

## Durham E-Theses

---

# *La musique des lumières: The Enlightenment Origins of French Revolutionary Music, 1789-1799*

JONATHAN EDWARD HUFF

### How to cite:

---

HUFF, JONATHAN EDWARD (2015) *La musique des lumières: The Enlightenment Origins of French Revolutionary Music, 1789-1799*. Masters thesis, Durham University.

### Use policy

---

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a <https://etheses.durham.ac.uk/id/eprint/11021/> is made to the metadata record in Durham E-Theses
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the [full Durham E-Theses policy](#) for further details.





*For my parents, Martin and Julie Huff*



## ABSTRACT

It is commonly believed that the music of the French Revolution (1789-1799) represented an unusual rupture in compositional praxis. Suddenly patriotic hymns, *chansons*, operas and instrumental works overthrew the supremacy of music merely for entertainment as the staple of musical life in France.

It is the contention of this thesis that this ‘rupture’ had in fact been a long time developing, and that the germ of this process was sown in the *philosophie* of the previous decades. In essence, I assert that to understand the Revolutionaries’ ambitions for music which treated music as a pedagogical tool, it is imperative to evaluate their basis in Enlightenment musical aesthetics.

In order to justify this assertion, I will examine the evidence from three angles in respective chapters. The first chapter will consider the nature of Enlightenment musical aesthetics, its foundations in Classical conceptions of music, and its path to the Revolution. The second chapter will consider the ways in which this perspective was adopted and transformed by the Revolutionary authorities, who sought a system of music (and the arts) which could inculcate Republican principles. In the last chapter, I will complete the present study by examining the nature of the Revolution’s political music itself, evaluating two case studies and taking into account modern scholarship’s interpretation of the repertoire.



# **LA MUSIQUE DES LUMIÈRES:**

The Enlightenment Origins of French  
Revolutionary Music, 1789-1799

by

**Jonathan Huff**

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts by Research (MAR)

Department of Music

The University of Durham

2015

(53,827 words, excluding translations)



## CONTENTS

.....	1
Abstract .....	5
La Musique des lumières:.....	7
Contents .....	9
List of Illustrations .....	11
Statement of Copyright .....	13
Acknowledgements .....	15
Introduction.....	17
Chapter I: La musique des lumières .....	21
Chapter II: Revolutionary Conceptions of Music .....	52
Chapter III: The Music of the Revolution.....	89
Epilogue: Les éléphants galantes .....	134
Bibliography .....	137



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Cover: *The Carmagnole (Dance Around the Guillotine)* by Käthe Kollwitz (1901)
2. Page 61: *La Mort de Marat*, Jacques-Louis David (1793)
3. Page 62 : *Les Derniers Moments de Michel Lepeletier*, Jacques-Louis David (1793)
4. Page 127 : *Robespierre exécutant le bourreau*, Hector Fleischmann (1908)



## **STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT**

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. Information derived from it should be acknowledged.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to a great many people who have helped and supported me in one way or another since this project began in June 2013. I would like to thank my supervisors, Patrick Zuk and Thomas Stammers, whose invaluable assistance and sincerely-appreciated care made this study possible. I gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance of St John's College, who awarded me the Postgraduate Scholarship Prize which funded my research in Yale's Beinecke Library, and of the Department of Music at Durham University, who generously funded a research visit to Paris in March 2014.

I would like to thank the staff of the Parisian archives for their assistance- these included the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra, whose rich resources formed the basis for a great proportion of my research. I am grateful too to the staff at the Beinecke Library for their assistance in negotiating their archives, and to the staff of the British Library and of the Bill Bryson Library for all their help.

For directing me towards useful sources and offering helpful advice, I would like to thank David Charlton, Mark Darlow, Mark Everist, Michael Fend, Sarah Hibberd, Jonathan Penny, Joseph Schultz, and Clare Siviter.

I owe personal thanks to the staff of St John's College, and in particular to Mark Ogden and Sue Trees who encouraged me greatly over the duration of this project.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my family and close friends for their care, and for enduring me during the many hours I spent locked away with my books. In particular, I am deeply indebted to Vincent Battista and to Andrew Corkhill, whose fraternal support has meant so much.



## INTRODUCTION

The music of the French Revolution is commonly perceived to represent an unusual rupture in compositional praxis, and a turn towards didactic pedagogy: suddenly patriotic hymns, *chansons*, operas and instrumental pieces apparently overthrew the supremacy of works intended merely for entertainment. In other words, music suddenly became—as Winton Dean has described it—a vehicle for the Revolutionaries’ ‘rabid’ ideology.<sup>1</sup>

It is the contention of this thesis that this ‘rupture’ had to the contrary been a long time developing, and that the germ of change was sown in the *philosophie* of the previous decades. In essence, I assert that to understand the Revolutionaries’ ambitions for music, which treated music as a pedagogical tool, it is imperative to evaluate their basis in Enlightenment musical aesthetics. It was, after all, in the writings of the *philosophes* that the classical perception of the didactic purpose and power of music were re-ignited. Whilst modern aesthetic commentaries concerned with the mid-eighteenth century are preoccupied with the fierce rivalry between Rousseau and Rameau and the wider contest known to us as the *Querrelle des Bouffons*, such a preoccupation has obscured a shared consensus which perceived music as a means to educate and improve society. This perspective was nurtured in the final decades of the old regime, and reached the Revolutionaries intact. We would do better therefore to treat the Revolutionaries’ didactic musical project not as ‘rupture’, but as the culmination of a developing change in conceptions of music.

This perspective fits well with how modern scholarship perceives the relationship between the Enlightenment and 1789, for it is commonly held that the *philosophes* were in some way responsible for the Revolution. This belief, explored recently by cultural historians such as Roger Chartier<sup>2</sup> and Jonathan Israel<sup>3</sup> builds on Daniel Mornet’s seminal work, *Les origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française* (1933). Mornet in turn revived the perspectives of Alexis de Tocqueville<sup>4</sup> and Hippolyte Taine<sup>5</sup> that the radicalism of eighteenth-century philosophies was an important catalyst in the coming of revolution, just

---

<sup>1</sup> Winton Dean, ‘Opera under the French Revolution’ in *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, vol. 94 (1967-1968), pp. 77-96 (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis Ltd., 1968): 78

<sup>2</sup> Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1991)

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas: An Intellectual History of the French Revolution from The Rights of Man to Robespierre* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014)

<sup>4</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *L’Ancien Régime et la Révolution* ed. G.W.Headlam (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1904): 146-147

<sup>5</sup> Hippolyte Taine, *L’Ancien Régime*, ed. William F. Giese (Boston : D.C. Heath and Co., 1906): 205

as the abstraction of these philosophies explained the Revolution's failure. Mornet argues convincingly that it was, at least in part, "ideas that determined the French Revolution."<sup>6</sup>

This perspective can be traced back to the Revolution itself. It pervaded the commentary of its external contemporaries; Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* from 1790 is a case in point. But as Darrin McMahon points out, the basis of such an assumption in fact originates with the Revolutionaries themselves, who were either eager to self-fashion a respectable narrative for the events of 1789, as shown by Jean François La Harpe's sermon to the National Assembly in 1790. But it was also prevalent among the Revolution's opponents, determined to denigrate 1789; in the *Isle des philosophes*, Abbé Balthazard lampooned the *philosophie* of the *philosophes* and its revolutionary offspring.<sup>7</sup>

In order to justify my assertion, I will build upon this perspective by examining the evidence from three angles. The first chapter will consider the nature of Enlightenment musical aesthetics, its foundations in classical conceptions of music, and how these aesthetics were elaborated before the Revolution. It is not possible here to give a comprehensive survey of said aesthetics; many admirable attempts to do so have been made, and each have been many times the size of this work.<sup>8</sup> Instead, the present study will trace the origins and developments of four key themes which consistently reoccur in the writings and compositions of the Revolutionaries.

The first of these themes concerns the imitation-of-nature polemics between Batteux and Morellet on the one hand and Boyé and Chabanon on the other, which were vital in intersecting with the second: the sensualist theories of Condillac and Rousseau which proposed the idea of music as communicative language, able to inculcate emotion and moral conduct through the imitation and expression of human sentiment. Bound up in this last concern is the role of vocal music as proposed by Rousseau in his theory of language. The third therefore is how this power might form the foundation of a pedagogical project seeking to mould a new society constructed around principles of civic virtue and morality. My last theme, the influence of antiquity, is the basis for my assertion that this perspective owed a great deal to the Ancient Greek conception of music, which provided both a nostalgic image of civic virtue, moral integrity and heroism, as well as a didactic musical theory in the writings of Plato. There existed an inherited body of Classical thought regarding music and the arts from which the *philosophes* at times drew both consciously and subconsciously.

The second chapter will consider the ways in which these themes were adopted by the Revolutionary authorities, who sought a system of music (and the arts) which could inculcate Republican principles. It

---

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Mornet, *Les origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française, 1715-1787* (Lyon : La Manufacture, 1989): 10

<sup>7</sup> See Darrin McMahon, 'Narratives of Dystopia in the French Revolution: Enlightenment, Counter-Enlightenment, in *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and Abbé Balthazard, *L'Isle des philosophes et plusieurs autres : nouvellement découvertes, et remarquables par leurs rapports avec la France actuelle* (Rouen : L. Deshayes, 1790)

<sup>8</sup> See for example Edward A. Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1992)

will draw upon important contemporary treatises which reveal a great deal about the Revolutionary perspective of music. These will be evaluated here in some detail.

It remains in the last chapter to complete our investigation by examining the nature of the Revolution's political music itself, evaluating two case studies and taking into account modern scholarship's interpretation of the repertoire. It should not be forgotten, after all, that no matter how forcefully the authorities might have sought to see their theories applied, any shift in the musical paradigm required the participation of composers and librettists willing to set these principles in their work.

The works themselves were in many instances strikingly unique, with calls for an intensely comprehensible music resulting in hybrid and unusual experiments. This was particularly the case with opera, which under the Terror culminated in an array of works which appropriated the characteristics of other, simpler genres such as the festival hymn, or even working such pieces wholesale into the musico-dramatic fabric. An examination of such works affords us the opportunity to delve further into the Revolutionary musical perspective than if we were to limit ourselves to a cursory examination of trends in the repertoire.

For these reasons, the focus of the last chapter will be centred upon the analysis of two important examples of Revolutionary operas: Gossec and Chénier's *Le Triomphe de la République* (1793), and Méhul and Arnault's *Horatius Cocles* (1794). I have chosen to focus on opera because of the pedagogical importance attributed to it by both the *philosophes* and the Revolutionary authorities. As we shall see, it was perceived equally by both as endowed with unusual expressive capabilities, and thus an ideal vehicle for didacticism.

I have chosen these operas specifically for several reasons. Firstly, they were both composed during the years of the Jacobin dominance of the Convention. It is fair to say that the majority of the most politically charged works originate from this period, for between 1792 and 1794 political reticence in composition was not as sure a defence from disfavour as it was earlier and later in the Revolution, given the intensity of factional clashes. Consider Méhul and Arnault's opera *Phrosine* for example (first performed in May 1794), which received criticism from a Government censor not because it was contrary to the principles of the Revolution, but simply because it was not considered Revolutionary enough.<sup>9</sup>

Secondly, these works proved successful with the authorities, with the administrators of the Paris Opéra (where these works were staged), and with audiences, and are thus good representatives for the sort of repertoire which was enjoyed during this period of the Revolution.

Lastly, these works reveal a great deal about the relationship between the authorities and the Revolution's composers and librettists. Both works are significantly different in terms of style and character (representing the unique fingerprints of individual composer/librettist collaborations), and both deal with

---

<sup>9</sup> Arnault, *Souvenirs d'un sexagénaire, 4 vols*, ed. Auguste Dietrich (Paris : Garnier frères, 1908): 2: 68

different subjects. Nevertheless, both might be considered as responses to demands for a new, Republican repertory which attempted to exert a pedagogical influence over its audience.

In considering all of these issues in detail, the present study will seek to establish answers to the following questions:

1. What suppositions and hypotheses concerning the nature of music and its emotive effects were made by the French *philosophes* during the eighteenth century, and;
2. In what ways did these build upon ideas from antiquity concerning music's didactic potential?
3. How did these suppositions and hypotheses influence the Revolutionary perceptions of music, particularly with regard to their use of music as an affective pedagogical tool which could be employed by governments to recalibrate public sentiment and to influence public opinion?
4. Consequently, how did composers adapt to these shifts in the musical paradigm, and how was the repertory affected?

There are two terms here which will appear frequently in this study and warrant defining more carefully. The first is antiquity, which here is used to refer specifically to Graeco-Roman antiquity. It was these two civilisations with which French commentators of the eighteenth century were most consistently preoccupied, although there was a growing interest in the music of the ancient Hebrews and Egyptians as well.

The other is the concept of 'affectivity', which is typically understood as pertaining to moods, emotion and attitude. In the eighteenth-century this had more of a physiological dimension than we tend to assume today, and in this present study, affectivity is closely associated with those artistic (and more specifically, musical) styles, genres and compositional processes which were intended to appeal to and even alter the emotional resources of the listener. As we will see later, these are closely related to the Rousseauian concept of *sentiment*, and the rise of sentimentalism generally during the Enlightenment.<sup>10</sup>

But let us turn now to the theories themselves, beginning with an evaluation of the Enlightenment conception of music.

---

<sup>10</sup> See William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 141-210

## CHAPTER I: LA MUSIQUE DES LUMIÈRES

“Ceaselessly occupied with Rome and Athens,” wrote Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his *Confessions*, “living, one might say, with their great men, myself born Citizen of a Republic and son of a father whose patriotism was his strongest passion, I took fire from his example; I thought myself a Greek or a Roman.”<sup>11</sup>

Rousseau was by no means alone in his preoccupation with Graeco-Roman antiquity. Virtually all of the *philosophes* consciously drew upon their ancient forbears in their works on all manner of subjects, whilst being able to quote popular phrases from antiquity’s seminal texts—in their original Greek or Latin, naturally—was considered the common currency of good discourse. This chapter takes as its contention that an important intellectual relationship existed between conceptions of music in Graeco-Roman antiquity and the French Enlightenment around the time of the *Encyclopédie*. It is postulated here that the intellectuals of the latter drew upon the works of the former to shape their ideas in three main areas: firstly on *mimesis*, the imitation of nature in art; secondly, the development of the discourse on *mimesis* to outline beliefs in music’s emotional power; and thirdly, that music might form the foundation of a pedagogical project seeking to inculcate principles of civic virtue and morality. Underpinning this argument is the contention that the Ancient Greek conception of music—which provided both a nostalgic image of civic virtue, moral integrity and heroism—provided a body of thought upon which the *philosophes* drew both consciously and subconsciously, and would go on to influence the Revolutionaries in their musical project.

### *I. The Influence of Antiquity on the Musical Theorists of the Enlightenment*

The fact that Revolutionary thinking on music and French Enlightenment musical aesthetics were so heavily influenced by Graeco-Roman writings is scarcely surprising, given the enormous prestige that classical authors such as Plato enjoyed at the period. As in England and elsewhere in Europe at the period, one of the fundamental aims of education as it was then understood was to impart a thorough grounding in Latin and Greek and knowledge of the literature in these languages.

The views of classical authors pervaded the thinking of the *philosophes* and serves as a point of departure for their forays into a wide range of subjects, such as Voltaire’s *Essai sur les mœurs et l’esprit des nations*, which begins with a an analysis of the civilisations of the Ancient Indians and Chinese. This work is itself indicative of the extent to which the *philosophes*’ familiarity with Antiquity reached, for they believed

---

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin, Marcel Raymond, et al., 3 vols. Book 1:16 (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), quoted from Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment : The Rise of Modern Paganism* (London: W.W. Norton, 1996): 46

themselves able to discuss not just Greece and Rome, but also the cultural differences between contemporary societies.<sup>12</sup>

Theirs was not a naïve admiration of all things deriving from antiquity, however. René Hubert has shown that the *philosophes* did not think of themselves as the disciples of the classical thinkers, and that they often preferred denigrating the primitivism of what they saw as barbaric, religiously fanatical societies to praising the enlightenment of their leading thinkers.<sup>13</sup> Nor was there unanimity in their views of which aspects of the civilisations of their forbears should be held in esteem. Many considered Greece as the model of civilisation's triumph over barbarism, to be admired for promoting the education of its citizens.<sup>14</sup> But others perceived Roman society as superior to Greece, pointing towards a wiser and more moral religious system which had the benefit of being socially useful. Others however, such as Diderot, dismissed Rome as decadent. The vast majority of the *philosophes* seem to have been in awe of Lycurgus' Sparta, such as Jaucourt (in his *Encyclopédie* article 'Gouvernement'), Rousseau (on 'Economie politique') and Diderot (on 'Sparte'). The Spartans were seen by these men as a civilisation whose 'natural' virtue and reasoning ensured a stability of the state and collectivism over selfish individualism.<sup>15</sup> But on the other hand, Voltaire derided Frederick the Great's Prussia as a 'modern Sparta' except when he found something to praise and referred to it as the 'modern Athens'.<sup>16</sup>

It seems fair to conclude, as Henry Vyberg does, that this huge diversity of opinion ranging from total acceptance to flat rejection of individual societies is derived from a scattered approach to elements of Greek thought and culture.<sup>17</sup> The *philosophes*' moralistic, judgemental historical methodology has been widely criticised since the nineteenth-century, and rightly so in the interests of accuracy and scholarly objectivity. But paradoxically, although their methodology may have produced widespread errors in the minutiae of historical detail, it was ultimately this shared moralistic approach which resulted in a consistent admiration for antiquity as teachers of morality. All subscribed to what R.A. Leigh has described as 'the myth of antiquity', a belief that "in the early days of the Roman and Greek republics, men were brave, hardy, upright, self-sacrificing, frugal, austere, brimming over with the domestic virtues and above all imbued with zeal for the common good."<sup>18</sup>

This of course accounts for the formation of a nostalgic, heroic image of antiquity which pervades so many of the *philosophes*' references to antique subjects. But what about the fate of the classical theories

---

<sup>12</sup> Op. cit., Gay, *The Enlightenment*: 34

<sup>13</sup> Hubert, *Les Sciences Sociales dans l'Encyclopédie. La Philosophie de l'Histoire et le Problème des Origines Sociales* : 66

<sup>14</sup> René Hubert, *Les Sciences Sociales dans l'Encyclopédie : La Philosophie de l'Histoire et le Problème des Origines Sociales* (Paris : F. Alcan, 1923): 66

<sup>15</sup> Ibid: 73

<sup>16</sup> Op. cit., Gay, *The Enlightenment*: 43

<sup>17</sup> Henry Vyberg, *Human Nature, Cultural Diversity, and the French Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989): 157

<sup>18</sup> R. A. Leigh, 'Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Myth of Antiquity in the Eighteenth Century' in *Classical influences on Western thought A.D. 1650-1870: proceedings of an international conference held at King's College, Cambridge, March 1977*, ed. R.R. Bolgar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 157

themselves? Voltaire, otherwise unstinting in his praise of Ancient Greece, held a rather condescending view of Greek philosophy:

*La belle architecture, la sculpture perfectionnée, la peinture, la bonne musique, la vraie poésie, la vraie éloquence, la manière de bien écrire l'histoire, enfin, la philosophie même, quoiqu'informe et obscure, tout cela ne parvint aux nations que par les Grecs.*

Beautiful architecture, perfect sculpture, painting and good music, true poetry, true eloquence, the method of writing good history, and finally even philosophy, although it was still formless and obscure—all of this only came to the nations of the world through the Greeks.”<sup>19</sup>

Voltaire’s comment about the formlessness and comparative incoherence of Greek philosophy is symptomatic of the Enlightenment’s attitude towards writers such as Plato and Aristotle. In the main, the *philosophes* preferred the historical writings of the Romans to the philosophising of the Greeks, especially Aristotle’s work on metaphysics which fell under suspicion for its close association with medieval Christian scholasticism.<sup>20</sup> It is my contention, however, that their disdain for the minutiae of Greek philosophical theorising might be regarded in the same manner as their disdain for certain cultural aspects of antiquity’s civilisations. The larger picture, one of respect for the pedagogical nature of the Greek musical project, is far more telling. I believe that this perspective will be vindicated once the similarities between Antique and Enlightenment theories are considered in greater detail, but for now it is enough to remind ourselves that said appreciation for Greek didacticism was widespread, and underpinned that image of upright, moral men already discussed. Likewise, Peter Gay points out that despite their condescension, “the Enlightenment was permeated with Platonic ideas. The Stoics, who taught the *philosophes* a great deal, had studied Plato closely, and had adopted many of his teachings.”<sup>21</sup>

It is worth noting too that a dichotomy in Enlightenment perceptions of Greek thinking might also be explained by the fact that, as Leigh points out, the *philosophes* valued the work of ancient philosophers not so much on aesthetic or cultural grounds, but on account of their preoccupation with ethics and didacticism.<sup>22</sup>

If the *philosophes* sought theories of ethics and didacticism, of course, they needed look no further than the Ancient Greek perception of music. Whilst much about the nature of Ancient Greek music itself remains unknown to us, a belief in the power of music is at least well documented. We know, for example, that work songs were commonly used as a stimulant to activity. As M.L. West observes, the Greeks believed that “[Music] stimulates the spirits and it assists in maintaining the rate of achievement and, where necessary, with synchronizing everyone’s efforts.”<sup>23</sup> Music was used to a similar end during times of

---

<sup>19</sup> Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet), *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Louis Moland, 52 vols (Paris : Garnier frères, 1877-1885): 59:175

<sup>20</sup> Op. cit., Gay, *The Enlightenment*: 83

<sup>21</sup> Ibid: 83

<sup>22</sup> Op. cit., Leigh, ‘Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Myth of Antiquity’: 157

<sup>23</sup> M.L. West, *Ancient Greek Music*: (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992): 28

conflict, in order to boost morale and to exert a synchronising influence over the efforts of groups of individuals. Thucydides described the Spartan army advancing into battle “slowly, and to the music of many pipers stationed in the ranks by military law, and not for any religious reason, but in order that, stepping by measure, they may advance evenly, and their ranks not be disordered, as is usually the case in large armies, in their approaches.”<sup>24</sup>

Anyone familiar with Greek mythology would not find these accounts surprising in the power that they implicitly ascribe to music in influencing behaviour. In many myths music plays a fundamental role; there are the Sirens, who lure unprepared sailors to their doom with their beguiling songs; there is the story of Amphion, whose lyre playing animated the stones around Thebes and allowed the building of the city wall;<sup>25</sup> and Orpheus, whose legendary musical skills and adventures in the underworld made him one of the most best-known figures in Greek mythology. Many more examples could be cited, but these three suffice to illustrate my point. The idea of music as a potent force, able to exert a unifying influence over the behaviour of living beings was widespread in Greek culture.

Interestingly, although many of the details are lost, definite musical theories about the various moral and emotional effects of different musical modes and rhythms were extant. We do know, for instance, that contemporary descriptions of the Greek system of modality would frequently refer to individual modes according to their emotional properties. According to Warren Anderson, “...when a Hellene thought of what we would call modality, he had in mind not merely a particular scale pattern but also a distinctive musical idiom, as it were a dialect.”<sup>26</sup> There is also evidence that the Pythagoreans made attempts to categorise the types of music which produced different emotional effects and responses, according to their rousing and calming properties.<sup>27</sup>

It is striking that there is little to separate this perspective from that of Rousseau, written over two millennia later:

*L'usage des chansons est fort naturel à l'homme: il n'a fallu, pour les imaginer, que déployer ses organes, et fixer l'expression dont la voix est capable, par des paroles dont le sens annonçât le sentiment qu'on vouloit rendre, ou l'objet qu'on vouloit imiter. Ainsi les anciens n'avoient point encore l'usage des lettres, qu'ils avoient celui des chansons: leurs lois et leurs histoires, les louanges des dieux et des grands hommes, furent chantées avant que d'être écrites; et de - là vient, selon Aristote, que le même nom grec fut donné aux lois et aux chansons.*

The use of songs is innate to man: in order to conceive of them he had only to use his voice and to establish the expression of which the voice is capable, through the use of words by which the senses announced the sentiment which one wished to render, or the object which one wished to imitate.

---

<sup>24</sup> S.T. Bloomfield, *The History of Thucydides*, 3 vols (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1829): 3:523-524

<sup>25</sup> Edward Tripp, *Crowell's Handbook of Classical Mythology* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1970): 44

<sup>26</sup> Warren D. Anderson, *Ethos and Education in Greek Music: The Evidence of Poetry and Philosophy* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966): 25

<sup>27</sup> Op. cit., West, *Ancient Greek Music*: 246

Therefore the ancients were musical before they were literate: their laws and their stories and their worship of Gods and of great men were sung before they were written; hence, according to Aristotle, the same Greek name was given to laws as to songs.<sup>28</sup>

As we will consider in detail, Rousseau's conception of music echoes themes outlined by Plato—of nature, imitation and *mimesis*; of music's moral, didactic plane; of the importance of *sentiment*, *passion* and emotion; and not least of his conception of the importance of language and its relationship with music.

But it was not just Rousseau for whom the deceased civilisations of antiquity represented a rich source of material, as has already been stated. For many of those *philosophes* that will be considered in detail here, especially Batteux, Rameau, Condillac, Diderot and Morellet, as well as their contemporaries, d'Alembert, Diderot and von Grimm, the works of Plato and Aristotle played a vital role in laying the foundations of the discipline of music aesthetics.

## II. *Mimesis and the Emotional Power of Expressive Music*

I wish first to take the imitation-of-nature thesis as an example. This thesis, which can essentially be regarded as the descendent of Platonic and Aristotelian *mimesis*, underwent several interesting transformations during the eighteenth century. The aesthetician Charles Batteux (1713-1780) is commonly held to be the pivotal figure responsible for bringing *mimesis* to the foreground of aesthetic discourse, outlining an argument propounding the importance of nature in providing the model for all beauty in the arts in his 1746 treatise, *Les beaux arts arts réduits à un même principe*. For Batteux, the fine arts, (as opposed to the mechanical arts like the sciences, and those arts which combine fine art with utility, such as architecture) are those which imitate an idealised form of nature: *la Nature belle*. This imitation is not 'realistic' but idealised, and good imitation requires that the Artist should seek to distil nature's essence so far as they believe it to be, rather than how it appears in the literal sense.

Batteux was of course not the first to propose such an idea. Several others—not least among whom was the Abbé Du Bos (1670-1742)—had iterated similar aesthetic theories in the previous century. But as Kristeller remarks:

The decisive step toward a system of the fine arts was taken by the Abbe Batteux in his famous and influential treatise, *Les beaux arts arts réduits à un même principe* (1746). It is true that many elements of his system were derived from previous authors, but at the same time it should not be overlooked that

---

<sup>28</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Louis de Cahusac, 'Chanson' in Diderot, Denis, *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project [Spring 2013 Edition], ed. Robert Morrissey). Available online : <http://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu/> [last accessed 13/09/14]: 3:139

he was the first to set forth a clearcut system of the fine arts in a treatise devoted exclusively to this subject.<sup>29</sup>

It seems also that Batteux's influence permeated significantly more extensively than his predecessors. Indeed, Lippman states that his work was disseminated more extensively and carried greater weight,<sup>30</sup> whilst Francis Coleman informs us that the extent of his influence was such that he should be considered the 'aesthetic spokesman' of the period.<sup>31</sup>

But it is also a fact that it was in Batteux's 1746 treatise that the role of music came to the fore for the first time in a systematic evaluation of the arts which makes it an important consideration in this context. Devoting an entire section to the subject, Batteux argues:

*Elle donnoit les graces de l'Art, à toutes les espèces de sons, et de gestes : elle comprenoit le Chant, la Danse, la Versification, la Déclamation...*

[Music]... gave the graces of Art to all categories of sound and gesture: it comprised song, dance, versification, declamation...<sup>32</sup>

At one time, Batteux argues, the art of music unified song, dance, poetry, and rhetoric. In contemporary times, however, it has been separated by artists into many different aspects. Batteux argues that this is not natural. Instead, to consider it as a unified art-form allows for a better understanding of the subject.<sup>33</sup>

That is not to say that the combination of arts should result in an equal division, for if that were the case then every art would be competing with the others. Instead, they should divide themselves according to the heroes of antiquity:

*Un seul doit exceller, et les autres rester dans le second rang. Si la Poésie donne des Spectacles ; la Musique et la Danse paroîtront avec elle ; mais ce sera uniquement pour la faire valoir, pour lui aider à marquer plus fortement les idées et les sentimens contenus dans le vers.*

A sole [art] must excel, and the others remain in the second rank. If poetry provides the spectacle: music and dance will appear with it; but this will be only to enhance it, to help it emphasise more strongly the ideas and sentiments contained in the verse.<sup>34</sup>

Where music which is to dominate, poetry and dance must work to emphasise its expression, and not compete for the spotlight.

---

<sup>29</sup> Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, 4 vols. (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1939): 3:587

<sup>30</sup> Edward A. Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1992): 162

<sup>31</sup> Francis X. J. Coleman, *The Aesthetic Thought of the French Enlightenment* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971): 60

<sup>32</sup> Charles Batteux, *Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe* (Paris : Chez Durand, 1746): 250

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 250-251

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 285-286

Batteux had very definite ideas about what this fusion of music, poetry and dance should express, and sought to refute notions that this was confined to the depiction of landscapes and representation of pastoral scenes. Rather than being concerned with literal representation, Batteux argues that the union of poetry, music, and dance should present images of actions and of human passions. Furthermore, it must present them in a manner which is not 'realistic', but instead captures the essence of such things.<sup>35</sup> It is this rule which must guide the arts: *Singula quaque locum teneant sortita decentir* ('Let everything have its due place').<sup>36</sup>

We see here a second aspect added to Batteux's conception of imitation: that it was concerned with the representation of emotion rather than 'realistic' representation of the external world. However, Batteux contended that the musician always imitates nature nonetheless, compelled as he is to imitate animate sounds which adhere to feelings. He is in this respect no freer than a painter, for all his subjects come from nature, just as they do in the visual arts. We might then consider a piece of music as a failure if we are unable to discern from it what the subject of imitation is, for poor music is in its most fundamental state poor imitation.

The product of this imitation of nature, passion and sentiment is what allows music to communicate directly to the heart of the listener. And it is this imitation rather than the carefully calculated mathematical relationships between pitches (harmony) which gives rise to the expression of emotion:

*Je ne prétends point calculer les sons, ni leurs rapports, soit avec notre organe: je ne parle ici... de vibrations de cordes, ni de proportion mathématique. J'abandonne aux savans Théoristes, ces spéculations ... La Musique me parle par des tons : ce langage m'est naturel... On doit juger d'une musique, comme d'un tableau. Je vois dans celui-ci des et des couleurs dont je comprends le sens ; il me flatte, il me touche.*

I do not claim to analyse sounds, or their relationship to each other by ear: I am not concerned here ... with the vibrations of strings or with mathematical proportions. I leave these speculations to learned theorists... Music speaks to me through sounds: this language is natural to me... One must judge a piece of music as one would a picture. I discern in the latter lines and colours of which I understand the meaning; the picture delights me, it touches me.<sup>37</sup>

From this passage, it is clear that Batteux viewed music as a mode of emotive speech. Such a contention might have come straight from the pen of Rousseau, for whom the polemic against harmony as the prime vehicle of expression would become an increasing preoccupation as his well-documented dispute with Rameau intensified throughout the 1750s. This dispute, with its origins in the *Querelle des bouffons*, initially concerned the suitability of the French language for musical adaptation. But as the exchanges continued and intensified, it became clear that what was at stake was the supremacy of either melody or harmony as the vehicle for expression.

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 290

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 290. Batteux is quoting Horace's *Ars poetica*

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 262-263

That is not to say that Rameau was opposed to the imitation of nature in music- quite the opposite in fact. As early as 1722, in his *Traité de l'harmonie reduite à ses principes naturels*,<sup>38</sup> Rameau identified harmony in music as 'natural' due to its basis in nature. Indeed, Thomas Christensen has identified Batteaux's theory of the imitation of nature as a significant influence on Rameau's conception of the arts, entailing as it does the Aristotelian ideal of a musician imitating nature passion: grief, joy, rage, love; all through an idealised portrayal of human passion.<sup>39</sup>

On this point, at least, both Rousseau and Rameau agreed. But the irreconcilable difference lay in the purported conflict between harmony, where beauty arose from the qualities of order, proportion and relationship,<sup>40</sup> and melody, where beauty arose from the expression of passion and the imitation of language and the human voice. As Rémy Saisselin has suggested, for Rousseau the pleasure of harmony is that of mere sensation and is but short-lived, whilst the pleasures of melody are the pleasures of sentiment, the passionate accent of the power of music over the soul.<sup>41</sup>

This perspective, in which music gains its expression from its proximity to speech rather than mathematical principles, is a maxim which stands at the heart of Rousseau's attitude towards imitation. The idea that imitation in music was linked with human passion had already been proposed by Batteux as we have seen, but Rousseau would develop this theory to the extent that in his own writings, discourse on imitation is irrevocably entwined with ideals of human *sentiment*, *passion* and emotional experience. The stirring of a partially sensualist perspective in Rousseau's of course owed a great deal to philosophers such as Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1715-1780) who was instrumental in establishing sensualism as a school of thought. But before we leave Rousseau to consider the influence of Condillac, we might first consider Rousseau's conception of music's ability to influence the emotions, and to convey *sentiment* and *passion* to the heart of the listener in greater detail. We see in Rousseau's article *Chant* a statement explicitly outlining this very idea:

*C'est par les différens sons de la voix que les hommes ont dû exprimer d'abord leurs différentes sensations. La nature leur donna les sons de la voix, pour peindre à l'extérieur les sentimens de douleur, de joie, de plaisir dont ils étoient intérieurement affectés, ainsi que les desirs et les besoins dont ils étoient pressés. La formation des mots succéda à ce premier langage. L'un fut l'ouvrage de l'instinct, l'autre fut une suite des opérations de l'esprit... Cette espece de langage, qui est de tous les pays, est aussi entendu par tous les hommes, parce qu'il est celui de la nature. Lorsque les*

<sup>38</sup> The title of this work translates as: 'Treatise of harmony reduced to its natural principles'. Written as an attempt to systematise Rameau's theory of the *basse fondamentale*, the work proposes a harmonic model as the basis of composition. Rameau establishes the validation of chords as fundamental musical structures by using the monochord string to establish the basis of all harmony, and by discussing the importance of mathematical ratios in the production of intervallic sound, or chords, and also discusses the consecutive movement of these chords in the context of harmonic progression.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Christensen, *Rameau and Musical Theory in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 236

<sup>40</sup> Ibid: 238. The idea of beauty as measurable according to these categories had exerted influence for some time, initially appearing in the works of aestheticians such as Jean-Pierre Crousaz (1663–1750) and Yves-Marie André (1675–1764) earlier in the century.

<sup>41</sup> Rémy G. Saisselin, *The Enlightenment against the Baroque: Economics and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth Century* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1992): 48

*enfants viennent à exprimer leurs sensations par des mots, ils ne sont entendus que des gens d'une même langue, parce que les mots sont de convention... Ces sentimens qui remuent et agitent l'ame d'une maniere vive, durent nécessairement se peindre dans le chant avec plus de vivacité que les sensations ordinaires; de - là cette différence que l'on trouve entre le chant du langage commun, et le chant musical... Le chant consacré par la nature pour nous distraire de nos peines, ou pour adoucir le sentiment de nos fatigues, et trouvé pour exprimer la joie, servit bientôt après pour célébrer les actions de graces que les hommes rendirent à la Divinité; et une fois établi pour cet usage, il passa rapidement dans les fêtes publiques, dans les triomphes, et dans les festins, etc. La reconnaissance l'avoit employé pour rendre hommage à l'Être suprême; la flatterie le fit servir à la louange des chefs des nations, et l'amour à l'expression de la tendresse. Voilà les différentes sources de la Musique et de la Poésie.*

It is through the different sounds of the voice that men had to first express their different feelings. Nature gave them the sound of the voice to paint outwardly the feelings of pain, joy, and pleasure which were affected internally, as well as the needs and desires which were urgent. The formation of words followed this first language. One was the work of instinct; the other was a result of the workings of the spirit... This sort of language, which is common to all countries, is also understood by all men, because it is of Nature. When children come to express their feelings in words, they are heard as people speaking the same language, because words are convention... These feelings that animate and stir the soul in a lively manner necessarily paint within the *song* with more vivacity than ordinary sensations, hence the difference one finds between the singing of a common language, and musical singing... Song, dedicated by nature to distract us from our troubles, or to soften the effects of our labours, and found to express joy, served soon after to celebrate the thanksgiving that men gave to the Gods, and once established for this purpose, it passed quickly into public festivals in the triumphs, and at feasts, etc. Gratitude which had paid homage to the Supreme Being; flattery made to praise the leaders of nations, and love for the expression of tenderness. These are the different sources of music and poetry.<sup>42</sup>

From this extract we might derive several important conclusions. For Rousseau, song (and all music derived from it) exercises extraordinary remarkable influence because of its ability to express our deep needs and desires. A person's cry of despair, for example, which might under normal circumstances trigger an instinctual response prompting us to help the suffering party, is magnified in music, enlivened as it is by the art's ability to 'paint' the emotions with greater vividness than ordinary speech. It can be inferred too that music's powers of expression come from this very ability, for it heightens those emotions which are the subject of imitation and thus allows the listener to empathise with great intensity. In essence, for Rousseau, music's power derives from its ability to effect emotional change in the listener, and to superimpose these emotions onto their soul. As Michael O'Dea suggests, the intensity of response should be its overriding concern- the soul must be put into a certain disposition.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Rousseau and Cahusac, 'Chant' in op.cit., Diderot, *Encyclopédie*: 3:141

<sup>43</sup> Michael O'Dea, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Music, Illusion, and Desire* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995): 50

Furthermore, Rousseau's discussion of song's utility in 'distracting' and 'softening the effects of our labours' implies also that music might even elicit physical responses from the body, through psychological responses to emotional stimuli. It is interesting to note here that the study of music's effect on the body was in fact one which was of some interest to many contemporary thinkers. We see in Menuret de Chambaud's *Encyclopédie* article on the effects of music for instance a detailed survey of the physical effects of music, along with a detailed list relating specific modes to certain physical or emotional responses.<sup>44</sup> One particular fascination for thinkers of the era was the disorder known as 'tarantism'. In folklore, tarantism—a malady which resulted in an uncontrollable urge to dance even unto death—was commonly held to be the result of a tarantula bite, and was believed to be cured by the *tarantella* dance performed with a suitable musical accompaniment (thus precipitating its entry into the repertoire).<sup>45</sup>

Rousseau himself recounts similar anecdotes in many of his works to emphasise the emotional and physical powers of music. In the *Encyclopédie* he points to the examples of Erric, King of Denmark, who could be made furious by music, and a musician in the employ of Henry III, who used the Phrygian mode to calm down the Royal Bodyguard, enraged by the discovery of weapons in the presence of the King.<sup>46</sup> He also recounts a rather amusing story of a Gascon knight who was terrified by the sound of the bagpipes.<sup>47</sup>

Rousseau's contention that music is a 'language understood by all men' is also particularly striking: he argues that the significant potency exercised by music extends so far as to exert a unifying effect on men from all backgrounds. It hardly needs to be said that the potential utility of such a music could hardly be missed by any politically-minded reader, especially given the concluding sentence in the passage quoted above which explicitly acknowledges this very idea. Of course, he did not envision the role of music being limited to the flattery of leaders or the praise of the Supreme Being (although, as we will see, at times it was used for exactly these purposes during the Revolutionary period); it could also unite the people through communal worship and celebration, and inculcate sentiments of explicit political utility to a mass-audience representing the full spectrum of society.

---

<sup>44</sup> Menuret de Chambaud, 'Musique, effets de la' in op.cit., Diderot, *Encyclopédie*: 10:903

<sup>45</sup> Tarantism is most closely associated with Southern Italy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and appears to be related to similar 'dancing mania' phenomena such as 'St Vitus' Dance' in Germany. One particularly detailed account of the affliction describes: "The poor peasant had laboured breathing, and we watched his face and hands turned black. Since everyone knew of his illness, a guitar was called to play a melody with which he was familiar, and this caused his feet and legs to move shortly thereafter. He was kneeling. Soon after, he arose swaying. Finally, in the space of a quarter of an hour, he was leaping three feet off the ground. He sighed, but with great impetus, and this brought a fear amongst the bystanders, and before an hour, his hands and face were no longer black, and had regained their natural colour." Quoted from Francesco Cancellieri, *Lettera di Francesco Cancellieri al ch. sig. dottore Koreff, professore di medicina nell' Università di Berlino sopra il tarantismo, l'aria di Roma e della sua campagna, li palazzj pontificj entro e fuori di Roma, con le notizie di Castel Gandolfo e de' paesi circonvicini* (Rome: F. Bourlié, 1817): 11 (translation by Vincent Battista).

<sup>46</sup> Rousseau, 'Musique' in op.cit., Diderot, *Encyclopédie*: 10:899

<sup>47</sup> Rousseau takes particular delight in informing the reader that this poor Gascon knight was so terrified by the sound of the bagpipe that he was unable to retain control of his bladder upon hearing it played.

Our conclusions thus far have of course been concerned with music's utility, and potential for communication, but we might also consider what types of music are best suited to the forms of expression which Rousseau advocated.

Certainly it is clear from his references to the importance of language that Rousseau believed vocal music to be the most elevated and potent form of musical expression. O'Dea contends that the reason for this is that the *philosophes* regarded singing as a response to the affective voice of the heart. Moreover, they believed that it had an effect on moral behaviour,<sup>48</sup> and held that its clarity of expression allowed for the most intense response from the listener: what O'Dea describes as *di prima intenzione*.<sup>49</sup> This theoretical perspective manifests in Rousseau's own compositions, such as *Le Devin du Village* (1752), in which consistent simplicity of vocal melody, frequent recourse to recitative, and a somewhat conservative musical style were used in the belief that they would ensure the unobstructed communication of sentiment.

Such didactic potency is for Rousseau derived from the fact that music draws a great deal of its power from the text: music allied to lyric is far more potent than music or spoken word alone:

*...quand il s'agit de peindre les objets même du sentiment... de les rendre reconnoissables, alors la musique est obligée d'emprunter le secours du langage. Nous pouvons être fort touchés, lorsque nous entendons, dans une langue qui nous est inconnue, les accents de la tristesse, de la douleur, de la désolation; mais, quand celui qui pousse cet accent, s'explique en même tems d'une manière intelligible, quand il nous instruit des causes et des principales circonstances de son infortune, notre émotion devient beaucoup plus forte.*

...when [music] paints objects of sentiment... to render them recognisable, then music is obliged to seek the aid of language. We can be strongly moved when we hear—even in a language with which we are unfamiliar—the accent of sadness, of pain, of desolation; but when that which possesses these accents expresses the same in an intelligible manner, when it tells us of the causes and principle circumstances of its misfortune, our feeling becomes much stronger..<sup>50</sup>

For Rousseau, then, vocal music owes its superiority not just to the fact that it is able to illuminate the subject of the music with absolute clarity (after all, he acknowledges that even works composed in a foreign language might convey expression if this derived from its purest, most natural and thus universally recognisable form), but because it allows for the union of music, language and accent; the result is a product greater in expressive potential than the sum of its parts.

The role of accent in this union is for Rousseau an important one. It is in essence the connection between music and oratory, imbuing the former with the persuasive capabilities and depth of expression of the latter. This connection, Rousseau contends, is what allows for pathos, with the inflections of the voice,

---

<sup>48</sup> Op. cit., O'Dea, *Rousseau: Music, Illusion, and Desire*: 70-73

<sup>49</sup> Ibid: 174. O'Dea identifies 'response' as one of the most consistent and important themes in Rousseau's work, both philosophical and literary.

<sup>50</sup> Rousseau, 'Instrumentale' in op.cit., Diderot, *Encyclopédie*: 3:618

the rise or fall in pitch, and the increase or decrease in speed conveying the sentiment of an impassioned orator to all those that hear it:

*...le plus ou moins d'accent est la vraie cause qui rend les langues plus ou moins musicals; car quel seroit le rapport de la musique au discours, si les tons de la voix chantante n'imitoient les accens de la parole? D'où il suit que, moins une langue a de pareils accens, plus la mélodie y doit être monotone, languissante et fade...*

...the extent of accent is the true factor which renders a language more or less musical, because what would be the relationship between music and discourse, if the tones of the sung voice did not imitate the accents of speech? Hence, it follows that in a language without such accents, melody must be monotonous, languid and bland...<sup>51</sup>

We should not underestimate the importance of this connection, which draws a great deal from the Classical conception of oratory and the eloquence of orators such as Cicero, but also (and perhaps more strikingly) from Hume's concept of sublime oratory which, as Catherine Packham has pointed out, did not seek merely to resurrect the practices of rhetoric in antiquity but also to moderate them so that persuasion might never become coercion.<sup>52</sup>

Here of course we are beginning to consider the ways in which Rousseau perceived the relationship between music and text. We will evaluate this in more detail later in the present chapter, but first we should consider the position of instrumental music in the *philosophe's* theories. Many interpretations of Rousseau portray him as having a negative attitude towards it, with the following cited as evidence:

*J'ose prédire qu'une mode si peu naturelle ne durera pas; la Musique est un art d'imitation; mais cette imitation est d'une autre nature que celle de la Poésie et de la Peinture; et pour la sentir il faut la présence ou du - moins l'image de l'objet imité; c'est par les paroles que cet objet nous est présenté; et c'est par les sons touchans de la voix humaine, jointe aux paroles, que ce même objet porte jusque dans les coeurs le sentiment qu'il doit y produire. Qui ne sent combien la musique instrumentale est éloignée de cette ame et de cette énergie?... Pour savoir ce que veulent dire tous ces fatras de sonates dont nous sommes accablés, il faudroit faire comme ce peintre grossier qui étoit obligé d'écrire au dessous de ses figures, c'est un homme, c'est un arbre, c'est un boeuf.*

I dare to predict that such an unnatural medium [the sonata] will not last; music is an art of imitation, but this imitation is of a different nature to that of poetry or painting, and to convey feeling it cannot rely on the image of the object imitated. It is through words that this object is presented to us, and it is through those sounds approximating the human voice, combined with words, that this same object carries the conveyed sentiment to the heart. Who does not feel how far instrumental music is removed from the soul and this energy?...In order to know what is being said, amidst all the

---

<sup>51</sup> Rousseau, 'Accent' in op.cit., Diderot, *Encyclopédie*: 1:108

<sup>52</sup> Catherine, Packham, 'Cicero's Ears, or Eloquence in the Age of Politeness: Oratory, Moderation and the Sublime in Enlightenment Scotland' in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 46 no. 4 (Summer 2013), pp. 499-512 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013): 499

overwhelming clutter of the sonata, one must be like the painter who was obliged to write underneath of his paintings: 'this is a man, this is a tree, this is an ox.'<sup>53</sup>

Such statements have furnished grounds for believing that Rousseau regarded vocal music as superior to all other forms of music. But to argue that Rousseau dismisses instrumental music entirely would, in fact, be quite incorrect, for there are several instances in which he affirms its utility: at dances, military functions, and other such events. He also points to the utility of instrumental music as a pass-time, for enjoyment, and suggests that it is also important in musical drama (such as opera) where an overture can put the audience in the correct mood for the theatrical spectacle to follow.

This, however, is a significant aside, for if instrumental music is capable of affecting the audience's mood, then we must conclude that it is still able to convey sentiment and to exert an influence on feeling and emotion. Rousseau acknowledges this; just as vocal music sung in an unfamiliar language can still convey sentiment, albeit in a somewhat indistinct and less potent manner, so too can instrumental music. Expression in instrumental music, he asserts, is derived from the same source as it is in vocal music, and can still be allied to accent in order to imitate the orator and to make use of his communicative qualities and clarity of expression. There is no reason, we must therefore assume, that an instrumental work might not be *more* expressive than a vocal work, if the former followed the principles of imitation more closely than the latter. Rousseau himself states:

*Pour éviter ces inconvénients, le compositeur feroit bien d'avoir toujours dans l'imagination l'idée de quelque personne, de quelque situation, de quelque passion, et de s'attacher tellement à cette idée, qu'à la fin il lui semble entendre la personne qui se trouve dans cette situation parlant elle-même. Cela le mettra en état d'être pathétique, enflammé ou attendri; et il trouvera encore du secours à cet égard, en cherchant dans les grands poètes des morceaux de ce genre, et en les déclamant pour se mettre à la composition dans l'état de chaleur où cette déclamation l'aura conduit. Sans ces précautions, il doit être bien persuadé que toute composition qui n'est propre à exprimer aucune passion, qui ne fait point entendre d'une manière intelligible le langage du sentiment, ne sera jamais qu'un vain bruit.*

To avoid these hindrances [where instrumental music must overcome its expressive limitations], the composer would do well to keep in mind the idea of a specific person, in a specific situation, experiencing a specific passionate emotion, and to focus so intently on this idea that in the end he seems to hear the very person him- or herself who is speaking in this situation. This will put him in the state of mind of someone experiencing pathos, inflamed feeling, or tenderness; and the composer will find it of further benefit to search the works of the great poets of these genres and declaiming them, for by doing so one is putting oneself and the composition into the very state of feeling in which this declamation will be conducted. Without these precautions, he must be persuaded that any composition which is unable to express passion, and which cannot make the language of feeling understood in an intelligible manner, and will never be more than empty noise.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Rousseau, 'Sonate' in op.cit., Diderot, *Encyclopédie* : 15 :348

<sup>54</sup> Rousseau, 'Instrumentale' in op.cit., Diderot, *Encyclopédie*: 3:618

A careful reading of such texts thus reveals that Rousseau saw a role for instrumental music provided composers conceived it in the right spirit.

We might here discuss the third type of music with which Rousseau was concerned: opera. However, because Rousseau's theories of dramatic music are so tightly entwined with his theories concerning the moral risks of the theatre and (consequently) the necessity of didacticism in music, we shall consider it in more detail later. Here, it suffices to state that for Rousseau the same principles applied to opera as to vocal or instrumental music: it must imitate human passion and emotion in order to convey sentiment.

But before proceeding, we should examine the term 'sentiment', so freely used by Rousseau, as it warrants closer attention. We can see from the extracts considered above that it is closely entwined with the communication of emotion. This is sentiment in its most mundane form, a catch-all term for the emotions and passions. This is the sense in which the word *sentiment* is used in the *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, which Downing A. Thomas correctly identifies as the driving force behind Rousseau's conception of the development of language.<sup>55</sup> But Rousseau defines it most clearly, however, in his *Second Discourse*, where he conceives of sentiment as the catalyst for empathy, or *commisération*. For Rousseau, sentiment is that which places us in the position of another's suffering; his emotions and passions become our own.<sup>56</sup>

But although Rousseau was perhaps the most vocal (and arguably influential) of the proponents of a sensualist, emotio-centric theory of imitation in music, its development owed a great deal to Etienne Bonnot de Condillac's radical empiricism which, amongst other things, asserted that experience (rather than innate knowledge) formed the basis of virtually all that we are: it teaches us "how to focus attention, remember, imagine, abstract, judge, and reason. It forms our desires and teaches us what to will."<sup>57</sup>

In his two most important works, the *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* (1746) and the *Traité des sensations* (1754), Condillac rejected the concept that any knowledge is innate. Rather, he asserts, our cognition is developed through sensual experience. This idea is expounded in its fullest in the *Traité*, in which he asks us to consider what an inanimate (and insentient) statue might learn if it were gradually given the five senses. As Falkenstein points out, the conclusion is that nothing more would be needed for it to acquire all the knowledge and all of the abilities that we have other than a sufficiently rich array of sensations.<sup>58</sup> It is grounded in the Lockean concept of imprinting: that there are no innate principles in the mind, and that learning occurs through the senses.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Downing A. Thomas: *Music and the Origins of Language: Theories from the French Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 106

<sup>56</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1755) : 32

<sup>57</sup> Lorne Falkenstein, 'Étienne Bonnot de Condillac' in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2010 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta. Available online: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/condillac/> [last accessed 14/09/14]

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> See John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (London: Edward Mory, 1690)

Mere experience alone, however, is not sufficient for one to comprehend fully everything that comprises experience. In the *Traité*, Condillac highlights the importance of attention, in order that we might come to understand the fuller nature of our experiences- but attention itself is also something which must be learnt, and Condillac argues that our basic needs and interests act as the catalyst for this learning process. These needs and interests themselves are formed from our experiences of pleasure and pain: we seek after that which is pleasurable and attractive to us, and avoid that which is displeasing and uncomfortable.<sup>60</sup>

We might take note, however, that the aural process is the most sophisticated mode of experience in Condillac's system. For a start, it has a much stronger emotional connection. Condillac explicitly highlights the suitability of music for conveying sentiment:

*Premièrement, les plaisirs de l'oreille consistent principalement dans la mélodie... Plus propre à émouvoir que les odeurs, les sons donneront, par exemple, à notre statue cette tristesse, ou cette joie, qui ne dépendent point des idées acquises, et qui tiennent uniquement à certains changements qui arrivent au corps... Quant à la musique, elle lui plaira davantage, suivant qu'elle sera en proportion avec le peu d'exercice de son oreille. D'abord des chants simples et grossiers seront capables de la ravir. Si nous l'accoutumons ensuite peu à peu à de plus composés... elle connaîtra de nouveaux plaisirs... Enfin, puisque les bruits sont à l'oreille, ce que les odeurs sont au nez, la liaison en sera dans la mémoire la même que celle des odeurs. Mais les sons ayant, par leur nature, et par celle de l'organe, un lien beaucoup plus fort, la mémoire en conservera plus facilement la succession.*

First, the pleasures of the ear derive principally from melody... More suitable for moving the emotions than smells, sounds will give to our statue, for example, that sadness or joy which does not depend on acquired ideas and rather arises solely from certain changes which affect the body... As for music, it will please [the statue] more as long as it is in proportion to the ear's lack of practice. At first simple and common songs will be capable of delighting it. If we gradually accustom it to more complex music... [the ear] will come to know new pleasures. Finally, since noises are to the ear what odours are to the nose, their connections in the memory will be the same as those of smells. But sounds having a significantly stronger link (because of their nature and because of the nature of the ear), the memory will preserve their order much more easily.<sup>61</sup>

Because of the extent of the interconnection in his theory (i.e. pleasure and pain drive need and interest, which in turn allows for attention, and is therefore by extension the catalyst for the very process by which we come to understand the true nature of our experiences), Condillac's assertion that sound is supremely capable of inculcating pleasure and pain—sadness and joy given here as examples—is extremely important. Not only does it assign music a prominent position in a system of the arts given its potential for expression, but it also acknowledges its ability to affect physical and emotional changes in the listener: music gives us “the sadness and joy which are independent of acquired ideas, and which arise from changes in the body.” Moreover, those changes which might ultimately define our understanding of our

---

<sup>60</sup> Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Traité des sensations*, 2 vols. (London and Paris : Debure, 1754): 1 :22. Condillac's perspective exerted significant influence over subsequent works, such as Claude Adrien Hélietius' magnum opus, *De l'esprit* of 1758.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*: 57-59

experiences are likely to have more permanence than those which we experience through other senses, because of the nature of the ear and because of the nature of aural experience. Permanence is also highlighted by Condillac's invocation of 'memory' at this point; a crucial addition for those concerned with pedagogy. To know that one might affect change is important, certainly, but that this change might endure through memory makes pedagogy a worthwhile enterprise.

What makes Condillac's account so compelling is his foray into a psychological dimension, grounding assertions about the expressivity of music in a foundation constructed in an attempted empirical study of the senses. Condillac's contention that sounds fix things in the memory; his description of the strength of the relationship between music and emotion; his belief in the utility of melody (a theory which Rousseau of course develops significantly in his own work); his assumption of the universal comprehensibility of simple forms of music: all gain significant credence in the eyes of those who might ascribe to a sensualist, empirical perspective.

The pedagogic nature of the *Traité* is made abundantly clear when Condillac suggests that by exposing his statue to an ever-increasing complexity of music we might teach it new pleasures. In effect, he acknowledges the potential for a musical education which might increase sensitivity to the expression of sentiment. Furthermore, if we are to equate the experience of pleasure and pain with morality, we might also conclude that a good musical education could also increase sensitivity to the inculcation of moral principles. Just as music represented a didactic tool for the Greeks, so too might we conclude from Condillac's theory that music has a moral dimension and potential utility in this context.

It is important not to overlook the fact, however, that learning which occurs through the transmission of sentiment facilitates a very human process. Thomas points out that, like Rousseau with his conception of *commisération*, Condillac postulates that music's foundation in language provokes an empathetic process: "the natural cry causes the same emotions in the other."<sup>62</sup> Or, in essence, it "moves sensation into the realm of signification."<sup>63</sup>

One further point which warrants noting is the manner in which Condillac describes the communicative aspects of music—he calls it a '*langage d'action*'. Kevin Barry alludes to the significance of its description as *une vraie peinture*, arguing that "there is a great value in this mode of signification because it simultaneously holds together unanalysed states of mind and feeling."<sup>64</sup> But the choice of metaphor is suggestive also of the fact that, like Rousseau, Condillac conceived of music as the depiction of a model; to be precise, an imitation.

Here it is echoed explicitly in Rousseau's own words:

---

<sup>62</sup> Op. cit., Thomas, *Music and the Origins of Language*. 65

<sup>63</sup> Ibid : 80

<sup>64</sup> Kevin Barry, *Language, Music and the Sign: A Study in Aesthetics, Poetics, and Poetic Practice from Collins to Coleridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 8

*Comme les sentimens qu'excite en nous la peinture ne viennent point des couleurs, l'empire que la musique a sur nos ames n'est point l'ouvrage des sons. De belles couleurs bien nuancées plaisent à la vue, mais ce plaisir est purement de sensation. C'est le dessin, c'est l'imitation qui donne à ces couleurs de la vie et de l'ame ; ce sont les passions qu'elles expriment qui viennent émouvoir les nôtres ; ce sont les objets qu'elles représentent qui viennent nous affecter.*

Just as the sentiments which painting arouses in us are not because of colours, the power which music exerts over our souls is not the result of sounds. Beautiful colours, nicely shaded, give pleasure to the eye, but that pleasure is purely sensory. It is the drawing, the imitation which gives these colours life and soul, it is the passions which they express that succeed in arousing our own, the objects which they represent that succeed in affecting us.<sup>65</sup>

It is clear then that the concept of music's expression and the idea that it might influence the listener is inextricably bound up in the interpretation of the imitation of nature- or rather, of the naturalness of the passions.

Before leaving this discussion of imitation and its relationship with musical expression, we should consider that by the time of the Revolution the imitation-of-nature theory was under attack. The aestheticians Pascal Boyé (1743-1794)<sup>66</sup> and Michel-Paul-Guy de Chabanon (1729/30-1792) both wrote important treatises disputing the contention that music achieved its expressive ends through the imitation of nature. They asserted that it was instead virtually non-existent except through the medium by which it is expressed (Boyé) or simply through its own innate expressivity (Chabanon).

Whilst it is important to examine these theories, we must not, however, exaggerate the extent to which these contentions invalidated the claims of the earlier *philosophes*. With regards to Chabanon, Edward Lippman has asserted: "This remarkably clear-sighted account of music signals the end of imitation as the foundation of a general aesthetic. If music was to be integrated into a family of the arts, some unifying principle other than imitation would have to be discovered."<sup>67</sup>

This contention requires a careful contextual consideration which is not included in Lippman's work. Whilst it might seem anachronistic to assert that by the time of the Revolution composers were still reliant on nature as a model for their works, the idea that music might imitate the naturalness of human passion and emotion as opposed to literal nature was still very much a viable theory. The aesthetician André Morellet (1727–1819) had posited an essay (*De l'expression en musique* in 1771) reiterating the imitation-of-nature thesis as a suitable musical model but eight years before Boyé's contentions, which somewhat undermines the concept of imitation as an anachronism. Morellet wrote:

*On peut distinguer deux sortes d'objets que la musique entreprend de peindre et d'exprimer, les objets physiques, leurs diverses actions, leurs mouvemens, leurs effets, et les passions ou plus généralement toutes les affections du cœur humain.*

---

<sup>65</sup> Op. cit., Rousseau, *Essai sur l'origine des langues* : 47

<sup>66</sup> Boyé lived into the Revolution, but abandoned his work on aesthetics to concentrate on political commentary. Unfortunately it seems that this was his downfall, for Boyé was guillotined during the Terror as a political dissident.

<sup>67</sup> Op. cit., Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics*: 98

There are two types of objects that music undertakes to paint and express- physical objects, their many actions, movements, and effects; and the passions, or, more generally, all the affections of the human heart.<sup>68</sup>

It should not be forgotten either that the critics Boyé and Chabanon were relatively minor figures (especially Boyé, who appears to have published only one work on aesthetics and was better known for his political writings) who simply did not exert the influence of Rousseau. In sum: whilst we might discuss the extent to which imitation fell out of favour, it would seem significantly misguided that the concept should be dismissed, especially given the ongoing ‘pro-nature’ polemic in the *Querelle des Bouffons* which continued well into the 1770s.

It is important nevertheless that we consider these later works, for they do represent an important development in aesthetic perspective. In his 1779 treatise, *L'Expression musicale, mise au rang des chimères*, Boyé argued that imitation in music is a logical inconsistency. Music is too far removed from its ‘object’ to rely on imitation for expression. In this, he argues, music is unique- all of the other arts adhere to their model without difficulty. Boyé gives the example of a painter who wishes to paint the most beautiful woman ever seen: he might take a number of the most beautiful women that he has seen, and combine their most striking features in a single painting.<sup>69</sup> The composer, however, could not proceed in an analogous manner.

Boyé then proceeds to attack the idea that music should imitate speech. Music, he states, is in fact clumsy in its imitation of speech- for a start, its smallest interval is a semitone, whereas the speaking voice has at least ten times as many pitches. He also points out that the difference between the musical sound and the sound of speech are entirely different, for the former is fixed and restricted, whilst the latter is indeterminate. Using music to imitate speech is thus a futile and counterproductive ambition. “I would rather be persuaded to believe that a draughtsman can imitate curved forms with straight lines.”<sup>70</sup>

Instead, Boyé proposes that music’s expressivity comes from the performer, and that expression in music thus depends entirely upon the performer’s ability to manipulate the resources available in order that his sentiment is understood. In this regard, music can act as a prison, restricting his resources.<sup>71</sup> He is, however, able to rely on the tone colour of his voice: he can change the quality of his notes according to the type and degree of the passions which he is expressing.<sup>72</sup> But for Boyé, the idea that music itself is able to represent specific emotions is unconvincing. Interestingly, this is the direct antithesis to the conclusion reached by Morellet eight years previously.

---

<sup>68</sup> André Morellet, *De l'expression en musique et de l'imitation dans les arts* (Paris: Lepetit, 1770): 367

<sup>69</sup> M. Boyé, *L'Expression musicale, mise au rang des chimères* (Paris: Esprit, 1779), quoted from ed. Edward Lippman, *Musical Aesthetics: From Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1986): 288

<sup>70</sup> Ibid: 287

<sup>71</sup> Ibid: 289

<sup>72</sup> Ibid: 289

If music is severely limited in its expressive capabilities, what then is its purpose? If it cannot speak to us, why should it continue to exist as an artform amongst its contemporaries? Boyé answers:

The principal object of music is to please us physically, without the mind putting itself to the trouble of searching for useless comparisons to it. One should regard it entirely as a pleasure of the senses and not of the intelligence. As much as one strives to attribute the cause of the impressions that it makes us experience to a moral principle, one will only be losing one's way in a labyrinth of extravagances...<sup>73</sup>

Boyé thus attempted a thoroughgoing refutation of notions that music imitates emotion. Chabanon too argued against imitation, but did not dismiss it entirely. He believed that it is in fact present in most works, but only as a weak undercurrent serving a secondary purpose- whereas the primary purpose of music is pleasure. He acknowledged also that music is capable of eliciting emotional response, but asserted that this is because the mind is searching for analogies rather than because the music itself has an innate ability to imitate:

Music therefore acts immediately on our feelings. But the human spirit, that swift, active, curious, and reflective intelligence, enters into the pleasure of the senses. It is not able to be a dormant and indifferent spectator of it. What part can it play in sounds, which having in themselves no determinate signification, never present clear and precise ideas? It searches in them for relationships, analogies with various objects or various effects of nature... Music imitates to the extent that it can and by the express command of the spirit, which, drawing it beyond its direct purpose, proposes imitation to it as a secondary purpose.<sup>74</sup>

Chabanon too felt that music is unable to imitate speech, and thus rejected this dimension of imitation. He posited that music was not a language derived from emotion, but rather its own master, independent of all else. This is an important point, for as Nancy Baker has asserted, in denying that music was a language of the emotions, he rejected an entire philosophy based on the alliance of music and rhetoric.<sup>75</sup> For Chabanon then, the idea of music as emotional motivator was less convincing than it was for Rousseau.

Not in all contexts, however. It appears that Chabanon believed that musical imitation did in fact play an important role in the opera, where it can be combined with stage effects in order to engage all of the senses, and to render the imitative capabilities of music *certain* through combination with the other arts. Imitation in other genres—always present, but weak and ineffectual—is *uncertain*, hence its impotence in trying to influence the emotion. But in the theatre it might strengthen the effect of the performed work:

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid : 294

<sup>74</sup> Michel Paul Gui de Chabanon, *Observations sur la musique* (Paris: Pissot, 1779), quoted from op. cit., Lippman, *Musical Aesthetics*: 300-301

<sup>75</sup> Nancy Kovaleff Baker, 'Expression' in *Grove Music Online*, available online: <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/09138> [last accessed: 14/09/14]

The essential and almost unique advantage of imitation joined to music is to unite to interesting situations that art which lends them a new interest, and which itself receives from this a new charm... The overture to *Pygmalion*, worthy of being applauded on all sides, would be so with much more enthusiasm if it participated in the interest of a situation which was appropriately united with it. Chance revealed to us the analogy of certain features of this overture to claps of thunder: it is well if during this symphony an unfortunate creature threatened by the lightning blunders upon the theatre... music will receive from the situation an interest it gives to it, and both heightened, the one will live upon the other.<sup>76</sup>

Chabanon's argument for imitation *only* in the theatre of course attributes a significant importance to music of this kind. If music is at its most expressive in this context, then it stands to reason that the theatre should play a significant role in society.

This example also serves to remind us that Chabanon did not reject the idea that music could influence the emotion. Even if imitation should be limited to the theatre, for Chabanon musical expressivity was still possible, but through analogy rather than depiction. This acceptance of the emotional power of music is acknowledged explicitly:

The melody which we shall call tender perhaps does not really place us in the same condition of body and of spirit in which we would be in actually feeling tenderly for a woman, a father, or a friend. But between these two conditions, the one actual, the other musical ... the analogy is such, that the mind agrees to take the one for the other.<sup>77</sup>

This point is important, for it embraced a vaguer yet more inclusive range of sentiments. In Chabanon's theory, what sentiment lost in clarity it gained in being able to excite a more abstract, less closely related series of emotions, which might be interpreted in many different ways. As Baker points out, "the sensations of sound created aesthetic feelings in the listener, and these he could compare to emotional feelings. But, first, they had no relationship in terms of cause and effect; second, they were different in nature, the one aesthetic, the other affective; and third, they were separate from each other."<sup>78</sup> We might add to this too that such ambiguity might well cause a distinct lack of consistency of interpretation, with two listeners perhaps hearing the same music but understanding it differently.

Both Boyé's and Chabanon's theories appear revisionist; that is to say, they both stand against the theories which had dominated musical aesthetic thought previously. We have already acknowledged that their writings should not be regarded as works which swept away all of the previous aesthetic perspectives of the preceding *philosophes*, and this is important when considering the survival of a belief in the power of music to stimulate emotional responses. But in other contexts, we are better served by considering what these writers contributed rather than the views that they sought to invalidate.

---

<sup>76</sup> Op. cit., Chabanon, *Observations*: 305

<sup>77</sup> Ibid : 313

<sup>78</sup> Op. cit., Baker, 'Expression'

Both writers, for example, accord greater importance to instrumental music, which had been relegated by Batteux, Rousseau and their contemporaries to an inferior level, suitable only for entertainment and incapable of transmitting significant emotional content. Boyé's theory effectively places all music on the same level, whilst Chabanon's more subtle theory allowed for the possibility of music influencing emotion without relying on mimetic processes beyond the reach of instrumental music.

Boyé's theory also brings the role of the performer to the fore, contending that only performers, rather than music, are capable of conveying sentiment. This, combined with Chabanon's conception of the power of theatre, serves to highlight the importance of opera in any systematic institutionalisation of a programme of the arts.

Likewise, Chabanon's contention that music is capable of expression through analogy does not so much reject the concept of a music of emotional power as add another dimension entirely. It stands of course opposed to Rousseau's conception, but it serves in a more general sense to emphasise the idea of music as an emotional agent. In essence, it, like the theories of Batteux, Morellet, Rousseau, and Condillac, owes a great deal to the classical conception of music as emotional agitator.

### *III. Music and Civic Virtue*

But if music was believed to affect emotion, passion, and even behaviour, could it not in the long term be used to affect far reaching transformations in these contexts? The roots of the *philosophes'* answer to this question might be found in antiquity, with the Greek theory of *ethos*. The concept is summed up best by Anderson:

A belief in modal ethos... supposes that the modes can qualify a man's nature ethically, or at any rate express ethical states... many writers credited music with the double power of expressing and also of influencing our moral nature... a Greek would at once have understood Dryden's query, "What passions cannot music raise or quell?"<sup>79</sup>

The idea of *paideia*, commonly associated with Plato (and later Aristotle), is essentially a derivative of the need to have a system which would ensure the appropriate inculcation of ethos, and its constituent components, virtue, ethics and morality. But the idea seems to predate Plato, having apparently been proposed by the pre-Socratic musicologist, Damon, in the fifth century BCE (interestingly, Damon is invoked by Plato in several texts including *The Republic* and *Laches*). Damon maintained that song and dance produce particular commotions of the soul which in turn are responsible for shaping character. It appears that he was concerned with the effects of various rhythms and melodic patterns upon human nature, and was instrumental in establishing the idea that music had specific moral effects. He contended

---

<sup>79</sup> Op. cit., Anderson, *Ethos and Education in Greek Music*: 32

that therefore music should uphold law and order by affecting the human soul and the soul of the state: its laws and constitutions.<sup>80</sup>

But the Platonic concept itself can essentially be distilled into the idea of education, begun in childhood, which teaches the subject the correct understanding of pleasure and pain; in other words, to experience pleasure from those things which might be considered ‘good’ (in an ethical and moral sense) and pain from those which are ‘bad’. The concept is more than just education, however. It is fundamentally interconnected with the idea of the ‘forms’ outlined in *The Republic*. *Paideia* is a means by which participants are able to approximate their true ‘form’, and come closer to an idealised version of true human nature:

Education has two branches- one of gymnastic, which is concerned with the body, and the other of music, which is designed for the improvement of the soul. And gymnastic has also two branches- dancing and wrestling; and one sort of dancing imitates musical recitation, and aims at preserving dignity and freedom, the other aims at producing health, agility, and beauty in the limbs and parts of the body, giving the proper flexion and extension to each of them, a harmonious motion being diffused everywhere, and forming a suitable accompaniment to the dance.<sup>81</sup>

Music’s role in *paideia* is thus highlighted as fundamental by Plato. It has didactic qualities, because through the process of *mimēsis*—in this case, the imitation of the virtuous in music—we ourselves learn to be virtuous, especially during our formative childhood years. A man who has been taught to imitate the good and virtuous in music will therefore be better aware of what is indeed ‘good’ in a more holistic sense. An educated man who has been exposed to (and participated in) the performance of good music will also be more socially responsible because he knows to imitate the examples of the great heroes. As Lippman points out, cultural values are transmitted through music, as they become embodied in words, dance and melody.<sup>82</sup>

But Plato was not unaware of the potential danger of such a powerful medium. The issue is of authority, for if a system of musical education is a fundamental aspect of *paideia*, who then should be responsible for its implementation? For just as there can be ‘good’ music which nourishes, so too can there be ‘bad’ music which detracts from the principles of *paideia*: “For must [vicious dances or songs] not have the same effect as when a man associates with bad characters, whom he likes and approves rather than dislikes... In that case, he who takes pleasure in them will surely become like those in whom he takes pleasure...”<sup>83</sup> To avoid the inculcation of these vices, Plato argues that it should be the lawgiver who determines what musical aspects are included in the process of education. He points to the example of

---

<sup>80</sup> Op. cit., West, *Ancient Greek Music*: 246-247

<sup>81</sup> Plato (tr. Benjamin Jowett), *The Laws* (New York: Cosimo Inc, 2008): 153

<sup>82</sup> Op. cit., Lippman, *Musical Thought in Ancient Greece*: 51

<sup>83</sup> Op. cit., Plato, *The Laws*: 36

Egypt, whose lawgivers, according to Plato, long ago instituted musical system which exhibits aspects of natural truth and correctness.

Once this system has been perfected, further stylistic or development should be unnecessary. For new music will affect the soul in new ways, and would consequently require new laws to govern its use. Here again, Plato points to the example of Egypt whose music, he argues, has not changed in ten thousand years.<sup>84</sup>

How then should music be used in the most suitable manner? Plato himself advocated the Greek tradition of festivals, and suggested annual cycles of educative events in a sacred context:

First we should ordain festivals-calculating for the year what they ought to be, and at what time, and in honour of what Gods, sons of Gods, and heroes they ought to be celebrated; and, in the next place, what hymns ought to be sung at the several sacrifices, and with what dances the particular festival is to be honoured. This has to be arranged at first by certain persons, and, when arranged, the whole assembly of the citizens are to offer sacrifices and libations to the Fates and all the other Gods, and to consecrate the several odes to gods and heroes: and if any one offers any other hymns or dances to any one of the Gods, the priests and priestesses, acting in concert with the guardians of the law, shall, with the sanction of religion and the law, exclude him, and he who is excluded, if he do not submit, shall be liable all his life long to have a suit of impiety brought against him by anyone who likes.<sup>85</sup>

It is clear, certainly, that Plato's ideas of music and *paideia* are essentially bound up in his socio-political agenda. He advocates a state in which music is under the strict control of the state, governed by laws and constitutions, and prevented from developing once it has reached the point at which it fulfils its educational purposes in the context of religious and ritualised festivals which honour beacons of virtue. It proposes community through exclusivity, rejecting any who dissent in the interests of unity. Themes which are not politically advantageous should be censored. He rejects complexity, which detracts from the virtue of simplicity and which furthermore makes it impractical as a tool of *paideia*.

Plato's ideas about music then are twofold. His conception of music as a political and educational tool is positive and forward-looking. Music (and the imitative arts generally) can be very beneficial and impart ideas of virtue and civic responsibility. Yet at the same time present is an inherent conservatism with regards to aesthetics and the use of music for pleasure.

The influence of Plato's views is readily apparent on French Enlightenment musical aesthetics. Rousseau, even more so than Plato, was preoccupied with music's potential to foment immorality. It was in fact the theatre that drew the brunt of his polemic against immorality and vice in music. In his *Lettre à M.*

---

<sup>84</sup> Ibid: 156

<sup>85</sup> Ibid: 156

*d'Alembert* (published in 1758) Rousseau responded to an article on Geneva written by d'Alembert for the *Encyclopédie*, which argued that the Genevans should seek to establish a theatre in their republican city-state. He warned d'Alembert that the passions, if not properly moderated, might easily descend into vice and immorality. He argues:

*Les impressions vives et touchantes dont nous prenons l'habitude, et qui reviennent si souvent, sont-elles bien propres à modérer nos sentimens au besoin?...Ne sait-on pas que toutes les passions sont sœurs, qu'une seule suffit pour en exciter mille, et que les combattre l'une par l'autre n'est qu'un moyen de rendre le cœur plus sensible à toutes? Le seul instrument qui serve à les purger est la raison; et j'ai déjà dit que la raison n'a voit nul effet au théâtre.*

Those lively and touching impressions, which by frequent repetition grow habitual, are they proper to moderate our sentiments if need be?... Is it not well known that all the passions are sisters, that one only is necessary to excite a thousand, and that to combat one by means of another is to render the heart more sensible to them all? The instrument that serves to purge them is reason; and reason, I have already said, has no place in the theatre.<sup>86</sup>

Rousseau's warning against the theatre is an explicit acknowledgement of its power over men's very being. These moral dangers arise because of theatre's ability to excite the passions in a manner which might be extremely difficult to control- not only could an unscrupulous playwright deliberately cause the inculcation of principles which corrupt, but so too could an unwitting playwright with good intention lead his audience astray by inadvertently exciting unsuitable passions. These passions might be significantly far removed from the intended subject of imitation, making the danger particularly insidious.

For Rousseau, opera, as a form of theatre, was thus potentially a very problematic tool for the inculcation of moral principles. Its power derived from the union of the expressive arts, the combination itself exponentially intensifying the didactic potential of the medium. In essence, not only did he envision opera as containing all of the expressive, persuasive characteristics of vocal music, but also those of dramaturgy, oratory, visual spectacle, and potentially dance as well. This potential, combined with 'frequent repetition' and the development of 'habit', could be morally ruinous. Unless properly monitored, opera might be responsible for moral degradation within society by virtue of its expressive capabilities.

If we are not persuaded by this argument, Rousseau asks us to consider as well what the potential social benefits of the theatre might be. Could we, for instance, produce an opera which might teach us the virtues of antiquity, and reform society so as to return to a Classical way of life?

*...l'on se croiroit aussi ridicule d'adopter les vertus de ses héros, que de parler en vers et d'endosser un habit à la romaine. Voilà donc à peu près à quoi servent tous ces grands sentimens et toutes ces brillantes maximes qu'on vante avec tant d'emphase; à les reléguer à jamais sur la scène, et à nous montrer la vertu comme un jeu de théâtre, bon pour amuser le public, mais qu'il y auroit de la folie à vouloir transporter sérieusement dans la société.*

---

<sup>86</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Lettre à M.d'Alembert sur les spectacles* (Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1758): 31-32

...we should think of ourselves ridiculous to adopt the virtues of theatrical heroes, to talk in verse, or to strut about in the Roman habit. You see then the use of all those grand sentiments, and those brilliant maxims that are extolled with such emphasis; they serve only for the stage, and to represent theatre as a theatrical puppet, proper enough to amuse the public, but too foolish a thing to be seriously introduced into society.<sup>87</sup>

Need this be the case? One might go along with Rousseau's disjunction between ancients and moderns and agree that the elevation of Classical models for behavioural imitation would be pointless, although he seems to interpret such a possibility with an unhelpful degree of literalism. One might of course not imitate the verse or gait of the Classical heroes, but still take inspiration from the nature of their actions. But accepting his point for the sake of argument, why should heroic or virtuous models from the more recent past or present not be taken and presented to an audience? Rousseau answers that these figures are never proportionate to reality, and thus we are left with characters on the stage that bear no resemblance to ourselves and are thus of no relevance.

But whilst Rousseau took this as justification for his rejection of the theatre and all of its musical genres, his contemporaries did not seem to agree that the theatre was beyond redemption. Diderot's search for greater realism on the stage drove him to formulate the principles of the *drame bourgeois* after all, which he described as an "impression of all that which has sensitivity, virtue, and some idea of humanity's failings" (*impression sur tous ceux qui ont de la sensibilité, de la vertu, et quelqu'idée de la faiblesse humaine*).<sup>88</sup> The *drame bourgeois* was to sit somewhere between comedy and tragedy, in theory conceding neither to vulgarity or classical posturing in the interests of didacticism and the representation of virtue. Diderot's first, *Le Fils naturel*, is as Roger Lewinter has put it, "a depiction of the trials of virtue and its [ultimate] triumph" (*une peinture des épreuves de la vertu et de son triomphe*).<sup>89</sup>

D'Alembert, however, disagreed more fundamentally, writing in response to Rousseau's *Lettre*:

The passions against which the theatre tends to protect us are not the ones it excites; but it protects us against them by exciting in us the contrary passions... In this sense, tragedy makes use of useful and praiseworthy passions...<sup>90</sup>

Whereas Rousseau's belief in the moral dimension of theatre caused him to oppose it as a breeding ground for immorality, d'Alembert's own belief resulted in the opposite conclusion: that the theatre might play a positive role in the didactic sense. He goes on to argue:

---

<sup>87</sup> Ibid: 50

<sup>88</sup> Denis Diderot, *Le Fils naturel* (Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1757): v

<sup>89</sup> Roger Lewinter, 'L'exaltation de la vertu dans le théâtre de Diderot' in *Diderot Studies*, vol. 8 (1966) pp. 119-169 (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1966): 134

<sup>90</sup> d'Alembert, *Lettre de d'Alembert à M. J.-J. Rousseau sur l'article Genève* (Amsterdam: Zacharie Chatelain, 1759), quoted from ed. Allan Bloom, Charles Butterworth, and Christopher Kelly, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Letter to d'Alembert and Writings for the Theater*, 10 vols. (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2004): 10:358

Would you wish to banish love from society? I believe that would be a great good and a great evil for it. But you would try in vain to destroy that passion in men... Thus, if one cannot, and if one perhaps should not... what is left to do, if not to direct it toward a decent end, and to show us its furies and weaknesses in illustrious examples in order to defend us from it or cure us of it?<sup>91</sup>

However, d'Alembert's (and indeed Diderot's tacit) criticisms of Rousseau's conception of the theatre are perhaps best perceived as one part of a vivacious and multi-faceted debate rather than an abject refutation. Certainly, the importance of Rousseau's view of the theatre—particularly with regard to its wider implication for the other imitative arts of potential didactic utility—should not be overlooked. We must accept, for instance, that an understanding of the theatre as a potential threat to virtue raises the logical concern that if opera is in fact capable of inculcating ideas of virtue, then it too must be capable of inculcating the very opposite with an equal degree of strength. This, of course, could hardly be missed by a politically-minded reader. He might well conclude, for instance, that if it is not necessary for opera to be dismissed as morally deleterious, it should nevertheless be handled with caution and tightly regulated.

Rousseau had discussed here the problem of the theatre, but we must reasonably conclude that such a problem might be inextricably entwined with any expressive music, given its ability to influence sentiment. The power of theatre is intensified by virtue of its union of the expressive arts, but those arts which possess a sufficient degree of expressivity must also have a moral dimension which should be carefully deployed.

So, in order to avoid artistic vice, what sort of music *might* be harnessed to didactic ends? Strikingly, Rousseau's suggestion draws upon Plato's concept of the festival:

*Ne faut-il donc aucun spectacle dans une république? Au contraire, il en faut beaucoup... Mais n'adoptons point ces spectacles exclusifs qui renferment tristement un petit nombre de gens dans un antre obscur, qui les tiennent craintifs et immobiles dans le silence et l'inaction... Non, peuples heureux, ce ne sont pas là vos fêtes! C'est en plein air, c'est sous le ciel qu'il faut vous rassembler et vous livrer au doux sentiment de votre bonheur... Plantez au milieu d'une place un piquet couronné de fleurs, rassemblez-y le peuple, et vous aurez une fête. Faites mieux encore : donnez les spectateurs en spectacle ; rendez-les acteurs eux-mêmes ; faites que chacun se voie et s'aime dans les autres, afin que tous en soient mieux unis.*

Must there be no shows or sports in a republic? Yes there must, and many of them... But let us not adopt those exclusive entertainments which contain only a small number of people as if in a darkened cave, where they sit in silence, motionless... No, happy people, these are not your festivals! You are to assemble in the open air under the heavens, and there you are to give yourselves over to the contemplation of your happiness... Plant a maypole in the middle of a square, crown it with flowers, let the people then be assembled around, and you will have a festival. Even better: let the spectators

---

<sup>91</sup> Ibid: 10:362

be exhibited as a show; make them actors themselves; let each man see and love himself in others, in order that they might be more closely united.<sup>92</sup>

Here again then we discover another example of the influence that French Enlightenment understandings of Greek musical culture exerted on the ideas of the *philosophes*. Music reaches its fullest potential in the pedagogical sense when combined with the other arts, but this is best undertaken in the context of communal participation in self-praise; to ‘feast on the contemplation of happiness’ that republicanism brings. That Rousseau is vague about precisely what this ‘happiness’ entails only makes it more enticing as a template- the Revolutionaries would have no difficulty in grafting principles of *liberté, égalité and fraternité* onto this festival-model, for instance.

#### *IV. Conclusions*

We can thus conclude that a generation brought up on the theories of the *philosophes* would be inclined to credit the power of music as an educational tool and to take it seriously. Condillac’s evaluations served to ground contemporary assumptions about the power of music in a supposedly empirical foundation, making explicit the potential for music to affect emotion because of the importance of experience. Rousseau’s evaluations united this belief in an affective music with the imitation-of-nature theory of Batteux, and although this theory underwent criticism in the later part of the eighteenth century, the possibility of a music which imitated human emotion in order to convey *sentiment* was still very much alive. Chabanon’s evaluation of this theory also opened up the possibility of a non-specific yet more comprehensive imitation of the emotions through analogy. Thus, the stage was set for a new approach to composition in which the expression of emotion and attempts to influence and affect passion was at the fore of praxis.

Leading on from this was an almost universally accepted contention that the fusion of the arts lent music greater potency. This fusion, it was believed, allowed music to achieve what it otherwise could not when divorced from poetry, spectacle, and rhetoric. We see this belief in Batteux’s argument for a ‘natural music’ which allies itself with the other arts; in the operatic principles of Rameau; in Rousseau’s proposition of communal musical activities; and of course in Chabanon’s interpretation of the importance of opera as the only context in which imitation might play a significant expressive role. Indeed, such a belief places opera in a position of supreme importance. As an art-form which unites the separate arts, it is able to express and influence with all the strength that this union affords it. For those concerned with its potential to corrupt, the festival would be an attractive alternative.

---

<sup>92</sup> Op.cit., Rousseau: *Lettre à M.d’Alembert*: 267-268

Vocal music too is afforded an important role in this respect. Rousseau's belief in the communicative nature of music, derived from the accent of oratory, attributes to it a significant utility. The clarity with which it speaks and its proximity to human language means that it must play an important role in a system of music which seeks to inculcate and affect in order to cultivate public virtue. Yet at the same time, purely instrumental music is vindicated not only by Rousseau's own acknowledgements of its potential, but also in the theories of Boyé and Chabanon, although a preference for music which depicts a clear programme would be understandable in the interests of clear communication of *sentiment*.

The Revolutionaries had as well the theories of music's didactic potential. Rousseau, d'Alembert, and Condillac in particular point to music's affective potential, and posit that this allows it exert an influence over man's moral perspectives. In this way, music is able to inculcate and nurture moral principles in society, just as Plato and Aristotle believed that music could be used for the purposes of moral education. In the Revolutionaries' system of public instruction, music might play an important role in shaping a more virtuous citizenry imbued with Republican principles.

In conclusion then, it would seem reasonable to conclude that French Enlightenment conceptions of music, many of which derived from Graeco-Roman thought, had the potential to provide a wealth of inspiration for Revolutionary ideologues and composers in their attempts to harness music to ideological and political ends.

## *V. Epilogue: Antiquity, Enlightenment, and Revolution*

But to prove more than just potential, however, it is necessary to show that the Revolutionaries were prepared to accept their predecessor's arguments concerning music and the arts. Although it is not possible to do so comprehensively given that it was rare for Revolutionary authors to refer to individual figures or theories explicitly, in the following chapter we will note a striking resemblance between their perspectives and those of their forbears, and explore the implications of this more fully. But it is possible to show here that the Enlightenment and antiquity formed an important part of the Revolutionaries' cultural heritage.

Let us start with the latter. We know that the men of the Revolution were educated under the *ancien régime*, and that their education was essentially the same as the *philosophes*'. It was rooted in the Classics, and particularly in the works of Cicero, Livy, and Plutarch of whom the Revolutionaries were fond of quoting. It seems no coincidence that, as Mortimer Sellers points out, the path of the Revolution itself took a quasi-classical route. The initial National Constituent Assembly was based along Roman lines, but ended up taking the Spartan 'general will', in which the King was intended to take the role of a Lycurgus or a Numa. After this, the model of the Terror was based on a Roman *decemviri*, culminating in Marat's call for

a dictator. And in the Convention's meeting hall, the symbols of antiquity were everywhere- Brutus, Camillus, and Publicola lined one wall, Lycurgus, Solon, Demosthenes, and Plato the other. Further examples abound.<sup>93</sup>

But in this vein many historians contend that it was the Romans, with their emphasis on history and rhetoric, rather than the Greeks, that held sway over the Revolutionaries. Harold Parker suggests the Revolution might be better thought of as a neo-Latin rather than neo-Hellene revival, pointing towards frequent references to the former and a far less to the latter in their speeches and writings.<sup>94</sup> But Parker's quantitative evaluation of Revolutionary quotation does not take into account the true nature of this practice, for Claude Mossé has shown that references to Rome rarely concern institutional practice and have more to do with models of individual heroics, wisdom and military glory, such as Brutus, Mucius Scaevola, Cicero, and Cato. Greece's invocation, on the other hand, might be regarded as indicative of a more structural influence, with city-states like Solon's Athens discussed in terms of social equality and checks and balances, or Lycurge's Sparta in terms of social reform, military fitness, and austerity.<sup>95</sup>

Above all, what concerned the Revolutionaries were the practical concerns of reconstructing society. Practical models were thus just as important as the part played by individual models of virtue, and it was after all the Greeks rather than the Romans who were perceived to have invented republicanism, democracy, equality and liberty. And as Kenneth Baker has shown, the Revolutionaries much preferred this model of classical republicanism with its overtones of virtue to the modern variety.<sup>96</sup> In this way the Greek influence was, as Mossé points out, implicit in the Revolutionary thought process.<sup>97</sup>

Elizabeth Rawson has pointed towards specific instances of this in the Revolutionaries' discourse on their pedagogical project. Prominent examples include the discussion of Athenian liberty and equality by Desmoullins in 1789, Spartan political and military virtue in 1792-3 by the Protestant pastor Rabaut-Saint-Étienne, general Platonic personal virtue and simplicity throughout the Revolution, deism and public virtue from Robespierre in 1794, reform of *mœurs* along Greek lines in the public to make the government more appealing from Billaud after Thermidor, and a general turn towards military virtue of the Spartans after 1796.<sup>98</sup> Within this discourse, Plato represented "what could be done in a small state in antiquity to

---

<sup>93</sup> Mortimer Newlin Stead Sellers, 'Classical Influences on the Law and Politics of the French Revolution' in *The Classical Tradition*, ed. Anthony Grafton, Glenn W Most, Salvatore Settis (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), available online://ssrn.com/abstract=1437165 [last accessed 14/09/14]: 8-9

<sup>94</sup> Harold Talbot Parker, *The Cult of Antiquity and the French Revolutionaries: A Study in the Development of the Revolutionary Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937): 20. For a statistical breakdown of the Revolutionaries' quotation of antiquity, see page 19.

<sup>95</sup> Claude Mossé, *L'Antiquité dans la Révolution française* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1989): 153-155

<sup>96</sup> Keith M. Baker, 'Transformations of Classical Republicanism in Eighteenth-Century France' in *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 73, no.1 (March 2001), pp. 32-53 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001): 33

<sup>97</sup> Op. cit., Mossé, *L'Antiquité dans la Révolution française*: 156

<sup>98</sup> Elizabeth Rawson, *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991): 270-290

conquer passion and prejudice and teach self-renunciation.”<sup>99</sup> In this case his pedagogical theory of *paideia*, in which music played a leading role, could hardly be overlooked.

But consistent with the model I have proposed whereby antiquity provided a thematic network of influence upon which *philosophes* and Revolutionaries alike drew, the men of the Revolution would inherit a great deal of their antique influence from the Enlightenment itself. We know, for instance, that they were closely familiar with Montesquieu’s *Considérations* and *L’esprit des lois*, Rousseau’s *Du contrat social*, *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne*, and his *Emile*, as well as Mably’s *Entretiens de Phocion*. Parker asserts:

there they found, as in the classical historians, a flattering picture of the heroes and institutions of republican antiquity. There they found in addition a nuance typically philosophe: a nuance which appeared when Mably and Rousseau flatteringly asserted that ancient republicans were ‘natural’ folk, living more in accord with nature’s harmonies than did modern Frenchmen; a nuance which appeared when all three writers, unlike the conservative pedagogues, lauded not only the private virtues of ancient republicans but also their public ones—their love of liberty, of equality, and of country—and praised not only the virtues of republican men but also the excellence of republican institutions.<sup>100</sup>

In other words, the Revolutionaries’ perspective of antiquity as a suitable model for the pedagogical dimension of their reconstruction of society derived in no small part from the Enlightenment interpretation of this period. But how significant was the Revolution’s own relationship with the Enlightenment?

The answer, in short, that this relationship was very significant indeed. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, cultural historians like de Tocqueville, Taine, Mornet, Israel and Chartier have charted the influence of Enlightenment ideas on the Revolution, arguing either that the radicalism of the *philosophes* imparted revolutionary ideas and helped to shape the character of the new French Republic<sup>101</sup>, or, retrospectively, that the Revolutionaries ‘re-invented’ the Enlightenment in their new reading practices.<sup>102</sup> Either way, the era of the *philosophes* was an invaluable resource for a nation attempting to re-define itself politically and socially.

But what about the survival of the Enlightenment’s conception of the arts specifically? Perhaps ironically, it was the *ancien régime* which transformed Enlightenment’s principle into a conception of art as propaganda, the very same conception which would, as James Leith puts it, create “a blueprint for the educational programme of the Jacobins at the height of the Revolution.”<sup>103</sup> Louis XV had little interest in an affective system of the arts which glorified his reign, but Mme de Pompadour devoted great effort to having the King portrayed as a benevolent majesty, whilst her brother the Marquis de Marigny as *Directeur*

---

<sup>99</sup> Ibid: 228

<sup>100</sup> Op. cit., Parker, *The Cult of Antiquity and the French Revolutionaries*: 33-34

<sup>101</sup> Op. cit., de Tocqueville *L’Ancien Régime et la Révolution*: 146

<sup>102</sup> Op.cit., Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*: 91

<sup>103</sup> James Leith, *The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France, 1750-1799* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1965): 94

*general des bâtiments* was supported in his work by Charles Cochin, who was a close friend of the *philosophes* and dedicated to the idea of instructive art.<sup>104</sup> It was during this period too that antiquity ceased to represent escapist fantasy and began to take on a didactic role, with artists officially encouraged to depict classical heroes enacting famous acts of virtue and contemporary allegories. Louis-Sebastien Mercier's utopian novel *L'An 2440* presents what post-Enlightenment thinkers hoped would be the culmination of this developing trend, with the ultimate ascendancy of a system of moral arts which concerned themselves with the representation of virtue.<sup>105</sup>

And in that most expressive of musical genres, opera, significant developments which put into practice many of Rousseau's principles had been made (albeit in a non-political context) in the works of Gluck, who, whilst unconcerned with moral instruction, nevertheless helped to transform many of the *philosophes'* theoretical principles of naturalness and expression into a practical success. In his famous preface to the opera *Alceste* in 1767 Gluck announced these transformations explicitly. To be thrown out were all the abuses which held opera back from affectivity and communication. Instead, Gluck's 'reform' operas would redress the balance of the arts, ensuring that music would serve the poetry by "strengthening both the expression of the sentiments and the interest of the situations." They would be fundamentally imitative, depicting its subject in the manner of a "well-conceived drawing, when the vivacity of the colours... animate the figures." They would bring the music closer to language by redressing the abuses which had prevented good communication for purposes of effect or spectacle, such as sudden pauses on favourable vowels or passages of virtuosic display, also placing greater emphasis on simplicity. Last of all, the purely instrumental overture would be more closely tied in character and sentiment to the rest of the opera, placing itself, in the Rousseauian sense, in the condition of the subject it sought to depict. In his own words, Gluck's operas in essence sought after naturalness, with no device employed except those "naturally suggested by the situation" and which might be "wedded to its expression."<sup>106</sup>

In conclusion then, by 1789 the ground was well prepared for the Revolutionaries to implement a pedagogical system of the arts which would help facilitate the re-construction of a nation along principles of republican morality and civic virtue. Not only were they repeatedly reminded in their reading of writers from both antiquity and the Enlightenment that music's peculiar powers of expression might help immensely in this regard, but they had seen too from the *ancien régime* that it was possible practically to use the arts to this end. Moreover, a working example in the operas of Gluck provided a template for an expressive, natural and affective music that needed only to be coupled with didactic motive. To harness music in this way was thus only a natural next step; a product of a fusion of aesthetic theory and practical evidence.

---

<sup>104</sup> Ibid: 74

<sup>105</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *L'An deux mille quatre cent quarante* (London: 1770): 2:62

<sup>106</sup> Christophe Willibald Gluck, 'Preface' to *Alceste* (Vienna: Giovanni Tomaso de Trattner, 1767)

## CHAPTER II: REVOLUTIONARY CONCEPTIONS OF MUSIC

Peignez surtout, peignez, le respect filial,  
Et l'amour paternel, et l'amour conjugal,  
Pour guider les humains aux vertus héroïques,  
Faites-leur traverser les vertus domestiques.

- Joseph Lavallée

In their conceptions of music and the arts, the men of the Revolution were all too eager to take this 'natural next step'. Serge Bianchi conceives of this step as a 'clean break'- in his words, a *table rase*.<sup>107</sup> But the truth is that whilst the Revolutionaries were keen to distance themselves from the *ancien régime* and to construct a new 'system of values' as Bianchi puts it, they did so not by breaking with the past but by redefining it. In this way, they were deeply indebted to their own traditions, and not least the Enlightenment. They, like the *philosophes*, subscribed to a perspective which was built upon principles of imitation, *sentiment*, passion, expression, and most of all, didacticism. However, unlike the *philosophes*, they were primarily concerned with translating theory into practice, attempting to harness the perceived power of music to consolidate the principles of the Revolution. Practical necessity thus resulted in some striking transformations of Enlightenment aesthetics. Implementation required re-interpretation, and this re-interpretation allowed the Revolutionaries to introduce important changes of emphasis into the *philosophes'* didactic model of the arts.

In this chapter then, we will examine not only the intricacies of the relationship between Graeco-Roman thought, the writings of the *philosophes*, and thinking on music in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution, but also the ways in which the Revolutionaries' appropriation of Enlightenment principles represented, as I assert, a process by which original perceptions were built upon and transformed as civic virtue became synonymous with Revolutionary republicanism. I wish to consider too that at times their inheritance posed a significant challenge for the Revolutionaries, for there were indeed moments where different aspects of their adopted system were in conflict with each other or with Revolutionary interests, and it is important to examine the ways in which these conflicts were overcome.

In both of these contexts the perspectives of individual figures are as important as the actions of the Revolutionary collective, for many of these individuals were the authors of long, highly significant, and yet undervalued treatises which reveal a great deal about the Revolutionary perspective of music. These will be evaluated here in some detail. Choosing these sources requires care, however. Because this current study is concerned with institutions and ideas rather than chronology, it is particularly important to remember that the Revolution was not one single event, but rather a complicated and especially dynamic

---

<sup>107</sup> Serge Bianchi, *La révolution culturelle de l'an II : Élités et peuple 1789-1799* (Paris: Editions Aubier, 1992):157

series of events. Consequently, to discuss ‘cultural policy’ or ‘contemporary thinking about music’ is to discuss concepts that are fluid, subtly shifting according to changing political and cultural backgrounds. This must be addressed, but in a way that does not compromise our approach when interpreting original documents; for although policies and perspectives changed, there was a consistent belief in the power of music to effect moral change and to construct and uphold a virtuous society which pervaded throughout the Revolution (and indeed beyond).

Furthermore, the sheer quantity of source material from the Revolution concerning music and its political utility precludes an exhaustive analysis here. However, we might consider that such an approach would not be particularly helpful anyway, simply because of repetition. Moreover, some writers on music were simply too little-known to have had a significant impact upon the people or their governments.

For these reasons, the source material to be considered here will be carefully selected to give as broad a picture of the Revolutionary perspective as possible, with emphasis placed on those who were either particularly influential politically or particularly articulate in their discussions.

Current scholarship tends to divide its focus between three main genres of Revolutionary music: opera and other theatrical pieces, the hymns and choral works of the Revolutionary festivals, and popular songs. This is an effective means of coming to terms with the Revolutionary repertoire, for it was these genres which exerted the greatest influence on the general public and in turn which attracted the most attention from the authorities. For this reason, the present study will take a similar approach, focussing in turn upon policies and perspectives towards each genre, to give an overview of Revolutionary attitudes towards music and to demonstrate their continuity with the *philosophes*’ conceptions of music.

But it is helpful first to consider that the thematic consistencies discussed in the previous chapter permeated all of the arts. Imitation, for example, which the philosophes had argued could be used to present images of human passion and emotion and to convey *sentiment*, became an important preoccupation for authorities concerned with the visual arts. Here the call for artists to imitate passions which could fire Revolutionary spirits and stir men’s hearts was particularly strong, even in the early years of the Revolution. In 1791, for example, the President of the National Assembly, Pierre-Victorien Vergniaud, declared in a speech to the Deputies:

*Sans doute que, brulant de l’amour de la patrie, avide de la liberté et de la gloire, le cœur encore palpitant des mouvements qu’imprima la révolution, l’artiste heureux avec un ciseau créateur, ou un pinceau magique, va reproduire, pour les générations futures, le plus mémorables des évènements, et les hommes qui, par leur courage ou leur sagesse, l’ont préparé et consommé. Croyez, Messieurs, que l’Assemblée Nationale encouragera de toutes ses forces des arts qui, par un si bel emploi, peuvent exciter aux grands actions, et contribuer ainsi au bonheur de genre humain.*

There can be no doubt that, burning with the love of the fatherland, eager for liberty and glory, his heart still beating with the vigour which caused the Revolution, the joyful artist, with a mighty chisel or a magic paintbrush in hand, will reproduce the most memorable events for future generations, as

well as those men who, by their courage or their wisdom, prepared for them and brought them to consummation. Believe, sirs, that the National Assembly will do its utmost to encourage the arts which, through such noble use, will stimulate great deeds, and contribute thereby to the happiness of humankind.<sup>108</sup>

Vergniaud outlines a fervent belief in the power of the arts to nurture virtue in society; to bring about ‘great deeds’ by stimulating those passions which are their foundation. Patriotism, love of liberty, a desire for glory: all sentiments which form the cornerstone of a virtuous republic on the cusp of ascending above the corrupt and despotic regimes of France’s neighbours.

It is particularly telling that Vergniaud’s claims are contingent upon the necessity for imitation in the arts—for ‘reproducing memorable events’ and ‘those men’ who by their own virtue were enabled to act for the glory of the *patrie*. This is of course removed from the argument for the imitation of nature in the strict sense, but it is also true that the Revolutionaries were prepared to conceive of the natural in less literal terms than their Enlightenment forbears. In her evaluation of the process of redefining the citizen which took Rousseau as its ‘spiritual guide’<sup>109</sup>, Lynn Hunt alludes to the words of the Abbé Gregoire:

*Le peuple français a dépassé les autres peuples; cependant le régime détestable dont nous secouons les lambeaux, nous tient encore à grande distance de la nature; il reste un intervalle énorme entre ce que nous sommes et ce que nous pourrions être. Hâtons-nous de combler cet intervalle; reconstituons la nature humaine en lui donnant une nouvelle tempe.*

The French people have gone beyond all other peoples; however, the detestable regime whose remnants we are shaking off keeps us still a great distance from nature; there is still an enormous gap between what we are and what we could be. Let us hurry to fill this gap; let us reconstitute human nature by giving it a new stamp.<sup>110</sup>

That Gregoire should discuss the Revolutionary project in terms of its relation to ‘nature’ is particularly telling. Mary Miller has shown that for the Revolutionaries, nature “provided a way of exonerating or even encouraging revolutionary violence, of limiting opposition to “natural” acts, and of engaging the population in revolution even while removing them from sovereignty and legislation... In many respects, nature became the new sovereign...”<sup>111</sup> Dan Edelstein also points towards natural rights as the catalyst for violence in both the Jacobin and Thermidorian periods.<sup>112</sup> Gregoire’s words exhibit this very desire to exonerate and to justify. But Gregoire’s only violence was the violence that might be found in the process of reconstituting human nature, thereby fulfilling man’s potential. That which “we could be”—a “citizen

---

<sup>108</sup> *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860, recueil complet des débats législatifs et politiques des Chambres françaises, imprimé... sous la direction de J. Mavidal et E. Laurent... 1<sup>re</sup> série (1787 à 1799)*, 47 vols. (Paris: [s.n.], 1876-1896): 34: 281-282

<sup>109</sup> Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 2

<sup>110</sup> Abbé Grégoire, *Rapport sur l'ouverture d'un concours pour les livres élémentaires de la première éducation, par Grégoire* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, an. II [1794]): 3.

<sup>111</sup> Mary Ashburn Miller, *A Natural History of Revolution: Violence and Nature in the French Revolutionary Imagination, 1789-1794* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011): 18

<sup>112</sup> Dan Edelstein, *The Terror of Natural Right* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009): 124, 263

burning with the love of the fatherland” perhaps—is termed ‘natural’ to justify pursuing a process of moral improvement in republican terms. Vergniaud’s concern is similarly defined: bringing about great actions, love of the fatherland, liberty and glory by implementing a new system which “harnesses the power of the arts.” To this end, Vergniaud’s discussion is no less rooted in the natural than Gregoire’s. He too takes the Enlightenment concept of the imitation of nature, but transforms it to better suit the idiosyncrasies of Revolutionary virtue.

Furthermore, deputies in the National Assembly frequently made similar speeches explicitly calling for the imitation of this kind of Revolutionary virtue in the arts. Particularly prominent examples are three Presidents of the Constituent Assembly: Louis-Michel Le Peletier, the famous statesman and national hero;<sup>113</sup> Alexandre François Marie de Beauharnais, General and President of the Constituent Assembly;<sup>114</sup> and Théodore Vernier, statesman and financial reformer.<sup>115</sup> But just as importantly, influential individuals began to write on the matter, their treatises and essays disseminated across the capital.

Quatremère de Quincy was one particularly prolific example. An amateur sculptor who played a particularly important role in redefining the theory of architecture, de Quincy was also a well-respected commentator primarily on the visual arts. Although it appears that he may well have been a closet royalist and was most certainly on the conservative end of the political spectrum,<sup>116</sup> his opinions on the moral utility of art were just as sincere as his more radical contemporaries’. In 1791 he wrote that the entire moral utility of art depends upon its imitative quality:

*L'influence morale des arts est donc de deux espèces, l'une qui résulte de la nature des sujets que traite l'imitation, l'autre qui dépend du degré de perfection de cette imitation. Il ne s'agit donc, pour les rendre moralement utiles, que de les détacher de la dépendance du luxe, de les appliquer aux grands intérêts de l'instruction publique, de purifier leur source et de régler leur cours, ce que l'on obtiendra en épurant le choix des sujets qu'on leur sera traiter, et en cherchant tous les moyens qui tendront à les perfectionner.*

The moral power of the arts is twofold. In the first instance, it results from the nature of the subjects which are imitated. In the second, it depends upon the degree to which this imitation achieves perfection. Therefore, to render [the arts] morally useful, they should be removed from their dependency on luxury, applied for the greater benefit of public instruction, have their source purified and their course guided, in order that we might obtain a selection of subjects to be imitated and find all the means by which to perfect them.<sup>117</sup>

For de Quincy then, imitation in the arts is important not simply for aesthetic reasons, but rather for its didactic utility; that is to say, imitation is an integral component in the process which allows the arts to

---

<sup>113</sup> Op.cit., *Archives parlementaires* 16:541

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 29:306

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 30:232

<sup>116</sup> See David Gilks, ‘Art and Politics During the ‘First’ Directory’ in *French History*, vol. 26, no. 1 (September 2014), pp. 53-78 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 56

<sup>117</sup> Quatremère de Quincy, *Considerations sur les arts du dessin en France* (Paris: Desenne, 1791): 56

nurture civic virtue in society. But a natural counterpart of imitation is control, for without control it is not possible to ensure that the arts can be made morally useful. In this sense then, in Platonic terms, the power of imitation must be fully realised by the legislators, who are in turn obliged to guide its application if they wish to rule over a virtuous people, infused with the principles of the Revolution. To this end, de Quincy suggested that all the departments throughout the nation submit lists of everyday heroes who had embodied the virtues of good citizenship. The National Assembly would then carefully consider these examples and use the most appropriate to produce a list of patriotic subjects suitable for imitation in artworks.<sup>118</sup>

Although de Quincy was in the main an advocate for liberty in the arts, this suggestion is indicative not only of an awareness of the potential power of imitation, but also a need to guide it. Of course, producing a list of subjects to be imitated is not the same as censoring works which do not conform to prescribed practices. But it was nevertheless, as Charles Walton would put it, an attempt to ‘police the peoples’ *mœurs*’ in the interests of cultivating public spirit. That de Quincy and other libertarians saw no hypocrisy in such a perspective is only testament to sincerity with which they perceived public spirit as a worthy ambition. It “helped them reconcile their policing of opinion with the principle of free speech”<sup>119</sup>, in other words.

The question still remains, however, as to why imitation itself is so important in affording the arts such moral utility. But for de Quincy, the answer was simple, and, like so much of the Revolutionary artistic perspective, a re-interpretation of the *ancien régime*’s preoccupation with the path to ‘good *mœurs*’:<sup>120</sup>

*Par la découverte du beau idéal, ces arts s’attribuerent le pouvoir de rendre la divinité visible. Interprètes éloquents de sa nature, de ses attributs, de ses perfections, ils n’abaissèrent Dieu jusqu’à l’homme, parce qu’ils avoient su élever l’homme jusqu’à Dieu.*

By discovering their most perfect form, the arts gain the power to make the divine tangible. Eloquent interpreters of its nature [i.e. of the Divinity], its qualities, its perfections, they do not bring God down to the level of Man, because they have lifted Man up to the level of God.<sup>121</sup>

The first stage in this process is comprehension- that the people understand how to behave. This divine model, the Platonic form of citizenship, the arts make tangible. The second is providing the energy and drive to lift the people up to a higher state, which the arts do by communicating and instilling sentiment.

This attitude, it seems, was prevalent throughout Revolution, and exerted a significant bearing on the Revolutionary festivals which were implemented to celebrate specific virtues set up as models. This will be considered in detail later, but for now it suffices to say that the Revolutionary authorities right up to

---

<sup>118</sup> Op. cit., Leith, *The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France*: 98-99

<sup>119</sup> Charles Walton, *Policing Public Opinion in the French Revolution: The Culture of Calumny and the Problem of Free Speech* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011): 195

<sup>120</sup> Op. cit., de Quincy, *Considerations sur les arts* : 24

<sup>121</sup> Ibid: 30

the apex of the structure of power exhibited a deep-seated belief in the importance of imitation and the imitative qualities of the arts. In 1794, for example, Robespierre himself intervened in the preparation of a list of suitable ‘virtues’ for imitation in national festivals, removing marriage and fraternal love (proposed by one Mathieu), and replacing them with justice, modesty, stoicism, frugality, and even disinterestedness.<sup>122</sup>

But it was not just the festivals that came to be dominated by a belief in the need for models of virtue. All the arts were called to imitate passions and sentiments that encompassed the virtues of the Revolution: patriotism, love of liberty, glory. In particular the concept of heroism proved particularly popular with the authorities, and those artists that either had a vested interest in the Revolutionary power structure<sup>123</sup> or who were particularly conscientious began to represent it in their artwork. Beauvais, Bara, Viala, Marat: all virtuous sacrifices to be imitated in order that the same sentiments which drove them to their noble ends might act as didactic examples for the citizenry of the new French Republic. Jacques-Louis David is of course the perfect example of the paradigm of the ‘artist-legislator’, with heroic subjects forming the basis of many of his most famous paintings such as *Le Mort de Marat* and *Les Derniers Moments de Michel Lepeletier* (see figs. 1 and 2). Such patriotic pieces were then reproduced and sold as commodities in order to maximise their pedagogical reach, becoming “the typical decorative motif of the public offices and committee chambers, the restaurants and cafes, the club rooms and social halls and the parlors of private homes.”<sup>124</sup>

But choosing models could be potentially problematic. Because of constant political flux, the authorities were faced with the problem of accounting for so many good examples gone bad. Bartlet highlights the examples of Lafayette, Bailly, Dumoriez, Danton and several others, who in the early days were regarded as state heroes but eventually fell out of favour as the political climate changed.<sup>125</sup> Testament to this is the remarkable fact that, as Mona Ozouf points out, *every* proposal for interment into the Pantheon after December 1792 was accompanied by a proposal to exhume an occupant.<sup>126</sup> Here then the practice they had inherited from the Enlightenment represented a conflict of interests between artistic objectives, for the problem was how to reconcile imitation with didactic ambition. The solution was an attempt on the part of the authorities to anonymise and thus make abstract the process of ‘heroic canonisation’ which

---

<sup>122</sup> Mona Ozouf (tr. Alan Sheridan), *Festivals and the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991): 110

<sup>123</sup> Many artists indeed held positions of authority, particularly on councils and other such administrative bodies concerned with the use of the Arts in society. Painters, authors, poets, composers and sculptors constituted the basis of these organisations, such as the Committee of Public Instruction, and continued to pursue their artistic work even whilst helping to formulate policies and organise events that would put the Arts to work in service of the Revolution. These included the playwright, poet and librettist M.J. Chénier, the artist Jacques-Louis David, and the playwrights Collot d’Herbois and Fabre d’Églantine.

<sup>124</sup> David L. Dowd, ‘Art as National Propaganda in the French Revolution’ in *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 3 (Autumn, 1951), pp. 532-546 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951): 540

<sup>125</sup> M. Elizabeth C. Bartlet, ‘The New Repertory at the Opéra during the Reign of Terror’ in *Music and the French Revolution*, ed. Malcolm Boyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 111-112

<sup>126</sup> Mona Ozouf, ‘Le Panthéon: l’Ecole normale des morts’ in *Les Lieux de mémoire, la République*, 3 vols. (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1997): 1:340

previously had proven such a useful but controversial tool, although as we might glean from reading Ozouf's essay on the Pantheon, this solution was neither fully realised nor entirely satisfactory.<sup>127</sup>

It is also instructive to consider the case of artists who did not toe the line and offer up images of Republican virtue. Whilst current scholarship has shown us that there was no systematic attempt to coerce artists at all costs, it is clear that there was a greatly increased risk in producing counterrevolutionary material after 1792.<sup>128</sup> Although the authorities focussed the brunt of their oppressive measures upon the press,<sup>129</sup> the danger was shared by practitioners of all the arts. Many were guillotined when they fell foul of the regime, including André Chénier (1794), whilst a greater number spent time in prison for 'counterrevolutionary activity', including his brother Marie-Joseph, and of course Jacques-Louis David amongst many others.

There was also a very tangible stigma attached to those who would deliberately work against the values of the Republic. One particularly vitriolic outburst came from Jacques Lebrun, who wrote:

*Qu'ils seroient coupables les artistes profanateurs qui prostitueroient leurs talens à offrir des images contrerévolutionnaires, qui oublieroient que leur première qualité essentielle est d'être philosophe ; leur premier devoir est de choisir des sujets qui tendent d'instruire, à régénérer les mœurs, à inspirer l'amour de la patrie, et l'enthousiasme de la liberté.*

They are guilty, those artist-defilers who would whore themselves to the production of counter-revolutionary images, who would forget that their greatest essential quality is to be a philosopher; that their greatest obligation is to choose subjects which instruct, to rejuvenate virtue, to inspire love of country and enthusiasm for liberty.<sup>130</sup>

Of course, this belief in the power of imitation is also indicative of the fact that the Revolutionaries had a more general faith in the power of the arts to affect moral change in a populace. Some were even prepared to argue that the arts had *no* value beyond their moral utility, like Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Chaussard, in his 1798 *Essai philosophique sur la dignité des arts*. But it is important to remember that the Revolutionaries' desire to harness the power of music in this way was as much a product of fear as of faith. As Jan Goldstein has highlighted, the sensationalist psychology of Condillac had left them with a very real fear of the neglected imagination; but by stimulating men's minds with 'countervailing forces'—in this instance, Revolutionary art—they might "keep the imagination in check."<sup>131</sup> I would add to this only that they also exhibited a more positive attitude, and sought not only to keep the imagination in check but to turn it towards virtue.

---

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 1:342

<sup>128</sup> Op. cit., Walton, *Policing Public Opinion*. 186

<sup>129</sup> See Jeremy D. Popkin, *Revolutionary News: The Press in France 1789-1799* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990): 169-185

<sup>130</sup> Athanase Détournelle, *Aux armes et aux arts ! Peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure. Journal de la Société républicaine des arts séant au Louvre* (Paris: Détournelle, 1794): 192

<sup>131</sup> Jan Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: politics and psyche in France, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005): 62

This of course explains the sincerity of the Revolutionaries' conception of art. As James Leith has pointed out:

Even though it was toiling in an effort to crush counter-revolutionaries, mobilize the citizenry for war, regulate economic activity, and cope with recurrent political crises. It took some of its hard-pressed time to attempt to direct artistic activity because it was anxious to spread the republican gospel by every means.<sup>132</sup>

What was clear, then, was that the Revolutionaries realised that if they were to consolidate and propagate their message, they had to harness the moral and didactic power of the arts. That this belief continued to exist in itself indicates that the Revolutionary artistic perspective was essentially an Enlightenment derivative, differing only in the determination to attempt to apply this belief systematically on a socio-cultural level. But it was arguably in music that this determination manifested most intensely, to which we will now turn our attention.

### *I. Official directives and policy on Opera and Theatrical Music*

Reconstructing the narrative of music drama during the French Revolution has proven to be a singularly difficult task. In part this is due to the quantity of often conflicting information available, and the lack thereof in certain important areas which make a complete picture hard to establish. But it is also due to the fact that during this period a multitude of organisations and individuals at different times were all involved in the process of monitoring, controlling and directing the great number of institutions which flourished after the Revolution abolished *privilege*. For the vast majority of these, music was an integral part of proceedings. As well as the opera houses in which music's place was obvious, most theatres regularly put on various dramatic forms which mixed speech with music. These, states Darlow, "threatened to outstrip regular theatre and through-composed opera in terms of public approval."<sup>133</sup> In short, French society in the eighteenth-century did not make the same distinction between music and drama that we do today. As such, it is not surprising that Revolutionary discussion of the music drama's place in society did not often make this distinction, either. For this reason, although we will here be concerned primarily with opera, it is important to ground our discussion in the Revolutionary conception of the theatre more generally.

As with the arts generally, it seems that the most pressing concern for contemporary commentators was the issue of control, and how to reconcile the desire for liberty with the need to harness the power of the

---

<sup>132</sup> Op. cit., Leith, *The Idea of Art*: 119

<sup>133</sup> Mark Darlow, 'Eighteenth-Century French Musical Theatre' in *French Studies*, vol. 66, no. 1 (2012), pp. 68-77 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 68

theatre to nurture republican virtue. The issue was compounded by the fact that the “tyrannical” *ancien régime* had already allowed policing of the theatres to lapse somewhat. Traditional structures of monopoly were under attack. *Privilège* was still enforced, but this was to ensure that the rights of ownership of the various theatres over certain repertoires were not violated rather than to uphold theatrical virtue. Even this was enforced at times with great reluctance on the part of the authorities, who regularly turned a blind eye to popular spectacles performed on the boulevards.<sup>134</sup> So how could the Revolutionaries justify re-establishing tighter control without compromising that fundamental principle of liberty upon which the Revolution was supposed to be based?

How to approach the issue provoked serious debate throughout the Revolution. The early years, for example, predominantly liberal, nevertheless had important figures working hard to ensure that the authorities would have an intimate hand in the running of the state’s theatres. Jean-Sylvain Bailly was one, writing in his memoirs:

*Je crois que la liberté de la presse est la base de la liberté publique, mais il n'en est pas de même du théâtre. Je crois qu'on doit exclure du spectacle, où beaucoup d'hommes se rassemblent et s'électrisent mutuellement, tout ce qui peut tendre à corrompre les mœurs ou l'esprit du gouvernement. Le spectacle est une partie de l'enseignement public qui ne doit pas être livrée à tout le monde, et que l'administration doit surveiller. Il est aisé de donner à la censure théâtrale une forme qui en exclue l'arbitraire et qui la rende toujours juste : ce n'est point une atteinte à la liberté des uns , c'est respect pour la liberté et la sûreté morale des autres; c'est une petite gêne pour les auteurs de ne pouvoir exposer sur la scène, ou les délires de leur imagination , ou les corruptions de leur cœur; c'est un grand repos pour moi de pouvoir mener ou envoyer mes enfans au spectacle, et d'être sûr qu'ils n'y puiseront ni principes dangereux, ni mœurs dépravées. L'Assemblée nationale a pensé autrement que moi.*

I believe that the freedom of the press is the foundation of public liberty, but the same does not apply to the theatre. I believe that one must exclude theatrical spectacles, where many men assemble together and excite one another, which can have a corrupting effect on the morals or the spirit of the government. The theatre is a part of public education which must not be handed over freely to anyone, but must instead be put under surveillance by the administration. It is easy to create a form of theatrical censorship which prevents arbitrary authority and which is always just: it is not an attack on the liberty of one group of people—rather, it is respect for the liberty and moral security of others. It is a small inconvenience for authors to refrain from exposing on the stage the delirium of their imaginations or the corruption of their hearts; but it is a great relief for me to be able to take or send my children to the theatre, and to be sure that they will absorb neither dangerous principles nor depraved habits. The National Assembly thought differently to me.<sup>135</sup>

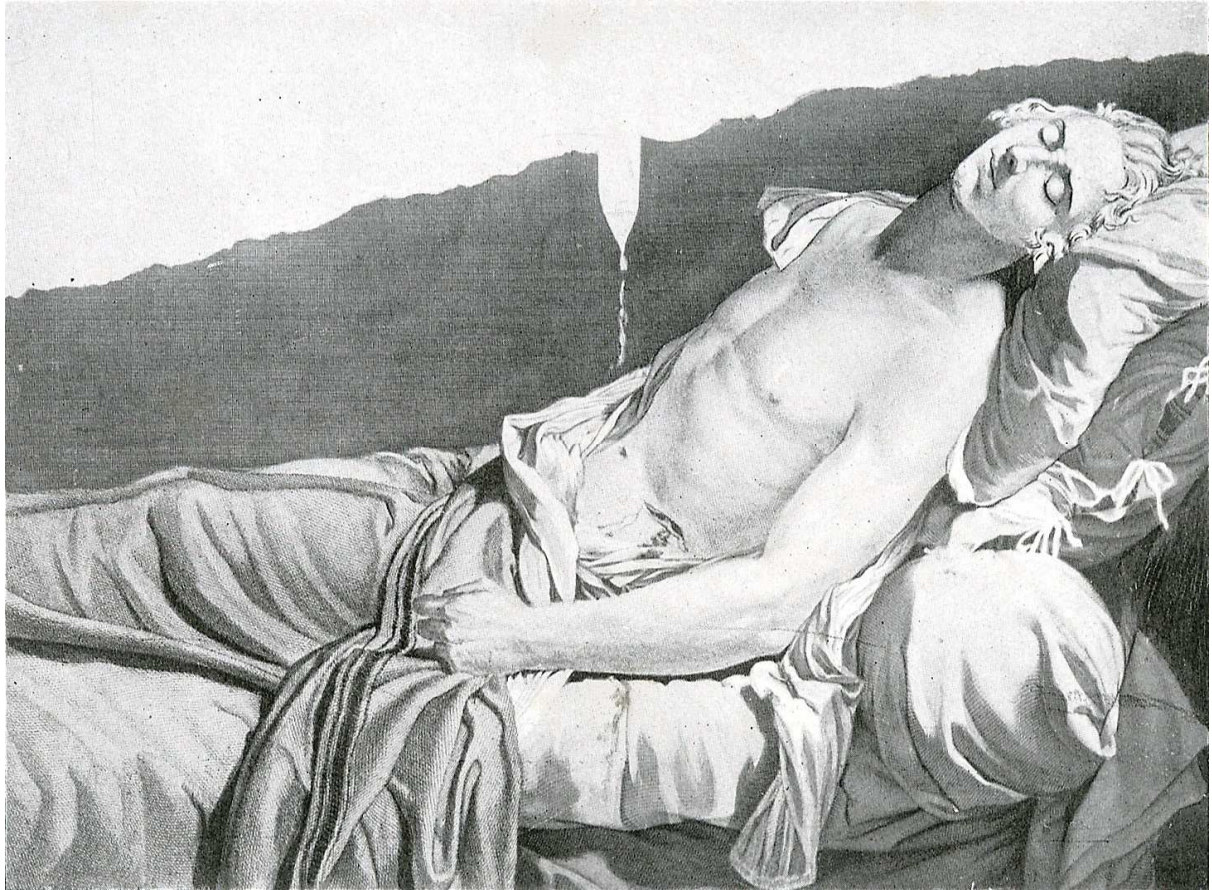
---

<sup>134</sup> See Robert M. Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy: Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986)

<sup>135</sup> Jean Sylvain Bailly, *Mémoires de Bailly, avec un notice sur sa vie, des notes, et des éclaircissemens historiques*, 3 vols. (Paris: Badouin frères, 1821-1822): 2:284



Jacques-Louis David's *La Mort de Marat*, 1788



Jacques-Louis David's *Les Derniers Moments de Michel Lepeletier*, 1793

It is important to note that Bailly's argument affords the theatre a special position in a system of the arts. The underlying assumption is that the theatre is particularly potent didactically speaking, hence its exceptional exclusion from freedom of censorship. Interestingly, this exclusion in no way detracts from the liberty of a free society. The release of a report by the politician Issac René Guy le Chapelier in 1791 might be regarded as the natural culmination of this perspective. It will be considered in more detail later, but the Chapelier report signalled that the theatres should not just encourage and educate but dictate public taste.<sup>136</sup> After this point, government participation seems to have become more firmly entrenched, with the debate turning from pro versus anti control to what methods of control were most suitable. At various times censorship was used reactively and occasionally preventatively- police surveillance was instituted; government inspectors were inserted into the internal hierarchy of institutions such as the Opéra; financial rewards were offered to those institutions who toed the line; and occasionally the authorities came down severely on those who did not (closing of the *Comédie-Française* for performing *Paméla* in 1793, for example). At the same time, internal attempts to regulate material and alter popular

---

<sup>136</sup> Op. cit., Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution*. 120-121

but inappropriate pieces (including the re-writing of operatic works which had been performed under the *ancien régime*) were made, with institutions making money from government subsidies awarded for ‘acting in the interests’ of the public.

The justification for this practice, of course, derives from a belief in the power of music. Unpacking Bailly’s claims more carefully, it is clear that for him this power was not merely the power of persuasion; it was the power which affects emotional change in the listener. When Bailly discusses the theatre causing its audiences to absorb “dangerous principles and depraved habits”, he thus refers to a theatre which in Rousseauian terms ‘animates and stirs the soul’<sup>137</sup> and affects the morals of the listener by exciting in them all the passions which this art can reach. Bailly takes this idea further than Rousseau, however, for he perceives the theatre’s corrupting influence reaching even the government. Where theatre’s power was previously discussed by the *philosophes* in terms of audience and listener, Bailly turns it towards all of the participants acting upon the republican stage. I use this idea literally as well as metaphorically, for in the early years of the Revolution, the relationship between stage and government was a significant preoccupation for many. Commentators discussing the political action of the day made frequent recourse to theatrical analogies,<sup>138</sup> but more practically, the early years of the Revolution witnessed an influx of actors into political circles which caused significant distress for many who continued to exhibit the traditional prejudices that respectable Frenchmen had long held against actors. Under the *ancien régime*, actors were widely mistrusted, enjoyed no official civil rights, and were despised by the Catholic Church which had all but excommunicated them.

This prejudice had officially been overturned by the Revolution, with actors afforded full rights as citizens and allowed to hold political office. To an extent it had already abated somewhat in the second half of the eighteenth-century anyway,<sup>139</sup> but, as Paul Friedland has ably demonstrated, in the early stages of the Revolution enough remained to cause certain individuals to perceive the theatrical influx “almost as if they were witnessing the crumbling of a barrier that had previously separated raw sewage from fresh water”.<sup>140</sup> In short, actors were still deeply mistrusted, and as the relationship between the stage and the government intensified, transforming the governmental stage into a theatre of politics,<sup>141</sup> a moral theatrical stage became less-and-less distinct from a moral stage of government.

Friedland correctly points out too that the issue was also one of representation, for whereas in the past political bodies had claimed to be the nation, the government was now only to speak on its behalf; to represent it in a manner not dissimilar from an actor representing their character.<sup>142</sup> The politicians of the

---

<sup>137</sup> Op. cit., Rousseau and Cahusac, ‘Chant’: 3:141

<sup>138</sup> Angelica Goodden, ‘The Dramatising of Politics: Theatricality and the Revolutionary Assemblies’ in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, vol. 20 no. 3 (July 1984), pp. 193-212 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984): 193

<sup>139</sup> Paul Friedland, *Political Actors: Representative Bodies and Theatricality in the Age of the French Revolution* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002): 167

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 167

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 183

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 191

Revolution, then, were to be actors on a national stage. Purifying the theatre was in this regard quite literally of *national* importance.

Bailly's conception of the theatre is thus intensely didactic, a place in which the people might assemble together and participate in a process of communication in which sentiment and passion drives moral education. Accordingly, censorship was not seen by Bailly and others like him as a restrictive, repressive measure. Rather, it freed man to fulfil his potential in virtue, for pedagogy in the theatre was only possible if the authorities would act to erect structures of control to regulate them.

The anonymous *Observations sur les spectacles*, also published in 1789, highlighted very similar points. Writing in the wake of the increasing concern about the success of the popular, less-well regulated spectacles put on by Jean-Baptiste Nicolet, Nicolas Audinot and others, the author writes along Rousseauian lines:

*On ne peut se dissimuler en même temps, que leur multiplicité, et surtout celle des petits Spectacles, n'ayent été, la source d'une multitude, d'inconvéniens, et, peut-être d'une partie des désordres, ayant inspiré un goût trop vif de dissipation à une infinité de personnes, dont les travaux faisoient fleurir précédemment les arts et le commerce, et dont l'inaction actuelle peut être non seulement; dangereuse, politiquement parlant, à la chose publique, mais encore aux mœurs, dans lesquelles il est aisé de remarquer un changement effrayant, depuis quelques années, par l'établissement d'une multitude de Spectacles où la décence et l'honnêteté sont tout-à-fait étrangères, et où les jeunes gens de l'un et de l'autre sexe et de tous les états, corrompent leurs cœurs, non seulement au milieu de la mauvaise Compagnie qui fait le principal fonds de ces Spectacles, mais encore par l'immoralité qui règne dans la composition des pièces de ces Théâtres...*

One cannot close one's eyes to the fact that by their multiplicity, and above all that of the lighter genre, [the theatres] have caused a great deal of harm, and, perhaps, disorder. They have inspired a taste far too conducive to dissipation amongst a great number of people whose labour had previously allowed the arts and commerce to flourish, whilst their current inaction might not only be dangerous, politically speaking, to public order but also to its morals in which it is easy to note a frightening change which has been occurring over several years because of the establishment of a multitude of spectacles from which decency and honesty are absent, and in which young people of both sexes and of all social positions go to have their hearts corrupted, not only by that bad company which constitutes the main basis of these theatrical productions, but also by the immorality which permeates theatrical composition...<sup>143</sup>

The author's firm belief in the need for theatrical material and to be regulated fits in to a larger plan for public education, which as we have seen was also a concern for Bailly. It is interesting too, however, that both authors should invoke the need to protect children and impressionable young people to justify their arguments. Bailly discusses his desire to be able to send his children to the theatre without fear that they might be exposed to vice, whilst the author of *Observations* makes frequent reference in particular to need to educate children in the virtues of the new society. It is after all the *les jeunes gens* who have their hearts corrupted in the theatre, and *les enfants* who are deprived of a moral and physical education. Given that the

---

<sup>143</sup> [s.a.] *Observations sur les spectacles de Paris* (Paris: [s.n.], 1789): 4

heart of the Revolution's pedagogical project was to form virtuous citizens, dedicated to the new Republic and taking an active part in French society,<sup>144</sup> the importance of children born after 1789 was that they would be the first truly revolutionary generation, unmarred by the failings of the *ancien régime*. The state thus had an obligation to educate them and nurture their virtue, and moreover had greater jurisdiction over their education even than their families.<sup>145</sup> In this way, part of the state's duty to reform the theatres thus derived from their duty to preserve the republican innocence of the first truly Revolutionary generation.

Such a perspective of course has a great deal in common with the Platonic concept of *paideia*. Physical nourishment is to be combined with moral education through the use of music in a sphere controlled by the authorities with a careful programme of censorship. No longer is the moral education of the people to be left 'in the hands of the poets'—in this case the composers and librettists of the opera houses and theatres—but instead given to the administration whose overriding concern is to construct a virtuous citizenry. Such a model is not at all dissimilar from the one presented by Plato in his *Republic*, although with a different metaphysics.

However, this call for direct control was hardly universal at this early stage of the Revolution. Darlow has pointed out that critics of this perspective responded that emulation was a better alternative, and that the "competitive striving between individuals to determine some rank order or hierarchy based on merits" would be the only censorship required.<sup>146</sup> But even those commentators who were in the main averse to censorship, such as Millin de Grandmaison, concurred that the theatre should be a site of public instruction. They differed only in the degree to which they believed the authorities should participate in actively controlling it:

*Un gouvernement despotique doit beaucoup multiplier le plaisirs pour distraire le peuple de ses maux, et lui en faire perdre le souvenir ; mais il doit établir dans les spectacles une police sévère, de peur que ces lieux d'assemblée ne deviennent un point de réunion où l'on puisse prendre des résolutions contre ses intérêts. Personne ne doit pouvoir y élever la voix ni parler au public, excepté les acteurs. Des soldats doivent toujours empêcher que les témoignages de contentement ou de désapprobation ne soient trop vifs, dans la crainte que le peuple ne s'accoutume à des mouvemens tumultueux.*

A despotic government must greatly increase the quantity of distracting entertainment available for the people in order to turn the public eye from their evils, and to make them forget all wrongdoing; but it must institute a strict policing of these spectacles, for fear that otherwise these communal spaces will become a meeting place where people might be instilled with principles opposing the government's interests. Nobody must be allowed to raise their voice nor speak in public, except

---

<sup>144</sup> Françoise Mayeur, *Histoire de l'enseignement et de l'éducation en France, 1789-1930*, 3 vols. (Paris: Perrin, 2004): 3:30

<sup>145</sup> Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992): 67

<sup>146</sup> Op. cit., Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution*: 104

actors. Soldiers must always prevent those who express gestures of approval or disapproval too strongly from doing so, for fear that the public become accustomed to disorderly conduct.<sup>147</sup>

In short, whilst such an approach might be politically expedient, it will not result in a virtuous people. Instead, they would be no better than slaves.<sup>148</sup> But it is important to recognise that de Grandmaison was opposed to the regulation of the theatre, but rather he advocated that the public itself should undertake the task—allowing the government to exert its influence less aggressively, by fostering a citizenry which was both wise and responsible enough to dictate theatrical taste itself.<sup>149</sup>

But it is important to note too that de Grandmaison and his supporters did not demand that the government refrain from involving itself with matters pertaining to the stage. To the contrary, their role was to facilitate the didactic process, and to prevent its obstruction. They had, after all, acted in this way before in their earlier reform of the Parisian theatre, removing the spectators from the stage and re-designing auditorium spaces in the interests of unimpeded theatrical illusion.<sup>150</sup> This was undertaken in part to maximise the efficacy of the spectacle, a concern which the Revolution shared with the *ancien régime*. Already, commentators were concerned with what Sophia Rosenfeld discusses in terms of “the audience’s physical reactions—their immediacy, intensity, and authenticity”, for this “constituted an indicator of the effectiveness of the spectacle on the stage.”<sup>151</sup> The communicative effectiveness of spectacle then was something that the Revolutionaries had inherited. The difference, however, was that whereas under the *ancien régime* the authorities might make recourse to censorship and other such repressive measures to bolster more positive measures of influence, de Grandmaison conceived of a government which shaped the perfect spectacle and allowed the perfect audience to dictate its practice. Once more, the Revolutionaries sought not to discard but to build upon their theatrical inheritance, in the process transforming it for the better.

The key to this utopian model was *participation*. De-regulating for the purpose of creating a moral theatre increases the potential for participation, allowing the whole spectrum of society to be immersed in the illusion of moral spectacle. In this, de Grandmaison echoed Rousseau in calling for a theatre more like the public festival of Antiquity.

*Pourquoi le peuple d'Athènes, qui n'avoit pas la faculté de lire, parce-que l'imprimerie n'existoit pas, et que les copies des manuscrits coûtoient trop cher, étoit-il le peuple le plus poli, et parloit-il un langage si épuré ? C'est qu'il se formoit aux théâtres, ou tous les citoyens, sans distinction, étoient admis ; dans les fêtes publiques, où les grands poètes et les grands historiens récitoient leurs belles compositions et dispuoient le prix ; et dans les places publiques où il entendoit l'éloquence, tantôt douce, tantôt fondroyante, de ses orators.*

---

<sup>147</sup> A.L. Millin de Grandmaison, *Sur la liberté du théâtre* (Paris: Lagrange, 1790): 3-4

<sup>148</sup> Ibid: 38

<sup>149</sup> Ibid: 22

<sup>150</sup> See Barbara G. Mittman, *Spectators on the Paris Stage in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984)

<sup>151</sup> Sophia A. Rosenfeld, *A Revolution in Language: The Problem of Signs in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 74-75

Why were the people of Athens, who had no means of reading (because publishing did not exist, and copies of manuscripts cost too much), such a refined people, and how did they come to speak such a pure language? Because they created theatres, where all the citizens, without distinction, were admitted; to the public festivals, where the great poets and historians recited their beautiful compositions and competed for the prize; and to public places where they heard the eloquence—so sweet, so striking—of their orators.<sup>152</sup>

De Grandmason's discussion of the festival and the theatre in spatial terms, as podiums for orators, is testament to the sincerity of his perception of music as a communicative theatrical language: comprehensible, emotionally charged; capable of moving and agitating and affecting significant change within the people. It was for de Grandmason a poetic mode of communication, akin to Batteux's 'second mode' of speech, gifted with expressive capabilities which made it, in the words of Rousseau, a language understood by all men; or indeed Rosenfeld's conception of Talleyrand's 'perfect language', which could transmit the moral ideals of the Revolution and to have them universally accepted.<sup>153</sup>

Ultimately, however, it seems that whilst the Revolutionaries continued to pay lip-service to Grandmason's hope for a free, uncensored theatre which would become a sphere of public education simply by virtue of the goodness of the French people, as the initial innocence of the early Revolution gave way to a more realistic politics, the authorities began to institute legislative attempts to control theatrical spaces. We have mentioned already the Chapelier report, which Darlow correctly identifies as a foundation for theatrical control, by making the state the sole guarantor of liberty.<sup>154</sup> It did this subtly, however—after all, it stood up for the rights of individuals with theatrical interests, by abolishing *privilege* and vindicating those who wished to set up their own theatres; but it simultaneously laid the foundation for the justification of repressive measures such as censorship and surveillance. This aspect has traditionally been overlooked, but the resemblance to Enlightenment ideals is striking:

*La conservation des mœurs est assurée par l'inspection de la police municipale ; il faut que les spectacles épurent les mœurs, donnent des leçons de civisme, qu'ils soient une école de patriotisme, de vertu, et de tous ces sentimens affectueux qui sont la irraison et le charme des familles, et qui, pour ne composer que des vertus privées, n'en sont pas moins les garans et les précurseurs des vertus publiques.*

The preservation of morals is assured by the inspection of the municipal police; it is necessary that the theatre should purify morals, teach civic virtue, and becomes a school of patriotism, virtue, and of all those affective sentiments which constitute the unreason and charm of families, and which, though merely private virtues, are nevertheless the guarantors and precursors of public virtues.<sup>155</sup>

---

<sup>152</sup> Op. cit., de Grandmason, *Sur la liberté du théâtre*: 22-23

<sup>153</sup> Op. cit., Rosenfeld, *A Revolution in Language*: 126

<sup>154</sup> Op. cit., Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution*: 15

<sup>155</sup> Isaac-René-Guy le Chapelier, *Rapport fait par M. Le Chapelier, au nom du comité de constitution, sur la pétition des auteurs dramatiques, dans la séance du jeudi 13 janvier 1791, avec le décret rendu dans cette séance* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1791): 9

Unlike de Grandmaison, le Chapelier was unsatisfied with only indirect government interaction with the theatre. In order that it become the ‘purifier of morals’, ‘teacher of civic virtue’ and ‘school of patriotism and virtue’—all ambitions held by d’Alembert and other *philosophes*, incidentally—it was necessary for the state to *direct*. Somewhat paradoxically, it must be considered, such measures are justified by the liberty they will bring, for Le Chapelier argues that if control over the theatres is instituted, then more may be opened and greater individual liberties allowed. In essence, greater control allows for greater liberties: “*Espérons qu’un règlement sage dirigera cette partie de l’éducation publique ; car c’en sera une alors, et consacrons le principe ; qu’il est libre à tout citoyen d’établir une théâtre.*” (“We hope that wise laws will guide this aspect of public education; because this will allow for the sanctification of the following principle: that all citizens are free to establish a theatre.”)<sup>156</sup>

Modern scholars like Gregory Brown, traditionally reading the bill as evidence for the future freedom of the theatre in a free market,<sup>157</sup> do not often stop to consider the ways in which the bill’s odd dichotomy reflects in many ways a degree of confusion amongst the authorities about the nature of their Enlightenment inheritance. On one hand is a genuine desire for liberty in the theatre: a theatrical culture in which the model of the ancients can be emulated, with people coming together to participate and to learn, and the government acting as an organising body rather than an authoritative one, protecting the rights of the individual and thus the collective to become purveyors of a moral, didactic art. This, at least explains the desire amongst many in the regime to see small theatres spread across Paris. On the other is a recognition of the need to direct and guide this process; of the fallibility of the populace and the potential danger that an unregulated theatre poses to its liberty— a view set out clearly by Rousseau in his letters to d’Alembert.

The issue is best regarded as a parallel to the issue of the visual arts, where the conflict between the Jacobin adherence to the free market and their desire for artistic propaganda was reconciled, as Rolf Reichardt points out, “only by redoubling their efforts to transform the consciousness of the people, which would then result in a radical change in their taste in art.”<sup>158</sup> The tension between liberty and control, then, was more than just a conflict between authoritarians and libertarians; it was a struggle to reconcile utility with the potential for corruption. That its supporters were successfully able to pass the Chapelier bill off as libertarian legislation only testifies to the authorities’ success in reconciling conflicting objectives in their own minds. They had persuaded themselves that it was possible to use pedagogical ambition to vindicate the paradox of propagating liberty whilst simultaneously tightening control, and convinced each other of the urgency of doing so given the corpus of old repertoire dominating the theatres and opera houses, as well as the pressing issue of counterrevolution.

---

<sup>156</sup> Ibid: 10

<sup>157</sup> Gregory S. Brown, *Literary Sociability and Literary Property in France, 1775-1793: Beaumarchais, the Société des auteurs dramatiques and the Comédie Française* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006): 138

<sup>158</sup> Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-century France* (London: Reaktion, 2008): 145

It is worth noting that we have considered the issue of Revolutionary musical theatre in a very broad sense, because the conclusions we have made thus far bear equal weight for the more sophisticated, operatic forms of musical theatre as they do for the more populist works with only incidental music. But that the Revolutionaries and their author-composers were concerned with maintaining opera specifically as a didactic form is attested to by the fact that after the establishment of the Convention, legislation regulating the opera houses (in particular demanding more nationalistic repertoire), became widespread, if never effectively implemented. Whilst it is unfortunately not possible to consider the entirety of this legislation here, one striking example, an *arrêté* by the *Comité pour salut publique* dated 8 October 1793, which placed the Paris Opéra under government control, serves to show that there was a close relationship between legislation and the Enlightenment perspective of the theatre:

The administration of the Opéra will be reformed according to economy and patriotic aims;

- I. It shall acquire Republican works;
- II. It shall only perform patriotic works;
- III. Its repertory shall be purified;
- IV. One weekly patriotic performance shall be given gratis *by and for the people*;
- V. Low-ranking positions in the Opéra shall be given to relatives of volunteers at the front.<sup>159</sup>

In return for following these guidelines, the Paris Opéra would receive a grant of 150,000 livres, but most importantly they could consider themselves under official protection. Current scholarship has considered this moment in the light of the implications for the relationship between the state and its theatres; it is after all representative of the regime seeking to assume greater control over the repertory performed at the period, and the running of the institutions themselves. But it indicates also that Revolutionary legislation of this period concerning opera was firmly rooted in didactic concerns. After all, the justification for this *arrêté*, given in the records of the *Comité pour salut publique*, highlights the moral dimension of opera explicitly: “c’est faire une véritable avance au profit de l’esprit public: que, dans un pays libre, les spectacles doivent être épurés et devenir, sous la surveillance du gouvernement, des moyens d’instruction publique...” (it is to make a noteworthy advance for the profit of the public spirit; that in a free country, spectacles should be purified and become—under government surveillance—tools of public education).<sup>160</sup>

The wording of the *arrêté* itself is significant. We see a demand for models of imitation (‘it shall acquire Republican works’; ‘it shall only perform patriotic works’); we see a belief in the moral dimension of the operatic repertoire (‘its repertory shall be purified’); we see also a belief in the need for participation (‘one

---

<sup>159</sup> F.A. Aulard (ed.), *Recueil des actes du Comité de salut public, avec la correspondance officielle des représentants en mission et le registre du conseil exécutif provisoire*, 28 vols., 4 vols. supplement (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1889-1899): 6:295-296.

Quoted from op. cit., Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution*: 163

<sup>160</sup> Ibid: 7:295

weekly patriotic performance shall be given gratis *by and for the people.*’) This weekly free performance was of course intended to maximise the impact of the Opéra’s pedagogical potential, ensuring that even those citizens who under normal circumstances might never attend could be exposed to the educative influence of a ‘purified’ operatic repertoire.

The repertoire itself was to be more ‘ideologically acceptable’, with the authorities exhibiting enthusiasm for works dealing with national history, and revised works which brought old classics in line with new ideological principles. What’s more, Mark Darlow has identified the authorities’ preference for several recurring themes in these works, such as funerary sobriety; oaths, sacrifices and transcendence; neo-classicism; exoticism; and kingship,<sup>161</sup> which were intended to communicate appropriate ideals in the form of sentiment to affect similar emotions in the audiences.

Each of these themes had an important role to play. Funerary sobriety was a surrogate for religious sobriety, eliciting sincerity and stoicism, but it was also the perfect mirror for sublimity. In the visual arts, de Baecque points out, “the corpse is at the heart of rituals, representations, and visions during the most critical moments of the French Revolution...[it] is the conceptual object that allows revolutionary politics to be thought out, a sublime abjection that defines the aesthetic and philosophical category proper to this moment of history.”<sup>162</sup> It was no different in opera where the process was intensified through the union of the arts: the on-stage action became more sublime on account of the emotional power of music and gesture.

Oaths, sacrifices and transcendence were to remind the citizens of their duty to the *patrie* and to give them hope even in the face of death. They were also, as Lynn Hunt has shown, a means of sustaining and animating revolutionary rhetoric, renewing the social bonds which depended upon re-iteration for their continued existence. In this way, staging the ritual oaths of loyalty, depicting sacrifice and the sublimity of transcendence was an attempt to create what Hunt has termed the ‘mythic present’.<sup>163</sup> Implicit in this concept was community and transparency between citizens,<sup>164</sup> and the theatre offered an art-form which catered for participation thanks to the power of theatrical illusion.

A just form of royal rule—for it is important to make the distinction between this and despotism—displayed the importance of loyalty and subservience to benevolent authority which preserves liberty. Although understandably the theme became somewhat problematic after Louis XVI’s execution in 1793, previously it had been bound up in the paternal rather than the exclusively political. For a long time, after all, the French were undecided on the place of the King in society. Was he to be removed, retained as a figurehead, or perhaps given executive power and a title other than king? Ambrogio Caiani has made an

---

<sup>161</sup> Op. cit., Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution*: 218-275

<sup>162</sup> Antoine de Baecque, *Glory and Terror: Seven Deaths Under the French Revolution* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013): 8

<sup>163</sup> Op. cit., Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*: 27

<sup>164</sup> Ibid: 45

interesting case for Louis' unwillingness to accept other forms of monarchical representation as the cause of his ultimate downfall, the implication being that he forced the Revolutionaries' hand into an execution they had no wish to act out.<sup>165</sup> With support strong for a constitutional monarchy during this period, operatic kingship represented the illusion of paternal love and of fatherly kingship in the best interests of the people. There was a conflict in the peoples' minds which Lynn Hunt has defined in terms of a contest between whether the "good father" would allow his children greater independence, or resist changes and become "detrimental to good family."<sup>166</sup> This was played out on the stage, and encouraged to resolve in a manner which reflected French society's desire for just and benevolent authority. Louis' final fall from favour did not signal the end of kingship's place in opera, however, but it was tempered by a suitable chronological and indeed geographical distance.

Most often, this distance was created through the use of exoticism and neo-classicism. The myths of Greco-Roman antiquity as already discussed meant safety, for they featured virtuous men and women suitable for representation on the stage. Interestingly, however, depictions of Ancient Egypt also provoked appreciative comments from the authorities. Ancient Egypt's association with freemasonry represented a fraternal take on virtue rather than the martial virtue of Rome, or the democratic, philosophical virtue of Greece. Margaret Jacob has suggested that this masonic interpretation of Egypt was in part intended to support the Cult of Reason, propagating the symbolism of a new civic religion,<sup>167</sup> but it also enhanced the sublimity of the ancient world, fostering the myth of antiquity.

As a collective, these themes are significant because they point towards an attempt on the part of the authorities to introduce new topics, and to reimagine old ones in order to redefine the operatic repertoire in pedagogical terms. In this the Revolutionary authorities were deeply indebted to the *philosophes*, for these themes shaped a new vision of opera based on Enlightenment principles. This vision conceived of opera as having a fundamentally didactic purpose, and based on the imitation of themes capable of affecting the emotions through the transmission of passion and sentiment and the virtues of the ancient world. But they are evidence, too, that the Revolutionaries sought to mould their intellectual inheritance from the French Enlightenment in accordance with firmly Republican values.

---

<sup>165</sup> Ambrogio Caiani, *Louis XVI and the French Revolution, 1789-1792* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 223

<sup>166</sup> Op. cit., Hunt, *Family Romance* : 21

<sup>167</sup> Mary C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment : Freemasonry and Politics in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991): 174

## II. Music and the Revolutionary Festival

In his plans for the funeral-festival of the Revolutionary martyr Jean-Paul Marat in 1792, J.B. Gence (a deputy to the Assembly) divided society up into representative sections which would make up the processional cortege. But preceding each group was to be a band of musicians performing music- seven separate ensembles in total. In short, music was to play a fundamental role in proceedings. In Gence's own words: "*la musique instrumentale, comme chez les anciens, seroit le prélude, et la poésie animée par l'accent musical, le résumé ou le complément de l'expression des objets*" (instrumental music, similar to that of the ancients, would form the introduction, whilst poetry enlivened by musical accent would outline or complement the expression of the subject at hand.)<sup>168</sup>

This is but one example of how the Revolutionary Festival, a vast, communal assembly of citizens and their leaders united in praise of the Republic, was conceived as an intensely musical affair. Discussing the origins of the Parisian Conservatoire, Constant Pierre points out that the authorities were well aware of music's utility in the festival, for they recognised the sterling service of their musicians by rewarding them with an institution of their own.<sup>169</sup> This 'reward' worked for both parties, however, as the government sought to ensure the musicians' continued participation in maintaining this important facet of the festival project.

Despite the awareness of its unique importance, perceptions of music in the Revolutionary festival were tightly bound-up in the idea of a fusion of the arts; even more so than in the case of the theatre, arguably. Music was to work alongside the other arts to create a spectacle which was transplanted out of the theatre and into the open air. Consequently, discussions of music in this context are more frequently amalgamated into discussions of the moral, didactic utility of the arts in general. But this is unsurprising if we consider that the Revolutionaries owed their very perception of music—as a component in a system of unified arts—to *philosophes* such as Batteux, who had written that music was most able to convey sentiment when it worked alongside poetry, declamation, and the other arts.<sup>170</sup>

This after all was an important concern for the pedagogically-minded Revolutionaries. Mona Ozouf has pointed out that festival was conceived as a tool of public instruction from its very conception, supporting the legislator by constructing a citizenry for whom his laws could be made.<sup>171</sup> In this belief, the Revolutionaries were truly children of the Enlightenment. Ozouf writes: "like the pedagogy of the Enlightenment, the organizers of the festivals inherited a fervent belief in the ability to train minds, and their projects, even more clearly than their pedagogical treatises, reveal the poisonous consequences of

---

<sup>168</sup> Jean-Baptiste-Modeste Gence, *Vues sur les fêtes publiques et application de ces vues à la fête de Marat* (Paris: Imprimerie de Renaudiere jeune, 1794): 4

<sup>169</sup> Constant Pierre, *Musique des fêtes et cérémonies de la Révolution française* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1899): viii

<sup>170</sup> Op. cit., Batteux, *Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe*: 285-286

<sup>171</sup> Op. cit., Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*: 9

their faith in human plasticity.”<sup>172</sup> But for the festivals to fulfil their role as moulders of ‘human plasticity’, they needed the participation of the arts as the driving force of the didactic process. After all, we have seen that the Revolutionaries inherited a belief in their capability for communicating and instilling sentiment and passion, and it was this very capability which would allow the people of the French Republic to absorb new principles, set up by the authorities as symbols. Ozouf considers the importance of the Revolutionary symbol in some detail in her *Festivals and the French Revolution*, but here it suffices to say that symbols such as clasped hands, oaths, national colours, red caps on royal crowns and broken chains represented the iconography of a new society.<sup>173</sup> But they also acted as models for imitation by the arts, which used them to attempt to instil the appropriate republican sentiments in the hope that artistic imitation would encourage emulation.

An important piece of evidence supporting this perspective of artistic fusion is also by a significant margin the most detailed account of the Revolutionary perspective of the role of the arts in the festival. Written by Boissy d’Anglas in 1794, his *Essai sur les fêtes national* explicitly echoes the *philosophes* in this respect. When he discusses the arts ‘making life forget its bitterness by pouring charm upon it’,<sup>174</sup> for example, he repeats Rousseau’s assertion that song might “distract us from our troubles, or... soften the effects of our labours.”<sup>175</sup> It is a conception which attributes the arts, and thus music, with a very tangible power to affect emotional, mental and perhaps even physical change in the listener. But it is a particularly interesting account because of the fact that it allows us to see, as a microcosm, how Enlightenment artistic perspective became Revolutionary artistic practice. In this instance, it is that fact that music and the arts ‘mature the morals of those who cultivate them’ and ‘give a greater value to social institutions’ that they should act almost as a surrogate for the kinds of repressive actions which might normally be a necessary part of government. By virtue of their virtue, so to speak, they purify the regime which institutes them as a basic aspect of socio-political life; a very Rousseauian line which implies a significant degree of participation between governors and governed under the aegis of the arts. Interesting too, however, is the fact that despite this ‘purifying’ effect, surveillance is not dismissed, but is rather affirmed in its ‘less intrusive’ state.

For a model festival which should be emulated, d’Anglas unsurprisingly invokes the spirit of antiquity. The Greeks and Romans, he argues, are to be imitated because liberty and the arts were the ‘most important and most lively preoccupation of their souls.’<sup>176</sup> His perception of their society is one which considers them to be based on sentiment, with arts and genius working together to create ‘*amour sacré*’ for the *Patrie*.<sup>177</sup>

---

<sup>172</sup> Ibid: 197

<sup>173</sup> Ibid: 52-53

<sup>174</sup> Boissy d’Anglas, *Essai sur les fêtes national suivi de quelques idées sur les arts, et sur la nécessité de les encourager* (Paris: Imprimerie polygotte, 1794): 131

<sup>175</sup> Op.cit., Rousseau and Cahusac, ‘Chant’ : 3:141

<sup>176</sup> Op. cit., d’Anglas, *Essai sur les fêtes national*: 138-139

<sup>177</sup> Ibid: 142

Part of this process, it seems, is based upon the close relation between the festival arts and memory, which is what allows the festivals to so effectively convey sentiment into the hearts of the participants. This is brought about by:

*...la réunion de tous les souvenirs, qui nous ont occupés dès notre enfance : sentiment énergique et touchant, qui s'allume à la seule idée de la terre , où l'on a senti les premières impressions du bonheur où le cœur s'est ouvert aux premières félicités de l'amour, de l'amitié, de la bienfaisance ; où l'ame a tressailli pour la première fois à l'aspect d'une mère ou d'un fils ; où les beautés de la nature ont frappé nos premiers regards, et nous ont avertis , dès notre aurore , de tout le charme de notre existence...*

... the reunion of all those memories which occupied our childhood: lively and poignant sentiment which is ignited by the very idea of the earth, where one sensed those first impressions of happiness when the heart has opened itself to the first celebrations of love, friendship and charity; where the soul shuddered for the first time at the image of a mother or a son; where the beauty of nature struck us for the first time, and had apprised us, since our dawn, of all the charm of our existence...<sup>178</sup>

Memory is here related to the idea of childhood: naiveté, innocence, virtue. In essence, if the arts are able to trigger memory then they can nurture virtue by causing the participants' senses and emotions to revert to a more virtuous period of their existence. In a very Condillacian 'sense', the impact of sensation transmitted by the festival arts is a very powerful tool for d'Anglas, and, following this argument, none have more power than music, given that sounds 'will be more easily preserved in the memory', "being much more strongly linked together, because of their nature and because of the nature of the sense organ."<sup>179</sup> But the emphasis, even with memory, is upon communication, and this process still occurs due to the imitation of those themes which d'Anglas highlights: naiveté, innocence, virtue.

Indeed, d'Anglas places a great deal of importance on the place of imitation in the festival arts:

*Montrez-nous les images des premiers martyrs de la liberté, des généraux qui ont défendu notre territoire, des grands écrivains qui ont éclairé le monde et illustré la nation française.*

Let us show the images of the foremost martyrs of liberty, of generals who have defended our territory, of great writers who have enlightened the world and given lustre to the French nation.<sup>180</sup>

This concept of 'imitated heroism', therefore, which we have already discussed in part, was unsurprisingly another (albeit important) example of how, for Boissy d'Anglas, virtuous representatives of the Republic were an important model to be held up in the festivals and imitated in its arts. Helpfully, d'Anglas is even more explicit about their didactic worth, describing them as *tout ce qui peut élever corriger, perfectionner les mœurs et former le cœur par les plaisirs de l'esprit* (all those who can... perfect morals and build up the heart according

---

<sup>178</sup> Ibid: 143

<sup>179</sup> Op. cit., Condillac, *Traité des sensations* : 49

<sup>180</sup> Op. cit., d'Anglas, *Essai sur les fêtes national* : 153

to the pleasures of the spirit).<sup>181</sup> But what is striking about this collection of martyrs, generals and great writers is its inclusion of the latter. Although no exhaustive work deals with the concept of heroism during the Revolution, the symbolic significance of those who were martyred for the Revolutionary cause is well documented,<sup>182</sup> whilst it is entirely understandable that the authorities would wish to lionise those who devoted themselves to military service for the *patrie*. But describing the ‘great writers’ in these terms reflects an altogether new process by which the ‘man of letters’ ascended to sublimity, and people were called to recognise what Thomas Carlyle has described as “the inspired wisdom of a Heroic Soul.”<sup>183</sup> Carlyle also alludes to the importance of this particular heroic template as an appropriation of the religious prophet, for “intrinsically it is the same function which the old generations named a man Prophet, Priest, Divinity for doing.”<sup>184</sup> In this way then, the practice of appropriation allowed the Revolutionaries to sanctify men like Rousseau, Condillac and Batteux in their attempts to replace the Church as a school of virtue. The festival was to be the new Church, and its prophets were those *philosophes* who might act as models to bring the French people to a state of virtue.

Indeed, that d’Anglas was sincere in his belief in the importance of educating the people and bringing them into a state of virtue is attested to by his concluding arguments, in which he states that to excite good sentiments associated with national virtues and to prevent bad taste and corruption, it is necessary to raise the arts to the level of laws (in prestige and focus), and to treat genius as a national magistrature, associated with the power of the people. The sacred genius of the philosopher-hero was to transmit from the individual to the anonymous collective, in order that the citizenry could be transformed into a *peuple sublime*, to borrow Bernard-Griffiths’ term.<sup>185</sup> Therefore, the festival arts were to play an integral part in facilitating this process

Each of d’Anglas’ arguments about the arts applies to music, of course, and indeed it would be fair to say that in the case of music these arguments are intensified. In an interesting footnote to a discussion of the topic of ‘exciting the soul’, he states:

*La musique est de tous les arts celui dont l'action sur l'âme, est la plus prompte et la plus certaine ; et son influence sur nos passions, ne peut plus être révoquée en doute ; on ne croit pas, il est vrai, aux miracles d'Amphion qui, en jouant de la flûte, éleva les remparts de Thèbes... on sait que l'on a voulu faire entendre par ces ingénieuses allégories que l'harmonie qui s'établit entre les hommes, est la base de la civilisation, laquelle bâtit des villes, suspend les dissensions et donne à l'homme les moyens de dompter les animaux les plus féroces.*

Music is of all the arts the one which has the greatest, quickest and most certain effect upon the soul, and its influence upon our passions cannot be doubted. We do not believe, it is true, in the miracles

---

<sup>181</sup> Ibid: 156

<sup>182</sup> See Michel Vovelle, ‘Agricol Viala ou le héros malheureux’ in *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, vol. 52, no. 241 (July-September 1980), pp. 345-364 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1980)

<sup>183</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History*: (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1893): 154

<sup>184</sup> Ibid:156

<sup>185</sup> S. Bernard-Griffiths and Alain Pessin, *Peuple, mythe, et histoire* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 1997): 14

of Amphion who, by playing the flute, erected the walls of Thebes... but we know that [the ancients] wanted to make understood by these clever allegories that harmony, established amongst men, is the basis of civilisation. It builds towns, suspends dissension and gives men the means to tame the most ferocious animals.<sup>186</sup>

Whilst he echoes many of his contemporaries' preoccupation with the fables of the ancients, d'Anglas' conception of the power of music with relation to antiquity is not entirely bound up in the mythic, and should thus not be dismissed as hyperbole. We should not interpret his discussion of harmony 'building towns' in this way, for example, for in this he echoes the concept of harmony in architecture which quite literally sought to apply the mathematical ratios of music to the construction of buildings in the pursuit of aesthetic beauty. This idea had a substantial pedigree, having been an integral part of the Medieval Quadrivium and famously refined by Leon Battista Alberti in the fifteenth-century.<sup>187</sup>

D'Anglas was also clear concerning the ways in which this potency might be harnessed:

*Voyez l'homme vertueux et libre qui, né dans les montagnes de l'Helvétie, a senti son âme palpiter d'amour et de volupté, dans le temps même ou son oreille étroite frappée des doux accens d'une musique champêtre et simple ; il n'entend jamais répéter les mêmes sons, sans que le bonheur des tendres illusions de sa jeunesse ne se représente à son âme attendrie, sans que le souvenir des momens délicieux, ou ses accords frappoient aussi son âme si puissamment émue par d'autres causes, ne vienne [check] subjuguier toutes les facilités de son être, en le transportant, pour ainsi dire, au tems même ou ces sensations dominoient si impérieusement son cœur.*

See the virtuous and free man who, born in the Helvetian mountains, felt his soul pulse with love and sensual pleasure at the very same moment that his ear was struck by the sweet accents of a simple and rustic music. He can never hear the same sounds repeated without feeling the happiness of those tender illusions of his youth being represented to his moved soul, or without the memory of those delicious moments when its chords also struck his soul which was so powerfully moved by other causes, coming back to overpower all the facilities of his being, and to transport him, so to speak, to a time when these sensations dominated his heart so imperiously.<sup>188</sup>

We might deduce from this that in d'Anglas' opinion, the ambition of the Revolutionaries should be to have a festival music which restores the citizens to their natural, heroic state; they need to be transformed into Helvetian men, so to speak. There is a distinctly Revolutionary twist to this analogy, for the definitive Helvetian man was of course William Tell, immortalised in fable for having resisted and assassinated the tyrant of Altdorf, Albrecht Gessler.<sup>189</sup> It was a subject which Grétry and Sedaine would draw upon for their 1791 opera, *Guillaume Tell*, which Albert Gier perceives as a representation of the values of the eighteenth-century bourgeoisie (in opposition to those of their tyrannical overlords).<sup>190</sup> Underpinning this

---

<sup>186</sup> Op. cit., d'Anglas, *Essai sur les fêtes national* : 140

<sup>187</sup> See Robert Tavernor, *On Alberti and the Art of Building* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998)

<sup>188</sup> Op. cit., d'Anglas, *Essai sur les fêtes national*: 18

<sup>189</sup> See Jean François Bergier, *Wilhelm Tell: Realität und Mythos* (Munich: List, 1990)

<sup>190</sup> See Albert Gier, *Guillaume Tell in French Opera: from Grétry to Rossini* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2002)

metaphor of the virtuous, natural man then is a validation of his republican credentials, and a subtle-yet-explicit assumption that music, in creating the virtuous, also creates the Revolutionary.

But we see here again that d'Anglas' perspective also owes a great deal to Condillac's theory of education through the senses, using memory as a tool by which to compare and thus judge. But d'Anglas also makes some interesting comments about the sort of music which is best suited to the festivals—it should be 'simple and rustic'; in other words, natural and communicative, in Rousseauian terms. This sort of music, 'powerfully emulating' models, can overpower the listener. This last point is striking: the listener is not simply to be engaged, nor persuaded or conversed with; but to be subjugated. This is the darker, more cynical counterpart to the Revolutionary conception of music- the citizen is, d'Anglas states, to be brought under control by sensations which ultimately betray his rational faculties and leave him at the mercy of his emotions in order that he might reach sublimity. Of course we are here guilty of taking d'Anglas' argument to extremes he himself does not reach, but this is only to highlight the consolidation of a view of music which envisions the art as intrusively powerful, and not as passive or wholly benign.

To summarise, for d'Anglas, music's purpose is to facilitate a didactic process, eliciting emotional and physical response from the listener. But he was not alone in his belief in the importance of music in this regard. Jean-Baptiste Leclerc, for example, wrote in his *Essai sur la propagation de la musique* (1797) that one fundamental necessity for the national festivals was to follow the Greeks in including songs for "all people, in all circumstances, from all professions", in order to "bring about a great revolution in virtue."<sup>191</sup>

That Leclerc should refer to songs explicitly should be interpreted as a belief in the importance of a music which is at once eminently comprehensible (and thus an effective medium for communication) and capable therefore of enhancing the didactic process. It is tied in with the desire for a 'simple and rustic' music—a natural music to create natural men. And what should be more natural in music than imitating antiquity in the union of all festival participants, who come together to sing hymns which proclaim the principles of a virtuous republic? Very little according to the authorities who presided over the Festival of the Supreme Being in 1794, and decreed that all the attending citizens should participate by singing Gossec's *Hymn to the Supreme Being*.

By appropriating sacred music and transforming it to convey a civic rather than the traditional liturgy, the authorities hoped to retain its power whilst redirecting it towards their own ends. Hymns were a powerful tool because they were a familiar and readily comprehensible musical genre. They allowed the citizens to participate in an act of communal worship. But more significantly, their influence could extend beyond the festival in ways that the visual arts could not. The hope, it seems, was for the Festival hymns to be remembered and repeated by the people; for them to continue educating even after the actual event had

---

<sup>191</sup> J.B. Leclerc, *Essai sur la propagation de la musique en France, et ses rapports avec le gouvernement* (Paris: Imprimerie de H.J. Hansen, 1797): 29

finished. In this sense, music could add permanence to the long list of qualities it contributed to the festivals in Condillacian terms. This was the reason that the hymns were widely disseminated, with institutions such as the *Magasin de musique* set up for this very purpose.<sup>192</sup>

A collection of hymns and other items pertaining to them compiled by Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Nougaret makes such intentions explicit. Nougaret, originally an author and theatrical commentator (an occupation which he seems to have continued pursuing by directing his efforts towards Revolutionary propaganda), played an important role as an agent of the *Comité de sûreté générale* tasked with directing and implementing Revolutionary justice, and would later go on to become the head of the *bureau de surveillance* for the Paris Commune. He wrote in his 1796 edition:

*Les chants patriotiques ne font pas seulement destinés à être l'âme de nos fêtes nationales, les poètes français doivent avoir encore une autre ambition : celle d'entendre répéter leurs vers par toutes les bouches, de les entendre chanter, avec enthousiasme, par les défenseurs de la patrie, et de voir les jeunes républicains en orner leur mémoire, dans les écoles primaires. C'est ainsi qu'ils contribueront à servir la chose publique, en nourrissant les esprits d'idées propres à faire aimer et bénir notre révolution, proscrire les préjugés de toute espèce, détester l'esclavage et ses satellites.*

Patriotic songs are not only destined to be the soul of our national festivals. French poets must have another ambition too: to hear their verses echoed everywhere, to hear them sung with enthusiasm by the defenders of the fatherland, and to see young republicans honouring their memory in all the primary schools. It is therefore for poets to serve the republic, to cultivate the spirit of upright ideas which make us love and worship our revolution, banish prejudice of all kind, and detest slavery in all its forms.<sup>193</sup>

Nougaret thus conceives of festival hymns as being instituted in a manner which allows them to permeate society, or to be part of daily life for the citizens. The hymn is to be directly educative, suitable for inclusion in the curriculum of schools but also capable of upholding virtuous ideals in society-general. In this Nougaret returned to the theme of childhood education which we have seen preoccupied Bailly and the anonymous author of *Observations sur les spectacles* in 1789. The difference, however, was that by 1796 France had witnessed intense debate on the place of education in society, and so Nougaret was perhaps a little clearer on the practical pedagogical potential of the hymn in fostering a new generation of 'young republicans'. That is not to say that the authorities were entirely decided on the path of education in France; after all, Talleyrand's ideas had fallen on the ears of men more concerned with internal conflict,<sup>194</sup> Condorcet's 1792/93 plans for free education based on the sciences was dismissed by the Montagnards as contrary to Revolutionary principles,<sup>195</sup> and le Peletier's proposal for a 'Spartan education' were wildly

---

<sup>192</sup> Constant Pierre, *Le Magasin de musique à l'usage des fêtes nationales et du Conservatoire* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1895): 13

<sup>193</sup> Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Nougaret, *Hymnes pour toutes les fêtes nationales précédés de réflexions sur le culte exclusif et les prêtres, extraites d'Helvétius, d'une prière à l'Être suprême... et de poésies relatives à notre révolution* (Paris: Louvet, 1796) : ii-iii

<sup>194</sup> Charles Duce, 'Condorcet on Education' in *The British Journal of Educational Studies*, vol. 19, no. 3 (October 1971), pp. 272-282 (New York: Taylor and Francis Ltd, 1971): 276

<sup>195</sup> L. Pearce Williams, 'Science, Education and the French Revolution' in *Isis*, vol. 44, no. 4 (December 1953), pp. 311-330 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953): 312

impractical.<sup>196</sup> Similarly, the works of Ginguené, Daunou, Volney, de Neufchâteau, de Tracy, Cabanis, Lakanal and Garat were yet to reach fruition. Nevertheless, Nougaret was not merely speculating on the pedagogical efficacy of the hymn when he advocated its inclusion in the curriculum.

But how might the hymn fulfil its didactic potential in an educational context? The answer is through its power to make sentiment clear- to literally ‘speak’ to the people:

*Pour obtenir ces précieux avantages, je me suis attaché à mettre dans mes hymnes plus de sentiment, plus de mouvement et de chaleur, que de beautés poétiques. Dans de pareils ouvrages, on doit parler au peuple et pour le peuple; le style qu'on emploie doit être à sa portée, sans néanmoins tomber dans le bas ou dans le familier; il faut écrire d'un ton noble, soutenu, mais se garder de l'emphase.*

In order to obtain these worthy advantages, I have dedicated myself to putting into my hymns more sentiment, more movement and warmth, rather than poetic beauties. In such works, one must speak to the people and for the people; the style adopted must be comprehensible to them, without ever falling into baseness or the familiar. It must strike a noble tone throughout, but guard itself against grandiloquence.<sup>197</sup>

Communicative efficacy is also for Nougaret a reason to pursue aesthetic simplicity, which is one of the reoccurring themes of Revolutionary writing on the festival. Take for example an *aperçu* from the National Convention in 1795 authored by J. Rameau, calling for: “*une hymne dégagée des prestiges de la fiction, d'un chant simple et majestueux en même temps que mélodieux, sur l'immensité du Tout incompréhensible, sur l'ordre qui règne dans l'univers, sur la beauté de la nature, le changement des saisons, leur propriété, sur la justice éternelle, la sociabilité, etc.*” (“a hymn freed from the glamour of fiction, a simple and majestic song at the same time melodious, about the immensity of the incomprehensible All [in this context, presumably the Supreme Being], about the order which rules the universe, about the beauty of nature, the changing of the seasons, their attributes, about eternal justice, sociability, etc.”)<sup>198</sup>

But this concept of music as language, simple and capable of communicating important, if abstract principles to the people was not a late development in the Revolution. As early as 1791, important figures were calling for such a music in the festivals. Lequinio, a deputy of the National Assembly, wrote:

*C'est une langue universelle avec laquelle vous parviendrez à éteindre la langue barbare que les peuples de ces contrées sauvages parlent encore, en les disposant aux communications sociales qui leur seront apprendre le français.*

---

<sup>196</sup> Ibid: 313

<sup>197</sup> Op. cit., Nougaret, *Hymnes pour toutes les fêtes nationales*: iii

<sup>198</sup> Just Rameau, *Aperçu philosophique et politique, sur la célébration des décadis et des fêtes nationales : discours destiné à être prononcé à la tribune de la Convention, sur le rapport du Comité d'instruction publique, concernant les fêtes décadaires* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1794): 5

[Hymns] are a universal language with which you can extinguish the barbaric tongues that people living in wild and distant regions still speak, and dispose them towards social communications that will teach them French.<sup>199</sup>

Furthermore, he pre-empted the authorities of the later Revolutionary years in their formulation of music:

*La musique est peut-être le moyen le plus efficace qui soit dans la main du législateur philosophe pour former des rassemblemens, pour les égayer, et amener dans les mœurs du peuple... Le peuple ne doit jamais perdre de vue de la constitution et la déclaration des droits de l'homme. Il faut donc que dans chaque fête décadaire,<sup>200</sup> il soit lu un article de la déclaration des droits, ainsi qu'un chapitre de la Constitution républicaine : tous ces exercices doivent être entremêlés de chant joyeux et d'hymnes civiques.*

Music is perhaps the most efficient medium in the hands of the philosopher-legislator<sup>201</sup> for constructing these assemblies, for brightening them and steering the morals of the people... the people must never lose sight of the constitution and the declaration of the rights of man. It is necessary therefore that in each of the *décadaire* festivals we must read an article of the declaration of rights, thereby a chapter of the republican constitution. All these exercises must be interspersed with joyous songs and civic hymns.<sup>202</sup>

For the Revolutionary authorities then, music consistently played an important part in transforming the civic festival into a didactic tool, and this process transcended the political upheavals of the period. But the model for this music, just like the model for the festival, was to be found decades earlier in the writings of the *philosophes*. Not only did the Revolutionaries conceive of a music unified with poetry which could imitate passion and sentiment, just as Batteux had in 1746, but they perceived it as a language which might break down barriers and communicate to all men; an intensely Rousseauian medium, fused with the power of Condillacian sensuality.

### III. Popular Political Song

Politically charged songs were ubiquitous during the Revolution, and generated a considerable volume of contemporary comment which is a rich source of information concerning the regime's view of music. At one extreme, there were the triumphant, crafted songs which reified the official attitudes of the Revolutions- songs such as Méhul's *Chant du Départ*, which was performed in 1794 to celebrate the fall of the Bastille and reflect the blurred line between hymn and popular song. Another example is of course

---

<sup>199</sup> Joseph-Marie Lequinio, *Des fêtes nationales* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1791): 25

<sup>200</sup> The *fêtes décadaires* were to be the staple of Revolutionary Festival life, occurring every ten days on the days of rest. They were intended to be of a smaller scale than the great events which would occur on the surrogate feast days, such as the festivals celebrating the fall of the Bastille etc.

<sup>201</sup> This idea is an explicit allusion to Plato, who believed that the republic should be ruled by the wise.

<sup>202</sup> Op. cit., Lequinio, *Des fêtes nationales* : 25

the famous *Marseillaise*, written upon commission by the army officer Rouget de Lisle. At the other end of the spectrum were works which were composed by the people, sometimes spontaneously. The most famous example of such a song is the *Ça ira*, which according to popular conception arose as a spontaneous expression of the patriotic fervour of the workers toiling to prepare the Champs de Mars for the *Fête de la Fédération* of 1790.

In between, the song was used for many different purposes. There were songs written to celebrate and encourage the military, to denigrate or celebrate the revolutionary cause, and even to be exported in the hope of projecting a positive image of the French Republic. The most common use of song however was as a political tool- a means of spreading propaganda. Very often political factions would set their constitutions to song in order that their beliefs would spread.

To discuss songs within the context of government participation is even more problematic than within that of the theatre or the festival, however. At first the authorities did not even recognise the song as a useful medium, and turned to antiquity to support their disdain; journalists echoed official pronouncements, with one author writing in the *Chronique de Paris*: “The Greeks never considered governing with songs; even little children know that Mazarin said of the French: *Let them sing, they’ll pay anyway*. What frightens the aristocracy today is that we talk, we write, we arm ourselves, and we do not sing.”<sup>203</sup>

Furthermore, if we consider popular song from the perspective of authorship, for example, it is clear that the Government was significantly far behind the citizens throughout the Revolution in their efforts to produce patriotic *chansons*. Constant Pierre catalogues almost three thousand known songs composed between the years 1789-1804. These are but a fraction of the songs which existed, but even this survey produces telling results:

*Près de 580 auteurs sont connus... Toutes les classes de la société sont représentées, depuis l'humble artisan jusqu'au plus aristocratique personnage, depuis le moins lettré jusqu'au plus habile versificateur. La surexcitation du patriotisme s'étendit à tous et transforma les gens de conditions les plus diverses en bardes de la liberté.*

Around 580 authors were known... All classes of society were represented, from the humble craftsman to more aristocratic characters, from the least literate to the most skilful versifier. The excitement of patriotism spread everywhere and transformed people from all backgrounds into bards of freedom.<sup>204</sup>

The proportion of songs composed by noted composers is strikingly small compared to the proportion composed by (often anonymous) bankers, labourers, farmers, soldiers and other citizens. In the sense of authorship then, the political songs often did belong to the people. Indeed, one need only consider the

---

<sup>203</sup> *Chronique de Paris*, 20 October 1789. Quoted from Laura Mason, *Singing the French Revolution Popular Culture and Politics, 1787-1799* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996): 40

<sup>204</sup> Constant Pierre, *Les hymnes et chansons de la Révolution* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1904) : 68-69

three most famous songs from the French Revolution to corroborate this claim. The *Ça ira* was set to a popular *contredanse* written by a professional musician, with the words arising from the passions of a patriotic labour force. The Marseillaise on the other hand was crafted by an officer of the engineers, one Claude Joseph Rouget de Lisle, at the behest of the Mayor of Strasbourg. The author of the Carmagnole on the other hand remains anonymous, but it has the earmarks of a folk-tune from Piedmont, whose young men crossed the border each year to dance with the daughters of Provence. The implication then, as Tiersot suggests, is that the Carmagnole was a product of the South, carried northwards to Paris by the volunteers from Marseillaise.<sup>205</sup> Even such a limited cross-section of revolutionary songs reveals that the political song belonged not to the Government, but to the people; and a socially diverse people at that.

But it is important to note that the Government from 1791 onwards made consistent attempts to participate in the production of songs. They could hardly afford to do otherwise, as Herbert Schneider points out: "...songs [were] recognized as a means of educating the lower classes, while the song itself was valued as the most suitable and effective instrument for propaganda and for influencing the masses, especially country people."<sup>206</sup>

Furthermore, necessity only intensified as the Revolution progressed, for as Laura Mason points out: "war and the republican revolution made the manipulation of songs and singing a particularly pressing issue... At official level, the government was increasingly concerned with propaganda, searching for the means to install republican values in an unlettered populace and sustain enthusiasm for the war in a popular army... Increasingly deputies, journalists, and publishers would point to singing's revolutionary potential, explore its implication, and suggest means to harness and implement it."<sup>207</sup>

Song was the perfect vehicle for revolutionary ideology because it could speak to the everyday citizen in a way that elaborate satire, rhetoric or debate could not. That is not to say that the average French citizen was illiterate and uneducated. Far from it, literacy levels were far higher in late eighteenth century France than in the United States of the early twentieth century<sup>208</sup> - somewhere around 47 percent amongst the male population and 27 percent amongst the female in fact.<sup>209</sup> However, the chanson had long been part of the Frenchman's heritage; every citizen knew of the exploits of that noble and quintessentially French monarch, Henri IV, through the historic *chansons*, for example.<sup>210</sup> Likewise, those 'country people' to whom Schneider refers had a long and rich tradition of folk chansons which were an integral facet of their everyday life. In short, song was the perfect vehicle for the expression of political sentiments for a people who had been using it as part of their everyday existence for centuries.

---

<sup>205</sup> Julien Tiersot and O.T. Kindler, 'Historic National Songs of France' in *The Music Quarterly*, vo. 6, no. 4 (October 1920), pp. 599-632 (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 625-626

<sup>206</sup> Herbert Schneider, 'The Sung Constitutions of 1792: an essay on Propaganda in the Revolutionary Song' in op. cit., Boyd, *Music and the French Revolution*: 236

<sup>207</sup> Op. cit., Mason, *Singing the French Revolution*: 101

<sup>208</sup> Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1989):180

<sup>209</sup> Op.cit., Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*: 69

<sup>210</sup> Op. cit., Tiersot and Kindler, 'Historic and National Songs of France': 603

There can be no doubt that the successive regimes of the revolutionary years were aware of this fact. They acted deliberately to ensure that political song became an integral component of the lives of the citizens. Where this required financial support, it was given; take for example the production of a hymn in honour of Rousseau, written by one 'citizen Perrin'. The Convention financed 12,000 copies of this hymn, provided funds for a further 1000 to be spent on engraved copies for the fourteen armies of the Republic and 4000 to be spread amongst the people of France.<sup>211</sup> The total outlay was approximately 60,000 livres,<sup>212</sup> a vast sum to be spent on one simple song, but one sanctioned by Carnot, Barère, Billaud-Varenne, Collot d'Herbois, C.A. Prieur and Saint-Just.<sup>213</sup>

This is but one example of many. Previous to this expenditure, the Convention had also purchased 2500 copies of an elaborate edition of revolutionary hymns (compiled by one Imbault), subsidised the newly established *Magasin de musique* to the tune of 33,000 livres, decreed that the Marseillaise should be sung at all theatrical productions put on in the Republic and even supported the distribution of almost 100,000 copies of the hymns of Thomas Rousseau amongst the armies of the Republic.<sup>214</sup> The Government did not stop at financial and legislative support however; it even commissioned works directly. Although the line between hymn and song is always contentious, works on either side of the line were commissioned from composers of significant repute (including Cherubini, Grétry, Pleyel and Gossec).

There are also many other instances in which the successive regimes of the Revolution spent significant amounts of money supporting the efforts of patriotic song-writers. Having come thus far in our examination of the Revolutionary musical perspective, the reason for doing so seems clear: the authorities perceived the song a particularly effective means of spreading republican principles, and thus an important didactic tool which could help to construct a virtuous republican society.

This fact is explicitly clear in the writings of various commentators who concerned themselves with the songs. One of the first, the same Jean-Baptiste Leclerc whose *Essai sur la propagation de la musique* was to prove so important later in the Revolution, penned a report to the Convention in 1793 entitled *De la poésie considérée dans les rapports avec l'éducation nationale*. In this *rapport* the distinction between poetry and music is largely undefined, but Leclerc does not appear to be discussing a purely poetic form when he introduces the topic of *poésie lyrique*, which in semantic terms draws self-consciously on the French tradition of *tragédie-lyrique* in which great attention was always devoted to clarity of declamation and naturalness of action.<sup>215</sup> On the *poésie lyrique*, he writes:

---

<sup>211</sup> James Guillaume, *Procès-verbaux du Comité d'Instruction publique de la Convention*, 8 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1904): 5:54

<sup>212</sup> Op. cit., Pierre, *Les hymnes et chansons de la Révolution*: 122, 129

<sup>213</sup> Op. cit., Aulard, *Recueil des actes du Comité de salut publique* : 15:25-26

<sup>214</sup> Cornwell Burnham-Rogers, *The Spirit of Revolution in 1789: A study of public opinion as revealed in political songs and other popular literature at the beginning of the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949): 21-26.

<sup>215</sup> John Warrack, 'Tragédie lyrique' in *Grove Music Online*, available online: <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e6875> [last accessed 14/09/14]

*Elle peut, lorsqu'on l'aura régénérée, rehausser le courage des citoyens, les entretenir dans l'amour des vertus, et servir utilement la patrie, tant par son influence habituelle, que par l'empire qu'elle exerce sur les âmes dans les momens difficiles. J'en atteste l'hymne immortel des Marseillois et l'antique romance de Roland, que chantoient nos pères lorsqu'ils voloient aux combats.*

It can, when it has been regenerated, enhance the courage of the citizens, train them to love virtue, and usefully serve the fatherland, be it by its customary influence, or by the control that it exercises on the soul during difficult times. I here attest to the immortal hymn of the Marseillaise, and the antique romance of Roland, sung by our fathers when they wanted to fight.<sup>216</sup>

Leclerc conceives of the song as attributed with emotional and physical power, allowing it to 'enhance' the courage of the citizens, 'train' them to love virtue and usefully 'serve' the fatherland. His choice of lexis in this context is telling, preferring active verbs indicative of a dynamic rather than a passive potency. Such lexis adds emphasis to Leclerc's claims that the song is able to exercise its influence on the soul to alter perspective, allowing citizens to cope in times of difficulty. The Marseillaise is for this very reason termed '*immortel*'; presumably in tone and sentiment rather than legacy, considering that by this point it was less than two years old. Likewise, the *Chanson de Roland* is perceived by the author to be capable of inspiring the French to battle, just as the Spartans advanced to the sound of many pipers in their ranks.<sup>217</sup>

In short, Leclerc conceives of the song as a didactic tool capable of exciting emotion and directing the people to virtuous ends. It is for this very reason that Leclerc believes that the song must be made accessible for all ("*je crois l'avoir prouvé dans mon opinion... que l'instruction doit être commune à tous sans distinction*"<sup>218</sup>). For Leclerc, the song is able to reach its potential in this way by presenting images of great men for imitation. He argues that each village has its own local heroes which are preserved in folklore, and that the authorities might tap in to such a tradition by presenting representatives of civic virtue and having songs written about them:

*Un simple récit glisse sur la mémoire ; une romance s'y grave : elle est répétée souvent, par tous les citoyens, au milieu des travaux, au milieu des plaisirs, à toutes les heures-du jour, et rend ainsi plus présent à chacun le trait d'héroïsme ou de bienfaisance dont on a eu dessein d'éterniser le souvenir ; c'est, pour ainsi dire, renouveler à chaque instant la bonne action et perpétuer le bon exemple.*

A simple recitation slips from the memory; a song engraves itself on it. It is repeated frequently, by all citizens, whilst working or whilst relaxing, at all hours of the day, and renders, therefore, more present to each citizen the trait of heroism or of beneficence that was intended to be eternalised in memory. It is, so to speak, to renew at every opportunity the good action and to perpetuate the good example.

---

<sup>216</sup> J.B. Leclerc, *De la poésie, considérée dans ses rapports avec l'éducation nationale* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1793): 3

<sup>217</sup> Op. cit., Thucydides, *The History of Thucydides*: 2:523-524

<sup>218</sup> Op. cit., Leclerc, *De la poésie*: 18

The song is thus for Leclerc eminently capable of fulfilling the same purpose that so many had conceived of for the other musical artforms- literally transferring qualities of virtue from model to people through communicating passion and sentiment. Song is therefore capable of eliciting ‘good action’ from ‘good example’, which is the fundamental principle in the Enlightenment perspective of music.

But it is worth noting too that although his conception of the song is as a fusion of what might be termed ‘high art’ (poetry) and ‘entertainment’ (popular music), Leclerc discusses the latter in an idealised state, referring to it in terms of its sublimity. Lexis like ‘rustic’, ‘pure’, and even ‘immortal’ pervade his arguments, whilst the functional issues of popular appeal and practical utility are presented only in the context of high-minded ambition—the nurturing of virtue, encouragement of heroism, and the like. Such a perspective allows Leclerc to attribute to the popular song a sense of aesthetic propriety, but it also indicates some discomfort on his part in approaching the genre on its own terms. There was, it seems, a dichotomy between the desire for a classical solemnity and aesthetic refinement in the Revolutionary musical perspective, and the need to embrace less formal genres for their mass appeal and their potential therefore for propagating republican values. By re-imagining the popular song as didactic ‘high art’, then, the Revolutionaries sought to reshape this aspect of their musical inheritance to better suit their own aesthetic ambitions. The *chanson* could be useful, but only if it could be reconceived.

Although Leclerc was the first to consider song in this light in any systematic sense, there are accounts from earlier in the Revolution which indicated a similar desire to reconcile aesthetic propriety with functionality. Concerned with spreading education to the people of the countryside, the scholar J.M Coupé produced a report for the Assembly in 1791 describing the song as sublime tool:

*Que l'on mette les principaux traits de notre révolution en strophes variées, qu'on leur donne avec goût et simplicité la mesure de danses, la légèreté des ariettes, le sentiment des romances ; et le patriotisme passant avec elles dans toutes les âmes, les parcourra comme l'éclair, et sera les délices de notre jeunesse.*

Let us place the foremost traits of our revolution in varied verses, so that they can take on with taste and simplicity the measure of dances, the delicacy of ariettes, and the sentiments of love songs; and patriotism, penetrating together with these emotions into all souls, will pass through them like a lightning flash, and will be the delight of our youth.<sup>219</sup>

Although it does not appear that the Assembly took any great action after Coupé’s report, by 1794 however, such reports were resulting in significant acts on the part of the Convention to ensure that patriotic songs became widespread. Louis-Bernard Guyton-Morveau,<sup>220</sup> a member of the *Comité de salut publique* and deputy to the Convention, reported to them in 1794 on the need to provide financial support for the National Guard of Paris, who were proposing to release a book with a symphony, a hymn or

---

<sup>219</sup> Jacques-Michel Coupé, *Vues proposées dans l'Assemblée des amis de la Constitution, séante aux Jacobins Saint-Honoré, pour éclairer le peuple de la campagne* (Paris: Imprimerie du patriote français, 1791): 3

<sup>220</sup> Interestingly, Guyton-Morveau had collaborated with d’Alembert and Diderot on the *Supplément* for their *Encyclopédie* in the early 1780s.

patriotic chorus, a military march, a rondeau or 'pas redouble, and a patriotic song, every month. Guyton-Morveau argued that songs specifically were needed:

*...à entretenir l'esprit public, à échauffer le patriotisme et à remplir utilement les jours périodiques de repos dans lesquels une longue habitude de réunion sous les étendards de la superstition appelle un remplacement plus conforme aux principes et aux progrès de notre heureuse Révolution.*

...to engage the public spirit, excite patriotism and usefully fill the periodic days of rest during which a long habit of meeting under the standards of superstition required a replacement conforming more closely to the principles and progress of our great Revolution.<sup>221</sup>

Subsequently the Committee awarded these artists 33,000 livres for them to complete their proposed project.<sup>222</sup>

Both authors exhibit a belief in the power of songs to provide an education in civic virtue for all the people, regardless of background. For Coupé in particular, song's communicative powers come as a result of harnessing the simplicity of forms with which the people were familiar. Not symphonies, settings of the Mass, or other such forms which are difficult for the public to assimilate on account of their grandiose trappings, but dances, ariettes, and romances; light in style and familiar to most people, and thus more able to communicate effectively.

For Guyton-Morveau, they are also a means by which the Revolution might turn its citizens away from the 'superstition' of dogmatic forms of Christianity (read Catholicism) and towards a new faith based upon reason and progress. This is an excellent example of the widespread belief that the power of the songs could be directed towards *constructing* and *transforming*- the power of music, here represented by the song, might have a purifying effect, sweeping away the superstitions and corruption of the *ancien régime*. This too was the objective of the Enlightenment, of course; to bring about "a sensationalist psychology, which wanted to be empirical, scepticism in religion, which wanted secularity in public education, a morality based on reason..."<sup>223</sup>

But it is interesting to note that it was in fact paganism which caused something of a crisis of conscience for some. Whilst men like Charles-François Dupuis took a great interest in ancient systems of religion and mythology,<sup>224</sup> Leclerc, for one, exhibited a desire to turn away from it, citing its basis in paganism and superstition as opposed to reason as a significant problem.<sup>225</sup> He could not deny however that the models it upheld were directly useful for bringing people together and uniting them in the civic festivals:

---

<sup>221</sup> Op. cit., Guillaume, *Procès-verbaux du Comité d'instruction publique*: 3:300

<sup>222</sup> Op. cit., Pierre, *Les hymnes et chansons de la Révolution*: 32-33

<sup>223</sup> Emmet Kennedy, *A Cultural History of the French Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989): 59

<sup>224</sup> See Charles-François Dupuis, *Origine de tous les Cultes, ou la Religion universelle*, 7 vols. (Paris: Agasse, 1795)

<sup>225</sup> Op. cit., Pierre, *Les hymnes et chansons de la Révolution*: 15

*... je n'aime à voir, sur le frontispice d'une église, les instrumens qui servoient aux sacrifices du paganisme. Mais... les poèmes destinés à la solennité des fêtes publiques doivent être communs et intelligibles à tout le monde, il est clair qu'on en doit proscrire la mythologie.*

... I do not like to see on the frontispiece of a church those devices which represent the sacrifices of paganism. But...[if] poems destined for the solemnity of public festivals must be communal and intelligible for all the world, it is clear that one must prescribe mythology.<sup>226</sup>

In short, the paganism of antiquity was necessary to provide a point of reference for the tone of solemnity and provide the model for a music which was intended to fulfil a didactic purpose. So although song was perhaps influenced less by antiquity than the festival and the theatre, the authorities were not ready to abandon it altogether in the context of the song. They still hoped for a medium which involved mass participation; and in many ways the song was the perfect option, as it could be disseminated amongst the people without difficulty and all the while inculcating patriotic principles.

For Leclerc, Coupé, Guyton-Morveau, and others then, song represented an important facet of the musical contribution to the didactic process which would help the Revolutionaries re-define their society. The same Enlightenment-influenced perspective which pervaded conceptions of the theatre and the festival extended to the popular song, and brought similar opportunities and problems. What distinguished it, however, was that its potential impact was arguably the greatest out of all of these genres. It was ultimately an ephemeral medium which belonged to the people, and consequently the authorities found it even harder to regulate than the theatre and the festival which at least had institutions upon which attempts to control could be directed. But by exerting a more subtle influence—that is to say providing financial support to patriotic songwriters, commissioning works, and in short ensuring that songs permeated the fabric of socio-political life—they were able to make significant efforts to guide public feeling and attempt to inculcate republican virtues of patriotism, love of liberty, and scepticism of superstition.

#### *IV. Concluding Remarks*

In conclusion, this chapter has shown that whilst government participation in musical spheres was a contentious and multifaceted issue, and attempts to implement any kind of cohesive policy were inconsistent with varying degrees of success, the Revolutionary authorities' perspective of music at least was consistent both internally and chronologically. The theatre, the festival and the song—three of the most important genres which experienced the greatest attention from those who were most instrumental

---

<sup>226</sup> Ibid: 15

in the formulation of a policy towards the arts—were conceived of as a didactic tool. They were to be an important part of the Revolutionary authorities' attempts to construct a citizenry which was infused with republican principles. Much of this pedagogical project was bound up in a conception of music working within a union of all the arts, and so it has been necessary to consider music's role within a broader aesthetic context. But music had a special place within this system, and by presenting images of civic virtue (often those of the Revolution's heroes or the great deeds of antiquity), music was perceived as being especially well equipped to transmit sentiment and passion into the souls of the citizens, allowing them to emulate and thus participate in the spirit of the Revolution. Furthermore, although recent scholarship has rightly sought to point out that governmental control was much less consistent and authoritarian than has previously been taken for granted, it is important to note that the authorities still envisaged playing an important role in guiding France's musical establishments towards a Revolutionary pedagogy.

## CHAPTER III: THE MUSIC OF THE REVOLUTION

### I. Opera

In keeping with what we have seen of the debt that Revolutionary public figures owed their predecessors in regard of their conception of music, certain trends in the early Revolutionary operatic repertoire which pointed towards a new compositional perspective represented the culmination of a musical development which had been in the offing for some time prior to 1789. David Charlton in his evaluation of ‘rescue opera’ under the *ancien régime* has pointed out that opera was already heading towards a new realism with an emphasis on social commentary. He states, “Those ‘rescue works’ that enjoyed a perceived privileged relation to historical fact were merely part of a growing body of historically-based librettos identifiable before 1789, which spoke by analogy to the national political situation of the *ancien régime*.”<sup>227</sup>

Charlton’s point is an important one. Whilst it is perhaps natural that we look for sudden change in the repertoire given the turbulence of contemporary events, such an approach is inconsistent with what we have seen about the continuing influence of the Enlightenment and other old regime models. The temptation is to overestimate the rapidity of change in our interpretations of political and cultural radicalism which swept through society, nevertheless leaving intact important aspects of the *ancien régime* tradition. Although undoubtedly intensifying with the birth of the new France and transforming dramatically to assimilate principles that directly opposed those of the old regime, a moral, didactic music had been prepared many decades before. The moral reform of *opéra-comique* is an excellent example, with historically analogous operas appearing as early as 1767, like Philidor’s *Ernelinde* (1767), and Grétry’s *Silvain* (1769).<sup>228</sup>

The evidence that such works were intended to be explicitly affective can be seen from surviving accounts written by composers themselves. In his memoirs of 1789, Grétry devotes considerable space to the discussion of how and for what purposes a composer should convey emotional states,<sup>229</sup> and, as Jann Pasler has pointed out, the physiological implications of this practice.<sup>230</sup> Similarly, Lesueur had stated two years previously to this in his *Exposé d'une musique imitative* that the primary purpose of music was expression, and that emotional expression was the realm of music first and foremost.<sup>231</sup> Furthermore,

---

<sup>227</sup> Charlton, *On re-definitions of ‘rescue opera’* in op.cit., Boyd, *Music and the French Revolution*: 174

<sup>228</sup> Ibid: 174

<sup>229</sup> See André Ernest Modeste Grétry, *Memoires ou essai sur la musique*, 3 vols. (Paris: Grétry, 1789)

<sup>230</sup> Jann Pasler, *Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009): 122

<sup>231</sup> See Jean-François Lesueur, *Exposé d'une musique une, imitative et propre à chaque solennité...et le plan d'une musique particulière à la solennité de la Pentecôte. Suite de l'Essai* (Paris: Vve Hérisant, 1787)

James Johnson has pointed out that audiences and critics had also begun to listen to music in these terms, with accounts discussing composers' works according to their expressive impact.<sup>232</sup>

Of course, from a compositional perspective, the pursuit of an affective operatic music predated even the French *philosophes*. Johann Mattheson, a contemporary and friend of Handel, had in 1739 authored a volume systematising the doctrines of rhetoric as the foundation for music.<sup>233</sup> In this and in his own operas Mattheson sought the imitation of emotion, writing: "Everything [in music] that occurs without praiseworthy Affections, is nothing, does nothing, is worth nothing."<sup>234</sup>

By 1789 then, composers were familiar with the idea of composing music that attempted to communicate sentiment and render emotional states explicit; and one which could thus affect the listener. But whilst the narrative of the Revolutionary opera was firmly entrenched in the *ancien régime* and in operatic tradition, composers were to reimagine their inheritance in order to redefine their work in Revolutionary terms. There was a significant difference, for instance, between Revolutionary sentiment and the 'affections' of Mattheson, and most definitely in their musical representation. Mattheson's affections were to be the formulae for vocal virtuosity and spectacle in an attempt to overwhelm the senses, whereas French *sentiment* was to be represented through simplicity, with everything of a superfluous nature removed in the interests of communicating didactic principles.

However, this new approach did not arrive fully formulated in 1789, but rather developed gradually throughout the Revolution. Here, chronology is vital. The most prevalent interpretation (as outlined by Giroud) divides development into three stages which roughly correspond with the three regimes of the Revolution,<sup>235</sup> and there is little evidence that during the first period, between 1789 and 1791, the repertoire changed drastically to account for the sudden social and political developments which rocked France at the time. Quite the contrary- whilst there were new 'moral' tragedies in both the theatres and the opera houses, it was the everyday entertainments which triumphed, especially the comedies. In his study of early Revolutionary repertoire, Emmett Kennedy has shown that the majority of these comedies were not overtly political, which he postulates suggests that librettists and composers eschewed writing works which might stir up public opinion.<sup>236</sup> Furthermore, Bartlett has pointed out that opera houses were in the main content to continue staging repertoire from the *ancien régime*, not least because of its enduring popularity with audiences,<sup>237</sup> although these might or might not be modified to suit the political

---

<sup>232</sup> James Johnson, *Listening in Paris: a Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995): 138

<sup>233</sup> See Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg: Christian Herold, 1739)

<sup>234</sup> George J. Buelow, 'Mattheson, Johann' in *Grove Music Online*, available online: <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/18097> [last accessed 14/09/14]

<sup>235</sup> Vincent Giroud, *French Opera: A Short History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010): 94

<sup>236</sup> Emmet Kennedy, *Theatre, Opera and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996): 37

<sup>237</sup> Op. cit., Bartlett, *The new repertory*: 108

climate.<sup>238</sup> In short, celebrating the Revolution was important to composers and librettists, but it was not the defining feature of the early Republican operatic repertoire.<sup>239</sup>

It was the middle period, that of the Convention and the eventual Terror, which resulted in the most striking developments in the operatic repertoire. It was during this period that the opera became more closely related to the intense patriotism of 1792-1794, seeking to utilise all the affective powers of music as the ‘crux of the Revolution’s pedagogical project’, to borrow Darlow’s own phrase.<sup>240</sup> To borrow another, the opera houses also became “a locus for competing discourses on patriotism, society, the role of the arts in the Republic, and the articulation of the Revolution’s relation with the old regime.”<sup>241</sup> One might add that part of this process—and perhaps even the greater part—was the articulation in the theatre and the opera houses of those ideals which would make it a place of virtue and education. Whether through stringent censorship or by offering encouragement in the form of financial support or whatever other incentives could be devised by the authorities, the aim was for an institution which would help build patriotism and construct a citizenry educated along Enlightenment lines; and the compositions of 1792-1794 reflect this clearly.

One development of particular note in this respect was the rise to prominence of hybrid works which bridged genres, fusing opera with festival music or popular songs. We will consider Gossec’s *Le triomphe de la république* later, but there were many other works; these included Bernardo Porta’s *Le reunion du dix août*, which was an attempt to stage a festival (that of 10 August 1793), Grétry’s *Denys le tyran* (1794) which incorporated the *Carmagnole* and the *Marseillaise*, and the librettist’s Antoine-François Ève’s *comédie mêlée d’ariettes*, entitled *Le congrès des rois* (1794), a collaborative effort involving twelve composers (including Cherubini, Dalayrac, Grétry and Méhul) which culminated in the Kings of Europe dancing the *Carmagnole*.<sup>242</sup> This practice, evidence perhaps of what Darlow has termed ‘patriotic self-fashioning’,<sup>243</sup> might best be considered as an attempt on the part of ‘patriotic’ composers to harness the proven success of these popular mediums in transmitting Revolutionary sentiment. Composers were less enthusiastic about the new regimes, of course, at least feigned a suitable degree of patriotism.

Although as Bartlett points out, in the purely musical sense it was rare for a work to escape *ancien régime* models instituted by Gluck, Salieri and Piccini, especially with regard to the progression of choruses and arias,<sup>244</sup> those aspects of hybridisation (such as the quotation of popular songs and festal works) were enough to define a new style of operatic work from 1792 onwards—one which Bartlett perceives as “often heroic and specifically French”.<sup>245</sup> Whilst we might not describe it as ‘rabidly ideological’ as

---

<sup>238</sup> Op. cit., Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution*: 176

<sup>239</sup> Op. cit., Bartlett, *The new repertory*: 88

<sup>240</sup> Op. cit., Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution*: 338

<sup>241</sup> Ibid: 386

<sup>242</sup> *Le congrès des rois* is in tone very similar to Sylvain Maréchal’s 1793 pro-Jacobin play, *Le jugement dernier des rois*.

<sup>243</sup> Op. cit., Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution*: 386

<sup>244</sup> Op. cit., Bartlett, *The new repertory*: 133

<sup>245</sup> Ibid: 133

Wynton Dean does,<sup>246</sup> certainly it was intensely patriotic and concerned with conveying the Republican message. Even *opéra-comique*—which was to come to dominate French operatic life—took on a new form of expression, developing upon its traditional light and parodic character with inflamed passions, dramatic events and pastoral make-believe to become a medium of social commentary.<sup>247</sup> An excellent example is Grétry's *Callias* (libretto by Hoffman) written in 1794.

It is also possible to identify certain musical features which might be considered the extension of Jacobin vision. As we shall see from *Horatius Coclès*, the recitative was given a new lease of life in Rousseauian terms, coming to play an important part in the traditional tragedy by replacing the aria in many instances as the vehicle for emotional intensity. The emphasis was thus upon communication rather than vocal virtuosity, to better clarify the didactic aspects of such moments. This was mirrored in a more general move away from the soloist towards the prominence of the chorus—the musical and theatrical embodiment of *fraternité*.

Perhaps the biggest change during the Terror, apart from the simplification of the scores to better communicate the Republican message, was the emergence of certain trends which reflected the political situation of the time. To summarise the findings of Kennedy, Bartlett, Darlow and others who have considered this repertory, these trends might be considered to fall into three categories: a preoccupation with antiquity and with presenting Republican France as the modern successor to Ancient Greece and Rome; nationalism and the sense of a new Republican community (reflected in attempts to devise modern equivalents of the Ancient Greek Festival); and a notable tendency to treat subjects about domestic life.

Themes from antiquity had been important under the *ancien régime* of course, but now it was to be used to build on revolutionary rhetoric and transform it into an analogy for the new Republic. In fact these operas were widely praised for portraying patriotic Frenchmen in Greek costume.<sup>248</sup> The attraction of antiquity had shifted drastically, for composers now eschewed the traditional mythic dimension so conducive to escapist fantasy in favour of Greco-Roman models of republicanism and virtue.

Contemporary settings of nationalist sentiment focussed upon the heroes of the Revolution, celebrating their virtue and dedication to liberty. Interestingly however, librettists and composers were in the main wary of naming these heroes, preferring instead anonymity (such as the three hussars in the 1793 production of *Le siège de Thionville*) or collective effort to avoid placing too great an emphasis on any one figure should they prove insufficiently virtuous in the long run. Of course, a great deal of this arose from the decrees declaring the *patrie* to be *en danger* in 1792 and introducing conscription in 1793, when heroism became synonymous with military service and self-sacrifice to rout the enemies of the Republic.

---

<sup>246</sup> Winton Dean, 'Opera under the French Revolution' in *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, vol. 94 (1967-1968), pp. 77-96 (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis Ltd., 1968): 78

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid*: 82

<sup>248</sup> *Op. cit.*, Bartlett, *The new repertory*: 125

Unsurprisingly, works which dealt with contemporary military events (such as *Toulon soumis* in 1794) proved popular with librettists and composers keen to be seen writing patriotic works.

Works concerned with domestic themes presented models of virtue in situations which might previously have been considered the ingredients for escapism. Rustic romance and riches, master-servant relations, intrigue and love; all might play their part in cultivating personal virtue. Although perhaps less intensely political, these works were invaluable for a regime which sought to redefine the everyday life of the citizen and to invade the domestic sphere.<sup>249</sup> The Revolutionary authorities sought to ‘regenerate’ the family, as Peter McPhee points out,<sup>250</sup> and by presenting all of the dramas of family conflicts, generational struggles and gender contrasts in a new Revolutionary light, the Revolution’s composers ensured that the theme of domesticity was put into the service of the *patrie*.

But the intensity of all this ‘patriotic self-fashioning’ on the part of composers and librettists resulted in confusion amongst the artistic community as to what the new, post-Thermidor canon should seek to represent after the Jacobin regime fell. Was it to abandon the patriotic works of the Terror entirely, or to assimilate those aspects which had proven useful in rallying the people? Current scholarship has yet to provide a satisfactory quantity of evidence to allow us to establish the true nature of the Directory’s musical perspective, but interpretation leans towards the former. Bartlett for instance points out that the majority of operatic works conceived during the Terror became suspect on account of their associations with Revolutionary ideals and were withdrawn from performance. New works no longer attempted to evoke the intense patriotism typical of their immediate predecessors.<sup>251</sup> Giroud has highlighted that the organisation of institutional structures essentially reverted to the pre-Terror situation of stratification with three different opera houses performing three different types of repertoire,<sup>252</sup> although a future, closer study of the issue would be useful. There was too a decisive shift towards pre-Terror repertoire, with pre-Revolutionary works by Gluck and Sacchini once more taking prominence. Meanwhile, contemporary works in the main concerned themselves with a vogue for melodrama, engaging once more with topics of escapist fantasy and spectacle and largely ignored contemporary subjects,<sup>253</sup> and more complex musical devices returning after the simplicity of the Terror.

All this is undoubtedly true; but what is overlooked is that the exceptions point towards the survival of an affective music which was still closely allied to the pedagogical programme of the authorities. We know of course that the Directory was intensely concerned with the education of its citizens through the Arts—in many ways even more so than the Jacobin Convention, given that it was faced with the uniquely difficult task of maintaining social stability during a period of unprecedented factionalism.<sup>254</sup> This was why patriotic songs were still prescribed in the theatre, and festivals continued to make use of Revolutionary

---

<sup>249</sup> Op. cit., Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*: 67

<sup>250</sup> Peter McPhee, *Living the French Revolution 1789-1799* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 35

<sup>251</sup> Op. cit., Bartlett, *The new repertory*: 151-152

<sup>252</sup> Op. cit., Giroud, *French Opera: A Short History*: 99

<sup>253</sup> Op. cit., Johnson, *Listening in Paris*: 158

<sup>254</sup> See James Livesy, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001): 198- 233

hymns long after enthusiasm for them had waned amongst the public. The operatic repertoire did not enjoy immunity from this attention, and continued to contain educative principles—such as Gaveaux and Bouilly's *Léonore, ou l'amour conjugal* of 1798 (the inspiration for Beethoven's *Fidelio*), in which a young woman proves her faithfulness to her husband—and celebrate France's military success and in turn uphold its heroes as models for imitation, such as the post-Thermidor works *Les Épreuves du républicain* and *Encore une victoire ou Les déserteurs liégeois*, both performed after the fall of the Jacobins at the end of 1794.

Neither is it entirely fair to say that the repertoire of the Terror was to disappear entirely. The Directory was not adverse to reviving patriotic works from the period when it was politically expedient to do so, and particularly when it needed to galvanise public feeling. *Horatius Cocles* was revived by the authorities for this very reason, receiving nine performances between November 1797 and January 1798 when it was felt necessary to revive republicanism after the anti-royalist Coup of 18 Fructidor.

What is more, James Johnson has pointed out that audiences in post-Terror France continued to listen to works in terms of expressive capabilities, as suggested by new responses to Cherubini's *Lodoiska* (originally composed in 1791), by their applause to references to peace in the theatre after the signing of the Treaty of Campo Formio (1797), and their reception of the news that the French had won the Battle of Marengo (1800). He writes:

The intense, immediate experience of music under the Terror taught audiences to seize contemporary references with an acuity altogether different from the vague equation some spectators made between kings and the gods in the eighteenth century. Even as post-Thermidorian audiences rejected the facile imitations of daily scenes, the revolutionary habit of finding analogies to the present persisted.<sup>255</sup>

That the audiences of Parisian opera houses had been taught to hear music in terms of emotional expression and to search for contemporary allusions is testament to the legacy of the pedagogical facet of the Revolutionary musical project, and to the Enlightenment where its foundations were laid.

### *National Festivals*

In 1789, even before the first official festivals were instituted, the many and various ceremonies which followed the taking of the Bastille were lent the solemnity of sacred works such as Gossec's *Requiem* of 1760, as well as less formalised songs and hymns. By the time of the first official festival however, the *Fête de la Fédération* of 14 July 1790, the government were more prepared, and brought together the musicians of several of the leading opera houses to perform the officially commissioned *Te Deum* from Gossec and the *hiérodrame* (sacred drama) *La Prise de la Bastille* by Marc-Antoine Désaugiers. The former was a religious

---

<sup>255</sup> Op. cit., Johnson, *Listening in Paris*: 160

work setting a Latin text (incorporating Chénier's *Hymn pour la Fête de la Fédération*) praising God for the early successes of the Revolution, whilst the latter interspersed quasi-religious liturgy with musical interludes mostly taking the form of military marches.

Harnessing the sound-world of sacred music was widely practiced and a shrewd decision. Not only did its tone communicate to the people the seriousness of their social enterprise, essentially proclaiming the Revolution to be ordained by God, but familiarity also allowed for the clear communication of the Revolution's principles. For this reason, simple, familiar musical mediums long associated with the church were to be the order of the day. Subtly, Gossec's *Te Deum* also communicated to the people a decisive shift in society and in sovereignty. The *Te Deum* had always been associated with consecration and coronation.<sup>256</sup> To use it in the context of the *Fête de la Fédération* (14 July 1790) implied a consecration of the collapse of despotism for which the Bastille was the quintessential analogy.

That traditional sacred music was perceived to be of the greatest importance in the festival is testified to by the fact that religious musical forms continued to be employed even as hostility towards the church intensified from 1790 with the signing of the Civil Constitution. Its solemnity certainly suited the sombre funerary events of this period, such as the state funeral of Mirabeau or Voltaire's reburial in the Pantheon, both in 1791. It was, in essence, perceived as eminently suitable for conveying sentiments appropriate to the sublimity of national occasions.

But sacred music was not the only genre to be appropriated in the pursuit of a didactic festival music aesthetic. Revolutionary festivals frequently incorporated both theatrical works and songs which would in other contexts be considered independent and autonomous works, but were staged within the festivals on a grand scale with expanded choruses. The choral oath from Sacchini's *Dardanus* was performed in the *Fete de la Fédération* in this context, for example. Désaugiers' *hiérodrame* was a fusion of all three—festival, sacred, and dramatic; an experiment in hybridity between sacred and secular in an attempt to harness the respective qualities and potential of each. Even the term itself implied appropriation and hybridity, with the etymology of the word deriving from two distinct concepts: *hiéro-* from the Greek ἱερός (sacred; holy); and *drame* from the Latin *drāma* (drama).

After 1792, however, the composers of the festivals made decisive steps away from sacred music. Hymns were from now on dedicated to an ever-increasing range of secular subjects. But if 1792 marked a decisive step away from Christianity, it was in 1793 that the civil liturgy was finally fixed and the secular hymn achieved its ultimate position as a crucially important feature of the Revolutionary festival. Whereas previously these hymns had been drafted in to support grander works, they were now to be used thematically and applied to a range of subjects which suited the purpose of the respective festivals, from high minded concepts of civic duty to agriculture; or to take Constant Pierre's phrase, to express *les*

---

<sup>256</sup> Ruth Steiner, et al., 'Te Deum' in *Grove Music Online*, available online: <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/27618> [last accessed 14/09/14]

*sentiments les plus nobles et le plus divers* (the most noble and varied sentiments)<sup>257</sup> in order to glorify and celebrate moral and civic virtue.

Hymns were important from 1793 until the end of the Revolution because they continued to provide the familiarity and ritual of sacred music whilst becoming detached from the church and from the large-scale Masses and *Te Deums* which were less able to escape their sacred associations. In essence, they allowed the festival to appropriate Catholicism without becoming tainted by it, which, as Emmett Kennedy has pointed out, suited the Revolutionary programme of de-christianisation.<sup>258</sup> In this vein too they were able to add to the festival a socially unifying element of communal worship, presenting at least a veneer of fraternity, inclusion and tolerance<sup>259</sup> as well as forming virtues based on the models of Ancient Greece and Rome. In this the fashionable cult of the Masons represented the perfect model—heavily ritualised, strongly fraternal, but without explicitly Catholic traits. Mona Ozouf has pointed out that masonism permeated the music of the festivals, with a prevalence of male-voice choirs, triple time-signatures and a ‘column of harmony’<sup>260</sup> providing the accompaniment.<sup>261</sup>

The success of the hymn undoubtedly lay with its suitability for expressing a new, secular liturgy in this way. It was perceived by the Revolutionaries to be the perfect Rousseauian medium, and this view was certainly shared by composers and librettists. It was Gossec after all who adapted the *Hymne à l'Être supreme* into a popular song to ensure its continued influence. Chénier explicitly described the hymn as the most suitable vehicle for Revolutionary propaganda, and strove hard to ensure that his texts suited the stresses of the music, abandoning traditional poetic practice and adopting new techniques to render his meaning clear.<sup>262</sup>

How then best to categorise the hymns of the French Revolution? The most convincing thematic approach, proposed by Jam, divides them into three parts. Between 1789 and 1792 were the ritualised and quasi-religious celebrations of the Enlightenment’s victory over the *ancien régime*, concerned primarily with anti-clericalism and the abolition of privilege. Between 1792- 9 Thermidor an II (27 July 1794), the hymn more closely mirrored the trend of current events, but was preoccupied by the war and celebrated liberty and sacrifice as well as the glory of the people, denigrating the enemy. From this date until 1799, themes became more disparate, with composers compelled to account for old enemies as well as the new threat of continued radicalism. But they continued to be intensely expressive and didactic, even whilst the means by which this could be achieved were problematic for composers.

---

<sup>257</sup> Op. cit., Pierre, *Musique des fêtes*: xxvi

<sup>258</sup> Op. cit., Kennedy, *A Cultural History of the French Revolution*: 338

<sup>259</sup> Jean-Louis Jam: *Marie-Josephe Chénier and François-Joseph Gossec : Two Artists in the Service of Revolutionary Propaganda* in op.cit., Boyd, *Music and the French Revolution*: 225

<sup>260</sup> Wind instruments grouped as such: two clarinets, two horns, two bassoons and a serpent playing the *basso profundo*.

<sup>261</sup> Op.cit., Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*: 97

<sup>262</sup> Op. cit., Jam, *Marie-Josephe Chénier and François-Joseph Gossec* : 231

### III. Popular Political Songs

The quantity of popular political songs composed during the Revolution is striking. In his study, Constant Pierre catalogued around three thousand revolutionary songs. The likelihood, however, is that there were in fact many more, because a great number were written and immediately fell out of the public repertoire.<sup>263</sup> In a way that operatic and festivals could never be, the song was a popular medium, more profoundly affected by day-to-day popular feeling than officially sanctioned sentiment. Their performance—spontaneous, ever-changing—could not be governed in the way that theatrical or festival performance could be given their dependence on fixed performance spaces. As Laura Mason has suggested:

...performance lent singular weight to individual appropriations, shifting emphasis from the content of a particular song to the ways in which it was used. Individuals of all social backgrounds and every political stripe composed their own songs, but they also reshaped those of others... More than that of any other genre, the meaning of a song was as much dependent on an appropriation and contexts of performance as it was upon content, format, or presumed authorial intent.<sup>264</sup>

To compound matters, in this early period of the Revolution (until at least 1791), song production was virtually unaffected by government intervention. The populace therefore was free to continue a tradition which was more firmly rooted in the street culture of the *ancien régime* rather than in Enlightenment idealism. As André Prévost has pointed out, this tradition—most acutely in Paris—was one of biting satire, in which professional song-writers would take existing tunes and write new lyrics commenting on contemporary political events. These would then be disseminated in cheap pamphlets.<sup>265</sup> This process was a regular and indeed important aspect of the political song in Revolutionary France too; Hughes points out that the use of timbres allowed even illiterate listeners to remember and replicate songs.<sup>266</sup> The *Ça ira* of 1790 is an excellent example of this practice, but frequently timbres would be taken from the *ancien régime* repertoire too, such as *Vive Henri IV* or *Marlborough s'en vat en guerre*. This process was a representation of what Laura Mason has described as adapting traditional practices to Revolutionary events.<sup>267</sup>

What was lacking at this stage, however, was consistency of sentiment. Those either appalled by the collapse of the *ancien régime* or consequently disaffected from the Revolutionary cause by its intensifying radicalism were just as quick as its supporters to put their arguments to music. Take for example *Le troubadour parisien* of 1789, a song which cries for the zealous revolutionaries to apply their zeal to the

---

<sup>263</sup> Op. cit., Pierre: *Les hymnes et chansons de la Révolution*: 2

<sup>264</sup> Op. cit., Mason, *Singing the French Revolution*: 3

<sup>265</sup> André J. M. Prévost, 'Popular Music' in *Handbook of French Popular Culture* ed. Pierre L. Horn (New York, Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1991): 187

<sup>266</sup> Charles Hughes, 'Music of the French Revolution' in *Science and Society*, vol. 4, no.2 (Spring 1940), pp. 193-210 (New York: Guilford Press, 1940): 194

<sup>267</sup> Op. cit., Mason, *Singing the French Revolution*: 36

Royalist cause,<sup>268</sup> or the pro-monarchy *Chanson très-nouvelle*. In many instances the same song was used by both Royalists and Republicans, resulting in many versions and each expressing very different political sentiment. This was the defining feature of the song during the early years of the Revolution.

So too did the diversity of subjects represent disparity. Songs were written on nearly every topic: public life, political events, natural and national disasters, military action, civic virtue, religion and the clergy, public figures, the authorities and any other subject one might care to name.<sup>269</sup> Some were lofty and concerned with virtue whilst others were violent and crude. But it is easily overlooked that the basis for such disparity was a common belief in the utility of the song as a means of communicating the peoples' own moral principles. These were not the principles of the *philosophes*, of course, but by setting their messages to music, self-defined communities of shared opinion were seeking to persuade others of the merits of their perceptions, or to think and act as they were. They were still to teach and instruct in lessons of perceived virtue.

But whilst the people themselves were not in the main concerned with the musical ideals of the *philosophes*, by 1792, the Government, who most certainly were, had realised the potential of the song as a didactic tool. We have considered their perspectives on the matter in some detail already, and whilst the people continued to produce their own songs, officially commissioned songs began to enjoy success, encapsulating as they did the defiance of a nation preparing to face its adversaries. 1792 after all was the year of the *Marseillaise*—the war song of the Republican armies.

Official efforts to influence the nature of Revolutionary songs during this period did appear to yield results. There was, for example, a clear intensification of patriotism in the repertoire with songs more defiantly opposed to the enemies of the Republic—a direct response to the proclamation of *patrie en danger*. Albert Soboul has rightly identified the *sans-culottes'* singing as a representation of their engagement with radical politics,<sup>270</sup> whilst it was not unknown for popular deputations to interrupt the meetings of the Convention with songs, congratulating it on its work or celebrating its successes. They might even submit proposals or criticise perceived abuses. Constant Pierre recounts one event at the meeting of 5 July 1793 when:

*... qu'une multitude immense de citoyens de plusieurs sections de Paris se présentait aux portes de la salle; le président les fit introduire successivement. Après avoir affirmé qu'elles acceptaient la Déclaration des Droits de l'homme et l'acte constitutionnel, plusieurs députations, qui s'étaient fait accompagner de tambours et d'instruments de musique, chantèrent 'l'Hymne à la Liberté' et diverses chansons patriotiques, parmi lesquelles le 'Ça ira' et 'Où peut-on être mieux qu'au sein de sa famille'.*

...a great multitude of citizens from several sections of Paris presented itself at the doors of the room, and the President introduced each one successively. After stating that they accepted the

---

<sup>268</sup> Ibid: 186

<sup>269</sup> Op. cit., Pierre, *Les hymnes et chansons* : 31

<sup>270</sup> Albert Soboul, *The Parisian sans-culottes and the French Revolution, 1793-4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964): 231

Declaration of Human Rights and Constitutional Act, several deputations, to the accompaniment of drums and musical instruments, sang the *Hymn to Freedom* and various other patriotic songs, including the *Ça ira* and *Où peut-on être mieux qu'au sein de sa famille*.<sup>271</sup>

It was therefore not just the prerogative of the government to use music in order to convey a Revolutionary agenda, because the people themselves transformed the song into a tool by which they might communicate and express their own interpretation of republican sentiments. But with the fall of the Jacobins and the revival of Royalist sentiment in 1795, the bitter struggle seen before 1792 erupted once more. Each side in this struggle again used song as a weapon, republicans with the *Marseillaise* and royalists with the *Réveil du peuple* (composed by Jean-Marie Souriguières and Pierre Gaveaux) lamenting the excesses of the Jacobins. If the Terror had been comparatively successful in drawing together some semblance of consistency in political sentiment, its fall marked a return to disparity and contest. As Aulard writes:

In this war of the old spirit against the new, these two opposing parties fought one another not merely by newspaper articles and discourses from the rostrum. They would thus have influenced only the literate elite when it was a question of winning the mass of the population, who generally did not know how to read... It was by the political song, sung in the theatre, in the cafés and in the street that the Royalists and Republicans succeeded, principally at Paris, in influencing the people.<sup>272</sup>

In this contest between the authorities and dissenters, the former sought to limit the peoples' powers to express themselves. Song writing was to be institutionalised and professionalised whilst popular singing practices were restricted.<sup>273</sup> This was only one aspect of the Directory's attempt to dismantle the popular movement in 1795, and through sheer perseverance they were largely successful. In the context of the song they were helped in no small part to the increasing apathy amongst a large proportion of the populace who no longer cared what songs expressed. Once more then there was to be a decisive shift in the repertoire. These developments ushered in the heyday of songs which might be considered patriotic, but which were no longer explicitly political and actively avoided such subjects. Instead, the great majority of songs focussed on the military exploits of France's generals, with the Napoleon's Italian campaign of 1796 and his expedition to Rome taking precedence. Festival songs and other such works tended instead to celebrate abstract concepts like virtue itself, such as the *Portrait de la République* (Cubières, 1796), or *L'Égalité républicaine* (anon., 1799). The Directory, in short, sought to re-direct the Republic's attention away from themes which might foster factionalism, and towards the glory of and danger to the *patrie* in the interests of unity.

---

<sup>271</sup> Op. cit., Pierre, *Hymnes et chansons*: 7

<sup>272</sup> F.A. Aulard, *Études et leçons sur la Révolution française*, 9 vols. (Paris: F. Alcan, 1893-1924): 3:241-242. Quoted from op.cit., Burnham-Rogers, *The Spirit of Revolution in 1789*: 26

<sup>273</sup> Op. cit., Mason, *Singing the French Revolution*: 158

#### IV. Case study: two Revolutionary operas

Having considered these broader trends in the Revolutionary repertoire, let us now turn our attention to two examples of Republican opera, in order to evaluate in closer detail how composers realised the Revolutionary conception of music in their works.

**François Joseph Gossec (libretto by Marie-Joseph Chénier): *Le triomphe de la République, ou le Camp de Grand Pré, divertissement lyrique en un acte, représenté à l'Opéra le 27 janvier l'an 2e de la République française, une et indivisible* (1793)**

According to Gossec's biographer Claude Role, collaborative work with M.J. Chénier began on *Le triomphe de la République* after the French victory over the Prussians under the Duke of Brunswick<sup>274</sup> at Valmy in October 1792, which victory this opera celebrates.<sup>275</sup> The process of gestation must therefore have been a rapid one, because the first performance was given at the Parisian Opéra on 27 January 1793—a mere two or three months. It was conceived, certainly, in a period of intensifying republicanism. The Convention replaced the Legislative Assembly in September 1792, shortly thereafter abolishing the monarchy altogether, and the King was placed on trial for his life at the end of the year (the trial extending into January 1793). The political climate was such that pro-Republican works such as *Le triomphe* were needed in order to provide cultural support for political radicalisation.

The opera only received ten performances, although this was by no means unusual for Republican operatic works conceived in 1792/1793 as they were overshadowed by Gossec's other opera contemporary with this period, *L'Offrande à la liberté*.<sup>276</sup> Critics were divided in their opinion of the work. Some like the *Journal de Paris*, working within a new Revolutionary aesthetic framework, praised its subject matter and Republican character; but others more inclined to traditional aesthetic taste criticised its stilted plot and uninteresting style.<sup>277</sup> Amongst audiences, however, it proved highly successful, its total gross takings second only to *L'Offrande* (which received 102 performances) and higher than any other Republican works put on at the Opéra in 1793.<sup>278</sup>

As with many Revolutionary operas, it is hard to categorise the work in the traditional sense. Although it shares many characteristics with the *tragédie lyrique*, its title as a *divertissement-lyrique* better reflects its smaller

---

<sup>274</sup> Brunswick (1735-1806) was sovereign of the German state after his name and also a Prussian general, widely celebrated for his martial prowess during the eighteenth century. He was the natural choice to lead the forces of the First Coalition against France in 1792, but was beaten by Republican forces in the field at Valmy.

<sup>275</sup> Claude Role, *François-Joseph Gossec, 1734-1829: un musicien à Paris de l'Ancien Régime à Charles X* (Paris: le Harmattan, 2000): 182

<sup>276</sup> For a statistical breakdown of operatic success during this period, see op.cit., Emmett Kennedy, *Theatre, Opera, and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris*

<sup>277</sup> Op. cit., Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution*: 332-333

<sup>278</sup> Ibid: 205

scale (the work lasts approximately seventy-five minutes). The term also reflects its departure from tradition, for unlike conventional *tragédies lyriques*, *Le triomphe* incorporates two hymns and several dance scenes as well as the standard arias and recitatives. And whilst the orchestra is typical of the period (albeit with a strong brass complement), the cast is dominated by male voices. The only female voice, a soprano, is Laurette, who is really only a supporting character for her male counterpart, Thomas.

*Le triomphe* is therefore best considered a musical tableau rather than an opera proper. Although there is a narrative of sorts, Chénier's libretto is almost entirely devoid of any of the dramatic devices one might expect within a work of this nature. It forgoes the traditional handling of plot, characterisation and most other conventions in favour of six scenes which present idealised images of Republican life. The central characters exist to allow the audience an insight into the principles they stand for: archetypes, in essence, which are at once models for imitation and yet devoid of real humanity. Tellingly, none except for Thomas and Laurette are named beyond the titles which describe their social function (for example, the 'Mayor' or the 'General'). The emphasis is thus on representation and the collective rather than personality and the individual. In this work then, Gossec and Chénier eschewed the compelling individualist, psychological dramas of contemporary Germanic operas, for example, for this would distract from the true purpose of *Le triomphe*—an exploration of collective virtue and service to the *patrie*.

What little dramatic tension the work possesses is driven by a series of affective musical tableaux which exhibit a tendency for quick changes of sentiment and sound-world, and small-scale and simple rather than complex forms and structures. This simplicity permeates the music as a whole, however—texture, harmonic language, tonal movement, phrasing, and most else besides. But Gossec relies on simplicity not for simplicity's sake, for it plays a fundamental role in facilitating the clarity with which sound-worlds are constructed and emotion conveyed. Thus the chorus and the recitative are the preferred vehicles for expression, and feature prominently throughout the work.

Familiarity is as important as simplicity here in the communicative sense, and Gossec's musical style leans heavily upon the use of comprehensible 'topics' which acted as what Raymond Monelle terms 'linguistic syntagmas'<sup>279</sup> for eighteenth-century listeners. In other words, Gossec employs certain musical gestures to represent activities and sensations with which the audience were familiar, and in this instance it is the martial and the pastoral which are most prevalent.

These topics are well-suited to depicting a libretto firmly rooted in patriotic, nationalist sentiment. This union is crafted so as to present as clear a model of Republican virtue as is possible, and to transform *Le triomphe* into a vehicle for didacticism. We need not speculate on this point, either, for M.J. Chénier explicitly describes the work in these terms in his foreword:

*Réchauffé par le beau talent de Gossec, l'Ouvrage peut entretenir dans les cœurs l'amour de la Liberté, passion et besoin des Peuples qui ne sont pas dégénérés. C'est le but que l'Auteur s'est proposé dans tous ses Ecrits. Sa vie publique et*

---

<sup>279</sup> Raymond Monelle, *The Musical Topic: Hunt, Military and Pastoral*. (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006): 3

*littéraire, sera toujours conforme à ces principes sacrés, qu'il a professés dès sa première jeunesse, et plusieurs années avant la Révolution.*

Stimulated by Gossec's great talent, this work is capable of upholding the love of liberty in mens' hearts; that great passion and need of peoples who have not degenerated. This is the objective that the present author has pursued in all of his writings. Both his public and literary life will always conform to these sacred principles which he has professed since the days of his youth, many years before the Revolution.

Chénier's words are an apt summary of the work. The intense—some might say unrelenting—didacticism of *Le triomphe* conforms to the Revolutionary conception of a repertory which reforms the decadent genre of theatrical music.

The plot can be briefly summarised as follows. In the first scene, representatives of all strata of French Revolutionary society have assembled together to join in communal worship. From the Mayor down to the children, all sing hymns in praise of their Republic, united by their common sentiment. The mayor reassures the people that they must not fear tyranny, and hearing this message the people rejoice. Charmingly pastoral, the second scene is set in the countryside, with two citizens, Thomas and Laurette, leading their fellow *villageoises* in praise and dance. These celebrations are barely disrupted by the preparations for departure made by the military in the following scene, as a Republican general, his officers and his men announce that they must depart to combat the Duke of Brunswick (the French army's nemesis and leader of the forces amassed to march on Paris by the First Coalition in early 1792) at Valmy, whose army has just invaded France. Their companions, the women, old men, and children of France declare that they will miss them during their absence, but express their confidence that their menfolk's service to the *patrie* will be glorious and triumphant. This is discussed further by the remaining sections of society in the fourth scene as the young men march away—a veteran beginning proceedings by lamenting that in his day French soldiers were disadvantaged by their servitude to absolute monarchs. All agree that these 'inheritors of French courage' have all the advantage they could need: they are Republicans. The soldiers' return in the fifth scene appears to prove them correct, and they enter onstage singing praises to liberty and calling for a festival to celebrate the glorious success of the French Republic. The chorus concurs, singing a hymn to liberty whilst the Goddess Liberty herself descends from the heavens in the sixth scene to praise the Republicans, proclaiming them as virtuous citizens and the true inheritors of Greek liberty. France, she declares, is her new temple. Whilst the people celebrate, the Mayor gives a rousing speech declaring that the virtue of French soldiery has won peace and pacified the entire world; a striking imperialist flourish. The work then concludes with a communal celebration of liberty, victory, virtue and the ruin of kings.

Even before the action proper commences, the musical gestures and general simplicity of the overture's musical language ensure that the scene is already set in the Gluckian sense, as it is closely tied in character and sentiment to the rest of the opera. It is strikingly programmatic, constructed in two thematically

distinct sections defined by their topical emphasis—the first section being martial in nature and the second pastoral.

The first (bb.1-165) is scored for a full brass complement supplemented by timpani, a combination which, as Andrew Harringer has shown, was recognised by eighteenth-century commentators and audiences as having strongly martial connotations.<sup>280</sup> Indeed, the entire first half of the overture is dominated by the military topic—following the dramatic, unison C minor introduction, it is permeated by horn calls, trumpet fanfares and timpani rolls, all favouring strong, dotted martial rhythms. There is even a part for cannon (which was probably performed on a bass drum) that interjects forcefully with its *forte* minims, not so much complementing the instrumentation as adding extra-musical devices to enhance the programmaticism of the overture (See fig. 1). It conjures up images of the conflict to come, but also of the potential for valour in service of the *patrie* which is ultimately the dominant theme of the opera as a whole.

As the first half concludes, however, a second sound-world appears (bb.166-265): a rustic *pastorale* dominated now by the woodwind, and given rhythmic vitality and the bucolic qualities of a folk dance by its 6/8 time signature (See fig. 2).<sup>281</sup> It too is simple structurally, constructed in ternary form. Its B section (bb.198-225) is relatively short and non-developmental, despite its brief modulation to the dominant (G major), and the returning A section (bb.226-265) is truncated so as to incorporate a short coda fragmenting and concentrating the limited quantity of thematic material. The prevailing impression is one of pastoral innocence, and the audience is left with an idyllic impression of this fictional France, which, for all intents and purposes, is worth defending from tyranny.

Although these two distinct sections communicate two very different scenes, they are interconnected in several significant ways. Firstly, both share the C major tonality (a key long associated with simplicity and purity), modulating but briefly and returning always to the tonic before long. Both are almost entirely diatonic (thus setting a trend which continues throughout the opera) with chromaticisms limited to a few diminished seventh chords and secondary dominants. Throughout, Gossec prefers to draw his contrast from dynamics which alternate between extremes and instrumental timbres which contribute a great deal to the overture's colour. Lastly, the two sections are linked by a solo timpani roll (bb.166-169) which is alien to neither world, suggesting in context either military percussion or the prelude to a rustic dance performed on a peasant's tambor. The two sound-worlds are thus constructed in a manner which subtly emphasises their interconnectedness, as one is able to metamorphose into the other, suggesting a natural progression between war and peace. Taking up arms to defend this idyllic pastoral representation of France is therefore identified as an entirely natural process for the citizen. This message is subtly conveyed in the overture, but it is no less important for it—later on in the opera, the call for arms will

---

<sup>280</sup> Andrew Harringer, 'Hunt, Military and Pastoral Topics' in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014): 197-198

<sup>281</sup> Ibid: 204

again blur the distinction between citizen and soldier. It is a didactic message in its own right, encouraging the citizens in the audience to serve their *patrie* and fulfil their duty as citizens.

The overture therefore is arguably the perfect embodiment of Rousseau's ideals for instrumental. It is intensely programmatic, simple and sentimental (in the Rousseauian definition of the term), and communicates a sense of natural order and purity through unimpeded diatonicism. Indeed, the pastoral section itself is directly reminiscent of Rousseau's own opera, *Le Devin du village* of 1752, which is also characterised by its rural themes and transparent simplicity.

Scene I continues in this vein of transparency, but begins with the inclusion of a festal hymn which transforms *Le triomphe* into a hybrid work—the *Chant du 14 Juillet*. The inclusion of this hymn could not paint the ensuing scene of communal celebration any more explicitly. At once it depicts the state in which we find the characters and also presents us with the very principles that the work self-consciously sought to embody—principles that the audience were implicitly being encouraged to adopt.

The need for social unity and civic participation are the most apparent of these principles. The people are joined in communal worship of the 'God of the people and of kings, of cities and of the countryside' (*Dieu du Peuple et des Rois, des Cités et des Campagnes*), and proclaim their unity explicitly: 'Here are assembled, under your great gaze/the sons and servants of the French Empire' (*Ici sont rassemblés, sous Ton regard immense/De l'Empire Français les fils et les soutiens*). The people make no distinction of rank, despite the presence of great leaders and lowly peasant children, despite the disparity of their roles and backgrounds. They proclaim themselves one people under the 'French Empire'; an interesting, if confusing use of the word. It seems unlikely that 'empire' is meant in traditional imperialist terms, however, for it is made abundantly clear that despotism is the enemy of the French: 'And you will soon see tyrants despondent, our strength surrounding them (*Et vous verrez bientôt les tyrans abbatus/Notre force les environne*). This is a distinction which becomes increasingly important as the qualities of their foes broaden—servants of despotism, oppressors, barbaric kings, all encapsulated by the Duke of Brunswick. The message to the people is clear: join together in communal worship as one people, hate the Revolution's many enemies, and prepare to resist them.

Gossec's decision to open *Le triomphe* with a civic hymn also introduces a sacred dimension which plays an important role in lifting these declarations of unity to a higher, almost divine plane. The invocation of a divine being by the people—a permutation of the Christian God, but neither the Catholic one, nor Robespierre's broadly theistic Supreme Being<sup>282</sup>—supports this. The *Chant* itself is in essence a symbol of ritual, an appeal to the divine, and one which serves to sanctify this union of the people and the principles they will proclaim. And in case this appeal to the Christian God is not enough, the choir repeat their call in pagan terms to the sun itself, with the masonic sounding 'Pure fire, eternal eye, soul and energy of the

---

<sup>282</sup> The *Chant du 14 Juillet* was composed in 1790, long before the Supreme Being was conceived but after the beginnings of anti-clerical sentiment had begun to emerge in France.

Oboes

Clarinet in C

Trumpet in C

Horn in C

Timpani

Cannon

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Fig. 1: Overture, bb. 39-44

Fig. 2: Overture, bb. 166-177

**Allegro moderato**

Piccolo

Oboes

Clarinet in C

Bassoon

Trumpet in C

Horn in C

Timpani

Violin I

Violin II

Violoncello

pizz.

world/May you admire the splendour of the French/May you never see in your fecund course any who equal their greatness!’ (*Feu pur, œil éternel, ame et ressort du monde/Puisses-tu des Français admirer le splendeur/Puisses-tu ne rien voir dans Ta course féconde/Qui soit égal à leur grandeur!*).

That Chénier should have recourse to the sun as the symbolic basis for this section may well indicate a desire to harness pagan images of fertility and providence in this new image of a splendorous France. But the sun also conveys images of benevolent and providential sovereignty given its long association with rulership. Most recently, Louis XIV had adopted the title of ‘Sun King’, of course,<sup>283</sup> but the association extends at least as far back as antiquity—as an example, the Emperor Julian (331-363) had delivered a famous oration on the ‘sovereignty of the sun’ during his tenure. But in the First French Republic a new sun of sovereignty had risen, one removed from the historical tradition of absolutism. Chénier’s depiction of this sovereignty thus appropriates traditional imagery, but transforms it to uphold the new image of French liberty as one of virility and masculine potency.

This most natural image, combined with the fusion of Christian and pagan ideals serves an important purpose in denouncing those who would stand against the French Republic. Not only do they offend the people, but also God and Nature itself: ‘The Heavens have made mankind to be free, just as the tyrant and the slave are unholy, rebels against the Divinity!’ (*Le Ciel pour être libre a fait l’humanité/ Ainsi que le tyran, l’esclave est un impie/ Rebelle à la Divinité!*) Tyranny and slavery are explicitly described as existing against the order of nature itself, and this is all the justification that the people should require to go to war with such unnatural, abhorrent foes. It is also on Chénier’s part a strong if unsubtle attempt to excite the patriotic passions of the audience by communicating Revolutionary zeal.

All this is carefully treated by Gossec, and his musical language remains self-consciously simple, direct, and accessible throughout. Martial scoring and a male chorus, coupled with the reiteration of several of the martial motifs from the overture, and a carefully timed modulation from the tonic to the dominant in bar 17 (E flat to B flat) serve to provide all the militaristic celebration required. Diatonicism lends this section great clarity, whilst Gossec’s willingness to indulge in word-painting (such as the sudden *forte* in bar 37 which dramatises the words ‘*celebrant devant toi leur bonheur*’) serves to illustrate the text. This last point is of particular relevance in the Mayor’s speech, where recitative renders his words in true Rousseauian clarity. Take for example the descending flurry of semiquavers in C minor in bar 70 which accompany his invocation of the Duke of Brunswick (see fig. 3). The hymn itself returns in bar 79 to sanctify the words of the General, his aide and the Mayor who join together to sing a surprisingly delicate trio introducing the choir’s appeal to the sun. This in contrast is sparsely orchestrated endowed with masculine musical traits by the all-male voices, although the glory of participation is soon re-announced when they are re-joined in bar 113 by the full choir and the orchestra with its martial brass and sturdy homophonic texture.

---

<sup>283</sup> For a detailed analysis of the symbolism behind this title, see N.R. Johnson, *Louis XIV and the Age of the Enlightenment: the myth of the Sun King from 1715 to 1789*, 2 vols. (Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, 1978)

The purely musical elements of this scene therefore play an important role in illustrating the text, but also in fusing together two themes—the martial and the religious—together. The effect is the sanctification of military action in defence of Republican principle. The music also encapsulates perfectly the emotions of the on-stage crowd, conveying them to those off-stage. It cannot be missed either that the people here are the source of authority. They are guided by the mayor, of course, but they are the main voice to be heard, gifted all the strength of the full orchestra whenever they join in chorus. It is participation through proxy for the audience.

Indeed, participation continues to play an important part in the second scene which begins with a direct address to all, citizens on-stage and off, as Thomas calls: ‘Citizens, whose ardent courage has braved the Prussian rage’ (*Citoyens, dont l’ardent courage/A bravé la Prusse en courroux*). It is an extension of the Rousseauian preoccupation with the communication of sentiment, but the Rousseauian aspect is already overt with a scene closely resembling his *Devin du village*, with the assembled villagers singing of virtue. Thomas himself might be considered the perfect example of a Rousseauian ‘noble savage’, at once a rustic peasant but also a committed citizen, ‘Orator, song-writer, singer of his village’ (*Orateur, Chansonnier, Chanteur de son village*). He is a model for emulation: pure, simple and virtuous; a committed Republican and servant of the *patrie*, but one whom the people might aspire to be like—‘Thomas, citizen like you’ (*Thomas, Citoyen comme vous*). Such virtue makes him the ideal representative for the communication of Revolutionary principle—his message is a call for unity in celebration and worship ‘You, lovely girls, and you, young men, join your voices to the sound of our musettes’ (*Vous, aimables filettes/Et vous, jeunes garçons/Aux sons de nos musettes/Unissez vos chansons*). So too does he praise the law, liberty, and rustic simplicity. But Thomas’ message is also a martial one, warning of the need to resist the perfidious enemies of the Republic (*Guerriers perfides*) and calling the people to arms.

The presence of the young lady Laurette—who rather cloyingly describes herself as Thomas’ *chanteuse*—does little to dampen the martial atmosphere. If anything, her own calls are even more vehemently defiant, denouncing ‘emigré Nobles and Princes’ and their servants, and proclaiming the victory of the French and the defeat of their enemies. In this Laurette is quite literally a representative of ‘virtue’ in the etymological sense of the word, derived as it is from the Latin for ‘man’—*vir*. Her masculinisation, endowing her with martial qualities, is an encouragement for female citizens to participate in a collective effort against the Republic’s enemies. The extent of this contribution is limited, however, for Laurette is no amazon. Her role is one of support and encouragement, and *Le triomphe* does nothing to break down this traditional gender separation. Nevertheless, her martial fervour is directed towards concerted rather than divided effort, and as such she represents the female archetype for emulation.

What is most important about Thomas and Laurette, however, is that they ensure the didacticism of this scene comes from within the community rather than from higher authority. Here are two citizens the audience might (in theory, at least) relate to, and understand their simplicity and translate that into virtue.

Fig. 3: Scene I, bb. 67-72.

Le Maire  
de nos Lé-gi-sla-teurs les gé-ne-reux dé-crets - à Gui-llaume à Bruns-wick por-te-ront les al-lar-mes

Violin 1  
*pp* *cresc.* *ff*

Violin 2  
*pp* *p* *cresc.* *ff*

Viola  
*pp* *p* *cresc.* *ff*

Violoncello  
*pp* *p* *cresc.* *ff*

unis.  
col B

Fig. 4: Scene II, bb. 41-50.

Gayment  
Thomas  
nous ap-por-tons du vin, ci de-vant cham-pe-nois les en-ne-mis vou-loient en boi-re

Violin 1  
*p*

Violin 2  
*p*

Viola  
*p*

Violoncello  
*p*

Fig. 5: Scene II, bb. 53-57. Note the tumbling motif depicting the fall of kings in bars 55-57

pressé  
Thomas  
Peu - - - ple à la chu-te des rois

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

But it is also the case that between the two characters, Chénier ensures that this rustic world is irrevocably fused with the military, just as Gossec has them coincide in the overture.

This fusion is perhaps less clear musically than in previous material, but mostly because Gossec turns to recitative to communicate Thomas and Laurette's message unequivocally. Instead, this is a scene for word painting. After a brief introduction which establishes a delicately scored B flat major, Thomas' recitative lifts to G major (b.33) marked *gayment* (b.41) to revel in the drinking of wine, only to be interrupted by an unexpectedly sinister D minor motif (bb.48-49) upon mention of their enemies' nefarious intention to disrupt proceedings (see fig. 4). But D minor is transformed into a noble D major in bar 53 as Thomas drinks to the glory and health of the people, accompanied by the strings' stately interjections. The mention of 'the fall of kings' (*La chute des rois*) however interrupts to produce a tumbling motif in the strings (bb. 55-57), which depicts Thomas' message quite literally (see fig. 5), but is followed shortly after by a sudden, *forte largo* section (b 62) in which the entire choir join only to sing the words 'For the honour of liberty' (*en l'honneur de la liberté*)—an unexpected climactic interjection, but one which conveys the sentiment of this scene with absolute clarity. With a return to recitative for Laurette's couplets matters continue to progress in this way until the climax of this scene, a charming B flat major pastoral dance in which refrains and verses alternate to carry both Thomas and Laurette's messages and the communal affirmation of the people (bb.80-152). Thomas' concluding aria addressed to the inhabitants of the rural *bocages* continues this theme (bb.152-232).

In Scene III however, martial imagery returns. It continues initially in a style similar to the preceding *pastorale*, with a lilting 3/8 introduction dominated by the lively dance rhythms of the woodwind, but soon surrenders attention to the General's aide whose recitative introduces his call-to-arms—'The trumpet has sounded; all of you are called to arms' (*La trompette a sonné; tout vous appelle aux armes*). The following instrumental interlude (bb.30-42) in a noble D major crescendos towards a climactic chorus, with a trumpet fanfare accompanied in its calls by horns and timpani. The martial connotations of their timbres are emphasised by the undulating thirds, fourths, fifths upon which the motif is constructed, imitating the trumpet calls of the battlefield, all the while lent the strength of a homophonic wind and strings accompaniment. By the time that the chorus of young soldiers join with their farewell to their families (*Adieu nos enfants et nos pères*, b.51) this martial scene has already been well-established by the programmaticism of the instrumental introduction. The chorus itself builds on this foundation—it is entirely homophonic, robustly orchestrated (although never too heavily) and transparently diatonic, although some chromaticism is introduced to paint important textual moments, such as a the pungent German sixth depicting 'Rois' at the climactic '*périssent les Rois*' (see fig. 6).

Scene III is not entirely focussed upon the soldiers, however. It is in fact a dialogue between the various groups of society which form the nuclear French family: young men, of course, but also their wives and children as well as their veteran-fathers (*les vieillards*). Whilst the young soldiers contribute a great deal to this scene's martial didacticism, declaring their readiness to defend the *Patrie* and topple bloodthirsty

Oboe

Clarinet in A

Horn in D

Trumpet in D

Timpani

Choeur des jeunes gens

Choeur des jeunes gens

Choeur des jeunes gens

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

pé - ris - sent pé - ris - sent pé - ris - sent les rois san - gui naires

pé - ris - sent pé - ris - sent pé - ris - sent les rois san - gui naires

pé - ris - sent pé - ris - sent pé - ris - sent les rois san - gui naires

Fig. 6 : Scene III, bb. 62-69

Fig. 7: Scene IV, bb.1-9

Des troupes au pas de charge

Piccolo

Oboes

Clarinet in A

Horn in D

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

tyrants, the emotional colour is provided by their companions. An excellent example is the young women, who exclaim ‘Alas! If you should lose your life, our regret will be eternal! (*Hélas! Si vous perdez la vie/Nos regrets seront éternels.*) Such ‘regret’ represents the necessity for willingness for self-sacrifice across all sections of the Revolutionary family, and indeed the emphasis here is upon unity and encouragement for the troops. The only exception to this is presented by the children, who despair, ‘Do you abandon your companions?’ (*Abandonnez-vous vos compagnes?*); but Gossec’s portrayal of them suggests that in their innocence they can hardly be blamed for not understanding the true value of the Revolutionary cause. Just in case, the experienced *viellards* pre-empt the children: ‘do not listen to the children when you are called by Liberty’ (*n’écoutez pas des enfans/Quand Liberté vous appelle*), and when the time comes the men are firm in their response: ‘We leave, and on the mountains we swear to find victory or death’ (*Nous partons; et sur ces montagnes/Nous jurons de trouver la victoire ou la mort*). Most apparent from this dialogue therefore is that all society has been idealised, and each of its sections have pedagogical models for emulation.

Scene IV continues this trend. After a brief musical representation of battle joined which pastoralises military action with its 6/8 time signature and *gigue*-like upbeats and rhythmic vitality, (see fig. 7) each of the remaining characters not tasked with military service (the Mayor, municipal officers, veterans and the women and children) either in groups or singly are given a platform to espouse their own praise of the Republic and its soldiers. This takes the form of a short trio (bb.100-117) which is shared between the on-stage characters, with the melodic line broken up into individual phrases—an emphasis on the communality of expression. All the while, trumpet fanfares and cannon blasts interject, each time lending programmatic weight to the characters’ praise of their soldiers’ fortitude.

This fortitude is proven by their victory in battle, but in Scene V the soldiers return from offstage singing an unusually delicate chorus praising liberty (bb.9-69). Composed in the purity of C major, it seems conceived to favour communication over elaborate celebratory complexity, with an unobtrusive orchestral accompaniment (the melody doubled and ornamented in the violins); simple, syllabic writing; each couplet repeated to ensure its transmission; and unison singing. The only real contrast of note is textural, when their return onstage precipitates the joining of the women who repeat their soldiers’ words an octave higher (b.41). After the ensuing recitative shared between the General and Thomas (bb.70-95)—a mutual exchange of praise—the General takes an aria (bb.96-147) lifted to the dominant (G major) in which he recounts the events of the battle. This stately 2/2 section, accompanied once more with homophonic brass and percussion suits the military theme perfectly; but as his account intensifies something of the *pastorale* returns. The quicker tempo and vital 12/8 of course serve to complement the energy of the battle under scrutiny, but the lilting dotted rhythms and syncopation subtly suggest the rusticism of Thomas’ earlier ‘*Les habitants de ces bocages*’ (Scene II, b. 152) and the final transformation of peasants into citizen-soldiers is complete. They have retained their bucolic purity, but now they have gained the virtue of men who would take up arms to defend the *patrie*.

In the conclusion of this scene, a hymn to liberty, both pastoral and martial dimensions are brought together and sanctified. The militaristic timbres of the brass and timpani continue to adorn the lilting 6/8 dance in which the orchestra is engaged, but the choir's entrance is in contrast an appeal to the lofty heavens: 'First amongst mortals, oh cherished Liberty! Liberty whose flags our fatherland will forever follow ; descend from the heavens, come and endow your festival with beauty' (*Premier bien des mortels, o Liberté chérie/Liberté, que notre Patrie/Suive à jamais tes étendarts/Descends des Cieux; viens embellir ta fête*). That this culmination of the martial, the rural and the religious is the climax of the scene is attested to not only by the union of voices and the strength of the orchestration, but it is also texturally one the more sophisticated sections of the entire opera. It is, for instance, the closest that Gossec comes to polyphonic writing, with antiphonal exchanges between the voices and amongst the instruments (see fig. 8).

If this section is the climax of Scene V, it is Scene VI in which we find the climax of the opera. Invoked by the people of France, the Goddess Liberty herself descends from the heavens to give her blessing to represent the newest incarnation of a legacy of virtue handed down from the Greeks. 'New Republicans' she exclaims : 'I was born in ancient times under the sky of Greece, and it was there that the enchanting company of the fine arts came to watch over my cradle' (*Je naquis autrefois sous le ciel de la Grèce/C'est-là que des beaux arts la troupe enchanteresse/Vint présider à mon berceau*).

There are two important aspects to this message. The first is of the divine ascent of the French people who are separated from their peers by their virtue, attested to by their pursuit of liberty. France itself is given divine status by her decision to reside there, and she proclaims it her new 'temple' (*La France est désormais le Temple/Où je dois fixer mon séjour*).

The second is the redefinition of France in terms of antiquity. Just as the *philosophes* repeatedly returned to this theme to offer examples of the ideal, so too does Chénier present Ancient Greece as the model of a virtuous civilisation, and France as its natural descendent. His is a nationalist interpretation of the classical universal ideal, for France is quite literally to be perceived as a new cradle of civilisation from which Europe might be reborn. This perspective was one of re-construction and re-definition, with France endowing to a new world all that which Greece had originally provided several millennia ago (including, incidentally, a system of the 'enchanting' fine arts.) It is in this spirit at the end of the scene that the General announces in explicit terms that France must follow the model of Antiquity: 'Let us revive the spirit of Republican Rome, and in this Classical Earth today devoid of virtue, awake the heroic ashes of the Greeks, and Brutus.' (*Ressuscitons les vieux Romains/Et dans cette terre classique/Déserte aujourd'hui des vertus/Réveillons la cendre héroïque/Et de Gracques et des Brutus*).

It is striking, however, that Liberty's long soliloquy is not given the same emphasis in the final score that it was by in Chénier's libretto. As well as having been cut down from thirteen to a mere four couplets, it appears as a recitative rather than an aria. On Gossec's part this is an interesting decision. One would

The image shows a page of a musical score for an opera scene. It features a variety of instruments and vocal parts. The woodwinds (Piccolo, Oboe, Clarinet in C, Horn in C) and strings (Violin 1 & 2, Viola, Violoncello) are marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) are in French. The lyrics are: "Des - cends des cieux des - cends des cieux viens em - bel lir la fê - te". The score is written in 8/8 time and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Fig. 8: Scene V, bb. 225-235

assume that a figure as important to the Republic as Liberty might naturally take an aria, to better characterise her and also to present her to the audience in all the aesthetic glory which becomes the figurehead of the Revolution. It seems reasonable to assume however that this decision was taken in the interests of communicative clarity, for there is a studied avoidance of anything suggesting indulgence in the vocal passages. Such spectacle was perceived by Gossec as inappropriate, perhaps, for the danger of placing emphasis on purely musical, sensory devices might well detract from the communication of content. Nevertheless, it is not to construe this decision as an artistic misjudgement, for this scene provided an opportunity for Gossec to vary the otherwise constant, and by this point, rather monotonous formula of alternating recitatives and choruses, whilst still presenting an image of virtue and divinity.

The real musical focus of this scene then is the inclusion of a second hymn (b.25)—the *Hymne à la Liberté*. Returning to the bright D major typical of *Le Triomphe*'s celebratory scenes, it appears just as it would in a festival. It amalgamates Gossec's typically climactic orchestration dominated by brass and percussion with the homophonic simplicity we have by now come to expect, although the limited imitative contrapuntal devices featured in the previous scene also makes their reappearance at important sections, in this instance to reinforce the collective oath—'we swear to obey' (*nous jurons d'obeir*)— and calls for unity: 'Let all France proclaim' (*Que la France entiere s'ecrie*) (see figs. 9 and 10).

With each scene that has passed the focus of didacticism has broadened, and Scene VI naturally represents the culmination of this development. The message has already been iterated clearly—the call is for society to emulate their on-stage counterparts, espousing patriotism, a willingness for self-sacrifice, a resistance to and hatred of tyrants and tyranny, as well as all the other themes explored thus far. The Mayor summarises this perfectly when he states 'Virtue made upright soldiers; it is in virtue that glory resides' (*La vertu fait les vrais soldats/C'est dans la vertu qu'est la gloire*). Virtue, states Chénier, is the tool by which a glorious republic must be constructed, and the foundation of martial glory is no less dependent upon civic duty than any other aspect of the *patrie*.

Martial virtue, nevertheless, is the means by which Thomas and the Mayor envisage spreading these Republican principles, by taking their '*vrais soldats*' to those who seek deliverance from tyranny and leading them against those that seek to enforce it. The Brabant, Liège, Brussels and even Vienna are mentioned by name, fostering the sentiment of early 1793 which would ultimately lead to the campaigns of 1793-1794 against the Austrian Netherlands, ostensibly to free the Brabantist rebels seeking independence from Austrian domination. However, the message applies equally to any despot: 'Let us plant the tricolour standard in the heart of the palace of Caesars' (*Plantons l'étendart tricolore/Au sein du palais des Césars*).

It is in this spirit that the scene concludes, with a series of national dances representing (rather optimistically) the assembly of the world's nations in celebration of the French Republic. These are heard in truncated form in between the end of the *Hymne* and the concluding section of the scene, but are otherwise unchanged in the work's finale. This transforms the French tradition of setting national 'types' (or indeed topics) in dance forms, which had been particularly prevalent under the *ancien régime* during the first half of the eighteenth century. Rameau's *Les Indes galantes* (1735) was a particularly enduring example, but the success of *opéras-ballets* in this vein dated at least as far back as Campora's *L'Europe galante* of 1697. *Les Indes galantes*, as Graham Sadler points out, depicted characters intended to appear realistic and natural, with an emphasis upon allegory.<sup>284</sup> The inclusion of national dances was to facilitate this process. They fulfil a similar purpose in *Le triomphe*, programmatically depicting an assembly of the nations at the birth of a new civilisation. The virtuous French Republic has shared the Revolutionary gospel with the world, and thus ushered in a new era of civilisation with France at its centre, constructed along Classical lines.

---

<sup>284</sup> Graham Sadler, 'Les Indes Galantes' on *Oxford Music Online*

Oboe

Clarinet in A

Horn in D

Trumpet in D

Timpani

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

nous ju-rons d'o-bé - ir nous ju-rons d'o-bé - ir de don - ner no - tre vi - e

nous ju-rons d'o - bé - ir nous ju-rons d'o-bé - ir de don - ner no - tre vie

nous ju-rons d'o - bé - ir nous ju-rons d'o-bé - ir de don - ner no - tre vi - e de don - ner no - tre vi - e

nous ju-rons d'o - bé - ir nous ju-rons d'o-bé - ir de don - ner no - tre vi - e

Fig. 9: Scene VI, bb. 62-69

Fig. 10: Scene VI, bb. 81-86

Horn in D

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

que la France en - ti - ere s'é - cri - es

que la Fran - - - ce en - ti - ere s'é - cri - e

que la France en - ti - ere s'é - cri - es

que la France en - ti - - ere que la France

Although it is fair to say that they fail to reach beyond crude stereotyping, these depictions of national style are at least unambiguous, and easily interpreted by the audience.

This is a point analogous for *Le triomphe* as a whole, for the entire opera might be considered a vehicle for the affective communication of sentiment and moral principle. It is, in sum, unsophisticated, and at times its relentless pedagogical intent is exhausting and wearisome. To this end, Gossec favours a literalistic representation of events, with absolute simplicity his watchword in order to ensure that even an audience without a musical education might fully understand the didactic principles of Revolutionary republicanism. There is, for example, a very limited quantity of thematic material recycled carefully to ensure consistency, diatonic harmony and functional tonal relations throughout the work. There is nothing present which might be perceived as indulgent in the vocal or instrumental writing, and traditional aesthetic elegance is sacrificed in favour of total transparency.

The libretto is similarly focussed, and in the main appears stilted and verbose. This is in part due to Chénier's attempts to imitate a Latinate syntax, but the result is rather more ponderous than elegant. Likewise, in transforming the characters into archetypes, most semblance of humanity is removed. *Le triomphe* was never intended to emulate the compelling psychological dramas of Mozart, of course, but the intensity of the pedagogy prevents any nuance in characterisation which might provide a degree of respite.

But the work has suffered unfairly in the estimation of many critics. It is not, as Wynton Dean has described it, merely the vehicle for rabid ideology. There are many delightful sections where flashes of Gossec's brilliance might be perceived, particularly in his handling of forces which are always carefully balanced and also provide some relief in the form of variety. It paints affectively and yet is never overbearing, providing the necessary timbral and dynamic contrasts which underpin the virility of what otherwise might be considered cloying didacticism.

We must consider too that *Le Triomphe* fulfils its purpose as a didactic work admirably. It is the perfect example of the Revolutionary interpretation of the Enlightenment's ideal music: affective, programmatic, unequivocal in its representation of sentiment and emotion, and with a clear message of civic virtue rooted in antiquity.

**Etienne-Nicolas Méhul (libretto by Antoine-Vincent Arnault): Horatius Coclès : acte lyrique, représenté pour la première fois sur le théâtre national de l'opéra, le décadi 30 pluviôse (1794)**

A collaboration between the composer Étienne Nicolas Méhul and the dramatist Antoine-Vincent Arnault, *Horatius Coclès* takes the form of a single act opera, styled an *acte-lyrique*. First performed in February 1794 (30 Pluviôse an II) at the Opéra, it was likely completed only the month before, which as Bartlet points out fits events well given France's recent victories at the end of 1793.<sup>285</sup> Although relatively successful in its own right, it was only a means to an end for its authors, intended to curry favour with the authorities to ensure the smooth passing of the subsequent *Mélide et Phrosine*. This was necessary because the libretto of *Phrosine* had been criticised by official censors as 'not Republican'.<sup>286</sup> It was successful in this respect.

It was composed during a period of intense political turmoil, when the demand for Republican repertory was at its peak. France was at war with most of Europe, and thus the need to encourage patriotism was acute. As we saw in the previous chapter, the *Comité de Salut publique* had recently taken responsibility for subsidising the Opéra on the condition that it put on a greater number of performances of patriotic works. *Horatius* was one such work, and proved popular with the authorities (who lauded it as a true Republican work), and with audiences and the administration of the Opéra.<sup>287</sup> It was successful in terms of ticket sales, but received only fifteen performances. This was no indication of its success with the public, however, for it was only dropped because its martial character put it at odds with the authorities' desire for peace after war ceased in 1795. It was nevertheless considered suitable for revival in 1797 upon the resumption of hostilities on account of its martial spirit, and received a further nine performances.<sup>288</sup>

The narrative, based upon historical accounts by Plutarch, Dionysius of Harlicarnassus, and Livy, runs thus. The year is 509 B.C. A choir of Roman citizens set the scene: Rome is under siege by the forces of neighbouring monarchical despots, the Etruscans, led by their King Porsenna. The Romans invoke the name of their deceased hero, Brutus, who had been instrumental in founding the Republic and expelling their previous overlord King Tarquin, and they are joined in their praise by their Consul Valerius and the hero Horatius, who proclaim that Rome will be victorious. By the second scene, Horatius and a young warrior named Mutius have devised a plan to strike at the heart of the Etruscan camp, but each wishes to go for glory's sake despite the peril. After a lengthy debate, the people declare that Mutius shall be the one to undertake this project. Mutius departs, and in the following scene Valerius discusses his battle plan with Horatius, requiring the hero to risk considerable danger himself. In Scene IV Horatius prepares himself with a prayer to liberty, whilst in Scene V it is announced that an envoy from Porsenna is on the way. The Romans meet with this envoy in the sixth scene, and he has arrived with prisoners in tow including Horatius' own son. He offers mercy for the prisoners and a complete pardon from Porsenna if

---

<sup>285</sup> Bartlet *Etienne Nicolas Méhul and Opera During the French Revolution*: 333

<sup>286</sup> Arnault, *Souvenirs*: 68-69.

<sup>287</sup> Bartlet, *Etienne Nicolas Méhul and Opera During the French Revolution*:333

<sup>288</sup> Bartlet, *Revolutionary Rhetoric and Operatic Consequences*: 156

only the Romans will submit to his authority. Echoing David's depiction of Brutus' resolve upon the execution of his sons for treason, Horatius refuses for the shame submission would bring them both, even though this may well mean the death of his son. His son says his farewells, declaring his honour to be intact, but Porsenna's envoy argues that Horatius' verdict does not speak for all the Romans. When the offer is put to them, however, they refuse it in liberty's name and the envoy departs swearing to bring them to ruin.

Battle is now joined. The Roman troops are engaged, and Horatius takes up his position defending the Pons Sublicius against the Etruscans. As the enemy assault Horatius the Roman soldiers are able to weaken the bridge with axes, causing it to plunge into the river with the Roman hero and a considerable number of Etruscans still upon it. But Horatius survives, and he returns to celebrate the Romans' victory. Mutius returns, informing them that he failed to kill Porsenna; nevertheless, all is well. Having struck down a courtier for speaking against Rome and then been arrested by the King's guards, Mutius thrust his sword-hand into a brazier placed upon an altar to the Gods to punish the feeble hand that betrayed him. Such an act awed Porsenna, who declared a people such as this unconquerable, and the renunciation of his plans. In the final scene, the Romans, once more re-united (including Horatius and his returned son), celebrate their victory and liberty.

Méhul, not dissimilarly to Gossec, relies on intense programmaticism to convey the didactic nuances of this narrative. It is, like *Le Triomphe*, permeated by simplicity, but in this instance a stylistic austerity which, according to Arnault, Méhul himself described as 'iron music': *La musique de cet ouvrage est d'une extrême sévérité; c'est de la musique de fer, pour me servir de l'expression de son auteur* ("The music of this work is extremely severe; it is iron music, if I might borrow the expression of its composer").<sup>289</sup> This is encapsulated by its dependence on diatonicism, functional orchestration, and a formulaic, recitative-based progression of events; as well as a noted absence of female voices. Unlike *Le Triomphe*, such allegorical devices are outlined in the context of sudden and unusual tonal progressions, which Méhul ambitiously attempts to graft onto events as they unfold, often resulting in areas of intense tonal instability.

Textually, *Horatius* is defined by its attempt at revising antiquity, an ambition of which both librettist and composer were acutely conscious:

*J'imaginai pour me conformer au temps, sans déroger à mes principes, de choisir dans l'histoire un sujet analogue à la position où la France se trouvait avec l'Europe coalisée contre elle, ce qui, abstraction faite des principes du gouvernement me fournirait l'occasion de louer, dans le patriotisme d'un ancien peuple, celui qui animait les armées françaises. Les traits réels ou imaginaires attribués par la tradition à Mutius Scévola, à Horatius Cocles', me semblèrent de cette nature.*

In order to adapt to the climate of the time without betraying my own principles, I conspired to choose from history a subject analogous with the position France that found itself in with all Europe

---

<sup>289</sup> Op. cit., Arnault, *Souvenirs*: 70

ranged against her. This abstraction of the principles of government caused me to find in the patriotism of an ancient people that same power which animated the French armies of our time. Those real or imagined traits that tradition attributes to Mutius Scevola and Horatius Cocles seemed to me highly suitable.<sup>290</sup>

As part of this process, Arnault strives to communicate three main allegorical themes recognisable in part from *Le Triomphe*, but here refracted through a Classical lens. The first is the representation of *le Patrie en danger*, and what this means for the people and heroes of the nation. It entails the representation of an intense struggle to overcome adversity. The second is the concept of civic duty and virtue, entailing honour, self-sacrifice, and taking up arms, with the characters acting as idealised models for imitation; but these characters with their stern Roman countenances are far from the rustic innocence of Thomas and Laurette. The last concerns constructs of authority and where it resides.

We shall explore these themes and their musical representation further, but first let us turn our attention to the overture and its 'iron music'. Encapsulating the atmosphere of the opera to come, it is also an excellent indicator of the musical techniques to be employed. Driven by the depiction of sentiment, it is characterised by its martial topic: dotted, martial motifs are repeated frequently throughout and driven by underlying syncopation permeating the overture's rhythmic fabric, and it opens with the bright, noble D major key signature also favoured by Gossec in the depiction of military glory within *Le Triomphe*. Indicative of things to come is Méhul's ambitious use of tonal contrast, which rarely settles in one key for long and juxtaposes distantly-related keys at climactic moments.

The martial D major opening, for instance, is hardly given time to establish itself before it is undermined by the substitution of F natural for the F sharp (b.7), and so it continues in D minor. This conflict, representing the struggle between the virtuous Romans and their despotic enemies, reappears frequently throughout the opera, but here lasts only a short while. Within eleven bars a B diminished seventh arpeggio and an ensuing circle of fifths briefly move into A flat (bb.19-22), a tritone distant, and D minor (bb.30-32). This then gives way to an apparent conclusion in the dominant, A major (b.32), until a sudden move to an F sharp dominant seventh chord anticipates the B minor it then resolves into for but three bars (bb. 42-44), and another section of tonal instability follows. The ultimate goal is in fact E major, to which it eventually resolves for a short while (bb.59-65), before moving once more (and without any preparation) to F major (b.66). So things continue, with periods of instability alternating with periods of brief respite in D minor, A major, B flat major, F major, and D major. It conveys a sense of the conflict to come, with only brief respites from the musical *mêlée*.

In essence, the D major/minor conflict established at the very opening remains unresolved throughout, and to emphasise this struggle these two keys are at times bought into direct opposition (see fig. 11). The climax in bar 188, appropriately a dramatic diminished seventh on F sharp rather than F natural, is the

---

<sup>290</sup> Ibid: 70

first indication of what the result might be; but it is not until eight bars from the end that a final perfect-authentic cadence removes the last vestiges of tonal ambiguity.

Méhul's handling of tonality in this section is a fair indication of similar techniques which appear later in the work, although it must be acknowledged that nowhere else does it reach this degree of sophistication. He is at times equally ambitious, but less successful. This is no doubt because the overture itself was originally composed for an earlier work, *Adrien* (1792), which could not be performed for its apparent message of support for the Austrian empire.<sup>291</sup> But if anything, the fact that the overture does not in theory 'belong' is even more striking, considering the close fit. It suits the tense, martial atmosphere perfectly: the dotted rhythm and syncopated drive already discussed; the orchestration brass and percussion heavy; the use of diminished sevenths at climactic points to build tension. Such traits combined with the underlying tonal struggle depict the raging of the battle to come. In other words, it is intensely mimetic, imitating not nature but rather the stoic passion of Republican Rome.

Fig. 11: Overture, bb. 168-176

This mimetic emphasis is carried over into the first scene with its depiction of Rome under siege. 'For the universe and for Rome' exclaim the chorus of Romans, 'today is a day of suffering' (*Et pour l'univers et pour Rome/Ce jour est un jour de douleur*), whilst the orchestra accompany them in a subdued D minor chorale, coloured by the modal inflections of a Phrygian sixth which briefly hints at A major (see fig. 12). But the mention of the great hero Brutus' only eleven bars in lifts spirits, substituting D major in the ongoing

<sup>291</sup> Op. cit., Bartlett *Etienne Nicolas Méhul and Opera During the French Revolution*: 330

conflict between the two keys (b.11). Suddenly all thought of suffering disappears as the people praise their hero, his spirit the means by which they might preserve their honour: ‘Brutus, you must be honoured by both the sexes; you re-establish rights, and you avenge the honour of our kin’ (*Brutus, tu dois être à la fois/Honoré d’un sexe et de l’autre/Du tien tu rétablis les droits/Et tu vengeas l’honneur du nôtre*). Their Consul Valerius affirms their prayer, and calls upon him to watch over the Romans in their struggle.

The musical score for Scene I, measures 1-5, is in B-flat major and 4/4 time, marked 'Lent'. It consists of three staves. The top staff is for the 'Choeur des Romains' (Chorus of Romans) and contains the lyrics: 'Et pour l'u-ni-vers et pour Ro-me ce jour est un jour de dou-leur'. The middle staff is for the 'Strings' and features a rhythmic accompaniment with dynamics ranging from forte (f) to fortissimo (ff). The bottom staff is for the 'Solo' part, which is not explicitly labeled but appears to be a vocal line.

Fig. 12 : Scene I, bb. 1-5.

Valerius’ words have an edge of defiance, however: ‘The labours of kings will be in vain, we attest to this in your memory; and the liberty of the Romans will endure as long as your glory’ (*Des rois les efforts seront vains/Nous en attestons ta mémoire/Et la liberté des Romains/Doit durer autant que ta gloire*). Beginning in a martial B flat major (b.30), Méhul turns to the recitative (in sudden contrast to the homophonic chorale of the choir) to convey Valerius’ words; but within ten bars the style has changed yet again to an unexpectedly jolly F major *allegro* (b.39), celebrating the inevitable fall of kings. Valerius has already departed the recitative by this point, taking instead a more melodic line. It is rapidly taken up by the chorus, who use this motif to interject with their own celebration of tyranny’s shortcomings (see fig. 13). Although the recitative has for now disappeared, both Valerius’ introduction and the ensuing refrain are delightfully simple: tonally stable, the text portrayed homophonically, and the orchestra serving only to provide diatonic support and to ornament the melodic line but slightly. The essence, therefore, is all upon communicating the futility of tyranny, and the importance of honour, liberty, and the quasi-divine status of virtuous heroes who encapsulate republicanism.

There is another side to this scene, however, which departs from the martial mood and ‘iron music’ that has so far held sway. When adversity threatens the sanctity of community and family, Horatius sings, ‘Show the tenderness of a father, for this brings no dishonour; and on a head so dear, any man, even a Roman, might weep.’ (*Montrer la tendresse d’un père/Ce n’est pas se déshonorer/Et sur une tête aussi chère/Un*

homme, un romain peut pleurer). Musically, this is one of the most delicate sections of the opera, and even in a scene which changes style frequently the contrast is striking (see fig. 14). Resounding refrain and recitative

**Allegro**

Valerius

des Rois les ef-forts ser-ont vains nous en at-test-ons ta me-moi-re et la Lib-er-té des Ro-mains dont du-

Strings

*p* *f* *p* *cresc.* *f*

8

Choeur des Romains

des Rois les ef-forts ser-ont vains nous en at-tes-tons ta mé-moi-re

des rois les ef-forts ser-ont vains nous en at-tes-tons ta mé-moi-re

des Rois les ef-forts ser-ont vains nous en at-tes-tons ta mé-moi-re

des rois les ef-forts ser-ont vains nous en at-tes-tons ta mé-moi-re

rer au-tant que ta gloi-re

*p* *f* *p* *cresc.*

Fig. 13: Scene I, bb. 39-50

Fig. 14: Scene I, bb. 128-137

**Andantino con espressione**

Horatius

mon-trer la ten-dres-se d'un Père ce n'est pas ce des-hon-no-

Strings

*f* *p*

6

rer et sur u-ne tête aus-si chère un homme au Ro-main peut pleu-er

give way to a *piano, cantabile* arietta in A flat major (b.128)—the tritone relation of D again, as if to suggest that sentiment is as far from the martial as is possible. But the martial is still present with the dotted rhythms of the previous sections creeping back into the thematic fabric. Tender melancholy turns to resolve, and concluding this scene with a semitone step upwards to A major is a grandiose collective oath (b.163); *forte*, homophonic, densely orchestrated with full wind, brass and percussion in the timbral foreground, all accompanying the homorhythmic chorale of the choir which declares: ‘We swear to the ruin of kings, we swear to Rome’s liberty! (*Jurons la ruine des rois/Jurons la liberté de Rome*). It is the musical equivalent of David’s *Oath of the Horatii*, a collective oath made against those who would threaten liberty, with the oath-makers united in their determination (see fig. 15). The didactic message could not be clearer.

In Scene I then, Méhul’s depiction of sentiment is closely dependent upon tonality. It is shifting, programmatic, and conveys emotion on a micro-scale even at the expense of traditional tonal practice: the emphasis is upon mimesis to the point that at times the scene becomes an affective patchwork of juxtaposed sentiment. Antiquity’s allegorical role in this is crucial. Arnault has depicted his heroes as idealised models of civic virtue, just as Chénier has in *Le Triomphe*. But whereas in the latter these models are idealisations of the real and tangible, of French villagers and other citizens, *Horatius*’ cast are examples of stern devotion to an ancient Republic. Their cult of heroism is more firmly entrenched within a social order, with separate places for warriors, citizens and leaders. In short, the burden of duty is divided amongst the populace, and within this context the heroes, both Horatius and the spirit of Brutus, are called to bolster the resolve of the people. But although these heroes are antiquated in a quite literal sense, if anything Méhul’s recourse to tonal contrast shapes more real, human characters than in *Le Triomphe*, capturing as he does their emotional nuances and personal traits as in Horatius’ lament.

Emotional depth and realism is not synonymous with fallibility, however. This is immediately apparent in the second scene, which focuses on the debate between Horatius and his compatriot, Mutius, about who will undertake a perilous attack on their enemy’s camp. Neither is concerned with their own well-being, only the glory and the defence of liberty, and this theme is outlined in formulaic recitative. The increasing intensity of the debate results in ever-more eloquent rhetoric, culminating in a poetic soliloquy for Mutius, given vitality by a bright *allegro* centred in a diatonic E major (b.37) and driven by insistent dotted rhythms in the strings and interjections from the brass. This culminates with Mutius’ dramatic declamation in the purity of a briefly visited C major: ‘[I am] Happy to receive my death, so long as my arm deals it out.’ (*Heureux de recevoir la mort/Pourvu que mon bras la lui donne*), which takes a chromatic step downwards to B major as he contemplates the gravity of dying for Rome (see fig.16): I will fall pierced by blows, but mine will have saved Rome’ (*Je tomberai percé de coups/Mais les miens le salut de tous*).

Horatius’ counter-protestations that he is old and experienced and willing to die for his country signal a move to A, the key of the collective oath in the previous scene, but emphasising the contest between the

two heroes is the tension between A minor and A major, both present in the same motif (see fig. 17). Mutius responds in characteristic E major, however, as further tonal conflicts ensue and the contest continues. As if to portray the lack of resolution, the accompaniment is permeated by an undulating semiquaver motif (see fig. 18) which continues until the people make their pronouncement in the form of an A minor chorale; again the key of the collective oath, but tinged with a minor third as if representing their regret at refusing Horatius. He in turn responds in the martial key of D, although more specifically the D minor *douleur* of the previous scene. But in the concluding chorale the people transform his D minor into D major (via A major for purposes of resolution), and thus the roles are reversed with the people now uplifting the spirits of their hero.

The image shows a musical score for Scene II, measures 50-59. It features a vocal line for Mutius with lyrics in French: "j'affron - te - rai dans mon tran - sport la gar - de dont il s'en - vi - ron - ne heu - reux de re - ce - voir la mort pour - vu que mon bras la lui don - ne". The score includes instrumental parts for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, Oboe, Bassoon, English Horn, and Euphonium/Trombone. Dynamics range from *pp* to *ff*. A double bar line is present at the start of the second system.

Fig. 16: Scene II, bb.50-59. Note the brief move to C major in bars 55-56, and the final resolution in B major.

Fig. 17: Scene II, bb.100-101: The A major/minor motif



Fig. 18: Scene II, b. 108: The undulating motif



Arnault's heroes do not shy away from the bloody nature of the task at hand. Rather, they positively embrace it. Horatius declares for example: 'This sword yet reeking with the blood of its victims must be washed in the blood of the Tarquins' (*Ce glaive encore fumant du sang de leur victim/En doit être lavé dans le sang des Tarquins*). A suitably placed Neapolitan sixth chord on the fourth beat of bar 11 serves to dramatise the word 'blood'.

In the end, however, it is not the heroes who decide the outcome, nor even Consul Valerius. It is the people. All (including the consul, importantly) acquiesce to this decision, even the refused Horatius. Didactically speaking this is a significant moment even though it is but brief, for it points unequivocally to the people as the basis for authority. Although in line with the principles of republicanism, it is interesting to speculate that the strength with which this section is depicted musically was intended as a message for the authorities, for by the time of composition the Terror had already claimed the lives of tens-of-thousands of citizens. The moment the people make their decision is almost a vignette in itself, portrayed musically through solemn homophony, beginning *piano* but with a *crescendo* to *forte* and a gradual *accelerando* propelling the chorus towards the climax: 'Depart, Mutius! But should your blows fall contrary to their destiny, be sure to consider us equally committed avengers as brothers' (*Pars, Mutius: mais à tes coups si les destins étoient contraires, sois sûr de retrouver en nous autant de vengeurs que de frères*).

The heroes and the consul must play their part in defending and directing the Republic, and to fail is to fail the people and to risk their wrath. They must serve it and submit to its authority. In this regard, Mutius is the model hero: 'Oh joy! Oh what a glorious choice! The people have decided' (*O bonheur! O*

*choix glorieux! La peuple a prononcé*). It is again the people who are entrusted to communicate another didactic message when they declare in response to the heroes' debate: 'The death useless to the state is the only one to be feared' (*La mort inutile à l'état/Est la seule qu'on doit craindre*). Méhul and Arnault's message might apply equally as well to the *Montagnards* as to the ordinary citizen; perhaps even more so given the former's greater propensity for executing its own people instead of serving them (see plate 3).

A brief respite from characterisation follows, as Scenes III and V concentrate on advancing the narrative. Scene IV is an exception, however, as it features a surprisingly tender aria from Horatius who dedicates a prayer to liberty full of religious symbolism, serving to communicate the deification of liberty. Sparsely orchestrated, it appears in F major—the same key with which the people celebrated the inevitable downfall of kings in Scene I. Its reappearance here, hymn-like, solemn and yet sweetly *sostenuto cantabile*, crystallises the principle that there can only be liberty if tyrants are laid low. The manifestation of this message as an aria makes a welcome change to the recitative, but it is nevertheless handled carefully to ensure that the message is conveyed unambiguously. Tonal instability, for example, is replaced by a settled F major, albeit with very brief visits to C major (b.23) and A flat major (b.31) which merely provide a little contrast. The theme itself is also mimetic: a slow but graceful progression of ascents and descents with subtle word-painting, such as the characteristic exchange of B natural for B flat (see fig. 19) to emphasise key aspects of the libretto—in this instance, a Pentecostal metaphor: 'Liberty, vigorous and pure flame, embrace all just as you embrace me' (*Liberté, flame active et pure/Embrâse tout ainsi que moi*).

Whilst Horatius' prayer to liberty carefully cultivates the image of a virtuous hero, it is in Scene VI that these traits are put to the test. Upon his arrival, Porsenna's envoy announces himself with a lengthy recitative, offering the Romans his King's mercy (for the captured prisoners including Horatius' son) and friendship if they will submit. Typically this recitative visits many different keys, but the initial response (b.76)—from Horatius' captured son—is an unequivocal refusal in C major which stands in stark diatonic contrast to the envoy's words. Angered, the envoy exclaims 'you refuse liberty!' with a chromatic motif coloured by a descending tritone and a pungent Italian sixth chord (see fig. 20). But again he is rebuffed, this time in G major, as the elder Horatius exclaims: 'No, we refuse to be slaves' (b.83).

In fact, the interaction between the envoy and the two Horatii dominates the whole scene, pitting them in direct opposition both textually and musically. In general, the contest is between the beguiling chromaticisms of the envoy and the pure diatonicism of the Romans, with simple homophonic duets lent the support of sympathetic orchestral writing contrasting with less clearly defined, less stable tonal regions in which the envoy holds sway. A perfect example, the section beginning '*La voix de l'honneur*', juxtaposes a grandiose diatonic C major duet with a more chromatic G major section, resulting in another tritone, this time harmonically against the elder Horatius (see fig. 21).

The climax both symbolically and musically comes immediately after this, when the slighted envoy puts his question to the people, declaring that 'the voice of Horatius does not speak for the entire people'.

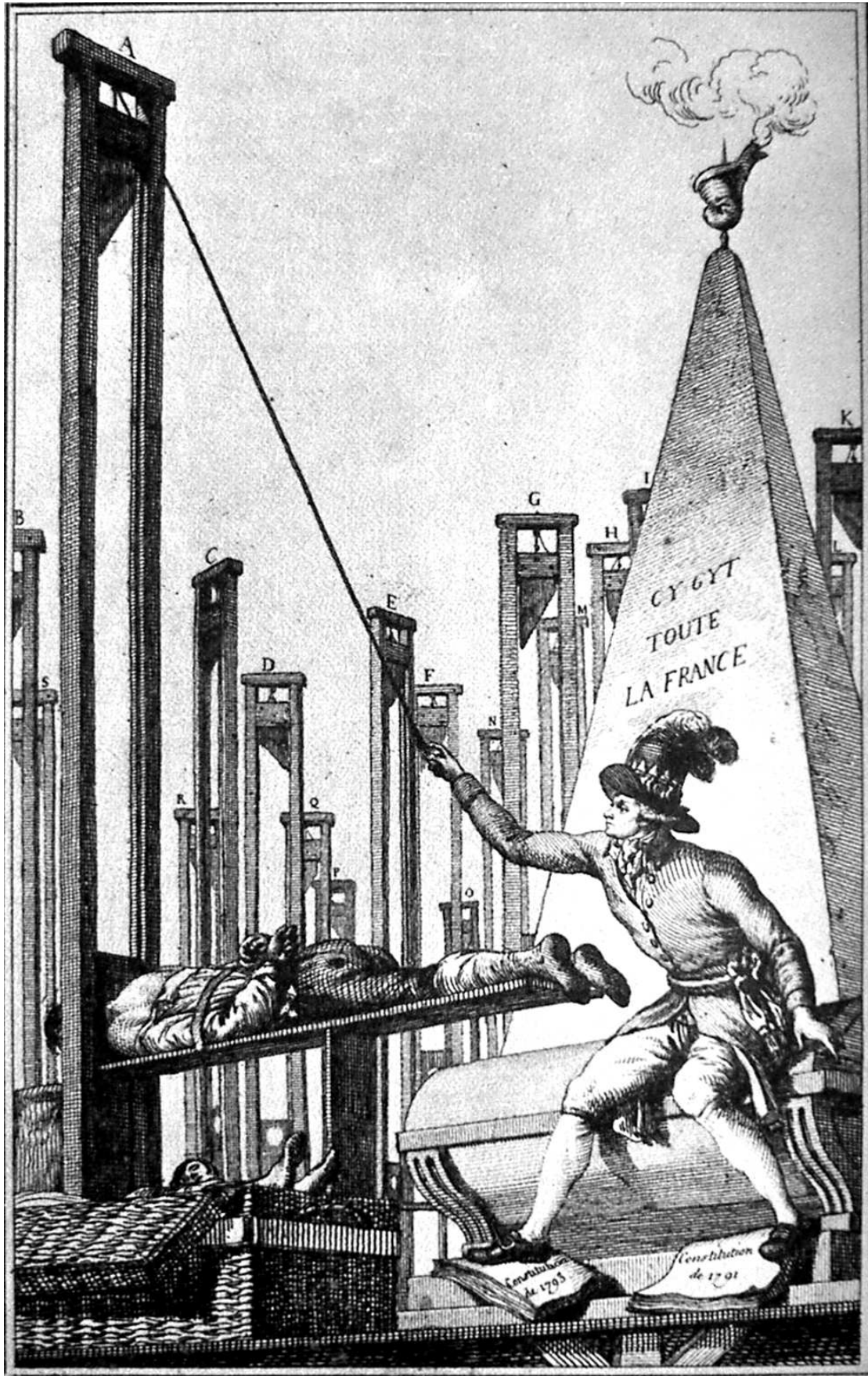


Plate 3: H. Fleischmann's *Robespierre exécutant le bourreau* (1908). Robespierre is depicted here guillotining the executioner after everyone else in France has been guillotined.

**Lourd sostenuto**

Horn in F  
Trumpet in F  
Horatius  
Violin I  
Violin II  
Viola  
Violoncello

Li-ber - té flame ac-tive et pû re em-brâ-se tout ain - si qu moi

Fig. 19: Scene IV, bb. 9-17

Fig. 20: Scene VI, bb. 82-84. Note the tritone interval in the melody, coloured by an Italian sixth chord

(b.83)

le Deputé

le Deputé  
Strings  
vous re - fu - ser la Li - ber - té

Their response is to quote the words of their great hero Brutus: 'If in Rome's breast you should find a traitor who yearns for a king and longs for a master, let him die in the midst of agony, let his deceitful ashes be scattered in the wind' (*Si dans le sein de Rome il se trouvoit un traître/ Qui regrettât les rois et qui voulût un maître/ Qu'il meure au milieu des tourment/ Que sa cendre perjure, abandonné aux vents*). This is sung in resolute unison (b.181). Symbolically, the themes of authority and defiance are brought together in the chorus' refusal. Theirs is the last word to which even the envoy must acquiesce, and he departs swearing eternal war.

War is promised, and war is what follows. The focus of the seventh scene is instrumental, with a great deal conveyed through a programmatic depiction of the battle which ensues. Inflected with modality, it

begins in the bright D major of the opening replete with a full orchestration, including the brass and percussion. The martial topic once more dominates with dotted rhythms mimicking fanfares and other

le jeune Horatius  
 Horatius la voix de l'hon-neur te l'or - don - ne la voix de l'hon-neur te l'or - don - ne  
 la voix de l'hon-neur te l'or - don - ne la voix de l'hon te l'or - don - ne Ro -

Orchestra

le Deputé et c'est lors qu'il vous a - ban - don - ne  
 tant de su - bli - mi - té m'é - ton - ne et mal-gré moi j'en suis ja - loux  
 mains c'est quand il m'a - ban - don - ne qu'il se mon - tre dig - ne de vous, qu'il se mon - tre dig - ne de vous

Fig. 21: Scene VI, bb. 122-133

battle calls, whilst a typically dynamic tonal propels the action onwards, portraying the valiant actions of Horatius in defence of his Republic

Scene VIII, however, presents an interesting theme which has not been dealt with before: failure. Upon his return, Mutius informs the Romans that he was unsuccessful in his attempt to kill Porsenna. Nevertheless, all is well, for his resolve in penetrating the enemy camp, striking down a courtier who 'uttered blasphemy against Rome' (Rome thus deified in the process, of course) and thrusting the hand that 'betrayed his oath' into a brazier. The necessity of doing so arose from this betrayed oath, so important not just as a commitment to the Republic but also to the people who are united in sharing this act: 'I had sworn, upon you all, to avenge my Fatherland. Three hundred Romans had sworn the same. Only my arm betrayed my heroic oath; I wished to punish it: and suddenly I thrust this treacherous hand into the burning altar of the household Gods' (*J'avois juré, sur toi, de venger ma patrie/Trois cents romains l'ont juré comme moi/Mon bras seul a trahi mes serments héroïques/Je l'en veux punir: et soudain/J'étends cette perfide main/Sur l'autel embrasé des ses dieux domestiques*). Mutius' failure was in this sense a breach of the principles

of *fraternité*. All was not lost, however. A display of virtuousness through the act of self-mutilation in punishment was enough to persuade Porsenna, albeit somewhat unconvincingly, that the Romans might never be conquered: ‘Your people are not made to bow to a master. I renounce my vain labours. I recognise that a people are free as soon as they wish to be so’ (*Ton Peuple n’est pas fait pour ployer sous un maître/Je renonce à mes vains projets/Un peuple, je le reconnais/Est libre aussi-tôt qu’il veut l’être*). Whether Porsenna’s words signal a new convert to democracy or not remains to be seen. The didactic message is clear, however: if a citizen is sufficiently virtuous in their actions they might never fail their *Patrie*. Freedom, it seems, is a state of mind.

But Porsenna’s mercy is every bit as striking in this scene as Mutius’ devotion to the cause. Given the lengths to which composer and librettist have gone in order to portray King Porsenna as a tyrant, it seems surprising that he should choose to spare his enemy’s life in an act of virtue after he had attempted to assassinate him in the middle of his own camp (depicted through a bright F major section in which lively imitative dotted motifs adorn his declaration of abandoning his labours—see fig. 22). The reason that Mutius provides—his act of self-mutilation provoking an epiphany and transformation of attitude in Porsenna—is not particularly convincing. A more likely suggestion is that Méhul and Arnault wished to draw out the theme of mercy in a period in which their own tyrant, Robespierre, had killed so many for falling short of the Jacobin ideal. Perhaps Méhul and Arnault’s didacticism was not merely intended for the people, but their leaders as well.

Mutius  
 ton peu-ple n'est pas fait pour ploy - er sous un Mai - tre je re - nonce a mes vains pro -

Bassoon

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

jet, un Peu - ple je le rec - con - nois, est Libre aus - si tôt qu'il veut l'é - tre

Fig. 22: Scene VIII, bb.49-59

Victory achieved in both military and diplomatic contexts affords the Romans time to celebrate, and in Scene IX they reflect upon the value of what they have won. More importantly, they express the lessons they have had reinforced. ‘There is no danger’ states Valerius ‘that man cannot overcome’ (*Il n’est pas de danger que l’homme ne surmonte*). He might better have declared that there is no danger that virtuous men in fraternity might overcome, for this has been the overriding didactic message of the opera. It is in this celebratory spirit that the chorus conclude the work—the reflection of the people takes the last word. Set to a lively homophonic *gigue* (b. 26) which once again pits D minor against D major, the people take one last opportunity to proclaim the fall of tyrants and the inevitable victory of the people in their pursuit of liberty. With this D major at last triumphs over its adversary (b. 64), and the chorus’ words act as one final reminder of the image of a virtuous republican society *Horatius Cocles* seeks to convey: ‘Kings weighed heavily upon our head. We sing to the ruin of kings. Tyrants usurped our rights, and now we sing of their reconquest. Man has reclaimed his dignity, the people are returned to their glory; the people swear to victory when they swear to liberty’ (*Les rois pesoient sur notre tête/Chantons la ruine des rois/Les tyrans usurpoient nos droits/De nos droits chantons la conquête/L’homme a repris sa dignité/Le Peuple est rentré dans sa gloire/Le Peuple jure la victoire/Quand il jure la liberté*).

The parallels between *Horatius* and *Le Triomphe* are certainly tangible. Both are constructed to the same template, after all, with a republic overcoming adversity through virtue to triumph in the pursuit of liberty. It is more interesting however to note the subtle differences between Arnault and Méhul's representation on the one hand, and Chénier and Gossec's on the other, for whilst the latter favour the depiction of rustic virtue and the inevitability of triumph through affective orchestration and stylistic caricature, in the main Arnault and Méhul focus upon representing the martial valour of an heroic age through allegory and tonal representation. This thus necessitates technical differences which are also infused with the personal fingerprints of the librettist and composer, including moments of subversion. Nevertheless, the foundation of didacticism remains a constant, and *Horatius Coclès'* intense affectivity—driven by the underlying tonal plan and intense characterisation—is an excellent example of pedagogical focus in the Revolution's operatic repertoire, and of the influence of Enlightenment ideals.

### Concluding Remarks

What might we conclude from our assessment of the Revolutionary musical project and its repertoire? First of all, that the concept of rupture should not be overstated. Enlightenment trends had begun to reveal themselves in opera well before 1789, with the rise of a new, communicative, and allegorical medium. During the Revolution these new works by Gluck, Sacchini and others would act as a model upon which a new canon would be constructed. The importance of the Revolution was in adopting this affective music and in process intensifying it; transforming it well beyond the conception of the *philosophes* by harnessing it to French Republican principles.

The startling extent of such a transformation however means that we should not allow this element of continuity to detract from our interpretation of the significance of the Revolutionary musical project. Not only did operatic practice change dramatically with techniques such as hybridisation, the transformation of the recitative etcetera, but so too did it result in the renovation of traditional genres like the hymn and the *chanson* to the degree that they must be considered almost entirely unrecognisable from their forbears. The purpose of this change was to ensure that genres were fully capable of inculcating Republican principles through their expressive capabilities, maximising the powers of communication and presenting clear subjects through musical and textual imitation. The most apparent results were simplicity and immediacy, with composers turning towards simpler compositional techniques and those genres to which they were best suited—hence the success of the hymn, the song, and *opéra-comique*. This process also suggests that composers and authors responded to the authorities in their calls for a moral music, but also that they were prepared in their own right to interpret the nature of the musical inheritance from the Enlightenment and the *ancien régime* more generally.

Furthermore, this combination of response to the authorities and interpretation of inheritance resulted in two reoccurring themes that warrant noting. The first was participation, which the authorities had deemed

vital in the Revolutionary pedagogical project. In the festival and the song this resulted in composers maximising on simplicity, with the assimilation of old traditions, familiar tunes constantly recycled, accompaniments scored in a broad, homophonic terms, and a reliance on vast wind ensembles and large choruses to increase impact and strengthen the community in its participatory singing. In the opera this was more difficult, but composers and librettists maximised the importance of the chorus so that the audience might at least participate via proxy.

The second was the re-definition of antiquity, which during the Revolution would come to form the backbone for allegorical didacticism rather than escapist fantasy. This process, as we have explored, had already begun before 1789, but intensified during the Revolution. This was most prominent in the opera house where subjects from antiquity allowed composers and librettists to present models of civic virtue in an idealised form, but hymns and songs did not shy from presenting contemporary figures as modern examples of the heroes of yore.

Lastly, composers' desire to write in the new, didactic and expressive Revolutionary 'style'—in part a response to the authorities, and in part because of 'patriotic self-fashioning'—resulted in the creation of a music which was consciously nationalistic, and intensely extrovert. It is important to note, however, that this process did not occur evenly and at the same rate across all genres, although all genres considered here produced works of this nature. The peak of intensity was undoubtedly during the Jacobin Republic, but the 'development-climax-disintegration' model is unsatisfactory. In particular, the post-Terror move away from political allegory in compositional practice should not be confused as a move away from patriotic, nationalist sentiment, as is commonly assumed, especially given the predominance of militaristic works during this period. How composers handled the complicated inheritance of 1792-1794 under the Directory is an issue which requires much closer evaluation, but they certainly did not ignore it- especially in the hymn and the song.

To sum up: the product of the Revolution was a new, affective music which represented the culmination of an Enlightenment experiment. It had been nurtured during the last decades of the *ancien régime*, and the Revolution would build on this inheritance but transform it in ways that would have rendered it unrecognisable to the *philosophes*, had they been alive to see it. Imitation, the communication of sentiment, and the use of antiquity to disseminate and inculcate the principles of the Revolution would all play their part in the radicalisation of a medium which was always intended to transform society.

## EPILOGUE: LES ÉLÉPHANTS GALANTES

On the 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1798, two elephants stood as representatives for all the citizens of France. A group of musicians had gathered at the Ménagerie du Jardin des plantes, and this motley collection of vocalists and instrumentalists assembled around several professors from *the* newly formed Conservatoire de Musique, who had received instruction to prepare a concert. But this concert was unlike any other that Paris had seen or would see again. It was commissioned not by the administrators of any of the major opera houses or concert halls, but by a team of scientists. The only audience was two pachyderms, a male named Hanz and a female Marguerite.

As the instrumentalists sat down and began to play, the scientists noticed that the elephants were instantaneously absorbed by the music. It even seemed to be provoking unusual physiological responses. The elephants rose on hind legs and waved their trunks through the air, almost as if trying to touch the ephemeral harmonies that preoccupied them. When the musicians ceased one piece and began another, Hanz and Marguerite responded accordingly. The overture of Rousseau's *Le Devin du village* caused them to dance gaily, whilst a solo bassoon performing the tune *Ó ma tender musette* calmed them down again.

James Johnson recounts the rest of the concert in more detail:

The observers were most interested in the effect of martial music on the elephants. “Ça ira,” the radical popular song, was their test case. Instantly the pair became livelier, and Marguerite, already softened by the solo bassoon, now “redoubled her solicitations.” She “caressed” Hanz insistently and gave him gentle kicks from behind. Presently the Conservatoire’s choir joined in with the words. Now Marguerite couldn’t contain herself. She trotted back and forth in cadence, mingling her own blasts with the sound of the trumpets. Approaching Hanz, her ears began to flap with great agitation as her “amorous trunk entreated him in all the sensitive areas of his body.” She fell to the ground in delirium, spreading her legs as she leaned back against the bars.<sup>292</sup>

The experiment had been a success, for the scientists had proven that music could exert its power over ‘sensitive listeners’ uncorrupted by despotism and tyranny,<sup>293</sup> and most importantly elicit emotional or even physiological responses from them. For the Revolutionaries on that strange day in 1798, Hanz and Marguerite had confirmed their faith in the affective and potent power of music.

It was the existence of such power that drove the Revolutionary authorities in formulating some semblance of a ‘cultural policy’ towards music. Moreover, it most certainly preoccupied contemporary commentators, who consistently sought to direct this policy towards the creation of a system which fully realised its didactic potential. In both respects, the current study has highlighted several important points.

---

<sup>292</sup> This account of the concert in the Jardin is taken from op. cit., Johnson, *Listening in Paris*: 130-131

<sup>293</sup> Ibid: 131

Firstly, the Revolutionary authorities did not so much ‘create’ as develop their conception of music. They built this conception upon principles formulated in the Enlightenment and nurtured under the *ancien régime*. If the Revolution itself became the first instance in which a belief in the moral utility of music was systematically applied to political ends, it was the work of Rousseau, d’Alembert, Batteux, and others which provided the foundation. Furthermore, both the *philosophes* and the Revolutionaries were deeply indebted to musical theories from Ancient Greece, and to an idealised image of antiquity as an era in which the arts cultivated civic virtue.

Nevertheless, by transforming their musical and aesthetic inheritance and re-imagining it in terms of a new set of republican values, the Revolutionaries were also able to construct something radically new. Whilst they undoubtedly built upon the foundations laid down by their forbears, the product was intended to be a music which would not only be didactic, but also intensely Revolutionary. The power of music was to be systematically harnessed on an unprecedented (national) scale to pedagogical ends. Virtue had been transformed in the image of Republican principles.

We have seen too that there was a close relationship between the theoretical perspective and compositional praxis, with trends in the repertoire showing that many composers answered the authorities’ call. Composers adapted stylistically in order to produce works which were suitable vehicles for Revolutionary principles, which in practice meant works which reflected the Enlightenment conception of music as a communicative and didactic tool.

This relationship was by no means perfect, of course. After all, there was initially a significant degree of continuity with *ancien régime* repertoire (particularly at the Opéra), a severe chronological disparity between socio-political trends and their representation in music, and an initial hesitance and subsequent apathy from 1795 which prevented a full mobilisation of music as a didactic tool in service of the *patrie*. Moreover, not all composers were keen to produce works embracing Revolutionary ideologies. We know for example that Grétry, who had written so extensively on the expressive powers of music, preferred to fade from the public eye as a composer and turn instead to the analysis of his own works, rather than direct his experience towards fulfilling Revolutionary ambition.<sup>294</sup>

But despite these truths which must temper our conclusions, we have established that the Revolutionary corpus of composition was self-consciously expressive, based upon principles of imitation and representation, didactically charged, and also, in one way or another, unable and unwilling to escape the pull of an intensely politicised culture.

Further projects might develop the present study further. A broad picture has been established, but as has been indicated there exists a great quantity of contemporary writing on the subject of music and the arts not yet fully explored. These texts are important, for they can shed a great deal of light upon

---

<sup>294</sup> Michael Fend: ‘An Instinct for Parody and Spirit for Revolution: Parisian Opera 1752-1801’ in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, ed. S. Keefe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 327

Revolutionary musical practice, which itself is yet to receive the extent of musicological attention it warrants. They might also yield a great deal of information about the demands this Revolutionary music made not just on composers, but on performers and audiences as well. There is also a substantial corpus of repertoire which has at the present time received only cursory attention in the analytical sense. It is hoped that the two operas examined here have highlighted the contextual and thematic richness of such works, but there are many others which might be studied more carefully in the interests of exploring the relationship between compositional praxis and Revolutionary conceptions of music.

The most pressing issue, however, is of chronological scope. Great gains might be made by pursuing works which span a larger period of time generally, but crucially the relationship between the Directory and its institutions and composers has yet to be examined in any systematic sense, for the majority of studies tend to focus on the earlier period of Revolution up until the fall of the Jacobins and tail off after 1795. Examining how this earlier repertoire was handled by the Directory in closer detail is a pressing task.

Increasing the chronological scope beyond the turn of the century would also bear fruit, for important strands of Enlightenment debates on music and emotion continued to shape theoretical and political discourse on music during the post-Revolutionary and Restoration periods, especially considering the continued pedagogical function and influence of the Conservatoire de Paris (later the *École Royale de Musique*).

It remains also to contextualise the study of Revolutionary music within the arts more generally. The visual arts in particular have received significant attention, but their relationship with music (particularly in contexts such as opera in which they are bound up together in theatrical spectacle) has only just begun to be explored. This is particularly important given the Revolutionaries' penchant for discussing music within a system of the arts. To artificially isolate music out from other creative endeavours would mean overlooking its true potential in the eyes of the men of the Revolution.

Indeed, given the importance of the French Revolution as a model for subsequent revolutions across the globe and across several centuries (an idea explored in Joseph Klaits and Michael Haltzel's collection of essays, *Global Ramifications of the French Revolution*; in Susan Desan, Lynn Hunt and William Nelson's *The French Revolution in Global Perspective*; and in Bailey Stone's *Reinterpreting The French Revolution: A Global-Historical Perspective*), further studies might fruitfully increase the chronological scope beyond the Restoration. Sabrina White's *Music as a Tool of Revolutions: Examining the French, Russian, Cuban and Iranian Revolutions* is the only work of which I am aware that considers the continuing influence of the French Revolutionary musical perspective beyond this period, and this might usefully be expanded upon. In short, the music of the French Revolution and its cultural origins and consequences have a great deal more fruit to bear.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Periodicals

*Journal de musique*

*Journal de Paris*

*Journal des spectacles*

*Journal des théâtres et des fêtes nationales*

*Mercure français*

*Moniteur universel, ou Gazette nationale*

### Primary sources

Alembert, Jean le Rond de, *Oeuvres posthumes de d'Alembert*, ed. C. Pougens, 2 vols (Paris: C. Pougens, 1821)

——— *Lettre de d'Alembert à M. J.-J. Rousseau sur l'article Genève* (Amsterdam: Zacharie Chatelain, 1759)

Anglas Boissy d', *Essai sur les fêtes national suivi de quelques idées sur les arts, et sur la nécessité de les encourager* (Paris: Imprimerie polygotte, 1794)

*Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860, recueil complet des débats législatifs et politiques des Chambres françaises, imprimé... sous la direction de J. Mamidal et E. Laurent... 1re série (1787 à 1799)*, 47 vols. (Paris: [s.n.], 1876-1896)

Arnault, Antoine Vincent, *Souvenirs d'un sexagénaire*, 4 vols, ed. Auguste Dietrich (Paris : Garnier frères, 1908)

Aulard, F.A. (ed.), *Recueil des actes du Comité de salut public, avec la correspondance officielle des représentants en mission et le registre du conseil exécutif provisoire*, 28 vols., 4 vols. supplément (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1889-1899)

Bailly, Jean Sylvain, *Mémoires de Bailly, avec un notice sur sa vie, des notes, et des éclaircissemens historiques*, 3 vols. (Paris: Badouin frères, 1821-1822): 2:284

Balthazard, Abbé, *L'Isle des philosophes et plusieurs autres : nouvellement découvertes, et remarquables par leurs rapports avec la France actuelle* (Rouen : L. Deshays, 1790)

Batteux, Charles, *Les beaux arts arts réduits à un même principe* (Paris : Chez Durand, 1746)

Boyé, M., *L'Expression musicale, mise au rang des chimères* (Paris: Esprit, 1779)

Burke, Edmund, *Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event* (London: J. Dodsley, 1790)

- Cancellieri, Francesco, *Lettera di Francesco Cancellieri al ch. sig. dottore Koreff, professore di medicina nell' Università di Berlino sopra il tarantismo, l'aria di Roma e della sua campagna, li palazzj pontificj entro e fuori di Roma, con le notizie di Castel Gandolfo e de' paesi circonvicini* (Rome: F. Bourlié, 1817)
- Chabanon, Michel Paul Gui de, *Observations sur la musique* (Paris: Pissot, 1779)
- Chapelier, Isaac-René-Guy le, *Rapport fait par M. Le Chapelier, au nom du comité de constitution, sur la pétition des auteurs dramatiques, dans la séance du jeudi 13 janvier 1791, avec le décret rendu dans cette séance* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1791)
- Cloots, Anacharsis, *Convention nationale. Instruction publique. Spectacles. Opinion d'Anacharsis Cloots, membre du Comité d'instruction publique* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1794)
- Condillac, Etienne Bonnot de, *Traité des sensations*, 2 vols. (London and Paris: Debure, 1754)
- Condorcet, Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de, *Cinq Mémoires sur l'instruction publique*, ed. Charles Coutel and Catherine Kintzler (Paris: Flammarion/GF, 1994)
- Coupé, Jacques-Michel, *Vues proposées dans l'Assemblée des amis de la Constitution, séante aux Jacobins Saint-Honoré, pour éclairer le peuple de la campagne* (Paris: Imprimerie du patriote français, 1791)
- Diderot, Denis, *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project [Spring 2013 Edition], ed. Robert Morrissey). Available online : <http://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu/> [last accessed 13/09/14]
- Détournelle, Athanase, *Aux armes et aux arts ! Peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure. Journal de la Société républicaine des arts séant au Louvre* (Paris: Détournelle, 1794)
- *Le Fils naturel* (Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1757)
- Dupuis, Charles-François, *Origine de tous les Cultes, ou la Religion universelle*, 7 vols. (Paris: Agasse, 1795)
- Gence, Jean-Baptiste-Modeste, *Vues sur les fêtes publiques et application de ces vues à la fête de Marat* (Paris: Imprimerie de Renaudiere jeune, 1794)
- Grandmaison, A.L. Millin de, *Sur la liberté du théâtre* (Paris: Lagrange, 1790)
- Grégoire, Abbé, *Rapport sur l'ouverture d'un concours pour les livres élémentaires de la première education, par Grégoire* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, an. II [1794])
- Grétry, André Ernest Modeste, *Memoires ou essai sur la musique*, 3 vols. (Paris: Grétry, 1789)
- Guillaume, James, *Proces-verbaux du Comité d'Instruction publique de la Convention*, 8 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1904)
- Héluvétius, Claude Adrien, *De l'esprit* (Paris : Durand, 1758)
- Leclerc, J.B., *Essai sur la propagation de la musique en France, et ses rapports avec le gouvernement* (Paris: Imprimerie de H.J. Hansen, 1797)
- *De la poésie, considérée dans ses rapports avec l'éducation nationale* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1793):
- Lequinio, Joseph-Marie, *Des fêtes nationales* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1791)

- Lesueur, Jean-François, *Exposé d'une musique, une imitative, et propre à chaque solennité; où l'on donne une Dissertation sur ses effets, et le Plan d'une Musique particulière à la solennité de la Pentacôte* (Paris: Veuve Hérisant, 1787)
- Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Edward Mory, 1690)
- Mattheson, Johann, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg: Christian Herold, 1739)
- Mercier, Louis-Sébastien, *L'An deux mille quatre cent quarante* (London: [s.n.], 1770)
- Morellet, André, *De l'expression en musique et de l'imitation dans les arts* (Paris: Lepetit, 1770)
- Nougaret, Pierre-Jean-Baptiste, *Hymnes pour toutes les fêtes nationales précédés de réflexions sur le culte exclusif et les prêtres, extraites d'Helvétius, d'une prière à l'Être suprême... et de poésies relatives à notre révolution* (Paris: Louvet, 1796)
- Observations sur les spectacles de Paris* [s.a.] (Paris: [s.n.], 1789)
- Plato (tr. Benjamin Jowett), *The Laws* (New York: Cosimo Inc, 2008)
- Quincy, Quatrèmere de, *Considerations sur les arts du dessin en France* (Paris: Desenne, 1791)
- Rameau, Just, *Apperçu philosophique et politique, sur la célébration des décadis et des fêtes nationales : discours destiné à être prononcé à la tribune de la Convention, sur le rapport du Comité d'instruction publique, concernant les fêtes décadaires* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1794)
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin, Marcel Raymond, et al., 3 vols (Paris : Gallimard, 1959)
- *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1755)
- *Lettre à M.d'Alembert sur les spectacles* (Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1758)
- Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet), *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Louis Moland, 52 vols (Paris : Garnier frères, 1877-1885)

## Secondary sources

- Anderson, Warren D., *Ethos and Education in Greek Music: The Evidence of Poetry and Philosophy* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966)
- Aulard, F.A., *Etudes et leçons sur la Révolution française*, 9 vols. (Paris: F. Alcan, 1893-1924)
- Baecque, Antoine de, *Glory and Terror: Seven Deaths under the French Revolution* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013)
- Baker, Keith M., 'Transformations of Classical Republicanism in Eighteenth-Century France' in *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 73, no.1 (March 2001), pp. 32-53 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001)
- *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)

- Baker, Nancy Kovaleff, 'Expression' in *Grove Music Online*, available online:  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/09138> [last accessed:  
 14/09/14]
- Barry, Kevin, *Language, Music and the Sign: A Study in Aesthetics, Poetics, and Poetic Practice from Collins to Coleridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987)
- Bartlet, M. Elizabeth C., *Etienne Nicolas Mébul and Opera During the French Revolution* (The University of Chicago, ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 1982. T-28338)
- Bauman, Thomas, and McClymonds, Marita, *Opera and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)
- Bergier, Jean François, *Wilhelm Tell: Realität und Mythos* (Munich: List, 1990)
- Bernard-Griffiths, S., and Pessin, Alain, *Peuple, mythe, et histoire* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 1997)
- Bianchi, Serge, *La révolution culturelle de l'an II : Élités et peuple 1789-1799* (Paris: Editions Aubier, 1992)
- Biget, Michelle, *Musique et Révolution française : La Longue Durée* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1989)
- Bloom, Allan; Butterworth, Charles; and Kelly, Christopher (ed.), *Jean-Jacques Rousseau : Letter to d'Alembert and Writings for the Theater* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2004)
- Bloomfield, S.T., *The History of Thucydides*, 3 vols (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1829)
- Boyd, Malcolm (ed.), *Music and the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)
- Brown, Gregory S., *Literary Sociability and Literary Property in France, 1775-1793: Beaumarchais, the Société des auteurs dramatiques and the Comédie Française* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006)
- Buelow, George J., 'Mattheson, Johann' in *Grove Music Online*, available online:  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/18097> [last accessed  
 14/09/14]
- Burnham-Rogers, Cornwell, *The Spirit of Revolution in 1789: A study of public opinion as revealed in political songs and other popular literature at the beginning of the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949)
- Caiani, Ambrogio, *Louis XVI and the French Revolution, 1789-1792* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)
- Carlson, Marvin, *The Theatre of the French Revolution* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1966)
- Carlyle, Thomas, *On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History*: (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1893)
- Charlton, David, *Grétry and the Growth of Opéra-comique* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986)
- Chartier, Roger (translated by Lydia G. Cochrane), *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1991)

- Christensen, Thomas, *Rameau and Musical Theory in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)
- Coleman, Francis X. J., *The Aesthetic Thought of the French Enlightenment* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971)
- Darlow, Mark, *Staging the French Revolution: Cultural Politics and the Paris Opéra, 1789-1794* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)
- 'Eighteenth-Century French Musical Theatre' in *French Studies*, vol. 66, no. 1 (2012), pp. 68-77 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)
- Dea, Michael O', *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Music, Illusion, and Desire* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995)
- Dean, Winton, 'Opera under the French Revolution' in *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, vol. 94 (1967-1968), pp. 77-96 (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis Ltd., 1968)
- Donakowski, Conrad L., *A Muse for the masses: ritual and music in an age of democratic revolution, 1770-1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977)
- Dowd, David L. 'Art as National Propaganda in the French Revolution' in *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 3 (Autumn, 1951), pp. 532-546 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951)
- Doyle, William, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990)
- Duce, Charles, 'Condorcet on Education' in *The British Journal of Educational Studies*, vol. 19, no. 3 (October 1971), pp. 272-282 (New York: Taylor and Francis Ltd, 1971)
- Edelstein, Dan, *The Terror of Natural Right* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009)
- Falkenstein, Lorne, 'Étienne Bonnot de Condillac' in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2010 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta. Available online: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/condillac/> [last accessed 14/09/14]
- Fend, Michael, 'An Instinct for Parody and Spirit for Revolution: Parisian Opera 1752-1801' in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, ed. S. Keefe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)
- 'The Problem of the French Revolution in Music Historiography and Music' in *Musicology and Sister Disciplines: Past, present, Future: (Proceedings of the 16th International Congress of the IMS, London, 1997)*, ed. David Gree, pp. 239 - 250 (London: Oxford University Press, 1997)
- Friedland, Paul, *Political Actors: Representative Bodies and Theatricality in the Age of the French Revolution* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002)
- Gay, Peter, *The Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (London: W.W. Norton, 1996)
- Gilks, David, 'Art and Politics During the 'First' Directory' in *French History*, vol. 26, no. 1 (September 2014), pp. 53-78 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)
- Giroud, Vincent, *French Opera: A Short History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010)
- Goldstein, Jan, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: politics and psyche in France, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005)

- Goodden, Angelica, 'The Dramatising of Politics: Theatricality and the Revolutionary Assemblies' in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, vol. 20 no. 3 (July 1984), pp. 193-212 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984)
- Harringer, Andrew, 'Hunt, Military and Pastoral Topics' in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014)
- René Hubert, *Les Sciences Sociales dans l'Encyclopédie : La Philosophie de l'Histoire et le Problème des Origines Sociales* (Paris : F. Alcan, 1923)
- Hughes, Charles, 'Music of the French Revolution' in *Science and Society*, vol. 4, no.2 (Spring 1940), pp. 193-210 (New York: Guilford Press, 1940)
- Hunt, Lynn, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984)
- Hunt, Lynn, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992)
- Israel, Jonathan, *Revolutionary Ideas: An Intellectual History of the French Revolution from The Rights of Man to Robespierre* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014)
- Isherwood, Robert M., *Farce and Fantasy: Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986)
- *Music in Service of the King* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1973)
- Jacob, Mary C., *Living the Enlightenment : Freemasonry and Politics in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991)
- Johnson, James, *Listening in Paris: a Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995)
- Johnson, N.R., *Louis XIV and the Age of the Enlightenment: the myth of the Sun King from 1715 to 1789*, 2 vols. (Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, 1978)
- Kennedy, Emmet, *A Cultural History of the French Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989)
- *Theatre, Opera and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996)
- Leigh, R. A., 'Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Myth of Antiquity in the Eighteenth Century' in *Classical influences on Western thought A.D. 1650-1870: proceedings of an international conference held at King's College, Cambridge, March 1977*, ed. R.R. Bolgar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)
- Leith, James, *The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France, 1750-1799* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1965)
- 'Music as an Ideological Weapon in the French Revolution' in *Historical Papers*, vol. 1, no.1 (1966), pp. 126-140 (Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Association, 1966)
- Lewinter, Roger, 'L'exaltation de la vertu dans le théâtre de Diderot' in *Diderot Studies*, vol. 8 (1966) pp. 119-169 (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1966)
- Lippman, Edward A., *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1992)
- *Musical Aesthetics: A Historical Reader* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1990)

- (ed.), *Musical Aesthetics: From Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1986)
- Livesey, James, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001)
- Mason, Laura, *Singing the French Revolution: Popular Culture and Politics, 1787-1799* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996)
- Mayeur, Françoise, *Histoire de l'enseignement et de l'éducation en France, 1789-1930*, 3 vols. (Paris: Perrin, 2004)
- McMahon, Darrin, 'Narratives of Dystopia in the French Revolution: Enlightenment, Counter-Enlightenment' in *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)
- McPhee, Peter, *Living the French Revolution 1789-1799* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)
- Miller, Mary Ashburn, *A Natural History of Revolution: Violence and Nature in the French Revolutionary Imagination, 1789-1794* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011)
- Mittman, Barbara G., *Spectators on the Paris Stage in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984)
- Monelle, Raymond, *The Musical Topic: Hunt, Military and Pastoral* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006)
- Mornet, Daniel *Les origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française, 1715-1787* (Lyon : La Manufacture, 1989)
- Mossé, Claude, *L'Antiquité dans la Révolution française* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1989)
- Oliver, Alfred Richard, *The Encyclopedists as Critics of Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947)
- Ozouf, Mona (tr. Alan Sheridan), *Festivals and the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991)
- 'Le Panthéon: l'Ecole normale des morts' in *Les Lieux de mémoire, la République*, 3 vols. (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1997):
- Packham, Catherine, 'Cicero's Ears, or Eloquence in the Age of Politeness: Oratory, Moderation and the Sublime in Enlightenment Scotland' in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 46 no. 4 (Summer 2013), pp. 499-512 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013)
- Parker, Harold Talbot, *The Cult of Antiquity and the French Revolutionaries: A Study in the Development of the Revolutionary Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937)
- Pasler, Jann, *Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009)
- Pierre, Constant, *Le Magasin de musique à l'usage des fêtes nationales et du Conservatoire* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1895)
- *Musique des fêtes et cérémonies de la Révolution française* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1899)
- *Les hymnes et chansons de la Révolution* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1904)
- Prévos, André J. M., 'Popular Music' in *Handbook of French Popular Culture* ed. Pierre L.Horn (New York, Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1991)

- Popkin, Jeremy D., *Revolutionary News: The Press in France 1789-1799* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990)
- Rawson, Elizabeth, *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991)
- Reichardt, Rolf and Kohle, Hubertus, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-century France* (London: Reaktion, 2008)
- Role, Claude, *François-Joseph Gossec, 1734-1829: un musicien à Paris de l'Ancien Régime à Charles X* (Paris: le Harmattan, 2000)
- Rosenfeld, Sophia A., *A Revolution in Language: The Problem of Signs in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001)
- Sadler, Graham, 'Les Indes Galantes' in Grove Music Online, available online:  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O005181> [last accessed 14/09/14]
- Saisselin, Rémy G., *The Enlightenment against the Baroque: Economics and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth Century* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1992)
- Schama, Simon, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1989)
- Sellers, Mortimer Newlin Stead, 'Classical Influences on the Law and Politics of the French Revolution' in *The Classical Tradition*, ed. Anthony Grafton, Glenn W Most, Salvatore Settis (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), available online://[ssrn.com/abstract=1437165](http://ssrn.com/abstract=1437165) [last accessed 14/09/14]
- Soboul, Albert, *The Parisian sans-culottes and the French Revolution, 1793-4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964)
- Steiner, Ruth; et al., 'Te Deum' in Grove Music Online, available online:  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/27618> [last accessed 14/09/14]
- Taine, Hippolyte, *L'Ancien Régime*, ed. William F. Giese (Boston : D.C. Heath et Co., 1906)
- Tavernor, Robert , *On Alberti and the Art of Building* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998)
- Tissier, André, *Les Spectacles à Paris pendant la Révolution: répertoire analytique, chronologique et bibliographique*, 2 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1992-2002)
- Tocqueville, Alexis de, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, ed. G.W.Headlam (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1904)
- Thomas, Downing A., *Music and the Origins of Language: Theories from the French Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)
- Tripp, Edward, *Crowell's Handbook of Classical Mythology* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1970)
- Vovelle, Michel, 'Agricol Viala ou le héros malheureux' in *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, vol. 52, no. 241 (July-September 1980), pp. 345-364 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1980)
- Vyberg, Henry, *Human Nature, Cultural Diversity, and the French Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989)

Walton, Charles, *Policing Public Opinion in the French Revolution: The Culture of Calumny and the Problem of Free Speech* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Warrack, John, 'Tragédie lyrique' in Grove Music Online, available online:  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e6875> [last accessed 14/09/14]

West, M.L., *Ancient Greek Music*: (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)

Williams, L. Pearce., 'Science, Education and the French Revolution' in *Isis*, vol. 44, no. 4 (December 1953), pp. 311-330 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953)

Zuk, Patrick, 'Our songs are our laws!: Music and the Republic (parts 1 and 2)' in *The Republic : a journal of contemporary and historical debate*, vol. 3 (July 2003), pp. 113-131, and vol. 4 (Spring 2005), pp. 116-132 (Dublin, The Ireland Institute, 2005)

## Libretti

Arnault, Antoine Vincent, *Horatius Coclès, acte lyrique, représenté pour la première fois sur le théâtre nationale de l'Opéra, le décadi 30 pluviôse 1794* (Paris : Huguet Musicien, 1794)

Chénier, Marie-Joseph, *Le triomphe de la République, ou Le camp de Grand-Pré : divertissement lyrique en un acte, représenté à l'Opéra le 27 janvier l'an 2<sup>e</sup> de la République française, une et indivisible* (Paris : Huguet Musicien, 1793)

## Scores

Gluck, Christophe Willibald, *Alceste* (Vienna: Giovanni Tomaso de Trattner, 1767)

Gossec, François-Joseph, *Le triomphe de la République, ou Le camp de Grand-Pré : divertissement lyrique en un acte, représenté à l'Opéra le 27 janvier l'an 2<sup>e</sup> de la République française, une et indivisible* (Paris : Huguet Musicien, 1793)

Méhul, Étienne-Nicolas, *Horatius Coclès, acte lyrique, paroles du Cn Arnault, représenté pour la première fois sur le théâtre nationale de l'Opéra, le décadi 30 pluviôse 1794* (Paris : Huguet Musicien, 1794)