

RIDDLED CONSTRUCTS: A STUDY OF MUSICAL HUMOUR IN  
EMMANUEL CHABRIER'S COMIC OPERAS

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Music)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

December 2011

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## Abstract

The music of Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894) has received high praise from prominent twentieth-century French composers, including Ravel, Poulenc, Debussy, and Satie. These composers indicate Chabrier as a venerable figure and a significant influence on early notions of French musical modernism; particularly celebrated is his musical humour, which has long been recognized as a defining and rewarding characteristic of his works. Remarkably, Chabrier's music disappeared from the performing repertory almost immediately and is hardly known today. My dissertation begins to redress this imbalance by offering analyses of humour-producing musical processes in Chabrier's comic operas. These works are among the composer's most celebrated and also offer the most variegated and nuanced expression of his aesthetics of musical humour.

Chapter 1 introduces central concepts and methodological concerns, in particular those pertaining to the interdisciplinary field of humour studies. A detailed consideration of generic antecedents prefaces my analyses of Chabrier's works in the popular genres of *opérette* and *opéra bouffe*. Works by Offenbach, Hervé, and Lecocq are discussed in Chapter 2 in order to determine comic and humorous gestures that are characteristic of these genres. In Chapter 3, humour-producing incongruities and disjunctions in Chabrier's popular operas—the three *opérettes*, *Vaucochard et fils 1er* (incomplete, c. 1864), *Fisch-ton-kan* (incomplete, c. 1864), and *Une Éducation manquée* (1879), and the *opéra bouffe* *L'Étoile* (1877)—are considered with respect to generic expectations. These works are shown to combine characteristic humour techniques with varying degrees of emphasis, demonstrating different facets of Chabrier's practice as a musical humorist.

Chapter 4 offers an investigation of humorous musical discourse in Chabrier's mature *opéra comique* *Le Roi malgré lui* (1887) that is more comprehensive. Adapting concepts developed for the linguistic study of verbal humour, the analyses that I present reveal humour mechanisms in virtually every musical parameter and active on multiple structural and intertextual levels. The sophistication and variety of humour techniques identified recommends the study of Chabrier's style and aesthetic not only as a conceivable model for the modernist ideals of later generations, but for its own sake, as music with a highly developed language that challenges traditional processes through humour.

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## Acknowledgements

This study could never have been realized successfully without the guidance and generous support of my dissertation advisor, Vera Micznik. For the uncompromising academic and intellectual standard that she modelled and for her enduring kindness, I would like to express my most sincere gratitude. I left every meeting with her feeling healthily instructed and genuinely inspired. I owe particular thanks also to Steven Huebner, who encouraged my project well before I had the knowledge or focus to even know where to begin, and who patiently shared his time and his expert knowledge of the field with me. I am grateful to David Metzger and to William Benjamin for providing detailed critiques of each chapter; their insightful comments improved the quality of the finished document in terms of its completeness, accuracy, and elegance. I would also like to thank Kenneth DeLong, under whose supervision I first decided to pursue the study of Chabrier's comic operas, for his astute suggestions, his contagious sense of humour, and his encouragement through many years.

The friends and colleagues who have enriched my life intellectually and socially throughout my many years of graduate study have been many—among whom, Jeremy Armstrong, Carol Cullingham, Jennifer Koster, Trent Leipert, Jennifer Medlock, Gord Ross, and Rita Yembilah—thank you for the rewarding conversations and friendship. I would like to acknowledge in particular James Palmer: a too-recently discovered fellow “humour in music”-enthusiast, Jim was kind enough to listen to my aimless ramblings and to digitize, with very short notice, the musical figures that appear in Chapter 4.

This dissertation has asked a great deal from my family, my deep appreciation of whom I do not express often enough. To the many babysitters whose generosity I have most certainly abused (you know who you are): the girls and I are grateful for the loving care that you have offered. My husband PJ, my sisters Patricia and Meredith, and my grandmother Evelyn: while the all-consuming nature of this project may not have always seemed rational to you, thank you for never losing faith in my ability and for always being there when I needed support, whether I knew it or not. The unconditional love, both emotional and material, of my father, Bill Brand, and my late mother, Arlene Brand, have nurtured me more than I could have ever asked for or

even imagined—I dedicate this dissertation to you. My beautiful daughters, Simone and Naomi Rose, whatever logistical challenges my work might create for us, you are never far from my mind and you are always in my heart. Words cannot express the joy you bring to my life.

*To my parents,  
with love and gratitude*

## 1 Introduction

Emmanuel Chabrier's musical humour has long been recognized by enthusiasts as a defining and rewarding characteristic of his music.<sup>1</sup> His most celebrated works in both vocal and instrumental genres demonstrate a decidedly humorous stance activated by a rich variety of mechanisms.<sup>2</sup> This humour receives its most variegated and nuanced expression in the comic operas. Already, the incomplete *opérettes* of the 1860s, *Vaucochard et fils Ier* (c. 1864) and *Fisch-ton-kan* (c. 1864), present remarkable articulations of the composer's aesthetics of musical humour at an early stage of development. The three complete works—the *opéra bouffe* *L'Étoile* (1877), the *opérette* *Une Éducation manquée* (1879), and the *opéra comique* *Le Roi malgré lui* (1887)—demonstrate different facets of Chabrier's mature practice as a musical humorist, employing characteristic techniques with varying degrees of emphasis.

Chabrier's music in general and the three complete comic operas in particular have suffered a paradoxical fate. High praise from prominent composers of early French modernism such as Ravel, Poulenc, Debussy, and Satie (a selective list of champions continues to include Stravinsky, Mahler, Richard Strauss, as well as Fauré, d'Indy, Hahn, and Messager), indicates Chabrier as a venerable figure and a significant influence on early notions of French musical modernism.<sup>3</sup> Yet remarkably his major works disappeared from the performing repertory almost

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<sup>1</sup> Hervé Lacombe's article "*L'Étoile* et l'ange du cocasse: 'le meilleur de la musique française,'" *L'Avant-scène opera: L'Étoile* 242 (January 2008), 62-65, quotes many of Chabrier's most prominent supporters to this effect, including d'Indy (whose fitting characterization of Chabrier as the "angel of drollery" is borrowed for Lacombe's title), André Messager, Debussy, Catulle Mendès, Bruneau, Hahn, Duparc, and Pierre Lalo.

<sup>2</sup> The most well-known and frequently cited works include the *Pièces pittoresques* for piano (1881), the orchestral rhapsody *España* (1883), the *Souvenirs de Munich* (1886), the "barnyard songs" ("*Villanelle des petits canards*," "*Ballade des gros dindons*," "*Pastorale des cochons roses*," and "*Les cigales*;" 1890), the *Bourrée fantasque* (1891) for piano, as well as the three complete comic operas studied in this dissertation.

<sup>3</sup> Among the most impressive claims: after attending the 1929 revival of Chabrier's *Le Roi malgré lui* at the Opéra-Comique, Ravel described Chabrier as "celui des musiciens qui m'ont le plus influencé" (the musician who has

immediately and are hardly known today, even to musicologists and to professional musicians.<sup>4</sup>

The absence of a critical response to Chabrier's music in musicological discourse is especially surprising given the recent resurgence of interest in the music of Ravel and Satie, to name but two contemporaries also disparaged, even occasionally judged unworthy, for their commitment to "light" or "comic" music.<sup>5</sup> The diverse tendencies and implications of early French "modernism" likewise continue to reward musicological inquiries.<sup>6</sup> These studies rarely

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influenced me above all others). Letter from Maurice Ravel to Mme Bretton-Chabrier, 6 November 1929, BnF Mus; letter published in part in Renée Girardon, "Le Don Chabrier à la Bibliothèque Nationale," *Revue de musicologie* 24 (1945), 87. Poulenc places Chabrier before Satie as the most important precursor to "l'école française" and also documents Ravel's claim that "les premières mesures du *Roi malgré lui* avaient changé l'orientation de l'harmonie française" (the opening measures of *Le Roi malgré lui* have changed the direction of French harmony). Francis Poulenc, *Emmanuel Chabrier* (Paris and Geneva: La Palatine, 1961), 96. On Chabrier's influence on Satie, see Alan M. Gillmor, *Erik Satie* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988), 18-25. Gillmor recounts the oft-told story of Satie presenting a calligraphic manuscript of an early piano piece to Chabrier's doorstep after an 1887 performance of *Le Roi malgré lui*. Homage to the composer of *España* is further evidenced in Satie's "Españaña" from *Croquis et agaceries d'un un gros bonhomme en bois* from 1913, which appeared within a year of Ravel's "À la manière de... Emmanuel Chabrier." All translations of French terms and quotations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>4</sup> Numerous recent performances do suggest a renaissance of interest in Chabrier's comic operas: the Opéra National de Lyon's production (2005) of *Le Roi malgré lui* was presented at the Paris Opéra-Comique in spring of 2009; new productions of *L'Étoile* appeared in 2006 at the Opéra de Zurich, in 2007 at the Paris Opéra-Comique, in the 2009-2010 season in Berlin and Geneva (the latter was broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in September 2010), and in 2010 New York City Opera presented Mark Lamos's vivid and successful production of *L'Étoile* (prem. Glimmerglass, 2001), already revived at the Opéra de Montréal in 2005. Another new production of *L'Étoile* is slated for October 2011 at Frankfurt, and *Éducation manquée* is appearing at various smaller theatres across Europe and North America.

<sup>5</sup> A selection of recent studies of Ravel includes Carolyn Abbate, "Outside Ravel's Tomb," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* (JAMS) 52 (1999), 465-530; Steven Baur, "Ravel's 'Russian' Period: Octatonicism in his Early Works, 1893-1908," *JAMS* 52 (1999), 531-592; Peter Kaminsky, "Ravel's Late Music and the Problem of Polytonality," *Music Theory Spectrum* 26 (2004), 237-264; Deborah Mawer, *The Ballets of Maurice Ravel: Creation and Interpretation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Steven Huebner, "Laughter: In Ravel's Time," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 18 (2006), 225-246; Michael Puri, "Dandy, Interrupted: Sublimation, Repression, and Self-portraiture in Maurice Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* (1909-1912)," *JAMS* 60 (2007), 317-372; Stephen Zank, *Irony and Sound: The Music of Maurice Ravel* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester, 2009); Deborah Mawer, ed. *Ravel Studies*, Cambridge Composer Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Numerous doctoral dissertations can be added to this list. The recent proliferation of scholarship approaching the music of Satie includes numerous book-length studies, for instance, Robert Orledge, *Satie the Composer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Nancy Lynn Perloff, *Art and the Everyday: Popular Entertainment and the Circle of Erik Satie* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Alan M. Gillmor, *Erik Satie* (New York: Norton, 1992); Steven Moore Whiting, *Satie the Bohemian: From Cabaret to Concert Hall* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Mary Davis, *Erik Satie* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007); and doctoral dissertations, including Mary Davis, "Esprit gaulois: Erik Satie's 'Sports et divertissements' in Context" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1997); Belva Jean Hare, "The Uses and Aesthetics of Musical Borrowing in Erik Satie's Humorous Piano Suites, 1913-1917" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2005); and John Peter Supko Jr., "Points and Lines: The Musical Language of Erik Satie" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> For example, Glenn Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture, and Collage from Stravinsky to the Postmodernists* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994); Mary Davis, *Classic Chic:*

acknowledge Chabrier's contribution in more than a perfunctory and superficial way despite the obvious contrast that his musical language offers to prevailing notions of modernism. Likewise, humour is rarely considered in these studies as a significant aesthetic category in its own right, also surprising considering the pronounced ludic, ironic, comic, or otherwise humorous elements in the work of Ravel, Poulenc, and Les Six, among others.

My dissertation begins to redress this imbalance by offering analyses of the musical processes that produce humour in Chabrier's comic operas. Critical interrogation of these works reveals the incompleteness of many commonly accepted assessments of Chabrier's musical language: there is more to this music than conventionally-conceived structures peppered with colorful "modern" harmonies and witty satirical jokes.<sup>7</sup> Processes that at first seem commonplace are found to be internally challenged, subtly manipulated, or ironized through a wide variety of techniques and with remarkable sophistication. Chabrier's *bouleversement* of conventional procedures often seems systematic, operating on multiple levels of musical syntax and with diverse intertextual allusions. In other instances, the "deceptively simple" ruse is inverted: dense passages demonstrate an aesthetic of eclectic discontinuity and abrupt contradiction, seeming nearly incomprehensible on first encounter. On close examination, informed by a thorough understanding of genre and context, such passages are often revealed to

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*Music, Fashion, and Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); and Noel Orillo Verzosa Jr., "The Absolute Limits: Debussy, Satie, and the Culture of French Modernism, ca. 1860-1920" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> In the words of Vladimir Jankélévitch, "With Emmanuel Chabrier, it is easy to point out the compositional inventions that make the musical language in *Le roi malgré lui* or *Sommation irrespectueuse* [...] so savory and unusual: a undiscovered sequence, an aggregation of sounds, an unexpected modulation. But this would simply tally up grammatical turns, orthographical idiosyncrasies, and such things are a matter of indifference without the verve that brings them to the fore at a particular moment and that withholds their delights at others." Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 105. The unresolved 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> chords of the *Prélude* to *Le Roi malgré lui* are the quintessential example of "modern" sonorities in Chabrier, and the *Souvenirs de Munich: quadrille sur les thèmes favoris de Tristan et Isolde de Richard Wagner* is the favored agent in essentializing Chabrier as a satirist. See, for example, Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4: 60-66.

exhibit shrewd commentaries. Such jests are continually reinvented and presented in fresh contexts, implying that a multi-layered analysis of style and structure is necessary in order to access the complex meanings embedded in these works. It is propitious to understand Chabrier's style and aesthetic, and especially his engagement with humour, not only as a conceivable model for the modernist ideals of later generations, but for its own sake, as music with a highly developed and idiosyncratic language that challenges traditional processes through humour.

### Overview of Chapters

The present chapter provides a review of relevant secondary literature including an overview of the field of humour studies and definitions of key terms that will be used throughout the study. The body of the dissertation begins with a critical survey of developments in the “popular” genres of *opérette*, *opéra bouffe*, and *opéra comique* (as distinct from the officially-sanctioned traditions cultivated at the subsidized Opéra and Opéra-Comique) before Chabrier's first complete opera of 1877. Offenbach's *Ba-ta-clan* (1855) is taken as prototypical of the new genre of *opérette* and is analyzed in detail. The discussion aims to identify elements from two distinct categories of “comedic” discourse: the “comic” and the “humorous.” That is, I seek to understand how the music and text work together to propel the comedy as a “comic” genre of theatre. The comic aspect includes such generic elements as stock comic characters, fast-paced plot, simple conventional forms, and *quiproquos*—devices that do not intend to produce humorous laughter in themselves, but that are characteristic of comedic forms of theatre.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> I also apply the descriptor “comic” to techniques that work together to create and sustain a discourse modeled in some fundamental way after dramatic comedy (such as instrumental genres heavily influenced by *opera buffa* that demonstrate a “high-spirited” bustling action). On this, see Wye J. Allanbrook's “Theorizing the Comic Surface,” in *Music in the Mirror: Reflections on the History of Music Theory and Literature for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, eds. Andreas Giger and Thomas J. Mathiesen (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2002), 195-216. Incidentally, many of the characteristic techniques of comic theatre coincide with what literary theorist Katrina Trierzenberg calls “humor

Second, I investigate specific mechanisms of humour particularly as they are manifest in the music. Throughout my study I maintain this distinction between the concepts of comic and humorous because, while they are often mutually reinforcing, they are separate components of a comedic text.

Hervé's *Le Petit Faust* (1869) is then considered as an example of Second Empire *opéra bouffe*, a genre related to but distinct from the one-act *opérette*. Hervé's contribution to the developing genres of *opérette* and *opéra bouffe* far exceed the importance implied by his current obscurity; any viable genealogy of the genre(s) must consider his distinctive styles of music and humour. While this opera appears to belong to a burlesque sub-genre and its thoroughgoing humorous deflation of Gounod's *Faust* should not be considered characteristic of the genre at large, I have included this piece as a major and successful work by Hervé with many satirical references that continue to resonate today. Chapter 2 will also include Lecocq's *La Fille de Madame Angot* (1872), which, though composed for popular theatre is subtitled *opéra comique*. It is representative of a shift to a more sentimental and "operatic" style evident in the 1870s, in which the outlandish comic gestures of the pre-1870 repertory are markedly softened. While illustrating something of the variegated complexity of the mid- to late-nineteenth century popular opera scene in Paris, the immediate purpose of this chapter is to establish a perspective to investigate Chabrier's contribution to these forms. As it is primarily the purely musical application of humour that sets his works apart, a fundamental goal is to determine humorous musical gestures that are characteristic of the genres, and how they function as humour.

Chapter 3 examines Chabrier's four comic operas composed for non-official venues—*Vaucochard et fils 1er*, *Fisch-ton-kan*, *L'Étoile*, and *Une Éducation manquée*. Though *Éducation*

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enhancers." Katrina Triezenberg, "Humor Enhancers in the Study of Humorous Literature," *Humor* 17 (2004), 411-418.

*manquée* demonstrates a subdued *bouffe* aesthetic, all four works connect with the *esprit bouffe* that prevailed in the Second Empire works of Offenbach and of Hervé. Chabrier's idiosyncratic style is observed in distinct stages of development in these works. Both musical language and techniques of humour progress towards an increasingly subtle aesthetic with each successive work. The discussion isolates specific humour-producing musical processes in order to identify characteristic techniques and to demonstrate the complexity with which multiple facets of Chabrier's style work together as the foundation for his larger humorous commentary.

Chabrier's *opéra comique* *Le Roi malgré lui* is the focus of Chapter 4. Once situated *vis à vis* early Third Republic developments in the genre, *Le Roi* is shown to be self-consciously connected to "old-fashioned" *opéra comique*. A systematic manipulation of highly codified musical processes evidences an ironic stance towards genre, which forms the basis of the opera's complex humorous discourse. A multilayered analysis aims to elucidate the humorous interaction of clichéd gestures, structural incongruities, exotic tropes, and incorporated borrowed materials. Building on concepts applied to the works studied in Chapters 2 and 3, *Le Roi* as a whole is proposed as a "long humorous text" and analyzed according to concepts put forth in Salvatore Attardo's groundbreaking study *Humorous Texts*.<sup>9</sup> A brief conclusion, Chapter 5, summarizes the study's most significant findings and proposes a seed of "comic decadence" at the core of Chabrier's art.

### **Literature Review: Chabrier Studies and Nineteenth-Century French Comic Opera**

Remarkably, Chabrier's music has not been the primary subject of a single article in a major North American academic journal nor has it inspired a single book-length study in English

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<sup>9</sup> Salvatore Attardo, *Humorous Texts: A Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2001).

since Rollo Myers's biography introduced Chabrier and his major works to English readership in the late 1960s.<sup>10</sup> Poulenc published a lengthy tribute in 1961 that offers a more focused discussion of several of Chabrier's works with an interest in connecting them to early twentieth-century modernist practices.<sup>11</sup>

More recently, more penetrating studies have been published by late French musicologist Roger Delage, French opera specialist Steven Huebner, and pianist-scholar Roy Howat, and in 2008 an issue of *Avant-scène opéra* spotlighted *L'Étoile*.<sup>12</sup> Delage devoted his career to studying Chabrier's life and music and has provided background research of incalculable importance, including an annotated edition of Chabrier's complete correspondence.<sup>13</sup> His detailed monograph *Emmanuel Chabrier* provides thorough biographical information about the composer informed by a comprehensive knowledge of documentary and archival sources.<sup>14</sup> The chapters on *L'Étoile* and *Une Éducation manquée* and the four short chapters on *Le Roi malgré lui* address the genesis, the staging, the early reception, and Chabrier's revisions of the works, though the study does not attempt a critical discussion of the music. Also noteworthy is Delage's series of articles

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<sup>10</sup> Rollo Myers, *Emmanuel Chabrier and his Circle* (London: J.M. Dent, 1969). Numerous short pieces, often in French, have appeared in French journals, for instance, many contributions by Chabrier scholar Roger Delage (see note 15); an entire issue of *Ostinato Rigore: Revue internationale d'études musicales* was dedicated to Chabrier on the centenary of his death in 1994; and Thierry Bodin, "Musique sérieuse et musique gaie dans la correspondance d'Emmanuel Chabrier," in *L'Esthétique dans les correspondances d'écrivains et de musiciens, XIXe-XXe siècles* (Paris: Presses de l'université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2001), 45-156. Short exposés have been published in English journals, for example, James F. Penrose, "Emmanuel Chabrier and French Musical Tradition," *New Criterion* 19 (2001), 29-36; and Daniele Pistone and E. T. Glasow, "Emmanuel Chabrier, Opera Composer," *Opera Quarterly* 12 (1996), 17-25. Several DMA dissertations also address aspects of Chabrier's music, most often the piano works: Daniel E. Weiser, "The Visual Stimulus: The Influence of the Visual Arts on the Musical Compositions of Emmanuel Chabrier, Erik Satie, and Francis Poulenc" (DMA diss., Johns Hopkins University, Peabody Institute, 1998); and Mariko Kaneda, "Selected Piano Works of Emmanuel Chabrier: A Stylistic Analysis" (DMA diss., City University of New York, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Francis Poulenc, *Emmanuel Chabrier*, trans. Cynthia Jolly (London: Dobson, 1981).

<sup>12</sup> *L'Avant-scène opéra: L'Étoile* 242 (January 2008). The guide includes short articles by Chantal Cazaux, Gérard Condé, Joël-Marie Fauquet, and Hervé Lacome, an interview with Macha Makeïeff, who co-designed the 2007 Opéra-Comique production, as well as the complete libretto including the original dialogue.

<sup>13</sup> Emmanuel Chabrier, *Correspondance*, comp. and ed. Roger Delage and Frans Durif with Thierry Bodin (Paris: Klincksieck, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> Roger Delage, *Emmanuel Chabrier* (Paris: Fayard, 1999).

that investigate the relationship between Chabrier and other composers including Bizet, Debussy, Ravel, and Wagner, as well as Chabrier's close personal friend, the painter Edouard Manet.<sup>15</sup>

Delage also contributed an important pioneering effort in editing manuscripts and recording a number of Chabrier's lesser known works.<sup>16</sup>

Of the three chapters on Chabrier's operas in Huebner's book *French Opera at the Fin de siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style*, one is devoted to *Le Roi*.<sup>17</sup> Huebner contextualizes the piece within the genre of *opéra comique*: he points to the work's origins as an *opérette* in order to demonstrate the possible sources of the opera's notorious dramatic imbalance and also to gain a clearer understanding of *opéra comique* expectations as they were understood in the 1880s. He identifies the work's unusual veering between the comic and the serious as a major critical issue worthy of study, and he also acknowledges the instability of genre as a major issue in interpreting this work. In two important recent contributions, Roy Howat explores Chabrier's

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<sup>15</sup> For example, Delage, "Ravel and Chabrier," *Musical Quarterly* 61 (1975), 546-52, explores the admiration that Ravel maintained for Chabrier throughout his life and briefly notes parallels in harmonic and rhythmic procedures between various works of the two composers; and Delage, "Chabrier et Wagner," *Revue de musicologie* 82 (1996), 167-179, focuses on Chabrier's enthusiasm for Wagner, pointing to Wagnerian experiences at important turning points in Chabrier's career and tracing his involvement among the French Wagnerian enthusiasts in the 1880s, Delage also notes stylistic parallels between the composers, noting that in the case of the similarities lie in the realms of orchestration and melodic line. The English translation of this article includes an appendix containing Chabrier's personal notes on the Ring cycle: "Chabrier and Wagner," *Wagner* 17 (1996), 114-141. Other articles of this type include "Manet et Chabrier," *Revue de l'art* (1983), 65-70; "Chabrier et Bizet," *L'Avant-scène opéra: Les Pêcheurs de perles* 124 (October 1989), 77-80; and "Debussy et Chabrier," *Cahiers Debussy* 17-18 (1993), 57-64. Also by Delage, "Emmanuel Chabrier en Espagne," *Revue de musicologie* 56 (1970), 177-207; "Telluric Verve," *Musical Times* 135 (1994), 557-562; and "Chabrier mélodiste," *Ostinato rigore* 3 (1994), 57-71.

<sup>16</sup> Delage's editions of the operas (piano vocal) include Chabrier, *Fisch-ton-kan* (Paris: Éditions françaises de musique, 1974); *Vaucochard et fils 1er* (Paris: Éditions françaises de musique, 1974); and *Une Éducation manquée* (Paris: Éditions musicales du Marais, 1991). He has also edited a collection of piano works and the complete *mélodies: Pièces pittoresques* (Paris: Éditions musicales du Marais, 1990); *Mélodies en 2 volumes*, 2 vols (Paris: Éditions Alphonse Leduc, 1995-1997). His recording of the *opérettes* is the only one extant: Chabrier, *Une Éducation manquée—Fisch-Ton-Kan—Vaucochard et fils*, conducted by Roger Delage (Paris: Arion. Collegium musicum de Strasbourg, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 286-300. Of the other two chapters, one is a general introduction to Chabrier's style and his position within French musical culture at the end of the nineteenth century, and the other focuses on Chabrier's serious opera, *Gwendoline* (1886). Its evident Wagnerian themes and undertones bring this work closer to the focus of Huebner's study: the chapter investigates the many parallels between *Gwendoline* and Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*.

central role in *fin-de-siècle* developments in French piano music and in emerging French modernism (he refers to Chabrier and Fauré as “quiet” revolutionaries).<sup>18</sup> He traces provocative “modern” procedures in Debussy and Ravel back to antecedents in Chabrier; particularly relevant to the present study is his assessment of rhythmic play in the *Pièces pittoresques*.<sup>19</sup>

My study also draws on secondary literature pertaining to French comic opera of the second half of the nineteenth century. C. H. Moore published an informed and insightful analysis of Verlaine’s eccentric texts for Chabrier’s two early *opérettes*, which has been singularly beneficial to the present study.<sup>20</sup> In general, however, the popular genres of *opérette* and *opéra bouffe* remain underrepresented in music scholarship, with discussion all but limited to theatrical histories and composer biographies.<sup>21</sup> This lack of interest is surprising given the prominence of the two genres in French theatre repertoires and the recent proliferation of studies considering popular theatrical traditions of Vienna, London, and New York.<sup>22</sup> The work of French musicologist Jean-Claude Yon has recently emerged as a promising exception—his comprehensive biography of Offenbach is meticulously documented with primary source

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<sup>18</sup> Roy Howat, “Modernization: From Chabrier and Fauré to Debussy and Ravel,” in *French Music since Berlioz*, ed. Richard Langham Smith and Caroline Potter (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); and Roy Howat, *The Art of French Piano Music: Debussy, Ravel, Fauré, Chabrier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Howat, “Rhythmic Games in Chabrier,” in *The Art of French Piano Music*, 187-197.

<sup>20</sup> C. H. Moore, “Verlaine’s *opéra bouffe*,” *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 83 (1968), 305-311.

<sup>21</sup> Renée Cariven-Galharret and Dominique Ghesquière’s *Hervé: Un musicien paradoxal, 1825-1892* (Paris: Éditions des cendres, 1992) is the first book-length biography of Hervé and establishes details of the composer’s life on a solid documentary basis. On the development of French *opérette* and *opéra bouffe*, see, James Harding, *Folies de Paris: The Rise and Fall of French Operetta* (London: Elm Tree Books, 1979); and Benoit Duteurtre, *L’Opérette en France* (Paris: Seuil, 1997). A broader study of the evolution of various national “operetta” traditions, providing excellent coverage of French beginnings is Richard Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History* (London: Gollancz, 1984). This area presents considerable promise for future research projects, offering a large and virtually unexplored repertory all the more fascinating for the involvement of major composers, including Bizet, Massenet, and Delibes, at the beginning of their careers.

<sup>22</sup> For example, Camille Crittenden, *Johann Strauss and Vienna: Operetta and the Politics of Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert and Sullivan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); David Eden and Meinhard Saremba, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Joseph Swain, *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey*, 2d ed. (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2002).

material, and he includes some, albeit limited, discussion of Offenbach's musical language.<sup>23</sup>

Elsewhere Yon has examined the origins and early history of *opérette*, and proposed a typology for Offenbach's inconsistently and confusingly subtitled operatic works.<sup>24</sup>

Mary Jean Speare's dissertation, "The Transformation of *opéra comique*: 1850-1880," and Steven Huebner's discussion of "Institutions and Repertory" in *French Opera at the Fin de siècle* have clarified details of style and programming previously unknown concerning the official tradition of *opéra comique*.<sup>25</sup> The former traces an impulse towards "elevation" in *opéras comiques* of the generation before *Le Roi malgré lui* with special focus on collaborations involving librettists Jules Barbier and Michel Carré; the latter outlines the "business and politics" of opera in Paris in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, highlighting social, economic, political, and aesthetic contingencies of directorial decisions pertaining to, particularly, programming at the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique. The remainder of the relatively large body of literature addressing this genre is more tangentially relevant to my study: broad historical treatments are a valuable resource for historical context and large-scale generic trends,<sup>26</sup> but more focused studies rarely approach the period or the aesthetic issues immediately pertinent to

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<sup>23</sup> Jean-Claude Yon, *Jacques Offenbach* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000).

<sup>24</sup> Jean-Claude Yon, "La Création du théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens (1855-1862), ou la difficile naissance de l'opérette," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 39 (1992), 575-600; and Yon, "Offenbach l'inclassable: la question des genres," in *La Scène bâtarde entre Lumières et Romantisme*, ed. Philippe Bourdin and Gérard Loubinoux (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2004), 203-215.

<sup>25</sup> Mary Jean Speare, "The Transformation of *opéra comique*: 1850-1880" (Ph.D. diss., Washington University, 1997); Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de siècle*, 1-11.

<sup>26</sup> Major studies of the Opéra-Comique in the late nineteenth-century as genre and venue include: Jean Gourret, *Histoire de l'opéra-comique* (Paris: Publications universitaires, 1978); Albert Soubies and Charles Malherbe, *Histoire de l'Opéra-Comique: La Seconde Salle Favart 1840-1887*, 2 vols (Paris: Marpon and Flammarion, 1892-93; single-volume reprint, Geneva: Minkoff, 1978); Stuart W. Sharp, "The Twilight of French *opéra lyrique*, 1880-1900" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1975); Nicole Wild and David Charlton, *Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique, Paris: Répertoire 1762-1972* (Sprimont, Belgium: Mardaga, 2005). Dealing with related issues of genre and style is Hervé Lacombe, *The Keys to French Opera in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Edward Schneider (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

*Le Roi*.<sup>27</sup> As with *opérette* and *opéra bouffe*, my understanding of conventional procedures was largely acquired through surveying and analyzing published vocal scores.

Many dramatic themes and conventions of comic opera find counterparts and antecedents in comic literary traditions. Maurice Charney's classic study *Comedy High and Low* is a theoretical consideration of stage comedy and has provided many helpful ideas, especially his conception of the language and rhetoric of comedy.<sup>28</sup> The volumes *Comedy: A Geographic and Historical Survey*, edited by Charney, are a rich resource that provide histories of various comic genres and offer reliable definitions of comic terms.<sup>29</sup> In addition, I have found studies of the Old Comedies of Aristophanes, Shakespeare's "festive" comedies, and French farce that have developed concepts with parallel application in the operatic comedies studied here.<sup>30</sup> On theatre as venue, John McCormick's *Popular Theatres of Nineteenth-Century France* has helped to clarify terms and concepts and to compare musical developments to those in spoken theatre.<sup>31</sup>

## Humour Studies

The word "humour" as it is used in this study refers to the quality of a provocative cognitive experience intended to bring about laughter or amusement. In the words of anthropologist William O. Beeman, humour is

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<sup>27</sup> Those that do focus on early Third Republic works habitually consider the works more or less independently from their traditions, a notable exception is Susan McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>28</sup> Maurice Charney, *Comedy High and Low: An Introduction to the Experience of Comedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

<sup>29</sup> Maurice Charney, ed., *Comedy: A Geographic and Historical Guide*, 2 vols (Westport: Praeger, 2005).

<sup>30</sup> Cedric H. Whitman, *Aristophanes and the Comic Hero* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971); C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Its Relation to Social Custom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959); Norman R. Shapiro, "Farce," in *Comedy: A Geographic and Historical Guide*, 2:296-313.

<sup>31</sup> John McCormick, *Popular Theatres of Nineteenth-Century France* (London: Routledge, 1993).

a performative pragmatic accomplishment involving a wide range of communication skills including, but not exclusively involving, language, gesture, the presentation of visual imagery, and situation management. Humor aims at creating a concrete feeling of enjoyment for an audience, most commonly manifested in a physical display consisting of displays of pleasure, including smiles and laughter.<sup>32</sup>

Reflections on the nature of humour have made their way into the writings of major philosophers since Plato. Yet rigorous investigation was uncommon before the twentieth century, as humorous amusement was regularly disparaged as a “lower” form of human behaviour and consequently deemed “unworthy” of philosophical contemplation.<sup>33</sup> Over the centuries, three primary modes of inquiry have emerged—these are usually referred to as the Superiority, Incongruity, and Relief Theories of humour.<sup>34</sup> These might more accurately be considered essentializing

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<sup>32</sup> William O. Beeman, “Humor,” *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9 (1999), 103. I have opted to not make a formal distinction between “wit” and “humour.” The term “wit” rarely appears in this study, and when it does it is treated as roughly synonymous with the term “humour.” The difference between the modern notions of wit and humour (as opposed to the widely-theorized eighteenth-century use of the terms) lies in the degree of subtlety, wit being associated with a more intellectual humour. On this, see James C. Kidd, “Wit and Humor in Tonal Syntax,” *Current Musicology* 21 (1976), 70-82.

<sup>33</sup> See John Morreall, “The Rejection of Humor in Western Thought,” *Philosophy East and West* 39 (1989), 243-265.

<sup>34</sup> The idea that humour or laughter is an expression of one’s superiority over another dates back to the writings of Plato (*Philebus*, 48a-50b) and Aristotle (*Poetics*, 1449a). In the seventeenth century Thomas Hobbes, in *Leviathan* (Part 1, ch. 6), developed the superiority argument further, proposing the concept of “sudden glory” as “the passion which maketh those grimaces called laughter; and is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves;” *Hobbes’s Leviathan: Reprinted from the Edition of 1651* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1929), 45. The identification of an incongruity was also proposed by Aristotle (*Rhetoric*, 3.2). Kant proposes a theory of laughter based on incongruity and like other “incongruity theories” his explanation locates the laughable in the object of laughter. In *Critique of Judgement* he says that “laughter is an affection arising from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing;” Immanuel Kant, *Kant’s Critique of Judgement*, trans. J.H. Bernard (London: Macmillan, 1914), 223. Schopenhauer, too, is associated with the incongruity theory of humour: “the cause of laughter in every case is simply the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects which have been thought through it in some relation and laughter itself is just the expression of this incongruity;” Arthur Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Idea*, trans. R.B. Haldane and J. Kemp (London: Trübner, 1883), 1: 76. The “relief theory,” also known as “release theory,” is primarily associated with Sigmund Freud and Herbert Spencer: Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1960); Spencer, “On the Physiology of Laughter,” in *Essays: Scientific, Political, and Speculative* (New York: D. Appleton, 1892), 2: 452-466. Though, like incongruity theories, relief models developed in the eighteenth century to counteract superiority approaches. This view of humour focuses on the physical aspect of laughter, particularly as a release of nervous or “psychic” energy. Both Spencer and Freud based their views of laughter on the nineteenth-century “hydraulic” model of the nervous system, whereby energy was thought to be built up in the nervous system requiring specialized release mechanisms. Freud’s theory is more involved and far more widely known. He divides situations into three categories but identifies the discharge of superfluous “psychic” energy that had been created for a specific

categories rather than consciously developed theoretical apparatuses, and serious accounts of humour typically supplement an argument that foregrounds one of superiority, incongruity, or relief models with elements drawn from another.<sup>35</sup>

Even among scholars who work with superiority and relief concepts, contemporary humour researchers generally agree that an element of incongruity is a necessary but not sufficient condition of humour. As John Morreall, a leading philosopher of humour and founding member and former president of the International Society of Humor Studies (ISHS), clarifies “what seems both necessary and sufficient for humorous amusement ... is an enjoyment of some incongruity.”<sup>36</sup> As such, most contemporary theorizing about the nature of humour retains incongruity as a fundamental ontological principle.

The launch of the journal *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research* in 1988, the official publication of the ISHS, represents a coming-of-age of sorts for modern humour research as a field of study. The peer-reviewed quarterly, published by De Gruyter Mouton, aims to publish “high-quality research papers on humor as an important and universal human faculty.”<sup>37</sup> Contributors approach the subject of humour from diverse parent fields, most commonly linguistics, literature, psychology, and sociology. This methodological diversity is characteristic

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task (such as the repressing of emotions) as common to each. John Morreall, ed. *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987) is a compilation of source readings in philosophy of humour. A concise overview can be found in John Morreall, *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 1-26, which also considers humour as “playful relaxation,” as advocated by Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, and the “relaxation theory” proposed by Robert Latta. See also Victor Raskin, *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985), 30-41.

<sup>35</sup> Modern inquiries, drawing on whichever of these traditional models, tend to fall into three categories based on function—functionalist investigations consider usually the social function of laughter; psychological inquiries examine such things as presumed motivation and/or emotional benefit for humorous acts, such as degradation, tension, release, and play; and intellectualist inquiries, such as the present dissertation, describe or analyze the object of laughter, often focusing on the activating incongruity. For more on this, see Marcel Gutwirth, *Laughing Matter: An Essay on the Comic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 1-28.

<sup>36</sup> John Morreall, “Philosophy and Religion,” in *The Primer of Humor Research*, ed. Victor Raskin (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), 233.

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.degruyter.com/journals/humor/detailEn.cfm> (accessed 25 May 2011).

of the field as a whole and is reflected in the structure of the *Primer of Humor Research* edited by Victor Raskin.<sup>38</sup> This volume provides an exceptional introduction to the field: for each discipline it offers clear definitions of central terms and concepts, traces significant advances, and offers comprehensive bibliographic references.

Given the considerable methodological challenge of devising a coherent theory of humour, most studies focus on the uses or effects of humour rather than its nature or substance. Currently, the most extensive and effective theories of the nature of humour are based on linguistic models.<sup>39</sup> In 1985, Victor Raskin's "Semantic Script Theory of Humor" (SSTH) effectively revolutionized modern research into verbal humour.<sup>40</sup> The main hypothesis states that

A text can be characterized as a single-joke-carrying text if both... (i) The text is compatible, fully or in part, with two different scripts [and] (ii) The two scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite [according to conditions subsequently clarified]. The two scripts with which some text is compatible are said to overlap fully or in part in this text.<sup>41</sup>

Raskin defines script—a term often used interchangeably with frame or schema by other writers—as “a large chunk of semantic information surrounding the word or evoked by it. The script is a cognitive structure internalized by the native speaker and it represents the native speaker's knowledge of a small part of the world.”<sup>42</sup> The SSTH was followed in 1991 by the “General Theory of Verbal Humor” (GTVH) presented by Raskin together with his protégé Salvatore Attardo.<sup>43</sup> The GTVH broadens the central concepts of the SSTH beyond its purely

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<sup>38</sup> Victor Raskin, ed., *Primer of Humor Research*.

<sup>39</sup> For an overview of the linguistic study of humour, see Salvatore Attardo, *Linguistic Theories of Humor* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994).

<sup>40</sup> Victor Raskin, *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor*.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 81. On “script oppositeness,” see 107-114.

<sup>43</sup> Salvatore Attardo and Victor Raskin, “Script Theory Revis(it)ed: Joke Similarity and Joke Representation Model,” *Humor* 4 (1991), 293-347. For a concise overview of both SSTH and GTVH see Salvatore Attardo, *Humorous Texts: A Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2001), 1-35.

semantic foundation, to include pragmatics, narrativity theory, and textual linguistics. It also introduces five other “knowledge resources” to the central “script opposition” of the SSTH—logical mechanism, target, narrative strategy, language, and situation.

These linguistic models use frame theories of human cognition to explain how the incongruity mechanism in humour works. This reliance on the concept of a cognitive frame allows ideas developed for the study of verbal humour to be adaptable to non-verbal humour. To take a familiar musical example, the script evoked by a low-register open fifth pedal point would include notions of pastoral and nature idyll. This script would be compatible with a diatonic violin melody with regular phrase structure, but not with, say, soprano coloratura or Wagnerian chromaticism. When in Ravel’s *Menuet from Tombeau de Couperin* (orch. 1919) such a drone does not “turn off” as it should at the end of the *musette* section, the listener becomes aware of the mechanical implications of this musical device. So in this example, the text of bass drone is compatible with the opposing notions of pastoral and machine and this script opposition is a potential source of humour.<sup>44</sup> The term “disjunction” (also called “passage” or “switch”) is conventionally used in humour studies to refer to the event which causes the listener to become aware of the co-presence of the second interpretive frame—in the case of the Ravel example, the continued presence of the drone after the return of the *menuet* provokes disjunction.<sup>45</sup>

Neal Norrick developed a model for the analysis of verbal humour which appeared closely on the heels of Raskin’s very similar SSTH.<sup>46</sup> While the mechanisms he isolates are in

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<sup>44</sup> The mechanical is central to Henri Bergson’s theory of humour. Bergson famously postulated the “mechanical encrusted on the living” as the central mechanism in humour. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 18. For a different take on this particular incongruity, see Carolyn Abbate, “Outside Ravel’s Tomb.”

<sup>45</sup> The concept of disjunction is central to Attardo’s “Isotopy-Disjunction Model” (or IDM), and is theorized in Salvatore Attardo, *Linguistic Theories of Humor*, 60-107.

<sup>46</sup> Neal R. Norrick, “A Frame-Theoretical Analysis of Verbal Humor: Bisociation as Schema Conflict,” *Semiotica* 60 (1986), 225-245.

essence analogous to Raskin's, Norrick uses more general language, broader categories, and non-semanticly specific concepts that are even more amenable to application to non-verbal acts of humour: he argues that humour requires the presence of a "lower-level schema conflict" together with a "higher-level schema fit."<sup>47</sup> In the Ravel example cited above, the disjunction realized by a pastoral drone being suddenly reconceived as a mechanical device creates a conflict. These immediately palpable script or schema conflicts are what Norrick refers to as "lower-level conflicts." The "higher-level fit" is a reconciliation that requires inference on the part of the audience or observer. The incongruity of drone-as-machine is countered by the presence of the same sound only seconds before in the commonplace environment of pastoral dance, which in turn highlights mechanical properties inherent in such repeating musical figures (and dehumanizing the bucolic peoples with whom these devices are conventionally associated). My analyses in Chapter 4 draw repeatedly on Norrick's simple but apt formulation.

In *Humorous Texts* Attardo extends coverage of the GTVH to all humorous texts. His central question asks "how do narrative texts longer than jokes function as *humorous texts*?"<sup>48</sup> His point of departure is the structural differentiation of jokes, which end in a punch line, and humorous texts that do not end in a punch line. The latter consist of non-humorous narratives that include a humorous component. He introduces the term "jab line" for the non-final punch lines, puts forward a methodology for mapping and analyzing punch and jab lines in a given text, and also proposes a classification system for humorous plots. His discussion of diffuse disjunctors (where the source of humour is diffused across an extended passage rather than localized in a punch or jab line; examples include irony and register humour) and hyperdetermined humour (where multiple sources of humour are active at once) have been

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<sup>47</sup> These correspond to the "script opposition" and "logical mechanism," respectively, of the GTVH.

<sup>48</sup> Attardo, *Humorous Texts*, viii.

particularly valuable to my reading of *Le Roi malgré lui*. My discussion responds to previous criticisms of imbalance in the humorous discourse of the opera by demonstrating the presence of humorous disjunction in even the most allegedly “serious” moments.

Indeed, musicologists and music theorists approaching the subject of humour will almost certainly be looking outside of music scholarship for conceptual tools. “Music and humour” studies tend to fall into three categories differentiated by focus. First, there are studies that reflect on the many inherent similarities between music and humour as communicative acts (often the observed parallels are used as a point of departure for a broader argument).<sup>49</sup> Peter Kay, for instance, draws such parallels in the first part of his article “Music and Humor.” He points to the perception of models and patterns, the frustration of expectations, creatively logical reinterpretations and their resultant “psychological shifts,” and the pleasure of discovering possibilities as components of rewarding musical and humorous experiences. A second category includes studies that deal with a humorous aspect or correlative of a work or group of works, typically by either investigating a humorous component through a conceptual lens or expounding on the *uses* or *effects* of humour inherent in the music.<sup>50</sup> Many of these focus on incongruities

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<sup>49</sup> Peter Kay, “Music and Humor: What’s so Funny?,” *Music Reference Services Quarterly* 10 (2006), 37-53. Kay builds on observations of music cognition first presented in John Sloboda, *The Musical Mind: The Cognitive Psychology of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985). Also approaching the subject with an interest in cognition is Kendall L. Walton, “Understanding Humor and Understanding Music,” *Journal of Musicology* 11 (1993), 32-44. Walton uses an extended metaphor of an anthropologist studying Martian laughter to demonstrate various analogies between understanding humour and understanding a musical composition, from which point he goes on to champion musical analytical methodologies that seek to understand one’s way of hearing and to specify the intensional content of one’s musical experience. In “Close Enough for Jazz: Humor and Jazz Reality,” *Humor* 1 (1988), 371-388, Frank A. Salamone examines the “essential qualities common to both humor and jazz,” but his larger goal is to consider the role of humour in jazz culture.

<sup>50</sup> The majority of these studies focus on the eighteenth-century instrumental repertory; this may very well be because of the supposed stability and predictability of the “high classic style.” Examples include, Jane Perry-Camp, “A Laugh a Minuet: Humor in Late Eighteenth-Century Music,” *College Music Symposium* 19 (1979), 19-29; Steven E. Paul, “Comedy, Wit, and Humor in Haydn’s Instrumental Music” in *Haydn Studies*, eds. Jens Peter Larsen, Howard S. Serwer, and James Webster (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), 450-456; Cassandra I. Carr, “Wit and Humor as a Dramatic Force in Beethoven Piano Sonatas” (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1985); Susan

and a play metaphor is commonly invoked, as is the case of Roy Howat's previously-cited essay on "rhythmic play" in Chabrier's piano music. A major contribution and a rare book-length study of this type is Gretchen Wheelock's *Haydn's Ingenious Jestings with Art*, a study of playful rhetoric in Haydn's instrumental music.<sup>51</sup> As indicated in the book's subtitle, "Contexts of Musical Wit and Humor," Wheelock's primary objective is to illuminate contexts (musical, social, historical) requisite to Haydn's "artful jesting," a category she keeps decidedly broad. She seeks to "locate the strategies of musical jests, along with the aesthetic and kinesthetic paradoxes they introduce, in those genres and procedures noted as humorous by Haydn's contemporaries."<sup>52</sup> A reader whose foremost interest is the rigorous investigation of musical humour might raise a general criticism against these insightful and well-researched studies. That is, these inquiries rarely provide a rationale for the processes identified as humorous (as in Wheelock's investigation of "genres and procedures *noted as humorous by Haydn's contemporaries*"), or alternately, propose unpredictability or violation of expectation as a sufficient condition.<sup>53</sup>

A different strategy is exemplified in a grouping of articles that extrapolate on conceptual parallels between the music of Haydn or Beethoven and humorous or comic literary

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Wollenberg, "A New Look at C.P.E. Bach's Musical Jokes," in *C.P.E. Bach Studies*, ed. Stephen L. Clark (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 295-314; and Danuta Mirka, "Wit, Comedy, and Metric Manipulation in Haydn's and Mozart's Personal Styles," in *Metric Manipulations in Haydn and Mozart: Chamber Music for Strings, 1787-1791* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 295-309. Three such studies that reach beyond eighteenth-century repertory are R. Anderson Sutton, "Humor, Mischief, and Aesthetics in Javanese Gamelan Music," *Journal of Musicology* 15 (1997), 390-415; George-Julius Papadopoulos, "Johannes Brahms and Nineteenth-Century Comic Ideology" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 2003); and Steven Huebner, "*Laughter: In Ravel's Time.*"

<sup>51</sup> Gretchen A. Wheelock, *Haydn's Ingenious Jestings with Art: Contexts of Musical Wit and Humor* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1992).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, x. Her four analytical chapters present analogies between Haydn's musical discourse and (i) frustrated kinesthetic expectation, (ii) dysfunctional conversation, (iii) teasing suspense, and (iv) distraction.

<sup>53</sup> On other reactions of violation of expectation and the dependence of expectation on musical and extramusical context, see David Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006); and more generally, John Morreall, "Funny Ha-ha, Funny Strange, and Other Reactions to Incongruity," in *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor*, ed. John Morreall (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 188-207.

tropes found in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*.<sup>54</sup> The title of William Kinderman's article, "Beethoven's High Comic Style," rightly identifies his object of inquiry as the "comic" in the selected works of Beethoven. In the article, however, the comical and the humorous are often found to be conflated. This is another general criticism that might be leveled against many of the existing studies of musical humour. Indeed, the two qualities are closely related and at times overlap in a given work, but the distinction is important to maintain: comic rhetoric itself does not typically provoke humorous laughter. Wye J. Allanbrook's "Theorizing the Comic Surface" is a remarkable essay addressing the concept of the "comic" so distinguished from humour-producing mechanisms.<sup>55</sup> She calls the analyst's attention back to the musical surface, the locus of the comic in music (back from "the Behind, the Beneath, and the Beyond"). Her goal is to "return the word 'superficial' to neutrality, at least for the purpose of music analysis, and sing the praises of the surface."<sup>56</sup> Allanbrook identifies comic flux, variety, concision, and mixture of stylistic modes as attributes of the comic musical surface, establishing normative features of "comic" musical discourse. I would suggest that these elements likely exist in a symbiotic relationship with humorous disjunctions, though this dialectic has yet to be systematically investigated.

In a third category and more in line with the present study are the efforts to explain the substance of musical humour—the mechanisms themselves that trigger humorous amusement—either in theoretical or in practical terms. Among these, Fred Fisher's article "Musical Humor: A

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<sup>54</sup> Mark Evan Bonds, "Haydn, Laurence Sterne, and the Origins of Musical Irony," *JAMS* 44 (1991), 57-91; Howard Irving, "Haydn and Laurence Sterne: Similarities in Eighteenth-Century Literary and Musical Wit," *Current Musicology* 40 (1985), 34-49; and William Kinderman, "Beethoven's High Comic Style in Piano Sonatas of the 1790s, or Beethoven, Uncle Toby, and the 'Muckcart-driver,'" *Beethoven Forum* 5 (1996), 119-138.

<sup>55</sup> Allanbrook, "Theorizing the Comic Surface."

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

Future as Well as a Past?,” stands out for its many astute observations.<sup>57</sup> He offers a sound set of conditions of musical humour and explores, among other things, the apparently limited potential for musical humour in modern atonal and twelve-tone idioms. Fisher is among the first of many scholars to propose Leonard Meyer’s work on affective response and musical meaning as the basis for a theory of humour in music.<sup>58</sup> Concentrating on mechanisms on the level of tonal syntax, James Kidd postulates the interaction of two breaches in stylistic propriety as requirements for musical humour—a structural surprise (syntactical or formal) joined with a semantic surprise (an unexpected change in “emotional climate”)—which he tests against contrasting open and closed formal aspects of Beethoven’s Op. 54 piano sonata.<sup>59</sup> Rossana Dalmonte approaches the subject from a semiotic perspective and considers humour processes on the poietic and aesthetic levels.<sup>60</sup> The majority of the essay concentrates on the former (the productive or formative level), exploring especially the communication of the composer’s “intentions” through titles and other verbal paratextual indications. Her objective is to establish coherent categories as a preliminary step towards a semiotic theory of musical humour. In an article discussing “musical satire” in the film *The Rutles*, John Covach applies theories of

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<sup>57</sup> Fred Fisher, “Musical Humor: A Future as Well as a Past?,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 32 (1974), 375-383. Two essays that predate the surge of interest in the subject that began in the 1970s are Henry F. Gilbert, “Humor in Music,” *Musical Quarterly* 12 (1926), 40-55, a pioneering effort in the musicological study of the conditions of humour that continues to be cited today; and R. Gruneberg, “Discussion: Humor in Music,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 30 (1969), 122-125. Both have the tone of *apologie*, the authors purporting, at least in part, to demonstrate that musical expression is capable of humour.

<sup>58</sup> Leonard B. Meyer’s *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956); *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989); and “View: A Pride of Prejudices, or, Delight in Diversity,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 13 (1991), 241-251. Other works that draw on Meyer include Allanbrook, “Theorizing the Comic Surface;” Mirka, “Wit, Comedy, and Metric Manipulation;” Kidd, “Wit and Humor in Tonal Syntax;” as well as studies by Linda R. Lowry, “Humor in Instrumental Music: A Discussion of Musical Affect, Psychological Concepts of Humor and Identification of Musical Humor” (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1974); Laurie-Jeanne Lister, *Humor as a Concept in Music: A Theoretical Study of Expression in Music, the Concept of Humor, and Humor in Music* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1994); and John Covach, cited below (see note 61).

<sup>59</sup> James C. Kidd, “Wit and Humor in Tonal Syntax.”

<sup>60</sup> Rossana Dalmonte, “Towards a Semiology of Humour in Music,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 26 (1995), 167-187.

musical style and intertextuality to unpack complex mechanisms of referential humour.<sup>61</sup> Covach is interested in “stylistic competency” and its relation to amused response, examining in particular the role of intertextual relationships on different stylistic levels in triggering the congruity-incongruity dialectic required of humorous amusement.

As can be seen from this cursory survey, humour in music is fertile ground for investigation, and the potential to expand into new repertoires and new theoretical realms is promising. In the three central chapters of my dissertation, humorous disjunctions in the musical discourse are subject to increasingly comprehensive analysis. Chapter 2, being more interested in identifying conventional musical procedures and types of humorous effects that might be considered characteristic of the genres of *opérette* and *opéra bouffe*, draws concepts more from theories of comedy than from theories of humour. Terms and concepts are defined as they are introduced. Chapter 3, dealing with Chabrier’s popular operas, is more methodical in investigating the nature of oppositions and disjunctions and makes use of basic concepts of humour theory. Chapter 4, after identifying “conflicting schemas” (to use Norrick’s terminology) on local levels of genre, syntax, and musical reference or allusion, considers larger-scale humorous processes in *Le Roi malgré lui* and relies more heavily on linguistic theories of humour, particularly Attardo’s work that moves beyond the local semantic level.

### **Terminology: Humorous Musical Borrowing**

Provocative manipulation or recontextualization of borrowed musical materials is among the most characteristic and frequently encountered means of humour production in the repertory considered in this study. Discussions of such referential or intertextual humour rely on

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<sup>61</sup> John R. Covach, “The Rutles and the Use of Specific Models in Musical Satire,” *Indiana Theory Review* 11 (1991), 119-144.

specialized terminology, and the terms employed—such as “parody,” “travesty,” and “burlesque”—are often broadly and inconsistently used in the literature. These are best clarified at the outset and the final section of this chapter is devoted to the definition of select terms.

I have drawn on Gérard Genette’s exhaustive study of literary “hypertextuality,” *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, for critical definitions of intertextual techniques and genres.<sup>62</sup> I should clarify that I am using the term “intertextual” in a literal sense: to refer to relationships among particular texts. Genette defines intertextuality as such at the beginning of his book:

I define [intertextuality] . . . as a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts: that is to say, eidetically and typically as the actual presence of one text within another. In its most explicit and literal form, it is the traditional practice of *quoting* . . . in another less explicit and canonical form, it is the practice of *plagiarism* . . . in still less explicit and less literal guise, it is the practice of *allusion*: that is, an enunciation whose full meaning presupposes the perception of a relationship between it and another text, to which it necessarily refers by some inflections that would otherwise remain unintelligible.<sup>63</sup>

This definition is distinct from the conventional use of the term in literary criticism, which considers intertextuality as being, in the words of Jonathan Culler, the investigation of “the anonymous discursive practices, codes whose origins are lost, that make possible the signifying practices of later texts.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997). Genette distinguishes hypertextuality from other types of transtextuality by defining the former as “any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is ‘grafted’ in a manner that is not that of commentary,” 5.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>64</sup> Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 103.

Throughout his investigation, Genette maintains a clear distinction between hypertexts that are derived through *transformation* and those that are derived through *imitation*.<sup>65</sup> Categorical subdivisions are then proposed based on function, namely whether the derived text displays a satirical or non-satirical relationship with its hypotext.<sup>66</sup> In non-satirical adaptations of texts, Genette identifies a “serious mood” (which is not of concern to the present study) and a ludic or “playful mood.”<sup>67</sup> Following Genette’s typology, my dissertation will use the following definitions: imitative tropes include “caricature” and “pastiche,” these display satirical and playful (non-satirical) moods respectively; “travesty” is satirical transformation; and non-satirical transformation in the ludic mode is referred to as “parody.” The term parody, then, is used in a more specific sense in this study than is commonly found in the literature.<sup>68</sup>

Determining a composer’s intent to be satirical or non-satirical is certainly a subjective exercise, and in instances where satirical intent is not unambiguously clear I have opted to err on the side of the ludic.

“Burlesque” is another term that is used with flexibility in the literature, and the sense in which I employ this term is similar to but not indistinguishable from what Genette calls

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<sup>65</sup> Genette distinguishes the two operations: “to transform [a model hypotext], I need only modify in whichever way any one of its components . . . But to imitate [a text] . . . it presupposes that I should identify in this [text] a certain manner . . . and then express in this manner (in this style) another idea.” Genette, 7.

<sup>66</sup> Satire, as distinct from non-satirical expressions (which may be humorous or non-humorous), is moralistic and intends to ridicule. In the words of Dustin H. Griffin, “satire is designed to attack vice or folly. To this end it uses wit or ridicule. Like polemical rhetoric, it seeks to persuade an audience that something or someone is reprehensible or ridiculous; unlike pure rhetoric, it engages in exaggeration and some sort of fiction.” Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 1.

<sup>67</sup> See *ibid.*, chap. 7.

<sup>68</sup> Compare, for example, Linda Hutcheon’s definition of the term as “repetition with critical difference.” Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985), chap. 1.

“burlesque travesty.”<sup>69</sup> When it is introduced in Chapter 2, I have included a more detailed consideration of the concept and its various applications to Hervé’s *Petit Faust*. But in short, a burlesque gesture debases a model text by “lowering” it stylistically while maintaining its exalted subject, or *vice versa*.<sup>70</sup> The simultaneous presence of high tone and lowered means, while maintaining a clear connection to the model hypotext, is the defining characteristic of the burlesque, whether as a genre or as a local level trope. This extravagant incongruity might be reinforced by a successive process: subject matter (and literary style of the text) is maintained, but a sudden lowering of musical style occurs. In the analyses that follow, I have also employed the term “burlesque” to refer to this kind of double disjuncture.

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<sup>69</sup> By “burlesque travesty,” Genette refers to a specific genre that stylistically transforms a single model hypotext with an aim to debase or ridicule (as in travesty). He identifies Paul Scarron’s *Virgile travesti* (c. 1650), a travesty of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, as the generic prototype. Genette’s discussion of “burlesque” proper is minimal. See Genette, 56-66.

<sup>70</sup> This definition is in accordance with *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, ed. Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). See also Woodbridge Wilson and Deane L. Root, “Burlesque,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, edited by Stanley Sadie, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O008435> (accessed 25 June 2011).

## 2 French Popular Opera before Chabrier

*Opérette* is a genre of French light comic opera that was performed in the popular theatres of Paris beginning in the early 1850s. By “popular,” I refer to the non officially-endorsed theatres, sometimes referred to as “théâtres du boulevard,” that depended on private funding and on the patronage of a paying public.<sup>71</sup> The genre flourished in the second half of the nineteenth century, being especially associated with the Second Empire of Louis Napoleon (1852-1870).<sup>72</sup> The composer Hervé (1825-1892) is considered to be the creator of *opérette*—his musical theatre experiments of the 1840s and early 1850s led to his opening of a small theatre in 1854, the Folies-Concertantes.<sup>73</sup> Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880) was interested in the new genre from the outset and had works performed at various Parisian *salles* as early as 1853. In July 1855 he opened his own theatre, Les Bouffes-Parisiens. The enduring repertory of successful works

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<sup>71</sup> I have opted to use the possibly ambiguous term “popular opera” or the cumbersome qualifier “non-officially-sanctioned” due to the conventional association of “boulevard theatre” with the popular theatres of the boulevard du Temple district, of which Offenbach’s theatres were not a part.

<sup>72</sup> Several theatrical histories gather information about the major composers, librettists, and theatres that were involved in the development of “operetta,” which is the term commonly used, retrospectively, for French *opérette* and its descendants (including *opéra bouffe* and other national schools such as Viennese *Operette*, Gilbert and Sullivan “comic opera,” Spanish *zarzuela*, and American *operetta*). These studies provide overviews and anecdotes concerning repertory, plot, reception, and stage antics. The most thorough discussion of early French developments is given in Richard Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History*, rev. ed. (New York: Routledge, 2003). See also Andrew Lamb, *150 Years of Popular Musical Theatre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); and John Kenrick, *Musical Theatre: A History* (NY: Continuum, 2008). Several French studies focus exclusively on the French tradition: José Bruyr, *L’Opérette* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962); Florian Bruyas, *Histoire de l’opérette en France, 1855-1965* (Lyon: E. Vitte, 1974); Claude Dufresne, *Histoire de l’opérette* (Paris: F. Nathan, 1981); and Benoît Duteurtre, *L’Opérette en France* (Paris: Seuil, 1997).

<sup>73</sup> Hervé had made an association in 1853 with Emperor Louis Napoleon’s half brother, the Duc de Morny, which resulted in Hervé receiving a privilege to operate his own small theatre. The Folies-Concertantes opened in 1854 in the boulevard du Temple. Conceding his privilege in July of that year he remained with the theatre, newly renovated and reopened in October as the Folies-Nouvelles, in the role of artistic director. Works by Hervé formed the majority of the repertory of the Folies-Nouvelles at this time but he also programmed works by other composers including Delibes and Offenbach.

Renée Cariven-Galharret and Dominique Ghesquière, *Hervé: Un musicien paradoxal* (Paris: Éditions des Cendres, 1992) is the first book-length study of the life and career of this little-known composer. Louis Schneider, *Les Maîtres de l’opérette française: Hervé, Charles Lecocq* (Paris: Perrin, 1924) is an early biography, especially valuable as the only extended treatment of Charles Lecocq available to date.

that he supplied together with the generous funding and the favourable mainstream publicity that he acquired have allowed for Offenbach to be historically remembered as the first master of the form.<sup>74</sup>

Following an imperial decree of 1807, impresarios of non-official theatres in Paris were required to present applications indicating the specific nature of their proposed enterprise to the satisfaction of the Minister of State, the Ministry of Interior, and the Prefect of Police.<sup>75</sup> A license permitting a combination of music and drama (especially newly-composed music) would almost invariably limit the works to one act. For this reason the diminutive *opérette* has come to designate a work in a single act. This conventional adoption of the term by historians follows a consistency demonstrated by Offenbach in employing the designation *opérette* (in conjunction with various qualifiers) exclusively for one-act works. It simplifies what in reality was a

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<sup>74</sup> By the time Hervé opened his theatre Offenbach had already submitted his own suavely argued application, see Archives nationales (Paris), F/21 1136; quoted in Alexander Faris, *Jacques Offenbach* (New York: Scribner, 1980), 48. His new theatre would be located in the (pre-Haussmann) Champs-Élysées, a neighborhood well-suited to his proper bourgeois clientele, also conveniently accessible to visitors of the upcoming 1855 Exposition Universelle in search of “un spectacle de bon goût.” He also cites the service he would be providing to young composers, always in want of a venue for their works. H. de Villemessant had recently resuscitated the defunct *Le Figaro* and, seeing the new theatre as a sister enterprise to his newspaper, gave Offenbach his financial support and ensured positive publicity. The application would be successful and the tiny Bouffes-Parisiens opened in July 1855 in the carré Marigny. The Bouffes would be the first institution dedicated exclusively to the genre of *opérette* and no less than twelve new one-act works would be produced before the end of 1855 (usually two or three would be programmed together in a single evening). Offenbach moved the theatre to a larger, more central, and warmer winter location: the newly named Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens was opened in the passage Choiseul (2<sup>nd</sup> arrondissement, rebuilt in 1863 with front entrance on rue Monsigny) on 29 December 1855. On the formation of Offenbach’s theatre and the many obstacles faced by the genre in its formative years see Jean-Claude Yon, “La Création du théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens (1855-1862), ou la difficile naissance de l’opérette,” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 39 (1992), 575-600. For more on Offenbach’s connection with Villemessant and his licensing process see Faris, 48-50.

Numerous biographies of Offenbach have been published, most noteworthy of these are Jean-Claude Yon, *Jacques Offenbach* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), an expertly documented, comprehensive, and insightful contribution to Offenbach research; and Siegfried Kracauer, *Jacques Offenbach und das Paris seiner Zeit* (Amsterdam: Allert de Lange, 1937), translated as *Orpheus in Paris: Offenbach and the Paris of his Time*, trans. Gwenda David and Eric Mosbacher (New York: Vienna House, 1972). This “social biography” presents Offenbach’s works as reflecting the commercialization of French culture during the Second Empire and has aroused considerable controversy, see Harald Reil, *Siegfried Kracauers Jacques Offenbach: Biographie, Geschichte, Zeitgeschichte* (New York: P. Lang, 2003); and Norbert Nagler, “Jacques Offenbachs musikalische Utopie: die Sehnsucht nach der herrschaftsarmen Heimat. Reflexionen zu Siegfried Kracauers Gesellschaftsbiographie des Second Empire,” *Musik-Konzepte* 13 (1980), 87-102. Other biographies, all dating from the centenary of Offenbach’s death, include Peter Gammond, *Offenbach: His Life and Times* (Speldhurst: Midas Books, 1980); James Harding, *Jacques Offenbach: A Biography* (London: J. Calder, 1980); David Rissin, *Offenbach, ou le rire musical* (Paris: Fayard, 1980).

<sup>75</sup> Faris, *Jacques Offenbach*, 49.

complicated and inconsistent application of a wide variety of generic labels, most of them newly-invented.<sup>76</sup> Terms such as *opérette bouffe*, *comédie-opérette*, *vaudeville-opérette*, *saynète*, *bouffonnerie musicale*, *pochade musicale*, as well as the more singular “excentricité musicale” and “anthropophagie musicale” appeared on scores, librettos, and the official registers.<sup>77</sup> This seeming delight in categorization humorously continues a French tradition that extends at least as far back as the seventeenth-century *comédies-ballets*, *opéras-ballets*, and *ballets-héroïques* of Lully and his successors.

These terms often declare an explicit comic intent. *Opérette* at this time usually, though not always, included a pronounced element of humour: playful or satirical reworkings of theatrical and operatic conventions, sociopolitical satire, and broad comic gestures were widespread practices in these genres. As might be gathered from such proto-Satiean appellations as “lyrical asphyxiation” (Delibes’s *Deux sous de charbon, ou Le Suicide de bigorneau*, Folies-Nouvelles, 1856) the favored mode tended towards the ridiculous or *loufoque*—as implied in the qualifier *bouffe*—decidedly unlike the romantic comedy then in vogue at the Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> See Jean-Claude Yon, “Offenbach l’inclassable: la question des genres,” in *La Scène bâtarde entre Lumières et Romantisme*, ed. Philippe Bourdin and Gérard Loubinoux (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2004), 203-215. Attempting to classify Offenbach’s 110 stage works, which appeared under thirty-three different denominations, into a functional lexicon Yon has identified inconsistent usage as a methodological hindrance to what ought to be a rather routine exercise: the genre indicated in the published score is often not in agreement with the term used in other sources such as the libretto, the censor’s manuscript, the press, and the SACD (Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques) registers. His six categories are “opéra-bouffe,” “opérette” (these are all one-act works), “opéra-comique,” “genres divers avec une racine bouffe,” “opéras-féeries,” and “divers.”

<sup>77</sup> The “excentricité musicale” in question is Hervé’s *La Fine fleur de l’Andalousie* (Théâtre des Folies-Nouvelles, 1854); Offenbach’s *Oyayaye, ou La Reine des îles* (Folies-Nouvelles, 1855) was designated “anthropophagie musical” (musical cannibalism).

<sup>78</sup> Eugène Scribe was the most highly-regarded and most prolific supplier of *opéra comique livrets* in the period 1825-1861. In a detailed discussion of the Scribean “livret bien fait” as supplied for the Opéra-Comique, Rey Longyear emphasizes the centrality of young lovers: “Love is the foremost situation in Scribe’s librettos. Usually a young lady who desires to marry a poor but honest young man is thwarted by her father, who insists on her betrothal to a wealthy and old gentleman. When two young men strive for the same girl’s affections, a *mariage réparateur* is always contrived at the end so that no one goes offstage unhappy.” Major works that follow this formula include *Fra Diavolo* and *Le Cheval de bronze*, both set to music by Auber. Rey Longyear, “Daniel-François-Esprit Auber: (1782-

*Opérette*, like any “new” genre, drew heavily on the conventions of various established forms, most importantly *opéra comique*, *vaudeville*, and *revue*. From both *opéra comique* and *vaudeville* it takes up the alternation of songs and spoken dialogue as well as the use of simple strophic forms. It employed ensemble finales similar to those encountered in mid-century *opéra comique*, and featured complicated plots and zany antics characteristic of contemporaneous *vaudeville*.<sup>79</sup> The *revue* combined song, dance, and spectacular “curiosités” but did not develop a dramatic plotline. Dedicated to the “passing in revue” of recent events, particularly recent operatic and theatrical productions, the *revue* lent *opérette* a parodic and satirical tendency.<sup>80</sup> Broader comic gestures such as *doubles entendres*, puns, and slapstick were commonplace and drag performances were not uncommon in *revues* and *vaudevilles* of the time.<sup>81</sup> These features come together in various proportions in the *opérettes* of Offenbach, Hervé, and their contemporaries.

When the restrictive Napoleonic legislation was lifted in 1864, full-length (usually three-act) works superseded the one-act *opérettes* in quantity and in popularity. The works continued the same *esprit bouffe* of the *opérette*. As multiple-act dramas with large casts and choruses they became known by the designation *opéra bouffe*, which is to be distinguished from *opérette*

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1871): A Chapter in French *opéra comique*” (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1957), 225. Karin Pendle also discusses the dominance of sentimental and romantic themes in Scribe’s *opéras comiques*. Pendle, *Eugène Scribe and French Opera of the Nineteenth Century* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979), 99ff.

<sup>79</sup> On *vaudeville* see John McCormick, *Popular Theatres of Nineteenth-Century France* (New York: Routledge, 1993), especially 113-133. McCormick suggests that the distinction between *vaudeville* and *opérette* was a matter of degree of musical importance more than one of style or substance: “There is no hard and fast line between what should be spoken and what should be sung in a play with vaudevilles. This very fluidity could allow the musical element to take over, and when this happened in the nineteenth century the result was the operetta of Hervé and Offenbach. In the later nineteenth century there is a division between the vaudeville become light comedy or farce, on the one hand, and the vaudeville become operetta, on the other,” 115. A significant difference between *vaudeville* and *opérette* not cited by McCormick is the use of newly-composed music in the latter.

<sup>80</sup> Andrew Lamb, et al., “Revue,” in *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed 21 March 2009).

<sup>81</sup> See illustration of renowned drag performer M. Potier, *affiche* for early nineteenth-century production at the Théâtre des Variétés, in McCormick, 121.

primarily by the number of acts. Works of this type flourished during the period of 1864-1870, including such enduring classics of the genre as Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène*, *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*, *La Périochole*, and *La Vie Parisienne* (the librettos for all but the last were by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy) and Hervé's *L'Oeil crevé*, *Chilpéric*, and *Le Petit Faust*.<sup>82</sup>

The more sober political and social climate of the early Third Republic following the humiliating defeat to Prussia and the horrors of the Paris Commune is usually cited in conjunction with the evident shift to a more sentimental mode of comedy in popular opera of the 1870s. The satirical edge and the farcical zaniness of *opéra bouffe* is markedly softened, abstracted, or entirely absent in the comedies of Charles Lecocq, Émile Audran, Robert Planquette and their contemporaries. In these works the subtitle *opéra bouffe* was replaced with *opéra comique*.<sup>83</sup> *Opéras comiques* from this popular tradition must be distinguished from the repertory of the Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. While many parallels exist between the two genres that went under this name, they are by no means equivalent. They stem from different traditions—one nascent, one endowed with a long history but arguably in decline; one a “low” form subject to the whims of private enterprise, the other officially-sanctioned “high art.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> In 1858 Offenbach obtained a license permitting a two-act work with full cast and chorus resulting in the “opéra bouffon” *Orphée aux enfers*. *Orphée* is considered the beginning of the *opéra bouffe* tradition, but is something of an exception for the period as composers remained bound to the terms of their specific licenses (which continued to restrict most works to one act) until the legislation was officially changed in 1864.

<sup>83</sup> Following Delphine Mordey, who, in “Auber’s Horses: *L’Année terrible* and Apocalyptic Narratives,” *19th-Century Music* 30 (2007), 213-229, warns against the unqualified acceptance of this “turning-point narrative” in French music history, which she argues was constructed retrospectively by critics desiring cultural change, this evident change in focus should be considered neither abrupt nor exclusionary. Stylistic continuities can indeed be identified in the popular operas composed under the two regimes.

<sup>84</sup> For the sake of clarity I will use the more cumbersome term “popular opéra comique” if the context permits any ambiguity for the works performed at the popular theatres (that is the works of Lecocq, Planquette, *et alia* that I have positioned as descendents of Second Empire *opéra bouffe*) and retain the familiar *opéra comique*, unqualified, for the relevant works of the Opéra-Comique repertory.

This chapter offers readings of three works, one from each of these branches of popular opera (*opérette*, *opéra bouffe*, and popular *opéra comique*). It will describe certain generic norms as exemplified in the selected pieces, which will make it possible to appreciate Chabrier's contributions to these genres from a contextually appropriate perspective. Without an understanding of, say, the outlandishness characteristic of the *opérette* and *opéra bouffe* it would be easy to overlook or misconstrue Chabrier's more idiosyncratic gestures. The discussion will also demonstrate how these pieces function as "comedic" in the two senses distinguished in Chapter 1, that is, to identify and distinguish "comic" convention and rhetoric (both dramatic and musical) and specifically "humorous" devices. In the latter case, I will limit most of my discussion to musical examples. Of course, humorous devices are plentiful in the libretto, and a sampling of the variety of jokes will be provided in the discussion of comic discourse. However, as the larger purpose of this chapter is to contextualize Chabrier's inventiveness and it is the specifically musical application of humour that sets his works apart, it will be most valuable to determine the humorous musical gestures that are characteristic of the genre and see how they function as humour.

Offenbach's "chinoiserie musicale" *Ba-ta-clan* (Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens, 1855, libretto by Ludovic Halévy)<sup>85</sup> is taken to be a seminal work and will be analyzed in some detail. It appeared at the end of the busy and experimental year of 1855 and benefits from the experience of Offenbach's earlier pieces. It was nevertheless the first work produced at the new and permanent location of the Bouffes (Salle Choiseul) and thus it stands symbolically at the

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<sup>85</sup> Halévy had been working with Offenbach since the first show at the Bouffes-Parisiens. To protect his government job, the libretto for *Ba-ta-clan* was published under the pseudonym Jules Servières. References to the libretto will be cited as Halévy, *Ba-ta-clan* (Paris: N. Tresse, 1860) in order to distinguish from references to the musical score (Offenbach, *Ba-ta-clan*). The latter exists in various versions that are less readily available; the musical examples reproduced in this chapter are taken from the first published edition of the piano-vocal score (Paris: L. Escudier, 1856).

head of a tradition. In his edition of the vocal score, Antonio Almeida indicates that *Ba-ta-clan* was Offenbach's first work designated "opérette" in the official theatrical registers.<sup>86</sup> It was enormously popular and remains among the best-known of Offenbach's *opérettes* today. More importantly, it displays many features that would inform the genres of *opérette* and *opéra bouffe* until 1870, and the numerous parallels that can be drawn with Chabrier's *opérettes* suggest a kinship that makes it especially pertinent to the present study.

I have chosen to discuss Hervé's *Le Petit Faust* (Folies-Dramatiques, 1869, libretto by Hector Crémieux and Louis-Adolphe Jaime) as an example of 1860s *opéra bouffe*. Addressing distinct differences in style and temperament between *Le Petit Faust* and Offenbach's major works will be one goal of this section. The connection to the *vaudeville* tradition that Hervé self-consciously privileges over Offenbach's concept of the genre as an evolution of the official tradition of *opéra comique* will be addressed. The treatment of borrowed materials, an important element of the humour of *Le Petit Faust*, is also somewhat different from the analogous practice in Offenbach. These comparisons will permit a more balanced picture of the genre than would be possible if discussion of *opérette* and *opéra bouffe* were limited to Offenbach's works as has been customary.<sup>87</sup>

Charles Lecocq's *La Fille de Madame Angot* (Brussels, 1872, libretto by Clairville, Paul Siraudin, and Victor Koning) remains one of the most popular post-1870 French light operas. Discussion of generic procedures and mechanisms of humour in this popular *opéra comique* will

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<sup>86</sup> Jacques Offenbach, *Ba-ta-clan: Chinoiserie musicale en 1 acte*, libretto by Ludovic Halévy, ed. Antonio Almeida, English version by Michael Kaye (Melville: Belwin-Mills, 1983), iii. As the first work performed at the Salle Choiseul it enjoyed the flexibility of Offenbach's new and more lenient license and for the first time four characters were permitted. The chorus indicated in Almeida's score did not appear in the first edition (Escudier, 1856). All musical examples from *Ba-ta-clan* that appear in this chapter are reproduced from Almeida's edition.

<sup>87</sup> The available literature addressing the works of Hervé is very limited relative to the growing Offenbach bibliography, and surveys of early *opérette* developments typically focus overwhelmingly on Offenbach's contributions. See, for example, Bruyas, *Histoire de l'opérette en France*; Lamb, *150 Years of Popular Musical Theatre*; and Traubner, *Operetta*.

demonstrate an aesthetic far removed from that of early *opérette* and *opéra bouffe* of the 1860s. The self-affiliation of the “low” with the “high” forms of *opéra comique* (that is, popular *opéra comique* with the works of the Opéra-Comique) resurfaces as an important criterion in the ontology of French light opera, and will be disentangled in this section.

### ***Ba-ta-clan*: Plot Synopsis and General Characteristics**

Raymonde: Oui! Oui, tu as raison. Ce n'est peut-être pas génial, mais ce sont généralement les moyens les plus classiques qui réussissent le mieux.<sup>88</sup>

Comic theatre relies heavily on stereotypes; the same can be said of *opérette* without being any less of a truism. Comic dramaturgy involves stereotypical plots, sustained and developed formulaically, and peopled with one-dimensional character types who indulge in established forms of histrionics and comic play. In *opérette* the text meets with music that is also highly formulaic. The uniqueness of a given work results from the creative selection and combination of familiar devices and the inventiveness with which the characters transgress the boundaries of their circumscribed comic reality.<sup>89</sup>

Early *opérette* follows a “festive mode” of comedy: a manic frenzy, a naive spontaneity, a farcical temperament, and a topical acuity completely devoid of the workings of everyday reality recalls Aristophanic Old Comedy and its most celebrated modern successor, the Rabelaisian carnivalesque.<sup>90</sup> While other forms of comedy follow a teleological progression

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<sup>88</sup> Georges Feydeau, *La Puce à l'oreille*, in *Théâtre complet* (Paris: Éditions du Bélier, 1950), 4: 131.

<sup>89</sup> For more on the structure of comedies see Maurice Charney, *Comedy High and Low: An Introduction to the Experience of Comedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 75-94.

<sup>90</sup> C. L. Barber's landmark study on festive comedy, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Its Relation to Social Custom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), identifies parallels between

toward ritual celebration (in the form of marriage, feast, and revelry), festive comedy sustains a celebratory spirit throughout. Real people and ideas drawn from contemporary society are brought into the unrealistic fantasy world that is assumed as the play's reality. These types of comedies are governed by an inner logic that not only tolerates but thrives on buffoonery, vulgarity, and physicality. The following synopsis of *Ba-ta-clan* illustrates this festive orientation:

A conspiracy is being mounted against Fé-ni-han, emperor of the country of Ché-i-no-or and its forty-seven subjects. It is led by Ko-ko-ri-ko, chief of the imperial guard. Meanwhile, two young mandarins about court, Fé-an-nich-ton and Ké-ki-ka-ko, discover that the other is actually a French national and posing as a mandarin: Fé-an-nich-ton is a Parisian chanteuse (kidnapped by Fé-ni-han's soldiers) and Ké-ki-ka-ko is the Vicomte de Cerisy (shipwrecked, and also taken captive by Fé-ni-han's soldiers). They sing the praises of France (waltz, duet, and "French" *ronde*) and each reveals their involvement in the conspiracy. Emperor Fé-ni-han appears, he too is a Frenchman and longs for his homeland. Ko-ko-ri-ko has captured the young couple and demands their execution, to which Fé-ni-han must consent. As they take up their French song one last time Fé-ni-han discovers fellow compatriots and demands their assistance in his escape, on threat of impalement. Ké-ki-ka-ko refuses and sings the revolutionary anthem, the "Ba-ta-clan," to summon the conspirators. Fé-ni-han cannot resist joining in; his death is imminent. The timely arrival of a letter reveals that, alas, Ko-ko-ri-ko too is a Parisian. He arranges for the escape of his three compatriots via rickshaw relay from Peking to Paris. All sing the "Ba-ta-clan."

The generic opening scene of a comedy will find the protagonist(s) faced with an insoluble problem. In *Ba-ta-clan* the resolution of this problem (threat of immanent death), rather than propelling the intrigue through to a required happy ending, serves as an intriguing premise that sets the tone of the work and establishes its fantasy reality. Following Aristophanes, the initial predicament is quickly eclipsed by a more pressing problem (*ennui* for France). This is

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Shakespeare's saturnalian style and that of Aristophanes, tracing it to Shakespeare's involvement in popular theatre and popular holiday traditions, specifically "the way the social form of Elizabethan holidays contributed to the dramatic form of festive comedy," 4. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1968) shows the connection between Rabelais and ancient and medieval carnival traditions. For a brief overview of festive comedy that demonstrates the influence of Aristophanes on the festive comedies of Rabelais and Jonson, see Charney, 135-142.

followed by increasingly ridiculous complications and revelations but little actual plot development. Developmental devices characteristic of farce, of “repetition, accumulation, and snowballing,” as outlined by Maurice Charney, are present.<sup>91</sup> The ending of *Ba-ta-clan* represents a scenario frequently found in *opérette*—all “gallop” away jubilantly, destination: Paris.

The plot summary also reveals dramatic themes that would quickly become clichés of the genre: a “nonsensical” story set in an unrealistic locale (in this case, also exotic) revolves around a ridiculous twist that in turn sanctions a collaboration allowing a narrow escape and resulting in communal happiness.<sup>92</sup> Flight is as much motivated by homesickness as by the threat of violent atrocities at the hands of an incompetent tyrant-clown. Victimhood, stratified and multivalent, is a characteristic driving element of farce that contributes significantly to the “funny nightmare” effect of many farcical works, and is present in *Ba-ta-clan* in appropriately ludicrous proportions.<sup>93</sup> Several of the dramatic ingredients satirize common operatic models already seen as cliché themselves: the exotic setting, a conspiracy, a strong military presence, incognito characters, a mysterious letter, the recurrence of a rousing nationalistic chorus, and dramatically questionable turns of plot. An operatic approach to plot development is not only avoided but undermined—it is comically defamiliarized by its many recognizable features that seem ridiculous in the *bouffe* reality of *opérette*.

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<sup>91</sup> Charney, *Comedy High and Low*, 82-87.

<sup>92</sup> A very similar situation is found in Offenbach’s early *opérette* *Oyayaye* (1855) and Chabrier’s *L’Étoile* (1877); both also have exotic “barbaric” settings.

<sup>93</sup> For a discussion of victimization as motivating force in farce see, Norman R. Shapiro, “Farce,” in *Comedy: A Geographic and Historical Guide*, ed. Maurice Charney (Westpoint: Praeger, 2005), 2: 296-313, especially 305 ff. Eugène Labiche’s *Un Chapeau de paille d’Italie* (Palais-Royal, 1851), a seminal work of the modern tradition of farce, similarly demonstrates a complex of victimizations.

The characters who play out this scenario are themselves conceived as types. They function as plot devices, and characterization for its own sake is absent. The classic comic characters of clever servant, young lovers, and pretentious and incompetent doctor who populate the domestic worlds of ancient Greek “New Comedy” and its descendants (i.e. Molière, Marivaux, Labiche, and Feydeau) are avoided in favour of more peculiar types who are nevertheless one-dimensional and incapable of change. Each is dominated by a single feature that is exaggerated to the point of caricature and precludes any subtlety or semblance of human wholeness. The world of *Ba-ta-clan*, like that of most comedy, is peopled with incomplete humans.<sup>94</sup>

The characters are used for what they represent, and are seemingly so named. French satire provides centuries of precedents of comic onomastics—think of *Pantagruel*, *Tartuffe*, *Candide*. These names define their owners and the abstractions they introduce contribute significantly to the “inner logic” of their respective works. The name “Ké-ki-ka-ko,” for instance, caricatures the Chinese language as linguistic nonsense and bears clear scatological implications. The name nevertheless betrays a clear structural rationale: the unchanging velar plosive trips through a string of contrasting vowel sounds, which is underlined visually by hyphenated syllabification. “Fé-ni-han” may at first seem to likewise be a nonsensical “Chinese” mélange of syllables, but the name becomes more meaningful when its phonetic derivation is apprehended: Ko-ko-ri-ko reveals his plan to dethrone the emperor and declares “moi je n’ai d’autre ambition que de prendre ta place, Fé-ni-han, et de fainéantiser vingt-quatre heures par

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<sup>94</sup> In some *opérettes* the characters are literally incomplete, as in Offenbach’s *Croquefer* (1857), where the title character’s menacing hereditary enemy, Mousse-à-mort, is a knight lacking one leg, one arm, one eye, and a tongue. On comic identity and incompleteness, see Andrew Stott, *Comedy* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 40-61.

jour sur tes coussins!” making the play on the word “fainéant” (one given to idleness) explicit.<sup>95</sup> “Ko-ko-ri-ko,” on the other hand, is a French patriotic slogan and chauvinistic emblem, itself derived from the crow of the arrogant rooster. Almeida suggests that “Fé-an-nich-ton” might correspond to the expression “faire un micheton,” that is, to pay for a lady’s services.<sup>96</sup>

Ironically, the predominant personality features of these characters are not in strict alignment with the assigned names as one might expect, in the way that, say, Voltaire’s *Candide* is candid if nothing else. For instance, there is no indication that Fé-an-nich-ton should be considered as sexually objectified, she is a chanteuse driven by her longing for boulevards of Paris and remains chaste throughout the *opérette*; Ko-ko-ri-ko is indeed marked by his arrogance, but is the least patriotic of the troupe and opts to remain in Ché-i-no-or instead of returning home with the others; Fé-ni-han certainly is the idle loafer implied by his name, but as we will, see this is hardly his most striking personality feature.

*Ba-ta-clan* begins with a “potpourri” overture. It loosely juxtaposes four sections, two of which are based on tunes from the *opérette* proper.<sup>97</sup> The libretto divides the action into seven set pieces including various combinations of the four permitted characters. This distribution was typical of the formula of early *opérette* (five to seven numbers was standard). Also characteristic of the genre, three of the seven numbers are strophic *couplets* as is the first part of the finale; the

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<sup>95</sup> “I have no ambition other than to take your place, Fé-ni-han, and to loaf around on your cushions twenty-four hours a day!” This line is spoken in an interposed passage of dialogue in the finale, *Ba-ta-clan*, ed. Almeida, 125. Halévy similarly “explains” the appearance of a personified Public Opinion in the “prologue” to *Orphée aux enfers* (see “Qui suis-je?,” opening scene).

<sup>96</sup> *Ba-ta-clan*, ed. Almeida, iii. Steven Huebner has pointed out to me that the term “nichons” is slang for a woman’s breasts. The name “Fé-an-nich-ton” then might be understood as “fée à nichons,” which is also in line with the sexualized function suggested by Almeida.

<sup>97</sup> The second section is based on the “Ba-ta-clan” anthem; the fourth anticipates the march heard in opening number. Potpourri overtures were common in the nineteenth-century *opéras comiques* of Boieldieu, Auber, and Hérold and were standard in all forms of popular French opera of the nineteenth century.

opening number, the *duo italien* (cantabile-cabaletta structure), and the *trio bouffe* (ternary form) use other simple conventional forms. Melodies and harmonies are generally simple and diatonic, there is a strong preference for major modes and quick tempos, and all but one number are enlivened by catchy dance rhythms. Each number maintains a consistent sentiment and style throughout and avoids “high art” techniques such as chromaticism, virtuosity, developmental procedures, and complex counterpoint; exceptions to this are invariably for humorous effect.<sup>98</sup>

*Opérette* relies heavily on short strophic songs. The majority of these are lighthearted *couplets* but more sentimental *romances* also appear regularly.<sup>99</sup> The following structural diagrams of the four strophic numbers of *Ba-ta-clan* demonstrate a variety of deviations from a melodic template that is commonly encountered in *opérette*: a strophe comprised of four phrases, typically in four-measure units, organized according to the melodic pattern AABC or AABA’ is followed by a refrain that introduces new melodic material (only the first strophe and refrain are shown in Figure 2). This melodic organization is similar to the so-called “lyric prototype” that frequently governed operatic *cantabiles* and *cabalettas* in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>100</sup> The most straightforward use of the pattern is found in the *ronde de Florette*, where an  $A_8A_8B_8A'_{8+4}$  strophe is followed by a refrain with contrasting melody (#4; see Figure 2.1c).

<sup>98</sup> As Faris has pointed out, Offenbach’s earlier works, limited to three of four singing characters, tended to be more contrapuntal than his later works with larger cast, Faris, 46.

<sup>99</sup> Both *couplets* and *romance* are carried over from *opéra comique*. The former is typically a light song in major mode with quick tempo, regular four-measure phrases, and short poetic lines. The latter is typically longer and more serious than *couplets*; it is more likely to be in the minor mode and to demonstrate flexibility in phrase lengths but typically retains the simple diatonic harmony, syllabic text-setting, and figural accompaniment of the *couplets*. When chorus is introduced at the *couplet* refrain, the number is often called *ronde*. On *couplets* and *romances* in Auber’s mid-century *opéras comiques*, see Longyear, 345-348.

<sup>100</sup> On the “lyric prototype” in Verdi’s arias, see Joseph Kerman, “Lyric Form and Flexibility in *Simon Boccanegra*,” *Studi Verdiani* 1 (1982), 47-62. As Kerman explains, “Verdi’s lyric prototype is the four-phrase, sixteen-bar pattern *a a’ b a*” or *a a’ b c*. The four-bar *a* and *b* phrases may themselves be built up out of similar or even identical two-bar members. For purposes of cadential emphasis . . . a coda is added,” 49. In the strophic forms of French light opera, this four-measure prototype is typically followed by a refrain, almost always with contrasting melodic material, rather than a coda. Following Kerman’s example, the subscripts in my discussion refer to phrase lengths, so  $A_4A_4B_4C_4$  refers to four phrases of four measures each, the first two of which are based on similar melodic material.

The most flexible element is the melodic material of the fourth vocal phrase. AABC and AABA' should both be considered normative, and AABB is not uncommon. The least usual deviation here is in #3 (Figure 2.1b), which follows an asymmetrical AAAB structure (the static repetitions of the A phrase in the strophe is balanced by the many repetitions of C in the

Figure 2.1a. *Ba-ta-clan*, #2 *romance*, structural diagram of first strophe and refrain

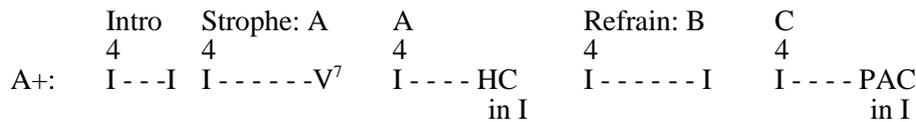


Figure 2.1b. *Ba-ta-clan*, #3 *duo*, structural diagram of first strophe and refrain

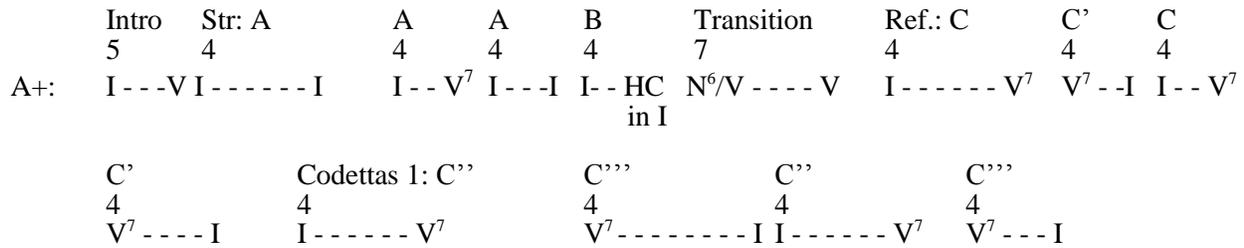


Figure 2.1c. *Ba-ta-clan*, #4 *ronde de Florette*, structural diagram of first strophe and refrain

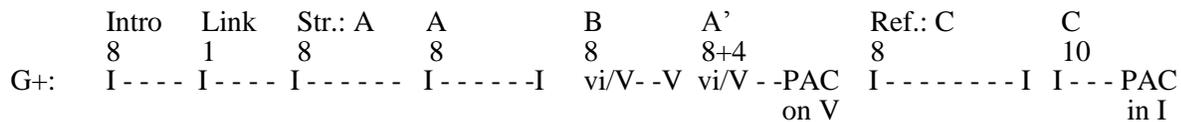
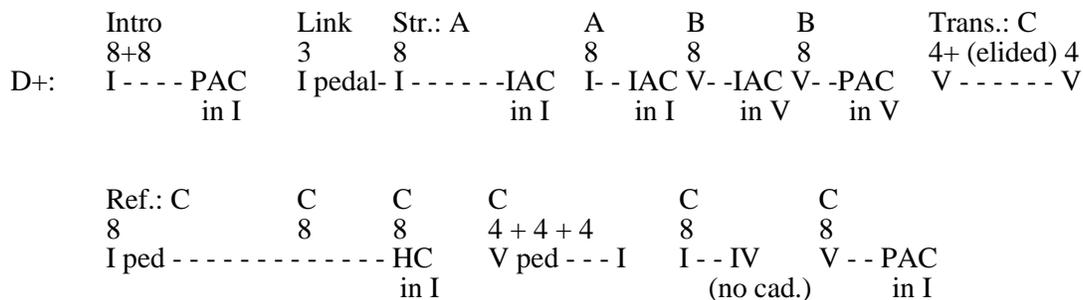


Figure 2.1d. *Ba-ta-clan*, opening of #7 *final*, structural diagram of first strophe and refrain



refrain).<sup>101</sup> Another variable element is the positioning of the refrain. In #3, #4, and #7 (Figure 2.1b, 2.1c, and 2.1d respectively) we find the standard placement of the refrain after a complete strophe of four phrases. In #3 and #7, a transition precedes the refrain; and in #2 the B and C phrases function as the refrain. In *Ba-ta-clan* we find refrains that are always based on melodic material that contrasts with the A and B components of the strophe and they are always conceived of in the same size phrase units as the strophe, but vary considerably in the number of repetitions and phrase extensions (called codettas in #3).<sup>102</sup>

In every instance Offenbach adheres to rigid four- or eight-measure phrase units with rare isolated deviations that mostly appear in transitional areas. The harmonic structure is also very simple with I and V being used exclusively at cadence points and structural junctures (surface chromaticism is not indicated in the diagrams, but is in any case extremely limited). Local level tonicizations of V occur in each except the *romance*, while the finale has a brief and simple modulation to V. These forms are simple, square, and repetitive, and as such they preclude the “marriage of text and music” so celebrated in “high” opera. In each of these strophic numbers the music avoids characterization, “emotional” gestures, and subtleties of any sort; the melodies are catchy and memorable, accompaniments figurative, and rhythms propelling to an apparent aesthetic fault. The music jaunts along, comfortable in its “tired and true” formulas, and seemingly oblivious to its text or its dramatic context. Content is subordinated to convention.

These musical conventions, like the dramatic and textual ones, work exceedingly well to maintain the momentum and festive spirit of the work. While the libretto appeals to the intellect, the music appeals to the physical body in its (over-)indulgence in dance (emotional appeals are categorically absent). The repetitive, four-square, regularized forms are indeed formulated for the dance, which is the very essence of *opérette* music. There are two marches, one waltz, and three

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<sup>101</sup> This song begins a loose *cantabile-cabaletta* duet. The second strophe has a long extension that leads to a “tempo di mezzo” section, which in turn leads to #4 (*cabalette*).

<sup>102</sup> Such flexibility also characterizes the use of the similar “lyric form” in the *ottocento* repertory. On this, see, Steven Huebner, “Lyric Form in *Ottocento* Opera,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 117 (1992), 123-147.

*galops* in *Ba-ta-clan*; only the Italian *duo* is not based on dance rhythms but even this number includes a reprise of the dance refrain from the *ronde de Florette*. This refrain reveals several noteworthy features of the dance music of *Ba-ta-clan* and is excerpted as Example 2.1 (the only tempo marked in the score is “léger;” when this refrain returns in the *duo italien* the tempo indicated is *allegretto*). Perhaps satirizing the unique traditional association of French opera with sung and choreographed dances, most dance gestures in *Ba-ta-clan* are pure foot-tapping carnivalesque and might be considered crude and vulgar. As we can see from the text “Sautons! Valsons! Dansons! Polkons!” it is not a specific dance and its associations that is invoked but a plurality that exemplifies the aesthetic of excess that informs Second Empire *opérette* and *opéra bouffe*. That the first imperative is “sautons” (let’s jump) is indicative of the abstracted

Example 2.1. *Ba-ta-clan*, from #4, *ronde de Florette*, refrain mm. 46-53.

46  
FÉ-AN. *Sau\_tons! Val\_sons! Dan\_sons! Pol\_kons! Dan\_sons! Pol\_kons pour tou\_jours!*  
*Dance a waltz, or dance a pol - ka! Dance a pol - ka all day long!*  
léger  
détaché

50  
FÉ-AN. *Sau\_tons! Dan\_sons! Val\_sons! Pol\_kons! Dan\_sons! Pol\_kons, mes a\_mours!*  
*Dance a waltz, or dance a pol - ka! Come, my love, and join my song!*

The image shows two systems of musical notation. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The first system starts at measure 46 and ends at measure 53. The second system starts at measure 50 and ends at measure 53. The piano accompaniment features a steady, rhythmic pattern of chords, with the right hand playing a melody of eighth notes and the left hand playing a bass line of eighth notes. The tempo marking 'léger' and 'détaché' is present in the first system.

physicality that saturates the work. “Polkons” (let’s polka), even more so, as this “call to action” employs an invented verb. (The music in this number accords with neither of these commands; it is that of the celebratory *galop*.) The opening *mise en scène* (quoted in full below) indicates that the characters are to enter *en sautillant, en caracolant*, that is, hopping and prancing—physicality distilled to its raw ingredients.

Dance rhythms invariably underpin the extended passages of “la la la” that typically saturate the librettos of *opérettes* and *opéras bouffes*, though are remarkably absent in *Ba-ta-clan*. These “la la las” operate as a dance-inspired analog to humour-inspired laughter: both are seemingly involuntary, repetitive non-lexical vocal outbursts that necessarily arise when favorable conditions are created: “la la las” result from the joyful surplus of physicality, laughter from the perception of witty or humorous events. Laughter itself (“ha ha ha” or “ah ah ah”) is also found less in *Ba-ta-clan* than is characteristic of Offenbach’s work at large, but there is sighing aplenty. *Opérette* “ah ah ahs” are versatile, accompanying a variety of actions such as fainting, swooning, courting, and pining. In *Ba-ta-clan* these passages appear as structurally inessential transitions and extensions in regularized forms, and are mechanically repeated and comically exaggerated.<sup>103</sup> The libretto of *Ba-ta-clan* repeatedly calls for a more singular physical spasm, this is the “ruade” (kick-like motion) that habitually accompanies Fé-ni-han’s appearances, and it also is associated with a codependent vocalization, the emperor’s “raca” (an ineffective abracadabra-type incantation). All of these physical-vocal couplings take on the quality of involuntary actions, superimposed on the character as demanded by the formula.

At the dramatic center of *Ba-ta-clan* there is another form of physicality. The threat of violence—execution by impalement—darkens the comic barbarism of *Ba-ta-clan* and contributes an element of grotesque humour to the piece. Barbaric physical atrocity as a source of humour is not uncommon in this repertory, and beatings, particularly of servants, are typical in nineteenth-

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<sup>103</sup> In #3, the four-measure transition passage (which uses Neapolitan harmony to humorously evoke “sincere” nostalgia) is extended by three measures of “ah” (mm. 26-28), and the second strophe has a long extension (mm. 116-137) based almost entirely on repeated arpeggiations of “ah.” In #6 the opening eight-measure phrase has an extension of four measures that is decorated with comic “coloratura” on the “ah” that leads to an extended flat-VI pedal.

century farce.<sup>104</sup> These ubiquitous references to the body together with the energizing mechanical repetitions of dance strains constantly detracts from and compensates for the deficiency of dramatic depth and musical richness, demonstrating the superficiality of *opérette*.

In this section I have drawn attention to select components and conventions of *Ba-ta-clan* to establish a preliminary repertory of generic procedures. Unless otherwise indicated, all of the elements outlined above can be found in more than a few *opérettes* of the 1850s and 1860s, and together can be said to characterize the genre. It is important to note that none of the procedures that I have mentioned should be considered “new” or unique; they have long histories in French opera and theatre before Hervé and Offenbach appropriated them into *opérette*. In fact, these elements should largely be considered antiquated formulas; many were ideal objects for satirical exaggeration simply because they were already considered cliché practices of opera. What is unique to *opérette* is the aesthetic of transgression and excess that results from the manipulation and combination of these “vieux jeux,” which I will now consider in more detail.

### **Ba-ta-clan: Transgressions and Excesses**

Humorous transgressions are a defining feature of *opérette*, and indeed of most comic genres. This section will identify characteristic ways in which Offenbach tests aesthetic and social boundaries, with examples drawn from *Ba-ta-clan*. The challenges posed by the text and music of this *opérette* are primarily to the traditional aesthetic ideals of French opera. Even before any words are uttered there are numerous indications of this self-conscious opposition: the *mise en scène* calls for pagodas, a bowl of goldfish, a “pavilion chinois,” and folding chairs to decorate the emperor’s gardens. The fascination of French high culture with oriental objects is evoked by the exotic structures (pagodas and “Chinese” pavilion), but is simultaneously

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<sup>104</sup> Violence is central to the plots of Offenbach’s *Oyayaye*, *Croquefer*, Hervé’s *L’Oeil crevé*, and of course Chabrier’s *L’Étoile*, and it is incidental to many “vaudeville-farces” of Labiche and Feydeau.

defamiliarized by goldfish and folding chairs, props that would have not been found on officially sanctioned stages. The following instructions preface the opening march:

Le Coeur des Conjurés entre en sautillant au son de la marche jouée par l'orchestre; il fait le tour de la scène, et va se ranger au fond du théâtre, toujours en sautillant.—Entre Ko-ko-ri-ko, tenant à la main une énorme lance; il fait également le tour de la scène en sautillant, et va se placer devant le Choeur des Conjurés.— Entre Ké-ki-ka-ko, tenant une paire de cymbales; il se place devant le pliant, à gauche.—Entre Fé-an-nich-ton, tenant à la main un triangle; elle se place devant le pliant, à droite.—Entre Fé-ni-han, portant le chapeau chinois; il s'avance vers le public en caracolant et se place devant les coussins, au milieu de la scène; d'une ruade, Fé-ni-han ordonne à un des Conjurés de le débarasser de son chapeau chinois; d'une autre ruade, il ordonne à Fé-an-nich-ton et à Ké-ki-ka-ko de s'asseoir; puis il s'assied lui-même sur ses coussins.<sup>105</sup>

In accordance with contemporary illustrations, Almeida's score describes the "chapeau chinois" as "equipped with a Chinese gong and little bells capable of producing an annoying clatter."<sup>106</sup> Along with the triangle, cymbals, trombone, tambourine, saxhorn, and saxophone, the "chapeau chinois" forms part of the "Chinese" orchestra that accompanies the "Ba-ta-clan" in the finale. The opening text presses the already somewhat ridiculous scenario to the point of utter nonsense, though posing as poetry with regular patterns of rhyme, alliteration, and meter (each *couplet* is ten syllables):

Cloc, clock, moc, mock  
 Cloc, clock, moc mic loc moc!  
 Cric crac cri quo lot  
 Cric crac lo quo tot

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<sup>105</sup> "The chorus of conspirators enter, hopping to the sound of the march played by the orchestra; they make a tour of the stage and arrange themselves, always hopping.—Enter Ko-ko-ri-ko, carrying an enormous lance, he also makes a tour of the stage, hopping, and places himself in front of the conspirators.—Enter Ké-ki-ka-ko, carrying a pair of cymbals, and takes his position in front of the folding chair, on the left.—Enter Fé-an-nich-ton, carrying a triangle, she takes her place in front of the folding chair on the right.—Enter Fé-ni-han, wearing the Chinese hat; he prances toward the front of the stage and stops in front of the cushions in the middle of the stage. With a kick, Fé-ni-han orders one of the conspirators to remove his hat, with another kick, he orders Fé-an-nich-ton and Ké-ki-ka-ko to sit. He then takes a seat on his cushions." Halévy, *Ba-ta-clan*, 1.

<sup>106</sup> *Ba-ta-clan*, ed. Almeida, 6. See poster illustration reproduced in Almeida, x.

It is in the context of this chorus of conspirators that the four characters are introduced, their names almost undifferentiable from the pseudo-Chinese vocables:

Fé-ni-han! Ké-ki-ka-ko, ploc!  
Fé-ni-han! Ko-ko-ri-ko! (ki ki ki ki ki ki)

The emperor's name is presented again in the context of "Chinese" gibberish in the *galop* of the finale where the text reads: Ba-ta-clan! Ra-ta-plan! Fé-ni-han! Fich-ton-khan! (see Example 2.2). As in the "Cloc, clock, moc, mock" chorus (which might sound more like a mockery of English than of Chinese), the words share morphological features (rhyme and syllabification) with the surrounding verbal constructions. Here, the four words also share the semantic condition of fabricated speech that assumes meaning only for its associations. "Fé-ni-han" is now connected

Example 2.2. *Ba-ta-clan*, from #7, "Le Ba-ta-clan," refrain mm. 56-67.

56

FÉ-AN. *pp*  
Ba-ta-clan Ra-tan-plan Fé-ni-han!  
Ba-ta-clan! Ra-tan-plan! Fé-ni-han!

KÉ-KI.

FÉ-NI. *pp*  
Ba-ta-clan Ra-tan-plan Fé-ni-han!  
Ba-ta-clan! Ra-tan-plan! Fé-ni-han!

*pp*

62

FÉ-AN.  
Fich-ton-khan! Ba-ta-clan! Ra-tan-plan! Fé-ni-han! Fich-ton-khan! Ba-ta-clan!  
*Fich-ton-khan! Ba-ta-clan! Ra-tan-plan! Fé-ni-han! Fich-ton-khan! Ba-ta-clan!*

(imitant la trompette)  
(imitating a trumpet)

KÉ-KI.  
Tata ta tata tata  
Ta ta ta ta ta ta ta

FÉ-NI.  
Fich-ton-khan! Ba-ta-clan! Ra-tan-plan! Fé-ni-han! Fich-ton-khan! Ba-ta-clan,  
*Fich-ton-khan! Ba-ta-clan! Ra-tan-plan! Fé-ni-han! Fich-ton-khan! Ba-ta-clan,*

morphologically with the onomatopoeic battle-cry “ra-ta-plan” from which derives the “Chinese” version, “Ba-ta-clan.” “Fich-ton-khan” is a phoneticization of the idiom “fiche ton camp” (roughly: “hit the road”).<sup>107</sup> So, this seemingly meaningless exclamation could be interpreted to mean: “To arms, to arms!: Fé-ni-han, hit the road.” Ironically, Fé-ni-han himself is singing along, entranced by the irresistible tune. This music itself caricatures the repetitiveness of “ra-ta-plan” numbers frequently encountered in French opera, the examples from *Les Huguenots* and

<sup>107</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, Chabrier composed five numbers of a “Chinese” *opérette* under the title *Fisch-ton-kan* (libretto by Paul Verlaine, 1864) which is based on a “parade chinoise” by Thomas Sauvage and Gabriel de Lurieu (*Fich-Tong-Khan, ou L’Orphelin de la Tartarie*, Palais-Royal, 1835). The following extract from a weekly journal article that appeared in 1860 demonstrates a similar association of this expression with comic *chinoiserie*: “Les indigènes du Céleste-Empire ont les usages les plus bizarres, en tout contraires aux nôtres. Ils sont d’abord affablés de noms baroques, tels que: Path-chough-lih, Fich-tong-khan, Kah-kah-oh-lih, et autres appellations aussi burlesques que peu justifiées.” (The indigenous people of the Celestial Empire have the most bizarre customs, quite unlike our own. First, they are weakened by baroque names, such as Patchouli, Fich-ton-camp, Ca-ca-in-bed, and other appellations as burlesque as they are unjustified.) *Le Journal pour rire, ou Le Journal amusant* 217 (25 February 1860), 2.

Donizetti's then-popular sentimental celebration of military life *La Fille du régiment* (opéra comique, 1840) being the most immediate points of reference.

Example 2.3. *Ba-ta-clan*, from #7, "Le Ba-ta-clan," strophe, mm. 20-29.

20

FÉ-AN. *p*  
 Le cha - peau chi - nois, le trom - bon - ne. Ding ding dingdingding  
 Sound the Chi - nese hat and the trom - bone! — Ding ding dingdingding

KÉ-KI. *p*  
 Le cha - peau chi - nois, le trom - bon - ne, Ta de ra ta ta  
 Sound the Chi - nese hat and the trom - bone! — Ta de ra ta ta

FÉ-NI. *p*  
 Le cha - peau chi - nois, le trom - bon - ne, Boum  
 Sound the Chi - nese hat and the trom - bone! — Boum

25

FÉ-AN. *f*  
 dingdingding dingdingdingdingding, Le tri - an - gle,  
 dingdingding dingdingdingdingding Do just as the

KÉ-KI. *f*  
 ta ta ta ta de ra ta ta ta, Le tri - an - gle,  
 ta ta ta ta de ra ta ta ta Do just as the

FÉ-NI. *f*  
 boum boum boum boum, Le tri - an - gle,  
 boum boum boum boum Do just as the

In addition to the mocking sinologisms found in *Ba-ta-clan*, a linguistic indulgence favored by Offenbach is the use of onomatopoeia. Sounds such as “boum boum,” “piff paff,” and “tzing tzing” appear in most of his comic works, and *Ba-ta-clan* is no exception: non-lexical vocables form the majority of the sung text in the introduction and in the finale. I have already noted the “ra-ta-plan” refrain of the finale, but the strophes also use onomatopoeic sounds. Four-measure phrases of poetic verse alternate with a layered polytextual “refrain”: “ding, ding, ding” represents the bells of the “chapeau chinois;” “ta de ra ta ta ta” is the trumpet call of the “Ba-ta-clan;” and “boum boum boum” lays the bass on the downbeat (see Example 2.3). These words are energized rhythmically and repeated *ad infinitum* and the characters become sound-emitting objects. More regular lyrics are also submitted to excessive repetition, contravening hallowed tradition. For example, in the *duo italien* (an instance of the conventional *duo bouffe*) the opening Italian command “Morto!” is heard no less than twenty-one times in eight measures (see Example 2.4).

Example 2.4. *Ba-ta-clan*, from #5, *duo italien*, mm. 59-71.

59

FÉ-NI.  
Morcel\_lato! Em - pal - la - to! ——— Ké-ki-ka-ko morto! [dansant]  
(dancing)

KO-KO.  
Morcel\_lato! Em - pal - la - to! ——— Ké-ki-ka-ko morto! Morto, morto, morto,

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is for the vocal part of Fé-ni, the middle for Ko-ko, and the bottom for piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: Fé-ni: "Morcel\_lato! Em - pal - la - to! ——— Ké-ki-ka-ko morto! [dansant] (dancing)"; Ko-ko: "Morcel\_lato! Em - pal - la - to! ——— Ké-ki-ka-ko morto! Morto, morto, morto,". The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and a more complex pattern in the left hand, including a section marked *sp* (sforzando).

63  
 KO-KO. *morto! Mor-to, morto, morto, morto! Morto, mor - to, Mor -*

*f p*

*[dansant avec Ko-ko-ri-ko]  
 (joining Ko-ko-ri-ko's dance)*

66 *légèrement*  
 FÉ-NI. *Morto, morto, morto, morto! Morto, morto, morto, morto! Morto mor -*

KO-KO. *to!*

*f p*

*[En s'étreignant il se tournent vers les spectateurs et chantent.]  
 (Clasping each other's arm at the elbow, they face front and sing.) (On entend au loin le chant du Ba-ta-clan.)*

69  
 FÉ-NI. *to! Mor- rit. to! (The song of Ba-ta-clan is heard in the distance.)*

KO-KO. *Mor - to!*

*f* *Pistons.*

Another characteristic Offenbachian form of verbal play, though seen in *Ba-ta-clan* only in spoken dialogue, is the breaking up of words into syllables, sometimes repeating segments to comic effect.<sup>108</sup> The two most celebrated examples are from the 1860s: the chorus of recalcitrant husbands from *La Périchole* (1868) includes the verse

Aux maris ré-  
 Aux maris cal-  
 Aux maris ci-  
 Aux maris trants-  
 Aux maris récalcitrants...

and the resulting wordplay in the *couplets* celebrating the Greek kings in *La Belle Hélène* (1864) is even more humorous:

Je suis l'époux de la reine,  
 -poux de la reine,  
 -poux de la reine, le roi Ménélas!

and later

Le roi barbu qui s'avance,  
 -bu qui s'avance,  
 -bu qui s'avance, c'est Agamemnon!<sup>109</sup>

If this flouts accepted standards of language, so too does *Ba-ta-clan* have a narrative process that is atypical of “high-art” theatrical genres of the period. For instance, it is explicitly stated in various places in the dialogue that the telling of tales is undesirable, but virtually anything is excusable if it serves as a vehicle for indulgence. For example, upon realizing Ké-ki-ka-ko’s French heritage, Fé-an-nich-ton resists hearing his life story:

<sup>108</sup> For example Halévy, *Ba-ta-clan*, 10:

Fe-an: Mais il sera gé...  
 Ke-ki: ...né...  
 Fe-ni: ...reux!

<sup>109</sup> The first phrase translates as “I am the queen’s spouse,” but dropping the “é” reduces the phrase to “I am the queen’s louse.” “The bearded king advances” of the second excerpt, becomes a play on the verb “boire” (to drink) when the first syllable of “barbu” is removed.

Fé-an-nich-ton: Une histoire... c'est ordinairement bien ennuyeux!... mais une histoire en français!... Je vous écoute... je vous écoute!<sup>110</sup>

The dialogue that reveals the preposterous origins of the present conspiracy shamelessly privileges entertaining gags over plot and appears only at the end of the work, immediately preceding the *finale*. It begins:

Fé-ni-han: Non! non! rassurez-vous! Je ne vous conterai pas mon histoire! j'arrive droit au dénouement! il est lugubre.<sup>111</sup>

The scene that follows draws on wordplay (“Fé-ni-han, le vrai, le seul, l’unique...—L’eunuque!—L’unique...—L’eunuque.—Nique—Nuque”), clichés (“Mes cheveux en ont blanchi!—Vous n’en avez pas—C’est une figure”),<sup>112</sup> and shocking imagery (emphasis on Fé-ni-han’s instrument of torture, his impalement stake, which remains very sharp and has now been gold-plated). Finally the explanation for the conspiracy: reigning in complete ignorance of the native language, Fé-ni-han found himself, three months ago, surrounded by an excited crowd; jeers and whistles were directed towards five indigenous men in the front row; quoting the wise Zoroaster (“Dans le doute, empale toujours!”),<sup>113</sup> Fé-ni-han had them promptly impaled. These were, it turns out, the most venerated and honorable men of the empire, recommended for national honorifics. Like most of the “events” pertinent to the plot, this episode took place before the piece begins (yet it is revealed at the very end): it provides a colourful background, but the entertaining details are essentially superfluous to the action at hand. In fact, the only dramatic events of the entire piece that do have any bearing on the denouement are the piecemeal

<sup>110</sup> “A story! This would usually be very tiresome! But a story in French! I’m listening, I’m listening!” From the dialogue preceding Fé-an-nich-ton’s *romance*. Halévy, *Ba-ta-clan*, 2.

<sup>111</sup> “No, no, rest assured. I will not recount my story. I will go straight to the denouement, it is lugubrious.” Halévy, *Ba-ta-clan*, 7.

<sup>112</sup> These two phrases translate as: “Fé-ni-han, the true, the only, the unique—The eunuch!—The unique—Eunuch—Nique—Nuch” and “It turned my hair white—you don’t have any hair—it’s an expression.”

<sup>113</sup> The correct quote, attributed to Zoroaster, is “Dans le doute, abstiens-toi” (“When in doubt, abstain”).

realizations by each of the four characters that the others are French compatriots. This recalls the movement that C.L Barber identifies as basic to Shakespeare's festive comedies: "from release to clarification." In *Ba-ta-clan*, this movement is literalized: revelation supplants plot development, the clarification is not the understanding of nature that Barber observes in Shakespeare (at least not directly), but is the literal clarification of the true identities of the characters.<sup>114</sup>

In *Ba-ta-clan* the first "real" words are not heard until well into the opening number, following 140 measures of chorus and "quatuor chinois." They are proclaimed by Fé-ni-han as dramatic recitative, and accordingly are in senseless Italian, adding a third language to this already "bilingual" *opérette*:

Fé-ni-han: Axaxo! Tapioca, macaroni, fritura!

An easy chuckle is generated with this melodramatic excess, caricaturing the formulaic coloratura displays of Italian opera. But this text does more than provoke a laugh at the histrionic and gastronomic excesses of the Italians: it points to another current in French social life of the mid-nineteenth century and provides an important key to understanding the sensibility of *Ba-ta-clan* and many other Offenbach works. The macaroni was a well-known type of cosmopolite in late eighteenth-century London associated especially with extravagant hairpieces and affected foreign manners, supposedly acquired while "Grand Touring," and widely recognized as a precursor to the nineteenth-century Parisian dandy. An embodiment of bourgeois social

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<sup>114</sup> See Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, 6-10. Barber identifies the "release to clarification" formula as the basic structural element in Shakespeare's festive comedies: "the fundamental method is to shape the loose narrative so that 'events' put its persons in the position of festive celebrants: if they do not seek holiday it happens to them," 6. In terms of the festive atmosphere, characters and audiences demonstrate solidarity in merrymaking, ridiculing inhibitions that are hostile to pleasure as well as to idealism. The mocking of the unnatural that abets the understanding of man's relationship to nature, which constitutes "clarification," only incidentally results in satire. The same might be said of *Ba-ta-clan*, implying that an investigation into the relationship between *opérette* and social custom might reveal connections beneficial to Offenbach scholarship, especially towards the reassessment of the lingering impression of Offenbach's works as primarily satirical.

aspirations, the macaroni was above all a self-made man. Amelia Rauser has argued that as an object of ridicule but also a desirable exemplar in an age fascinated with character and individualism, the macaroni embodies a fundamental paradox. He was also a popular object of caricature.<sup>115</sup> More germane to Offenbach's audience, by the 1830s this species had evolved into the post-Brummellian dandy and become a regular feature of the Parisian boulevards.<sup>116</sup>

Even before the mid-nineteenth century accounts of Barbey d'Aureville and Baudelaire, commentators have stressed issues of refined physical appearance particularly in dress, impassive detachment or reserve, leisurely pursuits, and feigned aristocratic manners—features carried over from the London macaroni—as implicated in the “dandiacal pose” of the mid-nineteenth-century Parisian dandy.<sup>117</sup> Comic variations of the dandy appear in other of Offenbach's works (Paris in *La Belle Hélène*, for example). In *Ba-ta-clan*, the character of Fé-ni-han is the most comprehensive and consistent embodiment of this sensibility, where features of both macaroni and dandy are loosely combined in caricatural proportions. We have already noted the Chinese barbarisms and ludicrous “chapeau chinois” that serve as the affected foreign mannerisms and extravagant “headpiece” definitive of the macaroni character explicitly referenced in the libretto. Other of Fé-ni-han's behaviours resonate with stock macaroni/dandy expressions, most notably his singular ambiguity in sexual comportment. While interpreted variously as heterosexual, homosexual, or asexual, the macaroni is widely considered to have

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<sup>115</sup> Amelia Rauser, “Hair, Authenticity, and the Self-Made Macaroni,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38 (2004), 101-117.

<sup>116</sup> *Ba-ta-clan* is not the only work of this period to mention the word “macaroni”: the *trio italien* of *M. Choufleuri restera chez lui le...* (libretto by Comte de Morny, pseud. “M. de St.-Rémy,” music by Offenbach, 1854) begins with the recitative “Italia la bella, mia bella patria! Bonna pasta frolla... Macaroni buona!,” this is followed by the spoken interjection “Macaroni! ... Comme c'est italien!”; Cariven-Galharret and Ghesquière indicate that Hervé's *Un Ténor très léger* (1855) contains a number titled “Le Macaroni gallant,” 67.

<sup>117</sup> See Jules Barbey d'Aureville, *Du Dandysme et de G. Brummell* (Caen: B. Mancel, 1845); Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life,” in *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, trans. P. E. Charvet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 390-435.

self-consciously challenged hegemonic ideals of masculinity, most obviously in his perceived effeminacy.<sup>118</sup> Indeed, Fé-ni-han's conduct is irreconcilable with conventional notions of masculinity. For example, upon entry, he executes his *ruade*. This kick is more than a nervous tic, it is a mode of communication for the emperor, as the stage directions indicate: "D'une ruade, Fé-ni-han ordonne à un des Conjurés de la débarasser de son chapeau chinois; d'une autre ruade, il ordonne a Fé-an-nich-ton et a Ké-ki-ka-ko de s'asseoir..."<sup>119</sup> When combined with the "raca" command, his kick brings magical powers, but, as he despairs in the dialogue preceding the "Morto! Morto!" duet, these powers are failing him in his darkest hour: "La foudre est sur ma tête, et je vais être privé du secours de mon talisman: Raca! Ces deux syllables et ma ruade magique, mon salut, ma force, mon espérance perdent leur influence sur l'imagination de mon peuple!"<sup>120</sup> Together with the clamour of his gong-hat, the raca-ruade talisman are his best defense against sedition. At one point he is seen blowing kisses to his goldfish, a call to "unmanliness" by any standard.<sup>121</sup>

Fé-ni-han also displays the idleness characteristic of the dandy. We should recall that his name, a near homophone to the French noun "fainéant," defines him as a loafer. He falls asleep on his cushions at various times in the piece. This leisurely attitude, like his effeminate gestures, is humorously exaggerated. His inattention to his responsibilities as emperor renders him so ineffective that he cannot even communicate with his subjects. Together with the misquotation of Zoroaster that he selected as the basis for his imperial ideology, this forms the motivation for the

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<sup>118</sup> Rauser, 106-107.

<sup>119</sup> "With a kick, Fé-ni-han orders one of the conspirators to remove his hat, with another kick, he orders Fé-an-nich-ton and Ké-ki-ka-ko to sit..." Halévy, *Ba-ta-clan*, 1.

<sup>120</sup> "The thunderbolt hangs over my head, and I will be deprived of the security of my talisman: Raca! These two syllables together with my magical *ruade*, my salute, my force, my hope lose their power over the imagination of my people." Halevy, *Ba-ta-clan*, 5.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

revolution at the dramatic core of the piece. The resulting mockery of governmental logic makes a common approach in Offenbach scholarship easily available—these works are often read as satirizing the Second Empire of Napoleon III—but the satire is in this case not an end in itself but a by-product of the dandy’s signature refusal to work hyperbolized.

In the same passage that narrates the tale of the pre-revolutionary impalement, we learn that Fé-ni-han was not, in fact, this creature’s name at birth: he was born Anastase Nourrisson. Again the name reveals the character: literally “nursling,” eternally dependent, naive. The name was given to him, along with his chapeau, raca, and goldfish when he was brought before the “real” Fé-ni-han and forced to inherit the empire.<sup>122</sup> Abhorrent to the dandy/macaroni sensibility, his identity is literally foreclosed. All of his affects—macaronic, dandiacal, and otherwise—were imposed from without, the inverse of the self-made man and inauthenticity in the extreme. Fé-ni-han is wholly artificial, a replica, even, or especially, in his most singular of ways, thus embodying the fundamental paradox of the dandy as unique but reproducible.<sup>123</sup> This artificiality is underlined by the systemic projection of the cliché incognito condition. None of the characters in *Ba-ta-clan* is who he or she seems to be: all are lapsed Parisians in mandarin dress.

Audiences would have identified with the posturings of this fashionable type (overdressed, aloof, effeminate, aristocratic in bearing), but this is not the only source of rapprochement to the world of *Ba-ta-clan*. The piece repeatedly cites landmarks and current events—references to the rue Mouffetard, the chaussée d’Antin, a novel by Paul de Kock, the journal *La Patrie*, the café La Maison Dorée, the dance hall Le Bal Mabille, the operas *Les Huguenots* and *La Juive*, the *vaudeville* adaptation of *La Dame aux camélias*, Boule furniture,

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>123</sup> Rhonda K. Garelick identifies a confusion of reality and fiction at the root of dandyism. Garelick, *Rising Star: Dandyism, Gender, and Performance in the fin de siècle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 6-11. Much of this study focuses on the concept of reproduction, especially pertinent to dandyism in the age of mass culture and the “decadent dandyism” of late nineteenth century.

the newly-invented saxophone are scattered throughout the libretto. By infusing the *opérette* with the sights and sounds of Paris the audience is invited into the fictional world of *Ba-ta-clan*. This world becomes fused with their own, and the boundary of the self-contained artwork is breached. The text of the *trio bouffe* makes the conflation of the two worlds explicit: “Je suis français, il est français! Eh oui, nous sommes tous français.” Addressing the audience directly, or removing the “fourth wall,” is common in *opérette*, especially in the form of sung “Je suis...” introductions.<sup>124</sup> In *Ba-ta-clan* this functions together with topical contemporality to acquire audience complicity in the transgressions performed by the *opérette* against accepted standards of art, language, dress, and gender identity.

### ***Ba-ta-clan*: Musical Humour**

Although conceived very differently, the music of *Ba-ta-clan* undermines aesthetic ideals as overtly as does the text. In the libretto we find traditional gestures replaced with comic antics that are uniquely formulated and explicitly topical, standards of taste and autonomy are systematically violated. As already indicated, the music embraces old formulas to a degree that could be interpreted as insultingly conformist. Instead of musical portraiture and *dramma per musica*, which are as antithetical to *opérette* as they are championed in opera, the music operates largely as a generalized and neutralizing parallel to the libretto. In direct contrast to the idealized “marriage of text and music” of art, the two are more likely to exhibit a relationship approaching mutual obliviousness.

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<sup>124</sup> These unabashedly histrionic introductions destroy any semblance of verisimilitude and are ubiquitous in pre-1870 *opérette* and *opéra bouffe*. For example, in *Orphée aux enfers* we find arias beginning “Moi, je suis Aristée” and the closely related “Quand j’étais roi de Béotie,” the second act opens with an ensemble containing sections beginning “Je suis Cupidon” and “Je suis Vénus.” The first words uttered in the work, as mentioned above, are “Qui suis-je?”

There is one example of musical humour as “against the rules” that plays directly to this insensitive text-music relationship—Offenbach’s signature “bad prosody.”<sup>125</sup> The first instance of sung French lyrics demonstrates text setting that is awkward enough to be considered intentional, a mockery of a hallowed tradition that dates back to Lully’s artfully sculpted *récitatives*, in operatic terms, and the protectionism that the French are known to exhibit towards their linguistic heritage, in general (see Example 2.5). The eighth-note passages stress inappropriate syllables by putting them on the beat, resulting in an apparently arbitrary approach to text setting: the trochaic setting of “j’*étais* aimable” is in direct conflict with the French *accent tonique*, and most of the naturally stressed syllables are placed on off-beats.<sup>126</sup> The prolonged second syllable of “jadis” (once, or formerly) is unexpected in purely musical terms after the steady eighth-note pattern of the introduction and the first vocal phrase, and the agogic accent emphasizes the awkward unidirectional “run and jump” normally avoided as inelegant. The highest pitch coming at the end of the musical unit gives the effect of an expectant question mark. All of this plays into the semantic illogicality of setting the words “and once” at the end of a phrase. The corresponding event in the next phrase is even more pronounced: “mes beaux yeux . . . me donnant.”

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<sup>125</sup> In one of the only rigorous musical analyses published that addresses the repertory of “light opera,” Robert Fink (though not focusing on the production of humour) identifies “original” prosody as a valuable characteristic of Sullivan’s musical setting of Gilbertian lyrics. He concludes that, “‘good declamation’ . . . is by no means a clear-cut virtue . . . it is not the adaptable ‘suppleness’ of Sullivan’s rhythm but rather its stubborn *resistance* to stock poetic meters that creates settings of memorable and lasting worth.” Fink, “Rhythm and Text Setting in *The Mikado*,” *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 14 (1990), 46.

<sup>126</sup> Offenbach could have set the *e muets* of “aimable” and “jeune,” as was customary in French vocal music, and achieved twelve-syllable lines of classic alexandrines (though the accent patterns are incorrect), but opted instead for asymmetrical hendecasyllabic phrases.

Example 2.5. *Ba-ta-clan*, from #2, *romance*, mm. 4-12.

4  
FÉ-AN.

1<sup>r</sup> COUP! J'é-tais ai-mable é-lé-gan-te, Et ja-dis  
 2<sup>e</sup> COUP! Adieu, chants de ma jeu-nesse, Que ma voix  
*1st Couplet How I wish you'd seen me as I used to be!*  
*2nd Couplet I con-fess that I had lov-ers by the score,*

7  
FÉ-AN.

Je brillais, jeune et charmante, À Pa-ris! Je régnais en souve-rai-ne,  
 Murmu-rait a-vec i-vresse Aut-re-fois! Adieu, mes rêves d'enfan-ce!  
*When I was so young and charming in Pa-ree! I was sing-ing op-er-a at an*  
*Ev-'ry night they'd line up at my bou-doir door! We would dine on cav-i-ar and*

10  
FÉ-AN.

Mes beaux yeux Me domant u-ne dou-zai-ne D'a-moureux! Ah! Qui  
 Plus d'es-poir! Je ne dois plus pauvre France, Te-re-voir! Ah! Qui  
*ear-ly age. All of Pa-ris called me di-va On and off the stage! Ah! Who'll*  
*fine French wine! Dance un-til the dawn was break-ing- My it was di-vine! Ah! Who'll*  
 Clar Cor et Bassou

rit. rit. vite SOLO

*Opérette* texts can be manhandled even more abruptly. Textual units are sometimes treated like musical motives, subjected to techniques such as fragmentation, repetition, and augmentation. Instances of text repetition and words fragmented into syllables have already been cited. As unsurprising as it is to find vowel sounds elaborated by melismas and roulades in vocal music of all genres, the guttural *r*, that most stereotyped of French sounds, is an extremely unlikely phoneme for elongation, yet the *duo italien* finds Fé-ni-han and Ko-ko-ri-ko facing off to the sounds of “Rrrrrrrrraca!” and “Morrriiiiiirto!” (see Example 2.6).

Example 2.6. *Ba-ta-clan*, from #5, *duo italien*, mm. 31-33.

The image shows a musical score for three parts: Fé-ni-han (top), Ko-ko-ri-ko (middle), and piano accompaniment (bottom). The score is in 2/4 time and begins at measure 31. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The vocal lines are in treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in bass clef. The lyrics for Fé-ni-han are "Haca! Haca! Rrrrrrrrraca! Rrrrrra - ca!". The lyrics for Ko-ko-ri-ko are "Morto! Morto Morrriiiiiirto! Morrriiiiiirto!". The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and a similar pattern in the left hand. The score ends with the tempo marking "All<sup>to</sup> Mod<sup>to</sup>".

At times, the voice is treated like an orchestral instrument. Numerous examples can be found in this work but the most prominent is Ké-ki-ka-ko’s trumpet fanfare in the “Ba-ta-clan” anthem (also known as the “Chinese marseillaise,” see Example 2.7).<sup>127</sup> After four statements of the fanfare head motive he sings a continuation phrase in extremely high register (see m. 75; this is marked falsetto in Almeida’s score), the tenor voice is now twice removed from its “natural”

<sup>127</sup> I have added measure numbers in square brackets to several of the musical examples in this dissertation, some examples also include annotations; these editorial markings are for the convenience of the reader and do not appear in the original printed scores.





Example 2.8. *Ba-ta-clan*, from #7, *final*, m. 304-308.

304

*(parlé)*  
*(spoken)*

FÉ-AN.  
- tère! une deux trois Mys-tère infer-nal in-fer-nal! ah  
- y! One! Two! Three! A grim mys-ter-y! Mys-ter-y! Ah

KÉ-KI.  
Mys-tère infer-nal in-fer-nal!  
A grim mys-ter-y! Mys-ter-y!

FÉ-NI.  
Mys-tère infer-nal in-fer-nal!  
A grim mys-ter-y! Mys-ter-y!

KO-KO-RI-KO  
*(sortant du groupe des Conjurés (parlé)*  
*et s'avancant vers le public) (spoken)*

*(stepping out of the group of* **une deux trois quatre in-fer-nal!**  
*Conspirators and moving toward* **One! Two! Three! Four! Mys-ter-y!**  
*the audience)*

FÉ-AN.  
*[subtilisant la première place sur scène]*  
*(quickly taking the stage from her)*

KÉ-KI.  
*très vite.*  
Destin fatal fatal fatal!  
*Cruel stroke of fate! O fa-tal fate!*

KÉ-KI. *Des-tin fa - tal*  
*Cruelstroke of fate!* [pour ne pas être en reste]  
 (not to be out-done)

FÉ-NI. *Ba pa pa*  
*Ba pa pa pa pa pa pa pa pa pa pa*

(9) (9)lento. (*a piacere*)

world of serious opera), and Fé-ni-han, “grand idiot” (as he is addressed in said letter), sputters pathetically to exhaustion attempting to show up his rival.

These types of surface level gestures can be found in strophic numbers and in the more complex structures of *opérette*. The non-strophic numbers, however, tend to be more thoroughly humorous and to manipulate borrowed material or established convention through travesty and caricature (satirical transformation and satirical imitation respectively), the most common forms of larger-scale musical humour.<sup>128</sup> Material is obviously appropriated, and the inherent incongruity of “high art” objects found in a popular context is supplemented by a maximum misalignment between the borrowed material and its musical or dramatic surroundings. The “Morto, morto” duet, for example, is a satirical imitation of a *bel canto* duet. The Italian text makes the Italian model explicit; the repetition of barbarous words declares the humorous intent: “Morto, morto! Poignardato! Étranglato! Déchirato! Morcellato! Empallato!” As in caricature,

<sup>128</sup> Often referred to as “parody,” satirical imitation is what Genette more precisely calls *caricature*, see Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 25 and 89-98. On *travesty*, which Genette defines as satirical transformation, see, 25 and 56-73.

select identifying features of the model are singled out and exaggerated: the obvious butts of the *bel canto* aria or duet are the repetitive text and its vivid imagery, and the decorated lyricism. Other fundamental elements are preserved, such as the regularized accompaniment patterns and the formulaic four-movement structure (*tempo d'attacco* dialogue; dramatically static *cantabile*; startling revelation in *tempo di mezzo*; new perspective for fast *cabalette*). Exaggerating features characteristic of *bel canto* opera speaks to the perceived excesses of the melodramatic style, itself viewed as unnatural to French audiences who distinctly valued “precision, simplicity, clarity.”

As *bel canto* opera was a favourite object of ridicule for *opérette* composers, so too were the major German operas and French *grands opéras*, particularly those of Meyerbeer. The more successful and pompous the better, which made Meyerbeer's 1836 blockbuster *Les Huguenots* an especially susceptible target. In the *Ba-ta-clan* finale, Fé-ni-han, facing imminent assassination, opts to die “comme dans *Les Huguenots*.” Over a leading-tone tremolo Fé-ni-han *et al.* fall to their knees for an in-full-earnest statement of the “Ein' feste Burg” chorale, a quote of the harmonized chorale as heard *Huguenots* Act 5, scene iii (melody, rhythm, and vocal texture are reproduced exactly, an adjustment to the harmony is made at the end of each four-measure statement to allow for the “ta ta ta” continuation in the *Ba-ta-clan* example; compare Examples 2.9a, m. 280ff. and 2.9b).<sup>129</sup> The noisy ruckus of the finale is brought to a temporary halt by this moment of “high drama,” but an abrupt return of the “Ba-ta-clan” fanfare jolts the listener back to the world of low comedy. One familiar rallying cry rubs against another as the phrases of the chorale are interspersed with phrases of the “Chinese marseillaise.” The humour does not result from manipulations of these materials for they are quoted directly and with the vocal parts in

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<sup>129</sup> Example 2.9b is reproduced from Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Les Huguenots: opéra en cinq actes* (Paris: Brandus, c. 1860).

simple unison, but from the unusual relationships that they hold with each other and with their musical and dramatic surroundings. Both of these melodies are quotations of quotations, and bring complex intertextual associations. “Ein’ feste Burg” was an emblem of Protestant solidarity long before Meyerbeer gave it a central symbolic role in the greatest operatic success of the nineteenth-century French stage. The opening phrase instantly evokes notions of religion, French political history, mass murder, and also the artistic legitimacy of the *grand opéra* tradition. The “Ba-ta-clan” fanfare, while its “ta ta ta” gunfire imitation cleverly points to the gunfire also heard in the Act 5 finale of *Huguenots*, represents the ridiculous un-Chinese sounding conspirators hovering murderously nearby and is emblematic of their saturnalian world.

In purely musical terms, the stately and dignified chorale (see mm. 280-283 and 285-288), with its *forte* declamation, stepwise melodic profile, tremolo accompaniment, and changing harmonies, offers a complete contrast to the perky sixteenth-note arpeggiations with march accompaniment delivered *piano* over an unchanging tonic harmony, with which they are juxtaposed (see mm. 283-284 and 289-290). The two phrases are interlocked by elision and harmonic continuation and are repeated sequentially as a unit, ratcheted up with mechanical inevitability and increasing in “suspense” with every step. Three repetitions and the “machine” is brought down with the abrupt appearance of what might be the most clichéd prop of comic theatre, the unexpected letter. This episode is as quickly brought on as it is forgotten, for immediately before Fé-ni-han calls up the model of *Les Huguenots* he is to be found scurrying around to the cowardly strains “A ma mort, je le sens, non, non, non, non, non, non, je ne survivrai pas!” (see Example 2.9a, mm. 256-264). The verisimilitude of this frantic scampering is broken with an overt declaration of the appropriation of an old model: the patterns required of

Example 2.9a. *Ba-ta-clan*, from #7, "Le Ba-ta-clan," mm. 256-290.

256

FÉ-NI.

A ma mort je le sens non, non, non, non, non, non, je  
 Now I fear death is near! no, no, no, no, no, no, I

262

FÉ-NI.

Même Mouv! KÉ-KI-KA-KO FÉ-AN .

ne sur - vi - vrai pas! Il s'agit de montrer du toupet\* Du cou.  
 do not want to die! We have to show some nerve and be brave. And cou-

268

FÉ-AN.

-ra-ge!  
 -ra-geous!

FÉ-NI.

Que je vou - drais m'échap - per de ces lieux! Comme dans les Hugue.  
 How I would love to es - cape from this place! So let's make a fi - ral

273

FÉ-AN. *Chantons!  
Opera!*

KÉ-KI. *Chantons!  
Opera!*

FÉ-NI. *nots mes a mis avec ra ge chantons, comme des furi eux!*  
*stand now, my friends! Let's sing opera at them, as in Les Hugue-nots!*

(Entrent Ko-ko-ri-ko et les Conjurés, parvenus au dernier degré de l'exaspération. Fé-ni-han, Fé-an-nich-ton et Ké-ki-ka-ko marchent à leur rencontre, en se tenant unis tous trois et en mêlant le refrain du Ba-ta-clan au choral du cinquième acte des Huguenots.)

(Ko-ko-ri-ko and the Conspirators enter, provoked beyond endurance. Fé-ni-han, Fé-an-nich-ton and Ké-ki-ka-ko march to meet the Conspirators head on, defiantly incorporating the Choral from the fifth act of Meyerbeer's Les Huguenots with the song of the Ba-ta-clan. The Conspirators rebel after each statement of the Choral.)

279

FÉ-AN. *f* Ho - san - na! Mort - je t'ai - - -  
*(tombant aux genoux)* Ho - san - na, mort, - je t'ai - - -  
*(falling to their knees)*

KÉ-KI. *f* Ho - san - na! Mort - je t'ai - - - ta ta  
Ho - san - na, mort, - je t'ai - - - ta ta

FÉ-NI. *f* Ho - san - na! Mort - je t'ai - - -  
Ho - san - na, mort, - je t'ai - - -



Example 2.9b. *Les Huguenots*, from Act 5, scene iii, “Ein’ feste Burg” chorale.

V. *ff* Ho - san - na! Mort, — je

R. *ff* Ho - san - na! Mort, — je

M. *ff* Ho - san - na! Mort, — je

*ff*

V. tai - - mel Ho - san - na! Ter - re,

R. tai - - mel Ho - san - na! Ter - re,

M. tai - - mel Ho - san - na! Ter - re,

*ff* Ab - jurez!

*ff*

The image shows a musical score for three vocal parts (V, R, M) and piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are in French and have the lyrics: "terre, a - dieu! Viens, mort je t'ai - me, viens,". The piano part has the lyrics: "Dieu le veut! Renégats,". The score includes dynamic markings like *ff* and *f*.

humour are established with calculated illogicality and broken unexpectedly, but utmost transparency is always maintained.

A more singular instance of musical humour is found in the *quatuor chinois* episode of the opening number. This number derives its main punch from the playful undermining of established patterns. An extended introduction gradually introduces a series of contrasting ostinatos (Example 2.10). The repeated staccato dominant ( $V^{4/2}$ ) gives a rhythmic energy and harmonic suspense to the passage; the two-measure vocal unit is humorous as artless nonsense and forms the basis of an ostinato that is subject to increasingly ludicrous “ornamentation” (oscillations around the dominant triad). The first three entries of this vocal unit are punctuated with high-register triangle chirps, and in measure 234 a descending woodwind arpeggio, always on dominant harmony, enters the pattern. By measures 239-240 the accumulating patterns reach maximum density. Process (towards saturation) appears retrospectively to have been an end in

itself for by measure 245 the texture dissolves down to a single sustained pitch. This leads to the quartet proper where, essentially, the same process is repeated in protracted form and with new materials. Systematically, ostinatos accumulate piecemeal, “snowballing” in controlled four-measure chunks into a ludicrous cacophony.

A single-measure accompaniment pattern (march topic) is repeated throughout the quartet proper. Ké-ki-ka-ko enters with a four-measure pattern made up of one-measure cells that match Fé-an-nich-ton’s opening vocalise exactly in pitch and contour. His second statement forms a counterpoint to Fé-ni-han’s entry, a jaunty dance tune, also four measures (the use of triplets in the first clashes with the eighth notes in the second). Similarly, Fé-an-nich-ton and Ko-ko-ri-ko enter with a bombastic bass-line and a lyrical ornamented melody respectively. Example 2.11 is an excerpt from the end of this section. At measure 272 all four characters restate their ostinatos (Fé-an-nich-ton’s is a variation of her original phrase) and the humour of the unusually high density and marked contrast between the voices is evident. The incompatibility of the contrasting musical topics is underscored by incompatible texts, each character is limited to a different vowel sound (“Ma-xa-la cha-la-xa”/ “Ri-bi-xi midississi”/ “Tur-nus-sus-su pu-nug ussu”/ “Mo-lo to-to do do do”). Offenbach again caricatures the rational discourse of language and exposes its materiality. The mutual exclusivity of the different sounds systematically constrains the characters and allows this moment to literalize the incommunicability on which farce depends.

Example 2.10. *Ba-ta-clan*, from #1, *quatuor chinois* from *marche, choeur, et quatuor chinois*, mm. 225-245.

225 *Moderato*  
FÉ-AN-NICH-TON

Maxa - la. Chapala.

*Moderato*  
*p*

229  
FÉ-AN.  
- xa! Rapafa - xa! Hafa -

233  
FÉ-AN.  
- xa! Danara - xa! Fanara -

237  
FÉ-AN.  
- xa! Canara - ta! Asana -

241  
FÉ-AN.  
- xa! ah ah ah ah ah!

The musical score is for a piece in 2/4 time, marked *Moderato*. It features a vocal line (FÉ-AN) and a piano accompaniment. The piano part consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the left hand and chords in the right hand. The vocal line includes lyrics in French and Chinese characters. The score is divided into five systems, each starting with a measure number (225, 229, 233, 237, 241). The key signature has one sharp (F#). The tempo is *Moderato*. The piano part is marked *p* (piano). The vocal line includes lyrics: 'Maxa - la. Chapala.', '- xa! Rapafa - xa! Hafa -', '- xa! Danara - xa! Fanara -', '- xa! Canara - ta! Asana -', and '- xa! ah ah ah ah ah!'. There are triplets and slurs in the vocal line. The piano part has a 'Triang.' marking in the first system and a 'Basso' marking in the third system.



276 two-measure extension galop, based on rhythm of Fé-ni-han's ostinato

*très sec et pp*

FÉ-AN. Ba - pa - la - xa ra - fa - xa! Ma - xal - la - la

KÉ-KI. Ri - bi - xi miris - si, fi - li - ti grissis - si! Ri - bi - xi - xi

FÉ-NI. Tur - nus - sus - su pu - nu - gus - su! Tur - nus - sus - su

KO-KO. Mol lo to to! Mol - lo to - to

*très sec et pp*

*léger.*

279

FÉ-AN. cha pa la xa ra pa ta xa, ra pa ta xa fa na fa na xa!

KÉ-KI. mi ris sis si mi ris sis si, ri bi xi xi mi ris sis sis si!

FÉ-NI. pu nu gussu pu nu gussu, mur lu tus su tus lu tur lu tu!

KO-KO. mol lo to to do do do do, do mo lo xo co bo co bo lo!

Where to go after such a climax? What continuation would do justice to this contrapuntal “tour de force”? A brief extension (mm. 276-277) leads to the inevitable and the homorhythmic *galop* emerges (m. 278), as completely unexpected as it might be in the context. The arrival of the *galop*, the very signature of *opérette*, brings epiphany.<sup>130</sup> Dance epitomizes the human drive and subjugates the mechanical. The exotic, better to say strange, becomes familiar. The process is akin to anthropomorphization and through it two future developments are foreshadowed. First, these “mandarins” are exposed as French, for who but the French would succumb so irresistibly to the suggestion of a *galop*? And secondly, we get an isolated glimpse into Fé-ni-han’s true character. It was he, after all, who first suggested this dance tune and this *galop* is merely a melodic variation of his four-measure subject. It is now taken up by the entire ensemble as if under hypnosis. Fé-ni-han’s secret is revealed; he is the unwitting comic mastermind, the archetypal “winner who looks like a loser,” whose eventual escape from his own stupidity is not the result of sheer luck that is appears, but the blessed invulnerability of universal comic heroism.

Maurice Charney begins his classic book *Comedy High and Low* by identifying comedy as rhetorical, as “an art of persuasion, that tries to move its audience to laughter.”<sup>131</sup> A rhetoric of comedy implies a paradox that lies at the heart of any humorous effort: to provoke laughter is to *deliberately* bring about an involuntary, non-rational reaction.<sup>132</sup> Comic theatre achieves and

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<sup>130</sup> On the origins and musical characteristics of the *galop*, see, Andrew Lamb, "Galop," in *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed 9 May 2011).

<sup>131</sup> Charney, *Comedy High and Low*, 9.

<sup>132</sup> For more on this, in the context of an informative and concise discussion of comedy and its dramatic elements, see Charney, “Introduction,” in *Comedy: A Geographic and Historical Guide*, ed. Charney, 1-8.

sustains comic momentum through the inventive combination of various established devices; it maximizes the creative potential of its constraints. These constraints (verbal, structural, characterological) are remarkably familiar and are transparently incorporated. Differences in emphasis and degree distinguish different genres of comedy, and the uniqueness and success of any given work is a result of the author's creative approach to the stock elements. In the best comedies, one pleasingly unexpected spin on a familiar formula follows another, while a unifying aesthetic maintains generic coherence.

The *bêtises* and *banalités* of *Ba-ta-clan* are endemic to early *opérette*, and their purpose, to bring about *le fou rire*, is rhetorical. The twists and gags are underscored by a rationality that is inevitably pressed to absurd extremes. Conventional procedures from official opera and from "low" comedy are manipulated to humorously push the limits of taste and propriety. The excesses of the libretto (verbal, semantic, topical) are justified by the comic end; the humour, particularly its most pointed and vulgar gestures, is glossed over by the calculated rationality of highly stylized music, with which it exists in a quasi-tangential relationship. The music brings its own self-contained festivity, its invulnerable formulas and its repetitive dance patterns work together to ascertain the acquiescence of the text and of the audience.

### **Hervé, Offenbach, and *opéra bouffe***

Hervé is the stage name of one self-styled "compositeur toqué," who for a time also worked as an organist under his real name, Florimond Ronger.<sup>133</sup> *Opérette* lore accepts Hervé as the true "father" of the genre, but his success was quickly eclipsed by that of Offenbach. Hervé made a comeback in the late 1860s by following Offenbach's model of the three-act *opéra*

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<sup>133</sup> *Le Compositeur toqué* is the title of an early one-act "bouffonnerie musicale" by Hervé (1854); the familiar term "toqué" translates roughly as "crazy." Hervé also worked under the pseudonyms of Jules Brémont, Louis Heffer, and Alcindor, see Cariven-Galharret and Ghesquière, 71-72 and 119-120.

*bouffe*, just as Offenbach had built on Hervé's one-act model in the 1850s.<sup>134</sup> By the late 1860s Offenbach's popularity was beginning to decline, a development exacerbated by the romantic tendencies that began to infiltrate his works beginning with *La Périchole* of 1868.<sup>135</sup>

Strategically timed premieres of three Hervé works would rejuvenate the career of this singular composer (and librettist, actor, conductor, and director): *L'Oeil crevé* (Folies-Dramatiques, 1868) opened six months to the day after Offenbach's *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein* premiered at the Variétés; *Chilpéric* (Folies-Dramatiques, 1868) within three weeks of *La Périchole*; and *Le Petit Faust* (Folies-Dramatiques, 1869) less than two months after Gounod's expanded *Faust* opened at the Opéra. Despite the enormous popular success of these works in Paris and abroad, Hervé has remained an obscure figure in musicological discussions of *opérette*, typically consigned as an amusing curiosity to parenthetical comments, and his music remains even more neglected than Offenbach's.<sup>136</sup>

To a large degree, *opéra bouffe* was an enlargement of comic *opérette* into three acts. It was enormously popular in the years following theatre deregulation of 1864, playing at various theatres in Paris, most notably Offenbach's Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens. Generically it shared many conventions and aesthetic qualities with *opérette*: stereotyped characters and scenarios, strophic *couplets*, patter in rapid tempi, and dance forms were combined to create an atmosphere

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<sup>134</sup> With over 100 works each, both Offenbach and Hervé were highly prolific, and lacking official recognition and governmental subsidy, their efforts were necessarily entrepreneurial. Both were constantly concerned with publicity and financial support, took on roles other than composer and conductor, led troupes on international tours while still on the boards of Paris theatres, and benefited from their association with celebrated female actor-singers. The infamous Hortense Schneider worked intermittently with Offenbach from 1855 (*Les Violoneux*) until 1868 (*La Périchole*). He brought Zulma Bouffar to Paris in 1864 upon discovering her in Hamburg. Headlining in *La Vie parisienne* and *Les Brigands*, she would star in his shows until 1875. Likewise, Hervé attracted attention with Blanche d'Antigny's saucy presence in his *Chilpéric* and *Le Petit Faust* (she would be the inspiration for Zola's *Nana*), and he was later associated with Anna Judic, the resident soprano of the Variétés; Traubner, 22, 23, 25.

<sup>135</sup> Gammond, 96.

<sup>136</sup> I am aware of one major study completed to date on the works of Hervé, Pascal Blanchet's recent dissertation, "La contribution de Florimond Ronger, dit Hervé au développement de l'opérette (1848-1870): éléments biographiques et mécanismes du comique" (Ph.D. diss., Université de Montréal, 2010). I have been unable to consult this document as of the time of this writing.

of unpretentious festivity and *bouffe* hilarity. Profanation of the revered continued to be a dominant goal of the humour. Manipulation of borrowed operatic materials is supplemented with topical references to current socio-political events and to institutions that are sometimes generalized (bourgeois values, military “intelligence”) and sometimes very precise (the Champs-Élysées, Napoleon III), but are rarely entirely absent. Likewise ubiquitous are comic superficialities of farce such as violence, miscommunication, disguise, and word play.

The *opéras bouffes* of Hervé and Offenbach were usually in three acts, and the librettists typically worked in teams (except when Hervé wrote his own librettos, a situation more common for his one-act works). The genre was more standardized than the relatively experimental *opérettes*, which is reflected in more consistent generic labeling. Early published scores of Offenbach’s *La Belle Hélène*, *La Grande-Duchesse*, *La Périchole*, and *La Vie parisienne* and Hervé’s *L’Oeil crevé*, *Chilpéric*, and *Le Petit Faust* all indicate *opéra bouffe* as their genre.

There are pronounced contrasts between the styles of Offenbach and Hervé. In general, Offenbach’s *spectacles de bon goût* are almost benignly amusing relative to Hervé’s wild and risqué inanities. Hervé’s librettos often contain familiar and vulgar expressions, and dialogues demonstrate, in Richard Traubner’s words, a “genial unstructuredness” and the use of non-sequiturs and other “absurd” verbal techniques possibly anticipate modern theatrical procedures.<sup>137</sup> The humour is more connected to current events, which might partially explain the shorter lifespan of these works. Hervé’s music is less operatic than Offenbach’s and is arguably less polished. His extended musical numbers follow comparatively simple structural designs. His treatment of borrowed material will be discussed in greater detail in the sections that follow, but in general it is broader and less cleverly incorporated than is Offenbach’s. The *bêtises*

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 22.

of *Ba-ta-clan* were considerably toned down in Offenbach's big pieces of the 1860s, and by the time of *Duchesse* one might say that Offenbach has lost his *bouffe* "edge." But even *Ba-ta-clan* seems domesticated and sexless compared to the outlandishness found in Hervé's work.

These basic differences support the suggestion that the two composers, while both writing *opéras bouffes* in the 1860s, approached the genre from distinct generic perspectives. Offenbach consciously sought a connection with the *opéra comique* tradition and the legitimacy it bestowed. Before the seminal year of 1855, Offenbach attached the term *opéra comique* to the majority of his works,<sup>138</sup> and he strove throughout his career for a success at the Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. The most explicit statement of this self-conscious affiliation is found in an article that Offenbach published early in his career. In the 20 July 1856 issue of *Le Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, he announced that the Bouffes would be holding a competition for a one-act *opérette*, open to young composers of France.<sup>139</sup> The conditions of the competition are prefaced with a 1500-word "manifestorial" essay that provides a mini-history of *opéra comique* and clearly outlines his vision of the new genre: "Le théâtre des Bouffes Parisiens veut essayer de ressusciter le genre primitif et vrai [de l'opéra-comique]."<sup>140</sup> Offenbach laments the denaturing

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<sup>138</sup> See "List of Works" in Faris, 236-251. Faris has compiled the details of the stage works from vocal scores. As noted previously, inconsistent usage of terms between scores, librettos, *affiches*, and *registres* complicate considerations of genre in this repertory. Disparities can be found between Faris's list of works and the catalogue found in Andrew Lamb, "Offenbach, Jacques," in *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed August 18, 2009).

<sup>139</sup> *Le Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 20 July 1856; reprinted in *Le Ménestrel*, 27 July 1856.

<sup>140</sup> "The Bouffes-Parisiens wishes to try to revive the true original genre [of *opéra comique*]." The passage continues, as translated in Faris, 56-57: "Our very license puts us under an obligation to do so. So far we have concentrated on keeping to this idea, but we feel that our efforts should go further. Without any pretensions, still working in a modest and limited sphere, we think we can do a great service to art and artist. We have had some success in reviving the form of the musical sketches of the old *opéra-comique* and the kind of farce that produced the theatre of Cimarosa and the first Italian masters. We intend, not only to go on with this, but also to mine the inexhaustible vein of French gaiety of the past. Our only ambition is to 'write short', but if you think about it for a moment that is no mean ambition. In an opera that lasts barely three quarters of an hour, where one may only have four characters on stage, and an orchestra of thirty musicians at most, the ideas and melodies have to be in hard cash. Note, too, that with this restricted orchestra—which was after all enough for Mozart and Cimarosa—it is very difficult to conceal the mistakes and lack of experience which would be covered up in an orchestra of eighty musicians.

of the genre's purity, simplicity, and wit through complexities and pomposities inflicted at the behest of public taste. Evoking the authority of the hallowed tradition, and publicly acknowledging his debt, he clearly positions himself as its saviour, as the custodian of the "genre éminemment français."<sup>141</sup>

Hervé, for his part, developed his art on more popular foundations. The physical location of his theatre on the boulevard du Temple (number 41) alone testifies to this. Popularly known as the "boulevard du crime," the theatre district around Temple was then the favoured destination for bourgeois theatregoers in search of vicarious slumming.<sup>142</sup> Jean-Claude Yon reports that within two months of opening, Hervé's Folies-Nouvelles had become a very fashionable success.<sup>143</sup> The rowdy patrons, lubricated with "sucres d'orge à l'absinthe" served in the lobby café, were a mixture of high society and demi-mondains. The name of his theatre also indicates popular roots: it was originally named Les Folies-Concertantes, and later, Les Folies-Nouvelles. The term "folies" can also be found in Hervé's titles and subtitles, for example *Les Folies dramatiques* (1853) is a "vaudeville," and *Un Drame en 1779* (1855), a "folie musicale."<sup>144</sup> John

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Far be it from us to be reactionary or to disparage new techniques. We do not say that looking back to the past is the last word in progress; but, granted that the genre we are developing under the licence of the Bouffes-Parisiens is only the first step on the ladder, there still has to be a first step if we are to climb any higher. The present demands of *opéra-comique* can easily put a young composer under a strain; one has to be a writer of experience to attempt a three-act work without tripping up. With rare exceptions no one can do it successfully until his talent has matured."

<sup>141</sup> In a valuable recent contribution to Offenbach scholarship, Mark Everist chronicles Offenbach's appropriation of music of the "long eighteenth century as one of several strategies . . . for the aesthetic positioning of his Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens." Everist, "Jacques Offenbach: The Music of the Past and the Image of the Present," in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830-1914*, eds. Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 97.

<sup>142</sup> For more on the boulevard du Temple and its romanticization, see McCormick, 14-16.

<sup>143</sup> Yon, "La création du théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens," 577-578. For more on Hervé's theatres of the 1850s, see note 73, above.

<sup>144</sup> See catalogue of works in Cariven-Galharret and Ghesquière, 196-199.

McCormick, in his book *Popular Theatres of Nineteenth-Century France*, equates “folies” with the genre of “vaudeville-farce.”<sup>145</sup>

*Vaudeville* also appears in the catalogue of Hervé’s works,<sup>146</sup> particularly at the beginning of his career (his first dramatic piece, *L’Ours et le pacha*, after Scribe, is termed “vaudeville musicale”) and again at the end (a series of successful “vaudeville-opérettes” beginning in 1879, which includes his most enduring work, *Mam’zelle Nitouche*).<sup>147</sup> By the 1850s one branch of *vaudeville* had already begun its upward trajectory towards the respectability of literary art. Labiche’s *Le Chapeau de paille d’Italie* of 1851 is considered a masterpiece of mid-century “vaudeville de mouvement,” combining elements of the “well-made play” with farce, at dizzying speed; its author was held in high enough esteem to be the first “farceur” elected to the Académie française in 1880. McCormick recounts Théophile Gautier’s complaint that in 1842 it was “necessary to go to the smaller theatres such as the Folies-Dramatiques, the Délassements-Comiques or even the Petit Lazari” to find *vaudevilles* of the original and simple cast.<sup>148</sup> It is worth noting that it was at the Folies-Dramatiques that Hervé had had his big works of the 1860s premiered, and that he had been conductor at the Délassements-Comiques from 1859-1862.

“Pantomime” is another term associated with popular entertainment, being one of the genres routinely named on the licenses of secondary theatres following the decree of 1807. It also appears twenty-six times in Hervé’s work (all dating from the period 1854-56) as opposed to only three times in Offenbach’s (in all three of these instances the works bear a *commedia*

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<sup>145</sup> McCormick, 120.

<sup>146</sup> In contrast to Hervé, the term “folie” is never found in the catalogue of Offenbach’s works and “vaudeville” is associated only with one very early essay, *Pascal et Chambord* of 1839; Faris, 236-251.

<sup>147</sup> These works are indicated as “comédie-opérette” in Cariven-Galharret and Ghesquière’s appendix, but the two terms are described as interchangeable in the text, see 145.

<sup>148</sup> McCormick, 131.

dell'arte theme).<sup>149</sup> McCormick describes pantomime as a genre that was especially volatile and difficult to define, but always included dumbshow accompanied by music. These types of shows were seen in the fairgrounds and at the secondary theatres in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It lost its independence as a genre over the course of the nineteenth century as it was incorporated into other forms, most notably melodrama, which was also a decidedly popular form of entertainment.<sup>150</sup>

### **Hervé and Intertextual Humour: *Le Petit Faust* as Burlesque**

To “burlesque” is to treat an exalted subject with low or trivial means, or *vice versa*.<sup>151</sup> Burlesque tropes are fundamental to the humorous intertextuality of Hervé’s aesthetic: *Chilpéric*, for instance, is a broad debasement of medieval literature and society; *L’Oeil crevé* burlesques, among other things, elements of *Guillaume Tell* and *Der Freischütz*. It is a method of approaching an object or a mode of discourse, but it is also a theatrical genre. It is described as such in the *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*:

a genre of light theatrical entertainment with music, common on the English stage especially in the 19th century. It involved the treatment of a familiar and usually serious subject in which the general spirit of the model was retained but distorted for comic effect, reducing historical, legendary or classical character and situation

<sup>149</sup> McCormick, 138. Faris reproduces a portion of the conditions of Offenbach’s license for the original Bouffes. Seven categories of entertainments were permitted, the first reads “Pantomime harlequinades with five characters,” 50. Hervé’s license at the Folies-Concertantes likewise permitted pantomime, see Yon, “La Creation du Théâtre,” 577.

<sup>150</sup> McCormick, 134-147.

<sup>151</sup> This definition of the term is consistent with that found in *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, ed. Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). The entry for “burlesque” begins: “A kind of parody that ridicules some serious literary work either by treating its solemn subject in an undignified style, or by applying its elevated style to a trivial subject...” The term is used with some fluidity in literary and musicological writings. Some use the term more specifically, indicating “burlesque” as a type of parody, and “travesty” is the specific sub-type of burlesque germane to Hervé’s work: *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* specifies travesty as “a mockingly undignified or trivializing treatment of a dignified subject, usually as a kind of parody. Travesty may be distinguished from the mock epic and other kinds of burlesque in that it treats a solemn subject frivolously, while they treat frivolous subjects with mock solemnity.” Genette avoids the ambiguity by distinguishing “burlesque travesty” from other types such as “modern travesty;” see Genette, *Palimpsests*, 21-24 and 56-72.

to the level of commonplace modern life... But whereas pantomime most often took its subject matter from stories familiar to children ... burlesque tended to employ more elevated and serious models... Among the objects of ridicule were the conventions of serious theatre and melodrama. Burlesques followed the appearance of virtually every major opera.<sup>152</sup>

Hervé's *Le Petit Faust* is this type of theatrical burlesque. The work is somewhat atypical in the repertory of French *opérette* and *opéra bouffe* in its "massive and explicit" dependency on a single hypotext. This singularity makes it suitable as an introduction to Hervé's style and characteristic procedures: because its most obvious references remain familiar today it will be easier to see how Hervé's work is informed by intertextuality.<sup>153</sup> Indeed, a specialist in mid-nineteenth-century culture, politics, theatre, or popular music would be able to recognize references unrelated to Gounod's *Faust* and would be able to position Hervé's work much more precisely than is possible here. The goal of this section is necessarily less ambitious. I hope to elucidate aspects of Hervé's style, specifically of his approach to pre-existing materials, focusing narrowly on the relatively straightforward case of *Petit Faust* as burlesque of Gounod's "grand" *Faust*.<sup>154</sup>

On many levels, the libretto of *Petit Faust* debases *Faust* by manipulating its identifying features or their contexts. Comparing plot synopses reveals how certain "serious" elements of

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<sup>152</sup> Fredric Woodbridge Wilson and Deane L. Root, "Burlesque," in *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed 19 August 2009). The popularity of operatic burlesque in England corroborates Hervé's enormous success in London. Cariven-Galharret and Ghesquière refer to Hervé as "le compositeur le plus anglais de sa génération," and provide an overview of Hervé's activities and the reception of his works in London, 123-163. On operatic burlesques in Victorian London, see Roberta Montemorra Marvin, "Verdian Opera Burlesqued: A Glimpse into mid-Victorian Theatrical Culture," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 15 (2003), 33-66, and Roberta Montemorra Marvin, "Burlesques, Barriers, Borders, and Boundaries," in *Operatic Migrations: Transforming Works and Crossing Boundaries*, ed. Roberta Montemorra Marvin and Downing A. Thomas (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 205-215.

<sup>153</sup> Again, the term "intertextual" is used literally throughout this study to refer to the relationships of a text to particular texts.

<sup>154</sup> Parallels with Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust* can also be found, as one might expect. For example, there is no correspondence to Hervé's "Le satrape et la puce" in Gounod (where Méphistophélès sings "Le veau d'or"), whereas the lyrics recall "Une puce gentille chez un prince logeait" from Part 2 of *Damnation*. Highlighting instances of intertextual transformation, Cariven-Galharret and Ghesquière compare excerpts of the librettos set by Berlioz and by Hervé, 109-113.

*Faust* (the longstanding debate about the “seriousness” of Gounod’s adaptation of the Faust legend notwithstanding)<sup>155</sup> are retained but relocated into incongruously “low” surroundings, other elements are replaced with common or vulgar substitutions. The synopsis of *Faust* would have been known to the audience of 1869, though its highlights might bear retelling today:

Act I. The ageing philosopher Dr. Faust contemplates suicide. A pastoral chorus is heard outside. Méphistophélès appears, answering Faust’s call for deliverance. Though Faust longs for youth and pleasure, he hesitates to accept Méphistophélès’s contract (earthly desires in exchange for service in the afterlife). When Méphistophélès summons a vision of Marguerite, Faust immediately accepts, and it transformed into a young man.

Act II. Kermesse. Mixed chorus of students, soldiers, bourgeois gentlemen, young girls, and matrons. Valentin is leaving for war and asks his friends to watch over his sister Marguerite. Méphistophélès interrupts the drinking and sings a blasphemous song about the Golden Calf. Upon speaking Marguerite’s name, he is attacked by Valentin, and uses supernatural powers to shatter the sword. Valentin and companions sing a chorale denouncing the powers of evil, and exit. Faust and villagers enter, waltzing. Marguerite appears, shyly refuses when Faust offers his arm, she quickly departs.

Act III. Garden Scene. Young Siebel brings flowers for Marguerite, whom he loves. Faust and Méphistophélès appear. Faust sings his famous *cavatine*, an apostrophe to her chaste home. Méphistophélès produces a casket of jewels. They hide. Marguerite enters thinking of Faust. She sings a folk song (“Roi de Thulé”). She finds the jewels and is transformed, musically rendered in the sophisticated Jewel Song (waltz-*cabalette*). Quartet: Méphistophélès woos guardian with light music, Faust and Marguerite address each other in lyrical style. Méphistophélès casts an enchantment over the garden. Faust and Marguerite sing an extended love duet and separate. Faust and Méphistophélès linger in the garden, listen to Marguerite’s private confession of love.

Act IV. Scene i. Marguerite has been abandoned by Faust and has given birth to his child. Her Spinning Song continues the musical development of her character. Scene ii. Soldiers’s chorus, Valentin returns. Faust and Méphistophélès enter and are confronted by Valentin who seeks to avenge his sister’s honour. Faust kills Valentin, who, dying, condemns Marguerite. Scene iii. Marguerite prays in church, in counterpoint with Méphistophélès’s satanic solo and an oppressive liturgical chorus.

Act V. Scene i. Walpurgis Nacht. Ritualistic celebration, wild and supernatural. Scene ii. Faust drinks in surreal cavern, sees a vision of Marguerite, demands to be taken to her. Scene iii. Marguerite is in prison for infanticide. Faust enters,

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<sup>155</sup> For an overview of this controversy and a discussion of Carré and Barbier as a “literary perversion” of Goethe’s drama see William E. Grim, *The Faust Legend in Music and Literature* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1988), 18-27.

they sing a love duet. Final battle for her soul. Apotheosis. Marguerite is saved by her faith, Faust falls to the ground in supplication.

On the broadest level, the premise of *Petit Faust* is identical: ageing Doctor Faust longs for youth, pleasure, and specifically for Marguerite; through a pact with Méphistophélès he is transformed into a young man and is joined with Marguerite; the two are reunited after a brief separation before supernatural intervention brings their earthly existence to an end. Other similarities include the involvement of Marguerite's brother Valentin, who provides for her protection as he goes to battle. He then returns home, discovers Marguerite's desolation, and is killed by Faust. More local details are also retained: Méphistophélès interrupts a large public scene for mixed chorus and sings a parable; Marguerite sings a folk song about an old king. However, only the most basic identifying elements of these events are retained, the particulars and the surrounding events are widely divergent with *Faust* and its aesthetic space. The plot synopsis illustrates this:

Act I. Doctor Faust is anatomy professor to a class of rowdy schoolgirls. As the cadaver is being brought in, a group of soldiers enter, led by Valentin. He is leaving for war and entrusts his sister Marguerite's guardianship to Faust. Faust reluctantly agrees. Marguerite quickly disrupts the class with her yodelling, inappropriate suggestions, and aggressive behaviour. Faust prepares to whip her, but his heart flutters and he hesitates. Remembering that she is above the age of consent he hurries the other students out of the room. Marguerite shows the doctor the many parts of her already wounded and swollen body. Faust is overcome with a powerful sensation, and Méphisto appears. He sings an introduction, a catalogue celebrating human vice. Méphisto promises youth, beauty, and pleasure to Faust; Faust is transformed into a young man. The students sing a revolutionary *galop* celebrating truancy and romantic adventures, Faust hurries to join Marguerite, all exit.

Act II. Cocottes, old men, and students sing a triple chorus at the Bal Mabilille. Méphisto entertains the crowd with his apologue of the satrap and the flea. Faust appears, exhausted (he cannot keep up with his youthful desires) and irritated. He is searching for Marguerite, whom he has literally lost. Méphisto summons a parade of worldly Marguerites, but Faust's beloved is not to be found among the English Margarets, Italian Margaritas, or Javanese Mavargaveravitaves. To Faust's pleasure, Marguerite finally returns as a laundress (she had been travelling in England, promoting the cancan). Faust reflects thoughtfully on the passage of

time, and the two are reunited. Valentin returns from war, interrupts their tryst, and challenges Faust to a duel. Méphisto intervenes and Valentin is killed, he shares his worldly wisdom as he departs. Faust steals away with Marguerite.

Act III. Wedding celebrations are heard. Marguerite sings a folk song (“Complainte du roi de Thuné”) and reminisces about her life before Faust, specifically about a certain M. Adolphe. Valentin’s ghost appears in the soup. Faust admits that he has given up his fortune; Marguerite storms out. Méphisto leads the “bal infernal,” and condemns Faust and Marguerite to an eternity of dancing.

All additions and transformations contribute to the debasement of Gounod’s model. The retained events are drastically recontextualized in one of two ways. The new dramatic context is either rendered crude through inappropriate suggestions, often sexual, or unsophisticated words and music (i.e. Faust’s lusty thoughts and Marguerite’s yodelling), or lowered socially, to the level of common workaday realism antithetical to mid-nineteenth operatic “reality” (i.e. classroom of schoolgirls, revolutionary songs, crowds gathering at a popular dance hall, the occupation of a laundress). These are examples of the “provocative mixture of real life color with fiction” that Steven Huebner has identified as a fundamental element of Hervé’s comedy.<sup>156</sup> Indeed, Hervé’s work is informed by a unique “stylized realism.” The world depicted is far from the fantasy fiction of *Ba-ta-clan*, it is a worker’s world threatening incivility.

In addition, major events in the story are reordered. For example, Faust meets Marguerite at the outset but gallantly offers her his arm much later; Valentin appears in the opening scene, not in the excitement of the Kermesse; Marguerite sings her folksong towards the end of the opera; and Faust reflects on old age after his romance with Marguerite. The effect is one of decomposition. In the second and third acts especially, the action seems like a random bricolage of familiar details. Sketch-like episodes are strung together, entirely reliant on their previous associations for meaning. This procedure destabilizes the original and at the same is nourished

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<sup>156</sup> Steven Huebner, review of *Hervé: Un Musicien paradoxal (1825-1892)*, by Renée Cariven-Galharret and Dominique Ghesquière, *Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 50 (March 1994), 972-973.

by it. As a burlesque the drama is neither self-contained nor makes sense on its own: it is structurally and diegetically parasitic.

Details of character and action are also treated with vulgarity or everyday realism, as are lyrics to individual numbers. Example 2.12, from the opening of the chorus of schoolgirls that begins the opera, demonstrates certain features already seen in *Ba-ta-clan*. The text privileges

Example 2.12. *Le Petit Faust*, from #1, *ronde des écolières*, mm. 5-17.

(CHOEUR)

Sau-te, sau-te! Coup ta

tê-te! Ou je vais t'arra-cher. Sau-te, sau-t'gare au plus bê-te! fêt sur

( La 2<sup>e</sup> fois le chœur seulement ici. )

lui qu'on va sau-ter, Sau-te, sau-t'coup ta têt-te Ou je

*mf* *f* *tr* *tr*

unrefined physicality (jumping and violence), but it is more raw than its parallels in *Ba-ta-clan*, not least because these words are sung by schoolgirls: “Saute, saute! Coup’ ta tête! Ou je vais t’ la raboter! Saute, saut’ gare au plus bête. C’est sur lui qu’on va sauter.”<sup>157</sup> The octosyllabic construction also evidences a debased state—the archetypal seventeenth-century burlesques of Paul Scarron routinely transformed classical verse into “trivial” eight-syllable lines.<sup>158</sup> The familiar expression “gare au plus bête” is also of a notably “lower” aesthetic than one would expect to find in Offenbach. The music too surpasses the coarseness of anything found in *Ba-ta-clan*. The melody is angular, bare, relies shamelessly on its unusually emphatic rhythm, and the accompaniment pattern is elemental enough to be ritualistic.

The most pointed object of burlesque treatment is the character Marguerite. In Gounod’s opera, the far-reaching development of Marguerite’s character, represented musically with utmost attention, is the binding thread of the opera. She is introduced incrementally: appearing first as a vision in Act 1, she sings a brief phrase as she elusively slips, dream-like, through the crowd in Act 2, and is only fully unveiled in an Act 3 *grand scena* that couples the simple “Roi de Thulé” with the glittering, sophisticated Jewel Song waltz. Hervé subjects these precious and pivotal moments to grotesque distortions, changing their context and/or their substance.

He quotes the text and the melody that opens the first meeting between Faust and Marguerite in the Kermesse scene, “Ne permettez vous pas” (tonality, harmony, and phrase lengths are also retained, see Examples 2.13a and 2.13b).<sup>159</sup> The essence of their encounter is

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<sup>157</sup> This might translate as “Jump, jump, chop your head! Or else I will lop it off! Jump, jump, fool beware. We’re about to jump on you!” All musical examples of this opera are reproduced from the first published edition: Hervé, *Le Petit Faust: opéra bouffe en 3 actes et 4 tableaux* (Paris: Heugel, 1869).

<sup>158</sup> Genette considers Scarron’s *Virgile travesti* to be the archetypal example of burlesque travesty, and Scarron’s practice of “travesty” classic verse into octosyllabic “burlesque verse” his most fundamental device. Genette, *Palimpsests*, 58-66.

<sup>159</sup> Example 2.13b is from Charles Gounod, *Faust: opéra en 5 actes* (Paris: Choudens, c. 1869).

Example 2.13a. *Le Petit Faust*, from #16, *trio du Vaterland*, mm. 5-17.

FAUST.

Ne per-met-trez vous-

pas, Char-mante Je-mai-sel-le-Qu'un vous of-fre la

main - Pour fai-re quel-que pas. Non, monsieur je ne

*rall:* *M. ARG:*

*rall:* VI:

Detailed description: The image shows a page of a musical score for 'Le Petit Faust' from 'trio du Vaterland', measures 5-17. The score is in 2/4 time and features a vocal line for Faust and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are in French. The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the vocal line starting with 'FAUST.' and the piano accompaniment. The second system continues the vocal line with 'pas, Char-mante Je-mai-sel-le-Qu'un vous of-fre la' and the piano accompaniment. The third system continues the vocal line with 'main - Pour fai-re quel-que pas. Non, monsieur je ne' and the piano accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ppp* and *rall:*, and performance instructions like *M. ARG:* and *VI:*.

Example 2.13b. *Faust*, from Act 2, #6, *valse et choeur*, mm. 210-218.

FAUST. (abordant Marguerite)

Ne permettez-vous pas, ma belle demoiselle,

Qu'on vous offre le bras pour faire le chemin?..

maintained, and the text of Marguerite's response is almost verbatim. However, in *Petit Faust* this encounter occurs in the second half of the opera (#16, *Trio de Vaterland*), after the infamous affair. The “fleeting glimpse” effect is supplanted by a protracted scene full of comic antics. Likewise, Hervé changes the dramatic context of the “Roi de Thulé” folk ballad. It is relocated to the final act and Marguerite sings it as she prepares for her wedding to Faust. Hervé retains the basic melodic contour and the tonal center of the original, but the content is radically different, as the opening lyrics of Examples 2.14a and 2.14b illustrate: the narrator's impersonal evocation of legendary yesteryear in Gounod (which following Goethe is recited privately by Marguerite), is replaced by a direct address to Marguerite's audience, whom she identifies as compatriots of one M. Wagner, and she begins with an imperative!

Example 2.14a. *Le Petit Faust*, from #20, *complainte du roi de Thuné*, mm. 11-18.

MARG: 1<sup>er</sup> COUPLET.

É - cou - tez, gens d'Al - le - ma - gne, — Où mon -

Curdes.

*p*

*plus lent et avec expression.*

M. —sieur Wag - ner est né, His - toir<sup>e</sup> d'un roi de Thu - né, Qu'à - vait

*suivent.*

Detailed description: This musical score consists of two systems. The first system features a vocal line for Marguerite (MARG) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a rest followed by the lyrics 'É - cou - tez, gens d'Al - le - ma - gne, — Où mon -'. The piano accompaniment starts with a whole note chord, followed by a series of chords and eighth notes. The second system continues the vocal line with '—sieur Wag - ner est né, His - toir<sup>e</sup> d'un roi de Thu - né, Qu'à - vait' and the piano accompaniment with 'suivent.'. The piano part includes dynamic markings 'p' and 'pp', and performance instructions like 'Curdes.' and 'plus lent et avec expression.'.

Example 2.14b. *Faust*, from #9, *scène et air, chanson du Roi de Thulé*, mm. 4-9.

MARGUERITE.

*un peu retenu.*

Il é - tait un

*p* *f* *pp stacc*

M. Roi de Thulé, — Qui, jusqu'à la tom - be fi - dè - le,

Detailed description: This musical score consists of two systems. The first system features a vocal line for Marguerite (MARGUERITE) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a rest followed by the lyrics 'Il é - tait un'. The piano accompaniment starts with a series of chords and eighth notes. The second system continues the vocal line with 'Roi de Thulé, — Qui, jusqu'à la tom - be fi - dè - le,' and the piano accompaniment with 'Roi de Thulé, — Qui, jusqu'à la tom - be fi - dè - le,'. The piano part includes dynamic markings 'p', 'f', and 'pp stacc', and performance instructions like 'un peu retenu.'.

Upon Marguerite's first appearance in *Petit Faust*, the virginal purity that Gounod captured so painstakingly is retained only long enough to make its satiric intent clear. Example 2.15 reproduces the A section of "Fleur de candeur," Marguerite's opening *air*. The compound meter, sustained chords, long tonic pedal, regular appoggiaturas, flower imagery, and the entire text up to measure 22 is overstated simplicity and declares the number as a caricature of a pastoral. But, at the first mention of her German ancestry, "Les Allemands m'abbellent Gretchen!" (*sic!*), she breaks into a yodel with waltz accompaniment. The same sequence repeats in the *Trio du Vaterland*, suggesting that any evocation of Germany will irrepressibly transform Marguerite into a waltz-yodelling automaton. This passage ends with the polylingual expression "Stockfisch in black," which is not inconsistent with Hervé's characteristic use of "franglais."

Example 2.15. *Le Petit Faust*, from #4, *air de Marguerite*, mm. 10-31.

[m. 10]

Moderato.

Fleur de candeur, — je

rall: Moderato.

pp Bois.

pp Hautb: Cordes.

suis la pe-ti-te Mar-gue-ri-te; Mon cœur ne sait

[m. 18]

M.  
rien, ni le mal, ni le bien. — Et les Al- lu-

Allegretto.

M.  
-mauds mi ab- bel- lent — Gret- chien! — Tro- lo i — o

Allegretto.

Fl:  
Cor-  
Basson.

[m. 24]

M.  
lo lo lo lo ou li è — ou li è — vè

flauto:

M.  
Tro lo i — o lo lo lo lo — Tro

Clar:  
Flûte Solo.  
Clar:

[m. 29]

lo u ou li è Stock - fisch in black!

Allegro, tutti.

The B section of the ternary form also humorously attacks Marguerite’s legendary naïveté. The text treats the colloquial expression “rouler dans le foin” literally, ironically overstating Marguerite’s “naive” behaviour and evoking the visual image of two young adults having a “roll in the hay” and sexualizing her explicitly from the start:

Je vais d’instinct à tout ce qui m’attire,  
 Je cours dans l’herbe après les papillons  
 Et je ne vois pas plus de mal à rire  
 Avec les filles qu’avec les garçons.

Il faut me voir quand la moisson commence  
 Avec Sièbel rouler dans le foin.  
 Ma vertu va jusqu’à l’inconséquence,  
 Peut-être un jour ira t’elle plus loin.<sup>160</sup>

Like the yodelling passage, the entire B section is a waltz. This elliptically recalls the Jewel Song (also in sectional form) and underlines the contrast between the two numbers.

No “elevated” gestures are found in Marguerite’s music and her musical character is unchanging. She waltzes and yodels, always true to the character established in the opening scene. Together with her debased state, this one-dimensionality plays into the vociferous controversy then raging among critics, many of whom felt that Gounod’s treatment of Goethe’s

<sup>160</sup> “I follow my instinct’s every whim, I chase the butterflies through the grass, I see no harm in laughing with the girls or with the boys./ You must see me when the harvest begins, rolling in the hay with Sièbel; My virtue extends to the extremes, perhaps one day it will go even further.”

venerable drama was itself a travesty, especially in its treatment of Marguerite.<sup>161</sup> Hervé, though, downgrades the vocal style of all characters, not only Marguerite. They all sing in essentially the same style, either fast duple dances (usually *galops*) or moderately paced waltzes (soldiers also march). There are no supernatural touches for Méphisto, nor is there ardent lyricism for the tenor. The waltzes are not used symbolically as they are in *Faust*, or sensuously as in such waltz-laden Viennese *Operettes* as *Die Fledermaus*, but are banal background accompaniment democratically available to each of the characters.

Hervé uses several direct musical quotations from *Faust*, in addition to the *recitative* from the Kermesse scene already noted. Easily recognizable scraps are prominently positioned as signposts or placards. Exact pitches from the instrumental introduction to Faust's famous *cavatine* (#8, *recitative* "Quel trouble inconnu me pénètre?") are quoted in #5 (*Morceau d'ensemble et Duo du martinet*, mm. 11-12) and a slightly altered version is heard in the opening two measures of the overture. The tenor melody in *Les Trois Choeurs* (#10, mm. 41-42) quotes the tenor line from the Kermesse layered chorus from *Faust* (#3, mm. 85-86).<sup>162</sup> The most emphatic use of quotation is the two-measure snippet from the bombastic Soldiers's Chorus (#14 of *Faust*, the tune is first heard in the instrumental introduction, mm. 8-11), which projects over the *couplets du guerrier Valentin* as a kind of head motive separated from the song proper by spoken dialogue (the two measures preceding #3, see Example 2.16; the second measure of the quotation is heard again at the beginning of #22 *ter.* where it heralds the ghost of Valentin).<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Grim, 21-24.

<sup>162</sup> It is interesting to note that Hervé's text at this point also references the dandy, but unlike the more oblique allusion to the "macaroni" sophisticate of *Ba-ta-clan*, we find the familiar term "gandin": "Nous voyons passer les gandins..."

<sup>163</sup> This all produces a rather crude effect, quite unlike Offenbach's more integrated use of quotation. Compare for example, Offenbach's use of the melody of Gluck's "J'ai perdu mon Eurydice" in the second scene (#9, Act 1 *Final*) of *Orphée aux enfers* (1858): overjoyed at the prospect of life without Eurydice, Orphée is forced by Public Opinion to appeal to Jupiter for a reunion with his dearly departed (Public Opinion: "Voici le moment solennel! tu vas, d'une

Example 2.16. *Le Petit Faust*, opening of *couplets du guerrier Valentin*.

Même des choses aussi simples que ça! **N<sup>o</sup> 3.** COUPLETS DU GUERRIER VALENTIN. (Chœur des Soldats et Couplets de Valentin.)

Allegro.

PIANO. *f* Cuivres.

PARLÉ jusqu'à la Réplique:  
Qu'ils se donnent la peine d'entrer. (suivent)

Mod<sup>to</sup> (Mouv: de Schottisch)

Cordes. *p*  
(Entrée des Soldats)

In *Petit Faust*, musical humour that is not based on borrowed material can also be found. Marguerite's waltz-yodelling, for instance, caricatures the young girl's Germanic heritage and offers a musical parallel to her mispronunciation of the French language (as in "Les Allemands m'abbellent Gret-chien!"). The opening passage of the *ouverture* (Example 2.17) finds incongruous topics juxtaposed, interrupted phrases, excessively varied instrumentation, and rough harmonic progressions, all of which might be heard as burlesque humour—awkward

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voix attendrie, implorer du grand Jupiter le droit de reprendre à l'enfer ton épouse tendre et chérie!"); Orphée provides the appeal by ironically quoting Gluck's famous melody to the lines "On m'a ravi mon Eurydice," continuation is provided by sympathetic goddesses (whom the scene had primed as extremely bored and eager for excitement), a sentimental violin solo, followed by the goddesses in counterpoint. This "bring out the violins" sentimentality had also been prefigured earlier in the act when Orphée overtly used the violin as an "instrument of torture" in the hilarious *duo du concerto*. The context of the quotation contrasts with the original, not only in that Orphée's appeal is ironic (he wants nothing more than to be rid of Eurydice, and everyone knows it except for Jupiter *et al.*), but it is also relocated to the beginning of the work, immediately following Eurydice's death. Offenbach complicates the definitive simplicity of Gluck's melody by introducing concerted forces (trio of goddesses and solo for violin). Moreover, Offenbach blatantly misappropriated the "classically" understated melody for humorously sentimental effect, equating sincerity with sentimentality.

gestures unsuitable to a respectable opera. But it is characteristic of the opera's humorous musical discourse that these themes nevertheless draw on those heard in Gounod's overture to *Faust*. While stock gestures similar to those already noted in *Ba-ta-clan*, such as vocal imitation of instrumental idioms, gratuitous coloratura, and extremes in vocal register can also be found, the essence of the humour, musical and otherwise, is the "lowering" of borrowed materials.

Example 2.17. *Le Petit Faust*, from *ouverture-valse*, mm. 1-17.

The musical score for the introduction of *Le Petit Faust* (mm. 1-17) is presented in four systems. The first system, labeled "INTRODUCTION", shows the Bassoons and Violins playing a melody in D major, marked *Moderato* and *p*. The second system features the Horns playing a similar melody, marked *cresc.*. The third system shows the Flutes and Clarinets playing a more complex, rhythmic pattern, marked *Tutti* and *sf*, while the Bassoons play a supporting line marked *p*. The fourth system features the Violins playing a melodic line marked *cresc.* and the Flutes playing a rhythmic pattern marked *f*.

### Post-1870: Charles Lecocq's *La Fille de Madame Angot* and Popular *opéra comique*

Charles Lecocq (1832-1918) was the most successful composer of light opera of the early Third Republic. His major works and those of his contemporaries demonstrate a concerted effort towards more “elevated” music and romantic subject matter that was uncharacteristic of the pre-1870 repertory.<sup>164</sup> Renouncing the *bouffe* aesthetic and declaring their more serious ambitions, these composers often called their works *opéras comiques*.<sup>165</sup> These “popular” *opéras comiques* reconcile *opérette* and *opéra bouffe* strategies with official operatic standards. They nevertheless fall clearly in the popular tradition and were produced accordingly at such unofficial theatres as the Théâtre de la Renaissance or the Folies-Dramatiques.

This evolution from *bouffe* humour to romantic comedy is by no means unprecedented. It parallels the shift observed by Offenbach in the genre of *opéra comique* earlier in the century from outrageous and farcical topicality to light drama typically dealing with adventures and amorous pursuits of middle class characters. This same softening is prefigured in the earliest extant comedies, distinguishing Aristophanic Old Comedy from its progeny, the New Comedy of Menander. This suggests that the new direction of post-1870 light opera evidences a dynamic pattern fundamental to the evolution of comic drama.

Recognition came early to Lecocq when he was awarded first prize, together with Georges Bizet, in Offenbach's aforesaid *opérette* competition of 1856. His *chinoiserie Fleur-de-*

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<sup>164</sup> This effort towards “elevation” clearly parallels developments in official operatic forms of the period. See Mary Jean Speare, “The Transformation of *opéra comique*: 1850-1880” (Ph.D. diss., Washington University, 1997).

<sup>165</sup> Indeed, the light opera scene in mid- to late-nineteenth-century Paris was variegated and complex and I do not mean to suggest that all pre-1870 works were *bouffe*, or that all post-1870 popular operas rejected that particular mode of humour. When Chabrier composed an overtly *bouffe* opera in 1877, it is significant that he is connecting with an older tradition.

*thé* afforded him some commercial success after its 1868 premiere.<sup>166</sup> But it was *La Fille de Madame Angot* (premiered at Brussels's Théâtre des Fantaisies-Parisiennes in 1872 before appearing in Paris at the Théâtre des Folies-Dramatiques, 21 February 1873) that established him as the leading composer of popular opera of the 1870s. Among his over fifty stage works, two others also stand out for their enormous popularity: *Giroflé-Girofla* of 1874 (libretto by Leterrier and Vanloo), whose “silly” subject and comic exotica are a throwback to Second Empire *opéra bouffe*, and *Le Petit Duc* (1878, libretto by Meilhac and Halévy), which was the main theatrical attraction for visitors to the 1878 Exposition universelle.

*La Fille de Madame Angot* was Lecocq's first three-act work subtitled *opéra comique* and bears many features that separate it from the works of Offenbach and Hervé. The majority of these—central love theme, musical and dramatic characterization, “realistic” period setting, mezzo and baritone secondary characters as foil to soprano and tenor principals, extended musical numbers (multi-sectional introduction and finales), ensembles, subtle harmonies, polished orchestration—are operatic in scope and find many parallels in the *opéras comiques* of the 1830s such as Auber's *Fra Diavolo* (1830) and *Le Domino noir* (1837), which were still in the repertory of the Opéra-Comique. The large cast and chorus and the operatic finales were anticipated by Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène* and other works of the 1860s. But *La Fille* is laden with the central themes of love and politics, its humour reigned in and domesticated in comparison to the *opéras bouffes* of Hervé and Offenbach. This seriousness should not be overstated, however, for it is nevertheless a cheerful alternative to the works then fashionable at the Opéra-Comique, which were taking on proportions and themes that exceed in grandeur and

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<sup>166</sup> Like *Ba-ta-clan* this opera focuses on a Frenchman attempting to escape a Chinese post.

seriousness anything the theatre had ever seen excepted only for a brief period following the French Revolution.

Humorous touches appear throughout each of the three acts of *La Fille*, but moments of *bouffe* humour are rare and always relegated to subplots and secondary characters, incidental to the primary dramatic thread. The action is set in Paris during the Directoire period of the First French Republic. The dramatic frame is as follows.

Act I. A chorus celebrates the upcoming wedding of Clairette to Pomponnet, a hairdresser. An archaic strophic *romance* reveals Clairette's innocence and naiveté. Bystanders sing of her mother, the famed fishwife Madame Angot. Enter dissident *chansonnier* Ange Pitou, critic of the new republic—indeed, he loved Clairette, but he could hardly intervene now that another has claimed her hand. Clairette, in love with Pitou, devises a plan to escape her marriage (at the ceremony, she will simply refuse her vows). In the *duo bouffe*, Pitou agrees to remove the name of Larivaudière, friend of the Directory, from his *chanson politique* in exchange for a large sum of money. In the finale, the crowd entreats a performance of Pitou's new song. Upon learning that such a performance is grounds for arrest, Clairette heartily sings the *couplets*, implicating a certain Mlle. Lange, among others. Oblivious of the rebellious content of the song, she is delighted that prison will relieve her from marrying Pomponnet.

Act II. Mlle. Lange, glamorous actress and kept woman, sings suggestively of the manly soldiers and their many assets. Pomponnet again celebrates Clairette's innocence: she is ignorant of her crime and unjustifiably punished. Lange has summoned Clairette to inquire into her accuser's motive and the two women recognize each other as old schoolmates. Their duet progresses from lyrical nostalgia to cheeky dispute. Pitou arrives, also at Lange's request, and the two share a seductive waltz disclosing their mutual attraction through ironic political banter. When Pitou is discovered in Lange's boudoir Clairette suspects his infidelity. At night, conspirators gather to plot against the Directoire, but approaching republican soldiers force them to remove their blonde wigs and black collars and pose as guests to the supposed wedding of Clairette and Pitou. During the ball, Clairette and Lange discover the other's involvement with Pitou.

Act III. Clairette gathers the marketplace regulars for a ball in order to determine Pitou's infidelity. Her true nature is revealed: with her mother's feisty spirit she is ready for anything. Pomponnet and Larivaudière, both posing incognito as muscled men of the market face off in a comic duo. Clairette exposes Mlle. Lange, who has deceived her many lovers, including Ange Pitou of Clairette's own heart. To avenge her honour, she will marry Pomponnet after all.

The libretto joins elements from three popular traditions, each with proven histories. The drama conspicuously relocates the enormously popular “genre *poissard*” of the eighteenth century,<sup>167</sup> whose most famous mouthpiece was the legendary Madame Angot, to the colourful Directoire period, then fashionable in spoken theatre.<sup>168</sup> It retains the conventional *opérette* and *opéra bouffe* structure of alternating *couplets* and spoken dialogue (supplemented with extended finales and a first act compound introduction typical of *opéra comique*), dance rhythms, and numerous standard comic devices already seen in the works of Offenbach and Hervé (such as *duo bouffe*, laughing refrain, incognito characters, and conspiracy scene). The Directoire setting and the *poissard* genre allow for the foregrounding of serious aspects that may be interpreted as satirizing politics and social customs of the early Third Republic. Pitou’s pointed royalist criticism of the new Republic and its censorship of the poet’s work depends on the former, and the serious question of social mobility and the mockery of the young parvenue’s malapropos mannerisms, the latter.

*La Fille de Madame Angot* combines eighteenth-century colour with a touch of “realism.” Clairette represents the lower classes, and as in other *poissard* pieces, the incongruity of her unrefined comportment *vis à vis* the aristocratic circles in which she moves is a major source of humour. Several characters are real historical personages: Mlle. Anne Lange, Ange Pitou, the Vicomte de Barras, and Marshal Pierre Augereau were all prominent Directoire figures. Act II opens with a *Choeur des Merveilleuses*, an airy waltz that reflects the frivolous luxury of Mlle. Lange’s fashionable subculture. The male counterparts of the Merveilleuses, the

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<sup>167</sup> The “genre *poissard*” was a genre of theatrical comedy popular in Paris in the eighteenth century, it focused on “low-life” characters from the Parisian streets and marketplaces, particularly the fishwives who were known as “*poissardes*.” In the late eighteenth-century the genre was commonly a vehicle for the expression of revolutionary sentiment. See Alexander Parks Moore, *The genre poissard and the French Stage of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935). Fundamentals of the style are also discussed in McCormick, 116-118.

<sup>168</sup> Traubner, 78.

“Incroyables” (of which the Barras was historically the most prominent) are not mentioned directly in the score, but are comically evoked by Trenitz’s signature refusal to speak the letter “r” in the conspiracy scene (Act II *Final*, see mm. 44-50 and 63-66), a symbolic rejection of the “R”évolution: “Oui, des conspiateus, nous sommes les modèles, un égiment, (un égiment,) ne nous feait pas peu... Mais il n’a pas de collet noi, il n’a pas de peuuque blonde.”<sup>169</sup>

Reflecting Lecocq’s interest in the operas of Rameau, whose *Castor et Pollux* he arranged for piano (published in Paris by Legouix, n.d. [1878?]), the score of *La Fille* also contains many eighteenth-century touches. Most conspicuous is the four-movement *divertissement-ballet* in the last act (two of the dances are rounded binary). The fourth number begins as a *musette*, though a waltz refrain and a *galop strette* are incongruously appended. Louis Schneider notes that the *chanson politique* (#6b, “Jadis les rois, race proscrite”) is reminiscent of eighteenth-century *caveau chansons*, and its choral refrain “Barras est roi, Lange est sa reine” recalls the spirit of the revolutionary songs “La carmagnole” and “Ah! ça ira.”<sup>170</sup> Other moments, such as the *recitative* and the *allegro moderato* of the *duo bouffe* (#5), sound like Mozart pastiche.

Pomponnet’s opening *couplets* (#1b, see Example 2.18) are representative of Lecocq’s approach to structure, style, characterization, and humour in *La Fille*.<sup>171</sup> Typical of *opéra comique*, the short song is embedded in the opera’s choral *introduction*, which characteristically begins and ends with the same homophonic chorus. It is also characteristic that a secondary

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<sup>169</sup> The text, with “r”s reinstated, “Oui, des conspirateurs, nous sommes les modèles, un régiment, (un régiment,) ne nous ferait pas peur... Mais il n’a pas de collet noir, il n’a pas de perruque blonde,” translates as “Yes, we are model conspirators, a regiment would not frighten us... But he is not wearing a black collar, he is not wearing a blonde wig.”

<sup>170</sup> Schneider, *Les Maîtres de l’opérette française*, 167-168.

<sup>171</sup> Charles Lecocq, *La Fille de Madame Angot: opéra comique en 3 actes* (Paris: Brandus, [1873]).

Example 2.18. *La Fille de Madame Angot, couplets, from #1, introduction, mm. 110-133.*

[m. 110]

Moderato.

là.

*p*

Bots  
Coss.

*sf*

*p* Quasi.

1<sup>re</sup> c. Aujourd'hui prenons bien garde — A ce bouquet plein d'ap - pas;  
2<sup>e</sup> c. Je l'entends, et le sou - pire — Sans même savoir pour - quoi;

[m. 119]

Je permets qu'on le re - garde — Mais que l'on n'y touche pas! Seul je  
Son bouquet semble me di - re: — Grâce pour elle et pour moi! Mais u -

prétends en ca - chet - te Le te - nir en mon pou - voir, Et je me fais u - ne  
- ne dou - ble con - quê - te Me livrant femme et bouquet De l'innocente Clai.

*p* Quasi.

[m. 127]

rall. All.

fête De le dé-tacher ce soir. Ah! ah! ah! d'a-

rette Fait ma-da-me Pon-pon-net!

suivez. Vos

*Fl. Hautb.* *Largiero.*

-vance, Quand j'y pense, Quel ef-fet Ce-la me fait! Ah! d'a-

character has the first solo. It follows the conventional AABC + refrain structure already noted in *Ba-ta-clan*. But in terms of musical context, humour, and characterization it shows a sophistication and seriousness not found in Hervé or Offenbach.

The text celebrates Clairette's innocence, and Pomponnet delights in anticipation of her defiling with a crude shift in imagery as the refrain approaches. The refrain loses all the poetic affect of the verses as Pomponnet indulges his vulgar fantasy.

Pomponnet: Aujourd'hui prenons bien garde, à ce bouquet plein d'appas;  
 Je permets qu'on le regarde, mais que l'on n'y touche pas!  
 Seul je prétends en cachette le tenir en mon pouvoir.  
 Et je me fais une fête de le détacher ce soir. Ah! ah!

ref: Ah! d'avance, quand j'y pense, quel effet cela me fait!  
Ah! d'avance, quand j'y pense, quel effet cela me fait! etc.

Je l'entends, elle soupire, sans même savoir pourquoi;  
Son bouquet semble me dire: Grâce pour elle et pour moi!  
Mais une double conquête me livrant femme et bouquet  
De l'innocence Clairette fait madame Pomponnet. Ah! ah!

ref: Ah! d'avance, quand j'y pense, quel effet cela me fait!  
Ah! d'avance, quand j'y pense, quel effet cela me fait! etc.<sup>172</sup>

This shift is paralleled and surpassed in the music. The halting melody, rhythmic flexibility, delicate woodwind punctuation, and touching *romance* style of the strophe are precious and affected. This style is juxtaposed with a robust march with short vocal phrases, many accents, and thumping accompaniment figures. Pomponnet loses his composure and is carried away by physical desire. The quickening tempo and gradual crescendo reflect his surging libido.

Similar sexual suggestions appear in various other numbers. For instance, Lange's *couplets* (#8), which begin with the refrain (incidentally, also a march): "Les soldats d'Augereau sont des hommes (sont des hommes) et toutes faibles que nous sommes je prétends que nous les valons, car nous faisons des hommes tout ce que nous voulons (oui, nous faisons des hommes tout ce que nous voulons)."<sup>173</sup> The word "hommes" is repeated nine times in the refrain and is decorated with ornaments. The text of the first verse plays on the verb "traîner" (i.e. "son grand

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<sup>172</sup> "Take a good look at this bouquet full of charms today;/I allow you to look, but not to touch!/I secretly imagine holding her in my power./And I will feast tonight detaching the flower./ *refrain*: Ah! When I think of the effect it will have on me! etc./ I hear her, she sighs, without even knowing why;/Her scent seems to say: grace unto her and unto me!/A double conquest to deliver the lady and her bouquet/From innocent Clairette to Madame Pomponnet./ *refrain*: Ah! When I think of the effect it will have on me! etc."

<sup>173</sup> "The Augereau soldiers are men, and, weak as we are, I do contend that we value them; for with men, we do exactly as we please."

sabre qu'il fait traîner partout" <sup>174</sup>). In the *duettino* between Lange and Pitou, a seductive waltz underpins flirtatious banter, reminiscent of eighteenth-century *marivaudage*.<sup>175</sup>

Pomponnet's number is in A major, which, in the larger context of the brash pre-wedding excitement in D, makes for an unremarkable harmonic space. To prepare the precious atmosphere of the *couplets*, Lecocq writes a brief detour through F major, a key noticeably removed from both D and A. Slow turn figures and colourful orchestration add to the effect (mm. 110-112, the passage in F begins at m. 105, not shown). He returns to A by reinterpreting the tonic of F as the root of the predominant German sixth of A (m. 111), an harmonic procedure of greater sophistication than one is likely to encounter in Offenbach or Hervé. This constructed naiveté is as transparent as Clairette's supposed virtue, which it purports to represent. This fact is the source of humour in Pomponnet's other solo song (*Romance*, #9), which also apostrophizes Clairette's innocence. The two verses both begin and end with the phrase "Elle est tellement innocente" (She is so very innocent) and have music to match. The irony latent in Pomponnet's first song is more apparent here, as the audience has by now witnessed Clairette, clever and wily daughter of Madame Angot, in action.

Pomponnet's two solos are in matching old-fashioned styles, and both focus on the virtues of the young heroine (as he perceives them). This invites a comparison with Clairette's "true" personality. Her first solo (#1d, "Je vous dois tout") matches Pomponnet's expectations, expressed only moments before. It is archaic in style, with pastoral drones, and is marked "con simplicità ed espressione." But unlike Pomponnet, who is stuck in this mode, Clairette's musical

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<sup>174</sup> "His great sword that he is always dragging around."

<sup>175</sup> Named after the celebrated comic playwright Pierre Carlet de Marivaux (1688-1763), *marivaudage* refers to the witty banter on the subject of love that is commonly exchanged between the young romantic hopefuls of Marivaux's plays. The style is often described as precious, affected, *galant*, and even eccentric; the term has been used since Marivaux's time with varying degrees of disparagement. See Frédéric Deloffre's classic study, *Une Préciosité nouvelle: Marivaux et le Marivaudage* (Paris: Société d'édition *Les Belles Lettres*, 1955).

characterization is dynamic and develops in each of the three acts. Ironically, her motivations and her true nature do not change, only her musical personality does. Her outward behaviour reflects the incremental release of her disguise (read: feigned propriety).

The *fou rire* of *Ba-ta-clan* and of *Le Petit Faust* is absent in *La Fille de Madame Angot*. Hervé's *grossières* and the *loufoque* spirit of the "Offenbouffes" are replaced with a brand of humour that is inspired and effective but distinctly genteel. The musical humour is also understated in comparison to the *bouffe* works. Humorous musical gestures in *La Fille* include exaggeration, juxtaposition of incongruous gestures, and caricature in the requisite *duo bouffe*. All of these find precedent in *Ba-ta-clan* and other *opérettes* from the 1850s. Comic energy is sustained musically by laughter, dancing, clichés waiting in ambush, the mechanical inevitability of the celebratory *galop*, and a general busyness. But whereas in *Ba-ta-clan* these humorous or comic antics were the *raison d'être*, in *La Fille* they are incidental to the primary substance of the piece, which, while admittedly comic, resides in an operatic libretto and corresponding musical devices.

### 3 Chabrier's *opérettes* and the *opéra bouffe* *L'Étoile*

Chabrier's "popular" operatic comedies consist of three *opérettes* that survive in various stages of completion and one *opéra bouffe*.<sup>176</sup> The two early *opérettes*, *Vaucochard et fils 1er* (1864) and *Fisch-ton-kan* (1864), are incomplete with four and five surviving numbers respectively, at least two of which are unfinished. One documented performance of *Fisch-ton-kan* took place during Chabrier's lifetime under the title *Peh-li-kan* in 1873 at the Cercle de l'Union artistique.<sup>177</sup> His only complete *opéra bouffe*, *L'Étoile* (1877, three acts), had a brief but acclaimed run at the Bouffes-Parisiens in 1877-1878. It was followed by *Une Éducation manquée* (1879), the only complete *opérette*, which had a single performance during Chabrier's lifetime at the private Cercle international in 1879. Spanning his formative years as a composer, from the mid 1860s until he resigned from his civil position to become a professional composer in 1880, these works bear traces of Chabrier's evolving aesthetic and present an inventory of his most characteristic procedures.

All four pieces connect with the *bouffe* spirit that prevailed in the pre-1870 *opérette* and *opéra bouffe* repertory. Elements of musical style, plot, and humour find more parallels in the works of Offenbach than in those of Hervé, with *Ba-ta-clan* (discussed in Chapter 2) being a particularly pertinent point of comparison for the first three of the Chabrier works. Features of Chabrier's style can be seen in various stages of evolution in these pieces: an ironic approach to

<sup>176</sup> That is, in the "popular" tradition as distinct from officially sanctioned genres (such as *opéra* and *opéra comique*) that were performed at the subsidized theatres, see Chapter 2. A second *opéra bouffe* titled *Le Service obligatoire* (three acts, libretto in part by Henri Meilhac), written in collaboration with René de Boisdeffre and Jules Costé, was reportedly performed at the Cercle de l'union artistique in 1872. The manuscript is now lost. Roger Delage, *Emmanuel Chabrier* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 109-110.

<sup>177</sup> Chabrier's involvement with the Cercle de l'union artistique (also known as the Cercle des mirlitons) is documented in Delage, ch. 8. Note the discrepancies between dates indicated in Delage's *catalogue des oeuvres* and elsewhere in the text. *Fisch-ton-kan*, for instance, was performed 29 March 1873, as correctly indicated in the text, 110.

genre, a playful destabilizing of structure through incongruity and interruption, an unhierarchical mixture of styles, and an unapologetic excess of surface detail are treated differently in each work. In general, a more refined application of these procedures and an increasingly subtle style emerge in each successive work. A crassness found in *Vaucochard* and in *Fisch-ton-kan* is entirely absent in *Éducation manquée*, an *opérette* dealing with a “delicate” moment in the coming-of-age of a genteel eighteenth-century aristocrat set as an appropriately delicate stylized Baroque suite.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide historical and aesthetic context for these four works and to offer an analysis of stylistic and other significant features necessary for an appreciation of Chabrier’s musical humour. In addition to presenting the basic features of plot synopsis, libretto, and musical convention, I will isolate idiosyncratic musical procedures in order to demonstrate the complexity with which multiple facets of Chabrier’s style work together as the foundation of his technique as musical humorist.

### **The Early *opérettes*: *Vaucochard et fils 1er* and *Fisch-ton-kan***

*Vaucochard et fils 1er* (originally spelled *Veaucochard*) and *Fisch-ton-kan* were Chabrier’s first essays in dramatic music. The words set in these fragments are by Chabrier’s then close friend Paul Verlaine (1844-1896); Verlaine likely worked together with one Lucien Viotti on the text of *Vaucochard*.<sup>178</sup> Chabrier and Verlaine had become acquainted in the early 1860s (some say in 1861), as both young artists frequented the favoured gathering places of the

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<sup>178</sup> In an endearing sonnet written in 1887, *À Emmanuel Chabrier*, Verlaine recalls writing these verses together with “un ami cher” who has been identified as Lucien Viotti. Delage, 94-97. On Chabrier’s friendship with Verlaine, see Delage, ch. 7.

future Parnassian poets, which included the home of the publisher Alphonse Lemerre, and the salons of the Marquise de Ricard and Nina de Villard.<sup>179</sup>

The extant sources for the *opérettes* leave many unanswered questions concerning date of composition, genesis, intended performance venues, and overall structure and plot. Most commentators agree on 1864-1865 as the time of composition of the music, with *Vaucochard* coming somewhat earlier than *Fisch-ton-kan*.<sup>180</sup> Following Edmond Lepelletier's early biography of Verlaine, Roger Delage suggests that Verlaine intended the works to be performed at the salon of Nina de Villard and that the *bouffe* antics and saucy lyrics were of a kind with the improvised satirical sketches performed at her weekly gatherings.<sup>181</sup>

Chabrier's unedited manuscripts are the only source containing music and no concordances exist for the texts found in these scores (the excerpts from *Vaucochard* are in full orchestral score, *Fisch-ton-kan* survives only in a piano reduction).<sup>182</sup> One isolated dialogue from *Vaucochard* that is not found in Chabrier's manuscript (no music is extant) has been included in Verlaine's *Oeuvres poétiques complètes* and it conveys something of the dramatic theme of this

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<sup>179</sup> On Chabrier's involvement with the Parnassian poets, including the gatherings of Lemerre, the Marquise de Ricard (mother of poet Louis-Xavier de Ricard), and Nina de Villard, see Delage, ch. 6. The salon hosted by Nina de Villard (also known by her married name, Nina de Callias), which Verlaine affectionately called the "quartier ninâcum," was significant to Chabrier's early development as a composer. The atmosphere of creative artistic expression always allowed music a central position and comprised a free mixture of Wagner adulation and transgressive *cocasserie* ("absurdity"). The salon also introduced Chabrier to many friends, collaborators, and professional contacts with whom he would form lasting relationships. Chabrier also hosted a series of *soirées* in his home on the rue Mosnier. Attendees included Chausson, Duparc, d'Indy, Lecocq, Manet, and Saint-Saëns. See James Ross, "Music in the French Salon," in *French Music since Berlioz*, ed. Richard Langham Smith and Caroline Potter (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 97-98.

<sup>180</sup> This accords with the dates that Chabrier noted on the folder of manuscripts that he compiled in the early 1890s. It seems that Verlaine returned to these texts later in life, at one point approaching Charles de Sivry (pianist of the Chat Noir cabaret and future brother-in-law to Verlaine) to compose music. Delage, 96-98.

<sup>181</sup> Delage, 97-98. In an insightful and well-researched article on these Verlaine librettos, C. H. Moore suggests that *Vaucochard* would have been intended for Ricard's salon. C.H. Moore, "Verlaine's opéra bouffe," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 83 (1968), 302.

<sup>182</sup> The manuscript of *Vaucochard* is located at Bibliothèque nationale de France, Musique (BnF Mus.), MS 20639; similarly, that of *Fisch-ton-kan*, BnF Mus., MS 20625.

work.<sup>183</sup> Given the fragmentary sources it is not possible to reconstruct the entire plot of *Vaucochard*, but the sources suggest that, following Offenbach's *Ba-ta-clan* and *Orphée aux enfers*, it is a satire of Napoléon III and his court. The ruler, Roi Vaucochard, is presented as a dim and cowardly tyrant-clown. This is especially evident in the scene not set by Chabrier, where he publicly addresses his court and his people: in response to threats of public insurrection, Vaucochard renounces the absolutism of his monarchy and offers a share in the profits of his "bobèche" (candle sconce) enterprise to his enlightened ("éclaircés") subjects. The scene satirizes the ridiculous basis of the emperor's power and his naive confidence in the simple-minded plan to calm public uproar with sudden reform in economic policy. The scene ends with his wholesale submission to his consort Sidonie's flattery.

Chabrier's score of *Vaucochard* contains four numbers, two of which are unfinished:<sup>184</sup>

- #1. *Chanson de l'homme armé*, "C'est home terrible effroyable épouvantable" (ensemble for four soloists—Douyoudou and Aglaé, both in the mezzo soprano range, and the two tenors Médéric and Vaucochard—with STB chorus)
- #2. *Duo*, "Ah! Ah! Ah!" (Aglaé and Médéric; *incomplete*)
- #3. *Sérénade*, "Pour l'amour tout local est bon" (Aglaé; *incomplete*)
- #4. *Trio*, "Vous le voulez, vous le voulez" (Aglaé, Médéric, Vaucochard)

Further dramatic details can be gleaned from the texts of these numbers. The *Chanson de l'homme armé* is sketched on the cover of the manuscript, introducing some ambiguity as to its intended positioning within the *opérette*. Delage positions it as the opening number in his edition of the vocal score.<sup>185</sup> A female soloist Douyoudou warns of an advancing menace coming to

<sup>183</sup> Paul Verlaine, *Oeuvres poétiques complètes*, ed. Y.-G. le Dantec, rev. Jacques Borel (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 40-41.

<sup>184</sup> The numbering in this list follows Delage's edition of the vocal score; Emmanuel Chabrier, *Vaucochard et fils Ier*, ed. Roger Delage (Paris: Éditions françaises de musique, 1974). The musical examples of *Vaucochard* that appear in this chapter are from this edition. Those of *Fisch-ton-kan* are likewise taken from Delage's edition: Emmanuel Chabrier, *Fisch-ton-kan*, ed. Roger Delage (Paris: Éditions françaises de musique, 1974).

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

topple the royal dynasty. She describes the appearance of the armed warrior, and courtiers Aglaé and Médéric repeat many of the vivid details. The King's frightened sputters—such as “sois circonspect!” (be wary!) and “Dieux que j'ai peur” (God, I'm so scared)—are echoed by a terrified chorus (passages from this number are excerpted below, see Examples 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5). In the *duo*, lovers Aglaé and Médéric express their mutual affection in cliché swoons. Aglaé's *sérénade* reflects on the many opportune sites for lovers to sneak a secret tryst. Finally, in the *trio*, likely intended as the *final*, the lovers are delighted when the unwitting King, harbouring extramarital interest in Aglaé, requests that the two play the roles of lovers for his viewing pleasure (“tous les deux bien vous entendre”). The *trio* ends with the appearance of death, a sort of *deus ex machina* in the form of Nécrotas, whose spoken announcement “Sire, les plus graves événements!!!” initiates a wild dance that closes the scene.<sup>186</sup>

Like the majority of the numbers discussed in the previous chapter, these four pieces are based on simple structural schemes. The *sérénade* follows the basic four-phrase strophic format identified in Chapter 2 with a simple variation: the strophe is organized AABB' plus major-mode refrain.<sup>187</sup> The minor-mode strophe that is commonly heard in *romances* is here coloured with strong Phrygian inflections, offering a more pronounced contrast to the characteristic major mode of the refrain. The other numbers, however, demonstrate more creative departures from the basic forms on which they are built. Many of these departures create provocative “disjunctions”

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<sup>186</sup> Moore suggests that the *Chanson de l'homme armé* might be heard after the *trio*, the approach of the “homme armé” being among the “graves évènements” (serious events) indicated by Nécrotas. Moore, 308.

<sup>187</sup> To recall, short strophic *opérette* numbers often follow an AABC or AABA' melodic pattern, to which a refrain, consisting of contrasting melodic material, is added. The four phrases are typically four (less frequently, eight) measures each. The last phrase is considerably more variable than the others in terms of melodic content: various alternatives to the typical varied repeat of A or contrasting-closing C can be found, as is the case in this *sérénade* where the fourth phrase offers a varied repetition of B.

that are decidedly humorous.<sup>188</sup> The *duo*, for example, is in three contrasting sections. The first section (A) is twenty-eight measures of dominant prolongation; sustained open octave drones create a static effect that is matched by the very sparse and slow moving melody line and minimalistic text that repeats the single syllable “ah” (see Example 3.1a). The B section likewise has unchanging accompanimental figuration, a very simple melody and texture, and sustains dominant harmony throughout (Example 3.1b). The tonic (of C Major) is first heard upon arrival of the C section, which also brings the waltz, already anticipated at the outset by the tempo marking *T<sup>o</sup> di valse* (Example 3.1c).<sup>189</sup> The satisfaction of achieving both tonic and waltz proper after the anticipation that had built in both A and B sections is playfully countered by an unexpected return to the text of the opening. The very short text of this number follows a ternary pattern that conflicts with the more teleological ABC design of the music: “Ah! Ah! Ah! Oui c’est l’amour qui pénètre en ce jour tout mon être! Ah! Ah! Ah!”<sup>190</sup> The *duo* is incomplete, but the unfinished state of the final section introduces another playful paradox that certainly would have delighted Chabrier (if in fact he had not intended for the piece to remain very nearly as is). As it stands, the waltz section is an eight-measure miniature. The abrupt deflation of expectations after two distinct sections with inflated introductory rhetoric together with the other paradoxical disjunctions observed indicate that Chabrier’s skill at producing multileveled humorous structural paradox is already developed in this early work.

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<sup>188</sup> Following the discussion of this concept in Chapter 1, “disjunction” (or “switch”) is a term used in humour studies to indicate a provocative event in which the incongruity mechanism required of humour is activated.

<sup>189</sup> Roy Howat identifies this technique of anticipating a tonic from the outset (by sounding dominant and/or predominant sonorities), but delaying resolution to a clear tonic chord as a “modernist” approach to key favoured by Debussy, but neglects to note that this was also a common procedure in Chabrier. See Howat, “Modernization: From Chabrier and Fauré to Debussy and Ravel,” 207. The technique is also found in the *trio* in *Vaucochard* and in the title character’s *air* from *Fisch-ton-kan*.

<sup>190</sup> “Ah! Ah! Ah! Yes, today love penetrates my entire being! Ah! Ah! Ah!”

Example 3.1a. *Vaucochard*, from *duo*, A section (mm. 1-18).

[m. 1] *Allegro* (T<sup>o</sup> di valze)

g<sup>ra</sup>e

lédéric

ra.

*fp*

Ah!

[m. 7]

Ah!



Example 3.1c. *Vaucochard*, from *duo*, C section (mm. 38-46).

The image displays a musical score for three parts: A. (Alto), M. (Mezzo-soprano), and Pia. (Piano). The tempo is marked "Moins vite (poco a piacere)" and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the vocal parts with lyrics "tre!.." and the piano part with triplets and a dynamic marking of *p*. The second system shows the vocal parts with lyrics "Ah!" and the piano part with a dynamic marking of *pp*. The score is marked with a double bar line and repeat signs at the beginning and end of the second system.

Like that of the *duo*, the basic musical design of the *Chanson de l'homme armé* is very simple. This *chanson* is organized around the varied repetition of its opening melody, but the approximate AA'A'' + coda scheme that it follows glosses over many anomalies in harmony, melody, orchestration, and style. For instance, each of the three musical entries is heard at a

higher pitch level and with increasingly complex harmonic implications, and a lengthy episodic closing section introduces many new topics and themes (this number is analyzed in detail below).

The construction of the *trio* is much more complex than the other numbers of *Vaucochard*. The piece resists structural classification and is best analyzed as a conglomerate that borrows structural elements from several forms.<sup>191</sup> Like the conventional *opérette final*, the number is built of contrasting sections that incrementally accumulate texture and accelerate towards a very fast dance in duple meter. An element of ternary is introduced in the penultimate section where the text, the rhythm, the texture, and many details of melodic contour return from the opening vocal section (“Vous le voulez, vous le voulez”), now accompanied by the open fifth ostinato drawn from the instrumental introduction to the number. Like so many Chabrier pieces, this *trio* begins on the dominant. The tonic (of D Major) is not securely established until measure 57. The lengthy section that begins with this tonic arrival is organized according to sonata principle. The second theme (which is in  $\flat$  VI, see m. 91ff.) is a melodic variation of the first and both themes clearly recall the style of *grand opéra cabalette* melodies. When the second theme is recapitulated in the tonic (m. 124) it initiates a fugato section. This in turn begins a lengthy coda that demonstrates many shifts in motive, texture, and style. The sense of disorder created by the structural confusion is underlined by an abundance of topics and melodic styles, complex key relationships, and sudden changes of texture. The appearance of Death in the postlude, personified in the spoken role of Nécrotas (“entrant tout effaré”), ups the ante, as it were, and instigates an involuntary mania (“ils dansent follement”) that abruptly proves terminal.

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<sup>191</sup> Roy Howat notes that certain of Chabrier’s formal structures are “so densely and intricately packed... that their forms are impossible to categorize.” See Howat, “Modernization: From Chabrier and Fauré to Debussy and Ravel,” in *French Music since Berlioz*, 205.

Example 3.2. *Vaucochard*, from *trio* (mm. 171-187).

[m. 171] *Presto* *ils dansent follement*

A.

M.

Le R.

Pia.

Pia.

[m. 180]

Pia.

Pia.

The musical score is written for four vocal parts (A., M., Le R., and a fourth part) and two piano parts (Pia.). The tempo is marked *Presto*. The lyrics are "ils dansent follement". The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and trills. The piano parts feature complex rhythmic patterns and trills.

This *presto* section introduces a new trumpet fanfare that contrasts with all of the stylistic and topical material heard thus far in the number. It is born of the augmented triad (m. 172) formed by the root and third of B  $\flat$  ( $\flat$  VI) and D (tonic), the two keys between which fanfare segments mechanically oscillate. The same augmented triad is repeated after the second B  $\flat$  Major segment (m. 182), providing a closing bookend, effectively containing the harmonic deviation and offering a rationale for the otherwise unjustified juxtaposition of these unrelated keys in the final seconds of the piece (see Example 3.2).<sup>192</sup>

Lepelletier claims that the ridiculous scenario of *Vaucochard* was inspired by the “vaudeville idiot” *La Famille Beautrouillard*, indicating that it was not purely the product of Verlaine’s imagination.<sup>193</sup> *Fisch-ton-kan*, likewise, has an antecedent in the popular theatre: it is based on the popular “parade chinoise” *Fich-tong-khan* by Sauvage and Lurieu (Palais Royal, 1835).<sup>194</sup> Moore proposes that *Fisch-ton-kan* was intended as a sequel to *Vaucochard*, continuing the mixture of satire and bouffonerie that characterized the earlier work with the action relocated to a fantasy exotic land.<sup>195</sup> The work’s obvious parallels with Offenbach’s *Ba-ta-clan* provide a further intertextual connection.

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<sup>192</sup> Another of Chabrier’s typical techniques is to introduce a “wrong note” in various harmonic contexts in the course of a number. B  $\flat$  had been structurally significant earlier in the *trio* as the secondary harmonic area (m. 90ff.) of the central sonata form.

<sup>193</sup> Cited in Delage, 97; and Moore, 305.

<sup>194</sup> This was pointed out by Delage, who provides a synopsis of the Sauvage and Lurieu play; Delage, 101-102. Verlaine reproduced the exact text of the *air de Poussah* from the original play, and the text of the *duo* for Fisch-ton-kan and Goulgouly is an adaptation of a dialogue from the model. From this earlier version one can speculate on details of the presumed plot of Chabrier’s *opérette*. See, Thomas Sauvage and Gabriel de Lurieu, “Fich-tong-khan, ou L’Orphelin de la Tartarie,” in *Le Magasin théâtral: choix de pièces nouvelles*, vol. 1, no. 16 (Paris: Marchant, 1835).

<sup>195</sup> Moore, 308.

From Chabrier's piano-vocal manuscript, the only extant source of the *opérette Fisch-ton-kan*, one can deduce the following scenario:

As the trapeze-clown's body is carried in, *coryphées* lament the young man's apparent downfall.<sup>196</sup> Believing him to be dead, they sing a choral lament that is punctuated by anguished cries from the young mandarin Goulgouly.<sup>197</sup> The ugly clown will no longer "sit upon the polished rod." The mandarin courtier Poussah introduces himself with a jolly *air*, a self-congratulatory catalogue of his most cherished sins (he is a fat, proud, and greedy glutton). In a complex *trio* of operatic scope, Kakao, emperor of China, tries to impress Goulgouly, the object of his affection, with his collection of "magots" (grotesque porcelain figures of Chinese heroes's heads) that speak to him and dance for his entertainment. Goulgouly's disgust for the emperor is not disguised by her vain flattery; she loves the trapeze-clown Fisch-ton-kan. The latter comments on the horrific scene as he watches Kakao fondle Goulgouly, with fetishistic desire growing to maniacal proportions. The young lovers call for help. When Kakao strikes Fisch-ton-kan for insolence, momentary hysteria breaks out before all return trancelike to their earlier deliberation of the porcelain *magots*. Later, Fisch-ton-kan contemplates his identity: wretched wanderer, forgettable juggler, unloved and alone. But alas, this identity is a façade, he is in fact the prince of Tartary. Goulgouly delights in his legitimacy, they can now publicly celebrate their love.

As in *Vaucochard*, the musical numbers of *Fisch-ton-kan* follow simple formal designs that are usually complicated by peculiar manipulations. But in general, the latter work is more outwardly conventional and is more consistently based on dance rhythms, as is characteristic of *opérette*.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Delage's edition of the score identifies the unconscious body as that of "Pélikan;" Emmanuel Chabrier, *Fisch-ton-kan*, ed. Roger Delage (Paris: Éditions françaises de musique, 1974). Moore suggests this character is distinct from Fisch-ton-kan, whose other appearances are missing from the incomplete score, 309. However, we should recall that the *opérette* was performed under the alternate title *Peh-li-kan*, the change being motivated entirely by the presence of a well-known contemporaneous "chanson injurieuse" by Antonin Louis (text by Paul Burani) known by the name of *Le Sire de Fish-ton-kan*; see Delage, 110. It thus seems reasonable to speculate that the eponymous Fisch-ton-kan was replaced wholesale by the clown named "Pélikan" for this performance, and that the two characters are one and the same.

<sup>197</sup> In Sauvage and Lurieu, Goulgouly is the daughter of the mandarin courtier Kaout-chouc (this character does not appear in Chabrier's manuscript).

<sup>198</sup> The opening number is a strophic piece for soprano and baritone chorus with brief interjections from Goulgouly. A lengthy introduction on G Phrygian feigns toward the dominant of C Major; the strophe that follows (beginning m. 25) is comprised of two three-measure phrases in C+ (AA); the refrain (two eight-measure phrases, BB) is in C Aeolian; this is followed by a twelve-measure *perpetuum mobile* extension. Poussah's *air* is a jolly 6/8 dance paradoxically in the minor mode (the seventh degree of E minor is often lowered, adding modal ambiguity). It is a simple variation of strophic *couplets* beginning with the refrain. The *trio* is in two large parts separated by recitative, following the *grand scena* format: an *allegretto* in A minor (ABABA, the B section is a *bourrée* in the relative

The distribution of the five musical numbers is as follows.

#1. *Petit morceau de scène—Entrée du pitre*, “Ah! Quel est ce bruit” (Goulgouly, SB chorus)

#4. *Air de Poussah*, “J’engraisse, mon front brille d’allégresse” (Poussah)

#6. *Trio*, “Ah! mon seigneur!” (Goulgouly, Fisch-ton-kan, Kakao)

#8a. *Air*, “Qui je suis, qui je suis, qui je suis, qui je suis” (Fisch-ton-kan)

#8b. *Duo*, “Ah! Fisch-ton-kan!” (Fisch-ton-kan, Goulgouly)

A manuscript in Chabrier’s hand indicates that *La Chanson du pal*, a number now included in *L’Étoile*, was originally intended for this *opérette*.<sup>199</sup> The document identifies “Le pal” as “Chant en solo du rôle de Kakao.” The indicated position of #11 would place it after the above listed numbers, but I would suggest that it was possibly intended as an interior number in an alternate, longer version of the opera.<sup>200</sup> In the song, Fisch-ton-kan is to be impaled for insubordination and he and Kakao debate the benefits and detractions of impalement, the form of torture “le plus fécond en délices” (the most fertile in delights).<sup>201</sup>

Readers of Chapter 2 will note many similarities between the plot outlines of these two *opérettes* and that of Offenbach’s *Ba-ta-clan*: a bizarre exotic locale ruled by a tyrant-clown, the latent threat of violence, ugly or degenerate characters, mistaken identities, and comically derived names posing as naive nonsense *exotica*. *Fisch-ton-kan* might even be interpreted as a

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major) is followed by a *cabalette-contredanse* that begins in an ambiguous mode but settles into a clear A major and ends with a *strette* coda. Fisch-ton-kan’s *air* is melodically a clear strophe-refrain (AABC) form, but again withholds the solid arrival of the tonic until the refrain and a declamatory recitative is heard between the strophes. The *duo* is a love duet, its main section a lyrical *barcarolle* with voices entwined in shifting points of imitation.

<sup>199</sup> BnF Mus., MS 3909.

<sup>200</sup> The work’s larger scope and the inclusion of more conventional numbers prompts this speculation. Also, Delage catalogues *Fisch-ton-kan* as an *opéra bouffe*, which also implies a larger, probably three-act work, 693.

<sup>201</sup> Delage proposes an autobiographical element in the homoerotic sadism demonstrated by the emperor in Verlaine’s text, especially in his fixation on impalement and in Fisch-ton-kan’s identity crisis provoked by living a false life. Delage, 100-102.

direct parody of *Ba-ta-clan*. Parallels extend well beyond basics of plot synopsis and the generally transgressive aesthetic of the libretto. We find Verlaine reproducing some of Offenbach-Halévy's favourite devices such as syllabified text distributed between the voices (for example, "ô-dou-leur" in the *entrée du pitre*), the use of familiar terms (for example, "les jolis magots avec leurs grelots me semblent moins sots que ce Kakao" is the basis of the dance refrain of the *Fisch-ton-kan trio*),<sup>202</sup> non-lexical vocables ("tra-lou-ï lou tra-lou-ï la" in the refrain of Poussah's *air*), and there are instances of laughter, tears, and swooning ("Ah ah ah...") throughout the score. The "Je suis" introductions of *opérette* also appear. For instance, the phrase "Je suis Poussah" appears at the end of the refrain of the courtier's *air* and the refrain of Fisch-ton-kan's "Qui je suis, qui je suis" begins "Je suis Fisch-ton-kan, je suis Fisch-ton-kan." The irony of this emphatic pronouncement is immediately revealed: following this refrain is a declamatory passage that reveals this character's true identity as "vingtième enfant de la Tartarie..." (twentieth child of Tartary...).

More localized parallels with *Ba-ta-clan* can also be found in both of these Chabrier *opérettes*. For instance, Fé-ni-han's "macaroni" gong-hat finds a counterpart with the "homme armé" of *Vaucochard*, who wears pompoms on his cap, and Fisch-ton-kan's emphatic declaration of identity includes the line "Je suis Fisch-ton-kan, le seul, le vrai, l'unique," almost an exact quote from *Ba-ta-clan* (recall: "Fé-ni-han, le vrai, le seul, l'unique"). The context of this phrase is similar in both pieces as both of these characters are imposters and will soon reveal their true identities. Fé-ni-han, to recall, is in reality a Frenchman; but Fisch-ton-kan, in contrast, is Tartar, a true indigen. This points to one of the many important aesthetic differences between the two operas: while *Ba-ta-clan* forces a rapprochement to Paris of 1850s by repeatedly

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<sup>202</sup> "These pretty grotesques with their little bells seem less foolish to me than this Kakao."

introducing elements of the Parisian landscape into Fé-ni-han's fictional "China," *Vaucochard* and *Fisch-ton-kan*, in contrast, avoid such references to daily life, instead using Louis Napoléon's Paris as a satirical point of departure.

Many of the satirical jabs in these works seem elusive today and are arguably more subtle than the *bêtises* of *Ba-ta-clan*, speaking to a narrower and more erudite audience than did Offenbach's works at the Bouffes. C.H. Moore unpacks the connotations of Vaucochard's "bobèche" dynasty:

The name 'Vaucochard,' inherently vulgar and stupid, suggesting as in its original spelling [*Veaucochard*] "tête de veau" and "veau d'argent" as well as one of Chabrier's favorite oaths, "cochon d'argent," finds its full sense in Verlaine's "bobêchard." Drawing on the ludicrous project of a "bobèche" factory, it hits the mark in recalling Bobèche, illustrious buffoon of the First Empire. The glabrous calf's head and Napoleon III's pale, listless face merge in Bobèche's comical mask of lifeless stupidity. Taking on this identity, Vaucochard enters into the 'clown' theme of Verlaine's poetry.<sup>203</sup>

Moore also points out the numerous layers attending Vaucochard's proposal that Aglaé and Médéric pose as a couple and the adulation the king is given by the secret lovers as a result: "As well as from the underlying satire of Napoleon III's amorous affairs, the comic arises from the 'double entendre' of flattery accented by Vaucochard's gullibility and from the mere semblance of success attending his monumental stupidity."<sup>204</sup> It should be noted that another important dynamic, archetypal in *opérette*, also plays into this situation: that of confused identity. Do we ever know who is in disguise? Whose posturings can be taken at face value? It is not even entirely clear in the manuscript to whom Aglaé refers when she sings of her secret rendezvous in the forests, *boudoirs*, and carriages around town.

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<sup>203</sup> Moore, 306. In its similarity to the French noun "clochard," "cochard" also suggests a vagrant or vagabond aspect to this character.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

The licentious suggestion of sexual role playing leaves behind the innocent “bon goût” of Offenbach’s G-rated buffoonery. Suggestive lyrics abound in these numbers, the following exchange from the *trio* of *Fisch-ton-kan*, using the verb “jouir” that in French refers specifically to sexual pleasure, being one of the cruder examples:

Kakao: De ce spectacle immonde, ma Goulgouly tu vas jouir  
 Goulgouly: Ah! j’en jouis d’avance<sup>205</sup>

The explicit sexuality that sets these *opérettes* apart is not entirely gratuitous. Genuine love always underpins actual sexual relationships. Love is an important theme in all Chabrier operas, romantic relationships motivate the actions of central characters, and, notably, love is the one theme the he routinely treats “seriously.” That is, ironic subtexts are generally absent in these relationships and expressions of love are the purest lyrical moments of the scores (for example, the *barcarolle* at the end of the *duo* between Fisch-ton-kan and Goulgouly).

Exultant love, however, is ironized by its grotesque surroundings.<sup>206</sup> The grotesque, which undermines the assumed mutual exclusivity of seemingly opposite semantic categories specifically by combining the “ludicrous with the horrifying,” takes a markedly more pronounced role in these pieces than in the Second Empire works of Offenbach and Hervé.<sup>207</sup> For instance, the pure love relationship between Aglaé and Médéric—evidenced by the unison writing, expressive harmonies, and shared text in their *duo*, and their division of the main melody

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<sup>205</sup> Kakao: My Goulgouly, you will delight in this vile spectacle  
 Goulgouly: Ah! I delight in advance

<sup>206</sup> After D. C. Muecke: “To ironize something is [in the class of simple irony] to place it, without comment, in whatever context will invalidate or correct it; to see something as ironic is to see it in such a context” D.C. Muecke, *The Compass of Irony* (London: Methuen, 1969), 23.

<sup>207</sup> In Esti Sheinberg’s words, the grotesque is “an unresolvable ironic utterance, a hybrid that combines the ludicrous with the horrifying,” explaining further that “juxtapositions of aesthetic units that form contradictory semantic pairs such as tragic/comic, terrifying/ludicrous or ugly/beautiful are interpreted... as unresolvable hybrids, or grotesques,” Esti Sheinberg, *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque in the Music of Shostakovich: A Theory of Musical Incongruities* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 207. For a semiotic consideration of the grotesque in a late modernist work with many stylistic and thematic parallels to these nineteenth-century antecedents, see Yayoi Uno Everett, “Signification of Parody and the Grotesque in György Ligeti’s *Le grand macabre*,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 31 (2009), 26-52.

and frequent imitative entries in the *trio*—serves as the main agent of dramatic unity and gives the goofy and sometimes frightening antics of Vaucochard and his court a stable departure point. It can hardly be overlooked that the idyllic romance is nested amidst the clumsy king’s lustful extortion on the local level and the threat of violent attack on the more global level. Similarly, persons or objects are frequently identified by conflicting qualities. To take an example from the opening number of *Fisch-ton-kan*, the baritone *coryphées* successively describe Poussah as both “grand et laid” and as “joli, si joli.” In his charming and comic *air*, ironically in the minor mode, Poussah sings the praises of his most repulsive attributes.<sup>208</sup> Grotesque ironies also operate in broader instances as well in these *opérettes*: most notably, violent revolt as comedy is the basic subject matter of both works. In *Vaucochard* in particular, violence in a comic context is even more alarming than it is in Offenbach’s earlier works (or in nineteenth-century farce in general, of which it also characteristic) because the threat of violence is replaced by Death itself.

The *Chanson de l’homme armé* likewise joins the horrifying with the ludicrous and this piece presents a singular instance in Chabrier’s comic operas where the music actually becomes frightening. A detailed analysis of this number seems warranted for several reasons. First, it exemplifies the significant musical departures from generic standards that are characteristic of Chabrier’s *opérettes*. Of particular note, the wild extravagance of the text extends to the music in these works, a feature distinctly not typical of the genre. Also significant is the ironic approach to standard generic procedures—Chabrier rarely uses structure as mere scaffolding for tuneful melodies, these *opérettes* privilege memorable effects over memorable tunes. As we have seen, Chabrier characteristically evokes conventional structural formulas in order to ironize or undermine them by introducing unexpected tonal relationships, unusual proportions, or

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<sup>208</sup> Elsewhere, *Fisch-ton-kan* describes his costume as a “grotesque habit.” Kakao’s bizarre relationship with his bobble-heads, whose dancing he describes as a “spectacle immonde,” also contributes to the overarching grotesque aesthetic of the work.

stylistically incongruent components—all of these are present in the *Chanson de l'homme armé*. Secondly, and of even more immediate interest to the present study, the musical humour in this piece is sophisticated and intricately designed. A variety of destabilizing mechanisms is present and the playful disjunctions that mark the discourse as humorous are calculated to invade different musical parameters independently, coming into focus only incrementally. Finally, many of the bold aberrations heard in this number can be considered fundamental to Chabrier's mature humour technique—the ambiguities and enigmas of his mature style, exemplified in *Le Roi malgré lui*, are often elucidated when considered as sublimations of the more blatantly expressed multilayered play found here.

The number begins with a drumroll ostinato, which brings military associations germane to the scene of impending battle (see Example 3.3). In piano-vocal reduction the formulaic vamp is unremarkable, the rhythm is stable and the pitches clearly establish a tonal center of D. This accords with the key signature of one flat, which, incidentally, is the key signature traditionally associated with fifteenth- and sixteenth-century settings of the famous “l'homme armé” song, after which this *chanson* appears to be elliptically based.<sup>209</sup> The orchestration, however, works against such regularity: Chabrier orchestrated each beat of the measure differently using a variety of brass and percussion instruments, which lends an excess of timbral colour and a grotesque eccentricity to the commonplace formula (see Figure 3.1). Using only the dimension of orchestration, Chabrier provokes disengagement from “normal” discursive procedures.<sup>210</sup> This

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<sup>209</sup> Enigmatically, Chabrier never uses the famous “homme armé” melody. On the presence of Renaissance “l'homme armé” settings in nineteenth-century Paris, see Katharine Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past: Early Music in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Ellis indicates references to Josquin's Mass made by Fétis in 1832 (Ellis, 24) and that Tiersot spoke of chanson-based masses, including “l'homme armé” settings, in the 1890s (Ellis, 171-173).

<sup>210</sup> Comic disengagement is central to philosopher John Morreall's general account of humorous amusement: “the playful enjoyment of a cognitive shift is expressed in laughter.” John Morreall, *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 49. By “normalcy” I refer to the “bona-fide” use of musical language and procedure, whereby a listener might reasonably expect to interpret what he or she hears at “face

Figure 3.1. *Vaucochard*, opening of "Chanson de l'homme armé."  
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Musique (MS 20639).

Handwritten musical score for "Chanson de l'homme armé" by Vaucochard. The score is written on multiple staves for various instruments and voices. The title "Chanson de l'homme armé (av. 11)" is written at the top right. The tempo is marked "lento" and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes parts for Oboe, Flute, Horn, Clarinet, Bassoon, Trumpet, Trombone, Percussion, and Bass. The vocal part is for Douyoudou, with lyrics in French: "Cet homme terrible effro ya ble e pou vai. table et un aspect plus que ses spect a". The score is marked with "marcato" and "p" (piano).

first signal to the listener that the ostensible earnestness of the scene is in jest establishes a “play frame” that prompts the disinterested interpretive stance required of “humorous amusement.”<sup>211</sup>

Soloist Douyoudou (whose name is an existential twist on the English greeting “How do you do?”) then enters with the melody, which is unaccompanied other than by the ostinato bass.

value.” See Victor Raskin on the “non-bona-fide mode of communication” that is used in joke-telling, *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985), 100-104.

<sup>211</sup> The concept of “play frame” is central in William Fry’s classic study of humour. William Fry, *Sweet Madness: A Study of Humor* (Palo Alto: Pacific Books, 1968), 119-172.

This texture together with its unusually sculpted contour gives the melody the personality of a fugue subject. The eight-measure phrase displays numerous characteristics that depict the frightful appearance of the barbaric “*homme terrible effroyable épouvantable*” depicted in the text (mm. 5-12).<sup>212</sup> Beginning on the fifth scale degree the melody quickly plunges to the lower tonic, an unusually low tessitura for a female voice. Note the leap of a fifth, also associated with the Renaissance “*l’homme armé*” song. The whole-tone oscillation around the tonic that follows has been identified by Delage as something of a signature phrase for Chabrier.<sup>213</sup> After three complete measures in this low range, the melody quickly climbs a fifth for a registral accent and a lone melisma emphasizing the word “*diable*.” The melodic asymmetry is matched by an unusual rhythmic profile—the stability of the clichéd drumroll vamp, the opening sustained quarter in the melody and the ornamental grace of the following sextuplet turn are quickly replaced by choppy eighth notes and jagged dotted rhythms. No two measures repeat the same rhythmic pattern.

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<sup>212</sup> The text of this excerpt translates as:

Douyoudou: The terrible, dreadful, appalling man, with a more than suspicious appearance, indeed has the look of a devil.

Chorus: Be wary!

Douyoudou: He has fangs, tail, and horns; his beard, from which floats a vapour, is [that of a sapper]

<sup>213</sup> Delage traces the appearance of this motif throughout Chabrier’s oeuvre. See, for instance, Delage, 102-103, 195, 265, 292, 325, 394, and 396.

Example 3.3. *Vaucochard*, from *Chanson de l'homme armé* (mm.1-18).

[m. 1] *Lent*

The image shows a musical score for the first measure of the piece. It consists of seven staves. The top six staves are for vocal parts: Doujoujou, Aglaé, Médéric, Vaucochard, Le Roi, and Sopr. (Soprano). The bottom staff is for Piano. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo is marked 'Lent'. The vocal parts are marked with a piano (p) dynamic. The piano part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

Doujoujou

Aglaé

Médéric

Vaucochard

Le Roi

Sopr.

Meur Ten

Bass.

Piano

[m. 5] *marc.*

D. 

C'est hom-me ter-ri-ble effro-ya — ble é-pou-va-nta-ble et d'un as-pect plus

Pia. 

[m. 8]

D. 

que sus-pect a bien la bi-net-te d'un dia —

A. 

a —

M. 

a —

Pia. 

## Phrygian tetrachord anticipated by soloists, echoed by chorus in augmentation

[m. 11]

ble  
bien la bi-net—te d'un dra—ble  
bien la bi-net—te d'un dia—ble  
f Sois cir—cons—pect!  
Sois cir—cons—pect  
Ah!

[m. 16]

opening melody, now on dominant

f if pos-sè—de croes queue et cor—nes sa barbe où— flat—te une va—peur est

dissonant pedal in bass, begins  
harmonic destabilization

A three-measure continuation (mm. 13-15) begins with the signature lament motif of descending Phrygian tetrachord. This is actually an echo in augmentation of the melodic segment sung by the chorus in the previous measure to the word “diable.” The words “sois circonspect” introduce the second important textual theme of the fifteenth-century “homme armé” song—fear and alarm. In measures 14-15, the “serious” subject matter, while first set to the serious lament motif, is given burlesque expression with histrionic slow appoggiaturas humorously emphasizing the “suspense” of the situation; note the bass exclamation “Ah!” with expressive dynamic marking.<sup>214</sup>

To this point the harmony has alternated between tonic and dominant exclusively, with some superficial coloration in measures 9-10 whose greater significance will be realized retrospectively. Such harmonic stability in Chabrier is usually indicative of strangeness to come, whereby oddities (such as unprepared dissonances, unexpected progressions, and unorthodox modulations) are introduced one at a time, systematically becoming more inexplicable with respect to “normal” harmonic language and consequently ironizing the simplicity of the initial process.<sup>215</sup> Harmonic destabilization begins as the soloist presents a second entry of the opening melody (beginning m. 16). It now enters a fifth higher, much like a typical fugal answer, and with counterpoint moving in parallel with the melody—but the statement is now heard over a dissonant F pedal. Harmonically, this single glitch begins a process of gradual deterioration. This first indication of disengagement in purely harmonic terms is only understood as such in retrospect, unlike the more instantly perceived oddities of orchestration, melody, and rhythm.

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<sup>214</sup> Following the use of the term in Chapter 2, to “burlesque” is to treat an exalted subject with low or trivial means, or *vice versa*.

<sup>215</sup> See the *nocturne* in *Le Roi malgré lui* for a large-scale manifestation of this principle.

Example 3.4. *Vaucochard*, from *Chanson de l'homme armé* (mm. 26-38).

[m. 26]

third entry of opening melody, now based on notes of augmented sixth on D-flat

*ff* Sa voix fait un bruit de tem—pê—te et son re—

peur

peur

*p*

[m. 29]

3 "As-tu vu la caquette" melody begins in orchestra, on D-flat

—gard n'est point ca—pon, un gros pom—pom se ba—lan—ce sur sa cas—

*ff* augmented sixth on D-flat, inverted

[m. 32]

D. -quet-te sur sa cas-quet-te *ff* sa bot-te dont Pé-pe-ron

A. Sur sa cas-quet-te

M. Sur sa cas-quet-te

V. cest boncest boncest boncest bon

S. Sur sa cas-quet-te

T. C'est bon cest boncest boncest bon *ff*

B. C'est boncest boncest boncest bon *ff* "As-tu vu la casquette; now on E-flat

Pia. *ff* *ff* E-flat<sup>4/2</sup>

[m. 36]

D. son — ne porte le trou-ble et le tré — pas dans les lieux bas *f* En

A. Dans les lieux *pp*

M. Dans les lieux *pp*

S. Dans les lieux *pp*

T.

B.

Pia.

arrival to C<sup>7</sup>, resolution of augmented sixth on D-flat

Much more unusual is the third entry of the “subject” (beginning m. 27, see Example 3.4) where the melody is built on the notes of the French augmented sixth on  $D \flat$  that provides the harmonic basis of the phrase. The augmented sixth sounded in measures 27-28 belongs to the key of F (the  $B \sharp$  is not heard until m. 28) and is approached chromatically from a harmonically distant E Major chord (as V of A minor). The unexpected and unprepared F tonality is all the more unusual for relying on this chromatic predominant chord for its implications towards a tonic that is not sounded even once in the twelve-measure phrase that it initiates. After eight measures the melodic unit is structurally complete, but the unresolved harmony forces a continuation whereby Chabrier introduces a new four-measure episode that resolves the augmented sixth to  $V^7$  of F minor (mm. 35-38).

A new melodic figure is heard in the accompaniment overlapping these last two units (mm. 28-38). This is a quotation from the famous military song (now known also as a children’s song) “La casquette du père Bugeaud.” The text of the quoted refrain, “As tu vu la casquette?” (Have you seen the cap?), refers the listener to the imagery of the warrior’s pompom-bearing cap. Rather than an element of authenticity or rapprochement, the intrusion of the martial tune from the “real world” lends an eerie effect to the scene serving as an uncanny reminder of the external reality that presupposes the dream world. The pure diatonicity of the bugle call also provides uncanny relief from the harmonic instability of the passage’s chromatic wavering between the inverted augmented sixth, with signature  $B \sharp$  often in the bass, and seventh chords built on  $B \flat$ . The  $E \flat^{4/2}$  (m. 35) resolves the  $B \flat^7$  that concluded the previous segment (m. 34), but this secondary process is merely an overlaid diversion complicating and interrupting the larger harmonic goal of resolving the augmented sixth to C, which finally occurs in measure 38.

Example 3.5. *Vaucochard*, from *Chanson de l'homme armé*, postlude (mm. 45-60).

The image displays a musical score for the postlude of 'Vaucochard' from 'Chanson de l'homme armé'. The score is arranged in four systems, each with a vocal line (Soprano, Tenor, Bass) and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is B-flat major, and the time signature is 4/4. The first system shows the vocal lines with the instruction 'bas' (low) and the piano accompaniment. The second system features a piano accompaniment with a forte (*ff*) dynamic and includes a measure with a boxed number '5'. The third system continues the piano accompaniment with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The fourth system concludes the piece with a forte (*f*) dynamic and includes a measure with a boxed number '10'. The score is marked with double bar lines and repeat signs.

Cleverly, the augmented sixth is heard resolving through the E  $\flat$  interference.<sup>216</sup> This important harmonic resolution paradoxically marks an organizational point of no return and the clear structure of the number dissolves, surrendering the music to the process of becoming unhinged.

The dismantling of rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic normalcy already observed now extends to structure; the formal organization is reduced to episodic sequences of stylistically diverse exclamations. The postlude (Example 3.5)—saturated with chromaticism, ornamental figures (runs in the woodwinds are not indicated in the reduction), and incoherent fragments—seems to indicate a world gone berserk. With an extended G pedal the number appears to be moving towards closure in C minor (the root of which had been emphasized since the appearance of C<sup>7</sup> in m. 38 as the resolution to the augmented sixth on D  $\flat$  ) but the harmony veers suddenly back to the D tonic for an authentic cadence blemished by a jazz-age #7.

The chaotic amalgam of incongruous idioms, topics, and intertextual references encountered in this number—martial drum topic, lament motif, contrapuntal idioms, modal inflections, references to a Renaissance song famous for its “inappropriate” use in sacred music, real-world military song—contributes to the out-of-control affect already noted in various musical parameters and in the text. From the perspective of humour analysis, the significance of these various elements is that their contrapuntal interplay is animated by the spirit of play. Taken as individual quirks they would merit note as eccentric singularities, but many are not particularly humorous in isolation. It is the excess of oddities with which Chabrier saturates the

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<sup>216</sup> The harmonic progression through this section—the fundamental movement is from German augmented sixth on D  $\flat$  (see Example 3.4, m. 27ff.), to B  $\flat$  <sup>7</sup>, to E  $\flat$  <sup>4/2</sup>, to C<sup>7</sup>—might also be analyzed as a sequential variant of the “échange des dominants,” also known as “omnibus,” progression described in French harmony texts of the early twentieth century. The “exchange” is between two chords of dominant seventh structure whereby two inner voices share common tones and the two outer voices move in stepwise contrary motion. I would like to thank William Benjamin for pointing this out to me. Chabrier’s manipulation of this progression invites further analysis, for even if his substitution of augmented sixth chord for the first V<sup>7</sup> and his camouflaging of the technique with various voice exchanges do not obfuscate the device entirely, his peculiar melody that relies on the notes of the German sixth pushes the application to the point of caricature.

piece, organizing the independently wayward elements into a trajectory of increasing hysteria that gives the pieces its strangely vital aesthetic and its undeniable humour.

It has been fundamental to my argument that Chabrier's systematic disengagement from conventional procedures in different musical parameters allows the listener to enjoy the excesses and transgressions as humour. Chabrier relieves his listeners of their interestedness by systematically pulling the pins of normalcy. This disengagement is in contrast to the courtiers who perform this ironic conglomerate naively accepting the monstrous "homme armé" at face value and in full earnestness. The ultimate paradox of this piece might then be the genuinely frightening effect provoked by the calculated humorous disjunctions.

To return to generic *opérette* norms, we might recall Offenbach's formulaic approach to text setting in *Ba-ta-clan*. The humour of the insensitive text-music relationship in Fé-an-nich-ton's *romance* resulted from the text seemingly being grafted onto Offenbach's invulnerable melodic structures with no allowance made for the French *accent tonique* or natural phrase rhythm of the spoken language (Chapter 2, Example 2.5). In *Vaucochard* and in *Fisch-ton-kan*, Chabrier often does the opposite, sculpting the melody and distributing the text in an overtly humorous manner. For example, in the refrain of Aglaé's *sérénade* the steady *oom-pah* accompaniment depicts a trotting horse, which in turn generates the "pleasant" bumpiness of the lovers encounter in the carriage above that is humorously reflected in the young girl's octave jumps (Example 3.6).

Example 3.6. *Vaucochard*, from *sérénade* (mm. 42-47)

The image displays a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The vocal part (A.) is written in a single staff with lyrics underneath. The piano part (Pia.) consists of two staves. The score is divided into two systems by a double bar line. The first system includes the lyrics: "cet-te con-jonc-tu — re n'est si plai-sant qu'u-ne voi-tu" and "Le roi: c'est para-doxal,". The second system includes the lyrics: "mais c'est bien drôle!..." and "Non rien dans". The piano part features various musical notations, including chords, arpeggios, and dynamic markings like *f*.

The *Chanson de l'homme armé* provides another vivid example of humorous text setting. In general, the long opening melody (mm. 5-12) with its jagged rhythms and jerking contour captures the wildness of the scene. More specifically, the fast patter and blustering turn on “homme terrible effroyable” suggests the grotesque physicality of the armed man. The humour is heightened by the semantically neutral “c’est” that opens the phrase on a sustained note giving the histrionic effect of one pausing to catch one’s breath before an exciting recitation. The low register and repeated notes in measures 6 and 8 capture the mock-horror of the vivid scene. When the main subject returns in measure 16 and again in measure 27 the increasingly grotesque image depicted in the text (“Il possède crocs, queue, et cornes, sa barbe où flotte une vapeur est

d'un sapeur, et son grand grand sabre est sans bornes" and "Sa voix fait un bruit de tempête et son regard n'est point capon, un gros pompom se balance sur sa casquette..."<sup>217</sup>) is reflected in the higher melodic register and the increasingly dissonant and unexpected harmonies. Unlike Offenbach, Chabrier makes no apologies for the barbaric excesses of the text, he instead employs numerous musical devices to hyperbolize its comic crudeness.

In *Vaucochard* and in *Fisch-ton-kan* a single unifying style is far less likely to be present throughout a number than was typical in the examples by Offenbach (and also Hervé and Lecocq) discussed in Chapter 2. In marked contrast to the inoculating formulas that domesticated the wild gestures of the libretto of *Ba-ta-clan*, a mixture of topics and styles, which might include brief episodes based on dance rhythms, heightens the comic *barbarie* of Chabrier's texts. The *trio* of *Fisch-ton-kan* demonstrates a mixture of topics and textures that is even more pronounced than that encountered in the *Chanson de l'homme armé*. As illustrated in Example 3.7, the ensemble includes passages of *bourrée* (7a), lyrical melody in counterpoint with comic patter (7b), declamatory recitative (7c), *contredanse* (7d), imitative fanfare above *perpetuum mobile* fiddle (7e), evocations of hysterical laughter (7f), and *galop* (7g).

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<sup>217</sup> "He has fangs, tail, and horns; a vapour floats from his sapper's beard, and his huge, huge sword is without end," and "His voice rattles like a storm and his look is not at all cowardly, a large pompom swings from his little cap." Sappers were military engineers traditionally known for their large beards.

Example 3.7a. *Bourrée* topic, *Fisch-ton-kan*, from *trio* (mm. 20-23).

G. <sup>2<sup>e</sup> fois</sup>  
 (al coda)  
 signe hon — neur!

F. **KAKAO** *express.*  
 pa-ro-le d'honneur. — Sont-ils assez beaux mes magots, mes chers ma-gots Ah! sont-ils

*cresc... f* *sf* *p* *cresc. - - - - -*

Example 3.7b. Layered counterpoint, lyrical melody with comic patter, *Fisch-ton-kan*, from *trio* (mm. 36-39).

G. — vé — re Com — ment ce — la va — t-il fi — nir! Com — ment ce —

F. sont-ils as — sez laids ces magots sont-ils assez laids ces magots

K. — vé — re sont-ils as — sez beaux mes magots sont-ils as —

*tr* *sf*

Example 3.7c. Declamatory recitative, *Fisch-ton-kan*, from *trio* (mm. 123-125).

*Lent*

*f*

sur toi ti-mi-de fleur! le fils du ciel fait descendre une in-

*(Lent)*

*p*

Example 3.7d. Contredanse topic, *Fisch-ton-kan*, from *trio* (mm. 133-137).

*Très Animé*

*f*

1º Et maintenant vi-te vi-te qu'on se balan-ce c'est l'instant  
2º (id) " " " " " " re-com-men-ce

*ff*

Example 3.7e. Imitative vocal fanfares with fiddle, *Fisch-ton-kan*, from *trio* (mm. 148-151).

G.  
K.

Les vi-lains ma-gots a-vec  
les jo-lis ma-gots avec leurs gre-lots

8va...

Example 3.7f. Hysterical laughter, *Fisch-ton-kan*, from *trio* (mm. 192-196).

(riant)  
lui ah! ah! ah! ah! ah! ah! ah! ah! ah!

(pleurant)  
-ci ah!

(il le frappe) (riant)  
ci! ah! ah! ah! ah! ah! ah! ah! ah!

Example 3.7g. *Galop* topic, *Fisch-ton-kan*, from *trio* (mm. 233-241).

Musical score for the first system (mm. 233-241). The score is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It features four staves: three vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Bass) and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are:

G. *ff*  
 ka - ka - o Ces ma gots a - vec leurs  
 CODA ces ma gots a - vec leurs  
 ma - gots ces ma gots a vec leurs

The piano accompaniment consists of a rhythmic melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A fermata is placed over the first measure of the piano part.

Musical score for the second system (mm. 233-241). The score continues with four staves: three vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are:

gre lots sont moins sots que Ka Ka o Oui  
 gre lots sont moins sots que Ka Ka o Oui  
 gre lots chan- tent Bon jour Ka Ka o Bon

The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern as the first system.

Chabrier's musical treatment of the exotic subject also stands in sharp contrast to the comic *chinoiserie* of *Ba-ta-clan*, very little of which is manifest in the music (even the most "exotic" numbers—the *quatuor chinois* and the march "Le Ba-ta-clan"—sound more comically raucous than exotic). Chabrier's signature modal writing, which often extends to his harmonies, colours every number except for the two love duets. The orchestration of *Vaucochard* is generally quite sparse and makes limited use of strings, emphasizing instead flutes (for example, the chromatic runs in the *Chanson de l'homme armé*, m. 27 and m. 46), low winds, and percussion (the latter two are prominent in Aglaé's *sérénade*). The timbres of these more "colouristic" instruments are typically associated with exotic evocations. The static harmonies, drone basses, dense chromatic passages, and frequent diminished and augmented intervals that can be found throughout the scores would all have been easily identified as exotic markers in the 1860s.

A final noteworthy characteristic of these works is the degree of musical sophistication, which far exceeds the norms of their genre. This is true of all of Chabrier's comic operas. Complex harmonic progressions, unusual key relationships, contrapuntal passages, sophisticated and irregular rhythms, stylistic mixture, modal inflections, vivid orchestration, and highly evocative melodies are indicative of a high art perspective that is atypical in the explicitly popular genre of *opérette*. Chabrier's complex musical formulations and the risqué themes introduced in *Vaucochard* and in *Fisch-ton-kan* support the speculations that these pieces were intended for the elite audience of an intellectual salon—a type of venue that has been shown to be more receptive to avant-garde experimentation.<sup>218</sup> It might also be partially understood from

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<sup>218</sup> Ross, "Music in the French Salon," 93. Although the Parisian *salonnière* as patron for light theatrical music is a subject that awaits rigorous study, it would appear that the artistic salon was a venue of considerable importance in the history of *opérette*: all three of Chabrier's one-act *opérettes* were apparently destined for performance at a "cercle" or salon and we know that *Éducation manquée* was slated with two other one-act works at its premiere in

this perspective that the shocking transgressions, general crudeness, and almost chaotic amalgam of styles and procedures seen in these works are considerably toned down in *L'Étoile*, which was composed for the public Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens.

### *L'Étoile*

The *opéra bouffe* *L'Étoile* (1877) was Chabrier's first major work to be publicly performed. Chabrier was introduced to the established team of librettists Eugène Leterrier and Albert Vanloo in 1875 by a mutual friend, the painter Gaston Hirsch.<sup>219</sup> Impressed by Chabrier's musical and dramatic verve, the pair promptly agreed to furnish him with a text.<sup>220</sup> The scenario would incorporate adaptations of two numbers that Chabrier had included as part of his impromptu audition: the *romance* "O petite étoile" and a chorus on the subject of impalement. Chabrier quickly completed the score without any prospect for performance. Having agreed to an audition, Charles Comte, then director of the Bouffes-Parisiens, was treated to what must have been an impressive spectacle: with characteristic pianistic virtuosity and "sa mauvaise voix de compositeur, contre laquelle il pestait lui-même et qui, dans les notes élevées voisinait d'assez près avec le miaulement du chat ou le galoubet du canard," Chabrier performed the entire score.<sup>221</sup> Comte was persuaded and the work was slated for fall 1877.

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1879. Furthermore, there are numerous works in the *opérette* repertory of the mid- to late-nineteenth century that are designated "opérette de salon" in the printed score, including Lecocq's *Le Baiser à la porte* and *Liline et Valentin* (both of 1864), and *Un Billet de logement* (1861) and *Souvenirs d'enfance* (1875) by one F. Mahoudeau.

<sup>219</sup> Leterrier and Vanloo had achieved considerable success earlier in the decade with librettos for three *opéras bouffes* set to music by Charles Lecocq: *Giroflé-Girofla* (1874), *La Petite mariée* (1875), and *La Marjolaine* (1877).

<sup>220</sup> Vanloo recalls his first impressions of Chabrier and the conditions surrounding the initiation of the collaboration in Albert Vanloo, *Sur le plateau: souvenirs d'un librettiste* (Paris: P. Ollendorff, 1913), 200-203; reproduced in Delage, 186-187.

<sup>221</sup> Vanloo's humorous description translates roughly as: "his awful composer's voice, which he railed against with curses; in the high register his tone approached that of a cat's meow or a duck's chatter," Vanloo, 203. Vanloo also discusses the performance negotiations with Comte and the details surrounding the rehearsals, 203-206; the lengthy passage is reproduced in Delage, 188-191.

The premiere (Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens, 28 November 1877) garnered reviews in many major Parisian journals, exposing Chabrier to the attention of a wider musical community than was previously possible. The published reviews were mixed: most critics agreed that Chabrier's talent set him apart from other *opéra bouffe* composers and that the score contained many inventive charms, but the praise was tempered by complaints of "Wagnerism," inexperience, and forced originality based on excess and eccentricity.<sup>222</sup> Several composers, including Henri Duparc and Vincent d'Indy, recognized the quality and originality of the work with unqualified enthusiasm.<sup>223</sup> After a brief run of forty-seven performances troubled by casting difficulties, argumentative performers, and low receipts, the work was dropped in January of 1878.<sup>224</sup> Although *L'Étoile* would not be revived during Chabrier's lifetime and the production did not procure him any future commissions, the score was published by the firm of Wilhelm Enoch thereby establishing a lifelong relationship between composer and editor.<sup>225</sup>

*L'Étoile* continues in a similar aesthetic vein and engages many of the same themes as Chabrier's earlier *opérettes*, though in general the crude extravagances of *Vaucochard* and of *Fisch-ton-kan* are camouflaged under a veneer of cheeky refinement. Like the earlier pieces, *L'Étoile* connects to the *bouffe* spirit of the Second Empire *opérettes* and *opéras bouffes* that was

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<sup>222</sup> Delage provides an overview of contemporary criticism and quotes excerpts of reviews from *Le Figaro* (20 November), *Le Charivari* (1 December 1877), *Le Ménestrel* (2 December), *L'art musical* (6 December 1877), and *Paris-Théâtre* (6-12 December), 197-200. Delage later cites an article from 1887 in which Chabrier is quoted as saying "*L'Étoile* was a flop," 201.

<sup>223</sup> Delage, 204-205.

<sup>224</sup> The last performance was 13 January 1878. Rollo Myers indicates that there were forty-eight performances and that while the work was said to have been cancelled due to a performer's illness. Myers, *Emmanuel Chabrier and His Circle* (London: J. M. Dent, 1969), 18. In reality the run was likely terminated due to a contractual stipulation that promised increased royalties to the artists after fifty performances.

<sup>225</sup> The piano-vocal score, reduction by Léon Roques (conductor of the Bouffes), was published in 1877 by Enoch, père et fils (plate stamp E.P. et F. 258). All musical examples from *L'Étoile* that appear in this dissertation are taken from this edition. The libretto was also promptly published (Paris: A. Allouard, 1877). Chabrier's full-score manuscript is located at BnF Mus., MS 8525.

no longer the primary trend in the 1870s (see Chapter 2). Likewise, it is a humorous portrayal of a fictional exotic kingdom, the primitive views and violent tendencies of which are treated with mock gravity. The plot is complicated with farcical twists (mistaken identity, misunderstandings, and *coups de théâtre*) that systematically derail the action and preclude any sense of natural denouement thereby lending the work a pronounced “funny nightmare” effect. At the dramatic center is a love relationship that, for all its earnestness, is not free from crude sexual suggestion. But in accordance with the more tempered aesthetic of *L'Étoile*, the “rough edges” of *Vaucochard* and *Fisch-ton-kan* are smoothed over. In particular, the violence is not as savage or as frightening, and the treatment of sexuality is far less crass and is usually veiled by metaphor.

The libretto reproduces many situations and dramatic themes of *Fisch-ton-kan* and Delage has shown that *L'Étoile* is based, at least in part, on this work. As already indicated, Chabrier had originally composed the “couplets du pal” for the earlier *opérette* (though both text and music were revised for its inclusion in *L'Étoile*). In *L'Étoile* *Fisch-ton-kan* is reincarnated as Lazuli, Goulgouly as Princess Laoula, and Kakao becomes King Ouf. Numerous parallels will be evident from the detailed synopsis that follows.<sup>226</sup>

Act I. King Ouf (tenor) customarily celebrates his birthday with a public execution, but, having no condemned criminal available for the task he steals about town *incognito* seeking a suitable victim. All are on guard. Meanwhile, a foursome is travelling from the neighbouring kingdom of Mataquin—the Princess Laoula (soprano); Hérison de Porc Épic, ambassador of Mataquin (baritone); Aloès, his wife (mezzo-soprano); and Tapioca, his secretary (tenor)—disguised as travelling merchants of novelty products. Without her knowledge, the princess is being brought to marry Ouf. She is also inexplicably posing as Hérison’s wife. Also *en route* to Ouf’s kingdom is the peddler Lazuli (mezzo-soprano), who has attracted the attention of the ladies. The young man

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<sup>226</sup> Reproducing the synopsis of the “parade chinoise” *Fisch-tong-khan*, the model for Verlaine’s libretto, Delage reveals parallels between *L'Étoile* and the earlier scenario that are not discernible from the fragments of *Fisch-ton-kan* that I have discussed above: not only are both *Fisch-ton-kan* and Lazuli condemned to death by impalement, but both narrowly escape death by a farcical turn of events that places them under the official protection of the court; the love interest of both heroes is coveted by the ruler, who in turn mandates his subjects to outrageous and sadistic ceremonies. Delage, 101-102.

sleeps under the evening star after singing a sentimental *romance*. The girls delight in tickling Lazuli, who playfully joins in a “tickling trio.” Laoula and Lazuli fall in love. Ouf arrives and succeeds in rousing Lazuli’s temper and the youth impetuously strikes him. A victim has been found—Lazuli will be impaled within the hour. All rejoice and celebrate the delights of impalement. However, the court astrologer Siroco (bass) interrupts the festivities announcing that the peddler’s fate is inconveniently linked to the King’s: the two will die within one day of each other (Siroco too is implicated in this predicament, for Ouf has stipulated in his testament that his astrologer is to join him in the afterlife within fifteen minutes). “Le pal” is promptly replaced by the king’s “palanquin” and Lazuli is ushered into the palace as an honoured guest.

Act II. Lazuli luxuriates in the pleasantries of Ouf’s palace. Ouf and Siroco guard his safety and attempt to appease his impulses: his every wish is their command but his safety will be protected on all outings. Lazuli craves the freedom to be with Laoula and tries to jump out the window. Ouf and Siroco are aghast to learn that Lazuli’s beloved has a husband, no doubt a jealous lunatic! Not at all, Lazuli assures them, reflecting on the usefulness of husbands in extramarital excursions. But he will nevertheless attack if necessary. Ouf determines to imprison Hérison (Laoula’s supposed husband) in order to avoid this calamity. Laoula and Hérison enter; the latter explains to the princess that she is to marry Ouf. Hérison is escorted away and Laoula faints. Lazuli revives her with kisses (Aloès and Tapioca join in for a “kissing quartet”). Laoula secretly reveals her true identity to Lazuli. They delight at the irony when Ouf arranges for the lovers to escape her “husband,” giving them an expense allowance, and laughing with them at the cuckold. They express their appreciation and Ouf basks in the recognition of his ingenuity. Ouf still believes Aloès to be his betrothed and the court prepares for the official presentation of the princess. Nobody appears... except for Hérison who has escaped from prison. He clarifies the princess’s true identity to Ouf and commands Lazuli be shot in order to rectify the situation. Gunfire is heard. Laoula soon appears and narrates the idyllic tale of the two lovers at sea disrupted by Lazuli’s sudden submersion; the peddler is presumed dead. The chorus expresses condolences at the tragedy in exaggerated swoons. Ouf and Siroco despair.

Act III. It is the next day and the body has not been found. Ouf and Siroco believe they will die within the hour. The chief of police arrives with the news that Lazuli’s clothing has been retrieved and pronounces him dead. Ouf and Siroco exit in search of a drink. Lazuli returns secretly, singing of his underwater adventures. Ouf and Siroco return inebriated and debate striking the clause that commands the astrologer’s death. They agree to have another cordial to strengthen their nerves: *green Chartreuse* this time. Laoula laments Lazuli’s death and Aloès consoles her with carefree *couplets* explaining that grief is as fleeting as a husband’s charms. Laoula calls out to her beloved, which prompts Lazuli to emerge from hiding. They celebrate his return and plan to meet up outside the city limits. Ouf returns in good spirits and determines to marry Laoula within the hour. She should be grateful that she will quickly be widowed and free to be with Lazuli, but Laoula reflects that a rose, once plucked, is not the same. The court orchestra begins a wedding hurdy-gurdy and the chorus welcomes the magistrate. Ouf gropes after Laoula, hoping to ascertain his legacy of “un petit Ouf.” Siroco reminds him that the time has come, and the wedding is forgotten. Ouf primps

himself to properly demonstrate the departure of an Ouf. Tunes are sentimentally recollected and the clock strikes the fatal hour. Nothing happens—Ouf and Siroco are surprised to find themselves alive and well. The police chief rushes in, having arrested Lazuli at the city gate. Ouf declares that the wedding ceremony will begin anew. Lazuli will surely die! In the final *couplet*, Lazuli, Laoula, and Aloès turn to the audience and, to the refrain of the “couplets du pal,” invite them to return for many future visits.

In marked contrast to the playful structures of *Vaucochard* and of *Fisch-ton-kan*, many of the nineteen numbers of *L'Étoile* employ simple conventional forms with minimal manipulation.<sup>227</sup> Structurally the opera follows the Offenbachian model quite closely. It is even more conservative than *Ba-ta-clan*, whose strophic numbers used the AABC strophe with considerable flexibility and whose non-strophic numbers employed more complex formal schemes (as was seen in Chapter 2). Also following the Offenbach example, the most overtly humorous moments of *L'Étoile* use musical parody, travesty, or caricature to mock revered models.<sup>228</sup> For example, the chromatically descending melody line of Lazuli's celebrated *romance de l'étoile* recalls Wolfram's “O du, mein holder Abendstern” from *Tannhäuser*, also

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<sup>227</sup> I would speculate that this was due to the structure of Leterrier and Vanloo's libretto, the larger scale of the work, and Chabrier's desire to have the work performed at a public theatre. The overture follows the “potpourri” design with contrasting sections based on melodic highlights of the opera, accelerating incrementally towards a *presto* climax and including a *galop* as the penultimate section. Fourteen pieces are strophic, mostly in the style of *couplets* (numbers 1c, 2b, 5b, 6c, 7b, 8, 9, 10, 13b, 14, 15, 16a, 17; 19 contains only one strophe of a *couplet*). Most of these are close adaptations of the AABC + refrain template, employing the form either directly with symmetrical phrasing (such as numbers 6c, 8, 13b, and 19) or with simple variations similar to those found in Offenbach (in numbers 7b and 14 the C phrase functions as the refrain; in 15 the strophe is only two phrases, each with contrasting sub-phrases divided between the two voices; others show flexible or asymmetrical phrasing, such as numbers 5b, 9, 10, 16a, and 17). Two of the strophic pieces are more liberal in their variation of the model: in the *chanson à 2 voix* (1c), the repeated A phrase is three measures and a transition is inserted before the four-measure B phrase, which, instead of continuing the strophe, begins the refrain; in the *chanson des employés de commerce* (2b) the strophe is a simple AABC with an expanded B phrase, but a lengthy modulating digression is inserted before the refrain.

Eight of the numbers and the first *entr'acte* are based on ternary forms (see numbers 1a, 1b, 3, 4, 5a, 13a, 13c, and 18). In several other instances a reprisal of music heard earlier in the scene acts as a framing device (see 2bis, 7bis, and the music following 1c, 5b, and 6c). The simplicity and balanced stability of these structures also extends to the remaining numbers (2a, 6a, 6d, 7a, 11, 12, 13d, and 16b), which are all for chorus or ensemble and generally comprise four- or eight-measure phrases with much repetition and homophonic writing. Four of these include brief phrases of flexible lyrical dialogue embedded in the larger, more regular structure (see numbers 2a, 6a, 11, and 16b).

<sup>228</sup> Following the definition of these terms given in Chapter 1, I will employ Gérard Genette's specific definitions as outlined in Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 25 and 89-98.

an Ode to the Evening Star, as Steven Huebner and others have noted (see Examples 3.8a and 3.8b).<sup>229</sup> The *romance* reproduces the “enchanted” tone, atmospheric orchestration, and regularized accompaniment from this most conventional of Wagner’s famous passages. The horn countermelody and the string tremolo in the return of the A section also recall gestures from Wolfram’s aria and preceding *arioso*. However, the melody is rhythmically transformed and transplanted into a sentimental song in closed form with an exotic melody (particularly in the B section)—all antithetical to Wagnerian notions of music drama. Also travestied is the beneficiary of the heartfelt prayer: Lazuli, always the opportunist, entreats the heavens for riches, pleasure, and royal stature in contrast to Wolfram’s plea for Elisabeth’s virginal soul.<sup>230</sup>

Example 3.8a. *L'Étoile*, opening melody of Lazuli’s *romance* (mm. 11-14).

The image shows a musical score for the opening of a romance. It consists of two staves: a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line is marked 'L.' and 'tendrement.' The lyrics are 'O pe\_tite é\_toi\_le Du des\_tin c'est par toi Que je'. The piano accompaniment features a tremolo in the right hand and a steady eighth-note pattern in the left hand, both marked 'pp'.

<sup>229</sup> Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the fin de siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 283; Delage also points this out, 187. The satirical treatment of Wagner brings to mind the often-quoted complaint of the frustrated orchestral musicians at the Bouffes, “we’re not at the Bouffes to play Wagner;” Vanloo, 205. Example 3.9b is taken from Richard Wagner, *Tannhäuser* (New York: Schirmer, 1895).

<sup>230</sup> In conversation, Professor Huebner has suggested that the humorous deflation of Wagner manifested in this number (and similarly in such works as Chabrier’s *Souvenirs de Munich* or the *Souvenirs de Bayreuth* by Fauré and Messager) be described by the apposite term “desublimation.”

Example 3.8b. Opening of Wolfram's "O du mein holder Abendstern" from *Tannhäuser*.

Oh, star of eve, — thy ten — der  
O du mein hol — der A — bend —  
beam  
stern, Smiles on my spir — its trou — bled dream;  
wohl grüsst ich im — mer dich — so gern:

Two other famous numbers, the Act II *final* and the *duetto de la chartreuse verte* (Act III), caricature Italian *bel canto* models. The humour of the Act II *final* derives from its burlesque treatment of a serious event: Lazuli's apparent demise, of interest to the court solely for its supposed determining impact on the fates of Ouf and Siroco. The first section of the four-part finale is a chorus that begins with the apparently fatal gunshot followed by a sustained *fff* tremolo representing the shock of the court (see Example 3.9a). The chorus is essentially a protracted histrionic gasp, neatly contained within a clear ternary structure. Hushed exclamations and *pp* supplications ("Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!") are juxtaposed with *forte* cries of "a retenti" (has resounded).<sup>231</sup> A brief transition consists of a statement by Ouf ("j'en demeure stupide," mm. 11-

<sup>231</sup> The passage reproduced in Example 10a translates as:

Chorus: A shot, yes, without a doubt!  
A shot, incredible, unforeseen!  
Has resounded. My God! My God!  
A shot, a shot!

Example 3.9a. *L'Étoile*, from *choeur*, opening section of Act II *final* (mm. 1-20).

**Moderato.**

LAOULA.

ALOËS. *pp* *très sec.* *sf* avec les 1<sup>er</sup>s Sop.

OUF. *pp* *sf* avec les 1<sup>er</sup>s Tén.

HÉRISSEON. *pp* *sf* avec les 1<sup>er</sup>s Tén.

TAPIOCA. *pp* *sf* avec les 2<sup>ds</sup> Tén.

SIROCO. *pp* *sf* avec les Basses.

SOPRANI. *pp* *très sec.* *sf* *pp*

TÉNORS. PATACHA avec les Ténors. *pp* *sf* *pp*

BASSES. ZALZAL avec les Basses. *pp* *sf* *pp*

PIANO. *fff* *pp* *sf* *pp*

Un coup de feu,

Un coup de feu, oui, c'est indu - bi -

Un coup de feu, oui, c'est indu - bi -

Un coup de feu, oui, c'est indu - bi -

**Moderato.**

Ouf: I remain without a thought!  
 Siroco: It moistens my eye.  
 Chorus: Is he slain? Or is he not slain?

[m. 4]

- ta - ble! Un coup de feu, Impré - vu, for - mi - da - ble A re - ten -

- ta - ble! Un coup de feu, Impré - vu, for - mi - da - ble A re - ten -

- ta - ble! Un coup de feu, Impré - vu, for - mi - da - ble A re - ten -

[m. 7]

(parlé) *pp* ti. Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! *ff* A re - ten - *pp* ti. Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! *pp* Un

(parlé) *pp* ti. Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! *ff* A re - ten - *pp* ti. Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! *pp* Un

*pp* ti. Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! A re - ten - *pp* ti. Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! Un

[m. 9]

*mf* J'en de - meu - re stu - *ff* coup de feu, *ff* Un coup de feu!

*mf* coup de feu, *ff* Un coup de feu!

*mf* coup de feu, *ff* Un coup de feu!

*pp* *ff* *pp* *misurato. Poco meno. (♩=104)*

[m. 12]

*Allegro. (♩=120) pp*

0. - pi - de !  
SIROCO. Est - il oc -

Mon œil en est hu - mi - de.

*Allegro. très en mesure*

*p*

*pp*

[m. 15]

0. - cis? Est-il oc - cis? Ou

*pp*

S. Est-il oc - cis? Ou n'est-il pas oc -

[m. 18]

ALOËS. *poco marcato.*

Est-il oc - cis? Est-il oc - cis? Est-il oc -

0. *poco marcato.*

n'est-il pas oc - cis? Est - il *ten.* oc - cis?

TAPIOGA. *poco marcato.*

Est-il oc - cis? Est-il oc - cis?

S. *poco marcato.*

- cis? Est - il *ten.* oc - cis?

*cresc. poco a poco.*

Example 3.9b. *L'Étoile*, from Laoula's *couplets*, second section of Act II *final* (mm. 11-24).

[m. 11] *crese. poco.* *pp* *rit.*

- eu - se — Et le soleil bril.lait gaiement! O mon Dieu que j'étais heu -  
- na - ge — Je laisserai sans protes - ter — Ve - nir le jour du mari -

*sf* *crese.* *dimin.* *pp* *suivrez.*

[m. 13] **Allegro.** (♩=120) *pp*

- reu - - se! Et puis  
- a - - ge.

*p* *pp*

[m. 17]

crac! et puis crac! Tout changea dans u - ne mi - nu - te Mon a - mou -  
Je dis - pa - rais à la mi - nu - te C'est vi - te

[m. 21]

- reux fit la cul - bute Et dis - pa - rut au fond du lac Et puis crac Et puis  
fait u - ne cul - bu - te Je le re - joins au fond du lac

*sf* *sf*

Example 3.9c. *L'Étoile*, from Laoula's *couplets*, second section of Act II *final* (mm. 40-42).

Musical score for Example 3.9c, *L'Étoile*, from Laoula's *couplets*, second section of Act II *final* (mm. 40-42). The score is in G major and 4/8 time. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked *Lent.* (♩ = 52) and *Plus lent, et ralentir.* The lyrics are: "Et puis crac! Et puis crac! Et puis crac! Et puis crac!". The score includes performance instructions such as *long.*, *suivez.*, and *f:*. The piano part includes a section marked *suivez.* and *f:*. The score is numbered E. P. 4 F. 256.

Example 3.9d. *L'Étoile*, from *choeur des condoléances*, third section of Act II *final* (mm. 11-28).

[m. 11]

Musical score for Example 3.9d, *L'Étoile*, from *choeur des condoléances*, third section of Act II *final* (mm. 11-28). The score is in G major and 4/8 time. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked *Andante.* The lyrics are: "C'est un malheur — un grand malheur!". The score includes performance instructions such as *p* and *f:*. The piano part includes a section marked *f:* and *p*.

[m. 15]

*cresc. molto.*  
*pp* *f* *p*

Nous le disons du fond du cœur Princesse! C'est un affreux malheur!

*cresc. molto.*  
*pp* *f* *p*

Nous le disons du fond du cœur Princesse! C'est un affreux malheur! —

*pp* *cresc. molto.* *fp* *pp*

[m. 19]

*sf pp* (Parlé) (murmuré)

un é\_pouvanta\_ble mal\_heur! pouvan\_table pouvan.

*sf pp* (Parlé) (murmuré)

un é\_pouvanta\_ble mal\_heur! pouvan\_table pouvan.

*sf pp* *p* *pp* *pp*

[m. 23]

OUF.

Ciel! Je n'ai plus qu'un jour à vivre!..

-ta-ble!

-ta-ble!

Récit.

*ff* *p*

[m. 26]

SIROCO.

Un quart d'heure de plus! et je devrai vous suivre!

*fp* *p*

*rall.* *1.º Tempo.*

12) which is echoed melodically by Siroco (“mon oeil en est humide,” mm. 13-14). They take the situation very seriously, which is reflected in the recitative style and sober German sixth chords (see mm. 11 and 13, both are built on  $F^{\flat}$  but are in different “inversions”), especially prominent in a chorus based entirely on I and V.

Ouf then begins the choral B section, “Est-il occis?” (Is he slain?), which increases the suspense incrementally. Each entry of the head motif brings new textural layers, all over a staccato dominant pedal. After thirteen measures of contrapuntal buildup, the harmony changes

and the question is pounded out one last time in an emphatic *fortissimo* homorhythm followed by histrionic grand pause. The question proves rhetorical, its investigation is instantly abandoned as form dictates the return of the A section (not shown in Example). The chorus's apathy will soon be openly acknowledged, drawing further meta-theatrical attention to the fact that the chorus is included merely to fill a necessary conventional role.

The following sections reinterpret many of the distinctive features of this opening chorus and increase the burlesque misalignment of the serious subject and its comic expression.

Laoula's archaic *couplets* (#13b, see Examples 3.9b and 3.9c) also make prominent use of a German 6<sup>th</sup> chord at an important structural junction (m. 12, again on F<sup>♯</sup> and again inverted), degrade from a serious style to a comic one, this time shamelessly burlesque (see refrain beginning m. 17), and incorporate a shocked utterance from Ouf, shadowed immediately by Siroco (mm. 40-42, Example 4.9c). This instance is even more humorous than the previous one for the *couplets* adopt the burlesque refrain melody "Et puis crac" (And then crack) with melodramatic seriousness in a slow tempo, the second statement is accompanied by bassoon (note the performance indication "ahuri").

Etiquette demands that the chorus offer condolences: "Ma foi ça nous est bien égal/mais, néanmoins, à la princesses/faisons un compliment banal/ainsi le veut la politesse!" (#13c).<sup>232</sup> Again an augmented 6<sup>th</sup> chord is used prominently (much of the refrain is based on the French sixth, now on D<sup>♭</sup>, and its resolution, see Example 3.9d mm. 11, 13, 19, 20, 21, and 22) and right on cue, Ouf, echoed again by Siroco, punctuates the structure with an anguished reflection on his lamentable fate (mm. 24-28). By this point low comedy has supplanted all traces of seriousness: the *choeur* and *final* borrow numerous standard *opérette* techniques from

<sup>232</sup> "My word, it's all the same to us/yet, nevertheless, to the princess/we must offer a banal compliment/as politeness demands!"

Offenbach, notably the breaking up of text (“un épouvantable malheur, -pouvantable, -pouvantable”) and the multisectional interior finale based on homorhythmic dances in duple meter with endless repetition of text (ironized here by the assertion “puisqu’il est mort n’en parlons plus”) that accelerates incrementally to a frenzied *galop*. The number caricatures the overblown seriousness of operatic approaches to inevitable calamity as well as the transparent structural conformity with which such events are habitually expressed. The earnestness is satirically exaggerated before being subverted by the burlesque and coupled with an explicit acknowledgement of its own superfluousness.

Similarly, the full impact of the humour of the *Chartreuse* duet is only achieved when the multiple layers of caricature are apprehended (the complete strophe and refrain are reproduced in Example 3.10). If visual clues do not relate the humour of the piece (Ouf and Siroco wobbling about the stage in full inebriation), the opening music surely does. A repeated broken triad is unremarkable in itself, and the 6/4 position, if somewhat unconventional, is commonplace for Chabrier. The use of triadic clarinet obbligato, however, is a clear reference to the *bel canto cantabile*. This figure is heard seven times before the voice enters, a few too many by normal operatic standards, satirizing, if rather subtly, the use of repetitive clarinet accompaniments in the works of Bellini and Donizetti.<sup>233</sup>

The timbrally prominent trombone bass that is sounded on every beat beginning in measure 3 is far less subtle, giving the effect of belching. Musically representing the inebriated condition of the two buffoons, the misplaced trombone degrades the tragic death of the royal tenor and his loyal servant with a touch of burlesque. The heavily ornamented Bellinian turns decorating the simple triadic scaffolding of the melody are also unlikely to go

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<sup>233</sup> See, for instance, “Casta diva” from *Norma* or “Regnava nel silenzio” from *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

unappreciated. Drunkenness might also explain the static repetitions of the clarinet ostinato, the exaggerated melodic decoration, and Ouf's sentimental dialogue with clarinet (mm. 6 and 8), adding another layer to satire of the ever-popular *bel canto* aesthetic, particularly its melodic filigree. The melody is especially contorted in the second phrase (mm. 7-10), which, with Siroco's breathless sputtering octave descent, is now forced to break out of regular rhythmic pulse. The exhausting performance is clipped off with a glib pizzicato arpeggiated dominant. With the refrain comes another layer of caricature: the mock gravity of the royal situation is garnished with exaggerated Baroque pomposity. After a dramatic pause (m. 10), a Handelian ceremonial brass demonstration (mm. 11-12) introduces a refrain based on perky dance rhythms.<sup>234</sup> The burlesque, which I have suggested was anticipated in the trombone "belches," now takes over completely and the humour derives from the maximal misalignment of the serious subject matter and its coarsely comic expression. The instrumental-like vocal phrases are chopped up with jagged rhythms and inter-syllabic rests and supplemented with histrionic bassline sighs. Chabrier withholds the second syllable of "verte" à l'*Offenbach* until the final downbeat. This final "-te" delivers extra comic punch for waiting nearly an entire bar of rest before finishing off the melodic sequence begun in measure 17. Only the final tone of the sequential figure is heard, highlighting the structural inconsequentiality of the melodic component. Not only does this gesture emphasize the artifice of the conventional enunciation of the *e muet* in sung French, and the forced rhyme of "petit verr'" and "ver(-te)," it sounds like a synchronized expectionation. The unfettered pageantry of the lushly scored final "Baroque

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<sup>234</sup> Jann Pasler provides an overview of Handel reception in Paris in the 1870s, and, following Katharine Ellis in *Interpreting the Musical Past*, emphasizes Handel's privileged position as the Baroque composer most thoroughly assimilated into Parisian choral concert life, not the least for the "universal appeal" of his music. Pasler argues that Handel's music was a symbol of grandeur, elegance, and cultural purity at this time, and was used ideologically to purify public taste from the perils of light music and other social contaminants. Jann Pasler, *Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 286-88.

*ritornello*” that follows (mm. 21-24) is unmitigated by text or worldly concerns, but is not without the satirical humour of what Roy Howat calls the “mock-courtly bow” (m. 24).<sup>235</sup>

Example 3.10. *L'Étoile*, from *duetto de la Chartreuse verte* (mm. 1-24).

**OUF.** *Andante.* (♩=52) *très à l'italienne, un peu exagéré.*  
 (1<sup>er</sup> Couplet) Je me

**SIROCO.**

**PIANO.** *Andante.*  
*p* Clar. *diminuendo.* *pp*

[m. 3]  
 sens ——— hélas! ——— tout cho — — — se...  
*très avari.*  
 Je suis

[m. 5]  
 Cet — te li —  
 faible ——— à fai — — — re peur!

Tromb.

<sup>235</sup> Roy Howat, *The Art of French Piano Music: Debussy, Ravel, Fauré, Chabrier* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 97.

[m. 7]

0. - queur, je sup - po

*1. en rit.*

*suivrez.*

[m. 9]

0. - se,  
SIROCO *a piacere.*

5. Nous re - don - ne.ra, oui nous redonne - ra du cœur

*suivrez.*

*f*

*f*

[m. 12]

0. *p* Pour vous re - met - tre un homme en son as - siet - te Non rien ne

5. *p* Pour vous re - met - tre un homme en son as - siet - te Non rien ne

*pp très léger.*

*sp*

[m. 15]

0. *f* vaut un pe - tit verr' de chartreus' ver - ... de chartreus'

5. *f* vaut un pe - tit verr' de chartreus' ver - ... de chartreus'

*pp*

*traitez la voix.*

[m. 18]

ver... de chartreus' ver - - te

ver... de chartreus' ver - - te

*misurato.*

*f*

[m. 21]

*sempre largamente.*

[m. 23]

1<sup>re</sup> Fois.

2<sup>e</sup> Fois pour finir.

*pp*

A final example of intertextual humour, of yet a different type, is the seemingly modest *musique de scène* used as a backdrop for a spoken exchange between Ouf and Siroco who reflect on their lives in their final hour (#18bis, see Example 3.11a). The melody that opens the main strain is from Léonor and Fernand's Act IV *cabalette* "Viens! je cède éperdu" from Donizetti's *La Favorite*, still a major attraction at the Opéra (the tune is heard in the original key but in slow

tempo over Italianate clarinet triplets, see Example 3.11b).<sup>236</sup> Parallels in dramatic context underscore the humorous appropriation of the melody: it is heard in the final scene of both operas as the “soul mates” will soon be separated by death. A provocative and indeed subversive product of this borrowing is born from a striking dramatic difference between the reference and its referent: likening Ouf and Siroco to the lovers of *La Favorite* connotes a sexual component to their relationship (or perhaps merely confirms suspicions aroused by the flamboyant codependence that they have exhibited throughout the opera).

Only a short fragment of this melody is heard, the continuation (mm. 3-4) is borrowed from the refrain of the “chartreuse duet,” which now takes on a wistful tone in slow tempo (recall Example 3.10, mm. 13-14). The juxtaposition of these contrasting fragments, particularly given the incompatible associations they bring, caricatures the widespread use of sentimental melodic reminiscence in the final-act death scene of mid-century serious opera. The contrived nature of this operatic cliché is further underscored by a forced modulation to E Major for the second four-measure phrase (beginning m. 5, Example 3.11a). This four-measure phrase is in turn followed by a return of the “Baroque *ritornello*” (m. 9) that, in its first appearance heard between the verses of the *bouffe* duet, was already humorous for its intertextual associations (see Example 3.10, mm. 21-22).

Like the quotation of “Ein feste Burg” in the finale of *Ba-ta-clan*, in this example Chabrier debases a well-known melody from a successful *grand opéra* by quoting it in the incongruous context of a comic scene in an *opéra bouffe*. The meta-theatrical mode in which both Emperor Fé-ni-han and King Ouf quote their respective grand opera melodies is curious, and not only for evident commonalities. Indeed, both rulers cite well-known tunes from serious

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<sup>236</sup> Example 3.11b is taken from Gaetano Donizetti, *La Favorite: opéra en 4 actes* (Paris: Grus, [1840?]).

moments of famous *opéras* at the moment of death, and both acknowledge the appropriation with meta-theatrical intimations. Recall Fé-ni-han's explicit declaration of appropriation "Que je

Example 3.11a. *L'Étoile*, from *Musique de scène*, #18bis (mm. 1-9).

The musical score for Example 3.11a is presented in three systems. The first system begins with a vocal line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The tempo is marked 'Lent.' and the dynamic is 'ppp (On parle)'. The piano part features several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over the notes) and complex rhythmic patterns. The second system continues the vocal and piano lines, with the piano part showing more intricate rhythmic structures. The third system concludes the passage, with the piano part featuring dense chordal textures and rhythmic patterns.

Example 3.11b. Beginning of Act IV *cabalette*-duet for Léonor and Fernand from *La Favorite*.

The musical score for Example 3.11b shows the beginning of an Act IV *cabalette*-duet. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in treble clef and includes the lyrics: "viens, viens, jecède éperdu — au transport qui m'eni — vre au transport qui m'eni." The piano accompaniment is in bass clef and features a dense, rhythmic texture with many sixteenth notes. The score is marked with a '6' above the piano part, indicating a sixteenth-note pattern.



voudrais m'échapper de ces lieux! Oui, dans *les Huguenots!* Mes amis, avec rage, chantons comme des furieux!"<sup>237</sup> Ouf likewise announces that his death will be performed in proper fashion: the line immediately preceding Donizetti's melody reads "préparons nous... mon manteau!... Et vous tous, regardez comment finit un Ouf!"<sup>238</sup> But Chabrier does not blatantly betray Ouf's imposture or explicitly identify his "real world" referent, increasing the sophistication of the joke by leaving the inference to the discovery of his listeners. The source of the humour is nevertheless fundamentally the same in the two instances: a *grand opéra* hit tune is irreverently held up as the barometer of high fashion. Indeed a rather coarse jest, but Chabrier masks the crudeness with characteristic understatement. The subtlety of the reference is matched by the expressive performance of the borrowed melody (only a brief fragment is heard, *ppp*, as the backdrop to an episode of *mélodrame*) and by Ouf's poised comportment (which is also in complete contrast to Fé-ni-han's panicked scampering), exemplifying Chabrier's idiosyncratic paradox of coarseness refined.

The intertextual component of *L'Étoile*, following *opérette* tradition, is overtly humorous and relies on the obvious appropriation of well-known material or procedures. But I have not yet addressed the Chabriquesque stylistic features that depart significantly from the generic norms of

<sup>237</sup> "How I would like to flee from this place! Yes, *Les Huguenots!* My friends, with rage, let us sing like lunatics!" Ludovic Halévy, *Ba-ta-clan* (Paris: Escudier, 1856), 32.

<sup>238</sup> "Let us prepare... my overcoat... and all of you, witness the termination of an Ouf."

*opéra bouffe*. Many of these departures are also in the direction of humour, albeit of a more subtle type, and are likely at the root of the mixed critical response to the work and the charges of eccentricity and excess it received. Chabrier's unique style is exemplified in the *chanson des employés de commerce* where the incognito travellers are rehearsing their roles as shopkeepers (#2b, see Example 3.12). The introductory phrase begins "très vif et très gai" (very lively and very gay) with a typical *opérette* dance tune, brashly orchestrated and with a modal raised 4<sup>th</sup> (this will be the basis of the refrain) only to be juxtaposed after four measures with a purely diatonic march topic (this will return as the C phrase, mm. 23-26). The strophe begins with an even more abrupt switch in style. The first vocal line reflects Chabrier's performance direction "très naïvement, un peu bêtement" (very naively, a bit foolishly) and Hérisson's melody is appropriately the very essence of simplicity, oscillating between the first and fifth scale degrees exclusively doubled in octaves by staccato winds with only open fourths and fifths for harmonic support. The result is an exaggerated simplicity suitable to the feigned naiveté of the aristocratic characters attempting to deflect the suspicion of the commoners whom they impersonate. The slightly altered repeat of the opening four-measure vocal phrase adds a new pitch, resulting in a I-IV progression that is still modally ambiguous without thirds (mm. 13-16). The B phrase (mm. 17-22) is an exercise in expansion: the four-measure phrase is expanded internally to six measures; the harmonic palette is vastly enriched with full sonorities, chromatic inflection, a temporary tonicization of V, and a full cadential progression. Even the temporal duration of the phrase is elongated with three written requests to decelerate and melodic notes sustained for the entire bar. A complete contrast is provided by the march-like C phrase (mm. 23-26) that represents the soldier-like obedience of the shopkeepers, adaptable and keen to comply with their orders.

Example 3.12. *L'Étoile*, from *Chanson des employés de commerce* (mm. 1-58).

Très vif et très gai. ( $\text{♩} = 152$ )

*sf*

[m. 7] **A4**  
 HÉRISSEY. *Meno mosso, très naïvement, un peu bêtement.*  
 (1<sup>er</sup> Couplet) Aus - si - tôt que l'au - ro - re aux doigts gantés de

[m. 12] **A4**  
 ro - se E - claire à son le - ver les é - ta - blis - sements

[m. 17] **B6 "expansion"**  
*ritard - poco a poco - rit. - encore ralenti.*  
 De nouveau - tés où le bon goût re - po -

[m. 22] **C4 march topic**  
*a Tempo vivo. f*  
 - se, A nos vi - trin's ap - paraiss' les cli - ents,

(♩=112) strophe recomposed, "A4" "A4"

[m. 27] **Moins vite.** (*préventivement*)

La teut ar - ti - cle en prix connus s'ex - po - se Ou voit

**Moins vite.**

*fp*

(♩=84) "B4"

[m. 32] *rit. (en lâtant)* ***sf***

s'ar - rêter chaq' pas - sant Et les femm's disent en -

*sfz*

*pp rit.*

(♩=132) **new material, 8mm**

[m. 37] *riten. molto.* **Vif.**

rougis - sant: Quels sont donc ces jo - lis jeun's gens, Oh! mais là quels sont

*riten. molto.* **Vif.**

*p*

[m. 41] *p* *très ralenti.* *p* *espress.*

donc ces jolis jeun's gens Si — bien mis, si — fin - gants ?

*très ralenti.* **Vivo.**

*sf* *suivez.* *sf* *f*

[m. 47] **Vif. (♩ = 138) refrain (m. 47)**

**LAOULA.**  
*mf* C'est les employ-és jo-lis, C'est les employ-és gentils Des mai-sons de com-  
*f*

**ALOËS.**  
*mf* C'est les employ-és jo-lis, C'est les employ-és gentils Des mai-sons de com-  
*f*

**HÉRISSON.**  
*mf* C'est les employ-és jo-lis, C'est les employ-és gentils Des mai-sons de com-  
*f*

**TAPIQCA.**  
*mf* C'est les employ-és jo-lis, C'est les employ-és gentils Des mai-sons de com-  
*f*

**Vif.**  
*mf* *f*

[m. 53]

**L.**  
*mf*  
 - mer - ce — C'est les employ-és jo-lis, C'est les employés gentils.

**A.**  
*mf*  
 - mer - ce — C'est les employ-és jo-lis, C'est les employés gentils.

**II.**  
*mf*  
 - mer - ce — C'est les employ-és jo-lis, C'est les employés gentils.

**T.**  
*mf*  
 - mer - ce — C'est les employ-és jo-lis, C'est les employés gentils.

Instead of leading directly to the refrain, Chabrier inserts a digression that essentially reinterprets the relatively unproblematic strophe, complicating much of its directness (see mm. 27-46). It begins with the same E-B oscillation that had clearly defined E as the tonal center, but it is now harmonized as iv-i in E minor (at first it sounds like A Dorian). The four-measure phrase is sequenced harmonically but with a new melody and new intervallic relationships (now in G major, but beginning as C Lydian). The following phrase (see mm. 35-38) reproduces the harmonic progression of the B phrase, now compressed to four measures and without the initial defining B Major tonic (the G<sup>♮</sup> of the previous phrase is retained in the bass as a common tone). The fourth phrase of this section is yet another new topic (rather like a topical hybrid, combining rhythm and tempo of the *contredanse* with emphatic downbeat and sparse melody of the march)<sup>239</sup> and bears a four-measure slow extension that emphasizes an augmented sixth chord (m. 43).<sup>240</sup>

Given the harmonic game of ironizing an overly simple passage, the delight in topical contrast, and the free mixture of modes notwithstanding—all continuations of techniques found in *Vaucochard* and *Fisch-ton-kan*—it should be clear from these observations that *L'Étoile* is governed by a different aesthetic than were Chabrier's earlier works. The disjunctions, the unorthodox combinations, and the vulgar expressions of violence and sexuality, likewise are still present, but they have been smoothed over with neutralizing understatement. Effectively, the grotesque has been refined. The ultimate example of this is Laoula's "rose couplets," a

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<sup>239</sup> Leonard Ratner indicates that the *bourrée*, which is essentially a slower version of the *contredanse*, was often hybridized with *march* elements. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980), 13-16.

<sup>240</sup> Incidentally, this section of the *chanson* is also a good example of Chabrier's obsession with performance markings: the tempo changes often and the passage is heavy with expressive markings (*très naïvement*, *prétentieusement*, *en laiton*, *espress.*).

harmonically rich and ambiguous metaphorical response to Ouf's suggestion that succumbing to a quick marriage will come at the smallest price.

This aesthetic of refinement is evident even in the names of characters—compare Kakao (implications of excrement), for example, and Fisch-ton-kan (from the *argot* “ficher le camp”) to Lazuli and Aloès, names that refer to a semi-precious stone and a plant with mysterious healing powers respectively.<sup>241</sup> With these “refined” associations, Leterrier and Vanloo are satirically extending the literary and operatic tradition of equating exotic characters, especially female ones, with their indigenous flora or natural landscape.

Ouf, on the other hand is a throwback to the ridiculous onomatopoeian onomastics of *Fisch-ton-kan* and of *Ba-ta-clan*. The French interjection “ouf” expresses relief and is akin to the English “phew.” Naming a king Ouf is in itself an oxymoron, and the undignified exclamation is exploited throughout the opera for humorous effect. In the opening scene (see Example 3.13), Ouf begins by proudly introducing himself directly to the audience, an *opérette* tradition. But the initial spoken utterance is humorously ambiguous, suggesting some physical danger narrowly avoided more than the name of a monarch. The ambiguity is instantly clarified with a qualifier: “Ouf! Ouf 1er!” He elaborates musically with clever quips, delighting in the facilitation of his own demystification. Ouf's musical characterization is the quintessence of naiveté, but naiveté with delusions of refinement. With brief melodic chirps, echoed in octaves by various wind instruments in systematically increasing intervals, we learn that he is “Ouf, Ouf the First, the King, silent and mysterious.” Of course, audience and chorus are perfectly aware of the king's identity and of the fact that he is “slipping and sliding” all about town in disguise seeking a subject for execution. Accordingly, the entire town is on guard.

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<sup>241</sup> Chantal Cazaux suggests that the doubled syllable “goule” (ghoul) in the name Goulgouly points to the Arabic “gul,” a man-eating female vampire. Cazaux, “Introduction au guide d'écoute,” *L'Avant-scène opéra: L'Étoile* 242 (January 2008), 10-11.

These four dainty measures constitute the self-contained opening section of a ternary form. In the B section (mm. 21-28) Ouf again elaborates on his current preoccupation, priding himself as the bestower of privileged “secrets of state,” ironically, for he is no more “silent” than he is “mysterious.” Sequentially derived non-functional chord progressions, rhythmic mannerisms, ornamental excess, and preciously colouristic orchestration flourish within a tightly controlled formal miniature, humorously depicting Ouf’s self-proclaimed cleverness as naively oblivious to the narrow circumscription of his world view. At the same time that Chabrier caricatures the superficial excesses of operatic exoticism, he perfectly captures the psychological character of the royal oaf.

Example 3.13. *L'Étoile*, from *entrée du roi* (mm. 15-36).

[m. 15] **OUF.** **Moderato non tanto.** (♩=69)

(Parlé) Ouf! Ouf! 1<sup>er</sup> C'est moi! le roi! si -

**Moderato non tanto.**

*f* *pp*

[m. 19]

lence et mys - tère! Mon dessein est té - né -

*sf*

[m. 22]

- breux Et mon plan aven-tu-reux, Mais à

*fp*

[m. 25]

tous, Mais à tous Je dois le tai-

*rall.*  
*suivez.*  
*p*

[m. 28]

(Parlé, en mesure)  
- re. C'est moi! le roi! si-lence et mys-

*pp*

[m. 32]

- tè-re! c'est moi! le roi!

*pp*

Quite unlike the crushing gullibility of Goulgouly in *Vaucochard*, whose petrified and unhinged state of mind was transparently reflected in the melody, harmony, musical structure, and chaotic amalgam of musical styles in the *Chanson de l'homme armé*, Ouf's naiveté acts to caricature tragic heroism. He accepts the codes of his predestination with rigid self-containment even at the cost of death.<sup>242</sup> Lazuli's musical characterization stands in diametrical opposition. Instead of aestheticizing exotic clichés in comic earnestness, Lazuli's five solo numbers (nos. 3, 4, 7b, 8, and 14; he also leads the *quatuor des baisers* and shares the lead in the *trio de l'enlèvement*) imaginatively appropriate operatic and *opéra bouffe* procedures with virtuosic versatility and with a remarkable variety of surface nuance. He indulges his desires at every turn and with whatever means necessary. Ouf operates in only one mode; Lazuli thrives on novelty and disorder. He is the invincible shape-shifter, adaptable to any situation. In short, he is the comic hero *par excellence*.

Lazuli poses a challenge to elitism and orthodoxy on numerous levels. Like so many comic masterminds before him, he defeats his social betters with his working class wits. His cleverness is revealed even before he is brought inadvertently into battle with his stolid titled opponent: see the *rondeau du colporteur*, "Je suis Lazuli, (Lazuli, Lazuli, Lazuli, Lazuli)," an introductory catalogue-type aria whose lively dance rhythms and acrobatic melody reflects the peddler's nimbleness (Example 3.14a). The humorous prosody, rhythmically emphasizing a different syllable in three successive statements of the young hero's name, likewise captures the confident elasticity of this character. But this is not Lazuli's only *modus operandi*, the characterization is immediately supplemented with the entirely more sophisticated fourth number, "O petite étoile," whose sensitive enchanted tone is captured in the orchestral

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<sup>242</sup> On the mental rigidity characteristic of tragic characters as opposed to the flexibility of the comic, see Morreall, *Comic Relief*, 78-79. Morreall argues that comedy developed historically as a challenge to militaristic thinking, 79-81.

introduction (see Example 3.14b). Other of Lazuli's skills are displayed in his remaining solos: he is indulgent and sensuous in the *brindisi*; the *couplets du mari* is a statement of his opportunist philosophy; his childlike thirst for adventure is coupled with endearing physical vulnerability in the "sneezing couplets;" he leads the "kissing quartet" with a compelling passion that is the perfect embodiment of feigned naiveté; and in the "abduction trio" we find him playfully delighting in the role of invincible young lover. Comic heroism precludes emotion, and

Example 3.14a. *L'Étoile*, from *rondeau du colporteur* (mm. 1-13).

Vif. (♩. = 138)

LAZULI.

PIANO.

*f* *ff* *f* *ff* *pp*

*très gaiement, beaucoup d'animation.*

suis La-zu-li, La-zu-li, La-zu-li, La-zu-li, La-zu-li Le

*cresc. poco a poco.* *f*

col-porteur jo-li Le fournis-seur des da-mes, Et je vends au plus

*cresc. poco a poco.* *mf*

Example 3.14b. *L'Étoile*, from Lazuli's *romance* (mm. 1-14).

LAZULI. **Modéré et avec tendresse.** (♩=96)

PIANO. *dolcissimo.*

*pp*

*pp*

*f*

*espressivo.*

*f*

*f*

*f*

*tendrement.*

L. O pe\_tite é\_toi\_le Du des\_tin c'est par toi Que je

*pp*

accordingly Lazuli thinks his way through life's challenges. Even the “sensitive” *romance de l'étoile* ultimately serves as a symbol of comic predestination more than as an emotional effusion, reflecting Lazuli's trust in the unknown and in his faith that “it will all work out in the end” (not to mention that any seriousness is negated by the parody of Wagner).

With utmost plasticity Lazuli shifts between multiple personas. For his infinite malleability, he effortlessly succeeds in all ventures, always avoiding the revelation of true emotion or any sense of his real self. Furthermore, his solos, for all their abundance and variety

of style, are the definition of structural conventionality. Unlike the bold aberrations realized by the characters of *Vaucochard* and *Fisch-ton-kan*, Lazuli undermines the codes from within, draping a surface coloured with paradox, stylization, and idiosyncrasy to the point of saturation over an overtly conformist foundation. He is a microcosm of the aesthetic of superficial excess that governs *L'Étoile*.

Lazuli's *en travesti* performance also plays into this dynamic of multiplicity and surface excess. The little peddler, literally "star-crossed and cross-dressed," to borrow a phrase from Corinne Blackmer, is as successful in satisfying his libido as his other whims.<sup>243</sup> His erotic attraction to Laoula is his primary motivation throughout the opera (the impalement episode was merely a temporary distraction) and the audience at the Bouffes was treated to the tantalizing image of two women tickling, kissing, and swooning, their voices entwined in "sapphonic" rapture.<sup>244</sup> This quite exceeds the regular duties of the nineteenth-century operatic *travesti*: not one trouser role from the performed repertory of nineteenth-century opera demonstrates this degree of sexual prowess. One might think of Cherubino (whom Chabrier surely would have known) or Octavian (still thirty years in the post-decadent future), but Lazuli surpasses these erotically-charged young aristocrats in dramatic significance and centrality. A trouser mezzo as celebrated hero is simply unknown in nineteenth-century opera.<sup>245</sup> But this is categorically not

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<sup>243</sup> Corinne E. Blackmer, "Introduction," in *En travesti: Women, Gender Subversion, Opera*, ed. Corinne E. Blackmer and Patricia J. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 9.

<sup>244</sup> This rubric was coined by Elizabeth Wood to denote a "space of lesbian possibility;" Wood, "Sapphonic," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994), 27-66.

<sup>245</sup> The one notable exception to this is Romeo of Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (1830), whose casting connects with eighteenth-century *opera seria* tradition and was harshly criticized as old-fashioned throughout the nineteenth century. See Simon Maguire, *Vincenzo Bellini and the Aesthetics of Early Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera* (New York: Garland, 1989). On the subject of trouser roles in French opera of the period, see Heather Hadlock, "The Career of Cherubino, or, The Trousers Role Grows Up," in *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera*, ed. Mary Ann Smart (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 67-92. The article discusses Massenet's *Chérubin* (1905), an opera that has numerous parallels with Chabrier's *Éducation* (for instance, both operas center on a young nobleman in trousers, sexually frustrated, and dependent on his philosopher for guidance).

the case in *opéra bouffe*, a repertory with a preponderance of gender-bent central or title characters.<sup>246</sup> Whatever more political inferences lie in wait of argumentation, Lazuli's misaligned vocal and dramatic personas are testimony to his fictionality and dissimulation.

The surface excesses of *L'Étoile* are indulgences that betray, by placing in relief, the “tropes of nothingness” that are the essence of the opera. Recall the many instances of dramatic anticipation that come to nothing: the excitement leading to Lazuli's impalement, the official presentation of the princess, the wedding ceremony of Ouf and Laoula, and Ouf and Siroco's impending death are only the most prominent examples. Other more localized details of plot are superfluous and typically recognized outright as such: Hérisson and entourage indulge in their disguise as shopkeepers but the ruse is hardly relevant to their mission, particularly inexplicable is Laoula's posing as his wife (we learn in the dialogue that is it for “reasons of diplomacy”), and there is also the Aloès-Tapioca encounter that spontaneously erupts in the “kissing quartet” merely to caricature the love duet tradition by making it *à deux*. As already noted, much of the humour in the Act 2 *choeur des condoléances* and *final* relies on the undisguised apathy of the mourners, made explicit in such statements as “ma foi, ça nous est bien égal...” and “puisqu'il est mort n'en parlons plus/Sur son sort pourquoi donc geindre davantage/Tous nos pleurs seraient superflus.”<sup>247</sup>

There are numerous musical instances of gratuitous decoration as well. The colourful juxtapositions, exotic orchestration, “perfumed” sonorities, and general opulence of the *choeur*

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<sup>246</sup> The male heroes of Chabrier's *L'Étoile* and *Éducation manquée* and of Lecocq's *Le Petit duc* are all cast for female performers, to name a few prominent examples. Recall that the role of Méphisto in Hervé's *Le Petit Faust* (discussed in Chapter 2) was also a *travesti*. Despite the provocative challenges it poses, this prevalence has received virtually no comment in the literature.

<sup>247</sup> “My word, it's all the same to us...” and “Since he's dead let us speak of him no more/why whine anymore about his fate/all our tears would be superfluous.”

that opens Act 2, where we find Lazuli nested in the lap of six exotic ladies (odalisques?), serve no dramatic purpose other than to represent the indulgence of Lazuli's (sex-transgressive) hedonism in his newly privileged position. Ouf's musical characterization, as we have seen, likewise demonstrates an elevation of style over depth. I have already noted the transparently formulaic repetition of augmented sixth chords in the Act 2 *final* and the strategic incorporation of this chord in #2b, that together with the abundance of augmented sixths of various types throughout *L'Étoile* also suggest an aesthetic that privileges superficial excess.

The most convincing argument for an aesthetic of surface excess in *L'Étoile*, however, is found in the music associated with the *présentation de la princesse* (#12), whereby the court excitedly awaits the appearance of Ouf's bride Laoula. The short text and festive fanfare figures are repeated obsessively and with little development in the two sections of this noisy ceremonial (see Example 3.15, "Nous allons donc voir, nous allons donc vois, nous allons donc voir, nous allons donc voir..."). Everyone knows that the princess is nowhere to be found, except for Ouf of course, the mastermind of her abduction. Chabrier drives this playful irony to the level of aesthetic credo by positioning this same music as the climactic central section of the *ouverture*. The overture bolsters the vacuous fanfare with a massive multi-sectional introduction (in the opening 124 measures the tonic is never heard in root position), and liquidates its festive energy with a largely diatonic, accelerating *galop* coda. Again, Chabrier's subtle aesthetic point is paradoxically expressed through music of utmost coarseness.

Example 3.15. *L'Étoile*, from *choeur*, no. 12 (mm. 1-32).

**Allegro con brio.**

SOPRANI.

TÉNORS.

BASSES.

**Allegro con brio. (♩=112)**

PIANO.

*ff*

*ff*

*snc.*

Soprani.

Ténors, très détaché.

*ff*

Nous allons donc voir, Nous allons donc voir, Nous allons donc voir, Nous allons donc voir,

Basses.

*ff*

Nous allons donc voir, Nous allons donc voir, Nous allons donc voir, Nous allons donc voir,

*ff* *dim. molto.* *pp*

Nous allons donc voir, Nous allons donc voir la belle prin - ces - se,

*ff* *sf* *pp*

Nous allons donc voir, Nous allons donc voir la belle prin - ces - se,

*ff* *sf* *pp*

Nous allons donc voir, Nous allons donc voir la belle prin - ces - se,

*dim. molto.* *pp*

### *Une Éducation manquée*

*Une Éducation manquée* is also to a libretto by Leterrier and Vanloo. Chabrier had been invited to stage a performance of a one-act *opérette* at a small salon, the Cercle international, and approached his former collaborators for a text.<sup>248</sup> The libretto is based on a three-act *comédie-vaudeville* by Eugène Labiche titled *La Sensitive*.<sup>249</sup> The piece premiered 1 May 1879 with Chabrier at the piano and seems to have received a mixed response: most commentators complained of a misalignment between the text (seen as ridiculous and puerile, or, at the very least “très légère”) and Chabrier’s music (interpreted as too sophisticated and “tourmentée”).<sup>250</sup> As with *L’Étoile*, the score was promptly published by Enoch.<sup>251</sup>

After the premiere Chabrier orchestrated the score in hope of procuring a revival. Despite entreaties to friends and acquaintances he was unable to see the work mounted again, but the piece has been performed numerous times since his death, mostly at small or private venues.<sup>252</sup> The most noteworthy of these was certainly Diaghilev’s revival with the *Ballets russes* in 1924 conducted by André Messager, for which Darius Milhaud composed recitatives and orchestrated Chabrier’s early *romance* “Couplets de Mariette.”<sup>253</sup> In 1938 the work was premiered by the Opéra-Comique.

The detailed synopsis is as follows.

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<sup>248</sup> Vanloo recalls the initial details of the project, 206-209.

<sup>249</sup> This play premiered at the Théâtre du Palais Royal, 10 March 1860. Eugène Labiche, *Théâtre complet de Eugène Labiche*, 10 vols. (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1878), 6: 309-412.

<sup>250</sup> For an overview of the work’s reception, see Delage, 211-212, and 214.

<sup>251</sup> The piano-vocal score was published by Enoch in 1879 (E.P. & F. 407); the musical examples included from *Éducation* are from this edition. The location of the manuscript is unknown.

<sup>252</sup> In 1899 it received a single production by the Cercle des escoliers de Paris, it later was seen at the Monte-Carlo (1910), at the Théâtre des Arts (eight performances in 1912, revived again in 1913), at the Vieux-Colombier (1918), and with Diaghilev’s *Ballets russes* at the Monte-Carlo (1924). Delage, 214-216.

<sup>253</sup> The “Couplets de Mariette” (from the *Neuf Mélodies pour chant et piano*, 1861-62) was included in the production as a solo for Hélène. A new text was written by René Chalupt.

*Louis XVI era; aristocratic apartments; it is raining.* Young cousins Hélène de la Cerisaie (mezzo-soprano) and Comte Gontran de Boismassif (soprano) have been married and are entering their conjugal home for the first time. She has recently arrived from the convent; he has freshly graduated from a life devoted to academics. Amidst self-conscious banter Hélène observes that they have been left alone for quite a while. Suddenly Gontran is aware of his discomfort—when will his grandfather arrive, he had promised assistance in this delicate situation? Gontran is disappointed when footsteps turn out to be the tipsy stumblings of his tutor, Master Pausanias (bass). Pausanias explains that he could hardly resist a little bout of Rousillon in celebration of Gontran’s graduation (#1, *chanson*). He then informs the Comtesse that her aunt awaits her in her chamber. Hélène departs, to the relief of Gontran. Gontran precipitously asks after the whereabouts of his grandfather. Pausanias explains that the latter is indisposed but has sent his written recommendations; the tutor exits. Gontran has never been left alone before and is anxious for direction—he reads the letter (#2, *lettre*): indeed, in such a solemn occasion, guidance would be appreciated... but “Gontran, you little rascal, there is really nothing needing explanation.” What horror—his head stuffed with Latin and Greek, how could he be ignorant to such an important subject? Perhaps Pausanias can help. Gontran orders the tutor be presented, dead or alive. Hélène returns, ripe with her aunt’s advice. She tells Gontran that she will submit with tenderness to his wishes. To buy time and spare his dignity, Gontran launches a love duet (#3): they love each other, souls absorbed, they kiss, they swoon, it seems like there should be something more, there must be... Gontran fills the uncomfortable silence with clichéd conversation but Hélène’s morale is noticeably diminishing and she reluctantly retires to her chamber. Pausanias finally arrives and Gontran reprimands him for providing the youth with an incomplete education. Pausanias assures him that only the tiniest of details may have been overlooked. He recapitulates the thorough syllabus (#4, *duetto bouffe*): “Once saturated with Hebrew, Hindu, algebra, and chemistry, I crammed you full of Greek and trigonometry...” Gontran repeatedly protests that it was not enough. Pausanias is stumped—what could he have possibly omitted, geodesics? Gontran enlightens him to the subject in question. Pausanias never learned about *that*, he has, after all, been a very busy man. He bustles out to consult with a colleague. Awaiting the tutor’s return, Gontran is overcome with a strange sensation—he is flushed, his breathing constricted... it must be the thunderstorm. He reflects on his physical response to the storm (#5, *couplets*). He is about to turn in when a flustered Hélène rushes in for comfort, her sleepwear askew. She might not be very brave, but she certainly is pretty, muses Gontran. Suddenly he knows what to do: they must snuggle up very close together (#6, *duo*), suddenly their kisses seem so much sweeter. Pausanias clambers in. Gontran dismisses him; his lessons are no longer needed. But Pausanias insists on one final gesture: all three turn to the audience and request the indulgence of privacy (#6bis).

Again we find an outward conventionality—a “potpourri” overture with six vocal numbers, three of which are solos in the standard form of *couplets* and the remaining three are duets clearly derived from standard aria templates, all with symmetrical phrasing and largely

based on dance rhythms—but the numbers are rich with stylistic nuance and ironic humour. The sexual play and “nothingness” trope of *L’Étoile* are again found in *Éducation manquée* but with an even higher degree of subtlety, and the modal touches fundamental to the exoticism of the earlier works is retained in the service of eighteenth-century colour.

A paradoxical interplay of coarseness and refinement is central to the aesthetic of this *opérette*. Several variations of this dialectic are already realized in the *ouverture*, the first of which can be found in the eight-measure introduction (see opening of Example 3.16). A quiet horn call is the first sound heard, capturing the poetic ambience of the *pastorale*. A delicate response is sounded three octaves higher but with the unexpected timbre of the triangle. This echo-like effect is repeated six times, always squarely on the dominant, with ornamental changes providing the only relief from static repetition. The bucolic “call and response” of the distant-sounding horn, adorned with “unnatural” orchestration and progressively artificial ornamentation (the dotted rhythm introduced in m. 3 will be exposed as a calculated anticipation of the *sicilienne* rhythm of the main strain) is a microcosm of the out-of-placeness of nature domesticated that governs the *opérette*. As this brief analysis attests, the device is transparent, yet its understated expression detracts from its simplistic design.

The overture proper is made up of two self-contained ternary parts. The first begins in measure 9 (see Example 3.16), its music is drawn from Gontran’s *sicilienne couplets* (the concluding phrases of the strophe are heard, see mm. 17-24 of #5). This *sicilienne* returns in Gontran and Hélène’s *duo* (#6, mm. 60-68 and 74-75); in both instances it is associated with the thunderstorm, the tool of Gontran’s sexual awakening. Appropriate to its pastoral associations, the tune is heard with wind orchestration, an open fifth drone bass, stable tonic harmony, and compound meter though is overloaded with four- and later five-voice counterpoint and chromatic

Example 3.16. *Éducation manquée, ouverture* (mm. 1-32).

(PASTORALE) 8 Triangle

**Andantino.**

*p*  
Cor  $\wedge$

[m. 5] Cordes

Vns

[m. 9] Bois

*f*  
*p* *louré.*

Alto

*pp*

[m. 13]

*pp*

[m. 17] *Cordes dolce.* *Bois.* *pp* *Bon*

[m. 21] *Cordes* *Bois*

[m. 24] *Vns Flûte* *pp* *Alto* *Bon sempre pp*

[m. 27] *cresc.* *Hrb.* *pp Cl.*

[m. 30] *cresc.* *scen - do.*

nuance. The contrasting middle of this first part (mm. 17-32) is the antithesis of such unity and stability, exemplifying the bewildering effect of the storm. It juxtaposes contrasting fragments and shifts playfully between tonal centers. It begins with the phrase heard in the *duetto bouffe* (see #4, mm. 18-21, 38-41, and 105-108) that attends Gontran's protest against Pausanias's insufficient academics ("Je n'vous dis pas, Pausanias! mais ça ne suffit pas!"), which is juxtaposed with a continuation segment from the *sicilienne*. In both the overture and in the duet this "Je n'vous dis pas" fragment presents an unexpected stylistic shift that disrupts the stability

Example 3.17. *Éducation manquée, ouverture* (mm. 54-77).

[m. 54] **Allegro.**  
 Fl. Cl. vns Alto yelles Bou Cor

[m. 60]  
 Bou Cordes Basses

[m. 65]  
 Pia Htb B<sup>n</sup> très détaché. Basses

[m. 72]  
 vns Fl. 8

of the number. The context of the “ça ne suffit pas” connotation in the overture, however, is ironic: the storm (represented by the *sicilienne*, as unexpected as this association may be) is perfectly and completely sufficient, it will be Gontran’s only antidote to his civilizing erudition.

The second part of the *ouverture* is also a ternary structure. It opens with a bombastic march-like dance in that is not drawn from the *opérette* proper (Example 3.17). This is then supplanted by music from the elegant “letter couplets” (m. 62ff.). The main tune (mm. 70-77) cleverly reproduces the pitches and contour of measures 56-57, but the opening gesture is now transformed into gavotte style. The following subphrase (mm. 74-77) likewise begins with a reinterpretation of a preceding gesture (cf. mm. 62-63). Such interrelationships and subtleties continue to infiltrate the remainder of the overture.

With the contrasting middle of this second section (see mm. 141-189, the melody here anticipates #6) an overriding entropic process becomes apparent: the contrasts in dynamic, orchestration, texture, and style increase incrementally in boldness and the graceful posture of the *sicilienne* becomes a distant memory, its poise surrendering completely to the rowdy *bouffe* style. The unequivocal victory of the “low” style coincides with the return of the gavotte melody (m. 220, see Example 3.18a), now heard *ff* with pounding *tutti* accompaniment. The return of the opening section of the ternary now doubles as the *stringendo* coda, *de rigueur* in *opérette* overtures. This in turn morphs into an allusion to Bizet’s *Carmen*, a symbol of bravura pageantry utterly foreign to the genteel poetics of *Éducation manquée* as heard in the opening of this *ouverture*. (See Example 3.18b, from the conclusion of the allegro section of the *Carmen* *prélude*, which is drawn from the Act IV *corrida* scene—the allusion is most apparent in the

mode mixture and the similar orchestration of the two excerpts, which is not evident from the example.)<sup>254</sup>

Example 3.18a. *Éducation manquée, ouverture* (mm. 219-238).

**Striagendo**

The musical score for Example 3.18a, *Éducation manquée, ouverture* (mm. 219-238), is presented in four systems. The first system is marked **Striagendo** and features a piano part with *Cordes* and *H* (Horn) parts. The second system includes *Fl.* (Flute), *Cl.* (Clarinet), and *B<sup>b</sup>* (Bassoon) parts. The third system includes *Pist. Timb.* (Percussion/Timpani), *Fl.* (Flute), *Hrb.* (Horn), and *JJ* Cor (Horn). The fourth system includes *Fl. et Hrb.* (Flute and Horn), *Tri.* (Trumpet), and *allarg.* (ritardando). The score is marked with *JJ* (fortissimo) throughout and includes various dynamics and articulations such as *tr* (trill) and *Tutti*.

<sup>254</sup> Examples 3.18b and 4.6b are reproduced from Georges Bizet, *Carmen: Opera in Four Acts* (New York: Schirmer, 1895).

Example 3.18b. *Carmen, prélude* (mm. 114-120).

Pausanias’s “wine couplets” (#1, “Ce vin généreux”) maintain the regular phrasing and cadential structure associated with the strophe-refrain form, but, appropriate to the tutor’s drunken state, the syntax is confused, the rhythm is unusually fluid, and the prosody permits a rambling effect. The six-measure introduction (the head motif of which is borrowed from the refrain) caricatures the “beginning, middle, end” functionality fundamental to the structures of late eighteenth-century Viennese classicism, here rendered as three two-measure units contrasting in register, orchestration, and topic: bold opening sweep, ornamental filler, cadential gesture (see Example 3.19).<sup>255</sup>

Example 3.19. *Éducation manquée, chanson* (mm. 1-14).

<sup>255</sup> Similar play with functionality can be found in such canonical humorous works such as Mozart *Ein Musikalischer Spaß*, K. 522 and Haydn’s Op. 33 String Quartets.

PAUSANIAS. 1<sup>er</sup> COUPLET.

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system shows the vocal line with the lyrics "Ce vin gé - né -" and piano accompaniment with markings for "Bois", "Tutti", "Timb", "Cordes", and "B<sup>n</sup> V<sup>n</sup>". The second system continues the vocal line with "reux J'en ai pris d'a - bord un ver - re Après ça j'en ai - pris" and piano accompaniment with markings for "Cl.", "Fl.", "Htb", "Cor", and "Vns". The third system continues the vocal line with "deux, Mais - quand je - bois, moi, ça m'al - tère - - re! - - Et voi -" and piano accompaniment with markings for "Bois", "Cordes", "suivez.", and "Cl. B<sup>n</sup>".

Gontran’s “letter couplets” are set as a gavotte (highlighted in the *ouverture*). The strophe follows the AABB’ layout with consistent four-measure phrases, but, following the *chanson des employés de commerce* in *L’Étoile*, a reinterpretation of the strophe is inserted before the refrain (mm. 21-37, refrain begins m. 38). Chabrier’s characteristic modal writing, used throughout *Éducation manquée* to denote the eighteenth-century setting, is remarkably sophisticated in this number, demonstrating a modal-tonal synthesis with its own interior logic. Again the brief

Example 3.20. *Éducation manquée, Lettre* (mm. 1-9).

**Allegretto.**

**G- as tonic, conflicts with descending Bb+ scale in bass**

**emphasis on F+**

**cadential motion, emphasis on F**

[m. 4] **GONTRAN. 1<sup>er</sup> COUPLET**

Mon - en - fant ton vieux grand pè - re

*sotto voce.* **pp**

[m. 7]

En ce moment so - len - nel An - rait dû ve -

**opening figure returns, now as phrase-middle**

orchestral introduction is something of a microcosm (Example 3.20). The four-measure phrase begins and ends squarely on G Minor chords, but the harmonic simplicity that these bookends might suggest is deceptive. The *fauxbourdon* opening gesture, using the lowered seventh, indicates modal harmonic inflections. The F Major chord is emphasized in the rhythmically

displaced repetition of the gesture, falling on the downbeat in the second measure. It is further highlighted with a half cadence in B  $\flat$  in measure 3, which sounds like the natural conclusion to the three-measure phrase. Adding another layer to the modal-tonal ambiguity, the bassline of this opening three-measure unit is a diatonic B  $\flat$  Major scale. As curiously conclusive as the cadence in measure 3 sounds, Chabrier furthers the tonal ambiguity by repeating it up a whole step for a closed cadence in G Minor. The result is a passage clearly centered on G, but with a subversive modal ambiguity that undermines the logic of functional harmony with a ludic imitation of pre-tonal modality.

The F $\natural$ -F $\sharp$  cross relation heard in measures 3-4 is reproduced several times in the first half of the strophe (AABB', mm. 5-20) due to the participation in the bass ostinato of the raised seventh in contrast to the melody's faithful use of the lowered seventh. In measure 6 (repeated as m. 10), F $\natural$ , F $\sharp$ , and G are sounded simultaneously—a modern sonority posing as naive modalism. The F $\natural$  against F $\sharp$  then appears in a more puzzling context: the opening *fauxbourdon* gesture of the introduction, which was already reproduced in a different metrical context (m. 2), is again reinterpreted in measure 7 where it functions as the middle of the phrase. Revisiting this twice heard motif provides a kind of unity to the piece, but the primary unifying agent over the course of the strophe is rhythmic: each phrase, including the introduction, proceeds from faster melodic figuration (first two measures) to sustained chordal tones (third and fourth measures), a shift which underlines the cadential function of the phrase ending. Note the humorous concurrence of the plagal cadence on the word “solennel” (mm. 7-8) with *tierce de Picardie*, that endemic marker of Baroque tonality, over the obviously busy bass ostinato.

Example 3.21. *Éducation manquée, Lettre* (mm. 32-47).

[m. 32]

deux... Mais pas be- soïn de mo- ra- le...

Fl.  
Cor  
Bsn

[m. 35]

A de jeunes a- mou- reux

Fl. col. *rando*  
*ralentissez.*  
Cor  
Alto  
Vl.  
Bats seuls  
pp  
suivz.  
(Cor solo)

[m. 38]

Plus lent.

femme est jo- lie et ten- dre Et je sais bien...

Cords  
Vl.  
pp  
non solo

[m. 41]

pe- tit vaurien Que je n'ai rien, rien, rien, rien à tap-

Cords  
Vl.  
Quat. pizz.  
(arco) suivz.  
*a piacere.*

[m. 44]

G.  
 - pren - dre... (PARLÉ) Mais si!... mais si!...  
 Fl.  
 Hrb.  
 Cl.  
 Rud.  
 pp  
 mf  
 Allegretto.

The text of this number points to a significant characteristic of the *opérette*, and one that I privileged in my reading of *L'Étoile*: the gratuitous celebration of a void. The grandfather's letter is a preambing profusion of polite niceties, but is notably of no substance. In particular, to Gontran's horror, the purported subject of the letter is evaded just as grandfather appears to be getting to the point. Losing his train of thought, he veers off in nostalgic reverie:

Ce que je ne puis te dire,  
 Il faut bien mon cher Gontran  
 Me résigner à l'écrire,  
 Lis donc et profites-en!  
 Dans la chambre nuptiale  
 Quand vous serez seuls tous deux...  
 Mais pas besoin de morale...  
  
 Ah, de jeunes amoureux...  
 Ta femme est jolie et tendre  
 Et je sais bien  
 petit vaurien  
 Que je n'ai rien, rien, rien, rien à t'apprendre.<sup>256</sup>

Underlining the digression is a shift in musical style to that of a Gounodian *romance* at the refrain (Example 3.21, m. 38), and the words “rien, rien, rien” are emphasized with an ironic cadential gesture to C in the middle of the phrase (note the orchestration and mocking dissonance that not coincidentally repeats the F<sup>b</sup> / F<sup>#</sup> cross relation, mm. 42-43).

<sup>256</sup> “What I cannot tell you/I must, my dear Gontran/resign myself to write/So read and benefit!  
 In the nuptial chamber/when you find yourselves all alone/But not in need of /Ah! Young love!  
 Your wife is beautiful and gentle/and I well know/you little rascal/ that I have nothing, nothing,  
 nothing to teach you!”

Example 3.22. *Éducation manquée*, duetto (mm. 1-13).

**Moderato con grazia.**

Fl. Cl.  
*dolce.*  
Cordes

Htb.  
Cor B<sup>na</sup>

**GONTRAN** avec tendresse.

Eh! bien, ma chè - re à son ma - ri

Quat. seul  
*sf*

Fl.

*pp*

U - ne bon - ne pe - ti - te fem - me Dit gen - ti -

Cor  
*f* *p* *f*

Cl

*pp*

G

ment — com - me ce - ci:

Htb.  
Fl.  
B<sup>na</sup> *f* *pp*

The duet (#3) uses the double aria form in an overtly ironic and humorous manner that further emphasizes the returning “nothingness” trope. The *cantabile* section is a binary form minuet, a paradoxically formal and public dance for the intimate post-nuptial moment. The false poise is betrayed in the introduction, which begins with a three-measure tonicization of the subdominant key (D Major); an awkward attempt to correct the blunder results in the insertion of an isolated fragment in the tonic (m. 4 see Example 3.22). Gontran’s unease is further reflected in the staggered vocal entries with each phrase beginning on different beats and the misalignment between the voice and the accompaniment.

The *tempo di mezzo* section in the operatic *cantabile-cabalette* form bears the explicit responsibility of advancing the dramatic situation in order to justify the ensuing *cabalette*. Here, Chabrier mocks the transparency of this convention and the ridiculousness of the *bel canto* reliance on such inherently undramatic contraptions by doing precisely the opposite. The section begins with a frantic contrapuntal passage in quasi-*courante* rhythm (m. 73, see Example 3.23) that gradually loses momentum over the course of the section and reaching a complete stall by the end. The text makes the joke explicit:

Hélène:	Ensuite!		
Gontran:	Ah! Mon Dieu que j’enrage!		
	Ensuite! Ensuite! Eh bien! C’est tout!		
Hélène:	Eh quoi! C’est tout!		
Gontran:	J’ai beau chercher partout...		
	Oui, c’est bien tout...		
Hélène:	Hélas! C’est grand dommage...		
	Que ce soit tout.		
	Eh quoi c’est tout...		
Gontran:	Oui, c’est bien tout.		
Hélène:	Oui, c’est bien tout.		
Gontran:	Oui, c’est bien tout.		
Hélène:	Tout.	Gontran:	Tout.
Hélène:	Tout.	Together:	Tout. <sup>257</sup>

<sup>257</sup> Hélène: And then?

Gontran: Ah, my Lord! How annoying/And then, and then? Well, that’s all there is!

Example 3.23. *Éducation manquée, duetto* (mm. 70-96).

[m. 70] *Un poco animato.*

Mais... mais ça n'est que gen - til!..

*Un poco animato.*

[m. 74] HÉLÈNE. GONTRAN.

En sui - te! Ah! mon Dieu que j'en - ra - ge!

[m. 78] HÉLÈNE. GONTRAN.

En sui - te! Ensuite! Eh bien! c'est tout! J'ai beau cher -

Eh quoi! c'est tout!

---

Héleène:	What? That's all?
Gontran:	I have searched all around/Yes, that's all...
Héleène:	Alas! What a shame.../that this be all...
Gontran:	Yes, this is all there is...

[m. 82]

*f* **HÉLENE**

- cher par tout... Oui, c'est bien tout... Hé - las!

Cl. B<sup>9</sup> Htb.

[m. 85]

*pp* *f*

c'est grand dom - ma - ge... Que ce soit tout Eh quoi c'est

Cl. Cor *f* B<sup>9</sup> V<sup>1</sup> C.B.

[m. 89]

**GONTRAN.**

Oui, c'est bien tout. Oui, c'est bien tout.

tout... Oui, c'est bien tout.

F1, Htb. 1<sup>re</sup> V<sup>us</sup> 8<sup>va</sup> V<sup>us</sup> 8<sup>va</sup>

*p* *Alto pizz.* *Alto*

[m. 93]

*f*

Tout. Tout.

Tout. Tout. Tout.

*p* *Cordes* *mf* *Tutti* *f*

Nothing happens and the lovers literally have nothing to sing about. The subject of the *cabalette* is its own superfluousness:

Gontran/Hélène: Non! Ce n'est pas tout, je suppose,  
 Non! Ce n'est pas tout, je suppose,  
 Un semblable commencement  
 Attend un meilleur dénouement...<sup>258</sup>

The fourth number is the requisite *duetto bouffe*. It is sectional with Gontran's modal phrase "Je n'vous dis pas Pausanias! Mais... ça ne suffit pas" serving as a kind of *ritornello*: A (orchestral)—A (vocal)—*ritornello*—B—*ritornello*—C—B—*ritornello*—C. The A section is

Example 3.24a. *Éducation manquée*, *duetto bouffe* (mm. 18-26).

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system, marked "Andantino", shows Gontran's vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes the lyrics "Je n'vous dis pas, Pausanias! Mais... ça ne suffit". The piano accompaniment includes markings for "Bois" and "Cordes suivrez.". The second system, marked "All'ro poco scherzando", shows Pausanias's vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes the lyrics "pas! A - lors j'enta - mai La métaphy - si - que, La thérapen.". The piano accompaniment includes markings for "Fl.", "Cl.", and "Hrn.".

<sup>258</sup> "No, this cannot be all, I don't suppose/No, it is not all, I don't suppose/Such a beginning/deserves a better outcome..."

Example 3.24b. *Éducation manquée*, duetto bouffe (mm. 38-44).

**Andantino.**  
GONTRAN.  
Je \_ nvous dis pas, Pausani \_ as! — Mais ça ne suffit  
Eh! bien!

**Andantino.**  
*p* Bois  
Cordes *smorz.*  
1<sup>er</sup> C.B.

**Vivace.** *p*  
pas! La méta\_ phy \_ sique, La théra\_ peu \_ tique, La di \_ a \_ lec \_ tique. Et la méca \_  
La méta\_ phy \_ sique, La théra\_ peu \_ tique, La di \_ a \_ lec \_ tique Et la méca \_

**Vivace.**  
*f* Tutti *p* Cordes

based on a fanfare motif; the vocal portion draws on the introduction and forms a complete *couplet* with regular two-measure phrasing. B and C are vocal dances, a *scherzando* waltz and a gigue respectively. The song catalogues Pausanias’s tutorial syllabus, the excess of subject matter humorously paired with an abundance of verbs describing the philosopher’s inflictions upon his hapless student (*saturer, bourrer, entamer, panacher, aborder, faufiler...*). Gontran’s repeated assertion that “it is not enough” is a slogan for the entire *opérette*: erudition, no matter

how complete, cannot replace the force of nature. Musically, the *ritornello* prompts a shift to a more excited rhythm, first to a scherzo (Example 3.24a, beginning m. 21) and then to a patter-song styled gigue (m. 41, Example 3.24b). The philosopher's text in no way necessitates the change in style, as in the third number the stylistic shift is gratuitous and humorous for its lack of justification. The stylization and incremental acceleration also characterizes Pausanias, *basso buffo*, as a mechanically rambling pedant.

Gontran's solo (#5, *couplets*) is an astute psychological portrait fashioned as a *sicilienne*. Again, this music is associated with the storm and was the basis of the first part of the overture. The hesitant dotted rhythm captures the bewildering effect of the storm on the uncertain young man, as does the number's palindromic structure: instrumental—A—A'—B—A—A—  
instrumental—A—A'—B—A—A—instrumental. With no refrain, an extra phrase whose melody is the exact repetition of the first vocal phrase, and a repetition of the orchestral introduction between the strophes, the music folds back upon itself in a circular fashion. The contrasting middle phrase begins with a lyrical melody in fluid eighth notes. An enharmonic modulation up a semitone to D Major (using an enharmonically reinterpreted D  $\flat$  as common tone to shift to V of D Major, and a German  $\text{6}^{\text{th}}$  on D $\sharp$  in m. 16 to return to D  $\flat$ ) creates a destabilizing effect that is matched by hesitant melodic fragments separated by rests (see Example 3.25). Little Gontran still cannot figure out what is happening, though he is consciously aware of the storm's effect on his physical body. The second strophe draws a parallel with the young gardener's chastity, also a victim of the storm.

Example 3.25. *Éducation manquée, couplets* (mm. 10-18).

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment for the first two phrases. The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The third system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment for the final phrase. The piano accompaniment includes markings for 'Alto', 'Cordes', 'pizz.', 'arco', 'Fl.', 'Bois', 'vies', and 'Tri.'. Dynamics include 'trainiez. sf', 'dim.', 'pp', 'rit.', and 'a Tempo.'

The final *duo* is in two parts. A rondo in duple meter (ABACAD), where a playful dance refrain that borrows the ostinato bass figuration from the second number alternates with lyrical dialogue. This is interrupted by a reprise of the *sicilienne* music (always a metaphor for the storm), which is now set with vocal *parlante* (Example 3.26). Gontran's transfixed monotone reflects the awakening of the youth's natural instincts. This is followed by a waltz (instrumental introduction—A—B—B—A—Coda) which makes excessive use of appoggiaturas and rhythmic

play. The waltz, already established in 1870s *opérette* as the archetypal symbol of sexuality and celebration, brings consummation.

Emasculated by his aristocratic refinement the little trouser finally realizes that his education's preclusion of nature is only apparent. The "transfixed monotone" that attends the reprisal of the *sicilienne* is more than the young man's response to the stormy

Example 3.26. *Éducation manquée*, duo (mm. 57-65).

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system includes vocal lines for Hélène and Gontran, and piano accompaniment. The second system continues the vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The third system shows the continuation of the piano accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (*f*, *pp*, *f Tutti*, *p*), articulation (accents, slurs), and performance instructions (e.g., "il l'embrasse", "Cor(solo)", "2ds vps").

**System 1:** Hélène: *risquons-nous ma foi!* (il l'embrasse) *f* Grands dieux! *Moderato.* Qu'avez-vous? *Moderato.* Cor(solo)

**System 2:** Gontran: *pp* Il me sem-ble Que ce bai-ser point ne res-

**System 3:** *semble* A ceux de tout à Hébé. l'heu-re, il est... beaucoup plus

weather. His shock is primarily a reaction to the defining moment—albeit brought on by the storm—whereby M. de Boismassif lives up to his name. (I will leave it to non-French speakers to determine their own translation of the term.) The resounding chirps in measures 57-58 accompanying the lovers' embrace are a subtle illustration of his newfound manliness; Hélène's exclamation "Qu'avez vous?," less so. Hélène de la Cerisaie, whose family name is also crudely suggestive of her sexual function, will finally learn the proper "dénouement," represented metaphorically in the waltz. But actually, the waltz is not the consummate achievement of the *opérette*—recall that Pausanias bursts in on the scene. Despite his earlier humility ("souvent la présence d'un tiers...", scene vi), the philosopher opts to join in for a "trio" (*final*, 6bis).

In conclusion, *Une Éducation manquée* is a salon *opérette* with many characteristics that position it clearly in the tradition of *opérette bouffe*: six vocal numbers separated by spoken dialogue, strongly typecast characters singing conventionally designed arias and ensembles. A pronounced element of humour is largely generated through lowbrow topicality and allusions to high opera and its conventions. Like the big popular hit of the 1870s, Lecocq's *La Fille de Madame Angot*, it employs various musical devices to elicit eighteenth-century colour. In *Éducation manquée* the eighteenth-century tone is derived primarily from Chabrier's characteristic modal writing and the fashioning of *opérette*'s emblematic vocal dances into something of a stylized Baroque suite. The subject matter, the coming of age of a young aristocrat, makes the work a quasi-*Bildungsroman*, contributing to a multilayered ludic bouleversement of genre—life experience here is humorously reduced to a single defining sexual encounter.

Unlike many works in the *bouffe* tradition, including *Vaucochard*, *Fisch-ton-kan*, and *L'Étoile*, *Éducation manquée* is set in a realistic historical locale and populated by “ordinary” French humans. The poetics of genteel respectability and conformity, indeed entirely alien to the exotic absurdity of Chabrier’s earlier works and that of many of Offenbach’s pieces, is nevertheless offset by coarse suggestions and destabilizing musical gestures. *Éducation manquée* continues the unjustified celebration of style and musical surface, and the musical games of generic paradox, incongruous mixture of topics and styles, and enigmatic interconnections found in Chabrier’s earlier comic operas but with an unprecedented level of subtlety and sophistication in musical language. The musical humour is usually expressed with a paradox that can be easily overlooked: coarse gags and allusions are delivered with delicacy and sophisticated nuance, or, alternately, subtle humorous jokes and interconnections are embedded in music that is raucous or bombastic.

#### 4 Excess and Refinement on the National Stage: *Le Roi malgré lui*

In a letter to his wife, Chabrier's close friend Paul Lacome reported that the 1887 opening-night production of *Le Roi malgré lui* was “un four” (a flop) and that the audience response was categorically not of the same spirit that greeted a triumphant dress rehearsal the night before.<sup>259</sup> He indicated that only the simplest numbers were received warmly and that only two *bouffe couplets* and the *chanson tzigane*, certainly among the most accessible of the score, were encored. Two clear themes emerge from personal epistolary communications and from the numerous reviews that promptly appeared in Parisian periodicals: the music was celebrated as inspired and innovative, but was often described pejoratively as “trop raffinée” (too refined) and generally “excessive;” the libretto was almost unanimously judged to be contrived and overly complicated.<sup>260</sup> These charges of excess and refinement speak to evolving aesthetic principles that are central to Chabrier's art and that were considered in some detail in Chapter 3. The complications cluttering the libretto find defense in Chabrier's own correspondence: “Je trouve

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<sup>259</sup> This often-quoted letter is one of many included in *La Vie sincère de Paul Lacome*, unpublished manuscript by the composer's son Jean-François d'Estalens. It figures among those excerpted in Jean-François d'Estalens, “Lacome, Chabrier, Messenger,” *Littératures* 21 (1974), 27-55. Quoted in Roger Delage, *Emmanuel Chabrier* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 386-88; and Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the fin de siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 263.

<sup>260</sup> Louis de Fourcaud, in a review for *Le Gaulois* (19 May 1887), for instance: “de l'extrême raffinement, il passe, sans crier gare, aux procédés les plus grossiers de l'opéra-bouffe, et il revient de nouveau, à l'improviste aux raffinements délaissés” (without warning he passes from extreme refinement to the crudest gestures of *opéra bouffe* and then back suddenly to the forsaken refinements); Auguste Vitu of *Le Figaro* (19 May 1887) speaks of “une partition très copieuse” (a very copious score); in the review in *Le Gaulois* following the November re-opening Fourcaud continues: “l'oeuvre est cahoteuse, déconcertante et—tranchons le mot—fatigante, en ses excessifs raffinements comme en ses vulgarités” (the work is jagged, disconcerting, and, to speak plainly, as tiresome in its excessive refinements as in its vulgarities); and Paul Lacome, in the letter cited above, describes the music as “si travaillée, si ciselée” (worked, chiseled). D'Estalens, “Lacome, Chabrier, Messenger,” 46.

For a succinct survey of the critical reaction to *Le Roi* in the Parisian press, see Delage, *Emmanuel Chabrier*, 399-402. Excerpts of letters written by Vincent d'Indy and by Pierre de Bréville on the night of the dress rehearsal and from Charles Bordes, Julien Tiersot, Gabriel Fauré, Ernest van Dyck, Gabriel Pierné, and Catulle Mendès in the days following the premiere are included in Emmanuel Chabrier, *Correspondance*, ed. Roger Delage and Franz Durif with Thierry Bodin (Paris: Klincksieck, 1994), 394-396, and are likewise discussed in Delage, 388-393. Numerous reviews also appeared following the November re-opening; Delage, 409. See also Huebner, *French Opera*, 263-265.

*Le Roi malgré lui* très bien; c'est très machiné; très quiproqué, ça m'intéresse beaucoup de faire ça."<sup>261</sup> It is clear from this statement that Chabrier was attracted to the outlandish contrivances and many farcical aspects of the plot.<sup>262</sup> The analyses in this chapter reveal that Chabrier replicated this quality in his music, unapologetically producing a musical surface overloaded with a variety of curious turns, a multiplicity of styles, and intertextual references—an aesthetic that indeed might at times be described as excessive.

The present chapter introduces basic stylistic features of *Le Roi malgré lui*, the composer's only *opéra comique*, and provides an interpretation of its musical humour. The line between comic and serious is problematic in this opera, deliberately so, and any interpretation of its humour is an intricate intellectual exercise that far surpasses its correlatives in the *bouffe* works whose comic gags seem amateurish and even vulgar in comparison. Some aspects of these *bouffe* pieces certainly remain present in Chabrier's later comic works—a general *esprit pétard*, an abundance of humorous references, and stylistic and structural incongruities inform all of these works, but even more than in the popular works, a pretense of conservatism joins with a forward-looking aesthetic to challenge traditional processes through humour in *Le Roi*. Much of the humour in the work depends on the perception of isolated components in misalignment, and appreciation hinges even more fundamentally than before on the perception of finely nuanced details. Far surpassing its forerunners, *Le Roi* also demonstrates a rich palette of exoticisms,

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<sup>261</sup> "I find *Le Roi malgré lui* fine, it is very crafted, full of misunderstandings; this appeals to me greatly." Letter to Georges Costallat, dated by the editors to 29 (?) August 1884, in Chabrier, *Correspondance*, 239-240.

<sup>262</sup> Around the same time Chabrier expresses a similar sentiment in a letter to Gaston Hirsch: "Je suis sollicité surtout par le genre archicomique, un peu deluré et outrancier. J'aime, en un mot, à ce que ça pète" (I am drawn above all to the hypercomic, a little cheeky and outrageous. In a word, I like that it farts). Letter dated by the editors to 3 August 1884 (?), in Chabrier, *Correspondance*, 236-237. Chabrier's interest in details of the libretto of *Le Roi* can also be observed in his correspondence with his librettists, where he voices a pressing concern for issues of prosody and repeatedly requests extreme character types and situations. See, for example, the numerous letters to Burani and Najac in June and July 1886 (*Correspondance*, 346-347, 348, 360-362, 368-370). Around this time Burani writes to Najac of receiving a sixteen-page letter from Chabrier regarding particulars of the second act (*Correspondance*, 362-363).

structural ludics, and hypertextual interactions that this chapter will elucidate through a detailed and multilayered analysis. Therefore, after a brief historical overview and a summary of the plot, elements of humour production will be discussed according to the following categories: Chabrier's manipulation of conventional syntactical and stylistic procedures, including idiosyncratic distortions introduced on the levels of strophic structure, harmonic procedure, rhythm, and musical reiteration; the engagement with generic *opéra comique* framing devices; and the use of exotic tropes and intertextuality as generic play. The final section will adapt concepts from linguistic theories of humour to reassess and conceptualize the analytical findings, thus shedding new light not only on Chabrier's subtle aesthetics of humour, but also on how musical humour in general might be approached.

### Historical Background

Explicit mention of a project based on the comedy *Le Roi malgré lui* by François Ancelot (Palais-Royal, 19 September 1836)<sup>263</sup> first appears in Chabrier's correspondence in the summer of 1884.<sup>264</sup> The work was initially conceived as a three-act *opéra bouffe* with text by Paul Burani.<sup>265</sup> As with *L'Étoile*, Chabrier composed much of the music before establishing a contract for performance. After it was declined by directors of the Bouffes and the Renaissance, Léon Carvalho of the Théâtre national de l'Opéra-Comique showed interest in *Le Roi* but required considerable revisions to both text and music to reconcile the work's style and aesthetic with the

<sup>263</sup> Jacques-Arsène-François-Polycarpe Ancelot, *Le Roi malgré lui: comédie en 2 actes, mêlée de couplets* (Paris: Magasin théâtral, 1836).

<sup>264</sup> Letter to Enoch et Costallat dated by editors to 31 July (?) 1884, in Chabrier, *Correspondance*, 233.

<sup>265</sup> Delage and Huebner both address the complicated genesis of *Le Roi*, particularly its transformation from *opéra bouffe* to *opéra comique*. Delage draws heavily on autograph sources, Chabrier's correspondence, as well as articles published by Théodore Massiac (*Gil Blas*, 29 September 1886) and Victorin de Joncières (*Le Gaulois*, 11 March 1899) to document its various stages of development. Delage, *Emmanuel Chabrier*, 364-375. Huebner reads various revisions to the Ancelot play and to the original "opérette" conception as elevations necessary to reconcile the work's dramatic aspirations with the aesthetic of the Opéra-Comique. Huebner, *French Opera*, 286-289.

agenda of the official house. On Carvalho's recommendation librettist Émile de Najac joined the project to oversee the reworking of the text.<sup>266</sup> In May 1886 *Le Figaro* announced that the opera would be produced the following season.<sup>267</sup> *Le Roi malgré lui* premiered on 18 May 1887 at the Opéra-Comique and the vocal score was promptly published by Enoch et Costallat.<sup>268</sup>

On 25 May 1887, after three performances of *Le Roi*, the Salle Favart was destroyed by fire. 16 November 1887, one month after the Opéra-Comique reopened (its temporary home the Salle des Nations), *Le Roi* was revived and a further seventeen performances were mounted before the end of the 1887-1888 season.<sup>269</sup> Having already cut a first-act *air* for Alexina and made numerous minor changes after the premiere in May, Chabrier worked with Burani during the summer closure to make revisions to the unpopular libretto. Enoch et Costallat ran a second printing of the vocal score in November to reflect these changes;<sup>270</sup> the orchestral score appeared in November 1887, conforming to this second version.<sup>271</sup> Likewise, two versions of the libretto were printed by Librairie Théâtrale (the first in 1887, the second in 1888), according to the

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<sup>266</sup> We know from Chabrier's correspondence and personal papers that Jean Richepin also participated briefly in the libretto project. The manuscript containing his revisions, evidently penned between mid-November 1886 and January 1887, is now lost. Joncières reported in 1899 (*Le Gaulois*, 11 March) that Armand Silvestre also made contributions, though evidence of his involvement is corroborated in neither Chabrier's papers nor his surviving letters.

<sup>267</sup> *Le Figaro*, 9 May 1886.

<sup>268</sup> Emmanuel Chabrier, *Le Roi malgré lui: opéra comique en 3 actes*. (Paris: Enoch frères & Costallat, 1887); plate number E. F. & C. 1348. Enoch had partnered with Costallat in 1880. The vocal-score examples reproduced in this chapter are drawn from this first edition.

<sup>269</sup> There were a total of twenty performances in these first two seasons: three in May 1887 (18, 21, and 23 May), eleven in November and December 1887 (16, 18, 21, 23 November and 6, 8, 11, 16, 19, 24, 29 December) and six in spring 1888 (13 and 24 March and 18, 25, 27, 29 April).

<sup>270</sup> This edition also appeared with plate stamp E. F. & C. 1348. The first edition ran 433 pages and included an *air* for Alexina in the first act, "Pour vous je suis ambitieuse" (#6), the last three numbers of the score were 19. *rondeau à deux voix* (Alexina, Henri), 20. *duo* (Minka, Nangis) and 21. *final*. This second printing, 423 pages, includes twenty numbers, Alexina's *air* having been cut and the *rondeau à deux* moved to the first act (#6) and retexted for Alexina and Fritelli.

<sup>271</sup> Chabrier, *Le Roi malgré lui: opéra comique en 3 actes* (Paris: Enoch frères & Costallat, 1887); E. F. & C 1365. Excerpts from this orchestral score appear in this chapter as Examples 4.14 and 4.15.

premiere and the November versions.<sup>272</sup> *Le Roi* would be produced in Toulouse (9 March 1892) and in various cities in Germany during Chabrier's lifetime—Karlsruhe (2 March 1890); Baden (5 March 1890); Dresden (26 April 1890); and Cologne (15 October 1891)—but did not enjoy a Parisian revival until 6 November 1929 after Albert Carré, retired director of the Opéra-Comique, undertook a complete overhaul of the *livret*.<sup>273</sup>

### Plot Synopsis

The following synopsis narrates the main events of the opera, following the 1887 printing of the libretto. It is streamlined for the sake of clarity and is intended to serve as a guide for the reader unfamiliar with the storyline. Published vocal scores and the one available recording of *Le Roi* do not include the full text of the libretto and a detailed account of the actions and motivations of the characters is almost impossible to determine from readily available sources.<sup>274</sup> In the interests of clarity, a detailed breakdown of dramatic events including the distribution of the text into spoken and sung components is included as Appendix 1.

Act I. *Winter of 1574. A castle near Krakow.* Henri de Valois, Duke of Anjou (baritone), is in Krakow to be crowned King of Poland as ordered by his mother.<sup>275</sup> He is accompanied by his confidant Count Nangis (tenor) and by French lords. Polish Grand Palatine Laski is backing the Austrian Archduke's interests, and he leads a conspiracy against the French claim to the throne. Aware of the plot, Henri will remain incognito until the coronation which is to take place the next day. Henri's chamberlain, Duke of Fritelli (*bouffe* baritone), is preparing plans for the procession.

<sup>272</sup> E. de Najac and P. Burani, *Le Roi malgré lui* (Paris: Librairie théâtrale, 1887); and E. de Najac and P. Burani, *Le Roi malgré lui* (Paris: Librairie théâtrale, 1888). The editions contain 138 and 128 pages respectively.

<sup>273</sup> Albert Carré, *Le Roi malgré lui* (Paris: Librairie théâtrale, 1928); the score was reissued in 1929, again as E. F. & C. 1348. Huebner details Carré's changes to the libretto and purports to demonstrate how these "clarifications" served Carré's goal of "unearth[ing] the 'opéra comique spirit' of Chabrier's work," *French Opera*, 291-300.

<sup>274</sup> Chabrier, *Le Roi malgré lui*, conducted by Charles Dutoit (Paris: Erato. Radio-France, 1985) is the only commercial recording of the opera: The 1887 printing of the libretto has recently been made available on Gallica, the digital library of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k58035136> (accessed 1 July 2011).

<sup>275</sup> Following Ancelot, the events of the opera are based loosely on an episode in the life of Henri de Valois, who later ruled France as Henri III (r. 1574-1589), whereby the young nobleman was elected King of Poland.

He conceals his connection to Laski—Fritelli’s wife Alexina is the conspirator’s niece and the couple is involved in the resistance. Nangis, while out recruiting soldiers for the king’s guard, had fallen in love with the gypsy slave Minka (soprano). She too is in the service of Laski, but her loyalty will be to Nangis and the French court. Minka and Nangis share a passionate exchange and agree to meet later that night. In an effort to maintain Henri’s incognito, Nangis rushes Minka out as Henri approaches. The recollection of his prior love affair with a beautiful Polish princess softens Henri’s misery slightly, but he nevertheless begs Nangis to help him escape back to France. Alexina and Fritelli discuss their roles in the conspiracy and also Alexina’s premarital Venetian romance with a French nobleman, who, as Fritelli has deduced, was Henri. Alexina explains that the libertine who abandoned her had concealed his identity, and that the French retinue will suffer her scorn in his stead. As Fritelli and Alexina exit, Minka confesses her love for Nangis to Nangis’s “friend” Henri, always incognito. She reveals details of the conspiracy against the new king, including Fritelli’s participation. With this new information, Henri forces Fritelli to present him at the conspirator’s ball, threatening death should Fritelli reveal his true identity—he demands to be introduced as “Nangis,” the king’s disgraced former favourite. Henri then orders Nangis, who is not yet aware of the ruse, imprisoned. When Alexina arrives (Fritelli neglects to mention that his accomplice is also his wife), Henri and the Duchess recognize each other. Minka calls to Nangis in an offstage song and Nangis escapes from prison. Henri delights in his new role as “Nangis” the conspirator, confident that King Henri’s removal will succeed with his help.

Act II. *Ball at Laski’s palace.* Henri (as Nangis), Fritelli, and Alexina attend the conspirators’ ball and Henri learns of Fritelli and Alexina’s marriage. In the second scene, Minka sings a gypsy song celebrating love and is ecstatic to hear Nangis’s voice outside her window. Henri and Fritelli enter claiming to be protecting French interests as undercover agents in the conspiracy, and Minka agrees to join them. Minka soon suspects that Henri (as “Nangis”) has a genuine interest in the success of the conspiracy and accuses him of treason. Henri has her locked up in an adjacent room. Henri is alone with Alexina (who believes Henri to be “Nangis”) and seduces her anew with a barcarolle. Fritelli returns with the conspirators and all swear an oath of allegiance to the Austrian cause. Henri releases Minka and orders her to summon Nangis to the scene where the latter learns of his new role as king elect. Henri prepares to escort “the king” across the border but the conspirators vote that the king should instead be assassinated. Henri reveals his true identity but no one believes him. “Nangis” is chosen by secret ballot to be the assassin. Nangis (as king) escapes. Amidst general confusion Henri (as Nangis) reaffirms his commitment to unseat the incoming king.

Act III. *A countryside inn, the next morning.* Preparations are underway for the coronation. Fritelli informs the innkeeper that Laski’s conspiracy was successful and that the Austrian Archduke will be crowned. Henri regrets Alexina’s absence and hastens to leave Poland alone. He hears someone approaching and hides; it is Alexina searching for him. She reveals that the Archduke’s treachery has been exposed and that he has fled. The throne will belong to the French king. Fritelli deceives Alexina, wishing to keep her from reuniting with Henri, with the story that “Nangis” (Henri)

has been outlawed for regicide and convinces her to assist in his escape. Minka arrives searching for her lover, “the king,” and Alexina explains that he has been assassinated. Alexina encounters Henri. They realize Fritelli’s ploy and decide to flee together. Minka laments the death of her beloved and prepares to commit suicide but Nangis appears and the lovers share another joyful reunion. Minka exits to gather support for the king. Fritelli ushers Henri away, not recognizing his wife in disguise as the driver. The French suite arrives and Fritelli is accused of regicide. Fritelli explains that the king is alive and is currently *en route* to France. Nangis and the guards then return with the fleeing fugitives. Identities are revealed, lovers rejoice, and Henri resigns himself to rule over Poland. All celebrate the new king.

### **Structure, Syntax, and Style: *Opéra comique* Conventions and their Manipulations**

Just as Chabrier’s *L’Étoile* connected to the “bouffe” aesthetic of a previous generation, so too did *Le Roi malgré lui* embrace the “comique” that prevailed in *opéras comiques* of an earlier era. Most new works of the Théâtre National de l’Opéra-Comique retained conventional generic elements through to the late 1880s, but the traditional model was gradually eclipsed in favour of newer forms. A trend towards “elevation,” begun at least as far back as the early 1860s, saw the introduction of features incompatible with the traditional *opéra comique* aesthetic: comedy was relegated to subplot or abandoned altogether, as was the requisite happy ending, simple conventional numbers gave way to larger scene complexes and sophisticated musical language, the number of strophic pieces was diminishing, and even the definitive *parlé* was replaced by *mélodrame*, sung recitatives, and eventually a through-composed idiom.<sup>276</sup> The shift was more pronounced after the Théâtre Lyrique, known for its experimental initiatives, closed in 1870. Although some retained the official subtitle “opéra comique,” most new works of the mid-1880s adhered to the newer styles of so-called *opéra lyrique* or *drame lyrique*. The former designation refers to a hybrid genre which, in the words of Morton Achter, “occupied a middle

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<sup>276</sup> On “elevation” of *opéra comique* see Mary Jean Speare, “The Transformation of *opéra comique*: 1850-1880” (Ph.D. diss., Washington University, 1997).

ground between *grand* or serious opera and *opéra-comique*.<sup>277</sup> Following Gounod's *Faust* (called "opéra" by the composer; prem. Théâtre Lyrique, 1859), widely considered the generic prototype, many of these operas are based on literary antecedents. The major works of Massenet are of this type, as is Bizet's *Carmen*. "Drame lyrique" designates works with continuous music and typically styled to some degree in the Wagnerian idiom.<sup>278</sup> Saint-Saëns *Proserpine* (prem. 16 March 1887) and Lalo's *Le Roi d'Ys* (prem. 7 May 1888), the two works that flanked *Le Roi* on the ledger of Opéra-Comique premieres, are both of this type.

The bulk of the Opéra-Comique repertory was nevertheless made up of older works, many in the true *opéra comique* mold.<sup>279</sup> New pieces were rarely retained for more than one or two seasons, and numerous successful pieces from the 1830s through the 1850s continued to average ten or more performances a year in the decade 1880-1890.<sup>280</sup> Of the thirty-three works performed at the Opéra-Comique in 1887, the year *Le Roi* was created, only six premiered after 1870, and only two more were from the period 1865-1870.<sup>281</sup> So when Chabrier conceived *Le*

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<sup>277</sup> Morton Jay Achter, "Félicien David, Ambroise Thomas, and French *opéra lyrique*" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1972), 4. Most of the big Opéra-Comique premieres between *Mignon* (1866) and *Manon* (1884) were in the *opéra lyrique* style. Many works of this type premiered at the Théâtre Lyrique before 1870, then directed by Léon Carvalho, including works by Gounod (*Faust* and *Roméo et Juliette*) and Bizet (*Les Pêcheurs de perles* and *La Jolie fille de Perth*), several of which later entered the repertory of the Opéra-Comique.

<sup>278</sup> Mary Jean Speare traces the gradual transition from number opera with *parlé* dialogue to through-composed *opéra* in the works of Delibes as an exemplification of this transformation. Speare, 304-314.

<sup>279</sup> In the "Introduction" to *French Opera*, Huebner provides an overview of repertories and reportorial programming of the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique in this period, emphasizing the experimental programming of the latter theatre and its contribution to the project of renewal; Huebner, *French Opera*, 1-11.

<sup>280</sup> These works include Auber's *Fra Diavolo* (1830), Hérold's *Zampa* (1831) and *Le Pré aux clercs* (1832), Adam's one-act *Le Chalet* (1834), Auber's *Le Domino Noir* (1837), Donizetti's *La Fille du régiment* (1840), Massé's one-act *Les Noces de Jeannette* (1853), Maillart's *Les Dragons de Villars* (Théâtre Lyrique 1856); earlier works with a strong presence through the 1880s are Grétry's *Richard Coeur de Lion* (1874), Rossini *Le Barbier de Séville* (Rome 1816, entered the repertory of the Opéra-Comique in 1884), and Boieldieu's *La Dame Blanche* (1825). Albert Soubies, *Soixante-neuf ans à l'Opéra-Comique en deux pages* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1894).

<sup>281</sup> Thomas, *Mignon* (1866); Gounod, *Roméo et Juliette* (Théâtre Lyrique, 1867, acquired by the Opéra-Comique in 1873); Bizet, *Carmen* (1875); Poise, *L'Amour médecin* (1880); the three works preceding Chabrier's *Le Roi* proved ephemeral, the two-act *Juge et partie* (1886) by Edmond Missa and Gaston Salvayre's *Egmont* (1886) received only three representations each, and Saint-Saëns's *Proserpine* (1887), ten. *Ibid.*

*Roi* as “*opéra comique* au sens vrai du mot” (*opéra comique* in the truest sense of the word)<sup>282</sup>

with its Scribe-like libretto, conventional set pieces and character types, traditional forms, dance-based numbers, and spoken dialogue, its obvious similarities with the older form could hardly be overlooked.<sup>283</sup>

In *Le Roi*, this overt generic conservatism is plainly evident on the large structural level. However, idiosyncrasies are present in the formal, harmonic, and rhythmic dimensions, and also in the treatment of melodic reminiscence, which routinely challenge this outward conventionality. At times subtle, these peculiarities are often immediately humorous, but in other instances their participation in humour production only becomes apparent when considered collectively.

### • Strophic Forms

There are the nine instances of self-contained strophic song in *Le Roi*, and all are based on the AABC + refrain form that was identified in Chapter 2 as common to French light operatic forms. Most, however, demonstrate creative humorous structural deviations from the four-square template. The three numbers indicated as *couplets* are, predictably enough, structurally the most

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<sup>282</sup> Letter to Paul Lacome, dated 15 June 1886, in Chabrier, *Correspondance*, 354-355.

<sup>283</sup> The majority of the numbers follow simple structural designs that carry long histories in French light opera traditions. There are nine instances of self-contained strophic song (numbers 2, 4, 5, 11b, 14b, and 17 are for solo voice; 12 and 18 are duets; the *couplets* of number 10 have an ensemble refrain), another ten follow ternary or “rondeau”-type patterns beginning and ending with a self-contained section with stable phraseology and tonality that frames one or more contrasting episodes (1a, 1b, 1c, 6, 7, 11a, 13, 16, and the *rondeau à deux* and the *finale* from Act 3); there are no slow ternary *cavatines* of the type found in Gounod’s *Faust* or Massenet’s contemporaneous works and none of the major solos are written in ternary form.

The remaining numbers (numbers 3, 8a-b-c, 9, 14a, 15, and the last two numbers of Act 3) all follow familiar operatic forms and are generally comprised of four- or eight-measure phrases with much repetition and homophonic writing. With the exception of Minka’s *entrée* these are all pieces for chorus or ensemble. Most contain multiple movements or sections that contrast as the action progresses and are similar in design and scope to the Act 2 *finale* of *L’Étoile*. The three exceptions are somewhat more complex: the *duo* for Nangis and Minka follows the familiar four-movement duet format of *bel canto* ancestry; this format is overlaid with strophic aspects and elements of the solo *grand air* (slow strophes—transition—*cabalette*) in the *entrée de Minka*; and the celebrated *choeur dansé*, frequently excerpted under the title *Fête polonaise*, is the longest stand-alone number of the score and is organized according to sonata principle. Also significant is the four-voice instrumental fugue that appears at the dramatic apex of the opera embedded in the otherwise conventional Act 2 *finale*.

straightforward.<sup>284</sup> The simplest are the two solos for Fritelli, Italian *buffo* and incorrigible simpleton. The unaltered conventional structure of these *couplets* fittingly characterizes

Example 4.1. *Le Roi malgré lui*, scène et couplets, mm. 1-29.

**N° 10.** **Moderato.** **A<sub>2</sub>** **Baroque-style recitative**  
*légèrement*

ALEXINA. Rien n'est aussi près de la haine

HENRI.

FRITELLI.

LASKI.

**PIANO.** **Moderato.**

[m. 4]

**A<sub>2</sub>**

Que l'amitié; — On est en joie, on est en peine, Tout par moitié; —

**B<sub>2</sub>**

*cresc.* Mais on se fâche, on fait paraître De la pitié; —

*cresc.*

<sup>284</sup> *Couplets*, the most common type of strophic piece in nineteenth-century *opéra comique*, are usually a fast, light song in major mode with short poetic lines; each of the two strophes carries the characteristic refrain.



[m. 25] **couplets refrain**

qui?

c'est qui? — C'est un a - mi, Un bon a - mi, Un

FRIPELLI.

c'est qui?

LASKI.

c'est qui?

Allegro. Andantino.

Fritelli and inconspicuously supports the humorous texts and word painting of these numbers.<sup>285</sup>

The *couplets* in Act 2 for Henri beginning with the text “Bien souvent, seigneur Laski” (from #10; see Example 4.1 m. 15 ff.) are also organized AABC with regular four-measure groupings, but conventional structural expectations are undermined for humorous effect. The AABC organization is writ large across the strophe and the refrain (as was seen in two numbers of *Bata-clan*), and the number demonstrates an unusual systematic lengthening of successive syntactical units. The first phrase consists of a repeated two-measure “basic idea” and the four-measure B phrase is then something of a continuation, making the strophe sentence-like.

Alexina, Fritelli, and Laski then join in for the expanded transition (5 measures) that leads to an ensemble refrain of sixteen measures (based on a new melodic idea, C): Henri’s glib reflection

<sup>285</sup> The strophe of “Je suis du pays des gondoles” (Act 3, #17) employs a clear AABC melodic structure with consistent four-measure phrases and the refrain is a series of four-measure units. A common variant is found in his other *couplets*, “Le Polonais est triste et grave” (#2), where B and C function together as the refrain and the instrumental opening recurs as a ritornello between the strophes and again at the end.

on the habitual betrayal of one's intimates is paralleled by a nonchalant melodic style and a relaxed succession of four-measure phrases.

The relatively loose organization of this number is accentuated by the contrast it offers to the clear-cut AABC structure of the preceding "scène" for Alexina, "Rien n'est aussi près de la haine" (opening of #10; see beginning of Example 4.1). Here, the habitually volatile duchess brings her best manners to deliver a pithy pronouncement on hatred and treachery that not only conforms rigorously to a standard form, but is also presented in a French baroque declamatory style complete with alternating measures of duple and triple meter and dignified rhetorical pauses on the downbeats.<sup>286</sup>

Other strophic pieces contribute to the development of a character or scenario through more individualized structural manipulations. Minka's two strophic pieces—the sprawling *chanson tzigane* (Act 2, #11) and the *romance* "Hélas! à l'esclavage" (Act 1, #4)—challenge structural constraints to reveal facets of her character and betray Minka's resistance to easy categorization.<sup>287</sup> Nangis's *chanson française*, "Je suis le Roi" (Act 2, #14B), is one of the more humorous numbers of the score. In this song, Nangis delights in his sudden promotion to royalty. The number clearly follows strophe-refrain format but with inappropriate syntax that exposes his

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<sup>286</sup> If a carefully controlled recitative is joined with a more loosely organized song in this *scène et couplets*, a second scene also beginning with accompanied recitative for Alexina and also on the subject of hatred reverses the imbalance: the *duo-barcarolle* (Act 2, #12) begins with a lengthy and nuanced exchange between Alexina and Henri in three contrasting sections that in turn leads to the structurally straightforward *barcarolle* proper (the strophe is AAA'B with regular phraseology and stable harmony; the sixteen-measure refrain follows its own AABB pattern).

<sup>287</sup> These two solos for Minka are the only strophic pieces in the score that reproduce the second verse exactly, that is, with no changes in accompaniment for the second verse. The *chanson tzigane* and surrounding scene reveal various facets of Minka's complex persona, notably in the contrasting styles heard in the recitative "Il est un vieux chant de Bohème," the Gypsy song proper, and the ecstatic vocalizes of the lengthy coda. Both the strophe and the refrain of the song itself, "L'amour est un Dieu," unfold as loosely organized series' of four-measure phrases reflecting the young girl's infatuation. The strophe of the *romance* is comprised of two asymmetrical phrases, five and three measures each, divided by a one-measure ritornello; no unifying melodic or rhythmic figure is repeated and each subphrase begins on a different beat; and the refrain is protracted to six measures through incrementally increasing note values. A shift to major mode for the *romance* refrain is common in *opéra comique*, though here it is postponed until the final cadence giving a *tierce de Picardie* effect.

manifestly unaristocratic pedigree and acts as the primary mechanism of royal caricature: three-measure units are stitched together into a long bumbling and purely diatonic paragraph.<sup>288</sup> Other features that mark the style as “not quite right” include the clumsy offbeat accents, the many repetitions of the dotted rhythmic figure, and the parallel head motive shared by the strophe and the refrain (this number is excerpted below, as Example 4.6).

Standing quite apart from these relatively transparent applications of strophe-refrain form is the *nocturne à deux voix* between Minka and Alexina, “Ô rêve éteint, réveils funèbres” (Act 3, #18). Here, the second strophe presents an enigmatic recomposition of the first. The number opens with stylistic and structural characteristics appropriate to the genre of the *nocturne*, which is a vocal *romance* for two voices: regularized four-measure phrases are supported by generally diatonic harmony, the accompaniment is figural and subordinated to the vocal line, the melody is limited in range and technical demands, the text setting is syllabic, and the subject is sentimental (see Example 4.2a). From the stability of the opening phrase one can hardly foresee the ostensible dissolution of form and the truly disorienting manipulations that are to follow.

Throughout the first strophe (mm. 1-19), functional harmonic progressions and regular phrase structure are maintained but a graduated introduction of surface level harmonic complications (including chromaticism, extended tertian sonorities, unjustified and unresolved dissonances, secundal clusters, cross relations, and abrupt modulations), paralleled by accumulating texture and growth in dynamic level makes manifest an end-oriented progress towards irregularity.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Neatly, the three-plus-four measure instrumental introduction anticipates a switch from three-measure to four-measure groupings at the refrain.

<sup>289</sup> Chromatic non-chord tones and colouristic 9<sup>th</sup> chords are first heard in m. 7. On the second beat of this measure G ♭, G, and A ♭ are briefly sounded simultaneously. Measure 9 begins with an 11<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and raised 5<sup>th</sup> sounded

After an eight-measure refrain squarely in D ♭ Major (mm. 20-27), the second strophe begins directly in B ♭ Minor (m. 28, see Example 4.2b). Omitting the harmonically stable opening ten measures of the first strophe, the second strophe is based on the harmonic progression heard in measures 11-19. Here, after the full closure at the end of the refrain, the shift to the relative minor is more jarring and clearly gives the effect of beginning “in the middle,” or even “out of nowhere.” This disjuncture is underscored by a sudden shift in register and in orchestration. But beginning the strophe in the wrong key is not the only unconventional feature of this strophic repeat: the divergences from the vocal material and accompaniment figuration of the first strophe bring about a complete change in musical substance, rendering the repeat almost unrecognizable. So it is only harmonically that this passage recalls the first strophe at all, and the correspondence is far from direct.

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above the bass and on the second beat a four-note secundal cluster is heard. The harmony becomes increasingly complicated beginning at m. 11. A shift to the relative minor brings about a tonicization of B ♭ Minor, which is confirmed by a complete cadential progression. To the text “Nangis va partir,” the harmony takes a more unusual “departure” (mm. 14-15). Root and 3<sup>rd</sup> of B ♭ Minor are quitted by contrary motion (D ♭ -E ♭ -F over B ♭ -A ♭ -F ♯) and coalesce to a doubled F ♯ in m. 15. An F ♯<sup>7</sup> begins a progression towards E Major, a key very distantly related to B ♭ Minor (the cadential tonic in m. 18 is sounded with a 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, implying further motion to A Major). Chabrier justifies the sudden return to D ♭ Major of the opening by dropping the E root, leaving a G ♯ half-diminished 7<sup>th</sup>, the root and 7<sup>th</sup> of which function as enharmonic V<sup>7</sup> to D ♭. Minka’s A ♭ is left by tritone leap and the refrain begins (m. 20) with a strident cross relation.

Example 4.2a. *Le Roi malgré lui*, nocturne, mm. 1-20.

**N° 18.** *And<sup>te</sup> non tanto.* *pp*

MINKA.

ALEXINA.

*PIANO.* *pp*

[m. 3]

M. ré - ve é - teint, réveils fu - nè - bres, Je me

A. *pp* Quels dangers il court aujourd'hui! —

M. sens rou - ler dans les té - nè - bres.

A. Je voudrais être auprès de lui!...

[m. 7]

*sf*

Toi dont la lèvre fit fleu -

Que ta fièvre, fol amour, Puisse en -

*pp*

*sf*

-rir Sur la mienne un bai - ser,

-cor niem - bra - ser!

*pp*

Ped. Ped.

[m. 11]

*dolce*

Dieu clé - ment, sauve - le, je l'ai - me; Que plu -

*sempre pp*

*crese*

[m. 13]

M. *- tôt je meure pour lui...*

ALEXINA

*Nangis va par-*

*mf*

A. *- tir et je l'ai me; L'espoir en-tre*

*sf*

[m. 17]

MINK.

*sf*

*Ah!*

A. *- vu, fan-tôme vain, s'est en-fui!*

*sf*

*Ah!*

*pp*

*p*

Un peu rall.

dim. *pp*

Ah! Hé - las! ô ten - dre

dim. *ppp*

Ah! Hé - las!

*ppp* *pp*

Example 4.2b. *Le Roi malgré*, nocturne, mm. 26-39.

[m. 26] *ppp*

M. - va S'en va!

A. qu'on ré - va S'en va!

*sf* *ppp* *sf* *dim.*

Même mou! (plutôt ralenti)

A. U - ne crain - te va - gue m'oppres - se.

*pp* *sf* *pp* *mg*

[m. 29]

MINKA

Mon cœur fré - mit gla - cé d'ef - froi!..

ALEXINA.

Mon â - - me est plei - ne de détres - - sel..

[m. 31]

MINKA.

Je trem - - ble pour les jours du roi,

Nan -

- gis par - ti, dou - leur ex - trè - - me, A l'es -

[m. 33]

MINKA.

*sf* Hé - las! il

A - poir il faut dire a - dieu!

*pp* *cresc.*

M *sf* est le roi. *pp rit* celui que j'ai - me, Et je n'attends plus rien que *pp* de

[m. 35]

M *pp* Dieu! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Hé -

A *pp* Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

*ppp*

The image shows a musical score for 'Le Roi malgré, nocturne'. It consists of three staves: a vocal line (M), an alto line (A), and a piano accompaniment. The vocal lines are in French. The piano part features a bass line reduction and salient harmonies. The score is marked with dynamics like *f*, *pp*, and *ppp*.

Figure 4.1. *Le Roi malgré, nocturne*, bass line reduction and salient harmonies, mm. 11-20 compared to mm. 28-37.

The image shows a bass line reduction and salient harmonies for measures 11-20 and 28-37. The diagram includes annotations such as 'treble and bass in contrary motion to tonicization of E' and 'pivot to D-flat + through common-tone G#'. The harmonies are labeled as follows:

Measures 11-20: b-flat-: i V iv-<sup>6</sup> V<sup>6-5</sup><sub>4-3</sub> i PT V<sup>7</sup> V<sup>6-5</sup><sub>4-3</sub> E<sup>+</sup> 9 Db+ as I

Measures 28-37: b-flat-: i V<sup>7</sup> i V<sup>7</sup> iv bVII. V<sup>7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> E<sup>+</sup> 9 Db+ as I

Annotations:

- treble and bass in contrary motion to tonicization of E
- pivot to D-flat + through common-tone G#
- near-identical repeat of mm. 28-29; V left unresolved in m. 31

On close analysis the basic harmonies of the first strophe are discovered in the second but progressions are rearranged, interrupted, repeated, and finally abandoned.<sup>290</sup> A telescoping

<sup>290</sup> The second strophe continues the entropic process begun in the first and also revisits many of its calculated idiosyncrasies. Structurally and harmonically, measures 28-33 correspond to measures 11-14, with internal expansions amounting to two measures. While the corresponding passage beginning at measure 28 is six measures long, it actually contains less musical material than its four-measure counterpart in the first strophe because

process of expanding certain components and compressing others gives the effect of “formlessness” while vaguely recalling the transparent framework of the first strophe. The paradox of this riddle-like construction lies in the through-composed effect that Chabrier creates while composing consecutive strophes that are supported by near-identical bass lines (Figure 4.1 reproduces the bass lines of both passages, aligned vertically to demonstrate the similarity; salient harmonies are indicated in roman numerals and note heads are bracketed when bass lines differ).

### • Harmony

As the *nocturne* demonstrates, Chabrier’s music remains clearly based on conventional procedures even in its most nuanced instances. In fact, the most uncharacteristic aspect of the “advanced” harmonies of the *nocturne*, perhaps, is that they are joined with an experimental form. Chabrier’s usual approach, frequently encountered in *Le Roi*, is to gradually introduce harmonic aberrations while maintaining the proverbial “French clarity” in other syntactical dimensions, particularly phrase structure and large-scale form.<sup>291</sup>

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measures 28-29 are repeated exactly as measures 30-31. The only difference in the repetition is the fifth in the bass that precedes the return of the tonic chord (m. 30), a IV<sup>#3</sup> harmony which was already present in measure 28 above the pedal (in mm. 28-31 the progression i-IV<sup>7/#3</sup>-i-“V” is heard twice; compare the model i-iv-V of mm. 11-13). The E<sup>b</sup>-B<sup>b</sup> returns again in the bass in measure 32 (now supporting a minor triad) reproducing the same series of bass line pitches (B<sup>b</sup>-F-E<sup>b</sup> is heard twice in mm. 28-32; this was also the bass line beginning the phrase at m. 11) but the harmonic context is now different. In measure 30, as in measure 28 where it was implied but not sounded, the E<sup>b</sup> sonority colours the tonic harmony at the beginning of the group. In measure 32 it is sounded on the first beat of the phrase and gives way, by descending fifth, to an A<sup>b</sup>/G<sup>#</sup> pedal that in the first strophe (m. 14) had offered a weak-beat whole-tone descent from full-closure in B<sup>b</sup> to F<sup>#</sup> as pre-dominant in E Major. The corresponding A<sup>b</sup> in measure 14 lasted one beat; here it is protracted to one and a half measures. The modulation through common-tone A<sup>b</sup> having been expanded, the E Major material of measures 15-17 is compressed to a single measure (m. 34, albeit with a change of meter from 6/8 to 9/8).

<sup>291</sup> This is not to suggest that Chabrier’s phraseology is always four-square. In his elucidating chapter on rhythmic play in Chabrier’s *Pièces pittoresques*, Roy Howat analyzes several instances of extremely complex phrase structure. It should be noted, however, that in these cases melodic and harmonic transparency is almost always maintained. Roy Howat, “Rhythmic Games in Chabrier,” in *The Art of French Piano Music: Debussy, Ravel, Fauré, Chabrier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 187-197.

This is anticipated in the opening phrases of the *prélude*. Here, Chabrier transforms a banal series of I—V progressions with the simplest of manipulations: by adding a C# to each V chord (see Example 4.3). Imagine the celebrated opening phrase with all of its C#s replaced by D#s!<sup>292</sup> Consistent with Chabrier’s usual recasting of routine procedures, the C# “wrong note game” becomes progressively more involved as the section plays out. In the first four-measure antecedent it was applied only to the dominant chord, while in the consequent it colours the tonic sonority as well, blurring the stability of the tonic chord with an added sixth. The parallel phrase (m. 9 ff.) begins at the octave with different orchestration and non-substantive ornamentation but is otherwise virtually unchanged. At measure 13 the “wrong note” C# appears in a fresh context. Instead of being a coloristic dissonance it is taken as the root of a C#<sup>7</sup> chord and prompts a reharmonization of the melody. The C#<sup>7</sup> resolves conventionally to an F#<sup>7</sup>, after which one would expect either a tonicization of B Major or a return to E major through continued descending fifth root motion. However, an unexpected three-measure decoration of E♭/D# is inserted (mm. 15-17), enharmonically prepared by the major 9<sup>th</sup> added to the C#<sup>7</sup> (in mm. 13-14), before the descending fifths resume (mm. 18-19) and carry through for a cadence to E.<sup>293</sup> Interrupting processes to offer a parenthetical digression is vintage Chabrier, and has already been observed in *Vaucochard*. What might be emphasized here is how this elaboration contributes as one of several peculiarities that infiltrate the passage, incrementally becoming more complex, provocative, and decidedly riddle-like. This section of the *prélude*

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<sup>292</sup> Many of Chabrier’s idiosyncratic gestures can be traced to such simple manipulations of a single element. Howat begins his essay with a parallel observation concerning rhythmic displacement in the “Joyeuse marche.” Howat, “Rhythmic Games,” 187.

<sup>293</sup> William Benjamin has shared with me a brilliant analysis of this final section of the opening of the *prélude* (mm. 13-19) whereby the outer-voice counterpoint reveals a revolutionary treatment of diatonicism. Plotting the segment as a field of movement in pitch-class space (eight-tone circle of fifths against outer voice motion in each bar) makes apparent continuities in intervallic relationships that demonstrate a sophisticated and modernist harmonic strategy.

closes with an authentic cadence whose resolution to the tonic is coloured by a 6/4-5/3 decoration (m. 19), again the C# is the only unprepared dissonance (the A is suspended

Example 4.3. *Le Roi malgré lui, prélude*, mm. 1-19.

**Maestoso.**

**PIANO.** *ff*

[m. 6]

[m. 9]

[m. 13]

[m. 16]

from the  $V^7$  chord in the previous measure, if transposed from a different voice). The 6/4 “appoggiatura” is sounded together with the fifth above the tonic, throwing the conventional interpretation of this 6/4 as cadential decoration (which is in any case not typically given to the final tonic) further into question.

Fritelli’s “Je suis du pays des gondoles” was identified above as structurally the most archetypal strophic number of the score. Like the *prélude*, this number joins simple formal structure with complex harmonies. The strophe opens with decorated parallel 6/4 chords in chromatic descent over a dominant pedal that but for some tonal ambiguity in the upbeat to measure 3 is actually less complicated than all the accidentals may suggest (see Example 4.4a).<sup>294</sup> More peculiar is the digression—a sequentially repeated chromatic linear progression with enigmatic harmonic complications—interrupting the descending fifth movement from  $G^7$  (mm. 13-14) to  $C^7$  as  $V^7/V$  of  $B\flat$  (m. 17) that initiates the authentic cadence to  $B\flat$  (Example 4.4b; the outer-voice counterpoint is diagrammed as Figure 4.2, making the linear rationale of the intervening passage evident). A harmonic parenthesis similarly complicates the beginning of the refrain: an Italian augmented sixth on  $G\flat$  (m. 19), which implies a contextually suitable resolution to  $V/B\flat$ , is repeated a chromatic step higher on  $G$ , and then again on  $A\flat$ . This last augmented sixth is reinterpreted as a dominant seventh and the refrain begins in  $D\flat$ ! Chabrier draws attention to the harmonic play by requiring several blundering attempts before successfully returning to  $B\flat$  Major (mm. 20-31, not included in Example 4.4).

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<sup>294</sup> The  $B\flat$  Major arpeggio on the upbeat foreshadows the final tonal area of both the strophe and of the refrain, though neither section begins in this key.

Example 4.4a. *Le Roi malgré lui*, couplets, “Je suis du pays des gondoles,” mm. 1-6.

**N° 17. Allegro vivo.**

**FRITELLI**

**PIANO**

*Allegro vivo.* Je suis du pa-ys des gon-

- do - les; Par - bleu! là - bas, je sais com - ment Les

Example 4.4b. *Le Roi malgré lui*, “Je suis du pays des gondoles,” mm. 13-21.

[m. 13]

- do - le on fait des re - pas, Et per-

F. *son - - ne ne vous en blâ - - me: C'est*

The first system of music consists of a vocal line in the bass clef and a piano accompaniment in the grand staff. The vocal line has lyrics: "son - - ne ne vous en blâ - - me: C'est". The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with triplets. Dynamic markings include *f* and *cresc.*

[m. 17]

F. *la cou - tu - - me de - - là - - bas! Mais!*

The second system of music continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: "la cou - tu - - me de - - là - - bas! Mais!". The piano accompaniment continues with triplets. Dynamic markings include *dimin.* and *p*. A *long* marking is present above the final note of the vocal line.

**Meno mosso e pesante.**

F. *en Po - lo - gne, I - ci nous sommes Un pa - ys*

**Meno mosso e pesante.**

The third system of music features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: "en Po - lo - gne, I - ci nous sommes Un pa - ys". The piano accompaniment includes triplets and dynamic markings like *f* and *p*. The tempo and mood are indicated as **Meno mosso e pesante.**

Figure 4.2. Outer-voice counterpoint in "Je suis du pays," mm. 14-17

### • Rhythm

Chabrier also introduces playful distortions to the regular rhythmic patterns of *Le Roi*, many of which bring connotations of dance.<sup>295</sup> Intricate rhythmic patterns and processes are also at times riddle-like, disguising clever strategies that reward analysis. For example, the sung waltz in Act 2 opens with a multi-sectional introduction propelled by systematic rhythmic manipulations (Example 4.5). The four-measure idea that begins the number is purely rhythmic; its only pitch is scale-degree 5. It is heard twice and then fragmented incrementally, first the two interior measures are heard, the first and last two beats of this are then removed, and finally the first beat of the remaining three-beat fragment is also dropped. This last excision contributes a hemiola impetus to the acceleration written across the sixteen-measure phrase. The following group, now with a melodic component, also generates anticipation by purely rhythmic means, though the mechanisms here are more subtle. The bare octave doubling of the dominant pitch is replaced by the A—E open fifth. The ♩ ♪♪♪♪ repetition of this conspicuous sonority presents a supercharged

<sup>295</sup> The abundance of dance rhythms should come as no surprise given the clear appropriation of *opéra comique* conventions already observed in the structural designs of *Le Roi*: the *prélude* begins *à la sarabande*, and in the first act alone one can find intimations of minuet, waltz, gigue, two marches, pavane, and a “Russian”-styled dance theme.

Example 4.5. *Le Roi malgré lui*, Act II introduction et chœur dansé, mm. 1-30.

**N° 9.** **All<sup>o</sup> molto animato.**

LASKI.

(CORYPHÉES)  
SOPRANI.

TÉNORS.

(SEIGNEURS)  
BASSES.

(CHOEUR)  
SOPRANI.

TÉNORS.

BASSES.

**All<sup>o</sup> molto animato.**  
*ff*  
PIANO.

[m. 9]

[m. 17]

[m. 24]

acceleration of a classic minuet motto and reestablishes the triple meter.<sup>296</sup> In the second and third measures of this phrase (mm. 18-19), this same open fifth is sounded on the first and fourth (eighth-note) pulses; this introduces a secondary rhythmic pattern that is subtly suggestive of a conflicting compound meter. This pattern is undermined as soon as it is established, the “accents” created by repetition of the A—E interval are heard on every second pulse beginning on the fourth eighth of measure 19. The interplay of these rhythmic patterns is designed in such a way as to challenge the notated meter and to effect an acceleration to the downbeat that begins the repetition of the unit.<sup>297</sup> These eight measures are repeated with new accompaniment beginning at measure 25, and one will notice the conflicting metrical patterns of the accompaniment that adds a two-versus-three dissonance across the phrase. Rhythmic ludics of various sorts—displacement dissonances, grouping dissonances, inflated upbeats, blurred downbeats—energize the passage through to the waltz proper, but the phrase-structural groupings are almost exclusively four-square.

Humorous or quizzical rhythmic procedures can be found scattered throughout the score. To mention a few: Nangis’s *rondeau* in the Act 1 *introduction* sustains polymetric passages where simple duple in the vocal line is heard against 6/8 in the accompaniment and there are numerous instances of polyrhythmic and hemiola patterns, depicting the Frenchman awkwardly navigating the snowy Polish landscape.<sup>298</sup> Most clever, perhaps, are the ostensibly “incorrect”

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<sup>296</sup> In her classic study of rhythm in Mozart operas, Wye J. Allanbrook identifies this motto rhythm of a quarter note followed by four eighth notes, often on a repeated pitch, as emblematic of the slower of the two types of minuet most common in the late eighteenth century. Wye J. Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le nozze di Figaro and Don Giovanni* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 34-35.

<sup>297</sup> It might also be observed that the two two-measure units beginning at measure 17 are both rhythmic palindromes and that the whole-tone oscillation around E is yet another variant of Chabrier’s signature modal phrase.

<sup>298</sup> Shifting meters or polyrhythmic passages also occur elsewhere: the reprise of the “Russian” theme at the end of this same scene alternates 6/8 and 2/4; the “Quoi! c’est lui! c’est bien lui que je vois!” episode of the Act 3 *duo* alternates five-against-six with measures of straight 6/4 in the first phrase, which “accelerates” to seven-against-six and then eight-against-six in the second phrase.

Example 4.6. *Le Roi malgré lui*, opening of *chanson française*,  
from *morceau d'ensemble et chanson française*.

*All<sup>o</sup> mod<sup>to</sup>*

*rit*

Soyons le roi

*All<sup>o</sup> mod<sup>to</sup>*

*ff*

*A<sub>2</sub>* (2 hypermeasures  
(*à*rement) of 3 half notes each)

Je suis le

roi, je suis le roi, — Mon règne est ou - vert! qu'il com men - ce! Mais

*sf*

*A<sub>2</sub>*

pour ré - gner, faut il l'ef - froy, — Non, non, j'ai me mieux la clé - men - ce. Nan -

The image displays a musical score for the opening of the French song 'Le Roi malgré lui'. It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line (marked 'N') and a piano accompaniment. The first system shows the vocal line starting with 'Soyons le roi' and the piano accompaniment with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The second system continues with 'Je suis le' and includes a performance instruction for a hypermeasure: *A<sub>2</sub>* (2 hypermeasures (*à*rement) of 3 half notes each). The third system contains the lyrics 'roi, je suis le roi, — Mon règne est ou - vert! qu'il com men - ce! Mais' and features a *sf* dynamic marking. The fourth system concludes with 'pour ré - gner, faut il l'ef - froy, — Non, non, j'ai me mieux la clé - men - ce. Nan -'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamic markings.

**B<sub>2</sub>**

-gis, toi mon meilleur a - mi — Je t'ai puni, j'en ai gé - mi — Par -

**C<sub>2</sub>**

-don, Nangis par - don, Car je te nom - me Grandmaitrè et pre -mier gen.til -

hom - me! Je

Sop. *p*  
Grand maitre et pre -mier gen.til - hom - me.

Ten *p*  
Grand maitre et pre -mier gen.til - hom - me.

Basses *p*  
Grand maitre et pre -mier gen.til - hom - me.

three-measure groupings of Nangis's "Je suis le Roi," noted earlier, that might be reevaluated as a rhythmic-metric pun (see Example 4.6). Reading this song in hypermetric units of 3/2—that is,

each measure of two quarter notes is interpreted as a single beat of a measure in 3/2 (three notated measures constitutes one hypermetric measure of three beats; see annotations in Example 4.6)—the strophe falls clearly into four two-measure phrases in minuet meter with AABC design!

- **Reiterated Music**

The numerous instances of reiterated music in *Le Roi* demonstrate a variegated approach consistent with *opéra comique* practice of the period. But these too are complicated by unusual or ironic implications. The degree of sophistication in musical reminiscence varies greatly, and the dramatic inferences are strikingly different among instances. The simplest cases musically are three direct quotations of isolated fragments within the opera. Towards the end of the *chanson tzigane* Nangis is heard offstage singing a phrase from his *rondeau* “Huit jours, mort de ma vie.” In its original statement the *rondeau* reported Nangis’s eight-day sojourn in Krakow, but the dramatic context now offers a humorous variation of this: Nangis is returning from a much shorter stint as a guest of the city’s penal system. This offstage song replicates Minka’s earlier call to her lover but in reverse (in the *final* to Act 1 she was heard singing to Nangis; in her next appearance *she* is hearing *his* song) and it signals to Minka that her lover is free, motivating the cadenza-like conclusion of her *chanson*. In addition, Nangis’s physical absence shadows a peculiar liminality that attenuates his identity at this point—he is not yet aware of his incognito, though Henri has already assumed his identity.

Another of Nangis’s simple songs is recalled following the estranged lovers’ reunion in the Act 3 *duo* (#19), where the head motif of “Je suis le Roi” is heard in the orchestra (mm. 111-115 of the *duo*, immediately preceding the *cabalette* “Pour planer dans l’air libre et pur”). Nangis, having been absent since before the Act 2 finale, returns to his lover ignorant of recent

dramatic events and is dumbstruck by Minka's madly impassioned exultation "Quoi! c'est lui." Seemingly stunned by her outburst, and still not quite clear on the present political exigencies, he is nevertheless keen with ardour. When Minka reminds him of his royal status, the spry little "Je suis le Roi" motto depicts the dim outlines of recent events flickering back into Nangis's horizon of perception. Its fourfold repetition at the same pitch level humorously depicts the newfound glee of the shamelessly naive Comte and underlines the entire (factually) clarifying digression before amorous triumph in the form of *cabalette*. Finally, the "C'est un ami" refrain from Henri's *couplets* is heard in the orchestra at the beginning of the *ensemble de la conjuration* (Act 2, #13) where Henri-as-Nangis is presented as a "friend" of the conspiracy, highlighting an irony that is fundamental to the drama and to the humour through to the Act *final*. These quotations of previously heard material all add a humorous commentary that is not directly solicited by the text.

Certain passages are recalled in much larger blocks. The "Russian" theme and succeeding C Major chorus "Solides, fidèles" first heard in the *introduction* (#1C) both return with only ornamental variation at the beginning of the Act 1 *final*. The modal "Russian" theme is heard independently of the chorus at the very end of the *introduction*, and the soldiers' chorus (always in C Major) also launches the *final* of the opera. Adding to this, the "Vive le roi de Pologne" episode that follows the C Major chorus in Act 1 is also brought back in this *final*, and is the last music to be heard at the final curtain. So the concluding scene begins and ends with music drawn from the *introduction*, even reproducing the tonal sequence. Similarly, the "Par l'Évangile et notre Dame" strain that forms the central episode of the *ensemble de la conjuration* is also heard in the *prélude* and at the height of dramatic confusion in the Act 2 *final*, always together with the celebrated V<sup>9</sup> chords, again, always in the same key and with only superficial changes in

figuration. The regular recurrence of these lengthy, mostly choral, episodes balances the busy dramatic goings on of the opera with an element of large-scale musico-dramatic stasis.

Material associated with Minka also recurs at various places throughout the score, but the goals of these reiterations are less immediately humorous than the ones associated with the other characters. Minka's use of reminiscence (as is her use of popular aria types) is often gratuitous, serving little or no musical or dramatic purpose. It contributes instead to the production of a character who is purely an amalgamation of operatic clichés. The complete melody of the strophe and refrain of Minka's *romance* "Hélas! à l'esclavage" (Act 1, #4) is repeated at the outset of the *morceau d'ensemble* (Act 2, #14A).<sup>299</sup> Similarly, the arioso melody that begins the Gypsy song "Il est un vieux chant de Bohême" is recalled in the cello at the outset of the Act 3 *duo*—the bittersweet reminiscence of "earlier, happier times" is but the first of many tired operatic formulas that inform this (second) reunion of Minka and her presumed-dead. The "Je l'aime de toute mon âme" melody that inundates her earlier *duo* with Henri (#7) is also quoted toward the beginning of this number, as Minka, dagger in hand, is primed to end her days. This offers a rare instance of a recurring melody being treated to development: only the first three measures of the phrase are heard, an incomplete subphrase, and the last three beats are transformed rhythmically and intervallically and then sequenced up a major third prompting a modulation to C Major (see Example 4.7).

This is the single most revisited tune in the opera, returning also in the finales to both Acts 2 and 3. The melody acts as a "love theme" of sorts for Minka, associated with the heroine in a manner that playfully brings her characterization closer to that of certain contemporaneous *opéra comique* heroines (compare, for example Carmen's "fate" motive, or Manon's "love"

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<sup>299</sup> Apart from its augmentation, some insubstantial rhythmic variation, and a short expansion at Nangis's entry, the melody is quoted exactly and in the original key.

theme). The Act 3 *final*, in addition to this “love theme” and the two chorus episodes already noted, also recalls melodies from the Gypsy song proper and the *barcarolle* ending the opera in a kind of musical medley of dramatic reconciliation. The abundance of unrelated musical reminiscences in this final scene caricatures the common operatic practice of inundating the finale with sentimental motives heard earlier in the opera, as can be found in Massenet’s *Manon*.

Example 4.7. *Le Roi malgré lui*, duo, transition to “Quoi! C’est lui,” mm. 43-48.

The musical score for Example 4.7 consists of two systems. The first system is marked 'Animato. (Minka se dirige vers la porte)' and 'NANGIS parait'. It features a vocal line with the lyrics '- vre!' and 'Animato.' and a piano accompaniment with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The second system begins with the vocal line 'Ah! grand Dieu! Vi' and continues with the piano accompaniment, which includes a triplet figure in the right hand and a more active bass line. The tempo remains 'Animato' and the dynamics are 'ff'.

The motive that heads the fugue subject in the second section of the Act 2 *final* is also a reiteration, this time from the opening phrase of the preceding chorus (Example 4.8a, m. 6). In contrast to the previous examples, this motive is modified and recontextualized rather extensively (see Examples 4.8a-e).<sup>300</sup> In its original incarnation, associated with the “à

<sup>300</sup> There are other instances of transformed motives retained across structural divisions. For example, the first presentation of the “Solides, fidèles” chorus preserves the triplet turn figure from the modal “Russian” theme in an inner accompanimental voice; and the accompaniment for Nangis’s comforting strains “Va! Ne crains rien de lui” in

l'unanimité" tag, the motive stood out for its abrupt tonal and modal shift (the F# offers a Mixolydian coloration to the D final), pounding homorhythm, and emphatic articulation. It is heard fleetingly in the subsequent *parlante* passage, and again as part of the choral reprise that frames the section. The short instrumental transition that leads to the fugue proper is based entirely on this motive, its repetition at different pitch levels offering continuity through the chromatic modulation (Example 4.8b).<sup>301</sup> The instrumental fugue that follows is also based on this motive and the subject is often doubled heterophonically in the vocal line, which offers yet another variant.

The fugue assumes a complete exposition of the subject and typical developmental procedures ensue (fragmentation, sequencing, diminution, *stretta* entries), though the final closure in F is repeatedly thwarted. After a weak authentic cadence, the coda (beginning at the words "Ma foi, je désigne") includes a *divertissement* with reduced texture and culminates in a statement of the subject in C that stands out timbrally and texturally (it is sounded in the horns, doubled at the third against a treble ostinato figure in the winds) but the resolution to F is deceptive (m. 139, Example 4.8d). The F in the bass is the fifth of a B b minor-7<sup>th</sup> chord that begins a riddle-like chromatic process where figural treble accompaniment and subject fragments in the bass follow independent linear octave ascents. This passage begins suspiciously like a Gounodian *rosalia* (ascending sequence by semitone), but is quickly complicated when the "à l'unanimité" motive in the bass is fragmented and only the second half is heard. This accelerates

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the *entrée de Minka* repeats the orchestral figure from the scene opening, whereby Minka was chased onto the stage by a soldier.

<sup>301</sup> The implied background root motion is by descending fifth: from "D" to "G" to C<sup>4/2</sup> as V<sup>4/2</sup>/F Major. Chabrier typically complicates the surface by sounding only one of these chords unambiguously and even this, the C<sup>4/2</sup>, is in an inappropriate inversion. The "D" sonority (cadential tonic of the preceding section, reinterpreted as submediant in the new key of F Major) is coloured by a lowered fifth at first sounding and then cued but never realized by the Italian-6<sup>th</sup> on E#; a G center is suggested by the half-diminished 7<sup>th</sup> on F#. These "hazy" harmonies befit the Wagnerian idiom evoked in the preceding recitative to reflect the seriousness of Laski's preparation of the ballots.

Example 4.8a. *Le Roi malgré lui*, Act 2 final, “à l’unanimité” motive, mm. 1-6.

**N° 15.** *All<sup>o</sup> risoluto molto.*

MINKA

ALEXINA.

HENRI.

FRITELLI.

LASKI.

SOPRANO.

TÉNORS.

BASSES.

PIANO.

Avant une heu . re,

SEIGNEURS.

CONJURÉS.

*All<sup>o</sup> risoluto molto.*

*ff* *sf* *mf* *sf*

Il faut qu'il meu - re, Ar - rêt vo - té A l'unanimi - té.

“à l’unanimité” motive

Example 4.8b. *Le Roi malgré lui*, Act 2 final, “à l’unanimité” motive in transition to fugue.  
mm. 106-111.

Ten. CONJURÉS.  
Basses.

Oui, que le sort dé.ci.de Qui va frap - per le roi! (ils s'apprêtent à signer)

Oui, que le sort dé.ci.de Qui va frap - per le roi!

The musical score for Example 4.8b consists of two systems. The first system features a vocal line for Tenors (Ten. CONJURÉS) and Basses (Basses) with the lyrics "Oui, que le sort dé.ci.de Qui va frap - per le roi!". The vocal line is in 2/4 time and includes a dynamic marking of *f*. The piano accompaniment is in 2/4 time and includes dynamic markings of *f* and *p*. The second system continues the piano accompaniment with dynamic markings of *p*, *pp*, and *ppp*.

Example 4.8c. *Le Roi malgré lui*, Act 2 final, first entry of fugue subject, mm. 112-113.

1<sup>er</sup> GROUPE (quelques seigneurs)  
Basses (à part)

309

Mais, frapper un roi! C'est chose gra - ve, chose très grave; Et quoi.

The musical score for Example 4.8c shows the first entry of the fugue subject for the 1st group of lords (1<sup>er</sup> GROUPE (quelques seigneurs) Basses (à part)). The score is in 2/4 time and includes dynamic markings of *p* and *sf*. The lyrics are "Mais, frapper un roi! C'est chose gra - ve, chose très grave; Et quoi." The piano accompaniment is in 2/4 time and includes dynamic markings of *p* and *sf*.

Example 4.8d. *Le Roi malgré lui*, Act 2 *final*, mm. 137-148.

[m. 137]

HENRI.

*f*

Trop bon!

(à HENRI)

bien! J'ai mis le vôtre aussi.

*mf*

statement of fugue subject on C (V)

[m. 139]

riddle-like sequential process begins in orchestra

LASAI (à ALFXINA lui tendant le coffret où sont les noms)

Par ta main ô ma

deceptive resolution of V,  
F in bass as fifth of B-flat-minor 7th

imbalance in sequential model is perceived—"à l'unanimité" motive in bass ascends by one semitone per measure, tremolo figure in treble ascends by two semitones per measure

niè - ce, Que ce - lui - là soit choi - si Qui doit frap -

[m. 141]

ALEXINA. (hésitant)  
Vous vou - lez!

- per

Ténors  
Al - lons! Du - ches - se!

Basses.  
Al - lons! Du - ches - se!

motive in bass is fragmented, now treble and bass ascend by semitone as same rate (once per quarter note); parallel French augmented sixth chords result

[m. 142]

il le faut! il le faut!

il le faut! il le faut!

ALVINA.  
treble achieves octave ascent,  
doubled by solo voice

Le voici! Nangis! —

Lisez! Li - sez! Lisez! Li - sez!

bass continues by semitone

[m. 145]

HENRI

Qui, moi? Le sort m'impose un étran - ge pro

C'est vous!

*pp* un peu rall.

Vous mé - me! Vous mé - me!

*pp*

HENRI. (à LASKI) *ff* (à part)  
 \_blé me... Non pas! Je le tiendrai; Nangis, nous pourrons nous en.

LASKI.  
 Vous hésitez? Vous avez fait ser. ment!..

*Très ralenti.*  
*p* *molto sostenuto.*

F tonic achieved in bass, elides with *serioso* extension

Example 4.8e. *Le Roi malgré lui*, Act 2 final, chorus based on “à l’unanimité” motive, mm. 185-188.

Sop. *ff*  
 Qu'est-ce donc? Et pourquoi tant d'ef -

Tén. *ff*  
 Qu'est-ce donc? Et pourquoi tant d'ef -

Basses. *ff*  
 Qu'est-ce donc? Et pourquoi tant d'ef -

*ff*

\_froi? Qu'est - ce donc? Et pourquoi tant d'ef -

\_froi? Et pour - quoi cet ef -

\_froi? Et pour - quoi cet ef -

the chromatic ascent in the bass, both absolutely and also in relation to the treble, offsetting an imbalance that was inherent in the sequential model. The treble initially climbed two semitones for every one in the bass; the bass “catches up” two measures later and the two begin to move in lockstep. The result is a series of parallel French-6<sup>th</sup> chords. The F tonic that is finally achieved in the bass elides with a *serioso* extension, also based on overlapped fragments of the “à l’unanimité” motive with chromatic transformation over tonic pedal. Still no cadence is heard.

Henri approaches the oratory and prepares the ordered assassination of “the king,” a dramatic and comedic highpoint that itself is outdone by the sudden appearance of Minka and her announcement that Nangis has escaped. The fugue, its subject, and its effort towards tonal closure are abandoned. Minka’s ensuing ecstatic outpouring is operatic histrionics at its best, but it too capitulates to yet another *coup*. French subjects of unspecified persuasion are reported to be approaching and the panicked conspirators join together for a “quick” chorus based on a martial transformation of the “à l’unanimité” motive as they prepare to scatter (Example 4.8e). Caricaturing the perceived dramatic discontinuity inherent in Italian double aria structures (think, for example, of “Di quella pira” from *Il Trovatore*), the humour of the stupified chorus with martial accompaniment is increased by its *coup* upon *coup* setup and the anticlimactic deflation of expectations: anticipated events, both dramatic and musical, are immediately forsaken.

The peculiar harmonic logic through this passage is typical of Chabrier and recalls the central episode of the “Chanson de l’homme armé” from *Vaucochard* (discussed in Chapter 3), where an unconventional use of augmented sixth chord similarly acted as the primary agent in the frustration of a functional harmonic-structural process. In contrast to the *Vaucochard* example, where the eccentricities are rhetorically highlighted, the effect of the peculiar harmonic process here is softened amidst busy figuration and quickly changing quasi-sequential harmonies

in a codetta-like extension passage. This understatement, along with the organic oneness suggested by the fugal genre, is in direct contrast to the transparent commandeering of the unsuspecting little “à l’unanimité” tag for disparate musical and dramatic purposes.

Chabrier’s use of musical reminiscence, like his use of conventional forms, dance rhythms, and traditional harmonic formulas, positions this work clearly within the *opéra comique* tradition. Yet the playful and humorous manipulations of these procedures internally challenge the chosen generic constraints: conventions are used unconventionally in this opera. However, the disjunctions identified in this section, playing on established structural, syntactic, and stylistic codes, represent only the local-level generically-derived humour of the work. *Le Roi* also engages self-consciously with higher-level generic tropes that, once disentangled, reveal a pervasive meta-theatricality which is quite possibly at the core of Chabrier’s celebrated modernism.<sup>302</sup>

### ***Le Roi malgré lui* and its Genre(s)**

As the above discussion illustrates, there are many parallels that can be drawn between *Le Roi* and any number of “classic” *opéras comiques* such as Auber’s *Domino noir* or *Fra Diavolo*.<sup>303</sup> Nowhere is this more evident than in the choice of number types. In fact, the table of contents reads like a compendium of nineteenth-century “best ofs”: Gypsy song, soldiers’

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<sup>302</sup> Speaking to the modernity of such meta-theatrical tinkering, Hermann Danuser argues that the roots of musical modernism be traced back to the self-conscious blurring of text-context boundaries in the self-referential comic operas, or “meta-operas,” of the eighteenth century. Danuser, “The Textualization of the Context: Comic Strategies in Meta-Operas of the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” in *Music and the Aesthetics of Modernity: Essays*, eds. Karol Berger and Anthony Newcomb (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 65-97.

<sup>303</sup> Catulle Mendès, in a letter written to Chabrier following the premiere, described the work as “tout à fait *domino-noir*,” quoted in Delage, *Emmanuel Chabrier*, 392. Likewise, H. Moreno of *Le Ménestrel*, “de l’Auber, du simple Auber, avec un peut plus de sang, voilà tout.” *Le Ménestrel*, 22 May 1887. Chabrier himself once referred to the work as “Auber bien fait;” see J. Desaymard, “Étude sur Emmanuel Chabrier,” BN Mus., Rés. Vm. 25; quoted in Huebner, *French Opera*, 264.

chorus, oath-swearing ensemble, choreographed chorus, *barcarolle*, and *nocturne* are all represented, not to mention the numerous *romances* and *couplets*, as well as the tripartite introduction. A *pavane* and a *chanson française* are also included as examples of the *musique ancienne* then in fashion in Paris.<sup>304</sup> The libretto, too, is saturated with dramatic clichés (think of Henri’s double incognito, for instance), indeed representing “un peu de tout” as Chabrier scribbled on an early version of the libretto.<sup>305</sup>

All of this is not without a discernable strain. The librettists further complicated the *argument* inherited from Ancelot in order to include a prior Venetian romance to be recalled musically in a *barcarolle*. The unlikeliness of the romantic pairing of poetic French nobleman Henri and his chamberlain’s hot-headed and loud-mouthed wife further underscores the obvious contrivance of this evidently acceptable plot twist. Moreover, the farcical storyline seems to draw attention to the awkwardness resulting from the incorporation of so many popular song types and scenarios. In my interpretation, this effort to emulate the codes of *opéra comique* is self-consciously exaggerated. So, unlike Delibes’s *Le Roi l’a dit* (1873), another rare example of a post-1870 classically structured *opéra comique*, *Le Roi malgré lui* invites an ironic reading of its overt generic conservatism.

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<sup>304</sup> Jann Pasler has shown that the fascination for *musique ancienne*, particularly the *pavane*, reached a high point in 1887. Jann Pasler, *Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 501-507.

<sup>305</sup> “Il y a de tout derrière cette page. J’y ai même fourré ma patte à cette pâte. Ah! Caca! Ce qu’on s’emplâtrait.” Quoted in Francis Poulenc, *Emmanuel Chabrier* (Paris: La Palatine, 1961), 92. This comment is translated in Francis Poulenc, *Emmanuel Chabrier*, trans. Cynthia Jolly (London: Dobson, 1981), 52-53 as “There’s a bit of everything here. I stuck my finger in it too. Poof! What a dreadful mess! Mere patchwork.” The large file containing this first draft and other early drafts of the libretto were seen by Poulenc and Delage in the Bretton-Chabrier family archives but is apparently no longer accessible. Professor Huebner has not been able to locate it. Also quoted in Poulenc, a comment in Chabrier’s hand written on a dossier containing notes on and excerpts of the early libretto, 90: “manuscrit de trois auteurs (et même de moi). C’est la Genèse du *Roi malgré lui*. Nous trouvons là un peu de tout: une bouillabaisse de Najac et Burani que fait cuire Richepin et dans laquelle je colle des épices. Le document est épataant. On dirait qu’on se bat.” (Manuscript by three authors (and even me). This is the Genesis of *Le Roi malgré lui*. There’s a little of everything here: a bouillabaisse by Najac and Burani, cooked by Richepin, and spiced up by me. Shocking. More like a battleground.)

Chabrier clearly signals an ironic intent at the outset by establishing a “play frame” in the opening minutes of the opera.<sup>306</sup> In the ludic mode, indulgences that would frustrate a “straight” reading are justified and imbalances are not in want of reconciliation: play thrives on the eclecticism and abundance characteristic of Chabrier’s music. As musical analogues to such verbal signals as “Did you hear the one about...?,” Chabrier loads the opening scene with idiosyncrasies and enigmatic gestures. As we have seen, at the opening of the *prélude* Chabrier creates a harmonic riddle by progressively complicating a simple and conventional harmonic formula (a series of I—V chords): C#s are added to the dominant and tonic chords in such a way as to create increasingly enigmatic harmonic implications as well as increasingly “modern”-sounding sonorities (recall Example 4.3). Recognizing the musical effect as one systematic tinkering, which is to say understanding the passage as a harmonic riddle, realizes the emotional disengagement required of humorous enjoyment and invites a comic disengagement that prepares the listener to hear what follows as an exercise in ludics.<sup>307</sup>

#### • Generic Structural Frames

There are numerous instances in *Le Roi* of playful disengagement that hinge on generic codes pertaining to large-scale structure, and a complete understanding of Chabrier’s technique requires consideration of the incongruous disjunctions that move beyond the local level. The perception of the humour of such disjunctions requires both cultural competency and interpretive distance. The opening “gaming” scene (#1a), where the characters are literally engaged in play,

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<sup>306</sup> The “play frame” is fundamental to William Fry’s “architecture of humor,” as developed in his seminal study William Fry, *Sweet Madness: A Study of Humor* (Palo Alto: Pacific Books, 1963), 119-172.

<sup>307</sup> It follows John Morreall’s general account of humorous amusement that a cognitive shift may only be perceived as humorous if one is emotionally disengaged from the stimulus, or in a “play mode.” John Morreall, *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 49-64. The concept of disengagement was central to my analysis of the *Chanson de l’homme armé* in Chapter 3.

exemplifies.

The initial four-measure phrase perfectly captures the aristocratic posturing of the sixteenth-century French Lords at play (see Example 4.9a). The modal scale and non-functional

Example 4.9a. *Le Roi malgré lui*, introduction, mm. 1-37.

**modal minuet progression, with shift from C center to E+**  
All<sup>o</sup> mod<sup>to</sup> (♩ = 132)

NANGIS.

LIANCOURT  
D' ELEEUE

VILLEQUIER,  
MAUGIRON.

CAYLUS.

PAGES.  
(8 Coryphées)

TÉNOIS.  
(SEIGNEURS)

BASSES.

SOPRANI.  
(TRAVESTI)

TÉNORS.

BASSES.

PIANO.

[m. 5]

## [m. 9] "gaming sequence"

Musical score for measures 9-12, titled "gaming sequence". The score is in 3/4 time and features a piano accompaniment. The right hand plays a melodic line with triplets and slurs, while the left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment with triplets. Dynamics include *sf*, *mf*, *p*, and *f*.

## [m. 13]

Musical score for measure 13. The piano accompaniment continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. Dynamics include *sf*, *mf*, *p cresc.*, and *f*.

## [m. 17] "gambling cadence"

Musical score for measures 17-19, titled "gambling cadence". The score includes vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The vocal line features the lyrics "Cinq!" and "Trois!". The piano accompaniment includes trills and slurs. Dynamics include *sf* and *p*.

## "modal minuet" returns

a Tempo.

## [m. 22]

## "gaming sequence"

Musical score for measures 22-25, titled "gaming sequence". The score includes a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line features the lyrics "J'ai per - du!" and "J'ai gagné!". The piano accompaniment includes slurs and triplets. Dynamics include *f* and *mf*.

[m. 26]

L.  
Je te fais le double!

Ténors  
(SEIGNEURS.  
Basses.  
Nous faisons le

*p* *f* *sf* *mf* *p* *f*

"gambling cadence" now heard backwards

[m. 29]

GAYLUS.  
Entendu!

*sf* dou - ble. Entendu!  
*sf* dou - ble. Entendu!

*sf* *f* *sf* *f* *sf* *f*

[m. 31]

*f* *dim.* *p*

## light choral waltz

[m. 35]

*p* très léger.

*f*

A nous voir, nous gentils-hommes, Tous Fran - çais — jou - er gai -

PAGES.

*p*

A nous voir, nous gentils-hommes, Tous Fran - çais — jou - er gai -

Ténors.— LIANCOURT.

*f*

A nous voir, nous gentils-hommes, Tous Fran - çais — jou - er gai -

SEIGNEURS

Basses —VILLEQUIER avec les 4<sup>tes</sup> — CAYLUS avec les 2<sup>dés</sup>

*p*

A nous voir, nous gentils-hommes, Tous Fran - çais — jou - er gai -

*p* très léger.

Example 4.9b. *Le Roi malgré lui*, introduction, mm. 44-53.

*f*

apparen - ce, Chacun se dit, je croi: — Je

*p*

*f*

apparen - ce, Chacun se dit, je croi: —

*f*

(4 Ténors et LIANCOURT)

apparen - ce, Chacun se dit, je croi: — Je

*f*

apparen - ce, Chacun se dit, je croi: —

*legg.*

*fp*

*dolce.*

suis toujours en Fran - ce, Au Lou - vre

*dolce.*

Je suis tou - jours en Fran - ce Au Lou - vre

*dolce.*

suis toujours en Fran - ce, Au Lou - vre

*dolce.*

Je suis tou - jours en Fran - ce, Au Lou - vre

*dolce.*

Je suis tou - jours en Fran - ce, Au Lou - vre

*mf*

au jeu du roi! Je suis toujours en

*mf*

au jeu du roi! Je suis toujours en

*mf*

1<sup>rs</sup> et 2<sup>ds</sup> Ténors. au jeu du roi! Je suis tou -

*mf*

au jeu du roi! Je suis tou -

*cresc.*

*mf*

Example 4.9c. *Le Roi malgré lui*, introduction, mm. 127-140.

NANGIS  
Sa - lut, messieurs...

Ténors.  
SEIGNEURS.  
Basses.  
Nangis! —  
Nangis! —

LIANCOURT.  
J'ai per - du! —

VILLEQUIER.  
De - puis huit —

CAYLUS.  
J'ai ga - gné!

jours, Nangis est at - ten - du!... —

Ténors. *dolce.*  
SEIGNEURS  
Basses.  
De - puis huit - jours, Nangis  
De - puis huit jours, Nangis

The musical score is arranged in three systems. The first system features Nangis's vocal line (treble clef) and the vocal parts for Tenors, Seigneurs, and Basses (treble and bass clefs). The piano accompaniment is shown in grand staff notation. The second system continues the vocal lines for Liancourt, Villequier, and Caylus, with the piano accompaniment. The third system shows the vocal lines for the Tenors, Seigneurs, and Basses, and the piano accompaniment. Dynamics include *f*, *mf*, *dim.*, *p*, *sf*, and *dolce.*

harmonies obliquely mimic a Renaissance style that accords with the sixteenth-century setting, the fastidious four-part writing reflects the “elevated” status of the noble retinue, and the triple meter alludes to the minuet, a dance strongly associated with the aristocracy of the French *ancien régime* (but also with simple tonal harmony and melody-dominated homophony!). This playful mixture of codes, together with the modally ambiguous C “tonality” and the abrupt mediant slip into E Major (returning to the key of the *prélude*) for an “authentic” V—I cadence at the end of each of the two opening phrases already signal the potential for play.

The bustling sequence that follows is associated with the Lords’ gaming (mm. 9-14). The modal cadence to E Major at measures 17-18—again shifting abruptly to E from a key centered on C—is associated with the throwing of the dice. Caylus throws first, wins, and then accepts a double-or-nothing challenge. This “gambling cadence” progression is heard again, but *backwards* (m. 29 and m. 30) as the Lords pick up their dice, “rewinding” their actions as it were, and prepare to throw again. At this point pages (in trouser) and onlooking Lords pipe in for a breezy chorus marked “très leger” that hints at a waltz and reflects the inebriated state of the involved characters. The style of this section is clearly incompatible with the pseudo-elegance of the preceding exchange, but the descent into burlesque is even more explicit in the following passage. Here, the quintessential “Je suis...” *bouffe* lyrics prompt an overtly *bouffe* style (a schmaltzy *boulevardier* melody over “instrumental” staccato male chorus accompanied by precious harp arpeggios; see Example 4.9b).

Henri’s character is introduced in a short solo (Maugiron, “Hélas! Au Duc d’Anjou”) and it is here that we learn that Henri and his entourage are under orders of Henri’s mother. The music from the beginning of the scene is heard again, providing a structural frame: the “gambling cadence” (this is now heard first), the ironic minuet progression, the “gaming bustle”

continuation, the “rewind” figure, and the waltz-like chorus all return. At this point, Nangis enters, and the music appropriately changes harmony and style. But Nangis’s introduction is interrupted as the Lords resume their gaming (Example 4.9c), dramatically inappropriate and surely improper as courtly etiquette, the return of the “framing music” (m. 131) is expected in a traditional *opéra comique introduction*. The interruption is a parenthetical wink at the dogmatic compliance with the codes of “*vieuxjeuserie*” that Chabrier repeatedly disparaged in his correspondence.

An automatically executed structural frame, a gaming cadence with a rewind function, instrumental (read: non-human) use of voice, and an effective tonal force field between the centers of C Major and E major amount to a systematic frustration of expectations on the broadest scale. These “play signals” all share a mechanical quality. An important commonality in the musical aesthetics of Chabrier and Ravel, the mechanical is the very essence of Chabrier’s “modal phrase,” neatly subsumed in the recurring minuet melody.<sup>308</sup>

#### • Humorous Exotic Tropes as Generic Play

Also introduced in the opening scene is the opera’s rich interplay of exoticisms.<sup>309</sup> The ethnically variegated *dramatis personae* and their associations also contribute to Chabrier’s ludic *bouleversement* of genre. Considering the opera’s governing narrative—Frenchman in Poland desperately seeks repatriation—it is not surprising that the joke played for the most mileage in

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<sup>308</sup> The mechanical concept is central to Henri Bergson’s theory of humour, which postulates that laughter results from the perception of “something mechanical encrusted on the living.” Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (New York: MacMillan 1911), 18. Bergson first published this essay in a series of three articles in the *Revue de Paris* in 1899. In “Laughter: In Ravel’s Time,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 18 (2006), 225-246, Steven Huebner considers parallels between Bergson’s theory and the musical aesthetic of Ravel’s *L’Heure espagnole* to explore the perceived coldness of affect in Ravel’s *comédie musicale*.

<sup>309</sup> On the variety and prevalence of exotic themes in mid-century *opéra comique* see Hervé Lacombe, “The Writing of Exoticism in the Libretti of the Opéra-Comique, 1825-1862,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 11 (1999), 135-158.

this opera is the unflattering comparison of Poland to France.<sup>310</sup> In the Act 1 *introduction*, a chorus of French courtiers remarks how quaint is the scene of dice and aristocratic banter, so utterly French that it supports a delusion of being at the Louvre. In the *rondeau* that follows, Nangis shudders at the snowy sights of Krakow and the frigid plight of the gray-haired locals. Polyrhythms, shifting meters, irregular phraseology, suspended second-inversion chords, and a tripping melodic line illustrate the clumsy tenor slipping about in the forbidding landscape. Polish soldiers appear, willing and keen to serve—a disposition not typical of the “uncivilized” masses in nineteenth-century opera (think of the Brahmin leader Nilakantha, representative of his people, in *Lakmé*, or, on the *grand opéra* side of things, Sélika’s people who systematically execute foreigners in *L’Africaine*). The soldiers’ entry is preceded by a lengthy instrumental introduction bearing many “crude” features that Chabrier associates with the local populace. Repetition of truncated phrases, sudden leaps, offbeat accents, awkward ornaments, and modal stasis parody the “Russian” style of Borodin and remind the listener of the craggy Polish “reality” behind the refinements of the aristocratic farce.

The Poland-France comparison is also the focus of the second number. In “Le Polonais est triste et grave,” Fritelli compares the cultures more directly through antecedent-consequent pairs that shift styles from crude, angular, and harsh to refined, *cantabile*, and light. Henri’s apostrophe to Belle France (#5, *entrée du Roi et romance*) is all the more compelling for playing into this carefully prepared opposition. The Polish joke might seem overstated since it is not obviously all that funny, although it does underline the sheer wretchedness of the situation and Henri’s desperation to escape his post. This brings up an important parallel that would likely not

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<sup>310</sup> Certain French-Polish hostilities seem to have characterized the historic reign of Henri of Valois as King of Poland (r. 1573-1574). See Pawel Jasienica, *The Commonwealth of Both Nations: The Silver Age*, trans. Alexander Jordan (Miami: American Institute of Polish Culture, 1987), 42-55. Of course, the nationalistic implications of the opera’s obvious French chauvinism, or mocking thereof, certainly begs further exploration.

be lost on a keen contemporary observer: Poland as locale *par excellence* of the revolutionary era rescue opera. We should recall that Luigi Cherubini, a prominent institutional figure and a major influence on French composers of the nineteenth century, set the standard for French rescue opera plots with *Lodoïska* in 1791, and followed it with *Faniska* (1806): both are set in Poland. *Le Roi* is, after all, a rescue opera, even if the characteristic dramatic details are oddly awry. Instead of a freedom-loving detainee, unjustly persecuted by the tyrannical nobility and threatened with assassination, the rescuee here is not only a nobleman, but his court at large, unwillingly dispatched by Henri's own mother and faced with a lifetime of *ennui* and unpleasant weather. The playful imitation of the identifying features of rescue opera becomes ridiculous when Henri is assigned to be his own assassin in the Act 2 finale, the dramatic and comedic highpoint of the opera.

The leader of the conspiracy is *grand palatin* Laski, a Polish courtier representing the interests of Austria. Drawing on the strong sociocultural association between the operetta waltz and late nineteenth-century Vienna, the second act begins with an extended choral waltz. Thus, the participants at Laski's ball may conspire under the cover of dance. Chabrier's revisiting of the "dance while conspiring" gimmick (already seen as a source of humour in *La Fille de Madame Angot*) reaches beyond its immediate farcical effect: it draws attention to the paradoxical appropriation of an utterly French form, the *opérette* and in particular the *opérette* waltz, as an emblem for musical Vienna. Think of the waltz-laden and hugely successful *Die Fledermaus* (1874) by Johann Strauss, not only built on French models and subject matter, but with a libretto that is essentially a translation of a play by Meilhac and Halévy, mainstays of the Parisian popular theatres.

Italian delegate Fritelli is candidly *buffo*. I have noted that in engineering a nonsensical plot twist to justify the *barcarolle* Chabrier and his team of writers were evidently willing to sacrifice elements of the “well-made drama” in order to include a pleasing musical episode. A musical parallel in this regard can be found in the puzzling appendage to Fritelli’s Act 3 *couplets*. A quotation from Berlioz’s Rákóczy March has stumped commentators past and present (#17, the quote appears after the refrain at mm. 39-42). In terms of its context, however, this quotation has *everything* to do with its source—that is, it appears out of nowhere, having virtually no dramatic purpose. The following quotation is taken from Berlioz’s preface to *La Damnation de Faust*:

Maintenant, aux observations de détail qui ont été faites sur le livret de *la Damnation de Faust*, il sera également facile de répondre.  
 Pourquoi l’auteur, dit-on, a-t-il fait aller son personnage en Hongrie?  
 Parce qu’il avait envie de faire entendre un morceau de musique instrumentale dont le thème est hongrois. Il l’avoue sincèrement. Il l’eût mené partout ailleurs, s’il eût trouvé la moindre raison musicale de la faire...<sup>311</sup>

It is not inconceivable that Chabrier too may have simply “wished to include a piece . . . on a Hungarian theme,” filling out the international landscape of *Le Roi* and delighting in the ectopia this quotation shares with its source.

An idealized France functions as more than a point of reference from which to ridicule all things Polish. Consider Henri. As far as the 1887 Opéra-Comique audience might have been concerned, Henri is the most “normal” or realistic character. He is a deep-feeling gentleman of discriminating taste; he loves his country and his mother. Ironically then, striking period colour marks his only solo as the most chronologically distant-sounding of all: the king’s prayer-like love song to his “Cher pays” (Act 1, #5), with its stately duple meter, archaic Dorian mode, *divisi*

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<sup>311</sup> “Now, it will be a simple task to address the observations made regarding the libretto of *The Damnation of Faust*./Why, you may ask, does the author send his character to Hungary?/Because he wished to include a piece of instrumental music on a Hungarian theme. He admits this readily. He would have sent him anywhere else, had he any musical reason to do so...” Hector Berlioz, *La Damnation de Faust* (Paris: Richault and Cie., n.d. [1854?]), 3.

violas (read: viols), bass drones, and staid counterpoint, together with the symmetrical eight-measure phrases arranged ABC, clearly evokes the Renaissance *pavane*. Chabrier might have felt compelled to include a *pavane* in the score simply for its popularity in the late 1880s—but is it possible that Chabrier, forever outspoken in his exasperation with fashionability, is making a more critical point by providing the most French character with “outdated” musical material?

Minka stands out in this male-dominated Eurocentric farce, though she too refuses to operate as an instrument of the hegemonic order. Featured in six of the thirteen stand-alone numbers for solo voice or duet, she is clearly the musical centerpiece of the opera. Her role is also the most sophisticated and problematic. Inconsistencies and contradictions are so prevalent that they seem systematic: she suffers what might be read as an operatic identity crisis. She operates more as an abstraction of the exoticizing process than as a lifelike character, and in the final analysis her presence might be read as a gratuitous gesture by Chabrier, fashion savvy and keen to include an exotic love interest in his assortment of clichés.<sup>312</sup>

If Henri is the unwittingly expatriated patriot, Minka is a Gypsy, the perennial Stranger Among Us and chronic outsider. Jonathan Bellman reminds us that gypsies are the most stereotyped of all cultural outsiders, and also form the subculture most willing to play up its status as Other.<sup>313</sup> With Minka, Chabrier undermines many of these cultural stereotypes. For instance, she is the most ethical and loyal character in the opera, she routinely puts her lover’s needs before her own, and is honest to a fault—not the expected Gypsy criminal or seductress. She embodies the musical inspiration associated with the Gypsy caste, as her music far exceeds that of the other characters in diversity, intimacy, virtuosity, and harmonic richness. But

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<sup>312</sup> The character Minka is carried over from the Ancelot play, though in the original play her role in the action is subsidiary and she does not become involved in a romantic relationship with Nangis.

<sup>313</sup> Jonathan Bellman, “The Hungarian Gypsies and the Poetics of Exclusion,” in *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 74-103.

ironically, these revealing musical utterances are noticeably subordinated to convention.

Numerous paradoxes in her juxtaposed *entrée* and *romance* (Act 1, numbers 3 and 4) illustrate

Example 4.10. *Le Roi malgré lui*, entrée de Minka, mm. 49-65.

MINKA. (♩ = 120)

*pp*

Ah! dans mon cœur, Douce li-queur

*Andantino*

*pp*

M. Que vos pa - ro - - - les! Je n'ai plus peur.

*f* *pp*

M. Noi-re va-peur, Au loin tu t'en - vo - - les!

*cresc.* *pp*

M. Ah! dans mon ciel, Do - ré du miel De vos pa -

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system consists of a vocal line (marked 'M.') and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: '- ro - les, Quels tourbil - lons De pa - pil - lons En ron - des'. The piano accompaniment includes dynamics 'pp' and 'pp rit.' and the instruction 'suivez.'. The second system also consists of a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: 'fol - les! NANGIS. Oh! oui, sois sans é -'. The piano accompaniment includes dynamics 'ppp', 'Allegretto.', 'f', 'dim.', and 'rit.', and the instruction 'suivez.'.

how Chabrier draws attention to the conventionality of these numbers. Two more opposite numbers could hardly be imagined. Couched in the sprawling multi-sectional *scène*, an entrance number, are two heartfelt solos that could be conceived as the two parallel arias expected upon introduction of the leading soprano (see mm. 49-64 and 111-126 of *entrée de Minka et scène*; Example 4.10 excerpts the first of these). These two brief solos are subtle and rich, and are in marked contrast to the eclectic flurry of figures and comic action that frame them. However, as can be seen in Example 4.10, Minka's heartfelt sentiment is unusually contained with phrase units restricted to only two measures. In short, there is a grandeur of sentiment circumscribed within a miniature setting. Also, the "high art" tone of the solos is ironic in light of Minka's objectification as a slave at the beginning of the scene and of her status as Gypsy. In fact it is

explicitly counter-hegemonic, as exotic protagonists, while compelling as vocalists, are typically denied the validation of high style.

Even after the *entrée*, the full scope of Minka's potential is withheld. The listener expects a large revealing solo that will contribute to the understanding of her character but Chabrier instead provides a short *romance* that contradicts this expectation and works against the aspects of her personality revealed in the previous scene. The simple *romance* is strophic, diatonic, homophonic, limited in expression and vocal range, and complete with bird metaphors: it is precisely the type of piece that was typical for secondary characters.<sup>314</sup> This plays against the association of gypsy characters with powerful vocalism, as do the pastoral connotations of the solo oboe prelude, interludes, and postlude to the *romance* (which, incidentally, does absolutely nothing to advance the plot). Even more paradoxical is the sharp contrast the *romance* offers to the solos heard in the preceding *entrée*—the *romance* is a structurally much larger piece, but the expression of sentiment is obviously restrained.

In Act 1, number 11, a sextet for female serfs is followed by Minka's *chanson tzigane*. Example 4.11a reproduces the opening recitative and the beginning of the first strophe of this showpiece, a piece that qualifies much more obviously as a specimen of musical exoticism. The ten measures of accompanied recitative are a textbook example of Gypsy colour, demonstrating the conventional slow *hallgató* style with elusive ornaments and improvisatory rhythms, shifting modal harmonies, chromatic inflections in the melody, and a mournful tone borne of deep human suffering.<sup>315</sup> Typical of Gypsy forms, the slow section is followed by a fast dance, *friss*, in

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<sup>314</sup> The *romance*, the second most prevalent type of strophic-with-refrain piece in the nineteenth-century repertory, is characterized by its simple melody with figural accompaniment, generally syllabic text setting, diatonic harmony, and sentimental subject matter. A shift from minor to major mode at the refrain is not uncommon.

<sup>315</sup> On the musical characteristics of “Gypsy style,” or *style hongrois*, see Bellman, 81-95.

*csárdás* rhythm (short-long-short in simple duple). Note the raised fourth degree of the Gypsy scale in the allegro.

Example 4.11a. *Le Roi malgré lui, chanson tzigane*, mm. 1-27.

*espressivo.* *rall.*

Il est un vieux chant de Bo-hème, Par des Tziganes ap-porté.

*p* *suivez.*

Ped

[m. 4] *più f sf*

-té, Chant d'amour - chant de li-ber.

*sf* *mf* *dim.*

*dim.* *pp* *ppp*

-té, Qui fait es-pé-rer quand on ai-me!

*p* *pp* *pp*



Example 4.11b. *Le Roi malgré lui*, chanson tzigane, mm. 132-183.[m. 132] 1<sup>o</sup> Tempo.

m. 132-136  
 p  
 Oui, c'est un vieux chant de Bo - hê - me — Par des Tziga - nes ap - por -  
 ppp  
 Ped

m. 137-141  
 f  
 Chant d'amour, chant de li - ber -  
 - té —  
 f  
 dim.

[m. 137]

m. 142-146  
 pp  
 - té, — Qui fait es - pe - rer — quand on ai -  
 ppp

m. 147-151  
 (voix de NANGIS du dehors) NANGIS. f  
 - me! Huit  
 All<sup>o</sup> mod<sup>o</sup>  
 pp

[m. 143]

X  
- jours à Craco - vi - e, Ce ne fut pas long - temps Mais

*pp*

MINKA *mf*  
É - cou - tez

N  
dans ce peu d'ins - tants J'ai vu s'ouvrir ma

[m. 150]

M  
c'est lui! Par.tez!

N  
vie A l'é - ter - nel prin - temps.

**Più vivo.**

M  
ma joie est fol - le! Tout est bien pré - pa -

**Più vivo.** *mf*

[m. 157]

*f*

re, Ter-mi - né; Au-près de lui, moi je m'en - vo - le!

1<sup>re</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> GROUPES.

*f* En

*cresc.*

vain la - mour est ar - rê - té, Il sait tou - jours se mettre en -

[m. 167]

li - ber - té, Tou - jours, tou - jours Il sait se

*f* *f* *f* *f*

MINKA. *p* *tr* *tr* *tr* *f*

Ah!

mettre en li - ber - té, Ah!

*f* *f* *cresc.* *molto.*

[m. 176]

*appassionato.*

*p*

Ah! Ah!

*pp*

C'est l'a-mour qui pas-se, C'est l'amour qui passe, Par-courant

*très léger.*

*pp*

C'est l'a-mour qui pas-se, C'est l'amour qui passe, C'est l'amour c'est l'a-

*pp* *f* *f* *sempre pp*

Li-bre et grand Tout l'es-pa-ce!

-mour, c'est l'amour, c'est l'a-mour, c'est l'amour, c'est l'a-mour, c'est l'a-

After a reprise of the mournful recitative Nangis is heard outside (m. 143ff., see Example 4.11b). Exemplifying the composer's eclecticism as her character does, Minka steps out of her role as Gypsy storyteller and her anticipation begins to overwhelm her. The ensemble for serfs that opened the number is briefly recalled, now densely chromatic as it depicts the young girls as too excited to make real harmony, and Minka surrenders to ecstatic operatic vocalises. The sharp juxtaposition of heartfelt wisdom and dehumanizing coloratura creates ironic distance that highlights Minka's awareness of her Gypsy role and her ability to shift in and out of the stereotypes at will. "The Gypsy Weeps—the Gypsy Exults."

This discourse of seemingly systematic inconsistency leaves the audience wondering who this character really is, and puzzled by the fact that while Chabrier devotes so much stage-time and musical diversity to Minka's role, he is able to withhold any true semblance of human emotion. As she navigates a landscape of musical clichés we never know where the real Minka is. The intersection of many styles and Chabrier's ironizing use of tired operatic formulas are distilled in the role of Minka but are operating in the opera at large. Ultimately, Minka serves as a microcosm in an opera that can be read as a playful deconstruction of discourses germane to nineteenth-century French opera.

#### • Intertextuality as Generic Play

A wealth of musical references underscores the dialogue with French operatic procedures, particularly those of *opéra comique*. Allusions are so abundant that the piece almost appears saturated. The title itself, serendipitously perhaps, conflates those of Gounod's *Le Médecin malgré lui* (1858) and Delibes's *Le Roi l'a dit* (1873), two well-known works by successful composers in the repertory of the Opéra-Comique in the 1880s.<sup>316</sup> The direct

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<sup>316</sup> Like *Le Roi*, Delibes's *opéra comique* has been identified as somewhat atypical for the period in its overt use of conventional structures and generic procedures. Speare, "The Transformation of *opéra comique*," 305. Gounod's

quotation of the melody from Berlioz's Rákóczy March has already been cited. Danièle Pistone privileges evocations of Berlioz in her reading of the opera: she identifies allusions to the "Villanelle" from *Les Nuits d'été* in Minka's *romance* (#4), to the *nocturne* from *Béatrice et Bénédicte* in the sextet of female serfs, and to moments of *Benvenuto Cellini* in the Act 2 *choeur dansé* (#9).<sup>317</sup> She also hears a precedent to Minka's *romance* in the "Chronique de la Gazette de Hollande" from Offenbach's *Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein*, a very successful *opéra bouffe* that, like *Le Roi*, humorously transforms the *bénédiction des poignards* from Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* (see the *chant des rémouleurs* in the third act of *Grande Duchesse*). Other parallels with Meyerbeer's *opéra* include the 1570s setting, the Valois presence, and Catherine de Médicis's looming influence, not to mention that the lead tenor in both operas is named Nangis and both operas are based loosely on closely-related historical events.<sup>318</sup>

In addition to this, Nangis's effusive *ariosos* in the *entrée de Minka* allude to Gerald's vocal style in Delibes's *Lakmé* (see Examples 4.12a and 4.12b), while a reference to Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*—in the *barcarolle*, which is analyzed below—is embedded in a intertextual complex that also includes allusions to Wagner and to *Don Giovanni*'s Elvira.<sup>319</sup> Bizet's *Carmen* is suggested as a model for Minka, as the "l'amour" invocations that head the

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*Médecin malgré lui* shares with *Le Roi* a mixture of farcical episodes and sentimental scenes, the use of sophisticated harmony, archaic touches, and the inclusion of conventional musical types that lack dramatic justification. Steven Huebner, *Operas of Charles Gounod* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 175-179.

<sup>317</sup> Danièle Pistone, "Emmanuel Chabrier, Opera Composer," *Opera Quarterly* 12 (1996), 20.

<sup>318</sup> Most of these similarities have been commented upon in the literature. As Huebner points out, "Catherine de Médicis looms as an unseen presence in both operas: Meyerbeer's conspiracy delineates the exercise of her political will, Chabrier's its undoing. Both conspiracy numbers are in E major and end with a long pedal point that explodes into a reprise of the main strain. Meyerbeer's conspirators sing of 'Dieu le veut, Dieu l'ordonne' (God wills it, God orders it), and Chabrier's also invoke a higher calling (and also in the main strain) 'Par l'évangile et Notre Dame... Jurez-vous d'obéir à nos lois?' (By the Gospel and Our Eady... Do you swear to obey our laws?). Nevers bitterly opposes the murderous plot in *Les Huguenots*, breaking his sword to produce one of the moments of high drama in that work. Fritelli, his ridiculous counterpart in *Le Roi malgré lui*, opposes the kidnapping plans in a characteristically misguided effort to please the king." Huebner, *French Opera*, 296. See also *Le Figaro*, 19 May 1887.

<sup>319</sup> Example 4.12b is taken from Léo Delibes, *Lakmé: opéra en 3 actes* (Paris: Heugel, [1883]).

Exemple 4.12a. *Le Roi malgré lui*, entrée de Minka, mm. 63-69.

*ppp* **Allegretto.**

M fol - - les! -  
NANGIS.

*rit.*

**Allegretto.** Oh! oui, - sois sans é -  
*sf* *dim.* *suivez.*

**Moderato.** *espress.*  
-moi, - Que ton front ray - on - ne! - Ne crains rien, mi -  
**Moderato.** *pp*

MINKA. *pp* *rit.* *pp* <sup>3</sup>  
Après de vous, - plus d'ef -  
-gnon - ne, - <sup>3</sup>Après - de moi! -  
*suivez.*

Example 4.12b. *Lakmé*, from Act I duo, “D’où viens-tu?” mm. 28-33.

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system features a vocal line for 'L.' (Lakmé) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with the lyrics 'fil - le des Dieux!' and is marked 'rall.'. The piano accompaniment includes a 'p' dynamic marking and a 'suivez.' instruction. The second system features a vocal line for 'G.' (Gérald) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with the lyrics 'Ou - bli - er que je t'ai' and is marked 'a Tempo.' and 'avec chaleur'. The piano accompaniment includes a 'p' dynamic marking and a 'Ped.' instruction with an asterisk. The score is written in a key signature of two flats and a 3/4 time signature.

*chanson tzigane* evoke Bizet’s gypsy with particular aptness (compare Examples 4.13a and 4.13b, from “L’amour est un oiseau rebelle”) and the two gypsies share a seductive appeal to their good Frenchmen. However, Minka’s redeeming sincerity and “naïveté,” as well as her role’s appropriation of diverse musical styles, and her larger-than-life domination of the musical discourse all recommend Massenet’s *Manon* as another viable model. Not to mention that her name is something of an Eastern European diminutive of Massenet’s *ingénue*.



mour! \_\_\_\_\_ l'a - - mour! \_\_\_\_\_  
 love! \_\_\_\_\_ oh love! \_\_\_\_\_  
 ser, Et c'est bien en vain qu'on l'ap - pel - le Sil lui con -  
 tame, And in vain is all woo - ing mild If he re -  
 ser, Et c'est bien en vain qu'on l'ap - pel - le Sil lui con -  
 tame, And in vain is all woo - ing mild If he re -

Other writers identify further sources. Roger Delage hears an allusion to the second act of *Die Meistersinger* in the fugue of *Le Roi*, he suggests that the soldiers's chorus is an adaptation of that of *Faust*, that the *nocturne* was possibly modeled after Héro and Ursule's *duo* in *Béatrice et Bénédicte*, and that the *chanson française* connects with the spirit of Janequin.<sup>320</sup> Louis de Fourcaud, critic for *Le Gaulois*, reported Fritelli's *couplets* "Je suis du pays des gondoles" as a humorous reworking of Carmen's *Habanera*,<sup>321</sup> and Henri Moreno of *Le Ménestrel* identifies a dramatic parallel between the conspirators' waltz and that of Lecocq's *Le Fille de Madame Angot* and a musical one in the serf's sextet and Berlioz's Queen Mab *scherzo* from *Roméo et Juliette*.<sup>322</sup> In correspondence with his librettists, Chabrier himself speaks to this intertextual dimension, specifically suggesting the "Magali duet" from Gounod's *Mireille* as the model for portions of the Act 3 *duo*.<sup>323</sup>

The sheer abundance of musical reference and allusion is provocative, and poses a direct challenge to the interpreter. Much like the structural tinkering in the opening scene that signaled

<sup>320</sup> Delage, *Emmanuel Chabrier*, 389-398.

<sup>321</sup> *Le Gaulois*, 19 May 1887.

<sup>322</sup> *Le Ménestrel*, 22 May 1887.

<sup>323</sup> Letter to Najac, dated by the editors to 20 July 1886, in Chabrier, *Correspondance*, 369-370.

“play,” the pervasive intertextual gesturing, even if the individual allusions are not always humorous in themselves, repeatedly provokes ironic detachment. Moreover, these allusions all point to musical works that were well-known in the second half of the nineteenth century, which, together with the near saturation of operatic clichés (number types, character types, dramatic interactions, conservative structural formulas, exotic tropes), supports the idea that *Le Roi* is, above all, an “opera about opera.”<sup>324</sup>

### **Humorous Discourses in the Music of *Le Roi malgré lui***

The survey provided to this point suggests that the musical humour in *Le Roi malgré lui* is variegated and multileveled. To even more fully understand the scope and complexity of the opera’s humour dynamics it is useful to apply select concepts developed for the analysis of verbal humour. It is generally agreed that the perception of an incongruity is a necessary but not sufficient condition for humorous amusement. As such, the most effective and extensively developed modern theories of humour are based on the premise of incongruity. Employing frame theory of human cognition, William O. Beeman describes the basic incongruity theory as follows:

A communicative actor presents a message or other content material and contextualizes it within a cognitive “frame.” The actor constructs the frame through narration, visual representation, or enactment. He or she then suddenly pulls this frame aside, revealing one or more additional cognitive frames which audience members are shown as possible contextualizations or reframings of the original content material. The tension between the original framing and the

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<sup>324</sup> This meta-theatrical element of *Le Roi* is an important point of contact with that other eclectic and highly referential work from the 1880s, which also clearly connects to the *opéra comique* tradition: Offenbach’s *Les Contes d’Hoffmann*. In her book *Mad Loves: Women and Music in Offenbach’s Les Contes d’Hoffmann* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), Heather Hadlock points to many of these characteristics of the piece and rightly indicates that these devices in *Contes* work together to reinforce “fantastical” Romantic aspects associated with “Hoffmanisme,” which is quite distinct from the humorous impulse that drives *Le Roi*. See Hadlock, *Mad Loves*, chap. 1.

sudden reframing results in an emotional release recognizable as the enjoyment response we see as smiles, amusement, and laughter.<sup>325</sup>

Apposite to much of the humour in Chabrier's comic operas is Neal R. Norrick's suggestion that the "richness of the fit" between the first interpretive frame and the additional frame or frames is directly proportional to the "funniness of the structure."<sup>326</sup> He conceives of this fit as existing on a higher level: "the idea of higher-level schema fit, in combination with lower-level schema conflict, lends substance to the traditional definition of humor as 'sense in nonsense' or 'method in madness.'"<sup>327</sup> This simple concept is helpful in elucidating the mechanisms of many musical jokes.

The majority of the framings and reframings in Chabrier's operas play on text-music interactions or on conventional expectations of structure or genre. An example drawn from the first scene gambling episode demonstrates how the simple surface-level musical technique of word-painting can effect a complex humour dynamic that activates a series of higher-level associations. In Example 4.14 Courtier Maugiron is concluding a short solo that explains the court's mission to prevent Henri's abdication: "c'est l'ordre de sa mère!" (by order of his mother). The text creates a conflict with the initial frame, whereby the audience's default assumption that the new king would possess a certain autonomy, authority, and agency is shown to be incorrect. The officious matriarch, whom we know to be Catherine de Médicis, is simultaneously caricatured in music, her commanding sternness isolated for exaggeration.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> William O. Beeman, "Humor," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9 (1999), 103-106. John Morreall argues persuasively against the traditional classification of humour as an emotion or an emotional response used in this definition. Morreall, *Comic Relief*, 28-33.

<sup>326</sup> Neal R. Norrick, "A Frame-theoretical Analysis of Verbal Humor: Bisociation as Schema Conflict," *Semiotica* 60 (1986), 225-245.

<sup>327</sup> Norrick explains, "frame theory expresses human knowledge in schemas. It represents these schemas as arrays of relations between variables that stand for agents, objects, instruments etc." *Ibid.*, 229-230.

<sup>328</sup> Catherine de Médicis is named only once in the opera. This occurs in a *parlé* passage, spoken by Fritelli, between numbers 1 and 2.



Maugiron's elongated trill is agogically and registrally accented and is also highlighted by a deviation from the regularized 2 + 2 subphrase groupings.<sup>329</sup> The joke is designed to stand out with respect to its musical context, as one would reasonably expect of a blatantly humorous disjunction such as this. But here the reference to Henri's mother, forcibly interrupting and dominating the musical discourse as it does, parallels queen mother's control over her royal son's lifestyle (another "higher-level fit").

The humorous characterization is a well-timed and pithy instance of old-fashioned word-painting. The undulating visual pattern evoked by the neighbour-tone pitch oscillation supplements the humour with the suggestion of a furrowed brow—a unique sort of text-music relationship that is also not without precedent. To this, Chabrier adds a layer that is not solicited by the text. The trivial bouncing figure high above in the music-box register caricatures her royal son as a puppet: ridiculous, emasculated, and powerless. This single measure humorously characterizes Henri, his mother, and their relationship. The fact that said mother is one Catherine de Médicis enhances the humour and adds an intertextual aspect to the encounter (yet another "upper-level fit")—she was *in absentia* puppet master of *Les Huguenots* as well. Moreover, the preexisting nonnegotiable condition that this succinct musical gesture encapsulates is the dramatic "germ" of the opera, the very problem motivating the entire drama. Like much of the musical humour in *Le Roi*, this joke is hyperdetermined: it activates numerous sources of humour simultaneously.<sup>330</sup> Remarkably, without knowledge of the text and its subtext the entire gesture

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<sup>329</sup> The preceding subphrase broke on an accented e' pitch, a perfect eleventh higher than the decorated low B. This is the lowest note in the sixteen-measure solo whose melodic pitch content is focused rather tightly around a center a full octave higher.

<sup>330</sup> Salvatore Attardo distinguishes between two types of hyperdetermined humour: "the presence of several active sources of humor [is to be labeled] *textual hyperdetermination*, while we will use the label of *punctual hyperdetermination* for the case in which one source of humor works at different 'levels.'" Salvatore Attardo, *Humorous Texts: A Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2001), 100.

could almost pass unnoticed for a generic authentic cadence—only the registral disparity and unique orchestration (staccato solo flute over low register baritone trill) would warrant pause.

Example 4.15. *Le Roi malgré lui, rondeau à deux voix*, mm. 1-7.

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with the following parts from top to bottom:

- Flûtes.** (Flutes)
- Hautbois.** (Oboes)
- Clarinettes en LA.** (Clarinets in B-flat)
- Bassons.** (Bassoons)
- Cors en RÉ.** (Trumpets in D)
- Cors en FA.** (Trumpets in F)
- Pistons en UT.** (Horns in C)
- Trombones.** (Trombones)
- Timbales RÉ-SOL.** (Timpani in D-G)
- Grosse Caisse et Cymbales.** (Snare drum and cymbals)
- Triangle.** (Triangle)
- ALEXINA.** (Vocal soloist)
- FRATELLI.** (Vocal soloist)
- Violons.** (Violins)
- Altos.** (Violas)
- Violoncelles.** (Violoncelles)
- C. Basses.** (Double basses)

The score is in 3/4 time and G major. It begins with the tempo marking **All<sup>o</sup> con moto.** (♩ = 152). A section marked **A** begins at measure 4, where the tempo changes to **a Tempo.** The vocal soloists enter in measure 4 with the lyrics: "Ah! d'a-mour, plus un mot. En ce jour, il n-". The score includes various performance instructions such as *pizz.* (pizzicato), *dimin.* (diminuendo), *col. canto.* (colla parte), and *arco.* (arco).

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In this example, a generic cadential gesture becomes lexically packed largely by virtue of its context. A very simple musical technique activates a series of inferences each adding a new dimension to the humour. The following example likewise uses simple musical means to offer a satirical musical portrait and succinctly creates multiple incongruities with a variety of upper-level “fits.” The instrumental introduction to the *rondeau à deux* depicts the movement and momentum of a human character rushing onto the stage (see Example 4.15). The full stop at the end of the third measure is unexpected and unjustified from a purely musical point of view. This does not create a conflict or incongruity, per se, but Chabrier draws attention to the interruption by the uniformity of the initial gesture with its unchanging rhythm, interval pattern, direction, orchestration (pizzicato strings throughout), and articulation. The sudden cessation does conflict with the portrait of a character in full bustle, but this is not so much humorous as it is unexplained. But at the precise moment that the ascending pizzicato scale stops, the oboe sounds an octave below and is carried through the *caesura*. It is only when Alexina “tunes in” to the oboe’s sustained pitch and resumes the quick tempo of the opening (marked *scherzando* in the first edition of the vocal score)<sup>331</sup> that the humour of the situation is realized. Alexina’s “tune up” justifies the unexplained full stop and this event sets up its own conflict-resolution dynamic.

The punch line here requires a certain cultural competency—if one does not instantly recognize the shrill tone of the solo oboe as orienting beacon *par excellence*, the hilarity of the instance will be missed.<sup>332</sup> This joke is remarkable for a number of reasons: it requires specific orchestration for its effect, it does not rely on codified musical patterns or on musical borrowing,

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<sup>331</sup> In the second version of the published vocal score the tempo marking at the vocal entry has been changed to *con moto*.

<sup>332</sup> Geoffrey Burgess surveys French documentary evidence of the nineteenth-century oboist as “custodian of orchestral pitch” and indicates that the practice of the oboist establishing pitch was securely in place by the mid-nineteenth century. Geoffrey Burgess, *“The Premier Oboist of Europe”: A Portrait of Gustave Vogt* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2003), 48-52. I would like to thank Beth Orson for directing me to this study.

and it is contained exclusively in the music, that is, it is entirely unsolicited by the text. Perhaps most uniquely, its reference is external to the world of musical expression, pointing instead to real world performance practice and drawing attention to the performer and her instrument. The character Alexina switches off, the performer steps out of her role and briefly shifts her focus to an external frame of reference, and then readily reengages without missing a beat. Not coincidentally, I suspect, Cécile Mézeray, who created the role of Alexina, was known to be the weak link in the cast and had given Chabrier considerable trouble in rehearsal.<sup>333</sup> This enriches the humorous effect, adding another level to the caricature, but the real target is the character Alexina who again, by unusual elliptical and circular means, is characterized as an externally-regulated loose cannon. Only the vainglorious Duchess would dare to overtly violate the audience's suspension of disbelief, not to mention that her little "refresher" speaks directly to the artificiality of her histrionic comings and goings. The succinct disjunction of this "tune-up," like the "Henri and His Mother" cadential gambit, is almost generic enough to pass unperceived but once the humour mechanisms are identified it is easy to recognize the sophistication of the inferences involved.

The pseudo-Baroque recitative ("Rien n'est aussi près de la haine;" see Example 4.7) has already been singled out for the paradoxical structural contrast it offers to the loosely-constructed song it prepares. This example introduces another type of musical humour in *Le Roi*, one involving the frustration of generic or syntactical expectations. These instances tend to be easier to analyze because the mechanisms are restricted to conventional structural elements that are easily identifiable and for which music theory has developed very effective analytical concepts

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<sup>333</sup> Delage, *Emmanuel Chabrier*, 385-386, and 408.

and terminology. The classical “deceptive cadence” is often cited as a kind of archetype.<sup>334</sup> This recitative is rather more complicated, with various conflicting schemas that in their resolution, like the preceding example, also provide an indirect character portrait. The comic bassoon solo (a codified musical joke) that introduces the recitative reminds us that the overblown seriousness to follow is in jest. Its comic idiom conflicts with the recitative style, but not its spirit. As already stated, the style and syntax of Alexina’s lines establish the style of French Baroque recitative as the first interpretive frame: slow, declamatory, alternating meter, simple *basso continuo*-like accompaniment. Several features nevertheless conflict with the code: it is in a regularized form (AABC) associated with song or *couplets* rather than the expected flexible through-composed format, the traditional alexandrines (6 + 6 syllables) are replaced with thirteen-syllable lines (9 + 4) that have been associated with satirical poetry,<sup>335</sup> instead of a dignified *air* it introduces comic *couplets*, and the most frivolous and bantering of the score at that. Such *couplets* would traditionally not be attached to a recitative at all. The “sense in nonsense” here again rests with Alexina’s character—the Duchess’s rare display of propriety and elegance is not only uncharacteristic and generically confused, it is plainly ectopic. Her attempted dignified pose merely highlights her obvious limitations. The surface-level conflict fits again on an intertextual level: Chabrier is caricaturing the “elevated” declamations and the pretense of seriousness in contemporary French “light” opera.

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<sup>334</sup> The deceptive cadence is often referred to as a “musical pun,” though the mechanism is not actually the required polysemy or homophony of a true pun. See, for example, Peter Kay, “Music and Humor: What’s So Funny?,” *Music Reference Services Quarterly* 10 (2007), 37-53.

<sup>335</sup> See, Gordon A. Anderson and Thomas B. Payne, “Goliards,” in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/11402> (accessed April 7, 2011) and David Wulstan, “Goliardic Rhythm with Special Reference to the Play of Daniel, the Dublin Sepulchre Drama, and the Carmina Burana,” *Peritia* 8 (1994), 180-215. Incidentally, Emily Klenin discusses the widespread use of thirteen syllable lines in Polish and Russian verse in Klenin, “Musicality in Russian and Polish Verse: Fet’s Trochaic Tetrameter and Related Problems of Syllabotonic Versification,” in *American Contributions to the Tenth International Congress of Slavists*, ed. Alexander M. Schenker (Columbus: Slavica, 1988), 219-239.

While these three examples achieve disjunction and cognitive reframing through different methods, all three are immediately perceived as humorous. Each presents the listener with a localized provocation on the musical surface. These instances might each be considered a joke, which Beeman defines as “a humorous narrative with the dénouement embodied in a punch line.”<sup>336</sup> Such jokes are abundant in *Le Roi*, and much of the musical humour in Chabrier’s *bouffe* operas is of this type. The two most common mechanisms are the timely combination of incongruous styles and caricature (either of a model hypotext or of a character). In *Le Roi*, however, localized surface jests are but one facet of the musical humour. A second aspect of the humorous discourse in the opera has to do with the much more complex matter of “longer texts.”

Salvatore Attardo’s study *Humorous Texts* proposes a methodology for analyzing how “narrative texts longer than jokes function as humorous texts.”<sup>337</sup> In contrast to the previous application of linguistic methodology to the study of humour, particularly the seminal Semantic Script Theory of Humor (ubiquitously known as SSTH) and the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH), which depend fundamentally on the mechanisms of verbal semantics, many of the aspects explored in *Humorous Texts* are directly applicable to music.<sup>338</sup> Central to the theory is the insistence that “punch lines” are disrupting elements of a humorous text, “discrete disjunctors,” and that they occur exclusively in the final position of individual narrative segments. A humorous text will have only a single punch line, whereas “jab lines” are “humorous elements fully integrated in the narrative in which they appear (i.e., they do not

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<sup>336</sup> Beeman, 104.

<sup>337</sup> Attardo, viii.

<sup>338</sup> Victor Raskin, *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985); Salvatore Attardo and Victor Raskin, “Script Theory Revis(it)ed: Joke Similarity and Joke Representation Model,” *Humor* 4 (1991), 293-347. Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of these theories.

disrupt the flow of the narrative, because they either are indispensable to the development of the ‘plot’ or of the text, or they are not antagonistic to it).”<sup>339</sup>

Appreciating the humour of the *duo-barcarolle* requires the understanding that, like the “longer” texts that Attardo analyzes, rather than a single punch line that triggers release, the humorous discourse is structured around a series of “jab lines.” Local level triggers are concentrated in the lengthy opening recitative dialogue; the *barcarolle* proper offers the final release and serves as a liquidation of the various unresolved musical and dramatic tensions mounted in the opening sections.

The scene opens with Alexina at her Donna Elvira best—the stomping orchestral dissonances flailing erratically between registral extremes depicts the physicality of her tantrum (Example 4.16a). “Je vous hais! Je vous hais! Je vous hais!” is mere tautology. The humour of this demonstration is produced through caricature (it is not a narrative segment ending in a punchline). Alexina’s anger is depicted in caricatural proportions; this is humorous because unhinged theatricality has come to be expected of this character (if Henri were to behave like this, the result would not be as humorous, or might not be humorous at all, for such a tantrum would quite seriously through his sanity into question). However, this particular “upper-level fit” is not that “rich” and the humour would not be as satisfying were it not supplemented by a more rewarding structural fit: for all its surface instability, Alexina’s outburst is innocuously contained in a neat ternary form (read: the threat is more apparent than real).

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<sup>339</sup> Attardo, 82-83, and 103.

Example 4.16a. *Le Roi malgré lui*, duo-barcarolle, mm. 1-29.

**N° 12.**  
**Con moto.**

ALEXINA. *f* Oui! — je vous hais! — je vous hais! — je vous

HENRI.

PIANO. *f*

[m. 4]

A. *f* hais! — je vous hais! — Car pour jou -

A. *f* ets, Pre nant à l'a me Ses vœux de

A. *f* flam - me! O faux a - mants

*p* *crise.*

*marcato*

A.

Tous vos serments — Fleurs de nos son - ges,

*p* *espress.*

[m. 13]

A.

Sont des men - son - ges. — Oui — puisqu'à vous — mes vœux, mes

*sf*

A.

son - ges Sont des jou - ets — Je vous hais! — je vous hais! — je vous

*sf*

[m. 19]

A.

hais! — je vous hais! — Oui je vous hais! —

HENRI.

*espress.*

*sf* *dolce.* *p*

[m. 22]

H. *croy - ez vous ca - pa - - - - - ble*

H. *De tromper, de men - tir? J'ai*

[m. 26]

H. *l'air d'être un cou - pa - ble, Mais je*

ALEXINA. *Non! non!*

H. *suis un mar - tyr!*

Example 4.16b. *Le Roi malgré lui*, duo-barcarolle, mm. 38-56.

[m. 38]

*p espress.*

*Même mouvt!*

*ppp*

*ppp*

u. Au\_rais-je é-té ca - pa - - ble, Vous si bel\_

*dimin.*

*pp*

*presséz.*

u. - le, de vous tra\_hir? Je ne fus pas cou - pa - ble... Je

[m. 48]

*cresc.*

*mf*

*f*

u. suis à vos ge - noux! Rap-pe-lez - vous ! rap-pe-lons -

*cresc*

*cresc. sempre.*

*mf*

u. - nous !

*ppp*

Henri's response (beginning m. 22) illustrates his more refined, egalitarian approach to courtship. Psychological *rapprochement* is effected by his appropriation of the melody with which Alexina expressed her grievances. Now *dolce, piano*, and with stable Alberti accompaniment, he attempts to soothe the beast on her own terms. Henri's strategy is also a caricature: it is suave and sensitive, perhaps, but also manifestly naive and not likely to succeed. Henri's vocal line soon achieves independence and flexibility, which introduces a semblance of success, but syncopated *sforzando* protests in the orchestra illustrate Alexina's resistance to his strategy. His charm has tempered her rage somewhat for she politely waits for Henri's cadence and her response is notably less volatile, though her demeanor is not yet conducive to seduction. In a parenthetical offering, Henri attributes his abandonment of Alexina to his mother's command. (The king elect's blind compliance with his mother's orders is a recurring joke in this opera, as we have seen.) Resorting to a more persuasive tactic, Henri follows through with a conjuration of Wagnerian enchantment (mm. 38-60; Example 4.16b). The "magical" combination of iridescent orchestration, chromaticism, sequential harmonies, and musico-poetic synthesis causes Alexina's scorn to readily dissipate.

Accompanying the *barcarolle* proper is an allusion to the "slumber" *leitmotif* from the final scene of *Die Walküre*, associated with Brünnhilde's enchantment (see Examples 4.17a, m. 60ff. and 4.17b; the one-measure repeating motives each begin with a melodic leap of an ascending major sixth and then gently descend back to tonic).<sup>340</sup> The undulating melody and rocking accompaniment of Offenbach's famous *barcarolle* from *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, while somewhat generic *barcarolle* features, are adopted by Chabrier, as is its melodic distribution: the

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<sup>340</sup> On the "Schlummermotiv," see Hans von Wolzogen, *Führer durch die Musik zu Richard Wagner's Festspiel Der Ring des Nibelungen* (Leipzig: F. Reinboth, 1896), 51-53. Example 4.17b is reproduced from Richard Wagner, *Die Walküre* (Mainz: B. Schott Söhne, [1865]).

Example 4.17a. *Le Roi malgré lui*, duo-barcarolle, mm. 57-65.

*ppp* *And<sup>te</sup> non Tauto.*  
 Rap - pe - lons - nous!

*And<sup>te</sup> non Tauto.*  
*dim perdendosi.* *pp*

*dolcissimo.*  
 Quel soirs di - vins nous passions en rê - vant, Dans la gon - do - le!

*sempre pp*

Example 4.17b. *Die Walküre*, from Act III, closing scene.

*pp dolce.*

**WOTAN.**  
 Wer mei - nes

male character sings the melody in the first two phrases, the soprano then takes the melodic lead for the two final phrases of the strophe while doubled below with her partner's homorhythmic harmonies. A more specific reference to Offenbach's duet occurs in the refrain and its "ah! ah! ah!" extension. Chabrier's "ah! ah! ah!"s are so ridiculously exaggerated as to push the allusion to the point of caricature (see Examples 4.18a and 4.18b).<sup>341</sup> It is only after the Offenbach imitation is perceived that the listener can reflect back and realize the absurd cooperation of idiomatic strategies proper to Wagner and his antithesis Offenbach that was responsible for the taming of Alexina.

Example 4.18a. *Le Roi malgré lui*, duo-barcarolle, mm. 86-91.

The musical score for Example 4.18a consists of three staves. The top staff is for the Soprano (A.), the middle for the Alto (II.), and the bottom for the Piano. The key signature is B-flat major and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Ralenti.' and 'cresc. molto e allarg.'. The Soprano part begins with 'Ah!' and 'ah!' followed by 'Mon cœur'. The Alto part begins with 'Ah!' and 'ah!' followed by 'Oui mon cœur'. The Piano part provides accompaniment with a 'p' dynamic and a 'cresc. e allarg.' marking.

<sup>341</sup> Example 4.18b is drawn from Jacques Offenbach, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann: opéra fantastique en 4 actes* (Paris: Choudens, [1881]).

A *rit.* *f* se rap-pel - le Ah! ah! ah! ah!  
 II *f* se rap-pel - le Ah! ah! ah! ah!  
*f* *rit.* *poco mosso.* *mf*

Example 4.18b. *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Act III entr'acte et barcarolle, mm. 79-86.

G. ah! ah! ah!  
 N. *pp* ah! ah! ah!  
*pp* ah! ah!  
*pp* ah! ah!  
*pp* ah! ah!  
 Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \*

The image shows a musical score for a vocal duet in G major. It consists of five staves: Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), Bass (B.), and Piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are marked with *ppp* and include the lyrics "ah!". The piano part is marked with *ppp dim.* and includes "Ped." markings with asterisks. The score is set in 3/4 time and features a melodic line for the voices and a rhythmic accompaniment for the piano.

In this reading, the arrival of the *barcarolle* proper triggers release by reframing the previous strategies. In terms of humour function, the lyrical effusion of the *barcarolle* is justified as the resolution to the tensions mounted in the recitative. The *barcarolle* is not only warranted, it is required in order for the humour latent in the unlikely formula—Henri’s laughable psychological strategy is supplemented with the mysterious powers of Wagnerian enchantment and the “hate aria” dissolves into a tuneful love duet—to achieve its maximum potential. This reasoning reveals a parallel with the dramatic contrivances introduced to the plot in order to justify the inclusion of the popular number-type that has already been noted, that is, the forced inclusion of the *barcarolle* is underlined again by this complex of humorous disjunctions.

If my, admittedly intuitive, perception of the opening of the lyrical *barcarolle* as a “punch line” is correct, it is of some consequence to Attardo’s insistence that punch lines occur exclusively in the final position: “the punch line cannot be integrated into the narrative it

disrupts.”<sup>342</sup> Here, the punch line clearly overflows the boundaries of the musical and textual units of the original framing, eliding with the opening of the following segment. The same can be said of the Baroque recitative-*couplets* pair discussed as Example 4.7. Future considerations of musical humour will likely benefit from further reflection on this significant difference in narrative aspects of musical and verbal humour. Additionally, in both the *barcarolle* and the recitative-*couplets* examples the release of the tensions built in the recitative also coincide with the arrival of tonic harmony, implying, not surprisingly, an important harmonic dimension to musical humour.

The musical discourse of *Le Roi* is opportunistic and indulgent, as exemplified in the seemingly whimsical juxtaposition of disparate musical styles. While neither *bouffe* nor “serious art music” idioms form the majority of the music in the score, the two recur frequently enough, and in close enough proximity, to have prompted repeated criticism of imbalance. However, “serious-sounding music”—instances that if removed from the context of comic intrigue would sound like non-humorous and non-comic music in “high style”—do not appear in close proximity and are always contained within a single number or section. This is to say, the music of *Le Roi* never remains “serious” for long. A much more revealing observation about these ostensibly serious moments is that they are virtually all marked by irony.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Attardo, 83.

<sup>343</sup> “The art of irony,” writes D. C. Muecke, “is the art of saying something without really saying it.” D.C. Muecke, *The Compass of Irony* (London: Methuen, 1969), 5. He identifies an opposition of some sort between two levels of meaning together with an element of innocence as essential elements in all types of irony, 14-21. He explains further that “to ironize something ... is to place it, without comment, in whatever context will invalidate or correct it; to see something as ironic is to see it in such a context,” 23. Following Muecke, I consider ironic any utterance whose “face value” meaning is challenged by some aspect of its context or construction, prompting interpretation at some different level of meaning.

The exquisite music of the *nocturne*, for instance, with its consistently impressionistic sonorities and elegiac affect, directly opposes its paratextual generic schema. The conventionality communicated in the opening measures is readily challenged by incongruous features: the melody is far from the simple unadorned lines of the conventional *opéra comique romance*, the complex chromatic harmonies are likewise incongruous with the genre (of vocal *nocturne*, if not of piano nocturnes *à la Chopin*), the conventional “strophic” component is acutely problematized, and the mannered text takes as its subject bereavement, also inappropriate to the type.<sup>344</sup> The obvious “dramatic irony”—the two sopranos grieve their lost lovers whom the audience knows to be alive and well—is thus paralleled with ironic use of the *nocturne* genre. There is no surface-level “punch line” and the number would not be heard as humorous by most listeners. Irony here operates as a “diffuse” humour disjunctive, marking the text with a higher-level incongruity that nevertheless belies the “straightness” of the “serious” expression.<sup>345</sup>

The many “comic” devices in *Le Roi* (that is, pertaining to the dramatic genre of “comedy” or “comic opera”) are similarly non-serious and also contribute to an interpretive mode conducive to humour appreciation. Though they too are used to create context for humorous play without being humorous in themselves, these rhetorical devices should be distinguished from play itself because of their dissimilar expressive mode. The conventions of comic opera such as character stereotypes (Fritelli as fatuous *buffo*, Alexina as hysterical and

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<sup>344</sup> Jeffery Kallberg observes that Chopin’s Nocturne in G Minor likewise sits “on the edge of its class.” Kallberg, “The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin’s Nocturne in G Minor,” *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 11 (1988), 238-261. Like Chopin’s piano nocturne, Chabrier positions the piece firmly within its tradition (by means of title, scoring as a vocal duet, strophic form), which prompts the listener to question the many departures from generic norms. The overwhelming presence of unambiguously conventional generic characteristics in the others numbers of *Le Roi* further raises the peculiarities of the *nocturne* into relief.

<sup>345</sup> Attardo discusses irony and register humour as two significant examples of “diffuse disjunction.” Attardo, 103-125. “A diffuse disjunctive is any type of disjunctive which does not occur alone in a humorous (micro)narrative, insofar as it is unable to trigger the script-switch by its mere presence. Register humor and irony are good examples of diffuse disjunctives since the incompatibility/inappropriateness between the context and some elements of the utterance is the sole necessary and sufficient marker of humorous or ironical intention,” 103.

indignant *seconda donna*, Nangis as clueless tenor), the conventional use of dance rhythms, stock comic situations of the libretto (such as the protagonist’s apparently irresolvable initial dilemma, incognito characters, and *quiproquos*), and the use of low *bouffe* style might be more usefully considered “humour enhancers,” a concept proposed by Katrina Triezenberg.<sup>346</sup>

Consider Minka’s protracted exposé on Henri’s character in the first act *duo* (ironically delivered to Henri himself, incognito): a light comic style of music “enhances” the humorous text (“... on dit qu’il joue a la poupée,” for instance; see Example 4.19). These are generic agents of humorous texts, and they are non-ironic. They are not disruptive to the surface-level musical discourse and do not cause the script-switch or disjunction required of humour. They operate

Example 4.19. *Le Roi malgré lui*, Act 1 *duo*, mm. 93-96.

The musical score for Example 4.19 consists of two systems of music. The first system (mm. 93-94) features a vocal line for Henri and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Henri: -quets!.. Ou dit qu'il joue à la poupée, Enfant s'amuse d'un air...". The piano part includes dynamic markings like "più f", "mf", and "p". The second system (mm. 95-96) continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Un en-". The piano part includes dynamic markings like "f".

<sup>346</sup> Katrina Triezenberg, “Humor Enhancers in the Study of Humorous Literature,” *Humor* 17 (2004), 411-418.

on a different discursive level than the ironizing “play frame.” In fact, it might be argued that in *Le Roi* these non-ironic comic conventions *constitute* the surface-level discourse that repeatedly surrenders to disruption.

The humour in *Le Roi* that plays on these comic aspects is consistently non-ironic. It also largely depends on caricature, which satirically points out the inherent ridiculousness of its subject by exaggerating some characteristic feature. Examples include the comic characterization of the soldiers with alternating “barbaric Russianisms” and goofy diatonic counterpoint with wide-ranging vocal fanfares reflecting their initial crude state and their obliging domestication into French military service respectively (these two styles are first heard in #1C); the musical depiction of the hyper-vigilant patrol chorus that interrupts an already confused and protracted *finale* (8C); Fritelli’s self-defeating attempts to ingratiate himself and his perennial cynicism are deftly represented with witty musical analogues (for instance, the dragging augmented triads at “Ah! vraiment! Ah! vraiment!” in 8C); the musical depiction of Nangis in Poland’s forbidding climate (*rondeau*, 1B); the humorous contrast of Polish and French cultures in Fritelli’s *couplets* (2); the crude offbeat accented appoggiaturas and clipped melodic modules of Alexina’s vocal line in the *rondeau à deux*. The list goes on.

Virtually everything in *Le Roi* is “marked” as non-serious in some way. Even in the absence of discrete disjunction of a joke punch line, playful tinkering, comic stereotypes, ironic modes, or intertextual modeling are always close at hand. This reminds the perceptive listener that to hear *Le Roi* as a “straight” opera with moments of *bouffe* humour is to misread its signs. The musical discourse of *Le Roi* is humorous through and through.

As the characterization of Minka was proposed as a microcosm of the ironic dismantling of *opéra comique* conventions and the exoticizing tropes at work in *Le Roi*, so the *entrée de Minka et scène* might be considered a microcosm of the opera's complex of humorous mechanisms. This remarkable scene is saturated with comic antics, stylistic allusions, structural and stylistic paradoxes, harmonic play, generic ironies, and jab lines of various sorts. In short, it is "riddled" with disjunction. "Travaillée" and "ciselée" like the opera at large, the cluttered musical surface of this scene embraces an eclecticism that seems pressed to the point of absurdity. Also typical is the understatement of many of the humorous jests, as if deliberately designed to pass unperceived by all but the most astute listeners. For instance, in Nangis's first solo (Example 4.20), his ostensibly gallant and courageous offer of protection is ironized by awkward imagery and poor quality poetry, which in turn is matched by an awkwardness in the musical line (again, diffuse disjunction). We find Nangis unable to express a coherent melody or assert a strong tonic, all of his phrases are of unequal length and begin at various places in the bar, and his melody is in a different meter than the accompaniment. Furthermore, the accompaniment is borrowed from earlier in the scene.<sup>347</sup>

In the *entrée de Minka*, frames—stylistic, dramatic, syntactical—are established only to be undermined. This is perhaps most puzzling on the large structural level. Components of three different structural templates are introduced, but none is satisfactorily realized. The clear division

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<sup>347</sup> As it appears in the 1887 version of the opera, the poetry of this brief section naturally falls into two tercets according to its rhyme, scansion, and sentiment:

Va! Ne crains rien de lui,/S'il te manque un appui,/Mon bras l'offre à l'esclave./  
 Puissé-je, à te venger,/Courir quelque danger!/Vive Dieu! Je le brave.

The poem was re-written for the 1929 version. Carré's version retained the rhyme scheme (aab ccb) and the regular versification of (667 667 syllables per line), however the third and fourth lines of the 1929 poem present a continuation of sentiment "C'est toi qui te hasardes/A pénétrer ici" that is incongruous with the original text and the musical setting. Also, the attempt to render the poetry more sophisticated in the later version, does not concur with Chabrier's reading of the original poem, as he appears to be drawing attention to the very crudeness that Carré attempted to improve.

Example 4.20. *Le Roi malgré lui*, “Va! Ne crains de lui,” entrée de Minka, mm. 34-48.

**Meno mosso.** (♩. = 104)  
 NANGIS. (à MINKA) *p dolce.*

Va! ne crains rien de lui, S'il

**Meno mosso.**  
*p*

te manque un ap - pui, Mon bras l'offre à l'es - cla - ve.

*riten.*

Puissé-je, à te ven - ger, Courir quelque dan - ger!

*riten.* *p* *Pressez.* *f*  
 Ped.

**Allegro.** *f* **Andante.**

Vi - ve Dieu! je le bra - ve!

**Allegro.** **Andante.** *pp*

of the scene into two similarly designed sections that each end with an ensemble refrain suggests a simple strophic format, Minka's two contrasting solos separated by animated lyrical dialogue

hint at the *cantabile-cabalette* format common in introductory *scènes* for leading sopranos, and Nangis repeatedly tries to persuade the exchange towards love duet. I have already noted the paradox of Minka's precious solos circumscribed within miniature *mélodie*-like expressions and the reversal of this imbalance in the ensuing *romance*. Any true semblance of her character is withheld despite her expressive eloquence, a paradox that is maintained throughout the opera. In all of this, the scene draws attention to its frame, as does the opera as a whole. A great variety of superficial indulgences are entirely gratuitous, neither supported by formal structure nor dramatic action.

Nothing happens in this protracted entrance of Minka, and nothing happens in the opera as a whole. All relationships are in place before the piece begins and virtually no actions are successful at advancing the plot. The opera ends as it began: Henri is about to be crowned King of Poland. This circularity is reinforced in the music for the final scene recalls three of the most memorable melodies from the opera, sounds the inescapable whole-tone phrase, reproduces the tonal sequence from the opening of the first act, and quotes, at the final curtain, a lengthy choral passage from the *introduction*.

## 5 Conclusion

In this dissertation I have proposed reading Chabrier's comic operas as constructs "riddled" with humour-producing musical disjunctions, as indicated by the title *Riddled Constructs*. I have isolated numerous musical processes that are truly riddle-like, in that interpretation is required in order to unveil the humorous logic that justifies Chabrier's provocative artistic choices. On the other hand, there are many examples of humour that are more immediately palpable and coarsely *bouffe*, and a wide array of additional musical jokes falls in between these two extremes of intellectual wit and elemental buffoonery. My goal has not been to prove unequivocally that individual devices are meant to provoke, or warrant, a humorous response. Such a task might not even be achievable. Rather, it has been to demonstrate the variety and abundance of amusing incongruities and their persistent presence in the musical discourse of these operas. Taken collectively, the multitude of disjunctions and their clever justifications speak undeniably to the humorous impulse for which Chabrier has been celebrated.

The analyses that I have presented reveal humour mechanisms present in virtually every musical parameter and active on structural and intertextual levels. One of the most remarkable features that I have identified is the sheer abundance of incongruities that challenge, playfully or satirically, the conventional designs of these operas. Characteristic of Chabrier's style, at least in these works, is an unconventional use of convention: repeatedly, generic or conventional expectations are established and then challenged, ultimately ironized by irreconcilable aberrations. A sophisticated example is the *nocturne* from *Le Roi malgré lui*, where simple and stable harmonic patterns, regular phrase structure, and generically suitable stylistic expectations are set up in the opening phrases and each is independently undermined as the number unfolds.

In other instances the dislocation is a persistent element that is present throughout the musical discourse it disturbs. Examples include the numerous instances where an inconsistency is introduced in a single musical parameter (such as the unsuitable orchestration in the martial ostinato of the “Chanson de l’homme armé” from *Vaucochard*, the “wrong note” C# that systematically infiltrates the banal harmonic progression in the *prélude* of *Le Roi*, or the inappropriate song form of Alexina’s recitative “Rien n’est aussi près de la haine”). The “sense in nonsense,” or the “upper level logic,”<sup>348</sup> that supports and justifies these disjunctions with the script overlap required of humorous amusement likewise owes to a variety of mechanisms: reconciliations lying on the level of hypermeter, intertext, character development, dramatic irony, and even performance tradition have all been identified.

By prefacing my investigation of Chabrier’s works in the popular genres of *opérette* and *opéra bouffe* with a critical survey of mid-century developments in these genres I have identified a number of important continuities and divergences. A significant finding is that the satirical reworking of exotic tropes, the shocking subject matter, and the outrageous word play of some of Chabrier’s librettos, that of *L’Étoile* in particular, are not peculiar to Chabrier’s operas. Similar excesses are found in several of Offenbach’s works including *Ba-ta-clan*, and such antics might in fact be regarded as characteristic of the genre of Second Empire *opérette*. I have found that while Chabrier continued to employ the basic structural templates that prevailed in the works of Offenbach, Hervé, and Lecocq, his music is much more likely to demonstrate creative structural deviations. Humorous disjunctions are found abundantly in other purely musical parameters as well, including harmony, rhythm, and orchestration. These strategies do not appear to be typical of the genre and are notably more sophisticated than the examples identified in Chapter 2. With

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<sup>348</sup> These concepts, which I have used throughout my study and particularly in Chapter 4, are discussed in Neal R. Norrick, “A Frame-theoretical Analysis of Verbal Humor: Bisociation as Schema Conflict,” *Semiotica* 60 (1986), 225-245.

these purely musical devices, Chabrier supplements the humorous characterization, and the operatic parody and caricature that have been characteristic of the genres since the 1850s, thereby raising the role of humour in the musical dimension to a level more comparable with that of the text.

Examining the works chronologically has revealed certain of Chabrier's aesthetic tendencies in distinct stages of development. The primary aesthetic trajectories that I have highlighted are the increasing degrees of refinement and gratuitous excess inherent in successive works. These tendencies clearly carry through into Chabrier's comic masterpiece, the *opéra comique* *Le Roi malgré lui*. It follows from the increasing subtlety of Chabrier's mature style that the ambiguities and enigmas of *Le Roi* are often elucidated when considered against the much bolder aberrations of his youth. Precedents can be discovered even in instances where particular expression is dissimilar, as in the many rhetorically underplayed provocations of *Le Roi* that are comparable to processes found in the "Chanson de l'homme armé." This point might be of methodological interest to scholars interested in continuing research into Chabrier's music.

A proto-absurdist denial of anticipated events is a recurring theme in all of Chabrier's comic operas and it is significant that so much of the musical substance is completely unsubstantiated dramatically.<sup>349</sup> First, highly celebrated non-events are central to each work: the ceremonial presentation of the absconded princess in *L'Étoile*, the postnuptial moment that comes to "rien, rien, rien" in *Éducation manquée*, and Henri's multiple failures at unseating "the king" in *Le Roi* all figure among the most memorable musical or dramatic events of their respective works. Expressive musical touches are likewise often gratuitous, some more

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<sup>349</sup> It can hardly be a coincidence that Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* (1896), widely recognized as an important precursor to the Theatre of the Absurd, borrows plot details from *Le Roi* including a conspiracy set in Poland. This was observed by Roger Shattuck in *The Banquet Years: The Origins of the avant garde in France, 1885 to World War I*, rev. ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 208. On absurdist theatre, see Martin's Esslin's landmark study, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961).

transparently so than others: consider Minka's *chanson tzigane*, an instance of fashionable local colour that requires the otherwise superfluous inclusion of a gypsy character.<sup>350</sup> Also participating in this deceptive pattern is the excessively busy plot of *Le Roi* that justifies musical indulgences on the local level while masking the "nothingness" at the dramatic core.

Along with possible absurdist implications, yet to be considered are the many themes that point towards a sort of Wildean decadence in these works. The dictum "decadence is the subordination of the whole to the parts," attributed to Oscar Wilde, is a fitting epigraph for my discussion of *Le Roi*.<sup>351</sup> I would propose that even clearer parallels could be drawn between *Le Roi* and the comic writings of André Gide, in particular his *Les Caves du Vatican* (1914). Lawrence Busenbark has identified a circular structure (including repetition of passages and images, especially in the opening and closing scenes, and negation of plot development), a strong intertextual component including self-consciousness concerning generic heritage, and intrusions and dislocations of various sorts as characteristic of Gide's *soties*.<sup>352</sup> All of these features find ample parallel in Chabrier's comic operas, not to mention that Lafcadio's notorious "acte gratuit" in *Les Caves* (the unmotivated murder of Fleurissoire) speaks directly to the nothingness trope that I have highlighted. Furthermore, like Chabrier, Gide challenges conventional processes from within the interrogated tradition: both composer and novelist routinely use the very *vieux jeux*

<sup>350</sup> There is no gypsy in Ancelot's play *Le Roi malgré lui*, after which Chabrier's libretto was fashioned; in Ancelot the Minka character is a slave of unspecified ancestry, though Alexina does make a brief appearance in gypsy costume. Jacques-Arsène-François-Polycarpe Ancelot, *Le Roi malgré lui: comédie en 2 actes, mêlée de couplets* (Paris: Magasin théâtral, 1836).

<sup>351</sup> The original source of this apt formulation has not been identified, but the custom of attributing it to Wilde is perhaps a consequence of J. Edward Chamberlin's discussion of decadence in *Ripe Was the Drowsy Hour: The Age of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977).

<sup>352</sup> Lawrence Busenbark, "Novel Variations: A Comparative Study of André Gide's *soties*" (Ph.D. diss., University of Oregon, 1993). On these topics, see also Ruth B. York, "Circular Patterns in Gide's 'Soties,'" *French Review* 34 (1961), 336-343; William W. Holdheim, "Gide's *Caves du Vatican* and the Illusionism of the Novel," *MLN* 77 (1962), 292-304; and Holdheim, "Gide's 'Paludes': The Humor of Falsity," *French Review* 32 (1969), 401-409. *Sotie* is the term that Gide selected to qualify his *Paludes* (1894), *Le Prométhée mal enchaîné* (1899), and *Les Caves du Vatican* (1914). It recalls the medieval *sottie*, a dramatic satirical genre associated with the Feast of Fools, where allegorical fools ("sots") exchange a mocking commentary on contemporary events and individuals.

that they critique and demonstrate an abundance of self-aware clichés. Finally, the complex of amusing ironies and intertextual interactions present in the works of both artists suggest theirs to be a connoisseur's art that recommends humour as a means of artistic renewal.

A critical exploration of this intriguing connection is but one of many possible directions for future research that I have uncovered. Each of the three major subjects addressed—nineteenth-century French comic opera, humour in music, and the music of Chabrier—offer ample opportunity to interested scholars. The discussion of *opérette* and *opéra bouffe* in Chapter 2 indicates an entire repertory that remains virtually unexplored, with the exception of the works by Offenbach which are nevertheless rarely subjected to rigorous exegesis of any sort. Further research into the operas of Hervé is needed to more fully understand the nature of Hervé's contribution to the developing genres of *opérette* and *opéra bouffe* as well as his distinct styles of music and of humour. The involvement of major opera composers (including Massenet, Bizet, and Delibes) in this very successful popular form of entertainment would be a fascinating study as would be the investigation into the even more obscure subgenre of *salon opérette*. A whole subset of studies that focus on the *livrets* of these repertories is likewise possible. A multitude of trends would likely be revealed upon systematic investigation of these texts, as can be gleaned from my condensed discussion of libretto characteristics in Chapter 2.

Humour in music is similarly a promising area for development. The analytical methodology that I developed in Chapter 4 brings together multiple perspectives and allows for a comprehensive consideration of the complex interactions of different levels of musical humour. While my approach effectively served my purpose, I would be the first to admit that the analysis of a humorous musical text requires methodological flexibility and would hesitate to propose my particular model as paradigmatic. Further conceptual tools for the identification, classification,

analysis, or interpretation of humour in music could be developed around the principles of musical hermeneutics and cognition proposed by Leonard Meyer, as several scholars have suggested.<sup>353</sup> Alternatively, linguistic models such as Victor Raskin’s “Semantic Script Theory of Humor” might profitably be adapted to serve the unique requirements of musical semantics. This is but one potential avenue through which research into musical humour might expand into the field of Humour Studies proper: articles on the nature of musical humour have yet to be published in the academic journal *Humor*, and to my knowledge papers on related subjects have not been presented at conferences of the International Society for Humor Studies.

Chabrier’s music has waited a long time to be rediscovered. I hope that my investigation into his aesthetics of humour has done justice to Chabrier’s evident comic genius and has not suffered too much due to my unavoidable temporal and cultural distance, circumstances notoriously threatening to the appreciation of humour. While I have aimed to identify humour techniques and offered analyses of their interactions, many questions about Chabrier’s musical humour remain unexplored. An investigation of the aesthetic, socio-cultural, or political purposes of Chabrier’s excess of humorous disjunctions, or how these features might have been received by his contemporaries, would reward further investigation—one immediately questions the implications of the multinational *dramatis personae* of *Le Roi* or the more barbaric exoticism of *Vaucochard*, *Fisch-ton-kan*, and *L’Étoile*, for instance. The question of Chabrier’s Wagner adulation and his “Wagnerian” operas might also be revisited in light of the subversions that I have identified, as it would be particularly valuable to determine which stylistic qualities

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<sup>353</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1, Leonard B. Meyer’s work on affective response and musical meaning, as explored in *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956) and *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), has been proposed by numerous scholars as a useful starting point for the study of musical humour. See Chapter 1, note 58.

identified here are also present in his serious works such as *Gwendoline* and *Briséis*. Most importantly, perhaps, I hope to have clarified aspects of Chabrier's style and aesthetic which will enable the very important question of Chabrier's influence to be approached more effectively: the oblique satire found in Ravel, or the refined simplicity of Poulenc's music, for instance, can now more justifiably be connected to the later composers' admiration for Chabrier.

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## Appendix A      Detailed Plot Synopsis and Distribution of Musical Numbers in *Le Roi malgré lui*

The following detailed synopsis conforms to the 1887 printing of the libretto and the first printed version of the vocal score. Musical numbers are itemized as indicated in the table of contents of the first published vocal score.

Act I. 1574. *Winter garden of a castle near Krakow.*

1. *Introduction (scène; rondeau; chœur des soldats)*: French lords pass time throwing dice and voicing their *ennui* for France. We learn that Henri de Valois, Duke of Anjou (baritone), has been ordered by his mother to the throne of Poland; the French suite will see him through to the coronation. The Comte of Nangis (tenor), confidant of Henri, returns from an eight-day surveillance mission: he reports on the wretched Polish winter landscape and its miserable inhabitants. Nangis has also recruited locals to join the king's guard. Soldiers sing a jaunty chorus eulogizing their merits. All celebrate the king's upcoming coronation. *Dialogue*: It is revealed that the Polish Grand Palatine Laski is mounting resistance to Henri's claim to the throne, backing instead the Archduke of Austria, and he has the support of the Polish aristocracy. For this reason Henri is to remain incognito until the coronation which is to take place the next day.

Duke of Fritelli, Henri's chamberlain (*bouffe* baritone), enters, anxious that his familial connection with Laski might be exposed (Fritelli's wife Alexina is the conspirator's niece and the two are involved in the resistance). He nevertheless chides Nangis in his strong Italian accent. 2. *Couplets*: Fritelli responds to an update on Henri's homesick condition with *bouffe couplets* that humorously explain the inherent incompatibility of French and Polish sensibilities. *Dialogue*: Fritelli exits to prepare plans for the morning procession. It turns out that Nangis's previous excursion was extended due to the affections of a beautiful slave girl. He explains to the French lords that his love is true and that his beloved remains with her master Laski in order to inform Nangis of impending threats to the French court. 3. *Entrée de Minka et scène*: Said Gypsy slave Minka (soprano) is suddenly chased onto the stage by a menacing soldier and Nangis rushes eagerly to her defense. The two declare their mutual affection and bystanders punctuate the effusive exchange with buoyant commentary. *Dialogue*: Minka trembles at his kiss. 4. *Romance*: Minka likens herself to a wild lark whom the intoxicating light of freedom could destroy. *Dialogue*: Minka and Nangis agree to meet later that night, she will signal her presence with a song. She begins to disclose news of Laski's plans when Henri wanders in absent-mindedly carrying a letter. Nangis, protecting Henri's incognito, rushes Minka out. 5. *Entrée du Roi et romance*: Henri sings a loving tribute to France. *Dialogue*: He reveals his multiple dilemmas to Nangis—his mother intends him to marry an ageing twice-widowed Polish princess, his new subjects do not respect him, and his own vigilant retinue prevents him escaping back to France. On Nangis's prompting, Henri recalls his recent love affair in Venice with a young Polish lady and admits that perhaps Poland is not void of all delights after all. Fritelli, arriving to present revisions of his plans, enters in time to recognize the name of his own wife on the lips of the lovestruck king. Fritelli's plans are dismissed as "stupid;" he exits doubly disgruntled. Henri continues to bemoan his situation: Poland's one and only beauty is not even in Poland, and if she

were she would surely be displeased with him for abandoning her without *adieux*. (His mother had demanded his sudden departure). He begs Nangis to help him escape Poland. Fritelli returns with fresh plans; Henri and Nangis reject him once again and exit. Fritelli, alone, fumes, motivated anew to see Henri out of Poland.

Alexina (soprano) enters, disguised “*en amazone*,” bringing news of her uncle’s plans.<sup>354</sup> 6. *Air*: She voices her ambition and flatters Fritelli’s complicity. *Dialogue*: Fritelli wishes to discuss Alexina’s premarital Venetian romance that threatened her family’s honour and resulted in an expedited marriage to a certain Venetian Duke of Fritelli. Her lover’s identity was hidden, she says, but his insult has fuelled a lifetime of hatred towards all French nationals. She informs Fritelli that his role in the conspiracy has been assigned, details to follow at Laski’s ball; Fritelli is to attend and bring new recruits. Fritelli urges his vengeful wife out of sight lest she be discovered by the French retinue or, even worse, by Henri. Minka encounters Henri, whom she knows as Nangis’s friend and fellow courtier; he urges her to reveal her message to him. 7. *Duo*: Minka confesses her love for Nangis and imparts news of the conspiracy mounting against Henri. She wishes that should there be a reward for this information it go to Nangis. *Dialogue*: Minka is suspicious of Henri’s obvious delight at this report. She goes on to reveal Fritelli’s involvement. Minka exits. Confronted as a traitor, Fritelli agrees to bring Henri to Laski’s ball—Henri wishes to join the conspiracy, but under the name of Nangis! 8. *Final (choeur, scène, terzetto)*: Henri retroactively effects an essential component of his plan, publicly disgracing Nangis and imprisoning him without cause. Henri instructs Fritelli to present him as the humiliated Nangis at Laski’s ball. Fritelli’s “accomplice” arrives and Henri recognizes his lover from Venice; Fritelli laments his lot. The three set about conspiracy business when Minka’s voice is heard offstage, calling her lover Nangis to their evening tryst. Fritelli, Henri, and Alexina hide from patrolling soldiers who sing a chorus while they cross the stage. Minka continues her offstage song to Nangis. Fritelli is seen by the guard. Nangis appears, having leapt from the prison window. Henri-as-Nangis (unaware of Nangis’s escape) gleefully revels in his new circumstances.

Act II. *That night, a great ball is underway at Laski’s palace.*

9. *Introduction et choeur dansé*: Laski (bass) instructs his conspirators amidst the excitement of a sung waltz. *Dialogue*: Alexina is warmly received for presenting Laski with news of her progress. Fritelli appears with Henri-as-Nangis, who is introduced as Henri’s scorned former favourite. 10. *Scène et couplets*: Alexina begins an exchange on the subject of inconstancy: the more trusted a friend the greater the risk of betrayal. *Dialogue*: Henri learns of Alexina and Fritelli’s marriage and Fritelli scrambles for clemency once again. Henri remains committed to the conspiracy lest it should lose momentum without his assistance. They exit. 11. *Sextuor des serves et Chanson tzigane*: A sextet of young serfs dream of romance and Minka sings a gypsy song celebrating love. Nangis is heard outside the window prompting wild ecstatic vocalizes

<sup>354</sup> The scene following Alexina’s entry presents the only major discrepancy with future versions of the opera. The *air* “Pour vous je suis ambitieuse” was cut after the premiere. In the November printing of the score it is replaced with the *rondeau à deux voix* “Ah! D’amour plus un mot” for Alexina and Fritelli wherein Alexina’s power lust is coupled with pathetic pleas for affection from Fritelli. This number appeared in the original score in the third act (number 19) as a duet for Alexina and Henri with different text. On relocation it was also transposed down a semitone from Ab Major to G Major. The *amazone* detail is carried over from Ancelot play of 1836 and disappeared along with Alexina’s *air* after the premiere.

from Minka. *Dialogue*: Serf maidens exit. Henri-as-Nangis and Fritelli enter and Minka tries to warn the former that Fritelli intends to treacherously lure him to Laski's place. Henri reassures her that both he and Fritelli are undercover as accomplices; Minka opts to join them out of love for Nangis. She offers to have Nangis (whom the king learns has escaped from prison) bring in the king's guard. When he refuses, Minka accuses Henri of treason—Henri threatens death to Nangis should she divulge her suspicions. Fritelli locks her in an adjacent room. Henri spots Alexina and sends off Fritelli in search of Laski. Henri wishes to appease her scorn with an explanation of his hasty departure. 12. *Duo-barcarolle*: Alexina's rage gradually softens and they recapture their lost romance. *Dialogue*: Fritelli returns with conspirators. 13. *Ensemble de la conjuration*: All swear an oath of allegiance, except for Fritelli whose paranoia has caused him to abandon the cause. *Dialogue*: Henri declares that he will personally deliver the king to the conspirators. Conspirators and Fritelli exit. Henri frees Minka and she agrees to summon Nangis. 14. *Morceau d'ensemble et Chanson française*: Again she calls to him in song. Henri, Laski, Alexina, and conspirators suddenly interrupt the passionate reunion. They have come to capture the king, whom they believe Nangis to be. Henri-as-Nangis disputes Nangis's protestations, as do all who are present. Nangis quickly finds delight in his new role as king and he promptly promotes "Nangis" to First Lord. *Dialogue*: With some difficulty Henri-as-Nangis explains his plan to escort the "king" safely across the border but Laski determines that it is no longer prudent to allow the king to leave Poland alive. 15. *Final*: All vote to assassinate the king. Henri reveals his true identity insisting that no other should die in his stead—none believes him. A ballot is drawn designating the assassin: Nangis! All approach the oratory where Nangis-as-king is hiding and Minka emerges announcing that he has escaped. Laski warns that the French are approaching. All panic. Laski's guests enter, attracted by the excitement. Fritelli desperately wants out of this predicament; Laski and conspirators remind Henri of his oath; Henri renews his vow to dispose of the king.

Act III. *Basile's countryside inn, the next morning.*

16. *Choeur et scène*: All prepare for the king's coronation. Fritelli informs the innkeeper Basile that Henri will not be crowned. Basile is apathetic; he may as well support the Austrian Archduke for neither is more likely than the other to improve his lot. *Dialogue*: Henri-as-Nangis hastens to leave Poland, but Basile can only spare an old horse and worn-out cart for his voyage—all of his supplies have been sent to the Archduke's victory celebration! Henri regrets Alexina's absence and chastises Fritelli for having separated them. Someone is heard approaching and Henri hides, but it is Alexina searching for Henri. She explains that the Archduke's plot has been exposed and he is presently in transit back to Austria. Alexina expects rewards from the reinstated French king for her supposed undercover mission. Fritelli hopes that Alexina's antics in Venice will not be replicated here. 17. *Couplets*: Fritelli compares the ways of the Italians and the Poles. *Dialogue*: Fritelli convinces Alexina to assist in Henri's escape deceiving her with the story that Henri is now an outlaw for having assassinated the king. Minka arrives, expecting to find the "king" (Nangis) at the inn preparing for his return to France. Fritelli and Alexina claim to have no knowledge of his whereabouts. Fritelli exits. 18. *Nocturne à deux voix*: Minka and Alexina despair for their lovers. *Dialogue*: Believing it to be true, Alexina explains to Minka that the "king" has been killed. Minka flees and Alexina fears for Henri-as-Nangis's culpability. Alexina determines to pose as Henri's driver and is about to exit in search of servant's costume when Henri appears. Alexina reveals Fritelli's story, concocted to keep her

from Henri. *19. Rondeau à deux voix*: Alexina and Henri decide to promptly flee together. *Dialogue*: Both exit to prepare for the voyage. *20. Duo*: Minka laments the death of Nangis-as-king and begins a suicide ritual. Dagger poised, she spots Nangis approaching and the lovers share another joyful reunion. *Dialogue*: Minka agrees to fetch the king's supporters. They exit. Alexina enters, disguised as a servant girl. Fritelli rushes in urging Henri to make haste, not recognizing the driver as his wife. They depart. The French retinue enters and Fritelli is accused of regicide. Fritelli insists that the king is safely on his way back to France. Minka enters and denies this story: it is not the king fleeing in the farm cart but Nangis, the traitor... and he is with Alexina! Fritelli pulls his hair. Nangis and guards escort in the captured fugitives. *21. Final*: Identities are revealed. Alexina and Minka are delighted at the true identities of their lovers. Henri resigns to rule over Poland. All rejoice.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> The *rondeau* (# 19) was not replaced when it was moved to the first act in the second printing of the score. In the second score the *duo* for Minka and Nangis appears as number 19 and the *Final* is number 20.