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‘Theatre as a Nursery of Language’: Learning French through Vaudeville Tunes in Eighteenth-Century England

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Abstract

This article examines how French vaudeville tunes circulated in England through both theatrical performances and French-language textbooks (or ‘grammars’). My central concern is to consider how audiences in London – who had little exposure to the rich satirical and cultural connotations that these tunes had acquired over years of performance in Paris – might have been able to grasp their significance within staged works performed by visiting Parisian troupes between the years 1718 and 1735. I suggest that in tracing the transmission of tunes from France to England, scholars should consider a wider range of print sources, since vaudevilles had a social life extending beyond the plays in which they were performed. To this end, I focus on analysing vaudevilles found in French ‘grammars’. The pedagogical nature of these sources explicitly puts on display how French culture was translated for an English readership. By comparing the tunes found in grammars with plays that used the same tunes, I reveal both how Londoners could have become acquainted with the Parisian understanding of French tunes and how the grammar books could have shifted the meanings of these tunes for English readers and audiences. Ultimately, the circulation of French tunes abroad through grammars directs our attention to the material and cultural practices undergirding the mobility of eighteenth-century musical culture.

Keywords: transnationalism; French grammar books; comic opera; vaudeville tunes; théâtre de la foire; Abel Boyer

Scholars have long been captivated by the way the French vaudeville tune offers a window into the otherwise ephemeral world of daily news, gossip and popular culture of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Paris.¹ Deriving from *voix de ville*, or ‘voices of the city’, vaudevilles were short strophic tunes in French that were easily learned and memorized by almost anyone, regardless of musical training.² Most vaudevilles held symbolic meanings that were quickly recognized because of their longevity (some dating back to the Renaissance) and widespread circulation in Paris, from the street corner to the playhouse. Their accessible and referential qualities made them popular musical materials in French comic operas and plays, where they were recycled to new texts across a multitude of dramatic scenarios, suggesting humorous, ironic and often satirical connotations.

¹ See John Romey, ‘Songs that Run in the Streets: Popular Song at the Comédie-Italienne, the Comédie-Française, and the Théâtres de la Foire’, *The Journal of Musicology* 37/4 (2020), 415–458; Judith le Blanc, *Avatars d’opéras: parodies et circulation des airs chantés sur les scènes Parisiennes, 1672–1745* (Paris: Garnier, 2014); Judith le Blanc and Herbert Schneider, eds, *Pratiques du timbre et de la parodie d’opéra en Europe (XVIe–XIXe siècles)* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2014); Robert Darnton, *Poetry and the Police: Communication Networks in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010); Herbert Schneider, ed., *Timbre und Vaudeville: Zur Geschichte und Problematik einer populären Gattung im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1999); Clifford Barnes, ‘The Théâtre de la Foire (Paris, 1697–1762): Its Music and Composers’ (PhD dissertation, University of Southern California, 1965); and Donald Jay Grout, ‘The Music of the Italian Theatre at Paris, 1682–97’, *Papers of the American Musicological Society* 27 (1941), 158–170.

² Barnes, ‘The Théâtre de la Foire (Paris, 1697–1762)’, 131–138. Pierre Richelet defined the vaudeville as ‘une sorte de chanson qui est dans la bouche du peuple’ (a sort of song that is in the mouths of the people). See his *Dictionnaire françois, contenant les mots et les choses, plusieurs nouvelles remarques sur la langue Française* (Geneva: Jean Herman Widerhold, 1680), 508.

They also circulated through song collections called *chansonniers*, with their texts rewritten to communicate gossip on the latest scandal or political event. Thus, as scholars have shown, vaudeville tunes were not merely catchy melodies, but also ‘aural palimpsests’, to borrow Robert Darnton’s phrase; they could communicate coded subtexts and become potent vehicles for social, artistic and political commentary in Paris, both in the theatre and beyond.³

Yet vaudeville tunes also circulated widely outside France. In the words of the French playwright Alain-René Lesage (1668–1747), the genre from which they came was a ‘type of poetry’ (*espèce de Poésie*) that was not only known abroad, but also ‘esteemed by foreigners’ (*estimée des Etrangers*).⁴ The historical record has revealed that Lesage was not far from the mark. Central to the circulation of vaudevilles abroad were the approximately two hundred musical comedies from the repertory of the Parisian theatres – the *Théâtres de la Foire* (fairground theatres), *Théâtre Italien* (Italian theatre) and *Comédie-Française* (French theatre) – that were performed in French by visiting French acting troupes on London stages between 1718 and 1735.⁵ The fairground theatre repertory consisted of *comédies en vaudevilles*, a genre particularly dependent on vaudeville tunes, although plays at these other Parisian theatres used vaudevilles intermittently as well. Moreover, French vaudeville tunes were used in the first English ballad operas by John Gay – *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728) and *Polly* (1729) – as Vanessa Rogers and Daniel Hertz have shown.⁶ Vaudeville tunes were even transmitted as far as Haiti through the performance of French opera parodies.⁷ This widespread international circulation raises a fundamental question concerning the reception of the works using these tunes, or more precisely, about the relationship between performers and audiences of these works: did foreigners who had little exposure to lived, urban Parisian culture, on which the plays’ satire and critique often depended, grasp the coded meanings behind these melodies? And, if so, how did they gain this knowledge? At stake in these questions is the deeper issue of how scholars can reconcile the groundedness of eighteenth-century cultural practices in specific times and places with the simultaneous mobility that defined the music of this era.

This article addresses these questions by tracing the contrafacta of tunes across print and performance cultures in a transnational context. In adopting this approach, I build on recent scholarship that has sought to analyse tunes themselves as vectors for the international circulation of music during the long eighteenth century.⁸ While this scholarship has commonly focused on famous tunes – by Purcell and Mozart, for example – in order to explore the multifaceted reception history of the canon in the cultural periphery, I instead wish to ask how, if at all, a tune’s localized cultural connotations could be transmitted in the first place. To do so, I unearth the quotidian networks through which French vaudeville tunes entered the lives of early eighteenth-century Londoners. These tunes, in addition to being an integral part of the French comedies performed in London, possessed a

³ Darnton, *Poetry and the Police*, 80.

⁴ See Alain-René Lesage and Jacques-Philippe D’Orneval, *Le Théâtre de la foire, ou l’opéra comique*, ten volumes, volume 1 (Paris: Ganeau, 1721), Preface, no pagination. Here and throughout I adopt modern orthography for the title of this series. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

⁵ For a full listing of these performances see Erica Pauline Levenson, ‘Traveling Tunes: French Comic Opera and Theater in London, 1714–1745’ (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 2017), 175–239. See also *The London Stage, 1660–1800: A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments & Afterpieces*, eleven volumes in five parts, part 2: 1700–1729, ed. Emmett L. Avery (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960), and part 3: 1729–1747, ed. Arthur H. Scouten (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961).

⁶ Vanessa L. Rogers, ‘John Gay, Ballad Opera and the *Théâtres de la Foire*’, *Eighteenth-Century Music* 11/2 (2014), 173–213, and Daniel Hertz, ‘The Beggar’s Opera and *Opéra-Comique en Vaudevilles*’, *Early Music* 27/1 (1999), 42–53.

⁷ Julia Prest, ‘*Iphigénie en Haïti*: Performing Gluck’s Paris Operas in the French Colonial Caribbean’, *Eighteenth-Century Music* 14/1 (2017), 27.

⁸ See, for example, Ester Lebedinski, ‘The Travels of a Tune: Purcell’s “If Love’s a Sweet Passion” and the Cultural Translation of 17th-Century English Music’, *Early Music* 48/1 (2020), 75–90; Sarah Eyerly, ‘Mozart and the Moravians’, *Early Music* 47/2 (2019), 161–182; and Glenda Goodman, ‘Transatlantic Contrafacta, Musical Formats, and the Creation of Political Culture in Revolutionary America’, *Journal of the Society for American Music* 11/4 (2017), 392–419.

social life in England that extended beyond London's playhouses. They are scattered throughout English print and manuscript sources, appearing in sources as varied as French grammar books, amateur songbooks, newspapers, travel literature and even playing cards, suggesting both the wide reach of tune-based culture, as well as how theatre-goers could have come to know French tunes through a variety of contexts, not only via the stage.

Out of a range of possible sources, I focus on analysing French vaudeville tunes found in French 'grammars', or French-language textbooks. French grammars not only flooded London printing presses in the eighteenth century, they also explicitly put on display how French language and culture were translated for an English readership (see Table 1).⁹ After discussing the central role played by tunes in French grammars, I focus on two tunes that appeared both in widely circulating grammar books and in French plays performed in London: 'Adieu paniers, vendanges sont faites'¹⁰ (Goodbye, baskets, the harvest is done) and 'Tes beaux yeux, ma Nicole' (Your beautiful eyes, my Nicole). Through a close reading of these sources, I reveal both how Londoners could have become acquainted with the Parisian understanding of French tunes and how the grammar books could also shift the meanings of these tunes for London readers and audiences.

Learning French and Learning Tunes through Grammars

The French grammars, tunes and plays were part of an influx of French cultural goods into England during the early eighteenth century. After the Peace of Utrecht (1713–1715) ended a twenty-five-year period of war between France and Britain, trade prohibitions were lifted, making cultural exchange between the nations less restricted.¹¹ It was these political changes that allowed French theatrical troupes to travel to England in the first place. Yet such imports were not unprecedented, as French culture had long been associated with social prestige in England: indeed, learning French was an integral part of an elite upbringing because it was the language used at court and in diplomacy.¹² But by the early eighteenth century, knowing French and consuming French culture also began to be seen as a form of social mobility for England's 'middling' orders.¹³ As a result, there was a greater interest in learning French among the literate public beyond Britain's elite, and a higher demand for attaining French fluency in ways that were both accessible and affordable.

One of the main print genres that helped meet this growing demand to learn French were language textbooks known as 'grammars'.¹⁴ At least 450 editions of French grammars were published

⁹ Eighteenth-century French grammars, while well documented in linguistic histories, have yet to be studied as conduits of French popular song to England in the eighteenth century. On didactic linguistic texts and music in earlier time periods see Kate van Orden, 'Children's Voices: Singing and Literacy in Sixteenth-Century France', *Early Music History* 25 (2006), 209–256, and Elizabeth Eva Leach, 'Learning French by Singing in 14th-Century England', *Early Music* 33/2 (2005), 253–272.

¹⁰ Throughout the main text I use the modernized spelling of the French word 'paniers' rather than the 'panniers' that is often found in the original sources.

¹¹ John Shovlin, *Trading with the Enemy: Britain, France, and the 18th-Century Quest for a Peaceful World Order* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), chapter 1, 31–79; Jeremy Black, *Natural & Necessary Enemies: Anglo-French Relations in the Eighteenth Century* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987); and Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

¹² Marc Fumaroli, *When the World Spoke French*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: New York Review of Books, 2011), and John Gallagher, *Learning Languages in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 63–65.

¹³ On the relationship between social class and French/foreign culture in England see Jeremy Black, *A Subject for Taste: Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), chapters 5, 101–126, and 10, 211–236; for an explanation of the middling orders see H. R. French 'The Search for the "Middle Sort of People" in England, 1600–1800', *Historical Journal* 43 (2000), 277–293.

¹⁴ For linguistic histories of eighteenth-century French grammars see Simon Coffey, 'French Grammars in England 1660–1820: Changes in Content and Contexts Paving the Way to the "Practical" Grammar-Translation Manual', *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* 41/2 (2019), 137–156, and Michèle Cohen, 'French Conversation or "Glittering Gibberish"? Learning French in Eighteenth-Century England', in *Didactic Literature in England 1500–1800: Expertise Constructed*, ed. Sara Pennell and Natasha Glaisyer (London: Routledge, 2016), 99–117.

Table 1. French grammars published in London 1694–1749

Author	Title	First publication	Last edition	Music
Abel Boyer	<i>The Compleat French-Master, for Ladies and Gentlemen</i>	London: Tho. Salusbury, 1694	London, 1797 27th edition	Yes
Guy Miegé	<i>Miegé's Last and Best French Grammar</i>	London: William Freeman and Abel Roper, 1698	London, 1706 2nd edition	No
B. Delafosse	<i>A Short and Easy Method of Teaching French</i>	London: T. Ward, 1713	one edition only	No
Michel Malard	<i>The True French Grammar</i>	London: for J. Brown, sold by R. Mount, 1716	one edition only	Yes
François Cheneau	<i>The Perfect French Master</i>	London: Will. Botham, for the author, 1716	one edition only	No
J[ean] d[e] R[oussignac]	<i>A New Introduction to the French Tongue</i>	London: W. Redmayne, 1720	one edition only	No
Malherbe (translated into English by James Seguin)	<i>A New French Grammar in Two Parts</i>	Paris, 1725 (lost) London: S. Gray, 1728	one edition only	No
Jean Palairé	<i>A New Royal French Grammar: Teaching to Read, Speak, and Understand the French Tongue</i>	London: E. Howlatt, 1730	London, 1811 20th edition	Yes
J. E. Tandon	<i>A New French Grammar</i>	London: E. Howlatt, 1733	London, 1815 7th edition	Yes
Alexandre de Rogissart	<i>Nouvelle methode, pour apprendre facilement les langues Françoise et Anglaise / A New Grammar of the French Tongue</i>	The Hague, 1718 London: Jean Nourse, 1734	London, 1772 (3rd edition?)	Yes
Claude Buffier	<i>A French Grammar on a New Plan</i>	London: W. Hinchliffe, 1734 (first published in Paris, 1709)	London, 1756	No
Thomas Blair	<i>A Compleat and Easy French Grammar, in a Method Entirely New</i>	London: G. Strahan and A. Millar, 1736	one edition only	No
Solomon Lowe	<i>French Rudiments: Consisting of a Grammar of the Language</i>	London: author, 1737	London, 1740	Yes
John Holmes	<i>The French grammar: or, the rudiments of the French Tongue</i>	London: author, 1741	one edition only	Yes (one song)
J. B. Ozinde	<i>A New Compendious French Grammar</i>	London: author, sold by J. Hawkins, 1741	London, 1749	No
Joseph Gautier	<i>The True Practical French Grammar</i>	London: author and William Sandby, 1743	London, 1750	No
J. B. Ozinde	<i>A New Practical French grammar for the use of publick academies and private schools</i>	London: author, sold by B. Dod, 1749	one edition only	No

This table's data derive from R. C. Alston, 'The French Language Grammars, Miscellaneous Treatises, Dictionaries', in *A Bibliography of the English Language from the Invention of Printing to the Year 1800*, twenty-one volumes in thirty-eight parts, volume 12, part 1 (Leeds: author, 1985), 33–55. This table does not include French grammars published in British cities outside London or other works of linguistic reference such as dictionaries.

during the eighteenth century, nearly triple the amount of the previous century.¹⁵ Some of the most popular grammars, like Abel Boyer's *The Compleat French-Master, for Ladies and Gentlemen* (first edition, 1694), would see nearly thirty editions during the eighteenth century. Grammars were small and easily transportable (usually octavo or duodecimo format), and typically about two hundred to five hundred pages long. In the first half of the eighteenth century they usually contained two parts: a section covering pronunciation and grammar (syntax and morphology) and a section called 'language', which included everything from vocabulary and familiar phrases to dialogues, jokes and songs.¹⁶ This latter category was intended to be memorized, and the student could utilize this knowledge in real-life scenarios, such as when travelling, shopping for the latest French fashions or entertaining guests after dinner. Thus the grammars relied on an oral pedagogy of language that stressed rote memorization and recitation – an approach that dated back to the Renaissance – rather than writing and translation, which became the focus in the late eighteenth century.¹⁷

French grammars were consumed across a broader segment of English society in the early eighteenth century compared to earlier eras, and evidence for this can be found in the grammars themselves. To be sure, many of the French grammars were dedicated to the children of British royalty by their French tutors – often Huguenot émigrés from France who needed to secure patronage and employment. For instance, Abel Boyer – French tutor to Queen Anne's son, Prince William, Duke of Gloucester – included a lengthy dedication to his royal pupil in the opening pages of *The Compleat French-Master*.¹⁸ Unsurprisingly, much of the content of the grammars – with frequent references to travel, parties and social etiquette – catered to these elite employers. Yet French grammars also began to be marketed to the wider reading public. Frequent references to their titles in English letters and diaries demonstrate their extensive use among literate society, and their relatively inexpensive cost (around two shillings) meant that they were affordable to the middling orders.¹⁹ They were also sometimes marketed as autodidactic literature, 'teaching a person, of an ordinary capacity, without the help of a master, to read, speak and write that tongue [French] in less than half the usual time'.²⁰

The authors of French grammars sought to convey not only the linguistic aspects of the French language but also the subtleties of French culture. In general, they highlighted distinctions between French and English cultures through sample dialogues that envisioned hypothetical encounters between English and French travellers – for example, 'The Traveller makes Love in good earnest

¹⁵ Jean Caravolas, *Histoire de la didactique des langues au siècle des Lumières: précis et anthologie thématique* (Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2000), 20. For a complete listing see R. C. Alston, 'The French Language Grammars, Miscellaneous Treatises, Dictionaries', in *A Bibliography of the English Language from the Invention of Printing to the Year 1800*, twenty-one volumes in thirty-eight parts, volume 12, part 1 (Leeds: author, 1985).

¹⁶ Cohen, 'French Conversation or "Glittering Gibberish"?', 104.

¹⁷ Cohen, 'French Conversation or "Glittering Gibberish"?', 105–108; Coffey, 'French Grammars in England 1660–1820', 140; and Gallagher, *Learning Languages*. Both Cohen and Coffey point out that by the mid-eighteenth century, beginning with Louis Chambaud's *A Grammar of the French Tongue* (1750), pedagogical methods shifted away from orality and towards writing as a means of more deeply comprehending grammatical construction.

¹⁸ During the Hanoverian regime Michel (Michael) Malard and Jean Palairé served as French tutors to the children of King George II. J. E. Tandon was French tutor to Lady Mary Godolphin, who was the dedicatee of his French-grammar book and the daughter of the Second Duchess of Marlborough. For more on the lives of French grammar authors, including their employment and émigré statuses, see Coffey, 'French Grammars in England 1660–1820', 146–150, and Caravolas, *Histoire de la didactique des langues au siècle des Lumières*, 20–34. On the life of Abel Boyer specifically see J. F. Flagg, 'Abel Boyer: A Huguenot Intermediary' (PhD dissertation, Boston University, 1973).

¹⁹ Raymond Hickey, *Eighteenth-Century English: Ideology and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 70. French grammars ranged in cost from one shilling and sixpence to two shillings during the early eighteenth century, which was about the equivalent of a day's wages for a skilled tradesperson. See 'Currency Converter: 1270–2017', The National Archives www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/ (2 July 2022). See also Gallagher, *Learning Languages in Early Modern England*, 75–76.

²⁰ From the title-page of J. E. Tandon's *A New French Grammar*, third edition (London: John Millan and Joseph Fox, 1736).

to his Landlady' in Guy Miegé's *Last and Best French Grammar*.²¹ But they also translated French culture by including excerpts from well-known French literature, music or other arts as well as various French idioms, accompanied by English translations in an adjacent column or page. These sections were not subsidiary to the grammatical portions but were seen as a crucial component of learning the language through memorization and daily oral practice.²² Songs such as 'Les amours de Jean et de Jeanne' in Jean Palairet's *A New Royal French Grammar* (1733), for example, reveal that the music itself could serve a pedagogical function, helping (in this case) to practice distinctions in vowel pronunciation:

Jean aime Jeanne,
 Jeanne aime Jean,
 Joli jeune Jean aime jeune Jeanne,
 Jeanne jeune Jeanne aime jeune Jean.²³

Of an array of cultural offerings found throughout the grammars, theatrical ephemera – especially songs and dialogues – are well represented. One can find excerpts of scenes from Molière's plays for practising conversation, as well as stock phrases or dialogues for facilitating communication with fellow audience members at the theatre (see Figure 1).²⁴ In addition, of the approximately seventeen different French grammars that were published in London during the first half of the eighteenth century, at least seven of them contained French songs, especially theatrical songs (see Table 1). It is perhaps no coincidence that the grammars with music (such as those by Boyer, Tandon and Palairet) would go on to become the most successful, in that they saw the greatest number of new editions and reprints in the course of the eighteenth century. Amidst songs for particular situations ('chansons pour boire' and 'chansons de la guerre') and several airs by Jean-Baptiste Lully, one also discovers a handful of French vaudeville tunes from the repertory of the Parisian fair-ground theatres. Out of collections of anywhere from five to fifteen French songs in each grammar, the vaudeville tunes usually represent about a quarter to a third of the musical contents.²⁵ Most notably, several of these vaudevilles were used extensively in the plays from this repertory performed in London by the French troupes. Given the emphasis on rote learning in the grammars, Londoners conceivably could have arrived at these French entertainments with some of the same French tunes from their grammars already memorized, aiding their comprehension of the plays.

In England, attending the theatre had long been considered a pedagogical experience that reinforced societal values and tastes that were taught in the home or schoolhouse.²⁶ Thus the appearance of the French vaudeville tunes both in the grammars and on London stages suggests a connection between linguistic pedagogy – learning French – and theatre-going. This connection

²¹ Guy Miegé, *Miegé's Last and Best French Grammar* (London: William Freeman and Abel Roper, 1698), 125–129.

²² As grammarian François Cheneau states in *The True French Master* (London: J. Pote, 1752), 'I always caused my scholars, after their compositions were perfected, to get them by heart, and take every opportunity to speak and hold discourse' (A3r–A3v); see also Cohen, 'French Conversation or "Glittering Gibberish"?', 105–108.

²³ The quoted text is the refrain of the song, giving the aspiring French speaker several opportunities to practice pronunciation as they sing through the text multiple times. See Jean Palairet, *A New Royal French Grammar*, second edition (London: E. Howlatt, 1733), 420–421.

²⁴ See, for example, Solomon Lowe, *French Rudiments: Consisting of a Grammar of the Language* (London: author, 1740), 90, and Joseph Gautier's *The True Practical French Grammar* (London: author and William Sandby, 1743), 108–109 and 126–146.

²⁵ This calculation also includes airs from the Opéra, such as 'Aimable vainqueur' by André Campra and 'Que n'aimez-vous? cœurs insensibles' by Lully, that were widely parodied in the Parisian popular theatres and became vaudevilles through their widespread use. On parodied opera airs see Grout, 'The Music of the Italian Theatre at Paris' and Le Blanc, *Avatars d'opéras*.

²⁶ For an extensive exploration of this idea see Kathryn Moncrief and Kathryn McPherson, eds, *Performing Pedagogy in Early Modern England: Gender, Instruction, and Performance* (London: Routledge, 2016).

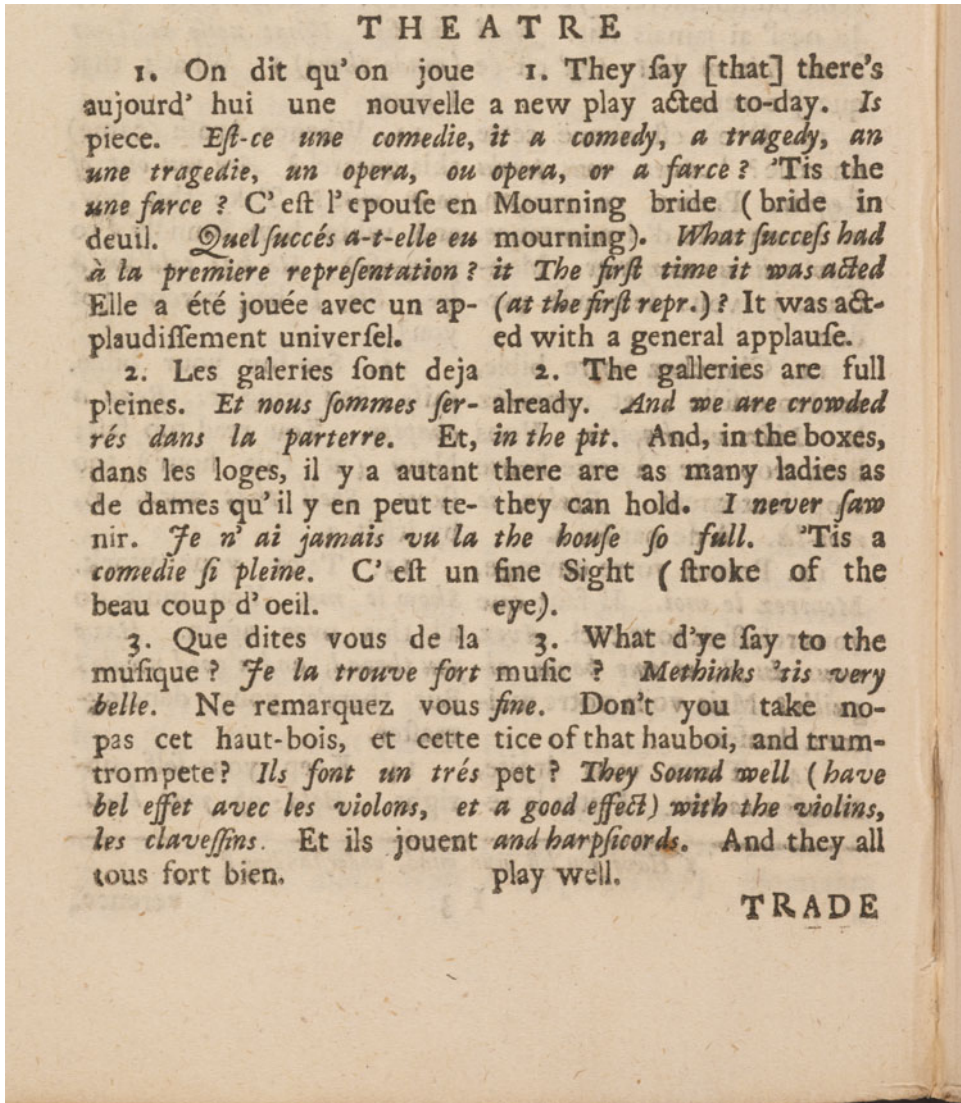


Figure 1. Sample dialogue for the theatre in Solomon Lowe, *French Rudiments: Consisting of a Grammar of the Language* (London: author, 1740), 90. British Library, London (GB-Lbl), RB.23.a 11523. © British Library Board

is further strengthened when we consider that the owners of French grammars and the attendees of French plays in London were part of the same milieu of British society, from the upper echelons to those aspiring to belong to a higher social rank. The British royalty and nobility, including King George I, continually attended and 'commanded' the French performances, yet the French plays also became part of a competitive London entertainment industry that appealed to the wider public. That the French plays were attended by middling audiences is evident both through their affordability to those with disposable income and through the frequent condemnation by eighteenth-century critics of this social class's interest in so-called lowly French farces.²⁷ In observing the broadening

²⁷ See Erica Levenson, 'From Royalty to Riots: Nation and Class in the Reception of French Musical Theater in London', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 50 (2021), 141–152.

appeal of the French entertainments to the ‘middling gentry’, one such critic, the dramatist and impresario Aaron Hill, also noted how the theatre could function as an instrument of linguistic pedagogy:

People of Quality already study *French*, for the sake of understanding what Harlequin says. If the *Middling Gentry* and *Trades-Folks* should follow their Example, and take it in their Heads to look upon the *French Theatre* as a *Nursery* of language, to breed their children in, by making them *improve* by *Diversion*, I am not a little apprehensive of a Success very detrimental to our *English Theatres*.²⁸

To be sure, the main anxiety behind Hill’s observation is that the popularity of French performers will leave English actors unemployed. But his criticism reveals something more subtle as well: the expansion of interest in French plays beyond the so-called ‘People of Quality’ was driven as much by a desire for language-based social advancement as by an intrinsic interest in the plays themselves. Of course, Hill is but one witness to the London theatrical environment of the 1730s. Yet his observation fruitfully prompts us to consider how language pedagogy and theatre attendance were intertwined and to investigate the modalities through which audiences learned French, at and for the theatre.

Learning to Hear French Tunes like Parisians

In order to reimagine the meanings Londoners might have come to associate with French vaudeville tunes, I will compare the tunes printed in the grammars with the same tunes as they appear in the relevant French theatrical works. We can have a reasonable sense of how these tunes appeared in theatrical works because they were published in a multi-volume anthology of fairground-theatre plays compiled by the French playwrights Lesage and D’Orneval, which printed the notated tunes at the end of each volume.²⁹ At least eight of the plays from this anthology were also performed in London by the French troupes (see Table 2), and at least three of the tunes from the French grammars were parodied extensively in these same plays: ‘Adieu paniers, vendanges sont faites’ (in Boyer), ‘Suivons l’amour, c’est lui qui nous mène’ (Let us follow love, it is he who leads us; in Boyer and Malard)³⁰ and ‘Tes beaux yeux, ma Nicole’ (in Tandon). It is of course possible that changes were made to the plays when they were performed in London; however, we can be reasonably certain that the French troupes still performed many of the same vaudeville tunes as they had in Paris, because the specific connotations of a given tune were an integral, driving force of both the plot of and the humour in these works. Furthermore, the French edition of the Lesage and D’Orneval anthology was also sold by London booksellers, and thus Londoners had access to the original performance context of these plays and their tunes as well.³¹

The first tune I will consider, ‘Adieu paniers, vendanges sont faites’, demonstrates how Londoners might have become acquainted with the Parisian understanding of a tune’s meaning with the aid of their French grammar book (see Example 1). The text of the tune ‘Adieu paniers’ can be found in the collection of songs at the end of Abel Boyer’s *Compleat French-Master*. Boyer’s grammar was foundational to the French grammar-book genre, spawning many imitators; its numerous editions and widespread readership in England would have brought its musical selections to the eyes and ears of many aspiring French learners.³² The first edition of 1694 contains eight

²⁸ Aaron Hill, *The Prompter* 13 (24 December 1734); original italics.

²⁹ Lesage and D’Orneval, *Le Théâtre de la foire, ou l’opéra comique*, ten volumes (Paris: Ganeau, 1721–1734). These same tunes can also be found in the anthology *Les Parodies du Nouveau Théâtre Italien* (Paris: Briasson, 1731).

³⁰ ‘Suivons l’amour’ was originally the closing chorus of the prologue in Lully’s *Amadis* (1684), but became widely parodied in the Parisian theatres.

³¹ Rogers, ‘John Gay, Ballad Opera and the Théâtres de la Foire’, 192–193.

³² Abel Boyer, *The Compleat French-Master, for Ladies and Gentlemen* (London: Tho. Salusbury, 1694).

Table 2. Plays from Lesage and D'Orneval's *Théâtre de la foire* performed in London 1720–1734

Title/author	Date/venue of Paris premiere:	Date/venue of London premiere
<i>Les Animaux raisonnables</i> , by M. A. Le Grand and Fuzelier	Foire St Germain 25 February 1718	King's Theatre 17 March 1720
<i>L'École des amants</i> , by Lesage and Fuzelier	Foire St Germain 3 February 1716	Lincoln's Inn Fields 4 April 1720
<i>Arlequin invisible</i> [<i>Chez le roy de le chine</i>], by Lesage	Foire St Laurent 30 July 1713	Little Haymarket Theatre 4 December 1721
<i>Les Eaux de Merlin</i> , by Lesage	Foire St Laurent 25 July 1715	Little Haymarket Theatre 12 December 1721
<i>Les Funérailles de la foire</i> , by Lesage and D'Orneval	Théâtre du Palais Royal 6 October 1718	Little Haymarket Theatre 8 January 1722
<i>L'île des Amazones</i> , by Lesage and D'Orneval	Foire St Laurent July 1718	Little Haymarket Theatre 17 December 1724
<i>Le Tableau du mariage</i> , by Lesage, D'Orneval and Fuzelier	Foire St Germain 3 February 1716	Little Haymarket Theatre 15 February 1725
<i>Les Amours de Nanterre</i> , by Lesage, D'Orneval and Auteau	Foire St Laurent ? 1718	Little Haymarket Theatre 14 November 1734

**Example 1.** The tune 'Adieu paniers, vendanges sont faites'. Alain-René Lesage and Jacques-Philippe D'Orneval, *Le Théâtre de la foire, ou l'opéra comique*, ten volumes, volume 1 (Paris: Ganeau, 1721), table of airs, 25

French songs, including vaudeville tunes and airs from Lully's operas, as well as four English tunes with French texts, including 'If love's a sweet passion' by Henry Purcell.³³ In the fourth edition of this grammar book from 1706, Boyer added new songs to reflect those that were currently in vogue in Paris. Among the added songs was an 'air nouveau' with the refrain 'Adieu paniers, vendanges sont faites'. Evidently, this tune did not go out of fashion in Paris and must have achieved popularity in England as well, since it was included in the subsequent twenty-seven London editions of Boyer's grammar, the last of which was published in 1797.

The original text and tune for 'Adieu paniers' derive from the finale of a popular seventeenth-century French play, *Les Vendanges de Suresnes*, by Florent Dancourt (1661–1725).³⁴ This was one of Dancourt's most frequently performed comedies, with a total of 551 performances during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³⁵ The tune itself was composed by Jean-Claude Gillier (1667–1737) for the finale of the play. It was one of several musical finales from Dancourt's works that were also used in Lesage and D'Orneval's *Théâtre de la foire* plays and that eventually became vaudevilles through their widespread popularity and use.³⁶ Indeed, the tune 'Adieu paniers' had most likely taken on a life of its own in Paris by the time that Boyer decided it merited inclusion

³³ For an analysis of the circulation of this Purcell tune in Boyer's grammar and beyond see Lebedinski, 'The Travels of a Tune'.

³⁴ Florent Carton Dancourt, *Les Vendanges de Suresnes: comédie de Mr. Dancourt* (Paris: chez T. Guillain, 1696).

³⁵ André Blanc, *F. C. Dancourt, 1661–1725: la Comédie Française à l'heure du soleil couchant* (Paris: Éditions Jean-Michel Place, 1984), 67–68.

³⁶ For a complete listing of such tunes see Romey, 'Songs that Run in the Streets', 440–441.

in his French grammar. Even long before Dancourt's play, however, the phrase 'adieu paniers, vendanges sont faites' was a French proverb; it implied something rendered useless owing to circumstances beyond anyone's control, such as harvesting baskets of produce after storm damage.³⁷

In Dancourt's play this saying is used for the song's refrain in all eight verses of the tune, where it insinuates a meaning altogether less innocent than a lost harvest. The song is sung by a stock aunt character with loose morals and two grape harvesters ('vendangeurs'), who lead a lively sing-along with the entire cast. In this context, the saying becomes an innuendo, the lost baskets here referring to the various unfortunate ways that one's sexual life can come to an end:

Profitez-bien, jeunes Fillettes, Des moments faits pour les amours; Quand on a passé ses beaux jours, Adieu panners, vendanges sont faites.	Profit well, young lasses, Of the moments made for love; When you have passed your prime, Goodbye baskets, the harvest is done.
Cachez-bien les faveurs secrètes, Amants, dont vous estes comblez Si-tost que vous les revelez, Adieu panners, vendanges sont faites.	Hide well the secret favours, Lovers, that have brought you pleasure; The instant that you reveal them, Goodbye baskets, the harvest is done.
Faites-bien vos marchez, Grisettes, Avant qu'aymer de grands Seigneurs; Si-tost qu'ils ont eû vos faveurs, Adieu panners, vendanges sont faites.	Bargain well, coquettes, Before loving some great seigneurs; The instant that they have had your favours, Goodbye baskets, the harvest is done.
Il faut sçavoir en amourettes Se saisir des tendres moments; Pour les trop timides Amants Adieu panners, vendanges sont faites.	You should know how, in flirtations, To profit from the tender moments; For lovers who are too timid, Goodbye baskets, the harvest is done.
Dessiez-vous de ces Coquettes Qui n'en veulent qu'à vos écus; Si-tost que vous n'en avez plus Adieu panners, vendanges sont faites.	Beware these coquettes, Who only want your money; The instant that you don't have any more Goodbye baskets, the harvest is done.
Veuves, restez comme vous estes, Vos Amants sont doux & souûmis; Dés qu'ils sont maîtres du logis Adieu panners, vendanges sont faites.	Widows, remain as you are, Your lovers are sweet and submissive; As soon as they are masters of the house Goodbye baskets, the harvest is done.
Quoy qu'un soupirant à Lunettes Paye cher les faveurs qu'il a; Tost ou tard on luy chantera Adieu panners, vendanges sont faites.	Even though a bespectacled [old] suitor Pays dearly for the favours he receives; Sooner or later he will hear the song Goodbye baskets, the harvest is done.
Amants d'Esté faites retraites Nous touchons à la Saint Martin, Pour vous jusqu'au Printemps prochain Adieu panners, vendanges sont faites.	Summer lovers, retreat! We're coming up on the Feast of Saint Martin For you, until next spring, Goodbye baskets, the harvest is done.

'Adieu paniers' was not performed on London stages until the 1720s, some fifteen years after it was first published in Boyer's grammar. Therefore the tune probably arrived in England in print before its appearance on stage. Thanks to Abel Boyer's inclusion of 'Adieu paniers' in *The Compleat French-Master*, Londoners had access – as early as 1706 – to the same version of the tune's text from Dancourt's play.

Readers of Boyer would have been able to hear the tune 'Adieu paniers' on London stages as soon as 26 December 1721, when French acting troupes performed Dancourt's *Les Vendanges de Suresnes* at the Little Haymarket Theatre as an afterpiece to *L'Homme à bonne fortune*. The play

³⁷ Philibert-Joseph Le Roux, *Dictionnaire comique, satyrique, critique, burlesque, libre et proverbial* (Amsterdam: Z. Chastelain, 1750), 315–316. The proverb was also quoted as early as the sixteenth century by Rabelais in *La vie de Gargantua et de Pantagruel*, book 2, chapter 27 (1534), to imply when someone or something is too late, or an occasion has passed: François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. Burton Raffel (New York: Norton, 1991), 68.

was relatively successful, as it was given three more performances in the following months, two of them ‘by royal command’:³⁸

- 1 1 January 1722, as an afterpiece to Molière’s *L’Avare*
- 2 2 February 1722, with a slightly altered title (*L’Usurier gentilhomme et les Vendanges de Suresnes*) as an afterpiece to *Arlequin cartouche*³⁹
- 3 19 February 1722, as an afterpiece to *Arlequin cartouche*, again with an altered title (*L’Été des coquettes et les Vendanges de Suresnes*).

Boyer’s readers would have also had the advantage of recognizing ‘Adieu paniers’ in many of the other plays that the French troupes performed in London. Indeed, the *comédies en vaudevilles* that were performed in London frequently used ‘Adieu paniers’, recycling the tune with different texts for new dramatic situations.⁴⁰ For example, London audiences could have heard it in a play entitled *Les Funérailles de la foire* (The Funerals of the Fair) at the Little Haymarket Theatre on 8 January 1722, only one week after a performance of Dancourt’s *Les Vendanges de Suresne*.⁴¹ Like many of the fair-theatre productions, *Les Funérailles de la foire* comments on contemporary events: it relates the story of how the fair theatres’ productions were banned in Paris in 1718.⁴² The play is thus a sarcastic allegory of the closing, or ‘death’, of these theatres, with ‘la foire’ personified as the doctor’s (M. Craquet’s) dying patient. Even if London audiences were unaware of the events in Paris that this play represented, their knowledge of ‘Adieu paniers’ from Boyer’s grammar could have helped them grasp the non sequitur between verse and refrain:

<p>M. Craquet J’offrirois en vain mes recettes, Tous mes soins seroient superflus. Dans vos Jeux on ne rira plus: Adieu, paniers, vendanges sont faites.</p>	<p>Mr Craquet I would offer in vain my remedies, All my efforts would be superfluous. We’ll no longer laugh at your plays: Goodbye baskets, the harvest is done.</p>
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In this case, the tune helps to stress the doctor’s negative prognosis. The phrase’s proverbial implications, of saying farewell to something owing to external forces beyond one’s control, shows the powerless position of the fair theatres in a competitive theatrical environment that had long been monopolized by royally subsidized theatres.⁴³ Thus, in this example, knowing the original text of ‘Adieu paniers’ would have helped emphasize and clarify the meaning of the new text in this scene.

In some cases, Londoners would have been able to see the more nuanced play of associations between text and tune. For example, in the play *Les Animaux raisonnables* they could have witnessed how ‘Adieu paniers’ was used to contradict, rather than emphasize, the surface meaning of the new text. Initially performed at the Parisian fairground theatres in 1718, *Les Animaux raisonnables* received a long run in London – with nine performances at both the King’s Theatre

³⁸ *The London Stage*, part 2, volume 2, 654–664.

³⁹ A play entitled only *L’Usurier gentilhomme* was performed on 15 January 1722. Its relationship to the play performed a few weeks later on 2 February remains unclear, but it is possible that it merged with *Les Vendanges de Suresnes* to form one entertainment, given that the latter did the same with *L’Été des coquettes* on 19 February. Both performances in February were ‘by royal command’.

⁴⁰ The tune ‘Adieu paniers, vendanges sont faites’ appears in almost every volume of the Lesage and D’Orneval *Théâtre de la foire* anthology in addition to the later *Les Parodies du Nouveau Théâtre Italien* anthology.

⁴¹ *The London Stage*, part 2, volume 2, 657.

⁴² Claude and François Parfaict, ‘1718 Foire Saint Laurent’, *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire des spectacles de la foire*, two volumes (Paris: Briasson, 1743), volume 1, 218–219. It is likely that the fair-theatre troupes went to London in 1718 in part because of this event.

⁴³ On the suppression of the fair theatres in Paris see Robert Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy: Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), chapter 4, 81–97.

and Little Haymarket Theatre between 1720 and 1734.⁴⁴ This play is a parody of Homer's *Odyssey*, in which the idea of the human as a rational animal from Aristotle is inverted by having animals play the characters. In a scene where Circe and Ulysses bid a literal *adieu* to one another, they sing to the tune of 'Adieu paniers':

Circe

Je me voyois dans ces retraites
Seule avec vous à tout moment:
Vous pouvez partir, cher Amant,
Adieu paniers, vendanges sont faites.

Ulysses

Oui, parbleu. Et si bien faites, qu'il n'y
a pas seulement de quoi grappiller.

Circe

I saw myself in these retreats
Alone with you at every moment:
You can leave, dear lover,
Goodbye baskets, the harvest is done.

Ulysses

Yes, egad. And so thoroughly done,
that there is nothing left to pick.

Here, knowledge of this tune's connotations from Boyer's grammar or Dancourt's play helps reveal the dialogue's subtext. Circe takes the proverb to mean that the harvest has been successfully completed, using it to imply her continued fidelity to Ulysses. But this meaning is already cast into doubt through the use of a tune that implied the end of sexual possibilities. Ulysses then takes up the tune and returns it to its original bawdy connotations. He uses the verb 'grappiller', meaning 'to pick up what is left after the harvest', to mock Circe's sincerity, suggesting that she will soon find many other suitors to replace him. In this example, knowing the tune's original meaning helps the audience grasp the conflicting message between the music and Circe's seemingly earnest declaration of love.

It is possible that 'Adieu paniers, vendanges sont faites' circulated in England both in the theatre and in print until at least the late eighteenth century, as its appearance is suggested in an English comic opera published in 1781. In this opera, *The Lord of the Manor*, by John Burgoyne and William Jackson of Exeter, there is a vague mention in the libretto of 'a short French song'.⁴⁵ With no trace of musical notation, it remains ambiguous as to what was sung here;⁴⁶ however, the preceding dialogue reveals a potential musical source. In the middle of a discussion with Sophia about the pleasures of infidelity, the character Annette alludes to the French proverb 'Adieu paniers, vendanges sont faites':

I wish you saw a girl in Provence as she trips down the mountain with a basket of grapes upon her head, and all her swains about her, with a glance at one, and a nod at another, and a tap to a third – 'till up rises the moon, and up strikes the tabor and pipe – away go the baskets – 'Adieu panniers, Vendange est faite!' – her heart dances faster than her feet, and she makes ten lads happy instead of one, by each thinking himself the favourite.⁴⁷

Shortly after this statement, Annette sings the French song, and Sophia replies: 'I admire your vivacity, Annette; but I dislike your maxims. For my part, I scorn even the shadow of deceit towards the

⁴⁴ Each French play was typically only performed once or twice on London stages. *The London Stage* lists performances of *Les Animaux raisonnables* (sometimes advertised as 'The Reasonable Animals') on 17, 19 and 26 March and 9 June 1720 at The King's Theatre, 23 March 1721 at the Little Haymarket Theatre, 29 January and 22 February 1725 at the Little Haymarket Theatre, and 11 and 15 November 1734 at the Little Haymarket Theatre.

⁴⁵ John Burgoyne, *The Lord of the Manor, a Comic Opera, as It Is Performed at the Theatre Royal Drury-Lane, with a Preface by the Author* (London: T. Evans, 1781).

⁴⁶ The musical numbers of this opera by William Jackson were in fact published, yet the French song mentioned in the libretto is absent from the published score. This further suggests that 'Adieu paniers' was well enough known in England at this time that no notation was required. See William Jackson, *The Lord of the Manor: A Comic Opera . . . adapted for the Voice and Harpsichord* (London: John Preston, 1781).

⁴⁷ Burgoyne, *The Lord of the Manor*, 35.



Example 2. The tune ‘Tes beaux yeux, ma Nicole’. Lesage and D’Orneval, *Le Théâtre de la foire, ou l’opéra comique*, volume 1, table of airs, 9

man I love, and would sooner die than give him pain’.⁴⁸ Could ‘Adieu paniers’ be the match for the French song performed in *The Lord of the Manor*? It seems plausible, especially given Sophia’s allusion to this song as a ‘maxim’, and seeing that both this version of the tune and the one in *Les Animaux raisonnables* highlight similar subtexts: they portray female infidelity by painting the character of a woman known for her many suitors. Moreover, Boyer’s *Compleat French-Master*, which included the same text for ‘Adieu paniers’ throughout subsequent London editions published until 1797, undoubtedly helped maintain this tune’s association with sexual promiscuity throughout the eighteenth century.⁴⁹

It is worth recalling here that many of the theatrical scenes described thus far depended on a degree of familiarity with the subtle play of meanings between tunes and their contrafacta and were performed in French for London audiences. It is of course possible, then, that many of these intricacies were lost on listeners. However, with the case of ‘Adieu paniers’, the judicious student of French grammar would have had a chance at comprehending such connections thanks to Boyer’s inclusion of the tune’s original text from Dancourt’s play and thanks to multiple opportunities to hear the tune sung on London stages to different texts.

Politicizing French Tunes in England

The French-grammar authors did not always preserve the earliest known texts for French tunes as Boyer did with ‘Adieu paniers’; in some cases, they altered the song texts completely, shifting the tune’s meaning as it circulated across the Channel. In his *New French Grammar*, J. E. Tandon rewrote the text of the vaudeville ‘Tes beaux yeux, ma Nicole’ to support his political agenda (see [Example 2](#)).⁵⁰ This was one of the most popular vaudeville tunes in France, as demonstrated by its use in twelve Théâtre de la Foire plays published in the first three volumes alone. Instead of including the well-known text that had been published in the vaudeville collection *La clef des chansonniers* of 1717, Tandon writes a new text ‘set to the tune of tes beaux yeux’ (‘sur l’air, tes beaux yeux ma Nicole’).⁵¹ In doing so, he turns a tune that was initially a comic portrayal of a woman’s beauty – one that uses culinary metaphors to describe the details of her face – into a scathing critique of France’s government:

⁴⁸ Burgoyne, *The Lord of the Manor*, 35.

⁴⁹ The tune ‘Adieu paniers’ is set to numerous different contrafacta in the manuscript ‘Chansonnier, ou recueil de chansons anecdotes, depuis l’année 1600 jusqu’à 1744’ (British Library, London (Gb-Lbl), Egerton MS 814–817), which belonged to William Chappell, a nineteenth-century British historian who collected folk songs. This chansonnier is another indication of the long-lasting circulation of ‘Adieu paniers’ in England.

⁵⁰ J. E. Tandon, *A New French Grammar: Teaching to Read, Speak, and Understand the French Tongue* (London: E. Howlatt, 1733), 114–115.

⁵¹ *La clef des chansonniers, ou recueil des vaudevilles depuis cent ans & plus, notez, et recueillis pour la première fois par J. B. Christophe Ballard*, two volumes (Paris: Ballard, 1717), volume 2, 264–265.

Text for 'Tes beaux yeux' in *La clef des chansonniers*, volume 2 (Paris: Ballard, 1717)

<p>Tes beaux yeux, ma Nicole, Me boutent tout en feu; Je sens que je rissole, Cela passe le jeu: Dans l'ardeur qui me frape, Mon corps semble un chaudron, Et mon cœur une carpe Qui cuit au cour-bouillon.</p>	<p>Your beautiful eyes, my Nicole, Set me all afire; Making me feel as if I am cooking, But that is beyond a joke: As the passion which strikes me, Makes my body seem a cauldron, And my heart a carp That cooks in broth.</p>
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<p>Tes beaux yeux, ma Lisette, Sont comme qui diroit, Grands comme une cuvette A fair' bouillir du lait: Ton nez est en sa place, Ta bouche est au dessous; Tout ça fait une face Qui nous enchante tous.</p>	<p>Your beautiful eyes, my Lisette, Are, as might be said, As large as a bowl To boil some milk: Your nose is in its place, Your mouth is underneath; All of which makes for a face Which enchants everyone.</p>
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Text for 'Tes beaux yeux, ma Nicole' in J. E. Tandon's *A New French Grammar* (London: John Millan and Joseph Fox, 1733)

<p>La France abimée, Sous un Roy pas trop doux, Vient toute Eplorée, Embrasse vos genoux: Vous Parlements de France, Il la faut relever, Reprendre vos Puissances, Dont on vous a privé.</p>	<p>France destroyed, During the reign of a none too benevolent king, Comes tearful, To kneel before you: You <i>parlements</i> of France, She needs to be lifted up, Reclaim the powers That were taken from you.</p>
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<p>Dans cette conjoncture, Il ne faut point plier Ou bien, je vous assure: Vous n'aurez point quartier, Dans le dur Esclavage; Ou vos enfants vous verrés Et la France au pillage, D'un Clergé forcené.</p>	<p>Under the present circumstances, You must not yield Or else, I assure you: You will no longer have any mercy, During this time of servitude; Or you will see your children And France looted, By a fanatic clergy.</p>
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<p>Dans vôtre Voisinage, Vous pouvez imiter Un Gouvernement sage; Qui se fait admirer: Faites en donc de même, Et ne permettez pas, Que le seul Diademe Fasse comme il voudra.</p>	<p>So look to your neighbour [England], You can imitate A wise government; Which is admired: So do the same, And do not allow, That only the Crown Does what it pleases.</p>
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<p>Sil se trouvoit en France, Un nouveau grand Condé, Pour prendre la Defence; Du País oppressé Il n'auroit qu'a paroître, Nos Cœurs sont tous unis, Faisant sans le connoître Des vœux ardents pour lui.</p>	<p>If there could be found in France, A new Grand Condé, For coming to the defence; Of the oppressed country If he would only appear Our hearts would be united; Creating, without knowing it Ardent wishes for him.</p>
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Under Tandon's pen, this tune becomes a plea for France to adopt a government based on that of Britain. In the first stanza he begs the *parlements* of France to stand up for their country. In particular, he believes they need to stand up to the heightened religious oppression against the Jansenists and Protestants, spurred on by King Louis XV's chief minister, Cardinal de Fleury, 'a fanatic clergy'.⁵²

⁵² Joseph Bergin, *The Politics of Religion in Early Modern France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 300. For more on these religious conflicts see Dale Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560–1791* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), chapter 2, 75–134.

Most notably, in stanza three he urges France to look to England (a constitutional monarchy) as a model of a more just monarchy, since the evils of absolutism still prevailed in France. In the final stanza Tandon wishes that a new hero would come their way like the Grand Condé – Louis II de Bourbon (1621–1686), the illustrious French general who had rebelled against the Crown during the Fronde (1648–1653).⁵³ By invoking references to French politics, both past and present, Tandon changes the character and meaning of the tune entirely; he renders ‘Tes beaux yeux’ political, anti-French and pro-British, despite the more politically neutral lyrics of the original tune.

Tandon’s transformation of an ostensibly innocuous grammar-book tune into a vessel for his political beliefs was not unusual for these didactic texts. The proliferation of French culture in London during a time when Britain and France remained political adversaries would have been viewed as anything but neutral.⁵⁴ Indeed, many grammarians felt the need to make it clear that their grammar books were not a pro-French (in the sense of pro-Catholic) project. They would often express political beliefs, especially in the prefatory and dedicatory material of their grammars. For example, grammarian Michel Malard made his anti-Catholic political allegiances apparent in *The True French Grammar*, by writing ‘wherein children by learning French shall learn at the same time their Religion; that they may never be seduced by the papists’.⁵⁵ Abel Boyer also published several political texts as well as linguistic ones.⁵⁶ But Tandon takes the expression of his political opinions a step further by imparting them in the musical text itself.

Like Abel Boyer, Tandon was probably a Huguenot refugee or a descendent of Huguenot refugees.⁵⁷ But beyond his possible personal ties to religious conflict in France, Tandon might have also written the new politicized text to ‘Tes beaux yeux’ as a means of showing allegiance to his employer. Like Malard, Palairt and Boyer, Tandon worked as a French tutor to the children of British nobility – in this case, Lady Mary Godolphin, who was the dedicatee of his French-grammar book and the granddaughter of Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough. The latter, sole heiress of the Marlborough estate, was Protestant, and adamant that the next Marlborough heir must not be a Jacobite or suspected of Jacobitism.⁵⁸ As the one in charge of her granddaughter’s private education, she may have employed Tandon for more than just his fluency in French; with his critical stance towards the French absolutist government and its ties to Catholicism, his religious and political outlook aligned with her own anti-Jacobite views and those of her family. In such roles, French tutors like Tandon would teach French to their elite students while also protecting them from Catholicism. In other words, they were hired to provide a moral education as much as a linguistic one.

But why would Tandon have chosen the tune of ‘Tes beaux yeux’ for his political message? It is of course possible that he chose it for arbitrary or for musical reasons; for instance, perhaps the melody fitted the text he wished to write. Yet this very tune had also made appearances in the

⁵³ The Fronde, a series of civil wars in seventeenth-century France, is often discussed in eighteenth-century historiography as an impressive moment of transgression against the French government, because there were ‘honest attempts to legislate a constitutional monarchy into existence in 1648–9’. David Parrott, *1652: The Cardinal, the Prince, and the Crisis of the Fronde* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 3.

⁵⁴ See especially Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*.

⁵⁵ Michel Malard, *The True French Grammar* (London: J. Brown, 1716). Similar goals are present in Malard’s companion pedagogical text entitled *The French and Protestant Companion . . . with the Defence of the Protestant Religion, and the Death of Popery. The whole in English and French, for the Use of the Young Princesses* (London: author and Mr. Marshall, 1718).

⁵⁶ Most notably, Boyer compiled histories of British royalty (*History of King William the Third* and *The History of the Reign of Queen Anne Digested into Annals*) and published contemporary news and parliamentary debates in his journal *The Political State of Great Britain* (1711–1729). For more on these texts see Flagg, ‘Abel Boyer’, chapters 4 and 5, 212–353.

⁵⁷ There is little surviving biographical information on J. E. Tandon. However, the views espoused in ‘Tes beaux yeux’ align with Huguenot propaganda of the time, which emphasized the tyrannical nature of absolutist rule in France. See David J. B. Trim, ed., *The Huguenots: History and Memory in Transnational Context* (Boston: Brill, 2011), 238. The third edition of Tandon’s French grammar was also published by the Huguenot printer John Millan in London.

⁵⁸ Frances Harris, *A Passion for Government: The Life of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 259.

French *comédies en vaudevilles* performed on London stages around the same time that Tandon had reworked it in his grammar book. In these performances, the tune's various contrafacta also helped convey different shades of political meanings. It is especially noteworthy that Tandon wrote 'sur l'air' of 'Tes beaux yeux' and didn't provide notation, suggesting that readers might have been familiar enough with this tune through performance to supply it on their own. The French plays that used this tune in Tandon's London reveal some sense of the associations to which Tandon might have referred with his setting and, indeed, to which the tune's print circulation perhaps contributed.

On London stages, the tune 'Tes beaux yeux' appeared in two staged French works from the Parisian fairground theatres. London audiences might have first come to hear it in a French play, *L'Isle des Amazones* (The Isle of the Amazons), which was performed in London on 17 December 1724. In this play Harlequin and Pierrot become captives on an island governed by Amazonian women. These women force their captives to marry them and then exile the men from the island after three months of marriage. This arrangement ensures that the Amazonians can reproduce and guarantees perpetual female control of the government. Sung by four characters, 'Tes beaux yeux' occurs during a moment in this play when two of the Amazons (Marphise and Bradamante) are presenting their male captives, Harlequin and Pierrot, with their new wives (Hypolite and Zenobie):

Marphise, présentant Hypolite à Arlequin
Air 35 ('Tes beaux yeux, ma Nicole')
Prenez cette Amazone,
Vous êtes son Epoux.
C'est le sort qui l'ordonne.

Bradamante, présentant Zenobie à Pierrot
Cette Brune est à vous.

Pierrot
Jarni! Qu'elle est gentille!

Arlequin
Ah! Le joli minois!
Ma foi, déjà je grille
d'entamer les trois mois.⁵⁹

Marphise, presenting Hypolite to Harlequin
Air 35 (Your beautiful eyes, my Nicole)
Take this Amazon,
You are her husband.
It is fate that commands this.

Bradamante, presenting Zenobie to Pierrot
This brunette is for you.

Pierrot
Zounds! She's charming!

Harlequin
Ah! Such a sweet little face!
Frankly, I already burn
To begin the three months.

The tune's prior associations render the two male clowns even more ridiculous. The original tune's text from the *Clef des chansonniers* satirizes conventional courtly love songs that idealized women's beauty, by using cooking as a metaphor for sexual appetite. This cooking metaphor is echoed in this scene with Harlequin's 'je grille d'entamer' (I burn to begin) and with the clowns' fear of being literally cooked and eaten alive by the Amazons, indicated by the repeated confusion of another character (Scaramouch) of the verbs 'mariner' (to marinate) and 'marier' (to marry) throughout the play. By singing 'Tes beaux yeux' at this moment, the Amazons enhance the original tune's satirical implications, since they are now not merely passive objects of beauty, but actively undermining the men's power through their politically motivated arranged marriages. The tune helps aurally depict this inversion of eighteenth-century gender norms within politics and marriage.⁶⁰ These new text settings in both Tandon's grammar book and *L'Isle des Amazones* thus show two different political interpretations that came to be associated with this tune in London.

After the publication of the first edition of Tandon's grammar, 'Tes beaux yeux' could also be heard in the play *Les Amours de Nanterre* (The Loves of Nanterre), performed in London on 14 and 21 November 1734. In this play, 'Tes beaux yeux' also depicts a marital arrangement, but once again takes a more critical perspective on these associations. The plot of *Les Amours de Nanterre* revolves around an older woman named Madame Thomas who thwarts her daughter

⁵⁹ Lesage and D'Orneval, *Théâtre de la foire, ou l'opéra comique*, volume 3 (Paris: Ganeau, 1721), 349.

⁶⁰ For more on how the utopian world of the female-governed Amazonian island was used to critique marital conventions see Marcie Ray, 'Dystopic Marital Narratives at the Opéra-Comique during the Regency', *Musica Perspectiva* 6/2 (2013), 49–83.

Colette's marriage to Valère because of a financial quarrel with his father, a tax collector. A plan is devised whereby Madame Thomas' own lover (her valet Lucas) will be sent off to war if she should stop the youngsters' engagement. In the end, Madame Thomas discovers that her own daughter is at the root of this plan; this dénouement is set to the tune of none other than "Tes beaux yeux":

Madam Thomas, regardant Colette
Air 35 ('Tes beaux yeux, ma Nicole')
Je vois tout le mystere.
Ah! Coquine, c'est vous . . .

Colette
Maman, point de colere.
Donnez-moi cet Epoux.
Par là, vous allez faire
D'une pierre deux coups;
En m'accordant Valère
Lucas sera pour vous.⁶¹

Madam Thomas, looking at Colette
Air 35 (Your beautiful eyes, my Nicole)
I see the entire mystery.
Ah! Coquette, it is you . . .

Colette
Mama, don't be angry.
Give me this husband.
That way, you will
Kill two birds with one stone;
In granting me Valère,
Lucas will be for you.

In both *L'Isle des Amazones* and *Les Amours de Nanterre*, the tune 'Tes beaux yeux' marks a moment when women become agents of marital diplomacy: they approach marriage as a rational transaction that will ensure either their own happiness or continued governance. The tune's appearance at these pivotal moments helps to emphasize this inversion of eighteenth-century gender roles.

It is worth re-reading Tandon's politically charged tune in light of these two London productions that also used it. For one, these theatrical renditions bring into clearer focus Tandon's use of marital language, especially in the last stanza, where the speaker expresses 'ardent wishes' ('vœux ardents') for a new leader to help 'unite hearts' ('nos cœurs sont tous unis') after years of absolute rule. With this in mind, Tandon's text becomes more than an anti-French polemic; it is also an analogy that compares successful governance to marriage. Might Tandon have also tried to draw a connection between a progressive island government (Great Britain) and that of the Amazonian isle where women governed and where more than one ruler shared 'the crown' ('le diadème')? Might his allusion to the Fronde's Grand Condé have also recalled the numerous noblewomen, known popularly as 'les amazons de la Fronde', who participated in the political activities of this civil war?⁶² In a grammar book dedicated to the granddaughter of an influential female political leader, such connections would have been enticing indeed.⁶³

Conclusion: French Tunes and Material Culture in England

By tracing the proliferation of tunes across page and stage, we have seen one way that musical culture was transmitted across borders. We have also gained a sense of the most ephemeral ways in which audiences experienced, and learned to engage with, the transnational popular culture of the day. Although rarely included in theatrical or musical history, grammar books responded to and helped to perpetuate a fascination with French theatrical culture in England. Their pedagogy of memorization and oral recitation encouraged readers to internalize cultural ephemera, providing a way for London audiences to be 'in on' musical jokes that Parisians might have spent years experiencing. In their circulation through grammars, tunes also took on new meanings, emphasizing how

⁶¹ Lesage and D'Orneval, *Théâtre de la foire, ou l'opéra comique*, volume 3, 325–326.

⁶² Parrott, 1652: *The Cardinal, the Prince, and the Crisis of the 'Fronde'*, 3. See also Sylvie Steinberg, 'Le Mythe des Amazones et son utilisation politique de la Renaissance à la Fronde', in *Royaume de Fémynie: Pouvoirs, contraintes, espaces de liberté des femmes, de la Renaissance à la Fronde*, ed. Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier and Éliane Viennot (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999), 261–273.

⁶³ Such an interpretation reveals a new perspective on gender and French-language pedagogy. Michèle Cohen has examined how French grammars helped in fashioning the English 'gentleman' in the eighteenth century (see 'French Conversation or "Glittering Gibberish"?'), yet Tandon's grammar reveals how such sources could have helped cultivate the politically engaged female.

vaudevilles – both in France and England – were versatile vehicles of social critique, malleable in meeting the needs of various polemicists.

Although the grammars' focus on memorization made them adept at transmitting musical culture, they were not the only way in which French vaudeville tunes circulated in England beyond the theatre. Many theatrical tunes can be discovered in sources meant for domestic music-making in London, such as single-sheet songs and amateur music notebooks.⁶⁴ In the case of single-sheet songs (many engraved by Thomas Cross), French tunes were often set to new English texts to help translate their meanings.⁶⁵ For example, the French tune 'Aimable vainqueur' from André Campra's opera *Hésione* (1700) – a popular parodied air in France – became 'A song to Celia who was forc'd to marry another, her lover being absent' and was sold as an engraved single-sheet song.⁶⁶ Although the words and names have been anglicized, the song still alludes to a similar plot device to that of Campra's opera – namely, an arranged marriage. French vaudeville tunes are also scattered throughout the personal music notebooks of amateur musicians in England.⁶⁷ These notebooks provide an intimate window into how French tunes were used to learn musical performance and composition. Like the French grammars, these notebooks reveal an active engagement with French tunes, which were selected by amateur composers and musicians, transcribed by hand and used for practising one's instrument, in addition to learning musical concepts such as transposition.⁶⁸

French vaudeville tunes can also be found in sources like the grammar books, where one would not typically expect to find music, suggesting how tunes were consumed via a range of social activities in everyday English life. French tunes published on playing cards, for example, could have offered a portable form for disseminating tunes; they could fit in one's pocket and be brought out to play (or sing) after dinner. The popular French vaudevilles 'cotillon' ('Ma commère quand je danse') and 'Le printemps rappelle aux armes' that were used in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* were printed (c1730) with a pack of *Beggar's Opera* playing cards.⁶⁹ In the later eighteenth century, one could also purchase playing cards with French dance tunes that were arranged for domestic performances, such as the 'Complete Pack of New Cotillons adapted for the Harpsichord, Violin, G. Flute etc. with figures entirely new' (London: Longman and Lukey, 1770).⁷⁰ French tunes were also published in travel literature and newspapers alongside the latest news and ideas about the world; sometimes these sources helped contextualize foreign tunes for their readers. In one example from *The Morning Chronicle* (7 August 1777), an old vaudeville

⁶⁴ In addition to these sources, French tunes could also be found in songbook miscellanies in the early eighteenth century, a genre popular in the domestic sphere explored by Alison DeSimone in *The Power of Pastiche: Musical Miscellany and Cultural Identity in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Clemson: Clemson University Press, 2021), chapter 3, 99–166.

⁶⁵ On Thomas Cross as engraver of single-sheet songs (many of which derived from the London stage) see Rebecca Herissone, "'Exactly engrav'd by Tho: Cross?': The Role of Single-Sheet Prints in Preserving Performing Practices from the Restoration Stage", *The Journal of Musicology* 37/3 (2020), 305–348.

⁶⁶ 'A Song to Celia who was forc'd to Marry another Her Lover being absent. Made therefore to [the tune of] Aimable Vanqure by Mr. Durfey' (London, 1704) (GB-Lbl, H. 1601. (61)). The tune 'Aimable vainqueur' was also parodied in the French popular-theatre repertory (see *Les parodies du nouveau Théâtre Italien*, volume 4) and danced to on London stages. On its danced versions see Moira Goff, 'The Celebrated Monsieur Desnoyer, Part 2: 1734–1742', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* 31/1 (2013), 86, 92.

⁶⁷ My research has focused on the music notebooks held in the MS Music School, MS Douce and MS Rawlins Poet collections (Special Collections) at the Bodleian Library, Oxford (GB-Ob).

⁶⁸ For example, 'Hannah Pearson' probably played French tunes (like 'Folies d'Espagne') on the lute or guitar, since they are notated using tablature in her notebook (GB-Ob, MS Mus. Sch.F. 579 (26602)). 'Mr. Fonronce' probably used French tunes to practise transposing to his suited vocal register (GB-Ob, MS Mus. Sch.G. 608 (26605)).

⁶⁹ For more on the use of these vaudeville tunes in *The Beggar's Opera* see Rogers, 'John Gay, Ballad Opera and the Théâtres de la Foire', 185–186.

⁷⁰ Both *The Beggar's Opera* and the Cotillon sets of playing cards can be accessed through the 'Albert Field Collection of Playing Cards', Columbia University Library's Digital Collections, <https://library.columbia.edu/resolve/cio13484140> (numbers 5 and 8) (2 July 2022).

known as ‘La Béquille du père Barnaba’ (The crutch of Father Barnaba) is printed with a new text. The author explains that this new version of the tune is currently as popular in Paris as the older version had been.⁷¹ Judging from the contrafactum the author prints, the new version of the tune was used as social gossip about the Chevalier d’Éon, a male diplomat who returned to France as a woman in 1777.⁷²

Each of these means of circulation, without a doubt, would have had its own ways of preserving and transmitting French musical culture. Taken together, they provide a snapshot of how widely vaudeville tunes circulated in London print culture, becoming a part of daily life contemporaneous with the French theatrical residency in London, and even long afterwards. Thanks to this rich archive, we too can begin to access, as eighteenth-century Londoners once might have, the web of associations carried by popular aural culture that would otherwise be lost – not only in translation, but to time itself.

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⁷¹ ‘The following song . . . we have received from a correspondent at Paris, where it is now sung in almost every place, and is as much celebrated as the famous old song to the same tune’. *The Morning Chronicle* (7 August 1777).

⁷² The older versions of this tune (popular in the 1730s and 40s) used sexual innuendos on the image of a stolen friar’s ‘crutch’ to poke fun at various targets of critique (see Darnton, *Poetry and the Police*, 89). It doesn’t take much stretch of the imagination to guess how such an innuendo might work in the context of the Chevalier d’Éon’s story.