THE ITALIAN PASTORALE IN FRANCE

The Italian humanist pastorales performed by touring commedia dell’arte companies represented but one aspect of the Italian influence that pervaded the Valois court throughout the latter half of the sixteenth century. Prunières has shown that string and wind players from Mantua, Milan, Verona, Florence, and Ferrara had long formed the backbone of the musical establishment of François I, while Italian dancers and choreographers figured prominently in French court divertissements. Queen Catherine de’ Medici superstitiously banned performances of tragedies after Henri II’s tragic death; thereafter, the lighter theatrical genres of comedy, tragicomedy, commedia dell’arte, and ballet de cour would flourish at the Valois court. During the 1560s Baltazarini di Belgioioso (Beaujoyeux), whom Brantôme described as ‘the best violinist in Christendom’, was appointed valet de chambre to the Queen, and became the foremost composer of court ballets. Constantly in demand for court divertissements during the 1570s and 1580s, commedia dell’arte actors routinely accompanied their theatrical presentations with music, dance, and acrobatics. Lord Burghurst, the English ambassador to Charles IX, described a fête given at the Hôtel de Nevers in 1571 featuring ‘musick of a most excellent and straunge conceite, and w’ a Comedie of Italians that for the good mirth and handling thereof deserved singular comendacion’. The following year the Earl of Lincoln was received at the Louvre, where ‘At aftar dynar Monsieur and his brother brought us to a Chamber where was vearie

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1 See M. Prunières, ‘La Musique de la Chambre et de l’écuue sous François Ier et Henri II’, Annales musicales, 1 (1911), 215–51.
3 Reported by the court chronicler Brantôme; cited in Œuvres complètes de Pierre de Brantôme, seigneur de Brantôme, ed. L. Lallemand (Paris, 1876), vii. 346–7.
4 Brantôme paints a vivid portrait of Beaujoyeux that deserves quotation (ibid. ii. 663–64): ‘the scene was told to me by M. de Beau-Joyeux, valet de chambre of the Queen Mother, and the best violinist in Christendom. He was accomplished not solely in his art nor in music, but he was a very cultured mind who knew much, and particularly very amusing stories and anecdotes, both common and very rare; and he was not at all sparing with them among his closest friends; and he related several of his own, for in his lifetime he had seen many adventures in love; for, with his excellent art and his fine and audacious spirit (two instruments good for love), he could do much. The Maréchal de Brissac had given him to the Queen Mother, who was the reigning queen, and had sent him from Piedmont with his very exquisite and complete band of violins; and he then called himself Baltazarini, but has since changed his name. It was he who composed those lovely ballets that have been continually danced at the court.’
5 Dispatch from Lord Burghurst to Elizabeth I, Paris, 4 Mar. 1571, quoted in Baschet, Comédiens italiens à la cour de France, 16 n.
many sorts of excellent music; and after that, he had us to another large Chamber where there was an Italian play, and dyuars vauters [vaulters?] and leapers of dyuars sortes, vearie excellent.\textsuperscript{6}

Henri III, successor to Charles IX, was particularly fond of Italian theatre. Upon the death of his brother, Henri (who was at that time king of Poland) returned to France via the Republic of Venice, where he was given a grand reception in July of 1574. There Henri and his entourage (including Catherine de' Medici) saw the commedia dell'arte actors of the Gelosi perform a pastoral play, an improvised comedy, and a tragedy written for the occasion by Coriolano Frangipani,\textsuperscript{7} with music by Claudio Merulo. While Iris, Mars, Pallas, and Mercury sang the praises of the future French sovereign, Henri was particularly struck by the charms of an actress named Vittoria.\textsuperscript{8}

Thereafter, Henri III invited the Gelosi to France to entertain at the convocation of the Estates-General at Blois. The actors arrived in January 1577 after having been seized in the south by Huguenots and held for ransom, and on 28 February they performed a pastoral, which may well have been Tasso's Aminta.\textsuperscript{9}

The theatrical spectacles of the Gelosi caused a sensation with their 'sumptuous costumes, set decorations, stage machines, and their musical intermedii, as well as the elegant women who performed the female roles—something which had never been seen in France'.\textsuperscript{10} Henri allowed the actors to give public performances at the Petit-Bourbon in Paris, and he protected them from the hostility of the Parlement, which condemned these 'comedies' [that] taught nothing but fornication and adultery, and only served as a school of debauchery for the youth of both sexes in the city of Paris.\textsuperscript{11}

Another Italian company, named the Confidenti, visited the Valois court in 1584 and performed La Flammella by the Veronese actor Bartolomeo Rossi. This pastoral comedy featured no fewer than eight singing characters: three furies in Act 1, scene 5, a trio of clowns in Act 2, scene 6, and a pastoral singing contest in Act 4, scene 2. When Rossi published La Flammella in Paris later that year,\textsuperscript{12} he dedicated it to their sponsor, the Duc de Joyeuse (brother-in-law and favourite of Henri III, whose 1581 wedding was celebrated with the Balé comique de la Roynce).

During the waning years of the Valois monarchy, the pervading anti-Italian sent-

\textsuperscript{6} Dispatch from the Earl of Lincoln to Sir Edward, Paris, 18 June 1572; quoted ibid. 41.
\textsuperscript{7} Tragedia del S. C. Corollo Frangipane nel christiansime Henrici III Rr di Francia e di Polonia, recitata nella Sala del gran Consilio di Venezia (Bibliothèque Nationale Ms. Ital. 799).
\textsuperscript{8} See Battachet, Comédies italiennes à la cour de France, 57–8.
\textsuperscript{9} See Proust, Opéra italien en France, p. xiv n. 3. Tasso would have been known to the French court, since the poet had visited Paris with Cardinal Louis d'Enghien in 1571.
\textsuperscript{10} Derenbourg-Holdberg, Théâtre de l'Île-de-Bourgogne, i. 26.

\textsuperscript{13} In 1588 a pamphlet entitled Renommées très-humbles au Roy de France et de Pologne, Henry III, which was printed at the time of the second convocation of the Estates-General at Blois, denounced the evil caused in the capital by the plays of 'Italian foreigners'. Quoted in part in the Frères Puritains, Histoire du Théâtre français, ii. 238 n.
\textsuperscript{14} Henri wrote to Martinelli personally on 21 Dec. 1599 and invited him to the French court; quoted in Battachet, Comédies italiennes à la cour de France, 106.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid. 123.
\textsuperscript{16} See Proust, Opéra italien en France, p. xxix.
\textsuperscript{17} Florence Archives, Mediceo, 4728, fo. 185; quoted ibid., p. xxix. Marie de' Medici also sent a letter to her aunt, the Grand Duchess, entreating her to lend them 'the musical coesour of Giulio Romano with his daughters'.

The reign of Henri IV marked the ascension of the Bourbon dynasty and a new era in French theatrical history. Henri IV, 'le Vert Galant', loved both music and the theatre. While he was king of Navarre, he maintained a musical establishment of twelve instrumentalists and nine singers, together with a resident company of Italian actors. After he became king of France, Henri continued to support commedia dell'arte: in December 1599, he invited the Accesi to entertain the court and his future queen, Marie de' Medici.\textsuperscript{14} This company, headed by Tristano Martinelli (Harlequin), arrived at Lyons in the summer of 1600, remained there for the royal wedding on 17 December, and afterwards went on to perform in Paris.\textsuperscript{15} Martinelli formed a lasting friendship with the royal couple and remained on such intimate terms that he presented them with a book entitled Compositions de rithorique de M. Don Arlequin, which included blank pages and a scurrilous dedication to 'the magnanimous gentleman, Henri de Bourbon, first bourgeoys of Paris ... Secret Secretary of the Secret Cabinet of the Madame Marie de' Medici, Grand Treasurer of the Italian Comedians'.

For the official marriage festivities given in Florence, Gabriele Chiabrera's Il Rapimento di Cefalo (1600) had been given in the theatre of the Uffizi palace on 9 October 1600. This sumptuous festa teatrale featured music by Giulio Caccini, for which the composer directed an ensemble of some 100 singers and instrumentalists. Thereafter, Marie de' Medici joined her royal bridegroom in Lyons, accompanied by the celebrated poet and librettist Ottavio Rinuccini.\textsuperscript{16} Evidently, they sang the praises of Caccini and his talented family, for the King later wrote the following letter to Ferdinando I, Grand Duke of Tuscany, to ask that the Caccini family be granted leave to visit the French court:\textsuperscript{17}

My uncle, the good account that I've heard of the fine musical consort of Giulio Romano with his daughters causes me to write you this note and ask through Rinuccini, who will give it to, kindly lend them to me for two or three months, so that having enjoyed them, I might let you know if the fame that surrounds them is deserved, and leaving the rest to be taken care of by Rinuccini, I beseech you to believe him, and God keep you, my uncle, in His holy and worthy safeguard, this 23 August (1604), at Fontainebleau. Henry.

Giulio Caccini and his wife Margherita, his two daughters Francesca and Settima, and his son Pompeo arrived at court in December 1604, and remained
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until April 1605.\(^{18}\) Caccini attested that by mid-January he and his family had performed for the royal family no fewer than four times.\(^{19}\)

La Cecchina [Francesca] sang two French airs to the great pleasure of the King, who requested that she repeat them twice more. The first day that I paid my respects to Their Majesties, the Queen said that she would like us to perform* La Dafne* when Rinuccini arrived; he has arrived since then, but no more has been spoken of it—for which reason we are now idle.

Whether or not the Caccini family performed* La Dafne* is unknown; but in a later letter Caccini mentions that his son Pompeo sang the beginning of* Euridice*, and the rest of them joined in singing the chorus, 'Al ballo, al canto'.\(^{20}\) Surely at some point the King must have requested excerpts from* Il Ripascimento di Cefalo*, which Henri, having sent a proxy to Florence, presumably had not heard.\(^{21}\)

The next year, the court poet Nicolas Chretien, Sieur des Croix undertook a French translation of Chiabrera's* festa teatrale* in celebration of the baptism of the Dauphin, the future Louis XIII. Entitled* Le Ravissement de Céphale*, this was the first mythological pastorale to be published in France.\(^{22}\) If a staged performance of* Le Ravissement de Céphale* had taken place around the time of the baptism (14 September 1606), the court chroniclers failed to mention it. Moreover, it would seem that no performances were anticipated, for in his dedication to the young Dauphin the author states:23

Here are the pagan gods that a Christian [i.e. 'Chrestien', a pun on the author's surname] presents to you—not on a magnificent stage as the one in Florence, where they received more honour, glory, and harmony between them in their Heaven, to honour the Marriage of which you are the happy fruit, but on pages where I paint the same affections of the very humble and faithful services which I dedicate to your Highness at the time of your birth and holy baptism.


\(^{19}\) "La Cecchina ha cantato due arie francesi con molto gusto dei Re che ne la faccia replicare due volte. Il primo giorno ch'io feci avvicinare a Sua Maestà, la Regina mi disse che voleva che non gli apparissero ancora le Dafne come versus il Rinuccini; venne, ne mai piu se ne trattò, onde perciò ora stiamo aspettando letter, from Giulio Caccini to Virginio Orsini, dated 16 Jan. 1605; quoted in Boyer, *Giulio Caccini à la Cour d'Henri IV, 1604-1605*, n. 2). Caccini’s setting of this lost opera is not listed among the composer’s works in the article by H. W. Hinchcock in the New Grove (s.v. 'Caccini, Giulio'), where the author writes: ‘Whether he composed music for Rinuccini’s Dafne, as he boastedly claimed in 1615 [in his Nuove musiche e nuove maniere di cavarli] is extremely doubtful’. Caccini’s letter of 16 Jan. 1606 proves that such a setting indeed once existed.

\(^{20}\) ‘Le le repliche del medesimo produce, anzi mi si accorse dopo l’aver cantato Prospero dell’Esiddia il principe e noi intenerci poi, ’al ballo al canto’ (letter from Giulio Caccini to Virginio Orsini, dated 1 Mar. 1605; in Boyer, *Giulio Caccini à la Cour d’Henri IV*, 247 n. 1).

\(^{21}\) Henri sent to Florence the Due de Bellegarde, who heard not only Chiabrera’s* Il Ripascimento di Cefalo* on 9 Oct., but also Rinuccini’s* Eurydice* three days earlier. See P. Preziosi, *Opere in Francia*, p. xvi.


\(^{23}\) Ibid., 'A Monseigneur le Dauphin,' italics added.

At any rate, *Le Ravissement de Céphale* announces one of the principal vehicles of political propaganda of mid-century, the mythological machine play.

The visits of the Fedeli and its leader, Giambattista Andreini, to the Bourbon court provided a further impetus to the development of a native lyric theatre in France.\(^{24}\) With their musical productions—some of which featured scenes in sung recitative—Andreini and his wife, the actress and singer Virginia Ramponi,\(^{25}\) would apprise the court of the latest developments in Florentine-style opera. The Fedeli arrived at Lyons in August 1613, where they gave four public performances before continuing on to Paris.\(^{26}\) Thereafter, Malherbe attended one of the performances that they gave before the royal family at the Louvre.\(^{27}\)

I went to the Comédie italienne on Saturday night by express command of the Queen . . . Arlequin is certainly different from what he had been, as well as Pedrolin. The former is 56 years old, and the latter 87: these are not appropriate ages for the stage. There it is necessary to have gay spirits and quick minds, which are hardly ever found in bodies as old as theirs. They performed the comedy called* Dai simili* [no doubt Andreini’s* Li due Leri simili*], which is Plautus’* Menandri.*

The Fedeli followed the royal court to Fontainebleau in November, where they gave on the average five performances per week,\(^{28}\) later that month they returned to Paris to perform at the Hôtel de Bourgogne from 24 November 1613 to 7 June 1614, after which they returned home.\(^{29}\)

The Fedeli left such a lasting impression that the young Louis XIII wrote to their patron, the Duke of Mantua, to request that they pay another visit to the
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French court. After two years of correspondence, Martineilli assembled his company and departed for France. The Fedeli had arrived by 12 January 1621, when Louis XIII attended a performance in the Hôtel de Bourbon. The actors performed for the King nine times in January and fourteen times in February, and when the King and his court took up residence at Fontainebleau during 6-28 April the Fedeli joined them. When the King asked the Italian actors to extend their stay in France by one year, everyone agreed except Harlequin, who returned to Italy in June; the rest of the troupe remained under the directorship of Giambattista Andreini. During this time the actors performed for the King and for the public at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, and when Louis left after Carnival 1622 to join his army, the Fedeli returned to Italy.

On the eve of their departure, Andreini published five of his musical plays in Paris. Included with the spoken text are Andreini’s detailed performance instructions (ordine) representing the practical concerns of the playwright, actor, and stage-director: i.e. set- and costume-design, stage properties, blocking, and incidental music and dance. Music effectively heightens the fantasy of his fairy-tale comedy Amor nello speccio: two spirits assume the form of sailors in Act 3, scene 7 and perform a dance-song to guitar accompaniment (‘Che fate, che fate’), and later sing a duet in Act 3, scene 10 (‘Siamo due spiriti Marinari’). Similarly, the addition of trumpets, bells, bagpipes, drums, and cymbals in La Sultana reinforces the play’s exotic Turkish setting. Amor nello speccio closes with a dance-song (‘Signor vi si fa intendere’), while Li due Leli simili ends with an envoy addressed to the audience (‘Io dunque spettatori’) and a moresca—the traditional cue that the play is over.

Two of Andreini’s Paris plays achieve a more thorough integration of music, dance, and spoken drama than had been hitherto attempted in France. The playwright acknowledged that his musical comedy La Ferinda was a bold, new experiment inspired by the ‘opere in musical recitative’ that he had seen in Florence and Mantua. This romantic comedy is set in Venice, with its seascapes, marble

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palaces, canals, and gondolas, and with music and dance contributing to the local colour. The play begins with some Venetian ladies and gentlemen who perform a carnivalesque builito. Then in the second scene Magnifico strikes up a colourfull band of ‘varii strumenti’, of which many are enumerated in his song (‘Sti vio- loni, e rebechini’). A chorus of gondoliers sings in Act 1, scene 6 (‘Olà Signori, lioghe le spade’), Pedrolino sings and plays the guitar in Act 2, scene 6 while sailing on the canals (‘Stia maledet sti canale’), and a quartet of local fishermen sings in Act 3, scene 2 (‘Se cotante amare sono’). Andreini also offered the intriguing option that the comedy could be performed entirely in sung recitative. With its combination of both realistic song and operatic recitative, its pastoral borrowings (such as the echo-dialogue in Act 2, scene 5), its allegorical prologue (where Thalia rises out of the waves on a seawheel to deliver some explanatory verses to the audience), and its emphasis on spectacle, La Ferinda looks forward to the mythological machine plays of the mid-seventeenth century.

According to Andreini, the hybrid musical play La Centaura was unquestionably his most extravagant creation. This unusual, semi-operatic work begins with a musical prologue that owes much to the intermedi tradition. The curtain opens to trumpet fanfares, revealing the colonnades of a lovely city and pyrami dés. Four mythical/allegorical figures then appear to their characteristic music: Thalia to a ‘sinfonia d’infiniti strumenti’, Pan to a ‘sinfonia di flauti, storte, over di pifferi’, Tragedy to the music of ‘trombe soda, e di tamburi discordi’, and finally Sagittarius on top of the zodiac to a ‘sinfonia di stridenti regali’. After each figure has sung an identifying aria, the prologue concludes with the sound of trumpets; Thalia, Pan, and Tragedy embrace and join voices in chorus (‘Tutti uniti qui dunque in bel legame’).

27 In the ‘Ordine per recitar La Ferinda’ that follows the play (pp. 51-2), Andreini states that 1. 2 requires ‘Varni strumenti suonar un aria’. The first strophe of Magnifico’s song lists many of these instruments (‘Sti violoni, e rebechini, Sti citarini, e li begli, flauti, e liust, Cornett musi, e melodia, Che segno mae, A tia mio goio, D’asder a tola’).
28 Ibid. 59-2.
29 In 1647 Andreini was in Paris for the performances of Rome’s Orfeo, at this time, he dedicated a presentation copy of La Ferinda to Cardinal Massen—probably with the hope of having it performed; see Piranèse, Opere italiane in Franc, p. xii n. 1.
31 Andreini provides details of the staging of this prologue in his ‘Ordine per recitar quest’Opera incominciando con il Prologo fino al fine’; ‘E’ un rimbombo di una sinfonia di flauti, storte, over di pifferi suonar un altra sinfonia et a questo suono uscira a suonare il Dio Pace…’ Al suon di trombe sordi e di tamburi discordi uscira la Tragedia e qui, sobbato che sarà nel mezzo al teatro, s’udira un organo di legno in suon mesto e eso, cavatara la sua ottava, e passagione nel mezzo in quello… Al suon d’una sinfonia di stridenti regali, nell’ altro comparirà il Sagittario in cima alla faccia del Zodiaco, la qual si vedera solo mezza in proposta, e li come c’è detto in cima, al suon di quella sinfonia farà a moto di bello… Finito il Prologo al suon d’infiniti trombe.’
32 Claude Boyer would follow much the same procedure in his preface to Les Amours de Jupiter et de Sémélée (1666), where the muses Hélène, Thalia, and Euterpe descend from Mount Parnassus to their characteristic music; see Ch. 13, p. 428.
Each successive act of the play is composed in a different dramatic genre, with the entr’actes marked by sung choruses. Act 1, a comedy, reveals that the wife of the Centaur is in fact the daughter of the King of Rhodes. The second act, a kind of pastorale, features a sung prayer ("O voi, che sù nel Ciel casi innocenti"), a sacrificial choral scene ("Per insano furore, per incendio sfacciato"), and a chorus of huntsmen ("O Centaura felice degna d’eterno Allori"). The third and final act is a tragedy performed in stile recitativo. In the denouement, the King of Rhodes dies, and his daughter arrives to claim her birthright. Muted trumpets and drums accompany the choral laments of the huntsmen ("Al trionfo di Morte", "La bevanda Reale", "Numi eterni, e sovrani"). The play concludes with a double chorus of shepherds celebrating the coronation of the Centauress as the new Queen of Rhodes ("O Centaura Bambina"). According to Prunières, Andreini's plays gradually prepared the Parisian public for the complicated plots that it would find several years later in opera; these plays would give the public an idea of the grand sumptuous fêtes that were the musical spectacles of Italy.\footnote{This multigenre experiment would be repeated in Bridard's 
Uranie (1631), a tragédie pastorale in which the first two acts are a tragédie pastorale set in Phrygia, the next two acts a pastorale set in Arcadia, and the final act a kind of pièce à machine. See also Quinault's 
La Comédie sans comédie (1657), in which each of the five acts respectively consist of a comedy, a pastorale, a farce, a tragedy, and a tragédie pastorale with machines. \cite{opera-italian}}