THE PUBLIC RECEPTION OF A COURT SUCCESS: LA PRINCESSE D’ÉLIDE

Molière’s La Princesse d’Élide premiered at court in May of 1664 as the featured entertainment of the second day of Les Plaisirs de l’Île enchantée. This was the first and arguably the most brilliant of the royal divertissements given during the reign of Louis XIV, and was designed to show off the newly-landscaped gardens of Versailles. The main events included an equestrian parade, a tournament, a banquet, a play and a ballet, a fireworks display, and a number of other theatrical performances. Louis XIV expressed his wish that all the parts of this divertissement would be planned ‘with coherence and with order, so that they could hardly fail to succeed well.’ As usual, Louis entrusted the Duc de Saint-Aignan, First Gentleman of the King’s Chamber, with its overall organization and the coordination of the team of artists. The latter included the stage designer Carlo Vigariani, the court poet Isaac Benserade, Molière and his Troupe de Monsieur, and Jean-Baptiste Lully (‘the Orpheus of our time’).

An episode from Ariosto’s epic romance Orlando Fùriso provided the unifying theme for the first three days of the fête. In cantos VI and VII, the sorceress Alcina (Alcine) imprisons Ruggiero (Roger) and his Christian knights on her enchanted island, where she makes them her lovers before transforming them into animals, rocks, trees, and fountains. The festivities of the first day of Les Plaisirs de l’Île enchantée began with an equestrian parade of Roger (portrayed by Louis XIV) and his companions, already under Alcine’s magic spell. Alcine had many pleasures in mind for her noble captives, and called for a re-enactment of the Pythian

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1 The main part of the entertainment was divided over the span of the first three days (1–9 May), and a continuation of these festivities followed during 10–13 May. The published accounts of these festivities included Les Plaisirs de l’Île enchantée. Comedie de la Chambre, contenant de nouveaux et de magnifiques feux de l’art, et tant d’autres fêtes galantes et magnifiques faites par le Roi à Versailles, le 7 mai 1664, et continuées plusieurs autres jours, Paris, R. Ballard, 1664 (repr. l’Imprimerie royale, 1673); ‘Les particularités des divertissements pris à Versailles par leurs Majestés’, Gazette, 60 (1 June 1664), 481–99; and Relation des divertissements que le Roi a donnés aux Rois dans la ville de Versailles, écrit à un gentilhomme qui est présentement hors de France. The author of the second account was Jacques Carpentier de Marigny, who also published it in his Œuvres en vers et en prose de Monsieur de Marigny (Paris: C. de Sercy, 1673), 34–56. See C. Massy, ‘Les Sources musicales et littéraires des comédies-ballets de Molière et Lully présentées dans la collection Philidor’, Littérature classique, 21 (Spring 1994), 59–64.


3 François de Beaurepaire, duc de Saint-Aignan (1618–79), was a lover of literature, a patron of Molière, and a member of the Académie Française; he was the official organizer of ballets given at court.
MUSIC AND THE THEATRE OF MOLIÈRE

games: the pan-Hellenic festival of musical, literary, and athletic contests dedicated to Apollo. Vigarani had been at work for two months constructing the mechanical devices and spectacular stage effects. He built a miniature version of Alcine's magic palace in the centre of the Basin of Apollo (then called the Fountain of Swans), and filled it with fireworks for the third day.

Molière’s actors played a central part in these festivities and, unusually, their names appear printed in the text along with the names of the noble participants. During the first day members of the company, portraying various allegorical and mythological figures, appeared together with Louis XIV and his courtiers, who were ‘armed in the Greek fashion’. The actor La Grange played Apollo, riding on a golden chariot 18 feet high, 24 feet long, and 15 feet wide that was drawn by four horses and driven by Time—a decrepit figure with wings and a sceptre portrayed by M. Millier, the royal coachman. At Apollo’s feet sat the Four Ages of Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Iron (portrayed by Mlle de Brie, M. Hubert, Mlle Molière, and M. Du Crosly). The Twelve Hours of the Day and the Twelve Signs of the Zodiac walked in double file alongside Apollo’s chariot, and were followed by the knights of Ariosto’s epic, portrayed by the French nobility bearing devices. Once these troops had entered the camp and taken their positions for the tournament, the Four Ages recited verses to Apollo in praise of the Queen. Then Roger and his knights staged a tournament that included the ancient tradition of running at the ring.

After night had fallen, Lully, dressed as Orpheus, conducted a band of thirty-four musicians, who played by candlelight for the ballet of the Signs of the Zodiac and the Four Seasons. The latter, mounted on different animals from the King’s menagerie, followed in a grand procession: the beautiful Mlle Du Parc, riding on a Spanish horse, portrayed Spring; her husband, riding on an elephant, was Summer; La Thoirillière, representing Autumn, rode a camel; and Winter, played by M. Béjart, rode a bear. Each Season was accompanied by its own retinue: Spring by twelve gardeners, Summer by twelve reapers, Autumn by twelve vine-dressers, and Winter by twelve old men, nearly frozen to death. As Lully directed a fourteen-piece consort of oboes and flutes, Pan and Diana (played by Molière and Mlle Béjart) appeared on a float depicting a rock shaded by several trees—including a mechanical tree that lifted Pan and Diana into the air. After the Four Seasons, Diana, and Pan recited more eulogies to the Queen, a royal banquet was given by the controllers of the King’s household, who portrayed Abundance, Joy, Propriety, and Good Cheer. The company sat down at a semicircular table laden with flowers and food while thirty-six violinists played on a small stage. Two hundred wax flambeaux held by masked servants provided illumination, and ‘all the knights, with their helmets adorned with plumes of different colours and their tournament cloaks, reclined against the tournament barriers, making of that ring an enchanting place’.

On the evening of the second day, Alcine rewarded Roger and his captive knights with a theatrical performance, La Princesse d’Elide. Vigarani erected a temporary stage in the Bosquet des Dômes—a kind of salon created by hedges and thickets with curtains protecting the candles and torches from the wind. The absence of a backdrop gave the audience an unobstructed view of Alcine’s magic island, as can be seen in the background of Israël Silvestre’s famous engraving (Plate 10). Five suspended chandeliers illuminated the stage, and ten others provided light from both sides of the prosenium. The best vantage point was reserved for the guests of honour: Philippe d’Orléans and his wife Henriette, Louis XIV and Maria-Theresa, and Anne of Austria. As we will see, the chivalric pageantry of the French court joined with Ariosto’s romance and Molière’s comédie galante to explore the dual preoccupations of Louis XIV: amour and gloire.

La Princesse d’Elide held its premiere within the first three days of Les Plaisirs de l’Isle enchantée. Molière’s main literary source was Augustín Moreto’s popular Spanish comedy El Desden con el desden (1654), a choice of subject made in deference to Anne of Austria and Maria-Theresa, who both had connections to the throne of Spain. However, Molière shifted his play’s setting from Barcelona to Elis, a region in the Peloponnesus near Arcadia, and added pastoral themes, com- monplaces, and characters. The Princess of Elis is ‘une autre Diane’ who loves only the hunt, and scorns her noble suitors. Prince Euryale of Ithaca urges indifference to her charms, and thereby attracts the attentions of the Princess. In the tradition of Spanish comedies, musical intermèdes frame the five acts of La Princesse d’Elide and provide a comic counterpart to the spoken play (see Table 15.1). These pastoral interludes constitute a parallel action that introduce and
Molière’s text, which he later describes as ‘un poème d’opéra’. There Molière reveals himself as a poet of fantasy, of free spirit, reminding one of Shakespeare... the Shakespeare of A Midsummer Night’s Dream (with his Theseus, Duke of Athens), or of Twelfth Night, or of the adorable reveries with which The Merchant of Venice ends.10 The romantic atmosphere of Molière’s play thereby harmonizes with that of the courtly spectacles inspired from Ariosto’s romance: Prince Euryale’s victory over the Princess’s coldness foreshadows Roger’s triumph over Alcine’s magic powers on the third day of the Les Plaisirs de l’île enchantée. Molière’s play also held special meaning for its noble spectators—for, according to the printed livret, it allowed the indifferent ladies of the court to discover ‘the true means of restoring themselves to reason’.

The first intermède serves as the prologue to the play, and acts as a transition from the epic world of Ariosto’s romance to the pastoral world of Molière’s comédie galante. The opening ‘Récit de l’Aurore’ recalls Daphne’s speech to the indifferent Silvia in the first scene of Tasso’s Aminta. Aurora, an allegorical representation of dawn, appears on-stage to sing a chanson d’amour that announces the main subject of the play. Many interpreted the second verse as an exhortation to the royal mistresses, Louise de la Vallière, who five months earlier had presented the King with their first child:

*Sigh freely for a faithful lover, and defy those who would blame you.
Un cœur tendre est amable, et le nom de cruelle
N’est pas un nom à se faire estimer:
Dans le temps où l’on est belle, rien n’est si beau que d’aimer.*

Later in the first act, Arbute pays a compliment to Prince Euryale that is indirectly addressed to Louis XIV (‘This is a quality that I admire in a monarch; tenderness of heart is a great sign, and I believe that everything may be expected from a prince as soon as we see that his soul is capable of love’). From the start Molière thereby establishes a common link between Alcine’s magic love-bonds, the King’s capacity for love (reaching even beyond the bonds of marriage), and the central theme of the play—the Princess’s awakening to love.11

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9 Julien Tiersot, La mésangue dans la comédie de Molière (Paris, 1922), 78-9.
10 H. Puré, ‘Le Chant pastoral chez Molière’, Cahiers de l’Association internationale des études françaises, 28 (1976), 133-44 (at 136-7) demonstrates how the lyrics of the first and last intermèdes establish a direct connection with the noble spectators, and an indirect one with the comedy. Aurora’s address to the ‘young beauties’ of the court to embrace love while they are young and beautiful, is balanced by the final intermède of ‘bergers et bergères héroïques’, who assure them that sooner or later one must give in ‘aux doux chœurs de l’Amour’. The comic ent’actes, on the other hand, establish a direct connection with the play, but an indirect one with the noble spectators.

parody various Arcadian commonplaces (the satyr, the echo conversation, the plainte, the singing-contest, and the suicide scene), until both the pastoral and heroic worlds finally converge in the sixth intermède—a ballet of singing and dancing ‘bergers et bergères héroïques’ accompanied by an orchestra of fauns playing flutes and violins. Because Molière lacked time to complete the versification of his play as planned, only the first act and part of the first scene of Act II is in alexandrine verse and the remainder is in prose.9 Julien Tiersot noted the lyric quality of

* In the middle of 2.1 (livre, p. 43), the reader is informed that ‘the author’s intention was to treat thus (in verse) the entire comedy. But a command from the King, who hurried this affair, made it necessary to complete the remainder in prose, and to pass lightly over several scenes, which he would have expanded further if he had had more time.’
The next scene of the first intermède pertains to the early morning hunt that is described in Act 1 of the play, and corresponds to the type of comic musical sketch that served as the lass to Spanish comedy. Its burlesque music and language contrasts sharply with the courtly style of Aurora's récit, which has awakened some of the Princess's dogkeepers just in time for the hunt. When they notice that their comrade Lycias (played by Molière) is still asleep and snoring loudly, they attempt to rouse him—first with choral proddings moving through the circle of fifths (Ex. 15.1a), then by vocally imitating the call of hunting-horns (Ex. 15.1b). Finally Lycias arises with great difficulty, and shouts to wake the other valets de chiens. The scene ends with a balletic re-creation of this episode: the first air for the sleepy dogkeepers is followed by a second air (presumably after Lycias has wreaked his havoc) for the awakened valets de chiens, who prepare for the hunt to the music of hunting-horns.

Moron, the court fool of La Princesse d'Élide, becomes the main character in the second, third, and fourth intermèdes, where his pastoral misadventures offer a comic reflection on the heroic events of the main action. For instance, at the start of the play we learn that during the hunt the Prince of Messena had saved the Princess from a wild boar; but rather than showing gratitude, she expresses outrage at his interference and reproaches him for lacking confidence in her hunting abilities. Likewise, Moron undergoes a similar test of his mettle in the second intermède, in which he faces a charging bear unarmed. According to Molière's synopsis, after some huntsmen arrive to rescue him, the fool, 'having grown bold by the removal of danger, wishes to go and give a thousand blows to the animal, no longer able to defend himself, and does all that a braggart, not overly brave, would have done on such an occasion'. Moron's cowardice thereby becomes a comic foil to the Princess's bravery, while the joy of the huntsmen offers a choreographic counterpoint to the Prince's chagrin.

The musical intermèdes also mirror the play's etiquette of love and courtship. Moron, the witty if cowardly servant of the court, is out of his element in a world ruled by a pastoral code of conduct, and his iniquity at mastering the conventions of the lyric arts thereby serves as a comic foil to the verbal gallantry of the play's princely suitors. Moreover, as Ada Coe observes, 'this is not the stylized, mythical Arcadia, but a comic world in which values are turned topsy-turvy'.

In the second intermède, Moron goes off to a solitary place to confess his love for
the milkmaid Philis in a lyric monologue. However Moron, no gallant shepherd, soon violates the bienséances forbidding the mention of things in life held to be beneath notice of the noble mind, and his injudicious choice of poetic images soon turns his lyric composition into a parody of the pastoral lament.\(^{15}\) He begins well enough—

Bois, prés, fontaines, fleurs, qui voyez
mon teint blême
Si vous ne le savez, je vous apprends que j'aime.

Philis est l'objet charmant
Qui tient mon cœur à l'attache;

—until Moron describes how he became enamoured watching his beloved milk a cow. As his imagery becomes increasingly tactile and earthy, the accretion of proscribed words so reaches critical mass, resulting in Moron's exclamation:

Et je devins son amant
La voyant traire une vache.
Ses doigts tout pleins de lait, et plus blancs
mille fois,

\(^{15}\) The following discussion of the second intermède has been inspired by Louis Auld's analysis of this scene in 'Molière as Dramatic Lyricist' (p. 6), an unpublished paper delivered at the 110th Convention of the Modern Languages Association in 1995.
seventeenth century, means 'idiot' or 'imbecile'). As the two are about to come to blows, the violins strike up an air, which transforms their altercation into ballet-pantomime.

In the following intermède Moron encounters the shepherd Tircis, whom his beloved Philiis seems to favour. This leads to a singing-contest between Moron and Tircis, with Philiis's love as the prize. Tircis extemporizes two thoroughly conventional airs—one a protestation ('Tu m'écoutes hélas! dans ma triste langueur'), the other a lament ('Arbres épaiss, et vous, près émouillés'). While capably composed, Tircis's melodies are dominated by triadic outlines and anaepastic rhythms which show little inspiration (Ex. 15.4a and b). Moron in turn responds with another well-worn poetic topos: he has been fatally wounded by unrequited love, and the lady alone possesses the power to heal him ('Ton extrême rigueur'; Ex. 15.4c). To our surprise, Moron not only successfully imitates the fashionable style of the air sérieux, but his musical invention surpasses that of Tircis in elegance and suppleness. His opening gesture consists of two beautifully crafted phrases of unequal length: the first phrase (mm. 1–5) begins on the upper tonic, fills in a descending seventh, and then doubles back to the dominant to complete its descent to the lower tonic—and his deceptive cadence in m. 5 on 'ceur' is an unexpected poetic touch. Moreover, Moron has evidently stolen a melodic motive (on the words 'sur mon cœur', marked with asterisks in Ex. 15.4c) from his rival's second air (also marked with asterisks in Ex. 15.4b). Moron's second phrase (mm. 5–8) consists of a pair of languorous 7–6 suspensions which conclude with a hauntingly beautiful Phrygian cadence on 'trépasse'. The fool has proved himself to be a bright student—considering that he could scarcely hold a tune in the preceding intermède.

However, once again, Moron tips his hand by allowing vulgarity of expression to creep into his final argument ('Will you be the fatter for it, because you allowed me to die?'; Ex. 15.4d). Furthermore, his music calls attention to the gaffe by placing trills on both half-notes of 'grasse' and a clumsy agogic accent on the mute syllable. To make matters worse, the melody then ascends to a high note on the proscribed word, and then falls the chute of a ninth to the final cadence. Even though Moron professes willingness to die for the love of Philiis, the crudeness of his poetic and musical rhetoric breaks the spell. In an ideal Arcadia, no self-respecting shepherdess would have the bad manners to accept a lover's offer of suicide; but to the fool's chagrin, Philiis expresses delight at the thought. While Moron meekly protests, Tircis enthusiastically supports his suicide plan (Ex. 15.4e) and urges him on, using the 2–3–1 motive (marked with asterisks) and ascending chromaticism (on 'de mourir', an inversion of 'Ah! Philiis, je trépasse' in Ex. 15.4c) to underscore his mocking sarcasm. At the moment of truth with dagger poised, the not-so-foolish fool abruptly changes his tune and...
bids farewell to these bloodthirsty pastoral lovers ('Je suis votre serviteur: quelque niais').

The pastoral and heroic worlds intersect in the fifth *intermède* where, having awakened to the fact that she has fallen desperately in love with Prince Buryale, the Princess calls upon the soothing power of music to help her regain her composure. She summons two shepherdesses, saying 'O you who know how to dispel the most troublesome cares by the sweetness of your songs, kindly draw near and try to soothe my sorrow with your music.' Cléménè voices her concerns on the subject of love, while Philis is eager to enjoy these vaunted pleasures. Their conflicting sentiments find resonance in the heart of the Princess, and prepares for her eventual capitulation to love in the final act. Such events of the human heart occur in that mysterious realm of the ineffable, for which Lully's languorous music expresses feelings where words fail (Ex. 15.5).

The sixth and final *intermède* completes the retransition from the Arcadian land of Elis to the chivalric world of Ariosto's romance. Four 'heroic' shepherdesses and two shepherdesses celebrate love in a choral song ('Usez mieux, ô beautés fières'), while eight other shepherdesses and shepherdesses dance. Meanwhile, a mechanical tree bearing sixteen fauns emerges from beneath the stage. As the tree moves forward 'under Alcine's spell', the flute- and violins-playing fauns are answered antiphonally by the harpsichords, theorboes, and strings from Lully's orchestra. According to Marigny, this finale was performed so well that everyone declared Lully, 'the creator of all this harmony', to be 'a hundred times more the Devil than the She-Devil, Alcine, herself'.

On the evening of the third day of *Les Plaisirs de l'Île enchantée*, the court assembled in front of the Basin of Apollo. Alcine's palace stood on the centre island, while on the two flanking islands were situated a string orchestra and a band of trumpets and drums. Seated on a dais facing the basin, the King and Queen heard a concert by Lully's musicians and watched as the palace became illuminated. The trumpeters announced the entrance of Alcine (played by Mlle Du Parc) riding on a sea-monster, and followed by the nymphs Celia and Dirce (played by Mlles de Brie and Molière) riding on whales. Arriving on the bank, Alcine and her followers recited verses in praise of the Queen Mother. Then

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16 Parkes ('Chant pastoral chez Molière', 137) points out that 'singing is an attractive manner of declaring one's love, and every woman loves to hear her praises from the mouth of the one who pleases her, all the while refusing to take literally the words uttered... to declare oneself ready to die is to indicate at which point life would be empty without the beloved. This manner of expression is thus both convention and symbol. This is what Moron does not understand. He takes the notion of suicide literally, and refuse to go through with it. Now, this refusal is also symbolic: it indicates that Moron, too selfish to kill himself, is incapable of loving.' I disagree with Parkes's analysis, in that I would suggest that Moron is too clever to fall into an obvious trap laid by the shepherdesses—who clearly prefers his rival and would do nothing just as soon he rid of Moron.


18 Again, these speeches resonate with topical meaning, for references to the steadfastness of Anne of Austria in the face of the 'rebellious waves' allude to the civil troubles of the Fronde during the minority of Louis XIV. Indeed, the *Ballet du Palais d'Alice* might be viewed as an allegorical depiction of the civil unrest of the past fifteen years, and brought to
returning to the enchanted island, Alcine and her nymphs prepared to defend their palace against Roger and his knights.

Lully’s Ballet du Palais d’Alcine depicted this epic struggle in a succession of entrées for dwarfs, giants, and Moors, culminating in a battle between six monsters and six knights. On the allegorical level, Roger (Louis XIV) effectively delivers those knights (the nobility of France) who had once succumbed to enchantment (moral-political blight). 19 Alcine then summons evil spirits to her aid, who are joined by various demons; but they prove unable to fend off Roger (portrayed by Pierre Beauchamps, acting as the King’s lieutenant) and his knights, who invade and conquer the island. With the help of Bradamant’s magic ring (symbolizing divine authority), Roger breaks the spell of Alcine’s sorcery and, in a blaze of lightning, thunder, and fireworks, Alcine’s magic palace is destroyed by fire.

The Troupe de Monsieur performed La Princesse d’Éléide again for the King and his court at Fontainebleau later that summer, and in the autumn Molègre brought the production to the Théâtre du Palais-Royal. They closed their playhouse for the first week of November in order to prepare for its premiere, during which time Jean Crosnier, the company’s set-decorator and factotum, 20 received 30 livres reimbursement on 2 November for petty expenses related to the rehearsals, and a carpenter named Maître Denis was given an advance of 22 livres. 21 On 9 November 1664, six months after its court premiere, La Princesse d’Éléide finally opened at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal. 22 While no livret or programme survives, we know that the company performed it with music and dance, for the account books record payments made to singers, dancers, and instrumentalists for these performances.

an end by Louis XIV’s personal role. However, as these verses also suggest a correlation between the Queen Mother and the nymphs, Roger’s victory over Alcine might also symbolize the King’s recent liberation from the menace of his dominating mother.

19 Id. McGowan has shown this to be a recurring theme of the ballets dramatiques of the late 16th and early 17th cent. In the earlier Ballet de Minerve et Vénus (1610) Alcine represented the disorders of the state. ‘The ballet thus becomes the representation of the transfer of power from the hands of a sorceress, who by her cackles has thrown everything into confusion, into those of a just and reasonable king who, victorious, will restore the order.’ See: Art du ballet du cour, 76. The figure of the powerful sorceress appears in other ballets and machine plays prior to Les Plaisirs de l’Ile enchantée: Aréda in the Ballet de la Délivrance de Renaud (1617) and Act 3 of Quinault’s La Comédie sans comédie (1655); Circe in Duval’s Les Travaille d’Élyse (1633); Boyer’s L’Icare dans l’île de Circe, ou Barthélémyומך kreuz (1648); and Thomas Corneille’s Circe (1475); and Medea in Pierre Corneille’s La Toison d’or (1660).

20 Jean Crosnier, l’acteur, scène-painter (scénographe) to Molègre’s troupe beginning in 1662 (see Registre de La Grange, i, 47 and 66) fulfilled a variety of functions. He was depicted in Le Baron de Foresse given by the Italian actor in Jan. 1674, where he was called ’Crongli’ (see the Eras Parizis, Histoire de l’ancien Théâtre italien, 428). Alternate spellings for Jean Crosnier’s name found in Le Registre de La Théâtrillière include ’Crosnier’, ’Crosniere’, and ’Cranncier’.

21 Schwartz believes that this payment might have been for constructing the mechanical tree used in the sixth intermède; see W. L. Schwartz, ‘Light on Molègre in 1664 from Le Seconde Registre de La Théâtrillière’, Publication of the Modern Language Association (Dec. 1958), 704-76 (at 706).

22 Molègre’s delay in presenting La Princesse d’Éléide to the public is understandable, since during the summer months his company was occupied with numerous command performances, as well as the public première of Racine’s Le Thébaïde, while he was petitioning the King to have the royal ban on Targn’s lifted. However, there may have been another reason for Molègre to have waited until Nov.–for Chappuzeau that we understand the winter season (from All Saints’ Day until Lent) was the time traditionally reserved for the peripatetic bacchic plays, while comedies usually premiered during the summer months; see Le Théâtre français, 63–70.

LA PRINCESSE D’ÉLIDE

Table 15.2. Receipts and Expenses for the First Performance of La Princesse d’Éléide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total (receipts)</th>
<th>840 livres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>daily expenses</td>
<td>52 livres 15 sols</td>
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<tr>
<td>soldiers</td>
<td>15 livres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salary for Crosnier</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>heat</td>
<td>3 livres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an extra playbill for 8 string players</td>
<td>4 livres 10 sols</td>
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<td>for 12 dancers</td>
<td>24 livres</td>
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<tr>
<td>for 12 dancers</td>
<td>60 livres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for the symphony</td>
<td>8 livres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for stage shoes for the dancers</td>
<td>36 livres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for stage shoes for the singers</td>
<td>12 livres</td>
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<td>for 4 pairs of silk stockings for the satyrs</td>
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<td>for the 3 oboes</td>
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<td>for the supplement to the strings for ritornelles</td>
<td>4 livres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for the singers</td>
<td>25 livres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to M. des Brosses, for what is owed to him</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>for the silk stockings for the dancers, at least</td>
<td>66 livres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to Crosnier, for expenses</td>
<td>15 livres 10 sols</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Share—22 livres

Source: Le Second Registre de La Théâtrillière, entry for Sunday 9 November 1664

As can be seen by Plate II (trans. in Table 15.2), several professional singers (‘la musique’) performed in this production. 24 The payment of 25 livres suggests that five singers were engaged to cover the eight singing roles required by the intermèdes, with each singer receiving 5 livres wages per performance. Since the singers doubled on roles at the court premiere, one might presume that the company adopted a similar distribution for the Paris performances, with all singing in the chorus of the sixth intermède. 23 Twelve dancers were hired and provided with stage shoes and silk hose, while those dancers who performed as satyrs

23 As Schwartz points out (‘Light on Molègre’, 1931), despite its attribution to La Théâtrillière many of the entries in this account book appear in the hand of André Hubert, who was made the company’s treasurer when he entered Molègre’s company from the Théâtre du Marais in 1664.

24 That this expense relates to singers is corroborated by later entries in Second Registre de La Théâtrillière, where it appears listed as ‘musique chantere’ and as ‘chantres’ (11, 14, 16, 18, 21, 23, 25, 28, 30 Nov. and 2, 5, 7, 9, 12, 14, and 16 Dec.)

25 The doubling of roles in the court production is recorded on the printed livret. If the public performances followed suit, then the soprano who sang as Aurora in the first intermède may have sung the role of Clémene in the fifth intermède, together with another paid singer to perform the role of Phoébus; the singing shepherd Tircis in the fourth intermède may have doubled the part of the tenor dogkeeper of the first intermède; and the singing satyr of the third intermède may have doubled as the bass dogkeeper of the first intermède—another paid singer playing the baritone dogkeeper.

As can be seen by Plate II (trans. in Table 15.2), several professional singers (‘la musique’) performed in this production. The payment of 25 livres suggests that five singers were engaged to cover the eight singing roles required by the intermèdes, with each singer receiving 5 livres wages per performance. Since the singers doubled on roles at the court premiere, one might presume that the company adopted a similar distribution for the Paris performances, with all singing in the chorus of the sixth intermède. Twelve dancers were hired and provided with stage shoes and silk hose, while those dancers who performed as satyrs
were supplied with four pairs of silk hose. A payment of 110 livres is listed for a 'M' des Brosses'—probably Anthoine des Brosses, one of the court dancers who appeared in Les Plaisirs de l'île enchantée and whom Molière would seem to have hired as ballet master for this production. As shown in Table 15.2, the theatre orchestra for La Princesse d'Élide consisted of 8 strings, 3 oboes, and 'la musique sinfonie' (probably referring to continuo instruments).28 Moreover, the string players who played 'ritournels'—that is, preludes, interludes, and postludes that framed the vocal numbers—received a supplement. Later entries record additional expenses: on 11 November 1664 des Brosses received another instalment of 110 livres, the tailor Jean Baraillon received 44 livres, and M. Vagnart, who played a bear in the second intermède, received 55 livres. On 9 December 300 livres were paid to 'Monseigneur Cambert'—no doubt Robert Cambert, who probably served as music director for the production.

Contrary to modern opinion, La Princesse d'Élide gave every indication of being a hit. It received twenty-five consecutive performances at the Palais-Royal, during which time Molière's company performed no other play; and throughout its run the production maintained relatively consistent box-office returns (see Fig. 15.1). The gross income amounted to a total of 15,281 livres, with an average daily intake of 507 livres 15 sous.29 Daily production costs would have amounted to approximately 60 livres of frais ordinaires, and an additional 130 livres of frais extraordinaires. Taking into account start-up costs and stipends paid to des Brosses and Cambert, each performance would have had to earn well in excess of 200 livres before a profit could be declared. It must therefore have been discouraging to the actors when the box-office receipts of 233 livres for the fourteenth performance (9 December) were used to pay off remaining expenses for the production, and they received nothing; the next performance (12 December) grossed only 317 livres, and so each actor who warranted a full share received only 8 livres 15 sous for that day.

No doubt these high production costs weighed against uncertain returns argued against future revivals of La Princesse d'Élide.30 While it would have been a simple matter to eliminate the musical intermèdes (as he later did for Le Mariage forcé), Molière must have sensed that La Princesse d'Élide would have had slight appeal as a spoken play. Even though Louis XIV requested four more perfor-

28 Lully's orchestra for the court première of La Princesse d'Élide included six theorubus and harpsichords, according to the printed libretto.

29 This would be considered a quite respectable performance run for the time—for according to Lough '10 to 15 performances represented a modest but definite success; 15 to 22 or 23 was a very considerable figure. Twenty-four or so to 30 meant a very striking success, while figures in the 30s and 40s were altogether exceptional' (J. Lough, Paris Théatre Audiences, 32).

28 See Registre de La Grange, i. 70–2.

30 Surprisingly, the Hôtel de Bourgogne mounted a production of La Princesse d'Élide on 12 July 1676, making it the only comédie-ballet by Molière known to have been performed there.

30 In 1669 La Princesse d'Élide was given four times for the King at Saint Germain between 23 Aug. and 1 Sept. (Registre de La Grange, i. 169).

31 In 1692, nearly twenty years after Molière's death, the Comédie Française produced a musically reduced version of the comédie-ballet, using only 8 dancers and 1 singer; the daily expenses amounted to 56 livres 'tout compris'—one-third of that of the first run. This production received 7 performances in Apr. 1692, and 12 more from Feb. to June 1693.