THE RISE OF THE THÉÂTRE DU MARAIS (1629–1658)

During 1625–8, rivalry developed between the Troupe Royale and the Company of the Prince of Orange. When, in the summer of 1625 the Confrérie de la Passion leased their playhouse to the latter without informing the Troupe Royale, Bellerose and his actors responded by performing in front of the Hôtel de Bourgogne—thereby preventing spectators from entering the playhouse. In August they were brought before the Châtelet court, ordered to desist their troublemaking, and forced to pay the taxes owed to the Confrères.1 In December 1629 the Royal Council granted the Troupe Royale exclusive rights to the Hôtel de Bourgogne for a period of three years.2 Meanwhile, their rivals moved into the Jeu de paume de Berthaud, and inaugurated their theatre with Pierre Corneille’s new comedy Mélide.3 Over the next three years the Company of the Prince of Orange moved to three different locations, and finally settled in a tennis-court in the Marais district.4 After two superimposed stages, boxes, and galleries were constructed, the actors inaugurated the Théâtre du Marais in April 1634.5 That autumn they received an invitation to perform for the wedding celebrations of three young courtiers to cousins of Richelieu. For this sumptuous party given at the Arsenal, the troupe performed Corneille’s Mélide and an unnamed prose comedy with intermèdes of burlesque ballet (for a description of this performance, see Chapter 6, pp. 79–80). Thereafter, Richelieu took a personal interest in the Marais company and their in-house playwright, Pierre Corneille.

At the Hôtel de Bourgogne, Bellerose became manager of the Troupe Royale, and in 1634 he acquired by the King’s order four of the best actors and actresses of the Théâtre du Marais: Charles Le Noir, Isabelle Mestivier, Julien Bedeau (dit Jodelet), and François Bedeau (dit l’Ispyp).6 After a dispute with Bellerose over

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1 See Dietrichau-Hohbore, Théâtre de l’Hôtel de Bourgogne, I. 126–7, and Soulié, Recherches sur Molière et sur sa famille, 159.
4 The members of the company by this time included Charles Le Noir and his wife, Isabelle Mestivier, Guillaume des Gébarts (dit Moorsey), François Mestivier, Claude Deschamps (dit de Villiers) and his wife, Marguerite Béguin, Julien Bedeau (dit Jodelet), François Bedeau (dit l’Ispyp), Pierre Marcoureau (dit Beaupain), Nicolas de Vin des Ouliettes, and Pierre Regnault Petit Jehan (dit Larocque).
5 See the Gazette, 139 (15 Dec. 1634). Jodelet and l’Ispyp would return to the Théâtre du Marais in 1641. In 1642 Bellerose once more appealed to Louis XIII, and he received into his company three actors and three actresses, formerly of the Théâtre du Marais: Claude Deschamps (dit de Villiers) and his wife, Marguerite Béguin; André Boiron (dit Baron) and his wife, Johanne Anouze; and François Chastel (dit Beauchampe) and his wife, Magdeleine du Puyer. See Dietrichau-Hohbore, Théâtre du Marais, II. 31–2.
author's rights, Alexandre Hardy left in 1626 and offered his services to the Théâtre du Marais. Three years later the Troupe Royale engaged the playwright Jean Rotrou as their new poète à gages. These became formative years for the development of French theatre. Stimulated by the presence of two permanent repertory companies, a Parisian public that was receptive to their literary efforts, and the protection of influential patrons, a new generation of playwrights emerged and created a steady supply of fashionable comedies, tragocomedies, and pastorales. Designed to be performed on-stage and not merely read, these preclassical plays featured romanesque plots that endowed incidental music and dance with dramatic significance. A drawing attributed to Abraham Bosse depicts a theatrical performance of the early seventeenth century taking place in an unidentified public theatre—which most likely is the Hôtel de Bourgogne (Plate 3).

Information on the musical practices of public theatres in the 1630s can be gleaned from a variety of sources: contemporary editions of plays, accounts of performances, iconographical material, contracts, and other theatrical records. There is little evidence that the Hôtel de Bourgogne or the Théâtre du Marais maintained a permanent theatre orchestra at this time: in fact, Puget de La Serre had to furnish his own instrumentalists when his plays were given in the public theatre. According to Tallemant des Réaux, La Serre "wrote several plays in prose, and provided the violon for the Hôtel de Bourgogne when they performed them, that is to say, there were ten or twelve string players in the end boxes, which played before, after, and between the acts". This information can be corroborated by Le Soir (see Plate 4d), a 1642 engraving that depicts the royal family (Gaston d'Orléans, Louis XIII, his wife Anne, and the young Louis XIV) watching a theatrical performance in the Palais-Cardinal (later called the Palais-Royal). Guitars, violins, and other instruments are visible in the second box nearest the stage in the enlargement (see Plate 4b).

Performance rubrics in plays suggest that theatrical companies frequently engaged professional musicians, even for such minor functions as playing military fanfares, accompanying a chanson, or providing music for a dance. Furthermore, there was a clear tendency to identify each family of instruments with a particular tone or mood set by the play. Flutes, oboes, and musettes are associated with pastoral settings; lutes and guitars with serenades; unusual or archaic instruments for the charivari; trumpets with martial or courtly events; horns with the hunt; and various percussion instruments with exotic scenes. The records kept by Mahelot, set-designer to the Hôtel de Bourgogne during this time, lists musical instruments among the stage properties required for a number of their productions (listed in Table 2.1). The guitar called for in d'Auvray's Madone was undoubtedly played by the knight who sings disparagingly about women (and is subsequently killed in a duel). Trumpets were used in plays featuring tournaments and trials by combat (Madone, Le Trompeur pynx, L'Infidèle confidente), battles scenes (La Bélindé. Dorinde), royal weddings (L'Heureuse Constance. Céline), or the arrival of a des ex machina (Iphigénie). Hunting-horns served to evoke a bucolic setting in La Fils de Scire and Le Berger fidèle.

Despite the later reputation of the Théâtre du Marais as the machine theatre of Paris, the Hôtel de Bourgogne, with its old mystère stage, was the first to

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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
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<tr>
<td>d'Auvray</td>
<td>Madone (1628)</td>
<td>des trompette, une guitare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Du Ryer</td>
<td>Citophon (1628)</td>
<td>tambours, trompettes</td>
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<td>Rampalle</td>
<td>La Bélindé (1630)</td>
<td>des trompettes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Du Ryer</td>
<td>Argens et Pollarque (1630)</td>
<td>des trompettes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scudéry</td>
<td>Le Trompeur pynx (1631)</td>
<td>des trompettes, un cor</td>
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<td>Pichou</td>
<td>L'Infidèle confidente (1629)</td>
<td>des trompettes</td>
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<tr>
<td>d'Auvray</td>
<td>Dorinde (1631)</td>
<td>des tambours, des trompettes</td>
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<td>Pichou</td>
<td>Le Fils de Scire (1631)</td>
<td>un cor de chasse</td>
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<td>Hardy</td>
<td>Pandace (lost before 1632)</td>
<td>des trompettes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hardy</td>
<td>Leucosie (lost before 1632)</td>
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<td>Canu</td>
<td>La Moscovitte (lost)</td>
<td>des trompettes, un tambour</td>
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<td>Boïserobert</td>
<td>Paretie (lost before 1632)</td>
<td>des trompettes</td>
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<td>Rouchot</td>
<td>Le Berger fidèle (1632)</td>
<td>des cors de chasse</td>
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<td>Rouchot</td>
<td>L'Heureuse Constance (1633)</td>
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<td>Bézé (? )</td>
<td>Céline ou les Prêtres rivaux (1637)</td>
<td>des trompettes</td>
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<td>Rotrou</td>
<td>Iphigénie (1639)</td>
<td>des trompettes</td>
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Source: Lancaster (ed.), Le Mémoire de Mahelot.

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7 According to the descision of terms of his contract with Belleroze, Hardy effectively relinquished all rights to his own plays; see Linsenlauter, Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne, i. 129–32.
8 After a lengthy struggle with Belleroze over author's rights, Rotrou negotiated a new contract that would be more advantageous to the author; he promised to grant the Troupe Royale the exclusive rights to each new play (at 400 livres per play) for the period of eighteen months, after which time he would be free to publish them. See Daukauflaut, ibid. ii. 12–15.
9 According to W. L. Wiley (The Early Public Theater in France (Cambridge, Mass., 1949), p. 43), this drawing is from an engraving attributed to Abraham Bosse. "This would serve to part of the engraving depicting the 'Ageables diverses-estaments de la Cour' (Bibliothèque Nationale, Estampes), reproduced in K. Martinus, Mémoire des Théatres, le public de la connaissance de son temps, trans. M. Pellissard (Paris, 1908), 39, where the author ascribes it to P. Chauveau.
10 Tallemant des Réaux, Histoireettes, ed. Adam, 'La Serre', ii. 543–4 (p. 543). According to the ed. (1635), n. 3, these plays might have been for tragedies Thomas Morus (pref. c. 1640), Le Sac de Carthage (1642), and Le Martyre de Sainte Catherine (1643).
11 Chappeteau later cites three locations for the situation of instrumentalists in the theater: on-stage, in the wings, and in the gallery; see Le Théâtre Français (Paris: Guignard, 1674), ed. G. Moreuil (Paris, 1875), bl. x, p. 119.
12 e.g. in the Comédie des chansons (1640) a troupe of 'musiciens grotesques' perform a charivari in s. 3 with an odd assemblage of instruments: 'une guitare, une vieille, des cymbales, des gêlées, [et] des flageolets'.
13 H. C. Lancaster (ed.), Le Mémoire de Mahelot, t. i, and d'autres電子拜托的 l'Hôtel de Bourgogne et de la Comédie-Française au xvi siecle (Paris, 1920), passim.
produce plays featuring elaborate sets, machine effects, and music. Judging by the Mémoire de Mahelot, Durval’s Les Travaux d’Ulysse (1631) showed seven different locales simultaneously on three levels, which culminated in a spectacular enfr scène. Following is Mahelot’s description of his set-design (his accompanying dessin is shown in Plate 5): 14

In the middle of the stage there must be a hidden underworld with its various tortures. Above the underworld, the heaven of Apollo and, above Apollo, the heaven of Jupiter. Beside the underworld, the mountain of Sisyphus and, on the other side, the garden of Hesperides. Across from the garden, the passage of the sailing vessel. On the other side, the palace of Circé. The arrival of the vessel is accomplished between the mountain of Sisyphus and the palace of Antiphates. A sea, and nearby the river Styx where Charon appears on his raft equipped with an oar; all of the underworld is concealed and opens up.

Three other mythological machine plays introduced the public to machine spectacle in advance of the arrival of Italian opera in Paris. Rotrou’s Iphigénie (performed c.1639) concludes when Diana appears in a mechanical cloud to the sound of thunder, has Iphigenia carried off through the air to her temple, and then bids the Greeks set sail for Troy. Sallebray’s Le Jugement de Paris et le Ravissement d’Hélène (1639) featured no fewer than five different locales with accompanying machine effects, and ends with a musical finale worthy of any opera. 20 Both Durval’s Les Travaux d’Ulysse (1631) and Chapoton’s La Descente d’Orphée aux enfers (1639) also featured spectacular enfr scenes, anecdotating that designed by Torelli for Luigi Ross’s Orfeo (1647).

Louis XIII and Richelieu actively supported Parisian theatre and its dramatists. The King favoured the Hôtel de Bourgogne, and awarded it a yearly subsidy of 12,000 livres; 15 Richelieu, on the other hand, preferred the Théâtre du Marais and took a particular liking to Montguy, his director. 17 As we have seen, Richelieu summoned Montguy and his actors to perform for his cousins’ weddings at the Arsenal in 1634. When the King thereafter ordered four leading members of the Marais to join the Hôtel de Bourgogne, Montguy appealed to Richelieu. 18 Performances ceased temporarily while Montguy recruited seven more actors ‘to repair the damage’, and the Gazette announced that the Théâtre du Marais had reopened at the end of 1634. 19 The following year Montguy’s company premiered La Comédie des Tuileries, the first comedy written by Richelieu’s consortium of dramatists: Rotrou, l’Estoille, Connelle, Boisrobert, and Colletet. 20

During the next eight years the Théâtre du Marais would become the foremost dramatic theatre in Paris. According to Montguy, when Corneille’s Le Cid premiered in January of 1637 his theatre was filled to overflowing. 21 Together with more serious works, the Marais company also produced Discrét’s musical comedy Aliz, comédie desoyde aux jeunes veuves et aux vieilles filles (1637). In his preface, the author declared that the public needs to laugh after having witnessed so many noble tragedies; and so he based his play instead on the ‘grotesques et veritables amours’ of the widow of a poor Parisian bourgeois. Aliz gives an attractive glimpse of middle-class Parisian life, with scenes depicting a picnic on the shore of the Seine with pastry, wine, and drinking-songs; a visit to the Hôtel de Bourgogne; and, at the end of the play, a clarivari performed before Aliz’s window on her wedding-night.

Upon Montguy’s retirement in 1637, Claude Deschamps (dit de Villiers) became head of the Marais company, and he recruited the great dramatic actor Josias de Soulas (dit Floridor) to play the leading roles in Corneille’s new tragedies. By 1641 several actors had abandoned the Hôtel de Bourgogne and returned to the Théâtre du Marais—which now numbered thirteen members. As the Troupe Royale was left with only two actors and three actresses, Louis XIII once more intervened. During the Lenten break of 1642, the King commanded six of the leading actors and actresses of the Théâtre du Marais (including de Villiers) to join the Hôtel de Bourgogne, leaving Floridor to assume directorship of the seven-member Marais company. 22

At the peak of this theatrical rivalry, a third company of inexperienced young actors formed in the summer of 1643. 23 Composed of Joseph Béjart, Germain Cléirin, Nicolas Bonnenfant, Denis Beys, Georges Pinel, Madeleine Béjart, Geneviève Béjart, Catherine des Ursis, Madeleine Malinge, and Jean-Baptiste Poquelin (dit Molière), the troupe named itself the ‘Illustré Théâtre’ and leased a tennis-court (the Jeu de paume des Mestayres) to workmen to construct the stage, the galleries, and the boxes, and engaged four maîtres joueurs d’instruments

14 Lancaster (ed.), Le Mémoire de Mahelot, 81-3.
15 While there is no proof that Sallebray’s Le Jugement de Paris et le Ravissement d’Hélène was performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1639, it would seem more likely, since two other machine plays were given there that year.
16 Decker, Holbeck, Théâtre de l’Hôtel de Bourgogne, ii. 9. The Théâtre du Marais received only half that amount from the King.
19 Gazette, 4 (6 Jan. 1635), 14. Decker, Holbeck identifies these actors as Pierre Regnault Petit Jehan (dit Laroque), Nicolas de Lescelle of Saint Maurice, André Boiron (dit Berce), Nicolas Cusset, Hierosme Collier (Sieur de la Roche), Philibert Robin (dit le Gaultier), and Bellemore (known as Captain Marameit); see Théâtre du Marais, I. 31-2.
20 Gazette, 50 (21 Apr. 1639). 108. This work premiered at the Arsenal on 4 Mar. 1635 before Anne of Austria, and was repeated on 16 April at the Hôtel de Richelieu before Louis XIII, Anne, and Guerard d’Orléans.
21 Letter to Guise de Balzac dated 18 Jan. 1637; quoted in part in Lancaster, History of French Dramatic Literature, i. 129.
to play for their performances.²⁴ It is provocative to speculate on the extent to which music and dance featured in the company’s early productions, for the instrumentalists were contracted to play ‘for the comedy, for the visits [i.e. private performances] that the said actors will undertake, and for ballet rehearsals’.²⁵ Evidently, the actors themselves danced in these ballets, for eight months would elapse before the Illustre Théâtre engaged a professional dancer to perform ‘in comedies as well as in ballets’.²⁶ Preparations lasted for two months, during which time the company contracted to have the stage and auditorium constructed and the road paved to make the entrance more accessible to carriages.²⁷ The new playhouse finally opened on New Year’s Day 1644—two weeks before the Théâtre du Marais burnt to the ground. This event proved to be a stroke of good fortune for the Illustre Théâtre, for it left only two rival theatres in operation during the nine months that it took to rebuild the Théâtre du Marais. Meanwhile, through the intercession of the playwright Tristan l’Hermite, Mollière and the young actors were introduced to Gaston d’Orléans, brother to the late Louis XIII.²⁸ According to Paul Lacroix, they performed for him ‘not only comedies and tragedies, but also ballets and musical plays’.²⁹ Gaston granted his protection to the Illustre Théâtre, and hereafter the company held the title of ‘La Troupe de l’Illustre Théâtre, entretenue par Son Altesse Royale’. The fortunes of the Illustre Théâtre changed when the rebuilt Théâtre du Marais opened in October 1644. This new playhouse was larger and more impressive than the old one, and was equipped for the latest techniques in theatre design and stagecraft.³⁰ There were two superimposed stages: one on a slanting floor elevated 6 feet above the parterre, and another smaller stage 13 feet above and supported by eight pillars. An open space behind the stages, 6 feet deep by 32 feet across, may well have been designed to accommodate the machinery required by machine plays. As this new Théâtre du Marais began drawing large crowds, the Illustre Théâtre found itself playing to empty seats. To reclaim their former audience, the actors moved to the right bank and closer to their rivals. Borrowing heavily to lease another tennis-court, they brought their furnishings over from the Mestayens tennis-court, and contracted a carpenter to


³¹ Jurgen and Maxfield-Miller, Contes de recherches sur Mollière, 261-2 (‘Marché entre Antoine Gireault, charpentier, et les comédiens de l’Illustre Théâtre’, 30 Dec. 1644). ³² See ibid. 266-9. ³³ The width of the stage remained the same (49 feet), but the depth of the stage was increased from 32 to 42 feet and was raised above the parterre level by about 6½ feet. Thirteen new dressing rooms for the actors were built, seven back-stage, and six below the stage, with two connecting staircases. The original twelve boxes in the auditorium were demolished, and replaced by two superimposed rows of nineteen boxes each, designed to accommodate a more fashionable audience. See Delekaufs-Hohbohe, Théâtre de l’Hôtel de Bourgogne, II, 182-3, 39 (‘Promesses des Comédiens de la Passion aux comédiens ordinaires du roi’, 8 Apr. 1647). ³⁴ See A. Belloc, ‘Une marquise de décor récemment retrouvée pour le Ballet de la prospérité des armes de France, danse à Paris, le 7 février 1641’, in J. Jacquot (ed.), Le Livre théâtral de la renommée (Paris, 1968), 377-403 (at 377-8). ³⁵ We know of only four other plays that may have been performed at the Palais-Cours before Richelieu’s death in Dec. 1642: Aiguesmarie’s La Pucelle d’Orléans (1642), Collinet’s Olympe, ou les deux victoires (1642), Desmaures’s Banye (1644), and Gilchrist’s Téléphone (1642). See Lancaster, History of French Dramatic Literature, ii, i. 519, 568, ii. 380-1, 389-90. ³⁶ See H. Prunières, L’Opéra italien en France avant Lulli (Paris, 1913), 45-7.
Giudizio della Ragione tra la Beltè e l'Affetto (1643). By that summer Mazarin had arranged for a more extensive production: Giulio Strozzi's musical comedy La Finta pazzza. Italian opera singers were brought from Florence, and, upon the request of Anne of Austria, the Duke of Parma sent the set-designer and machinist Giacomo Torelli and the choreographer Giambattista Balbi. Evidently, this production quickly outgrew the Palais-Royal, for it premiered on 14 December 1645 in the larger auditorium of the Petit-Bourbon. According to the Gazette, the public was especially taken with Torelli's complicated machine effects and rapid scene-changes. The choruses that concluded each act in the original Venice production were replaced with Balbi's burlesque dance entrées. This intercalation of opera and ballet, born out of a concession to the French tastes for ballet de cour, would endure in subsequent productions of Italian operas given at court.

In February 1646 the French court saw its first full-fledged Italian opera, Egisto, performed at the Palais-Royal by another troupe of imported singers. Among the audience was Mazarin's mentor, Cardinal Antonio Barberini, and his secretary, Francesco Buti. Prunières speculates that Egisto was poorly received at court, and that the production lacked elaborate décor and stage machines, but Beijer finds it improbable that Anne of Austria would have been content to give a concert version of a dramma per musica for her distinguished guests, knowing that its fame had been largely based on the sumptuous décor of the Venice performances. At any rate, Mazarin went ahead with more ambitious plans to produce an original Italian opera in Paris. Francesco Buti wrote the libretto, the Roman composer Luigi Rossini composed the music, and Giacomo Torelli—assisted by the French stage-designer Charles Errard and his assistants, Noël Cypel and Gilbert de Sève—created the sets and scenic effects. For this production Mazarin undertook to modify the stage of the Palais-Royal theatre, excising its foundations and extending the lateral walls to accommodate Torelli's stage machines. Another company of Italian singers arrived at the French court early in 1647, and after many delays they premiered Orfeo at the end of Carnival. The libretto omitted the customary descriptions of the scene-changes, for it was believed that the spectators would derive much more pleasure in being surprised by the machines and by the various decorations that enrich this work, than to know about them before seeing them.

The public's enthusiasm for the spectacular elements of La Finta pazzza and Orfeo did not pass unnoticed by the Théâtre du Marais. During the Lenten break of 1647 the company resolved that it could no longer compete with the Hôtel de Bourgogne as in the past. Floridor had left to replace Bellerose as the head of the Troupe Royale, and took Pierre Corneille with him. The Marais company, now directed by Philibert Robin, regrouped and hired some new actors. Inspired by Italian stagecraft and its potential for high box-office receipts, the Théâtre du Marais resolved to produce a series of pièces à grand spectacle. To create complicated scenic effects, mechanical devices, and aerial flights (voleries), the company engaged an engineer, Denis Buffeguin.

In December 1647 the Théâtre du Marais produced the first of these new spectacular plays. According to Dubuisson-Aubenay, this was a dramatization of the myth of Perseus and Andromeda, with machine effects inspired by those created by Torelli for Orfeo. Pierre Corneille had also been working on his own dramatization of the Andromeda myth for the Carnival celebrations of 1648. Furthermore, Dubuisson-Aubenay wrote that at the end of January 1648 of another court project in the planning stage: a French adaptation of Rossi's opera:

Subsequently, the play of Orphée and Eurydice, which played at the Palais-Royal this past winter with machines, was translated into French [un fait français] by Sieur Corneille, for which he received a 2,400 livres advance, and Torelli, conductor of the machines, between 13,000 and 14,000 livres to restore them in order. The unexpected illness of the King caused all plans to be set aside; but the Marais actors have performed the play Androméda et Persée, la délivrance for a month or more now, with machines modelled after those of Orfeo of the Italians.

As Prunières points out, Mazarin would be later criticized during the Fronde for having demolished Richelieu's expensive theatre 'in order to make room for the immense machines of this temerary work' (ibid. 164 n. 5).

Orfeo, Trag-Commedia en musique (Paris: Sébastien Contresay, 1647).

Desessa Linholstoffe convincingly argues that in 1634 and 1642 the King once more intervened, and Floridor left the Marais by royal command, see Théâtre du Marais, i. 225-31.

According to A. Jull (Dictionary critique de théâtre et d'artiste (Paris, 1867, repr. Geneva, 1970), i. 291-2), Buffeguin's father Georges was also a set-designer and painter, who 'specialized particularly in the composition of grand scenes and architectural structures that the pyrotechnic set put on for the Rix given by the King on the Cardinal'. Denis Buffeguin also became a painter, décorator, and maître: his profession is described on marriage and baptismal certificates as "maître ordinaire du Roi" and "artificier et maître ordinaire du Roi".

Andromède had been in preparation since the summer of 1647, for when Lefrere d'Ormeson died with Antoine de Ramon, Superintendent of Royal Buildings, on 6 July, he learned that Torelli 'was working on the design for a new comedy, Andromède et Persée'. See the Journal d' Olivier Lefrere d'Ormeson, and extraits des mémoires d'André Lefrere d'Ormeson, ed. A. Châtel, 2 vols. (Paris, 1860-1), i. 386.

Unfortunately, nothing more is known about Corneille’s French adaptation of Rossi’s Orfeo. Andromède was postponed indefinitely, for ‘since the recovery of the King, Monsieur Vincent [de Paul] has discouraged the queen from these entertainments, so that all the works have ceased’. It is unlikely that Andromède et Persée, la délivrance and Corneille’s Andromède are one and the same play. Had Corneille immediately given Andromède to the Marais to perform when the court production was cancelled, the actors scarcely would have had time to mount their own production by mid-December; besides, Corneille was now officially affiliated with their rivals, the Troupe Royale of the Hôtel de Bourgogne. More likely, news of Corneille’s project inspired the Théâtre du Marais to produce its own spectacular dramatization of the Andromeda myth, with stage machines by Denis Buffequin.

Andromède et Persée, la délivrance was soon followed at the Marais by a revival of Chapoton’s La Descente d’Orphée aux enfers on 13 February 1648. Its new title, La Grande journée des machines, or the Mariage d’Orphée et d’Euridice, emphasized the importance of its scenic effects (see Plate 6). The printed dessin du poème proclaimed Buffequin’s décor and mechanical devices to be ‘the most beautiful and most extraordinary that the skill of the ages past and present could invent’. One surviving copy of this livret credits Charles Coypeau (dit Dassoyau), former lutenist to Louis XIII, with composing the vocal music. Perhaps to win audiences over to future pièces à grand spectacle and thereby give these profitable works a longer performance-run, the Théâtre du Marais later reduced ticket prices.

Encouraged by the success of this production, the Marais company began to advertise itself as the ‘Théâtre des Machines du Marais’. Its next pièce à grand spectacle, Claude Boyer’s Ulysse dans l’île de Circe, premièred the following December, and proved to be even more operatic: in addition to sudden set-transformations, aerial flights of gods, and a spectacular fireworks display, the play featured a chorus of sirens and a dramatic lament sung by Circe. Rotrou’s La Naissance d’Hercule (1650) completed this first cycle of mythological machine plays commissioned by the Théâtre des Machines du Marais. The printed dessins described in detail its spectacular décor and set-transformations, sound and light-effects, and breathtaking volaties. This brief period of prosperity was short-lived, however, for then the second phase of the Fronde forced theatres to close temporarily. After it reopened, the company limited its repertory to revivals of earlier works. After its director, Philibert Robin, died in 1650, Pierre Regnault Petit Jehan (dit Laroque) became head of the Théâtre du Marais.

The long-awaited première of Corneille’s Andromède, originally scheduled for Carnival of 1648, brought a little diversion to these troubled times. First, the première was cancelled when the 10-year-old Louis XIV contracted smallpox; then when civil war broke out, the court fled Paris and took refuge at Saint-Germain-en-Laye. By the summer of 1649 the parlementaire Fronde had agreed to a temporary peace, and on 18 August the young King re-entered Paris to popular acclaim. The Troupe Royale of the Hôtel de Bourgogne finally produced Andromède during 1–22 February 1650. Originally scheduled to take place at the Palais-Royal, the production was transferred to the larger auditorium of the Petit-Bourbon, where performances were open to the public on those days when the King was not in attendance. François Chauveau engraved a series of six prints of Torelli’s set-designs for the prologue and five acts, which were published in the second edition of the play (see Plate 7). Dassoyau, who had played thorbo in the orchestra for Cavalli’s Egisto (1646), and for Rossi’s Orfeo, composed music for Corneille’s nine choruses, four sung airs, and a dialogue en musique (see Ex. 13.1a–b).

By August 1652 the court had resumed permanent residence in Paris, and the following year the Théâtre du Marais recommenced its normal schedule of productions. However, dwindling audiences left the company in financial straits, forcing the actors to sell their scenery, stage properties, and machines to the proprietors of the Marais theatre. By March 1654 eight actors of the company left for Nantes, where they reorganized under the direction of Nicolas Lion (dit Decker-Kohlbacher (Théâtre du Marais, II. 42) shows that the playhouse was shut down for a total of only nine months during the Fronde.


The Gazette, 27 (18 Feb. 1650), 269–70, published the official account of the production in a special ed. Arsene de Aumont, the 12-year-old Louis XIV, and the court came to see a performance on 26 Feb.

Andromède, tragédie. Reproduction de la machine sur le Théâtre Royal de Bourbon (Rouen, 1651; sched of improvement du 13 août 1651), the 1st edn., published exactly one year earlier, also carried a 1651 publishing date (even though it was printed on 13 Aug. 1650) but lacks the six plates by François Chauveau. See C. Delmas (ed.), Andromède (Paris, 1974), pp. 266–86 and crit.


Dassoyau would later include two of the choruses from Andromède in his Aimé à quatre parties, published by Robert Ballard in 1655 (transcribed below in Ex. 13.1a–b).

Le Courrier burlesque de la guerre de Paris (quoted in Césarit Moreau, Chansons de Mazarinades (Paris, 1833), ii. 167) announced that ‘When His Majesty returned the unrest immediately disappeared, together with the misery. Paris is once more beautiful. Everyone enjoys the prosperity. The merchant is in his store, the solicitor is in his practice, the nobility is at the Palais-Royal, the actors are at the Marais.’


22 Decker-Kohlbacher (Théâtre du Marais, II. 42) shows that the playhouse was shut down for a total of only nine months during the Fronde.
to pastoral plays, for several comedies and tragicomedies given by the Troupe Royale during the early 1650s also featured song performances: Boisrobert’s *La Folle Gagneur* (1653), Scarron’s *Eclat de Salamanque* (1654) and *Le Jardin de sylphes* (1654–5), and Quinault’s *Les Coups de l’Amour et de la Fortune* (1655).

Not to be outdone by the Marais, the Hôtel de Bourgogne undertook its own series of machine plays, beginning with a revival of *Andromède* during Carnival 1656.69 Then on 19 July 1656 the Troupe Royale contracted a master carpenter, Denis Buret, to furnish ‘machines and their mechanisms and all the chariots for the five set-changes and their mechanisms’ that were required for *Le Grand Astyanax*, ou *le Héros de la France.*70 This *lost pièce à grand spectacle* was evidently successful enough to be revived for Carnival 1658.71 Three other machine plays, all given in 1657, included such amounts of music and dance that they rivaled the Italian operas of the previous decade. Gabriel Gilbert’s *Les Amours de Diane et d’Endimion*, with its breathtaking machine effects, elaborate décor, solo songs, ballets, and choruses, ran for over a year at the Hôtel de Bourgogne.72 Encouraged by the success of this production, the Troupe Royale revived Sallebray’s *Le Jugement de Paris et le Ravissement d’Hélène* with added music, dance, and spectacle. Loret commented on the ‘concerts, dances and ballets’, as well as on ‘several changing perspectives, more than twenty flying machines, admirable backgrounds, fireworks and confagurations, and finally, the sumptuous scene in which the lovely Helen was carried off’.73 Smaller-scale musical productions also appeared on the stage of the Hôtel de Bourgogne during this time, and the increased musical element in such comedies as Boisrobert’s *La Belle Invisible*, ou *La Constance éprouvée* (1656), Thomas Corneille’s *Le Charme de la voix* (1657), and Lambert’s *Les Soeurs jalous**es* (1658) may well reflect the influence of these semi-operatic machine plays.

Meanwhile, the Théâtre du Marais was forced to reorganize after it lost eight of its actors in 1653. Laroque, its director, soon hired replacements, and after Easter his actors joined with the troupe of Noël le Breton (dit Hauteroche) to form a new Marais company. During 1655–7 it included two seasoned singing-actors: Hauteroche (an haute-contre) and Julien Bedeau (dit Jodelet, a singing

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65 Act of association dated 3 June 1654, quoted in Dieteke-Hoelhoeker, *Théâtre du Marais*, ii, 65–6. 66 Ibid. 221–4: app. 11 l’Accord entre Buffequin et les comédiens du Marais au sujet de la reprise d’Andromède’, 24 Dec 1654. 67 After the first four performances, Buffequin was permitted to select the box-office receipts of two Tuesdays, two Fridays, and two Sundays. 68 According to C. E. Senage (Charles Dassoucy: *Adventures in the Age of Louis XIV* (Lhebersham, 1984), 35), Dassoucy was living in Paris until June 1658.
farceur and theorbo-player). Quinault's *La Comédie sans comédie* (1655) and Gillet de la Tessonerie’s *Le Campagnard* (1656) both featured their musical talents. Despite the success of these plays and that of Thomas Corneille’s tragedy *Timocrate* (which was given ninety-two performances), the Théâtre du Marais fell on hard times. Hauteroche and his company departed at the end of the 1657 season, leaving Laroque with an insufficient number of actors to continue; thereafter the Théâtre du Marais closed for a period of two years.