In 1658 Molière and his touring company performed in Rouen while they made preparations to return to Paris. As the Marais theatre was unoccupied at that time, the troupe leased it together with the sets, machines, stage properties, boxes, chandeliers, and furnishings that the Marais actors had sold to their proprietors in 1653.1 In a letter to the Abbé de Pure, Thomas Corneille suggested that Molière’s company ought to join with the remaining members of Laroque’s company.2 Meanwhile Molière secured the protection of Philippe d’Orléans, younger brother to the King (known to the court as ‘Monsieur’).3 Upon their arrival in Paris in October 1658, the ‘Troupe de Monsieur’ appeared at the Louvre before Louis XIV, the royal family, and the Troupe Royale of the Hôtel de Bourgogne. There the actors performed Pierre Corneille’s Néomène (a tragedy then in the Troupe Royale’s repertory), followed by one of Molière’s provincial farces. In appreciation, the King granted them the use of the Petit-Bourbon, which they were to share with the Italian commedia dell’arte company of Tiberio Fiorilli.4 The actors agreed to perform on alternate days of the week: the Italians on the jours ordinaires of Tuesdays, Fridays, and Sundays; the Troupe de Monsieur on the jours extraordinaires of Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.5 However, this

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1 Jurgens and Manfield Miller, Cet an de recherches sur Molière, 312–9 (‘Bull par Louis Redon de Tallhouet à Madeleine Béquet du jeu de paume de Marais à Paris’, 12 July 1653).
2 Thomas Corneille, letter of 19 May 1658, quoted in G. Margolleda, Recueil des textes et des documents du XVIIe siècle relatifs à Molière (Paris, 1965), i. 100. This advice would turn out to be prophetic, for after Molière’s death fifteen years later the King would join the remaining members of the Troupe du Roy with the Marais company.
3 Pref. to Oeuvres de Monsieur de Molère, ed. La Grange and Vivet (Paris: Théâtre, Barbier, et Troubrioult, 1682). Philippe was the 18-year-old nephew of Gaston d’Orléans, who had sponsored the Théâtre Théatine fifteen years earlier. La Grange records that along with the title of Troupe de Monseigneur came an annual of 300 livres per actor, a sum they never received: see Le Régie de La Grange, 1659–1681, facs. eds. by R. E. and G. P. Young (Paris, 1962), i. 3.
4 Fiorilli (di Scarsoneche) had belonged to one of the commedia dell’arte companies that visited the French court in 1644, and in 1653 he returned to Paris to stay. In 1658 Fiorilli’s company consisted of Marc-Antonio Bianchi (Florace), Frédéric Pede (Aurelia), Domenico Locurci (Trivulce), Louis Gelbeil (Lucille), and Lorenzo Bizzera del Campo (Marinetto). See E. Campard, Les Comédiens du roi de la troupe italienne pendant le deux derniers siècles: Documents inédits recueillis aux archives nationales (Paris, 1880), vol. i, p. xiv, and V. Scott, The Commedia dell’Arte in Paris, 1644–1657 (Charleston, Va., 1990), 36. At this time Giacomo Torelli was also living in the Petit Bourbon along with his servant, who served as concierge to the theater and received a daily salary of 1 livre from the Troupe de Monsieur (Récits de La Grange, i. 18).
5 According to Chappuzeau, the jours extraordinaires were less desirable because Wednesday and Saturday were market days, Thursdays were the days for promenades, and on Mondays the coaches left for Germany, Italy, and the provinces. See Chappuzeau, Le Théâtre français, ed. Monval, 70.
the Marais: Julien Bedeau (dit Jodelet) and his brother François Bedeau (dit l’Espy). With the scenic resources of the Petit-Bourbon (and its storehouse of sets and machines) available for its use, the Troupe de Monsieur introduced music, dance, and spectacle in its productions. During the summer of 1660 the troupe’s repertory included two musical machine plays: Gilbert’s Les Amours de Diane et d’Endimion and Montauban’s Les Charmes de Félicité. As both works belonged to the repertory of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, this presented a clear challenge to the Troupe Royale.

By 1659 Mazarin had finally negotiated a peace treaty with Spain, to be sealed by the marriage of Louis XIV and the Spanish infanta Maria-Theresa. In honour of this occasion, Alexandre, Sieur de Rieux, known as the Marquis de Sourdéac, planned a grand celebration at his Château de Neufbourg in Normandy. Sourdéac was an amateur engineer whose hobby was designing and building stage machinery. To honour the royal couple, he commissioned Pierre Corneille to write a new machine play, La Conquête de la tison d’or, that would feature scenic effects of his invention. As soon as the Marais company had reorganized, Sourdéac engaged the actors to perform it at Neufbourg. Moreover, to ensure their success, Corneille agreed to let the Théâtrel du Marais produce his play in Paris. The marriage of Louis XIV and Maria-Theresa took place on 9 June 1660 at Saint-Sébastien, and afterwards the royal couple spent the summer at the châteaux of Chambord, Fontainebleau, Vaux-le-Vicomte, and Vincennes. On 29 and 31 July the Troupe de Sourdéac entertained the newly-weds in the gardens of Vincennes with a number of Molière’s comedies, and then later appeared at the Louvre when the royal entourage returned to Paris.

La Tison d’or finally premiered in November of 1660 at Sourdéac’s château, where the Marais actors spent November giving repeated performances. According to Chappuzeau, it was talked about more than any other machine play given in France: the spectacular scenic effects created such widespread interest that a replica of the sets, models of the play’s characters, and the stage machines were later put on public display. The impression made by this magnificent production was so great that the Merve Galant recalled its success thirty-five years later: 17

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6 Registre de La Grange, I.7 (entry of 11 July 1659). It remains unclear exactly why the Italian actors left. One possible reason proposed by Scott (Commedia dell’Arte in Paris, 77–8) is that, based on rival competition from the French companies, the Italians returned to Italy to find new scenarios with which to refresh their repertory.

7 Argument de la grande pièce intitulée La Rosaire, Impertinence de Constantinople. Representée au Petit Bourbon par la troupe italienne, avec des plus agréables et magnifiques vers, musiques, décors, changements de théâtre et machines, extrêmement entre chansons et de saillantes inventions (Paris: René Bremond, 1678).

8 Bijoux (Giovanni Terelli and Bourque Stage Design, 177–8) reproduces two set designs (one in Vienna, the other in Rome) that he attributes to Rossini. The author also notes (p. 180) how Terelli could have made use of sets that were already in existence in the storerooms at the Petit-Bourbon, and that ‘the completely new design was the palace with a tower above the entrance’ in Act 3.

9 J. Loret, Mise en Carrière, ii. 458; letter of 23 Mar. 1658.

10 This repertory was drawn from among the most known printed plays of the time, many of which had been performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne: Desmarest’s Saint-Sulpice’s Les Vivians et Veau; Guétin’s de Boucoul’s Séméza Passe; Gilbert de la Tassorens’s Le Campagnard; Reisbert’s La Folie Gagnée; Thomas Cornelle’s Dom Bérconn’s Gémeau and Le Gélier de sa pensée; Scarron’s Désolat; Mme. Japhet d’Annonay, and L’Heuristique réaliste; Pierre Cornelle’s Le Morbine, Hémius, Rodrigue, Clunus, La Mort de Pompe, Henri, and Le Cid; Tristan le Flambeau’s La Marianne et Le Mort de Christ; Du Ryer’s Scène de Némésie; Rieutort’s Thenardet; Coquetolet Le Clairét’s Pâle et Ora, Magnous’s Zidoreuns, Reyne de Palmarse; and Madeleine Béjat’s Dom Guichet, ou les Enchantements de Merlin (probably an adaptation of Guétin’s de Boucoul’s Dom Guichet de la Ménée).

11 The Treaty of the Pyrenees, signed on 7 Nov. 1659, ended the war between France and Spain.

12 G. Coconst (Les Vieilles de Comédie (1658–1684) (Paris, 1945), 25) has shown that the Mœurs de Sourdéac initially contacted Corneille between March and July of 1660.

13 A surviving playbill from Feb. 1660 (reprint. in S. Chevalley, Albana théâtre classique: La Vie théâtrale sous Louis XIII et Louis XIV (Paris, 1976), 86) announces these forthcoming performances of La Tison d’or, which, in the event, were given at the Théâtrel du Marais a full year after the Neufbourg performance.

14 A modern photograph of Sourdéac’s private theatre is reproduced in A. Jardillier, Le Théâtre d’Hoïrat du Marais de Sourdéac (Paris, 1961), 34.

15 See Chappuzeau, Théâtre français, II, ch. 22, p. 48.


17 Merve Galant (1689), 222: quoted in Jardillier, Sourdéac, 38.
the magnificence with which [Sourdéac] gave a grand fête at his Château de Neufbourg will long be remembered... The tragedy of La Toison d'or, combined with music and superb spectacles, was written expressly for it. He brought to Neufbourg the actors of the Marais, who performed it there several times in the presence of more than sixty of the most esteemed persons of the province, who were lodged in the château and treated during more than eight days with all imaginable hospitality and abundance. This took place at the beginning of the winter of 1660, and afterwards M. le Marquis de Sourdéac gave to the actors all the machines and set-decorations that had been used in this grand spectacle.

In point of fact, Sourdéac probably did not give his stage machines to the actors, since on 7 September 1660 they contracted Denis Buffequin to build the machines under Sourdéac’s supervision for their Paris performances. The company returned from Neufbourg toward the beginning of December, bringing with them only the sets, and the public première of La Toison d’or took place at the Théâtre du Marais during Carnival 1661. The King came to the Théâtre du Marais when the company revived it the following winter, and was so pleased with it that he returned once again and bestowed on the Marais actors the sum of 2,000 livres tournois for the two machine performances of La Toison d’or given in his presence.

In October 1660 the Petit-Bourbon was demolished by Colbert’s orders to make room for the eastward expansion of the Louvre. At Monsieur’s request, the King permitted Molière’s company to use Richelieu’s old theatre in the Palais-Royal. After a decade of neglect the playhouse had fallen into ruin; and so the King ordered that the necessary repairs be made to the building, and he left the interior remodelling to the actors. The Troupe de Monsieur was allowed to salvage the boxes and other furnishings from the Petit-Bourbon, and contracted a master carpenter to build two additional rows of boxes. The company constructed a raked stage and a wooden floor for the parterre, and covered Le Meire’s trompe l’œil ceiling with a large blue canopy suspended by ropes. The carpentry was completed by mid-December; but the metal- and stone-work and the installation of tapestries by Mathieu (the company’s set-designer) required another month. Finally, on 20 January 1661, the new playhouse that would be home to Molière’s company for the next twelve years opened its doors to the public. When Fiorilll’s actors returned from Italy in January 1662, they were allowed to share the Théâtre du Palais-Royal in exchange for reimbursing the Troupe de Monsieur for half of the total cost of the renovations.

On 13 July 1661 Nicolas Fouquet, Superintendent of Finance, gave a fête at his château of Vaux-le-Vicomte in honour of Monsieur and his new bride, Henriette d’Angleterre (sister of Charles II of England), for which the Troupe de Monsieur performed Molière’s comedy L’École des maris. At that time Fouquet revealed to Molière his plan for a series of fêtes, and commissioned him to write a new play. The next month, the Troupe de Monsieur performed Molière’s first comédie-ballet, Les Fâcheux, as part of a doomed fête given at Vaux-le-Vicomte for Louis XIV and the royal family. The playwright’s prior association with the corrupt Superintendent of Finance did not affect the King’s esteem for Molière, for immediately before Fouquet’s arrest, disgrace, and incarceration Louis XIV invited Molière to perform Les Fâcheux and L’École des maris at Fontainebleau, for which he awarded the Troupe de Monsieur the princely sum of 15,428 livres for ‘décorations, baladins, danseurs, nourriture et récompense des comédiens’.

However, despite Loret’s announcement that Les Fâcheux would soon be seen in Paris, Molière postponed the public première for two months. His reasons for doing so are not hard to imagine. As the Queen was conspicuously absent from Fouquet’s fête due to the advanced stages of her pregnancy, Molière knew that a royal celebration would be forthcoming. Thus when the Grand Dauphin was born on 1 November, Molière cancelled all subsequent performances at the Palais-Royal while his company prepared Les Fâcheux for performance three days later. This two-month delay probably worked to Molière’s advantage, for it made the public curious to see the regal entertainment that was rumoured to have contributed to Fouquet’s downfall. The box-office receipts for the first two weeks bore this out, for they totalled no more than twice those of the previous two weeks.

With the establishment of the Troupe de Monsieur in Paris, the struggle for theatrical supremacy escalated into a satiric literary war. Molière had first...
threw down the gauntlet when he performed Corneille’s Nicomède before the King and the Troupe Royale; thereafter the Troupe de Momusier appropriated other plays from its rivals for production at the Petit-Bourbon. Then Molière ridiculed the bombastic style of declamation practised at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in scene 9 of Les Précieuses ridicules. A barrage of polemical plays attacking Molière followed in 1660, all by Anthoine Badeau de Somaize and very likely given at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. The next year the Troupe Royale added to its repertory Poisson’s comedy Le Baron de la Crasse, in which the head of a troupe of travelling actors (obviously modelled after Molière) is shown to be egotistical, proud of himself and his repertory of older plays and outmoded farces.

During this time the Théâtre du Marais remained outside this conflict. For Carnival 1662 the actors revived Chapoton’s La Descente d’Orphée aux enfers, with sets and machines by Denis Buffequin. However, their 1662 première of Sertorius marked the triumphant return of Pierre Corneille to the Marais, and ignited the envy of the two rival companies. The Troupe Royale and the Troupe de Momusier obtained copies of Corneille’s tragedy before its publication, and after the Easter break they mounted their own productions, thereby preventing the Marais from recovering its initial investment in the expensive costumes. Furthermore, the Troupe de Momusier lured away Brécourt and La Thorillière, two of the leading actors of the Marais, while the Hôtel de Bourgogne followed suit by hiring the actress Alix Faviot (dite la Des Gélettes). These retaliations had their intended effect, for the Marais ceased its performances of Sertorius. Corneille expressed concern for the future of the Théâtre du Marais (“They all aspire to join the Hôtel de Bourgogne... some, I am told, have thoughts to go to the Palais-Royal. I do not know what keeps them at the Marais.”)

A new battle raged when Donnena de Visé criticized Molière’s latest comedy, L’école des femmes (1662), and touched off a controversy known as “la Guerre comique.” He accused Molière of gross impiety for his ‘realistic’ portrayals. The Hôtel de Bourgogne continued the attack by producing two scurrilous, polemical plays: de Visé’s Zélinde, ou la Véritable critique de l’École des femmes et la Critique de la critique et Boursault’s Le Portrait du peintre, ou La Contre-critique de l’École des femmes. Molière responded to his detractors with L’Impromptu de Versailles, a devastating satire in which the actors of the Troupe de Momusier (playing themselves) discussed Boursault’s play and lampooned the grandiloquent acting of the stars of the Troupe Royale. The King stood behind Molière, and added his name to the list of writers and scholars receiving annual pensions (gratifications).

For the 1663–4 season, the Troupe Royale produced a number of plays featuring music, dance, and spectacle. When Gabriel Gilbert’s Les Amours d’Ovide premiered at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in June 1663, Loret praised its elegant verse, machine effects, and ‘doux concerts.’ Sometime during the 1663 season the company also performed Antoine de Montfleury’s Le Mary sans femme, a comédie-ballet set in Algeria, while the composer remains unknown, Edward Forman suggests that it was Robert Cambert. The following year Boursault’s La Mémorphose des Yeux de Philis changez en astres, a machine play featuring ‘spectacular and musical effects’, was premiered at the Hôtel de Bourgogne.

Meanwhile, Molière prepared to increase the musical component in his own productions at the Palais-Royal. The Troupe du Roy engaged a small string ensemble for the 1663–4 season to play entr’acte music, and during the 1663 Lenten break the company purchased its own harpsichord. Then on 29 January 1664 Molière’s second comédie-ballet, Le Mariage forcé, premiered at court with music and dances by Lully. Perhaps encouraged by the success of Montfleury’s Le Mary sans femme, Molière subsequently transferred Le Mariage forcé to the Palais-Royal and gave it an expensive production ‘avec le ballet et les orneaments’—for which he engaged the court dancer and choreographer Pierre Beauchamps as maître de ballet. At first Le Mariage forcé appeared to be a hit, when four out of the first six performances during Carnival 1664 brought in over 1,200 livres; however, attendance subsequently fell off as the daily box-office receipts dropped to less than 500 livres, and it became impossible for the company to bear the financial burden of such princely orneaments. Molière withdrew Le Mariage forcé after twelve performances, and the Troupe de Momusier ended the season with less expensive productions: de Visé’s Zélinde, or the Véritable critique de l’École des femmes and the Critique de la critique and Boursault’s Le Portrait du peintre, or La Contre-critique de l’École des femmes. Molière responded to his detractors with L’Impromptu de Versailles, a devastating satire in which the actors of the Troupe de Momusier (playing themselves) discussed Boursault’s play and lampooned the grandiloquent acting of the stars of the Troupe Royale. The King stood behind Molière, and added his name to the list of writers and scholars receiving annual pensions (gratifications).

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plays: L’École des maris, L’Impromptu de Versailles, Les Fâcheux, and Le Cocu imaginaire. In the summer of 1664 the Troupe Royale premièrè Gilbert’s tragicomedy Les Amours d’Angélilque et de Médor. An unidentified dramatic scene, dating from the mid-seventeenth century, appears painted on an elegant fan owned by the Comédie-Française—and would seem to depict an intermède from the latter production (see jacket illustration and Pl. 8). The theatre setting appears to be the Hôtel de Bourgogne, where spectators are shown standing in the parterre and seated on-stage at both sides. A tournament is taking place centre-stage. In the foreground four knights in armour have abandoned their lances and are battling with swords; behind them stand three lancebearers—two in full armour, one masked—and a turbaned character. Background centre-stage are shown four trumpets and kettledrums. In Gilbert’s chivalric tragicomedy, Angélilque has chosen the knight Médor over Roland, Renaud, and Roger to represent her in the lists. The tournament takes place between the fourth and fifth act; only afterwards, Angélilque learns that Médor defeated Roland and spared his life. This would seem to be the episode depicted in this illustration, which might well have been enacted on-stage as a ballet intermède.

After losing three members to its rival companies that previous season, the Théâtre de Marais regrouped and revived Corneille’s La Toison d’or during the winter of 1663–4. However, few authors proved willing to furnish the Théâtre du Marais with this kind of repertoire. Later that year, the Marais company lost two more leading actors, André Hubert and Estienne des Ursis, to the Palais-Royal and the Hôtel de Bourgogne respectively. However, the Marais’s fortunes improved when Claude Boyer agreed to provide a new series of machine plays. The first of these, Les Amours de Jupiter et de Sémélie, featured an unprecedented amount of music and dance to accompany Denis Buffequin’s spectacular scenic effects. According to Sublligny, his stage machines surpassed those created by Torelli for Andromède.47


48 On 11 Jan. 1664 Blumenhal attended a performance, at which he expressed his admiration of the sumptuous and costly stage effects. See Mengold, ‘Ch. C. von Blumenhalts Pariser Tagesbücher,’ 239.

49 In his 25 Apr. 1662 letter to the Abbé de Pure, Pierre Corneille wrote that ‘[i]f [Boyer and Quinsaul] do not come to their aid as I have, it does not seem likely that the Marais will become re-established; and when the machine play (which is falling out of fashion) becomes defunct, I believe that this theatre will not be a good position’ (quoted in Méllville, Le Théâtre et le public, 34).

50 Diezkauf-Holboëm, Théâtre du Marais, ii. 158–9. It is possible that the actors and actresses themselves sang and danced in this production, since no mention is made of hired singers and dancers.

51 See La Graveille de Mayolus, letter of 17 Jan. 1666, and Charles Robinet, letter of 16 Jan. 1666; repr. in Rochschild (ed.), Correspondance de Loret, i. 613 and 624. Louis de Mollier was well known in his day as a composer of ballets, of instrumental music, and of sung airs. He composed music for Boyer’s Les Amours de Jupiter et de Sémélie (1666) and Donzette de Vise’s Le Mariage de Bacchus et d’Aréthuse (1672), both given at the Théâtre du Marais. He is also credited with having written music for Donzette de Vise’s Les Amours du Señor (1675); but this is open to question, since the play makes no reference to music; see B. Maxfield-Millier, ‘Louis de Mollier, musicien et son homonyme Mollière,’ Barcaroles sur la musique française classique, 3 (1965), 31–38.

52 See Robinet, letter of 16 Jan. 1666; repr. in Rochschild (ed.), Correspondance de Loret, i. 623–4. These performances of Boyer’s Les Amours de Jupiter et de Sémélie would be recalled by Donzette de Vise fifteen years later.


54 Loret, Mise en scène historique, iv. 229; letter of 2 Aug. 1664. Chigi was at Fontainebleau to deliver a formal apology to Pope Alexander VII with regard to an incident that occurred in Aug. between the Pope’s Cornicarn guards and Louis’s ambassador to Rome, the Duc de Créquy.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF PARISIAN THEATRE

Those who are curious, go and see the Marais’s play, to be sure, the machines for Andromède seem like nothing compared to those of this last work, which surpasses all others. I believe that the machinist is the devil incarnate when he creates such marvels; one cannot conceive of the workings of his incomparable machines. But with these few verses one will know nothing. Go, say, go and see them.

The Marais company hired an orchestra and engaged the court dancer Anthoine des Brosses as maître de ballet for this sumptuous production. The composer (called ‘un des plus grands Genies du Royaume’ in the livret) was identified by Robinet and Mayolus as the court composer Louis de Mollier.0 Les Amours de Jupiter et de Sémélie premiered on 2 January 1666, and enjoyed immediate success. Louis XIV attended a performance on 11 January, and Boyer later boasted in his printed dedication (‘Epistre au Roy’) that his play amused the King for three full hours. In the spring of 1664 Molière’s company participated in Les Plaisirs de l’Isle enchantée, the first of Louis XIV’s grands divertissements. The actors spent three weeks at Versailles, during which time they premièred the Molière–Lully comédie-ballet La Princesse d’Élïde, and also performed Les Fâcheux, Le Mariage forcè, and Tartuffe. In July Louis summoned the Troupe de Monsieur to Fontainebleau to repeat La Princesse d’Élïde, and to give Racine’s tragedy Le Théâbide for the papal legate, Cardinal Fabio Chigi. The Troupe Royale were also there performing two of Corneille’s tragedies, Othon and Gide—the latter of which was given with ballet intermèdes by Lully (Entr’aets d’Édipe, LWV 23). That autumn Molière’s company cancelled performances for a week at the Palais-Royal to prepare for the Parisian première of La Princesse d’Élïde. This was to be an elaborate musical production, for which the troupe engaged professional singers and dancers, a choreographer, a music director (probably Robert Cambert), and a small orchestra of 8 strings, 3 oboes, and continuo. Beginning on 9 November 1664, La Princesse d’Élïde played there for a single run of twenty-five consecutive performances.
MUSIC AND PUBLIC THEATRE IN PARIS

The next summer the Troupe de Monsieur performed for another fête at Versailles given in honour of the Queen. A temporary stage and amphitheatre was erected in the gardens and adorned with porticoes, scenic perspectives, orange-trees, and equipped with stage machines by Vigaranzi. Following a ball danced by the royal family, Molière’s actors performed Le Favori by Marie-Catherine Desjardins (better known as Mme de Villiedieu) in the manner of a comédie-ballet with musical intermèdes. After refreshments were served on-stage, and then the guests retired to the labyrinth, where a torchlit banquet accompanied by an ensemble of strings, winds, and various court singers awaited them. Later that summer, Louis XIV called Molière’s actors to Saint-Germain-en-Laye to announce that he had asked Monsieur to release them from his protection; henceforth they would be called the ‘Troupe du Roy’, and with their new title came an annual royal subsidy of 6,000 livres.

As the King’s personal entertainers, the Troupe du Roy could expect to be summoned upon short notice. The first call came two weeks later, when Louis ordered an entertainment for an autumn hunting-party at Versailles. Molière cancelled performances at the Palais-Royal for a week, while he and Lully hastily put together a comédie-ballet, L’Amour médecin. According to the Registre de La Grange, the company left Versailles on Sunday, September 13th, and returned on Thursday the 17th; we performed L’École des maris with Impromptu [de Versailles], and L’Amour médecin three times with music and ballet. The public première of L’Amour médecin soon followed at the Palais-Royal, and its first run lasted until November of that year.

The Hôtel de Bourgogne were also frequently called upon to give command performances for the King. On 9 January 1666 a magnificent fête was held at the Palais-Royal in honour of the wedding of the Marquis du Roure and Claude-Marie du Guast (dite d’Artigyn, la fille d’honneur of the King’s sister-in-law). For this occasion the Troupe Royale performed Thomas Corneille’s Antiochus together with a ballet in several entrées; Robinet identified this ballet as Le Triomphe de Bacchus dans les Indes. However, tragedy followed upon the heels of

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this gay celebration: Anne of Austria, long afflicted with cancer, died eleven days later, and the forthcoming Carnival celebrations were cancelled.

In August 1666 two short musical comedies by Brécourt premiered at the Hôtel de Bourgogne: La Nocé de village, and Le Jaloux invisible. The former is a kind of precursor to opéra-comique, depicting peasant quarrels, an appeal before a judge, a reading of the marriage contract, and a concluding wedding chorus and dances. Le Jaloux invisible, on the other hand, seems to have been inspired by Molière’s L’Amour médecin; when Brécourt’s comedy appeared in print later that year, it included Robert Cambert’s musical score for the comic Italian trio (Bon di, Cariselli, bon di) which many believed had been composed by Lully.

By December 1666 the court had ended its period of official mourning for the late Queen Mother, and gave Le Ballet des Muses in anticipation of its annual Carnival celebration. The King and his courtiers, the Troupe du Roy, the Troupe Royale, the Italian and Spanish companies, and singers, dancers, and instrumentals of the court all participated in this gala ballet royal, which they performed repeatedly from 2 December 1666 until 19 February 1667. When Maria-Theresa gave birth to a daughter in early January, a Spanish masquerade was added in celebration of the Queen’s fruitfulness. For their multiple performances of Molière’s Médecine, La Pastorale comique, and Le Sicilien (given as the thirteenth and fourteenth entrées), Louis XIV rewarded the Troupe du Roy with 12,000 livres—double their annual subsidy. For the sixth entrée Quinault contributed a short comic piece, Les Poètes, featuring members of the Spanish troupe who sang and danced while accompanying themselves on harps and guitars. Upon returning to Paris, the Troupe Royale performed several entrées from the Ballet des Muses at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, together with Quinault’s comedies Les Poètes and Les Orateurs latins et les Philosophes. Of the three comedies Molière contributed to the Ballet des Muses, he brought only Le Sicilien to the Palais-Royal, where it premiered on 10 June 1667. Later that autumn the King summoned the Troupe du Roy to Versailles, where they performed Pierre Corneille’s Attila, Molière’s La

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86 See Robinet, letter of 22 Aug. 1666 (repr. in Rouchard ed.), Comédiens et lettres, ii. 309.
87 In fact, trefcourt’s comedy may well have been inspired by the scarfandant—Lully masquée Les Noces de village (1668). See Lancaster, History of French Drama, Literature, ed. ii. 670.
88 La Jalousie invisible, comédie représentée au Théâtre Royal de l’Hôtel de Bourgogne, par le Sieur de Brécourt, Comédien ordinaire du Roy (Paris: Pepignat, 1666). The music, found on pp. 43–82, bears the heading “Trio italien burlesque composé par le Sieur Cambert, Maître de la musique de la royne Reine Marie.”
89 See the frères Parfait, Histoire du Théâtre Français, x. 130 n. Nevert and Thoan (pseudonym for Charles-Louis Estienne Tronet and A. E. Roquet) relate an anecdote of how an Italian composer named Cartelli, who wished to offer his services to the King, was publicly humiliated by Lully; see Les Origines de l’opéra français (Paris, 1886; repr. Geneva, 1972), 83–4.
91 Robinet, letter of 12 June 1667 (repr. in Rouchard ed.), Comédiens et lettres, ii. 878.
to visit the King at Saint-Germain-en-Laye instead of coming to the Hôtel de Bourgogne as they had promised, he was obliged in turn to invent some fake Russians who would be present at their theatre, as advertised.\textsuperscript{69}

The activities of Fiorilli’s commedia dell’arte company, which had shared theatres with Molière’s company since 1658, remain obscure during their early years in Paris.\textsuperscript{70} More is known of their newer repertoire of the late 1660s, when these Italian comedies began to feature French songs, dances, and contemporary Parisian settings. \textit{Le Règail des dames} (Il Regio di la domna) premières on 2 May 1667,\textsuperscript{71} and seems to have been inspired by Molière’s commedia-ballet \textit{Le Sicilien}. Arlequin sings a drinking-song ("Paye chopine, ma voisine") in Act 1, some Moorish dancers and two miniature Scaramouches dance a ballet at the Foire Saint-Germain in Act 3, and a sarabande and another drinking-song are performed in Act 4. Robinet referred to \textit{Le Règail des dames} as ‘an enchanted spectacle . . . full of little miracles’, and refers to ‘a certain chansonnette à boire that sticks in my memory—knowing it to be a famous author, in music a past master; and without talking nonsense, a man adept at beautiful words as well.’\textsuperscript{72}

From 1668 to 1674 Marc' Antonio Romagnesi became the leading playwright to the Italian actors, who performed his \textit{Le Théâtre sans comédie} (Il Teatro senza commedia) and \textit{Le Remède à tous les maux} (Il Rimedio a tutti i mali) with multiple set-changes, ballets, and concerts.\textsuperscript{73} Arlequin esprit follet (Arlecchino spirito folletto) capitalized on the current popularity of machine plays; Robinet’s account of the March 1670 production praised the ‘machines, flights, and turns, which are not everyday occurrences, but rather seem like effects of magic’.\textsuperscript{74}

In July 1668 the Troupe du Roy participated in a divertissement given at Versailles in celebration of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle.\textsuperscript{75} Molière may have

\textsuperscript{69} Pref. to \textit{Les Faux Muscovites} (Paris, 1668), quoted Ibid. 337–8.

\textsuperscript{70} Most of the existing information on the Italian company derives from four sources: (1) a brochure of around 100 pages published in 1709, entitled \textit{Tolite Alphabetique & Chronologique des pièces représentées sur l’Ancien Théatre Italian, depuis son établissement jusqu’en 1667}, (2) Evaristo Ghislieri’s 6-vol. set of \textit{Le Théâtre italien, ou le recueil général de toutes les comédies et comédies françois jouées par les comédie du roy}, pendant tout le temps qu’il ont été au service (Paris: Cousin et Wittre, 1709; repr. Geneva, 1993), (3) A French trans. of a stabblero attributed to Donnareo Biancacci, the Masque of the Italian troupe, by Thomas-Simon Gussette and entitled \textit{Translation du comique de Joseph Dominique Biancacci, dit Arlequin; et Gussette} (and C. C. Gussette’s \textit{Histoire du théâtre italien establie en France depuis l’an 1719 et les annees suivantes} (both found in the Bibliothèque de l’Opéra, Ms. Rés. 625). In the app. to \textit{Le Commedia dell’Arte} in Paris (pp. 391–405), Scott uses these sources to reconsider titles and performance dates of the repertoire of the Commedia Italiana during their stay in Paris. The scenario is reproduced in C. and F. Parfait, \textit{Histoire de l’Ancien Théatre Italian} (Paris: Renou, 1747; repr. New York, 1978), 307–21.

\textsuperscript{71} Robinet, letter of 5 May 1668; quoted in Scott, \textit{Commedia dell’Arte} in Paris, 156. Unfortunately, we have no further clues as to the identity of the composer of this chansonnette.


already had a play prepared when the King requested a *comédie ballet*, and so he and Lully intercalated a *pastorale en musique* between the acts of the comedy, *George Dandin*. According to the account published in the *Gazette,* [The fête] began at seven o’clock in the evening [of 19 July], following a collation that was deliciously prepared in one of the alleys of the park of this château, by a well-organized comedy that the Troupe du Roy performed on a superb stage erected in a large, verdant theatre. This comedy, which was intercalated in the entr’actes with another type of comedy in music and ballets, left nothing wanting in this first entertainment.

After the *comédie-ballet* followed a banquet, a ball, and lastly a spectacular fireworks display that illuminated both the château and its gardens. Vigarni’s theatre and the fireworks impressed the Dutch mathematician Christian Huyghens more than Mollière’s play, which he felt was “done in haste, and was a mere trifle.” On 2 November the company repeated *George Dandin* and its *pastorale en musique* three times for the King and court at Saint-Germain. However, when *George Dandin* finally opened at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal on 9 November 1668, it appears to have been given without the pastorale—for the company’s account books list no expenses related to music and dance for these performances. Moreover, when Mollière published the play the following year he omitted the text of the pastorale.

During Carnival 1669 the Théâtre du Marais celebrated Louis XIV’s victory in the War of Devolution with Boyer’s machine play *La Feste de Venise.* In the prologue, Victory descends to the ‘sweet sound of musettes and soft flutes, followed by violin ritornellos’ and pays tribute to Louis (‘Croisez Palmez, croisez Lauriers’; see Ex. 13.3). Choral singing, oboe music, and dancing also accompanied the Festival of Venus in the second act. While the composer remains unknown, it may well have been Louis de Mollière, who had composed music for Boyer’s *Les Amours de Jupiter et de Sémélé* (1666), and would later collaborate with Donnac de Visé on the Marais’s production of *Le Mariage de Bacchus et d’Ariane* (1672). In his dedication to Henriette d’Angleterre (the wife of Monsieur), Boyer boasted that ‘the performances enjoyed great success in Paris.’

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Richeleau first planted the seeds of interest in French lyric theatre, which subsequently were cultivated by Mazarin and brought to fruition by Colbert. While the Italian operas performed at court during the 1640s stimulated the imagination of dramatists, producers, scenic directors, and composers, no one rose to the challenge of opera. When Buti suggested that Mazarin have these Italian productions translated into French, Mazarin evidently took his advice and commissioned a French version of *Orfeo* from Pierre Corneille. Corneille and Dassoucy found themselves in a strategic position to create French opera in the 1650s; had the playwright shown an interest, no doubt royal support would have been forthcoming. However, after *Andromède* (1650) Corneille doubted the efficacy of combining music—more specifically, singing—and spoken drama, and he introduced music more cautiously in his next machine play, *La Toison d’or* (1660).

With the revival of the pastoral genre during the 1650s, dramatists and composers once more teamed up to create the *pastorale en musique*. Charles de Beys’s *Le Triomphe de l’Amour* (1655), with music by Michel de la Guerre, was the earliest-known French pastorale to be sung in its entirety. After his early attempt to compose a *comédie en musique* (*La Mueule inegrée*), the composer Robert Cambert collaborated with Pierre Perrin on the *Pastorale en Musique* (the so-called *Pastorale d’Issy*, 1659). After it was given eight or ten times at the country home of Monsieur de La Haye in April 1659, the royal family saw a special performance at Vincennes. Mazarin enthusiastically applauded the efforts of Cambert and Perrin, ‘and he indicated that he would employ them from time to time to put on similar entertainments’.

After returning from the performances of *La Toison d’or* at Neufbourg, the Marquis de Sourdeac established an informal opera academy in the Hôtel de Sourdeac on the rue de Garancière, where he built a private theatre capable of machine spectacle. There, Sourdeac sponsored free performances of operas (including the *Pastorale d’Issy*), for which he engaged Pierre Perrin to write the librettos, and Robert Cambert and La Grille (Dominique de Nornandin, Sieur de Neufbourg) to compose the music. Perrin’s letter to the Archiviste of Turin, Mgr. Della Rovere (transl. L. B. Aulad, in *Aulad, The Lyric Art of Pierre Perrin, Founder of French Opera*, Henryville, Pa., 1966, p. 101-4). Circolano Della Rovere was the papal nuncio to Innocent X, whom Perrin would have met in his position as interpreter des ambassadors to Gaston, Duc d’Orléans (brother to Louis XIII).

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88 Noizet and Thoisan (Génie de l’opéra, 1944, p. 95) propose that by establishing an opera academy Colbert was continuing the work begun by Mazarin—perhaps in accordance with the last Cardinal’s instructions.

89 Perrin’s letter to the Archiviste of Turin, Mgr. Della Rovere (transl. L. B. Aulad, in *Aulad, The Lyric Art of Pierre Perrin, Founder of French Opera*, Henryville, Pa., 1966, p. 101-4). Circolano Della Rovere was the papal nuncio to Innocent X, whom Perrin would have met in his position as interpreter des ambassadors to Gaston, Duc d’Orléans (brother to Louis XIII).

90 For further discussion, see Part II, ‘The Mythological Machine Play and Pastoral Opera’, Introd.

91 ‘Having always had in mind introducing plays in music as has been done in Italy, I began in 1678 to compose an elegy for three different voices in a type of dialogue, as are heard in concerts, and this elegy is entitled *La Mueule integrée*. M. Perrin, having heard this piece which was successful and did not become tiresome—even though it lasted, with symphonies and solos, a good three-quarters of an hour—became inspired to compose a little pastorale (Archives de la Comédie Française; reprod. in facs. in A. Texier, ‘Robert Cambert à Londres’, Revue musicale, 9 (1927-8), 101-22 (at 106-7)).

92 According to Castil-Blaze, Perrin was given the subject by Mgr. Della Rovere; see F. H. J. Blaise (dit Castil-Blaze), *L’Académie impériale de musique* (Paris, 1853), p. 17.

de La Grille) to compose the music. The five or six hundred spectators who saw these operas "all spread the word of the magnificence of the Marquis, and the worthiness of the spectacle that he wished to introduce in France". Around 1666 Perrin presented his manuscript *Recueil de paroles de musique* to Colbert, in which the lyricist proposed establishing an 'Academy of Poetry and Music, composed of Poets and Musicians'. In 1669 the King finally granted Perrin a twelve-year *privile`ge* to establish 'some opera academies, or musical performances in French modelled after those of Italy'.

Perrin's acquisition of the royal opera *privile`ge* galvanized the musical activities of Paris theatres. While the Hôtel de Bourgogne remained content with performing the occasional musical comedy, the Thé`âtre du Marais and the Palais-Royal began to focus their efforts on producing machine plays with unprecedented amounts of music, ballet, and spectacle. Donneau de Visé, who succeeded Boyer in 1669, provided the Thé`âtre du Marais with ever grander *pièces à grand spectacle*. After its highly acclaimed court performances of *Psy`ch`é* (1671), the Troupe du Roy resolved to remodel the Thé`âtre du Palais-Royal and equip it with machines, a transformation stage, and a permanent orchestra for productions 'tant simples que de machines'. These semi-operatic productions, which brought the Thé`âtre du Marais and the Palais-Royal in conflict with Perrin's monopoly (and Colbert's plans to establish a national opera), began a new era in the history of French lyric theatre which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

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89 Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français 2208. This avant-premier is repr. in Auld, *Lyric Art of Pierre Perrin*, vol. iii, pp. 319-21 (for the dating of this collection, see vol. iii, p. ii).

90 The *privile`ge* au `xvi`e et `xvii`e siècle* (dated 28 June 1669), repr. in Benoît, *Musiques de cour*, 31.