



Erick Arenas's thoughtful discussion of (once again) an 'imperial-liturgical' style of church music in relation to Fux's influence in Vienna on composers later in the century, including Michael Haydn; and last, but by no means least, Herbert Seifert's patient and scholarly engagement with the 'composing Emperors', which leads him to restore the authorship of a major composition, the *Miserere mei Deus*, to Leopold I, a work which had for so long been attributed to his son, Charles VI. In this endeavour, Seifert finds himself in agreement (albeit for different reasons) with Guido Adler.

The edited proceedings of this conference will be published by the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften at the end of 2010.

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doi:10.1017/S147857061000031X

## LE DIX-HUITIÈME SIÈCLE DU DIX-NEUVIÈME SIÈCLE: OPÉRA ET CLASSICISME EN FRANCE D'ADAM À MASSENET

OPÉRA THÉÂTRE DE SAINT-ÉTIENNE, 6–7 NOVEMBER 2009

The biennial Festival Massenet held in the composer's home town of Saint-Étienne has always made a point of championing his least-known works. With *Manon* holding the main stage, the tenth instalment last November might appear to have been an exception – but this time the novelty lay in the use of Massenet's recently discovered recitatives for the work in place of the spoken dialogue usually heard. Under the energetic guidance of Jean-Christophe Branger and Alban Ramaut, both of the Université de Saint-Étienne, and Vincent Giroud, recent festivals have incorporated a conference on French opera that is thematically related to the main production. Each symposium has been held at the Opéra Théâtre de Saint-Étienne, perched atop a hill that offers a commanding view of the city and its valley. And each has led to the publication of edited proceedings by the Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, as will the most recent event. With *Manon* on the boards, Branger and Ramaut felt that time was ripe for research into representations of eighteenth-century culture – repertory, settings, characters, musical styles – on nineteenth-century French operatic stages. The subtitle 'opéra et classicisme' directed participants not only to specific works but also to aesthetic questions. Many musicians and scholars will see the roots of post-World-War-One neoclassicism as a larger epistemological frame for such a conference, if only to evaluate the possible hermeneutic or style-critical utility of the 'neo' prefix for nineteenth-century repertory. From Adam to Massenet, from Mendelssohn to Brahms and Reger, the musicological literature betrays considerable terminological instability around the concept of the neoclassical – a matter that could not, of course, be resolved over the course of two days.

The first session concerned itself with typological and dramaturgical issues arising from reflections of the eighteenth century in nineteenth-century French opera. My own contribution (Steven Huebner, McGill University; 'Le XVIIIe siècle du XIXe siècle: choix lexicaux et enjeux critiques' (The Eighteenth Century of the Nineteenth: Lexical Choices and Critical Stakes)) focused on literary terminology – a little bit on the classical/neoclassical binary, a little more on parody, pastiche and imitation as understood by theorists such as Gérard Genette, Linda Hutcheon, Margaret Rose, Thomas Greene and others. Pastiche implies non-transformative imitation whereas parody entails a degree of stylistic distance from a model: in music the distinction between the two techniques is often even more difficult to discern than in literature. And both can certainly be deployed with the same ostensible intent and in the same affective register, be it ludic, ironic



or satirical. In today's studies of nineteenth-century opera, writers will also want to move beyond such intertextual concerns to consider how stylistic imitation was motivated by the search for authentic historical *couleur locale* or by a desire to achieve an appropriate tone in the evocation of antiquity.

The session continued with a work whose evocation of the eighteenth century produced a stark contrast to contemporaneous political turmoil in Paris, Adolphe Adam's *Le Toréador* (1849), discussed by Stéphane Etcharry (Université de Reims; 'Intertextualité et dramaturgie dans *Le Toréador* d'Adolphe Adam' (Intertextuality and Dramaturgy in Adolphe Adam's *Le Toréador*)). Principally remembered today as the composer of the ballet *Giselle*, Adam played a key role in championing the eighteenth-century legacy both as a journalist and in his editorial work on *opéras comiques* by Monsigny, Grétry and Dalayrac. In *Le Toréador* nineteenth-century Hispanic *couleur locale* plays a secondary role to eighteenth-century musical references, and Etcharry gave particular attention to specific Mozartean allusions. Sabine Teulon-Lardic (Montpellier; 'Fortune théâtrale des italiens du temps de Marivaux à l'opéra-comique sous la IIIe République' (The Legacy of Marivaux's Italians at the Opéra Comique during the Third Republic)) followed with a paper that explored late nineteenth-century echoes of *commedia dell'arte* elements in early opéra comique. Her points of reference were three ephemeral works featuring Arlequin by the little-known composer Ferdinand Poise and the *homme de lettres* and connoisseur of eighteenth-century culture, Charles Monselet: *Les deux billets* (1870), *La surprise de l'amour* (1877) and *Joli Gilles* (1884). Like Adam, Poise involved himself with editions of eighteenth-century music and brought his deep stylistic knowledge to the musical ambience of his scores. Teulon-Lardic used Genette's construct of pastiche as a conceptual framework, but concluded that the category is more compelling for understanding the intertextual dimensions of the libretto than the music.

The session ended with a presentation by Thierry Santurenne (Université de Marne-la-Vallée; 'La femme et la Révolution française dans l'opéra français' (Women and the Revolution in French Opera)) about operatic representations of women caught up in the Revolution, not only Massenet's and Claretie's well-known *Thérèse* (1907) but also *Vendée!* (Gabriel Pierné and Charles Foley/Adolphe Brisson, 1897), *Charlotte Corday* (Alexandre Georges and Armand Silvestre, 1901) and several others. The central critical issue revolved around the distress of female characters caused by the violent rupture from the ancien-régime world they had previously known. For the nineteenth century, these representations of anguish, said Santurenne, actually fuelled nostalgia for an image of eighteenth-century social life characterized by feminine grace, charm and erotic appeal in contrast to modern bourgeois convention – egalitarian but dull. Such strong projections of women caught between different ways of life produced a striking counterpoint to official Republican celebrations of the Revolution's political progress.

Nostalgia for the ancien régime continued as a theme in the afternoon session of the first day, which actually bore the moniker 'La nostalgie du XVIIIe siècle'. The noted historian and Offenbach biographer Jean-Claude Yon (Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines; 'Le XVIIIe siècle: le paradis perdu d'Offenbach' (The Eighteenth Century: Offenbach's Lost Paradise)) began with an overview of the importance of the eighteenth century to this composer. Offenbach cultivated the freshly minted genre of *opéra bouffe* partly as a reaction to (what he saw as) the excessive proportions that opéra comique had assumed in the nineteenth century, and he concomitantly championed the new genre as a return to humbler origins. In light of a critical (and marketing) strategy that evoked generic authenticity, it comes as no surprise, Yon argued, that Offenbach chose to compose well over a dozen *opéras bouffes* set in the eighteenth century and replete with period turns of phrase. Leo Delibes' *Le roi l'a dit*, the subject of Pauline Girard's paper (Bibliothèque Nationale de France; 'Le Grand Siècle et la République: les aventures du *Roi l'a dit*' (The *Grand Siècle* and the Republic: The Adventures of *Le roi l'a dit*)), was just the sort of gargantuan opéra comique that Offenbach had earlier excoriated. A strong element of laughter at the expense of ancien-régime aristocrats flavours its approach to nostalgia. That one of the clever peasant characters even succeeds in passing himself off with little effort as a nobleman certainly bears more than a whiff of a modern subtext. Girard suggested that the coincidence of the premiere of *Le roi l'a dit* (24 May 1873) with French elections that allowed the forces of monarchical restoration to achieve temporary ascendancy contributed to dampening the opera's success. Yet, from another perspective, there was still plenty in the staging and costumes of *Le roi l'a dit* to



satisfy those with a taste for the aesthetic ambience of the period. Rémy Campos (Conservatoire nationale supérieure de musique; 'Chanter l'antique? La reprise d'*Hippolyte et Arcie* de Rameau en 1908' (To Sing in an Ancient Manner? The Revival of Rameau's *Hippolyte et Arcie* in 1908)) followed with a description of a research project he undertook with student singers at the Conservatoire de musique de Genève: to perform Rameau's *Hippolyte et Arcie* as it was done at the Opéra revival of 1908, using an edition prepared by Vincent d'Indy. His sources for French vocal practice of the early twentieth century included contemporary press reviews, treatises, photos and rare early recordings. Conference participants were treated to a video of one scene as performed by Campos's students, which made especially clear that, contrary to what is sometimes claimed, performers in the days before the early music movement did indeed sometimes try to make historically informed choices.

The second day began with a session on Berlioz and the eighteenth century. There can be little argument that Berlioz's high esteem for the operas of Gluck was fundamental to his aesthetics and his sense of operatic dramaturgy, so conference co-organizer Alban Ramaut ('Le Salon des Refusés du XVIIIe de Berlioz' (Berlioz's Eighteenth-Century *Salon des Refusés*)) took a different approach by investigating Berlioz's eighteenth-century dislikes. Bach, Handel, the French *clavecinistes* – none of these fared well under his pen and Ramaut's discussion gave a good sense of just how idiosyncratic Berlioz's value system was in the context of his own musical culture. Julien Garde (Université de Saint-Étienne) followed with a close look at Berlioz's version of Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice* of 1859. Garde's particular concern lay with what we know about the voice of the mezzo-soprano Pauline Viardot, the well-known Orphée of the production, and how Berlioz tailored the role, and especially the ornamentation, to her abilities – in this case, hardly in a historically informed spirit. Charlotte Loriot (Université de Paris IV), with '*Béatrice et Bénédicte* de Berlioz: classicisme, pastiche du XVIIIe siècle ou distanciation ironique?' (Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédicte*: Classicism, Eighteenth-Century Pastiche or Ironic Distance?), brought the session to a close by assessing Berlioz's late opéra comique, and drew attention to its general retrospective aura and specific allusions to works by Grétry and Mozart. She traced the roots of Berlioz's aesthetic reorientation to his late-life pessimism and his estrangement from his contemporaries, even from his own past. But because *Béatrice et Bénédicte* also (perhaps somewhat paradoxically) synthesizes many elements of the Berlioz style, Loriot was reluctant to call the work *neoclassical*, preferring to think of it as classical in the time-honoured sense of measured, balanced and restrained in expression, in short, as a taming of Berlioz's romantic spirit.

The next session, after lunch, centred on the refractions of Viennese classicism in the musical and dramatic imagination of nineteenth-century French writers and composers. The literary historian Stéphane Lelièvre (Université de Paris IV; 'De *L'Élève de Presbourg* d'Ildephonse Luce à *Consuelo* de George Sand: quand Joseph Haydn et Nicola Porpora incarnent le compositeur romantique idéal' (From Ildephonse Luce's *L'Élève de Presbourg* to George Sand's *Consuelo*: When Joseph Haydn and Nicola Porpora Became the Ideal Romantic Composer)) discussed the opéra comique *L'Élève de Presbourg* (1840) by the little-known composer Ildephonse Luce, a work whose main claim to fame is that it brings Joseph Haydn to the operatic stage as a character. Haydn is presented as a young composer in a romantic vein – preoccupied with his art, marginal, enamoured of freedom – who travels to Pressburg (today's Bratislava) to study with the celebrated maestro Johannes Kreisler. Lelièvre went on to show how the opéra comique in turn inspired a scene in George Sand's celebrated musical novel *Consuelo*. There, the singer Consuelo travels to Vienna with none other than Haydn to meet up with her old teacher Nicola Porpora, whom Sand models on Kreisler of the opéra comique and, looking beyond, on E. T. A. Hoffmann's famous portrayals of this character. The composer, music critic and Gounod biographer Gérard Condé (Paris; 'Gounod et Mozart') examined Gounod's profound admiration of Mozart. Much of the presentation consisted of recorded excerpts to demonstrate striking parallels among their works, including the slow movement of the *Petite symphonie* and several passages from *Mireille*. Allusions to Mozart's style in the latter have the effect of ennobling the humble peasant characters derived from Frédéric Mistral's eponymous verse epic. Vincent Giroud (Université de Franche-Comté; 'Massenet et le XVIIIe siècle: les sources de *Chérubin*' (Massenet and the Eighteenth Century: The Sources for *Chérubin*)) rounded out the session by reflecting on the literary



antecedents to Massenet's opera *Chérubin*. He showed how librettist Henri Cain modified Francis de Croisset's eponymous play about the imagined adventures of Beaumarchais' character at age seventeen. Massenet, for his part, produced a score where post-Wagnerian eroticism rubs shoulders with melancholy eighteenth-century pastiche.

Massenet's *Chérubin* makes a compelling foil to Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, written just a few years later. Although Giroud did not broach this particular comparison, organizers sought to provide an international perspective on the conference topic, as has become almost *de rigueur* at Saint-Étienne conferences. In the final session Ryszard Daniel Golanek (Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, Poznan; 'Au travers du mur de Joseph Poniatowski: une parodie des conventions de l'opéra' (Joseph Pontaitowski's *Au travers du mur*: A Parody of Operatic Conventions)) offered an overview of the operas – nine in Italian, three in French – written by the Polish prince and composer Józef Poniatowski, and then focused on an *opéra bouffe* called *Au travers du mur*, written for the Théâtre Lyrique in 1861. The fashioning of the principal character as a singer provided Poniatowski a platform on which to parody eighteenth-century vocal conventions. The final two papers of the conference were given over to explorations of eighteenth-century reflections found in *verismo* opera. Giuseppe Montemagno (Università di Catania; 'Serres chaudes: Le XVIIIe siècle de la Giovane Scuola' (Hothouses: The Eighteenth Century of the *Giovane Scuola*)) pointed out that ancien-régime France was a much-favoured site for composers of Puccini's generation. He concentrated on the role that *divertissements* play in *Manon Lescaut*, Umberto Giordano's *Andrea Chenier* and Francesco Cilea's *Adriana Lecouvreur*: the play within a play was a much-exploited operatic device at the time, and in these works it is coloured by skilful pastiche and clever ways of tying the sideshow to the main events. In the last paper, Michela Niccolai (Università di Pavia) addressed 'Le deux visages de Manon: réflexion sur les mises en scène des opéras de Massenet et de Puccini' (The Two Faces of Manon: Reflections on the *mises-en-scène* of the Settings by Massenet and Puccini)) turned to questions of *mises-en-scène*. Among the most influential productions of Massenet's *Manon* was Albert Carré's of 1898 at the Opéra Comique, especially noteworthy for its attention to eighteenth-century decorative detail. *Manon Lescaut* was already well known by this time, but Niccolai argued that when Puccini came to supervise the publication of its *disposizione scenica* many years later, he took into account many elements of Carré's production.

To conclude with thoughts on opera staging seemed to all participants a fitting way to round off an area of study that was much more variegated than many had initially thought. Literary theory, vocal performing practice, music criticism, intertextual comparison, novels, the style of libretto writing: all were touched on in some form or another, and more than once. The presentations provided an exceptional springboard to position later French understanding of eighteenth-century classicism against trends such as romanticism, realism, nationalism and symbolism.

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doi:10.1017/S1478570610000321

## PURCELL, HANDEL AND LITERATURE

SENATE HOUSE, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, 19–21 NOVEMBER 2009

Many of us are still reeling from the plethora of events over the past year celebrating the anniversaries of the birth of Henry Purcell and the death of George Frideric Handel, perhaps the most important composers in the English musical tradition. 'Purcell, Handel and Literature', a conference convened on behalf of the Institute of Musical Research, the Open University, The Handel Institute, The Purcell Society and the