THE REORGANIZATION OF PUBLIC THEATRE (1673–1680)

News of a forthcoming 'pièce de spectacle nouvelle, toute comique' by Molière and Beauchamps planned for the following Carnival first appeared in the August 1672 issue of the Mercurie galant.1 Charpentier, flushed with the victory of La Comtesse d'Escaragnois and Le Mariage forcé, had evidently begun consulting with Molière on this project at the playwright's home in Auteuil.2 On 22 November general rehearsals for Le Malade imaginaire began at the Palais-Royal,3 and by mid-December the musical rehearsals were in full swing. In all, there were fifty-three rehearsals of the ballet—fifteen of them in conjunction with the comedy—and on 10 February 1673 Le Malade imaginaire premiered in a lavish and expensive production 'filled with dances, vocal music, and stage properties'.4

In the meantime Fiorilli's company continued to perform musical plays on alternate days at the Palais-Royal. In response to the Troupe du Roy's musical production of La Comtesse d'Escaragnois and Le Mariage forcé, the Italians premiered Joseph Girardin's Le Collier de perles, a 'Comédie Mêlée de Ballets & de Musique', for which Robinet praised its 'bonne musique | Et de tres beaux pas de ballet'.5 Similarly, their musical machine play Suite du festin de pierre (Agonias al comitato di pietra) was no doubt inspired by Molière's final comédie-ballet. Robinet gave a detailed account of this sequel to the earlier Don Juan play (Il Comitato di pietra) that told of the adventures of the Don's bastard son.6 The Suite du festin de pierre featured scenic spectacle, stage machines, and 'bonne musique' composed by Robert Cambert. According to Robinet, a 'lovely siren with an admirable voice sings wonderfully two or three airs accompanied by sweet

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1 Mercurie galant (8 Aug. 1672); given in Moreau, Raisons des causes relatifs à Molière, II. 420.

2 According to Le Registre d'Hôtel, Charpentier received 31 livres on 10 July 1672 'pour plusieurs voyages à Auteuil'; see Cherelvalley (ed.), Le 'Registre d'Hôtel', 31.

3 'On a ci-contre la preparation du malade imaginaire' (next to entry dated 22 Nov. 1672); Registre de La Grange, I. 140.

4 Ibid. 144. Still, the initial production expenses for Le Malade imaginaire amounted to 2,400 livres—about half those of Psyche.

5 See Robinet, letters of 30 July and 13 Aug. 1672; given in Brooks (ed.), Le Théâtre et l'opéra vue par Robinet et Laurent, 117–18. "The music for Le Collier de perles (of which only the dance numbers are preserved) is by Pierre Beauchamps; see Régine Arlett, 'Pierre Beauchamps and the Ballets de Collège', 138–45 (at 162–3) and Jérôme de la Guerre, 'Le Collier de perles et la musique de Pierre Beauchamps', 99–107. For further discussion, see Ch. 7, p. 145 and Ch. 19, p. 417.


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concerts, a baladin portrayed a demon in an acrobatic dance, and Scaramouche played his guitar. This was Cambert's last known theatrical collaboration in Paris, for that summer he departed to seek his fortune in London, where he founded a short-lived Royall Academy of Music at the Theatre Royal.7

Molière's sudden and unexpected death after the fourth performance of Le Malade imaginaire brought the successful but expensive production to a halt, and left the company in financial straits. Believing that the Troupe du Roy could not survive without the leadership of Molière, the King considered joining its remaining actors with the Troupe Royale of the Hôtel de Bourgogne.8 On 19 February the bequeathed company travelled to Saint-Germain to request that the King allow them to continue performing at the Palais-Royal.9 Evidently their petition was successful, for on 3 March performances of Le Malade imaginaire resumed, with La Thorillière playing the leading role (formerly played by Molière). On 5 March Monsieur and his wife attended a performance at the Palais-Royal; thereafter, the company gave seven more performances before the Lenten break—at which time it still owed more than 1,000 livres in production costs.10

After Molière's death La Grange took over the artistic direction of the Troupe du Roy, but he did not command the loyalty of the entire company. Four of its leading members (including La Thorillière) left to join the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Then on 22 April Lully acquired a new restriction limiting theatres to two singers and six instrumentalists, and forbidding the employment of 'any external singers, or of a greater number of strings for their entr'actes, or likewise of having any dancers, or an orchestra pit'.11 Five days later Lully's second opera, Cadmus et Hermione, premiered at the Académie Royale de Musique. In a singular show of support, Louis XIV and his court attended the performance at the Jeu de paume de Béquet and, according to the Gazette, 'the company departed extraordinarily satisfied with this superb spectacle'.12 The following day the King granted Lully
rent-free the use of the Théâtre du Palais-Royal for his Académie Royale de Musique.15

In his Registre, the new director of the Troupe du Roy noted with some exasperation that 'those actors and actresses who remained found themselves not only without a company but without a theatre, the King having deemed it apropos to give the use of the playhouse of the Palais-Royal to M. Lully, Superintendent of Music to His Majesty, which obliged them to seek another location and to take measures to form a new company'.16 According to Chappuzeau, the King placed Colbert in charge of selecting as he judged proper from among the most skilled of each, so as to form a new company . . . allocating the full shares, half shares, quarter shares, and three-quarter shares'.17 After much deliberation, ten members of the Marais joined with seven members of Molière's former company, together with three members who had been admitted after the Lenten break.18 The Marais actors brought with them their sets and stage machines, while the King allowed the Troupe du Roy to take 'boxes, stage, sets, and other works found in the hall of the said Palais-Royal belonging to the aforesaid troupe'.19 On 23 May, with the financial help of Molière's brother-in-law, André Boudet,18 the company acquired Perrin's former theatre, the Jeu de paume de la Bouteille, and entered into a partnership with Sourdré and Champeron, who still held the lease to the playhouse. For 14,000 livres and 'one share for the Marquis of Sourdré and another share for the Sieur de Champeron', the Troupe du Roy secured the rights to the theatre on the rue Mazarine and its boxes, sets, and machines.19 In June the Lieutenant of Police La Reyne issued an ordinance that permitted the opening of a new theatre, and forbade further performances at the Théâtre du Marais.20 On 9 July 1673 the Troupe du Roy inaugurated its new theatre, known as the Hôtel de Guénégaud.21

Lully's appropriation of the Théâtre du Palais-Royal also left the Italian actors without a playhouse, and so in April they accepted an invitation to visit the

15 Registre de la Grange, t. 147. 18 Chappuzeau, Théâtre français, ed. Morval, 127-8.
16 Claude de La Rose (dit Ronson) had left the Marais in May to join the Troupe du Roy, which had recently admitted two additional actresses (Sille Aubry and Angélique du Croy). For a full discussion of the two troupes, see Deierkau-Hohboch, Théâtre du Marais, ii, 187-99.
17 La Reyne's ordinance described it as 'Le Jeu de Paume situé dans la rue de Steine, au Faubourg Saint-Germain, avenue dans ladite rue, & dans celle des Fossés de Néve [i.e. rue Mazarine], vis-à-vis la rue de Guénégaud.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 It remains unclear why this theatre was called the Hôtel de Guénégaud, as it was a tennis-court, not a hotel, nor was it located on the rue Guénégaud. La Reyne's ordinance described it as 'Le Jeu de Paume situé dans la rue de Steine, au Faubourg Saint-Germain, avenue dans ladite rue, & dans celle des Fossés de Néve [i.e. rue Mazarine], vis-à-vis la rue de Guénégaud.'

23 See Scott, Commedia dell'Arte in Paris, 162-3. Evidently, there was some disagreement regarding the rights of the Italians to use the stage machinery. Further problems arose when the Italians began producing machine plays three years later; see Registre de la Grange, t. 149 and 227-8.
24 Robinet, lettre de 10 Nov. 1674, given in Brooks (ed.), Le Théâtre et l'époque va par Robinet et Laurent, 153-5.
25 This play is republished by Fouquet, Contemporaires du Roy, i, 519-48. Fouquet shows that Brécourt reproduces well-known scenes from several of Molière's comedies—hallets (Les Precieuses Ridicules, Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, Monseigneur de Pouancac, L'Amour médecin, Les Fils de Thau) as well as the comedies Sganarelle and Le Misanthrope.
26 The poet's complaint 'Hélas, Caron, hélas' is borrowed from Quinault's underworld scene in Alceste.
opera.27 As one character remarks in Act 5, scene 6, 'since the arrival of the Opéra, the rage for music has come over Paris and everyone has been bitten by the bug'. Here, the master of the house, an amateur musician, has employed violin-playing servants, who perform the play's overture and entr'actes. Musical performances, discussions about music, references to musical events in Paris, and its five singing characters earned Crispin musicien the nickname 'L'Opéra de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne' when a provincial company performed it the following year.28

The King and his court also honoured Molière's memory during July and August 1674, when a grand fête was given at Versailles to celebrate the annexation of Franche-Comté. The scheduled events included collations, gondola rides on the canals, carriage rides through the gardens, fireworks displays, and theatrical performances staged at various locations. While the Troupe Royale twice gave Racine's new tragedy Iphigénie in the Orangerie, Lully's Académie Royale de Musique performed Alceste in the newly completed marble courtyard, L'Églogue de Versailles in the Trianon, and Les Festes de l'Amour et de Bacchus in the Bassin du Dragon. Midway through the celebration, the Troupe du Roy performed the court première of Le Malade imaginaire in the Grotte de Thétis. This event was immortalized in Le Pautre's 1676 engraving, which shows a full complement of strings in the orchestra (Plate 8). Félibien's published account of the fête proclaimed that 'Their Majesties and all the court received no less pleasure than usual from the plays of its author'.29

Throughout the 1670s Molière's comedies and comédies-ballets formed a staple of the repertory at the Hôtel de Guénégaud.30 When the Troupe du Roy revived Amphitryon in September of 1673, the company's register listed a payment of 12 livres 10 sols made to 'M. Dassoyc'; evidently, the actors called upon Molière's old companion to assist with the music for this production.31 After Christmas 1673 the Troupe du Roy revived the comédie-ballet L'Amour médecin, and added Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme to their repertory the following spring.32 Le Malade imagi-

27 Crispin musicien, consulté par le Sieur de Haustruche, Comédiens de la série Troupe Royale (Paris, 1674).
28 Lancaster, History of French Dramatic Literature, iv. 439.
30 For further details with regard to expenditures on music and dance for productions at the Hôtel de Guénégaud, see J. Clarke, Music at the Guénégaud Theatre 1623–1800, Seventeenth-Century French Studies, 12 (1990), 89–110.
31 J. R gmme de la Troupe du Roi, 1673–1674, 3 Sept. 1673 (Archives de la Comédie-Française). Clarke (Music at the Guénégaud Theatre), 94 believes that this payment was a charitable handshake; however, the amount rather suggests a payment for services, roughly equivalent to the 14 livres 10 sols 'pour augmenter' Charpentier received in 1678 for a revival of L'Innommé (Archives de la Comédie-Française, VII. Registre des comédiens du Roi, 1673–1680, fo. 103). Dassoyc had been in prison on unknown charges from 9 Mar. until 30 Aug. 1673, and was saved from possible starvation through the kindness of the retired actor Louis Bjet. Soon thereafter, he was appointed musician to the royal household with a pension, so he would have had little need for charity at this time.
32 Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme evidently was presented in a musically reduced version, since the company's register lists payments made to 3 singers, 2 continuo players, 6 string players, and to La Moustache, the music director (Archives de la Comédie-Française, D. Regime de la Troupe du Roi, 1674–1677, account for Apr 1674).

33 Le Malade imaginaire was by far the most frequently performed comédie-ballet of the 1674–5 season; undoubtedly it was for this 4 May 1674 revival that Charpentier revised his musical score to conform to Lully's latest restrictions on music. The company also performed Monsieur de Pourcaugnac and Les Fâcheux on a double bill in July 1676, and added Le Mariage forcé to its repertory in October. In June 1679 the Guénégaud company revived Le Sicilien in a new musical version arranged by Charpentier.

In 1675 the Troupe du Roy revitalized its feud with Lully with Thomas Corneille's Cérès, the first in a series of new machine plays written for the Hôtel de Guénégaud.33 This spectacular production presented a clear challenge to Lully's monopoly. Four days after its première, Lully obtained further restrictions forbidding the hiring of professional singers and dancers. This new ordinance noted that professional singers were hired under the pretense of being regular company members; it therefore stipulated that the two singers permitted them to be actors.34 The company's forced compliance prompted Pierre Bayle to remark: 'if Molière's troupe were permitted to perform with music, dance, and instruments according to their wishes, Cérès would tower above all operas performed until now'.35 The Troupe du Roy gave Cérès seventy-six times between March and October 1675 and, according to de Visé, it would have run longer 'if the private interests of an individual had not forced them to omit the singers'.36 Nevertheless, the Gazette mentioned that Monsieur attended one of the last performances in October, and was 'marvellously satisfied with this fine spectacle, of which the decorations, the aerial flights, and the machines are extraordinary'.37

This production of Cérès inspired Fiorilli's company the following year to produce their own musical machine play, Le voyage de Scaramouches et d'Arlequin aux Indes (Il Viaggio di Scaramuccia e Arlechino alle Indie).38 This hodgepodge of comédie dell'arte, pastoral, opera, and machine play spiced with fantasy, exoticism, and magic effects was set to music by Claude Oudor, musical director to the Académie-Française. Two years later, Fiorilli's company performed another fanciful musical machine play La Magie naturelle—first at court and then at the Hôtel de Guénégaud.39

34 Lists of expenses for these productions as recorded in the troupe's registers are given in J. Bonnassieux, La Musique à la Comédie-Française (Paris, 1674), 16–20. For a recent survey of Charpentier's music for these machine plays, see C. Counsell, 'La Musique de Marc-Antoine Charpentier pour les pièces à machines (1675–1685)', Littératures classiques, 21 (1994), 115–24.
35 See 'Ordonnance portant défenses aux Comédiens de se servir d'aucuns musiciens extraordinaires ne y a leurs gages', in Bensol, Musiques de cour, 47.
36 Pierre Bayle, letter of 24 June 1675; quoted in Mézières, Répertoire analytique, 161.
37 Mermoz galeau (Jan. 1710), 283–4. The Troupe de Guénégaud originally ignored Lully's restrictions on music and dance and continued to use seven singing actors, three professional singers, and ten 'marcheurs' in their production.
38 Gazette, 97 (5 Oct. 1675), 738. Monsieur rewarded the troupe with 330 livres (Registre de La Grange, I. 176).
39 A synopsis of this play is given in Scott, Commedia dell'Arte in Paris, 204–10.
40 For information on this production, see ibid. 170–1 and 212–14.
Claudine ma voisine'. The most unusual performance is found in the fourth-act mascarade: a ballet that introduced the kings, queens, and knights of the four-card suits, who are accompanied by slaves representing other games: handball, backgammon, dice, and billiards. In the final act, ladies dressed as Juno, Minerva, and Venus preside over a tournament fought by knights. Cornelle's play enjoyed moderate success at the Hôtel de Guénégaud, where it received twenty-six performances from 7 August to 27 December 1676.

The musical activities of the Troupe Royale fell off in the latter 1670s, as the company premiered a series of new tragedies. A signal event was its 1676 production of La Princesse d'Elide: its first revival on the public stage since 1664, and the only comédie-ballet by Molière known to have been given at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Unfortunately, except for the properties listed by the stage-designer Michel Laurent (which included the mechanical tree featured in the sixth interlude), no details are known about this production.

At the height of his struggle with the Hôtel de Guénégaud, Lully was confronted with a new challenge to his monopoly. On 31 March 1675 Dominique de Normandin, Sieur de La Grille, obtained from the King a twenty-year privilege to give marionette plays with music, dance, and machine effects at the Théâtre du Marais. These marionettes, called 'pygmées' and 'bambocches' because of their diminutive height, were capable of walking, dancing, and moving 'like living persons'; de Visé commented that 'they are already much improved, they do not dance badly, but they sing too loudly to be able to sing well for a long while'. Their operatic productions included Les Pygmées (1676), a 'tragico-comedy ornamented with music, ballet entrées, machines, and set-changes', and Les Amours de Micron, ou les charmes d'Orcan (1676), a 'sprightly tragedy, interspersed with singular and entertaining ornaments'. La Grille spared no expense, hiring professional singers, instrumentalists, mechanists, scene-painters, and tailors. A year after the inauguration of this 'Théâtre des Pygmées', Lully attended a performance with his family. While Lully evidently gave no immediate sign of his disapproval, the Lieutenant of Police La Réynie received a letter from Monseigneur (the King's 15-year-old son) on 5 February 1677, stating that the King viewed these musical productions as an infringement on Lully's privilege;
even though La Grille and his associates later filed an official protest, the Théâtre des Pygmalions was closed that year.

After 1676 the Troupe du Roy capitulated to Lully's restrictions and reduced the amount of music in its productions. For a performance of Quinault's *Les Coups de l'Amour et de la Fortune* on 6 August 1677, the company's account books list payments for 'tambours, trompettes, Poussetin'. Montauban's pastoral machine play *Les Charmes de Félicité* was revived on 31 August 1677 at a cost of 180 livres in initial production expenses, and then an additional daily expense of 30 livres for 'musique symphonie et ouvrirs pour les machines'. For Boisrobert's *La Fille Gageure*, given on 26 April 1678, payments were made 'pour la musique' for two performances. Payments are listed for 'violons et habits' in a 7 June 1678 revival of Scarron's *Héritier ridicule*—probably for the farcical serenade performed in Act 4, scene 5. The Troupe du Roy revived *L'Inconstant* twice in 1679 with great success: for six performances during Carnival, the *Mercure galant* reported that 'this gallant play has such special ornaments that it is beginning to attract great crowds, as it did three years ago'. For another six performances given in October, Charpentier provided an instrumental overture and some dances for the prologue, and some additional airs. Charpentier may also have provided the company with an orchestral overture for its 11 July revival of Molière's non-musical comedy *Le Détroit amoureux*.

The Troupe du Roy's final production of the 1679–80 season was *La Devinetesse, ou les Faux enchantements*, a comedy by Thomas Corneille and de Visé based on the real-life activities of the famous fortune-teller and poisoner La Voisin. Although the elaborate staging cost a staggering 2,569 livres, the topicality of the subject, combined with its special 'magical' effects, made the play a popular success. In its forty-seven performances from 19 November 1679 to 10 March 1680, *La Devinetesse* became the 'most profitable theatrical investment of the century'. The play's text does not explicitly call for music. However, in view of the connection established between music and mysterious, magical, or supernatural forces in other plays of the time, it seems likely that music and sound effects would have accompanied the conjurings of the protagonist, Mme Jobin.

In August 1680 the King and Colbert joined the Troupe du Roy with the Troupe Royale to form the Comédie-Française. The combined company, now named the 'Seuls Comédiens du Roy', temporarily occupied the Hôtel de Guénégaud, while the vacant Hôtel de Bourgogne was given over to Fiorilli's company. No longer having to share a playhouse, the Comédiens du Roy scheduled daily performances. The company now consisted of fifteen actors and twelve actresses, which included five established playwrights: Champmeslé, Poisson, La Tuillerie, Brécourt, and Hautoche. On 14 November 1680 the Comédie-Française premièred Poisson's *comédie-ballet Les Fous divertissants*, with songs, ensembles, choruses, dances, and instrumental music composed by Marc-Antoine Charpentier. Lully evidently relaxed his musical restrictions for this production, and he even permitted the actors to parody scenes from his operas *Bellérophon* (1679) and *Proserpine* (1680) in Act 2. The merger of the three companies—the Troupe du Roy, the Théâtre du Marais, and the Hôtel de Bourgogne—brought an end to the strife that had reigned among Parisian theatres for the first eighty years of the seventeenth century. With the centralization of Parisian theatres there emerged a new spirit of détente, and even cooperation, between the Académie Royale de Musique and the Comédie-Française.