Musical Practices in the Theater of Molière

"Nous sommes dans un siècle où la Musique & les Balets ont des charmes pour tout le monde, & que les spectacles qui en sont remplis sont beaucoup plus suivis que les autres !," wrote Données de Vise on the eve of Lully's acquisition of the opera privilege. Indeed, during the first two months of 1672 four musical productions were running concurrently in Paris and Versailles: a revival of the tragédie-ballet Psyché (by Lully, Molière, Quinault, and Corneille) at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal; the premiere of the opera Les Peines et les Plaisirs de l'Amour (by Cambert and Gilbert) at the Académie Royale des Opéras; the premiere of another opera, Le Triomphe de l'Amour (by Sablières and Guichard), at Versailles; and the premiere of the comédie-héroïque Le Mariage de Bacchus et d'Ariane (by Molière and De Vise) at the Théâtre du Marais. That all three repertory theaters in Paris were trying to outdo each other in music, dance, and spectacle prompted a fictional character from Hauteroche's Crispin musicien (also known as "l'Opéra de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne") to remark that "Depuis les opéra, la rage de musique / s'est mise dans Paris, tout le monde s'en pique..."

More specific information survives on Molière's productions than for those of any other Parisian repertory theater of the time. We know that Molière regularly incorporated incidental music and dance in many of his plays, and the musical scores composed for them by Beauchamps, Lully, and Charpentier have become available in modern edition.

What follows is an account of the performance-practices of the Théâtre du Palais-Royal, the playhouse where most of these musical works were recreated for the public after their court premieres. The four existing account-books kept by Molière's company during this period make this kind of investigation possible, for they furnish a surprising amount of information on production-related expenses. The best-known of these is the Registre de La Grange, a summary account of productions given from 1658 to 1685. Equally important are the daily account-books of the 1663-64 and 1664-65 theatrical seasons (called the Premier and Second Registre de La Thorillière), which furnish still more information with regard to productions of the early comédies-ballets. Such data for the years 1665-1671 is scarce, mainly because the daily accounts have not survived for these years. But beginning in 1671, the Registre de La Grange offers an unusual number of facts and figures on the 1671 remodelling of the Palais-Royal theater and the production expenses for the public premieres of Psyché (1671) and Le Malade imaginaire (1673). The Registre d'Hubert, the daily account-book for 1672-73, furnishes still more clues with regard to the performance-practices of the Palais-Royal during Molière’s last season.

When combined with other documentary evidence, the information gleaned from these account-books allows us to reconstruct the musical and choreographic forces used for certain productions, the distribution and placement of the theater orchestra, the identities of some of the hired singers and instrumentalists, and what music might have been performed, and by whom. Moreover, these account-books reveal that the frequency with which Molière programmed plays with music, dance, and spectacle was often guided by sound financial considerations — for musical plays consistently brought in the highest box-office receipts. Careful evaluation of this production data in conjunction with other primary source material (contemporary accounts of performances, printed livrets, bills and receipts, first editions of the plays, and musical scores) will shed light on many obscure aspects of Molière's productions.

5. Premier Registre de La Thorillière (1663-1664), facsimile ed. Georges Monval (Paris : Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1890 [all page citations refer to this edition]); Second Registre de La Thorillière (1664-1665; Archives de la Comédie-Française).
THE THEATER ORCHESTRA

The String Ensemble

Beginning with their 1659-1660 season at the Petit-Bourbon, the daily expenses (frais ordinaires) for Molière’s company, then called the Troupe de Monsieur, included a line item of 4 livres 10 sols for violons. Here, the term “violon” is used generically to refer to string instruments — violins, violas of different sizes, and bass violins. This figure of 4 livres 10 sols would suggest three stringed instruments (perhaps two violins and a bass violin), with each player receiving 1 livre 10 sols. These violons appeared on-stage in scene 12 of Les Précieuses ridicules (1659) to play for an impromptu ball arranged by Mascarill; they reappear in scene 15 to demand their wages, and are rewarded with a torrent of abuse from Gorgibus in scene 17. Presumably, the Troupe de Monsieur also employed these strings for other musical plays then in repertory, such as Tessonerie’s Le Campagnard, Gilbert’s Les Amours de Diane et d’Endimion, Boistrot’s La Folle Gageure, Scarron’s L’Héritier ridicule, and Montauban’s Les Charmes de Féliee.

By 1661, the Troupe de Monsieur was established at the PalaisRoyal. Although specific details of their 1661 Paris production of Les Fâcheux remain unknown, Beauchamps’s five-part ballet orchestration would have required them to increase the size of their theater orchestra. Beauchamps’s score features the five-part division of strings common to court orchestras: violins on the top line (the dessus), violas of

7. The term “orchestra” is used here rather freely, for the Palais-Royal ensemble exhibits few of the requirements of an orchestra as proposed by Neal Zaslaw in “Lully’s Orchestra” (Jèrome de L Goree and Herbert Schneider, eds., Jean-Baptiste Lully: Actes du colloque Saint-Germain-en-Laye (Heidelberg, 1990), pp. 539-53).
9. Molière evidently was following the practices of the Illustre Théâtre which in 1643 had employed four instrumentalists to perform “tant en comédie que ballets.” The details of the three-year contract drawn up between the company and Claude Godart, Michel Tisse, Adrien Lefebvre, and Laurent Gaburet “tous maistres joueurs d’instruments à Paris,” are informative insofar as they reveal to what extent music and dance was used in these theatrical presentations. The instrumentalists were paid a daily wage of four livres, or twenty sols apiece, whether they played or not. This last clause is significant, for the Illustre Théâtre no doubt would have made full use of their services playing musical entr’actes and accompanying chansons and dances. See Madeleine Jurgens and Elizabeth Maxfield-Miller, Cent ans de recherches sur Molière, sur sa famille, et sur les comédiens de sa troupe (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1963), pp. 232-34 (“Engagement de Claude Godart, Michel Tisse, Adrien Lefebvre et Laurent Gaburet, joueurs d'instruments, pour servir les comédiens de l'Illustre Théâtre pendant trois ans.”)
different sizes on the inner three parts (haute-contre, taille, and quinte),
and basses de violons on the bass line (see Plate 1). In 1662 the daily
production expenses (frais ordinaires) for the company included 6 livres
for four string players (again, each receiving 1 livre 10 sols). The
following March the Troupe de Monsieur purchased a harpsichord for
330 livres. For a revival of Les Fâcheux in April of 1663, the Premier
Registre de La Thorillière shows that the theater orchestra consisted of
six strings, two oboes, and harpsichord. The top line was probably
played by two violins and the two oboes, with one instrument
(haute-contre, taille, quinte, and basse de violon) on each of the lower
parts. Evidently, the oboists were able to command 3 livres apiece, or
twice the amount earned by the string players.

Molière increased his theater orchestra in size to 12 strings, 2 oboes,
and harpsichord for the 1664 performances of Le Mariage forcé. Lully's
score, designed for the court orchestra, employed a five-part
instrumentation in the overture and dances. While the distribution of
instrumental parts at the Palais-Royal remains unknown, the Second
Registre de La Thorillière provides a clue with regard to the dessus. For
the 19 February 1664 performance, a line item reads "pour les 4 violons
du Recit po{pur} 3 fols...12 livres." This "Recit" would be the Récit de
la Beaute ("Si l'Amour vous soumet à ses loix inhumaines") of the
Premier Intermède, and we can easily calculate that the company paid
a supplement of 1 livre per performance to each of these four string
players. Lully's music is notated on three staves with two G1 clefs and
an F4 clef, and so was evidently intended for two-part violins and
continuo. Presumably, these four string players were members of the
orchestra who were paid an additional supplement for playing
ritournelles. This still does not help us settle the part-doublings in
Molière's theater orchestra, though a likely possibility would be four
violins and two oboes on the dessus, four basses de violons on the basse,
and four violas divided among the haute-contre, taille and quinte parts
in a 2-1-1 configuration.

10. Registre de La Grange, I : 54.
11. See the Premier Registre de La Thorillière, p. 10.
12. See Registre de La Grange, I:64, and the Second Registre de La
Thorillière, entries for 15 February to 11 March 1664.
13. The Registre de La Grange (I:64) includes the line item "Ritourel et
Claussissi..." (i.e., 4 livres for ritournelles, 3 livres for clavecin).
14. For the first run of Le Mariage forcé, the Second Registre de La
Thorillière provides a separate line item for ritournelles up to the eighth
performance (2 March 1664); thereafter, the expenses for "violons" and
"ritournels" are combined.
15. According to Marin Mersenne (Harmonie Universelle, the Books on
strings] are enough, in which are six trebles, six bass, four contratenors, four
altos, and four of a fifth part." For information on Lully's orchestra, see
Jérôme de La Goree, "Some Notes on Lully's Orchestra," in John Haju,
Heyer, ed., Jean-Baptiste Lully and the Music of the French Baroque (Cambridge:
(Courtesy Bibliothèque Nationale de France)
The earliest surviving orchestral music composed specifically for the Palais-Royal is Charpentier's score for Molière's *La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas* and *Le Mariage forcé* (1672). Unlike the usual five-part orchestration of court orchestras, Charpentier music is scored for a four-part texture, notated in G1, C1, C2, and F4 clefs; whether this implies two violins, viola, and bass "à l'italienne," or else *dessus*, *haute-contre*, *taille*, and *basse de violon" à la française" remains debatable.¹⁶ On fol. 38v, the *grand chœur* cadences in B-flat, and the


¹⁶. It has been argued by Jean Duron ("L'orchestre de Marc-Antoine Charpentier," *Revue de musicologie*, 72/1 [1986], 23-65) that, following the practice of five-part French orchestras, the middle parts of Charpentier's four-part texture should be played by violas. Moreover, three recent reviews of my modern performing edition of *Marc-Antoine Charpentier : Music for Molière's Comedies* have taken me to task for assigning a violin to the second string part, notated on the C1 clef. In *Music and Letters*, 73:1 (1992), p. 162, James Anthony writes that "although the second part lies well within the violin range (and for all practical purposes could be played by the violins), there is every reason to believe that originally it was played by a small viola (Georg Muffat's 'violetta') and that it is identical to the *haute-contre de violon* part found in all French five-part string music." Catherine Cessac (*Bulletin de la Société Marc-Antoine Charpentier*, 7 [July 1992], p. 19) feels certain that Charpentier's four-part theater orchestra is "clairement désigné comme étant composé de dessus, hautes contres, tailles et basses de violon et non de deux parties de dessus, alti et bassi." Most recently Lois Rosow added her voice to the chorus, stating categorically that "Charpentier's clefs, named above, imply *dessus de violon, haute-contre de violon, taille de violon, and basse de violon" that is, violin and *basse de violon* on the outer voices, with small instruments in two different sizes, both tuned like violas, on the inner parts" (*Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 48:1 [Spring 1995], p. 130).

Yet not all scholars agree. H. Wiley Hitchcock (*Marc-Antoine Charpentier* [Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1990], p. 62, n. 8) remarks that "only once or twice, in the many thousands of bars of Charpentier's orchestral scores, does the second-highest (*haute-contre*) part dip below the violin's G string (and indeed even the *taille* parts lie rather high in the viola range), yet some French scholars argue for a realization by violin I, violas I and II, and bass violin." I would agree with Hitchcock that Charpentier's four-part orchestral music (or at least that music he composed for Molière's *La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas, Le Mariage forcé, Le Malade imaginaire*, and *Le Sicilien*) is Italianate in texture, and that the *haute-contre* part, encompassing the range of d' to f♯", resembles a second violin part (not clearly intended for the *haute-contre de violon*, as Cessac maintains). For Médée, Charpentier scored his orchestra in five parts à la française. Here, the C1 line (composed for the *haute-contre de violon* of the Paris Opéra orchestra) extends a perfect fourth lower in Medea's Act III, sc. 3 monologue, "*Quel prix de mon amour*" (m. 67) — the same range (a-f♯") as Lully's *haute-contre* parts. That Charpentier used the *haute-contre* range when composing for the *haute-contre de violon* would seem to argue in favor of Hitchcock's assignment of Violin 2 to the higher-lying C1 line in his modern
petit chœur continues with imitative entrances (Plate 2). Charpentier writes over the G1 part "premier et second seuls," and under the C1 and the C2 parts "seul;" nine measures later he writes "tous" under each of the four parts. This would suggest there had been more than one player on the lower three parts (why else would he write first "seul" and then "tous"?), and probably more than two on the top (note that he originally wrote "seul," crossed it out, and then specified "premier et second seuls"). Another score and some contracts of association provide us with the names of five instrumentalists engaged by the Palais-Royal for the 1672-73 season. Charpentier's overture to the Second Intermède of Le Malade imaginaire (1673) contains a passage in which the grand chœur arrives at a dominant cadence on A, and the petit chœur proceeds with imitative entrances (Plate 3); here the three top parts are assigned to "duvivier" (G1), "nivelon" (C1), and "dumont" (C2). In July of 1672, Molière evidently contracted three string players — Jacques Duvivier 18, Jean Converse 19, and Pierre edition of Prologues et intermèdes du Malade imaginaire de Molière (Geneva: Minkoff, 1973).

Nevertheless, my reviewers may be surprised to learn that I agree with them. The fact remains that Molière's company engaged French ensembles to perform Charpentier's Italianate music, and that the haute-contre part in Parisian string bands was normally played by an haute-contre de violon. As proof, Lois Rosow (p. 131, n. 9) points to a contract of association drawn up in 1681 between twelve violons — 4 dessus, 2 haute-contre, 2 tailles, and 4 basses (discussed in Marcelle Benoit, "Une Association de joueurs d'instruments à Paris en 1681," Recherches sur la musique française classique, 4 [1964], pp. 91-93); if only half of the ensemble were to be hired, then their numbers were to be halved — 2 dessus, 1 haute-contre, 1 taille, and 2 basses. I could equally well cite the February 1673 contract between three violons to play in the Théâtre du Palais-Royal, which contains the following clause: "qu'en cas que lesdites commediens mettent seulement dans leur musique douce deux dessus de violons, un clavecin, un tuorbe et une basse de violon, qu'en ces cas celuy ou ceux qui jouront des trois rapporteront à celuy ou ceux qui ne jouront point leur profit pour este partagé entre eux esgallement" (for full citation, see note 22). It would therefore seem that dessus, haute-contre, taille, and basse de violon was not the sole option in Molière's theater.

Charpentier's C1 part remains equally playable on violin, and in my modern performing edition I recommended that the violin be used. If a modern ensemble owns replicas of the haute-contre de violon, I would urge using them; otherwise, a violin on the haute-contre line would be preferable to a modern viola.

17. As mentioned above (note 16, paragraph 3), a likely distribution is 4 dessus de violon, 2 haute-contre de violon, 2 tailles, and 4 basses.

18. The contract between Duvivier, Converse, and Molière (now lost) is cited in Jurgens and Maxfield-Miller, Cent ans de recherches sur Molière, Document CCLVII, p. 519.

19. Jean Converse (or Converzet) entered the musical establishment of the Duc d'Orléans beginning in 1673. He was a composer, and a highly-respected performer and teacher of the basse de violon, and in 1709 he purchased a position in the Vingt-quatre Violons. See the article by Bernard Bardet in
(Courtesy Bibliothèque Nationale de France)
Plate 3. Marc-Antoine Charpentier, *Le Malade imaginaire*. Ouverture
(Bibl. Nat. Ms. Rés. Vm 259, vol. XVI, fol. 58)
(Courtesy Bibliothèque Nationale de France)
Marchand to play in the summer revivals of *La Comtesse d’Esca
tagnas, Le Mariage forcé*, and other works. In mid-February of 1673
Duvivier signed an agreement with Converset and Marchand (now
listed as “tous trois violons de Monsieur frere unique du roy”) to play
for the first run of *Le Malade imaginaire*; from the wording of the

Dictionnaire de la musique en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, ed. Marcelle

20. Pierre Marchand, the son-in-law of Pierre Beauchamps, also played the
basse de violon. The contract between Molière and Marchand (now lost) is cited
in Jurgens and Maxfield-Miller, *Cent ans de recherches sur Molière*, Document
CCLVIII, p. 519. His name (“Mr. Marchand”) also appears next to the basse
part in Charpentier’s score for *Circé*, performed at the Hôtel de Guénégaud in
1675 (Bibl. Nat., Ms Rés. Vm 259, XVII, fol. 5). Marchand belonged to the
musical establishment of the Duc d’Orléans beginning in 1673, and in 1695 he
joined the Vingt-quatre Violons. See the article by Bernard Bardet in
Dictionnaire de la musique en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, ed. Marcelle

21. The names of Du Vivier, Marchand, Converset, and Du Mont appear
listed in the company’s registers for the 4 May 1674 revival of *Le Malade
imaginaire* (among the symphonie, where they were responsible for playing
ritournelles), for the 17 March 1675 premiere of *Circé* (among the symphonie,
where harpsichord appears as a separate line item), and in the 17 November
1675 premiere of *L’Inconnu* (where they comprised the “petit chœur,” and
harpsichord and theorbo appear as a separate line item). See Jules Bonnassies,
*La Musique à la Comédie-Française* (Paris: Bauer, 1874), pp. 15, 16, and 19.

22. Minutier central, XXXIV : 199; cited in Jurgens and Maxfield-Miller,*
Cent ans de recherches sur Molière*, Document CCLXXX, pp. 549-50. This
contract of association (signed, ironically, on the day of Molière’s death)
deserves quotation in full:

Furent présents Jean Converset, Jacques Duvivier et Pierre Marchand,
tous trois violons de Monsieur frere unique du roy et estans presentemen
t occupez aux pieces et comedies du sieur de Moliere, demeurens scavo
t ledict sieur Converset rue Bethizy, ledict sieur Duvivier rue des Fossez et
ledict sieur Marchand rue Saint-Honnoré, parroisse Saint-Germain-
l’Auxerrois, lesquelz sont demeurez d’accord entre’eux de ce qui ensuit, c’est
ascavoir qu’ilz ont promis de ne se point separer les uns des autres pour
jouer ausdites pieces ledict sieur Molière et autres comedies qui se
jouent et representent par les François sur le theatre du Paillis royal que
d’un mutuel consentement. Et, en cas que les commediens voullissent
mettre l’un d’eux ou deux dehors pour quelque cause et soubz quelque
pretexte que ce soit ou puisse estre, les deux autres ou l’un d’eux seront
tenus audition cas de quitter lesdits commediens et de ne plus jouer a leurs
pieces sans y pouvoir rentrer que tous trois ensemblement. Et, où lesdits
commediens voullroit en rappeller un ou deux des trois, aucune des
parties ne pourra rentrer sans le consentement des trois à peyne de payer par
chaucune desdites parties aux deux autres ou à l’une d’elles la somme de
cinq cens cinquante livres chacun de peyne commise avant d’y pouvoir
rentrer, sans que ladite somme de cinq cens cinquante livres de peyne
commise par chacune des parties soit repudiée comminatoire ains de rigueur.
Et a esté convenu qu’en cas que lesdits commendiens voullissent les
rappeller tous trois et qu’il y en eust un ou deux des trois qui ny voullissent
final clause, it seems clear that Converset served as a subcontractor for two of the continuo instruments (harpsichord or theorbo) in the ensemble 23.

The Basse Continue

The continuo group in Molière's theater probably consisted of harpsichord, theorbo, and either basse de violon or basse de viole. This is the ensemble recommended by the Maître de Musique in Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme when he advises Monsieur Jourdain to have weekly chamber-music concerts in his home:

... Il vous faudra trois voix : un dessus, une haute-contre, et une basse, qui seront accompagnées d'une basse de viole, d'un thèorbo, et d'un clavecin pour les basses continues, avec deux dessus de violon pour jouer les ritournelles. (II, i)

Although line items for basse de viole or basse de violon are not found in the company's registers at this time, Charpentier's score for Le Malade imaginaire specifies a basse de violon (Plate 4). Here in the Cérémonie des Medecins, it appears that the third ritornelle, notated on the top two systems, was played by the strings alone; then, when the orchestra and chorus enter after a speech by the Praesens ending with the words "ensuita purgare," the rest of the continuo instruments (presumably harpsichord and theorbo) joined the basse de violon on the fourth staff down. The absence of continuo figures in the purely

rentrer, qu'en cédic et celuy ou ceux qui y renteront ne seront tenus de payer aucune chose de ladite peynne commise, comme aussy qu'il sera loisible à chacune desdites parties de se retirer volontairement et de ne plus jouer ausdites pieces sans pour ce suject payer aussy aucune chose de ladite peynne commise. Et a esté encres convenu entre lesdites parties qu'en cas que lesdites commissiuns mettissent seulement dans leur musique douce deux dessus de violons, un clavecin, un tuorbe et une basse de violon, qu'en ce cas celuy ou ceux qui jourent des trois rapporteront à celuy ou ceux qui ne jourent point leur proffict pour estre partagé entre' eux esgalemant ; et, où il n'y auroit de clavecins ny de tuorbe ledict Converset ne sera tenu de rapporter aucune chose. Car ainsy etc, promettans etc, obligeans chacun en droit soi, renonceans etc.

Faict et passé à Paris és estudes etc. le quatorziesme fevrabre après midy mil six cens soixante-treize et ont signé ces presentes :

Jean Converset  
Jacques Duvivier

Pierre Marchand  
Pillault [notaire]

Dupuys [notaire]

23. The conditional statement "et, où il n'y auroit de clavecins ny de tuorbe ledict Converset ne sera tenu de rapporter aucune chose" was probably added to protect Converset, should Molière not require continuo instruments of him. Bardet's suggestion that Converset "devait jouer la partie de clavecin ou de thèorbe" probably derives from a misunderstanding of this clause (see Dictionnaire de la musique en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, s.v. "Converset").
Plate 4. Marc-Antoine Charpentier, Le Malade imaginaire, “Cérémonie des Médecins”
(Bibl. Nat. Ms. Rés. Vm1 259, vol. XVI, f. 74)
(Courtesy Bibliothèque Nationale de France)
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orchestral sections (i.e., overtures and dances) of Charpentier's theater scores suggests that the continuo group accompanied only the vocal numbers and soloistic instrumental passages. Harpsichord was a necessary component of the continuo ensemble, and expenses related to its tuning and repair appear among the frais extraordinaires for various productions. The presence of the theorbo in the continuo ensemble is harder to substantiate before 1674; however, other evidence suggests that theorbo appeared in Molière's theater orchestra prior to this date. Among the expenses for the 1664 performances of La Princesse d'Elide is listed 8 livres for "la musique sinfonie," because a line item for harpsichord is not given (and no instruments are listed other than strings and oboes), sinfonie must refer to continuo instruments. According to the 1664 court livret of La Princesse d'Elide, Lully's ensemble included a total of six "clavessins & theorbes" : d'Anglebert, Richard, Itier, La Barre le cadet, Tissu, and le Moine. These names can be further identified as members of the Chambre : Jean-Henry d'Anglebert (clavecín), Estienne Richard (clavecín), Leonard Ithier (luth), Pierre Chabanceau de la Barre (luth), Claude Tissu (luth), and Pierre Anthoine Lemoyne (basse de viole). Assuming that Lully's continuo group therefore consisted of two harpsichords, three lutes (or theorbo), and a basse de viole, we could speculate that the Palais-Royal orchestra at this time also included theorbo, harpsichord, and basse de viole (or de violon). We do not have further details regarding the troupe's continuo ensemble until 1671, when a line item for symphonie appears for Psyché (12 livres) and, in 1673, for Le Malade imaginaire (3 symphonistes, each receiving 3 livres). Assuming that 3 livres was the going rate for a symphoniste in 1671, we can calculate that a continuo group of four players was used in the public performances of Psyché.

24. This would follow the continuo practice of the Opéra; see Graham Sadler, "The Role of the Keyboard Continuo in French Opera, 1673-1776", Early Music, 8 (1980), pp. 148-57.
25. The first mention of theorbo among the registers appears for a 4 May 1674 revival of Le Malade imaginaire, when the II. Registre de la Troupe du Roy, 1674-1675 (Archives de la Comédie-Française) lists a payment of 3 livres made to a theorbist named "Mr Carles".
26. Second Registre de La Thorillière, 9 November-16 December 1664.
28. For a transcription of these court records for the year 1664, see Marcelle Benoit, Musiques de Cour : Chapelle, Chambre, Écurie (1661-1733) (Paris : Picard, 1971), pp. 8-14.
29. The 8 livres total for sinfonie for the 1664 Paris performances of La Princesse d'Elide suggests two instrumentalists, each receiving 4 livres per performance.
30. Registre de La Grange, I:126 and I:144.
The Orchestra Pit

It remains unclear exactly where the orchestra was located in the Palais-Royal before 1671. Samuel Chappuzeau tells us in 1674 that theater orchestras of the day were usually situated "ou derriere le Théâtre, ou sur les ailes, ou dans vn retraitement entre le Théâtre & le Parterre, comme en vne forme de Parquet". Lully's orchestra for the 1664 court premiere of La Princesse d'Elide is shown playing from an enclosure in front of the stage in the famous engraving by Israel Silvestre. We also know that a similar arrangement was in place at the Palais-Royal by 1673. Proof of this comes from an unlikely source: a police report describing a disturbance that broke out during a performance of Psyché in January of 1673. The officer in charge witnessed the following event:

... nous, conseiller, commissaire susdit serions monté sur ledit theatre, d'où, aussitost que la premiere entrée c'est faite, avons apperceu dans ledit parterre à la faveur de la clarté des chandeliers, quelques gens d'espèces à nous incognus, qui se seroient approché dudit theatre, lesquelz murmuroient et frappoient du pied en terre ; et, quand la machine de Venus est descendue, le cœur des chanteurs de cette entrée, recitans tous ensemble : "Descendez, mere des amours", lesdits gens d'espèces, autant qu'avons peu remarquer estre au nombre de vingt cinq ou trente de complot, auroient troubés lesdits chanteurs par des hurlemens, chansons derisionnaires et frappemens de pied dans ledit parterre et contre les ays de l'enclos où sont les joueurs d'instrumens...

A group of string-players were placed at the rear of the stage for the Premier Intermède of Le Malade imaginaire (1673); but rather than representing the normative practice, this appears to have been done for dramatic effect. Performance rubrics found in Charpentier's autograph

31. See Le Théâtre français (Paris, 1674); modern ed. Le Théâtre français par Samuel Chappuzeau, accompagné d'une préface et de notes par Georges Monval (Paris : Jules Bonnassies, 1875), p. 146. Nicola Sabbattini (Pratica di fabbricare scene e machine ne' teatri [1638], Ch. 36) also recommends placing the musicians in balconies on each side of the stage.


33. The 1671 remodelling of the stage and auditorium at the Palais-Royal may have made it necessary to move the orchestra into an enclosure at the parterre level. When the theater was completed in 1641, the musicians were placed in balconies close to the stage, and five stone-steps led from the parterre to the front of the raised stage (as can be seen in the famous engraving titled "Le Soir" [Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Estampes]). It is possible that these steps were removed in 1661, when Molière's company first took up residence at the Palais-Royal, and that the orchestra had been stationed there all along; or, on the other hand, perhaps the construction of an orchestra pit was part of the 1671 renovations.

34. "Procès-verbal des désordres advenus au Palais Royal pendant une représentation de Psyché," dated 13 January 1673; reproduced in Jurgens and Maxfield-Miller, Cent ans de recherches sur Molière, pp. 542-44.
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score indicate that “L’on joue derrière le théâtre la fantastie sans interruption; Polichinelle entre et lors qu’il est prest de chanter devant les fenestres de Toynette les violons conduits par Spacamond recommencent la fantastie avec ses interruptions...” 35 Since a verbal altercation ensues between Polichinelle and the strings, their placement at the rear of the stage was no doubt designed to facilitate this jeu de scène.

In 1673, Molière’s company, dispossessed of the Théâtre du Palais-Royal by Lully, moved to the Guénégaud theater — the converted tennis-court (jeu de paume de la Bouteille) originally adapted by Sourdeac and Champeron to serve as the opera house for Perrin’s Académie Royale des Opéras. Lully’s April 1673 ordinance forbade playhouses henceforth from having orchestra pits 36. According to Chappuzeau, “Depuis peu on les [i.e., les violons] met dans vne des Loges du fond, d’où ils font plus de bruit que de tout autre lieu où on les pourroit placer” 37. Evidently, the strings remained in these boxes until the 1675 production of L’Inconnu, when they were one again brought down front 38. Meanwhile at the Palais-Royal, now home to Lully’s Académie Royale de Musique, the orchestra pit was enlarged by Vigarani in the autumn of 1673 to accommodate the greater number of instruments in Lully’s opera orchestra 39.

THE SINGERS

For court performances of the comédies-ballets, the vocal music was usually sung by singers of the Chapelle and Chambre du Roy. As shown by the livrets, Hilaire Dupuy (soprano), Jean Blondel (tenor), Claude Le Gros (tenor), Jean Gaye (haute-contre/tenor/baritone), and Guillaume d’Estival (bass) were regulars in these productions. On occasion, Lully also sang in the comédies-ballets; he performed the role of one of the two grotesque singing doctors in Monsieur de Pourcaugnon (1669) 40, and of the singing Mufti in Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme (1670). An

36. “Ordonnance portant defenses aux comediens de se servir dans leurs representations de plus de deux voix et six violons,” dated 22 April 1673; reprinted in Marcelle Benoit, Musiques de cour, p. 41.
38. See Bonnassieux, La Musique à la Comédie-Française, p. 2.
39. See Barbara Coeyman, “Theatres for Opera and Ballet during the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV,” Early Music, 18 (February 1990), pp. 31-34.
40. The livret indicates “Les deux musiciens italiens: Il signor Chiachiarone et M. Gaye” for the comic duet “Buon di, buon di,” yet it remains unclear exactly which part Lully sang. From the order that the names are listed, we might assume Lully sang the upper part of the duet, as well as the following song, “Altro non e la pazzia.” Yet, the role Lully sang in the Turkish Ceremony of Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme was more of a bass role.
untrained singer, Lully relied on his considerable comic gift rather than on his singing abilities, to carry the performance. When he performed at court, Lully was listed in the livrets under various pseudonyms: “il signor Chiacchiarone” for Monsieur de Pourceaugnac, and “le Seigr. Chiacheron” for Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme.

At the Palais-Royal, either the actors themselves sang on-stage or, more often, professional singers were hired. Evidence shows that at least four actors and two actresses of the Troupe du Roy sang on-stage during Molière’s lifetime: Molière and his wife Armande Béjart, La
Grange, possibly La Thorillière, Baron, and Mlle Du Parc 41. For Les Fâcheux (1661), Philidor’s 1681 manuscript copy of the music states that Lully’s courante was sung by the actor La Grange, presumably an octave lower than notated (Plate 5). Even at low pitch, Lully’s courante lies just beyond the comfortable range of a baritone, and so La Grange’s vocal range would have corresponded to low tenor 42.

Another comédie-ballet, Le Sicilien (1667), featured a love-song (“D’un cœur ardent”) with a mock-Turkish refrain. The court singer Jean Gaye, playing an unnamed Turkish slave, sang it in the court premiere. However, when Molière published Le Sicilien the following year, he reassigned this song to the character Hali — a role customarily performed by La Thorillière. Therefore, La Thorillière must have sung this song on-stage, or else he pantomimed while a professional singer performed it from off-stage (La Grange alludes to this practice later on; see below, p. 26).

Molière also sang on-stage in a number of comic roles 43. His songs in general were short and simple, for Molière was a farceur, not a chanteur. “Qu’ils sont doux, bouteille jolie,” the drinking song sung by Sganarelle in Act 1, sc. 5 of Le Médecin malgré lui (1666), is a jaunty triple-meter dance which hovers around the hexachord b-g’ (Plate 6) 44.

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41. I omit Julien Bedeau (dit Jodelet) from this list, because he was with Molière’s company just a short time. This singing farceur originally belonged to the Théâtre du Marais, which he left to join the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1634; he joined Molière’s company in 1659, and died in 1660.

42. That La Grange sang tenor is corroborated by Charpentier’s music for Le Malade imaginaire, in which he, performing the role of Cleante in the petit opéra imprévu of Act 2, sc. 5, sang to F.#.

43. La Princesse d’Elide (Moron), Le Médecin malgré lui (Sganarelle), La Pastorale comique (Lycas), Le Sicilien (Dom Pèdre), and Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme (Monsieur Jourdain).

44. Julien Tieriot believed that this drinking song was in fact composed by Charpentier for a later revival of Le Médecin malgré lui given in June of 1672 (La Musique dans la Comédie de Molière [Paris : La Renaissance du Livre, 1922], pp. 173-74), and he referred to a manuscript collection (Chansons historiques, satiriques et gaillardes [n.p., n.d.]) which attributed this song to Charpentier. Moreover, Tieriot cited another drinking song attributed to Lully and preserved in Les Parodies nouvelles et les vaudevilles inconnus (Paris : Jean-Baptiste-Christophe Ballard, 1731), Vol. 2, p. 18, which he believed was the drinking-song originally performed in Le Médecin malgré lui in 1666 (with the lyrics “Qu’est tes glougloux, charmante bouteille”). I suggest that the following evidence argues against the attribution of “Qu’ils sont doux, bouteille jolie” to Charpentier. (1) The lyrics printed with the song were those published in the 1667 first edition of the play, and therefore must have been the original lyrics; for later revivals of other Molière works (Le Mariage forcé, Le Sicilien), Charpentier composed new music to lyrics which were completely different from those set earlier by Lully. (2) The Latin lyrics published at the bottom of the Recueil complet de Vaudevilles score date from the first performances. The frères Parfait (Histoire du Théâtre français [Paris, 1747]; repr. New York : Burt
LE MEDECIN MALGRE LUI. LULLY, 1666.

Airs

Qu'ils sont deux bouts de joli, qu'ils sont deux vos

Petits glou glous mais n'ont senté que bien des jaz

Louz qui vous etez toujours remplis ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah

Le marmie pourquoi nous quiduc vous?

Quam dulces,

Anphora aman,

Quam dulces

Sunt hae voces?

Hum fandismeterum in calice,

Ultima semper everes plena!

Ah! Alcara mea laguna,

Vivae et facie!
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Molière often played up the comic aspect of his singing by using trained singers as a foil. For instance, in La Princesse d’Elide the fool, Moron (played by Molière), attempts to win the love of a shepherdess by taking singing lessons from a satyr (performed by the bass Guillaume d’Estival in the court premiere), then later by improvising a surprisingly good pastoral lament (“Ton extrême rigueur”). Molière’s characters also possess singular bad taste in musical matters. In Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, Monsieur Jourdain finds Lully’s court air “Je languis nuit et jour” to be “un peu lugubre,” and prefers instead the jolly and unrefined quality of the chanson “Je croyais Janne- ton”.

Molière’s wife, Armande Béjart, also sang on-stage. One contemporary commented that “elle avoit la voix extremement jolie; elle chantoit avec un grand goust le francois & l’italien, & personne n’a sceu mieux se mettre à l’air de son visage par l’arrangement de sa coiffure, & plus noblement par l’ajustement de son habit.” She created the rôle of Angélique in Le Malade imaginaire, and for later revivals she

Franklin, 1968], Vol. 10, pp. 123-24, note a) quoted the following tale found in the December 1739 issue of the Mercure de France (1 :2914):

Il y a une anecdote assez plaisante au sujet de la chanson : Qu’ils sont doux, bouteille ma mie! &c. que chante Sganarelle. M. Roze de l’Académie Française, & Secrétaire du Cabinet du Roy, fit des paroles latines sur cet air ; d’abord, pour se divertir, & ensuite pour faire une petite malice à Molière, à qui il reprocha chez M. le Duc de Montaubier, d’être plagiaire : ce qui donna lieu à une fort vive & plaisante dispute. M. Roze soutenant, en chantant les paroles latines, que Molière les avait traduites en Français d’une Epigramme latine, imitée de l’Anthologie, dont l’air en question semble fait exprès : Voici les paroles,

Quam dulces !
Amphora amœna !
Quam dulces,
Sunt tuae voces !
Dum fundis metrum in calices,
Utinam semper esses plena :
Ah! ah! cara mea lagena,
Vacua cur jaces?

These Latin lyrics, designed to be sung to the tune reproduced in Plate 6 (and which is ascribed to Lully), confirms that this was the original drinking-song for Le Médecin malgré lui — of which the French lyrics match those published in the 1667 first edition. Therefore, for lack of compelling evidence to the contrary, I contend that the Recueil complet de Vaudevilles version of “Qu’ils sont doux, Bouteille jolie” was the drinking-song composed by Lully for the 1666 premiere.

45. The lyrics to this popular song were by Pierre Perrin (Molière’s rival), which were set to music by Jean Granouillet, sieur de Sablères, Superintendent of Music for the Duc d’Orléans (Lully’s rival). See Henry Prunières, “Une Chanson de Molière,” La Revue Musicale, II (1921), 150-54.

46. Quoted in Frédéric Hillemacher, Galerie historique des portraits des comédiens de la troupe de Molière (Lyons : Nicolas Scheuring, 1869), p. 88.
sang the "petit opéra impromptu" with La Grange, who played the role of the young lover Cléante. One critic praised these singing actors in this scene for the naturalness and effectiveness of their singing 47:

... la Molière & La Grange, qui la chantent n'ont pas cependant la voix du monde la plus belle. Je doute même qu'ils entendent finement la musique, & quoy qu'ils chantent par les règles, ce n'est point par leur chant qu'ils s'attirent une si générale approbation. Mais ils savent toucher le cœur, ils peignent les passions. La peinture qu'ils en font est si vraie semblable & leur jeu se cache si bien dans la nature, que l'on ne pense pas à distinguer la vérité de la seule apparence. En un mot, ils entendent admirablement bien le théatre, & leurs rôles ne réussissent jamais bien, lorsqu'ils ne les jouent pas eux mêmes.

After 1671 the Troupe du Roy resolved henceforth to perform plays "tant simples que de machines," and they began to recruit singing actors. For a revival of Le Mariage forcé given during the summer of 1672, the company hired Jean Deschamps, Sieur de Villiers 48 (an actor and haute-contre) along with several professional singers: the tenor Forestier, the bass Le Roy, and the soprano Mlle Turpin 49. About this time, a singing teacher was hired at company expense for Molière's protégé, the promising young actor Michel Baron 50. After Molière's death, several other actors (André Hubert, Isaac François Guérin d’Estriché, and Achille Varlet, dit Verneuil) possessed sufficient musical ability to sing on-stage, and by the mid-1670s the Troupe de Guénégaud could boast of their chorus of singing-actors for the 1675 production of Circe 51.


49. See Registre d’Hubert, p. 33. Hubert’s entry on p. 102 reads “Pour Être coiffure a la petite Turpin du mariage force, 7#10s.” This singer was celebrated by Charles Robinet (Oeuvres complètes, § 259) as “la jeune Turpin, qui chante d’un air si poupin.” Nüchter and Thoinan mention that “Mademoiselle Turpin chantait sur les théâtres particuliers et dans les concerts;” see Les Origines de l’Opéra français (Paris, 1886; repr. Geneva: Minkoff, 1972), p. 202, n. 3.

50. Registre d’Hubert lists on 10 January 1673 “a Monsr Baron pour deux mois de musique... 15# 10s;” and on 10 February 1673 “a Mr Baron pour son maître a chanter... 22#.”

51. Charpentier’s score for Thomas Corneille’s machine play Circe (Bibl. Nat., Ms Rés. Vm’ 259, XVII, fols. 1-17) lists in the margins of a chorus (fol. 3) the names of the following singers: “Bast[...],” “Pou[sin],” “Des Tri[ches],” “La Gf[an]el,” “Vr[n[eu]],” “Hub[eil],” and “De Gaye.” The first name is unknown, but Louis-Joseph Poussin was a professional haute-contre who sang in Psyché (1671), Le Malade imaginaire (1673, rev. 1674), and
The more demanding music of Molière's *intermèdes* required the company to hire professional singers (*musiciens à gages*). For *Le Mariage forcé* (1664), the *Registre de La Grange* lists a line item of 5 livres for "musique" (i.e., vocal music) 52. Evidently, the company hired a singer to perform one of the two vocal numbers, either the *Récit de la Beauté* ("Sî l'Amour vous soumet") or the *Récit d'un Magicien* ("Hola ! qui va là?"). It is probable that one of the actors (perhaps La Grange) performed the singing role of the magician; the *Récit de la Beauté*, on the other hand, required a singer of some ability who did not have to act. Several singers were needed for *La Princesse d'Elide* (1664), and the payment of 25 livres for musique listed in the *Second Registre de La Théâtrière* (9 November 1664) suggests that the company hired five professional singers to cover the eight singing roles required by the *intermèdes*. Singers doubled on roles for the court premiere, so we might assume that five singers were assigned a similar distribution of roles at the Palais-Royal performances, with all of them forming the chorus of the *Sixième Intermède* 53.

As singers' responsibilities increased for *Psyché* (1671) and *Le Malade imaginaire* (1673), their pay was increased accordingly: the lowest-paid singers received 5 livres 10 sols per performance, the highest-paid 11 livres. In 1671 the *Troupe du Roy* took a major step toward dramatic realism when they resolved to hire a group of singers for *Psyché* who were willing to appear on-stage, together with the actors. An interesting passage from the *Registre de La Grange* sheds considerable light on vocal performance practices in Molière's theater prior to this time 54. Evidently, while they performed from boxes, heard but not seen, the actors would mime their parts on-stage 55. La Grange explains that:

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52. *Registre de La Grange*, I:64.
53. Lully's score calls for two sopranos, a tenor, a baritone, and a bass. It is possible that, as was done at the court premiere, the soprano who sang Aurore in the *Premier Intermède* also sang the role of Climène in the *Cinquième Intermède* along with another paid singer, who sang the role of Philis; the singing shepherd Tircis in the *Quatrième Intermède* doubled as the tenor dogkeeper of the *Premier Intermède*; and the singing satyr of the *Troisième Intermède* doubled as the bass-voice dogkeeper, with another paid singer as the baritone dogkeeper.
55. There is evidence in earlier plays given by rival theaters that actors lip-synced their songs. In the musical finale to Sallebray's *Le Jugement de Paris*
Jusques icy les Musiciens et Musiciennes n’auoient point voulu parroistre en public. Ils chantoient a la Comedie dans des loges grillées et treillissées. Mais on surmonta cet obstacle et avec quelque legere despance on trouua des personnes qui chanterent sur le Theatres a Visage descouvert habillez comme les Comediens, sciauoir

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<th>Madelies</th>
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<td>Mrs Mosnier</td>
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<td>Champeenois</td>
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<td>Mlle Turpin</td>
<td>grandpré</td>
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Reading between the lines, we might surmise that some of the singers previously hired by the Palais-Royal were court singers, who were perhaps not keen to appear on-stage with actors. Curiously, of the eight singers listed above, only two were hired back two years later for *Le Malade imaginaire*. For this latter production, seven professional singers were hired, two at 11 *livres* per performance, and five others at 5 *livres* 10 *sols*. Six of them are identified in Charpentier's autograph score, where their names appear written in the left margins of the chorus "*Bene, bene respondere*" 56: Mlle Mouvant (first soprano), Mlle Hardy (first soprano), Mlle Marion (second soprano), M. Poussin (*haute-contre*) 57, M. Forestier (tenor), and M. Frison (bass) 58. The name of the seventh singer ("Guay") appears in the margins of one of the *haute-contre* solos in "*Profitez du printemps*" 59. This was probably the versatile singer Jean Gaye, who had sung numerous roles (in various vocal ranges) for the court performances of the *comédies-ballets*; Lully engaged him for the Académie Royale de Musique later that year, and composed for him the title-role of *Cadmus et Hermione* 60.

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_Le Ravissement d’Helene_ (1639), performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1657 (and perhaps earlier), Paris entertains Helé with a song ("*Prénés congé de ce rivage*"), which, in the printed play, is preceded by the performance rubric "*on chante,*." Similarly, for the 1666 performances at the Théâtre du Marais of Boyer’s _Les Amours de Jupiter et de Sémélé_ a performance rubric in Act 4 reads "*JVPITER descends porté par son Aigle au milieu des nuées enflammées, cependant qu’on chante ces vers (Je descends sur la terre avec toutes mes armes).*” Clearly, Paris and Jupiter were made to appear to be singing, while someone else sang their songs from the wings.

57. Louis-Joseph Poussin.
58. Antoine Frizon (or Frison) later sang as a *chantre ordinaire* in the royal chapel; see Benoit, *Musiques de Cour*, pp. 68, 76, and 152.
60. Evidently, Jean Gaye was also one of the external singers hired by the company for their production of *Circé* at the Théâtre de Guénégaud in 1675; see above, note 51.
THE DANCERS

Like other theatrical companies of the time, the Troupe du Roy was fully capable of dancing a ballet when the occasion arose. Molière is not known to have had any formal training as a dancer, other than what he may have received as a student at the Collège de Clermont. His dancing in the comédies-ballets was pantomimic for the most part; like his singing, it was often intended to appear comical rather than skilled. In sc. 12 of Les Précieuses ridicules, Mascarille (played by Molière) clumsily attempts a courante, and then reproaches the string players for not playing in time. In the Cinquième Entrée of Le Mariage forcé, a dancing master tries to show Sganarelle how to dance a courante in preparation for his wedding — after which his bride is shown dancing with four flirtatious young men. In the final scene of L’Amour médecin, some dancers hold Sganarelle and force him to dance while his fiancée elopes with her lover. Lully, on the other hand, was an accomplished dancer, and he frequently performed at court alongside professional baladins and skilled, noble amateurs. Lully evidently danced in the “Charivari grotesque” of Le Mariage forcé, and possibly as a Scaramouche in L’Amour médecin; in La Pastorale comique he appeared with Beauchamps as a guitar-playing gypsy. His famous buffo performances in Monsieur de Pourceaugnac and Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme revealed his talent for lazzi and burlesque pantomime.

Several members of Molière’s company danced in performances at court and in town. Of the actresses, Mademoiselle Du Parc, whose real name was Marquise-Thérèse de Gorla, was often praised for her dancing. Loret remarked that “La Du-Parc, cette belle Actrice, / avec son port d’Impératrice, / soit en récitant, ou dansant, / n’a rien qui ne soit ravissant; / et comme sa taille et sa tête / lui font mainte et mainte conquête, / mille soupirants sont témoins / que ses beaux pas

62. The livret lists “M. Lully, Les sieurs Balthasard, Vagnac, Bonnard, la Pierre, Descoutaux et les trois Opterres frères”. Three of these names recur as dancers in the comédies-ballets — Balthasard, Bonnard, and la Pierre appeared together in the Second and Sixième Intermède of La Princesse d’Elide. Other names can be identified as members of the Chambre and Ecure : François Pignon (dit des Cousteaux ; oboe and flute), Jean Hotteterre (violin and oboe), Nicolas Hotteterre (oboe and viola), Louis Hotteterre (viola and sackbut), Martin Hotteterre (viola and oboe). Since Lully’s name heads the list of dancers, it would be logical to assume that he danced in the Charivari grotesque.
63. She was married to the actor Du Parc, whose real name was René Berthelot. For an engaging account of her career and the mysterious circumstances surrounding her death, see H. Carrington Lancaster, “An Actress : La Du Parc ”, in Adventures of a Literary Historian (Baltimore : Johns Hopkins Press, 1942), pp. 79-96.
n'en font pas moins" 64. Another author recalled, with more than a hint of fetishism, that "elle faisait certains caprioles remarquables ; car on voyait ses jambes & partie de ses cuisses par le moyen de sa juppe fendue des deux costez, avec des bas de soye attaché au haut d'une petite culotte" 65. In *Le Mariage forcé*, Mile Du Parc played Sganarelle's flirtatious, young fiancée Dorimène. Loret commented on how diverting were Du Parc's feminine charms and dancing: "De la Du-Parc, rien je ne dis, / qui rendoit les Gens éboudis / par ses apas, par sa prestance, / et par ses beaux pas et sa dance" 66. The height of Mile Du Parc's recognition at court came in 1664, when she performed the role of Alcine, the enchantress of *Les Plaisirs de l'Ile enchantée*; in the finale of the *Ballet du Palais d'Alcine* that concluded the three-day divertissement, she danced opposite Pierre Beauchamps. Other members of Molière's company also occasionally danced on-stage. La Grange seems to have performed the role of the dancing nuisance Lysandre in the premiere of *Les Fâcheux* 67. Armande Béjart emerged as the leading beauty of the *Troupe du Roy* during the 1660s, and Molière wrote many of his principal female roles for her. She played a fortune-telling gypsy in the *Troisième Entrée de Le Mariage forcé*, where she appeared on-stage with the king and his courtiers. While Mile Molière may have danced on-stage in this and other productions, there is no record of it. Theatrical dancing costumes of the time were designed to disguise the fact that the gypsy women, shepherdesses, and Spanish ladies listed in the court *livrets* were performed at court by male dancers 68. In the public theater, professional dancers comprised the single most expensive production cost. For the first run of *Le Mariage forcé*, nine dancers

67. In Act I, scene 3, the dancing nuisance Lysandre confronts Eraste, the young lover. An inscription in the 1681 Philidor manuscript score (Bibl. nat., Rés. F 530, p. 68; see Plate 5) states that "Cette Courante a esté fait par Mr. de Lully et chantée au fâcheux par Mr. de la Grange Comedien". We know from *Registre de La Grange* (p. 40) that La Grange played the part of Eraste for the Paris performances until mid-November, when illness forced him to relinquish the role to Mr du Croisy. However, the evidence offered by Philidor’s score would lead us to conclude that La Grange, not Molière, premiered the role of the singing and dancing nuisance.
68. The following court dancers seemed to have made a specialty of performing female roles in the *comédies-ballets*: Lalanne, Saint-André, Baltazard, Magny, Arnald, Bonard, Noblet *cadet* and *ainé*, Foignard, La Montagne, Lestang, Favier cadet, Favre, Joubert, and Pezant.
were each paid 5 livres per performance\(^6\); for the 4 November 1664 premiere of *La Princesse d’Elide*, twelve dancers were paid a total of 60 livres—a sum that represents the total production expenses for a non-musical play.\(^7\) The rate of 5 livres seems to have become the standard rate for a dancer in 1664; when *Les Fâcheux* was revived for four performances in June of that year, an unspecified number of dancers (probably four) received a total of 20 livres.\(^7\) For the first run of *Psyché*, the company hired 12 dancers and 4 petits danseurs, 2 graces and 6 cupids and zephyrs to perform spectacular flights, as well as 2 acrobats. Dancers were usually outfitted with silk hose and shoes at the company’s expense. Often dancers received other perquisites: a dressing room at 9 livres appears among the 22 February 1664 expenses for *Le Mariage forcé*;\(^7\) expenses for the 22 April 1663 revival of *Les Fâcheux* include 1 livre 10 sols “pour du vin au record des danseurs”\(^7\); and payments were made to a baigneur for performances that featured ballet during the warm summer months of 1672.\(^7\)

**CHOREOGRAPHERS AND CONDUCTORS**

Three professional court dancers served as dancing masters for the Troupe du Roy: Pierre Beauchamps, Anthoine des Brosses and, at the Guénégaud theater, Pierre de la Montagne.\(^7\) Beauchamps, the most acclaimed *baladin* of his day, was Intendant des Ballets du Roy. He danced in most of the court premieres of the comédies-ballets, in which he portrayed a variety of colorful characters.\(^7\) Beauchamps composed

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69. As opposed to the fifteen professional dancers that performed at court. See the *Registre de La Grange*, I :64, and the *Premier Registre de La Thorillière* (2/15/1664-3/11/1664).

70. *Second Registre de La Thorillière*, entry of 9 November 1664.

71. *Second Registre de La Thorillière*, entry of 8 June 1664. In 1663, the rate seems to have been 3 livres per performance; 9 livres were paid “pour les danseurs” for performances of *Les Fâcheux* on 27 April, 26 October, and 30 October; the next July, a single dancer was paid 3 livres to perform a dance following Racine’s tragedy *La Thébaïde*.

72. *Second Registre de La Thorillière*; Bonnassie suggests that this was undoubtedly located in a building adjoining the theater (La Musique à la Comédie-Française, p. 6).

73. *Second Registre de La Thorillière*.


76. These include a “plaisant ou goguennard,” “magicien,” “galant” (Le Mariage forcé); Roger in Les Plaisirs de l’Île enchantée (Troisième Journée); “valet de chien”, “valet de feste”, “luteur” (La Princesse d’Elide, 25 August 1669 revival at Saint-Germain-en-Laye); “Egyptien jouant de la guitare” (La Pastorale comique); “Maure nu” (Le Sicilien); “berger”, “suivant de Bacchus” (George Dandin); “page”, “matassin”, “procureur”, “Biscayen” (Monsieur de Pourceaugnac); “dieu marin”, “pantomime”, “faune”, “jeune
the music and choreographed the dances for the Vaux-le-Vicomte premiere of *Les Fâcheux*; thereafter, his music (and perhaps his choreography) was used for subsequent performances at the Palais-Royal. Molière engaged Beauchamps for his first run of *Le Mariage forcé* beginning 15 February 1664, for which the *Registre de La Grange* recorded that Beauchamps received 550 livres “p[our] faire le ballet.” 77. Des Brosses evidently became their maître à danser for the public performances of *La Princesse d'Elide* that autumn, for the *Second Registre de La Thorillière* lists two payments of 110 livres made on 9 and 11 November 1664 to “Mr des Brosses.” 78. Later in his career, Des Brosses served as ballet master for the Théâtre du Marais 79, for Perrin’s Académie Royale d’Opéras 80, and as one of the choreographers for Lully’s Académie Royale de Musique 81.

For the public performances of *La Princesse d'Elide* in 1664, the *Second Registre de La Thorillière* records the sum of 300 livres paid to “Monsieur Cambert” 82. This was most likely the composer Robert Gen” (*Les Amants magnifiques*); “Ture”, “Espagnol”, “Scaramouche” (*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, with *Le Ballet des Nations*); “fleuve”, “cyclope”, “furie”, “berger galant”, “enseigne” (*Psyché*).


78. That previous May, Des Brosses had appeared in the three-day Versailles fête (*Les Plaisirs de l'île enchantée*) for which *La Princesse d'Elide* was first given — in which he danced as one of the Signs of the Zodiac, as a monster, and as a knight.


80. Des Brosses choreographed the ballets for the Perrin-Cambert opera *Pomone* (1671) and served as ballet master to the Academy until Beauchamps took over his position sometime in the late fall or early winter of 1671. A legal document from this time states “et pour l’opéra des peines et des plaisirs d’Amour il [est] constant que toute la musique estoit preste auparavant que Pomone cessat puisque Mr de beuchamps qui a dansé enuiron deux mois a Pomone a entendu la repetition dudit second opera le premier jour qu’il entra ["dans" crossed-out] a l’opera et que Mr des brosses auoit tous les airs ["auparavu" crossed-out] des ballets de ce second opera auparavant qu’il cedat sa place audit beuchamps.” (Ms., Archives de la Comédie-Française.)

81. Lully employed des Brosses to choreograph his pastiche *Les Fêtes de l’Amour et de Bacchus* (November 1672) and his first tragédie-lyrique, *Cadmus et Hermione* (April 1673) — both performed in a rented theater on the Rue Vaugirard (Jeu de Paume de Béquet, called « Le Bel-Air »).

82. “Raporte les trois cinq livres que j’auois en mes mains qui ont esté baillez à Monsieur Cambert” (*Second Registre de La Thorillière*, entry for 9 December 1664).
Cambert, who may have served as music director for this production\(^{83}\).
The total earned by Des Brosses and Cambert (220 livres plus 300 livres) for their services in \textit{La Princesse d'Elide} (roughly equivalent to the 550 livres that Beauchamps was paid for \textit{Le Mariage forcé}) suggests that Des Brosses and Cambert may have divided the duties undertaken by Beauchamps in the earlier production. When the Troupe du Roy engaged Beauchamps for their 1671 production of \textit{Psyché}, they doubled his earlier stipend: according to the \textit{Registre de La Grange}, Beauchamps received 1,100 livres "pour avoir faict les ballet et conduire la musique", together with a salary of 11 livres per performance "tant pour battre la mesure a la musique que pour entretenir les ballets"\(^{84}\).

**OTHER ASPECTS OF PRODUCTION**

\textit{Psyché} (1671) and \textit{Le Malade imaginaire} (1673) marked a new direction for Molière and the Troupe du Roy. Earlier \textit{comédies-ballets} received their court premieres under a variety of circumstances, often on makeshift stages and sometimes with modest décor. Upon occasion, the company performed machine plays — Corneille’s \textit{Andromède} in the provinces (perhaps in 1651-52)\(^{85}\), Gilbert’s \textit{Les Amours de Diane et d’Endymion} and Montauban’s \textit{Les Charmes de Félicie} at the Petit-Bourbon in 1660\(^{86}\), and Molière’s \textit{Dom Juan} and \textit{Amphitryon} at the Palais-Royal in 1665 and 1668 respectively. Perhaps encouraged by their success with the court performances of \textit{Psyché} at the Salle des Machines, the Troupe du Roy resolved during the Lenten break of 1671 to include henceforth in their repertory “high-tech” theatrical productions. Modelled after the kinds of musical machine plays by Boyer and de Visé that were being produced at the Théâtre du Marais, \textit{Psyché} would feature sudden set-transformations, breathtaking aerial flights, and special effects. But more importantly, by its classical subject

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83. Cambert would later compose incidental music for Brécourt’s comedy \textit{Le Jalous invisible}, given at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1666, and for the \textit{Sultane du festin de pierre} (Agisseries au convidatoire di pieta), performed in February 1673 by the Comédie Italienne (see Robinet, letter of 4 February 1673).

84. \textit{Registre de La Grange}, I:126.

85. A copy of a 1651 edition of \textit{Andromède} survives with the names of the actors who participated in Molière’s handwriting (Molière played the part of Perseus). Henry Prunières believes that a performance took place during the winter of 1651, when Charles Coypeau (\textit{dit} Dassoucy) met up with Molière and his company at a meeting of the États at Carcassonne (Henry Prunières, “Les singulières aventure de M. Dassoucy, musicien et poète burlesque,” \textit{La Revue musicale}, 19 [1938], p. 96).

86. During the summer of 1660 at the Petit-Bourbon, Molière’s company produced Gilbert’s \textit{Les Amours de Diane et d’Endymion} and Montauban’s \textit{Les Charmes de Félicie}, both of which called for special scenic effects, solo songs, and choruses. See the \textit{Registre de La Grange}, I:21-25.
matter, its prologue in praise of Louis XIV, its extensive divertissements of songs, choruses, and ballet, Psyché marked a new direction for Molière's company—a shift toward the aesthetic of opera. The rapid scene-changes required by Psyché were impossible to perform on the old stage of the Palais-Royal, where its fixed angle-wings confined the action to a single scene; furthermore, the machine-effects that were so integral to the dramatic action could not easily be recreated there. So on 15 March 1671, during their Lenten break, the company resolved "de réfaire tout le Théâtre, particulièrement la charpente, et le rendre propre pour des machines". They also completed the restoration of the auditorium, which had been done hastily when the company moved to the Palais-Royal ten years earlier. They repaired and repainted the three rows of loges (the third loge having been brought over from the Petit Bourbon in 1661), the amphitheater, the balconies, and the conveniences. And they installed several receding pairs of mechanically operated flat wings painted in perspective, which permitted changes of scene at a moment's notice.

An examination of the sets and machines described in the first printed edition of Psyché sheds some light on the staging capabilities of the remodelled Palais-Royal. The prologue opens upon "un Lieu champestre, & dans l'enfoncement un Rocher percé à jour, à travers duquel on voit la Mer en éloignement". This perspective would have been painted on the mechanical flat wings. Later, Venus descends from the heavens with her son Cupid and two little Graces on a grande machine, and at the end of the prologue Cupid takes to flight. The perspective then changes into "une grande Ville, où l'on découvre des deux costez, des Palais & des Maisons de differens ordres d'Architecture". At the end of Act 1, the set transforms into a desert landscape dominated by "des Rochers affreux" and "une Grotte effroyable" where Psyche is to be sacrificed. The Second Intermède, Act 3, and the Troisième Intermède are all set in "une Cour magnifique, ornée de Colonnes de Lapis enrichies de Figures d'or, qui forment un Palais.

87. See the Registre de La Grange, I:124-26.
89. Numerous discrepancies between the first edition of the play (Psyché, tragédie-ballet Par J.-B. P. Molière [Paris : Pierre le Monnier, 1671]) and the 1671 printed livret, which describes the production given at the Salle des Machines, lead me to believe that the former represents the staging usually given at the Palais-Royal.
90. Perhaps the basic mechanism was already installed at the Palais-Royal by 1668, for the conclusion of Molière's Amphitryon called for the descent of Jupiter on a mechanical eagle.
91. The set for the production at the Salle des Machines depicted "une grande allée de cyprès, où l'on découvre, des deux côtés, des tombeaux superbes des anciens rois de la famille de Psyché. Cette décoration est coupée, dans le fond, par un magnifique arc de triomphe, au travers duquel on voit un éloignement de la même allée qui s'étend jusqu'à perte de vue".
pompéus & brillant, que l’Amour destine pour Psiché ’’. At the end of the *Troisième intermède* the set changes to ’’un autre Palais magnifique, coupé dans le fond par un Vestibule, au travers duquel on voit un Jardin superbe & charmant, décoré de plusieurs Vases d’Orangers, & d’arbres chargez de toutes sortes de Fruits ’’ 92. What the beginning of Act 4 lacked in extraordinary sets, it more than made up for in special effects. At the end of scene 2, Zéphyr sweeps Psiché’s two sisters up in a cloud and bears them away through the sky. Then, after Psiché persuades Cupid to reveal his identity to her, the god suddenly flies away and simultaneously ’’le superbe Jardin s’évanouit ’’. Psiché is left alone ’’au milieu d’une vaste Campagne & sur le bord sauvage d’un grand Fleuve où elle se veut précipiter.’’ The river-god then appears — probably rising from below the surface of the river 93; he is shown ’’assis sur un amas de Joncs & de Roseaux, & appuyé sur une grande Urne, d’où sort une grosse source d’eau ’’. The *Quatrième Intermède* was the great set of Hell 94, where the audience saw :

... une Mer toute de feu, dont les flots sont dans une perpetuelle agitation. Cette Mer effroyable est bornée par des Ruines enflammées ; & au milieu de ses flots agitez, au travers d’une Gueule affreuse, paroist le Palais Infernal de Pluton... Psiché qui a passé aux Enfers par le commandement de Venus, repasse dans la Barque de Charon, avec la Boîte qu’elle a receue de Proserpine pour cette Déesse.

The act also features several aerial flights and concludes with a mechanical *tour de force*. Psiché faints at the end of sc. 3, and Cupid flies down to her ; then at the end of sc. 5, ’’après quelques éclairs & roulements de Tonnerre, Jupiter paroist en l’air sur son Aigle ’’. In the last scene two large machines descend from the heavens at both sides of Jupiter ; Venus and her attendants climb into one of them, Cupid and Psiché (newly made immortal) into the other, and they all ascend.

92. In the 1671 court *livret*, this setting is described as ’’un jardin superbe et charmant. On y voit des berceaux de verdure soutenus par des Termes d’or, et décorés de vases d’orangers, et d’arbres de toutes sortes de fruits. Le milieu du théâtre est rempli des fleurs les plus belles et les plus rares, environnées de haies de buis. On découvre dans l’enfoncement plusieurs dômes de rocaillies ornés de coquillages, de fontaines et de statues ; et toute cette agréable vue se termine par un magnifique palais ’’.

93. A trap-door was probably already in place at the Palais-Royal by the mid-1660s. At the conclusion of *Don Juan* (1665 ; although this description is found only in an uncensored version of the play, published in Amsterdam in 1683), ’’le tonnerre tombe avec un grand bruit et de grands éclairs sur Don Juan ; la terre s’ouvre et l’abîme ; et il sort de grands feux de l’endroit où il est tombé ’’. *La Princesse d’Elide* (1664) had also featured a special-effect in the final *intermède* — i.e., the emergence of the mechanical tree bearing instrument-playing fauns — which would have required such a trap door.

94. Since the description of the set for Hell in the published play is reproduced verbatim from the 1671 *livret*, one might conjecture that the king donated this set to Molière’s company for use in their production.
to heaven for the final apotheosis — while the gods, muses, and minor deities remain behind to dance the grand ballet.

After Psyché, the Troupe du Roy resolved to have an orchestra of twelve strings for all sorts of productions “tant simples que de machines” 95. Le Malade imaginaire, Molière’s next pièce à grand spectacle, would be a lavish and expensive production “remplis de danse, musique et vistecilles” 96 designed for this new transformation stage. After the 1673 livret, the set of the prologue (Élogue en musique et en danse) represents “un lieu Champestre, & neantmoins fort agréable”. There was also a tree on-stage during the prologue, for in preparation for the singing contest “Flore comme Juge va se placer au pied d’un arbre avec deux Zéphirs, & que le reste comme Spectateurs va occuper les deux coins du Theatre” 98. The first act takes place in Argan’s home in Paris, for which no stage description is provided. At the end of the act, “le Theatre change & represente une Ville”; afterwards, “le Theatre change, & represente la mesme Chambre” (Argan’s sickroom). No scene change is indicated for the Second Intermède; however, according to the 1674 livret a set-change was added for the production at the Hôtel de Guénégaud (“le Theatre change, & represente vn Jardin”) 99. For the musical finale, the Cérémonie des Médecins, “plusieurs Tapissiers viennent preparer la Salle, & placer les bancs en cadence”; perhaps the flat wings also changed — but there is no indication of it in the 1673 livret.

Thierry discovered a collection of documents which permits us to reconstruct in some detail the production schedule of Le Malade imaginaire, from the time general preparations commenced on 22 November 1672 (according to the Registre de La Grange, I:140) until the premiere on 10 February 1673 100. On 5 December 1672, carpenters started building the sets and machines 101. An account kept by Jean Crosnier, the company’s décorateur and general factotum 102, records

95. See the Registre de La Grange, I:125. In the event, this permanent orchestra evidently never materialized — for line item expenses for strings are still listed among the frais extraordinaires through Le Malade imaginaire.

96. Registre de La Grange, I:144.


98. This might well have been the mechanical tree used for La Princesse d’Elide in 1664, since there is no record of payments that pertain to the construction of a new tree.


the days (beginning 19 December) on which firewood was furnished to heat the hall from 8 A.M. until 2 P.M. for the dance rehearsals; these rehearsals were scheduled nearly every day of the week, and lasted for several hours into the early afternoon. Three days later, musical rehearsals began for the demoiselles, that is, the ladies who sang in the Prologue and the Moorish intermède, who were furnished with provisions and candles. The company arranged for a private tutor for one of the ladies, Mlle Marion, to teach her the music by rote. From the bill submitted by the candlemaker, Jeanne Magoulet, we can reconstruct the schedule of rehearsals for the actors and actresses: beginning 16 January, on afternoons when there were no other performances scheduled, 2 pounds of candles were furnished for the dramatic rehearsals of Le Malade imaginaire — which were evidently held in dim light. After Psyché closed on January 22nd, full rehearsals (the grandes répétitions) with the musicians and dancers began. In all, there were fifty-three rehearsals for the ballet, eighteen of them with the comedy. The extraordinary amount of attention devoted to the ballet might well testify to the complexity and elaborateness of Beauchamps’s choreography; but it might also suggest the inexperience of the dancers with whom Beauchamps had to work. Since Lully had appropriated the best dancers for his Académie Royale de Musique, Beauchamps’s corps de ballet must have been made up largely of actors and supernumeraries who required additional training and attention. These two months of rehearsals for Le Malade imaginaire had served to train a new generation of singers and dancers; after the production was underway, dance classes continued under the direction of Beauchamps. Thierry advanced the hypothesis that Molière, assisted by his dancing master and singing teacher, had established a school of performing arts to pave the way for future musical productions at the Palais-Royal.

The state-of-the-art stage at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal proved to be effective for spectacular musical productions. Indeed, after Molière’s death the king evicted the Troupe du Roy and gave the theater over to the Académie Royale de Musique. Molière’s death removed the last obstacle to Lully’s operatic ambitions; while the Troupe de Guénégau continued to incorporate music and dance in its productions during the

103. Crosnier’s initial entry reads “Premièrement, du lundi 19e décembre 1672, du [sic] depuis 8 heure du matin Jusqu’à deux heure a près mydi, du feu pour la respettion. Plus du mardy 20e la mesme chose.” Thierry (ibid., p. 164), however, points out that dance rehearsal probably did not in fact last six hours, since the hall would have been heated an hour in advance. The only days that the dancers did not rehearse were: 25 December 1672, 5 and 27 January, and 10 February 1673 — the day of the premiere.
1670s\footnote{108}, it no longer pose a serious threat to Lully’s monopoly. In a work of fiction published against Lully shortly after his death, the ghost of Molière recalls that they once considered taking over jointly the opera privilège, but Lully out-maneuvered him by going to the king two days before their agreed-upon date\footnote{109}. Yet what if the opera privilège had been granted to Molière? As we have seen, by the early 1670s the Troupe du Roy was well on its way to becoming an opera company, and \textit{Le Malade imaginaire} might well have served as the model for a new, urbane type of 17th-century \textit{opéra-comique}. But by 1673 the political winds had changed direction, and whether Molière’s spectacular musical comedies would have best met the requirements of Louis XIV and his royal image-makers is a question that remains beyond the scope of this study.

\footnote{108. See Janet Clarke, “Music at the Guénégaul Theatre 1673-1680”, \textit{Seventeenth-Century French Studies}, 12 (1990), 89-110. \footnote{109. “Lettre de Clément Marot à Monsieur de ***”. Sénèce places these words in Molière’s mouth:}

Le grand bruit que faisoient dans le Monde les Opera... excitèrent ma crainte et revellèrent ma cupidité, j’appréhendai que cette nouveauté ne fît deséjour mon Théâtre, et je me persuadai que si je pouvois m’en rendre le maitre, rien ne pourroit désormais me troubler dans la qualité, que je pretendois m’attribuer d’arbitre des plaisirs, et du bon goût de ce siècle galant où j’ai vescu. Comme j’avois besoin d’un Musicien pour executer ce projet, je jettais les yeux sur Lulli, et lui communiquai ma pensée, persuade que j’étois que la liaison que nous avions depuis long-temps, en concourant ensemble aux plaisirs du Roi, et le succès merveilleux qu’avoit eu depuis peu de temps le charmant spectacle de Psiché, où tous deux nous avions eu nôtre part au plaisir et à la gloire, m’étoient des garants infaillibles de notre future intelligence. Je m’en ouvris donc à lui, il applaudit à mon dessein, il me promit une fidelité, et même une subordination inviolable, nous fimes nos conventions, nous reglâmes nos emplois, et nos partages, et nous primes jour pour aller ensemble mettre la faux dans la moisson d’autrui en demandant au Roi, le Privilege de la representation des Opera... Je dormois tranquillement sur la bonne foi de ce traité, quand Lulli plus éveillé que moi partit de la main deux jours avant celui dont nous étions convenus. Il alla au Roi demander le privilege pour lui seul, il l’obtint à la faveur des belles couleurs qu’il scût donner à sa requeste, et l’obtint même avec des conditions rigoureuses, qui me donnerent beaucoup à courir pour conserver pendant ma vie quelques ornementes à mon theatre”. (\textit{Lettre de Clément Marot à Monsieur de ***} [Cologne : Pierre Marteau, 1688], pp. 54-57.)}\ {}

Georges Mongrédièn (“Molière et Lulli”, \textit{XVII Siècle}, 98-99 [1973], p. 10) points out that Sénèce had lived at court and had written a short opera himself, so he was likely to be well informed about the early developments of opera. Some of Sénèce’s information can be verified: when the opera privilège was granted in Lully’s name alone, it originally contained a clause (aimed directly at Molière) that prohibited theater companies from performing works “with more than two airs and two instruments”. Molière thereupon successfully petitioned the king to have this clause changed to “six singers and twelve instruments”.
SUMMARY

« Nous sommes dans un siècle où la Musique & les Balets ont des charmes pour tout le monde », wrote Donneau de Visé in 1672 « & que les spectacles qui en sont remplis sont beaucoup plus suivis que les autres ». Throughout his career in Paris during 1658-1673, Molière regularly incorporated music and dance into his plays. René Bray (Molière, homme de théâtre [Paris : Mercure de France, 1954]) remarks that in his first ten plays, Molière used music and dance only once, in the next ten plays five times, and in the final ten plays seven times. « La progression est instructive », Bray concluded.

This study will begin by examining Molière’s employment of professional instrumentalists, singers, dancers, choreographers, and musical directors at the Petit Bourbon and the Théâtre du Palais-Royal. Account-books, bills and receipts, contracts of association, musical scores, and other documents will be referred to in reconstructing the musical and choreographic forces deployed by Molière’s theater at various times in his career. In 1671, in response to the success of Perrin’s Académie Royale des Opéras, the Troupe du Roy embarked upon a new direction in musical theater. The troupe’s renovation of the Palais-Royal and their installation of a state-of-the-art transformation stage point to an increased commitment to large-scale performances involving music, dance, and machine spectacle. This gives credence to the hypothesis that, before their split, Molière and Lully planned to acquire Perrin’s privilege and move into opera.

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Donneau de Visé écrivait en 1672 que « Nous sommes dans un siècle où la Musique & les Balets ont des charmes pour tout le monde, & que les spectacles qui en sont remplis sont beaucoup plus suivis que les autres ». Tout au long de sa carrière à Paris, entre 1658 et 1673, Molière incorpore régulièrement de la musique et de la danse dans ses pièces. René Bray (Molière, homme de théâtre [Paris : Mercure de France, 1954]) remarque que dans ses dix premières pièces, Molière n’utilise la musique et la danse qu’une seule fois, dans ses dix pièces suivantes, cinq fois, et dans les dernières dix pièces, sept fois. « La progression est instructive » concluait Bray.

Cette étude examine tout d’abord les instrumentistes professionnels, les chanteurs, danseurs, chorégraphes et directeurs musicaux que Molière employa au Théâtre du Petit Bourbon et au Théâtre du Palais-Royal. Pour reconstituer le nombre des musiciens et des danseurs employés par le théâtre de Molière à différentes époques de sa carrière, nous nous sommes reporté aux livres de comptes, aux factures et reçus, aux contrats d’association, aux partitions musicales et autres documents. En 1671, suite au succès de l’Académie Royale des Opéras de Perrin, la Troupe du Roy prit une nouvelle direction en ce qui concerne le théâtre musical. La réorganisation de la troupe du Palais-Royal et l’installation d’une scène transformable laisse supposer un intérêt accru pour des représentations à grand spectacle mêlant musique, danse et machines. Cela donne foi à l’hypothèse que, avant leur séparation, Molière et Lully envisageaient d’acquérir le privilège de Perrin et de se diriger vers l’opéra.