéra until 1842, where she first appeared for the Opéra public in the role of Thérèse in *Le Philtre*. She struggled in her secondary position at the theatre, as she was rarely given an opportunity to perform. In 1844, her contract was not renewed and she left to sing in Bordeaux. She later married the actor Antoine-Marial-Louis Monrose (1811-1883), son of the famous Comédie-Française actor Claude-Louis-Séraphin Monrose (1783-1843), and sang under the name Drouart-Monrose in concerts in Paris and the provinces.

*Duprez, Caroline (Mme Van den Heuvel) (1832-1875). Opéra Comique: 1854-1855, 1860s.*

Soprano. Daughter of Gilbert-Louis Duprez (1806-1896) and Alexandrine Duperron (1808-1871). Caroline Duprez made her debut in Reims as Inès from Donizetti's *La Favorite*, and sang several roles from the Italian repertoire at the Théâtre Lyrique in Paris, including Amina from Bellini's *La Sonnambula*, the title role in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and Adina in his *Elisir d'amore*. In 1851 she sang at Her Majesty's theatre in London, then the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, before returning to the Théâtre Lyrique in Paris. She then took up a contract at the Opéra Comique, where she participated in the premières of Meyerbeer's *L'Étoile du nord* in 1854 and Auber's *Jenny Bell* in 1855. She married the Belgian violinist Vandenheuvel in 1856, and returned to the Théâtre Lyrique in 1857. She took up a final contract at the Opéra Comique and premièred Massé's *Fior d'Aliza* (1866). Due to health reasons, she had to abandon her career. She took up residence in the Midi of France and devoted herself to teaching.

*Falcon, Cornélie (Mme Malançon) (1814-1897). Opéra: 1832-1838.*

Soprano *falcon*. Falcon began her education at the Visitandine's convent; it was there that the Italian music instructor discovered her musical abilities, and recommended study at the Conservatoire. Falcon entered the institution in 1827 and studied with Henry, Pellegrini, Bordogni, and Adolphe Nourrit. In 1831, she won first prizes in singing and in grand opera. She debuted as Alice in Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* in 1832 to great acclaim. Her most noted creations were the roles of Rachel in Halévy's *La Juive* (1835) and Valentine in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* (1836), although she

also created (or interpreted) Amélie in *Gustave III* (1833), Morgiane in Cherubini's *Ali Baba* (1833), Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Juan* (1834), the title role in Louise Bertin's *La Esmeralda* (1836), and Léonore in Niedermeyer's *La Stradella* (1837). She gave her name to a voice-type, the *falcon*, used to denote a dramatic soprano. She began experiencing vocal trouble and lost her voice in March 1837 during the second performance of Niedermeyer's *Stradella*. She took an extended medical leave beginning the following autumn, but was unable to recover her voice. She returned to sing in her retirement benefit concert in March 1840 and was given (exceptionally) a retirement pension of 1,500 francs. She married François Malançon after her retirement. She went on tour with Cinti-Damoreau to Saint Petersburg in 1841-1842, sang in private concerts during the 1840s, and taught piano and voice lessons privately.

*Fargueil, Anaïs (1819?-1896). Opéra Comique: 1835-1836.*

Her father Jean-Paul Fargueil was a singer at the Opéra Comique. She studied at the Conservatoire from 1831 to 1835, taking singing lessons with Jean-Marc Bordogni, and won the first prize in vocalisation in 1834. She eventually debuted at the Opéra Comique in 1835. Her voice, however, was already beginning to show signs of wear, and she decided to leave the lyric stage for the boulevard in order to preserve her voice. She debuted at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in May 1836. She went on tour to the provinces, appearing in Marseille in 1839 and in Geneva for the 1841-1842 season, then returned to Paris where she debuted at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal in June 1842 in *Les Deux couronnes*. In 1844, she performed at the Théâtre du Gymnase, and then left once again to tour the provinces. Upon her return to Paris in 1851, she had almost been forgotten by the public, but was given a contract at the Théâtre du Vaudeville. She was supposedly given the role of Marguerite in Dumas's *La Dame aux camélias*, but she fell ill before the première and the role passed to its famous creator, Eugénie Doche. Just before the termination of her contract, she created the role of Marco in *Les Filles de marbre* and her success was colossal. From this role, she created her own *emploi*, the *fargueil*, and playwrights sought to create more roles for the actress. She created thirty-eight more roles between 1852 and 1880. In November 1883, she gave a retirement benefit concert where she reportedly made almost 40,000 francs. She was given a pension of 500 francs from the Société des artistes and lived a quiet life with her daughter.

*Flécheux, Marie-Louise (Maria) (1813-1842). Opéra: 1835-1838.*

Soprano. Marie Flécheux was living with her family on rue Le Peletier when an unnamed protector discovered her vocal talents, and then arranged and provided for her musical education. She studied privately with M. Castelli for some time and appeared in concerts, and then continued her vocal instruction at the Paris Conservatoire in 1834 where she studied with Louis Ponchard and Adolphe Nourrit. She won the first prize in singing in 1835. She debuted as Alice in *Robert le diable* in 1835, and soon created the role of Urbain in *Les Huguenots* in 1836, her greatest success in her short career at the theatre. She also created the role of Antoinetta in Halévy's *Guido et Ginevra* (1838). She left the Opéra in 1838 and went to sing at the theatre in Anvers, where she did not enjoy a particularly enthusiastic reception. Besides the fact that she had not sung much *opéra-comique* and therefore did not know the repertoire sufficiently well, it appears that Flécheux was already beginning to suffer the effects of tuberculosis. Upon her return to Paris, she died at the age of twenty-nine.

*Garcia, Eugénie (née Mayer) (1815-1880). Opéra Comique: 1839-1840.*

Soprano. Eugénie Garcia received an excellent musical education, having been raised in an upper middle-class family, and was taught both by Manuel Garcia *père* and Manuel Garcia  *fils*. She married the latter, and launched her career under her married name. She debuted in Novara in the role of Amina from Bellini's *La sonnambula* in 1835, and then sang in Rome, Genoa, Parma, and Bergamo. She debuted at the Opéra Comique in Paris in 1839 in the title role of *Eva*, but due to sickness and a pregnancy, she only rarely appeared in the following months. She left the theatre in 1840. In 1842-1843 she sang in London, first at the Princess Theatre, and then at Covent Garden, and by 1846 she was singing in Milan. She obtained a separation from her husband and, upon her retirement from the stage, she settled in Paris and devoted herself to teaching. One of her most famous students was the soprano Catherine Hayes. She also composed and published several *romances*. Her son, Gustave Garcia (1837-1925), was a baritone and teacher.

*Glossop, Joséphine (née Bonneau-de-Méric) (1801-1877). Opéra: 1827-1830.*

Joséphine Glossop debuted at the Théâtre Italien in 1823 and sang at the theatre for just over a year. She then married Joseph Glossop, an impresario from La Scala. She was hired at the Opéra in 1826, but when the director Lubbert took over management of the theatre, he looked to cancel the soprano's contract. Her contract assured her over 20,000 francs a year, a very lucrative salary at that time, and held a contract of



fifteen years (the theatre was still under the old system that produced long contracts). She debuted in 1828 in *Moïse* and *Le Siège de Corinthe*, two operas that did not suit her voice at all. Lubbert did not consider her vocal talents compatible with the new repertoire; unable to cancel her contract, and hesitant to program those (now very unpopular) works from the older repertoire that suited her voice better, he concluded that he would simply pay the singer but not allow her to sing. Glossop eventually tired of her inactivity, and successfully petitioned for a congé from May 1828 to May 1829 that would allow her to take up a contract in Madrid (she was permitted to sing at any theatre *except* those in Paris). Upon her return, she asked to sing, but found that she had been mysteriously “disappeared” from the Opéra’s record books. The disputes between the two parties ended up in court, and Lubbert succeeded in having her contract cancelled. It appears she was initially considered for the role of Alice in *Robert le diable*, but Meyerbeer, upon hearing her in *La Muette de Portici*, judged her to be quite ill suited for the role. She spent most of her career after that in Italy.

*Gosselin, Augusta (née Mori) (?-?). Opéra: 1826-1837.*

Contralto. Originally from England, Augusta Gosselin sang for some time in Italy. Upon her arrival in Paris, she was hired at the Théâtre Italien, where she debuted in April 1824. She sang at the theatre until August 1826, and then the Opéra hired her. Before debuting, however, she had to work on eradicating her English accent. An excellent singer, with a flexible, suave contralto voice, Gosselin-Mori was hired to sing the Opéra’s new repertoire, creating roles such as Mari in Rossini’s *Moïse et Pharaon*, Ragonde in *Le Comte Ory* (1828), Edwige in *Guillaume Tell* (1829), and Mme Gondelaurier in Bertin’s *La Esmeralda* (1836). She was forced to retire in 1837 by Duponchel, and given a pension of 1,600 francs for her thirteen years of service. She married Louis François Gosselin, a ballet dancer, during her employment at the Opéra.

*Grassari, Caroline-Joséphine (née Gérard) (1798-?). Opéra: 1816-1828.*

Soprano. Daughter of a lieutenant general, later Burgermeister in Tangier, the Baron Gérard. She began her studies in Belgium and continued at the Paris Conservatoire from 1814 to 1816. She debuted in 1816 in the role of Antigone in *OEdipe à Colonne*, and moved into the position of *premier sujet* in 1821 once Mlle Armand retired. She created a number of important roles, but was particularly praised for Amazilie in *Fernand Cortez*, where she could demonstrate her abilities as an actress as well as singer.

She performed main roles until 1828 when she was asked by the administration to retire early; Lubbert's administration paid the singer 30,000 francs to cancel her contract. With the recent hire of star singer Laure Cinti-Damoreau and the change in repertoire, Grassari lost her privileged place in the troupe. During her career, she was continually praised for the beauty of her voice as well as her physical beauty, and was well known for having exceptionally virtuous reputation. There is no trace of her in the press or elsewhere after 1828; she likely retired definitively from public life.

*Grimm, Sophie (Mme Petit) (1824-1879). Opéra Comique: 1846, 1849-1850s; Opéra: 1847-1848.*

Soprano. Sophie Grimm studied at the Paris Conservatoire, and took the first prize in singing and in *opéra-comique* in 1846. She debuted at the Opéra Comique in 1846 in the role of Carlo Broschi in Auber's *La Part du diable*. She created the role of Raphaëla in Auber's *Haydée* in 1847 and Alice in Boulanger's *La Cachette* (1847). She then moved to the Opéra where she debuted as Mathilde in *Guillaume Tell*, Alice in *Robert le diable*, and Teresina in *Le Philtre* in July 1848. She premièred Aïxa in Clapisson's *Jeanne la folle* (1848). She returned to the Opéra Comique in 1849, and premièred Ambroise Thomas's *Le Songe d'une nuit d'été* in 1850. From the 1840s and through the 1850s, Grimm sang frequently in concerts in Paris, particularly the Société des concerts. She married the theatre painter Jules Petit in 1857, and withdrew completely from professional singing.

*Heinefetter, Catinka (Kathinka) (1819-1858). Opéra: 1840-1842.*

Soprano *falcon*. One of six sisters who pursued theatrical careers: Clara Maria Heinefetter-Stöckl (1816-1857), Eva Heinefetter-Stöger (c. 1810-?), Fatime Heinefetter and Nanette Heinefetter. She studied singing with her older sister, Sabine Heinefetter (1809-1872), who had a successful international career and sang at the Théâtre Italien in Paris. Catinka debuted in 1837 in the role of Agathe in Weber's *Der Freischütz* in Frankfurt. She then arrived in Paris and was hired to sing at the Opéra in 1840. While preparing for her debuts, she studied with Géraudy, Louis Ponchard, and Michelot, and worked on perfecting her French pronunciation. She debuted as Rachel in *La Juive* in 1841 and then left the theatre to sing at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in 1842. She sang in Brussels and Bordeaux in 1843, Marseille in 1844, Bordeaux again in 1844, and then spent the 1845-1846 season in Marseille. She later sang at opera

houses in Hamburg, Berlin, Vienna, and Budapest. She retired in 1858, but died just months later at the age of thirty-eight.

*Janicot, Marie Louise Laure (1826-?). Opéra: 1847.*

Laure Janicot studied with a number of celebrated voice instructors in Paris, most notably Duprez and Bordogni, and spent a year at the Paris Conservatoire, under the instruction of Banderali, in 1842-1843. She began singing in salons in 1847 and was hired at the Opéra for a year from 1847 to 1848. However, she was hired simply as a *coryphée*, and very little information can be found on her time at the theatre.

*Jawureck, Constance (1803-1858). Opéra: 1822-1837.*

Soprano. Her father, a German musician, first taught her music and then enrolled her at the Conservatoire de Paris. There she studied with Charles-Henri Plantade, Pierre-Jean Garat, and Nicholas Baptiste *ainé*, and won the second prize in vocalisation in 1820. She debuted at Opéra in 1822 in *Aladin, ou La Lampe merveilleuse*. She quickly moved up from *double* to *remplacement*, and took over Grassari's roles upon her departure in 1828. She made a relatively successful transition from the Opéra's old to the new repertoire, creating some of the more important, albeit secondary roles in the new operas, including Isolier from Rossini's *Le Comte Ory* (1828), Jeannette in Auber's *Le Philtre* (1831), Berthe in Weber's *Eurianthe* (1831), two small roles in Halévy's *La Tentation* (1832), and Fleur-de-lys in Bertin's *La Esmeralda* (1836). Duponchel did not renew her contract upon its termination in 1837, and she took up a contract at the Théâtre de la Monnaie as the *forte première chanteuse*, singing in some of Falcon's roles from grand opera. She retired from the stage definitively around 1839, likely due to vocal deterioration. Her younger sister, Mlle Jawureck *jeune*, performed at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin in 1824 and at the Ambigu in 1825-1826 in soubrette roles.

*Julian, Esther Eliza (Mme Julian Van Gelder) (1819-?). Opéra: 1840-1841; 1847-1848.*

Soprano *falcon*. Eliza Julian began her music lessons with her father, a musician, and continued her studies at the Paris Conservatoire where she took lessons with Nicholas-Jean Martin and Jean-Marc Bordogni. She obtained the first prize in singing in 1837. She was contracted to sing at the Opéra and she debuted in May 1840 in the roles of Alice from *Robert le diable* and Rachel from *La Juive*. She left the theatre in 1841 to take up a contract at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels where

she sang the title role in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Mathilde in *Guillaume Tell*, and Julia in *La Vestale*. After the season's end, she left for the provinces where she sang in Marseille, Lille, and Bordeaux. Upon her return to Lille, she married the Dutch singer and pianist Van Gelder. She sang in Lyon for the 1845-1846 season, and then in Toulouse in 1846. She returned to sing at the Opéra in 1847 where she created the role of Hélène in Verdi's *Jérusalem*. In 1848, she left for London where she sang at Her Majesty's Theatre under the name of Mlle Giuliani, singing the role of Adalgisa in Bellini's *Norma*. She debuted at the Théâtre Italien in Paris in 1850, but did not remain. Her contracts took her to Belgium, Holland, Spain, and Strasbourg where, in 1853, she created the role of Fidès in *Le Prophète*. All traces of the singer disappear around 1854.

*Jullienne [Julienne], Augustine Eugénie (Mme Dejean) (1820-?). Opéra: 1845-1846; 1848-1850.*

Soprano *falcon*. Eugénie Jullienne began her musical studies in Rouen, and then arrived in Paris where she quickly obtained a debut at the Paris Opéra in 1845 in the roles of Rachel from *La Juive*, Alice from *Robert le diable*, and Valentine from *Les Huguenots*. She attended the Paris Conservatoire to perfect her vocal technique, and studied for a year with Duprez and Levasseur (*déclamation lyrique*, opera). She married by 1848 and continued her career with a hyphenated name, Mme Julienne-Dejean. She left the Opéra definitively in 1850 and went on tour to the French provinces. In 1852 and 1853 she sang at Covent Garden in London as Pauline in *Les Martyrs* and Rachel in *La Juive*. She also sang in Barcelona in 1852-1853 and in 1855-1856, adding the role of Valentine in *Les Huguenots* to her repertoire. She then left to go on tour to South America in 1856-1857 where she sang the role of Catarina in *La Reine de Chypre* in Rio de Janeiro. She began singing Italian repertoire, particularly that of Verdi, who composed the role of Amelia in his *Un ballo in maschera* for her. She sang in Trieste, Florence, and Rome in 1858-1859; in 1860-1861 she sang in Madrid, and in 1862 in Seville. She premièred *Les Huguenots* at the theatre d'Oporto in Portugal in 1863. She continued singing until about 1869. She co-managed an international theatre agency with Tamburini (*filis?*) beginning in 1876 in Paris.

*Laurent, Laurence-Françoise (née Grandidier) (1807-1867). Opéra: 1829-1850.*

Contralto. Laurence Laurent studied at the Paris Conservatoire and won the first prize in solfège in 1827. Hired at the Opéra in 1829 as a *double*, she mostly fulfilled the position of *coryphée*, rarely performing anything other than very small roles in

the operas. She married Émile Laurent, a theatre director (employed for some time at the Théâtre Français). Although she never managed to move up in the ranks, she nevertheless remained at the Opéra until about 1850.

*Lavoye, Anne Benoîte Louise (1823-1897). Opéra Comique: 1843-1849.*

Soprano. Louise Lavoye began her studies at the Conservatoire in Lille in 1836, and then continued at the Paris Conservatoire later that same year where she studied with Laure Cinti-Damoreau. She began singing in concerts, particularly the Société des concerts, around 1840. She won first prizes in singing in 1840 and in *opéra-comique* in 1842, and quickly obtained a debut at the Opéra Comique, where she first appeared in 1843 in the role of Henriette from *L'Ambassadrice*, a role originally created by her teacher. She created the roles of Zerline in Auber's *La Sirène* (1844), Thérèse in Labarre's *Le Ménétrier* (1845), Mlle de Solange in Halévy's *Les Mousquetaires de la reine* (1846), Séraphine in Potier's *Le Caquet du couvent* (1846), la Reine in Boisselot's *Ne touchez pas à la reine!* (1847), Ginetta in Boïeldieu fils's *Le Bouquet de l'Infante* (1847, alongside her sister, Marie), the title role in Auber's *Haydée* (1847), and Georgette in Halévy's *Le Val d'Andorre* (1848). She took over Cinti-Damoreau's roles in the repertoire once Anna Thillon left in 1845. Perhaps recognizing the possibility she might lose her comfortable position at the theatre with the recent hire of Delphine Ugalde, a very talented soprano, she left the Opéra Comique in 1849 and continued her career in the provinces. She debuted at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in May 1849, but, curiously enough, failed to pass the debut process. She then sang in Lyon later that year, then in Marseille in 1850 where she began taking on the grand opera repertoire, singing Berthe in *Le Prophète*. She returned to Lyon in 1852, then sang in Marseille from 1852 to 1854, and appeared in some concerts in Paris in 1853. In 1852, she broke off her relationship with the tenor Froment, whom she was intending to marry. She performed in Bordeaux in 1855-1856 and Rouen in 1856-1857 where she took on some roles from the Italian repertoire, including Rosine from *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*. She sang in Nantes in 1859-1860, and later performed in Geneva, Brussels, and Lyon. The last few years of her career were primarily spent singing in concerts, and she took up teaching in Nantes. She retired definitively by 1884 and received a pension of 500 francs, but spent the last few years of her life in poverty; Rosine Laborde paid for her funeral and burial arrangements.

*Lavoye, Marie Hippolyte Antoinette (Mme Mathieu) (1828-?). Opéra Comique: 1846-1849.*

Soprano. The younger sister of Louise Lavoye. Marie Lavoye began her studies in 1843 at the Paris Conservatoire where she took lessons with Jean-Marc Bordogni. She won the second prize in *opéra-comique* in 1845, and then debuted at the Opéra Comique in March 1846 in *Cendrillon*. She sang at the Opéra Comique until about 1849; however, she never obtained the same kind of success as her older sister, Louise. Still, she created several roles, including Madeleine in Bazin's *Le Malheureux d'être jolie* (1847), Rose in Boulanger's *La Cachette* (1847), and Gabrielle in Boïeldieu fils's *Le Bouquet de l'Infante* (1847, alongside her sister, Louise). She later married J. Mathieu, and either left the stage or pursued her career rather obscurely in the provinces.

*Lavry, Clara (née Leroux) (1806-?). Opéra: 1830-1832.*

Younger sister of Louise Dabadie. She studied at the Paris Conservatoire where she took the second prize in singing in 1829. She debuted in the role of la dame d'honneur in Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*. She sang at the Opéra only two years before moving on to the provinces. She sang the role of Isabelle in the same opera in Brussels in 1833. She led mainly a career in the provinces; she performed in Rouen in 1840. (Their younger sister, Pauline Leroux (1809-1891), was a well-known ballet dancer at the Opéra.)

*Lebrun, Annette (Mme Marquis de Montréal) (1810-?). Opéra Comique: 1834-1836; Opéra: 1838-1841.*

Mezzo-soprano, contralto. Her father, Louis Sébastien Lebrun (1764-1829) was a tenor and composer, her mother Caroline Percillier (d. 1856), a singer at the Opéra. She studied harp with Mlle Bertrand, singing with Joseph-Marc-Marie-Félix Blangini, and had some lessons with Rossini. She debuted at the Opéra Comique in 1834 in Boïeldieu's *Les Voitures versées* and Auber's *Concert à la cour* and sang at the theatre for about two years. In that time, she created the roles of Paquita in Adam's *La Marquise* (1835), Anna in Carafa's *La Grande duchesse* (1835), and Ulrique in Gomis's *Rock le barbu* (1836), but as the theatre did not have much room in the repertoire for a contralto, she left soon for the provinces. She then debuted at the Opéra in 1838 in Falcon's *emploi*, singing Rachel in *La Juive* and Valentine in *Les Huguenots*, and sang at the theatre until 1841. She continued her career in the provinces, singing in Nantes and Rouen in 1840, Amiens in 1841, and in Toulouse,



Marseille, and Bordeaux in 1843. By 1850, she was singing Italian opera in Manchester under her married name, Mme Lebrun de Montréal: she had married the marquis de Montréal sometime in the 1840s. Her husband died by 1856, and she continued her performing career. In 1852 she sang the role of Fidès in *Le Prophète* at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels. The date of her death is not known, but she was still alive in 1870.

*Lemmonier, Louise-Thérèse-Antoinette (née Regnault) (1789-1866). Opéra Comique: 1808-1831.*

Soprano. Louise Lemonnier began her career in Rouen where she sang opéra-comique for about four years. She then debuted in 1808 at the Opéra Comique. She married the Opéra Comique tenor, Louis-Auguste Lemonnier (1793-1875) and continued her career under her married name. She created roles in Isouard's *Cendrillon* (1810), Boïeldieu's *Jean de Paris* (1812), Auber's *Leicester* (1823), Adam's *Danilowa* and *Joséphine* (1830) (among many others). After 1830, she only created small roles and continued to sing in those that she had already created. She took her retirement from the Opéra Comique in 1831 and held her retirement benefit concert the following year.

*Margueron, Marie Clara (Mme) (?-?). Opéra Comique: 1832-1835.*

Soprano. Clara Margueron studied in Italy before debuting at the Opéra Comique in Hérold's *Zampa*, Boïeldieu's *Jean de Paris*, and Auber's *Le Maçon* in 1832. In 1833, she created a host of roles, including Effie in Carafa's *La Prison d'Edimbourg*, Sarah in Gomis's *Le Revenant*, Zulietta in Blangini's *Les Gondoliers*, and Charlotte in Despréaux's *Le Souper du mari*. She remained at the theatre until about 1835 when she left to pursue her career in the provinces. She began to add roles from the grand opera repertoire, singing Isabelle in *Robert le diable* in Marseille in 1835, Valentine from *Les Huguenots* and Alice from *Robert le diable* in Bordeaux in 1840-1841. With her success in grand opera, she returned to Paris to audition for the Opéra, but was not successful. She returned to the provinces, and for the 1842-1843 season in Nantes, she was hired as the *soprano sérieuse*.

*Masson, Elise Oscarine (?-1867). Opéra Comique: 1843; Opéra: 1847-1848; 1851-1853.*

Mezzo-soprano. Elise Masson studied with Gilbert-Louis Duprez and began singing in concerts and in salons around 1842 in Paris. She made her first debut at the Opéra

Comique as Camille in *Zampa* in 1843, but did not remain much more than a year at the theatre. She left to tour the provinces and sang in Toulouse, and then in Nantes from 1845 to 1847, where she began adding roles from grand opera to her repertoire, notably Odette from Halévy's *Charles VI*. She then debuted at the Paris Opéra in 1847 in the same role, and then performed several roles drawn from Falcon's and Stoltz's repertoire. She created the role of Clara in Benoist's *L'Apparition* and the title role in Clapisson's *Jeanne la Folle* in 1848. She left the Opéra later that year and continued her career in the provinces and abroad, performing in Marseille, Bordeaux, Nantes, and Liège in 1849. She sang in Brussels in 1851, then returned to the Opéra from 1851 to 1853 where she sang Fidès from *Le Prophète*, Léonor from *La Favorite*, and in Gounod's *Sapho*. In 1856 she sang *Le Prophète* in Milan at La Scala, in 1858 she performed in Barcelona, and in 1860 had returned to Italy to perform in Florence. In 1862, she traveled to Cuba where she performed in Havana. She returned to France and sang in Nantes occasionally in 1863 and 1864. As she had often performed in Nantes during her career, she enjoyed more celebrity in that city than in Paris. By the 1860s, her voice was showing some wear, but the public in Nantes still appreciated seeing the singer perform. She died about five years later of breast cancer.

*Massy, Marie-Éliza (née Gicomasci; Mme Hébert-Massy) (1814-1875). Opéra Comique: 1832-1835, 1842; Opéra: 1847-1853.*

Soprano. Marie Massy, born Gicomasci, began her studies at the age of twelve at Choron's École royale de musique, and was granted a prestigious place in the school's *pensionnat*. Her parents withdrew her from the school during the political turmoil of 1830, and she took private lessons and began performing in concerts. She acquired the protection and support of Martin, the Opéra Comique's famous baritone who lent his name to an *emploi*, and her first debut at the theatre took place in October 1832, the same evening as his final performance (he had briefly come out of his retirement to sing at the Opéra Comique). She created several roles in a short period of time: Agathe from Hérold's *La Médecine sans médecin* (1832), Nicette from Hérold's *Le Pré aux clercs* (1832), Nice from Hérold and Halévy's *Ludovic* (1833), and Jeannie from Carafa's *La Prison d'Edinbourg* (1833). She remained at the theatre for about three years, married her Opéra Comique colleague Hébert, and then left to pursue her career in the provinces. In 1837, she sang in Marseille, and then sang in Rouen in 1840. She briefly reappeared at the Opéra Comique in 1842, and then she was off to Bordeaux in 1844, and sang in Lille as the *premier soprano léger* for the 1844-1845 season. She sang for the 1846-1847 season in Lyon. She then returned to Paris and

was contracted to sing at the Paris Opéra where she debuted in the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. She remained at the theatre until 1853. She performed at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin in 1852, in a work in which Auber had composed the music. She then devoted herself to teaching, and took up a position at the Conservatoire in Toulouse.

*Méquillet, Sophie (1822-?). Opéra: 1842-1845.*

Soprano *falcon*. Sophie Méquillet was from a well-to-do (some even suggested a noble) family who lost much of their fortune. She put her excellent musical education to good use and began studying voice in earnest. She became an active singer in salons and concerts in 1837, and taught voice lessons in Paris. Catching the attention of the tenor Rubini, he granted her several lessons and advised her to continue her vocal education in Italy. She traveled to Naples around November 1838 where she was mentored by Adolphe Nourrit, just months before his suicide. Although initially distraught from the tragic death of her mentor, she decided to pursue professional singing. She debuted at the San Carlo theatre in Naples in May 1839. The next few years were spent in Italy, where she sang in Rome, Florence, Livorno, and Lucca. She returned to Paris, where she debuted at the Opéra in Falcon's roles, Valentine from *Les Huguenots* and Rachel in *La Juive*, in September 1842. She remained at the theatre singing those roles and doubling Stoltz in some of her repertoire. During her time at the Opéra, she created a number of roles, including Émilie in Rossini's *Othello* (1844), Edith Plantagenet in Adam's *Richard en Palestine* (1844), Anna Kennedy in Niedermeyer's *Marie Stuart* (1844). Her contract finished in 1845, and she left the theatre to pursue other performing opportunities. She sang in Caen and Lyon in 1845, Marseille and Nîmes in 1846, and The Hague for the 1847-1848 season. Her travels continued as she sang at the Théâtre de Boulogne in 1848, Brest in 1849, Rouen in 1851, and Munich in 1852. She was hired at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels for the 1852-1853 season as the *première chanteuse grand opéra*. She sang in Liège in 1853, where she notably performed the role of Fidès in *Le Prophète*. Méquillet retired from the stage in 1854, and devoted herself entirely to teaching.

*Moisson, Joséphine-Clady (1823-?). Opéra: 1846-1847.*

Mezzo-soprano. Joséphine Moisson entered the Paris Conservatoire in 1841 and took voice lessons with Auguste-Mathieu Panseron. She obtained the second prize in opera in 1844. She obtained a contract to sing in Rouen, but was quickly called to debut at the Opéra and had to cancel her provincial contract. She ended up debuting

in the première Mermet's *David* in June 1846, and then as Rachel from *La Juive* in August. She remained at the theatre only for a short time, her contract getting cancelled only halfway through her three-year term due to reasons of "economy." She turned her sights to the provinces where she performed in Amiens, Lille, Potiers, Geneva, Dijon, and Bordeaux, in Falcon's and Stoltz's repertoire. She appealed to the director at the Opéra in 1854 for a contract, but was not successful.

*Moreau-Sainti, Marie-Lucile (?-?). Opéra Comique: 1855; Opéra: 1856.*

Her father was Théodore-François Moreau-Sainti (né Moreau, 1799-1860), and her mother the actress Marie-Louise Estancelin, known as Mlle Sainti. Marie Moreau-Sainti studied singing with Laure Cinti-Damoreau, and so resembled her teacher in style (and in name) that she was often taken for her daughter. She was first hired at the Opéra Comique in 1855, but moved to the Opéra in 1856 where she debuted in Verdi's *Les Vêpres siciliennes*. In 1857 she made her debut in Turin, and in 1859 was singing in Florence. She returned to France and sang in Bordeaux in 1863. Her brother was an actor and debuted alongside his mother at the Odéon in 1848. He did not have a long career as an actor, however, and instead became an administrator at the Théâtre de l'Ambigu and the director at the Folies Dramatiques.

*Morin, Marie Caroline (née Lebrun) (1807-1865). Opéra: 1824-1828, 1837-1840; Opéra Comique: 1829-1831.*

Mezzo-soprano. Sister of Annette Lebrun. Her father, Louis Sébastien Lebrun (1764-1829) was a tenor and composer, her mother Caroline Percillier (d. 1856), a singer at the Opéra. Her parents first taught her music, and then she took voice lessons from Charles-Henri Plantade, and studied dramatic art with Milon and her father. She studied at the Paris Conservatoire and won the second prize in singing in 1823. She first debuted at the Opéra as Philis, from her father's *Le Rossignol*, Julie from *Les Prétendus*, and Antigone from *OEdipe à Colonne*. She married Laurent-Josèph Morin (1805-1865?, professor of *déclamation lyrique* at the Conservatoire) by 1827 and left the theatre by 1828. She then sang at the Opéra Comique from 1829 to 1831. From there, she seems to have spent some time in the provinces and abroad, and also sang at the Théâtre Italien. She sang at the Théâtre de la Monnaie for the 1834-1835 season in the position of *dugazon et fortes secondes chanteuses*. In 1837, she sang in Toulouse, although she was not received enthusiastically. She later returned to sing at the Opéra where she replaced Gosselin-Mori upon her retirement in 1837; she sang at the theatre until 1840, and then retired from the stage.

*Nathan-Treilhet, Célestine (1815-1873). Opéra: 1839-1840, 1841-1845.*

Soprano *falcon*. Célestine Nathan studied with Duprez, who probably helped his student acquire a lucrative contract at the Opéra where she made her first debuts in 1839 in Falcon's *emploi*. She remained at the theatre for just over a year, and then went to sing at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in September 1840. She married Eugène Treilhet, a painter. She returned to sing at the Opéra the following year, where she shared Falcon's roles with Sophie Méquillet. She contracted smallpox and had a difficult pregnancy and birth (her daughter, Cécile Caroline Treilhet, was born in July 1844). Her health problems impeded her service and she experienced vocal troubles as well. Her contract was eventually terminated by Pillet when, along with a team of doctors and administrators, they declared the singer no longer in the physical capacity to continue her service. She took her retirement from the stage at that time and devoted herself to her family.

*Nau, Maria Dolorès Benedicta Joséphina (1818-1891). Opéra: 1836-1853 (non-continuously).*

Soprano. Born in New York to parents who were formerly Spanish colonists in the Saint-Dominique, Nau came to Paris with her mother after the death of her father. She studied at the Conservatoire with Laure Cinti-Damoreau. She won the first prize in singing in 1834 and was soon hired at the Opéra. Her first debut at the Opéra ended up being in the role of Urbain in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* as she filled in at the last minute for Maria Flécheux. She established herself in the troupe singing the roles sung by Cinti-Damoreau, and created several roles, including Zélia in Auber's *Le Lac des fées*, Annette in the French adaptation of Weber's *Le Freyschütz*, and Lucie in the adaptation of Donizetti's *Lucia de Lammermoor*. Duponchel did not renew her contract upon its expiration in 1842, and she left to tour the French provinces and to take up contracts in London and at the Théâtre de la Monnaie. Her success during those years assured her a better reception upon her return to the Opéra in 1844; her salary was almost doubled. Upon Dorus-Gras's retirement in 1845, she, along with Claire Dobré, took over her roles as well. During the political upheaval in 1848, she left again for a tour to the United States and sang for eighteen months at the Princess Theatre in London. She returned to sing at the Opéra until 1853. She went on tour to the United States once again, and then returned to Paris where she retired definitively from singing around 1856 when she lost her voice completely. Her daughter Pauline Nau sang professionally in the late 1860s.

*Paun, Hortenzy de (Varinsky) (Mme de Varny) (?-?). Opéra: 1838-1839.*

Soprano. Hortenzy de Paun was sent from Brussels by her parents to study with Jean-Marc Bordogni and Louis Ponchard. The Varin family hosted her during her time in Paris, and she later continued her career under a version of their family name. She solicited an audition from Duponchel once she began running out of financial resources. He hired her on a two-year contract and gave her a 1,000-franc advance. She only sang for a year at the theatre, but continued her career abroad. She sang in London under the name Mme de Varny at Her Majesty's Theatre, and then at the San Carlo theatre in Naples in 1842 in the title role of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Unfortunately, she did not have much success, and traces of her career disappear after 1842.

*Peignat, Louise Émilie (Mme Roulle) (1815-?). Opéra: 1834-1835.*

Soprano *falcon*. Louise Peignat studied with Davidde Banderali at the Paris Conservatoire and won the first prize in vocalisation in 1832. She debuted at the Opéra Comique in Weber's *Robin des bois*, Hérold's *Le Pré aux clercs*, and Auber's *Lestocq* in 1834. She married in 1836 and continued pursuing her career under her married name, Mme Roulle. She debuted *à l'improviste* at the Opéra in 1840 but did not manage to negotiate a contract, even though she was well received by the public. She sang in Toulouse in 1838, Lyon in 1840, Marseille for the 1841-1842 season, Nîmes in 1843, and Toulouse for the 1843-1844 season. In 1846, she sang in Liège, Toulouse, and Montpellier. By 1849, she was singing in concerts in Paris. Her daughter (?) Anaïs Roulle (1844-1878), born in Toulouse, studied piano and harmony at the Paris Conservatoire, and eventually became an instructor of solfège from 1864 to 1878.

*Pijon, Cécile-Henriette-Eugénie (dite d'Halbert, Mme Ponchard) (1821-?). Opéra: 1845-1849.*

Soprano. Cécile Pijon d'Halbert studied with Duprez at the Conservatoire and won the first prize in singing in 1845. She was hired at the Opéra to sing the light soprano repertoire and debuted in the role of Mathilde in *Guillaume Tell*. Although her employment was threatened several times, her father (and some well-placed friends) managed to help the singer keep her position at the theatre. She married Charles Ponchard, a singer and the son of the Opéra Comique singers, and remained at the Opéra until 1849. She sang a small *coryphée* role in *Le Prophète*. After leaving the

Opéra, she devoted herself to singing in concerts. Her husband continued his career at the Opéra Comique.

*Ponchard, Marie-Sophie (née Callault) (1792-1873). Opéra Comique: 1818-1836.*

Soprano. Sophie Ponchard began her studies in 1810 at the Paris Conservatoire and won first prize in singing and in *tragédie lyrique* in 1812. In 1814, she debuted at the Opéra in the role of Iphigénie from Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide*, but did not find much success. She left to pursue her career in the provinces where she sang notably in Rouen in 1817. In 1818, she returned to Paris and debuted at the Opéra Comique where she remained until her retirement in 1836. She created roles in Auber's *Emma* (1821), D'Hérancy's *Le Timide* (1826), la Reine in Hérold's *Le Pré aux clercs* (1832), Sarah in Carafa's *La Prison d'Édinbourg*, and Tao-Jin in Auber's *Le Cheval de Bronze* (1835). In 1832, she premièred the role of Isabelle in *Robert le diable* in Liège. She married her Opéra Comique colleague (also a Conservatoire instructor), tenor Louis-Antoine-Éléonore Ponchard (1787-1866), and their son, Charles-Marie-Auguste Ponchard (1824-1891), had a career as a tenor, theatre manager, and vocal pedagogue.

*Potier, Marie-Ambrosine-Minette (née de Cussy) [Mme Henri-Potier] (1817-1870). Opéra Comique: 1840-1847.*

Soprano. Marie Potier studied at the Paris Conservatoire where she won the first prize in piano in 1834 and the first prize in singing in 1837; her vocal instructor was Laure Cinti-Damoreau. Before she completed her studies, she married Henry Potier, the pianist and composer. She then debuted at the Opéra Comique in 1840 in the title role of Thomas's *Carline*. She created several roles, including Mina de Barnheim in Boïeldieu fils's *L'Opéra à la cour* (1840), Claire in Clapisson's *Le Pendu* (1841), Inès in Colet's *L'Ingénue* (1841), Paula in Kastner's *La Maschera* (1841), Élise in Clapisson's *Frère et mari* (1841), Lucile in Boïeldieu fils's *L'Aïeule* (1841), the title role in her husband Potier's *Mademoiselle de Mérange* (1841), Cécile in Adam's *Cagliostro* (1844), Agathe in Boilly's *Le Bal du sous-préfet* (1844), Claire in Balfé's *Les Quatre fils Aymon* (1844), Cécile in Bousquet's *Le Mousquetaire* (1844), Mlle de Viller in Boulanger's *Une voix* (1845), Djéna in Doché's *Le Veuf du Malabar* (1846), and Isabelle in her husband's *Le Claquet du couvent* (1846). Throughout the 1840s, she performed frequently in salons and concerts in Paris. In 1843, she sang the role of Catarina in Auber's *Les Diamants de la couronne* in Rouen. She retired from the stage in 1847, in part due to vocal fatigue after seven very hectic years of performance



at the Opéra Comique, and devoted herself to vocal pedagogy. In 1848, she appeared in the Opéra's reprise performance of Adam's *Le Brasseur de Preston*, where she apparently did the military march and swore, smoked, and sang with such relish that the audience immediately demanded an encore. She became a *professeur-adjoint* at the Paris Conservatoire and assisted Laure Cinti-Damoreau in her lessons until the latter's retirement in 1856.

*Pradher, Félicité (née More) (1800-1876). Opéra Comique: 1816-1835.*

Soprano. Her father was a theatre director in the provinces and regarded as one of the best basses of the period; he was also her first music teacher. Félicité Pradher began her career as a child singer at the age of five, in the role of Jeannette in Monsigny's *Le Déserteur*. She debuted in 1816 in Rouen and took up the position of *première chanteuse* at the theatre, but was soon ordered to debut at the Opéra Comique, where she eventually debuted later that year. By 1820 she became a *sociétaire* in the company, and she married Louis-Barthélemy Pradher (1781-1843), a pianist, composer, and instructor at the Conservatoire in Toulouse and later at the Conservatoire in Paris. She performed the roles of the *amoureuse* in several popular *opéras-comiques*, including Amy Robsart in Auber's *Leicester* (1823), the title role in Auber's *Léocadie* (1824), Irma in Auber's *Le Maçon* (1825), the title role in Auber's *Fiorella* (1826), and Henriette in Auber's *La Fiancée* (1829). She took her retirement in 1835 and toured for some time in the provinces.

*Prévost, Caroline-Élisa (1828-?). Opéra Comique: 1849.*

Daughter of Zoé Prévost and Jean-Baptiste Chollet. She studied at the Paris Conservatoire where she won the second prize in solfège in 1847. She began her career in the provinces, singing in Bordeaux in 1847, and then debuted at the Opéra Comique in 1849 in *Les Diamants de la couronne*. She, and her mother, Zoé Prévost, signed a two-year contract at the theatre; however, soon after her debut, she left the theatre and went to sing as the *première chanteuse à roulades* in Brussels at the Théâtre de la Monnaie. In 1850, she married the tenor Montaubry, who would later take over many of her father Chollet's roles at the Opéra Comique. She sang in The Hague in 1850.

*Prévost, Zoé (1802-1861). Opéra Comique: 1821-1850 (non-continuously).*

Soprano. Prévost began her studies at the Conservatoire with Louis Ponchard and won the second prize in opera in 1820. After singing for some time in concerts,

she debuted at the Opéra Comique in 1821 in Grétry's *La Fausse magie*. Her main creations included Zerline in Auber's *Fra diavolo* (1830) and the Marquise in his *La Marquise de Brinvilliers*. She also created the roles of Mathilde in Carafa's *La Grande duchesse* (1835), Marguerite in Auber's *Les Chaperons blancs* (1836), Madeleine in Adam's *Le Postillon de Lonjumeau* (1836), Suzanne in Thomas's *La Double échelle* (1837), la marquise de Sauve in Onslow's *Guise* (1837), Elfie in Adam's *Le Brasseur de Preston* (1838), Joséphine in Grisar's *Les Travestissements* (a one-act work with only two main performers that she performed with Chollet, 1839), la Baronne in Thomas's *Carline* (1840), Marthe in Adam's *Lambert Simnel* (1843), and Mathéa in Auber's *La Sirène* (1844). For much of the 1840s, Prévost performed her established repertoire and created small roles, usually the *duègne*, her new *emploi* (she had, of course, begun her career singing the *jeunes amoureuses* and *chanteuses*). She left with her companion Chollet to sing at the Théâtre de la Monnaie from 1832 to 1834, and was engaged as the *première chanteuse en tous genres et fortes Dugazon*. She then returned to the Opéra Comique where she remained until her retirement, around 1850. She sang alongside her daughter, Caroline Prévost, during her debuts at the theatre, in 1849. Her brother Eugène-Prosper Prévost (1809-1872) was a well-known composer; she sang in a number of his works at the theatre.

Quiney, Cornélie (Mme Baptiste) (1798-?). Opéra: 1821-1836.

Mezzo-soprano, contralto. Cornélie Quiney began studying music at the age of seven, as part of the extensive education initially provided by her family. Solicited by several voice instructors to pursue professional singing, she finally enrolled at the Conservatoire where she studied with Plantade and Lays. After less than two years of studies, she was called to debut at the Opéra, where she first appeared in the role of La Grande vestale in Spontini's *La Vestale* in 1820. She struggled to climb the hierarchy at the theatre and was finally promoted to *remplacement* in 1825, but never attained the position of *premier sujet*. She eventually transformed herself from a mediocre soprano (albeit with an extensive, almost three octave range) into a fine contralto. However, the Opéra administration did not feel that there was a place for a contralto in the repertoire. In 1833, she was given a leave of absence of twenty months and could take up singing contracts all the while remaining attached to the theatre. She was eventually forced to retire from the Opéra in 1836, although she continued to concertize until at least 1840. Upon her retirement, she received a pension of 1,800 francs.

*Révilly, Antoinette Hermance Jeanne (1822-1899). Opéra Comique: 1840-1875.*

Mezzo-soprano. Her father was a dancer at the theatre in Lyon. Hermance Révilly began her studies at the Paris Conservatoire where she won the first prizes in singing and in opera in 1840. She debuted at the Opéra Comique in 1840 in the role of Marie from Donizetti's *La Fille du régiment* and remained at the theatre for thirty-five years. She created the roles of Julia in Kastner's *La Maschera* (1841), Mariquita in Auber's *Le Duc d'Olonne* (1842), Gabrielle in Clapisson's *Le Code noir* (1842), Thérèse in Mazas's *Le Kiosque* (1842), the Reine Marie-Thérèse in Auber's *La Part du diable* (1843), la Comtesse in Adam's *Lambert Simnel* (1843), Clélia in Auber's *La Barcarolle* (1845), Hélène in Boulanger's *La Cachette* (1847), and Thérèse in Halévy's *Le Val d'Andorre* (1848). She later created roles in Grisar's *Bonsoir, Mr Pantalon!* (1851), Bazin's *Le Voyage en Chine* (1865), and Délibes's *Le Roi l'a dit* (1873). She retired from the theatre in 1875 after a thirty-five year career.

*Rieux, Marie Angéline [Angélina de Rieux] (1820-?). Opéra: 1838-1839.*

Mezzo-soprano. Born in Marseille, Angéline Rieux studied in Germany and in Italy, and at the Paris Conservatoire in 1838 with Ponchard. She debuted in the role of Alice from *Robert le diable* at the Opéra in 1839, but did not remain long at the theatre, even though the critics praised her talent and skill during her debuts. She left for Italy where she debuted in Milan at La Scala in an opera by Mercadante in 1841, and later sang Alice from *Robert le diable* in Livorno. She sang in Rome in 1842, and in smaller Italian towns in 1843.

*Roissy, Noémie de (née Lévêville) (1824-?). Opéra: 1841-1847.*

Mezzo-soprano. Her father was a physician in Paris, and when Noémie de Roissy began showing an inclination for music at the age of four, her parents provided her with music lessons. Her father died while attending to cholera patients in 1832, leaving her family in financial distress. She thus embarked on a professional career. She began her career in the provinces, singing in Bordeaux in 1840. She then debuted at the Opéra in 1841 and held a respectable secondary position at the theatre until she resigned in 1847. During her time at the theatre, she sang the page roles and doubled singers in Falcon's repertoire, and she was, apparently, one of Rosine Stoltz's only friends at the theatre. After leaving the Opéra, she sang in 1848 at the Princess Theatre in London, debuting as Norma, and then took several contracts in Italy, singing in Barcelona in 1850, Naples in 1854, and Livorno in 1855. She returned to Paris and

debuted at the Théâtre Italien, but was not successful. She left again for Italy, singing in Venice in 1856, Geneva in 1857, and Trieste and Turin in 1863.

*Rossi-Caccia, Giovanna (née Rossi) (1818-1892). Opéra Comique: 1836-1840; Opéra: 1846-1847.*

Soprano. Her mother, Marianna Rossi, was a singer at the Théâtre Italien. Giovanna Rossi-Caccia studied voice with Bordogni and Adelina Dalman-Naldi. Rossi-Caccia began singing in the choir at the Théâtre Italien and then debuted at the Opéra Comique in August 1836. She often filled in for Cinti-Damoreau when she was ill, and created roles in over a dozen operas during her three years at the theatre, including Olivia in Prévost's *Les Pontons de Cadix* (1836), Blanche in Grisar's *L'An mil* (1837), Léonor in Monpou's *Piquillo* (1837), la Comtesse in Adam's *Le Fidèle berger* (1838), Palmyre in Clapisson's *La Figurante* (1838), the title role in Boïeldieu's *Marguerite* (1838), Clara in Carafa's *Thérèse* (1838), the title role in Adam's *Régine* (1839), Laurette in Montfort's *Polichinelle* (1839), Camille in Halévy's *Le Shérif* (1839), and Nisida in Auber's *Zanetta* (1840). She married Alphonse Bonnevin, a pharmacist, in 1837. She went on a tour to Italy in 1840, and, having been widowed, remarried a young sculptor, Carlo Caccia. She sang in Lisbon from 1843 to 1845, and upon returning to Paris, debuted at the Opéra in 1846. She left the theatre a year later. In 1847, she sang at the Teatro Liceo in Barcelona and spent much of her career in Spain.

*Roullié, Julie Léocadie (1826-1896). Opéra Comique: 1845-1848.*

Julie Roullié studied at the Paris Conservatoire with Ponchard, and obtained the second prize in singing in 1845. She debuted at the Opéra Comique that same year in the role of Zerline from *Fra diavolo*. She created only small roles in the repertoire, notably that of Zélia in Leprévost's *Le Rêveur éveillé* (1848).

*Stoltz, Rosine (née Victoire Noël) (1815-1903). Opéra: 1837-1847, 1854-1855.*

Mezzo-soprano. Rosine Stoltz studied at Choron's École royale de chant from 1826 until around 1830. She began singing in the choir at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, and then sang in Spa, before later performing in Anvers and Amsterdam. She was contracted as a *coryphée* at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in 1833-1834. The following year, she sang in Lille. Returning to Brussels, she began singing primary roles in 1835. Adolphe Nourrit performed at the theatre during the 1836-1837 season and, impressed with her performance of Rachel in Halévy's *La Juive*, promised her a debut

at the Opéra. In March 1837, she married Alphonse-Auguste Lescuyer, the régisseur at the Théâtre de la Monnaie, and he recognized the legitimacy of their son, Alphonse Lescuyer, born in 1836. She debuted at the Opéra in the role of Rachel in August 1837 and, once Cornélie Falcon left the theatre to rest her voice, took over her predecessor's roles briefly before creating her own set of roles. Her main creations were Léonor in Donizetti's *La Favorite*, Catarina in Halévy's *La Reine de Chypre*, Lazzarillo in Marliani's *La Xacarilla*, and Odette in *Charles VI*, but she also created the roles of Ricciarda in Halévy's *Guide et Ginevra* (1838), Ascanio in Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini* (1838), Marguerite in Auber's *Le Lac des fées* (1839), Agathe in Weber's *Le Freyschütz* (1841), Zayda in Donizetti's *Dom Sébastien* (1843), Beppo in Halévy's *Le Lazzarone*, Desdemone in Rossini's *Othello* (1844), the title role in Niedermeyer's *Marie Stuart* (1844), Estrelle in Balfe's *L'Étoile de Séville* (1845), and Marie in Rossini's *Robert Bruce* (1846). Growing discontent with the singer reached a fevered pitch with the première of Rossini's pastiche *Robert Bruce*, where the public apparently revolted against the claque's too obvious support of the singer. She gave her resignation, but continued performing for another few months until her retirement benefit concert in April 1847. From there she toured the provinces and sang in Italy. She gave birth to a second son in 1848, Charles-Raymond, then left for Portugal where she had a lucrative contract at the theatre in Lisbon. A tour to South America followed in 1852. She was eventually rehired for one year at the Opéra in 1854-1855, where she performed the roles of Catarina and Léonor, and sang the role of Fidès from Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*. She then continued her career in the provinces, Italy, and again returned to Brazil. She stopped performing around 1860, and turned her attention to composition, publishing a set of *romances*.

*Thillon, Anna (née Hunt) (1819-1903). Opéra Comique: 1840-1845.*

Soprano. Born Anna Hunt and raised in a wealthy English family, she decided to embark on a professional singing career when her father died. She studied with Jean-Marc Bordogni and Eugenia Tadolini in Paris, as well as with Claude Thillon, the orchestral conductor at The Hague, whom she eventually married. She debuted first at the theatre in The Hague, and then at theatres in Clermont-Ferrand and in Nantes. She was soon hired by the director Anténor Joly to sing at the Théâtre de la Renaissance where she debuted in Grisar's *Lady Melvil* in 1838, and later performed the title role in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the theatre. Once the theatre stopped producing opera, she left and sang briefly in Lille, and then was quickly hired at the Opéra Comique where she sang from 1840 until 1845. She created the roles of

Catarina in Auber's *Les Diamants de la couronne* (1841, a role initially destined for Laure Cinti-Damoreau), Bianca de Molina in his *Le Duc d'Olonne* (1842), Argentine in *L'Eau merveilleuse* (1842), Casilda in Auber's *La Part du diable* (1843), Géraldine in Balfe's *Le Puits d'amour* (1843), Corilla in Adam's *Cagliostro* (1844), and la marquise in Montfort's *La Sainte-Cécile* (1844). She first sang at the Princess Theatre in London in 1843, and was contracted to sing at Drury Lane in 1845-1846. She later sang in Belgium, Mons, Antwerp, and Amsterdam, and in 1851-1854 she left on a tour to North America with an opera troupe. She retired definitively from the stage by 1867, having spent the last few years of her career mostly singing in concerts. She then devoted herself entirely to teaching.

*Ugalde, Delphine (née Beaucé) (1829-1910). Opéra Comique: 1848-1853; Opéra: 1858.*

Soprano. Her grandfather was the guitar virtuoso, Pierre Porro (1751-1831), and her mother a singer. She studied with Laure Cinti-Damoreau and Moreau-Sainti at the Paris Conservatoire. She began her career singing in concerts in Paris and married the Spanish musician Ugalde (d. 1858) before she began her stage career. In 1848 she debuted at the Opéra Comique in the role of Angèle in Auber's *Le Domino noir*. While at the Opéra Comique, she created roles in Ambroise Thomas's *Le Caïd* (1849), Adam's *Le Toréador* (1849), and Massé's *Les Noces de Jeannette* (1853). She then sang at the Théâtre Lyrique from 1854 to 1860 and from 1863 sang at the Bouffes-Parisiennes in operetta. She also sang in London in 1851 and in 1857, and at the Paris Opéra in 1858 in the role of Leonore from Verdi's *Il trovatore*. She later married the impresario Varcollier and co-directed the Bouffes-Parisiens. She composed the *opéra-comique* *Halte au moulin*, which was performed in 1867, in addition to several other pieces that she performed during the last few years of her career. She left her professional singing career in 1871 and devoted herself to teaching and other activities. She directed the Folies Marigny in 1872. Her daughter, Marguerite Ugalde (1862-1940), had an impressive professional career, as did her granddaughter. Besides her daughter, her most famous student was Marie Constance Sasse (Sass, Sax[e], 1834-1907).

*Widemann, Marie Anne [Anna] (née Jung) (1815-1864). Opéra: 1835-1842.*

Contralto. Anna Widemann began singing in the chorus at the Opéra, just in time to begin rehearsals for Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*. In 1837, her contract was renegotiated, and she was moved up to *artiste du chant*, and began her debuts in the role of Donna Elvire in Mozart's *Don Juan* in August 1838. She mainly secondary roles

in *Guillaume Tell*, *Le Comte Ory*, and *Les Huguenots*, and created a few small roles: une dame in *Guido et Ginevra* (1838), Maria in Ruolz's *La Vendetta* (1839), a small role in *La Reine de Chypre*, and she took over Stoltz's role of Marguerite in Auber's *Le Lac des fées*. Once her five-year contract finished in 1842, she left to pursue her career in the provinces, where she would have more possibilities of singing in lead roles. She sang Léonor in Donizetti's *La Favorite* in Lille in January 1843, then sang in Gand in March, Bordeaux from May through December, and in 1844 was singing in Toulouse. She was hired for the 1850-1851 season at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels as the *première forte chanteuse contralto*, singing Stoltz's repertoire and appearing in the role of Fidès from Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*. In 1852-1853, she left for a tour of North America, and performed in Boston and New Orleans, among other cities. By 1854, she had returned to France and was singing in Rouen, and in 1857, she performed in Bade. She performed in many concerts in the Société des concerts throughout her career. She died in 1864, leaving behind two sons.

*Zévaco, Thérèse Joséphine (1825-?). Opéra Comique: 1843-1846.*

Zévaco studied at the Paris Conservatoire where she obtained an *accessit* ("honourable mention") in singing and in *opéra-comique* in 1843. She then debuted at the Opéra Comique in 1843, and was hired mainly as an understudy in a three-year contract. She created just a couple of roles, Mlle de Guines in Montfort's *La Sainte-Cécile* (1844) and Antonia in Clapisson's *Les Bergers trumeaux* (1845). She later sang at the Théâtre Lyrique from 1860 to 1862.





## LETTER FROM NOÉMIE DE ROISSY TO PILLET

Letter from Noémie de Roissy to Pillet, 6 June 1841 (AJ<sup>13</sup> 195, dossier Roissy)

Paris le 6 juin 1841

Monsieur [le directeur, Léon Pillet],

Si j'ai eu l'honneur de vous écrire hier après m'être présentée inutilement chez vous jeudi et vendredi, c'est que j'étais placée dans une perplexité pressante. Un des plus hauts personnages de Naples devait obtenir de moi une réponse définitive avant son départ qui a eu lieu ce matin. Je n'ai pu la faire, et cependant depuis jeudi il avait eu la bonté d'envoyer trois fois chez moi. Retenue par mes liens de famille et d'amitié à Paris, appelée à l'opéra par mon genre de voix et d'études, et j'ose le dire par le vœu bienveillant et les encouragements du public, je n'ai pas dû hésiter devant un nouveau sacrifice, et de même que j'ai refusé jusqu'à ce jour les plus beaux engagements pour la province, ayant aujourd'hui la juste confiance d'être assurée au but, j'ai dû laisser échapper cette nouvelle occasion. Si j'en crois ce que l'on me dit, Monsieur, vous craignez que je n'aie des prétentions exagérées, et peut-être que je n'abuse des services que j'ai été assez heureuse pour vous rendre en jouant mon avenir. C'est une erreur si j'ai risqué dans mes deux premières représentations ma réputation d'artiste et ma santé. Mon seul but a été de vous convaincre de mon dévouement et de mon courage. Je connais les difficultés pécuniaires de votre administration, surtout dit-on d'ici à 6 mois je désire y apporter moins de charge que je ne lui ai sauvé de perte. Voici les conditions d'un engagement pour un an, dans lesquelles j'ai cherché à considérer vos intérêts et mon indispensable, ne voulant pas être marchandée je me fais bornée à la moitié de ce que j'ai pu avoir ailleurs.

Engagement d'un an, du 1<sup>er</sup> juin 1841 au 1<sup>er</sup> juillet 1842

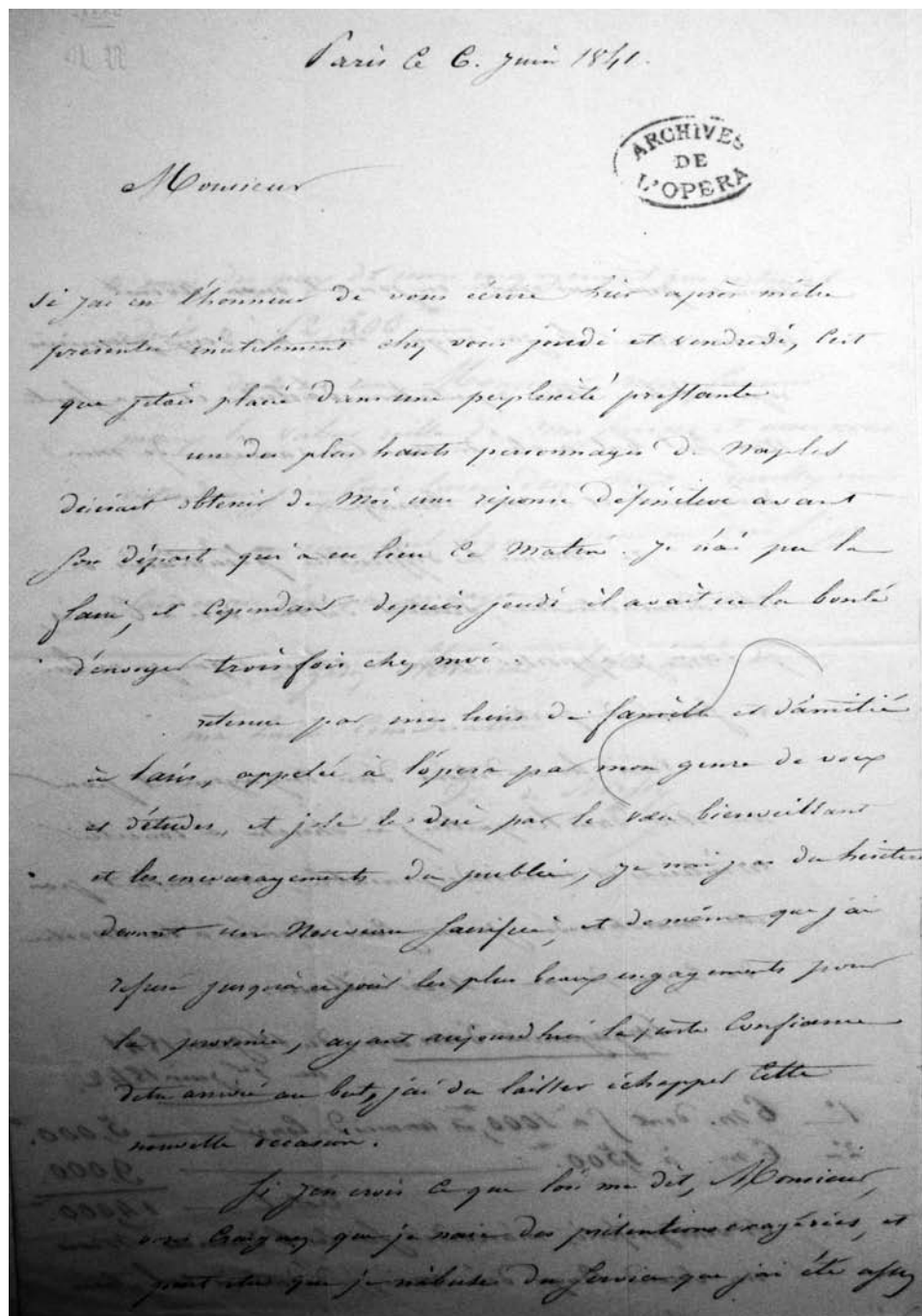
1. 6 m. [mois] dont 5 [mois] à 1000 fr. et un mois de congé: 5,000 fr.
2. 6 m. [mois] à 1,500 fr.: 9,000 fr.

Total: 14,000 fr.

Si vous préféreriez m'accorder sur les 6 derniers mois un second congé d'un mois, je déduirais volontiers ce mois du prix de mon engagement qui resterait réduit à 12,500 fr. Dans un an, Monsieur, nous saurions mieux la valeur réelle de mes services, et nous nous entendrons j'en suis sûre d'un mot. Veuillez me répondre une seule ligne pour me dire si je suis ou ne suis pas engagée.

Agréez, Monsieur, l'assurance de ma haute considération.

N. de Roissy

Figure B.1: Noémie de Roissy's letter to Pillet, 6 June 1841. (F-Pan AJ<sup>13</sup> 195)

aucun peut vous rendre en jouant mon avenir.  
 C'est une erreur. Si j'ai risqué dans mes deux premières  
 représentations. Ma réputation d'artiste et ma fortune.  
 Mon seul but a été de vous convaincre de mon  
 dévouement et de mon courage.

Je connais les difficultés pécuniaires de  
 votre administration, surtout d'ici à 6 mois,  
 je désire y apporter moins de charge que je ne lui  
 ai faite de perte.

Voici les conditions d'un engagement pour  
 un an, dans les quelles j'ai cherché à concilier  
 vos intérêts et mon indispensable, ne voulant pas  
 être marchandé je me suis borné à la moitié  
 de ce que j'en avais ailleurs.

Engagement d'un an, du 1<sup>er</sup> juin 1841  
au 1<sup>er</sup> juin 1842.

|                 |                                                        |                        |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 <sup>re</sup> | 6 m. dont 5 à 1000 <sup>fr</sup> , et un mois de congé | 5,000 <sup>fr</sup> .  |
| 2 <sup>e</sup>  | 6 m. à 1500 <sup>fr</sup> .                            | 9,000 <sup>fr</sup> .  |
|                 | Total                                                  | 14,000 <sup>fr</sup> . |

Si vous préférez m'accorder sur les 6 derniers mois  
 un second congé d'un mois je déduirais volontiers

Figure B.1: (continued)

le moi du prix de mon engagement qui m'intéressait  
réduit à 12,500.<sup>fr</sup>

Donc un an, Monsieur, nous saurons  
mieux la valeur réelle de mes services, et nous nous  
entendrons j'en suis sûre d'un mot. Veuillez me  
répondre — en tout lieu — pour m'en dire si j'en  
suis ou m'en suis pas engagé.

Agrés, Monsieur, l'assurance de  
ma haute considération

N. de Roissy

Figure B.1: (continued)





## SAMPLE CONTRACTS

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C.1 OPÉRA COMIQUE CONTRACT UNDER FRANÇOIS-LOUIS CROSNIER'S DIRECTION (MAY 1834-MAY 1845)

THÉÂTRE ROYAL  
DE L'OPÉRA-COMIQUE

Entre les soussignés,

M. CROSNIER (FRANÇOIS-LOUIS), Directeur du Théâtre royal de l'Opéra-Comique,

Et M \_\_\_\_\_

présentement à \_\_\_\_\_

y demeurant, d'autre part;

A été convenu et arrêté ce qui suit, savoir :

Moi, \_\_\_\_\_ je m'engage

pour \_\_\_\_\_ à partir du \_\_\_\_\_ jusqu'au \_\_\_\_\_.

1° A chanter et jouer sur le Théâtre royal de l'Opéra-Comique, et sur tous autres que bon semblera au Directeur, tous les rôles anciens et nouveaux qui me seront distribués par lui et qu'il jugera analogues à mon physique et à mes talents; à chanter dans les concerts, à paraître dans toutes les pièces à spectacle, et généralement à me prêter au bien et à l'utilité du Théâtre, et enfin à jouer au moins dix-huit fois par mois, dont six dans deux pièces. Dans le cas où je ne jouerais pas une ou plusieurs de ces dix-huit fois, pour quelque cause que ce soit provenant de mon fait, je m'oblige à supporter pour chaque fois une retenue égale au dix-huitième de mes appointements et feux du mois, et ce, sans préjudice des recours que le Directeur pourrait exercer contre moi, ainsi qu'il sera dit ci-après;

2° A me trouver à toutes les répétitions générales ou particulières, aux répertoires et assemblées qui seront indiqués par l'Administration, aux heures qu'elle jugera convenables, même après le spectacle, sous peine des amendes établies à ce sujet par les règlements faits ou à faire, et à me conformer à toutes les autres dispositions desdits règlements pour la police et l'ordre du spectacle

3° A me fournir à mes frais tous les habits de ville convenables à mes rôles; les habits étrangers et de caractère me seront seuls fournis par l'Administration, à l'exception du linge et de toute espèce de chaussures, maillots, perruques, coiffures, et je me contenterai des costumes qui me seront présentés;

4° A jouer partout où il plaira au Directeur, sans exiger aucune augmentation ni dédommagement, si ce n'est les frais de voiture et le transport des effets nécessaires, dans le cas où les représentations auraient lieu hors de Paris;

5° A ne jamais m'absenter de Paris, ni à jouer ni chanter sur aucun théâtre, ni dans aucun concert public ou particulier, payant ou non payant, pour quelque motif ou sous quelque prétexte que ce soit, sans le consentement exprès et par écrit du Directeur, sous peine d'une amende d'un mois de mes appointements et feux;

6° A payer la plus forte recette que l'on puisse faire au Théâtre, si, par ma faute, j'empêchais une représentation. Dans le cas où je n'aurais occasionnée qu'un changement de spectacle, je ne devrais que la différence de la recette que l'on ferait à la plus forte recette que l'on puisse faire au Théâtre;

7° A me trouver tous les jours à la disposition de l'Administration, une heure avant le commencement du spectacle, lors même que je ne jouerais pas, afin de lui donner le moyen de remplacer une pièce qu'un événement imprévu empêcherait de représenter;

8° A être toujours prêt à jouer sans répétition les rôles que j'aurais joués depuis moins de trois mois.

9° A être prêt en cas d'urgence à jouer les rôles du répertoire qui me seront désignés, savoir: pour une pièce en un acte, le quatrième jour de la remise qui me sera faite du rôle, poème et musique; pour une pièce en deux actes, le sixième jour; et pour une pièce en trois actes, le dixième jour. Il est bien entendu que ces délais s'appliquent aux rôles les plus longs du répertoire, et que pour des rôles de moindre importance, le Directeur aura le droit de fixer des délais plus courts.

10° En cas de maladie, je ne pourrais prétendre à être dispensé de mon service qu'autant que j'aurai justifié d'une impossibilité réelle par le certificat de l'un des médecins du Théâtre; aucun autre ne pourra le suppléer. Tant que durera mon indisposition, je m'engage à ne pas sortir de chez moi, à moins que ma sortie ne soit ordonnée par écrit, par le médecin du Théâtre désigné à cet effet par l'Administration. En cas d'infraction dans les cas ci-dessus, je me sou mets à perdre la totalité de mes appointements et feux du mois. Mes appointements cesseront de m'être payés après un mois de maladie continue ou d'intermittence de maladie qui ne me permettrait pas de jouer plus de trois fois dans le mois; si ma maladie continue ou intermittente

se prolonge au delà de deux mois, mon engagement pourra être résilié si bon semble à l'Administration.

11° Je ne pourrai demander la résiliation du présent engagement dans le cas où M. Crosnier se retirerait, et je m'engage à reconnaître pour Directeurs ceux avec lesquels il transigerait de ses droits dans l'Administration. De son côté, M. Crosnier sera tenu, pour être dégagé de toute garantie envers moi, de faire reconnaître le présent engagement par ses successeurs.

12° Il sera loisible à l'Administration de ne me payer que les deux tiers de mes appointements pendant les mois de juin, juillet, août et septembre; le tiers retenu sera réversible sur les mois d'octobre, novembre, décembre et janvier.

13° En cas de clôture du Théâtre, ou de suspension continue du spectacle pendant plus de trois jours, par suite d'incendie, par force majeure, par ordre de l'autorité supérieure, ou pour quelque cause que ce soit, dépendante ou non de la volonté du Directeur, mes appointements ne me seront point dus; mais dans le cas où la clôture s'étendrait au delà de six mois, je me trouverai libre, et le présent engagement sera rompu si bon me semble, en faisant alors notifier à l'Administration l'intention de me retirer.

14° Je consens à laisser à l'Administration le droit de considérer le présent engagement comme nul et non avenu, dans le cas où mes trois débuts ne lui paraîtraient pas satisfaisants.

Moyennant les clauses ci-dessus fidèlement exécutées, M. Crosnier s'engage à payer à M \_\_\_\_\_.

Les soussignés se soumettent respectivement à l'exécution du présent engagement pendant toute sa durée, sous peine d'un dédit de la somme de \_\_\_\_\_ lequel acceptable et payable dix jours après la signature du présent; passé lequel temps, outre le dédit, tous dépens, dommages et intérêts seraient exigibles du premier contrevenant.

Fait double, à Paris, le \_\_\_\_\_.

C.2 OPÉRA CONTRACT (FOR FEMALE ARTISTS) UNDER LÉON PIL-  
LET'S DIRECTION (JUNE 1840-JULY 1847)

ACADÉMIE ROYALE DE MUSIQUE

Nous soussignés,

LÉON PILLET, Directeur Entrepreneur du Théâtre de l'Opéra, demeurant rue Grange-Batelière, no. 3, d'une part;

Et M \_\_\_\_\_ artiste de chant libre de contracter tout engagement, faisant élection de domicile, pour l'exécution du présent, rue \_\_\_\_\_ auquel lieu elle consent la signification de tous actes, nonobstant tout changement de domicile, d'autre part;

Faisons les conditions suivantes, savoir:

1° A jouer et figurer sur son Théâtre, ou sur tout autre qu'il lui plaira, national ou étranger, en quelque lieu que ce soit, tel jour et à telle heure qu'il indiquera, dans toutes les pièces quelconques qu'il lui conviendra de faire représenter, en général tous les rôles pour lesquels je serai jugé apte et nécessaire par le Directeur, sans pouvoir en refuser aucun, sous quelque prétexte que ce soit, et sans pouvoir également en rendre, céder ou quitter aucun, à moins que ce ne soit du consentement exprès et par écrit du Directeur, et généralement à me prêter à tout ce qui sera jugé utile à l'Administration.

2° A me rendre avec exactitude aux répétitions et représentations aux lieux indiqués, de jour ou de nuit, sous peine d'une amende du dixième de mes appointemens mensuels, à retenir sur lesdits appointemens.

3° En cas d'événemens imprévus, lors même que je ne jouerais pas, afin de donner à l'Administration la faculté de remplacer un ouvrage par un autre, je m'engage à laisser chez moi, si je m'absentais, l'adresse où l'on pourrait me trouver, et à jouer le soir même dans la pièce qui serait indiquée; en conséquence, les jours de spectacle, je m'engage à ne pas quitter Paris sans autorisation.

4° En cas de clôture du Théâtre, par quelque cause que ce soit, ordre supérieur, incendie, réparation, ou tout autre motif obligé, je m'engage à ne recevoir aucun traitement pendant la durée de la clôture; à ne contracter d'engagement avec aucune autre administration avant le terme de trois mois écoulés depuis la clôture; et à ne paraître sur aucun théâtre dans l'intervalle, sans la permission du Directeur.

5° En cas d'indisposition ou de maladie, il ne me sera permis de me croire dispensé de mon service qu'autant que j'en aurai justifié par un certificat de médecin, approuvé et confirmé par l'un des médecins de l'Administration. Ce certificat devra exprimer l'impossibilité absolue de faire mon service, sinon je consens à être considéré comme refusant de jouer, et soumis aux clauses pénales stipulées dans mon engagement et à celles fixées par les réglemens ou usages de l'Opéra.

L'Administration pourra exiger que ce certificat soit renouvelé tous les cinq jours; et, s'il ne s'agit que d'une indisposition, je m'engage de plus à ne pas sortir de chez moi tant qu'elle durera.

Toute maladie ou indisposition, constatée comme il est dit ci-dessus, n'entraînera aucune diminution d'appointemens pour le premier mois; pour le second mois moitié de mes appointemens me sera retenue; et lesdits appointemens cesseront tout-à-fait de m'être payés pour le troisième mois et les suivans jusqu'à la reprise de mon service. Cette convention est formelle entre l'Administration et moi, et je déclare ne pouvoir jamais élever de réclamation à ce sujet, cette clause étant une des conditions expresses de mon engagement, qui, sans elle, n'aurait pas été consenti.

En cas de grossesse, je consens aussi à ne rien recevoir de mes appointemens pendant tout le temps où mon service sera interrompu.

6° Je me conformerai, sans aucune récrimination, aux usages et réglemens établis ou à établir pour l'ordre général.

7° Je m'engage à ne faire usage de mes talens sur aucun Théâtre, ni dans aucun concert ou réunion public ou particulière, sans l'autorisation écrite de l'Administration, à peine de \_\_\_\_\_ francs d'indemnité envers le Directeur, à retenir, comme mes amendes, sur mes appointemens mensuels, ce qui les réduirait d'autant.

8° Tout congé auquel je pourrais avoir droit, aux termes de mon engagement, quelle que soit sa durée, commencera à courir et me sera compté du lendemain de la dernière représentation dans laquelle j'aurai paru, à la veille du jour de la représentation dans laquelle je reparaitrai après ledit congé.

9° Enfin il demeure convenu que, dans le cas d'une contestation portée devant les tribunaux, le service ne pourra aucunement en souffrir. Je m'oblige en conséquence à satisfaire aux demandes de l'Administration pendant toute la durée de cette contestation, suivant la teneur de mon engagement et sous les mêmes peines, comme si cette contestation n'existait pas.

10° Il est en outre expressément stipulé que lorsque les amendes fixées par les réglemens et que j'aurai encourues, se seront renouvelées plus de trois fois dans un mois, l'Administration sera maîtresse d'annuler le présent engagement, si elle le juge

convenable: cette réserve étant entièrement à sa disposition, sans réciprocité.

Le présent engagement commencera le \_\_\_\_\_.

En prévenant M \_\_\_\_\_ mois à l'avance, il sera résiliable à la fin de la première année, à la volonté de l'Administration et sans réciprocité.

Voulons en outre qu'il ait même force et valeur que s'il était passé pardevant notaire, sous peine du paiement d'une somme de \_\_\_\_\_ à titre de dédit, exigible en totalité à quelque époque de l'engagement que ce soit et quel que soit le temps qui en resterait à courir, payable en tous lieux où le premier contrevenant pourrait se retirer, le présent engagement étant respectivement regardé et devant être jugé comme entreprise ou affaire de commerce.

Moyennant les clauses ci-dessus loyalement et fidèlement exécutées, moi, Directeur soussigné, je m'engage envers M \_\_\_\_\_ à lui payer par portions égales et de mois en mois, la somme annuelle de \_\_\_\_\_ pour appointements fixes; et de plus un feu chaque fois qu'il jouera. Ce feu sera de \_\_\_\_\_.

En cas de besoin, l'enregistrement du présent acte sera à la charge de celle des deux parties qui succombera.

Enfin, en cas de cession de l'entreprise, le présent engagement continuera à avoir son exécution; l'Entrepreneur pourra le mettre à la charge de son successeur, sans que M \_\_\_\_\_ conserve aucun droit ni recours à ce sujet contre lui.

Fait double et de bonne foi entre nous, après lecture, à Paris, ce \_\_\_\_\_.

## ROLE TYPES AT THE OPÉRA COMIQUE

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### D.1 FEMALE VOICE TYPES

*Accessoires* Very small roles, usually just having a few lines, and of very little dramatic or vocal importance.

*Amoureuse* Female lover. Often divided into *première amoureuse* (primary roles) and *seconde amoureuse* (secondary roles). Also includes *amoureuse sans roulandes*, or without vocal bravura.

*Chanteuse* Indicates above all a role with an important vocal component, usually requiring a light, flexible voice capable of singing coloratura. Divided into *première chanteuse* (primary roles) and *seconde chanteuse* (secondary roles).

*Duègne* Older women, governesses, or “old maid” figures. There are *duègnes comiques*, sometimes referred to as *caricatures*: these are comic, often ridiculous figures. There are also *duègnes de tenue*, otherwise called *des caractères*, which are more dignified characters. These are typically performed by the primary *duègne*.

*Dugazon* A role type named after Louise Rosalie Dugazon (1755-1821). The role type *jeune Dugazon* indicates those roles she performed in the first part of her career, typically younger, girlish roles. With the development of opéra-comique in the nineteenth century, the *Dugazon* came to indicate a female role where the vocal part is of secondary importance, but with an important acting or scenic component. Often divided into primary and secondary *Dugazon*.

*Dugazon mère* This role type indicates those roles Louise Rosalie Dugazon performed in the second part of her career, where she performed the roles of young mothers or older wives. The *Dugazon mère* should not be mixed up with the *duègne*.

*Gavaudan* Named after the Opéra Comique singer Mme Gavaudan (1781-1850). She debuted at the Théâtre Favart in 1798 and first sang the *Dugazon*. She had a



small, but flexible voice, and sang with expression; she was a good actress, witty, energetic, and a beautiful woman. She retired in 1823.

*Ingénuité* Young, naïve, tender female lovers, usually with a very candid, innocent character.

*Mères nobles* This role type usually belongs to those performing the *duègne*. Indicates more serious, dignified older women.

*Paysanne* Country woman, typically young and naïve.

*Soubrette* Young, witty, and intelligent, usually a servant-girl.

## D.2 MALE VOICE TYPES

*Amoureux* Male lover. Often divided into *premiers amoureux* (primary roles) and *secondes amoureux* (secondary roles).

*Colin* Indicates a male lover, usually a villager, naïve and tender, and the character often took the name “Colin” in the opéra-comique. Used mainly for the older Opéra Comique repertoire. In the nineteenth century, this role was usually performed by a secondary tenor.

*Elleviou* Named after the performer Jean Elleviou (1769-1842), *haute-contre*, who performed from 1790 to 1813. He had a flexible voice, with a large range, and he succeeded mainly in sentimental rather than bravura vocal writing.

*Frontin* Valet roles. Usually indicates a clever character who courts the soubrettes, gets involved in all kinds of intrigue, and has a certain *joie de vivre*. Belongs to the older repertoire of opéra-comique.

*Gavaudan* Named after the tenor Jean-Baptiste Sauveur Gavaudan (1772-1840), who was the understudy for Elleviou and Michu. He was an excellent actor, and when his voice lost much of its brilliance, he created roles with a strong acting component. He retired in 1816.

*Haute-contre* A high tenor voice that uses the head-voice register for high notes. Many of the male roles in the old repertoire for the Opéra and the Opéra Comique were written for the *haute-contre*. Voice-type became outmoded with the rise of strong tenor voices, like that of Gilbert-Louis Duprez.

*Laruelle* Named after the Opéra Comique performer Laruelle, who was a much better actor than singer. Indicates a role with a stronger scenic component. Usually performs the role of the father or the tutor rather than the lover. Laruelle specialized in the role of the father, and as he was a tenor, he established a repertoire where the roles of the father were written for tenor voices, and not for bass voices as we find elsewhere in opera.

*Martin* Named after Jean-Blaise Martin (1768-1837), who succeeded Elleviou as the primary male singer at the Opéra Comique upon the latter's retirement. He specialized in the valet or comic-servant roles. The *baryton Martin* initially indicated a high baritone voice, or a blend of the baritone and tenor registers, with an extension into the upper range through the use of head voice. Also associated with vocal bravura.

*Philippe* Named after the singer Philippe, active during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

*Trial* Named after the performer Antoine Trial, who began his career at the Comédie-Italienne in 1764. He had a nasal, slightly unpleasant voice, and thus created the role type of "singers without voice" (*chanteurs sans voix*), or the comic tenor, where the performer's acting skills were much more important than his vocal talent.

*Utilités* Simply indicates a role of small importance; could be of almost any character. A *coryphée* would often take this position.



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