Most of the theatrical activity in Paris during the first three decades of the seventeenth century centred around the Hôtel de Bourgogne, the playhouse of the Confrérie de la Passion et Résurrection de notre Sauveur et Rédempteur Jésus-Christ. The royal privilege granted to them by Henri II in 1548 gave this confraternity of Parisian bourgeois a monopoly on theatrical performances in the city and suburbs of Paris. During the periods when they were not performing their mystery plays, the Confrères leased their theatre to itinerant acting companies. The political turmoil and civil wars that plagued the waning years of the Valois monarchy brought all theatrical activity in Paris temporarily to a halt, but with the return of Henri IV in 1594, the Hôtel de Bourgogne reopened. The Confrères petitioned the new king to be allowed to reinstate their old sacred repertoire, which had been forbidden them by the Paris Parlement. Henri IV granted them the right to give mystery plays based on the Old and New Testaments, the lives of saints, and 'all other honest and amusing plays, with restrictions for all others from performing elsewhere than in the theater of the Hôtel de Bourgogne'. However, the Parlement upheld its old restrictions on mystery plays—the mainstay of the Confrères' repertory.

After 1598 the Confrérie de la Passion gave up all dramatic aspirations and began to profit from their theatre monopoly. As the proprietors of the only existing public theatre in Paris, they rented out the Hôtel de Bourgogne to professional acting troupes. Should a visiting company choose to perform elsewhere, such as in a tennis-court, the Confrères would collect a tax of 1 écu tournois per day. The history of the Hôtel de Bourgogne during this early period can be traced through the financial and administrative transactions recorded by two municipal notaries, Martin Hagueneur and Pierre Huart. On 25 March 1598 the Confrères signed a contract with 'Jean Thays and his companions, English actors', the terms of which stipulated that they would retain as rent the entire box-office

1 C. and F. Parfait, Histoire du Théâtre Fransais depuis son origine jusqu'à présent (Paris, 1745; repr. New York, 1968), ii. 324 and iii. 322–6. The Parlement particularly objected to profane actors which had come into their religious plays.
2 For a repro. of the arrêt registered by Parlement on 28 Nov. 1598 see ibid. iii. 322–3 n. The Parlement of Paris retained the right to register royal enactments, the process of which 'entailed an examination of the law by men who knew the principles of French jurisprudence . . . , by the registration of laws, the Parlement restrained the monarchy and regularized it' (F. Blaché, Louis XVI, trans. M. Greer, New York, 1990, 130).
THE PRIMACY OF THE HOTEL DE BOURGOGNE

years numerous Italian companies of actors and opera singers would be brought to the French court at royal expense.

Outside the Hôtel de Bourgogne, Parisian street theatre provided a hedge-podge of dramatic and musical offerings which often served as an aid to promote medicinal elixirs. *Les Tromperies des charlatans*, written around 1610 by one *Sieur Courval*, tells of an Italian quack doctor named *il signore Hieronymo*, whose platform stage in the courtyard of the Palais de Justice featured *four excellent violin players seated on the four corners of the stage*, and they did marvellous things assisted by a notable buffoon or funny-man, named Galinette la Galina from the Hôtel de Bourgogne, who for his part did a thousand mimics, acrobatics, and clownings. 11 The most famous of the charlatans was Anthoine Girard, dit Tabarin, who established his medicine show in the Place Dauphine around 1618 and, together with his brother Philippe (dit Mondor), flourished there for several years. His entertainments consisted for the most part of comic monologues and short comic plays, some of which were published in 1622. 12 These farces are composed of stock situations, slapstick, and scena borrowed from Italian commedia dell'arte, but set in Paris and with many references to Parisian landmarks. The main characters are Tabarin with his famous hat of many shapes, two old men named Lucas and Piphagn, two young women named Franciquine (played by Tabarin's wife) and Isabella, and a miles gloriosus named Captain Rodomont. 13 An engraving published in 1622 depicts Tabarin and another character, who may be singing the chanson that traditionally followed a farce; in the background are shown a hurdy-gurdy, a treble viol, and a bass viol (see Plate 1). Tabarin evidently employed professional musicians to perform in his shows, for in 1626 an agreement was drawn up between six instrumentalists for the period of eight years, during which time 'none of the said associates will be permitted to play on the stage of Montdar and Tabarin, or any similar stage under additional penalty of 50 livres tournois'. 14 Tabarin's street show was highly successful, which prompted one envious critic to write: 'everyone sees what Tabarin and Mondor make in Paris, and indeed it is necessary that their profits be great to feed so many mouths, to take around with them all their equipment of violins, acrobats, roustabouts, women, children, servants, and maids'. 15

5 This letter is reprinted in W. S. Dieterkauf-Holboer, Le Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne (Paris, 1970), i. 173–4; app. 3 ("Ball par la Comédie de la Passion à Jean Thays et ses compagnons, comédies anglais", 23 Mar. 1598). E. Souilé, (Recherches sur Malhère et ses familles (Paris, 1846), 113) states this lease was 25 May 1598, and cites the lease as "Johan Selaus, comédien anglais." 6 This judgement is reprinted in Dieterkauf-Holboer, Le Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne, i. 176–7; app. 3 ("Un jugement de la Prévôté de Paris entre les maîtres et les comédiens anglais", 4 June 1598). 7 See Souilé, Recherches sur Malhère et ses familles, 113. 8 Ibid. 135. 9 Mémoires-Jeunesses de Pierre de l'Estrée, ed. P. Bonnefon, 12 vols. (Paris, 1888), vii. 209. 10 See A. Bouchet, Les Comédiens italiens à la cour de France (Paris, 1882), 126–9. 11 Pref. to Il Breviere del Capitano Spezente (Venice, 1620); quoted ibid. 124–9. 12 Raymond Lebègue discovered an account of a performance given by the Gelosi during this time and reported by Ovettier Godefroy, Steur de La Gilletière: "On 4 January 1604 . . . I saw performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne by the company of Isabella and Pedrolino the tragedy of Le Canyde d'ÉgYPTE killed in his text by Nunsennet, will of Acttis and

8 citizen of Nurnance, besieged by the afresaid Calyse. See "Les Italiens en 1604 à l'Hôtel de Bourgogne", Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France (1935), 77–8 [77].


14 "Association de six joueurs d'instruments pour huit années", 21 août 1626; repr. in M. Jurgens, Documents du Ministère Contenuant l'histoire de la musique (1609–1658) (Paris, 1869–70), i. 393–4. 15 "Discours de l'origine des mutes fraudes et impostures des Charlatans . . . par J.D.P.O.M.O.D.R.,", repr. in Glauba complètes de Tabarin, ed. Aventin, ii. 231 ff. Indeed, from their profits the Girard brothers were able to retire from the stage, purchase a seigneurie, and live out their lives as country gentlemen in Orleans.
In these early years of professional French theatre, Valleran Le Conte emerges as a seminal figure who struggled for twelve years to gain a foothold for his company in Paris. In her research on the playwright Alexandre Hardy, Deierkauf-Holsboer uncovered archival documents which shed significant light on many aspects of early French theatre, including repertory and performance practices, the musical training provided to apprentice actors, the employment of professional musicians, and the manner in which music was introduced into plays. The first record of Valleran Le Conte dates from 1592, when he was with a company of actors at Bordeaux that 'performed many tragedies and farces, with very great applause from the audience'. He wisely avoided Paris during the turmoil of the early 1590s, and instead toured Angers, Rouen, and Strasbourg. In March 1593 his company visited Frankfurt, where Le Conte requested permission from the town council to perform 'biblical tragedies and comedies'. During this time his repertory may have included the Protestant dramas of Théodore de Bèze, Louis des Mares, and Jean de La Taille, which would have appealed to the French-speaking Protestants living in these cities. When Le Conte's company toured Rouen, Strasbourg, and Angers, they also performed the plays of 'Schodillen' (i.e. Etienne Jodelle).

When Valleran Le Conte arrived in Paris in 1598, his company consisted of five members: himself, Gilles Godard, Jehan de Rennes, Fiacre Boucher, and Savinien Bony. They soon joined forces with another company headed by Adrien Talmy. A document from the town of Arras (dated 11 February 1594) shows that Talmy's repertory at this time consisted of three tragedies by Robert Garnier (Les Juppes, La Troade, Hippolyte); two anonymous tragedies (Le Ravissement de Philomène fait par Tère and Médée); Claude Rolllet's tragedy Philanie; an histoire morale entitled Corps humain qui laisse son âme; La Taverne de Volupté endormie; an histoire vrayement christienne et catholique entitled Peché retiré par Discpline et Sapience; a comédie morale entitled La Calamité du pauvre peuple; Nicolas de Montreux's pastoral Les Amours d'Athlète et de Menalque (from Les Bergeries de Juliette); and an anonymous pastoral entitled Le Grand bon temps. Talmy and Le Conte shared an interest in producing plays of various genres and including music in their performances, for two of these works have a significant musical element: Rolllet's Philanie (1577), which includes sung choruses, instrumental music, and dance.

and Montreux's Athlette (1585), which features an accompanied song in Act 1, scene 3.

In March 1598 the two companies signed a three-year contract 'to perform together comedies, tragedies, tragocomedies, pastorales, and other works agreed upon in this city of Paris, as well as elsewhere in this kingdom of France'. According to its terms, Le Conte was to provide the costumes, stage properties, and a chest of viol with which his viol quintet would perform entr'acte music. One of his actor-musicians, Fiacre Boucher, is described elsewhere as a maître joueurs d'instruments—a title that implies that Boucher was a full-fledged member of the municipal guild of minstrels. The amalgamation of the two companies lasted less than a year, for on 4 January 1599 Le Conte signed another contract with Benoît Petit, whose company had already leased the Hôtel de Bourgogne. They would perform in the playhouse on alternate weeks, and lend each other whichever actors were needed for their plays. Petit was to pay the rent, while Le Conte provided the costumes and the instrumental music for the entr'actes—for which he would be paid 1 écu 40 sols per performance. Less than two weeks later, Le Conte and Petit were in dispute over a romance in several journées; Le Conte's company was to have performed the first two episodes, but did not receive the scripts from Petit in time to prepare their parts. This altercation evidently brought their partnership to an end.

By all appearances, in the spring of 1599 Valleran Le Conte and his company were preparing for an extended season at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. On 22 March Le Conte contracted Nicolas Vatteme, a scene-painter, to provide 'faintes et peintures' for his performances. The following month Fiacre Boucher leased from the Confrières a 'loge des dépendances'—most likely a balcony from which the viol consort was to perform the entr'actes. Their
theatrical season appears to have been successful, for Le Conte renewed his lease with the Confrères on 2 October 1599.36 Three days later he contracted two set-designers to provide some painted backdrops of cities, châteaux, rocks, deserts, woods, groves, artifices [fireworks?], 'and generally all other things whatsoever that will be needed and necessary to make and have for the decoration for the romance that the said Le Conte plays and performs in this present year at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in Paris, and will perform until next Easter, together with other plays—tragicomedies, pastorales, comedy.'37

Clearly, the public were very enthusiastic about these theatrical offerings, for on 6 October 1599 the company requested permission to set up barriers in front of the entrance to the playhouse so as 'to block the pushing of the crowd.'38 While in Paris that year, the Swiss student Thomas Platter provided an eyewitness account of one of Le Conte’s performances at the Hôtel de Bourgogne:39

At the Hôtel de Bourgogne there is an actor named Valleran who is protected by the King. He plays daily in the afternoon a comedy in French verse and then gives a farce [i.e. a farcical monologue] on whatever amusing episode may have happened in Paris, either amorous adventures or other anecdotes of the same type. He performs this monologue (either in blank verse or in prose) so well, and he so liberally spices it with funny jokes, that one can hardly keep from laughing—even if one knows the story or the persons involved. For Valleran hears of everything extraordinary that occurs in Paris as soon as it happens. He makes a play out of it, and everyone crowds in there to hear the farce he relates at the end of the performance. Moreover, he is very skilled at adding many things in his play. The performances take place in a great hall, on a platform hung with backdrops. The lower classes pay only half price, on condition that they stand; but the spectators paying full price can go up into the galleries, where they can sit, stand, or lean against a rail in order to see much better. That is where the ladies are accustomed to going. There are so many people every day in this playhouse and the comedies last so long that they finish only by the light of torches.

Le Conte clearly viewed music as an essential part of theatrical performance, and took an active part in preparing young apprentice actors and actresses for the stage. He taught all his students gratis, and also provided their clothing, room, and board. In March 1599 Le Conte contracted to teach the 15-year-old Nicolas Gasteau 'the science of acting . . . to learn to play the spinet, the viol, and to sing music.'40 Pierre le Messier (later known as Bellerose) taught violin lessons, and reproductions in G. Cohen, Le Théâtre en France, ii (Paris, 1931), pls. 172 and 172r, and in A. Jullien, Les Anciennes Tapissières historiques (Paris, 1835), pls. 1-9.

38 Ibid., app. 18 (‘Accord entre Valleran Le Conte et Estienne de Ruffin au sujet du reglement de ses gages’, 3 May 1606). 188-9. Le Conte evidently repaid his debt, for when he formed a new company in 1607 with Nicolas Gasteau, Estienne de Ruffin, Huguen Gassier (known later as ‘Gaston Gassier’), the Italian actor Savizian Bozy, Loys Nysier, Jollun Douliger, and two actresses (Gasteau de Rachel Tétepeu and an unknown girl), Le Conte furnished 'wh rose, violins, and backdrops suitable for the aforesaid performance of comedies, tragicomedies, pastorales, and other plays'. See ibid., 190-1: app. 21 (‘Acte d’association d’une trops de comedies du Roi sous la direction de Valleran Le Conte’, 1 Dec. 1607).
40 DrieIkof-Hobbeler, Vie d’Alexandre Hardy, 191-3: app. 22 (‘Acte d’Association de la Troupe de Mathias Le Fevre’, 21 Feb. 1608). Le Févre’s company (like Le Conte’s) also adopted the title comedies françaises and ordonnances du roi.
41 Ibid., 192-3.
43 According to the Frères Parfaits (Histoire du Théâtre Français, iii, 264 n) the Hôtel de Argent, located in the Marais quarter, possessed a theatre beginning in 1600. Le Févres fell to receive authorization from the Confédérés, and was sentenced by the Châtelet in Mar. 1610 to pay a fine, see DrieIkof-Hobbeler, Théatre de l’Hôtel de Bourgogne, i, 77.
Garguille was known for his animated performance of racy chansons. Sauvial described this singing-actor as follows:

He was extremely supple, and all the parts of his body so perfectly obeyed him that one would have taken him for a marionette. He was very gaunt, with straight, thin legs, and with that overly large face that he usually covered with a mask and with a pointed beard. He always played an old man in farce, and in this funny garb one could not see him without laughing. There was nothing but that was extremely comic in his speech, in his gait, and in his action. Also, there was never a more unaffected and natural comedian. Turlupin and Gros-Guillaume, two other actors of the same epoch, assisted him marvelously: but when he was to sing alone, even though the air and the words might have been usually in poor taste, he brought forth all the applause of the spectators. His posture, gestures, tones, and accents—all were so burlesque, that many went to the Hôtel de Bourgogne only to hear him, and 'the chanson of Gauilbert Garguille' became proverbial.

Numerous anthologies of theatre songs appeared in print during this time. The two books of Chansons folâtres et prologues tant superflues que drôlines des comédiens français par le sieur Belleau (Rouen: Jean Petet, 1612) contain lyrics intended to be sung to known timbres, others on a air nouveau. The two books of the Recueil des plus belles chansons des comédiens français (Caen: Jacques Mangeant, 1626) are the only collections of this early period to include both lyrics and their musical settings. Another, later volume, entitled Les chansons folâtres des comédiens, recueillies par un d'eux (Paris: Guillot-Gorju, 1637), reproduces the texts of nine songs of the 1626 collection. Émile Magne discovered six musical settings of Gauilbert-Garguille's song-lyrics in various chanson collections, and he proves that many of the melodies derive from familiar airs, or pont-neuf, borrowed from the popular vaudeville repertoire. Whereas the theatrical chanson 'Jean de Nivelle' appears in both the 1626 and 1637 collections, its lyric can be traced to the early sixteenth-century Farce des deux savettes.

In 1626 the company of the Prince of Orange arrived in Paris to challenge the primacy of the Troupe Royale. Assisted by François de Vautrel, they leased the Hôtel de Bourgogne for six weeks that summer. Another company soon

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**The Primacy of the Hôtel de Bourgogne**

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Vincent Bonnart to play for their productions. Evidently the competition did not benefit either side, for in January 1610 Le Conte and Le Febvre signed an agreement joining their troupes for three years. According to Tallemant de Réaux, the assassination of Henri IV on 13 May 1610 brought a temporary halt to theatrical activity in Paris; consequently the actors left for several weeks to perform in the provinces. After two more years of financial asperity, Valleran Le Conte gave up his losing battle in Paris. In March 1612 he organized a touring company composed of young actors and actresses who he had trained: Judicq le Messier, Jehanne Crevé, and Guillaume des Gilberts (dit Montdory). Their contract of association provided for a singer and a violinist, whose salaries were to be included among the daily operating expenses. Le Conte's troupe travelled to the Hague and to Leiden, where on 2 May 1613 he obtained permission from the authorities to perform some tragedies and comedies; after that, Valleran Le Conte disappears from recorded history.

When Le Conte's company began to dissolve in 1611, many of his actors regrouped in Toulouse, where they formed a new company. Upon returning to Paris in 1612, they adopted the name 'Troupe Royale des Comédiens.' From 1615 the company featured a trio of comic actors that became closely associated with the Hôtel de Bourgogne: Robert Guérin (known as 'Gros-Guillaume' in farce and as 'La Fleur' in serious drama), Hugues Guèrè ('Gauilbert Garguille' / 'Flèchelles'), and Henri Legrand ('Turlupin' / 'Belleville'). By thus adopting two different pseudonyms, the actors were able to keep their dramatic personas as separate as their costumes and acting-styles (see Plate 2). Of this trio, Gauilbert

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84 'Association de trois joueurs d'instruments pour accompagner la troupe de Mathieu Leslieux, sieur de La Porte,' 9 Sept. 1609; in Jurgens, Documents du Ministère Central, ii. 370.

85 Diezkeauctione, Vie d'Alexandre Hardy, 193–7; app. 28 ("Acte d'association de Valleran Le Conte et de Mathieu le Pevre"). 28 Jan. 1610); 195–7; and also 198–201. app. 39 ("Acte d'association d'une troupe de comédiens de Valleran Le Conte"). 28 Mar. 1610).


87 Diezkeauctione, Vie d'Alexandre Hardy, 209–10; app. 39 ("Acte d'association des comédiens français de la troupe de Valleran Le Conte.' 31 Mar. 1612). Montdory would later become the leader of the Marais troupe in Paris.

88 Ibid. 209 ("A Jacques Vuissart, musicien dix sols par mois en lieu et place des deux sols que je te payes pour le risque.")

89 Franzen, 'Documents inédits sur l'Hôtel de Bourgogne,' 321.

90 Société (Recherches sur Médéé et sa famille, 160) cites one final lease signed on 50 Sept. 1638 between the Comédie and 'Valleran Lescomto et ses compagnons, et par Hugues Guérè, Henri Legrand, Pierre le Messier, et autres.' Franzen ("Documents inédits sur l'Hôtel de Bourgogne,") 320, however, points out that Société is mistaken: the lease in question bears the signatures of Guérin, Legrand, Pierre le Messier, but not that of Valleran.

91 Diezkeauctione, Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne, i. 89. This new company consisted of Robert Guérin, François de Vautrel (a violin player and former member of Le Febvre's troupe); Ristienne de Ruffin, Hugues Guèrè, Louis Nicolas, Jehan Domayne, and Colombe Vevrard.

92 Franzen, 'Documents inédits sur l'Hôtel de Bourgogne,' 335 and 352. Despite their title, the actors in fact received no royal subsidy at this time. Diezkeauctione (Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne," i. 109) shows that the Troupe Royale was the main receiver of the Comédie's playhouse during these years.

93 Some of the more famous of his song-lyrics were published in Le Chansonnier de Gauilbert Garguille (Paris: François Targe, 1632), and many later appeared in the anonymous play La Comédie de chansons (Paris: Quentin, 1649). For more on Gauilbert-Garguille, see P. Danielsson. "Bouffonnerie et chanson au XVIIe siècle: Le Chansonnier de Gauilbert Garguille," Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises, 28 (May 1976), 119–32.


95 'This collection is briefly discussed in G. Duranteau, L'Air de cour en France, 1737–1857 (Lille, 1991), 201–2.

96 E. Magne, Gauilbert-Garguille, comédien de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne (Paris: [1917]), 164, 165, 167, 168, 171, and 176. Magne publishes both the text and music for 'Jean cette nuit,' 'Un jour un rigolet de Paris,' 'Je me braise à la debache,' 'Je reserve en ma memoire,' 'Ce fut sur notre montée,' and 'Un jour madame Perrette.'


98 This troupe included Charles Le Noir, Jean Viallot, Anthonie Constant, François Mestivier, Louis de la Barre, Paul Berriere, Jacques Guillaumme, and Guillaume des Gilberts (dit Montdory—one of Le Comte's former pupils).

99 Franzen, 'Documents inédits sur l'Hôtel de Bourgogne,' 342 and 354.
followed, headed by Pierre le Messier (dit Bellerose). With them came the prolific dramatist Alexandre Hardy, who provided a steady supply of tragédies, pastorales, and comedies. They joined with the Troupe Royale, and replaced the Prince of Orange’s company in the Hôtel de Bourgogne that autumn.

During the 1620s plays of greater refinement began to replace the bawdy farces of Gros-Guillaume, Turlupin, and Gaultier-Garguille. Of this early repertory, Les Ramoneurs represents the new, sophisticated type of comedy that became popular in Paris during the years of the précieuses’ salons. On stylistic grounds Austin Gill has shown that it may be ascribed to Alexandre Hardy, and internal evidence in the play further suggests that it was first given at the Hôtel de Bourgogne sometime around 1624. Of particular musical interest is the serenade performed on-stage in Act 1, scene 8 by an ensemble of singers, lutenists, and guitarists (for a description of this performance, see Chapter 7, p. 102). These kinds of set pieces composed in the latest musical genres and styles would be increasingly featured in the plays of the following decade.

39 Its members included Philibert Robin, Nicolas Prodhomme, Louis Gallan, and François le Messier (brother of Pierre le Messier).
41 The sole copy of this unpublished, anonymous play is found in the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal in Paris (Fonds Rondel Ma. 194).
42 A. Gill (ed.), Les Ramoneurs, comédie en prose (Paris, 1957), pp. iv-viii, lixiv and xxxvii-xli. Thirty-five years later the actor Claude Deschamps (dit de Villiers) wrote his own one-act version of this play (Les Ramoneurs (Paris: de Sercy, 1662)) based on the same plot and characters, and also incorporating a serenade in sc. 1 and 2. The title-page states that this play was also acted at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, probably in 1659-60.