MUSICAL PRACTICES IN MOLIÈRE’S THEATRE

More specific information survives with regard to Molière’s theatrical productions than for those of any other Parisian repertory theatre of the time. The musical scores composed by Beauchamps, Lully, and Charpentier for his comédies-ballets have for the most part become available in modern edition. What remains to be considered here are the performance-practices of Molière’s theatre—from the time that the Troupe de Monsieur took up residence in the Petit-Bourbon in 1658 until the eviction of the Troupe du Roy from the Palais-Royal in 1673. The four existing account books kept by Molière’s company during this period make this kind of investigation possible, for they furnish a surprising amount of information on production-related expenses. The best-known of these is Le Registre de La Grange, a summary account of productions given from 1658 to 1685. No less important are the daily account books for the 1663–4 and 1664–5 theatrical seasons (called the Premier and Second Registre de La Thollière), which furnish still more data with regard to productions of the first comédies-ballets. Such detailed information for the years 1665–1671 is scarce, mainly because the daily account books have not survived for these years. However, beginning in 1671, Le Registre de La Grange offers many tantalizing details on the 1671 remodelling of the Théâtre du Palais-Royal, as well as on the production expenses for Psyché (1671) and Le Malade imaginaire (1673). From Le Registre d’Hubert, the daily account book for 1672–3, we can glean further information with regard to the performance-practices of the Palais-Royal during Molière’s last season.

These sources provide the means to reconstruct (1) the musical and choreographic forces used for certain productions, (2) the distribution and placement of the theatre orchestra, (3) the identities of some of the hired singers and instrumentalists, and (4) what music might have been performed on-stage, and by whom. This production data, when evaluated in conjunction with other primary source material (contemporary accounts of performances, printed livrets, bills and receipts, first editions of the plays, and the existing musical scores), sheds light on many obscure aspects of Molière’s productions.

THE THEATRE ORCHESTRA

The String Ensemble

Beginning with its 1659–60 season at the Petit-Bourbon, the daily operating expenses (frais ordinaires) of the Troupe de Monsieur included a line-item of 4 livres 10 sols for ‘violons’—a term generally used to refer to string instruments (violins, violas of different sizes, bases de violons). This figure of 4 livres 10 sols would suggest that the company hired a string trio (probably two violins and a basse de violon), with each player receiving 1 livre 10 sols. These violons appeared on-stage in scene 12 of Molière’s comedy Les Précieuses ridicules (1659) to play for an impromptu ball arranged by Mascarille, and they reappeared in scene 15 to demand their wages—only to be rewarded with a torrent of abuse from Gorgibus. The Troupe de Monsieur no doubt also used these instrumentalists in other musical plays then in repertory, such as Scarron’s Dom Japhet d’Arménie and L’Héritier ridicule, Guérin de Bouscal’s Le Gouvernement de Sanché Parze, Gillet de la Tessonnerie’s Le Campagnard, Gilbert’s Les Amours de Diane et d’Endimion, Boisrobert’s La Folle Gageure, and Montauban’s Les Charmes de Félicie.

By 1661 the Troupe de Monsieur had relocated to the Théâtre de Palais-Royal. Although specific details of their Paris production of Les Fâcheux remain unknown, Beauchamps’s music would have required them either to increase the size of their theater orchestra, or to leave out some of the inner parts. The ballet score copied by Philidor in 1681 features the five-part division of strings common to court orchestras, with violins on the top line (le dessus), violas of...
different sizes on the inner three parts (haute-contre, taille, and quinte), and basses de violon on the bottom line. In 1662 the frais ordinaires were increased to 6 livres for four violons (each instrumentalist receiving 1 livre 10 sols), and the following March the Troupe de Monsieur purchased a harpsichord for 330 livres. For a revival of Les Fâcheux given in April 1663, the Premier Registre de La Thèâtrière shows that the theatre orchestra now consisted of six strings, two oboes, and harpsichord. The top line was probably played by two violins and the two oboes, with one viola on each of the haute-contre, taille, and quinte parts, and a basse de violon on the bottom part. The oboists were able to command 3 livres apiece for this production, or twice the amount earned by the string players.

For the 1664 performances of Le Mariage forcé, Molière increased his theatre orchestra to 12 strings, 2 oboes, and harpsichord. Lully’s score for the comédie-ballet included an overture and dances in five parts. While the instrumental distribution at the Palais-Royal remains unknown, the Second Registre de La Thèâtrière provides a clue with regard to the dessus part. For the 19 February 1664 performance, the line-item reads ‘pour les 4 violons du Recit p[our] 3 fois...12 livres’. This ‘Recit’ would be the ‘Recit de la Beauté’ (‘Si l’Amour vous soumet à ses loix inhumanes’) of the intermezzo, where Lully’s music is notated on three staves with two G clefs and an F clef—evidently intended for two-part violins and continuo. Presumably, these four string players were also regular members of the orchestra, who received a supplement for playing the ritournelles. While this does not help to establish the doubling of the inner parts, we might speculate that these four violins played the dessus part (along with the two oboes), and that the remaining eight violons were distributed among the lower parts.

Circumstantial evidence points to a four-part distribution of strings in public theatres. The published fragments of Cambert’s score to Pomone (1671) and Les Peines et les Plaisirs de l’Amour (1672)—composed for the orchestra of the Académie Royale des Opéra—feature overtures and dances notated in four parts (using G1, C1, C2, and F4 clefs). Furthermore, the earliest surviving orchestral music composed specifically for the Palais-Royal orchestra is Charpentier’s music for La Comtesse d’Esparbagnas and Le Mariage forcé (1672)—which is also scored for a four-part texture using G1, C1, C2, and F4 clefs. Whether Charpentier’s score implies two violins, viola, and bass ‘à l’italienne’, or else dessus, haute-contre, taille, and basse de violon ‘à la française’ remains a hot topic of debate. Clearly, the dessus part was performed by violins. In the overture to La Comtesse d’Esparbagnas, Charpentier writes over the G1 part ‘premier et second seuls’, and under the C1 and the C2 parts ‘seul’; nine measures later he writes ‘tous’ under each of the four parts. This would suggest there had been more than one player on the lower three parts (why else would he write first ‘seul’ and then ‘tous’?), and probably more than two on the top (he originally wrote ‘seul’, crossed it out, and then specified ‘premier et second seuls’).

The names of three instrumentists engaged by the Palais-Royal for the 1672–3 season are known to us through two contracts of association. In July 1672 Molière seems to have hired three string players—Jacques Duvivier, Jean Converse, and Pierre Marchand—to play in the summer revivals of La
The Basse-Continue

The continuo group in Molière's theatre orchestra probably consisted of harpsichord, theorbo, and either basse de violon or basse de viole. These are the instruments recommended by the Maître de Musique in Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme in Act 2, scene 1, when he advises Monsieur Jourdain to have weekly chamber-music concerts in his home: 'You would need three singers: a soprano, an haute-contre, and a bass, who will be accompanied by a basse de viole, a theorbo, and a harpsichord for the basse-continue, along with two treble violins to play the ritournelles.' Harpsichord was an essential continuo instrument in the Palais-Royal orchestra, and expenses relating to its tuning and repair appear among the frais extraordinaires for many productions. The presence of the theorbo in the continuo ensemble is difficult to verify before 1674, for this instrument is neither listed in the company's registers, nor is it called for in Charpentier's scores.27 Neither is the basse de violon so listed—although Charpentier's score for Le Malade imaginaire explicitly calls for one in the 'Cérémonie des Médecins.' 28

27 The names of Devrier, Marchard, Converser, and Du Moust appear listed in the company's registers for the 4 May 1674 revival of Le Malade imaginaire (among the symphonies, where they were responsible for playing ritournelles), for the 17 Mar. 1675 première of Circé (among the symphonies, where harpsichord appears as a separate line-item), and in the 17 Nov. 1679 première of D'Urbain (where they comprised the 'petit choeur'), and harpsichord and theorbo appear as a separate line-item. See Bonnet, Musique à la Comédie-Française, 15, 16, and 19.

28 Minstrel, xxxv. 199; cited in Jungius and Maxfield-Miller, Cent ans de recherches sur Molière, document cxxxii, 549–50. Ironically, this contract of association was signed on the day of Molière's death.

29 The condition added to the contract ('and, were there to be neither harpsichords nor theorboes, the aforesaid Converser will not be required to yield anything') was probably added to protect Converser, should Molière not have required continuo instruments of him. Barner's suggestion that Converser 'devait jouer la partie de clavecin ou de clavebœ' probably derives from a misreading of this clause (see Beronck (ed.), Dictionnaire de la musique, s.v. 'Converser').

30 Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Ms. Rés. Vm1 219, XVI, fo. 5r; reproduced as pl. 3 in my article, 'Musical Practices in the Theatre of Molière', 13. The names of Devrier, Marchard, Nivelon, and Du Moust appear listed in the livret to Psyché among the violins who played in the final intermède; see Clavere complette de Molière, ed. Couton, II, 811–18.

31 The first mention of the theorbo among the registers appears for a 4 May 1674 revival of Le Malade imaginaire, when the II. Scenario de la 'Troupe de Roy, 1674-1675 (Archives de la Comédie-Française) lists a payment of 3 livres made to a theorbo named 'M Carles'.

Hence, while a group of string players were stationed backstage for the ‘Intermediate Version’ of the first _intimé de Malade imaginaire_ (see Chapter 17, p. 391), they would normally have performed from one of the boxes nearest to the stage. As the strings remained there until the 1675 production of _L’Inconnu_, they were once again brought down front. Meanwhile, the old orchestra pit at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal (now home to the Académie Royale de Musique) was enlarged by Vigarani in the autumn of 1673 to accommodate the greater number of instruments in Lully’s opera orchestra.

**THE SINGERS**

For court performances of the _comédies-ballets_, Lully’s vocal music was usually sung by singers of the Chapelle and the Chambre du Roy. As shown by the printed livrets, Hilaire Dupuis (soprano), Jean Blondel (tenor), Claude Le Gros (tenor), Jean Gaye ( _haute-contre_ / tenor / baritone), and Guillaume d’Estival (bass) were regulars in these productions. Lully also performed in court productions as one of the two grotesque singing-doctors in _Monsieur de Pourcaucaux_ (1669), and as the singing幕llet in _Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme_ (1670)—where he is listed in the livrets under a pseudonym (‘l’signor Chiachierone’ for the former, ‘le Seigneur Chiacheron’ for the latter). Here, the multi-talented Lully no doubt relied on his considerable comic gift rather than on his singing abilities to carry the show.

At the Théâtre du Palais-Royal, either the actors themselves sang on-stage, or else they hired professional singers. For their first season at the Petit-Bourbon, the Troupe de Monsieur recruited Julien Bedeau (dit Jodelet), the singing faiseur and theoro-playbo whose fifty-five-year career spanned the development of Parisian theatre. Jodelet died in March of 1660, after only one season with the company. Evidence shows that at least four other actors and two actresses sang on-stage at the Palais-Royal: Molière, La Grange, Baron, Armand Béjart, Mlle Du Parc, and possibly La Thorillière. Philiot’s 1681 copy of _Les Fâcheux_ assigns Lully’s courante to La Grange, which he presumably sang an octave lower than notated; even at low pitch, the courante lies just beyond the comfortable range of a baritone, and so La Grange’s vocal range seems to have corresponded to that of Lully’s continuo group consisting of four players.

The going rate for a symphoniste in 1673 remained the same as in 1671, we can calculate that the _Psyche_ continuo group consisted of four players.

When Molière’s actors relocated to the Hôtel de Guénégaud in 1673, they were forbidden from having an orchestra pit by the ordinance of 22 April 1673.

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32 See Benoist, _Musique de Cour_, 8–14. 33 _Registre de La Grange_, 126 and 144. 34 See Le Théâtre françois, ed. Monval, 146. Niccolò Sabbonieri ( _Pratique du fabriquer xerne et machinez se tautox_ (1638), ch. 38) also recommends placing the musicians in balconies on either side of the stage.

35 The 1671 remodelling of the stage and auditorium at the Palais-Royal may have made it necessary to move the orchestra into an enclosure at the parterre level. When the theatre was built in 1641, the musicians were placed in balconies close to the stage, and five steps steps led from the parterre to the front of the raised stage (as can be seen in the famous engraving titled _Le Sein_—see Pl. 4). It is possible that these steps were removed in 1661, when Molière’s company first took up residence at the Palais-Royal, and that the orchestra had been stationed there all along, or on the other hand, perhaps the construction of an orchestra pit was part of the 1671 renovations.


37 ‘Ordonneance portant deffenses au comedienz de se servir dans leurs représentations de plus de deux voix et six violez’, dated 24 Apr. 1673; repr. in Benoist, _Musique de cour_, 41.

38 _Chappureau_ confirms this in _Théâtre francçois_ (166–7), where he states that ‘recondui (the strings) have been placed in one of the loges du fond, where they emit much more sound than any other location in which they have been placed’.

39 See Brumonnete, _Musique à la Comédie-française_, 10.

40 _The livret indicates ‘Les deux musiciens italiens: il signor Chiachierone et M. Gaye’ for the comic duet ‘Bon di, bon di’, yet it remains unclear exactly which part Lully sang. From the order in which the names are listed, we might assume Lully sang the upper part of the duet, as well as the following song, ‘Alior non e la paszie’. Yet, the part that Lully sang in the Turkish Ceremony of _Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme_ was more of a bass role._
of a low tenor. Le Sicilien (1667) features a lovesong (‘D’un coeur ardent’) with a mock-Turkish refrain that was sung by the singer Jean Gaye, who played an unnamed Turkish slave in the court première. However, when Molière published Le Sicilien the following year he reassigned this song to the character Hali, a role normally played by the actor La Thorillière. Therefore, either La Thorillière sang this song on-stage, or else he pantomimed it while a professional singer sang from off-stage (regarding this performance practice, see below, p. 408n).

Molière also performed a number of comic singing roles in the comédies-ballets. In general, his songs were short and simple, for Molière was a farceur, not a chanteur. ‘Qu’ils sont doux, bouteille joli’, the drinking-song sung by Sganarelle in Act 1, scene 5 of Le Médecin malgré lui (1666), is a jaunty, triple-mètre chanson in dance rhythm (see Ex. 7.1). Molière often emphasized the comic aspect of his singing by playing off trained singers. For example, in the third intermède of La Princesse d’Elide (1664) the fool Moron (played by Molière) proves to be a poor student of voice when a satyre (played by the eminent bass Guillaume d’Estival) attempts to teach him to sing (see Ex. 15.3 and the discussion of this scene in Chapter 15, pp. 345–6). Molière’s comic protagonists generally possess poor taste in musical matters. In Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme (1670), Monsieur Jourdain finds Lully’s exquisite court air ‘Je languis nuit et jour’ (Ex. 7.11) to be 'un peu lugubre', and prefers instead the jolly and unfined quality of the chanson ‘Je croyais Janneton’ (Ex. 7.12).

Molière’s wife Armande Béjart also sang on-stage. One contemporary commented that she had an extremely pretty voice, she sang both French and Italian with very good taste, and no one knew better how to dress up the manner of her appearance by the arrangement of her hair, and more nobly by the wearing of her clothes. She created the role of Angélique in Le Malade imaginaire (1673), and for later revivals she sang the ‘petit opéra impromptu’ of Act 2, scene 5 with La Grange—who usually played the young lover Cléante. One critic praised these actors for the naturalness and effectiveness of their singing.

La Molière and La Grange, who sing the ‘petit opéra impromptu’, do not have the loveliest voices in the world. I even doubt that they understand the finer points of music; and although they sing correctly, it is not by their singing that they are generally so well received. But they know how to touch the heart and to paint the passions.

After 1671 Molière began to recruit singing-actors for his company. In the summer of 1672 the Troupe du Roy hired Jean Deschamps, dit de Villiers (an haute-contre) along with several professional singers: the tenor Forestier, the bass Le Roy, and the soprano Mlle Turpin. About this time, a singing teacher was hired at company expense for the promising young actor Michel Baron (Molière’s protégé). By the mid-1670s the company could boast a chorus of singing-actors that appeared in their 1675 production of Thomas Corneille’s Cérè. Charpentier’s manuscript score lists the following names in the margins of a chorus: ‘Bastonet’, ‘Poussin’, ‘des Triçhes’, ‘La Grange’, ‘Verneuil’, ‘Hubert’, and ‘de Gaye’. The first singer is Mlle Bastonnet, a soprano who the following November would sing in Thomas Corneille’s L’Inconnu (1675). Louis-Joseph Poussin was a professional haute-contre who sang in Psyche (1671), Le Malade imaginaire (1673, rev. 1674), and L’Inconnu (1675). Guérin d’Estriché (‘des Triçhes’) was an actor (later Molière’s second husband), who also sang haute-contre in Les Fous divertissans (1680), Endimion (1681), and Andromède (rev. 1682). La Grange sang tenor in Les Fous divertissants and Andromède; Achille Varlet (dit Verneuil) sang bass in Les Fous divertissants, La Pierre philosophe (1681), and Andromède; and André Hubert also sang bass in La Pierre philosophale and Andromède. That Jean Gaye’s name appears in Charpentier’s score for Cérè (1675)

48 The lyrics to ‘Je croyais Janneton’ were by Pierre Perin (Molière’s rival), which were set to music by Jean Granoustel, Sicar de Sakehke, Superintendent of Music for the Duc d’Orléans (Lully’s rival). See Pruvost, ‘Une chanson de Molière’, 110–4.

49 Quoted in Frédéric Hillemercher, Galerie historique des portraits des comédiens de la troupe de Molière (Lyon, 1869), 88.


51 Registre d’Hubert lists on 10 Jan. 1673 ‘a M. Baron pour deux mois de musiques . . . 119 livres 10 sols’; and on 10 Feb. 1673 ‘a M. Baron pour son maître a chanter . . . 228 livres’.
proves that Molière’s company ignored the royal ordinance of 12 August 1672, which forbade theatres from hiring singers and instrumentalists employed by Lully’s Académie Royale de Musique.

The Troupe du Roy frequently hired professional singers (musiciens à gages) to perform in the comédies-ballets. For Le Mariage forcé (1664), Le Registre de La Grange lists a line-item of 5 livres for ‘muscique’ (i.e. vocal music). As 5 livres was the going rate for a singer, the company evidently hired only one to perform either the ‘Récit de la Beauté’ (‘Si l’amour vous soumet’) or the ‘Récit d’un Magicien’ (‘Holà! qu’va là!’). While the singing role of the magician could easily have been performed by one of the singing-actors (perhaps La Grange), the ‘Récit de la Beauté’ would have required a singer of some ability who did not have to act. Several trained singers were needed for the intermèdes of La Princesse d’Elide (1664), and the payment of 25 livres for ‘muscique’ listed in the Second Registre de La Tholilliére (9 November 1664) indicates that the company engaged five professional singers to cover the eight singing roles.

As their responsibilities increased for Psyché (1671) and Le Malade imaginaire (1673), the wages paid to professional singers increased proportionately: the lowest-paid singers received 5 livres 10 sols per performance, the highest-paid singers received 11 livres. In 1671 the Troupe du Roy took a major step toward dramatic realism when they resolved henceforth to hire singers for Psyché who were willing to appear on-stage and in costume. An interesting passage from Le Registre de La Grange sheds considerable light on vocal performance-practices in Molière’s theatre prior to this time. It would seem that the custom had been for professional singers to perform from boxes, heard but not seen, while the actors mimed their parts on-stage. La Grange explains that

Until now the male and female singers had not wished to appear before the public. They sang in the theatre from latticed boxes. But this impediment was overcome, and with some minor expense individuals were found to sing on-stage, unmasked, and in costume dressed like the actors: namely, Milles de Rieux, Turpin, Grandpré, and Messieurs Forestier, Monnier, Champenois, Ribou, and Poussin.

Reading between the lines, we might speculate that some of the singers previously hired by the Palais-Royal were court singers, who perhaps were not keen to appear on-stage with actors. Curiously, of the eight singers listed above, only two were hired back for Le Malade imaginaire two years later. For this latter production, seven professional singers were engaged, two at 11 livres per performance, and five others at 5 livres 10 sols. Six of their names appear in Charpentier’s autograph score—written in the left margins of the chorus ‘Bene, bene respondere’.

Mme Mouvant (first soprano), Mme Hardy (first soprano), Mme Marion (second soprano), M. Poussin (haute-contre), M. Forestier (tenor), and M. Frison (bass).

THE DANCERS

Like other theatrical companies of the time, the Troupe du Roy was fully capable of dancing a ballet when the occasion arose. Other than what dance instruction he may have received as a student at the Collège de Clermont, Molière is not known to have had any formal training. His dancing in the comédies-ballets was pantomimic for the most part, and, like his singing, it was often intended to appear comical rather than skilled. In scene 12 of Les Précieuses ridicules (1659), Mascarille (played by Molière) clumsily attempts to dance a courante, and then reproaches the fiddlers for not playing in time. In the fifth entrée of Le Mariage forcé (1664), a dancing master tries to show Sganarelle (Molière) how to dance a courante—while his new bride is shown dancing with four flirtatious young men. In the final scene of L’Amour médecin (1665), some dancers hold back Sganarelle and force him to dance with them while his fiancée elopes with her lover.

Lully, on the other hand, was an accomplished dancer, and he frequently appeared in court productions of the comédies-ballets along with the King and his nobles. Lully danced in the ‘Charivari grotesque’ of Le Mariage forcé, as Scaramouche in L’Amour médecin, and as a guitar-playing gypsy in La Pastoral comique (1666). His buffo performances in Monsieur de Pourtouenue (1669) and Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme (1670) revealed his famed talent for lazzi and burlesque pantomime.

Several members of Molière’s company danced in performances both at court and in town. Of the actresses, Marquisse-Thérèse de Gorla (dite Mlle Du Parc) was often praised for her dancing. Loret remarked that ‘La Du Parc, this lovely actress, with the bearing of an empress, does everything delightfully, be it in 38 M. Louis-Joseph Poussin.
39 Antoine Frison (or Frison) later sang as a chanteur ordinaire in the Royal Chapel; see Benoist, Musiques de cour, 68, 76, and 152.
40 For more on Lully the dancer, see M.-F. Chriantou, ‘Baptiste, interprète des ballets de cour’, in La Corse et Schoenieder (eds.), Jean-Baptiste Lully, 197–22.
41 The livret lists ‘M. Lully, Les sieurs Balbaste, Vagner, Bonnard, la Piece, Descourtoys et les trois Optieres forezs’. Three of these names recur as dancers in the comédies-ballets—Balbaste, Bonnard, and La Piére appeared together in the second and sixth intermèdes of La Princesse d’Elide. Other names can be identified as members of the Chambre et Écurie: François Pighon (dit Descourtoys; oboe and flute), Jean Hotteresse (violin and oboe), Nicolas Hotteresse (oboe and viola), Louis Hotteresse (viola and sackbut), Martin Hotteresse (viola and oboe). Since Lully’s name heads the list of dancers, it would be logical to assume that he danced in the ‘Charivari grotesque’.
42 She was married to the actor Du Parc, whose real name was René Berthelot. For an engaging account of her career and the mysterious circumstances surrounding her death, see H. C. Lancaster, ‘An Actress: La Du Parc’, in Adventures of a Literary Historian (Baltimore, 1947), 79–96.
singing or dancing'.

Another author recalled, with more than a hint of fetishism, that Mlle Du Parc used to perform 'certain remarkable caprioles—for one could see her legs and part of her thighs through the slit in her skirt, as well as her silk hose attached to her rights'.

In Le Mariage forcé, Mlle Du Parc played Sganarelle's flirtatious young fiancée Dorinére. Loret commented on how diverting were Du Parc's feminine charms and dancing: 'Of La Du Parc, I can say nothing to make people more entertained by her attractions, by her presence, by her lovely gait and her dance.'

The height of Mlle Du Parc's recognition at court came in 1664, when she played the role of Aline, the enchantress of Les Plaisirs de l'île enchantée; that she performed opposite Pierre Beauchamps in the finale of the Ballet du Palais d'Alice testifies to her dancing skill. Other members of Molière's company also occasionally danced on-stage. La Grange evidently played the role of the dancing nuisance Lysandre in the première of Les Fâcheux, who attempts to teach a courante to the unwilling Eraste in Act 2, scene 3.

Armande Béjart (Mlle Molière) emerged as the leading beauty of the Troupe du Roy during the 1660s, and Molière wrote many of his principal female roles for her. She played a fortune-telling gypsy in the third entrée of Le Mariage forcé, where she appeared on-stage with the King and his couriers; however, while Mlle Molière may have danced on-stage in this and other productions, there is no record of account of it.

Theatrical costumes of the time were designed to disguise the fact that the gypsy women, shepherdesses, and Spanish ladies listed in the court livrets were usually performed at court by male dancers. Mlle Du Parc was among the first females to dance on the French stage.

In the public theatre, hired professional dancers comprised the single most expensive production cost. For the first run of

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Le Mariage forcé, nine dancers were each paid 5 livres per performance, 49 while for the 4 November 1664 première of La Princesse d'Élodie twelve dancers were paid a total of 60 livres—a sum equal to the daily operating expenses for a play. 70 The rate of 5 livres per performance seems to have become the standard rate for a dancer in 1664; when Les Fâcheux was revived for four performances in June of that year, an unspecified number of dancers (presumably four) received a total of 20 livres. 71 For the first run of Psyché, the company hired 12 dancers and 4 'petits danseurs', 2 graces and 6 cupids and zephyrs to perform spectacular aerial flights, as well as 2 acrobats. Dancers were usually supplied with silk hose and shoes at the company's expense, and often received other perks. A dressing room at 9 livres appears among the 22 February 1664 expenses for Le Mariage forcé; expenses for the 22 April 1663 revival of Les Fâcheux include 1 livre 10 sols 'pour du vin au record des danseurs'; and payments were made to a baigneur for performances that featured ballet during the warm summer months of 1672.

**CHOREOGRAPHERS AND CONDUCTORS**

Three professional court dancers served as dancing masters for the Troupe du Roy: Pierre Beauchamps, Anthoine des Brosses and Pierre de La Montagne. Beauchamps, the most acclaimed baladin of his day, was intendant des ballets du Roy. He danced in most of the court premières of the comédies-ballets, in which he portrayed a variety of colourful characters. Beauchamps composed the music and choreographed the dances for the Vaux-le-Vicomte première of Les Fâcheux; thereafter, his music (and probably his choreography) was used for subsequent performances at the Palais-Royal. Molière engaged Beauchamps for his first run of Le Mariage forcé beginning 15 February 1664, for which Le Registre de La Grange recorded that he received 530 livres 'for composing the ballet'. 77 Des Brosses evidently became the choreographer for the Paris performances of La Princesse

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48 Loret, Mode historique, iii. 451: letter of 19 Nov. 1661.

49 Mercure de France, Letter (in the collection), 1740: quoted in Hillemescher, Galerie historique, 44-5.

50 Loret, Mode historique, iv. 159-40: letter of 2 Feb. 1664. Loret must have seen her in either the first or second court performance of Le Mariage forcé, given at the Louvre in the apartments of the Queen Mother (29 and 31 Mar. 1664).

51 As mentioned earlier, the Philidor copy (Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, Rés. F 530, Vol. 40) is the source for the music for Las Réchous that was performed in 1664 for Pouquet's ball (the title-page of the collection reads Le ballet des fâcheux dançant devant le Roy à Vincennes par M' Bouquet l'an 1661, à la page 85). Lully's courante from this edition (Cette Courante a été fait par M. de Lully et chantée au Ballet de M. de la Grange Comédien) is composed by M. de Lully and sung in Las Réchous by Mr. de la Grange, an alter. We know from Registre de La Grange (i. 40) that La Grange played the part of Eraste for the Paris performances until mid-Nov. when Illens forced him to relinquish the role to Mr. du Croisy. The evidence offered by Philidor's score would lead us to believe that La Grange, not Molière, performed the role of the dancing music at the court première. Perry Gehlbach has suggested that Philidor's score, copied in 1661, may refer to later performances given after Molière's death—when La Grange took over Molière's comic roles, including that of Lasréchous; I contend, however, that Philidor's inscription places the composition of Lully's courante and its performance by La Grange in the same time-frame, and that both refer back to the 1661 première.

52 According to the entrée livrets, the following dancers appeared to have made a specialty of performing female roles in the court performances of the comédies-ballets: La Lante, Saint-André, Buhnavard, Magny, Arnaud, Bocquet, Nollet, Cadet and all, Fontigné, La Montagne, L'Estang, Paviot Cadet, Pavin, Joubert, and Pantz.

53 Particularly noteworthy in this regard was the Ballet du Roy des Petits de Scacch (1651), wherein the 11-year-old Moussette danced as a young girl in the sixth entrée while a professional female dancer (La petite Molière) appeared in the thirteenth entrée, Boureau: Ballet pour Louis XIV, ed. Cousineau-Giroux, 53-59 (at 61 and 67).
d’Élite that autumn—for which the Second Registre de La Théâtrière lists two payments of 110 livres made on 9 and 11 November 1664 to ‘M’ des Brosse,79 Des Brosse also served as ballet master for the Théâtre du Marais, for Perrin’s Académie Royale des Opéras, and later became one of the choreographers for Lully’s Académie Royale de Musique.

For the public performances of La Princesse d’Élite at the Palais-Royal, the Second Registre de La Théâtrière records the sum of 300 livres paid to ‘Monsieur Cambert’ (probably Robert Cambert, who may have served as music director).79 The combined earnings of des Brosse and Cambert were roughly equivalent to the 550 livres paid to Beauchamps for Le Mariage forcé—suggesting that des Brosse and Cambert shared the duties undertaken by Beauchamps in the earlier production. As the original comédie-ballet version of Le Mariage forcé consisted mainly of ballet entrées, it would have been logical for the ballet master to take over the musical direction. La Princesse d’Élite, on the other hand, featured a larger component of vocal and choral music—for which the company evidently felt the need to split the duties of ballet master and musical director. When Beauchamps returned for the 1671 production of Psyché at the Palais-Royal, he took on the dual responsibility of choreographer and conductor—for which the company doubled his earlier stipend.80

OTHER ASPECTS OF PRODUCTION

Psyché (1671) and Le Malade imaginaire (1673) marked a new direction for Molière and the Troupe du Roy. Earlier comédies-ballets received their court premières under a variety of circumstances, often on makeshift stages and sometimes with modest décor. Upon occasion, the company performed machine plays: Corneille’s Andromède in the provinces (perhaps in 1651–2),81 Gilbert’s Les Amours de Diane et d’Endimion and Montauban’s Les Charnes de Féliçie at the Petit-Bourbon in 1669, and Molière’s Dom Juan and Amphitryon at the Palais-Royal in 1665 and 1668 respectively. The rapid scene changes designed by Vigarani for Psyché were impossible to perform on the old stage of the Palais-Royal, where its fixed angle-wings confined the action to a single scene; furthermore, the

machine effects that were so integral to the dramatic action could not easily be re-created there. So during their 1671 Lenten break, the company resolved to rebuild the entire stage, particularly the framework, and make it suitable for machines;83 and they installed several receding pairs of mechanically operated flat wings painted in perspective, which permitted changes of scene at a moment’s notice.84

An examination of the sets and machines described in the first edition of Psyché sheds some light on the staging capabilities of the remodelled Palais-Royal.85 The prologue opens upon ‘a rustic spot in the foreground, and in the background a pierced rock through which the sea is visible in the distance’—a perspective would have been painted on the flat wings. Later, Venus descends from the heavens with Cupid and two little Graces on a grande machine,86 and at the end of the prologue Cupid takes to flight. The perspective then changes to ‘a large city, with palaces and houses of different architecture on both sides of the stage’.87 At the end of Act 1, the set transforms into a desert landscape dominated by some ‘horrible rocks’ and a ‘dreadful cavern’ where Psyché is to be sacrificed. The second interval, Act 3, and the third interval, are all set in ‘a magnificent court adorned with columns of lapis lazuli and decorated with golden figures, forming a sumptuous and brilliant palace that Cupid has prepared for Psyché’. At the end of the third interval the set changes to ‘another magnificent palace, intersected at the rear by a vestibule, across which is seen a charming and magnificent garden decorated with several vases, with orange-trees and other trees laden with all kinds of fruits’.88 What the beginning of Act 4 lacked in extraordinary sets, it made up for in special effects. At the end of scene 2, Zephyr sweeps Psyché’s two sisters up in a cloud and bears them away through the sky. Then, after Psyché persuades Cupid to reveal his identity to her, the god suddenly flies away and simultaneously ‘the superb garden vanishes’. Psyché is left alone ‘in the middle of a vast plain, and on the desolate banks of a great river into which she is contemplating throwing herself’. The river god then appears—probably rising up from the

89 That previous May, des Brosse had appeared in the three-day Versailles fête (Les Plaisirs de l’île enchantée) for which La Princesse d’Élite was first given—in which he danced as one of the signs of the zodiac, as a monster, and as a knight.
79 Second Registre de La Théâtrière, entry for 9 Dec. 1664.
80 According to Registre de La Guerre (L. 126), Beauchamps received 1,100 livres ‘for having composed the ballet and conducted the music’, together with a salary of 11 livres per performance ‘for beating time to the music as well as for directing the ballets’.
81 A copy of a 1681 ed. of Andromède survives with the names of the actors who participated in Molière’s handwriting (Molière played the part of Perseus); see Ch. 13, n. 43.
82 During the summer of 1660 at the Petit-Bourbon, Molière’s company produced Gilbert’s Les Amours de Diane et d’Endimion and Montauban’s Les Charnes de Féliçie, both of which called for special scenic effects, solo songs, and choruses. See Registre de La Guerre, I. 21–9.
depths of the river; he is shown seated on a mass of reeds and water plants and leaping on a large urn from which pours a jet of water.

The fourth intermède featured a spectacular enfer scene, where the audience saw:

a sea of fire, whose waves are in perpetual undulation. This horrible sea is bordered by flaming ruins; and in the middle of these seething waves, through a frightful mouth, appears the infernal palace of Pluto. In Psyche, who has passed into the infernal regions by Venus' command, crosses back in Charon's boat with the casket which she has received from Proserpine for that goddess.

The act also features several aerial flights and concludes with a mechanical tour de force. Psyche faints at the end of scene 3, and Cupid flies down to her; then at the end of scene 5, after several lightning flashes and thunderclaps, Jupiter appears in the air on his eagle. In the last scene two large machines descend from the heavens at both sides of Jupiter; Venus and her attendants climb into one of them, Cupid and Psyche (newly made immortal) into the other, and they all ascend to heaven for the final apotheosis—while the gods, muses, and minor deities remain behind to dance the grand ballet.

After Psyche, the Troupe du Roy resolved to have an orchestra of twelve strings for all sorts of productions 'tant simples que de machines'. Le Malade imaginaire, Molière's last pièce à grand spectacle, would be a lavish and expensive production designed for the capabilities of this new transformation stage. According to the 1673 livret, the set of the prologue ('Élgoge en musique et en danse') represents a rustic, pleasant spot. There was also a mechanical tree on-stage during the prologue, for in preparation for the singing contest 'Flora, as judge, places herself with two Zephyrs at the foot of the tree'. The first act takes place in Argan's home in Paris, for which the livret provides no stage description. At the end of the act, 'the stage changes and represents a town'; afterwards, 'the stage changes and represents the same chamber' (Argan's sickroom). No scene change is indicated for the second intermède; however, according to the 1674 livret a set-change was added for the production at the Hôtel de Guénégaud ('the stage changes, and represents a garden'). For the musical finale, the 'Cérémonie des Médecins', several upholsterers enter to prepare the hall, and place the benches to music; if the flat wings were also changed, there is no indication of it in the 1673 livret.

With its orchestra pit, its transformation stage, and machine capability, its newly remodelled auditorium, the Théâtre du Palais-Royal proved to be effective for spectacular musical productions. Indeed, it was the only permanent theatre in Paris suitably equipped for opera: little wonder that Lully sought to acquire it for his Académie Royale de Musique. In a work of fiction, Bauderon de Sénécé suggests that Lully and Molière once considered taking over jointly the opera privilège, but Lully out-manoeuvred Molière by going to the King two days before their agreed-upon date. Yet what if the opera privilège had been granted to Molière instead of to Lully? As we have seen, by the early 1670s the Troupe du Roy was in the process of transforming itself into an opera company, and Le Malade imaginaire might well have served as the model for a new, urban type of seventeenth-century opéra-comique. However, by 1673 the political winds had changed, and whether Molière's spectacular musical comedies could have met the needs of Louis XIV and his royal imperial-makers is a hypothetical question that remains beyond the scope of this study.

44 Le Malade imaginaire, comédie mêlée de musique, représentée sur le théâtre de la Troupe du Roy par le Sieur de Molière (Paris: Guillaume Adam, 1674). After the second intermède, 'the stage changes & represents the same chamber'.

45 In his Lettre de Clémont Marot à M. de ..., touchant ce qui s'est passé à l'arrivée de Jean-Baptiste de Lully aux champs Élysées (Collogny: Pierre Marteau, 1668), 54–5, Bauderon de Sénécé assigns this speech to Molière's slave. 'The big quarrel that was going on in the world of opera aroused my fear and reassured my curiosity. I feared that this novelty might evade my stage, and I became convinced that if I was going to master it, nothing could henceforth hinder me in the authority that I claimed for myself as arbiter of the pleasures and of the good taste of this gallant era in which I lived. As I needed a musician to execute this project, I caste any eyes on Lully and communicated to him my thoughts—persuaded as I was that the association that we have long had collaborating in the King's pleasures, and the marvellous success that the charming spectacle of Psyche enjoyed a short time ago (where we both shared in the pleasure and glory), were for me infallible guarantees of our future understanding. Then I opened my mind to him, he applauded my plan, and swore his loyalty and even an invisible subordination; we made our agreements, we settled on our duties and our shares, and we set the date to go together and gather from what another has sown by requesting from the King the privilege for performing operas. ... I received assured of the good faith of this agreement; although Lully, more sly than me, broke his promise two days before that date upon which we had agreed. He went to the King to request the privilege for himself alone, and he obtained it by means of the false justifications that he knew how to give to his request, and even obtained it with rigorous conditions that gave me much trouble in order to preserve during my lifetime some ornaments for my stage.' G. Mongedelin ('Molière et Lully', 2e siècle, 98–9 (1973), 10) points out that Sénécé had lived at court and had written a short opera himself, so he was likely to be well informed about the early developments of opera.