Music and the self-fulfilling prophecy in Molière’s *Le mariage forcé*

1. Costume design for the *Première entrée*: ‘La Jalousie, les Chagrins, et les Soucions’ (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Rothschild Collection 1460, cat.no.292). This pen and ink drawing, originally part of the extensive theatrical collection of M. de Soleinne, shows the costume of the dancing Chagrins, performed by Saint-André and Desbrosses (their names are faintly visible in the left margin) which incorporates marigolds (fleurs de soucis) in the head-dress and trim of yellow-brown ‘dead-leaf’ colour (feuille-mort).

2. ‘Musique grotesque’ from the *Ballet des fêtes de Bacchus* (1651) (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Est.Pd 74, f.71). This pen and gouache drawing is from the workshop of Henry de Gissey. The caped performer wearing an animal head is playing an *air grotesque* announcing the *Entrée de Jeu*: his bowed monochord is perhaps a trumpet marine. Marie-Françoise Christout suggests that one of the three performers playing this *air grotesque* is Michel Lambert, Lully’s father-in-law: *Le ballet de cour au XVIIe siècle* (Geneva, 1987), p.79.

Early in 1664 Louis XIV asked Jean-Baptiste Molière and Jean-Baptiste Lully to create a court entertainment in which he and some of his courtiers could participate. The resulting comedy with *intermèdes*, entitled *Le mariage forcé* (‘The forced marriage’), became the second work that Molière called ‘a new genre for our stages’. Once again Molière attempted to solve the technical and aesthetic problem of weaving music, dance and comedy into a unified fabric, and thereby to make but a single thing of the ballet and the comedy. To this end the playwright combined different musical-theatrical styles and genres and, through the interworking of poetry, music and dance, introduced into *comédie-ballet* the play of multiple simultaneous meanings.

*Le mariage forcé* surpassed in musical diversity Molière’s first *comédie-ballet*, *Les fâcheux* (which had featured character dances). Lully’s music consisted of an *air de cour*, pantomimic dances, a scene with a singing magician, an instrumental ‘Charivari grotesque’ and a vocal ensemble (‘Concert espagnol’) sung by Spanish...
court singers—intended for the queen mother, Anne of Austria. Molière marshalled these resources to develop further the central theme of his play. Scenes of music and dance grow out of the play’s dramatic action; they revolve around the comic predicament of the protagonist, Sganarelle. Originally played by Molière himself, Sganarelle remains on stage throughout the play and the intermèdes. At the end the musicians, dancers and actors all join him in the wedding celebration that serves as the work’s musical finale.

The première took place at the Louvre on 29 January 1664, and marked the first official collaboration of ‘les deux Baptistes’ (as Madame de Sévigné called Lully and Molière). The royal family, delighted with Le mariage forcé, called for a repeat performance on 31 January, and the king’s brother invited Molière’s troupe to give it twice more in his wife’s apartments at the Palais Royal. The Dutch mathematician Christian Huygens, who frequented court entertainments while in Paris, wrote about one of these performances:

Last Sunday I saw at the Louvre a little ballet that was danced in the salon of the Queen Mother; it is a very funny little comedy by Molière called Le mariage forcé, interspersed with ballet entrees and several musical solos performed by Mademoiselle Hilaire and Signora Anna. The King himself danced, and I believe that it is [being given] today for the 6th and last time. The livret printed by Ballard contains the sung lyrics (except for those of the Spanish concert), the staging descriptions, a summary of the play’s action, and a list of the musicians, dancers and nobility who participated in the entrées.

The similarity of the plot to a real-life incident no doubt contributed to its popularity. Philibert, the Comte de Grammont, had recently been banished from the court of Louis XIV for the attentions he paid to Louise de La Vallière, the king’s mistress. Philibert went to England, where he became engaged to Elizabeth Hamilton, granddaughter of the Duke of Ormond; when at last he was summoned back to the French court, Philibert would have deserted Lady Hamilton—had it not been for the intervention of her two brothers. They caught up with Philibert at Dover, and persuaded him to marry her before returning to France. This was the perfect material for farce, and few courtiers would have overlooked the resemblances between the comic fates of Philibert and Sganarelle.

Soon after this series of court performances, Molière brought the production to his own theatre in Paris, the Théâtre du Palais Royal. Assisted by the choreographer Pierre Beauchamps, Molière gave it 12 performances beginning 15 February 1664 ‘avec le ballet et les orne- ments’ before mounting production costs forced Molière to discontinue the first run. The company presented the comédie-ballet once more at court, and thereafter dropped it from their repertory. Four years passed before Molière revived Le mariage forcé—at which time he presented it as a one-act comedy shorn of its costly interludes of music and dance. That same year (1668) he published this revised, non-musical version that has since served as the source for all later editions of the

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Table 1  Le mariage forcé, structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act/scene</th>
<th>Musical number</th>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Performers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>Overture</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>5-part strings, b.c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/ii</td>
<td>Rétournelle</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>3-part strings, b.c.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Récit de la Beauté</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>soprano, b.c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Première entrée</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>5-part strings, b.c., 3 dancers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘La Jalousie, les Chagrins, et les Soupçons’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seconde entrée</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>5-part strings, b.c., 4 dancers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Quatre Plaisants ou Goguenards’</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sganarelle, Géronimo, Pancrace Sganarelle, Mophilierios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/i</td>
<td>Troisième entrée</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>5-part strings, b.c., 6 dancers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Premier Air: Deux Egyptiens et Quatre Egyptiennes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sganarelle, 2 Egyptiennes</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/ii</td>
<td>Second Air: Deux Egyptiens et Quatre Egyptiennes</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>5-part strings, b.c., 6 dancers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Récit d’un Magicien</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>Sganarelle, basset, b.c.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Quatrième entrée</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>5-part strings, b.c., 4 dancers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Quatre Démons</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sganarelle, Alcantar, Sganarelle, Lycante, Sganarelle, Alcantar, Lycante, Dorimène</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/i</td>
<td>Cinquième entrée</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>5-part strings, b.c., Maître à danser, Sganarelle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Premier Air</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/ii</td>
<td>Deuxième Air</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>5-part strings, b.c., Maître à danser, Sganarelle</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ghost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/iii</td>
<td>Sixième entrée</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>5-part strings, b.c.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rétournelle</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>7 singers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concert espagnol [lost]</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>5-part strings, b.c., 2 Espagnols, 2 Espagnoles</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Menuet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4/iv</td>
<td>Septième entrée</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>5-part strings, b.c.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Un Charivari grotesque</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>5-part strings, b.c.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Deuxième Air</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>5-part strings, b.c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Huitième entrée</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>5-part strings, b.c., 4 Galants, Dorimène</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gavotte</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>5-part strings, b.c., 4 Galants, Dorimène</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deuxième Air: Bourrée</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>5-part strings, b.c., 4 Galants, Dorimène</td>
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</table>
play. In converting the three-act comédie-ballet into a one-act spoken play, he changed some of his original text and added new material to replace the ballets and vocal music he had eliminated. Therefore, we can reconstruct to a large extent the original version of Le mariage forcé premiered in 1664 by (1) identifying and omitting the scenes added in 1668, (2) restoring the three-act comédie-ballet format with the help of the scene synopses published in the 1664 livret, and (3) reinstating Lully's intermèdes.

Molière's comedy presents the middle-aged bachelor Sganarelle and his concerns about marrying the young, frivolous Dorimène. On the one hand, he desires companionship and children; but on the other, he fears being made a cuckold. In his quest for advice on his dilemma, Sganarelle approaches his friend Géronimo, who advises him not to think of marriage (Act 1, scene 1). When Sganarelle responds with 'and I tell you that I am determined to marry', Géronimo realizes that Sganarelle does not wish his opinion, only his approval, and he gives it. Sganarelle then meets up with his betrothed, Dorimène, who informs him that their forthcoming marriage will finally free her from parental authority and provide her with the opportunity to pursue her own pleasures. Dorimène then leaves on a shopping spree, intending to send the bills to her future husband (Act 1, scene 2).

According to the 1664 livret, the first-act intermède then begins: Sganarelle is left alone, rather stunned; after this discourse he
complains of a heaviness weighing on his head, and going to a corner of the stage to sleep he sees a woman in a dream... who sings this solo.

This vision is Beauty personified (an idealization of his fiancée Dorimène), who appears before Sganarelle and advises him to choose someone worth suffering for:

If Love submits you to his inhuman laws,
choose to love someone you find attractive;
at least put on pleasant chains,
and if you must die, die a sweet death.

If the object of your sighs does not merit your troubles,
do not daily in Love's empire;
at least put on pleasant chains,
and if you must die, die a sweet death.16

An allegorical ballet entrée of 'La Jalousie, les Chagrins, et les Souçons' reveals through dance-pantomime the inner torments of the lover who ignores Beauty's advice. Another entrée of 'Quatre Plaisants ou Goguenards' makes fun of the bachelor's foolishness, and perhaps conveys the notion that some people will not be inclined to help Sganarelle's young bride honour her marriage vows. Through song, allegory and figured expression, Sganarelle's fate is prophesied, should he continue to ignore the dictates of reason and common sense. Lully set the dream sequence in the tonal world of G—a 5th removed from the C major overtone. The 'Récit de la Beauté' and the dances of 'La Jalousie, les Chagrins, et les Souçons' begin in G minor; a change to the parallel major key for the dances of 'Quatre Plaisants ou Goguenards' juxtaposes Sganarelle's tormented inner reality (jealousy, chagrin and suspicion) with the way others ('jesters' or ' scoffers') outwardly perceive him. In this manner, song, dance and mime serve to magnify Sganarelle's folly—while at the same time permitting the spectator to derive pleasure from this comic paradox.

The Premier intermède ends abruptly as Géronimo wakes Sganarelle. Realizing the potential significance of dreams, Sganarelle muses, 'You know, dreams are like mirrors; they can show us the future.' This perceptive observation is uncomplicated of Sganarelle who, ironically, has ignored Géronimo's common-sense advice.

Next, Sganarelle seeks professional counsel from two learned philosophers—one Aristotelian, the other Pyrrhonian—who quibble ad nauseam over points of semantics. Pancrace, the Aristotelian, is in a rage because of an argument he had concerning whether one should say 'the shape' or 'the form' of a hat, and he interjects erudite Latin expressions into his tirade (Act 2, scene 2). Unable to gain the first philosopher's attention, Sganarelle then approaches Marphurius—a sceptic who is sure of nothing. Driven to distraction by the philosopher's incertitude, Sganarelle physically attacks Marphurius and then debates whether the beating in fact ever happened (Act 2, scene 3).

Fed up with the prattle of the two pedants, Sganarelle then comes upon a troupe of dancing gypsies, and he asks two gypsy girls to tell his fortune. When questioned whether or not he will become a cuckold, the gypsy girls taunt Sganarelle and avoid answering by singing and dancing. After the gypsies leave, Sganarelle encounters a magician. Here Molière underlines this juxtaposition of the mundane with the supernatural by having the magician sing his responses to Sganarelle's spoken questions. Thereupon the magician summons mute demons, and tells Sganarelle (in song) that these demons will answer with intelligible signs. When asked if he will be a cuckold, the dancing demons pantomime horns. Unlike the Premier intermède, whose dream sequence was a product of Sganarelle's fantaisie, here supernatural beings interact with Sganarelle in song and dance. The meaning of their responses, however, becomes revealed to the audience through music, metaphor and gesture—a language that Sganarelle clearly does not comprehend.

While the opening scenes show Sganarelle seeking advice from friends and specialists, the Premier intermède represents Sganarelle's subliminal anxieties. As Sganarelle now turns to the supernatural for reassurance, we see how far he has become divorced from reality and rational common sense. The G minor tonality relates the occult world of the gypsies, magician and demons to the inner world of Sganarelle's dreams. As in the Premier intermède, a sudden shift of mode (from G minor to Bb major) for the demons' pantomime underlines its figurative meaning (impending cuckoldry), and gives Sganarelle the clearest indication so far of what the future has in store for him.

Act 3 begins when Sganarelle, convinced of his mistake, goes to Dorimène's father, Alcantor, and tries to call off the wedding. But her brother (Lycante in the 1664 comédie-ballet, Alcidas in the 1668 non-musical version) shows up to respond to Sganarelle's request. With exaggerated politeness he challenges Sganarelle to a duel.18 Sganarelle nervously refuses with equal politeness, and is forced to endure a thrashing before submitting to his marriage.

The finale to the comédie-ballet, a musical wedding celebration, fulfils the predictions of the Premier intermède (though still represented by the surreal world of ballet). Sganarelle's friend Géronimo reappears to tell
him that the young people of the town have prepared a masquerade for his wedding. Here Molière permits us a glimpse into Sganarelle’s future. A dancing master shows Sganarelle how to dance a sprightly courante (Cinquième entrée), and his attempt at learning an athletic dance best performed by a young man mirrors Sganarelle’s act of folly in marrying a bride half his age. In the last ballet entrée, four gallants dance and flirt with Dorimène, and together they show Sganarelle how a pas de cinq should be danced.

The featured entertainment at Sganarelle’s wedding is the lost ‘Concert espagnol’, whose lyrics alone have been preserved in the Philidor copy of the comédie-ballet. The first verse alludes to the moral blindness that has proved to be Sganarelle’s undoing:

- You have made me blind, Belisa,
- But now I see well your harshness.
- For your disdain is so apparent,
- That even the blind can see it.

A minuet for two Spanish gentlemen and two Spanish ladies follows, and these skilled performances given by professional singers and dancers contrast with Sganarelle’s inability to conduct himself with wisdom and deftness. The Spanish dances in C major and the ‘Concert espagnol’ together with the C major overture, provide both a tonal framework and a point of social reference to the aristocratic world of the French court.

By way of contrast, the G minor ‘Charvari grotesque’ is a burlesque travesty. Here, dream and allegory combine with the surreal to develop the comic paradox. Sganarelle is not the natural husband for a young coquette, and his repeated denial of this truth leads to inexorable consequences. The performing arts support this progression toward a farcical dénouement and Sganarelle’s transformation from the subject of a farce to the subject of a ballet. The opening instrumental overture now becomes transformed into a bizarre, presumably cacophonous ensemble. The ‘Concert espagnol’ sings of the consequences of ignoring Beauty’s advice (in the Premier intermède); the premonitions figuratively depicted earlier by ‘La Jalousie, les Chagrins, et les Soupçons’ become fulfilled by the ‘Quatre Galants cajolant la femme de Sganarelle’. Now Sganarelle has become part of the dance—unwittingly playing the dupe in a grotesque celebration that underlines his departure from the rational world.

Throughout the 1660s Lully and Molière continued to develop comédie-ballet entertainments for the court, and Molière afterwards presented them in musically reduced versions at the Théâtre du Palais Royal. By 1672, however, Lully had decided that his own future lay in opera, and he soon ended his collaboration with Molière. After their break-up, the ageing poet-musician Charles Coypoe (known as Dassoucy), who had hopes of renewing his prior association with Molière, approached the playwright to offer his musical services. But instead of Dassoucy, Molière chose the promising young composer Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643–1704), who had recently returned from Rome and his studies with Carissimi. In Charpentier, Molière found a colleague who, though yet untried in the theatre, was the musical equal of Lully. During the summer of 1672 Molière started to revive earlier comédies-ballets, for which he began to substitute new music (by Charpentier) and lyrics for those originally set by Lully.

For the Parisian première of La Comtesse d’Escarbagnas Molière revived Le mariage forcé—evidently as a comédie-ballet-within-the-play. Molière took this opportunity to replace the 1664 intermèdes with Charpentier’s new songs and dances—with new choreography by Pierre Beauchamps, who had assisted in the original 1664 performances at Molière’s theatre. This production opened at the Théâtre du Palais Royal on 8 July 1672 for a run of 14 performances. La Grange documented this production in his Registre:

N.B. that Le Mariage forcé, which was played with La Comtesse d’Escarbagnas, was accompanied with ornaments—for which Monsieur Charpentier composed the music, Monsieur de Beauchamps [choreographed] the ballets, Monsieur de Baraillon [designed] the costumes, and Monsieur de Villiers performed in the music of the interludes.

Monsieur de Villiers, a recent addition to Molière’s troupe, was recruited partly for his ability to sing in musical productions. The names of two other singers (Forestier, a tenor, and Le Roy, a bass) along with the number of dancers and violinists are known to us, thanks to a second register kept by the actor André Hubert. Another entry in Hubert’s Registre indicates that the role of the singing gypsy was sung by a young girl named Mlle Turpin.

At its 1672 court première La Comtesse d’Escarbagnas served as a dramatic framework for Le ballet des baillets—a pastiche of the king’s favourite selections from other comédies-ballets. In subsequent performances at the Théâtre du Palais Royal, Molière combined La Comtesse d’Escarbagnas with other short comedies (Le mariage forcé, L’Amour médecin, or the lost farce Le fin lourdant). A one-act play in nine scenes, La Comtesse d’Escarbagnas focuses on the foolishness of a provincial noblewoman who, after returning from a two-month
visit to Paris, is eager to associate with persons of quality. Anxious to imitate 'les grands airs de Versailles' and the intellectual pursuits of the highly refined précieuse society, the countess shows her lack of breeding by maltreating her servants, scorning provincial ways, and trusting in her beauty, youth and quality to enamour a young viscount. In fact, the viscount has come to court not the countess but Julie—her young protégée. The viscount has arranged an entertainment for Julie in the countess’s home. Scenes 1 to 7 are preparatory to this entertainment, which is then twice interrupted by scenes 8 and 9; at the end of the play the characters again turn their attention to the remainder of the spectacle.

*La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas* and *Le mariage forcé* become affiliated by the common theme of the protagonists’ misplaced affections. Had *Le mariage forcé* been performed after scenes 7, 8 and 9 in a three-act comédie-ballet format (an arrangement that seems likely) the progression of Sganarelle’s dilemma would furnish an interesting counterpoint to the developing love triangle between the countess, the viscount and Julie. Charpentier’s new *intermèdes*—songs, vocal ensembles and dances—could be expected to add further resonance to the underlying themes common to the two plays.

Unfortunately, no *livret* exists from the 1672 performances, and so the exact order and placement of the musical numbers remain unknown. Table 2 lists the musical numbers in Charpentier’s manuscript score. Common sense dictates where many of the numbers would occur within the context of the spoken plays. The ‘*Ouverture de La Comtesse d’Escarbagnas*’ obviously precedes the first scene of the play. Likewise, the dance ‘Les Marys’ (‘The husbands’) evidently precedes the presentation of *Le mariage forcé*—given that in Charpentier’s manuscript the inscription ‘*intermèdes nouveaux du Mariage forcé à Molière*’ (‘new interludes for Le mariage forcé by Molière’, but written in a later hand) heads the musical numbers following ‘Les Marys’. Furthermore, the dance ‘Le Sogne’ (‘The dream’) clearly pertains to the dream sequence in the *Premier intermède*, just as ‘Les Bohemiennes, Sarabande’ (‘The gypsys, sarabande’) belongs to the gypsy scene—wherever it might have occurred in the 1672 version. However, the ordering of the other vocal numbers and dances remains a matter for conjecture.

The question of Molière’s authorship of the *intermède* lyrics for the 1672 revival has often been raised. Louis Moland first announced his discovery of these texts in Charpentier’s musical manuscripts, and published them in his complete edition of Molière’s works with the disclaimer, ‘I would not dare take it upon myself to place the signature of Molière below these fragments, which, after all, are anonymous.’ Eugène Despois and Paul Mesnard also included some of these texts among the ‘Poésies diverses attribuées’ in their subsequent edition of Molière’s complete works. Both editions attribute the lyrics of the ‘*La la la la bonjour*’ trio to Charpentier on the basis of the inferior literary quality of the verse. Georges Couton alone is comfortable with crediting all of the *intermèdes nouveaux* lyrics to Molière: ‘we do not see why he would have entrusted them to another, and, given the competency of these verses, nothing prevents us from attributing them to him.’ At least one text, however, appears to stem from an earlier Molière–Lully collaboration. Molière’s comédie-ballet *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670) concluded with *Le ballet des nations* at its court première. Some lyrics found
François Puget (1625–1707), portrait of the musicians and artists of Louis XIV, including Lully (playing the lute) and his librettist Quinault (Paris, Musée du Louvre)
in the fifth *entree de ballet* bear a resemblance to those of the first strophe of ‘*Les Boemienes, Sarabande*’.

Ah! qu’il fait beau dans ces Boccages  
Ah! que le Ciel donne un beau jour!  
Le Rossignol sous ces tendres feuillages  
Chante aux Echos son doux retour:  
Ce beau séjour, ces doux ramage,  
Ce beau séjour nous invite à l’Amour.  

(*Le ballet des nations*)

Les rossignols, dans leurs tendres ramage,  
Du doux printemps annoncent le retour.  
Tout refleurit, tout rit en ces bocages  
Ah! belle Iris, le beau temps! le beau jour!  
Si tu voulais m’accorder ton amour!  
Si tu voulais imiter leur amour!  

(‘*Les Boemienes, Sarabande*’)  

‘*Les Boemienes, Sarabande*’ seems to adopt many features of the earlier text: the imagery, language and even individual words; the succession of end-rhymes, with their alternating feminine and masculine endings; the number of lines; and the parallelism of the final couplet. Surely we can imagine Molière writing under pressure and borrowing lyrics from his earlier ballet for use in this summer revival.

Eight years separated the two musical versions of *Le mariage force* during which time Molière and Lully refined in their mature *comédies-ballets* the progression from spoken comedy toward a sung and danced finale. For the Molière scholar Louis Auld, these *comédies-ballets* expand through music and choreography the comic physicality of the play—a continuum which begins in farce and ends in dance. Might the second *comédie-ballet* version of *Le mariage force* incorporate any of these developments? And to what extent might Charpentier’s *nouveaux intermèdes* reflect the tastes of the Parisian audience for whom they were composed?

As we have seen, Molière and Lully designed the 1664 version for a court première, where its audience included the royal family. As with earlier court ballets, *Le mariage force* was to allow for the king and his courtiers to dress up in costume and dance in some of the *entrées*. Elements of Lully’s *intermèdes* stem from the musical and theatrical genres of court entertainments: the ‘*Récit de la Beauté*’ is an *air de cour*; the allegorical characters, gypsies, Spaniards and magician all derive from the genre of *ballet de cour*; even the representation of a ‘*Charybdis* grotesque’, with its fantastical musicians and bizarre instruments, had been used previously in the 1651 *Ballet des fêtes de Bacchus* (see illus.2). The number of performers who participated in the première of *Le mariage force* confirms this *ballet de cour* orientation: 25 dancers participated in ten separate dances, whereas eight singers appeared in only three vocal numbers. When Molière and Charpentier revised *Le mariage force* for audiences at the Théâtre du Palais Royal they struck a more even balance between vocal music and ballet—five dances, five songs. Furthermore, the *intermèdes* they added were spiced with a more popular flavour, and featured bourgeois characters. Only the gypsies remained in the new version—for their fortune-telling scene with Sganarelle was integral to the play.

As we have seen, in the 1664 *Premier intermède* Molière and Lully used song and dance to represent Sganarelle’s nuptial apprehensions. Charpentier’s new dance of 1672, ‘*Le Songe*’ (‘The Dream’), obviously was to have a dream-like if not nightmarish character, and probably further explored Sganarelle’s fears through pantomime. The songs of Charpentier’s *nouveaux intermèdes* articulate concerns that weigh heavily on Sganarelle’s mind: marriage transforming wives into deceitful shrews (‘*Mon compère en bonne foi*, ‘Belle ou laide il n’importe guiere’) who pose the ever-present threat of cuckoldry (‘*Ah, quelle estrange extravagance*’). For an urban, heterogeneous audience these vocal numbers would make an unambiguous connection with Sganarelle’s situation. In particular, the ‘*Trio grotesque*’ (‘*Amants aux cheveux gris*’) addresses the folly of old men taking young wives:

Lovers with grey hair, ’tis no strange thing  
That Love subjects you to his laws,  
For both young and old [lit. ‘bearded’],  
At any age love is good.  
But if you want to set up house,  
Do not turn to these young beauties:  
You repulse them, you disgust them,  
And far from them putting up with your foolishness,  
You will soon have only horns in exchange.”

These lyrics also form a counterpoint to the advice Géronimo offers Sganarelle in the first scene of the play: . . . and I will tell you frankly and in friendship, since you have made me promise, that marriage is hardly for you. It is a thing that young people must ponder in depth before doing; but men of your age should not consider it at all; and if it is said that the greatest folly of all is to marry, I see nothing more inappropriate than to commit this folly in the time of life when we should be wiser.

The gypsies’ dance-song (‘*Les Boemienes, Sarabande*’) counterbalances Géronimo’s pessimism. Its lyrics depict the return of Spring and love in the pastoral world, where the nightingales herald Spring’s return, Flora
basks in Zephyr’s kisses, and two shepherdesses (Iris and Sylvie) are entreated to follow nature’s example. In the world ruled by nature’s laws, love comes about in its proper season:

‘Tis to transgress natural law
To let these moments pass by,
That can be made so enchanting,
The season of Spring appears beautiful,
And our years are sprightly as is she,
But one must intermingle the delights of love,
For without them the days will not be bright.66

But these merry pursuits are for the young, and Sganarelle’s obsession with wedding a woman half his age offends both reason and nature. The gypsies’ dancesong provides morally correct examples of love in accord with nature. The polarity of these two visions is underlined by tonality: D minor, A minor and F major are the keys associated with songs warning of fickleness and cuckoldry, while C major, by contrast, depicts nature’s harmony (see table 2 for the keys of individual numbers). By not heeding these premonitions and thereby disrupting the natural order, Sganarelle through his lack of raison invites imbalance into his life.67

Charpentier’s ‘La la la la bonjour’ trio manifests this imbalance on many levels. It pictures the surreal vision of a world peopled by commedia dell’arte caricatures, where dogs, cats, nightingales and jackasses sing in chorus, and where reason and harmony give way to folly and cacophony. Throughout the spoken play and the intermèdes language has undergone a gradual transformation from sense into nonsense. At the start of the play, Géronimo offers Sganarelle clear, rational advice. The Aristotelian and Pyrrhonian philosophers he then consults engage in circular, syntactic arguments interspersed with Latin interjections. Later the gypsy fortune-tellers respond to Sganarelle’s inquiries by singing nonsense syllables (‘La, la, la, la’). Eventually language divests itself of meaning, and the polite but ironic speech of Dorimène’s brother belies his murderous intent. Now in the ‘La la la la bonjour’ trio language fully degenerates into animal calls and macaronic nonsense—eschewing sense for the purely musical qualities of language. Charpentier’s music parallels this departure from sanity and raison. As the three singers first ‘unsheathe’ their voices, they deliberate upon what to perform and soon resolve to sing about nonsense—‘tout bruit forme mélodie’:

Let us jumble together at random
Unruly verse,
Some long as elegiac verse,
Others with short feet.
No rhyme nor reason!
All is fine, whatever they say,
Any sound may form melody.
Tic toc, chic choc, nic noc, frie froc.
Paint, glass, cut, jug.
Ab hoc et ab hac, ab hac et ab hoc.
Fran, fran, fran for Seigneur Gratian!
Fron, fron, fron for Seigneur Harlequin!
Fron, fron, fron for Seigneur Pantaloon!
Oh, the lovely concert, and the sweet harmony!

Oh, the lovely symphony!
How sweet it is, and how appealing!
Let’s join in the melody
Of cats, of dogs,
And of the nightingales of Arcadia.
Caw, caw, caw. Bow, wow, wow.
Meow, meow, meow. Bow, wow, wow.
Hee haw, hee haw, hee haw.
Oh, the lovely concert, and the sweet harmony!68

Quick changes of metre mimic this textual nonsense, while passages of cloying chromaticism musically parody the lines ‘Oh, the lovely concert, and the sweet harmony!’ (illus.4).69 Compared with the moral truism of ‘Les Boemienes, Sarabande’ (with its diatonic harmonies and regular dance metre), the ‘La la la la bonjour’ trio portrays conventions of reason, language and music set askew. The dance that follows, ‘Les Grotesques’, presumably carries this distortion into the realm of figured expression, and thus contributes to the surreal vision of a madcap world ‘sans rime et sans raison’. This musical débâcle would serve as a fitting entertainment for Sganarelle’s farcical wedding celebration.70

Charpentier’s burlesque intermèdes and Molière’s bourgeois farce prove to be a perfect marriage of music, dance and comedy. The comic action of Le mariage forcé has its basis in social reality—one in which the ageing protagonist, blinded by his obsession, endures situations of humiliation, violence and failure. Charpentier’s music and Beauchamps’s dances introduce an element of fantasy that alleviates the play’s more serious undercurrents, while turning Sganarelle’s world upside-down. Gustave Michaut observes that reality and fantasy are not mutually exclusive in comédie-ballet: ‘one might say that ballet, dance and music liberated Molière’s comic vein and gave it wings’.71 While the vocal airs and dialogues make fun of cuckoldry and the pitfalls of marriage, the dances introduce the charm, lightness and irony of movement and gesture. Sganarelle’s matrimo-
nial anxieties thereby become farce, and his misfortunes are met with laughter. As Charles Mazour points out, nothing should be taken seriously in the world of comédie-ballet: the fantasy, wit and surrealism of the musical intermèdes are needed to dissipate the physical threats, purge the anxieties, and exorcize the anguish of the protagonist. In Le mariage forcé, music, dance and laughter become a panacea for the ills brought on by human folly.

John S. Powell is Assistant Professor of Musicology at the University of Tulsa. He is the editor of two volumes of music by Marc-Antoine Charpentier, and has contributed articles to New Grove dictionary of opera, Journal of the American Musicological Society, Revue de musicologie and several other leading journals.

1According to the 1664 livret (see n.8 below), the Première entrée was danced by Sieurs Dolivet (‘La Jalousie’), Saint-André, Des Brosses (‘Les Chagrins’; illus.), De Lorge and Le Chantre (‘Les Soupirs’); Hilaire Dupuis (Mlle. Hyères, sister-in-law of the singing teacher Michel Lambert, who was in turn Lully’s father-in-law) sang the Récit de la Beauté. The Deuxième entrée was danced by the Count d’Armagnac, d’Heurteux, Beauchamps and Des-Airs le jeune (‘Quatre Plaisants ou Goguenards’). Louis XIV and the Marquis de Villeroy danced the parts of two gypsies (‘Deux Egyptiens’) in the Troisième entrée, while the Marquis de Rassan, Raynal, Noblot and La Pierre danced in travesty as four female gypsy dancers (‘Quatre Egyptiennes’). (As was customary in ballets of this time, female roles were performed by male dancers.) For the Quatrième entrée D’Estival sang the role of the Magician (while Pierre Beauchamps danced and pantomimed the part); the ‘Quatre Dénoms’ he summons were danced by D’Heurteux, De Lorge, Des-Airs l’aîné and Le Mercier. The Cinquième entrée consisted of a ‘Concert Espagnol’ sung by Signors Anna Bergerotti, Bordignon, Chiarini, Jon. Agustin, Taillava and Angelo Michæl. The Sixième entrée featured Du Pille and Taras (‘Deux Espagnoles’), De la Lanne and Saint-André (‘Deux Espagnoles’). The Septième entrée featured a ‘Charivari Grotesque’ played by Lully, Bathasar, Vagnac, Bonnard, La Pierre, Descouteaux and the three Opterie (Hotteterre) brothers. The final entrée (Huitième et dernière entrée) was danced by Le Duc, the Duc de Saint-Aignan and Beauchamps and Raynal (‘Quatre Galants’).

2Molière announced the birth of this new theatrical invention in his
Vendetta to Les fâcheux (1661), and labelled these two works (along with L’Amour médicin, 1665; Le Sicilien, 1676; and George Dandin, 1668) simply as ‘comédie’. For other musical works he used the eponymous ‘comédie mêlée de danse et de musique’ (La Princesse d’Elide, 1664; Le malade imaginaire, 1673), ‘comédie mêlée de musique et d’entrées de ballet’ (Les amants magnifiques, 1670), ‘comédie-ballet’ (Le bourgeois gentilhomme, 1670; Monsieur de Pourquageauen, 1669) and ‘tragédie-ballet’ (Psyché, 1671).

Avertissement to Les fâcheux.

Anne was sister to Philip IV of Spain, and therefore had ties to both the Spanish crown and the Habsburgs. The music for this Spanish concert is missing from the existing sources for Le mariage forcé; its lyrics are preserved in the Philibert copy, also the most complete source for the music—Le mariage force / Comédie et Ballet / Du roy / Donsé par sa Majesté le 29 / Jour de Janvier / 1664 / Recueilli par Philibert Lucén in / 1669, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Rés. F322. Lully’s music is collected and published in Oeuvres complètes de J.-B. Lully, ed. H. Prunières (Paris, 1930–39), ‘Les Comédies-Ballets’, i (1931).


‘Le lundi 4th le mesme Ballet du mariage force chez Madame au palais Royal’.

Le registre de La Grange, i, p.64; La Grange records that it was repeated on 9 February, ‘Madame’ was Henriette, sister to Charles II of England and wife to Philippe, the king’s brother (known at court as ‘Monsieur’).

‘Dimanche passé je vis au Louvre un petit Ballet qui fut dansé dans le salon de la Reyne Mère; c’est une petite comédie de Molière fort plaisante qui a nom le Mariage Force, entremêlée avec des entrées de ballet et quelques récits en Musique dessus sont Mademoiselle Hilaire et la Signora Anna. Le Roy y danse lui mesme et je croy que c’est aujourd’hui pour le 6 et dernier foir’. Letter dated 8 February 1664; cited in P. Mélese, Répertoire analytique des documents contemporains d’information et de critique concernant le théâtre à Paris sous Louis XIV, 1659–1715 (Paris, 1854), p.122. Hughesen’s letter raises some interesting points that conflict with the known facts. For instance, we have no record of Molière’s troupe performing Le mariage force at the Louvre on Sunday, 3 February 1664, as Hughesen states; moreover, we have seen that this was neither the sixth nor the last performance given for the royal family (see n.6 above). So which performance did Hughesen attend?


This anecdote and the one concerning the Marquis de la Trouse (see n.18 below) is retold in The dramatic works of Molière, trans. H. van Laun (New York, 1880), i, p.472.

La Grange listed in his Registre (i, pp.142–3) a daily expense of 109 livres for music and dance (in excess of the ordinary operating expenses of around 51 livres), as well as a payment of 550 livres to Pierre Beauchamps ‘pour faire le ballet’. By comparing these payments with those recorded in a second Registre kept by the actor La Thoriellière for the 1664–5 season (Ms., Archives de la Comédie-Française), we can deduce that Molière’s troupe employed 12 violins, 9 dancers, a singer, 4 [1] oboes and 2 tambours de basque for the intermèdes. Although the comédie-ballet was without doubt a popular success, these ‘frais extraordinaires’ substantially reduced the profit margin and hence affected each actor’s share of the house receipts. After the tenth performance (Friday, 7 March 1664), for instance, the total receipts amounted to only 200 livres, and each actor receiving a full share took home a meagre 2 livres 5 sous.

On 13 May 1664, when Molière’s troupe again performed Le mariage forcé, along with La Princesse d’Elide, Les fâcheux and three acts of Tarasque, during the course of ‘Les Plaisirs de l’Île enchantée’—an extravagant seven-day fête given by Louis XIV in his newly remodelled gardens at Versailles.


Including Prunier’s of the comédie-ballet—see n.4 above.

The changes Molière made in 1668 to the play are as follows: Act 1, scenes 1 and 2 (1664 original version) correspond to scenes 1 and 2 (1668 revision); Act 2, scenes 1, 2 and 3 correspond to scenes 3, 4 (extended and 5 (1668 revision); Act 3, scenes 1–3 (1664 original version) correspond to scenes 8–10 (1668 revision). The Act 2 intermède of 1664, in which Sganarelle meets up with a troupe of singing and dancing gypsy fortune-tellers, is revised as scene 6 of the 1668 comedy. The 1664 livret for the comédie-ballet describes one spoken scene (Act 3, scene 4) preserved neither in the Philibert copy (see n.4 above) nor in the 1668 published version (see n.12 above). In this scene ‘Singeur Géronimo comes to celebrate with his friend, and tells him that the young people of the town have prepared a masque to honour his marriage’.

Much of the psychological ambiguity developed through the interplay of the performing arts was lost in this revision. In the 1664 comédie-ballet the songs and pantomimic dances of the intermèdes manifested Sganarelle’s apprehensions and foreshadowed his fate by means of dream sequence, allegorical pantomime, prophecy and supernatural apparition. The audience, given only fleeting glimpses of Dorimène, were thus forced to view her through Sganarelle’s fantasies. In the 1668 revision Molière added a scene (scene 7) in which Sganarelle overhears his fiancée and her lover ‘en tête à tête’ planning their future together after Sganarelle’s death. Dorimène thus makes verbally clear her intentions by telling her lover that she is marrying Sganarelle only for his money, and expects him to die within six months. In the 1664 comédie-ballet Sganarelle remains suspicious to the end; in the 1668 revision he goes to the altar with his eyes wide open.

Molière himself began living this role two years earlier when, at the age of 40, he married the 20-year-old Armande Béjart. Mlle de Montfleur, an actress from the rival Hôtel de Bourgogne who was jealous of the favour Louis XIV had shown Molière, attacked him personally; she accused Molière of incest—of having been Madeleine Béjart’s lover (which was true), of fathering Armande Béjart in 1643 (this was unfounded), and then marrying his own daughter in 1664. Molière did not publicly deny the incest charge—yet the Béjart family records suggest that Armande was in fact Madeleine’s sister, not her daughter. To quell the raging scandal (and perhaps to show his appreciation for Le mariage force), Louis XIV and Henriette (Monsieur’s wife) stood as godparents by proxy to Molière’s first child, christened Louis on 15 February 1664. That name-day coincided with the public première of Le mariage force.

Curiously, the Récit de la Beauté appears in Pierre Perrin’s manuscript, Recueil de paroles de musique (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Ms. fonds français 2230, f.668), among other lyrics by Perrin for the Ballet des fous Rois; there it bears the title RÉCIT POUR UN BALLET DU ROY CHANTÉ par Madm. Hilaire, représentant la Beauté. To my knowledge, this coincidence has not hitherto been noticed—not even by the Molière scholar Louis Auld, who reproduces this text and other poetic works by Perrin in The lyric art of Pierre Perrin, founder of French opera (Henrysville, PA, 1936), iii, p.81. Did Molière (or perhaps Lully) borrow Perrin’s text for Le mariage force, or did Perrin flitch it from Molière?

Molière revised this scene with the singing and dancing gypsy fortune-tellers and moved it to scene 6 in the 1668 comedy; see n.14 above.

Tradition has it that Molière based this character on the Marquis de la Trouse, who was always excessively polite and apologetic when killing an opponent in a duel: see The dramatic works of Molière, i, p.472.

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Le registre de La Grange (i, p.126) in connection with the 24 July 1671 première of the tragédie-ballet Phèdre, in which he sang on stage, unmasked and dressed like the actor...

Hubert's entry (Chevalley, p.102) reads 'Pour Vne coiffer a la petite Turpin du mariage force, 7201'. This singer was celebrated by Charles Robinet (Oeuvres complètes, viii, p.259) as 'la jeunette Turpin / Qui chante d’un air si poupin' ('the young Turpin, who sings in such a cute manner'). For further details see W.L. Schwartz, Molière theater in 1672-73: light from Le registre d’Hubert, Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, xvi (1941), pp.404-13.

Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Ms. Rés. Vm 1, 259, XVI, f.38-48; titles are given as they appear in this source, along with quotes of text incipits.

Three possible ways in which the intermèdes nouveaux might fit within La Comtesse d’Escarbagnas / Le mariage forcé entertainment are outlined in the preface to Marc-Antoine Charpentier: Music for Molière's comedies, ed. I. S. Powell (Madison, WI, 1990), pp.viii-xii. Couton (Molière: Oeuvres complètes, i, pp.116-19) speculates that the order of the music in Charpentier's autograph manuscripts represents its distribution throughout the play: the "Dialogue" served as Premier intermède after Act 1, the "Triomphe grotesque" followed Act 2, the two solo arias ("Belle ou laide" and "Ah! Quelle étrange extravagance") replaced Lully's Concert espagnol, and "Les Boemienes, Sarabande" substituted for the sixth, seventh and eighth entrées. I, however, share the opinion of Mazouer, who feels that 'the order of the numbers in Charpentier's manuscript does not necessarily correspond to their order of performance [in Le mariage forcé]': C. Mazouer, 'Molière et Marc-Antoine Charpentier', Cahiers de l'Association Internationale des Études Françaises, xii (1986), p.148.

Oeuvres complètes de Molière, ed. L. Moland (Paris, 1880-85), viii, pp.376-8. These texts were published earlier in L. Moland, 'Fragments présumés de Molière', La correspondance littéraire, x (25 Aug 1864), pp.294-6.


Indeed, a similar animal motif (singing tom-cats) occurs in the intermèdes that Charpentier composed for the 1676 and 1695 revivals of Molière's Le Sèvrient: there is no evidence, however, that Charpentier himself wrote these lyrics, see I. S. Powell, 'La Sérénade pour Le Sèvrient de M.-A. Charpentier et le crépuscule de la comédie-ballet', Revue de musicologie, lxxvii (1991), pp.88-96.

Molière, Oeuvres complètes, i, p.204.


The demographics of theatre audiences attending performances at court and in the public theatres during this time are discussed in J. Lough, Seventeenth-century French drama: the background (Oxford, 1979), chap.4. Lough shows that theatre spectators ranged in status from servants, students, tradesmen, writers and thirtly nobles who bought tickets to stand in the parterre, to the aristocrats who frequented the premières loges. Other nobles paid top prices to sit on banquettes on stage, in full view of the rest of the audience.

Amants aux cheveux gris, ce n'est pas chose étrange Que l'Amour sous ses lois vous y range. Pour le jeune et pour le barbou A tout âge l'amour est bon. Mais si vous désirez de vous mettre en ménage Ne vous adressez point à ces jeunes beautés: Vous les réjouissez, Vous les dégouttez. Et bien loin de les faire à votre bidding. Vous n'avez bien souvent que comtes en partage.

Couton's edition (Oeuvres complètes, i, p.319) indicates that 'Les Boemienes, Sarabande' is a trio of soprano, but we know the name of only one singer who participated (Robinet's 'la petite Turpin'). Moreover, internal evidence in Charpentier’s manuscript score suggests that

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"See n.4 above.

"Siege me tienes, Belisa, / Mas bien es tu rigores veo / Porque tu deslsen tan claro / Que pueden verle los ciemos. / These lyrics are preserved in the Philidor copy; see n.4 above.

"This metaphor is further developed in Le bourgeois gentilhomme (Act 1, scene 2), where the singing and dancing masters patiently explain to the dull-witted Bourgeois why it is necessary to learn music and dance.

"Music master: All the disorders, all the wars that we see in the world happen only from not learning music and dance.

"Dancing master: All the calamities of mankind, all of the horrible dis-, asters of which history is filled, the blunders of politicians and the losses of the great commanders, all of this came about only from not knowing how to dance.

"Monsieur Jourdain: How is that? / Music master: Doesn't war result from a lack of concord among men? / Monsieur Jourdain: That is so.

"Music master: And if all men were to learn music, would this not be the means of harmonizing together and of seeing universal peace in the world? / Monsieur Jourdain: You are quite right.

"Dancing master: When a man has committed an error of conduct, either in family matters, or in affairs of government, or in commanding an army, does one not say 'So and so has taken a false step in this matter?' / Monsieur Jourdain: Yes, this is said.

"Dancing master: And can a false step result from anything other than from not knowing how to dance? / Monsieur Jourdain: That is true, you are both right.

"Dancing master: This goes to show you the excellence and usefulness of dance and music.

"Just as Sganarelle remained deaf to the meaning of Beauty's song, we can probably also assume that Sganarelle does not understand the Spanish lyrics of the 'Concert espagnol'.

"The dissolution of their partnership and the restrictions that Lully thereafter imposed upon theatre music is discussed in J. S. Powell, 'Charpentier's music for Molière Le malade imaginaire and its revisions', Journal of the American Musicological Society, xxxix (1986), pp.87-142.

"Dassoye had served Louis XIII as lutenist, poet and composer, 1637–55; after this period he joined up with Molière and his itinerant troupe, the 'Illustre Théâtre', in their provincial tours. Later Dassoye met Charpentier in Rome in 1660—where he later alluded (disparagingly) in an open letter to Molière. For more on Dassoye see C. Scriver, Charles Dassoye: adventures in the age of Louis XIV (New York, 1984); this letter is reproduced on pp.210–11.

"It has been suggested that Mlle de Guise, Charpentier's patroness, was in a position to ask a favour of Molière and therefore she may have brought Charpentier and the playwright together: P. Ranum, 'A sweet servitude: a musician's life at the Court of Mlle de Guise', Early music, xv (1987), p.360, n.23. Furthermore, in his open letter Dassoye implied that Molière had agreed to collaborate with Charpentier in order to pacify some 'irritated virgins'; perhaps this is a reference to Mlle de Guise, as Ranum suggests.

"N'Encores que le mariage force qui a été joué avec la Comtesse d'Escarbagnas a été accompagné d'ornemens dont Mons' Charpentier a fait la Musique et Mons' de Beaucamps les ballets, M' Barallion les habits et M' de Villiers aurait employé dans la musique des Intermèdes. Le registre de La Grange, i, p.137.


"See Le registre d'Hubert, 1672–73, facsimile ed. S. Chevalley, in Revue d'histoire du théâtre (1973), p.33. Forestier also appears listed in

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in fact just the upper part was sung—probably as an accompanied solo; for fuller discussion see Marc-Antoine Charpentier: Music for Molière's comedies, ed. Powell, pp.x-xi.

"C'est blesser la loi naturelle
De laisser passer des moments
Que l'on peut se rendre si charmants.
La saison du printemps parait belle,
Et nos ans sont riants tous comme elle;
Mais il faut y meler la douceur des amours,
Et sans eux il n'est point de beaux jours.

"The author of 'Lettre sur la comédie de l'imposteur' (Molière: Oeuvres complètes, i, pp.1149-80) points out that since no one knowingly acts unreasonably, one who so acts must be ignorant of his irrationality, for such ignorant errors exposes him to the joyful contempt of others. The ridiculous is based on a lack of raison, that is, on deviation from a norm accepted as reasonable; therefore, the more extreme the lack of reason, the sharper will be the deviation, the greater will be the degree of improbability, and the stronger will be the sense of paradox. (I am indebted to Prof. Steve Fleck for this summary of the key points found on pp.1178-80.)

"Fagotons, à tort et à travers,
De méchants vers,
Les uns longs comme vers d'élégie,
Les autres à jambe racourcie.
Point de rime et point de raison!
Tout est bon, quoy qu'on die;
Tout bruit forme mélodie.
Tic toc, chic choc, nic noc, fric floc.
Peinte, verve, coupe, broc.
Ab hoc et ab hoc, ab hoc et ab hoc.
O, le joli concert, et la belle harmonie!
O, la belle symphonie!
Qu'elle est douce, qu'elle a d'appas!
Meslons y la mélodie.
Des chiens, des chats,
Et des ressignaux d'Arcadie.
Caou, caou, caou. Houpé, houpé, houpé.
Miaou, miaou, miaou. Oua, oua, oua.
Hin han, hin han, hin han.
O, le joli concert, et la belle harmonie!

"An excellent analysis of the 'La la la la bonjour' trio is provided in Mazouer, 'Molière et Marc-Antoine Charpentier', pp.154-5. Mazouer shows how its comic musical language (featuring parodic repetitions by the lowest voice, scurrying through certain words after passages in regular rhythm, canonic entries, echo effects, metric changes, rhythmic oppositions) stylistically derives from the 'Trio grotesque'.

"Indeed, Mazouer suggests that this trio took the place of Lully's 'Charivarie grotesque', and was performed at Sganarelle's wedding: Mazouer, 'Molière et Marc-Antoine Charpentier', p.149.


Besides all the instruments that are common to us as well as the Italians, we have the hautboys, which by their sounds, equally mellow and piercing, have infinitely the advantage of the violins in all brisk, lively airs, and the flutes, which so many of our great artists [Philibert, Philidor, Descoutteaux and the Hotteterres] have taught to groan after so moving a manner in our mournful airs, and sigh so amorously in those that are tender.

François Raguenet, Parallèle des Italiens et des Français (1702)