CASTIL-BLAZE, *DE L’OPÉRA EN FRANCE* and the 
FEUILLETONS of the *JOURNAL DES DÉBATS* (1820-1832)

by

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ABSTRACT

François-Henri-Joseph Blaze (1784-1857), who published under the pseudonym Castil-Blaze, was an important figure in French musical life during the period of the Bourbon Restoration (1815-1830). In his historical monographs, he was the first writer to address the wider French public to explain to them the history and practical functioning of their major musical institutions. As France's first professional music critic and the author of some 340 articles in the prestigious *Journal des débats* between 1820 and 1832, he created a place for literate writing about music on the front pages of the most respected daily newspaper in France, providing the French public for the first time with a regular account of Parisian musical activities written from a musician's point of view.

The present study examines his views on opera as expressed in his articles in the *Journal des débats* and in the work which launched his career, *De l'Opéra en France* (1820). Chapter 1 reviews the centrality of opera in French musical life from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, concentrating upon the literary outlook which conditioned its development and upon the parallel development of French music criticism during this period. Discussed as well are the founding of the *Journal des débats* at the end of the eighteenth century and the work of its first important critic, Julien-Louis Geoffroy, at the beginning of the nineteenth. Chapter 2 describes the early career of Castil-Blaze before his arrival in Paris and analyses both the new direction which *De l'Opéra en France* represented in French writing about music and the contrast evident between Castil-Blaze and his predecessor Geoffroy. Chapter 3 outlines Castil-Blaze's views on the nature of music criticism as a specialty discipline and details the ways in which his own work attempted to put these views into practice. Chapter 4 discusses the crucial importance of the libretto, in Castil-Blaze's view, to the ultimate effectiveness of opera, both at the large-scale level of its dramatic structure and at the small-scale
level of its verse prosody. Chapter 5 deals with the issues affecting the opera composer's score: the theoretical basis of Castil-Blaze's musical aesthetics, his practical concerns with the traditional French system for distributing voice roles, and his opinions on text-music setting and the nature of dramatic expression in music. Chapter 6 deals with Castil-Blaze's expectations of the opera singer, both as a vehicle for the composer's written intentions and as an important contributor of dramatic expression and improvised ornamentation in performance. A concluding chapter outlines unifying themes in his writings as a whole and discusses their impact upon later developments in French opera.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................... ii

TABLE OF CONTENTS ....................................................................................... iv

LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................... vi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ....................................................................................... vii

PREFACE .............................................................................................................. 1

CHAPTER 1: FRENCH OPERA AND MUSIC CRITICISM
BEFORE CASTIL-BLAZE ................................................................................... 12
  Opera in French Musical Life ........................................................................ 12
  The French View of Opera as Literature ....................................................... 15
  Critical Writing about Music before 1800 ................................................... 20
  The *Journal des débats*, the *Feuilleton*, and Geoffroy .............................. 27
  New Conditions of Musical Life in Restoration Paris .................................. 35

CHAPTER 2: CASTIL-BLAZE’S DÉBUT IN PARIS
AND *DE L’OPÉRA EN FRANCE* ........................................................................ 42
  Castil-Blaze’s Background ........................................................................... 42
  *De l’Opéra en France* .................................................................................. 46
  Castil-Blaze and Geoffroy ............................................................................. 54

CHAPTER 3: CASTIL-BLAZE AND SPECIALIZED MUSIC CRITICISM .............. 57
  Castil-Blaze’s Innovation ............................................................................ 57
  Music Criticism as a Specialized Discipline ............................................... 60
  Qualities of the Music Critic ...................................................................... 65
  Objectivity and Practicality in Castil-Blaze’s Feuilletons ............................ 82
  Range of Subject Matter ............................................................................. 86
Table of Contents

CHAPTER 4: THE OPERA LIBRETTO ............................................ 90
  Setting and Dramatic Interest ........................................... 100
  Distribution of Roles and Music ....................................... 109
  Division into Acts and Scenes ......................................... 118
  Operatic Prosody .......................................................... 124

CHAPTER 5: THE DRAMATIC SCORE ................................. 140
  Castil-Blaze’s Aesthetics .................................................. 140
  The *Système vocal* of French Opera .................................. 146
  Text-Music Setting and Dramatic Expression ........................ 154

CHAPTER 6: THE SINGER’S ART ........................................ 168
  The Singer as the Composer’s Vehicle ............................... 174
  Ornamentation and the Singer’s Taste ............................... 187

CONCLUSION ................................................................. 197

BIBLIOGRAPHY .............................................................. 209

APPENDIX: The *Feuilletons* of Castil-Blaze in the
  *Journal des débats* (1820-1832) .................................... 220
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: De l'Opéra, II, Planches, p. 1 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 51

Figure 2: De l'Opéra, II, Planches, pp. 22-23 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 163
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It is a notion commonly held that the great figures of history tend to transcend their time while lesser figures tend to typify the age in which they live. The historical figure treated in this dissertation will find neither a unique nor a universally agreed upon place in such a scheme, however, for as both a pioneer and a popularizer he would appear to lay almost equal claim to the titles of leader and follower of the French public to whom he directed his work. François-Henri-Joseph Blaze (1784-1857), known by his pseudonym “Castil-Blaze,” was a learned, articulate, enterprising and ultimately controversial musical personality whose activities as a writer on music and as a translator and adaptor of foreign works for the lyric stage made him an important figure in French musical life during the 1820s and 1830s. His principal contribution, in writings which comprise both historical monographs and a major corpus of articles in the press, was to stimulate public interest in the serious study of music as an art and to raise standards for writing about music in general. In his historical monographs, some of which are still consulted by modern scholars, he was the first writer to address the wider French public to explain to them the history and practical functioning of their major musical institutions. As France’s first professional music


critic and the author of some 340 articles in the prestigious *Journal des débats* between 1820 and 1832, he created a place for literate writing about music on the front pages of the most respected daily newspaper in France, providing the French public for the first time with a regular account of Parisian musical activities written from a musician's point of view. In so doing, he set new standards for French music criticism and in his journalistic writings he gained a wide audience for the serious discussion of French musical culture conceived in its broadest terms.\(^3\)

Yet as pioneering and progressive a figure as Castil-Blaze may appear to be, he was also undeniably a man whose interests and ambitions were typical of the age in which he lived. Early nineteenth-century France was in the process of becoming a more industrial society, mediated by a growing class of administrators and financial middlemen whose role became increasingly important in the regulation of French affairs as more and more of the national wealth began to derive from the manufacturing and financial sectors.\(^4\) Castil-Blaze participated in this expansion of French industry in ways that are not always associated with a musical figure. In his early career he was a lawyer and a public administrator, but one who displayed strong entrepreneurial tendencies as well. His death notice in the *Journal des débats* indicates, for example, that he had also been a wholesaler in wines before moving to Paris from his native Vaucluse.\(^5\) Very soon after establishing himself in the capital in 1820

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3. Castil-Blaze later became the music critic for the Parisian daily *Le Constitutionnel* after leaving the *Débats* in 1832, and was a frequent contributor to specialized publications such as the *Revue de Paris, Le Ménestrel*, the *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* and *La France musicale*.

4. French industry had been stimulated greatly by Napoleon's continental blockade, instigated in 1806, which forced France to begin producing goods that had previously been imported from England, notably textiles. In addition, Napoleonic reforms in the legal system, in the organization of professional faculties at the universities and in the domain of public administration had promoted the bourgeoisie, giving them a clearer path of advancement in society and creating an important place for their talents. These developments had prompted an increase in the population of Paris, the administrative and business centre of the country, of almost 50% between 1800 and 1830.

he became very active in the business of music publishing, and many of his works were published by his own publishing company, which he appears to have directed with enormous energy and commitment.6

Castil-Blaze's dual pursuit of music as an aesthetic preoccupation and as an economic activity have made him a controversial figure in the historical literature. Fuelling this controversy are his activities as a translator and adaptor of works for the French lyric stage, which stand at the crux of the debate over his ultimate status as a progressive or a regressive force in French musical life. Arguing in his favour is the prescient, early and wide exposure which he gave to operatic works of outstanding merit destined to remain in the canon. It was by means of his translations that many of the operas of Mozart, Cimarosa, Beethoven, Rossini, Weber and Donizetti were first introduced to a large segment of the French public, especially in the provinces, where foreign-language opera performances were comparatively rare.7 But the freedom which he granted himself to revise some of these works in the aim of making them more acceptable to the French public has created for him the reputation of a défiler

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rather than a champion of high musical art. This view of his activities has only been encouraged by the lengthy list of successful and profitable pastiches which chronologically interlard his full-length adaptations.\(^8\)

Scholars have thus been torn between the conflicting interpretations of his life's work as either a reaching out with enthusiasm to gain a wider audience for the great admired works of Western musical art, or a vast exercise in mass marketing, the principal aim of which was to maximize profit without regard for artistic integrity. In the camp of those crediting him with moving against the current of public opinion to champion the cause of great art one might place Leo Schrade, who writes:

No less a man than Castil-Blaze, greatly deserving for his efforts on behalf of German classic and romantic music, ventured to bring the *Freischütz* to the Paris stage as *Robin des Bois*, three short years after Carl Maria von Weber produced this paragon of romantic music in Berlin for the first time.\(^9\)

The author of the article on Castil-Blaze in the *Grand Dictionnaire Universel* is more eloquently admiring still, referring to

... son rêve favori : propager en France, à l'aide de traductions plus ou moins littérales, les chefs-d’œuvres des grands maîtres. Cette noble ambition, réalisée en partie, est, à nos yeux, le plus beau titre de gloire de Castil-Blaze. Grâce à ces traductions arrangées par lui, les départemens, qui s'en emparèrent, furent initiés à la connaissance de ces œuvres impérissables qui élèvent à la fois l'âme et le goût des spectateurs.\(^10\)

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8. Castil-Blaze's pastiches include: *Les Folies amoureuses*, after Regnard, music by Mozart, Cimarosa, Paër, Rossini, Pavesi, Generali (pseud. for Castil-Blaze himself), Steibelt (Lyon, 1823; Paris, 1825); *La Fausse Agnès*, after Destouches, music by Cimarosa, Rossini, Meyerbeer, Pucitta, Federici (Paris, Lyon, 1824); *La Forêt de Senart, ou la Parti de chasse de Henri IV*, after Collé, music by Beethoven, Weber, Rossini, Meyerbeer (Paris, 1826); *M. de Pourceaugnac*, music by Rossini and Weber (Paris, 1827); *La Marquise de Brinvilliers*, libretto by Scribe, music by Aubert, Batton, Berton, Blangini, Boieldieu, Carafa, Cherubini, Paër (Paris, 1831); *Les Sybaltites de Florence*, libretto by Lafitte, music by Aimoin, Barbereau, Beethoven, Castil-Blaze, Meyerbeer, Rossini, Spohr, Weber (Paris, 1831); *Bernerbo*, after Molière, music by Cimarosa, Salieri, Paisiello, Guglielmi, Farinelli, Grétry (not performed).


Far more numerous and more weighty in the balance of critical opinion, however, have been those for whom Castil-Blaze’s arrangements and adaptations have raised troubling questions of originality and artistic propriety, and for whom his financial success has only exacerbated their mistrust of his intentions. At the head of these must stand Hector Berlioz, who flamboyantly defined his artistic personality in categorical opposition to that of Castil-Blaze. Berlioz described Castil-Blaze in his Mémoires as a “veterinary surgeon of music,” as the “plunderer” of Weber’s Der Freyschütz, and he even coined the scornful term castilblazade to refer to his arrangements. Indeed, Berlioz’s reaction to Castil-Blaze provides some of the most memorable passages from his writings:

Villain! And a wretched sailor gets fifty lashes for a minor act of insubordination!

Weber [assassinated] by Castil-Blaze; Gluck, Grétry, Mozart, Rossini, Beethoven, Vogel mutilated by this same Castil-Blaze ... There is hardly a work of these composers that he has not retouched in his own image. I believe he is mad.

Berlioz’s anathema, with its excoriating tone of moral indignation, is echoed in the comments of many modern scholars, among whom John Warrack stands out in describing Castil-Blaze as:

... a species of theatrical tomb-robber who, despite his attacks on poor translations and adaptations and the abuses of theatre managers, was himself guilty of pillaging numerous foreign works for the stage and modifying others to suit prevailing Parisian taste.


12. The Memoirs of Hector Berlioz, pp. 89, 91. Castil-Blaze is pilloried as well in many of Berlioz’s journalistic writings and especially in his Grotesques de la musique and Les Soirées de l’orchestre.

Castil-Blaze's largely unsavoury reputation as an arranger may well be responsible for the scant recognition and superficial treatment given in the scholarly literature to his work as a pioneering journalist. Arthur Pougin, for example, in his overview of the French musical press in the *Encyclopédie de la musique et dictionnaire du Conservatoire*, ignores Castil-Blaze's writings in the *Journal des débats* completely, preferring to see the establishment of the *Revue musicale* (1827-1835) as the signal revolutionary development in nineteenth century music criticism, and Fétis as the real "founder of the musical press in France." His comments follow upon opinions in a similar vein expressed by Ernest Thoinan who, while admitting Castil-Blaze's competence, seeks to minimize his importance by claiming for his writing a "limited influence" relative to that of Fétis. It would be difficult, however, to support this claim by citing chronological priority, a large difference in frequency of appearance, or a superior circulation base as criteria for judgement. Castil-Blaze's articles in the *Journal des débats* began seven years before the establishment of Fétis's journal, and attracted considerable attention, appearing an average of just under thirty times per year. Furthermore, his articles were published in the most prestigious daily newspaper in France with a circulation of 13,000 copies compared with the approximately 200 subscribers of the

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14. "... c'était Fétis, qui allait enfin, avec sa *Revue musicale*, opérer en France une sorte de révolution, fonder en ce pays la véritable presse musicale, et par son exemple encourager la création d'un grand nombre de publications qui, à sa suite, ont rendu et rendent chaque jour les plus grands et les plus signalés services." Arthur Pougin, "Notes sur la presse musicale en France," in *Encyclopédie de la musique et dictionnaire du Conservatoire*, ed. by A. Lavignac and L. de la Laurencie, Part II, Vol. 6 (Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1931), p. 3847. Pougin might claim for Fétis the distinction of founding the musical press in France if the latter be understood to refer to specialized publications alone, but his article discusses numerous general publications as important antecedents of Fétis's *Revue musicale* without, however, mentioning Castil-Blaze's feuilletons.

15. "Si... Castil-Blaze sut se faire remarquer dans un journal en y parlant de la musique en toute connaissance de cause, il n'en faut pas moins reconnaître que les feuilletons du *Journal des Débats* (1820), ne paraissant que de loin en loin, n'eurent qu'une influence assez limitée. Il n'en fut pas de même des écrits de Fétis, qui acquit de suite une certaine notoriété par la publication de sa *Revue musicale* (1827), et qui peut justement être considéré comme le fondateur de la presse musicale dans notre pays." Ernest Thoinan, "Esquisse historique sur la presse musicale en France," *La Chronique musicale* 1, No. 2 (August 1873): 58.
Revue musicale. In fact, Castil-Blaze's reputation at the time of the establishment of the Revue musicale was such that Fétis had wanted him to contribute articles to his new publication. Moreover, the published remarks of Fétis himself make clear the historical position which he believed Castil-Blaze’s journalism merited. In one of his first articles in the Revue musicale in 1827, a review of Castil-Blaze’s De l'Opéra en France, he remarks on the progress of music journalism in the following terms:

Tout cela [illiterate writing about music] a changé depuis sept ou huit ans; la plupart de nos journalistes ne font plus sourire de pitié les connaisseurs lorsqu'ils parlent de musique; le public n'est plus étranger aux notions de cet art; enfin, une révolution s'est faite, et cette révolution, il faut l'avouer, a été provoquée par l'écrivain spirituel dont je me propose d'examiner l'ouvrage.

Fétis’s entry for Castil-Blaze in the Biographie universelle des musiciens is equally emphatic:

L'auteur de la chronique musicale sut bientôt se faire remarquer par la spécialité de ses connaissances; il imposa silence au bavardage des gens de lettres, et parvint à la faveur de sa verve méridionale, à initier le public au langage technique dont il se servait. Quels que soient les progrès que puisse faire en France l'art d'écrire sur la musique dans les journaux, on n'oubliera pas que c'est M. C. Blaze qui le premier, l'a naturalisé dans ce pays.


Yet despite more recent acknowledgments of Castil-Blaze’s importance in the relatively sparse literature on French music journalism since Fétis’s time, notably from such historians as Frédéric Hellouin and Andrea Della Corte, Castil-Blaze has remained a figure much quoted but little studied. Early nineteenth-century French music specialists know well the range of his historical and journalistic work and frequently have recourse to his writings in the course of their research. In the collection *Music in Paris in the Eighteen-Thirties*, for example, Castil-Blaze’s writings are cited in essays by H. Robert Cohen, Philip Gossett, D. Kern Holoman and Jean-Michel Nectoux. But others interested in this period, ill-served no doubt by the paucity of secondary literature, seem only distantly aware of Castil-Blaze, and it is not uncommon, even in the most recent scholarly literature, to find imprecise or patently inaccurate references to his life and work. The work of still other writers exists at a further remove in that they seem unaware that they are even citing Castil-Blaze when quoting the *Journal des débats* of the 1820s, either directly or through other sources. Most surprising

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of all are the comments by specialists in French music criticism such as Kerry Murphy and Katherine Reeve characterizing Castil-Blaze's criticism as vague or uninformative, opinions considerably at variance with the above-cited nineteenth-century assessments of his work by Fétis, among his admirers, and even Thoinan, among his detractors.

On the whole, then, there is little evidence to suggest that our understanding of this important figure has advanced substantially since the last century, and much to suggest that it has receded. While French music criticism has benefitted from fine research work on a number of its great figures from the nineteenth century, including Fétis, Berlioz, Ernest Reyer, and most recently Joseph D'Ortigue, no work of any length has yet been directed to the journalistic writings of Castil-Blaze.

It will be the purpose of this dissertation to study Castil-Blaze's contribution to French music criticism through an examination of his articles in the *Journal des débats* during his tenure as its first music critic (1820-1832), and furthermore to analyse the critical perspective which he brought to bear on the composition and performance of opera in France, which formed the principal subject matter of his writings during this period. An important point of reference in this study is Castil-Blaze's *De l'Opéra en France*, a work largely credited with

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23. Kerry Murphy writes: “Despite his background, Castil-Blaze's musical analysis in these early reviews is fairly rudimentary. He tends to be descriptive rather than analytical and uses a number of vague emotive adjectives which add little to the readers' knowledge of the work.” Hector Berlioz and the Development of French Music Criticism (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988), pp. 11-12. Katherine Reeve, in her essay “Rhetoric and Reason in French Music Criticism of the 1830s,” in *Music in Paris in the Eighteen-Thirties*, pp. 537-551, views Castil-Blaze, Fétis and the musically illiterate drama critic Geoffroy together as representatives of a type of criticism which “was outspoken in judgment, yet it had very little to say about the music itself.” (p. 538)

24. Peter Bloom has examined the interaction of Fétis’s criticism with the major musical figures of his time in “François-Joseph Fétis and the *Revue musicale* (1827-1835)” (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1972). H. Robert Cohen has proposed the criterion of “dramatic appropriateness” as the underlying principle in Berlioz's critical aesthetic in “Berlioz on the Opera: A Study in Music Criticism” (Ph.D. diss., New York Univ., 1973). Finally, Elizabeth Lamberton’s “The Critical Writings of Ernest Reyer” (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of British Columbia, 1988) and Sylvia L’Écuyer’s “La Vie et l’Œuvre de Joseph d’Ortigue” (Ph.D. diss., Université Laval, 1992) have provided landmark studies of immense documentary richness on the lives and works of these two critics.
launching his career as a journalist after its publication in 1820, and one which offers an im-
portant context within which to interpret his journalistic writings.

Chapter 1 of this study reviews the centrality of opera in French musical life from the
seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries, concentrating upon the literary outlook which con-
ditioned its development and the parallel development of French music criticism during this
period. Discussed as well are the founding of the *Journal des débats* at the end of the eigh-
teenth century and the work of its first important critic, Julien-Louis Geoffroy at the begin-
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in Paris and analyses both the new direction which *De l'Opéra en France* represented in
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practical concerns with the traditional French system for distributing voice roles, and his
opinions on text-music setting and the nature of dramatic expression in music. Chapter 6
deals with Castil-Blaze's expectations of the opera singer, both as a vehicle for the
composer's written intentions and as a contributor of dramatic expression and improvised or-
namentation in performance. A Conclusion assesses his influence in the context of the later
developments in French music.

* * *
It should be noted that no attempt has been made in the many direct quotations featured in this study to bring any measure of discipline to the unruliness of early nineteenth-century French spelling. The decade of the 1820s was especially capricious in this regard and the reader is hereby alerted that the imperfect tense may appear with either an “oi” or “ai” suffix (e.g., étoit or était), that accents on the letter “e” may be reversed or even missing (e.g., arpège, tenor), that endings in “-nts” may lack the letter “t” (e.g., chantans), and that italics may be either missing or present in abundance, according to the whim of the writer.
CHAPTER 1
FRENCH OPERA AND MUSIC CRITICISM
BEFORE CASTIL-BLAZE

Opera in French Musical Life

Opera occupied a place of privilege in French musical life from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, supported by its importance in the political, social and intellectual domains of French life. The high status which opera enjoyed throughout this period derived ultimately from its origins as an aristocratic entertainment developed at the court of Louis XIV for the personal pleasure of the sovereign by his courtier composer, Lully, and by Quinault, his courtier librettist. The theatrical organization established in 1672 by royal letters patent to produce this type of opera was given the status of a royal académie, and as such it outlived its immediate royal patron, composer and librettist to become a state-subsidized institution whose performances symbolized French national prestige in lyrical dramatic art. By virtue of its status as a royal institution and the strict enforcement of its exclusive privilège to present continuous dramatic music in the French language, the Académie royale de musique legislated an important place in France for its uniquely national brand of opera, and stood at the same time as a cultural bulwark against the incursion of Italian opera seria into France in the eighteenth century. As France’s national lyric theatre, the Académie royale de

1. The operas of Lully and Quinault were each dedicated to the King in an allegorical prologue. Louis was personally consulted at every stage, and his life and reign were the implicit subject matter of every opera, which usually addressed the problems of kingship in terms of the conflict between amour and gloire.

2. “In their privileged position, Lully and his successors were able to confine the repertory to French works. When the whole of Europe — from Lisbon to St Petersburg, from Vienna to London — was in the grip of Italian opera seria, France was still hermetically sealed against this foreign form of art. Up to the Revolution, only the tragédie lyrique held sway.” Jean Mongrédié, “Paris: the End of the Ancien Régime,” in The Classical Era: From the 1740s to the End of the 18th Century, ed. by Neal Zaslaw (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1989), p. 85.


**Chapter 1**

*musique* — or *Opéra*, as it was known — enjoyed immense social prestige, and its importance was further magnified by its eleven-month season of performances, the longest in all of Europe.³

The importance of opera as a genre within French musical life is confirmed as well by the attention given to it by French intellectuals. All of the major musical debates of the eighteenth century — between Lecerf and Raguenet at the beginning of the eighteenth century, between the Lullistes and Ramistes in the 1730s, the *Guerre des bouffons* at mid-century and the war between the Gluckists and Piccinnists in the 1770s — are centred on opera, and it was to opera, rather than to instrumental music, that the *philosophes* directed their speculations about the nature of music in general.

Toutes les grandes querelles relatives à la musique qui agitent le XVIIIe siècle ont pour point de départ le théâtre lyrique. Des philosophes, des hommes de lettres, qui souvent connaissent très mal la technique de l'art sur lequel ils dissertent à l'envi, échafaudent des théories esthétiques qui s'appuient presque toujours à l'origine sur l'opéra. La musique instrumentale, sans être pour autant dédaignée des vrais connaisseurs, reste cependant au second plan. C'est l'époque où, pour beaucoup d'esprits, et non des plus médiocres, il n'est de musique que vocale.⁴

The French found vocal music in general, and opera in particular, as its most prominent genre, a more natural object for intellectual enquiry than instrumental music since its text

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3. "... no other city had an opera season anywhere close to the more than eleven months of performances at the Académie Royale de Musique each year. In cities such as Rome opera came about for several weeks during the carnival, and while seasons did lengthen in some places by the 1750s, none rivalled the long season at the Paris theatre... The receipts at the Opéra reflect this situation, since they show that summer attendance was often substantial, a quite respectable half of that in the high season." William Weber, "Lully and the Rise of Musical Classics in the 18th Century," in *Jean-Baptiste Lully. Actes du colloque: Saint-Germain-en-Laye and Heidelberg, 1987*, ed. by Jérôme de La Gorce and Herbert Schneider (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1990), pp. 585-86. It is interesting to note that the premiere of perhaps the most important French operatic work of the Restoration period (1815-30) — Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* — took place at the height of summer on 3 August 1829.

provided an obvious point of reference within the theory of the "imitation of nature," which dominated eighteenth-century French aesthetics. Instrumental music, on the other hand, seemed more difficult for the French to grasp intellectually, and their discomfort with it is evident in eighteenth-century writings about music. Lacépède, for example, in his aesthetic treatise of more than 700 pages entitled *La Poétique de la musique* (1785), devotes less than 20 pages to instrumental music, and even in these short sections he attempts to explain symphonies, sonatas, trios, etc. either in terms of vocal music, or in terms of visual images and the metaphors of painting.\(^5\) In the face of instrumental music French writers of the eighteenth century often seemed to draw a complete blank.\(^6\)

The importance of opera as a prestigious art form of national importance, its centrality to intellectual musical debate, and the relatively primitive understanding of instrumental music in this era led composers to seek out their careers in opera composition, rather than in instrumental music.\(^7\) Opera was thus the career of choice for the composing musician in France, a way of making one's name and of gaining national recognition for one's skill and one's art. It should not be surprising, then, that the places of honour in early nineteenth-century cultural and musical institutions were routinely occupied by opera composers.

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6. "The inability of most 18th-century writers in France to conceptualize absolute music as meaningful and significant finds its epitome in the apostrophe attributed to Fontenelle: *Sonate, que me veux-tu?*" Maria Rika Maniates, "*Sonate, que me veux-tu?* The Enigma of French Musical Aesthetics in the 18th Century," *Current Musicology* 9 (1969): 132.

7. "On voit poindre, sous ces idées, le refus de ce qu'on appellera, au siècle suivant, la *musique pure*. Un homme aussi fin que d'Alembert le dit d'ailleurs expressément: « Toute cette musique purement instrumentale, sans dessein et sans objet ne parle ni à l'esprit ni à l'âme et mérite qu'on lui demande avec Fontenelle : Sonate, que me veux-tu? » Ces prises de position très tranchées ont pesé parfois lourdement sur la musique française au tournant du XVIIIe et du XIXe siècles : quantité de compositeurs, égarés par des principes définis très souvent par des littérateurs qui n'étaient pas des musiciens, vont se détourner de la musique instrumentale ou du moins privilégier l'opéra." Mongrédién, *La Musique en France*, pp. 254-55.
Many of the best composers of the day were drawn to write operas for Paris, and for good reason. The high status that the French traditionally granted to spoken theatre carried over to the théâtre lyrique: during the nineteenth century nearly all the musicians elected to the Académie des Beaux-Arts were opera composers, as were three of the four long-term directors of the Conservatoire: Cherubini, Auber and Ambroise Thomas (the one exception, Théodore Dubois, was best known for another large-scale vocal genre, sacred oratorio). \(^8\)

The French View of Opera as Literature

Locke’s comment that “the high status that the French traditionally granted to spoken theatre carried over to the théâtre lyrique” is an important one, for the imprint of the spoken theatre is clearly evident in French opera from its inception, and the stamp of both literary merit in the text of the libretto and dramaturgical merit in its construction was expected both by theatre critics and by opera audiences alike. One should not be surprised to find, therefore, that French librettists tended to be playwrights rather than simply poets, as was the norm in Italy,\(^9\) and that French audiences considered the libretto text to be more important than the composer’s music.

... although the musician may have more talent than the poet, although by the force of his genius he may assure the success of an opera, his art is always regarded in France as secondary to that of the poetry.\(^10\)


\(^9\) “The influence of the drama upon French librettists is far more marked than upon their Italian counterparts. The importance of the play in France and its relative unimportance in Italy account for the distinction: most French librettists from Quinault to the twentieth century began life as playwrights or wrote plays concurrent with their operatic œuvres, whereas most Italian librettists, with the obvious exception of Goldoni, considered themselves poets rather than dramatists, and wrote few if any works for the spoken stage until late in the nineteenth century.” Patrick Smith, The Tenth Muse: A Historical Study of the Opera Libretto (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), p. 48. Smith notes further “the general absence of stage directions in Italian librettos, and their presence in French ones.” Ibid.

The clearly deferential posture which French music adopted with respect to the libretto is exemplified in the operas of Lully and Quinault. Lullyan opera, as indicated by its generic name *tragédie lyrique*, was conceived essentially as a French verse tragedy, enriched with music, ballet and spectacle. The purpose of these enriching elements was to inflate the surface brilliance of the tragedy, rendering it suitable for presentation before a king whose grandeur was a distinguishing characteristic of his court. The meter and rhyme pattern of Quinault’s verse imitated the alexandrines of the tragedies of Racine and Corneille, and its text received official sanction from the *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*. The music which enveloped this verse text, and which structured the *divertissements* (as the episodes of ballet and the scenes using stage machinery were called), was not intended to replace its literary or dramatic appeal with a purely musical appeal. Rather, it was meant to enhance that appeal, and the perception of music as a foreground layer of aesthetic activity was kept deliberately weak by the manner in which it was used. Most of the text, for example, was set as recitative, and it was in these declamatory sections that the points of highest emotional intensity were found, rather than in the lyrical sections of aria, as was the case in Italian opera. Moments of purely lyrical appeal — the *airs*, where one might expect musical interest to be in the foreground — were kept short, infrequent and without great contrast with respect to the recitative. The music was deliberately crafted so as to magnify the distinctive speech patterns of the spoken text and the prosodic patterning of the verse, without upstaging them by asserting its own unique qualities as music. Harmony and rhythm, for example, were unadventurous, choruses moved in block chordal patterns without contrapuntal

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12. “The vocal airs in Lully’s operas differ considerably from Italian arias. As a rule, they are not strongly set apart as separate numbers, but are continually interspersed in a scene along with recitatives, duets, choruses and dances. For the most part these airs are short, narrow in range, and subject to piquant irregularities of phrasing.” Donald J. Grout, *A Short History of Opera*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 127.
elaboration, and the time signature often slavishly followed the demands of the verse patterning. Claude Palisca explains how plastically Lully's music was draped over the prosodic patterning of Quinault's verse text in his analysis of a passage from *Cadmus et Hermione* (1673):

Ends of lines are invariably marked by a long value or rest, and accented syllables almost always fall on successive quarters of the measure. Constant shifting of the poetic foot between iambic and anapest in Quinault's verses requires alternately a duple or quadruple subdivision of the beat, while the changing number of feet per line and the convention of placing the principal accents of each line on the first beat of a bar demand shifting between 3/4 and 4/4.\(^\text{13}\)

Lully's music, furthermore, was written with scrupulous care to reproduce the accentuation patterns and declamatory style of the best actors of French tragedy, and rehearsed to preserve every declamatory detail.\(^\text{14}\)

This manner of conceiving the role of music in French opera — i.e., as merely one of the components of its grandeur, but not the primary element of its aesthetic appeal — was carried into the eighteenth century by the longevity of Lullyan opera in the French repertoire, and remained an important point of reference for serious opera composition until late in the century.\(^\text{15}\)

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14. "Weeks before the general rehearsals began Lully worked individually with the actors, carefully directing their every gesture and drilling them in the inflections, the accents, and the declamatory style of delivery which he had studied at the Comédie-Française. He controlled the musical expression of his singers by forbidding the florid vocalizing common in Italian opera. An enemy of individuality, Lully would not permit the singers to embellish their parts." Isherwood, *Music in the Service of the King*, p. 207.

15. Lully's *Thésée* and *Amadis*, for example, were performed in revivals as late as the 1770s. For a discussion of the survival of Lullyan opera into the eighteenth century, see William Weber, "Lully and the Rise of Musical Classics in the 18th Century," cited in note 3. The changes made to the texts and scores of these operas during their long tenure in the French repertoire are discussed in Lois Rosow, "From Destouches to Berton: Editorial Responsibility at the Paris Opéra," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 40 (1987): 285-309.
If music in *tragédie lyrique* was subordinate to the claims of language and dramatic action, its role was even more utilitarian and functional in the genre of French lyric theatre known as *opéra comique*. This genre of comedy with music traces its origins to the *comédies-ballets* of Molière and Lully, and to the improvised farces and parodies of the troupe of Italian comedians resident at the French court in Paris from 1660 to 1697. During the eighteenth century *opéra comique* evolved out of the theatrical successors to these comedies — the colourful stage entertainments offered at the fairs held in spring and late summer at the Saint-Laurent and Saint-Germain fair grounds in Paris. Competing with acrobats, tightrope walkers and animal acts, the plays mixing music and spoken dialogue performed at these fairs as *opéras comiques* were characterized by irreverent flashes of wit and what might be termed a certain “directness” of appeal, especially in the *parades* performed outside the theatre to entice in passers-by.

Authors believed that their works had to be vulgar and obscene in order to cater to the low taste of the common people. For example, in the *parade* *Le Marchand de merde* by Thomas-Simon Gueulette, a well-known barrister of the Parlement of Paris, Gilles learns from Arlequin how to become a successful salesman of excrement.

The nature of *opéra comique* as a popular entertainment operating under difficult circumstances prescribed a deliberate simplicity of means in the musical score. The orchestras...

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19. Not the least of its problems was the fact that its legal status was, for the better part of the eighteenth century, the subject of continual judicial challenge: “One is inclined to believe that *opéra-comique* came into being through the constant pressure and persecution exerted by the two privileged royal institutions on the illegitimate stage, the *théâtre de la foire*. The *Comédie Française* prevented the performance of spoken plays and the *Académie Royale de Musique* in-
tra, which provided overtures, dances and descriptive symphonies, comprised less than a
dozen players, and the vocal score, when not parodying some recent production of the
*Académie royale de musique*, was fashioned from well-known popular songs fitted with new
words. Songs created in this way, known as *vaudevilles*, had been sung in France since
the early sixteenth century. They provided a light touch of musical colouring to the farces
and comedies of the fair that was suited both to the limited means available for their perfor-
mand to the varied nature of the audiences which they were likely to attract. The ex-
treme simplicity of this type of music is described by Robert Isherwood in the following
terms:

The vaudeville airs were lively and catchy. The rhythms were animated, usually in
6/8 or 3/4 time with words, notes and beats in perfect cadence. Each phrase of the re-
frain was repeated twice and the first phrase recurred twice again at the end. This
AA, BB, AA pattern enabled people to remember the tunes easily. The simplicity of
the melody and harmony served the same end. Melodic intervals were seldom
greater than a third. The refrains were adorned with onomatopoeia in the form of
imitations of the sounds of beating drums and trumpet fanfares.

During the eighteenth century *opéra comique* developed rapidly as a genre. In the
1740s and 1750s a greater place was given to original vocal music as *ariettes* patterned after
the style of formal Italian *arias* were gradually introduced. After the *Guerre des bouffons*
sisted on its monopoly in presenting works which were sung from the beginning to the end.” Paul
Henry Láng, “Literary Aspects of the History of Opera in France” (Ph.D. diss., Cornell Univer-

20. “A *vaudeville* was any song whose melody had long since passed into public domain. It was identi-
ified textually by a *timbre* which was a title usually based on the first line of the refrain by which
the original tune was generally known. The entire melody of the song, tagged by this *timbre*, was
known as a *fredon*. The tunes were folk-like with repeated, simple rhythmic patterns and a nar-
row melodic range ... Any tune that caught the public’s fancy was a likely candidate for the grow-

21. Useful to the arranger of *vaudeville* tunes were such publications as J.B.C. Ballard’s compilation
entitled *La Clef des chansonniers, ou Recueil des vaudevilles depuis cent ans et plus, notez et
recueillis pour la première fois* (Paris: Mont-Parnasse, 1717); Alain-René Lesage’s *Le Théâtre de la
Foire ou l’Opéra-Comique contenant les meilleures pièces qui ont été représentées aux foires de S.
Germain et de S. Laurent*, 10 vols. (Paris: Étienne Ganeau, 1721-37); and P. Capelle’s *La Clef du
caveau*, published at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

of the early 1750s, *opéra comique* began to develop its own distinctive musical personality in the works of such composers as Egidio Duni, François-André-Danican Philidor, Pierre-Alexandre Monsigny and above all André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry. But from its beginnings in the early entertainments of the foire to its late eighteenth-century flowering in the works of Grétry, *opéra comique* retained its roots in the popular good humour of the common folk. It retained as well its appeal as a theatrical genre in which simplicity and transparency were the most prized qualities of its musical score, and in which music was expected to be a discrete background element against the foreground interest of its witty dialogue and its engaging comic or sentimental dramatic action.

In both the comic and tragic genres of opera, then, the French displayed a greater interest in opera as dramatic literature than as music. It was principally the dramatic action on stage that held their attention, and it was the text beneath the score that represented to them the major creative achievement in each work. Such an attitude encouraged in French writing on the theatre the application of a single critical perspective to the productions of the spoken and lyric theatres alike, and set important limitations on the appreciation of the uniquely musical qualities of French opera, as will now be discussed.

**Critical Writing about Music before 1800**

The nature of Lullyan opera as a mixed genre, and the prestige that accrued from its status at court as French national art, set the stage for its own critical reception by

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littérateurs, rather than by musicians. Tragédie lyrique was judged against the standards of purity and intellectual clarity applied to the tragedies of Corneille and Racine, and inevitably found wanting. The very idea of this mixture of music with tragedy, along with its attendant elements of spectacle — not to mention its "corrupting" themes of love — drew fire from many literary critics who considered it a serious debasement of French drama which threatened to sensationalize and pervert the ancient form of tragedy on which it was modeled.

Music, far from being judged on its own merits, was frequently criticized as merely another of the sensual charms debasing this pure and noble literary genre.

The seventeenth-century critical reception of French opera, then, was largely concerned with its very validity as a mixed genre. La Bruyère complained that it offered nothing for the mind and that it was, in fact, rather boring, "faute de théâtre, d'action, et de choses qui intéressent." Saint-Evremond was more direct. He applied to opera the criteria of verisimilitude used in spoken stage presentations and thought that the whole concept of a dramatic work presented completely in song was utterly propositious, totally unrealistic, and consequently doomed to fail. Boileau even doubted whether music could contribute in any way at all to the presentation of dramatic material since it was unable to tell a story, but

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25. "... there is nothing so ridiculous as having an action sung, whether it be the deliberation of a Council, the giving of orders in battle, or any thing else you like. Where the Gods are concerned there may be singing: every Nation has worshipped them in song, and chanted their praises. We can sing what we feel and suffer, for grief and affection are naturally expressed by a kind of tender and melancholy song. But our actions require no other expression but the spoken word." Letter to Monsieur d'Hervart (4 February 1674/5), in The Letters of Saint-Evremond, trans. and ed. by John Hayward (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1930), pp. 161-62.

26. "... on ne peut jamais faire un bon Opera: parce que la Musique ne scéroit narrer. Que les passions n'ye peuvent este peintes dans toute l'estendue qu'elles demandent. Que d'ailleurs elle ne scéroit souvent mettre en chant les expressions vraiment sublimes et courageuses." "Avertissement au lecteur," Œuvres complètes de Boileau, edited by Françoise Escal (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1966), p. 277. The influence of this opinion lasted into the late eighteenth century as evidenced by Beaumarchais' quoting of this passage from Boileau in his Preface to Tarare (1787).
warned against the danger that such works represented to the moral rectitude of young girls who might succumb to thoughts of love and other "operatic" emotions while in the grip of its music.\(^\text{27}\)

And so it was that much of the "music criticism" of the seventeenth century is not about music at all; rather, it is quite plainly about literature and about theories of propriety in dramatic art. The *music* in opera was almost transparent to the seventeenth-century critics who talk about it, since

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\text{music was still regarded almost as a department of manners, and even the critical systems propounded in the France of Louis XIV approached it first through ethics and then through literature.}\(^\text{28}\)
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The resistance of the literary establishment to a serious consideration of opera as an independent genre, in effect "finding fault with opera for being sung, and with the libretto for being tailored to a musical setting,"\(^\text{29}\) continued in the philosophical and polemical debates of the eighteenth century on the subject of music. With opera established as a permanent form of state-supported art in France, attention then turned to the relative importance to be accorded to its competing elements of music and libretto. This issue dominates the major polemical debates on music in the eighteenth century, as Oliver Strunk points out in his introduction to an excerpt from Raguenet's *Parallèle des Italiens et des Français*:

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27. See Boileau's *Satire X*, lines 125ff.

28. Winton Dean, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "Criticism" (Vol. III, p. 522). Richard Oliver draws a telling comparison between the opera criticism of this age and twentieth-century film reviews: "We praise or condemn a film on the basis of drama or spectacle, as the case may be; almost never on the basis of music. We realize that the music is present, and indeed we should notice its absence; but we never make a point of praising a film because of its musical excellence. This was precisely the reaction of classical critics to opera. Their criticism of the opera was based chiefly on literary and dramatic grounds." *The Encyclopedists as Critics of Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), p. 9.

With the Abbé François Raguenet ... began the impassioned and obstinate controver­
sies about the opera that were to hold under their sway the artistic and literary circles
in France throughout the eighteenth century. No matter whether the controversy
was fought out between the followers and detractors of Lully, as was the case with
Raguenet and Le Cerf de la Viéville; whether it was transferred to the field of comic
opera, as in the “Querelle des Bouffons” ... or whether it assumed the aspect of a
fight for or against the major operatic reform embodied in the works of C. W. Gluck
... the underlying issue was fundamentally the same — should the musical expression
in the opera be entirely autonomous, or should it be determined by the exigencies of
the dramatic action?30

On the surface these controversies often appeared framed in terms of national cultural
rivalries between France and Italy, but even the terms “French” and “Italian” could not re­
ally be called valid labels during this century. Rameau, for example, was first accused of
being too italianate when Italian music was thought to be complex and confusing, and then
not italianate enough when, during the Guerre des bouffons, Italian music was held up as
the model of simplicity. Louis Striffling points out that because French musical taste was so
conservative, and because the essential style of opera created by Lully changed so little up
until the time of Gluck, those who were bored with this style and attracted to innovation of
any sort enrolled naturally under the banner of Italian music.31 While the circulation of
ideas about music increased in the eighteenth century, and while music figured among the
topics argued about by some of the age’s most intelligent writers, it could not be said that
music criticism, in the sense of critical judgements about individual musical works, existed at
a very advanced stage. In the polemical debates of the eighteenth century the merit of the
individual musical work was not the point; the issues discussed really centred in essence
around much larger aesthetic questions concerning entire national schools of composition,
and justifications for broad aesthetic positions that often mixed political, literary and musi­
cal issues together.

31. Louis Striffling, Esquisse d’une histoire du goût musical en France au XVIIIe siècle (Paris:
The polemical and philosophic debates about music's place in opera were not the only avenue for discussion of music and musical events, however. Since the early part of the seventeenth century, music had been "covered" as a news item by the first developing organs of the French press.\(^{32}\) By the middle of the eighteenth century the number of periodical publications dealing with music in some way — in direct discussion, publicizing of musical events, or by the inclusion of engraved music — began to grow substantially. The musical commentary contained in these general interest journals is for the most part insubstantial. Many were content to register the success or failure of the works reviewed, or to devote most of their discussion to a superficial commentary on the performers. The works themselves, if discussed at all, might be approached in two ways, according to Lionel de la Laurencie: by discussing the way in which the music fitted to the words, or by indicating musical patterns of contrast and opposition.\(^{33}\) Vague characterizing adjectives were, for the most part, the stock in trade of the writer discussing musical events in the popular press. Frédéric Hellouin notes, with regard to reviews of operatic productions in the *Mercure*:

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... \text{dans les articles réservés aux théâtres musicaux, toujours quelques mots seulement} \\
\text{— où il est généralement question de « simplicité », de « variété », de « majesté noble » — seront consacrés à la musique. Seul le livret aura le privilège de retenir la sollicitude. Pendant tout le cours du XVIIIe siècle, il en sera de même.}^{34}
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Hellouin notes further that other genres of music, reviewed in other publications, offered little more by way of informed commentary:

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\text{En effet, notamment dans le *Mercure*, les *Annonces, affiches et avis divers*, l'\textit{Avant-Coureur}, la *Gazette de France*, le *Journal encyclopédique*, le *Journal étranger*, le}
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32. The first of these was the *Gazette* of Théophraste Renaudot, first published in 1639, in which the first performances of Italian opera in France during the 1740s are discussed. In 1672 appeared *Le Mercure galant*, which in its long run (it lasted until 1792) published a continuous chronicle of musical events.


Bref, tout cela reste très insignifiant.^^

Yet another indication of the slow development of music criticism in France is given in the fact that the specialized musical press did not permanently take root in France until relatively late: until the publication of Fétis's Revue musicale in the 1827. During their short, and often erratic schedule of publication, such specialized journals as Le Sentiment d'un harmoniphile, the Journal de musique historique, théorique et pratique (1770-1771), continued as Journal de musique par une Société d'amateurs (1773-1777), the Correspondance des amateurs musiciens (1802-1805), the Journal de Musique et des Théâtres de tous les pays... (1804) and Les Tablettes de Polymnie(1810-1811), increased the range of articles offered to the public on French musical life. Yet despite the increased availability of historical essays, letters to the editor on topics of musical interest, reviews of recent performances and publications, and information about composers, performers, publishers and printers, these specialized publications failed to win for themselves a permanent audience.36

The fact that specialized music criticism was in its infancy in France is indicated by the way in which discussion of music was “buried” in amongst other journalistic subject matter in most publications; it had no separate place in the press. Coverage of the opera, for example, the most important form of musical activity reviewed, was entrusted to the same critic who wrote about the spoken theatre, and very frequently this coverage concerned the li-

35. Ibid., pp. 72-73.

bretto alone, which was naturally that part of an opera which was most accessible to a musically untrained littérateur. Indeed, the limited nature of the discussion which this implies was in some quarters raised to the status of an editorial principle. The Mercure galant, for example, writes concerning Rameau's Castor et Pollux in 1737:

... les applaudissements que M. Rameau s'étoit attirés dans ses deux premiers Opéra, donnoient une grande idée du troisième; ce n'est pas à nous à juger si cette idée a été remplie; le Public n'est point encore d'accord sur ce point, et ce n'est que par lui que nous devons nous déterminer : d'ailleurs nos Extraits n'ont ordinairement que le Poëme pour objet. Ce sera donc uniquement sur ce qu'on appelle les paroles que nous nous arrêterons.\(^{37}\)

Hellouin concludes that the eighteenth century failed to produce music criticism of any stature, and the causes lie both with a public that was not inclined to demand or support it, and with a pool of journalistic talent that on the whole was ill-equipped to provide it.

La littérature musicale ne réussissait donc pas à la fin du XVIIIe siècle, et pas plus au commencement du XIXe. Telle est la constatation qu'il faut se résigner à faire. A cela il y avait une double cause: l'indifférence du public et des professionels de la musique pour toutes les questions se rattachant à celle-ci, et la médiocrité des écrits d'alors.\(^{38}\)

The nineteenth century begins a new era in the history of the press in general, and one which has important repercussions for the development of music criticism. It was in the opening decade of the nineteenth century that the Journal des débats, the newspaper for which Castil-Blaze was to write, rose to prominence. An important factor contributing to its success was the readership attracted by its dramatic critic, Julien-Louis Geoffroy, who wrote a regular series of reviews for the Débats between 1800 and 1814 in the new journalistic form, known as the feuilleton, invented at this newspaper. The feuilleton was crucially im-

\(^{37}\) Quoted in Hellouin, Essai de critique, p. 72. By contrast, Germany had begun much earlier to develop specialized musical publications — with Mattheson's Critica musica (Hamburg, 1722) — and had firmly established itself by the end of the century with the Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung (1798-1848).

\(^{38}\) Hellouin, Essai de critique, p. 76.
important in gaining a wider audience for critical writing about musical events and performances. Few journalistic vehicles allowed music criticism to reach a wider audience in the nineteenth century than the *feuilleton* of the French daily newspapers. Furthermore, few daily newspapers reached as many readers, and none was as intellectually prestigious, as the *Journal des débats*. And no critic represented more concretely than did Geoffroy the characteristics of eighteenth-century critical writing that hindered the development of nineteenth century music criticism — the combination of a zealous literary orientation, blatant musical illiteracy and the respect of a large and devoted public following.

Before beginning a discussion of the ways in which Castil-Blaze contributed to the development of music criticism in the nineteenth century, it would be well to discuss first the early history of the publication for which he wrote, the *feuilleton* form which he inherited, and the first charismatic practitioner of *feuilleton* journalism, Julien-Louis Geoffroy.

**The *Journal des débats*, the Feuilleton, and Geoffroy**

The *Journal des débats et des décrets* had begun in August of 1789 as little more than an account of the proceedings of the *Assemblée nationale.* In those unstable times, publishing the verbatim record of political speeches in the Assembly was an effective means of feeding the public's desire for news while not running afoul of the stringent censorship laws of the time. In the decade that followed its founding, the *Journal des débats* had gradually diversified its content to include other material as well such as foreign news and stock mar-

ket reports, along with the occasional review of theatrical performances.  

The decisive step which transformed the *Journal des débats* into the influential force that it was to become in the nineteenth century was its acquisition in late January of 1800 by François and Louis Bertin. These innovative proprietors sought a means for distinguishing this newspaper from the many others that competed for the attention of the reading public. After the bloody excesses of the Terror, political reporting seemed to be a particularly dangerous field for innovation, one which offered little scope for journalistic development. The brothers Bertin therefore sought to transform their newspaper into a first-rate journal of ideas which would boldly exploit the one area in which freedom of expression was still guaranteed: literary and theatrical criticism.

The journalistic vehicle of this strategy was the *feuilleton*, an area reserved for arts criticism that ran across the bottom third of each page, separated by a solid line from the political reporting and other general news reports above. This mixing of political and arts reporting in a single daily newspaper was a novelty that had just recently been introduced in France at the end of the eighteenth century, and one which the *Journal des débats* used to great advantage to establish itself in the journalistic market. Before this time, periodicals had generally been much more specialized in their content, and much less frequent in their distribution. As a consequence, Parisians wishing both timely and specialized reporting in both the political and artistic spheres would have had to subscribe to several different publications. The success of the *feuilleton* form in response to these needs was amply proven


41. The brothers Bertin, known as Bertin l'aîné and Bertin de Veaux, respectively, were important figures in the development of the French press. The *Journal des débats* stayed in their family until the end of the nineteenth century. Bertin l'aîné is well-known as the subject of a famous portrait by Ingres.


44. Timely reporting in the arts was particularly scarce since most journals specializing in literature or
by the fact that shortly after its appearance the *Journal des débats* began to gain subscribers at the expense of other journals, eventually attaining a readership of over 30,000.45

But perhaps the most striking feature of the *Journal des débats* in its early years, and that which distinguished it from all other publications, was its choice of critic to fill the post of *feuilletoniste*: Julien-Louis Geoffroy.46 So well-known was Geoffroy in his post at the *Débats* that even when other major newspapers were forced to imitate the *Débats* by beginning a *feuilleton* of their own, Geoffroy’s article was still referred to generically as simply “*le feuilleton*” and he himself as “*le Père Feuilleton.*”47

Geoffroy’s appeal was broad, since his purview was the entire range of theatrical activities in Paris. His articles, which appeared regularly every two or three days from 1800 to 1814, covered such diverse repertoires as the tragic and comic productions of the Théâtre-Français, the musical productions of the Opéra, Opéra-Comique and Théâtre de l’Impératrice (i.e., Théâtre-Italien), as well as the variegated theatrical offerings of theatres such as the Odéon, the Porte-Saint-Martin, Théâtre du Vaudeville and others. Geoffroy reviewed everything, including *drames*, *mélodrames*, and even the occasional tightrope walker and highwire dancer.

The theatre were either weeklies or monthlies. An exception was the *Courrier des théâtres*, a daily published between 1795 and 1807.

45. “Quoi qu’il en soit, le feuilleton de Geoffroy, ce compte-rendu sans façon, vif, alerte, moqueur, ingénieux, savant, fut de plus en plus goûté, et le *Journal des Débats* eut bientôt 32,000 abonnés dans cette grande France qui lui faisait Napoléon.” Hatin, *Histoire du Journal en France*, p. 134. One indication of the commercial success enjoyed by the *Débats* is the fact that the *Courrier des théâtres*, its most direct competitor in specialized theatre criticism, was forced to join with the *Courrier de l’Europe* in 1807, which was subsequently absorbed by the *Journal de Paris* in 1811.

46. Geoffroy is discussed in most of the studies of the *Journal des débats* cited above (see n. 39 above). Shelagh Aitkin’s doctoral dissertation, “Music Criticism in France during the First Empire,” (University of Chicago, 1985) gives a review of pertinent literature about Geoffroy, but adds little to it. By far the most comprehensive study is that by Charles-Marc Des Granges, *Geoffroy et la critique dramatique sous le Consulat et l’Empire (1800-1814)* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1897). Geoffroy’s major feuilletons on the lyric theatre may be found in the *Cours de littérature dramatique, ou Recueil par ordre de matières des feuilletons de Geoffroy*, Vol. 5 (Paris: Pierre Blanchard, 1820).

Geoffroy’s popularity may be attributed to the engaging combination of scholarly erudition and journalistic flair which characterized his writing. As a docteur agrégé of the Faculty of Arts and a former professor of rhetoric at the Collège de Navarre and Collège Mazarin in Paris, Geoffroy’s academic credentials were very much in order (as he was not above reminding his readers). He had been the principal editor of the literary journal *L’Année littéraire* from 1776 to 1790 and co-founder of the short-lived royalist periodical *L’Ami du roi* (1790-92). He was thus well acquainted with a wide range of journalistic writing styles, from the poised formal set pieces of literary reviewing to the more agile verbal fencing of the polemical essay. Geoffroy used his distinguished academic reputation and his long years of experience (he was 56 when he began writing for the *Débats*) to create a style of critical article that dazzled his readers, and left his competitors gasping in exasperation. Gone was the traditional formal structure of the literary set piece in favour of an unpredictably wide-ranging view of the work being reviewed. Des Granges indicates that in Geoffroy’s articles on tragedy, for example, one might find:

... l’indication des sources anciennes ou étrangères, la comparaison avec les modèles; l’histoire de la pièce, les remaniements, les chutes suivies des succès; les intrigues de l’auteur avec le pouvoir et les confrères; les extraits de la Correspondance, les destinées de telle ou telle tragédie, son influence sur les mœurs en général, sur la Révolution, sur nous-mêmes; le déplacement des effets philosophiques; la polémique avec les journalistes contemporains, avec les pamphlétaires, etc., que sais-je encore? l’étude du style et de la versification ... Combien d’éléments multiples, inépuisables, sans cesse mis en œuvre avec une infatigable animosité!

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48. Des Granges gives an idea of the constituent elements in this established form of literary review: “Geoffroy, à l’*Année littéraire*, suivait la routine de ses prédécesseurs. Il donnait d’abord une analyse de la pièce nouvelle, acte par acte; puis il discutait l’*action*, les *caractères*, le *style* et l’*interprétation*. Du *répertoire*, il n’est point question, ni chez lui, ni chez ses confrères ... si ce n’est pour la rentrée de quelque grand acteur.” Des Granges, Geoffroy, p. 184.

49. Presumably the *Correspondance littéraire*, published by Baron Grimm between 1759 and 1772.

Chapter 1

Complementing Geoffroy’s remarkable versatility and flexible writing style is the high moral tone which characterizes all of his writing. Just as he believed that literary works should be understood within the social and intellectual context of the age in which they were produced, so he repeatedly warned in the sternest terms that the poor quality of many of the stage works of his own age gave evidence of a dangerous decline in standards, both social and intellectual.

Les mauvais auteurs sont une vermine qui ronge la société et l’État ... Toute république sagement constituée doit redouter cette racaille turbulente qui, n’ayant rien à faire, s’ameute dans les tripots littéraires, corrupt l’esprit public, égare l’opinion, répand dans la société des idées fausses qui sont autant de germes de discorde. Tous ces fainéants, soi-disants poètes ou écrivains doivent attirer l’attention de la police, autant que les aventuriers, les aigrefins, les quidams, les chevaliers d’industrie, et tous les gens sans aveau qui n’attendent qu’une bagarre pour faire un coup de main.51

The withering severity of Geoffroy’s criticism was legendary, and it frequently brought him into conflict with many of the important artistic personalities of his day.52 He viewed the entire philosophic movement of the eighteenth century with alarm, seeing it as a corrupting force that had attacked the high standards upheld in the previous century and — worse still — as a direct cause of the breakdown of social order in the Revolution and its bloody aftermath. He continually singled out Voltaire as the worst representative of this century. Even the most celebrated actor of his age, Talma, the favourite of Napoleon, was not spared Geoffroy’s venom, and indeed was one of his frequent targets.53

52. Des Granges devotes 3 entire chapters to the various polemical disputes in which Geoffroy engaged, with a chapter each given to his quarrels with pamphleteers, with fellow journalists and with authors.
53. Talma is said to have become so irritated with Geoffroy that he actually slapped him in the face in the middle of the foyer of the Théâtre-Française, according to the Dictionnaire Larousse du XIXe siècle (s.v. “Feuilleton,” Vol. VIII, p. 311). Napoleon seems nonetheless to have been extraordinarily indulgent towards Geoffroy. For example, when the Journal des débats was placed under the control of a state-appointed censor, Geoffroy’s feuilleton was specifically exempted from censorship, and remained so until his death in 1814.

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While the Parisian public was enormously entertained by the ongoing gladiatorial spectacle of Geoffroy's rigorous standards locked in mortal combat with current theatrical offerings, they were also extremely impressed by it. Charles-Marc Des Granges believes that the receptivity of the Parisian public for a figure such as Geoffroy — one who invested his work with such intellectual and moral authority that he held even his own readers in disdain — may be explained by the need of his public to find a link to a theatrical tradition whose continuity had been ruptured by the events of the 1790s. In short, the parvenu audiences of the Empire were all too aware of their intellectual and social shortcomings, and were willing to "go back to school" under the knuckle-rapping professorial figure that Geoffroy represented.

It is noteworthy that Geoffroy, like his journalistic predecessors from the eighteenth century, was eager to do battle with the repertoires of both the musical and the spoken theatres outfitted with his literary armour alone. Geoffroy was brazenly illiterate in music, and the mere topic of his musical credentials has evoked commentary from historians which, in its derisive tone, is worthy of Geoffroy himself.

... il est inutile d'ajouter que, sous le rapport de la technique musicale, il était l'incompétence même.55

... ce critique, justement célèbre en beaucoup de choses, était d'une stupidité rare en musique.56

Geoffroy's long experience with the theatre had not left him completely bereft of any musical sense. There was much musical theatre that he enjoyed immensely, and praised in

54. In particular Des Granges believes that the emigration of many aristocrats after the Revolution deprived Parisian theatres of its most knowledgeable audience members, and that the break-up, in the 1790s, of the company of actors that had composed the Théâtre-Français robbed the stage of many performers with first-hand knowledge of theatrical practices under the Ancien Régime. Des Granges, Geoffroy, pp. 125-127.


his feuilletons. But the sort of theatre which he enjoyed and praised fell within the narrow confines of what he considered to be “music’s place” in the dramatic realm.

The operas comiques of Grétry, for example, knew “music’s place” and hence garnered his sincere praise for their witty combination of music and text. In the older opéra comique genre he felt well oriented because of the clearly deferential role that music takes to the dramatic text, and because of the prominence of the spoken dialogue. But his praise was primarily reserved for the quality of simple tunefulness in these works. Where musical stage works strayed too near the depiction of human passions, which he considered the proper domain of language, he complained loudly against the trespass of music on the domain of literature. His general mistrust of serious opera as a genre, for example, could have been written in the seventeenth century, as he himself admits:

> Je pense de ce théâtre comme La Bruyère ... j’y éprouve toujours le même ennui dont se plaignait l’auteur des Caractères, sans expliquer la cause. La littérature est presque étrangère à ce genre de spectacle ...

Indicative of his conservative approach to the place of music in opera are his views of Gluck, whose works are especially troubling for him. Geoffroy might well admit that Gluck was a man of talent, even of genius, but he thought that in general he was the propogator of a “false system” that purported to be creating tragedy in music, something which, according to him, simply could not be done. Gluck’s music was fine when it was tuneful, or picturesque, but Gluck’s recitatives, which usurp the place of language, are by comparison with spoken theatre “heavy” and “slow.”

> ... il a quelquefois confondu la douceur avec la monotonie, la volupté avec la lenteur.

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57. Article on La Caravane du Caire, in Cours de littérature dramatique, p. 35. In this article, Geoffroy’s musical leanings are expressed in his stated wish that Grétry had made this more musically developed opera into a simple opéra comique like Zémire et Azor.

Ce grand compositeur, qui pouvait tout ce qu’il voulait, a été trop souvent égaré par un faux système de mélopée et de déclamation musicale qui dénature le véritable idiom de son art: il voulait faire des tragédies en musique, et rapprocher la mélodie de la déclamation théâtrale. Avec ce principe, on ne fait ni musique ni tragédie: on fait seulement une grande dépense d’harmonie et de génie, pour fatiguer les auditeurs. Une tragédie bien déclinée par d’excellens acteurs, sera toujours plus agréable et plus intéressante que la même tragédie en récitatif ...

La musique affaiblit et dégrade tous les genres auxquels on la marie : un grand opéra n’est pas plus une tragédie qu’un opéra comique n’est une comédie : et même la musique aurait encore plus de prise sur les sentiments de la comédie que sur les passions de la tragédie. 59

Ou parlez, ou chantez, il n’y a pas de milieu; mais ne me donnez pas pour de la musique un débit corrompu et dénaturé par la servitude de la note. 60

All of this “complication,” this “noise” and “fracas” was, for Geoffroy, just a passing fashion of Gluck’s time, related, naturally, to the lack of moral fibre in the nation. His view is predicated on the idea that music is something which is intrinsically exterior to drama, like costuming, or set design; it is something that reflects the time, but does not go deeper into the portrayal of character or action. 61

Geoffroy, writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the period immediately preceding the arrival of Castil-Blaze in Paris, is still firmly ensconced in the tradition of the literary appreciation of musical stage works that begins in the seventeenth century. The important difference, however, is that his voice is no longer an elitist one, directed at the intelligensia or the aristocracy; rather, he is unquestionably the most popular and most frequently read critic in the daily newspapers of Paris. Obviously Geoffroy was widely followed for reasons other than his piercing insight into the development of French music, and

59. Ibid. p. 16.
60. Ibid., p.30.
61. At the end of his article on Gluck’s Armide, for example, he lists a few bright moments in an otherwise boring three-hour operatic spectacle, as if they were of equivalent value: the décor, the ballets, the rain of fire effect, and the occasional “trait de génie de Gluck.” Cours de littérature dramatique, p. 15
despite the substantial number of his feuilletons dealing with the lyric theatre, he seems not to have been challenged by his contemporaries on his lack of musical knowledge. Geoffroy, his polemical adversaries, and his readers alike, seemed all to have agreed that criticism of the lyric theatre, in the opening decades of the nineteenth century, was still a literary affair alone.

Geoffroy’s lack of musical education, of musical insight — his lack, even, of musical sympathy — do not disqualify him as an important predecessor of Castil-Blaze at the Journal des débats. By establishing the theatrical feuilleton as such a strong journalistic vehicle for criticism, with its characteristic mixture of scholarly familiarity with past traditions and polemical interest in new developments, Geoffroy created a model which Castil-Blaze’s own learning and flair for written expression made it easy to adapt to create the musical feuilleton. The smug self-assurance with which Castil-Blaze dismisses his polemical opponents for their lack of erudition, his command of a wide range of subject matter, as well as the overwhelming force of moral conviction that emanates from his many proposed reforms of musical life, identify him as a direct inheritor of Geoffroy’s powerful journalistic legacy.

New Conditions of Musical Life in Restoration Paris

The death of Geoffroy in February of 1814 created considerable speculation as to the choice of his successor in the post of feuilletoniste. No less than seventeen pretenders to the throne of dramatic criticism were eagerly waiting in the wings, according to an article in the Débats of 7 March 1814. After a short period in which the reviewing responsibilities of the feuilletoniste were divided between several of the Débats’ writers, and a further reorganization after the first Bourbon Restoration, there emerged by the end of the year a permanent

successor — Pierre Duvicquet.63

Duvicquet was an academic like Geoffroy, a staunch supporter of the classics, and an opponent of "romantic" innovation,64 but his tone was more moderate and less biting. In matters of music, however, he could be every bit as intolerant as his distinguished predecessor, waxing archaically vexed, it seems, at the mere presence of music in combination with classical drama.

Recent publishing activities, however, indicate that there was a growing market in Paris for specialized reporting on music. Since the founding of the Conservatoire in 1795 Paris had become a major centre of music education, and a growing number of teaching texts and method books had appeared on the market. A particularly important figure in this development was Alexandre Choron, founder of the Institution Royale de Musique Classique et Religieuse, who published an impressive number of pedagogical works in the early part of the nineteenth century.65 An indication of the variety and range of works newly becoming available is found in César Gardeton's Annales de la musique, ou Almanach musical, published in two yearly volumes (1819 and 1820),66 which attempted to provide an organized listing of

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63. Pierre Duvicquet (1766-1835) was a lawyer and politician who had held many administrative posts in the 1790s. After holding office briefly in the magistrature under the Consulat, he left administrative and political life to teach at the Lycée Napoléon until joining the Journal des débats as drama critic in 1814. He remained as feuilletoniste for the spoken theatre until replaced by Jules Janin in 1835.

64. "Il défendit avec autant de bravoure que d'urbanité le drapeau de l'école classique contre les attaques des barbares : c'est ainsi qu'on appelait alors les romantiques." Grand Dictionnaire universel, s.v. "Duvicquet" (Vol. VI, p. 457).

65. In collaboration with Fayolle, Choron published the Dictionnaire historique des musiciens, artistes et amateurs, morts et vivants (Paris, 1811). The extraordinary range of Choron's pedagogical activities in the ensuing period may be seen in the following partial list of his works published in the second decade of the century: Méthode élémentaire de musique et de plain-chant (1811); Traité général des voix et des instrumens d'orchestre (1813); Méthode élémentaire de composition (1814); Méthode concertante de musique à plusieurs parties (1815); Le Musicien pratique (1816); Exposition élémentaire des principes de la musique (1819); Cours élémentaire de musique, solfège et chant (1820).

66. The two volumes of the Annales de la musique, ou Almanach musical have been reprinted as Tome V in the series Archives de l'édition musicale française (Geneva: Minkoff Reprints, 1978).
the institutions and activities that were contributing to the burgeoning musical life of the capital during this period. Not only do these volumes contain a bibliographical compilation of recent available musical publications and engravings, but also lists of inventors and instrument manufacturers, an address list of prominent composers, singers and instrumental performers in Paris and the provinces, as well as a month-by-month review of important musical events, and even a detailed price list of seats in the major Parisian theatres. While Gardeton's attempts at bibliography were far from systematic, and his journal foundered after its second yearly issue in 1820, the appearance of this type of publication — and that of his similar Bibliographie musicale published in 1822 — indicate that the level of musical activity in Paris was becoming such as to attract increasing attention from the press.

The opening years of the Bourbon Restoration saw a substantial rise as well in theatrical activity due to the easing of the former Napoleonic restrictions on the number and types of theatres permitted to operate in the capital, and due as well to the return of many theatre-loving emigrés to France after the re-establishment of the Bourbon monarchy. Representative of this expansion in theatrical activity was the opening in 1820 of the Gymnase Dramatique, a type of “farm league” theatre mandated to present excerpted fragments from the standard repertoire (either spoken theatre or comedies with interspersed songs), and to generate experienced performers for promotion to the state-subsidized royal theatres. In the same

67. Fétis is particularly disdainful of Gardeton’s methods and approach. See his Biographie universelle des musiciens, s.v. “Gardeton, César.”


69. After the liberté des théâtres was declared in 1791, a great many theatres and theatrical entertainments came into existence, including those featuring acrobatic displays, equestrian events, and many with overtly political content. By the decree of 29 July 1807 Napoleon re-introduced government regulation of the theatres, reducing the number of establishments permitted to operate under the title of “theatre” to eight: the four royal theatres (Opéra, Opéra-Comique, Odéon, Théâtre Français) and four secondary theatres (Vaudeville, Gaité, Variétés, Ambigu-Comique). The Gymnase Dramatique was the first new secondary theatre licenced to open since the decree of 1807.
year, a new modern opera house was being built for the Académie royale de musique. But perhaps the phenomenon with the greatest impact on musical life in this period — the phenomenon which represented the greatest challenge for musical criticism — was the rise of Italian opera in Paris.

Italian opera was hardly new to the capital, but it was only in the early nineteenth century that it had joined the ranks of the official Parisian musical establishment, with its own officially-sanctioned theatre space in which to perform and, most importantly, its own state subsidy. The Théâtre-Italien was officially established in Paris by decree in 1801 and its performances were at first restricted to Italian opera buffa, but in 1810 opera seria was added to its repertoire. Its operation from 1818 to 1827 under the tutelage of the Académie royale de musique gave it the additional orchestral, choral and staging resources needed to eclipse in popularity the Opéra itself. Italian opera became fashionable as never before, serving eventually as a common literary backdrop in the novels of Stendhal and Balzac.

Le Théâtre italien entre alors dans la phase la plus glorieuse de son histoire. Il était déjà de bon ton de « se montrer aux Italiens » sous l’Empire. Sous la Restauration, c’est une nécessité, du moins si l’on prétend appartenir à une certaine élite intellectuel et sociale. Le thème de « la loge aux Italiens » devient alors — et pour de longues années — un thème littéraire.

The driving force behind the dramatic increase in popularity of Italian opera was undoubtedly the introduction to Paris of the works of Rossini, and the concomitant appearance on French stages and in French concerts of the finest Italian singers in Europe. During the Restoration, the Parisian public heard over a dozen of Rossini’s works — many under

71. Jean Mongrédié, La Musique en France, p. 132.
72. These included the Italian operas Il Barbiere di Siviglia, Semiramide, Zelmira, L’Italiana in Algeri, Tanerodi, La Cenerentola, La Gazza ladra, Mosè in Egitto, La Donna del lago, Mathilde di Sabran, Il Viaggio a Reims, and Il Turco in Italia; the French adaptations of Maometto secondo as Le Siège de Corinthe and Mosè in Egitto as Moïse; the opéra comique Le Comte Ory; and
the composer’s own direction during his tenure as director of the Théâtre Italien from 1824 to 1826 — performed by singers such as the sopranos Maria Malibran, Laure Cinti-Damoreau, Joséphine Mainvielle-Fodor and Henriette Sontag, basses Filippo Galli and Luigi Lablache, tenors Giovanni Battista Rubini and Antonio Tamburini, and above all, the most worshipped of all divas, Giuditta Pasta, whose haunting dramatic presence on stage earned her a following that can only be compared to that of Maria Callas in this century.

This music presented at once a piquant and titillating attraction to French ears and a forthright challenge to established French musical practice of the previous century and a half. Here was dramatic music based frankly on its purely musical appeal.

Alors que ses devanciers se contenaient d’enchaînements banals, d’une instrumentation plus que discrète (la même, à peu près depuis un siècle) pour laisser la première place à la mélodie, lui n’hésitait pas à user continuellement de la modulation, à hérissé sa phrase de dissonances non préparées, d’appoggiatures non résolues, à donner aux instruments une part entière et non plus à les limiter au seul rôle de soutien de la ligne vocale. On sait la surprise causée aux contemporains par les fameux effets du crescendo orchestral qui consiste à faire entrer les pupitres successivement pour parvenir finalement au tutti...73

Rossini and Italian opera were not only a popular success, but — and herein lies the surest sign of its importance in French terms — a subject of polemical debate and controversy among littérateurs. Paris in the Restoration was divided into French traditionalist and Italophile dilettanti musical camps, exchanging polemical volleys by means of monographs and brochures. Prominent on the Rossinist side was Stendhal’s La Vie de Rossini (1823); expressing reservations over the latter’s enthusiasm was Joseph D’Ortigue’s De la guerre des dilettanti (1829,) the opening line of which summarizes well the mark which Rossini’s music had made upon Parisian cultural life:

Guillaume Tell, his last opera.

73. Mongrédién, La Musique en France, p. 135.
Rossini! On a tant parlé de Rossini depuis quelques années; ce nom est devenu si populaire dans le monde musical, qu'il peut paraître superflu d'en parler encore. N'a-t-on pas déjà tout dit sur un compositeur qui semble avoir épuisé tous les genres d'éloges et de critiques? 

At the beginning of this period of rising interest in Italian music, and in burgeoning growth of musical life in general, there is evidence that the literary figures employed by the Débats were unequal to the task of writing about the growing importance of musical activities and institutions in the French capital. In the period preceding the arrival of Castil-Blaze in 1820, Duviquest had written about the full range of spoken and lyric theatrical productions — tragedies, comedies, operas, opéras-comiques, ballets, pantomimes with music, vaudevilles — with the notable exception of Italian opera. The first performances of Rossini operas in the period 1817-1819, and the Théâtre-Italien in general, were reviewed under the rubric Mélanges by various writers such as Étienne and Becquet. François-Benoît Hoffman, the librettist of Cherubini's Médée and Spontini's La Vestale, who had written some articles on musical topics during the reign of Geoffroy, also continued to contribute articles on musical events during this period.

It was becoming increasingly clear that writing music criticism for more demanding, more musically educated audiences was not the task for a musically illiterate drama critic. Given the strength of the new vogue for the operas of Rossini and Italian opera in general there must have been a gap in the reviewing staff at the Débats. It is logical, then, in the expansion of musical activity in Paris after the restoration of the Bourbons, that the Parisian


75. The quality of coverage of the Théâtre-Italien would likely have been an important issue for the circulation statistics of the Débats as well, since the clientele of this theatre — aristocratic ex-emigrés for the most part — made up an important part of the paper's readership. It was no coincidence that the musical reviews of La Quotidienne, the Parisian daily of the right-wing Ultra faction in French politics of the time, were overwhelmingly devoted to performances of Italian opera at the Théâtre-Italien.
public should feel the need for intelligent critical commentary on musical topics to match the quality of commentary to which they had become accustomed in the fields of literature, drama and the other arts. It was the high quality of its critical writing that had established the reputation of the *Débats* since it was acquired by the Bertin brothers in 1800, and the leading position of this newspaper in criticism of the arts was confirmed, in the opening years of the Restoration, by the publication of the collected works of two of its major arts journalists, Geoffroy\(^76\) and Dussault.\(^77\) What the *Débats* obviously needed in this period was a critic with musical training, one who could write as engagingly and authoritatively about the Théâtre-Italien as well as the French lyric stage, one who was capable of reviewing recent publications, both scores and pedagogical materials, who took an interest in technological advances in instrument manufacture and who remained abreast of musical developments in other European capitals.

Towards 1820 just such a figure was making his way to Paris from the provinces — François-Henri-Joseph Castil-Blaze.

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76. *Cours de littérature dramatique*, cited in note 46.

77. Jean-Joseph-François Dussault had held the post of literary reviewer at the *Débats* since the time of the invention of the feuilleton in 1800. His collected writings were published as *Annales littéraires, ou choix chronologique des principaux articles de littérature insérés par M. Dussault dans le « Journal des Débats » depuis 1800 jusqu'à 1819 inclusivement, recueillis et publiés par l'auteur des Mémoires historiques sur Louis XVII* (Paris, Maradan, 1818-1824), 5 vol. in-8°.
CHAPTER 2
CASTIL-BLAZE’S DÉBUT IN PARIS
AND DE L’OPÉRA EN FRANCE

Castil-Blaze’s Background

It is a curious phenomenon that one of the strongest influences on musical taste in Paris during the Restoration period was not that of a native Parisian. Rather, it was that of a figure recently arrived from the provinces whose knowledge of the Parisian lyric theatre appears to have been acquired virtually entirely while living away from the French capital. His command of the repertoire, traditions and practices of this stage were authoritative and commanding enough to establish him within a short period of time as Paris’s pre-eminent music critic, indeed the first newspaper critic to devote himself consistently to the discussion of music and musical issues.

The French critic, arranger and writer on music known as Castil-Blaze was born François-Henri-Joseph Blaze in Cavaillon, near Avignon in the department of Vaucluse, in 1784. Published biographical information concerning his early life is sketchy.1 It is known, however, that in 1799 he came to Paris to study law at the University, and that while in the capital he undertook studies as well in music and in painting in addition to his legal studies,

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1. No full-length study of Castil-Blaze’s life has yet been attempted, but relatively short biographical summaries are available in the standard dictionaries and encyclopedias (Fétis’s Biographie universelle, the Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle, La Grande Encyclopédie, Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, The New Grove) and in the memoirs and biographies of his contemporaries. Notable for the fulsome detail of its account, though not for its reliability, is Marie-Louise Pailleron’s anecdotal account of early nineteenth-century French literary life entitled François Buloz et ses amis: La Revue des Deux-Mondes et la Comédie-Française (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, c.1920). The first half of Chapter II of this work (pp. 40ff.) is devoted to “La famille Blaze” and the “Débuts de Castil-Blaze.”
enrolling in harmony and solfège classes at the newly-founded Conservatoire, and apprenticing in the atelier of the painter David.²

In contrast to many young artists sent away to university and forced to overcome parental opposition in order to take musical training — the case of Berlioz springs immediately to mind — the young Castil-Blaze seems rather to have followed in the footsteps of his own father, the notary, composer and novelist Henri-Sébastien Blaze.³ The elder Blaze had also come to Paris when young to receive legal training about a quarter century before, and while there had taken instruction in piano and organ from Séjan.⁴ He had followed an administrative career after returning to his native Cavaillon but had composed as well, and his compositions were particularly well received in Marseille. Henri-Sébastien Blaze was actually in Paris with his son at the time of the latter’s legal, musical and artistic studies around the turn of the century, and the young Castil-Blaze no doubt benefitted from his father’s friendship with such figures as Méhul and Grétry.

Castil-Blaze must have returned to Vaucluse some time toward 1805 and like his father pursued an administrative career there. He is said to have held several administrative posts in Vaucluse, including those of Inspecteur de la Librairie and Sous-préfet. Like his father as

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2. Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) rose to prominence during the Revolutionary period and is best known for his paintings relating the sternness of ancient civic virtue to the zeal of the fledgling French Republic. Marie-Louise Pailleron (op. cit., p. 44) indicates that the figure of Romulus in David’s painting of The Sabines was posed by the young Castil-Blaze. Although Mme Pailleron’s information is often questionable, this anecdote may be true, since Castil-Blaze reveals an in-depth knowledge of David’s creative process and of the genesis of this painting in De l’Opéra en France (Vol. I, pp. 406-407), and seems quite taken with the way in which this figure in particular came out: “Le Romulus de David est un modèle de beauté.” Ibid., p. 130.

3. According to the entry in the Grande Encyclopédie Larousse du XIXe siècle, the compositions of Henri-Sébastien Blaze (1763-1833) include a number of sonatas and instrumental duos, an opera entitled Semiramis (which, though unperformed, earned him a corresponding membership in the Institut), a Requiem and several masses. His literary works include the novel Julien, ou le Prêtre, (1805) and a volume entitled De la nécessité d’une religion dominante en France (1796).

4. Nicolas Séjan (1743-1819), the most celebrated French organ composer of the second half of the eighteenth century, held the post of organist at the church of Saint-Sulpice in Paris and was professor of organ at the Conservatoire.
well, he remained active as a musician. The romances and other light pieces which he composed during this period were published under the pseudonym “Castil-Blaze,” a name that made reference to his own but which would not compromise him in the eyes of his employers.5

At the beginning of the Restoration, Castil-Blaze began to be known in the south of France for his French translations and musical adaptations of Italian operas. In 1817 his French adaptation of Cimarosa’s Il Matrimonio segreto was performed in Nîmes and in 1818 his adaptation of Mozart’s Le Nozze di Figaro in the same city. In 1819 his French version of Rossini’s Barbiere di Siviglia was accepted for performance at the Grand Théâtre de Lyon.6 It was at this time as well — sometime towards 1820 — that he moved to Paris with his wife and three children, bringing with him a number of works for publication, including his French adaptations of Mozart’s Le Nozze di Figaro and Don Giovanni, and his two-volume study of French musical life and institutions entitled De l’Opéra en France. By the early part of 1820 Castil-Blaze had found a publisher for these works in the firm of Janet et Cotelle7 and his career in Paris as a writer about and for the musical stage had begun. The

5. The pseudonym Castil-Blaze, under which he published for the rest of his life, is a French version of Castil-Blazo, the name of the first tutor of the hapless travelling hero of Lesage’s picaresque novel Gil Blas de Santillane. Many of Castil-Blaze’s early romances, the earliest dating from 1808 but the majority from the period 1811-1817, are listed in Rita Benton and Jeanne Halley, Pleyel as Music Publisher: A Documentary Sourcebook of Early 19th-century Music, Annotated Reference Tools in Music No. 3 (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 1990), s.v. “Castil-Blaze” (pp. 44-45).

6. Castil-Blaze’s Le Barbier de Séville was eventually performed in Lyon on 19 September 1821. This production is the subject of Mark Everist’s “Lindoro in Lyon: Rossini’s Le Barbier de Séville,” Acta musicologica (in press), an advance copy of which was most kindly provided to me by the author.

7. The publishing firm of Janet et Cotelle was founded in 1810. Its period of greatest influence was the Restoration and early July Monarchy, and thus paralleled that of Castil-Blaze himself. Like Castil-Blaze as well, it created its success by marketing the works of others. By absorbing other firms (Imbault in 1812; Décobé in 1821; Boieldieu in 1824; Ozi et Cie in 1825) Janet et Cotelle acquired a large stock of plates, and by 1830 were among the largest music publishers of the capital. The bulk of their output consisted of new editions or re-issues of previously published works that they had acquired, but they also published didactic and literary works such as those of Castil-Blaze and Fétis. See D.W. Krummel and Stanley Sadie, Music Printing and Publishing (New York: MacMillan Press, 1990), s.v. “Janet et Cotelle.”
publication of *De l'Opéra en France* in that year is repeatedly quoted as the source of Castil-Blaze's fame, as the work which first brought him to the attention of the Bertin brothers at the *Journal des débats*, and as the work which gained him the post of music critic at that newspaper.\(^8\)

Contemporary discussion of this work shows that the importance of *De l'Opéra* was evident from the very year of its publication. The high-circulation Parisian daily newspaper *Le Constitutionnel* reviewed it very enthusiastically immediately following its appearance,\(^9\) and its second edition, published in 1825, was given a laudatory review by Fétis in one of the first issues of his *Revue musicale*.\(^10\) The work even received high praise in Germany: the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* of Leipzig devoted an extensive two-part article to it in 1822.\(^11\) The German author of this latter review clearly saw *De l'Opéra en France* as an authoritative, even epoch-making work, and in his opening sentence goes so far as to claim that "musical literature had perhaps revealed no work on this subject rendered with such spirit ... and all-encompassing knowledge."\(^12\) Given that it was the publication of *De l'Opéra en France* that is generally credited with obtaining Castil-Blaze his post at the *Journal des

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8. See, for example, the entries under his name in the *Grand Dictionnaire Larousse du XIXe siècle*, *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1927 edition), *The New Grove* (1980), etc.


12. "Die Literatur der Tonkunst hat vielleicht kein Werk über diesen Gegenstand aufzuweisen, welches mit so vieler Wärme ... entworfen und mit so vieler umfassender Kenntnis durchgeführt ist." *Ibid.*, No. 28 (10 July 1822), col. 453. As late as 1835, the writer of the entry under "Castil-Blaze" in the *Encyclopädie der gesammten musikalischen Wissenschaften der Tonkunst* (Stuttgart: Franz Heinrich Köhler, 1835) wrote that he fully concurred with this latter review (Vol. 2, p. 151).
débats, and that the ideas expressed in this work prefigure those in the feuilletons which were to appear in the following twelve years, it would be useful to examine what qualities of this work so captivated both the Parisian reading public that bought it and the Bertin brothers who hired him as their first professional music critic.

De l'Opéra en France

The success of De l'Opéra en France cannot be attributed to its favorable reception by newspaper critics and professional musicians alone, since it was not for these readers that the work was expressly written. Far from being directed to the aspiring professional musician, to the musically trained or even musically literate amateur, this quasi-encyclopedic work sought its readership instead among the general music-loving public. In his opening Avertissement Castil-Blaze states:

Ce livre n'est point fait pour les compositeurs et les érudits, ils en savent tous plus que son auteur. Les bons praticiens y apprendront peu de chose. C'est pour les gens du monde qu'il a été écrit; pour ces amateurs passionnés de musique, qui suivent avec ardeur les messes, les oratorios, les concerts, les opéras, et n'ont cependant ni la doctrine, ni l'exercice de cet art.^^

These “amateurs passionnés” for whom the book was written should not be understood in the Romantic sense as exalted adepts, à la Berlioz, worshipping at the temple of art, for they are in no sense isolated from their fellow men, but rather “gens du monde.” Castil-Blaze takes pains to avoid painting the appreciation of music as either an arcane art or as melomaniac ecstasy. The only prerequisite of those who would read his book seems to be a simple enjoyment of music, an enjoyment which he describes as being as natural as a walk in

the garden. Castil-Blaze’s intended reader need only have the ability to listen to the songs of
birds and to concertos with equal pleasure, as if they were extensions of the same experience.

By having explained to them “les moyens et les résultats” of the art of music, readers
are promised that they will learn to speak intelligently about their amorphous musical im-
pressions and so become articulate in the art of cultured conversation about music. They
will be able to speak about it intelligently in society, as the average cultured bourgeois, per-
haps, would be expected to be able to speak about art or literature. Music is thus portrayed
as a cultural attainment, as a social grace, a living skill for those who must deal with the
large quantity of discussion on musical topics encountered in salons, in theatre foyers, in
cafés and in the newspapers. It is in these venues, Castil-Blaze states, where musical opinion
is most in need of correction.

As much as De l’Opéra en France is written for the general public, it is also explicitly
written against the prevailing troupe of “savans et littérateurs parfaitement étrangers à cette
matière”15 who are responsible for most of the current books and articles on music, and
whose unhealthy influence, in Castil-Blaze’s view, is lamentably evident in the above-men-
tioned venues where music comes under discussion. According to Castil-Blaze, the latter
have not only been of little assistance in helping the public to understand the issues most fre-

14. Ibid., pp. i-ii.
15. Ibid., p. iii.
quentely discussed, but they have in fact been the source of many new errors and have spread many heresies.16

Thus, Castil-Blaze's book is not about how to write music, i.e., how to find musical ideas and connect them together effectively and appropriately. It is essentially a book about how to judge music, i.e., how to tell what is good music and what is bad music, and how to talk about the difference and defend one's point of view. As stated in the Avertissement, the work is not written for composers, but rather for audiences. It is not a theory treatise, nor is it a harmony text; it is, in fact, one of the first books in the genre of what would nowadays likely be called "music appreciation."

This work by which Castil-Blaze proposes to educate the average citizen, and correct the errors spread by the literarily erudite but musically illiterate, comprises some 650 pages, divided into two halves. The following is its table of contents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tome Premier</th>
<th>Tome Deuxième</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Des paroles</td>
<td>I. Des parties dont se compose un opéra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. De la musique</td>
<td>II. De l'ouverture</td>
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<tr>
<td>III. De l'expression musicale, de l'imitation</td>
<td>III. De l'introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. De la mélodie</td>
<td>IV. Du récitatif</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. De l'harmonie</td>
<td>V. De l'air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. De la composition</td>
<td>VI. Du duo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Des effets de la musique</td>
<td>VII. Du trio, du quatuor, du quintette, du sextuor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Des voix et du chant vocal</td>
<td>VIII. Du finale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. Des emplois et des rôles</td>
<td>IX. Du chœur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. Des instrumens</td>
<td>X. Des airs de danse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. De l'orchestre</td>
<td>XI. De la marche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII. Du chant instrumental</td>
<td>XII. De l'entr'acte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII. De l'accompagnement</td>
<td>XIII. Des traductions, parodies et centons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV. De l'exécution</td>
<td>XIV. S'il faut être musicien pour bien juger de la musique, et pour écrire sur cet art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>XV. De l'opéra en province</td>
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<td>XVI. Des musiciens</td>
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16. Ibid., p. iii.
The first volume deals with the small-scale building blocks which the composer manipulates to create the texture of dramatic music: its words, harmonies, accompanimental patterns, instrumental combinations, orchestral effects, voice ranges, etc. In the second volume Castil-Blaze discusses the various large-scale forms which dramatic music takes on, e.g., overtures, airs, duos, trios, choruses, ensembles, ballets. At the end of the second volume he adds three chapters treating topics of special interest to him: on the prerequisites for writing competently about music in Chapter XIV; on musical life in the provinces in Chapter XV; and about the life led by musicians in Chapter XVI. An Appendix at the end of the second volume features 188 musical illustrations that complement the musical discussion and are referred to in the text.

From a look at this table of contents one might think that one was dealing with an encyclopedia of music, and indeed De l'Opéra en France stands heir to the eighteenth-century example of the Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des arts, des sciences et des métiers in that its stated aim is the democratization of knowledge, and its subtext the subversion of traditional authority. There is, as well, a touch of the philosophe Rousseau in the quotation given above, with its blended appeal to both “man in society,” represented by the sonata and concerto, and to the solitary wandering “man in nature” who listens to the sounds of birds. Above all, the inheritance of the encyclopédistes is most evident in Castil-Blaze's insistence on the concept of progress. As we shall see, his discussion of all the major topics dealing with opera — whether in the creation of more realistic, logical and inherently interesting libretti, in the composition of more dramatically descriptive and densely picturesque music, or in the simple advancement of vocal and instrumental technique — is led by the concept of progress, an idea which lies at the base of the encyclopédiste philosophy as well.

But what would likely be most impressive about such a work as De l'Opéra en France to a reader of 1820 is the authority and breadth of learning with which its author speaks about his subject matter. The range of historical, philosophical and literary sources cited in
his text is extraordinarily wide. From the ancient classics he cites Aristotle, Cicero, Horace and Vergil; from the modern classics Rabelais, Racine, Corneille, Boileau and La Fontaine. Among philosophers and aestheticians he discusses the treatises of Algarotti, Batteux and Boyé, Laborde and Lacépède; among writers on music he cites the historical works of Burney, Forkel and Kalkbrenner as well as the latest instrumental method books of Baillot and Choron. He is extremely well-read in the music criticism of the last 50 years, in particular quoting extensively from the major journalists contributing to the debate surrounding Gluck in the 1770s — La Harpe, Marmontel, Suard, Guingené — as well as from more recent writings by Grétry and Geoffroy, and from current literature by Chateaubriand and Mme de Staël. Adding to the aura of learning surrounding this work is the fact the many quotations are given in the original Latin, Italian, German and even Spanish.

From this wide range of source material Castil-Blaze assembles for his readers a history of the musical stage in France and a description of its resources and characteristic forms. His breadth of reference within the field of musical stage works is as impressive as his knowledge of the secondary literature about it. In his Introduction alone, for example, he mentions over 240 stage works by over 110 authors and composers. In other chapters many stage works are discussed with reference to their first performances, subsequent reprises, the companies and singers performing them, and the repertoires of the theatres at which they were performed.

This collection of dates and facts, of literary sources and philosophical analyses, would make De l'Opéra en France a valuable reference text for anyone interested in the history of the French lyric stage, but what most impressed the critic of Le Constitutionnel who reviewed the work immediately after it appeared, and what he considered the most "modern" part of the work, was the way in which Castil-Blaze managed to draw from this information not only a philosophie of music (i.e., a systematic description of the overarching principles
which govern it) but also an *idéologie*,¹⁷ i.e., an analysis of the reasons behind the development of its central ideas, explaining why they developed in the way in which they did:

> Notre époque le veut ainsi : elle veut qu’en tout on remonte aux principes; la littérature même la plus légère n’a plus la permission d’être frivole et sans but. Il ne faut pas seulement des idées; il faut encore donner la raison de ces idées. Nous dirons presque que le siècle est décidément *idéologue*.... Voyons comment M. Castil-Blaze a suivi l’*idéologie* de la musique.¹⁸

However, where Castil-Blaze’s unique niche as a writer about music resided, and where he set himself apart from even the most cultivated of *littérateurs* before him, was in the way in which he could communicate to his audience the nature of expression in music and the role played by individual musical parameters (e.g., rhythm, mode, harmony and melodic outline) in communicating it. He points out, for example, by means of a side-by-side comparison of the opening of Mozart’s Symphony No. 40 and an operatic air from Nicolo’s opéra comique *Joconde*, how two melodies with very similar outlines, differing only in mode, can produce dramatically different expressive effects:¹⁹

![Symphony and Air Comparison](image)

**Fig. 1.** *De l’Opéra*, Vol. 2, *Planches*, p. 1.

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17. The word *idéologie* was of recent coinage at the time of this review. The *Petit Robert* (1984 edition) defines it as follows: “*IDÉOLOGIE*... (1796; de idéo- et -logie). ¹⁰ Hist. philo. « Science qui a pour objet l’étude des idées, de leurs lois, de leur origine. » (LALANDE).”


Other examples pique the reader's interest by demonstrating the underlying interconnectedness of "cultivated" and "popular" musical styles. By means of other side-by-side comparisons, Castil-Blaze reveals how various airs and ensembles of the great works of the lyric stage, e.g., a trio from *Didon*, an air from *Armide* are only slightly altered versions of popular songs such as *La Bourbonnaise* and *Toto Carabo*. The idea of isolating a single musical parameter to show how fragile and subtle are the determining elements in musical expression is an extraordinarily good teaching technique, and the examples which he gives in the course of this discussion obviously made for very engaging reading. The critic of *Le Constitutionnel* was obviously delighted with them; in fact he admires the entire chapter devoted to *L'Expression musicale*.

Ce chapitre plein de pensées profondes et d'observations fines offre le rapprochement très-piquant de certains airs dont l'expression prend un caractère tout-à-fait différent si l'on change le mode, la mesure, ou le mouvement dans lesquels ils ont été composés; on est étonné de trouver la *Musette de Nina* dans le vaudeville de *Maître-Adam*; la *Bourbonnaise* dans le trio de *Didon*; *Toto Carabo* dans un air d'*Armide*.

Such examples as these are not only instructive, but also entertaining, and it is Castil-Blaze's gift to be able to convince his readers with the force of his arguments on a subject as alien as the technicalities of musical structure while still delighting them with the discovery of new relationships in old and familiar material. *De l'Opéra en France* represents, therefore, not only a compendium of historical information, a footnote-laden treatise on the development of the lyric theatre which enjoyed the respect of the scholarly and critical communities, but also, as previously mentioned, an important early contribution to the field of "music appreciation." In this he anticipates by ten years the next major work in this field, Fétis's

La Musique mise à la portée de tout le monde.22

Extremely important to the success of De l'Opéra en France as a music appreciation text is not only the ingenious presentation of its factual material and the relevance of its examples, but also the engaging style in which it is written. It is a quality which provoked mention in every review of the work. The reviewer in the Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung cited above refers in his first sentence to the great “spirit” (Wärme) which characterizes Castil-Blaze writing.23 Fétis calls Castil-Blaze an “écrivain spirituel” and an “homme d’esprit,” and refers to the “manière piquante” with which he develops his ideas. And the reviewer from Le Constitutionnel devotes almost an entire paragraph to this point:

Le style de M. Castil-Blaze est correct et plein de franchise; et si, comme Buffon l’a dit, le style est l’homme même, on ne peut que prendre une très-bonne idée de l’auteur d’après son ouvrage. Du charme et de l’élévation dans divers passages où ces qualités sont à leur place; enfin, partout la couleur du sujet. Nous avons particulièrement remarqué un récit de la guerre des Gluckistes et des Piccinistes, une description du chant des Oiseaux, une analyse savante des ouvertures du Mariage secret et des Noces de Figaro; enfin, le mérite précieux de cette production, c’est qu’elle instruit en amusant. L’intérêt se soutient du commencement à la fin, tantôt par les faits, tantôt par les raisonnemens.24

Lastly, De l’Opéra en France was an important polemical document that, while teaching and amusing its audience, made important statements about the state of the contemporary lyric theatre. By vigorously confronting such topics as the nature of the traditional opera libretto, the administrative structure of the French national theatres, the unusual manner of classifying lyric voice types in France and of distributing them in stage productions, Castil-Blaze raised important new questions for public debate, questions which challenged the centralized control of state institutions and their repertories by the French government.

22. François-Joseph Fétis, La Musique mise à la portée de tout le monde, exposé succint de tout ce qui est nécessaire pour juger de cet art, et pour en parler sans l’avoir étudié (Paris: Mesnier, 1830).
By so doing, he also raised himself closer to the level of other commentators on public pol-
icy, and to the level of the political journalists whose remarks appeared above the feuilleton
in the pages of the Journal des débats. His authority to speak, like theirs, lay not only in the
knowledge which he had acquired in his subject area, but also in his ability to make practical
application of that knowledge. In this respect, the publicity notice for Castil-Blaze’s French
adaptation of Le Nozze di Figaro which greets the reader at the beginning of Volume I pub-
licizes not only the adaptation which it announces, but Castil-Blaze’s credentials as a
practising musician as well.

Castil-Blaze thus reveals himself to be a writer whose command of music, and of the re-
spect of his audience, is multi-faceted. He is first of all an historical authority on the French
lyric stage. He is furthermore a teacher and popularizer of considerable gifts as well as an
engaging and witty writer. Finally, he is a reformer whose engagement in the practical is-
suces facing the contemporary repertoire is as impressive as his authority over the repertoire
of the past, and is backed up by his experience of writing for the stage.

Castil-Blaze and Geoffroy

By hiring Castil-Blaze as their new musical feuilletoniste the Bertin brothers had, in
many ways, hired another Geoffroy. They had hired a writer of solid erudition with an en-
gaging writing style whose spirited and well documented critiques of the musical practices of
his time separated him cleanly from his contemporaries and made his feuilletons required
reading for Parisian audiences. Indeed, a comparison of Castil-Blaze and Geoffroy has
much to reveal about the changing nature of French theatre journalism in the early nine-
teenth century.
First of all, the regional, intellectual and professional backgrounds of these two writers was entirely different. Castil-Blaze was a provincial, a fact which he advertised in the many anecdotes of provincial musical life interlarding his prose and which was recognizable in the general *verve méridionale* of his writing style. He had of course been given professional training in Paris but had nonetheless spent essentially his entire professional life in the provinces. His taste of musical life in the capital lasted only a few years during his period of study around the turn of the century, and he had spent the better part of his mature life, it appears, viewing Parisian musical life from a distance. The ideas for the reform of musical institutions that he developed over this period, and which he published in *De l'Opéra en France*, bear the common-sense stamp of this long-range, perhaps more “objective” vantage point.

Geoffroy, by contrast, was a lifelong Parisian insider. As a former literary critic for *L'Année littéraire* in the 1770s and a professor of rhetoric at the Collège Mazarin, he was a surviving link with the artistic traditions and established institutions of the *ancien régime*, a link with traditions and institutions that were founded in and nourished by the specific conditions of artistic life in the capital. Furthermore, Geoffroy viewed the theatre with the eye of an eighteenth-century generalist, confident that his deep knowledge of the classics and his impeccable credentials as an academic were all that was needed to confront the full range of theatrical offerings of his time. Despite his formidable command of the fundamentals of crafted speech, his critical writings rarely deal with technical details, but rather concentrate instead on the moral dimensions of the dramatic literature which he reviewed. These works were judged as evidence for either the maintenance or the decline of moral values in society as a whole. In this way he was very close in spirit to the critics and commentators from the age of the Latin and Greek texts which he knew so well and which he had taught at the Collège Mazarin.
Castil-Blaze, however, was distinctly more modern in outlook than Geoffroy. A lawyer by training, and thus a member of the professional classes, he had been employed as an administrator, and was used to applying practical solutions to the problems of managing public institutions. His wealth of background knowledge and his manner of indicating clearly the rational rather than tradition authority for his judgements could be expected to appeal to the same class of readers that looked for similar qualities in political writing in the press. If Castil-Blaze struck a chord, therefore, with the readership of the daily press in Paris in his feuilletons of the next twelve years, it may well have been in part because he represented the aspirations of the professional classes that increasingly began to claim power during the Restoration, classes whose chief political instrument was the press. Free of associations with powerful state institutions such as the university or the government, Castil-Blaze spoke to his readers as one of them. He treated them as interested amateurs who, if they so desired, could become knowledgeable and informed audience members if they would merely take the trouble to educate themselves systematically in the fundamentals of music. His own career as a trained lawyer turned professional music critic and adaptor of stage works gave them ample assurance that this transformation was indeed possible.

Apart from these differences in background, it is chiefly in his treatment of the lyric theater and of the discipline of criticism itself that Castil-Blaze distinguishes himself from his predecessor Geoffroy. In his articles for the Journal des débats, Castil-Blaze left behind much of the outlook that Geoffroy represented and established new standards for writing about opera. The dominating new idea that characterized Castil-Blaze's writings as a whole during this period was the concept that opera was not a literary endeavour, but a musical one, and writing about it was a task that should be reserved for the musically literate. The implications of this view for the type of music criticism he espoused and for the critical perspective on opera displayed in his writings will be the subject of the remaining chapters of this work.
CHAPTER 3
CASTIL-BLAZE AND
SPECIALIZED MUSIC CRITICISM

Cette chronique sera exclusivement consacrée à la musique. Les opéras anciens et nouveaux y seront (uniquement sous le rapport musical) examinés, analysés avec soin, et d'après les principes de la bonne école.¹

Castil-Blaze's Innovation

In December of 1820, the feuilletons of Castil-Blaze began to appear under the rubric "Chronique musicale," signed with the three-star pseudonym "X.X.X." by which he became widely known in Parisian musical circles. With their publication Castil-Blaze became the first specialized music critic for the Journal des débats. Indeed, he became the first specialized music critic, so-called, in any of the Parisian daily newspapers, and the appearance of these feuilletons marks the starting point of the continuing presence of specialized music criticism in the French press. This development is remarkable from two points of view.

First of all, it is noteworthy that specialized music criticism in France did not first take root in a marginal publication, i.e., in a specialized music journal, in a specialty arts publication, or even in a publication of general interest but of small circulation and infrequent appearance. Rather, its founding occurred in the Journal des débats, one of the largest daily newspapers in Paris, and a journalistic vehicle of enormous intellectual prestige and popular influence. The importance of the Journal des débats made it unlikely that the new type of music criticism that Castil-Blaze was developing would be ignored by the Parisian public.²

². Print run statistics of the daily Parisian newspapers are not available for the year 1820 but those for the year 1824 (found in Pierre Albert, Gilles Feyel and Jean-François Picard, Documents pour l'histoire de la presse nationale aux XIXe et XXe siècles [Paris: Éditions du C.N.R.S., n.d.], p. 10) may be considered typical of the period. The leading newspaper in Paris at this time was Le Constitutionnel, the newspaper of the Liberal opposition, with a circulation of 16,250; the
Secondly, it is remarkable that specialized music criticism arrived in the French press in a fully-formed state. Castil-Blaze's feuilletons stand out in high relief against a background of critical writing about music that had produced no intermediary figures. No previous writers had even approached his combined depth of knowledge, breadth of interests and talent for written expression. The modern music critic as we would recognize him or her today — musically literate, historically informed, and conversant in the current musical events of his time — appears to have arrived all at once in the French press in the figure of Castil-Blaze, seemingly without any significant antecedents.

From these two points of view, Castil-Blaze's feuilletons in the *Journal des débats* represent an important turning point in the musical life of Paris. In seeking the causes of this development one might be tempted to stress those conditions that would favour the rise to prominence of just such a figure at this time, in particular the growing importance of Italian opera in the capital and the inadequacy of the older generation of writers at the *Débats* to deal with an aesthetic debate that was attaining an increasingly higher profile in the press. In this view Castil-Blaze might be painted as an accident of history, as a “man of the hour” propelled artificially high in the estime of the musical public by the publication of his *De l'Opéra en France*, with its strong Italophile sympathies, just at the time of the Rossinian invasion of Paris. But such a view would undervalue the contribution of his own unique personality and the forceful appeal of his new views on the nature of the lyric stage as major factors in the arrival of this new development in music journalism. As will be discussed, the inadequacy of previous music criticism was a prominent theme in this writings, and he had argued strongly in *De l'Opéra en France* for the establishment of just such a type of specialized criticism as

*Journal des débats*, with 13,000 subscribers, was followed by *La Quotidienne*, the paper of the Catholic right, with a circulation of 5,800. It should be noted that these numbers do not represent the number of readers for each publication, but merely the number of subscribers. Newspapers were sold only by subscription at this time and each copy might be read by as many as twenty persons in commercial reading libraries (cabinets de lecture) which gained great popularity in this period. On this latter phenomenon see Françoise Parent-Lardeur, *Les Cabinets de lecture à Paris: la lecture publique à Paris sous la Restauration* (Paris: Payot, 1982).
he himself inaugurated as the first music critic at the *Journal des débats*. Moreover, once in
this post, he continually sought to remind his public of the progressive step that this new
style of critical writings represented, and frequently contrasted the quality of his own com-
mentary with that of less musically literate writers in order to reinforce his point. His contri-
bution, therefore, was in no sense accidental, but rather deliberate and intentional in every
way.

Moreover, the outstanding characteristics of his criticism as a whole — his concentra-
tion on the practical aspects of music-making and his rejection of a literary or generalist phil-
osophical approach to musical issues — are first applied in an important way in his views on
the nature of music criticism. It would be well, therefore, before examining his more general
critical outlook, to discuss first his approach to the very journalistic discipline in which these
views are communicated, i.e., the discipline of music criticism itself. For in discussing music
criticism Castil-Blaze reveals many of the salient characteristics of his approach to music as
a whole. In particular, he reveals the wide spectrum of knowledge sources that inform his
opinions, the depth of detail that he is willing to apply in supporting his opinions, and the
range of topics that caught his attention.

Castil-Blaze's writings represent an important point of origin for modern music criti-
cism. He fleshed out the aims of the discipline and the specific requirements of the critic in
a way that none in France had done before. Some writers had proposed that music be ac-
cepted as an independent art, but none had specified what this might imply for the critic who
must analyse and comment intelligently on this art. No formulation of the principles of
music criticism, no description of the art of the music critic had been outlined, and no body
of writing had emerged embodying these principles and putting them into practice to match
that produced by Castil-Blaze.
It will be the purpose of this chapter to examine Castil-Blaze's views on 1) the need for specialized music criticism; 2) the qualities of the ideal music critic and how he reflected these qualities in his own criticism; 3) the qualities of objectivity and practicality that characterize his critical judgements; and 4) the range of topics discussed in his feuilletons.

Music Criticism as a Specialized Discipline

The idea of beginning a regular newspaper column devoted exclusively to musical issues originated with Castil-Blaze himself, if we are to believe the account of his meeting with Bertin l'aîné, principal owner of the Journal des débats, cited by Marie-Louise Pailleron. In her anecdote-laden history of early nineteenth-century French literary life entitled François Buloz et ses amis: La Revue des Deux-Mondes et la Comédie-Française, she recounts how Castil-Blaze boldly suggested in an interview with Bertin that his newspaper was sadly lacking in one area of expertise — that of specialized musical commentary — and that he, Castil-Blaze, was precisely the person needed by the Débats to fill this void.

Un matin de 1823 [sic] un inconnu se présente chez M. Bertin et, sans avoir l'air de se douter de ce que sa démarche a d'insolite, ose lui parler d'une réforme qui s'impose à son journal.
— Fort bien, monsieur, répond en souriant M. Bertin, ne vous gênez pas, dites ce qui nous manque.
— Un feuilleton.
— C'est vrai, nous n'avons plus Geoffroy, et vous voudriez remplacer Duvicquet?
— Je ne veux remplacer personne, je veux créer, fonder un art nouveau : la critique musicale, et comme il me faut une tribune d'où l'on entende, j'ai choisi les Débats.3

While this account is likely fanciful — to begin with it dates the conversation from 1823 instead of 1820 — it certainly does not contradict the degree of self-confidence and forthrightness evidenced by Castil-Blaze in his writings about the importance of competent music

3. Marie-Louise Pailleron, op. cit., pp.48-49. This account is cited by Mme Pailleron as deriving in turn from a work entitled Mes Souvenirs by “H. Blaze.”
criticism. Even before obtaining the post of music critic at the Débats he had argued the cause of specialized music criticism, if not to Bertin l'aîné, then to the French public itself, in De l'Opéra en France. The sixty pages of Chap. XIV of Vol. 2 (one of the longest chapters of the entire work), entitled “S'il faut être musicien pour bien juger de la musique, et pour écrire sur cet art,” show that his ideas on music criticism were fully formed before he began to write. In this chapter he argues a parallel between music criticism and other forms of specialized criticism well accepted in journalistic practice; he describes the inadequacy of previous writing about music; and he isolates the element of musical literacy as the key element missing in music criticism to date.

Castil-Blaze’s point of departure in this chapter is the established practice of having various disciplines treated in the press by expert commentators, each competent in a specialized field. The fields of comparative anatomy, painting, sculpture, architecture, geography, causes célèbres, and the different branches of literature are all covered in the press by specialists in their field, he argues, but music is not.

Lorsque les journalistes veulent nous rendre compte des travaux des savans et des artistes, ils ont recours à diverses personnes instruites chacune dans son genre. Ainsi M. Cuvier fournira d'excellents articles sur l'anatomie comparée, M. Bouillon sur la peinture, M. Boutard sur la sculpture et l'architecture, M. Malte-Brun sur la géographie, M. Méjan sur les causes célèbres. La littérature dont le cercle est trop étendu a ses différentes branches, et l'écrivain qui rédige la partie poétique ne s'occupe point de traductions. C'est très-bien établi: par ce moyen chaque matière est traitée par des gens qui la possèdent à fond et qui joignent encore la pureté, l'élegance du style à la force du raisonnement et de la doctrine....

Cette prévoyante sollicitude devrait du moins s'étendre jusqu'à la musique, et cet art qui fait le charme principal de trois théâtres royaux, cet art si généralement cultivé et qui pourrait donner lieu à des articles d'un si grand intérêt, n'obtient pas les honneurs d'une rédaction spéciale.4

Yet from the point of view of public interest, he argues, music is certainly the equal of architecture or geography; and from the point of view of intellectual complexity, music is surely too complex a subject matter to be entrusted to a generalist writer.  

Castil-Blaze judges previous critical writing about music severely, and analyses its limitations, its arbitrariness and its haphazard quality in the following terms. Music critics, he writes, may be divided into three camps: 1) those who either evade the topic by speaking in vague generalities such as “the poet was well seconded by the musician” or “the music could not overcome the defects of the text,” or who are content to report audience reaction; 2) those who manage to write something sensible, but who cannot amplify or develop what they have written because it was cribbed from some knowledgeable source and repeated by rote without understanding it; and 3) those who boldly and brazenly write what they genuinely think and thereby reveal the full plenitude of their ignorance. The worst aspect of this latter kind of writing is that its authors, among whom he mentions the well-known writers Marmontel, La Harpe and Geoffroy, would often do much harm by slandering composers and works later recognized as classics.  

Even before being hired by the Débats, Castil-Blaze seems to be predicting — or even lobbying for — his own hiring at one of the major newspapers when he writes, in 1820, that the field of music criticism is wide open to the first competent musician who wishes to pick up a pen and write:

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5. “Confier cette partie à un simple littérateur, c’est convenir que la musique n’est pas un art assez important pour qu’on s’en occupe d’une manière particulière, ou peut-être pense-t-on qu’il est beaucoup plus aisé d’analyser le sextuor de Don Juan, le finale des Deux Journées, l’ouverture du Jeune Henri ou de l'Hôtellerie Portugaise, les quatuors de l'Irato et de Ma Tante Aurore, les airs de Richard ou de Strattonice, que de décrire des frontons et des arcs doubleaux, l’île de Madagascar et la mer Caspienne.” *Ibid.*, p. 194.

Cependant quelle carrière s'offre au littérateur musical! que de fleurs et de fruits à cueillir dans un champ si fertile, où personne n'a moissonné! que de choses à dire sur tant de beaux sujets vierges encore! quelle mine à exploiter pour un journaliste, s'il lui était permis de porter ses regards au-delà du cercle étroit qui l'environne et de s'emparer de la plume des Arnaud, des Suard!

Once in his post at the Journal des débats, Castil-Blaze was not content to let drop the theme that music criticism was a specialized discipline which required specialized training, and this topic continues to be discussed in his feuilletons, especially in the first year of his tenure as music feuilletonist at the Débats. In these early feuilletons, Castil-Blaze repeatedly emphasizes that real music criticism consists of more than an appreciation, no matter how just, of the purely literary elements of an opera and that the time is gone when a writer can limit his comments on the musical score to reporting audience reaction. He attempts, moreover, to have his readers pity such writing more than hate it by his analysis of the causes for some of the quasi-intellectual sallies which some writers have made into the actual musical score of an operatic production. The problem, he explains, is that since these writers have only their raw sense impressions to guide them, unmediated by the intervention of reflection and critical thinking, their judgements are tainted with other impressions received and stored in the same way, i.e., memories unrelated to the substance and content of their musical experience (souvenirs). And this, he insists, accounts more than anything for the uncritical support which French opera has received from its commentators.

Les gens de lettres, n'ayant point étudié la musique, en ont parlé comme ils parleraient de toute autre chose qu'ils ne connoissent point, et ne sont point tenus de connoître. Ils rendent compte de leurs sensations, c'est tout ce qu'ils peuvent faire.... Les littérateurs ont toujours trouvé notre ancienne musique excellente,


8. In a feuilleton from late 1821 he describes, for example, the efforts of previous critics in the following way: "... ils rendent un compte exact de l'intrigue du drame, jugent admirablement le dialogue, les vers et jusques aux rimes hasardées, et donnent, sur la musique, l'avis du public. A-t-il applaudi, la musique est enchantérresse, divine. A-t-il manifesté son mécontentement, elle est pitoyable. A-t-on bâillé, la musique est savante, et à l'aide de quelques mots employés à tort et à travers, le rédacteur d'un feuilleton motive son jugement et passe pour un docte aux yeux de ceux qui n'en savent pas plus que lui. Il ne dit rien, mais il a l'air de dire quelque chose, cela suffit à bien des gens." Débats (18 November 1821): 2.
applaudissons à leur zèle patriotique; on s'attache aisément aux airs que l'on a entendus dans sa jeunesse, mille raisons, toutes indépendantes du mérite musical des ces airs, s'unissent pour motiver cet attachement. En voulant séparer l'opéra français de l'opéra allemand et de l'opéra italien, ils se sont privés d'un moyen de comparaison, qui seul pouvoit les éclairer sur l'état de notre musique théâtrale, et les tenir en garde contre l'influence des souvenirs.9

Castil-Blaze's argumentation cuts even more cleanly to the centre of the issue by virtue of his sincere praise for the literary talents and philosophical depth of the very critics whose writing on music he so severely criticizes. He does not wish to discredit the intellectual capabilities nor the genuine talent for written expression which he finds in the best French writers who have written on music. He takes great care to distinguish cleanly between their true depth of thought and not inconsiderable literary gifts, on the one hand, and on the other their knowledge, pure and simple, of matters musical. Marmontel, La Harpe, Geoffroy, and above all Rousseau are all given credit for their accomplishments in their respective literary and philosophical domains, but he emphasizes that those accomplishments simply have no relevance when they write about music. When they write about literature or philosophy, he insists, they write with the authority that their education and intellect grants them, but when they attempt to write about a subject such as music, which is outside of their training, their comments are no more significant than those of writers without specialized knowledge in any field. His comments on Rousseau's Dictionnaire de musique illustrate well the distinction that he wishes to make between the philosophical thinker and the musical commentator:

Un feuillet de ce Dictionnaire, remarquable d'ailleurs par des beautés sublimes de style et des déclamations éloquentes, mais en quelque sorte étrangères à l'art, renversera toujours le pompeux édifice que les louangeurs maladroits voudront élever au philosophe musicien; et l'exhibition de sa burlesque partition [i.e., Le Devin du village] ne sera point nécessaire pour achever la conversion des incrédules.... Nous sommes accoutumés à les entendre divaguer sur cet art; Marmontel, La Harpe, Geoffroy ont ouvert la carrière. On leur a pardonné ce qu'ils ont dit en faveur de la manière dont ils l'ont dit ...10

Both in his comments in *De l'Opéra en France* and in his feuilletons, then, Castil-Blaze defends the notion that music is a subject domain of sufficient complexity as to require its own specialized body of critical literature. The question remaining, of course, is "What qualities are required in a writer who wishes to contribute to such a body of critical literature?"

**Qualities of the Music Critic**

In attempting to define the characteristics of the professional music critic, Castil-Blaze was in one sense, of course, "starting from scratch" since this species of writer had, in his opinion, not yet come into existence. But in another sense his models were perfectly clear to him: if music was to be the equal of the other arts, as he repeatedly insisted in arguing for a specialized discipline of writing about music, then it required a form of critical writing of the same depth of thought and with the same quality of considered judgement that characterized the specialized criticism of the other arts. Defining the qualities of the music critic, then, was a matter of translating the established qualities and credentials expected in the arts critic of his day into a specific suite of skills applicable to the music critic. These skills may be divided into five categories: musical literacy, a knowledge of technical vocabulary and terminology, the ability to analyse musical style, a prodigious memory and wide-ranging base of musical experience from which to make one's judgements, and the ability to isolate originality and to identify plagiarism in a musical work.

**Musical Literacy.** The prime requirement of a music critic, according to Castil-Blaze, may appear extraordinarily obvious to us today, but it was proposed with the forcefulness of a writer who faced stiff resistance to such an idea: the music critic must be musically literate, he must be able to read a musical score. Only if the critic is able to study the score, Castil-Blaze argued, will his comments be able to compare in intellectual weight and density with
those expected of the serious critic of literature or art. The ability to read a musical score is not only necessary because the critic must know what kinds of elements comprise a musical score in order to know what effects are being attempted — i.e., he must know what to listen for — but also because the critic's judgement of a work must evolve out of a wider base of evidence than that provided by merely hearing it in performance. It is important that the critic also have an opportunity to form a judgement that in some way is independent of the performance that occasions his review. He should, in other words be able to "tell a good work in a bad performance," just as a literary critic would be able to tell the merit of a play by Racine no matter how badly performed:

Je demanderai aux gens de lettres qui veulent à toute force être les seuls juges compétents et irrécusables en musique, si les vers de Racine, bien ou mal dits, ne leur semblent pas toujours beaux et si pour apprécier le mérite d'une tragédie ils ont besoin qu'elle soit déclamée dans la perfection. Il faudroit qu'un morceau de musique fût défiguré par une exécution tout à fait barbare pour que l'œuvre du compositeur se dérobât à l'oreille de l'homme exercé. On saisit ce que l'on peut, l'imagination suplëée le reste; une partie fait deviner l'autre; on suit le motif à la piste, et la seconde reprise rend tout ce qu'on ait perdu du début et des premiers développemens. La belle musique mal jouée ne perd jamais tous ses charmes. Plus on mettra de soins pour exécuter une mauvaise composition, et plus les sottises du fabricateur se montreront à découvert.11

Castil-Blaze carries the point even further still. The critic must be able to review an opera from the score alone, if necessary, just as a literary critic might review a published tragedy that had never been produced on the stage.

Les tragédies de Bélisaire, d'Annibal, de Tribère, ont été analysées par les journalistes, quoiqu'on ne les ait pas représentées. Je demanderai à ces messieurs ce qu'ils pourraient dire de l'opéra de Sésostris, si les héritiers de Méhul le faisaient graver. Il est pourtant plus facile de juger un ouvrage dans le silence du cabinet que

11. Débats (14 March 1821): 2-3. In the middle of his tenure as music critic for the Journal des débats, Castil-Blaze reiterates this point. In referring to musical literacy as a modern development, he writes: "Autrefois, les journalistes n'avoient d'autre opinion que celle du public; un opéra ap- plaudi étoit toujours excellent; un ouvrage tombé ne trouvait aucun défenseur. Vouloir qu'un homme de lettres s'occupât de détails harmoniques, et sût apprécier le mérite d'un bel opéra mal exécuté, étoit une prétention trop impertinente." Débats (15 October 1827): 4.
pendant qu’on l’exécute sur la scène. Mais pourquoi donner des partitions à examiner à ceux qui ne les savent pas lire?¹²

Castil-Blaze’s insistence upon the printed score as an essential object of scrutiny in music criticism comes at time when this type of study was first becoming practically possible. Full scores of many operas were being published in increasing numbers, and the library of the Conservatoire contained a large collection of manuscript copies of unpublished full scores which were available for consultation. It was in this library, open to the public every day until three in the afternoon, that Berlioz, for example, studied the scores of Gluck in the 1820s during his student years after his arrival in Paris.

But perhaps the most important concept in the requirement that the music critic be musically literate is an unstated one: that music is in fact worthy of “study,” i.e., that it is an aspect of a stage work that is addressed to the intelligence, one which goes beyond mere surface sensation to give an intellectual pleasure as well. He believes along with A. Perotti, whom he quotes in De l’Opéra en France, that the art of music “fait naître un plaisir raisonné, fruit de l’observation et de la réflexion.”¹³ The real beauty of music, Castil-Blaze insists, the part of it which is worth writing about, requires study. While this may seem obvious to us now in the twentieth century, it must be remembered that the large amount of intellectually concentrated “serious music” — largely instrumental music — of which the modern canon is comprised has made this concept second nature to us. But the musical canon of early nineteenth-century France, as outlined in Chapter 1, was only marginally composed of instrumental works. Furthermore, important and respected opinion-makers such as Geoffroy could generalize that music, on the whole, was a lesser form of pleasure, overly influenced by the whims of fashion, in which the engagement of the intellect was a sign of

social decadence associated with frivolity,\textsuperscript{14} and an art, in any event, which “degrades every
genre to which it is wed.”\textsuperscript{15} The degree of forcefulness with which Castil-Blaze makes his
point testifies to the challenging nature of the concept of musical literacy as a legitimate pre-
requisite for writing about music at the time that he was writing.

Castil-Blaze’s own ability to work from the composer’s score is perhaps the most strik-
ing new aspect of his criticism. Apart from references to his training at the Conservatoire,\textsuperscript{16}
Castil-Blaze’s musical literacy is most evident in the parts of the lyric production which he
chooses to discuss. The overture which, if discussed at all by other critics, had normally been
discussed as a kind of mood picture or simplistic narrative in sound, is frequently analyzed
by Castil-Blaze as an abstract musical structure. He cites the formal disposition of its
themes, its modulations, its patterns of motivic development and its orchestration.

Duvicquet, for example, in his review of Manuel Garcia’s \textit{La Mort du Tasse} at the Opéra,
describes the overture to this work in the following terms:

\begin{quote}
L’ouverture est riche, peut-être un peu trop riche et trop bruyante; mais le caractère
en est juste et profondément senti; les sons entrecoupés des instrumens à vent, les si-
lences, les reprises vives et animées m’ont paru avoir pour objet de peindre alternati-
ment les cris, les sanglots de la douleur, et le désordre tumultuaire qu’amène une
mort subite.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} E.g., “... moins il y a, chez un peuple, de sensiblité, de justesse et de raison, plus la musique, pour
plaire, doit être compliquée, bruyante, minaudière, frivole.” Geoffroy, \textit{Cours de littérature
dramatique}, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{15} See Chapter 1, p. 34.

\textsuperscript{16} The thoroughness of Castil-Blaze’s training at the Conservatoire may be glimpsed in the fol-
lowing anecdote: “Je me souviens que M. Charles Duvernoy, mon maître au Conservatoire,
après nous avoir fait chanter sur toutes les clefs et dans tous les tons imaginaires le répertoire
entier des solfèges, nous faisait exécuter des partitions d’opéra, dans lesquelles chaque élève
prenoit une partie vocale ou instrumentale; il en vint ensuite aux manuscrits, aux brouillons
indéchiffrables, et ses élèves qui pouvoient se vanter de savoir lire, finirent par apprendre à
deviner. Car ce n’est rien que de lire la musique gravée, il faut attaquer avec autant de confiance
les partitions griffonnées par Zingarelli, Nicolo, Paër, Andreozzi, etc., et dire ce qu’il y a, ce qui
n’y est pas, et ce qui devroit y être.” \textit{Débats} (11 June 1827): 3.

\textsuperscript{17} C. [Pierre Duvicquet], “Académie royale de musique. Première représentation de \textit{la Mort du
Tasse}, opéra en trois actes, paroles de MM. Cuvelier et Hélitas ***, musique de M. Garcia, ballet
Castil-Blaze, however, writing about the same overture, finds different issues to discuss:

Si quelques critiques prétendoient que le premier motif de l'ouverture de M. Garcia est le même que celui de l'ouverture de Gulnare, je répondrois que ce trait étant formé des notes de l'accord parfait appartient à tout le monde, il est pourtant placé plus heureusement dans ce dernier opéra. M. Garcia accompagne le second motif de son overture d'un trait de second violon qui est d'un bon effet. Il me semble cependant que ce trait seroit entendu avec plus de plaisir s'il ne paroissoit que quand le premier dit le motif pour la seconde fois, ce chant et son accompagnement devant figurer deux fois encore vers la fin de l'ouverture. Il faut savoir ménager avec art les bonnes choses; un chant simple gagne beaucoup à être embelli des fleurs du contrepoint, et il y a de la coquetterie à le présenter d'abord dépouillé d'une partie de ses agrémens.18

Individual numbers within the opera might be described equally carefully, and with a degree of detail that could only come from writing with the score ready to hand. Castil-Blaze's knowledge of the score is evident as well in his comments on the cuts that have been made in the production, on the insertions, on the ornamentation added by singers and in many other deviations from the established text. Castil-Blaze obviously knows what is on paper and what has been added (or subtracted) by those responsible for the performance. These, as well, are details that could only be written about with certainty after studying the score.19

**Technical Vocabulary and Terminology.** The ability to consult the musical score would be of no use without a second requirement of the music critic: that he be able to communicate his thoughts in terms of the terminology used by musicians themselves to describe musical compositions. The proper use of terminology, in Castil-Blaze’s view, is what most

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19. He writes the following, for example, in discussing Henriette Sontag’s performance of a passage from Rossini’s Otello: “... j’invite les dilettanti à se donner le plaisir d’entendre la nouvelle Desdemona, et je leur recommande de prêter toute leur attention à la soixante-quatrième mesure du grand air du second acte, il y a une gamme chromatique ascendante, écrite par Rossini, et qui fait, par conséquent, partie du texte de l’air.” *Débats* (5 January 1828): 3.
easily distinguishes the littérateur from the musician. In making this point in *De l’Opéra en France*, Castil-Blaze uses as his spokesman the critic Suard, who comments in the following terms on La Harpe’s misuse of terminology in the latter’s review of an art exposition:

De telles méprises, qui échappent à un homme non-seulement de beaucoup d’esprit, mais d’un esprit très-juste et très-exercé (M. de La Harpe), prouve bien ... que la précision du langage suppose nécessairement la précision des idées; que pour appliquer avec justesse les termes d’art qui paraissent les plus simples, il faut avoir des connaissances plus exactes qu’on ne le croit communément. Il n’y a point d’art en effet dont la langue ne demande l’étude pour être bien entendue.

Important here is the phrase “la précision du langage suppose la précision des idées,” for the whole value of terminology is explained in it: without the proper terminology, the critic — no matter how intelligent, how skilled as a writer, no matter how attentive an audience member — cannot really say anything precise at all about the art that he is purporting to discuss. Insight is inextricably connected with the vocabulary used to communicate it, and insight can only be communicated in the terms recognized by practitioners of the art itself.

Castil-Blaze uses the analogy of the literary critic to make this distinction clear. The littérateur may well know the rules of rhetoric and be able to isolate and describe the slightest fault in a syntactic period of prose or verse, but Castil-Blaze asks whether he knows the rules of *musical* rhetoric, and whether he can isolate and describe a missing measure in a *musical* period, whether he can identify an irregular phrase length in the same way that he can

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20. “Mais un littérateur peut-il distinguer seulement l’excellente musique de la mauvaise? Il cite au hasard et s’abandonne à la règle des probabilités qui le fit tomber bien souvent sur un morceau médiocre et même pitoyable qu’il exalte avec une bonhomie risible. Faut-il s’étonner qu’il se trompe si grossièrement sur les choses puisqu’il ne comprend pas même les mots, et que dans ses écrits les termes de *mélodie, harmonic, mélopée, motif, chant vocal, chant instrumental, accompagnement, récitatif, chant mesuré, etc. etc. etc.*, sont employés à contre-sens ou substitués les uns aux autres comme par plaisir et pour rendre ses phrases inintelligibles aux lecteurs les plus exercés.” *De l’Opéra*, II, pp. 198-99.

tell when there is a foot missing in a line of poetry?\textsuperscript{22}

This position has interesting implications for the make-up of music criticism’s intended readership, as illustrated in Suard’s further comments on the varieties of critical judgements which it is possible to make. While defending the right of the generalist, the “man of taste,” to judge the “effects” of art — i.e., to view the work as a cultivated audience member might view it — he draws the line at searching for the “causes” of these effects in the artistic medium itself, i.e., in giving advice to the artist about how well he has manipulated his materials.

... si, non content de juger des effets, il veut en chercher les causes dans les moyens de l’art; s’il va jusqu’à vouloir indiquer à l’artiste la route qu’il doit suivre pour obtenir certains effets; s’il prétend apprécier le style; comparer les différents genres de mérite, etc. il tombera dans d'éternelles méprises, ou, lorsqu’il ne se trompera pas, il ne dira inévitablement que des choses communes, aussi peu instructives pour le public que pour les artistes.\textsuperscript{23}

Castil-Blaze’s own feuilletons give ample evidence of the use of the specialized terminology of the musician, and it was for this characteristic that they were noticed as being clearly different from other critical writings of the period. Especially alert to this difference were his littérateur collègues at the Débats, François-Benoît Hoffman and Pierre Duvicquet. In the newspaper where writers were used to describing the productions of the lyric theatre in a vo-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} “Disciples et imitateurs de Marmontel, les gens de lettres nous rappellent avec exactitude tout ce que l’on a écrit sur la période : c’était la marotte de leur patron. Des raisonnements justes seront la conséquence d’une théorie claire et précise. Essayez de les prier d’en faire l’application à la musique exécutée, et qu’en praticiens exercés, ils vous signalent à l’instant de l’exécution, en les saisissant au passage, la période incomplète et celle dont on admirera l’élégante rondeur, la phrase boiteuse ou carrée, les demandes et les réponses, les imitations symétriques. Demandez-leur pourquoi M. Steibelt a commencé l’allégro de son ouverture de Roméo et Juliette par une phrase de six mesures, au lieu de lui en donner huit; demandez-leur encore si le début de celle des Noces de Figaro est carré pour l’oreille et pour l’œil? ce qu’un périodiste rigoureux peut remarquer dans le duo des Horaces de Cimarosa, Se torni vincitor, l’allégro de l’ouverture de Pierre-le-Grand et dans le solo de hautbois de celle de la Caravane : vaines questions, soins inutiles, on ne vous répondra pas, et il y a de bonnes raison pour cela. Le livre ne l’a pas dit.” \textit{De l’Opéra, II}, pp. 222-23.
\item \textsuperscript{23} \textit{De l’Opéra, II}, p. 202.
\end{itemize}
cabulary that displayed their literary education, there suddenly appeared a type of criticism that spoke in terms of “la tonique, la dominante, l’enharmonique,” and of “modulations, blanches et noires” or in terms of “basses continues, quintes, sixtes, transpositions, dissonances, accords enharmoniques, etc. etc.”

The freedom which Castil-Blaze felt to speak in the technical language of the practising musician is one of the most noticeable aspects of his writing style. This trait not only agrees with his stated belief that technical terminology is appropriate in music criticism, but has particular significance to Castil-Blaze as a writer, given that he also made his name during the 1820s as a lexicographer, publishing the *Dictionnaire de musique moderne* in 1821, which he most modestly recommends to those of his readers as follows:

*Tonique, dominante, strette, enharmonique, voilà des mots passablement barbares; j’allois m’excuser sur l’emploi de ces termes techniques, et je comptois les remplacer à l’avenir par le longues périphrases. Mais heureusement pour moi, M. Castil-Blaze, auteur de l’ouvrage sur l’opéra, vient de publier un Dictionnaire de Musique moderne, dans lequel on trouvera l’explication de tous ces mots, et de bien d’autres encore.*


25. As complained about by Duvicquet in his feuilleton “Théâtre Royal de l’Opéra-Comique. Début d’Alexis Dupont dans le rôle d’Azor, de Zémire et Azor,” Débats (11 January 1821): 3. Castil-Blaze replies to the criticisms of Duvicquet in his feuilleton of 14 January 1821, and to a further article by Hoffman entitled “Variétés. Des disputes sur la musique,” [Débats (6 April 1821): 3-4] in his feuilleton of 21 April 1821. It should be noted that the debate between Castil-Blaze and these littérateurs was always gentlemanly, despite the firm convictions of the writers on both sides. Duvicquet even ends a discussion of the singer Martin in a production of *Lully et Quinault* with the following comment: “Martin mérite bien un article à part; je laisse avec plaisir ce soin à mon collègue et mon contradicteur musical. Quelque jugement qu’il porte sur Martin, quelques éloges qu’il lui donne, je promets qu’en ce point du moins je serai parfaitement de son avis.” Débats (26 March 1821): 4.

26. Castil-Blaze’s *Dictionnaire de musique moderne* (Paris: Janet et Cotelle, 1821), which went through a second edition in 1825 and a third in 1828, was a “lexicographical pastiche” of established eighteenth-century works such as Rousseau’s *Dictionnaire de musique* and treatises by Albrechtsberger, and of portions of more recent didactic works such as Choron’s *Principes de Composition de l’école d’Italie*.

27. Débats (26 January 1821): 2-3. Castil-Blaze includes a footnote giving the price of the work and an indication of where it can be purchased.
His concern for the proper use of terminology is part of his larger concern for linguistic precision in general. Not only is he careful to use the proper technical vocabulary for the formal procedures and harmonic patterns used in musical composition, but it almost appears to be a mannerism in his writing that he is fond of defining technical terms for his readers, as a means of contributing to their ongoing education. The various terms used for describing and cataloguing the voice types used in the lyric theatre are a favourite subject of discussion. He also sought to clarify for his readers the meaning of certain Italian indications such as *andantino* and his interest extended as well to more general linguistic usages in the French language which he wished to influence. He takes credit for making popular the French word *livret* to replace *poème* when referring to the libretto, for example, and even concerns himself with the correct usage of verbs and prepositions, e.g., *toucher l'orgue* and *pincer la harpe* vs. *toucher de l'orgue* and *pincer de la harpe.* His suggestions on the proper use of these expressions, discussed in his feuilletons of 13 September 1823 and 4 September 1827, were not borne out by subsequent usage, but his claim to have popularized the term *livret* when referring to the libretto, however, may be true: the *Petit Robert* (s.v. “livret”) gives the date 1867 for this word in the sense of “text for musical setting.”

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28. E.g., he explains the words *fausset,* *basse-taille,* the differences between the *tenor sérieux* and the *ténor de demi-caractère.* As will be discussed in Chapter 6, his definition of voice types is extremely precise, defined in terms of exact pitches that represent the outer limits of the range, and extensive descriptions of the quality of tone and roles suitable to each voice type.


31. Castil-Blaze’s interest in technical vocabulary remained strong for the rest of his life. In one of his last works, the *Théâtres lyriques de Paris: Théâtre Impérial de l’Opéra* (Paris: Castil-Blaze, 1855) he devotes several pages to the question of vocabulary. His side-by-side listing of old and new usages on pp. 374-76 of Vol. 2 of this work (in which one finds *livret* as the replacement for *Poème d’opéra*) is prefaced with the following remarks: “Les musiciens doivent avoir sans cesse l’oreille et l’œil ouverts pour se garantir du mauvais langage, de l’orthographe vicieuse que notre Académie française autorise et prescrit. Ce n’est qu’après trente-quatre ans de persévérance et la publication d’une cinquantaine de volumes de prose que j’ai pu reformer en partie le langage du théâtre lyrique. Voici l’état comparatif des mots dont l’usage était général en avril 1820, avant la publication de mon livre intitulé: *De l’Opéra en France,* de mon *Dictionnaire de Musique,* avant mon entrée au *Journal des Débats,* et des mots que je leur ai substitués. Je n’aurai pas besoin de vous indiquer ceux qui sont définitivement adoptés, les autres le seront.”
precision extended even so far as to the publication of *Errata*, in his feuilletons of 2 August 1827, 4 September 1827, 15 October 1830 and 25 May 1831, alerting his readers to the problems which he faced in dealing with the printshop at the *Débats*. Typographical errors were of particular concern to him since they reflected on his scholarly credentials, and because he himself was very careful to point out the spelling inaccuracies which he found in the work of others.\(^{32}\)

Terminology, then, for Castil-Blaze had great significance. It was at once the basis for meaningful communication about music, and as well an indication of careful thinking and a scholarly approach to subject matter.

**Style Analysis.** The third major skill which a music critic must have is to be able to use the two skills discussed above — the ability to read scores and the ability to use terminology with precision — in order to create an accurate and convincing verbal description of the overall style of the music being examined. Furthermore, he must be able to extract the mannerisms and identifying characteristics of each composer and be able to use the comparative method to distinguish him from his predecessors and from his contemporaries.

These skills in stylistic description and comparison are the fundamental intellectual tools of the critic, as Castil-Blaze sees him, in any field whatsoever. Again, it is by analogy with critics of literature and the visual arts that Castil-Blaze brings this point home. He asks rhetorically what kind of critic of painting would be trusted by his public if he could not tell Titian from Rembrandt? What literary critic — what mere schoolboy, even — would not be able to distinguish Pascal from Montesquieu? The average music critic of the literary

\(^{32}\) E.g., on Mme Bawr’s *Histoire de la musique*. “Je voudrois encore, et j’ai souvent exprimé mon voeu à ce sujet, que dans un livre sur la musique on eût soin de présenter les noms des musiciens avec la plus grande exactitude.” *Débats* (13 September 1823): 3. This feuilleton lists a number of inaccuracies contained in Mme Bawr’s work.
school, Castil-Blaze insists, one who must even look at the playbill to find out if he is listening to French, Italian or German music, is simply not intellectually equipped to practice music criticism. In *De l’Opéra en France*, Castil-Blaze poses the following hypothetical dialogue with a supposed music critic:

Quand vous entendez exécuter un opéra au théâtre, à quoi connaissez-vous que la musique en appartient à l’école allemande, italienne ou française, et qu’elle a été composé par tel ou tel maître? — Belle question! l’affiche ne nous l’a-t-elle pas déjà dit?33

After questioning his interlocutor further, he provides the following commentary:

Que dirait-on d’un homme qui, se présentant comme connaisseur en tableaux, ne saurait distinguer les têtes de Rubens de celles de Raphaël, les héros de Poussin de ceux de Lebrun, le coloris du Titien de celui de Rembrandt, qu’à l’aide d’un livret bien exactement numéroté? Quel est, je ne dira pas le savant, mais l’écolier de troisième qui ne sent pas l’énorme différence qui existe entre Virgile et Perse, Tacite et Quinte-Curce, Corneille et Du Belloy, Pascal et Montesquieu? Certes, on ne dira pas qu’il soit possible de confondre la manière d’écrire de ces auteurs, leur caractère est fortement prononcé et diamétralement opposé si on les met en regard l’un de l’autre.34

The conclusion which he draws, is that just as every writer and every painter has his own unique style, so,

Il en est de même des musiciens : chacun a son génie, son style, sa manière, son faire particuliers, ses phrases, ses périodes, ses transitions, ses cadences favorites. Il éprouve une prédilection pour tel instrument, telle marche de basse, tel rythme d’accompagnement, tel groupe d’arpèges, telle suite d’harmonie, tel tour, tel accord, tel ton.35

The degree of style-analytical skill that Castil-Blaze expects is remarkable when compared with previous critical writing. His standards for musical criticism are high indeed, and in the examples which he provides in *De l’Opéra en France* describing the distinguishing sty-

34. *De l’Opéra*, II, p. 204.
35. Ibid.
Listic features of such composers as Cimarosa, Gluck, Piccinni, Méhul and Berton, one can see already the premises underlying the twentieth-century approach to this problem outlined by Jan LaRue in his *Guidelines for Style Analysis*. The following excerpt, illustrated by 16 musical examples from the *planches* at the back of the volume, gives an idea of the detailed nature of his understanding of these composers’ works:

Les gammes diatoniques descendantes portant harmonie sur chaque note, se rencontrent souvent dans les basses de Méhul (*Fig. 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, et 65*); il paraît avoir une prédilection pour les accords de septième diminuée et de neuvième et quarte. Ses instruments à vent sont groupés avec art; la dernière quinte du basson lui plaît singulièrement; le rythme de ses accompagnements est réglé, le plus souvent, dans la mesure à deux temps par quatre croches, une noire et un temps vide, que la basse remplit, pour préparer la chute sur le temps fort de la mesure suivante. Le cor, la clarinette, le basson, placent de temps en temps une ronde, pour compléter l’accord soutenu par les violons, ou doubler la note de la viole.

These *diagnostiques*, as he refers to them in *De l’Opéra*, also inform the stylistic descriptions that are a regular feature of his feuilletons. Observe how in the following discussion of a duo from Spontini’s *Fernand Cortez* clear stylistic description mixes with a cross-composer comparison tracing some of Rossini’s orchestral style to Spontini:

L’accompagnement de cette partie du duo est soutenu en accords plaqués, frappés sur chaque temps par les hautbois, les cors et les bassons, tandis que la viole s’agite et murmure avec Télasco. C’est la première fois que ce jeu d’orchestre a été employé dans les opéras français; Rossini s’en est servi ensuite avec succès dans toutes ses pièces. On voit que M. Spontini a donné des soins particuliers à ce duo.... L’auteur sépare souvent les basses pour faire jouer les violoncelles à l’octave haute; cette disposition ne me paraît pas heureuse, la contrebasse sonnant l’octave grave des notes que l’on écrit sur une même clef pour le violoncelle et le basson; si vous la séparez encore de ces instruments par un intervalle d’octave, la contrebasse jouera deux octaves plus bas que les violoncelles, et cet écart est trop grand.

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Pure stylistic description, then, is a strong component in Castil-Blaze’s writing. It forms, so as to speak, the foundation of his analysis of any music under consideration. In an age of increasingly complex scoring and where advances in instrumental technique were occurring rapidly, this skill makes him a valuable source of information. Paganini is a case in point. Castil-Blaze’s description gives us a much more concrete idea of his actual playing style than we would get from reading the astonished gasps of most of his fellow journalists of the time:

Le pizzicato, les sons harmoniques, forment des contrastes piquants avec les sons attaqués avec l’archet. Paganini fait marcher ensemble ces trois jeux. Il attaque une roulade avec une grande prestesse, et l’archet et le pizzicato se la partagent sans en ralentir le mouvement. Ce n’est point assez de jouer un chant, un trait en sons harmoniques, il le fait entendre en double corde avec une vigueur, une agilité qui tiennent du prodige. Il jette les sons harmoniques au milieu d’un trait, et reprend aussitôt la position naturelle. Il exécute une trille double, tandis que son pouce fait entendre une basse travaillée en pizzicato sur la quatrième corde. Il fait même le trille double en pizzicato. Il joue des morceaux entiers sur la quatrième corde avec plus de perfection qu’on ne pourra le faire en employant tous les moyens du violon. Il rend ainsi la prière de Mosé, et fait chanter alternativement la basse, le ténor, le dessus, en ayant recours aux sons harmoniques.40

**Memory and Experience.** The fourth prerequisite of the music critic is a prodigious memory, exercised in the recall of an enormous repertoire of scores which the critic must have studied and analyzed for style. Such memory and experience with scores is required, in Castil-Blaze’s view, if the critic is to write confidently of the characteristics of a composer’s complete œuvre, if he is to compare it with that of other composers and identify influences and trends over whole schools of composition. The best music critics, he notes, might have whole scores by heart and be able to play them at the piano, much as some literary critics are able to recite vast stretches of Virgil or Horace.41 It is this immense amount of study, Castil-


41. “Il est de même des musiciens qui possèdent certaines partitions au point de pouvoir les noter de mémoire. Cette érudition, fruit d’un long exercice, n’a rien de plus étonnant que celle du littéra-
Blaze believes, which gives the critic's judgements their value, and music criticism, like the best literary and art criticism, is a concentrated reduction of an immense amount of intellectual experience.

Geoffroy is singled out as both a good and bad example of the direct relationship between study and critical value. Castil-Blaze notes that Geoffroy is well worth consulting, when dealing with literature, due to his immense learning. In music, however, he is correspondingly valueless because of his profound ignorance in matters musical:

C'est avec six mille volumes dans la tête que Geoffroi composait ses articles sur *Iphigénie, Rodogune, Zaïre, Rhadamiste, Manlius, les Templiers.*

Cette page que le journaliste vous donne chaque jour, cette seule page demande un savoir aussi étendu qu'un grand ouvrage. Recueillez avec soin les feuillets de Geoffroi, [sic] parmi quelques erreurs, vous trouverez d'excellentes choses sur la littérature théâtrale. Parcourez ses écrits sur la musique, la même stérilité règne partout. Ce sont d'insignifiantes formules, des lieux communs rebattus, un radotage insipide et dégoûtant qui, produit par un cerveau vide, ne peuvent rien apprendre à personne.

And such a vast memory is of course part of Castil-Blaze's own intellectual equipment. He refers to this ability in recounting an anecdote in *De l'Opéra en France.* When entertaining groups of music lovers, he would draw mischievous delight in mixing up the words and music of various pieces, putting Italian music to non-Italian words, and vice versa, in order to expose the superficial nature of his audience's understanding of the Italian musical style that they believed themselves to be so thoroughly immersed in:

Je me suis amusé quelquefois à les mystifier devant un cercle nombreux, et qui y prenait un vif intérêt. Ces prétendus connaisseurs sont, pour l'ordinaire et par ton, enthousiastes des Italiens; il y a vraiment conscience de les tromper, il donnent trop aisément dans le panneau. Mozart, Hummel, avec les vers de Métastase, étaient pour eux du Paisiello: *Vo soltando un mar crudele,* ajusté tant bien que mal sur un teur qui récite à volonté les poésies d'Homère, de Virgile, d'Anacréon, de Tibulle, d'Ovide. *De l'Opéra,* II, p. 206.

42. *De l'Opéra.* II, p. 206.

air de *Phrosine et Mélidore*, avait la suavité de Cimarosa; que dis-je? les chansons des nourrices, les noëls provençaux, les refrains gothiques du roi René, habillés à l’italienne, passaient aussi sur le compte des virtuoses ultramontains: c’étaient des villanelles, des barcaroles vénitiennes. Pour compléter l’œuvre, je ne manquais jamais de chanter des fragments de MM. Paër, Pavesi, Rossini, avec des paroles françaises; et nos fins connaisseurs de hauser les épaules et de répéter tous les vieux dictons sur notre musique.  

His control over vast stretches of repertoire is demonstrated as well by the many broad comparisons which he is able to make across the work of such a fecund composer as Rossini, and in his series of articles on the complete operatic output of Grétry and Méhul.  

**Plagiarism and Originality.** The value of such accumulated knowledge, and the whole point behind acquiring it, according to Castil-Blaze, is to be able to focus on that portion of a musical work in which the imaginative creative achievement of the composer resides, that which principally represents its aesthetic worth. This component must be distinguished from those elements which are derivative.  

Je demanderai donc à ces messieurs, [i.e., journalists] si leurs connaissances musicales, si leur érudition harmonique peuvent les conduire jusqu’à distinguer les idées créées, les phrases filles de l’imagination et qu’on ne saurait s’approprier sous aucun prétexte, d’avec les lieux communs de l’école, les marches de septièmes, de quinte et quarte, les motifs obtenus par les diverses combinaisons des trois notes de l’accord parfait, les phrases faites qui appartiennent à tout le monde.


45. He undertakes a detailed comparison, for example, of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *La Cenerentola* in his feuilleton of 26 January 1828. An overview of the major works of Grétry is undertaken in four feuilletons (9 June, 23 July and 14 September 1825, and 22 August 1827). Méhul’s works are treated in overview in his feuilletons of 3 September 1828 and 2 October 1829.

46. *De l’Opéra*, II, p. 224. An example of this distinction is noticeable in the quoted passage on p. 69 concerning the overture to Manuel Garcia’s *La Mort du Tasse*: “Si quelques critiques prétendent que le premier motif de l’ouverture de M. Garcia est le même que celui de l’ouverture de Gulnare, je répondrais que ce trait étant formé des notes de l’accord parfait appartient à tout le monde, il est pourtant placé plus heureusement dans ce dernier opéra.” *Débats* (19 February 1821): 2.
In writing of this ability, Castil-Blaze refers to the fifth quality of the music critic: the ability to use his acquired knowledge to identify originality in musical composition. Castil-Blaze's ideal music critic is called upon to adjudicate a wide range of similarities, on a scale from the accidental to the deliberate: from simple commonplaces that belong to every composer, to individual mannerisms of a single composer, to self-borrowing by a single composer, thence to involuntary "reminiscences" of material between composers (obvious to the ear of the listener, but not of sufficient integrity to constitute theft), and finally outright plagiarism.

With fulsome reference to the musical examples at the back of the volume, Castil-Blaze explains in *De l'Opéra en France* the nature of the musical parameters that the critic must be able to distinguish: from micro-patterns of harmonic movement that all are free to use to large-scale formal patterns of scene lay-out and design. These large-scale patterns might include the formal construction of overtures; Della Maria's overture to *L'Opéra-Comique* is patterned after that of *Le Prisonnier*, for example. Or they might refer to the construction of ensembles; e.g., the quartet from Marsolier's *L'Irato* is cited as establishing the pattern subsequently used in the quartets from *Ma Tante Aurore*, *Le Trésor supposé*, and in trios from *Une heure de mariage*, *Picasos et Diego* and *La Fête du village voisin*.

The application of this principle in Castil-Blaze's own critical writing in the *Débats* is everywhere evident in his habit of pointing out reminiscences and various shades of borrowing in the works that he discusses. No one who reads Castil-Blaze's articles can fail to notice this characteristic. It was one of the "piquant" features of *De l'Opéra en France* that attracted the attention of the critic of *Le Constitutionnel* and it runs like a leitmotif throughout his writings for the *Débats*. The success of the works of Rossini gives him ample room to exercise his skill in recognizing re-used material, and he often displays his knowledge of this

47. "Quelquefois le plagiat ne portera pas sur les idées, mais seulement sur l'arrangement c'est le plan, la marche, le cadre d'un morceau que l'on aura imité." *De l'Opéra*, II, p. 229.
composer's works with enormous flair. He describes an aria from the second act of

*Cenerentola,* for example in the following terms:

... air d'une foiblessé extrême, espèce de pot-pourri fabriqué avec le trio *d'Otello,* le
quatuor de *Mosè,* la cavatine de *la Gazza,* *Se per voi pupille amate,* l'air du même
opéra, *O colpo impensato,* etc. etc. 49

The first act finale of *Semiramide* is similarly laid out for the reader, section by section, in
terms of the individual works after which it is patterned:

Le finale du premier acte a le même tort; le quintette qui lui sert d'introduction est
accompagné comme le quintette *d'Otello,* et cette imitation se prolonge jusqu'au mo­
ment où l'ombre de Ninus paroit : c'est une pale copie du beau finale *d'Otello.* A
partir de ce point, le musicien a cessé de se répéter lui-même, et nous a donné une
nouvelle édition du magnifique duo de *l'Olympiade* de Paësiello, *Ne giorni tuo felici,*
dont l'orchestre redit le sublime accompagnement sous le chant de *Semiramide* :
*D'un semi-dio.* 50

The identification of reminiscences and borrowed material seems almost to have acquired
the status of a parlour game amongst certain members of the opera-going public, a game to
which Castil-Blaze often makes reference in refuting the assertions of overzealous audience
members who wish to suggest similarities of melody and construction where he believes there
to be none. 51

His identification of similarities in musical material is an essential component of his
view of the music critic as an intellectual who is competently grounded in the fundamentals
of his art. The range of similarities that he is able to point out in the following passage from
a review of Rossini's *La Donna del lago* — including not only melodies, but also formal pat-
terns, modulations, orchestral accompaniments — demonstrates the extraordinarily high standards that Castil-Blaze sets for the music critic.

Le quatuor est d'une longueur démesurée, il rappelle trop le trio de Zorài.de, le quintette de la Gazza ladra; il a néanmoins produit de l'effet. Quant à l'air de Malcolm : Ah! si pera, je conseille à Mlle Schiassetti d'en faire le sacrifice; il arrive trop tard, et n'est qu'une faible contre-épreuve de l'air sublime de Fernando, dans la Gazza ladra. Les traits d'orchestre qui soutiennent le choeur, la Cabaletta, le dessin, les modulations, tout est emprunté à cette première composition.52

Castil-Blaze's ideal critic, then, is no less than a kind of expert musical wine-taster who when blindfolded can imbibe a swig of aural elixir and give forth instantaneously with the musical equivalent of the château and year of bottling, telling, if necessary, when the label is lying and the vintage has been re-bottled.

Lorsque l'érudition, l'expérience, et surtout une mémoire heureuse, servent de guide et de soutien à l'harmoniste, rien ne lui échappe: il n'a pas besoin de recourir à l'affiche pour faire connaissance avec le compositeur. Il perce le voile de l'anonyme, rend à Mozart le duo faussement attribué à Cimarosa, signale le plagiat, les réminiscences, les négligences, les défauts, dans le cours d'un morceau rapide, applaudit un trait d'une piquante originalité, un accord bien choisi, un tour élégant, goûte la musique en amateur, et la juge en homme éclairé; ses éloges annoncent un triomphe complet, et sa critique n'offense point: l'un et l'autre sont motivés.53

Objectivity and Practicality in Castil-Blaze's Feuilletons

It should be clear from the above discussion of Castil-Blaze's requirements of the music critic that a substantial portion of the core subject matter of his critical writing consists of details of the written score. The evidence from which he argues in making his judgements is heavily supported with analytical descriptions or quotations from the score itself. Such a style is clearly distinguishable from the more poetical, personally referential rhetorical style of Romantic criticism, typified by the writings of E.T.A. Hoffmann and Berlioz. In such crit-

52. Débats (9 September 1824): 4.
icism, though in the case of Hoffmann and Berlioz superbly technically informed, the rhetorical centre of gravity lies in the analysis and description of the sympathetic movements of the soul of the critic himself when confronted with music which he considers to be of surpassing greatness. While enthusiasm and heated conviction are also important qualities of Castil-Blaze's style, they are presented in a completely different fashion: not as self-confession, but as cogent argument, as the passionate conviction of an aesthetic "legal counsel," as it were (and it should be remembered that Castil-Blaze was a lawyer by training), arguing heatedly the merits of a case of which he is intellectually convinced, rather than by which he is merely personally moved. His appeal is more that of a defence lawyer or prosecuting attorney attempting to convince a jury than of a demagogue attempting to stir up a revolutionary mob.

Castil-Blaze's style of reasoned argument and pose of cold objectivity are, like many other characteristics of his writing, self-consciously adopted and deliberate, and he even mentions them as such. For example, in devoting his entire feuilleton of 10 September 1822 to Giuditta Pasta, the singer who was stunning all of Paris with her dramatic performances of Rossini, he justifies the length of his discussion of this singer in the following terms:

... le journaliste, séduit par l'ensemble de la représentation, ou peut-être par de beaux yeux, attribue quelquefois à la voix des effets qui lui sont étrangers. C'est pour me prémunir contre cette espèce d'enthousiasme, que j'écris cet article après une superbe représentation de la Gazza ladra, opéra dans lequel Mme Pasta ne joue pas. Je veux raisonner sur son talent, et je ne réponds pas que cela fût possible immédiatement après l'avoir entendue.54

He is equally punctilious in writing about subjects to which he has a strong antipathy. In discussing the scandalous arrangement of Mozart's Zauberflöte as Les Mystères d'Isis, he insists that where others may have raged, it is for him to speak calmly, and without rancour:

Mes confrères ont parlé les premiers : pleins d'une sainte indignation, ils ont fait éclater les foudres de leur éloquence; j'arrive trop tard pour continuer sur le même

ton. Je laisserai donc l'\textit{allegro furioso}, et j'attaquerai \textit{moderato}, afin d'examiner sans colère une œuvre tout au plus digne de pitié.\footnote{Débats (8 January 1823): 1}

Castil-Blaze believes himself to be addressing the musical connoisseur who recognizes both the genius and the faults in great artists, and can point out where these two separate aspects co-exist; indeed he believes that the ability to distinguish them is what separates the connoisseur from the crowd that searches for simple "yes" or "no" answers and loves to engage in endless and pointless polemical arguments.\footnote{"Si l'invention qui brille dans un ouvrage est entachée de défauts opposés aux qualités que je viens de signaler, le connoisseur y est toujours sensible, mais son plaisir n'est point sans mélange. Il applaudit aux beautés qui étincellent, et gémit sur les fautes qui déparent; enfin, distinguant l'homme de génie du musicien ignorant, il applaudit l'un et blâme l'autre. Or ces distinctions déplaisent toujours aux gens du monde. Inexorables pour tout ce qui ne flatte pas leur fantaisie du moment, ils ne souffrent pas qu'on touche à l'objet de leur culte. Examiner ce qu'ils admirent leur paroit un outrage, et les éloges disparaissent à leurs yeux pour ne laisser apercevoir que les critiques. De là les discussions, les écrits polémiques, la guerre de journaux, et tout cela dure jusqu'à ce que quelque nouveauté fasse oublier la querelle et son objet." Débats (12 August 1825): 3.} This pose of impartiality, of judging a work or a performance more on the type of merits and evidence approved by musical professionals and connoisseurs than by the whims of audience coteries, produces some rather jarring juxtapositions of approval and disapproval in his writing. Consider the following passages on Grétry:

Le trio de \textit{la Fausse Magie} est foible; il est noté pour être chanté faux par Mme Saint-Clair qui se conforme toujours aux intentions de l'auteur. Le quatuor ne vaut guère mieux : l'espèce de finale des Bohémiens est au dessous de la critique. L'effet d'orchestre qui accompagne l'opération magique dans la scène du miroir est excellent.\footnote{Débats (23 July 1825): 2.}

L'ouverture de \textit{Panurge} est la meilleure symphonie de Grétry. Les mélodies en sont belles et mal ajustées. L'auteur n'a pas su tirer parti de son début dont le rythme est brillant et fier. Il néglige de le rappeler dans la période exécutée par les basses.\footnote{Débats (22 August 1826): 4.}
Yet Castil-Blaze’s reasoned presentation of evidence drawn from the musical score did not make him a “bookish” critic of merely theoretical conviction but little practical experience. He was as well an equally perceptive observer of the details of stage performance, and from various hints one has the impression that he attended the rehearsals as well as the performances of the operas that he reviewed. His attention to the details of stage performance is as focused as his discussion of the score, as evidenced by the following description of a scrambled performance of the quintet from Rossini’s Otello:

Le quintette n’a pas été sans reproche: Derosa a manqué son entrée pour les deux gammes descendantes, et, dans la crainte d’arriver après les autres, il a supprimé ce trait, le seul qui donne du mouvement à cette cadence. La seconde fois il s’est ravisé; les gammes ont été entamées et finies assez bien sous le rapport vocal; mais au lieu de dire si, sol, fa, mi, ainsi qu’il est écrit, il a chanté la, sol, fa, mi. Ce si, note essentielle qui détermine l’accord de dominante, étant remplacé par un la, change la face de l’harmonie; l’impatient Elmiro s’empare de la tonique deux temps avant les autres chanteurs, et l’orchestre n’y arrive pas. J’imagine que c’est une erreur du moment; si c’était une habitude, il faudrait s’en corriger.

Likewise, his interest in staging details extends even as far as timing and comparing performances — down to the minute.

There is, then, in Castil-Blaze’s criticism a practical bent that counterbalances his theoretical and “score-intensive” orientation. He has a genuine admiration for “what works” on the stage, for what is dramatically effective in live performance as well as what is intellectually ingenious on paper. His concerns extend from the perspective of the set décor to the

60. Débats (15 November 1830): 2.
61. For example, the quintet from La Gazza ladra is indicated as taking 27 minutes in Débats (21 August 1825): 2; the quartet from La Donna del Lago as taking 11 minutes in Débats (23 June 1826): 2; the “grande scène d’Anna” from Anna Bolena as taking 19 minutes in Débats (5 September 1831): 2; and we are informed in Débats (11 January 1827): 2; that the finale of Il Barbiere di Siviglia takes 20 minutes at Favart (i.e., Théâtre-Italien) and at the Odéon, but is performed 2 minutes faster in the provinces — and this despite the fact that the adagio takes 3 1/2 minutes less!
62. E.g., “Les décorations sont d’un bon effet au premier aspect, mais leur illusion est détruite par la présence des acteurs. En observant les lois de la perspective, le peintre réussit à nous montrer une
quality of the costuming and even the arrangement of furniture on stage. One can tell that even his analysis of the score itself is not simply abstract and intellectual. As will be discussed in later chapters, one of his ideals for dramatic music is that it be idiomatically written for a specific voice type and performed by the voice type for which it was composed.

**Range of Subject Matter**

The music critic, then, as Castil-Blaze envisages and embodies him, is a resource of encyclopedic intellectual dimensions. He is a writer who offers his readers the opportunity to hone their own skills in judgement as connoisseurs of fine music in the manner in which the readers of competent literary or art criticism might expect to have their minds engaged by specialists in these respective fields. Like the specialized writers in these fields, the range of topics which he considered to be within his purview was wide indeed. In his first feuilleton for the *Débats* he indicates the breadth of subject matter which he intends to treat as follows:

Je ne me bornerai pas aux compositions théâtrales, je parlerai aussi des messes, des motets, des oratorios, des symphonies publiées ou exécutées dans les églises et les concerts. La musique de chambre fixera mon attention, et je m'empresserai de signaler une bonne romance quand elle paroîtra au milieu du déluge de rapsodies dont les petits faiseurs nous inondent.

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63. E.g., “On ne sait pas pourquoi les frères de Joseph sont introduits dans le palais de Pharaon par un soldat vêtu à la grecque, tandis que les gardes du ministre sont habillés à peu près en égyptiens. On croiroit voir un compagnon de Miltiade à la cour de Xercès.” *Débats* (11 September 1828): 3.

64. E.g., “Je ne sais pas pourquoi on a changé la mise en scène du finale [of Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*]; les acteurs entrent maintenant sur l'avant-scène, et sont obligés de tourner autour de la table avant d'arriver au milieu du théâtre. Ce changement n'est pas heureux, il embarrasse inutilement la scène : toutes les entrées sont gauches, le départ de Basile et son retour surtout ne produisent plus le même effet. Quelle nécessité d'établir au milieu de la scène cette caisse de sapin qui figure un piano?” *Débats* (3 February 1828): 2.
Je ferai connoître les nouvelles découvertes et les perfectionnements apportés dans l'enseignement de l'art et la facture des instrumens, ainsi que les succès obtenus sur les théâtres des départemens, toutes les fois qu'ils donneront des preuves de leur existence, en représentant quelque nouveauté musicale non encore jouée dans Paris.

These were new topics in the popular press. No other newspaper before the arrival of Fétis' *Revue musicale* in 1827 treated the range of topics featured in Castil-Blaze's feuilletons in the *Journal des débats.*

His intention to enlarge the field of coverage of musical topics was largely successful, as a review of the topics covered in his feuilletons shows. His treatment of religious music includes performances and publications of major religious works such as Mozart's *Requiem* (1 December 1824 and 10 October 1826), Handel's *Messiah* (29 July 1821), the *Psaumes* of Marcello (11 March 1822) and masses by Cherubini (11 May 1830) and Lesueur (3 February 1828). He attempted to counter the neglect of the music of Lalande, Louis XIV's *maître de chapelle,* in a long biographical article about this composer (25 July 1827), and he deplored the plight of the organ in French cathedrals (2 January 1822). His reviews of instrumental music included not only the major established events of the Paris social season, such as the *Concerts spirituels,* the newly founded *Concerts du Conservatoire* and the first concerts of Paganini in Paris, but also smaller concerts by the young Liszt, numerous chamber music concerts by the string quartet of Pierre Baillot, and a wide range of published instrumental music.


66. A cursory review of *Le Constitutionnel,* Paris's leading daily newspaper, reveals little but theatre reviews for the whole period during which Castil-Blaze wrote for the *Débats.* Coverage of music in *La Quotidienne,* next behind the *Journal des débats* in readership, was restricted in issues consulted between 1820 and 1825 almost entirely to music in the theatres, apart from one or two very short and superficial notices per year on concerts. Coverage in issues consulted for 1825 and 1826 in *Le Globe,* a smaller circulation but intellectually prestigious publication, also featured few departures from the treatment of theatrical music.

67. The *Concerts spirituels* are covered in his feuilletons of 30 April 1821, 14 April 1822, 30 March 1823, 21 April 1824, 1 June 1827, and 17 April 1828; the *Concerts du Conservatoire* in those of 19 and 29 March 1828, 18 February, 9 March, 24 March and 9 May 1829, 30 March, 7 April and 11 April 1830 and 2 February 1831. Paganini is treated in the feuilletons of 13 March, 23 March 1831 and 4 May 1832; and Liszt in his feuilleton of 24 March 1824. Baillot's concerts are dealt
His interest in music education was keen, as evidenced by his coverage of the Concours du Conservatoire and the Prix de Rome competition, as well as in his articles of various published pedagogical materials.\textsuperscript{68} His feuilletons contain not only a running commentary on the way in which the major musical institutions of the capital were being managed, but also news from the provinces and from foreign capitals, gleaned from a reading of newspapers from London, Milan, Naples, Vienna, Berlin and Leipzig. He kept Parisians informed as well about new technological advances in instrument manufacture.\textsuperscript{69} Indeed the only topic on which he seems to have laid emphasis in the intitial prospectus of his first feuilleton, but which he did not follow through with consistently, is that of romances.\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{68} The Concours du Conservatoire are treated in this feuilletons of 4 September 1821, 7 September 1824, 14 August 1827, 28 August 1828, 5 September 1829 and 29 August 1831; the Prix de Rome in those of 31 October 1821, 17 September 1822 and 10 August 1828. His reviews of published educational materials include méthodes for violin by Mazas (4 May 1832), for clarinet by Muller (4 September 1821), and for violoncello by Hus-Desforges (12 October 1828); pedagogical materials for voice by Rodolphe (25 September 1821), Pastou (14 October 1822), and Panseron and Fétis (9 November 1821); Mme de Bawr’s Histoire de la musique (13 September 1823), Hédouin’s Notice historique sur Monsigny (13 October 1821), Kandler’s Mémoires sur Jean Adophe Hasse (18 November 1821), and Fétis’s Traité de contrepoint (12 August 1825), Solfèges progressifs (11 June 1827) and Galerie des musiciens célèbres (18 December 1827).

\textsuperscript{69} His coverage of instrument manufacture embraced not only the traditional instruments such as the pianos of Dietz (9 March 1829), Erard (24 March 1824 and 28 August 1828) and Pape (28 February 1832), the clarinets of Iwan Muller (4 September 1821), the trumpets of Legram (5 August 1821), and the Industrial Exposition of 1827 (23 September 1827); but also more exotic and ephemeral species of inventions such as Roller’s transposing piano (7 December 1820), Salomon’s harpoyre (28 December 1828), Trentin’s violicombole (2 January 1822), Dietz and Bodin-Lagrange’s claviharpe (25 September 1821), Erard’s orgue expressif (16 September 1829), Matrot’s diapasorarne (17 December 1825), and Winkel’s Componium musical improvising machine (15 January 1824).

\textsuperscript{70} Among published works in this form, he offers only two mentions, and these merely in the nature of publicity announcements: the Souvenirs des ménestrels in 5 January 1821 and Garat’s Romances in 13 October 1821. This may reflect his view that the “déluge de rapsodies dont les petits faiseurs nous inondent” had produced few works worthy of comment. Ralph Locke describes the romance as “simple in melody and accompaniment, unambitious in harmony, strophic in form and anodyne in text.” “Paris,” in The Early Romantic Era, p. 57. A more sympathetic view is contained in Austin B. Caswell, “Loïsa Puget and the French Romance,” in Music in Paris in the Eighteen-Thirties, pp. 97-115.
Despite this interest in a wide range of musical subject matter, it remains true that the majority of Castil-Blaze's feuilletons in the *Journal des débats* — more than 80 percent, in fact — deal with opera or the lyric theatre in some way. It was in the field of opera that his ideas for the progress of musical life in France were most fertile and his polemical commentary most pointed and direct. The central theme of this commentary is that opera is a musical and not a dramatic literary art form. His overriding belief was that the construction of an opera by its collaborating librettists and composers, its performance by singers, and its reception by audiences must all be conditioned by the desire to create, convey or appreciatively receive its musical content rather than its literary content. The way in which this belief marked his critical approach to the opera libretto, the dramatic score and the singer's performance will form the subject of the following three chapters.
CHAPTER 4

THE OPERA LIBRETTO

... la musique est l'objet principal d'un opéra sans doute, mais dans un feuilleton elle doit céder le pas au livret, il faut d'abord faire connaître le cadre qui l'a reçue, et désigner avec clarté les situations qui ont varié ses couleurs.¹

When Castil-Blaze began his career as a music journalist, the libretto was still the dominant topic in French critical discussion of opera. The traditional French emphasis placed on text and action in opera, derived perhaps from its continuing close connection with French tragedy and ballet, had encouraged writers on the theatre to apply a single critical perspective to both the spoken and lyric theatres alike. Thus in the feuilletons of Geoffroy, Castil-Blaze's predecessor at the Débats, and of Duvicquet, his colleague there, an opera might well be judged largely on the basis of the libretto alone.

Castil-Blaze's quarrel with these littérateur critics was essentially a quarrel with this type of libretto-centred criticism, and with the view of French opera that was implicit in it. Yet despite this polemical stance, Castil-Blaze's attention to the libretto in his own writings was extensive. In fact, his music-centred style of criticism is nowhere more conspicuous than in his approach to the opera libretto. For far from attempting to de-emphasize the libretto in his writings, or to minimize its importance as a subject of critical discussion, Castil-Blaze analyzed opera libretti in detail, often devoting a large part of his feuilletons to lengthy plot summaries and to assessments of the quality of the drama and the text. He did so, however, from the perspective of the composing musician, not that of the littératour.²

¹ Débats (23 November 1831): 1.
² His attention to the libretto is of such expansiveness that he occasionally feels obliged to ask his readers' forebearance for the amount of space which he devotes to the plot summary of a new opera, assuring them that it forms an integral part of his examination of the music: "Mes lecteurs trouveront peut-être que l'analyse que je donne de la pièce est trop détaillée et trop méthodique; je
ing the libretto as literature, he emphasized instead in his writings the musical rewards to be reaped when a composer works with a libretto that has been tailored to his needs, i.e., one in which dramatic scenes are conceived from the outset as vehicles for musical expression, and in which dramatic text is composed expressly for musical setting.

Such a libretto is referred to by Castil-Blaze as _bien disposé pour la musique_, ("well laid out for music"), an expression which reflects his underlying view that the libretto is primary a _musical structure_, in that its value and worth are directly proportional to the value and worth of the music which can be set to it. Castil-Blaze judged the opera libretto both for its conceptual and for its practical "musicality," i.e., both for its very conception as a story to be told in music, and for the way in which its detailed layout facilitated the composer's task in realizing this musico-dramatic conception. Absent from his judgments are any comments on the ingenuity of plot structure conceived independent of musical content, or on the polish and refinement of language independent of its use in a musical setting. Rather, he assesses dramatic action and language for their direct contributions to musical expression: dramatic action for the motivation which it provides for intensifying musical involvement in telling the story; language for its rhythmic patterning as raw sound and its plastic adaptability to musical phrase structure.

By placing action and language in a subordinate position with respect to music — by asserting that the libretto was a dramatic structure _for_ music, rather than simply _with_ music — he set himself in opposition to the traditional view of opera in France. The French were not used to seeing opera in this light, judged principally for its musical content, for the musicality of its dramatic and linguistic structure, in short, for its musical intentions. In _Débats_ (2 March 1828): 3. "Cette analyse est un peu longue, mais il était difficile d'être plus bref sans devenir obscur; il convient d'ailleurs de détailler les scènes d'un opéra afin de préparer ainsi l'examen de la musique." _Débats_ (12 January 1829): 2.
l'Opéra en France and in his feuilletons for the Journal des débats Castil-Blaze set out to teach the French public just how to do this. This was his principal challenge to the view of opera prevalent in France in his day.

What Castil-Blaze was proposing involved a major change of emphasis, a major shift in the foreground-background relationship between libretto and music that had subsisted in the French view of opera since its inception in the seventeenth century. The relationship of libretto to music proposed by Castil-Blaze was that of intention to realization, and it is meant to replace the previous relationship of realization to ornament. Instead of conceiving of opera as a sub-genre of the spoken theatre, i.e., as a fully realized independent dramatic work to which a degree of musical “ornament” was merely added in a second stage, he propagated the notion that an opera was from its very conception a stage work whose principal characteristics were defined and determined by the medium of music in which it was written. Opera was not, in his view, a stage work independently conceived in action and language, to which music was then “fitted” as best could be done, but rather a close collaboration between two kinds of “musicians.”

The first of these, the librettist, maps out his vision of the kinds of scenes, and the kinds of language, in which the musical potential of the story to be told might be structured. The second, the composer, attempts to realize this musical potential in a score based on the outline of actions and words given him by the librettist. Both collaborators are working in the medium of music, but at different levels of detail, and at different times. It is for this reason that Castil-Blaze considers the librettist’s work so very important, since “c’est au poète à tracer les premiers contours du dessin musical.”

In this regard it is instructive to note that Castil-Blaze most often refers to an opera’s libretto as its cadre (“frame” or “framework”), a metaphor which conveys a sense of its struc-

tural importance, while yet conceding its background relationship to the musical interest in the foreground of opera. Just as a frame defines the outer boundaries of a painting, so too, he implies, does the libretto delimit the outer bounds of the drama in opera, but without usurping music's central position in communicating its inner content. Virtually without content by itself, filled only with its potential for musical expression, the libretto, Castil-Blaze insists, is not a literary artifact, and ought not to be judged by literary standards. The libretto is a kind of half-structure, one which has been left incomplete by design, awaiting and indeed requiring embodiment in musical form for its full meaning to be established.

Je ne ferai point une critique raisonnée de cette pièce : on ne doit pas faire une guerre littéraire à un libretto; rien de si facile que de le tourner en ridicule et d'en démontrer même l'absurdité. Le poète a-t-il fourni un cadre au musicien? Voilà ce qu'il importe d'examiner; en remplissant cette condition, il a atteint son but.4

Implicit in the view that opera must be judged according to separate criteria is the parallel view that opera is an entirely separate and independent genre of dramatic narrative, defined by its own use of artistic resources. For Castil-Blaze, music was the very medium in which opera was to be conceived and written, by the librettist no less than by the composer, just as tragedy was conceived in language and verse, and as ballet was conceived in gesture and movement.

This view of opera as a distinct genre with its own distinct means of expression is highlighted in a passage quoted from Marmontel's *De la poésie française*, which Castil-Blaze includes in his chapter entitled “De la musique” in *De l'Opéra en France*.5 Using the story of Armide and Renaud as an example, Marmontel explains that the way in which an individual story is told depends entirely upon the genre of narrative in which it is conveyed. In tragedy, this story might tell of a queen who had attracted to her court the disgraced hero Renaud,

5. This passage, identified as deriving from Chap. XIV of Marmontel’s work, is cited on pp. 90-92 of *De l'Opéra*, I.
and had fallen in love with him only to see him leave to follow the path of his glory. The same legend treated in an epic poem would emphasize Renaud’s travels and his heroic adventures; Armide, instead of a queen, would be an enchantress, and Renaud’s love for her the result of a magic spell. Treated in the operatic genre, these fantastical elements of the story would be made powerfully appealing to the sense by means of magical music and set décor depicting vividly the enchanted garden. Each of these three tellings of the same story would be different, because each genre has its own unique procedures, devices, and resources for constructing a vivid narrative.

What a libretto should reflect, Castil-Blaze believes, is the unique nature of the operatic genre. The librettist should bear in mind what can be accomplished in an operatic setting that cannot be accomplished in other forms of narrative, and should emphasize the strengths of the operatic genre, which are essentially different from those of other genres. Among these Castil-Blaze includes the use of choruses to convey the emotional reaction of crowds to the events on stage, and especially the use of ensembles to incorporate ironic reflections or to express simultaneous conflicting emotions within the binding force of a single harmonic texture. In this, he believed, opera far surpasses in dramatic flexibility and emotional range the equivalent technique in the spoken theatre of using the aparté, or spoken “aside.”

Another of opera’s advantages is the musical portrayal of character. He counts the buffo bass as one of the most valuable roles of the Italian repertoire, one which he wished to

6. On the impotence of the spoken stage to convey the emotions of the masses, Castil-Blaze writes: “On ne parle dans les récits que des transports d’un peuple qui prend part à l’action. Ses cris séditieux ont éclaté, il assiège les portes du palais, tout cède à sa fureur : il entre; mais trop respectueux pour élever la voix, il reste muet et se range paisiblement sur deux files. L’ombre de Ninus sort du tombeau, et cet événement surnaturel autant que terrible ne cause pas la moindre surprise aux assistans; toujours le même repos et le même silence. Les acteurs ont l’air de dire : ce n’est pas notre affaire, cela ne regarde que Sémiramis.” De l’Opéra, I, p. 100. In the passage immediately following he compares in weakness of the tirades in a climactic scene from the spoken tragedy of La Vestale to the vehement choral outbursts of its operatic treatment.

7. This advantage is discussed in De l’Opéra en France in a passage where Castil-Blaze demonstrates how a scene from L’École des maris could be much more effective if arranged for the lyric stage as an ensemble. De l’Opéra, I, pp. 104ff.
see develop in the French repertoire. What appealed to him about this role was that it was a vehicle for creating comedy that was more deeply rooted in its distinctly musical realization of character — i.e., in large melodic leaps and in rapid declamation of patter — than in any linguistic cleverness and wit in the lines given this caricature to deliver.\(^8\) It is such resources as these, Castil-Blaze emphasizes, that define opera as a unique theatrical genre, and he believed that it was the obligation of the skilled librettist to take as his principal aim the exploitation of resources of this kind.

When opera is conceived in other than musical terms, he warned — in terms of pure dramatic action, for example, or elegant use of language — then opera loses something at the level of its very definition as a genre: it becomes debased. It is interesting to note that this argument about the purity of the genre has come full circle when it issues from the mouth of Castil-Blaze, having first been uttered by opera critics in the late seventeenth century on the subject of opera's threat to the purity of French tragedy, as mentioned in Chapter 1. The danger to opera as an independent genre which Castil-Blaze was proclaiming derived largely from the French concern for the quality of the libretto text at the expense of the score. Some traditional aspects of production practice in both the serious and comic repertoires represent well how institutionalized the emphasis on the text had remained in the French lyric theatre.

In the serious French theatre there was the institution known as the “literary jury,” which screened libretti for the Académie royale de musique (the Opéra). This body was the successor to the Académie des inscriptions et des belles-lettres which approved the libretti of Quinault during the reign of Louis XIV. The high standard expected of this august body es-

\(^8\) Why, Castil-Blaze asks, is the bouffe d'opéra really funny? “C'est que la musique vient unir tous ses charmes aux situations comiques, au jeu spirituel des comédiens. C'est que cet acteur bouffe dont les charges et joyeusetés font pleurer à force de rire, nous jette avec prodigalité les trésors de sa voix puissante, mélodieuse, tonnante, expressive et dont les inflexions ont une justesse dramatique aussi parfaite que leur justesse musicale.” Débats (4 March 1832): 1.
established the libretti of Quinault as a benchmark for future screening committees. Later libretti were accepted at the Opéra, for example, on the basis of a reading of the text by the librettist before a literary jury. Only after a favourable decision by this body on the merits of the work, independent of any musical setting, was the decision taken concerning who might set the accepted work. This institutionalized two stage-system of conceiving of opera composition, which saw the work first as an independent dramatic work and secondly as a text that needed setting, was antithetical to Castil-Blaze’s entire approach to what opera should be. Consequently, he campaigned hard to discredit the literary jury as an institution, and its continued admiration for libretti in the style of Quinault. He laid at its door the mangled production of Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* in 1801 as *Les Mystères d’Isis*, and the continuing presence in the repertoire of works of only slightly higher merit. He urged that the jury system be disbanded, like the former costume and décor juries, which had kept powdered wigs and ridiculous bowers on the lyric stage long past their time.

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10. “Nos faiseurs de livrets marchent sur les traces de Quinault, c’est le modèle que le jury de l’Académie royale de musique leur propose encore; il s’évertuent depuis cent cinquante ans à conquérir les palmes de l’auteur d’Armide, ils ne doivent pas s’offenser si on leur donne la qualification [i.e., parolier] que leur maître a portée.” *Débats* (27 May 1830): 1.

11. He expresses astonishment “qu’une partition divine, grotesquement diaprée de fautes que l’indulgence la plus excessive ne sauroit pardonner; de ces belles, bonnes, grosses sottises, qu’un enfant de douze ans ne fait plus après sa troisième leçon, ait été admise solennellement par le jury redoutable et suprême de l’Académie royale, pour être exécutée sur ce théâtre, c’est ce que je ne saurois m’expliquer!” *Débats* (1 August 1823): 3. He also ridicules the jury’s approval of *Fin ch’han dal vino* made into a trio, in *Débats* (6 December 1823): 2.

12. “Ces opéras ont obtenu pourtant les suffrages du jury de l’Académie royale; le bonnet doctoral s’est incliné devant ces chefs-d’œuvre de stupidité musicale; l’aréopage suprême a prononcé le *Dignus est intrare* […] À Dieu ne plaise que je veuille accuser le jury d’ignorance; mais il est permis de dire que sa complaisance est sans bornes. L’inutilité de ce jury est donc démontrée par les faits.” *Débats* (16 October 1825): 1-2.

13. “Le jury de l’Opéra a déjà donné plus de cent fois des preuves de son inexpérience ou de sa complaisance extrême; il est donc inutile…. Si l’on parvient à mettre à la retraite le jury littéraire, il sera permis d’espérer que le véritable style lyrique cessera d’être méconnu. Lorsqu’il s’agit de musique et surtout d’opéra, on ne saurait trop attaquer les vieilles routines.” *Débats* (2 March 1828): 1.
The status of music as a secondary component in opera production was even more deeply ingrained in the repertoire and traditions of the Opéra-Comique which, although in the process of becoming more thoroughly musical in intention, still maintained a number of works in its repertoire that continued the tradition of borrowing or adapting music from other sources in the style of the *vaudeville*. An important resource for writers of vaudeville comedies, for lesser opera-comique librettists and for other theatrical poets whose muse needed just that extra push to reach the top of Parnassus was the reference text known as *La Clef du Caveau*. This work was a godsend for the librettist who wished to insert a simple strophic ditty into his stage play but had perhaps neither the time nor the inclination to compose it himself. By means of an indexed catalogue of model examples, *La Clef du Caveau* offered the aspiring stage poet a comprehensive taxonomy of sample verses in every conceivable syllabic, prosodic and stanzaic configuration. These he could either imitate, adapt or steal outright, matching them with the cross-referenced appendix of well-known or traditional tunes at the back of the book. By indicating a *timbre* for each, i.e., the identifying refrain line of the tune to which the verses were to be sung, a librettist unable to distinguish a whole note from a treble clef could himself “compose” a complete stage work with music. This way of composing musical numbers in regular stanzaic *couplets* represented the loosest possible connection between music and drama, and Castil-Blaze continually pointed out when these compositional short-cuts found their way into the scores of the works performed in Paris.

Castil-Blaze believed that opera libretto writing in France was in a state of genre confusion. He found that the very definition of an opera, as he himself conceived it, was not a

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14. This work was published in several editions in the early nineteenth century. Its third edition was published by Janet et Cotelle, Castil-Blaze’s first publishers, and thus must post-date the founding of this company in 1810. The edition consulted in preparing the following description was published as *La Clef du caveau: à l’usage de tous les chansonniers français, des amateurs, auteurs, acteurs de vaudeville et de tous les amis de la chanson*. 4th ed. (Brussels: A. Weissenbruch, n.d.).
well-understood concept in France, and that French librettists had no real notion of the way in which an opera obtained its effects, nor of the librettist's task in producing them.\(^{15}\) He compared them unfavorably to their Italian counterparts who, while not as skillful in many aspects of dramatic construction, were at least clearly aware of the basic principles of the genre: what they created, whether good or bad, was at least opera, and not some other theatrical genre masquerading as opera under a mask of musical dressing.\(^ {16}\) Castil-Blaze was quick to point out this masquerade of genres in works that he reviewed.\(^ {17}\)

In his vision of opera, the way in which a libretto is constructed is of crucial importance, and his criticism of the libretto has but one aim: to point out how a well-made or poorly-made libretto either widens or narrows the range of musical resources and procedures left open for the composer, and thus affects the ultimate musical character of a work. In his criticism he links each element of libretto construction to the musical result that it produces, or which it at least heavily conditions. While theorists and composers have at all times in history described their aesthetic aims in terms of a 'perfect union of words or drama with music,' Castil-Blaze must be said to stand out for the precision of his analysis of these rela-

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15. "J'ai dit plusieurs fois que les littérateurs français étaient fort inhabile dans la fabrication des livrets d'opéras: notre répertoire lyrique atteste chaque jour leur maladresse, et prouve qu'ils ignorent encore la fin du métier. [...] Nos auteurs ont excellé dans tous les genres en travaillant pour la scène; mais comme ils ne connaissent ni le mécanisme d'un opéra, ni la mesure, la cadence, le rythme des vers, ni le champ qu'il faut ouvrir au musicien pour qu'il y déploie les ressources de son art, ils ont presque toujours manqué le but. Ils travaillent au hasard, et le hasard les a trop rarement servis ..." Débats (17 October 1829): 1-2.

16. "Les littérateurs italiens se trompent quelquefois, j'en conviens; leur erreur ne peut du moins avoir aucune conséquence funeste pour l'art. Ils voulaient faire un bon opéra, ils le font mauvais; c'est un malheur, mais leur pièce est toujours un opéra. Nos auteurs dramatiques, au contraire, choisissent un sujet, le divisent en scènes, l'écrivent en vers ou en prose, et croient avoir fait un opéra bon ou mauvais: point du tout, c'est un vaudeville, un drame languissant, ou ce qui est encore pire, une comédie spirituelle et sans action." Débats (16 January 1823): 2.

17. He writes, for example: "Quoique la pièce de M. Scribe [Leicester] présente un grand nombre de morceaux de musique, on ne peut pas lui donner le titre d'opéra : c'est une comédie à ariettes." Débats (5 March 1823): 2. "Les Petits Appartemens semblaient destinés au [Théâtre du] Vaudeville." Débats (12 July 1827): 2. He indicates that "La Maison isolée n'est point un opéra, c'est une sorte de mélodrame en deux actes" Débats (29 August 1827): 2; and that the long scenes of somnambulism in Scribe's libretto for Bellini's La Sonnambula "conviennent mieux à la pantomime qu'à l'Opéra." Débats (28 October 1831): 2.
tionships. Defining his standard in libretto construction as that which offers the greatest scope for developing the drama in purely musical terms, he established in *De l’Opéra en France* and developed further in the feuilletons a comprehensive, multi-dimensional model of the ideal libretto, conceived musically both in terms of its dramatic action and its use of language.

In a revealing passage from Chapter 2 ("Des Paroles") in *De l’Opéra en France* Castil-Blaze points to what he considers to be the three most important issues to be considered when deciding whether a libretto’s dramatic action is suitable for musical treatment:

Les administrations de l’Opéra et de Feydeau, en examinant le poëme qui leur est offert, devraient observer d’abord s’il est propre à recevoir de la musique; si la coupe en est heureuse; s’il présente des effets pittoresques et contrastés, des scènes passionnées; et surtout si le nombre des personnages et leur caractère permettent d’employer les forces harmoniques, et de varier le coloris. 18

These three categories — the formal division into acts and scenes (referred to as *la coupe*); the inherent interest and quality of its dramatic setting and intrigue; and the distribution of musical interest among its principal characters — describe well the benchmarks by which Castil-Blaze judges the "musicality" of a libretto. In his critical writing he analyses in detail the effect that the librettist’s decisions in these three areas of dramaturgical construction have on the music. He explains how the disposition of a work into a particular pattern of scenes and acts determines the degree of contrast in melodic styles (air and recitative) and in textures (solo or ensemble) that will mark its musical character. He explains how the choice of setting and the range of human emotions portrayed affects the range of musical expression possible. Furthermore, he shows how the number, sex and age of the characters portrayed translates in turn into the musical forces, vocal ranges and palette of tone colours which the composer will have available to him. Castil-Blaze’s analysis of the impact of the

18. *De l’Opéra*, I, p. 54.
librettist’s use of language on the composer’s score — relating the librettist’s patterns of syllables, lines and stanzas to the composer’s melodic motives, phrases and periods — may be said to represent a fourth category of critical commentary.

The remainder of this chapter will discuss Castil-Blaze’s critical views on the opera libretto in the four categories of discussion mentioned above, in the following order: setting and dramatic interest; the distribution of music among the roles created; act and scene structure; and finally, the prosodic aspects of the libretto text itself.

Setting and Dramatic Interest

It is Castil-Blaze’s belief that the librettist establishes the basic character of a lyric stage work by his choice of subject matter, and in a meaningful way it is he who establishes the first details of the musical score by determining the emotional range and intensity of the subject matter to be presented. He points to this close connection between librettist and composer in an early review of Hérold’s *L’Auteur mort et vivant*, in which he asserts that the undistinguished nature of the score merely reflects the undistinguished nature of the libretto which the composer was given to set:

> Quelques censeurs prétendent que cette composition manque de mélodie et d’invention. Nous n’adresserons pas ce reproche à M. Hérold; il a fait ce que l’on fera toujours quand on travaillera sur un poème gracieux, léger, mais futile, peu propre à la musique, sans images, sans couleur prononcée, ne présentant aucune situation qui puisse inspirer, point de développemens, point d’efforts. Le musicien suit son guide, et s’il parvient à être aimable et léger comme lui, sa tâche est remplie.¹⁹

In this regard three aspects of concern are evident in his writings. First of all, a story which is to be made into an opera must start from a dramatic premise and in a setting that is

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admirably suited to musical setting: it must be a story that is conceived for its musical possibilities. In Castil-Blaze’s terminology, it must have a definite couleur musicale about it. Secondly, its action must have force dramatique, i.e., strong forward momentum, and move convincingly from musical scene to musical scene, portraying its principal characters in moments of crisis, i.e., in situations fortes. Thirdly, in the course of its development it must offer the composer the opportunity to use music in a wide variety of ways, so that the overall pattern is one of contrasting scenes, each of which presents a particular type of musical interest.

Castil-Blaze stresses that the quality of la couleur musicale demanded of an operatic plot is quite distinct from the qualities that would normally be looked for in the spoken theatre. In an operatic work, offering resources to the composer is more important than providing skillfully constructed stage action and dialogue for the audience.

Une pièce peut être conduite avec art et purement écrite, sans offrir cependant des ressources au compositeur: c’est une bonne comédie, dont on aura fait un mauvais opéra. L’Ami de la Maison, les Prétendus, les Dettes, n’ont point la couleur musicale. Il est aussi des opéras qui par leur intrigue divertissante et les agréments d’un dialogue spirituel, pourraient peut-être se passer de musique.20

Castil-Blaze associates much of what a story “offers the musician” with setting, mood and atmosphere. The story of Romeo and Juliet, for example, with its masked ball, wedding, and burial scene, is a classic example of the type of musically advantageous plotline for which Castil-Blaze is looking:

Le sujet de Roméo et Juliette convenait cependant beaucoup mieux à l’opéra qu’à la tragédie; il offre au musicien des tableaux variés, un bal, un rendez-vous nocturne, une noce, un enterrement, etc.: voilà un champ vaste pour déployer les puissances musicales, et produire de grands effets avec de grands contrastes.21

But equal in importance to the range of scenic backdrops in which music can serve as “sonic set décor,” as it were, is the type and range of human emotions being portrayed. Here too he cautions that opera and the spoken theatre are separate genres, and that the range of subject matter which can be successfully treated in the spoken theatre is much wider than that which is suitable for treatment in music. This difference is especially evident in comedy. Castil-Blaze points out that Molière’s *Don Juan*, for example, provided an admirable canvas for Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, but that it is unlikely that *Le Misanthrope* would have offered a subject equally inspiring. He thus expresses surprise, and some disapproval, at what he considers the “anti-musical” subject matter in such works as Rossini’s *La Gazza ladra*, of which the second act is largely concerned with courtroom procedure, and Kreutzer’s *Le Négociant à Hambourg*, which centers on financial speculation in imported goods.

*La Gazza ladra* nous a présenté le jargon du Palais figurant sous les périodes badines de Rossini, *le Négociant de Hambourg* nous offre l’argot de la Bourse uni aux mélodies de M. Kreutzer; tout cela n’est pas très musical. On a été surpris d’entendre les soupirs du basson, les tendres roucoulements du cor accompagner des vers fort durs, exprimant les désirs avides de l’ambition mercantile : sentiment qui n’inspire aucun intérêt au théâtre, où l’on est accoutumé à voir traiter avec mépris ceux qui cherchent avec trop d’ardeur à satisfaire la soif du lucre qui les dévore.

His point here is not that legal or commercial subject matter cannot form part of a legitimate opera plot, but that the overall driving force in the plot must not center on a legal or

22. “Une comédie peut être fort jolie et ne fournir aucune inspiration au compositeur. Il faut qu’un sujet ait la couleur musicale; *le Festin de Pierre* de Molière est devenu le plus beau des opéras; *le Misanthrope* n’aurait certainement pas donné de semblables résultats.” *Débats* (31 October 1822): 2.

23. *Débats* (17 October 1821): 3. It should be noted that although Castil-Blaze objected to the subject matter of *La Gazza ladra*, his objections were not strong enough to overcome his admiration for its convincing quality as musical theatre. In his first review of this work he notes that “Casti avait supprimé la scène du procès dans *les Noces de Figaro*, comme étant peu propre à recevoir les accords du musicien, et je crois qu’il avait raison. Il signor Gherardini [Rossini’s librettist] en a pensé autrement, et c’est dans le tribunal même qu’il établit un morceau d’ensemble à grand fracas, dont l’effet fait pardonner en quelque sorte l’inversemblance.” *Débats* (20 September 1821): 2. He subsequently adapted *La Gazza ladra* for the French stage. *La Pie voleuse* was first performed at the Odéon on 8 August 1824 and was given 51 performances at this theatre between 1824 and 1828, according to the daily theatre listings of the *Débats*.  

102
financial outcome, since these types of subject matter do not lend themselves to the type of expansion in music on which opera is based. It would be hard, Castil-Blaze believes, to develop out of such a subject matter the concentrated nuggets of dramatic intensity with which a good opera must be studded, i.e., its situations fortes. These situations must be rooted in the conflict of basic human passions, and not merely in themes of danger or of innocence persecuted, the major dramatic content of the melodrama — and still less in commodities futures.

The force dramatique which fixes audience attention upon the unfolding of the plot must be both of human interest and well-suited to musical treatment. Such driving force he finds in the scenario for Berton's Virginie, for example, of which he praises not only the intensity of the drama itself, but also its potential for expression in music that sets it apart from the spoken theatre.

Virginie réclamée comme esclave au moment où son cortège nuptial s'avance vers le temple, Virginie immolée par un père désespéré qui n'a que ce moyen terrible pour la soustraire aux criminelles entreprises d'Appius, voilà deux belles scènes d'opéras. La musique s'unite admirablement à ces grandes catastrophes. Le privilège qu'elle a de faire parler tous les personnages à la fois et même un peuple entier, lui permet de tenir des effets qui passent les bornes fixées à la simple déclamation. Une mauvaise tragédie peut devenir un excellent opéra si elle offre au musicien l'occasion de déployer la magie de son art.

While the intensity of emotion may not be the same between serious and comic opera, Castil-Blaze insisted that the connection between the dramatic action and the music should be equally strong in both. He complained frequently that many libretti in the repertoire of the Opéra-Comique lacked sufficient motivation for the music which they present. Regardless of the amount of music featured, he remained firm in his principle that opera is a genre

24. It is interesting to note, in this connection, that Castil-Blaze's first review of La Gazza ladra in Débats (20 September 1821) describes this work in its titling as an opéra de Rossini, whereas his second review in Débats (28 September 1821) the titling refers to it as the mélodrame de Rossini.

that develops a story in music, not simply with music and he stressed that comic opera was more than simply spoken comedy with “applied” music.

Ce n’est pas l’abondance de la musique, c’est la manière dont elle se lie à l’action théâtrale qui constitue l’opéra.26

A toutes les qualités que l’on exige dans une bonne comédie, un opéra doit réunir encore des tableaux, des situations, des scènes propres à la musique; il faut qu’un air, un duo, soient amenés par l’action théâtrale, et non pas ajoutés et plaqués maladroitement pour satisfaire, en quelque façon, à l’obligation de produire du chant.27

The ways in which music was introduced into opéra comique scenes without really being warranted by the plot were many and varied, but one which attracted Castil-Blaze’s particular attention was that of portraying principal characters as singers in their on-stage lives. Le Dilettante d’Avignon, for example, features opera performers who sing samples from their repertoire in the course of a plot which largely revolves around the thoroughly undramatic subject of the relative merits of Italian and French musical styles. While the work is veritably swimming in music, it is, as Castil-Blaze points out, “musique exécutée sans raison et au repos,” since there is really nothing at stake during the musical numbers.28 In a similar vein, he points out that the opéra comique La Table et le Logement seems peopled with a vast assortment of innkeepers, scullery maids and guests all of whom just happen to be amateur musicians, and all of whom are willing to give throat to their personal musical ambitions by singing chansons, cavatinas and even arie di bravura for the benefit of any other character on stage, while the audience sits observing this series of improvised concerts. But none of this is dramatic in the slightest, since “la musique veut de l’action et des situations.”29

27. De l’Opéra, I, pp. 48-49.
Castil-Blaze finds diluted dramatic force to be most systematically in evidence when the principal characters are not even human, as in the older generation of opera plots that revolved around the amatory and career activities of deities, and in the more recent fashion for operas based on féerie plots such as *Aladin, ou la Lampe merveilleuse*.

Dramatic interest, then, must be strong, but it must not merely be presented in isolated scenes, it must be maintained between them, and in this regard Castil-Blaze notes that many a librettist who can invent good musical scenes for inclusion in an opera cannot find a way of “sewing them together” in a way that provides force dramatique to the whole. The libretto for Zingarelli’s *Romeo e Giulietta*, for example, despite the considerable scenic potential in the story line described above, disintegrates into a series of disjointed scenes with only their function as occasions for music to recommend them.

Ce libretto appartient à l’ancienne école, et n’est qu’une série de scènes décousues, dans lesquelles on retrouve néanmoins la danse, la noce, le rendez-vous, le double empoisonnement, et la scène des tombeaux....

La musique de Zingarelli est belle; mais comme le poème a été disposé seulement pour amener des airs et des duo, [sic] l’intérêt dramatique est absolument nul, et ce défaut influe singulièrement sur les résultats musicaux.

30. “Le spectateur est toujours tranquille sur le sort d’une divinité; il compte sur sa toute-puissance: on ne s’attache point à un être qui ne peut jamais se trouver en danger, et qui, d’un coup de baguette, change un cachot affreux en un jardin délicieux, en un palais étincelant d’or et de pierres-...” *De l’Opéra*, I, p. 94.

31. “L’intérêt des situations ne peut marcher de front avec la magie, dès qu’un héros de roman ou d’opéra se montre armé d’une baguette, d’un anneau, d’une clochette, d’une lampe, d’un pied de mouton, ou même d’une queue de lapin : on est tranquille sur son sort. Il peut bravement exposer sa vie, prodiguer ses trésors, pourfendre ses rivaux, faire la cour aux beautés les plus inhumaines. La queue de lapin est là, et l’on sait que son heureux possesseur ne mourra pas, que ses rivaux auront un pied de nez, que les belles s’apprivoiseront, que de nouveaux sequins de cuivre succéderont à ceux qu’il a jetés par les fenêtres, que l’enfer en sera pour ses frais d’esprit et de gaz, et qu’au dénouement le cachot affreux qui rembrunit la scène sera changé en un palais resplendissant d’or et de diamants. Tel est à peu près le cadre de toutes nos féeries; beaucoup d’auteurs ont réussi dans ce genre facile que le machiniste et le décorateur soutiennent.” *Débats* (16 May 1822): 1-2. Nicolo Isouard’s *Aladin, ou la Lampe merveilleuse* débuted at the Opéra on 2 June 1822, and featured many new innovations in set décor, including the first theatrical use of gas lighting in France.

32. *Débats* (1 September 1821): 1, 2. Similarly, the libretto for Meyerbeer’s *Medea in Corinto* exploits well the couleur musicale of the subject, but at the expense of the strong dramatic material inherent in the story: “Le sujet de Médée convient admirablement à la scène lyrique; l’expression des
The question raised here is not just that of scattered scene structure disorienting the audience, but also that of the very important concept of *invraisemblance*. As energetic a proponent of Italian operatic practice as he was, and despite the allowances he was willing to grant the libretto for the sake of creating musical interest, he remained doggedly French in his insistence on veracity of presentation. The most forceful of plots is undercut immediately when the characters begin to act illogically or appear to be the mere puppets of a complacent librettist cynically setting up his series of required musical numbers.33

The third quality of the libretto plot, apart from its general suitability for musical setting and the dramatic force linking its scenes, is an overall pattern of contrast and variety that characterizes its musical shape as a whole. Once again, Castil-Blaze stresses the link that he believes to exist between the libretto and the score: contrasts of mood, tone and rhythm on the aural surface of a work all have their origins in the librettist's conception at the structural level, where scenic action must be planned in such a way as to imply varied and contrasting realization in music.

... cet art si puissant et si séducteur ne sauroit se passer de contrastes. Il faut que le poète prépare des situations et les combine assez adroitement pour que le dessin musical ait cette variété de couleurs, de rythmes, d'effets, qui soutient l'intérêt, éveille l'attention et attache l'auditeur.34

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sentiments tendres et des passions exaspérées, des mystères magiques, une cérémonie nuptiale, tout cela porte un grand caractère et présente des contrastes bien favorables pour l'art musical. Le poète italien n'a pourtant pas fait une bonne pièce; les situations fortes et dramatiques s'y trouvent, mais elles sont amenées par des scènes décousues. On nous fait passer d'un palais dans un temple, pour nous conduire ensuite au fond d'un souterrain, dans une prison, dans un palais, et nous laisser ensuite sur le bord de la mer. On aurait pu nous épargner une partie de ces voyages."


33. Romeo’s random promenades on and off the stage in the first act of the Zingarelli work is a good example: "On se demande pourquoi le jeune Montaigu brave mille morts en revenant dans les lieux où il a couru tant de dangers. Est-ce pour voir Juliette? Il vient de la quitter. Est-ce pour défier Capulet? Ils se sont rencontrés tout à l'heure, et ils ont eu assez de philosophie pour contenir leur ressentiment. Est-ce pour combattre et vaincre son rival que le chevalier Roméo entre si fièrement sur la scène? Non, sans doute, c'est tout bonnement pour chanter un air de Rossini en *sol majeur*; cela fait, il se retire, comme si personne ne l'avait vu ni entendu." *Débats* (1 September 1821): 2.

What this means concretely is that the librettist must be able to think through his sequence of scenes in terms of the taxonomy of stage emotions long sanctioned in the lyric theatre — prayer scenes, scenes of terror, of tenderness, of despair, etc. — so that the composer will be stimulated to create deep and moving instances of these stereotypes in his own mould. The librettist must imagine himself to be working for a composer eager to display the full range of his art, a composer such as Dalayrac who, Castil-Blaze imagines, when told he is to set the story of Camille, can already imagine what he will do when the librettist gives him the varied scenes that will be chosen for setting:

A merveille! s’écrie Dalayrac, c’est ce que je vous demandois depuis long-temps, je voulais un cadre propre à recevoir des tableaux nombreux et variés, voilà ce qu’il me faut. Les prières, les craintes, la tendresse maternelle, le désespoir de Camille vont m’inspirer des airs grandioses et touchants. Je pourrai composer un beau cantabile, un largo plein de candeur et de suavité ...\[35\]

Castil-Blaze warns that if a librettist fails to achieve this overview of the work in his planning, if he fails to consider the relationship between pressing dramatic action and varied musical expression, then regardless of the inherent strength of the individual scenes that he might have chosen, his work will risk an overall uniformity that will eventually wear on his audience, and work to the detriment of whatever dramatic interest he might create. The libretto of Berton’s Virginie, mentioned above for its enormous dramatic potential, stands as an example of just this sort of danger. Given the types of emotions that the librettist is asking the composer to set in music, he ought to realize that in the dramatic structure he is creating, an overly uniform musical surface will result:

Il faut faire en sorte qu’un air de désespoir ne succède point à un air de fureur, et qu’un duo fortement agité ne soit point précédé et suivi par un morceau du même caractère. L’uniformité de sentiment se fait trop remarquer dans Virginie, presque tous les airs de cet opéra sont consacrés à l’expression de la menace, de la colère ou du désespoir. On sait que les cadres de l’agitato sont peu variés, le mode en est le

35. Débats (30 October 1821): 2. As we shall see in the following chapter, Dalayrac does not get his wish in this regard. He has yet to meet up with the trammelling traditions of the Opéra-Comique.
The problem of uniformity of musical character is one to which Castil-Blaze is very alive, and one which he points out frequently, in both serious works such as Bellini's *Il Pirata*, and in comic works such as Auber's *Le Dieu et la Bayadère* and Prosper's *François Ier à Chambord*. It represents to him still another way in which French librettists are not yet considering opera seriously from the point of view of the composing musician; or if so, have not filled out their vision of it to encompass its full range of expressive possibilities.

The criteria by which Castil-Blaze judges works for the lyric stage — the musicality of its setting and general theme, the directness and momentum of its action, and the variety of musical expression to which it gives rise — each reflect in some way how the musical surface of an opera is rooted in the *cadre* provided by the librettist. By applying them to opera in the way in which he did, he contributed to defining opera as a separate genre with a separate range of subject matter appropriate to it, and a separate set of criteria for judging that subject matter.


38. "Le sujet de l’opéra nouveau était difficile à traiter pour le musicien, l’uniformité des sentiments, du caractère des airs de chant et de danse, la couleur orientale qu’il fallait leur donner, le retour forcé des mêmes rythmes, l’emploi des mêmes moyens ont enfermé M. Auber dans un cercle dont il ne pouvait guère se tirer sans se faire quelques emprunts." *Débats* (15 October 1830): 2.

**Distribution of Roles and Music**

Castil-Blaze indicates that with a musical setting in place, a dramatic action pressing ever onward, and a variety of human emotions unfolding upon the stage, the librettist can still create a highly defective *cadre* for the composer if musical interest is spread thinly or awkwardly over the dramatic material created. Grétry's *La Caravane* gives an example of how this is possible:

*La Caravane* est une assez mauvaise pièce, dont on auroit pu faire un excellent livret d'opéra. Tableaux superbes et variés, agréments de la danse, éclat des costumes, décorations pittoresques, situations dramatiques et musicales, l'auteur a su réunir sans effort tous ces divers moyens dans un même cadre. Ce n'est pourtant qu'une ébauche sous le rapport de l'intérêt et des effets de la musique ...

L'ensemble de *la Caravane* est excellent, mais l'intérêt musical est trop divisé. Sur dix rôles on n'en trouve pas un qui soit réellement bon.  

The distribution of music over the dramatic canvases drawn up by librettists was not a matter that had been given systematic attention in France. Castil-Blaze suggested that it was time for that to change. He urged librettists to use the variables available to them — the amount of music given to each character role, the number of available vocal timbres, and the different compositional textures available (solo vs ensemble) — to create a musical structure that parallels the dramatic structure in its pattern of interest and intensity. In so doing, he was extending the principle of variety in subject matter to include the larger dimension of character portrayal and scene complexity.

The parallel structure that he envisaged would tend to be characterized by the following relationships between dramatic elements and musical resources:

1) the characters of greatest dramatic interest would receive the most important and demanding musical roles, with the greatest amount of material to sing;

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2) the pattern of contrasting dramatic roles in the drama would be matched by a parallel pattern of contrasting vocal timbres;

3) the headlong thrust of the work’s *force dramatique* should be matched by a corresponding gathering of intensity in each act, progressing from solos, to duos, to larger ensembles, with each act crowned by an elaborate ensemble finale.

The problem of the distribution of interest between roles was a difficult one in French opera. This was so in part because in the early part of the nineteenth century solo singers of quality were rare in France, and thus there came little pressure from this quarter for musical roles of real substance to be created; and in part because many older works, with their irregular musical casts and motley of musical dressing were still in the repertoire setting an example by their prestige. Older works such as Grétry’s *La Caravane*, mentioned above, and Méhul’s *Une Folie* displayed the inherent problems of much of this repertoire: many important dramatic characters did not have sufficiently important amounts of material to sing, and often musical interest was divided between too many characters, creating no major roles for any one of them. But Castil-Blaze criticized many newer works as well for the skimpy musical dressing which they attached to their principal characters, e.g., Boieldieu’s *Les Deux Nuits* and Weber’s *Oberon*. Equally lopsided and harmful to the overall pattern was the occasional practice of concentrating musical interest in too few characters.

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41. “La musique de ce maître […] commence à n’être plus en rapport avec le nouveau style; les scènes de dialogue sont d’une longueur démesurée, dans *Une Folie*; quatre rôles, ceux de Cerberti, de Francisque, de Jaquinet, d’Armantine, sont tout à fait nuls sous le rapport musical. Florival et Carlin ont chacun un air à chanter, et prennent leur part de l’unique duo que l’on rencontre dans cet opéra.” *Débats* (27 September 1828): 2.

42. Concerning Boieldieu’s *Les Deux Nuits*, he writes: “Mais comment peut-on s’intéresser à une héroïne qui ne paraît que dans deux scènes, parmi lesquelles il faut compter celle du dénouement, où son rôle se borne à quelques mots? […] Je voudrais seulement que la partie du dialogue fût considérablement abrégée et que l’on eût donné plus d’importance musicale aux rôles principaux. Malvina devrait chanter au moins un air.” *Débats* (22 May 1829): 2.

43. “Comme beaucoup de livrets allemands, *Obéron* a le défaut d’employer un trop grand nombre d’acteurs pour remplir des rôles secondaires qui occupent la scène en pure perte, dégarnissent les rangs des choristes, et portent un préjudice notable aux principaux personnages que l’on ne voit pas assez souvent. Cette abondance d’acteurs est plus que stérile, elle nuit à l’ensemble d’un ouvrage.” *Débats* (27 May 1830): 2.
Kreutzer’s *Cordelia*, for example, is a strong performance vehicle for the principal character of the same name. But this too, Castil-Blaze warns, brings its own dangers: the audience will soon tire of continually hearing the same vocal colour, and the singer herself will soon tire from the strain of so much singing.\(^{44}\)

What Castil-Blaze wishes to see in the distribution of music throughout the cast, is a degree of musical interest given to the principal characters that matches their dramatic interest. Most frustrating to him was the increasing occurrence in opera libretti of characters for whom no music was written at all, who filled merely acting roles. In the past, this practice had been adopted by complacent composers to deal with the situation where a leading actress possessed of good looks and superior acting ability — and therefore indispensable for attracting audiences — was either ill-inclined or perhaps not even able to sing. In such cases composers would simply create a non-singing role.

With the advances in professional music education that were occurring in France in the early nineteenth century, this problem might well have solved itself over time were it not for a new and, from Castil-Blaze’s point of view, more pernicious problem that had recently arisen. There emerged on the French stage of the Restoration a strong vogue for mute characters, characters whose entire role was confined to animated gesturing. The interpretation of this gesturing would be parroted to the audience by other characters on stage musing aloud on what the mute character in their midst must be trying to say. Among the best known of these was Fenella, in Auber’s *La Muette de Portici* (1828).

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\(^{44}\) “Telle est l’action de ce mélodrame, où la scène est sans cesse occupée par un seul personnage et le chœur. Ce genre de composition a besoin d’être soutenu par un talent supérieur d’exécution : c’est l’acteur qui fait la pièce; et, malgré ce précieux, cet indispensable secours, il est bien difficile qu’un seul personnage intéresse toujours, et qu’une situation si long-temps prolongée ne fatigue pas l’acteur et l’auditoire. Les meilleurs efforts se détruisent les uns les autres, les sensations deviennent moins vivaces à mesure que l’on approche du dénouement, et la force physique du comédien et du chanteur n’est pas telle qu’il puisse conduire son crescendo jusqu’à la fin, sans employer des moyens déjà employés, et sans nous faire entendre ce que nous avons déjà entendu.” *Débats* (10 June 1830): 1.
Such characters, invariably young women, were strong centres of attraction for the audience’s sympathy, and their presence on stage is a natural outgrowth of the development and increasing influence of the *mélodrame* in French theatre. What concerned Castil-Blaze about this trend was that their incorporation into the dramatic fabric of an opera was directly at odds with the defined strength of the genre to convey dramatic expression by musical means. By incorporating a character of some dramatic weight whose only means of communication is visual rather than musical, the librettist creates a small mime show in the middle of an opera. This obviously removes one character from potential involvement in the ensembles, depleting the musical drama of precious harmonic resources and inevitably blunting its impact as music. As he points out, with much irony, but not much real understatement:

> De toutes les infirmités humaines, la moins favorable pour un oeuvre de chant est sans contredit le mutisme. Il semble que nos faiseurs de livrets auraient dû penser à la nullité d’un semblable personnage figurant parmi des chanteurs; ils auraient dû prévoir que ce mime devait porter le désordre et, ce qui est encore pire, la langueur dans tous les morceaux d’ensemble exécutés en sa présence; qu’il devait désorganiser un quatuor, faire boiter un trio, éborgner tous les duos.... mais nos auteurs, charmés de leur trouvaille, ont pensé que le public s’amuserait beaucoup du silence d’une actrice et des interprétations, des commentaires obligés que les acteurs parlant sont forcés d’adresser au public pour l’intelligence du drame.45

The warmth of his language on this subject, with its images of incapacity and mutilation (“faire boiter un trio, éborgner tous les duos”), indicates just how strongly felt are his views. A deaf mute in an opera was for Castil-Blaze like a large patch of bare canvas in the middle of a painting where the artist had refused to paint — and what is worse, a spot to which all the characters portrayed in the rest of the painting seem to be pointing and addressing their attention. It represents to him the worst abdication of artistic responsibility — the responsibility to create drama in *music* and not in another medium — and it represents to

him a threat to the operatic genre itself. In ridiculing this practice, he indicates that this type of genre-destroying procedure would never even have been considered by so musical a people as the Italians:

Jamais un impressario de Naples ou de Milan s’est-il avisé de dire à ses abonnés : « Messieurs, pour vous offrir une chose nouvelle et digne de votre suffrage, j’aurai cette année une prima donna qui ne dira rien; aucun son mélodieux, énergique ou badin ne sortira de sa bouche, non clamabit in gutture suo; elle sera sans reproche sous le rapport de l’intonation. Cette honnête et discrète personne sera secondée par des acteurs subalternes que vous n’écoutez jamais; veuillez bien leur prêter une oreille attentive et déroger ainsi à l’usage établi, si vous êtes curieux d’apprendre ce que notre muette ne saurait vous expliquer.»

Castil-Blaze was hardly more indulgent towards the fashion, appearing just shortly afterwards, for sleepwalking characters. These quasi-pantomime roles were only slightly more adapted to opera, in that they were indeed singing parts, but parts which could not be both dramatic and musical to the same degree. On the spoken stages these types of roles might be characterized by means of altering the voice to create a different quality of sound, but this technique could not work while singing. The result is that the character of somnambulism implicit in the role could not be conveyed musically, and thus Castil-Blaze concluded that sleepwalking disorders were entirely inappropriate for characters in an opera.

The quality and number of major roles created by the librettist is of concern to Castil-Blaze because of its implications for the composer’s ability to create large-scale patterns of musical contrast and momentum. The decision as to which exact voice type is to be assigned to which role is ultimately up to the composer (as will be discussed in the following chapter), but the broad pattern — the number of characters, the proportion of women’s voices to

46. Ibid.

47. “Cette somnambule ne devrait pas chanter pendant son sommeil comme elle chante quand elle est éveillée. On se souvient que Mme Perrin parlait d’une manière mystérieuse dans les scènes de sommeil d’une autre somnambule; mais ces modifications de la voix parlante ne peuvent pas être employées et pratiquées dans le chant. Mme Pasta prend l’attitude et la démarche d’une dormeuse, son oeil est fixe, mais sa voix est aussi éveillée que celle du pinçon ou de la linotte qui voltigent dans les bosquets au lever du soleil.” Débats (28 October 1831): 2.
men's voices — is determined by the librettist, and this pattern itself, broad as it is, has im-
portant ramifications for the ability of the composer to give an interesting overall musical
shape to an opera.48

At a broader level of regularity, even supposing that sufficiently musical roles were pro-
vided by the librettist, Castil-Blaze makes clear that the librettist must still take care that the
vocal timbres likely to be used are well spread out, and that solo numbers alternate effec-
tively with ensembles. Ensembles were an extremely important part of opera to Castil-Blaze.
They represented a way for the composer to add variety to his overall musical design in the
opera while still following closely the direction of the drama.49 An important guiding princi-
ple in his thinking was that each act should develop from a series of solos through an increas-
ingly frequent occurrence of ensembles in a pattern of continuously mounting musical
excitement that parallels the dramatic excitement of the plot. Each act, apart from the last,
should culminate in a finale ensemble of unresolved conflict where the drama is at its most
multi-dimensional state:

Un drame lyrique doit être conçu et disposé de manière que les effets de la musique
soient contrastés et ménagés avec artifice afin que leur progression soit toujours
croissante jusqu'à la fin.50

In the passage which follows, he indicates just what kinds of adjustments the librettist must
be prepared to make in order to assure that this large-scale pattern occurs:

Il faut songer à réunir trois acteurs pour former un trio, renoncer à une scène de
comédie si elle devoit se terminer par un air de tenor comme celle qui l'a précédée. Il

48. "Je n'hésiterais point à refuser de mettre en musique un opéra dont l'intrigue roulerait sur deux ou
trois personnages seulement ... Le moyen de composer un quatuor, si l'on n'a que deux ou trois
acteurs à faire chanter? Comment introduire de beaux contrastes dans un ensemble où vous ne
pouvez employer que des voix de femme?" De l'Opéra, I, pp. 54-55.

49. “Les morceaux d'ensemble, les finales habilement dessinés, donnent plus de force à l'action sans re-
tarder sa marche: c'est là surtout que le compositeur peut varier ses couleurs, suivant le caractère
des personnages introduits sur la scène, ou la diversité des événemens." De l'Opéra, I, p. 49.

But none of this is possible if the librettist does not try consciously to create it. The librettist is thus, in Castil-Blaze’s view, a dramatist who thinks not just dramatically, but musico-dramatically. He must be able to manipulate both dramatic and musical variables simultaneously to ensure the composer the widest possible freedom in exploiting the resources of music. The librettist’s aim is to help the composer to create a brilliant and varied aural surface, while still creating an underlying dramatic structure that justifies and necessitates the use of these musical resources. This is a delicate balancing act for the writer, but an extraordinarily important one, since, in Castil-Blaze’s view, it is this multi-dimensional structure that defines opera as a distinct genre, and his defence of the operatic genre so-defined is a central recurring theme in his criticism.

This music-biased criterion for excellence in libretto construction collided most heavily and most frequently with the repertoire of the Opéra-Comique, where the precedence of the writer’s dialogue or the performer’s acting over the composer’s score had long been an accepted traditional characteristic of the repertoire. The type of musical apparatus needed to shape this large-scale momentum, building from small to larger musical resources, was often little in evidence in most opéras comiques, where simple hummable ditties were the order of the day, and few ensembles of much sophistication could be heard. Castil-Blaze therefore easily waxed impatient over the dearth of musical resources that precluded any attempt at large-scale shaping in works such as La Maison isolée:

51. Ibid.
Chapter 4

La musique n’est introduite dans cette pièce que pour le *from, from*, les *brr* d’usage pour l’entrée des voleurs: deux chansons, un air, un fragment de duo, un simulacre de quatuor, du reste point de rôle saillant.\(^52\)

But at the same time, he distributed lavish praise when he found real operatic thinking on the part of a comic librettist, as he did when reviewing Prosper’s *L’Hôtel des Princes*:

>Airs, duos, trio, morceau d’ensemble concerté; chœurs, tout cela se rencontre dans *l’Hôtel des Princes*, ce n’est point une comédie à chansons, un vaudeville du genre de ceux de Feydeau, mais un opéra complet.\(^53\)

Many of the works of the older serious repertoire still playing in Paris, were considered by Castil-Blaze to show as few signs of the large-scale disposition of musical resources as they showed concentration in solo roles. Beaumarchais & Salieri’s *Tarare*, which debuted in 1787, for example, and was still performed until 1826, represents an example of the type of “cadre trop rétréci” (overly cramped frame) in the operas that still found a place on the major lyric stages of Paris during the Restoration.

>C’est une longue et monotone déclamation coupée par des airs brillans et pompeux, mais d’un cadre trop rétréci. Un duo fort court, quelques phrases en quatuor : voilà tous les groupes musicaux que l’on rencontre dans l’œuvre de Salieri....

>Le chœur offre des masses imposantes et de grands effets, il ne peut cependant suppléer le morceau d’ensemble et encore moins le finale.\(^54\)

Even large modern works, representing in other ways the most modern advances in opera production, are also criticized by Castil-Blaze for not using the largeness of their scale to full musical advantage, for being large-scale and modern in set décor and length only, not in full-

\(^{52}\) *Débats* (29 August 1827): 2. Castil-Blaze’s references to “le *from, from*, les *brr* d’usage” are meant to point out the roots of this music in the *vaudeville*, where onomatopoeic imitations of drums and trumpet fanfares were common stylistic traits of the refrain (see Chapter 1, p. 19). This is but one instance of the general irritability which he displayed in the face of what he believed to be the continuing *vaudevillisation* of the opéra comique genre.

\(^{53}\) *Débats* (25 April 1831): 2.

\(^{54}\) *Débats* (8 January 1822): 1.
ness of musical realization. Nicolo’s *Aladin, ou la Lampe merveilleuse* (1822) is but one example: Castil-Blaze complains that it offers little more than a succession of solos and choruses, without any concern for building up musical interest by means of increasingly complex ensemble groupings. On the other hand, Scribe’s libretto for Meyerbeer’s *Robert-le-Diable* offers an example of the successful application of the principle of steadily mounting excitement in libretto design.

It is noteworthy that a purposeful variety of textures is the aim, according to Castil-Blaze, not simply a maximum of ensembles. Indeed it was certainly possible to have too many ensembles, as Castil-Blaze finds in many operas and opéras comiques produced during the 1790s, when the revolutionary fervour of the times tended to encourage scenes of group action and de-emphasized somewhat the prominence of solo roles. Cherubini’s *Les Deux Journées* (1797) is an example of this tendency, a work just as “unbalanced” in its use of ensembles as an opera consisting of solo arias only. Castil-Blaze complains that the flaws in its musical character are fundamental, and directly traceable to the librettist’s preoccupation with grouping characters dramatically instead of separating them musically.

Quant au deuxième acte, il étoit impossible de le rendre plus régulier sous le rapport musical, l’action dramatique s’y oppose. La scène est trop long-temps et trop souvent occupée par des personnages subalternes, tels que les officiers et les soldats, c’est un défaut essentiel dans une pièce.

55. “La Lampe merveilleuse est un beau sujet pour le compositeur, mais il est mal disposé pour la musique : on n’y trouve qu’un seul trio, l’ébauche de deux duos, et point de finales. Quatorze airs et quatorze chœurs forment la chaîne trop uniforme des morceaux de chant. Au lieu de ces ensembles intrigués, de ces débats d’une gradation croissante que nous offre le finale; au lieu de ces groupes harmonieux diversement caractérisés qui précèdent un brillante péroraison, notre oreille est sans cesse battue par le piano des solos ou le fortissimo du chœur : point de demi-teintes. Une telle uniformité de cadres est désagréable pour l’auditoire : elle a dû nécessairement enchainer le talent du musicien.” *Débats* (16 May 1822): 2.

56. “Si les situations ne sont pas toutes également favorables, elles offrent du moins une gradation croissante, et qui donne à la musique un crescendo de vigueur et de vivacité qui entraîne, à partir du troisième acte jusqu’à la fin.” *Débats* (23 November 1831): 3.

Castil-Blaze’s view of the distribution of musical resources throughout the libretto quite naturally parallels his view of the ideal type and disposition of subject matter within it, since these two dimensions of libretto construction are regarded by him as complementary. The requirement that an opera have a subject matter suitable for musical setting presupposes that it will also have a sufficient number of major roles to tell the story fully in music. The variety in emotions to be built into the dramatic structure is matched by the variety in vocal timbres and textures that will communicate these emotions musically. The driving dramatic force of the plot itself is paralleled at the level of musical structure in the increasing musical complexity of the scenes as the work approaches the end of each act.

There remains as well one further level of large-scale libretto construction that Castil-Blaze considered an important consideration in judging an opera libretto: that of its act and scene structure and the implications that this structure has for the patterns of variety and driving dramatic force already discussed.

**Division into Acts and Scenes**

Castil-Blaze’s critical writing shows his awareness that the formal disposition of the libretto into acts and scenes, referred to as its *coupe* (“cut”), has implications as well for the musical character of the resulting work. A *coupe heureuse*, or favourable disposition into scenes and acts, in his view would involve two characteristics: 1) a regularly proportioned alternation of lyrical and plot-advancing scenes as the structural basis for each act; and 2) a multi-act, (i.e., not single-act) structure for the work as a whole.

The clean division into lyrical sections of *chant figuré* and plot-advancing sections of recitative was hardly a new or progressive idea in libretto construction. It had been the latent or explicit pattern in Italian opera virtually since its inception in the early seventeenth
century. But newness was not the issue for Castil-Blaze: he was not concerned with revolutionizing the dramatic structure in opera in all its particulars, but rather in stabilizing it in the proper form, in order that the composer might have a recognizable and workable framework into which to integrate his musical score. Castil-Blaze considered that the regularity of this “stop-and-start” structure of aria-recitative alternation provided a useful structural underpinning for opera for three reasons, which he explained in his review of Nicolo Isouard’s *Aladin, ou la Lampe merveilleuse* in 1822.58

First of all, he approves of the way in which this structure contributes to creating an overall pattern of musical variety while providing a well-defined place for the composer’s best efforts. The intervention of recitative has the musical function of isolating and setting off each lyric section, whetting the audience’s appetite for the next aria or ensemble. Operas in which either of these two elements occupy the stage for too long a stretch of time he considers to be unbalanced and unmusical. His objection to the traditional French *tragédie lyrique* is rooted in the excessively long stretches of recitative that destroy its musical balance. Quinault might have been a great poet and dramatist, he concedes, but he had very little to offer the composer, and thus could not be classed as a great librettist.

Cet auteur s’est montré poète, il est vrai, mais les beautés de son style sont toutes étrangères au genre qu’il ait adopté. *Armide, Proserpine, Roland* renferment de magnifiques dithyrambes; la grande scène d’Atys est un chef-d’œuvre sous le rapport de la conduite, de l’exécution et des pensées. Toutes ces belles choses sont parfaitement inutiles pour le musicien qui ne peut les employer qu’en récitatif toujours trop long pour les acteurs qu’il fatigue en pure perte, et surtout pour le public condamné à les entendre.59

58. The following comments are taken from Castil-Blaze’s review of this opera in *Débats* (16 May 1822): 1-4.

Nicolo, the composer of *Aladin*, is criticized as well for weakening the built-in contrast which the clean aria-recitative alternation provides. Nicolo’s fault lies in making the recitative, normally the least interesting section of a work, far too interesting by introducing

une infinité de petites cavatines, des phrases mesurées, des traits de chant soutenus par l’orchestre soumis aux figures d’un accompagnement régulier

which only serve to blunt the contrast with the more strictly regular musical numbers.\(^60\)

But Castil-Blaze’s objection to this procedure is motivated by a second reason, one which is central to his view of the value of recitative in general. He argues that given the musical intensity of the lyric sections, with their word-distorting melismas, a section of musical texture suitable for declaiming the explanatory details of the plot is absolutely necessary if the opera is to be intelligible, and this texture must be as clean and transparent to the meaning of the words as the lyrical sections are coloured and impenetrable.

Les choses d’action et de récit doivent être saisies sans peine par tous les spectateurs; les ornemens du chant, la lenteur du mouvement, exciteront leur impatience en mettant un obstacle au désir qu’ils ont d’être instruits de ce qui s’est passé et de ce qui se prépare ...

*Mon cœur palpite, de crainte il s’agite*, je le sais, je le vois, allez votre train; je serai toujours assez instruit sur ce point. Mais parlez clairement, sans lenteur, sans précipitation, parlez seul et sans accompagnement, quand vous me direz qu’un homme prêt à périr dans les eaux vous a donné une lampe, et que vous me ferez connaître les vertus de ce talisman et les circonstances qui peuvent vous l’enlever. Il ne faut ici ni roulades, ni sons filés, ni accompagnement figuré: mais un récitatif bien simple, bien clair, bien dégradé, qu’on me permette ce mot. Cette simplicité nécessaire pour mettre les paroles à découvert devient indispensable sous le rapport de l’effet musical, afin de produire des contrastes et de ménager adroitement l’arrivée d’un air

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\(^60\) *Débats* (16 May 1822): 3. Unbalanced lyrical excess is found to be a problem in Prosper’s *François Ier à Chambord* as well: “La plus grande partie des airs et des chœurs de *François Ier à Chambord*, se chantent au repos, et comme l’action n’avance pas, la partie active de la musique, le récitatif, ne s’y montre presque point. Deux, trois et même quatre morceaux de musique s’enchaînent l’un à l’autre sans l’intervention du récitatif. Cette suite de chants mesurés fait que ces morceaux se nuisent mutuellement. La déclamation lyrique est parfois ennuyeuse, je le sais, mais sa monotonie ajoute au charme de l’air qu’elle précède, c’est la bordure du tableau.” *Débats* (19 March 1830): 2.
Implicit in his reasoning is his often stated principle that an audience cannot be expected to concentrate on two things at the same time, and that in structuring an opera one must take into account the difference between an audience’s emotional response to music and its intellectual response to the semantic content of the words. As we will see in the following section of this chapter, this principle has important implications for the nature of the lyric text in general.

Castil-Blaze’s third reason for favouring the regular alteration of lyrical and recitative sections is unabashedly practical: the consideration that the singers need some time to rest their voices from the labours of expressive singing. An example of this problem is found in the second act of Rossini’s Otello, which Castil-Blaze criticizes for its succession of lyrically intense scenes without intervening recitative. The problem that he sees with this section of the opera relates not only to its overly rich uniformity of intensity, but principally because it gives the singers little chance to catch their breath.

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62. “L’attention ne peut se fixer en même temps sur deux objets également intéressans : après la musique, on écoute les paroles, pour revenir ensuite à la musique. S’il n’y a ni paroles ni musique pour rendre une pièce attachante, on a recours alors aux décorations, et l’œil se promène avec agrément sur les tableaux de ce panorama dramatique, jusqu’au moment où le tourment qu’éprouve l’oreille ne peut plus être supporté.” Débats (2 May 1822): 4 Also: “L’attention ne peut se fixer en même temps sur deux objets également intéressans : après la musique, on écoute les paroles, pour revenir ensuite à la musique.” Débats (2 May 1823): 4.


64. “Le second acte d’Otello est disposé d’une manière peu favorable pour les deux principaux rôles; les scènes fortes s’y trouvent enchaînées, et les morceaux d’une expression outrée arrivent l’un sur l’autre sans que l’acteur ait le temps de se reconnaître ... Une succession si rapide ajoute à nos plaisirs sans doute; mais elle augmente prodigieusement les difficultés que les chanteurs ont à vaincre avec des moyens que la fatigue a pu affoiblir.” Débats (19 April 1828): 1.
For Castil-Blaze then, there was no question of continuous drama. The stop-and-start pattern accepted in the eighteenth century is merely adapted for use in the early nineteenth century without objection to its basic premise of a clear division between sections that advance the plot and those that express emotional reaction to it. While a third type of scene, in which stage action occurs in tandem with musical interest — i.e., in declamation-style delivery in the voices against musical interest in the orchestra — is well recognized by him, and indeed described in detail in his chapter entitled “Du chant instrumental” in De l'Opéra en France, it does not seem to figure strongly in his criticism of the libretto. This is very likely because the relationship between the libretto and music in such scenes is not one in which the librettist’s decisions affect the composer’s range of options.

At the act-level division of the libretto structure, Castil-Blaze’s concern for creating a cadre large enough for the composer to display the full range of his powers leads him to insist that an opera must have at least two acts, preferably three, and no more than four.

C’est la coupe la plus favorable pour l’opéra sérieux et l’opéra comique. Le premier acte sert à l’exposition et aux développemens; l’action se lie fortement au second, et se dénoue au troisième. Si des raisons puissantes obligent le poëte à agrandir ou à resserrer son dessin, il peut ajouter ou supprimer un acte: je voudrais, cependant, qu’il s’en tint là. Un opéra en quatre actes est déjà trop long; comment soutenir l’intérêt, alimenter la curiosité, et prévenir l’ennui, si on étend l’ouvrage jusqu’à cinq?

The dramatic pattern presented by the one-act opera, especially common in the repertoire of the Opéra-Comique, was repeatedly characterized by Castil-Blaze as “essentiellement vicieux sous le rapport musical” because it does not allow enough scope to create the large-scale patterns of contrast and variety that he believes are the property of the operatic

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65. De l’Opéra, I, p. 52.

66. This theatre regularly featured three one-act opéra comiques per evening. Gabriele Buschmeier indicates that the majority of opéras comiques in the repertoire up to 1813 were in one act, and that the percentage was only slightly less in the Restoration period. Gabriele Buschmeier, op. cit., p. 167.
genre. He believes that there is simply not enough time to get to know the characters, and to delineate their personalities in music, and that the relationship between music and storyline cannot have the proper relative proportions.

Most important of all, the one-act coupe does not allow the composer to write the crowning piece of any opera, its first-act finale, where the power of music to coordinate conflicting dramatic emotions into a single musical texture gives the most impressive evidence for opera's uniqueness as a genre. His review of the one-act opéra comique Les Petits Appartemens occasions the following comments which summarize his views in this regard.

Une pièce en un acte ne peut jamais devenir un bon opéra: le cadre est trop petit, pour que l'auteur ait le temps et les moyens de rassembler et de séparer ses personnages, afin de former des groupes musicaux variés, sous le rapport du nombre des voix et du caractère de la mélodie. Un acte ne peut donner qu'un vaudeville ou une comédie à ariettes, ces deux genres sont aussi pauvres l'un que l'autre....

Il est bien plus agréable d'entendre un bel et bon opéra en trois actes que trois pièces qui n'ont qu'un seul acte chacune. Une exposition suffit pour la grande pièce; l'action marche, et devient plus intéressante; les scènes, les morceaux de musique sont bien établis, et suffisamment développés; un dénouement avec art préparé termine cet œuvre musical et dramatique. Le public a fait connaissance avec les personnages; il sait de quoi il s'agit; il les suit avec plaisir, et son divertissement n'est point une fatigue. Mais si, à chaque acte, on voit paroître de nouveaux venus, s'il faut subir le triple ennui de trois expositions et de trois dénouements, s'il faut voir...

67. This theme is struck in De l'Opéra en France: "Nous avons beaucoup de drames lyriques en un seul acte : cette coupe peut convenir à l'action scénique, et la faire marcher avec plus de rapidité; mais elle est essentiellement vicieuse sous le rapport musical, en ce qu'elle ne fournit jamais de grands tableaux et rarement des morceaux de facture. Presque tous les opéras italiens sont en deux actes : le premier se termine par un finale du plus bel effet. Nos petits actes, bluettes, scintillantes d'esprit et pleines d'agrément, sont d'une trop grande frivolité : des airs, des couplets, une romance, un duo, un trio, voilà tout ce qu'ils peuvent nous offrir; et il a fallu tout le génie de Méhul pour donner deux quatuors importants dans ces miniatures musicales, véritables colifichets." (Vol. I, pp. 52-53) The same theme is continued in one of his early feuilletons: "Nous avons trop de pièces en un acte. Cette coupe, bonne pour la comédie, est essentiellement vicieuse pour l'opéra, en ce qu'elle ne présente pas de ressources au musicien. Point de groupe, point de finale; c'est un poème stérile dont le compositeur ne peut tirer parti. Il n'y a presque pas de musique, et celle qu'il fera ne pourra être jugée qu'avec les yeux.... On a pu en faire l'observation à la première représentation de Auteur mort et vivant : la musique de M. Hérold n'a point produit l'effet qu'on devoit en attendre." Débats (30 December 1820): 3.

tronquer les scènes les plus intéressantes par l'obligation où l'auteur se trouve d'être bref, et dégarnir de musique un opéra pour le réduire au temps donné pour l'exécution de ces abrégés, on aura raison de dédaigner une variété frivole pour revenir à des tableaux plus grands, mieux travaillés, et par conséquent plus dignes de la faveur du public. 69

The principles of scene and act construction which Castil-Blaze is proposing for the libretto are consistent with aesthetic concerns stated previously. The variety within regular proportions that he demands in subject matter and in the pattern of vocal timbres and textures is echoed at the level of scene construction by the variety provided by the alternation of lyrical and recitative melodic styles. The maintenance of an overall pattern of musical momentum in the force dramatique of the plot, and in the pattern of mounting musical tension in larger ensemble numbers towards the end of each act, is accommodated at the level of act construction by an insistence upon a multi-act structure.

Throughout the full range of options exercised by the librettist in constructing his drama, Castil-Blaze consistently emphasizes those which maximize the composer's freedom to create musical interest on a large scale. His view of the libretto, however, extends beyond the mere manipulation of the large-scale effects of operatic dramaturgy, as we shall see in the following section.

Operatic Prosody

Castil-Blaze elaborates the generic characteristics of the libretto not only in its dramaturgical outline and internal arrangement of parts, as discussed so far, but also at a finer level of detail in its use of language. His views at this finer level of detail echo many of the same principles that animate his conception of the larger dramatic structure. He stresses at

this level as well the deference owed by the libretto to the aims of the composer, and the need
for regularity in patterning. The extension of his principles down to this level of detail
demonstrates how multi-dimensional is his vision of the libretto as a musical structure.\textsuperscript{70}

As in his approach to the libretto, Castil-Blaze is at pains to separate literature or spoken
drama from opera, and to distinguish between the literary use of language and its operatic use. He stresses that creating a text for singing is a very different matter from creating a
text meant to be read alone, since the rhythmic and prosodic patterns of spoken verse may
not be preserved in musical setting.

Un livret d'opéra n'est pas fait pour être lu : les fautes de versification que le traducteur a bien voulu faire sont-elles réellement des fautes si le livret seul a pu les révéler, et si la structure de la partition les fait disparaître ou prévient l'effet désagréable qu'elles auraient produit? Deux vers rimés d'une manière insuffisante seront-ils remarqués par l'oreille la plus exercée si ces deux vers se trouvent séparés par une
marche militaire? ... Placez un solo de hautbois, un roulement de timbales, une fanfare de trompettes entre deux voyelles prêtes à s'entrechoquer, il n'y aura point
d'hiatus, puisque la liaison des deux mots, leur rapprochement même est impossible.\textsuperscript{71}

A related concept involved in his approach to language use in opera is that of the strict
foreground-background relationship between words and music mentioned above.\textsuperscript{72} Because
Castil-Blaze believes that the unique advantage of opera, and what defines it as a separate
genre, is its ability to convey dramatic emotion musically, his comments are largely restricted
to the use of language in lyrical sections, where dramatic musical expression is the deliberate
aim. The language of recitative, where he believes conveying information, rather than emo-

\textsuperscript{70} Castil-Blaze's most extensive discussions of opera prosody are to be found in \textit{De l'Opéra}, Chap. 1 ("Des Paroles"), pp. 64ff., and in comments made in the following feuilletons: 25 January 1823, 2 May 1823, 23 August 1824, 19 October 1824, 2 August 1825 and 14 December 1827. He also wrote a monograph on this subject, posthumously published as \textit{L'Art des vers lyriques} (Paris: H. Delahays, 1858).

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Débats} (2 August 1825): 3.

\textsuperscript{72} See previous note 62.
tion, to be the only goal, is largely ignored, because its influence on the music — Castil-Blaze's reason for discussing language at all — is not an important consideration.

The most important characteristic of the text in lyric sections is one which would shock the French littérateur: their semantic neutrality. Castil-Blaze is quite categorical on this point, and references to the dominance of the music over the demands of the text are clear and unequivocal in his many references to the subject both in De l'Opéra en France and in his feuilletons:

> En exceptant, toutefois, les fragments de dialogue et ce qui, dans un morceau d'ensemble, se rapporte directement à l'action théâtrale, les paroles ne sont rien et ne doivent rien être...

> Les paroles sont les très humbles servantes de la musique, des esclaves qu'il lui est permis de fouler et d'écraser même si cela lui convient.

Such opinions as these could not be more radically distinct from the attachment of French traditionalists, and French opera juries in particular, for the care which had always been lavished upon the libretto texts as literary utterances. They highlight the very strong assertion on his part that music, and music alone, should be given the responsibility of projecting the most powerful and memorable aspects of the drama to its audience. His position is justified, in his view, by the belief that music's power is so strong, and its command over

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73. *De l'Opéra*, I, p. 72.


75. The following notes concerning the libretto prize competition of 1785, in which Suard, the Secretary of the Selection Committee indicates the criteria for the competition, make clear that Castil-Blaze's criteria were not generally accepted in the Opéra administration of the ancien régime:

> "Celui qui réunirait à la forme du poème lyrique un dialogue ingénieux & vrai, & une poésie élégante et harmonieuse, obtiendrait la préférence sur le poème qui, par sa coupe par l'intérêt même de l'action, serait susceptible de produire de plus grand effets dramatiques & de plus grandes beautés musicales si le style en étroit incorrect & commun. Quinault & Métastase ont prouvé que la tragédie même n'avait point d'effet qui ne pût se transporter avec succès sur le théâtre de l'Opéra & qu'une belle poésie pouvait s'unir à la plus belle musique." Gabriele Buschmeier, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.
the audience’s attention so complete, that any care given to poetic craft in passages well-composed by the musician is utterly wasted.

Qu’un poëte exprime en beaux vers le trouble d’un amant, ses craintes, ses soupirs, ses regrets, ses alarmes, ce tableau, plein de sentiment et de vérité, sera justement admiré. Mais, s’il s’avise de l’associer aux accords d’un habile musicien, toutes les beautés de la poésie s’évanouiront devant le charme d’un magicien plus puissant. Le tremolo des violes, une tenue de cor, les soupirs des hautbois et des bassons, les traits agités des violons en diront plus aux écoutans en une seconde, ils feront une impression plus forte et plus vive sur leur âme que toutes les fleurs de rhétorique du poète, et celui-ci aura épuisé toutes les ressources de son art pour ne dire réellement que ces mots indicateurs : C’est un amant, il est malheureux; la musique aura exprimé tout le reste.76

In Castil-Blaze’s analysis this intensity of expressive power comes at the expense of agility and precision. He believes that music, while more powerful an aesthetic stimulus, is slower than language as a communicative medium, and more vague, a quality particularly apparent in comedy, where wit conceived in linguistic terms can quickly outpace music’s limited speed of delivery.77 Castil-Blaze thus stresses that “too many words” will inevitably encumber the composer.78 Furthermore, a certain dilution in meaning is required, even of the few words used, in order that the music be assured its leading place, and that it not have to compete with ideas of any consequence in the text. It is for this reason that he consistently warns against using language of any degree of semantic density in lyric verse, e.g.,

76. Débats (2 May 1823): 3.


78. Castil-Blaze finds this problem, for example, in the opéra comique Les Petits Appartemens: “Le rondeau récité par Lemoimier n’a qu’une petite phrase; les deux autres reprises contiennent trop de paroles qu’il fallait nécessairement faire filer; elles ont embarrassé le compositeur qui n’a pu établir aucune mélodie gracieuse sur un discours trop long et trop irrégulier.” Débats (12 July 1827): 2. And the air Sur ces bords écartés from Gluck’s Armide as well: “Comme tous les airs français, elle renferme beaucoup trop de mots.” Débats (19 August 1826): 4.
narrations\textsuperscript{79} or philosophical maxims, \textsuperscript{80} since they encourage the audience to listen to the words and distract them from the music. For the same reason he anathematized the use of elaborate similes and metaphors such as were frequent in the libretti of Metastasio,\textsuperscript{81} or parallel constructions common in the libretti of Quinault.\textsuperscript{82} Vagueness and a studied avoidance of intellectual effort are thus important characteristics of the libretto text, in Castil-Blaze's view, at least insofar as it is to serve as the basis for a lyric scene. He finds the types of semantic and rhetorical structures itemized above objectionable because they rival, and thus weaken, music's singular foreground hold on the audience's attention.

In place of semantic content, Castil-Blaze proposes that good lyric operatic verse be conceived merely as syllables for singing. He conceives of the text not in terms of a relationship of music to meaning, but rather as a relationship between sound structures that must be made to run in parallel.

\textsuperscript{79} “Les narrations ne doivent pas être chantées; et, dans le Solitaire, nous avons cinq récits en musique et cinq expositions en prose; l’auteur des paroles a fait assez pour notre instruction.” \textit{Débats} (20 August 1822): 3.

\textsuperscript{80} Castil-Blaze warns that “encadrer des maximes philosophiques, de vieux dictons, de pitoyables quolibets dans des stances symétriques, destinées à être chantées sur le même couplet musical, et placer ensuite de pareilles chansons dans un opéra, c’est abuser de la patience des gens de goût et déshonorer la scène lyrique. Le retour des mêmes périodes fatigue l’oreille par une insipide monotonie, que l’exiguité du cadre, les formes étroites de la chanson rendent inévitable.” \textit{Débats} (5 March 1823): 1.

\textsuperscript{81} “... Métastase fait toujours figurer deux couples d’amans qui débitent force madrigaux, et finissent toujours par se comparer au vaisseau battu par la tempête, au nocher privé de son gouvernail, à la barque flottant au gré des ondes. Cela peut être fort poétique, mais le musicien sera rarement inspiré par de semblables couplets.” \textit{Débats} (14 July 1825): 3. “Les livrets d’Apostolo Zeno, de Calzabigi, de Metastasio, tant de fois reproduits, ont été bannis de la scène italienne. Les productions de ces auteurs sont toujours estimées, admirées, même sous le rapport de l’invention et de la poésie; mais leurs longs discours, qu’il fallait mettre en récitatif, leurs airs bâtis sur des lieux communs de rhétorique ou de philosophie, leurs comparaisons éternelles et leurs fastidieuses similitudes ne pouvaient se maintenir sur une scène que l’on voulait rendre dramatique.” \textit{Débats} (17 October 1829): 1.

\textsuperscript{82} In an article on Gluck's \textit{Armide} from 1831, he voices his objection to the repetition of words such as in the following verses: “Et pour l’avoir trouvé sans peine, / Nous ne l’en trouvons pas moins doux;” “La Gloire a qui tu l’arraches, / Doit bientôt te l’arracher;” “Vous m’apprenez à connaître l’amour; L’amour m’apprend à connaître la crainte.” \textit{Débats} (13 September 1831): 12.
Critiquer les pensées et les tours, peu importe; la musique ne veut que des mots sonores, symétriquement arrangés.\textsuperscript{83}

By deliberately curbing the potential for language to occupy the attention of the listener, and by stressing the harmonious relationship that should exist between the syllables of the libretto text and the notes of the composer's melody, Castil-Blaze asserts the librettist's primary role in assuring that music take control of the dramatic expression of the work. His role at this level parallels that of his role at the level of dramatic construction: he must create empty syllables for singing in the same way that he is to create empty occasions for singing. Writing undistinguished verse of this sort was not natural to the French, and the very principles of this type of writing seemed unknown in France except to a very few.\textsuperscript{84}

As with his views on other aspects of libretto construction, his approach at the level of language usage is systematic and comprehensive, being elaborated on three levels of poetic construction: 1) at the level of the individual syllables to be sung; 2) at the level of the poetic line and its rhythm; and 3) at the level of the poetic stanza and its rhyme pattern. In each of these he seeks to demonstrate how literary decisions made by the librettist affected the choices available to the composing musician.

His concern with the sung text at the syllable level of its construction is centred on the practical demands which these syllables make upon the singers who must deliver them. Syllables for singing, he insists, should above all be easily pronounceable. They should not press-

\textsuperscript{83} Débats (2 August 1825): 4. Many of his strongest comments in this regard occur in discussions of French translations of foreign texts, a subject close to his heart since he himself had much experience in this area, e.g.: "Le Mont des Oliviers a été traduit de l’allemand en français; cette traduction est excellente pour un littérateur qui a fait ce qu’il pouvait faire; on lira ses vers avec plaisir, on applaudira à la fidélité de la version, à l’harmonie des vers. Mais ces vers, pourra-t-on les chanter? C’est de quoi les poètes s’embarrassent fort peu. Ils croient que les vers d’un traducteur musical se composent avec des mots; point du tout, c’est avec des syllables qu’il faut les construire." Débats (14 April 1822): 2.

\textsuperscript{84} Jean-François Marmontel, the librettist who revised Quinault’s Armide for Gluck, and François-Benoît Hoffman, the librettist of Spontini’s La Vestale, were among few French writers whom Castil-Blaze believed capable of putting themselves intelligently in the service of the composer with whom they were working.
ent an obstacle course for the performing musician trying simply to offload them from his

tongue. One example which he frequently cites in this regard is drawn from Rossini’s *Le
Siège de Corinthe*, in which the clear open vowels of the original Italian phrase

Duce di tanti, di tanti eroi

are transformed into the tongue-twisting “paroles anti-musicales et durement torturées” of
the French translation as

Chef d’un peuple, d’un peuple indomptable.\(^{85}\)

Vowels are as much a problem in this regard as consonants, due to the phonetic make­
up of the French language with its numerous nasal and closed front vowel sounds. He
points out, for example, that the French translator of Gossec’s *O salutaris hostia* was obvi­
ously not thinking of effectiveness in performance when he devised rhymes ending in dark
“-eux” sounds:

... les mots hébreux, lieux, dieux, arrivent sans cesse pour éteindre les bonnes notes
de Gossec et voiler les cadences.\(^{86}\)

Worse still was the Comte de Ségur’s French translation of Haydn’s *The Creation*, which, at
the climactic moment where light first appears in the world, features the phrase — impecca­
ably literary and faithful to the original, but totally unmusical — *et la lumière fut.*

\(^{85}\) *Débats* (4 February 1828): 4. Castil-Blaze considered the translation of this phrase, which he
discusses in several articles, to be emblematic of the lack of sympathy for the performing singer in
French theatrical circles. He notes in a later feuilleton how one singer was unable to ornament
this passage in the same style as the Italian original because of the difficulty of the French text :
“Dérivis a voulu restaurer l’air, chef d’un peuple indomptable, en lui rendant les ornemens que
Rossini a donnés à l’original, duœ di tanti eroi, mais il a été obligé d’y renoncer.” *Débats* (29 Sep­
tember 1831): 1. Similarly difficult words are pointed to in a duo from Caraфа’s *Le Solitaire*: “Les
paroles de ce duo sont anti-musicales: le compositur n’a pas pu s’en rendre maître, et l’acteur ne
réussit pas toujours à les prononcer.” *Débats* (20 August 1822): 3.

\(^{86}\) *Débats* (11 April 1830): 2.
Par une fatalité singulière, fatalité qui certes n’aurait point imposé ses lois au musicien le moins habile, le mot *fut*, mot le plus sourd et le plus sifflant de notre langue, arrive *a punto* sur la tenue la plus éclatante de Haydn.

Les cent voix, dont l’accord harmonieusement bruyant, est destiné à donner une image musicale de l’explosion de la lumière, se trouvent contrariées de la manière la plus désagréable. Au lieu de frapper un coup de tonnerre en déployant la puissance de leur moyens sur un *A*, tous les chanteurs font la moue sur l’*U* de *fut*, et semblent répéter la leçon du Bourgeois gentilhomme. 87

Arnold’s impassioned, but inevitably muffled outcry in Rossini’s *Guillaume Tell*

Mon père! — tu m’a dû mau — dire!

is similarly cited for the lack of connection between the open emotion to be displayed and the closed up vowels to be sung. 88

Such negligences on the part of the librettist were only symptomatic, however, of much larger problems which Castil-Blaze noticed at the verse and stanza level of poetical construction, problems which had severe implications for the composer at the phrase and period level of musical construction, where unmusical prosodic practices make musical setting difficult.

The problem, bluntly put, is that:

*Il est impossible de joindre une mélodie élégante et régulière à des vers durs et boiteux.* 89

The origin of these problems Castil-Blaze believed to lie with the changeover from the ancient system of classical prosody based on syllable length, used by Horace and Vergil, to the later developed system of end rhyme. This change in prosodic principles, he believed, brought with it the separation of music from poetry by eliminating the element of rhythm which had always linked these two arts together.

Après la chute de l'empire romain, les indignes successeurs de Virgile et d'Horace, privés de génie et de talent, cherchant à s'éloigner d'une route qu'ils ne pouvoient suivre avec honneur, écrivirent des vers rimés, et ces chutes unissonnes, que l'on regardoit auparavant comme un défaut, devinrent une des qualités principales de cette poésie dégénérée....

Le divorce est déclaré entre la musique et la poésie, du moment que celle-ci est privé du rythme et de la mesure, qualités constitutives et communes entre ces deux sœurs. La rime, invention gothique et barbare, ne sauroit offrir une compensation, puisque la musique la repousse comme inutile et nuisible même.^^

The result, he insisted, was not poetry at all — or at least not poetry worth setting to music — but mere prose rimée (rhymed prose), a phrase which he used often in referring to operatic verse. Castil-Blaze considered most libretto verse to be mere prose rimée because it was constructed with regard only for the arrangement of its ideas, like prose, and for the similarity of sound patterning at the ends of its lines, i.e., its rhyme. But what the composer needed, he emphasized, was language constructed with regard to the internal arrangement of rhythmic stresses in each line, not with respect to the arrangement of ideas; and with regard to the masculine or feminine rhythmic pattern at the ends of each line — its cadence — and not merely the similarity of sound, the phonetic identity of these line endings.

C'est la cadence et non la rime qui caractérise le vers lyrique; il faut qu'une exacte symétrie dans les tems et les césures offre des repos aux mêmes lieux et une égale distribution des longues et des brèves....

La rime peut n'être pas nécessaire pour les vers d'opéra, la cadence intérieure est toujours indispensable. Comme un peloton de soldats, une strophe doit se diviser dans tous les sens par égales portions, et tomber d'aplomb de manière à présenter sans cesse un front régulier.^91

Castil-Blaze found cadence to be a particularly overlooked aspect of lyric verse construction.^^ He pointed out, however, that it is an extremely important one, since it is the

90. Débats (19 October 1824): 1, 2.
91. Débats (2 May 1823): 2.
92. Castil-believed that cadence and rhythm are what distinguish Italian music from French: “Voilà ce qui constitue réellement la prééminence des airs italiens sur les airs français, c'est le rythme et la cadence.... Ce sont les vers des poètes français qui gâtent notre musique de chant, c'est ce texte bi-
rhythm of the line ending which determines the length of the phrases that the composer will be able to create and the type of melodic pattern that he will have to use to end his phrases. Since the composer will want to end his phrases on a strong beat, masculine endings should be reserved for those lines which are intended to arrive at the ends of musical phrases. Using masculine cadences before this point will break up the continuity of the musical texture, forcing the composer to write small fragmentary phrase units in the style of

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Je suis sergent.
Brave et galant.  
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This is a style typical of the vaudeville and other lower forms of musical entertainment of which Castil-Blaze disapproved.

Feminine endings should be used, he insists, to maintain continuity of rhythm between lines. They should, for the same reason, be avoided where a musical phrase is expected to end. Otherwise the phrase will end with a bâillement (yawn), i.e., a long appoggiatura on the strong beat, followed by the weak feminine ending on a following weak beat. Castil-

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93. "Je connais des romances composées alternativement d'une mesure de bavardage musical, et d'une mesure de repos complet, rien n'est si désagréable à entendre qu'une semblable psalmodie, mais comme on est accoutumé à bâiller quand on écoute des romances, les ditettanti du petit genre ne remarquent pas de semblables défauts. Cette alternative de silence et de caquetage a pour cause le trop grand nombre de vers masculins. Les vers n'étant pas mesurés, il faut que le musicien ait recours à la déclamation, et pose ses lignes rimées en observant la valeur des points et des virgules, c'est une véritable psalmodie d'asthmatique. Je suis sergent. / Brave et galant." Débats (10 March 1828): 1.

94. Reference to this "choppy" style of verse is found as well in De l’Opéra en France: “La prose brillante de Montesquieu offrirait plus de ressources au musicien que des vers tel que ceux-ci: Voici des dieux / L’asile aimable. / Goûtez des cieux / La paix durable. / Plus de plaisirs / Que de désirs; / Des chaînes / Sans peines; / Et de beaux jours / Comptés toujours / Par les Amours.” De l’Opéra, L, p. 66.

95. He finds, for example, that despite Prosper’s attempts to write in the Italian style in his François Ier à Chambord, this French mannerism of using feminine endings at musical cadence points betrays his nationality, especially when setting lines ending in patrie, folie, maîtresse: “Comment voulez-vous que le musicien ferme sa phrase sur un mot qui ne conclut pas? Il faut alors avoir recours aux bâillements qui terminent la plupart des airs français. Quand un danseur a fini son entrée, on trouve tout naturel qu’il retombe sur ses pieds; le chanteur suit la même marche lorsqu’il n’est pas contrarié par des mots qui le forcent à mâcher à vide une longue tenue, languissante préparation de la syllabe muette qu’il faut bien laisser échapper ensuite sur les bruyants accords de
Blaze believes that librettists who fail to structure their verse according to the musical principles of cadence and rhythm will inevitably create “misshapen” forms for the composer, who consequently will be responsible for the defects of the setting that results.

La plus grande partie de la gloire d’un opéra est attribuée au musicien; mais, par une juste compensation, on le rend responsable des fautes du poète. Tel air, tel duo, tel chœur sont critiqués avec raison : leur coupe est-elle vicieuse, leur marche irrégulière, leurs contours estropiés, leur rythme faux ou boiteux, leur effet nul, on dit aussitôt la musique est mauvaise....

Si le type est difforme, l’épreuve reproduira les mêmes défauts. L’habit d’un bossu est tel qu’il doit être : croyez-vous que le tailleur n’aurait pas préféré l’adjuster sur une taille droite et bien prise?96

Similarly, when the librettist has done his work well, the composer can hardly be given all the credit:

Il ne faut jamais faire compliment à un musicien de ce qu’il a bien distribué ses phrases et ses fragments de mélodie; le compositeur exercé remplit toujours cette condition quand il lui est permis de le faire. Le rythme de cet air a été marqué par Hoffman, et ce rythme aurait retenu dans la bonne voie un musicien très inférieur à Méhul.97

One result of the traditional French emphasis on sense and rhyme, instead of on rhythm and cadence, is that French librettists have always felt free to shorten or lengthen their lines at will, so long as they rhyme properly. Castil-Blaze points out, however, that lines of varying length, such as those found in the libretti of Quinault, for example, and in more modern libretti as well, are a major impediment to the composer, who is not as free as his literary colleague to shorten or lengthen the phrases to which these lines must be set.98 A

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96. Débats (2 May 1823): 2.
98. “Le langage vulgaire de Sédaine est bien préférable aux vers longs et courts de Zémire et Azor et de Sylvain. Cette irrégularité concerèt, ce désordre étranger à l’art embarrassent les comédiens qui sont obligés de réciter de semblables scènes, en s’efforçant de leur donner l’élégance et la facilité de la prose.” Débats (23 July 1825): 1. “Nos poètes croient avoir fait un chef-d’œuvre, lorsqu’à
typical example cited by Castil-Blaze is a passage from the libretto to Spontini's *Fernand Cortez*:

Les paroles de *Fernand Cortez* peuvent paraître excellentes à des littérateurs, il y a peut-être quelque élévation dans le style de cet opéra, mais on y chercheroit vainement la moindre intention musicale....

Les cruels Mexicains ferment tous les passages:
Ces tristes rivages
Ne nous présentent plus que les fers ou la mort.

Voilà ce que nos poètes appellent des vers lyriques. Je demanderai à nos musiciens de me citer une phrase musicale qui puisse s'adapter régulièrement à ce triolet, dont le premier et le dernier vers sont exclus du chant figuré, pour être trop longs, et qui se trouvent séparés par un vers de deux pieds et demi, dont la mesure rompt tout à fait la cadence et l'harmonie du triolet. 99

He points out that even lines with a constant number of syllables can be troubling if they are not divided internally in a regular way. The regular distribution of strong accents in a line that scans regularly, such as the following from *Guillaume Tell*:

*Ces jours — qu'ils ont — osé — proscire*

facilitates the composer's task, because its rhythmic divisions make it easily adaptable to musical setting. 100 But Castil-Blaze points out that the line which follows it, though equal in the number of syllables, is much more difficult. With its "runaway" first hemistich,
it presents the composer with the thorny task of finding a second phrase that will smoothly match the first which began so regularly. Few librettists, Castil-Blaze laments, think through their task far enough to consider how the composer and the singer will be affected by their work. At the line level, then, the librettist’s task is to deliver as much symmetry to the composer as possible.¹⁰¹

Among the many patterns discussed by Castil-Blaze in *De l’Opéra en France* and the feuilletons, that which he considers ideal, and which he most often recommends for creating stanzas suited to musical setting, is a verse of four lines consisting of three five-syllable lines with feminine endings, followed by a four-syllable line with a masculine ending.¹⁰² The search for lines written according to this pattern is a theme in his feuilletons, and points them out with some ceremony when he finds them, as he did in Scribe’s libretto for Auber’s *La Fiancée*:

> Les vers de M. Scribe sont en général bien coupés : on y remarque des stances parfaitement rhythmées, et que l’auteur de notre poétique musicale ne désavouerait pas :
>
> Douce espérance!
> Ah! quand j’y pense,
> Que la vengeance
> A de plaisirs!

Voilà cette triple rime tant sollicitée par le musicien; voilà des vers tels qu’il les demande, leur cadence régulière appelle les mélodies, et le compositeur n’a que l’embarras du choix.¹⁰³

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¹⁰¹. He recommends creating equal symmetrical hemistiches, as a way of doing this. He notes, for example, that Guillard, in his libretto for Sacchini’s *OEdipe à Colone*, might well have avoided the succession of hissing “s” sounds and created an easier line for musical setting if he had replaced the hobbling line “Le fils des Dieux — le successeur d’Alcide” with the more symmetrical line “Le fils des Dieux — l’ami d’Alcide.” *Débats* (10 March 1828): 2.

¹⁰². “Faites des vers, si telle est votre envie, mais qu’ils offrent à la mélodie une triple rime féminine suivie d’un repos ...” *Débats* (23 June 1824): 1.
At all three levels of construction, then — syllable, line and stanza — Castil-Blaze establishes a connection between the raw sounds and rhythms which are the poet’s contribution and the musical units (motives, phrases and periods) which the musician must compose from them. The close relationship between librettist and musician established in his comments on operatic prosody strongly parallels his view of operatic dramaturgy outlined in the first part of this chapter. In each the librettist’s role is to indicate a musical intention in the material that he manipulates — be it dramatic action or the use of language — in such a way that the composer realizing that intention will be permitted to take advantage of the unique characteristics of the operatic genre. In each it is the librettist who, in creating his cadre for the musician, establishes the basic musical character of the stage work and “traces the first contours of the musical design.”

In Castil-Blaze’s conception of opera, as conveyed through his critical writings, the librettist’s every move is thus shadowed by musical consequences for the composer. And it is in this sense that his new critical perspective on the role of music in French opera may well be said to stand in highest relief when he writes not about the music itself, but about the libretto.

103. Débats (19 January 1829): 2. He finds them as well in Scribe and Delavigne’s verses for Meyerbeer’s Robert-le-Diable: “Le petit chœur de femmes est d’une mélodie charmante, et son rythme régulier frappe agréablement l’oreille. Honneur à M. Meyerbeer, honneur surtout à MM. Scribe et De Lavigne! En effet, comment faire de la musique médiocre sur des vers aussi bien mesurés et qui présentent avec une parfaite exactitude la coupe des strophes de Tancredi, Piru dolce e placide. À la souffrance
Donne assistance,
La bienfaisance
Est dans ton cœur.
Vous chanterez ce couplet sur l’air du chœur de Tancredi, sans être obligé de déranger une syllabe, une lettre; vous le chanterez encore sur l’air Di tanti palpiti, sur soixante airs du même mètre, avec une exactitude égale, une semblable facilité.” Débats (4 December 1831): 1.
Castil-Blaze's critical perspective on the opera libretto is an important part of his perspective on the lyric theatre in general. It exemplifies his view that opera, as a genre, is essentially a systematic and rationally organized exploitation of musical resources in the service of dramatic narrative. This view differed from French national tendencies by giving a higher priority to music than to dramatic action and the literary qualities of the text. It differed from Italian practice in its insistence upon dramatic verisimilitude and momentum, and in its systematic rigour, which stood in opposition to the traditional capriciousness of Italian libretto design.

The persuasive force of Castil-Blaze's position with regard to the libretto may perhaps be attributed to the Frenchness of its appeal, despite the largely Italian origin of much of its content. His emphasis upon rational principles of construction in opera would have attracted the admiration of the French, offering them a paradigm of rigour and sophistication of patterning, of matched dramatic and musical momentum, that paralleled the qualities which they so admired in their own classic theatre. By explaining to them in terms of clear overriding principles the relationship between the librettist's activity and that of the composer, he established a series of règles classiques for the lyric theatre — based not on theunities of time, place and action, but upon the "regularities" of role, verse, and varied distribution of musical interest — within which they could understand opera to be a separate and unique dramatic genre, written in music, and not just with music.

In his metaphors of deformity — describing ensembles featuring mute characters as éborgnés, and rhythmically irregular poetical lines as bossus or boiteux — he adopted the excoriating tone, and laid claim to the authority and prestige, of the critic of classical tragedy who founded the feuilleton genre — Geoffroy. With his lawyer's skills in argumentation, and the clarity of his focus on the concrete details of operatic construction, he articulated a compelling vision of opera that attempted to shift French critical attention away from the concept of music as illustration, dependent upon action or language, and stressed instead its
independence as an artistic medium, to be judged by the standards of regularity, proportion and fullness of effect that governed critical reception in the other arts.

The application of these standards to the musical score itself will form the subject of the following chapter.
CHAPTER 5

THE DRAMATIC SCORE

Castil-Blaze's Aesthetics

The new view of opera which Castil-Blaze proposed to the French in De l'Opéra en France and in his feuilletons for the Journal des débats identified music as the leading aesthetic parameter in opera. Castil-Blaze believed that it was the music in opera, rather than its text or its dramatic action, that should be the center of the creative activity of the librettist, composer and performer. It was by its music that opera should make its most immediate impact on its audiences, and for its music that it was most appropriately to be judged by its critics. This music-centred perspective seems modern and forward-looking, given both the timing of its appearance at the dawn of the Romantic movement (a movement which also accorded a privileged status to music within the arts) and given the banners of reform and progress under which Castil-Blaze proclaimed it with such polemical zeal. Yet he asserts his position from within a traditional eighteenth-century aesthetic framework and the philosophical underpinnings of that position are conservative, rather than revolutionary.

Citing such classic eighteenth-century sources as the Abbé Batteux's Les Beaux Arts réduits à un même principe (1746) and Rousseau's Dictionnaire de musique (1769), Castil-Blaze wrote about music as an art conceived in typically eighteenth-century terms, i.e., as "embellishment" and as "imitation of nature":

Les arts prennent pour règle la nature, ils l'embellissent en l'imitant¹

¹ De l'Opéra, I, p. 88. This same vocabulary is used in numerous passages from De l'Opéra, among which the following indicates clearly the chain of ancient to modern authority through which Castil-Blaze inherits these concepts: "... la musique, bien qu'elle soit bornée dans ses imitations, est cependant un art imitatif, puisque la nature lui fournit les modèles et les moyens de les reproduire. Aristote, Cicéron, Rousseau, Batteux, et beaucoup d'autres écrivains, ont consacré ce principe ..." Ibid., pp. 142-43. A brief but lucid introduction to imitation theory in the eighteenth
Two aspects of eighteenth-century thought in particular — the idea that the arts are all parallel forms of imitation, and the concept of art as studied artifice — are central to Castil-Blaze's assertions about the nature and status of opera as a genre, and about the standards by which it should be judged.

The notion that the arts of literature, painting and music are all forms of imitation, and therefore embody the same underlying artistic principles, is a commonplace of his critical writing. It is implicit not only in his many cross-disciplinary analogies, especially between music and painting, but is also explicitly stated in passages such as the following, concerning Jacques-Louis David's painting of *Les Sabines*:

"Personne ne doute certainement que ce tableau si parfait dans son ensemble, n’ait été dessiné d’un seul jet. Pourquoi ne pas faire la même concession à la composition musicale? *Les arts se tiennent tous par la main, et leurs principes s’accordent entr’eux :* je prescris la lecture de la poétique d’Horace au musicien comme au poète."

But Castil-Blaze's conservative invocation of eighteenth-century aesthetic theory had a more far-reaching agenda than simply to suggest that one art could be understood in terms of another. He points out as well that the common principle of imitation which links the arts together also implies their equality. There is no "natural" hierarchy, he argues, which would place any one art above any other, and conversely, no one art is "naturally" subordinate to any other. Each is capable of achieving the same degree of sophistication as an art, and each

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2. *De l'Opéra*, I, p. 407 (italics added). Analogies between music and painting are perhaps natural to Castil-Blaze because of his early training as a painter. He compares, for example, the uniformly sweet docile mood of some Italian operas to a painting without shadow and thus without depth: "Il y a du bon dans cet ouvrage, et tout y paraît mauvais, parce qu’il est dépourvu de traits de force, de ces effets dramatiques d’où naissent les contrastes, et qui, pareils aux masses d’ombre placées au-devant d’un tableau, font ressortir les figures et repoussent les demi-teintes des lointains." *De l'Opéra*, I, pp. 116-17.
therefore merits development in a genre especially devoted to it.\(^3\) The genre devoted especially to music, of course, is opera. Castil-Blaze thus used the theory of imitation to weaken the intellectual props beneath libretto-centred opera, and to advance the notion that music-centred opera, as he conceived of it, was already fully justified within established aesthetic doctrine. What most distinguishes his views on opera from those of his philosophical forebears, however, is his insistence upon specifying the practical terms and conditions under which such a genre might fulfill its highest artistic potential.

As explained in the previous chapter, Castil-Blaze’s notion of the systematic exploitation of music’s potential as an artistic medium involved maximizing its expressive range in all dimensions: in a full range of voice timbres, in a full range of moods and emotional states to be evoked (e.g., in *agitato* airs, *airs de sentiment*), and in a full range of solo and ensemble textures. He argued, however, that the French were far from systematic in their allocation of musical resources within an opera, and that their lack of systematic concern for musical effectiveness was nowhere more evident than in the French manner of casting musical roles, which he referred to as the French *système vocal*. In this regard, he argued, the French were as unsophisticated and barbaric in their lyric theatre as they accused the Germans of being in the spoken theatre, and while the French might criticize the works of Goethe and Schiller for their disorderly arrangement of characters and events when compared with the polished command of form in the tragedies of Racine, it would be well for them to remember the operatic achievements of Mozart, a German, and look to their own

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3. Castil-Blaze’s fondness for pointing out the common origins of certain operatic arias and popular songs (e.g., the resemblance between *Toto Carabo* and an air from Gluck’s *Armide*, pointed out by the reviewer of *Le Constitutionnel*) serves to remind his readers that music is a medium which, like any other, is capable of both low and high levels of artistic achievement. Castil-Blaze believed that learning to distinguish these levels was merely a matter of exposure to the right models. One hundred and fifty years of exposure to the classical theatre, he believed, had taught the French to distinguish wretched doggerel from finely crafted alexandrines, and similarly, distinguishing great music from low would only be a matter of exposure to the right operas. “Donnez-lui de beaux modèles, et rien que de beaux modèles, le Français va devenir musicien comme il est devenu poète.” *De l’Opéra*, I, pp. 175-76.
deficiencies in opera composition. Castil-Blaze predicted that these problems would be
sorted out when the artists of each country addressed seriously the systematic demands of
the genre in which they were working.

Nous critiquons leurs pièces, ils condamnent notre musique; et sous des rapports
différens nous sommes dans une position semblable: mais comme l'on arrive tôt ou
tard à ce point qui approche le plus de la perfection, il ne faut que la venue d'un
homme de génie pour changer le système poétique et le système musical de nos deux
nations. L'Allemagne un jour aura son Racine, comme la France son Mozart.4

Much of Castil-Blaze's criticism of the musical dramatic score, then, is directed towards the
elements of the French système vocal, since it is by improvements in these elements that he
believed French opera would advance closer to the perfection of the operas of Mozart, and
thus fulfill its potential as a full and equal member of the imitative arts.

His comments on the dramatic score are conditioned as well by a second eighteenth-
century idea: the view that art is in essence a deliberate and studied artifice, and as such adds
aesthetic value to the object of its imitation through the medium in which it is communi-
cated, i.e., in the use of words, colours or sounds. The important concept for Castil-Blaze in
this theoretical position is that the aesthetic shaping accomplished in each artistic medium
must be judged in its own terms, and not in terms of its fidelity to the original phenomenon
being imitated. While accepting imitation as the underlying basis for art, then, Castil-Blaze
insists that it is the very artificiality of this imitation that generates the real value in art, and
justifies the critic's attention to it. In De l'Opéra en France he cites the image-laden alexan-
drines of Racine and the idealized statues of the ancient Greek sculptor Praxiteles as exam-
pies of self-conscious artificiality in great art. The raw meaning of any passage by Racine,
he explains, could easily have been stated more simply in prose, but it would then lose its

4. De l'Opéra, I, p. 180. Mozart is often cited by Castil-Blaze as a clear example of systematic perfec-
tion in musical composition, comparable to the accomplishments of the greatest achievements of
literature. "Les vers d'Ovide et de Parny, la prose de Rousseau, parlent-ils à l'âme mieux que la
musique de Mozart? et jamais poète érotique exprimera-t-il la passion mieux que Cherubino di
Amore?" Débats (6 December 1823): 1.
quality as art. Similarly, more realistic wax figures reproducing the colours of real flesh would be far less satisfying than the idealized marble statues of Praxiteles. In these and other similar analogies Castil-Blaze's emphasis is always on the manner in which art embellishes by giving back in art more than is found in nature. In support of this notion, he quotes a number of eighteenth-century sources, among which are the following:

L'art n'est qu'imitateur; mais il corrige, épure,  
Et l'art, quand il fait bien, fait mieux que la nature.  

Ce n'est pas la vérité, mais une ressemblance embellie que nous demandons aux arts; c'est à donner mieux que la nature, que l'art s'engage en l'imitant; tous les arts font pour cela une espèce de pacte avec l'âme et les sens qu'ils affectent; ce pacte consiste A DEMANDER DES LICENCES ET A PROMETTRE DES PLAISIRS, qu'ils ne donneront pas sans ces licences heureuses.

In this view of art, then, the opera libretto is merely the “natural” point of departure which music is to embellish by its imitation, and the difference between opera and the spoken theatre resides in the “licence demanded” of enacting the drama in music, and the “pleasure promised” of a distinctly musical representation that will add to its aesthetic appeal. It is for this reason that Castil-Blaze jealously guards for music the major share of artistic shaping in opera, since to allow language, gesture or dramatic action to occupy the audience’s foreground attention would be to mistake the type of deliberate artificiality on which opera as a genre is based.

Profitons donc de la licence qui nous est accordée : parlons en musique puisque c'est le langage de l'Opéra, et gardons nous surtout de retenir cet art divin dans les bornes étroites assignées au récit oratoire. Déclamons la phrase poétique, mais que ce soit toujours musicalement ...

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6. Ibid., p. 88.  
7. Ibid., p. 90 (capitalization is that of the original). This same passage is also quoted in Débats (4 April 1822): 2.  
Hence the deference which he expects of the libretto with respect to the musical score is merely the large-scale reflection of the relative unimportance of a model in nature to its artificial imitation and embellishment in music. To use a modern analogy, an opera in which such a deferential relationship did not exist would be to Castil-Blaze like a picture in which some parts were painted thickly and richly in oils and other parts were represented by sharply focused photographs. Such a picture would give a patchwork representation of the subject in different artistic media, and it is just such a patchwork of aesthetic appeals that Castil-Blaze sees in much of the French opera of his time. His criticism is thus constantly tinged with his reaction to the dominance of literary values in French opera (the photorealist portions of the painting). He is continually assessing to what degree the means of expression that dominate in each work under discussion are distinctly musical, and whether or not the types of expression of which music is capable are being used artistically — which is to say artificially — enough.

In encouraging his readers to abandon their taste for this patchwork aesthetic of mixed literary and musical appeal, he pointed out to them that music was an artistic medium no less artificial than language as it is used in great literature:

En vain on m’opposera qu’il n’est point dans la nature qu’une reine déplore ses malheurs et se donne la mort en chantant; est-il bien naturel aussi qu’un héros s’exprime en phrases cadencées et à chutes unissones? et que l’ivresse de l’amour, les emportements du désespoir ne dérangent jamais la symétrique ordonnance de son discours? Le fils d’Agamémnon, en proie à ses remords et déchiré par les Euménides, se démênera comme un possédé, mais le trouble de ses sens ne se fera point sentir dans son langage. Les vers accouplés en distique iront toujours leur train, songe et mensonge, larmes et alarmes, monarque et marque, âme et flamme, et autres rimes obligées, se succéderont avec une admirable fidélité. Les figures recherchées, les périphrases ambitieuses, viendront encore se mêler à ses soupirs et à ses sanglots : cela est-il bien naturel? Non : cependant cela doit être ainsi.¹

¹. De l’Opéra, I, pp. 87-88.
Castil-Blaze insisted that the resources of music alone were capable of conveying the full range of dramatic expression required in opera and did not need the intervention of language and literary modes of expression to paint part of the picture. In supporting this position in his writings, he attempted to educate his readers about the proper relationship between the composer’s score and the text (concentrating on the nature of imitation and word-painting), and between the composer’s score and the dramatic action, concentrating upon the role of the orchestra. It is in terms of these criteria of dramatic expressiveness that Castil-Blaze expresses his belief that music is an artistic medium equal in worth to the media of language and visual representation.

Using as his aesthetic point of departure the eighteenth-century notions of the equality of the arts under the theory of imitation and of the artificiality within a specific medium that defines each art, Castil-Blaze’s views on the dramatic score can be seen, then, to be occupied with two main areas of discussion: 1) the “systematic” qualities of opera construction, i.e., the système vocal within which the composer is required to work; and 2) the nature and quality of dramatic expression in the composer’s score, both with respect to word-music setting and the expression of dramatic action. In the remainder of this chapter these two categories will be discussed in turn.

The Système Vocal of French Opera

Castil-Blaze’s concern that an opera score manifest its defining characteristic as a genre, the systematic exploitation of musical resources, is most fundamentally expressed in his criticism of the French système vocal (the established constellation of roles and their corresponding voice assignments in the French lyric theatres). His attention to this aspect of operatic practice reflects to a further degree his awareness that the composing musician exer-
cises his craft within conditions set largely by others, by theatre directors no less than by librettists. However musically inspired the librettist's cadre, the composer who attempts to realize fully its musical potential, he notes, must still depend for his raw materials upon the theatres for which he is creating his score. Like a painter commissioned to do a portrait, the composer has his choice of subject and size of canvas given to him by the librettist, but is reliant upon the theatre for which he is writing to give him the palette of colours with which he is to work.

Castil-Blaze found that the vocal "raw materials" with which composers were required to work at the two state-run theatres, the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique, presented major obstacles to the development of opera as a musical genre. The Opéra, for example, retained in its repertoire the voice type known as the haute-contre, a high tenor or countertenor singing in falsetto in the highest range, often assigned to leading male roles in the French operas of Gluck, Sacchini and Piccinni, many of which were still performed during the Restoration. Although abandoned by more recent composers, this voice type still remained a potent symbol for Castil-Blaze of "unmusical" operatic thinking, and he criticized it for its unevenness of tone throughout its range (especially its lack of "bite" in the low register) and the inappropriateness of its high register for use in heroic roles. He thus applauds the arrival of

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10. "Il est fâcheux que Gluck ait été obligé d'ajuster les premiers rôles de ses opéras à la portée de la voix de Legros, qui était alors le seul acteur capable de les chanter. Piccini, Sacchini, après s'être soumis d'abord à la même loi que la nécessité leur imposait, ont modifié la haute-contre en la ramenant à un diapason plus bas, et nos compositeurs ont fini par la bannir tout-à-fait de leurs opéras." De l'Opéra, I, p. 288.

11. "... cette voix est ordinairement très-bornée. Si elle est naturellement aiguë, il est rare que le médium soit bon et que le bas ait du mordant. Si le chanteur ne doit ses tons élevés qu'aux exercices multipliés, aux efforts de l'étude, il perdra dans le bas plus qu'il n'aura gagné dans le haut. D'ailleurs, cette voix claire et flûtée, qui convenait parfaitement aux Colins, aux Pierrots, aux Sylvandres, et au chant maniériste des héroïs de Lulli et de Rameau, s'accorde mal avec notre musique passionnée, véhément, et dont le rythme suit avec fidélité la déclamation théâtrale. Je reconnaîtrais les accens d'Achille dans un ténor vigoureux et sonore, et non pas dans l'éclat étourdissant d'une haute-contre." De l'Opéra, I, p. 287-88.
the first great French tenor of the nineteenth century, the young Adolphe Nourrit, who sang
Pylade in *Iphigénie en Tauride* in a full chest voice.

Nourrit fils a débuté par le rôle de Pylade, c’est un jeune homme d’une grande
espérance. Sa voix est un ténor pur et d’un timbre agréable : il a fort bien dit tout ce
qui était d’une expression tendre. Le mauvais goût demande à grand cris une haute-
contre; la nature se montre favorable en la refusant, nous sommes plus heureux que
sages.12

The problems of the Opéra-Comique were far more severe. Having begun in the early
eighteenth century as a theatre for comic entertainment at the Paris fairs, the original reper-
toire of this theatre had originally featured only vaudevilles and other borrowed light music
that presented little musical challenge to its performers, most of whom were comic actors
with little if any musical training. With the introduction of specially composed music near
the middle of the century, roles were tailored to the voices of the actors in place at the time,
without regard for the appropriateness of the role assignments that resulted. Thus roles for
tutors and bailiffs, for example — characters which because of their age and the gravity of
their roles might logically be assigned to the bass voice — became by tradition high-voice
roles, simply because the first actor to sing these roles had a high voice. Because roles tended
to be written around the individual talents of each performer (or more likely his or her lack
of them), there developed in the traditions of this institution a chaotic system of *emplois* or
traditional roles each based on, and named after, the actor who first created the type of role
bearing his or her name. Singing actors would subsequently be hired to fill the *emploi de
Trial* or the *emploi de Laruette* and consequently be referred to as a *Trial* or a *Laruette*, ac-

12. *Débats* (19 September 1821): 2. The qualities of Nourrit’s voice became a point of reference for
Castil-Blaze’s criticism of the French *système vocal*, in the modern repertoire as much as in the
older repertoire. In a review of Manuel Garcia’s *La Mort du Tasse* of 1821 he writes: “Nourrit
a chanté le sien [i.e., son rôle] d’une manière charmante. Il n’est pas inutile de faire observer que
cet rôle écrit en ténor n’oblige pas l’acteur à forcer sa voix pour faire entendre les sons durs et
criards de la haute-contre. Il est impossible de présenter avec grâce une mélodie que l’on n’obtient
qu’avec des efforts et des contorsions. Tout le monde se plait à critiquer les chanteurs de l’Opéra,
c’est contre le système qui y règne qu’il faut s’élèver.” *Débats* (19 February 1821): 2-3.
tresses as a Dugazon or a Saint-Aubin, and this traditional system of voice role assignments subsisted until the Restoration period and was still in effect during the time that Castil-Blaze wrote for the *Journal des débats*, as he never tired of lamenting.

La distribution des rôles d’un opéra, faite à des acteurs de comédie, dut nécessairement offrir les disparates les plus singulières. Chacun garda son emploi accoutumé et par conséquent la voix que la nature lui avait départie. Le tuteur, le bailli avait une voix haute et perçante; on lui fit chanter le contralto tandis que le bon sens et le goût lui assignaient la partie de basse. L’amoureuse n’avait point de voix; on trouva tout simple de ne pas la faire chanter. La duègne ne possédait point de notes graves; on porta son diapason à l’aigu. Comme la routine et le mauvais goût ont aussi leurs traditions, ce système pitoyable, dicté par l’impérieuse nécessité, et qui depuis soixante ans auroit dû éprouver une entière réforme, existe encore à Feydeau dans toute sa bizarrerie. Les tuteurs et les baillis crient encore parce que Laruette et Trial ont crié; les amoureuses y sont muettes, et les duègnes y miaulent a piacere pour ne point déroger aux principes de la constitution.  

Castil-Blaze opposed the traditions of these theatres as being hostile to the requirements of opera as a genre. He championed the principle that the voice type used is a fundamental expressive characteristic of each dramatic role, and that the assignment of voices to roles ought to be made on the basis of its musical suitability to the emotions it will be called upon to express:

Les sentiments qui agitent le coeur humain peuvent être exprimés par toute sorte de voix; il y en a cependant dont la gravité, la douceur, l’éclat, la légèreté, semblent convenir mieux à certains emplois. Ainsi, la majesté d’un roi, la pompe religieuse d’un grand-prêtre, les remords, la sombre inquiétude d’un tyran, s’accordent bien avec les accens de la basse; ceux du tenor rendent à merveille la tendresse d’un amant et la fierté chevaleresque d’un jeune guerrier ...


14. *De l’Opéra*, I, p. 287. The same position is taken in an earlier passage as well: “Energique et pompeuse, la voix de basse convient aux passions fortes, aux chants religieux; elle a trop de gravité et même de rudesse pour les sentiments tendres. Le tenor, au contraire, se distingue par la douceur et la flexibilité; ses accens nobles et touchans donnent au langage de l’amour l’expression la plus séduisante. La voix de femme réunit la force à la légèreté; sensible et gracieuse dans le médium, elle a, dans les tons élevés, l’éclat et la vigueur que demandent les grands effets.” *De l’Opéra*, I, p. 135.
Insisting that the timbre of a character's voice is as integral a part of his dramatic presence as his age, his costuming or his bearing and deportment on stage, Castil-Blaze frequently drew attention to the lack of "musical verisimilitude" in the casting of many operas and opéras comiques of the older repertoire. The character of Erasistrate in Méhul's *Stratonice* is a typical example of the disparity between stage manner and vocal character that results from the traditional casting practices of the Opéra-Comique.

C'est une chose bien singulière que le théâtre lyrique français. Un chanteur à voix grave et flexible se présente-t-il? on l'accepte à condition qu'il négligera ses brillans avantages pour se servir d'une petite voix grêle et incertaine. Le maintien d'Erasistrate est noble et sévère, sa barbe touffue, son front chauve, tout annonce un homme mûr; son discours parlé s'accorde bien avec son âge et son caractère; il est ferme et plein de gravité. Voilà l'extérieur et l'accent du rival d'Hippocrate. A peine le comédien a-t-il fait connaître convenablement le personnage qu'il représente, que l'orchestre le force à changer de ton et de style. Le signal est donné, le docteur prend sa petite voix flûtée, interroge Antiochus d'un ton de troubadour, et laisse expirer ses foibles accens de manière à faire croire qu'il va rendre l'âme.  

The solution which he proposed was to sweep aside all previous casting conventions, to pension off the old troupe of actors and replace them with professional singers, and to establish henceforth the matching of voice types with dramatic roles on a more rational and a more musical basis. He even provides in *De l'Opéra en France* an itemized list of the proper voice role assignments to be used. In his scheme each voice type is listed with the various types of dramatic roles to which it is suited. The contralto, for example, is matched with

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15. *Débats* (28 August 1825): 1. Castil-Blaze points out that the character of Jacob in Méhul's *Joseph* is similarly incongruous: "Le patriarche Jacob, succombant sous le poids des années et des infirmités, doit-il nous conter ses malheurs d'un ton de troubadours? Peut-on s'attendre à un tenor frais et pur, en voyant un corps ruiné par les outrages du temps? Ne faudrait-il pas que ce rôle fût noté pour une basse, pour une basse-contre même? Peut-on mettre trop de solennité dans les accens de ce chef des Hébreux?" *De l'Opéra*, 1, p. 316.

16. "Je commence d'abord par bannir les routiniers de la scène qu'ils déshonorent, et je propose de ne plus prendre pour règle aucune ancienne distribution [i.e., list of cast assignments]. De considérer un rôle sous son véritable point de vue, sans s'arrêter à la nomenclature des acteurs qui les ont créés." *De l'Opéra*, 1, p. 324.
such roles as noble mothers, peasant women and *duègnes*; the leading bass singer could be a
king, a tyrant, a grand priest, a jailor or the head of a band of brigands.17

The advantages of Castil-Blaze’s new *système vocal* were not confined to achieving a
less disordered aural characterization of the principal characters in the drama. Castil-Blaze
believed that the systematic distribution of roles over the full range of voice types would be a
progressive step for the entire French opera industry conceived in its widest terms, with ben­
efits accruing to composers, performers, theatre directors and audiences alike. Under this
system composers would be able to write scores which incorporated the unique advantages
which music possesses as an artistic medium. They could use the full range of voice types to
write ensembles with much greater harmonic potency, and escape the cramped textures and
narrow timbral range of the high-voice ensembles which predominated in the traditional
system.18 They would as well have professionally trained singers for whom they could write
solo roles matching in their expressive demands and musical sophistication the dramatic im­
portance and psychological complexity of each character to be represented. No longer

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17. According to this list, given in *De l’Opéra*, I, p. 236, roles would be assigned as follows: *première cantatrice*: female love-interest characters, coquettes, and all leading roles of a noble, sympathetic, brilliant or passionate character; *seconde cantatrice*: soubrettes, confidentes, young peasant girls and travesty roles; *contralto*: noble mothers, peasant women and *duègnes*; *tenor*: male love interest, petits-mâtres, and all leading roles of a noble, sympathetic, brilliant or passionate character; *bariton*: confidentes, valets, troubadours, amiable comic roles, or ridiculous non-caricature roles; *première basse*: noble fathers, kings, magicians, tyrants, grand priests, peasants, gaolers, chief
brigands, Tartars; *seconde basse*: tutors, caricature roles, certain peasants and lesser valets.

18. Castil-Blaze saw the underdevelopment of lower voice types as a major impediment to the system­
atic reform of French opera. The bass voice, while used to some extent in the repertoire of the
Opéra, was virtually non-existent in the repertoire of the Opéra-Comique as Castil-Blaze notes in
excusing the weak choice of roles made by the bass Serda for his debut in 1827: “Le débutant n’a
pu choisir deux rôles de basse, parce qu’il n’en existe pas dans notre répertoire d’opéra comique;
la partie si essentielle est négligée depuis si long-temps, qu’une basse qui se présente à Feydeau
dans un opéra, pour montrer si la nature et l’art l’ont rendu capable d’y figurer avec avantage.” *Débats* (29 August 1827): 1. He discusses the reasons
for the rarity of the alto voice in France in his feuilleton of 14 December 1822, and takes credit per­
sonally in 1827 for having contributed to the development of low male-voice roles by means of his
adaptations for the French stage: “Un système plus musical et plus raisonnable est maintenant
établi, et nous le devons entièrement aux traductions des opéras italiens. Les rôles de Figaro, du
Bailli de *La Pie voleuse*, de Desmasures, de Pourceaugnac, de Crispin des *Folies amoureuses*, font
partie du répertoire de l’acteur qui joue les rôles de Martin; mais c’es de véritables basses
chantantes, des barytons retenus dans l’étendue de leur diapason ...” *Débats* (12 July 1827): 2.
would an imaginative and inventive composer such as Dalayrac, whom we met in the previous chapter, feel systematically frustrated in his attempts to compose a drama out to the limits of its musical potential, as he is described to be when negotiating the setting he will give to the story of Camille featuring Mme Dugazon:

Les prières, les craintes, la tendresse maternelle, le désespoir de Camille vont m'inspirer des airs grandioses et touchants. Je pourrai composer un beau cantabile, un largo plein de candeur et de suavité, un... — Point du tout, songez que je destine le rôle à Mme Dugazon, elle le jouera à ravir, laissons lui de longues scènes à déclamer, et réservez vos cantabile pour une autre occasion. Il s'agit bien de largo, il faut attacher, ravir les spectateurs par un dialogue pressant et plein d'intérêt, et non pas imiter les Italiens qui chantent leurs opéras. Ne renonçons pas tout à fait à la musique, mais distribuons-la avec une main avare. Notre excellente actrice s'est élevée, dans Nina, jusqu'à la romance, nous pouvons maintenant risquer le rondeau, à condition que le mouvement en sera toujours vif, le rythme bien cadencé, l'accompagnement en batteries de second violon, et que la basse tombera symétriquement sur les temps forts comme le balancier d'une horloge. Au moyen de ces régulateurs, il y a licu d'espérer que la grande comédienne récitera convenablement son air.¹⁹

Instead of having to cater to the whims of unmusical performers, the composer would be able to write a fully musical role for the trained voice of a professional singer. Such roles would go beyond the simple ditties and repetitious couplets and rondos that were the main throat fodder of the Opéra-Comique repertoire, and instead include important characteristics of the Italian singing style: long held notes in the upper fifth of the range; simple cantabile and andante melodies suitable for embroidering with ornamentation; and vehement agitato pieces to show off the dramatic force of the voice.²⁰ With such roles as these to sing, audiences would hear more French dramatic airs appearing on concert programmes, where their lack of independent musical appeal had made them scarce, and the graduates of the

²⁰. These desirable characteristics and the general defects of the performing troupe of the Opéra-Comique are discussed in detail in Castil-Blaze's feuilleton of 20 February 1823, entitled "Quelques faits relatifs à l'ancien répertoire de Feydeau."
Conservatoire trained in this style of singing would not need to leave the country in search of a career since the French stage would then be able to use their talents.

Financial benefits would accrue to theatre directors as well since they would not need to keep on staff such a large number of performers to cover all of the various emplois. And the repertoire as a whole would be given a chance to grow and accumulate a body of classic achievements in each genre, since it would not consist largely of works likely to drop from view with the retirement of the star performers around whose talents they were written.

Castil-Blaze’s attention to the French système vocal parallels at the level of theatrical conventions his attention to the libretto, discussed in the previous chapter. In both domains he traces how decisions made outside the composer’s study crucially affect the character of the stage work he is able to compose by limiting the choices available to him in the exercise of his craft. In both he offers concrete and detailed solutions to the systematic defects that he sees in the traditional patterns of French opera design and production. His aim in each case is to point to the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the practical conditions which must be put in place before opera can function as a genre with music as the central core of its appeal.

21. Castil-Blaze points out that this burden was particularly onerous in the provincial theatres: “Nos partitions se répandent dans la France en sortant de Feydeau, et les infortunés comédiens des départemens sont obligés de répéter, avec la plus minutieuse exactitude, ce que l’on a écrit dans tous les temps pour des acteurs aussi diversement caractérisés que Clairval, Elleviou, Gavaudan, Gaveaux, Ponchar, Huet, Paul, Lemonnier, etc. Aussi les directeurs sont-ils obligés d’engager jusqu’à trois tenors pour faire face à l’amas indigeste et bizarre que présente seulement le répertoire de l’Opéra-Comique.” Débats (10 December 1828): 2. This problem is also discussed in Débats (1 June 1822).

22. The tenor-baritone-bass Jean-Blaise Martin, for example, possessed an extraordinary three-octave range. He sang as a tenor in solo airs (which often featured wide leaps) and as a bass in ensembles. The roles created for him were thus completely inaccessible to any other performer and many works disappeared from the stage with his retirement. Martin’s voice and roles are given substantial discussion in Castil-Blaze’s feuilleton of 30 March 1821.
Text-Music Setting and Dramatic Expression

Dramatic expression was, for Castil-Blaze, the essential content of opera. Opera, for him, was not simply a mere concert, resplendent with music but uncompelling as drama, as he believed the worst excesses of the Italian school tended to make it. Nor was it to be a literary affair of forceful dramatic action and psychological or comic character portrayal transparently tinctured with musical colouring, as the French had traditionally sought to make it. Opera, for Castil-Blaze, was indeed a stage work of both substantial *force dramatique* and engaging human interest, but it was a stage work in which the audience formed its primary opinions about the characters and their actions through music, and not primarily through language or the representation of dramatic action on stage. In his view, language and dramatic action “accompanied” the music in opera, in that they occurred simultaneously in a parallel fashion with it throughout the opera; music did not accompany language and dramatic action, as it was conceived to do in the traditional French model of opera.

In his view of dramatic expression, then, the deference of language and dramatic action to the aims of music is just as important at the small-scale level of construction, i.e., in fashioning the details of the musical score, as it is in guiding the librettist in the manufacture of his *cadre* at the large-scale level. The elaboration of this principle of deference to the aims of music is evident at this small-scale level in his views on both the way in which music should

23. Castil-Blaze outlines these competing national views of opera in a feuilleton from 1821, the first section of which is entitled “Ce que nous avons dit aux Italiens, et ce qu’ils nous répondent.” On Italian opera: “Nous avons dit aux Italiens: Votre musique est excellente, vos virtuoses sont parfaits, mais les drames qu’ils chantent n’ont pas le sens commun; il est impossible de s’attacher à des scènes décousues qui ne forment point une action, et de prêter une oreille attentive au gali-matias du dialogue.... Votre opéra est un concert excellent, mais enfin ce n’est qu’un concert.” *Débats* (9 September 1821): 1-2. The Italians reply to the French in the following tone: “Vos anciens opéras sont en général mauvais, le système vocal en est vicieux sur tous les points, et l’exécution en est quelquefois scandaleuse.” *Ibid.*, p. 3.
be joined to the individual words of the libretto text, and on the way in which dramatic ac-
tion should be represented on stage in music.

In the musical setting of libretto text, Castil-Blaze asserted the superior aesthetic value
of the musical component over the language component by severely criticizing any form of
literalism in musical depiction. The type of literalism which he believed should be avoided
might be of two kinds: 1) the undignified literal imitation of animals or physical objects; and
2) language-based semantic literalism in the form of puns and plays on words.

A useful point of departure for an understanding of his position in this regard is the
theory of imitation on which his aesthetic position was based. As mentioned earlier, the part
of this theory which Castil-Blaze found most congenial to his outlook as a whole, and which
he emphasized in his writings, was that artistic representation involved more than simply the
servile imitation of objects, actions and sentiments: it implied as well their embellishment.
The idea of embellishment underlies his twin concepts of aesthetic artifice and medium-
specific beauty, and motivates his preference for Praxiteles' marbles over more realistic ren-
derings in wax, and for Racine's rhyming verses over more literal renderings in prose.
Without sufficient artifice there is no art, as a fuller version of an earlier quotation makes
clear:

Les arts prennent pour règle la nature, ils l'embellissent en l'imitant; et, si la copie
est trop exacte, elle n'excitera point l'admiration.\textsuperscript{24}

It is because "the copy is too exact" that his admiration is not excited by Handel's de-
piction of leaping grasshoppers in \textit{Israel in Egypt} by means of dotted rhythms and pizzi-
cati.\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Similarly, among more modern compositions, he decries the triviality of the fashion

\textsuperscript{24} De l'Opéra, I, p. 88 (italics added). The sense of this passage is repeated later in the same work
when he writes: "Si l'on reproche aux musiciens que leurs tableaux sont quelquesfois infidèles, nous
répondrons que l'artiste doit reproduire la nature dans ses masses, et se porter plutôt vers le beau
idéal que s'égarder dans les détails mesquins d'une imitation exacte, mais servile." De l'Opéra, I,
p. 146.
for bird calls in opera, made popular by the success of Lemoyne’s *Le Rossignol* in 1817\(^{26}\) and featured in many other light works of the Restoration period, such as Caraffa’s *Le Solitaire*:

Le duo qui ouvre le troisième acte est un petit nocturne assez agréable : il le seroit bien davantage, si l’auteur retranchant la reprise qui contient des traits de clarinette et de basson, qui ne ressemblent pas plus au chant du rossignol et de la tourterelle, qu’à celui de l’ortolan et du perroquet : les imitations de ce genre sont ridicules, et n’ont d’autre résultat que de prouver l’impuissance de l’art.\(^2\)

What disturbed Castil-Blaze about such imitations as these was that they distract the listener’s attention from the expression of human emotion in the artifice of music and direct it instead to the trivialized representation of some animal characteristic.

Equally degrading to the dignity of musical expression, in Castil-Blaze’s view, is the pictorializing of concepts that have no imaginative reality in the mind of the character singing about them, but which are of purely linguistic origin. An example is the word *volage*, meaning “flighty” in the sense of “fickle,” and related to the verb *voler*, meaning “to fly.” Castil-Blaze explains that this word should not be set in a *roulade* (the scalar figure frequently used to express the idea of flight) if it occurs in an air expressing sadness, since such a setting would contradict the larger context of emotion with which the music is uniquely to occupy itself.\(^{28}\) Similarly, the scene in Grétry’s *La Caravane* in which Florestan expresses alarm over his son’s fate is needlessly distracting in its vivid scalar depiction of ocean waves at each passing occurrence of the word “shipwreck,” used from time to time to dramatize the intensity of

\(^{25}\) *De l’Opéra*, I, p. 143.

\(^{26}\) Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne’s *Le Rossignol*, with its trademark concertante scenes between soprano and flute, received 111 performances during the period in which Castil-Blaze wrote for the *Journal des débats* according to its daily theatre listings for the period 1820-1832.

\(^{27}\) *Débats* (20 August 1822): 4.

\(^{28}\) “Ainsi le compositeur ne fera point un contresens pour payer le tribut de roulades que semble réclamer le mot *volage*, si ce mot se trouve dans un air triste.” *De l’Opéra*, I, p. 119.
Florestan’s torment and inner disorder. Castil-Blaze believes that this expressive device should only be used if an actual storm is being described or visualized in detail by the character singing.

L’air de Florestan est plein d’expression et de force dramatique; c’est un air de sentiment. Un père alarmé sur le sort de son fils ne devrait pas être accompagné par des fusées de violon qui montent et descendent toutes les fois qu’il parle de naufrage. C’est jouer inutilement sur le mot : ce rébus musical seroit bien placé si Florestan faisoit à son confident ou à plusieurs personnes une description détaillée de la tempête qui a réellement submergé son fils; ce seroit un nouveau récit de Théramène, ou bien une description du genre de celles que l’on trouve dans la Paméla de Farinelli, dans le Tableau parlant, dans le Sorcier. Mais ce père, gémissant sur un malheur imaginaire, ne doit point être interrompu dans ses plaintes par les vagues de l’orchestre. Il n’y a ni action, ni récit, ni mouvement, rien enfin qui puisse motiver l’imitation pittoresque.29

The word rébus, in the passage above, is frequently used by Castil-Blaze to describe such pictorialisms of purely etymological or semantic origin, and recalls his objection to the use of language that draws too much attention to the semantic layer of the text-music collaboration, mentioned in the previous chapter.

The general principle in Castil-Blaze’s approach to the musical setting of text is that depiction should be kept general, which is to say that it is to be kept musical. In this his sympathies are very much with the Italians, and he quotes Mme de Staël in De l’Opéra en France as praising them for just this trait.30 His approval of the Italian method of expressing a text in music is coloured by one important reservation, however. The Italians, he observes, have a tendency to dress up every scene to be “beautiful,” regardless of its emotional colouring or its dramatic import, and as a consequence, to rob their music of the important dimension of dramatic force which it otherwise might have.

30. “... mais les Italiens, qui sont les vrais musiciens de la nature, ne conforment les airs aux paroles que d’une manière générale.” Unidentified passage from De l’Allemagne, quoted in De l’Opéra, I, p. 188.
His opinions in this regard reflect once again his central concern that the music in opera must represent a powerful amalgam of Italian-inspired frankly musical intentions and French insistence upon verisimilitude and probing realism in artistic representation. He rejects both the sugaring over of intense emotion practiced by the Italians and the rawness of French vehemence in declamation.

His concern that opera be fully musical, while not losing its potent attraction as drama (as judged by French standards) is reflected as well in his conception of the place and function of music in the larger-scale dimension of dramatic action. The issue which he sought to address in this regard was that raised by Boileau in the seventeenth century: could music narrate, i.e., could a story be told in music?

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Boileau believed that it could not, and more recent commentators such as La Harpe, one of the chief protagonists in the Gluckist-Piccinnist war of the late 1770s, had added further literary weight to the doubting side with such opinions as the following, which Castil-Blaze cites and rejects:

« L’accent de l’orgueil est anti-harmonique, et le dialogue d’Achille et d’Agamemnon est d’un genre de récitatif dont l’oreille est au moins étonnée; il est fort au dessous de la déclamation dont cependant on s’est efforcé de le rapprocher; et peut être Achille et Agamemnon ne peuvent pas se braver en musique. » C’est ainsi que s’exprimoit La Harpe en 1777. S’il étoit nécessaire de le refuter et de prouver combien sont dramatiques les duos chantés par deux personnages qui se bravent, je citerois ceux d’Énée et d’Iarbe, d’Assur et d’Arsace, de Licinius et du pontife ...


32. "... la Musique ne sçairoit narrer." See Chapter 1, note 26.

Castil-Blaze firmly believed that the French repertoire had already shown Boileau and La Harpe to be wrong. In his discussion of the nature of dramatic expression in both *De l'Opéra en France* and in his feuilletons he endeavoured to teach the French public in what ways the representation of action which they so prized in their drama was capable of being expressed in opera by means of music alone. In the elaboration of his theoretical analysis and in the copious quantity of passages from the repertoire which he explicated in support of it, he attempted to show the French public where, specifically, to look in the dramatic score for evidence of drama being conveyed in a manner unique to the art of music.

Dramatic expression in opera, he would have them know, may reside in any one of three elements of a musical texture, or in their combination. These three elements are: *le chant vocal*, referring to the solo vocal line; *le chant instrumental*, referring to foreground melodic and expressive material in the orchestra; and *l'accompagnement*, referring to background aspects of harmony or scoring in either a vocal or instrumental part. These three textural components, according to Castil-Blaze, represent the musician’s basic compositional resources in setting a drama in music, and they are the fundamental categories in terms of which he urges his readers to understand the drama as it progresses through the sequence of expressive scenes that the composer has created for it. He wishes his readers to be familiar with these elements of musical dramaturgy so that when they go to hear an opera they will recognize them as easily as they recognize a *tirade* in a verse tragedy or an *aparté* (spoken aside) in a comedy.

The importance of these elements, in his view, is that they are not arbitrarily or capriciously applied, but exist in a definite and predictable relationship with the patterns of dramatic activity that comprise the plot of an opera. Indeed the parallel relationship of plot

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34. "L'expression est dans le chant vocal ou instrumental, et dans l'accompagnement; les plus beaux effets viennent de la réunion de ces deux puissances [i.e., melody and harmony]." *De l'Opéra*, I, p. 115.
elements and musical expression is one of the fundamental defining characteristics of opera, according to Castil-Blaze. As outlined in the previous chapter, he views the opera libretto as a series of plot-advancing segments separated by lyrical segments. Lyrical segments tend to be melismatic in style and to use repetition, both of text and of musical phrases. Plot-advancing segments emphasize the clear declamation of the text, and avoid repetition and melismatic setting, since their aim is to convey information clearly. This does not mean, however, that musical expression is absent in those parts of the opera where the plot moves forward, as was mostly the case in operas of the previous century in which the plot was advanced in secco recitative. Despite his theoretical roots in eighteenth-century commonplace ideas, and his admiration for Italian musical style in general, Castil-Blaze has thoroughly and formally incorporated more modern ideas about dramatic orchestration into his theory of opera. He associates action-oriented segments of an opera with the orchestra, with chant instrumental, as automatically as lyrical segments are associated with the solo voice.

Le chant vocal exprime les passions. L’action est réservée au chant instrumental. Comme tout est en harmonie dans les arts, la division que nous avons faite d’un opéra en actions et en passions vient s’accorder parfaitement avec celle-ci.\footnote{De l’Opéra, I, p. 375.}

In Castil-Blaze’s view, every part of an opera is filled with musical expression of one sort or another. The contrast which he considers essential to the alternation of lyric and plot-advancing segments is not the contrast of expressive to non-expressive material, but the contrast between segments where expression resides principally in the vocal line and segments where it does not.

Castil-Blaze explains that the reasons why the orchestra might take over a leading role in presenting the dramatic situation are many and varied, but one common theme is that the characters represented on stage are too preoccupied with their own activity to address the au-
dience directly, and thus it falls to the orchestra to provide the audience with expressive clues as to the nature of the activity on stage.

Le personnage, trop occupé de la joie qu’il éprouve, de ce qu’il voit, de ce qu’il craint, de ce qu’il souffre, ne peut point nous entretenir des sentiments qui règnent dans son âme.  

Immediately following this passage in *De l’Opéra en France*, Castil-Blaze provides a list of no less than eighteen types of activity suitable for expression in *chant instrumental*, each footnoted with at least one pertinent example from the repertoire:

S’il s’interrompt pour rêver à ce qu’il vient de dire, s’il hasarde un mot avec trop de légèreté, s’il lit péniblement, s’il compte, s’il écrit...

His aim is to show that opera is a flexible genre, capable of presenting as wide a range of scenes as the spoken theatre, and that *chant instrumental* is the expressive resource in opera that makes this possible. It is worthy of note that Castil-Blaze is presenting more than simply a theoretical position here. Rather, he is demonstrating, by means of excerpts from the established repertoire, that opera has already proven itself capable of this type of dramatic expression. His aim is to provoke a re-evaluation of the French view of opera, emphasizing those aspects of it which he considers progressive and more in keeping with opera’s potential. He thus does not need a theoretical base which goes beyond that developed in the eighteenth century to support his views because the theatrical values which he is claiming for opera are those which are traditionally held by the French, and chief among them is verisi-


37. “Agamemnon, second acte d’Iphigénie en Aulide.” [Castil-Blaze’s note]

38. “Adolphe et Clara, duo Jamais d’amour.” [Ibid.]

39. “Montauciel, dans le Déserteur; Grégoire, dans les Visitandines.” [Ibid.]


41. “Scène de la lettre, dans les Noces de Figaro, et dans les Deux Paravents.” [Ibid.]
militude of action. By showing his readers that opera is capable of depicting in music the types of prosaic activities that might be featured in the spoken theatre, he reminds them once again that opera is a fully functioning and autonomous theatrical genre.

The large corpus of works from which Castil-Blaze draws his references and the abundance of illustrative material in the chapter of De l'Opéra en France devoted to chant instrumental (the entire Chap. XII of Vol. I, pp. 374-400) is indicative of the force of persuasion that he wishes to bring to bear on this topic, and the importance that it had for him. In this chapter he guides his readers step by step through a number of major scenes from works in the French repertoire, demonstrating how recitative-style declamation and chant instrumental alternate with passages where melodic interest is in the vocal line, and how this alternation is in direct relationship to alternations of plot advancement and lyrical expression in the dramatic action. The discussion of a scene from Dalayrac's Adolphe et Clara is particularly well-documented by means of a musical illustration and will serve as an example of his approach.

In the scene from this opera illustrated in Figure 2, Limbourg and Gaspard, are alerted by a horn call to the arrival of Clara. Castil-Blaze points out that in the first part of the scene (up to the double bar) the orchestra controls the musical expression by virtue of its melodic content while the voices declaim the text to inform the audience about the action taking place. But as soon as Clara arrives and the two characters advance to greet her (thus expressing their sentiments), the orchestra returns to an accompanying role and melodic interest is concentrated in the two voices singing in sixths and thirds.
Fig. 2. *De l'Opéra, II, Planches*, pp. 22-23.
Voilà le récit d'une action. Tant qu'il dure, l'orchestre est en possession du discours musical; mais au moment où les deux acteurs abandonnant l'objet de leur curiosité, viennent sur l'avant-scène s'égayer aux dépens de leur aimable prisonnière, l'orchestre devient accompagnateur, et les personnages guidés par les même [sic] sentiments, réunissent leurs voix sur les mêmes vers.

By means of this type of example, Castil-Blaze teaches his readers a way of following the continuity of the composer’s artistic shaping of his dramatic material. He explains to them how to follow the shifting focus of the composer’s musical discourse as it runs its parallel course alongside the dramatic action, “mapping out,” as it were, the dramatic expression as it alternates between passion and action, and between chant vocal and chant instrumental. In doing so he wishes to correct what he believes to be the prevalent but misguided view that the orchestra fills a mere accompanimental role in opera, and is thus by implication subordinate in all instances to the vocal line. He offers as an example of this misunderstanding the scene Plus j'observe ces lieux from Gluck’s Armide in which Renaud wanders through the magical garden of the enchantress Armide. He explains how, despite the fact that the orchestra bears the entire musical interest of the scene, La Harpe in an article in the Journal de politique et de littérature from 1777 insists on describing its effect in terms of its “accompagnement.”

Il n’est pas étonnant qu’il ait pris le chant de l’orchestre pour un accompagnement; c’est la bévue favorite des personnes qui sans rien connaître à la musique, se mêlent d’en parler. Sans réfléchir sur les effets et leurs causes, incapables d’analyser la moindre composition, et privés quelquefois de cette sensibilité exquise qui pourrait les éclairer à défaut du raisonnement et de la doctrine, l’orchestre leur offre sans cesse l’image de la subordination, et n’imaginant pas que son pouvoir s’élève au-dessus de l’accompagnement, ils attribuent tous les effets à la voix qu’ils regardent comme le seul organe du chant dramatique.

42. De l'Opéra, I, p. 377.

43. “Le récit de Renaud, si souvent interrompu, n’est ici qu’un accessoire et le dessin de la composition; l’ordonnance, la force musicale, tout se rencontre dans l’orchestre. La voix n’est jamais en possession du motif, elle n’en saisit que des fragments et ne se fait entendre qu’en usurpant la partie du hautbois ou de la flûte qu’elle suit à l’octave.” De l’Opéra, I, p. 391.

44. De l’Opéra, I, pp. 391-92. The need to be alive to the difference between orchestral material which provides background support (accompagnement) and that which stands in the musical foreground (chant instrumental) is reinforced in a feuilleton from 1828: “Bien des personnes jugent un
This concern that his readers learn to understand how to recognize the orchestra's role in
dramatic expression, first announced in De l'Opéra en France, became a prominent charac-
teristic of his feuilletons as well. He even refers to the fact that the expressive use of the
orchestra is one of his favourite topics when he writes half-mockingly in a review of Rossini’s
Tancredi:

On m'en voudra sans doute de ce que je vais distraire le spectateur maîtrisé par une
voix enchanteresse, pour lui faire sentir les beautés du langage de l'orchestre. Les
traits des violons, les arpèges du violoncelle, les soupirs des cors et des hautbois sont
conçus avec tant de vérité, et liés aux accens du personnage avec tant d'artifice, que
l'on seroit tenté d'attribuer à l'acteur les effets des instrumens qui animent si bien ses
gestes en parlant pour lui quand il se tait.\textsuperscript{45}

It is this kind of orchestral involvement, in which the resources of musical expression
become so transparently intermingled with the dramatic action that one cannot clearly tell
them apart, that Castil-Blaze considers to be the highest achievement in operatic composi-
tion, and it is for this type of plastic moulding of music to drama, for this thorough interp­
etration of music into drama, that he reserves his highest praise. His comments on the duo

\textit{O momento fortunato} from Paisiello’s \textit{Nina} indicate, in their use of terms such as

\begin{itemize}
  \item air ou un duo sans faire attention au rôle que l’orchestre remplit; il y a une grande différence entre
  l’accompagnement et le chant instrumental. Cette distinction peut seule prévenir de semblables
  méprises. Il ne faut pas avoir une grande expérience de la scène lyrique pour séparer à l’instant
  deux choses qui ne sauroient être considérées sous le même point de vue. Je n’avais pas cru devoir
  faire cette observation; elle est inutile pour les connoisseurs qui entendent la musique avec tous ses
détails; je ne me décide à combattre des erreurs de \textit{[text blurred]} que quand je vois qu’elles pren­
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Débats} (21 November 1822): 1. His expectation that orchestral details automatically reflect dra­
matic intentions often drives him to curious lengths. For example, he searches for an explanation
for the rude juxtaposition of C minor and A major tonalities in the orchestral introduction to
Pacini’s \textit{L’Ultimo giorno di Pompei} in the following terms: “Une introduction de peu d’étendue
y tient lieu d’ouverture. L’orchestre murmure sourdement en \textit{ut mineur}, le rideau se lève, et l’on
chante un choeur brillant en \textit{la majeur}. Cette opposition subite de deux tons étrangers l’un à
l’autre m’a paru singulière. J’ai cherché à me l’expliquer, en imaginant que l’auteur avait voulu
peindre les plaisirs d’un peuple qui se réjouit, tandis que le volcan menace de l’engloutir. Le
Vésuve joue ici le rôle du père Sournois. Ses accens ne sauraient avoir trop d’incohérence avec
les chants des Pompéiens.” \textit{Débats} (4 October 1830): 1.
“classique” and “chef-d’œuvre,” the standard of imaginative musical depiction by which he judged the stage works of his time.

Ce duo, que l'on peut regarder comme classique sous le rapport dramatique, est encore un chef-d’œuvre de sentiment et d’expression. Les moyens de l’art musical s’y trouvent employés avec une inconcevable adresse. La basse procède par demi-tons et fait monter d’un degré toute l’harmonie à mesure que l’espoir de Nina s’accroît: ogni sera, teco ognor, ogni matina, teco ognor, poi doman, poi doman l’altro, on voit les doutes de l’amant de Lindor se dissiper peu à peu, et la musique marque les heureux progrès de la persuasion. Il y a peu de morceaux dont les résultats soient aussi parfaitement dramatiques et musicaux en même temps.46

This moment-by-moment portrayal of the progress of a dramatic situation is the surest proof, in Castil-Blaze’s mind, that music can indeed “narrate,” and that the operatic genre can exploit its capacity to do so with elegance, vividness and wit.

* * *

Castil-Blaze’s vision of opera did not need to move beyond the bounds set by eighteenth-century aesthetic doctrine because his aim was merely to realize in practice what this doctrine had only postulated in theory: that music was an artistic medium equal in validity to language and visual communication, and therefore worthy of development in a genre systematically devoted to exploiting its potential for expression. His concern with the système vocal of French opera production and with the manner in which composers sought to put

46. Débats (24 November 1823): 4. Castil-Blaze expresses a similar admiration for the orchestral nuances of the “catalogue aria,” Madamina il catalogo è questo from Don Giovanni: “D’abord un simple débit tel que les paroles l’exigent, l’orchestre occupe l’attention de la manière la plus agréable pendant la lecture du catalogue; viennent ensuite les détails et les réflexions du malin valet; la musique les rend encore plus piquantes par son expression pittoresque, ses réticences, ses finesses: c’est le tableau le plus parfait qu’ait jamais produit la plume d’un musicien.” Débats (6 December 1823): 1. And similarly, he appreciates the effective orchestral portrayal of approaching danger in the duet between Ninetta and Fernando in La Gazza ladra: “Ce duo devient plus agité à mesure que le danger du malheureux déserteur s’accroît, il nimbo è vicino, l’orage le menace, et les accès de sa frayeur sont très bien exprimés par les forte que les violons font entendre à des intervalles éloignés, tandis que les voix ont pour base l’harmonie plaquée des instrumens à vent.” Débats (4 April 1822): 3.
text and dramatic action into music indicates just what he thought the major issues to be in the realization of this independent status for music as an art.

The composer's ability to paint the major protagonists of his drama in the vocal colours most appropriate to their dramatic function he considered to be fundamental to this aim. Without a musically conceived *système vocal* in place in the lyric theatres, the best intentions of French composers, he believed, would constantly be subject to the most shocking incongruities of effect at the immediate surface level of the score. He urged, therefore, that this surface level be subject to the same criterion of *vraisemblance* which governed the French theatre in general.

His concern for generality of expression in the musical setting of text and the avoidance of literalism represents his desire to see music freed from subordination to language and visual appeal. He insisted that the qualities of clarity, wit and vividness so prized by the French could be found within the medium of music alone, in the resources of vocal or instrumental melody and in the nuances of its harmonic accompaniment. In pointing out "les beautés du langage de l'orchestre," he sought to enlarge the awareness in French audiences of what constitutes dramatic expression in music, where it might be found, and how it might be achieved. By urging his readers to look beyond simple melody-accompaniment textures and to abandon their belief in the inherent subordination of the orchestra to the voice, he was asking them to reject the musical premises upon which the French comic and tragic lyric repertoire had been founded. Yet at the same time he was asking them to recognize in his vision of opera many of the aesthetic aims that had motivated those practices and had provided their rationale. In his attempts to show that music was an artifice equal in sophistication and communicative power to the language of Racine and to Praxiteles' marbles, an artifice capable of bearing narrative content and of taking over the foreground perception of a theatre audience, Castil-Blaze represents in his critical writings an early nineteenth-century coming of age of many eighteenth-century musical ideals.
CHAPTER 6
THE SINGER'S ART

In the aspects of Castil-Blaze's operatic model presented thus far there has been little to suggest that the singer's role is of major importance. His comments have overwhelmingly emphasized the composer's score at the expense of the independent literary value of the libretto, and have projected a largely classical ideal of opera as a drama of ideas-in-music which, in the hands of a composer such as Mozart, can rival in complexity and sophistication the drama of ideas-in-language of a playwright such as Racine. This ideal has ramifications which affect the full range of those involved in its construction and its reception. The critic, for example, is expected to be able to "tell a good work in a bad performance," ignoring the performers to assess the artistic merit of an opera by its score alone. Librettists are cautioned to direct their efforts to the composer and not to write literary performance vehicles directly for the performers. The French système vocal which caters to the needs and aspirations of performers to the detriment of composers is roundly decried and its abolition frequently demanded. Furthermore, audiences are reminded that the singer's voice is not the only source of musical expression in opera, and that what is most interesting, creative and artistic in an individual work is as likely to be found in the orchestra as in the singer's vocal line. For all of these reasons, and perhaps with one other consideration in mind — Castil-Blaze's overriding determination to systematize opera into a rigorous system of rationally justified and efficiently functioning compositional components — it may be difficult to imagine what place the singer might be granted in a critical outlook so thoroughly dominated by respect for the composer's craft and by discussion of the composer's score.

Yet the singer's role was an exceptionally important one in Castil-Blaze's conception of opera. This fact is reflected in both the amount of discussion in his feuillets devoted to
singers and to their performances, and in the depth of detail with which these issues are treated. A particularly valuable component of his writings for modern musical scholars is the precision of their descriptions of improvised ornamentation and other fleeting performance practices of the time. The following comments, for example, accompany an account of Henriette Sontag's performance in Rossini's *Semiramide* in 1829:

> Après avoir descendu rapidement la double gamme diatonique de si bémol, sans repos, sans préparation, Mlle Sontag a fait un saut de deux octaves pour attaquer l'ut à l'aigu avec autant d'éclat que de justesse; et, de cette position hardie, mais dangereuse, elle a terminé sa cadence par un arpège très bien articulé.¹

Furthermore, the discussion which he gives to individual singers often transcends the immediate performance which occasioned him to write. He attempts to view each singer as a unique individual, characterizing the voice type of each as to its specific pitch range and the variability of tone colour within that range, and generalizing on the inherent strengths and weaknesses of each singer as a performer. Furthermore, he notes in which roles these singers have done their best work and in which they might yet figure to advantage. His comments often combine the pedagogical insight of the *professeur de chant* with the career savvy of the theatre director.

The finely detailed coverage which he gave to opera singers was engaging reading in the 1820s, since the rise of Italian opera in Paris during this period had begun to attract a luxuriant parade of highly-paid and extravagantly skilled Italian singers to the French capital, about whose singing technique and style of performance the regular readers of the *Journal des débats* might wish to be informed. But his interest had much more profound roots as

¹ *Débats* (17 September 1829): 2. And Rubini's unusual skill in concluding a passage from Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* is described as follows: "Après avoir parcouru deux octaves avec l'agilité d'un oiseau, et s'être élevé jusqu'au mi bémol sur-aigu, le chanteur suit une marche opposée à celle que ses confrères adoptent en se pressant de conclure sur un trait brillant qui appelle l'applaudissement; Rubini, au contraire, nous donne un passage simple, à grosses notes, dans lequel il arpege lentement l'accord et finit par séduire ceux que sa prodigieuse vocalisation avait frappés d'étonnement. Sur le repos de dominante, Rubini tient le si bémol/aigu et le trille ensuite assez longuement." *Débats* (5 September 1831): 1.
well, and this detailed and close attention represents more than simply timely and technically
competent reporting on an increasingly topical subject. The performer's musical skill was
for Castil-Blaze, as it distinctly was not for French musical traditionalists, an integral part of
the very aim of opera. It was not merely a transparent medium for conveying independently
conceived musical ideas, but rather an integral part of the artifice of the operatic genre, and
a fit subject for systematic exploitation by the singer no less than by the composer. There
was, in Castil-Blaze's view of opera, a distinct place for the opera singer that other aspects of
the work — the dramatic action of the libretto, the ideas of the score — could not supplant,
something of the real essence of the operatic experience.

The origins of this view may be found in De l'Opéra en France in the chapter entitled
"De l'Exécution" (Vol. I, Chap. XIV, pp. 422-54). Castil-Blaze begins by noting that music,
unlike painting and poetry, cannot be directly appreciated in the written form in which it is
composed, but is utterly dependent upon the performer for its very communication to its au-
dience. The composer depends upon the singer not only to follow the accepted notational
conventions concerning pitch, rhythm and dynamics, but also to intuit, by the application of
musicianship, those elements of performance which the composer might not, could not or
perhaps even should not have written down. The elements he refers to are those concerning
such details as the degree of assertiveness within a texture or an individual chord, the addi-
tion of ornamentation in a solo air, or the fine gradation of a crescendo or a smorzando.3

More important, however, for Castil-Blaze is the idea that the performer not only translates

2. "Le peintre montre ses tableaux et la foule des admirateurs en jouit. Habile lecteur, le poëte peut
faire sentir les beautés d'une scène dramatique sans avoir recours aux comédiens. Le musicien est
entièrement dans la dépendance de ceux qui exécutent ses compositions." De l'Opéra, I, p. 422.

3. "... ce discernement qui le conduit à remarquer les passages où l'auteur lui commande la soumis-
sion, puisqu'il l'éloigne des régions du chant, de ceux où son trait rapide, sa tenue mélodieuse doiv-
ent planer au-dessus des masses; ce goût exquis, cet instinct musical qui lui dictent les ornemens à
joindre à un solo, et lui prescrivent la juste mesure du son réclamée par l'accord.... Il ne suffit pas
de tomber exactement sur le premier temps de la mesure, il faut encore suivre tous les détails
qu'elle renferme, marquer les demi-teintes, les traits de vigueur et ménager les sons avec artifice
Chapter 6

the composer's quarter notes and half notes into music, but into drama as well, and is thus co-equal with the composer in creating musical expression.

Le compositeur a jeté sur le papier un trait de mélodie; mais ses notes sont muettes, et la disposition de ces hiéroglyphes ne retrace aucune image, n'exprime aucune passion. En effet, quel rapport des noires et des blanches pourraient-elles avoir avec la joie ou la douleur? Il faut qu'il ait recours au chanteur pour donner la vie à ce tableau insignifiant et silencieux.

Il y a donc deux sortes d'expression, celle de composition et celle d'exécution: et c'est de leur accord heureux que naissent tous les beaux effets de la musique.4

Castil-Blaze argues that the role played by expression d'exécution is so powerful that even diametrically opposed dramatic intentions may be communicated by means of identical compositional material merely by relying upon the performer to render the difference in meaning clear. Drawing an analogy from the spoken theatre, he cites the example of an actor who recites the phrase “until this evening,” and notes that this linguistic motive could have any number of meanings depending upon whether it was spoken between two lovers, two gamblers, two gourmands, two assassins or two brigands. Each of these meanings would be utterly clear, however, since they would be made so by the actor who recites them, and the entire expressive force of this passage would reside within the actor's manner of performing it.5

Relating this example to music, he cites the well-known remark by Charles Boyé that the music to Gluck's air

J'ai perdu mon Euridice,  
Rien n'égale mon malheur.

5. "Un amant dit à sa maîtresse : à ce soir; deux joueurs, deux gourmands, deux spadassins, deux brigands se rencontrant, se serviront des mêmes termes. Que de choses disparates rendues par la même phrase! Que de projets divers! Un rendez-vous galant, un brelan, un souper, un duel, un assassinat. On remarquera sans peine que l'accent du personnage peut seul peindre le sentiment qui l'agite; la force expressive n'est pas dans ce qu'on dit, mais la manière dont on le dit.” De l'Opéra, I, pp. 131-132.
from the French version of his Orfeo could easily have been set to words of the opposite meaning:

J'ai trouvé mon Euridice,
Rien n'égale mon bonheur.

He replies, however, that this would in no way be shocking, since the music is not of such a marked character as to make it inappropriate to be performed in this way. In other words, the contresens which exists on paper would disappear in performance because of the singer's important role in creating musical expression.

A more recent application of this principle is cited in a feuilleton from 1822 wherein, after repeating verbatim these same passages from De l'Opéra en France concerning the two types of expression and Boyé's remarks on Gluck, Castil-Blaze notes that Rossini's famous aria Di tanti palpiti has undergone similar changes in context and served equally well in all of them. Originally conceived as a chant pathétique in Tancredi, this aria was subsequently appropriated by Mme Mainvielle as an air d'exécution for the lesson scene in Il Barbiere di Siviglia, and quickened in the process. It was then taken over as dance music by violinists for use at balls, and thus completed its transformation from the sadness of the sighing hero of Syracuse to the gaiety of a toe-tapping contredanse. 

6. "Je veux bien accorder que la mélodie douce et mélancolique des accens d'Orphée puisse devenir l'expression d'un [sic] joie affectueuse; la tristesse et le contentement que cet air exprimera tour-à-tour n'étant pas d'un caractère marqué, la couleur est affaiblie de part et d'autre, le rapprochement devient facile, et la mélodie n'aura rien de choquant, si on lui prête un sentiment opposé à celui qu'elle devait rendre." De l'Opéra, I, p. 128. Boyé's comments may be found in his L'Expression mise au rang des chimères (Amsterdam, 1779; Paris, 1789; repr.Geneva: Minkoff Reprints, 1973), pp. 13-14.

7. "La cavatine de Tancredi vient d'offrir un nouvel exemple de la diversité des sensations que le même air peut faire éprouver, si l'exécution s'éloigne plus ou moins de l'intention du compositeur. Présentée d'abord par Mme Mainvielle, avec la broderie riche et brillante que l'on pouvait ajouter au morceau d'étude de Rosine, di tanti palpiti ait reçu, dans le Barbier de Séville, un mouvement plus vif. Ce changement était nécessaire pour donner aux roulades l'éclat et la légèreté que réclament les airs d'exécution. Ce premier pas fait, l'air de Tancredi a franchi les limites du demi-caractère et pris une allure dansante. Ce chant pathétique, devenu gracieux par les soins de Mme Mainvielle, galoppe maintenant sous l'archet des ménétriers. Il est probable pourtant que, sans l'intervention de Rosine, les ménétriers, prompts à saisir leur proie, auraient laissé échapper un des morceaux les plus précieux du répertoire des bals. Le premier pas se fait sans qu'on y pense, dit la
The composer's score can thus in some instances bear the same relationship to the
singer's performance as the libretto bears to the composer's score, i.e., the relationship of an
intention to a realization, and Castil-Blaze stresses this open-ended quality in justifying the
important the role of the singer. Just as the librettist creates musical situations to be “filled
in” by the composer's skills in composition, so too the composer writes his score with the
deliberate intention that the singer “fill in” its exact character as dramatic music in perfor­
mance. The important point is that any number of realizations are possible from a single
notated intention, and the singer, in creating an individual performance, not only marks a
work with his or her own personal stamp, but in a real sense actually completes the composi­
tional process and is a creative composer in his or her own right. This view is articulated in a
feuilleton of 1831, occasioned by the departure of Mme Pasta from Paris:

Le génie de création appartient au musicien, mais son œuvre resterait imparfaite si le
génie d'exécution du virtuose ne venait lui prêter son charme et son appui. Le chan­
teur recompose une cavatine, cherche et trouve une variété d'accens et d'ornemens
qu'on ne saurait indiquer ou tracer sur papier, anime les ritournelles par le jeu de sa
pantomime, donne un sourire à la mélodie des flûtes, un geste noble ou menaçant
aux traits vigoureux de l'orchestre, et finit par posséder à un tel point toutes les nu­
ances d'expression, toutes les ruses du métier que présente cet air, qu'il nous conduit
depuis son début jusqu'à la cadence finale par une suite d'enchantemens. Cet air,
écrit par Rossini, devient la propriété de Mme Fodor ou de Mme Pasta, de Lablache
ou de Rubini.

En nous quittant, Mme Pasta avait emporté le secret de sa fameuse cavatine *di tanti
palpiti*...\(^8\)

Castil-Blaze views Mme Pasta taking with her all of her individual performances as if she
were a composer taking with her all of her unpublished scores. It is in this sense that the

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\(^8\) *Débats* (25 September 1831): 1.
singer represents to Castil-Blaze a major collaborator in the creative process of producing an opera.

Two aspects of the singer's role can thus be distinguished in Castil-Blaze's critical writings. The singer is first of all a medium through which the composer communicates his written composition to his audience. As such the singer is expected to embody all of the qualities of voice and training of a dependable vehicle for the composer's expression de composition. Secondly, the singer is the bearer and indeed the creator of expression d'exécution. This is a multi-faceted role, embracing aspects of performance ranging from gesture and demeanour on stage to the attention paid to small-scale effects of phrasing and sound gradation. But at its most "musicianly," it involves the singer's recasting the composer's melodic line anew in the kinds of improvised ornamentation that project the singer's personal view of his or her role. The remainder of this chapter will discuss Castil-Blaze's view of the singer's role in terms of these two aspects.

The Singer as the Composer's Vehicle

In the système vocal that Castil-Blaze envisaged for opera, the voice of the singer was viewed as a raw resource of vocal colour for the composer, to be linked to the dramatic role which was most appropriate to it in the opera's plot. Determining the range of colours available to the composer was the large-scale responsibility of the librettist, since it was he who chose the number of male and female characters to be portrayed. The appropriate linking of voice types and dramatic roles was the responsibility of the composer, whose travails when working with the traditional "anti-musical" système vocal of the French lyric theatres were discussed in the previous chapter. It was the singer's responsibility, in Castil-Blaze's view, to embody frankly the idiomatic qualities of a specific voice type, projecting vividly that which
differentiates this voice type from all others and heightens its contrast with them, in order that the musico-dramatic patterning foreseen by the librettist and implemented by the composer be able to stand in high relief in performance. These idiomatic qualities — principally the concentration of tone colouring (the “bite” in the voice) and to a lesser degree the quality of vocal agility — define to Castil-Blaze the suitability of a singer to the role assigned. They indicate to him the singer’s usefulness to a skilled composer who will naturally wish to exploit bright contrasts in sound colour when distributing scenes between his principal soloists, and who in writing his ensembles will desire the potency of harmonic effect and clarity of imitative movement that can only come from combining clear and distinct vocal timbres.

Castil-Blaze’s appreciation of ensembles as a unique and distinguishing feature of the operatic genre motivates the considerable attention which he devotes to major singers in other than their solo capacity, and underlies his view that even lesser roles must be filled with good voices for the sake of the ensembles. Indeed, ensembles set the minimum standard for all singers within an opera, as he explains in a feuilleton from 1821 in which he discusses the quintet from the first act of Rossini’s *Otello*:

Le quintette est exécuté par un premier et un second dessus, un premier et un second ténor, et une basse. Voilà des voix échelonnées selon les règles de l’art et du goût, et si l’on ajoute que ces voix sont toutes excellentes et dirigées par des gosiers habiles, on ne sera pas plus surpris de l’effet ravissant que ce morceau produit. Ces cinq voix forment un orgue de trois octaves, dont les jeux, diversement caractérisés, donnent des sons pleines et mordans sur tous les degrés de la gamme. Point d’efforts, et partant point de cris; les milieux unissent les extrêmes, et l’harmonie varie ses formes sans en altérer les gracieux contours....

Les premiers acteurs y sont chargés des solos; il s’en tirent fort bien le plus souvent; on dira qu’il suffit de leur confier les parties principales; qu’importe qu’un rôle secondaire soit bien ou mal rempli? Le public n’y fait pas attention. Je répondrai que cette inégalité peut être tolérée dans la tragédie ou la comédie. Mais cet Arcas, cet Araspe, cette Marceline, cet Antonio, personnages nuls à la Comédie française, deviennent essentiels à l’Opéra. Ils y sont les soutiens d’un sextuor, et l’un d’eux est quelquefois le pivot sur lequel roule tout un finale. Dans le quintette d’*Otello* Mme Rossi chante une partie aussi importante que celle de Garcia ou de Mme Pasta; c’est
Singers are thus judged as “stops” on the three-octave organ which represents to Castil-Blaze the vocal resources available to the opera composer. The bass voice “stop,” for example, must be thundering and powerful, not only because of the roles which it must play, i.e., kings, tyrants and other blustering authority figures, make this dramatically appropriate, but also because this voice is the harmonic foundation stone on which the entire “musical edifice” (a recurring metaphor) of an ensemble is built. A singer such as Filippo Galli is Castil-Blaze’s ideal bass.

By contrast, Castil-Blaze notes that a singer such as Zuchelli, while possessing superb agility and a smooth and polished delivery, is simply not a real bass, since he lacks the essential qualities needed for bass roles, as he makes clear in a review of Rossini’s Mosè in Egitto of 1822:

Zuchelli est un chanteur fort habile; sa voix est d’une étonnante flexibilité, mais elle manque d’éclat, de timbre et de mordant. Ce virtuose se trouve donc privé des qualités que son emploi réclame impérieusement, tandis qu’il en possède d’autres

dont il pourrait se passer. La première basse doit soutenir l'édifice musical formé
par l'union des voix; c'est au dessus, au ténor, au bariton de le décorer. Peu importe
que la contrebasse ait l'agilité de la flûte; il faut que Zuchelli change d'emploi s'il ne
veut pas se trouver constamment en opposition avec celui qu'il a choisi. Les tyrans,
les rois, les pères nobles, les personnages placés dans les situations fortes, causées par
de grandes infortunes, tels sont les rôles que l'on confie à la première basse. La men­
ace, l'imprécation, le désespoir, la rage doivent tonner, affronter l’orchestre, le domi­
ner et s'emparer de vive force du cœur des spectateurs. Ce n'est pas avec un roncoul­
rement de tourterelles que l'on défie les Euménides, les redoutables filles du Styx....

Cette manière polie et suave, gracieuse et légère convient à Figaro et non pas au roi
d'Égypte.13

Castil-Blaze’s criticism of Zuchelli as a singer is thus that he is singing in the wrong emploi:
he should be taking baritone roles in which the qualities of his voice would make him an
asset.14 Conversely, the suavity and elegance required in the the baritone voice, qualities
typified for Castil-Blaze by the role of Figaro, are no less a barrier to the “real” bass Galli
when he attempts this baritone role in a production of 1825:

La voix forte de ce chanteur, sa taille élevée, ses formes athlétiques, conviennent
parfaitement à d'autres rôles, ces qualités précieuses deviennent des défauts lorsqu’il
s'agit de représenter le leste et sémillant Figaro ...

L'exécution du rôle de Figaro a paru froide, parce qu'elle manquait de grâce et de
légereté, et que Galli n'a pas pu lui communiquer cette chaleur entraînante qu'il
deploie dans les rôles pathétiques ou grotesques....

Je pense que Galli fera bien de suivre les conseils de ses amis et de ses véritables parti­
sans en abandonnant un rôle qui semble être en opposition continuelle avec ses
moyens et la nature de son talent....15

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14. Castil-Blaze continues his criticism of Zuchelli in later feuilletons as well, noting the musico-
dramatic ineffectiveness of this singer in productions of Rossini's Otello in Débats (6 December
1823): 3, and Mozart's Don Giovanni in Débats (1 February 1824): 3-4. His comments on
Zuchelli in Rossini's Torvaldo e Dorliska are typical: “Zuchelli est un tyran à l'eau de rose; il
chante ses airs avec élégance et exactitude; il articule bien les roulades; mais cela manque d'accent
et de nerf.” Débats (13 May 1827): 3.

15. Débats (6 August 1825): 1, 2 and 3. Castil-Blaze continues to harangue Galli and Zuchelli into
singing roles that exploit their natural strengths rather than their weaknesses in his reviews of
Rossini's Cenerentola in 1825 in Débats (21 August 1825): 1 and (8 October 1825):2. He suggests
more than once that the duct between Zuchelli (as Magnifico) and Galli (as Dandini) does not
work because Galli’s deep bass voice is featured above Zuchelli’s baritone, and that they ought to
The application of similar criteria of authenticity of tone colouring and dramatic idiom are evident in his approach to other voice types as well. The tenor voice, for example, must be agile and bright, sung from the chest and not with the head voice of the \textit{haute-contre}.

Few other qualities of musicianship, in his view, can compensate for a deficiency in the quality of a voice's raw sound. Even a tenor as acclaimed as Rubini, appearing as Ramiro in \textit{La Cenerentola}, is criticized for the lopsided nature of his talents, highly agreeable in solo passages but hardly heard in ensembles.

\begin{quote}
L'organe du nouveau tenor est foible, voilé, et n'a guère qu'une quinte qu'il puisse faire vibrer avec éclat; il n'a par conséquent ni bas, ni medium....
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Cette voix gracieuse, expressive et légère plaît beaucoup dans le solo, mais on l'entend à peine dans les duos, et elle disparaît tout à fait dans le morceau d'ensemble....
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
La réserve que tous les chanteurs mettent dans le développement de leurs moyens favorise les petites voix, et cependant le rôle de Ramiro se réduisit souvent à la simple pantomime.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Castil-Blaze's concern for authenticity of vocal timbre is particularly keen with regard to the alto voice, a voice type which had not been widely cultivated in France and which was only recently becoming common on the French stage with the increasing prominence of the Italian repertoire.\textsuperscript{17} To compensate for the dearth of genuine altos, lower-tending mezzo sopranos — Castil-Blaze referred to them as “sopranos with a cold” (\textit{dessus enrhumé}s) — exchange roles (which they eventually do).

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Débats} (8 October 1825): 1. The tenor Curioni is found similarly wanting in the ability to stand out against the vocal forces amid which he is required to sing: “Ce chanteur a une voix de ténor bien caractérisée, assez étendue, mais elle manque de force et de volume. Ses moyens sont insuffisants pour une musique aussi brillante que vigoureuse; et les efforts multipliés du chanteur montroient en même temps sa bonne volonté et sa faiblesse. La cavatine: \textit{Ah! si per voi già sento}, est heureusement coupée pour le chanteur; son exécution est facile, mais il faut une voix sonore pour en faire sentir les effets, et les opposer avec avantage aux masses des chœurs.” \textit{Débats} (28 October 1824): 3.

\textsuperscript{17} French singers had traditionally avoided developing their voices in the alto range for two reasons: 1) this voice type seemed too “unfeminine” and unseemly, and 2) it offered no attractive leading roles to its practitioners. Castil-Blaze discusses the history of the alto voice in France in \textit{Débats} (14 December 1822).
were often substituted for their velvet-throated counterparts, a practice which he decried.\footnote{\textit{Débats} (10 October 1826): 1.} The dark colouring of this voice was needed, he argued, to distinguish it musically from the leading soprano role. He identifies just this sort of problem in reviewing Mlle Cesari in the travesty role of Arsace in Rossini’s \textit{Semiramide} in 1826:

\begin{quote}
La voix de Mlle Cesari est pleine et sonore dans le milieu et dans la partie élevée, mais elle a peu de force dans le bas, c’est un second-dessus qui peut à la rigueur exécuter la partie de contralto....
\end{quote}

Cette substitution d’une second-dessus à un contralto peut être admise quand le premier rôle de femme est confié à une cantatrice telle que Mme Mainvielle-Fodor, Mombelli, Sontag, dont les voix aiguës, légères, argentines forment encore une opposition avec le prétendu contralto. Mais si la \textit{prima donna} possède elle-même une de ces voix dont le timbre et le diapason se rapprochent de ceux du contralto, l’effet musical ne saurait être bon; l’une craint de monter, l’autre redoute de descendre, les deux voix doivent donc se rencontrer sans cesse dans le même espace pour y manœuvrer l’une à côté de l’autre.\footnote{\textit{Débats} (28 May 1827): 1.}

A more serious problem in this practice was that the alto’s function as the “timbral pivot” linking high and low pitch regions of an ensemble could not be fulfilled by anything but the genuine article.

\begin{quote}
Placé au centre de l’harmonie, le contralto est le pivot qui gouverne un quintette et un sextuor; il réunit les dessus aux voix graves, et fait tour à tour des appels ou des réponses au premier dessus, à la basse, au ténor.\footnote{Castil-Blaze explains: “Jusqu’à ce jour, la partie de contralto si essentielle dans un opéra et si précieuse pour l’harmonie n’avoit été remplie sur notre théâtre italien que par des seconds dessus enrhumés dont la voix n’a point assez de volume et d’intensité dans sa partie grave. Une voix de cette espèce peut briller dans une cavatine, elle chante seule, il lui est donc permis de transposer un air ou de le \textit{puntare} pour ramener dans un diapason plus favorable à la cantatrice les traits que le compositeur a disposés pour un vrai contralto. Dans les quatuors ou les autres morceaux d’ensemble, cette licence n’est point tolérée: il faut que la note}\
\end{quote}
Thus, an “imitation alto” like Mme Schütz, appearing in Rossini’s *La Donna del lago* in 1825, leaves a large gap in the middle of the vocal texture of the quartet *Ah se pera*, and contributes to the timbral separation of the piece into two duets, one in the high register and one in the low register.

Mme Schütz est excellente musicienne; son exécution est ferme, sa voix sonne bien, elle est agile et juste; mais ce n’est point un contralté comme on l’avait annoncé....

Du moment que le contralté n’a pas cette partie grave, qui le caractérise, et dont les cordes lient les parties de dessus à celles des ténors, dans la chaîne de l’harmonie, les effets que le compositeur s’étoit proposés n’existent plus. Les voix de Mme Mombelli [the soprano] et de Mme Schütz ne contrastent point assez, parce qu’elles sont parallèles. Ce défaut étoit d’autant plus sensible, qu’il n’y avoit pas de ténor pour remplir l’intermédiaire dans le finale et le quatuor, Zucchelli, chargé du rôle de Roderigo, ramenoit tous les traits au grave, et se rapprochoit ainsi de la partie de Levasseur [the bass]. Le quatuor n’étoit plus échelonné d’après les dispositions adroites et justes du compositeur: on entendoit réellement deux duos, l’un au grave, l’autre à l’aigu.21

The soprano voice presents yet another case. The essential qualities of this voice type include a sparkling agility in solo passages, in order to bring life to the coquettish characterization of the leading female role, and in ensembles a piercing clarity that allows this voice type to act as the guiding “pole star” for the other singers. Castil-Blaze finds both of these qualities in Mme Mombelli:

La voix de Mlle Mombelli est très étendue et sonne bien, surtout dans sa partie élevée: elle a de l’agilité...

Cette qualité de voix, la faculté d’attaquer sans effort, et par conséquent sans crainte, les notes les plus hautes, donnent à cette cantatrice un *brig* déjà bien précieux pour le solo, et dont les avantages sont encore mieux sentis dans les ensembles.

... on a justement applaudi son intelligence, sa piquante originalité et surtout la manière dont elle a conduit les morceaux d’ensemble, la verve et l’entrainement qu’elle a portés dans leur exécution. Bordogni, Pellegrini, Zucchelli, musiciens à

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resté à sa place, elle y reste à la vérité, mais on ne l’entend pas, elle est perdue pour l’harmonie, et le lien qui doit réunir le ténor au premier dessus cesse d’exister.” *Ibid.*

toute épreuve, n’ont pas besoin d’être soutenus dans leurs récits mais ils dépendent en quelque sorte de la prima donna dans les ensembles. C’est elle qui tient le sceptre; la voix de soprano est l’étoile polaire des nombreux chanteurs que rassemble un finale; si cet astre n’est pas brillant et invariable, toutes les parties groupées au dessous de lui tombent dans la confusion ou parlent pour ne rien dire, du moment que la partie principale, trop faible pour être entendue et suivie, se perd dans les masses de l’accompagnement.22

Concentration of tone colour and a degree of vocal agility appropriate to the dramatic role to be filled were not the only qualities which Castil-Blaze looked for in the performing equipment of the singer of opera. They represent only the final goal to be achieved in a long and intensive musical education in the fundamentals of the art of singing. Two other prominent characteristics that Castil-Blaze expects to result from this training are a generality of talent and an ease of delivery.

The singer’s talent should be general in the sense that the composer need not “write around” weak points in technique, and that the singer is capable of performing music of any degree of difficulty and of any kind of dramatic colouring. The Italian tenor David is such a singer, whom Castil-Blaze delights in praising by enumerating the astonishing range of his abilities:

Venons à David, celui-ci est le Moschelès, le Paganini du chant. Comme ces deux virtuoses il parcourt son instrument dans tous les sens, en prodiguant les merveilles et en se moquant des difficultés : il conduit sa voix en maître; son audace épouvante; sa réussite inspire l’enthousiasme : c’est un chanteur foudroyant.... Voulez vous de la force? Sa poitrine lui fournit un volume de son, capable de dominer l’orchestre le plus formidable. Un instant après, voulez-vous de la grâce, de l’amour, de la douceur? il captive l’âme, il enivre, il transporte par l’amabilité de ses tendres accens...

Il multiplie les roulades, monte, descend, se joue avec les gammes chromatiques, passe du grave au doux, du plaisant au sévère avec autant de talent que de bonheur.23

22. Débats (22 April 1824): 1, 2.
This ideal of generality of talent contrasts sharply with the low performance standards of the Opéra-Comique, about which Castil-Blaze never tired of complaining, and his reviews of this theatre mention the need for better all-round performance standards as frequently as his reviews of the Théâtre-Italien mention the systematic superiority of execution of the Italian singers. Castil-Blaze wished to proclaim the message that

les progrès de l'art musical ne permettent plus au chanteur ignorant de se montrer avec avantage sur nos théâtres

and insisted that a singer who was prepared to perform on the lyric stage should, as a minimum, be able to read fluently at sight, and have mastered the fundamentals of breath control, ear training, diction and the improvisation of ornamentation within a harmonic framework. Emblematic of his emphasis on fundamentals is the attention which he pays to pronunciation, and in particular the critical campaign which he launched in 1821 to exterminate what he considered the unmusical practice of grasseyement, i.e., the use of the “fat” (gargled) “r” sound typical of the urban accent of Paris in the 1820s, a mannerism of pronunciation which was natural in some singers, but deliberately affected in others.

24. For example, concerning Le Philosophe en voyage at the Opéra-Comique, Castil-Blaze writes: "L'exécution de cet opéra a été extrêmement foible pour un théâtre royal. On n'y entend que quelques voix exercées, et la plupart des rôles ont été abandonnés à d'excellents comédiens dont les accens anti-musicaux ne se lient ni aux voix des chanteurs ni à l'harmonie de l'orchestre. Je sais bien qu'ils jouent la comédie comme on la joue au Théâtre-Français; mais ils chantent comme on chante au Vaudeville et au Gymnase : et au Vaudeville et au Gymnase, on chante comme dans la rue." Débats (18 August 1821): 4.

25. Débats (5 October 1827): 2. This feuilleton, entitled “Des chanteurs,” discusses in some detail the reasons why Castil-Blaze believes that performance standards are so low in France.

26. In a review of François Fétis’s Solfèges, Castil-Blaze concurs with the aim of such method books, indicated as follows: "... de former des musiciens d'un talent profond et solide, qui puissent lire facilement, avec la rapidité de l'éclair et à la première vue, la musique la plus difficile et la plus compliquée pour en transmettre à l'instant les accens en se servant de la voix, d'un instrument, ou bien en employant à la fois ces deux moyens d'exécution." Débats (11 June 1827): 1.

27. In a lengthy discussion in De l'Opéra, I, pp. 265ff. Castil-Blaze refutes point by point the assertions made by long-term admirers of the Opéra-Comique who insist that its routiniers (i.e., those actors who must be taught their musical roles and who memorize them by rote), are the equal of other singers once well practiced in their roles.
Le grasseyement est toléré sur tous nos théâtres; c'est à ce défaut de prononciation, et non à l'inharmonie de la langue que l'on doit attribuer en grande partie la supériorité de la langue italienne sur la langue française, en ce qui regarde la musique. Le chant de grasseyeur n'est qu'un croassement plus ou moins désagréable, et la mélodie la plus suave ne sauroit adoucir la dureté d'une phrase telle que celles-ci, prononcées en grasseyant:

\[
\text{Je vais vous faire rrrrrrrr . . . . . . . .}
\]
\[
\text{Et pourrrrre parrrrrrrre un chaperrron . . . . . . . .}^{28}
\]

M. Perronet a une voix de ténor franche et agile, un trille brillant; il ne grasseie pas, remarque essentielle à faire dans une ville où le grasseyement est à peu près général. L'absence de ce défaut est une qualité bien précieuse, et l'on est favorablement disposé à l'égard du chanteur qui a reçu de la nature une prononciation mélodieuse, ou qui est parvenu à s'affranchir des entraves du grasseyement.\(^{29}\)

While the low standard of singing at the Opéra-Comique prompted Castil-Blaze to campaign for the cause of fundamental musical literacy, it was the highly forced melodramatic singing at the Opéra which caused him to champion poise and ease of delivery as additional requisite qualities of the ideal singer. At this theatre, the emphasis on preserving the intelligibility of the text at the expense of the melodic line had produced a heavily accented declamatory style of delivery, known to the Italians since the eighteenth century as the *urlo francese* or “French howl.”\(^{30}\) Castil-Blaze constantly pointed out in his early articles the absurdity of this singing style, and urged his readers to look instead to the Italian model of musical expression, which he insisted could generate equivalent extremes of emotional intensity, but

\(^{28}\) *Débats* (5 January 1821) : 4.

\(^{29}\) *Débats* (19 February 1821): 4. In other feuilletons Castil-Blaze takes an equally hard line on this practice. Mlle Leontine Fay is lectured on this practice in *Débats* (4 July 1821): 1. Furthermore, he doggedly insists that Mlle Maillard, a young singing student at the Conservatoire, should not be given a *premier prix*, since she is not even a singer: she sings *en grasseyant*. *Débats* (4 September 1821): 3-4.

\(^{30}\) Concerning the singing style at the Opéra in the early nineteenth century Jean Montgrédien writes: “Nos chanteurs français, eux, ne sortent à peu près jamais de leur pays; l'enseignement qu'on leur dispense au Conservatoire est critiqué dès ses débuts. Le grand reproche que l'on trouve partout dans la presse à ce sujet est qu'on leur apprend plus à forcer leur voix, à crier, qu'à chanter; depuis l'époque de Rousseau et de Grimm et de leurs diatribes contre l'*urlo francese*, rien ne semble avoir changé.” *La Musique en France*, p. 67.
without resorting to calamitously unmusical shrieks and howls. The ultimate sign of skill in the dramatic singer was thus, in Castil-Blaze's view, the ability to inspire deep emotion in others without losing one's own self-possession, and to sing with poise and control about characters who may be on the verge of losing just these very qualities.

Il faut que les phrases d'une mélodie agréablement expressive coulent avec limpidité de la bouche du chanteur, au lieu d'en être chassées par des mouvements coercitifs. Lorsqu'il s'agit de plaire et de séduire, il ne faut jamais avoir recours aux efforts, et c'est aux suivants d'Apollon surtout qu'il faut appliquer ces vers de La Fontaine : Plus fait douceur que violence.

Castil-Blaze believed that the superiority of the Italians in this regard was due not only to their training but to their more realistic and practical approach to performance practices in general. The Italians, he noted, insist upon singing only what lies comfortably within their range, and will transpose any piece if this will make it a more effective performance vehicle for their talents. This approach was well suited to the conditions of opera performance in Italy, where the output of new works was relatively large compared with France and the need was great to adapt them to the varying abilities of the performing forces in the many small and large towns in which they were being toured. French opera production, however, was much different, and operated under a greater number of strictures. It was centred in Paris, where relatively few new works were produced, and where consequently the repertoire was

31. "S'il se rencontre une voix éclatante et étendue, mais dure, sans charme et sans agilité, et que des efforts trop multipliés rendront fausse, tout le monde dit : Voilà une voix qui convient au grand Opéra! À ce théâtre, il ne s'agit de frapper fort; les cris y sont regardés comme le chant dramatique par excellence, et avec des poumons vigoureux on est sûr d'y réussir.... Le chant dramatique peut arriver à une expression outrée, sans cesser d'être musical, rien ne saurait donc justifier les cris. Nos tyrans d'opéra sont des tyrans à l'eau de rose en comparaison du farouche Otello. García nous prouve dans ce rôle qu'il est possible de se livrer sans crier aux fureurs de la jalousie et au délire des passions les plus violentes." Débats (24 July 1821): 1, 2-3.

32. Débats (26 September 1828): 1.

33. "Pourquoi les acteurs italiens se font-ils admirer, autant par leur belle exécution que par leur aisance, c'est qu'ils ne chantent que ce qui est à leur portée. Qu'importe que Rossini écrive tel morceau en sol'ou en ré pour les chanteurs de Naples, ceux de Paris, d'un trait de plume, ont bientôt fait subir à la musique tous les changements que réclament leurs voix." Débats (7 December 1820): 3.
much older. The Opéra was not only a lyric theatre but also a government-funded national institution where a heritage list of preserved classics stretching back to the *ancien régime* (principally Gluck, Piccinni and Sacchini) were regularly rotated for performance. To the long-time admirers of this repertoire, the concept of transposition was not only unfamiliar, but tantamount to desecration. Castil-Blaze argued forcefully, however, that the real desecration lay rather in the current system of performance, since the oldest parts of the repertoire had been composed when concert pitch was as much as a full tone lower, and consequently these works were not being “authentically” performed in any event.

The singers at the Opéra were thus straining their voices in aid of a principle of authenticity that had no justification either in historical fact nor certainly in artistic effect, as Castil-Blaze continually reminded his readers in comments such as the following:

> Il faut que l’Académie royale de Musique renonce aux opéras de Gluck ou qu’elle se décide à les transposer. La représentation d’*Iphigénie en Tauride* est venu à l’appui de tout ce j’ai dit à ce sujet. On y a vu le parricide Oreste poursuivi, étranglé, torturé, assassiné non par Mégère et ses farfadets, mais par une note de musique, par un FA plus redoutable que les Euménides secouant leurs torches enflammées : armé de son dièse, il a fait plus de ravages en une heure que les serpents béniens, les poignards sans lame, les feux follets, les haches de carton de l’Opéra n’en auraient fait en un mois.

In a parallel fashion he methodically exposed to the Parisian public as a model the transposition practices of the Italian singers whom they so enthusiastically applauded, and continually attempted to reinforce the point that the effects of which these singers were capable were directly related to the skill which they demonstrated in choosing the key most suited

34. “Les demi-savans vous diront que la transposition dénature un morceau de musique; les tons faux d’une voix qui se force le dénaturent bien davantage.” *Débats* (7 December 1820): 3. It must be noted, however, that the views which Castil-Blaze expressed in his feuilletons on transposition are difficult to reconcile with the following comments on key characteristics in *De l’Opéra en France*: “Le choix des tons est encore un objet essentiel; chacun a sa couleur: fa, mi, ré, sont éclatans; mi bémol, ut mineur, tristes et religieux; fa, mi, serviront à exprimer la tendresse ...” *De l’Opéra*, I, p. 136.

to their voices. In the following example, Rossini's *Di tanti palpiti*, perhaps the best known Italian aria in France at the time, is used to illustrate this point:

Mme Pasta a rendu enfin à l'air de *Tancredi* sa couleur et son expression, l'effet en a été délicieux et magique; elle l'a pourtant chanté une tierce plus haut que le ton de la partition. Cet air a été écrit en _fa_ pour Mme Malanotte, contralto bien décidé; Mlle Cinti a pris la licence de le chanter en _sol_, Mme Pasta l'a mis en _la bémol_, et Mme Fodor enfin a porté la profanation au comble en exécutant en _la naturel_ le même morceau. Ces Italiens sont des barbares; ils veulent à toute force chanter avec leur voix ... 36

His efforts, however, were not merely confined to cajoling the public from his critical podium at the *Journal des débats*. He also published editions of excerpts from the repertoire of the *ancien régime* transposed into what he believed would be keys suitable for concert performance, and discussed and advertised these editions in his feuilletons. 37 His commitment to the practice of transposition, emblematic of his practical orientation to opera issues in general, is evident from his very first articles and became a cause with which his name was widely associated in Parisian musical circles. 38

36. *Débats* (25 April 1822): 2. Note as well the following comments from a review of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*: "Mme Malibran a chanté la cavatine *Una voce poco fa* en _mi_, Mme Fodor la disoit en _sol_, Mme Cinti en _fa_, Mme Montano en _mi bémol_. Voilà un air qui a fait autant de voyages sur l'échelle du diapason que le fameux *Di tanti palpiti*. Que diront les antagonistes de la transposition, ces routiniers qui prétendent qu'il suffit de changer le ton d'un morceau pour en détruire l'effet? Cette cavatine ne s'est-elle pas toujours présentée avec tous ses charmes? Son effet a-t-il été moindre, toutes proportions gardées relativement aux personnes qui tour à tour l'ont exécutée?" *Débats* (24 April 1828): 1.


38. The issue of transposition is evident in his very first feuilleton, which features a review of a transposing piano by an inventor named Roller. *Débats* (7 December 1820): 4. And it is interesting to note in this connection that the popular success enjoyed by his more intrusive arranging activities, notably his adaptation of Weber's *Der Freyschütz* as *Robin des bois* in 1824, may partly be explained by the authority that accrued to him in championing this one cause. At the time of the première of *Robin des bois*, for example, an article in *Le Globe* strongly favouring the transposition of the older repertoire includes the following passage: "... et quant aux vieilles partitions, on
Castil-Blaze thus views the singer from three points of view: 1) as a representative of a well-defined vocal emploi upon which the composer can depend for the concentrated tone colouring and forceful musical presence needed to create strongly characterized solo roles and harmonically potent ensembles; 2) as a musician with sufficient training and generality of musical skills to allow the composer to write freely, without regard for the singer’s weaknesses; and 3) as a poised and polished performer with a talent for delivering music to its audience with ease, and an instinct for knowing when transposition will contribute to this effect.

**Ornamentation and the Singer’s Taste**

In dividing responsibility for musical expression between composer and performer (i.e., into expression de composition and expression d’exécution) and in pointing to the composer’s dependence upon the performer, Castil-Blaze was implying a more complex relationship between composers and performers than simply the former’s need of the latter’s talents to give throat, gesture and a plausible human visage to otherwise self-sufficient musical ideas. Indeed, it was just such a swarm of musically inert mannequins sonores which he fervently hoped to sweep from the lyric theatres of France, to be replaced by creative musicians of more co-equal status with the composers whose works they performed. While Castil-Blaze recognized the composer as the originator of the score of an opera, he did not

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39. *De l'Opéra*, I, p. 265. Castil-Blaze uses this pejorative term to describe the routiniers of the Opéra-Comique.
confuse this score with the opera itself. His long experience in going to the theatre, score in hand, had taught him that much of what is memorable, exciting and truly dramatic in an operatic performance is added after the score leaves the composer’s hands, added by the singer in live performance.

As mentioned above, Castil-Blaze believed that each singer creates a unique and individual rendering of the operatic role which he or she fills. The quality of this rendering is a product of the singer’s ability to portray character and to enact drama through both physical and musical comportment on stage. While the options before the singer are many and varied in this regard, the most inherently musical of these, and thus for Castil-Blaze the most important, is the creative application of improvised ornamentation. It is by means of ornamentation that the singer enlarges the scope of musical characterization opened up by the composer, giving a sense of personal rhetorical emphasis to the musical pronouncements of his or her character, and writing large the emotion implicit in the melodic line to be sung. For Castil-Blaze, opera at its best was virtually inconceivable without the creative participation of the ornamenting singer.

_Di tanti palpiti_ produit une sensation qu’il est impossible de décrire. Didon n’écoutait pas le récit d’Énée avec plus d’intérêt et de passion que les amateurs de Louvois n’en éprouvent en entendant cet air ravissant. De nouvelles broderies distribuées avec un goût qu’on ne peut comparer qu’au talent qui les exécute ont prêté de nouveaux charmes à cette scène. Voilà la vraie, la seule manière de chanter l’opéra.40

As the continuation of this passage makes clear, part of the reason for Castil-Blaze’s enthusiasm lies in the way in which the use of ornamentation serves cleanly to distinguish the lyric theatre from the spoken theatre, and thus to affirm opera’s uniqueness as a theatrical genre in which music is the primary dramatic medium.

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Chapter 6

Il faut absolument que ce spectacle essentiellement musical intéresse par la musique. Tout autre moyen de plaire, s’il est mis en première ligne, n’est qu’un subterfuge suggéré par la faiblesse et l’ignorance. Il faut que Talma et Mlle George [from the Théâtre-Français] déclament, et que l’acteur lyrique chante. Si l’on veut que la mélodie soit asservie aux lois de l’art oratoire, tous ses agréments vont s’évanouir à l’instant pour ne laisser subsister qu’une psalmodie également repoussée par les musiciens et les déclamateurs, une sorte de déclamation gâtée.41

Ornamentation in opera had traditionally been viewed with suspicion by many French writers, since by distorting the clarity and comprehensibility of the text, the practice of ornamentation distanced audiences from the literary ideals which underlay the French operatic aesthetic. Under the banner of classical simplicity and severity, the view had long prevailed in French operatic circles that singers who ornamented the melodic line were doing a disservice to its underlying text, whereas Castil-Blaze proclaimed just the opposite.

Il n’y a pas long-temps que les critiques conseillaient encore aux chanteurs de ne point embellir leur chant. Falloit-il louer un acteur lyrique, ils disoient : Sa méthode est excellente, il est très sobre d’ornemens. Dût-on me blâmer, je prendrai une route opposée ; je dirai aux héros d’opéras : Brodez, brodez sans cesse ; l’art de chanter est l’art de broder. Mais que le discernement et le goût président à vos improvisations.42

For Castil-Blaze, the ornamentation used by an operatic protagonist was a rich source of genuine and irreplaceable dramatic expression. Without this resource, the singer’s ability to convey the real dramatic potential of a scene would be considerably diminished, and his audience less informed about the state of mind of the character being portrayed and about the passions moving within him or her. This perspective is conveyed in a somewhat eyebrow-raising passage (at least for modern musicians interested in period performance) which

41. Ibid., p.2.

42. Ibid. The “severity” of the French attitude towards improvised vocal ornamentation may be traced to Lully’s strictness in this regard (see Chapter 1 n. 14). The views which Castil-Blaze ascribed to the critics of “not long ago” were in fact still alive in such commentators as the music reviewer of Le Globe, who writes concerning the singer Curioni: “Sa voix est belle et grande, et sa méthode sévère n’admet aucun de ces faux ornements où semblent trop se complaire aujourd’hui quelques chanteurs italiens ...” Unsigned, “Paris. Théâtre Royal Italien.” Le Globe 1, No. 22 (28 October 1824): 87.
constructs an analogy between the well-known violinist of the period Baillot\textsuperscript{43} and the right-thinking opera singer. Just as Baillot, he argues would not limit his ennobling ornamentation to lesser tunes, but would generously lend his skill in melodic embroidery as well to "the sublime adagios of Mozart and Haydn" and even "the melancholy productions of Beethoven," so

Comme celui du violoniste, l'art du chanteur est aussi l'art de broder. Entendez la cavatine de \textit{Tancredi}, trouvez-vous que les ornemens dont Mme Pasta l'enrichit rendent cet air indigne d'un paladin amoureux? \textit{Ombra adorata, aspetta;}, est-il un air plus grandiose, d'une inspiration plus majestueusement tragique? Melpomène a-t-elle des moyens plus puissans pour exciter l'admiration et la pitié? Croit-on que ce morceau ravissant produirait plus d'effet si on le dépouillait de ses ornemens pour l'approprier au genre ennuyeux?... je voulais dire sévère. Parlerai-je du duo qui termine l'opéra de \textit{Romeo et Giulietta}, est-il une situation plus attachante? Roméo, dévoré par le poison, ne fait-il pas partager ses angoisses aux spectateurs, son chant cesse-t-il d'être orné et d'être vrai? Il déchire le cœur, mais il flatte l'oreille : c'est le triomphe de l'art. Il faut que la musique soit toujours la musique, il faut que le sentiment du beau se trouve jusque dans l'expression de la douleur la plus horrible.\textsuperscript{44}

In writing about the nature and value of ornamentation in this passage Castil-Blaze writes in the same terms which he would use to write about music as the principal artistic medium of opera. Ornamentation itself, he seems to imply, is an artistic medium in its own right, the expressive power of which, like that of the composer's \textit{expression de composition}, resides in its very artificiality. As he argued before that the language of music is no less appropriate a medium for the mythological figures of antiquity than the language of Racine's chiming alexandrines,\textsuperscript{45} so too he argues here that music, once accepted as the legitimate language of the opera composer, should not be restricted in its expressive range to a "severe" reserve in the application of ornamentation. The real responsibility of the singer,

\textsuperscript{43} In 1814 Pierre Baillot instigated the first public concerts of chamber music in Paris, which in the course of the Restoration period introduced the French capital to the Viennese chamber music repertoire, including eventually the late quartets of Beethoven.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Débats} (10 September 1822): 3.

\textsuperscript{45} See Chapter 5, pp. 143-44.
he insists, is not to restrain the impulse to ornament the composer’s musical characterization, but to yield to it with enthusiasm, and to find those *roulades*, those trills and those scales and octave leaps that most perfectly express in music his or her understanding of the character being portrayed.

Le genre sévère, nous disoit-on, n’admet point d’ornemens, il faut qu’un roi se borne à déclamer la note simple. Homère ne nous dit pas qu’Achille, qui d’ailleurs étoit grand musicien, s’amusât à faire des trilles et des roulades, des gammes chromatiques et des sauts d’octave. Non, sans doute. Achille ne parloit point en vers non plus, Homère et Racine lui ont cependant prêté ce langage. Si vous introduisez le fils de Péée sur la scène lyrique, il faut nécessairement qu’il adopte la manière de s’exprimer des héros d’opéra. S’il existe des mélodies nobles, pompeuses et d’un grand caractère, il existe aussi des ornemens, des roulades, des tours, des passages, des traits nobles, pompeux et d’un grand caractère qui se lient admirablement à ces mélodies.46

The singer is thus the creator of a separate layer of artifice, acting not unlike a “magnifying varnish” applied to the composer’s vocal score. This additional transparent lustre is possible because ornamentation, as a fully expressive independent medium, is not merely appropriate to a single genre of drama, such as comedy or tragedy, but can be plastically adapted to any form of dramatic situation.47 In return for this freedom, the singer is required, just like the composer, to “give back more than the original,”48 and it is even possible, in Castil-Blaze’s view, for the artifice of the singer in the form of ornamentation to bear


47. “Quand on a entendu chanter *Otello* par Garcia, Bordogni, Levasseur et Mme Pasta, on doit être convaincu que la roulade est un ornement nécessaire dans le chant dramatique. Cet ornement est noble, tragique, comique, bouffon, selon la nature de la mélodie qui le reçoit.” *Débats* (9 June 1825): 4. Castil-Blaze felt a particular need to defend the use of this ornament in tragic works: “Mme Pasta et Garcia ont été mes soutiens quand j’ai pris la défense de la roulade; il m’ont servi à prouver qu’elle convenoit parfaitement à la tragédie.” *Débats* (5 January 1828): 3.

48. “Donzelli, malgré sa belle voix, produit peu d’effet dans la cavatine, *Ah!, si per voi già sento*; il change le trait en roulades, et ce qu’il lui substitue ne vaut pas ce qui est écrit. Quand on fait un changement on doit toujours faire plus et mieux que le texte original ...” *Débats* (10 August 1826): 3.
greater artistic significance than that of the composer. It is in this sense, for example, that a piece which he considers to be superbly written, such as Dunque io son from Rossini's II Barbiere di Siviglia, may yet transcend its original conception to become a unique creation of a singer such as Pellegrini.

Mais la nouveauté la plus piquante de cette reprise c’étoit Pellegrini dans le rôle de Figaro : il a montré que des airs superbes pouvoient encore être embellis par le chanteur; le goût sollicite les ornement, l’école enseigne à les concevoir, à les exécuter, à les placer aux endroits convenables. Tel est l’art du chanteur, témoin le duo Dunque io son du Barbier de Séville. Je ne veux point troubler le triomphe de Rossini; mais il m’est impossible de ne pas convenir que ce morceau est mieux chanté qu’il n’a été écrit.49

Cases where such transcendence is attempted, and where the attempt fails, are in no short supply however, and as energetic a proponent as Castil-Blaze might be of the practice of improvised ornamentation, he does not give singers carte blanche to re-upholster every melodic utterance that leaves their throat without regard to the expression de composition already present in it. In fact the singer, in "re-composing" to an aria, may actually contribute more to undoing the work of the first composer than to enhancing it. Mme Malibran, for example, as great a singer as she is in the role of Rosina, does not succeed like Pellegrini in enlarging the expressive potential in the vocal score. In fact, in her attempts to plant new musical flowers of her own, she seems to have trampled underfoot many of the strong stems and fresh petals already planted with care by Rossini.

Elle a introduit dans le rôle de Rosina, beaucoup de traits nouveaux, des passages d’un tour élégant; mais cette cantatrice a brillé beaucoup plus sous le rapport de l’invention que comme exécutante....

Certaines mélodies d’une grâce naïve et franche doivent être respectées, les plus beaux ornemens ne sauroient les remplacer. Ah tuo solo amor tu sei che mi devi consolar; ce trait, dit simplement la première fois, a été brodé avec art sans doute la seconde; c’est un tort. Le chanteur ne peut pas mieux faire que Rossini; je dirai plus,

il ne peut égaler avec tout le prestige de ses ornemens, le plaisir pur que le texte de l'auteur fait éprouver.\textsuperscript{50}

It is crucial, then, in Castil-Blaze’s view, that if the singer is to exercise the prerogative of ornamenting the composer’s score, a clean distinction must be made between the composer’s\textit{ expression de composition}, which is to be preserved, and the singer’s\textit{ expression d’exécution}, which is to be added. This distinction is explained in a discussion of Mme Catalani’s equally overburdened rendering, in a concert performance of 1825, of the cavatina \textit{Di piacer mi balza il cor} from Rossini’s \textit{La Gazza ladra}. After signalling the banality of the singer’s “metamorphosis” of the composer’s notated text,\textsuperscript{51} Castil-Blaze goes on to explain how to recognize the “marked character” of the music that bears the composer’s untouchable craftsmanship, and to distinguish it from the simple harmonic textures and the elemental melodic motives of “the singer’s part.”

Dans une cavatine, le compositeur sait faire \textit{la part de l’expression} et celle du chanteur; les endroits que celui-ci doit broder sont indiqués par la simplicité de la mélodie et l’uniformité des accords. Brodez ce canevas que le musicien vous abandonne, rien n’est plus juste, mais gardez-vous de toucher à tout ce qui porte un caractère marqué, dites-nous simplement une mélodie originale et naïve. Si les lieux communs, rebattus de gammes ascendantes et descendantes, des batteries en double et en triple, doivent masquer sans cesse les formes du chant, le mérite de l’invention devient inutile, et les airs les plus caractérisés se changent en exercices de vocalisations.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{50} Débats (24 April 1828): 1.

\textsuperscript{51} “\textit{Di piacer mi balza il cor} nous a été donné non comme M. Rossini l’a composé, mais comme il a plu à Mme Catalani de le métamorphoser. Les phrases d’expression, les motifs originaux, les traits de grâce et de gaité, ces \textit{no, no, no}, d’une délicieuse coquetterie, ont disparu sous un déluge de roulades insignifiantes, croquées à l’instant même, et quelquefois mal exécutées.” Débats (7 July 1825): 2.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. (italics added). In further discussion of Mme Catalani’s performance at this concert, Castil-Blaze criticizes as well her attempt to sing variations on \textit{Non più andrai} from Mozart’s \textit{Le Nozze di Figaro}, a section of the opera unsuited to this treatment since the repetition in its vocal melody is dramatically meaningful, and thus not suited to being treated as the lyrical \textit{Urînie} for the singer’s flights of fancy: “Ces gammes [added by Mme Catalani] enlèvent tout l’esprit des détails que Mozart fait succéder à ses motifs principaux. Cette énumération de parties, ces observations multipliées que Figaro fait à Chérubin, sur les obligations de son nouvel état, ne sauroient être traitées en chant proprement dit : c’est un simple débit, assaisonné des badinages de l’orchestre. Ce simple débit permet de nombreuses répétitions dont l’uniformité déploiera, si on a voit la prétention de les présenter comme une mélodie propre à captiver l’auditeur.”\textit{Ibid.}
In only one instance does Castil-Blaze allow the singer unbridled freedom in distribut-
ing vocal ornaments at will, when the dramatic situation itself requires no less than an
explicit *exercice de vocalisation* from the character being portrayed, as in Rosina’s lesson
scene from *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. In all other cases in which he finds dramatic justification
to be missing, Castil-Blaze seems to place himself in the camp of the traditionalists, and
urges restraint in ornamentation to even the greatest singers of his time. His commitment
to the superior claims of dramatic expression over those of the performer was sufficiently
great that he was even led in one instance to recommend that the singer omit *roulades*
already written into the score of Rossini’s *La Gazza ladra*.

Le rôle de Fernando appartient plutôt au comédien qu’au chanteur; il renferme des
roulades, mais elles peuvent être supprimées en partie sans que leur absence dégrade
les motifs. Des contours hardis, simples, gracieux, se font jour à travers la broderie,
et ce que l’on perd en triolets on le gagne en expression.

Because the sense of drama is so strongly rooted in Castil-Blaze’s conception of orna-
mentation, his first demand of the singer is a flawless execution of whatever is added to the
score. In keeping with his view of artistic embellishment as “giving back more than the origi-
nal,” he insisted that the higher profile given to the ornamented vocal line not come at the
expense of compromising other important dramatic values, and he pointed out in his criti-
cism a number of ways in which such concessions were frequent in performance.

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53. “Le musicien, n’ayant aucune passion à exprimer, se livre à tous les caprices de son imagination,
ces airs sont chargés de tous les ornemens qui peuvent faire briller le talent du chanteur. Rou-
lades, trilles, son filés, traits chromatiques, ports de voix, cadences, tout y est jeté avec profusion,
et ce qui serait contre-sens dans un air de sentiment est ici une beauté que l’on admire.” *De
l’Opéra*, 1, p. 98.

54. His vocabulary, in particular, is revealing. In reviewing Mme Malibran’s performance in *Il
Barbiere* in 1830, for example, he speaks of this singer’s abiding fondness for arpeggiated figures
as “denaturing” the melodies entrusted to her care: “Ces traits sont trop multipliés, dénaturent
les mélodies et changent une cavatine en exercice de chant.” *Débats* (29 November 1830):

55. *Débats* (12 November 1822): 1.
Because he viewed ornamentation not as mere background decoration, but as a form of heightened rhetorical emphasis applied by performer to raise the expressive relief of his or her dramatic utterances, the tone of delivery appropriate to it was required to be sharp-edged and penetrating. Thus a singer such as the tenor Mari, whose roulades are admirably light and well articulated, misses the point of singing them in the first place because he has to drop his voice to half strength in order to accommodate them. What might have been a dramatic gesture becomes, by the manner in which it is delivered, simply another exercise in vocalisation.

Cette voix change de caractère quand elle passe d'une phrase large et soutenue aux traits rapides, aux roulades énergiques et légères du style sérieux. Mari chante la grosse note avec toute sa voix et n'en emploie que la moitié dans les roulades. Ce n'est point ainsi que Mme Pasta, García, Galli exécutent la musique tragique; c'est en imprimant une grande vigueur d'accens aux traits rapides qu'ils ont pu nous faire adopter la roulade et nous le faire considérer comme éminemment dramatique. Io mi sento lacera, dit avec une voix flûtée, n'est plus qu'un exercice de vocalisation; je ne vois plus Otello frémissant de rage après avoir lu le billet, c'est un acteur qui cherche à faire briller son gosier.

Mlle Schiasetti is also encouraged to develop an accent dramatique in both her cadences (i.e., trills) and her roulades in order to be able to express appropriately the violent passions that her roles demand her to express.

Son talent va devenir plus brillant et plus solide, et bientôt, sans doute, on ne pourra plus reprocher à Mlle Schiasetti de manquer de vigueur et d'agilité dans les cadences et dans les roulades, qu'il est bon d'articuler quelquefois à pleine voix, afin de leur imprimer cet accent dramatique indispensable pour une cantatrice chargée d'exprimer des passions violentes, et que l'on doit exiger d'un preux qui commande une armée, défie un rival, tire l'épée, et fait maintes prouesses peu familières aux demoiselles de notre siècle.

56. “C'est la manière de les dire [i.e., roulades] qui fait tout; c'est cet accent ferme et pénétrant, ce ton réellement tragique et passionné que les acteurs français ne possèdent point encore qui a pu faire croire à certaines personnes que la musique n'étoit plus dramatique du moment qu'elle se montrait parée de tous ses charmes.” Débats (21 August 1825): 2.

57. Débats (3 June 1824): 3.

A more common problem was the way in which a scene of pressing dramatic interest and headlong musical thrust would suddenly — for no apparent, discernible cause — slow and yield to the leisurely measured recital of rippling *roulades*. Castil-Blaze saw the excessive draping of vocal lines in this ornament as a veritable quagmire sinking any pattern of mounting musical interest which an operatic composer might have been at pains to construct. Singers, he lamented, would too often drop their dramatic roles and regulate their musical comportment not by the need to express the situation unfolding on stage, but rather by the precautions needed to deal with the impending onset of their *roulades*. This practice caused Castil-Blaze to enunciate an important principle, which establishes clearly the bounds within which he grants the singer leave to ornament:

> Je suis un très grand partisan de cet ornement musical, [i.e., *roulades*] mais je le proscris du moment qu’il devient une entrave pour le chanteur.

Within the limits set, then, by the singer’s individual conception of the musical personality of the character being portrayed on the one hand, and on the other his or her ability to communicate that conception forcefully and easily, without sacrificing *la vérité dramatique*, Castil-Blaze urged singers to take part freely in the exploitation of music as a medium for powerful dramatic depiction. He championed the cause of musical ornamentation as a fundamental resource of operatic composition and performance, and he urged the French public to incorporate it into a view of opera that begins first with the librettist’s *cadre*, passes through the composer’s study to receive its essential compositional shaping and finally emerges memorably on the stage with the active help and creative participation of the trained singer.

59. “Ces précautions musicales portent la langueur dans tous les morceaux que la force de la situation, la chaleur du dialogue, la position des personnages devroient rendre vêhêmens et agités. [...] Assur ne redoute point le glaive d’Arsace, Sémiramis se moque du testament de Ninus; la roulade apparaît dans le lointain, elle suffit pour arrêter leur fougue dramatique.” *Débats* (28 May 1827):

CONCLUSION

Castil-Blaze’s feuilletons in the *Journal des débats* represent an important point of reference in French musical life, marking as they do the beginning of the continuous presence of specialized writing about music in the French press. They bear importance as well, along with *De l’Opéra en France*, for the cogent and engaging formulation of opinion about the nature of opera which they brought before the French public in a period in which this genre was undergoing far-reaching changes in its aesthetic aims and its practical functioning in France. These two aspects of his early writing, however, proved to be unequal in their ultimate significance, and it may be said that Castil-Blaze was much more influential in shaping the way in which the French ultimately came to view music criticism than in shaping the way in which they came to view opera.

By far the most concrete and lasting of his accomplishments was to raise the status of music criticism in France by demonstrating its power in developing reasoned judgements about music. By accurately charting in his writings the aesthetic geography of music — i.e., by pointing out to his readers those places in the score and performance where the musician’s creative activity is registered, familiarizing them with the technical vocabulary and methods of stylistic description appropriate to music as an art, and explaining to them the historical context within which music functions — Castil-Blaze filled out the dimensions of music criticism to the measure of criticism in the other arts, and gained for specialized writing about music a respected place in the arts journalism of his time. The musical feuilleton which Berlioz inherited as music critic at the *Débats* in the 1830s was a much more worthy vehicle for his talents because of the stature which this journalistic form had achieved under Castil-Blaze in the 1820s.¹

¹ Berlioz began to contribute articles to the *Journal des débats* in 1833 and in 1835 was appointed
Ultimately less lasting in its influence was Castil-Blaze's attempt to win over the French public, and the composers who wrote for them, to his very Italian-inspired conception of the nature of opera. This conception sought to define opera as a dramatic genre cleanly distinguishable from all others by a concentration upon music as its leading aesthetic parameter, to the exclusion of independently-conceived narrative, linguistic or visual appeal, elements strongly favoured in the traditions of French theatre. Opera, in Castil-Blaze's view, was to be motivated by the systematic exploitation of musical resources, and its large-scale construction judged for the plenitude and variety of the sonorities and effects which it laid before the listener. Within the spirit of this guiding principle, the details of the musical drama were to be filled in by the successive contributions of the librettist, composer and singer, each working to make sharper and increasingly more definite the outlines of an evolving pattern of musico-dramatic effect. The librettist, in creating the roles and scene structure of an opera would tailor the drama to provide for a varied and vivid pattern of action suitable for expansion in music, and would ensure that his poetical verses were well adapted to the needs of musical setting. The composer would then transmute these dramatic roles into musical roles of appropriate pitch range and tone colour and clothe the librettist's dramatic scheme in an imaginative musical score, favouring the human voice for the portrayal of passion and character, and the orchestra for the depiction of dramatic action. Finally, a skilled singer would take each musical character forward to the opera audience in a performance combining both an intuited sense of the composer's intentions and a uniquely personal interpretation of his or her role, communicated by means of comportment, gesture and above all the free application of vocal ornamentation.

This view of opera was well suited to explaining the aesthetic premises and performance practices of the form of opera making the greatest impact on French audiences during the

**Conclusion**

its regular music critic, a post which he held until 1864.
1820s, viz., Italian opera. The central ideal of this view, however — the subordination of all elements of an opera to the demands of musical expression — appears not to have taken root in the value system of French opera composers, nor in that of their audiences, in the period after Rossini's retirement from the stage in 1829. Least affected by this aesthetic position was French opéra comique, which continued to delineate its major characters more in spoken dialogue than in song and to base more of its appeal on linguistically conceived wit and irony than on comic musical nuance. Nineteenth-century composers of opéras comiques showed little interest in adopting the fully musical texture of Italian opera buffa, and even less its specialty characters such as the basso buffo, so prized by Castil-Blaze for its uniquely musical representation of humour. Indeed, during the latter portion of the Restoration and throughout the period of the July Monarchy the opéra comique genre, under the librettist Scribe and composers such as Boieldieu and especially Auber, enjoyed a period of revival which even attracted Rossini himself, and later Donizetti.²

French serious opera fell short of Castil-Blaze's expectations as well. For while he insisted that opera, to be worthy of the name, should be characterized by skillfully paced dramatic construction, the luxuriant display of vocal technique, and richly full orchestral accompaniments, the exuberant exhibition of just these qualities in the French grand operas of Meyerbeer, Auber and Halévy of the 1830s brought the practice of opera in France no closer to Castil-Blaze's ideal, since the leading aesthetic parameter in this brand of theatre was not music but spectacle.³ The extraordinary visual appeal of French grand opera — its

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2. Patrick Smith indicates Boieldieu's *La Dame blanche* (1825) as the beginning of this revival, and cites the success of Auber's *Fra Diavolo* (1830), *Le Cheval de bronze* (1835), *Le Domino noir* (1837) and *Les Diamants de la couronne* (1841), all with libretti by Scribe, as confirmation of the trend. Rossini's *Le Comte Ory* (1828) and Donizetti's *La Fille du régiment* (1840) represent Italian contributions to the genre. Patrick Smith, *The Tenth Muse*, p. 289.

3. The period of French grand opera was inaugurated by Auber's *La Muette de Portici* (1828) and Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* (1829). Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* (1831) and *Les Huguenots* (1836) are considered defining examples of the genre, which also featured Auber's *Gustave III* (1833) and Halévy's *La Juive* (1835).
rich costuming, spectacular scenic backdrops and numerous scenes of pageantry and mass action on stage — combined with the fast pace of its plots, centred upon the dramatic lead-up to some convulsive historical event such as a revolution or a massacre, left little room in the libretto structure for the expansive portrayal of individual human passions in music. The essential difference between Italian opera and French grand opera in this regard may be best seen by comparing differences in the place granted to romantic love within the pattern of the dramatic action. In Italian opera the solitary, lingering and poetical death by poison of star-crossed lovers at end of the Romeo and Juliet story, alone in their private world of tragic grief, would be a cardinal scene of great lyrical potential for the Italian composer, and it is perhaps for scenes such as these that more than one early nineteenth-century Italian composer was attracted to this story.\footnote{Zingarelli’s \textit{Romeo e Giulietta} was performed in Paris in 1821 and Vaccai’s \textit{Giulietta e Romeo} in 1827. Castil-Blaze’s opinion of this story has been described in Chapter 4 (p. 101).}

In a French grand opera such as Meyerbeer’s \textit{Les Huguenots}, however, such concentrated lyrical moments are mostly denied the composer, and this type of scene finds its correlative instead in the noisy, hurried and public death by gunfire of the religion-crossed Raoul and Valentine on a crowded stage at the St. Barthélemy Day massacre. In French grand opera the claims of music as an independent aesthetic end in itself are sacrificed to the librettist’s desire to create swiftly unfolding dramatic action, structured around the set designer’s immense backdrops in a series of visual tableaux. The comparatively lesser role of music as an independent element of aesthetic appeal is indicated by the general dearth of solo songs in this genre.\footnote{“... one of the most obvious things to be noticed is the comparatively small place given in grand opera to the developed type of solo song. The aria, that classic halting place in Italian opera, which in the preceding century was normally used dramatically to summarize a situation while expressing a protagonist’s state of mind, found itself relegated to a minor position, serving as contrast to weightier matters. Formerly put by choice at the end of a scene where virtuosity had freer rein, it was now more often incorporated into the preliminary action. Characters were seldom placed alone on the stage and granted long soliloquies during which they could indulge in great lyric flights of emotion. There are solo songs in each work but they are not numerous, and it is remarkable how many of these are occupied with narrative and are written in a simple ballad style.” William L. Crosten, \textit{French Grand Opera: An Art and a Business} (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), p. 116.} Castil-Blaze’s later referred to the worst
excesses of this spectacle-driven genre as *opéra franconi*, after the well-known family of horse trainers who produced equestrian pantomimes and historical military dramas with music at the Cirque Olympique.\(^6\)

The limited overlap between the values which Castil-Blaze espoused in his critical writings of the 1820s and those which later came into currency in France may in part be explained by observing that his vision of opera was not that of a new future, but rather one of the past perfected and fulfilled. His aims and goals for the progress of musical culture in France were those of an enlightened and reform-minded eighteenth-century thinker, confident in the power of reason to clarify, explain and render systematically well-functioning all aspects of society, even the arts. *De l'Opéra en France*, his attempt at the mass-marketing of eighteenth-century notions of musical connoisseurship, was a major part of his reforming initiative. Just as the *Encyclopédistes* had catalogued the natural world before him, Castil-Blaze sought — with an equal appreciation for the value of pictorial illustration — to catalogue the musical world for his readers, analysing the constituent elements of musical texture and the taxonomy of forms used in the lyric theatre. Most importantly, he related these elements and forms together into a single unified model of opera as a functioning aesthetic mechanism, and the interconnectedness of all parts of the opera's structure was a fundamental principle of his outlook. Thus he pointed out the relationship between the type of libretto created and the score that could be written from it; the relationship between the score that was written and the performance that could be realized from it; and especially the relationship between the performing conditions provided and their effect on all other components, since he considered the larger societal system of educational, theatrical and government institutions all to be part of the apparatus for producing opera, conceived in its widest terms.

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His aim was to exert pressure upon the operatic production system in France by the creation of knowledgeable amateur audience members whose patterns of patronage would gradually effect the reforms that he believed were needed in the lyric theatre, and the reforms which he viewed as necessary were many. He saw within the French tradition of libretto construction a literary bias, both at the large-scale level of dramatic construction and at the smaller-scale level of verse prosody, that left little room for generating musical interest in opera. He saw composers trammelled by traditions of production which left them unable to realize their best ideas for musical theatre. And he saw performances that ill served the dramatic potential of the works presented, restricted by the lack of sufficient skill in the performers or by the French sense of reserve in ornamentation. Hence the strong emphasis in his writings on the need for a system of conventions in French opera — in libretto construction, in its compositional code and its performance practices — that would permit this genre to flourish by guaranteeing in a certain way its musical intent.

Such a system was of course in place in Italian opera, and nowhere more in evidence than in the works of Rossini being performed in Paris in the 1820s. But the difficult performing conditions facing composers travelling the Italian provincial opera circuit which justified many of these conventions from a practical point of view (particularly the short gestation period allowed for new operas) provided scant justification for their adoption by composers for France’s national lyric theatre, where operas often had to wait several years before being performed. In promoting the adoption of these conventions, therefore, Castil-Blaze evoked instead the glory of the French classic theatre of the seventeenth century and the rigorous system of theatrical conventions within which Corneille and Racine, its most prominent and celebrated authors, worked. It was the promise of a similar level of classic achievement in the lyric theatre that propped up intellectually many of Castil-Blaze’s practical arguments for reform.
Evidence of Castil-Blaze’s classicism, defined in terms of a respect for the values of clarity, simplicity, regularity and balance, is evident in many aspects of his general musical aesthetic. His expressed ideal of sound in the solo singer, for example, features a clear and concentrated quality of tone colour — that “bite” in the voice that distinguishes the real tenor from the haute-contre, the genuine bass from the baritone, the real alto from the dessus enrhumé. In vocal ensembles he looked for the combination of such pure vocal colours to produce the full but balanced texture of his ideal “three-octave organ,” the structural cohesiveness of which relies upon the strength of timbre emanating from its major sonic girders: the bass’s ability to act powerfully as the “foundation of the musical edifice,” the alto’s role as a timbral “pivot” in the middle of the texture, and the leading role of the soprano as “pole star” guiding the direction of the ensemble as a whole. In the instrumental domain this sound ideal of clarity of part movement within fullness of range and harmony is evident as well in Castil-Blaze’s preference for the cleanly differentiated sounds of the string quartet over the homogeneity of sound of the piano, but he feels that even the string quartet could use some improvement in its système to make it conform more closely to the ideal described above for voices:

C’est la musique de chambre la plus parfaite; je n’en ai pourtant jamais approuvé le système dans la distribution des instrumens. Ils pourroient être échelonnés avec plus d’avantage pour l’harmonie. Je voudrois que la viole succédât immédiatement au premier violon, et qu’une seconde viole plus grosse ou un demi-violoncelle jouât la troisième partie. Cette seconde viole seroit montée comme le violon dont elle sonneroit l’octave basse, le système harmonique seroit rempli convenablement dans toute l’étendue de l’échelle, et les chants du violoncelle trouveroient un accompagnement grave que l’on ne peut obtenir des violons et de la viole. Ce second violon supprimé dans le quatuor reparoîtroit dans le quintette.

7. “Le piano a rendu de grands services à la musique, mais il a porté un préjudice notable à plusieurs parties de cet art.... Il est rare qu’un amateur qui joue souvent le magnifique répertoire de quatuors que nous possédons, n’adquière pas un sentiment profond de l’harmonie, et la connaissance de l’artifice que l’on emploie dans la marche des parties concertantes. Le piano embrouillit le tout dans ses masses plaquées; le quatuor réunit plusieurs dessins dont les contours restent toujours purs et ses parties se croisent sans se mêler.” Débats (1 September 1827): 3.

8. Ibid., p. 4
At the opposite pole from this ideal of finely nuanced sound construction was the tendency of many composers, Rossini among them, to plump up their orchestral scores with the undifferentiated rumble of the timpani regardless of the key in effect, a practice which Castil-Blaze roundly decried for its disordering effect upon the harmonic structure and the clarity of sound in the texture as a whole:

Les timbales ne donnent que deux notes lesquelles ne pouvoient plus être admises du moment que l'orchestre s'éloignoit du ton primitif. Pour faire disparaître cet inconvénient, quelques nouveaux compositeurs ont trouvé tout simple de considérer la timbale comme fournissant un son inappréciable, et les voilà frappant et roulant sans cesse, au péril de nos oreilles, sans s'inquiéter si la baguette frappe ou roule à faux. On trouve un roulement de cette espèce dans le premier finale de Zelmira [de Rossini]: les accords les plus hétérogènes reposent sur cette pédale, qui forme le bourdonnement le plus incommode qu'on puisse imaginer.9

It is indicative, therefore, that while in general he welcomes wholeheartedly the wide range of advances in instrument manufacture being made in his time,10 his enthusiasm for the improvements being made in the timpani and other machines sonores — even those which extend their tuning capabilities — is somewhat muted, since his fear is that these muffled kinds of sounds will in the future gradually take over a greater proportion of the orchestral texture of new compositions.11

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9. Débats (17 March 1826): 3-4. It is interesting to observe a similar strategem being used in our own century by Ravel, a refined musical colorist of the first water, who ends his Piano Concerto in G with the sonorous seventh A-G at the bottom of the piano's range, for lack of a lower G.

10. See Chapter 3, note 69 (p. 88).

11. Castil-Blaze includes the horns among the machines sonores, presumably for the diffuseness of their sound: "Mais que cette faculté d'avoir toujours une timbale à faire parler, quatre cors prêts à sonner sur tous les degrés de la gamme, n'engage pas les compositeurs à abuser de ces moyens; il me semble que l'on a déjà fait un emploi assez fréquent de ces machines sonores. Les cors, les timbales auront une marche plus régulière, il est vrai, mais on doit se tenir en garde contre les séductions des nouveaux sons que les facteurs viennent de conquérir. Je dirai plus, il faut que l'on conserve aux cors cette allure simple et naïve, cette fraternité constante qui fait le charme de leurs traits. Si l'on est tenté de travailler les parties de cor sur le modèle des parties de basson et de clarinette, on perdra beaucoup pour l'effet et surtout pour la clarté." Débats (23 September 1827): 3.
Castil-Blaze's approach is classical as well in its emphasis on the concept of musical composition as craft, the object of which is the creation of a well-made piece of aural art. His concern for *la bonne facture* is evident at both the practical, and the compositional levels. At the practical level Castil-Blaze demands that a work be idiomatic for the medium in which it is created or well-adapted to the purpose to which it is being put. This criterion is applied equally to libretti and performances as to compositions: the libretto is not meant to be read but to be set to music and therefore its prosody should reflect that purpose; compositions are not meant to be appreciated in score, but in performance, and therefore the key in which they are sung (or to which they are transposed) is a less important concern than the quality of the effect that can be created from them in performance; and the prime prerequisite of singers is that they be genuine representatives of the voice type required to portray their dramatic persona in sound. One has the suspicion, given the evidence that Castil-Blaze has his timepiece at the ready during many performances,\(^{12}\) that he may even have a specific time range in mind that is ideally appropriate to an opera finale.

In composition, Castil-Blaze places a strong emphasis upon constructive skill and upon achieving the maximum effect with an economy of means, especially as demonstrated in the ability to manipulate a single core idea in many ways. It is this skill to manipulate musical ideas, and not merely to generate them, that identifies to him the true musical craftsman.

Un grand compositeur qui s’appuie du secours de la science écrit de belle et bonne musique toute sa vie, se prolongeât-elle au delà des bornes ordinaires. Une étincelle d’inspiration lui suffit pour élaborer un morceau de la plus grande dimension, la science lui fournit les moyens de varier à l’infini ses plans, ses détails, ses effets. Le motif reproduit sous vingt formes différentes intéresse toujours, et l’imagination n’est pas obligée de faire de nouveaux frais, tandis qu’un musicien, homme de génie et de goût, se voit borné à présenter ses idées sous un seul point de vue : quand il les a dites une ou deux fois, il faut qu’il y renonce, et qu’il fasse litière de motifs s’il veut intéresser constamment.\(^{13}\)

\(^{12}\) See Chapter 3, note 61 (p. 85).

\(^{13}\) *Débats* (17 March 1826): 2.
This contrast between invention (l'art de trouver) and artful manipulation of material (l'art de mettre en œuvre)\(^\text{14}\) is a seminal one for Castil-Blaze. It forms part of a larger recurring pattern of thought in his writing, structured in terms of a dichotomy between “idea” and “treatment”. This pattern of thought is observable in many of the illustrative examples which Castil-Blaze cites in attempting to explain to his readers his conception of the essential nature of artistic expression: the story of Renaud is presented as a narrative idea which may be treated in the tragic, epic or operatic genres;\(^\text{15}\) the literal idea behind Racine’s verses might easily be stated in prose, but gains the status of art from the treatment which he gives it in verse;\(^\text{16}\) the phrase “à ce soir” may have any number of meanings, depending upon the treatment given to it in performance;\(^\text{17}\) the same melodic outline may have different expressive effects, depending upon whether it is treated in the minor mode by Mozart or in the major mode by Nicolo.\(^\text{18}\) What is common in all of these examples is that the manipulation of material is isolated as the focus of creative activity and as the source of aesthetic worth. The intrinsic value of the material being manipulated is of secondary importance.

Such a model of artistic creation is particularly well adapted to the compositional procedures of Rossini, whose skill in constructing large accelerating patterns of activity from relatively insignificant motivic fragments was a major component of his success as a composer.

\(^{14}\) These terms are frequently used by Castil-Blaze in justifying the superiority of works where motivic manipulation is particularly well handled. In describing a trio from Dalayrac’s *Le Château de Montencro*, for example, he writes: “Ce délicieux trio n’est composé que d’un seul motif, dont les nombreuses répétitions causent toujours un nouveau plaisir. En musique, l’art de trouver n’est précieux que quand il est accompagné de l’art de mettre en œuvre.” *Débats* (14 October 1822): 2.

\(^{15}\) Chapter 4, pp. 93-94.

\(^{16}\) Chapter 5, pp. 143-44.

\(^{17}\) Chapter 6, p. 171.

\(^{18}\) Chapter 3, Fig. 1, p. 51.
It provides as well a sympathetic context within which to view Rossini's re-use of identical or similar melodic material in different operas. But it would provide an equally sympathetic context for the activities of an arranger such as Castil-Blaze himself, who in his work for the lyric stage attempted to raise the treatment of musical material to the status of a profession. The ease with which Castil-Blaze is able to travel the conceptual distance from the intellectual density of Mozart through the brilliant stage effectiveness of Rossini to emerge in the compositional motley of his adaptations and pastiches presents a formidable challenge to our understanding of the meaning of his work, and would provide a most fertile avenue for further research.

The gap which eventually separated Castil-Blaze from the mainstream of developments in French music cannot be defined merely by a disagreement over the use of percussion instruments and horses on stage in French grand opera, nor the matter of creating light entertainment instead of sophisticated comic art in French opéra-comique. There exists as well an unfathomable divide between Castil-Blaze and a romantic generation of French musicians which, with Berlioz at its head, objected to these tendencies as much as he did himself.

Most contrary to the ambitions of this generation was his attempt to institute the notion of conventional procedure as a guiding principle in art at the very moment in history when established rules were being thrown over in virtually every field of artistic endeavour. His view of art as objective craft and his embrace of well-regulated collaboration in music production —encompassing the coordination of the efforts of librettists, composers, singers and a wider societal network of supporting institutions as well — held little natural attraction for a movement of idealistic and uncompromising individualists, who sought personal expression in art and imaginative dominance over their audiences and their society.
more, in proposing that opera as a genre follow the Italian model, neglecting independent narrative, linguistic and visual appeal to pursue purely musical goals, Castil-Blaze was perhaps expecting too much of a nation with a more varied theatrical tradition than had developed in Italy, and thus inspired by more complex notions of musical theatre.

The concept of music as a pure aesthetic pursuit in itself was to find a more appropriate vehicle in instrumental music. It was in instrumental music that the romantics could utilize to the maximum that quality of vagueness which linked music to psychological reality and which they considered to be the source of music's power. Vagueness, however, was for Castil-Blaze the intrinsic weakness of music as an artistic medium, that feature in which it was inferior to language, and which affected its very viability as a means of artistic communication. His preference for clear, distinct and separated tone colours within a contained dynamic range was not an ideal that lent itself to that pursuit of mystery and personal exploration that animated much of the romantic quest in music.

Above all it was the remarkable energy which Castil-Blaze put into his role as a reformer and arranger — to the relative neglect of what might be termed original creative composition — and the blithe contentment, not to mention celebrity and monetary reward, which he seemed to draw from this preoccupation, that made him such a bedevilling figure to the romantic generation. His curious status as both a progressive and a reactionary force in French musical life has power to bedevil us still.

Conclusion
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217


APPENDIX

The Feuilletons of Castil-Blaze
in the Journal des débats

1820

7 December
1-4 Chronique musicale

15 December
1-4 Chronique musicale

30 December
1-3 Chronique musicale

1821

5 January
1-4 Chronique musicale

14 January
1-3 Chronique musicale

26 January
1-3 Chronique musicale

4 February
1-4 Chronique musicale

19 February
1-4 Chronique musicale

14 March
1-4 Chronique musicale

30 March
1-3 Chronique musicale

21 April
1-4 Chronique musicale

30 April
1-4 Chronique musicale
4 June
1-4 Chronique musicale

18 June
2-4 Chronique musicale

24 July

29 July
1-4 Chronique musicale. De l'esprit en musique. — Mme Bonnini. — Galli. — Mme Pasta dans Don Juan. Le Messie, de Handel. — Le Barbier, de Rossini

5 August
1-4 Chronique musicale. Otello. — Trompette à coulisse de M. Legram. — La Vente après Décès. — Réponse à quelques critiques. — M. Farrenc. — Sur l'établissement d'un Théâtre de Mélodrame chanté

18 August
3-4 Théâtre royal de l'Opéra-Comique. Première représentation du Philosophe en voyage

21 August
1-4 Chronique musicale. De l'établissement d'un Théâtre de mélodrame chanté. — L'Oiseau bleu, à Versailles

23 August
1-3 Chronique musicale. L'Art Lyrique, poème en quatre chants, avec des notes, etc.; par Alexis Lucot

1 September
1-3 Chronique musicale. Première représentation de Romeo e Giulietta, musique de Zingarelli

4 September
1-4 Chronique musicale. Prix de l'École royale de Chant et de Déclamation. — Méthode pour la nouvelle clarinette et la clarinette-alto, par Iwan Muller

9 September
1-4 Chronique musicale. Ce que nous avons dit aux Italiens, et ce qu'ils nous répondent. — Académie royale de Musique, les Bayadères, la Vestale, Iphigénie en Tauride
19 September

20 September
1-3 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de Musique. Première représentation de *la Gazza ladra*, opéra de Rossini, au bénéfice de Mme Mainvielle-Fodor

25 September

28 September
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre Louvois, seconde représentation de *la Gazza ladra*, mélodrame de Rossini. — Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique, *Picaros et Diego*. — Théâtre de Lyon, première et seconde représentation du *Barbier de Séville*, opéra de Rossini

9 October

13 October

17 October
3-4 Théâtre royal de l'Opéra-Comique. Première représentation du *Négociant de Hambourg*, musique de M. Kreutzer

23 October
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre Italien, première représentation de *Camilla*, mélodrame en trois actes, musique de M. Paër

30 October
9 November

18 November
1-4 Chronique musicale. Mémoires sur la vie et les ouvrages du célèbre compositeur de musique Jean Adolphe Hasse, dit *le Saxon,* etc.; par F.S. Kandler. — Variétés, Plagiats, Répétitions, Corrections

24 November
1-4 Chronique musicale. *Stratonice.* — *La Gazza ladra*

30 November
1-4 Chronique musicale. Première représentation de *l'Italiana in Algeri,* musique de Rossini. — M. Kalkbrenner. — *Athalie,* avec les chœurs de Schultz. — Mlle Belleville. — *Elisa e Claudio,* de Mercadante à Milan

10 December
3-4 Théâtre Royal Italien. *Don Juan.* — Début de Mlle Corri

18 December
1-3 Théâtre royal de L'Opéra-Comique. *Gulistan.* — *Léonore et Félix*

1822

2 January

8 January
1-4 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de Musique, reprise de *Tarare.* — Opéra-Comique, Reprise de *Jeanne d'Arc;* Rentrée de Mme Gavaudan dans *le Diable à quatre* et *les Petits Savoyards.* — Nouvelles diverses

21 February
1-3 Théâtre royal de l'Opéra-Comique. Reprise de *Roméo et Juliette*

11 March
1-3 Chronique musicale. *Psautres* de Benedetto Marcello. — *Zelmira,* de Rossini
15 March
1-3 Académie royale de Musique. Représentation au bénéfice de Mme Mainvielle-Fodor: *Elisabetta, regina d'Inghilterra* (*Elisabeth, reine d'Angleterre*), opéra de Rossini

4 April
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien, rentrée de Mme Pasta, départ de Mme Mainvielle-Fodor. *La Gazza ladra*

14 April
1-4 Chronique musicale. Petite revue des concerts

25 April
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal Italien. Première représentation de *Tancredi*, opéra sérieux en deux actes, musique de Rossini

2 May
1-4 Chronique musicale. *Iphigénie en Aulide*. — *Le Gluck des Concerts*

10 May
1-3 Chronique musicale. S. Mercadante. — *Théorie du Son*, par M. Azaïs. — Écoles primaires de Musique. — Médailleur français de M. Romagnesi. — Reprise de *Camilla osia il sotterraneo*, de M. Paër. — Variétés

16 May
1-4 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de Musique. — *Aladin, ou la Lampe merveilleuse*

29 mai
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal de l'Opéra-Comique. — *Ma Tante Aurore*. Début de Cassel

1 June
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtres des départemens. — *Les Noces de Figaro*, musique de Mozart

10 June
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre Royal Italien. Première représentation de *la Cenerentola* (*Cendrillon*), opéra en deux actes de Rossini, pour le début de Mme Bonini

12 August
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de Vienne, *Zelmira* de Rossini. (Extrait d'une lettre de Vienne)
20 August
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal de l'Opéra-Comique. — Première représentation du Solitaire, opéra-comique en trois actes, paroles de M. Planard, musique de M. Caraffa

29 August
1-3 Chronique musicale. Opéra Italien, départ de Galli. — Opéra-Comique. divers débuts. — Gymnase-Dramatique, la Petite Lampe merveilleuse. — Musique sacrée, par M. Perne

10 September
1-3 Chronique musicale. Mme Pasta

17 September
1-4 Chronique musicale. Reprise d'Elisabetta, opéra de Rossini. — Grand prix de composition musicale. — Collection des meilleures partitions de Rossini, avec accompagnement de piano, publiée par souscription, par M. Pacini

28 September
1-3 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de Musique. Alfred-le-Grand, ballet-pantomime en trois actes, de M. Aumer, musique de M. le comte de Gallemberg

14 October
1-4 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de Musique. Mosè in Egitto, opéra en trois actes de Rossini, au bénéfice de Mme Pasta. Théâtre royal de l'Opéra-Comique. — Représentation au bénéfice de Mme veuve Moreau; le Château de Montenero

22 October
1-4 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de Musique. Première représentation de Mosè in Egitto, oratorio en trois actes, paroles del signor Tottola, musique de Rossini

26 October
1-4 Chronique musicale. Mosè in Egitto, de Rossini

31 October
1-2 Théâtre royal de l'Opéra-Comique. Première représentation de Fanfan et Colas, arrangé en opéra comique

12 November
1-4 Chronique musicale. Reprise de la Gazza ladra de Rossini. — Cours élémentaire d'harmonie et d'accompagnement, par F.L. Perne. — Nouvelles d'Italie

21 November
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal italien. — Tancredi. — Partition de Zelmira, opéra nouveau de Rossini
2 December
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal de l’Opéra-Comique. Première représentation de *Valentine de Milan*, opéra en trois actes, paroles de M. Bouilli, musique de feu Méhul, terminée par M. Daussoigne, neveu et élève de ce compositeur. — Partition de *Nadir et Sélim*, musique de Romagnesi

14 December
1-4 Chronique musicale. Concert de Mme Borgondio. — Médail de Méhul. — Théâtres de Lille et de Bruxelles. Première représentation de *la Pie voleuse*, opéra en trois actes, musique de Rossini

1823

15 January
1-3 Chronique musicale. Situation des théâtres lyriques. — Variétés. — *Quintettes de Boccherini*

16 January
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre Royal Italien. Première représentation de *Medea in Corinto*, opéra en deux actes, de Mayer, au bénéfice de M. Garcia

25 January
1-4 Chronique musicale. Variétés. — *Le Piccini des Concerts*

20 February
1-4 Chronique musicale. Quelques faits relatifs à l’ancien Répertoire de Feydeau

5 March
1-3 Chronique musicale. Reprise de *la Cenerentola*, opéra bouffon de Rossini. — *Leicester*. Mme Montano. Mlle Demeri

14 March
1-4 Chronique musicale. Début de Mlle Démery au Théâtre royal italien

24 March
1-3 Chronique musicale. Martin. — *Semiramide*, musique de Rossini. — Mme Fodor. — *La Bouquetière*

30 March
1-4 Chronique musicale. Concerts spirituels

2 May
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre du Gymnase dramatique, grand théâtre de Lyon, *les Folies amoureuses*, opéra bouffon en trois actes, d’après Regnard, musique de Mozart, Cimarosa, Paër, Rossini, Pavesi, Generali et Steibelt
8 May
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal Italien, première représentation de la Rosa 
Bianca et la Rosa Rossa, opéra seria en deux actes, de Mayer, début de Bonoldi, 
premier ténor. Théâtre royal de l'Opéra-Comique, début de d'Arboville

15 May
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal de l'Opéra-Comique — Première 
représentation du Muletier, opéra comique en un acte, paroles de M. de Kock, 
musique de M. F. Hérold. — Variétés

27 May
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal Italien. Reprise d'Otello. Début de Bonoldi

1 June
1-3 Chronique musicale. Giuseppe in Egitto, Oratorio del maestro Méhul. — Le 
Deuxième représentation d'Otello

16 June
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal de l'Opéra-Comique, l'Intrigue au Château, 
opéra en trois actes. — Théâtre royal italien, Mosè in Egitto, début de Mlle 
Bonsignori. — Académie royale de Musique, Virginie, tragédie lyrique, paroles de 
M. Désaugiers, musique de M. Berton

22 June
1-4 Chronique musicale. Il Matrimonio segreto

1 August
1-3 Chronique musicale. Les Mystères d'Isis

13 September
1-3 Chronique musicale. Encyclopédie des dames. Histoire de la musique, par Mme 
de Bawr

29 September
1-4 Chronique musicale. OEuvres de Rossini, édition de Pacini

22 November
1-3 Chronique musicale. Rossini à Paris

24 November
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal italien. Au bénéfice de Mme Pasta

6 December
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal italien. Reprise de Don Juan et d'Otello. 
Départ de Garcia
15 January
1-3 Chronique musicale. Reprise d'Agnèse, musique de M. Paër. — Débuts de Mlle Amigo dans la Cenerentola de Rossini. — Le Componium ou Improvisateur musical de M. Winkel

1 February
1-4 Chronique musicale. Situation du Théâtre royal Italien. — Reprise de Don Juan.
— Concert de M. Lafont

12 March
1-3 Chronique musicale. L'Inganno fortunato, de Rossini. — Nina, de Paisiello. — La Neige

23 March
1-4 Chronique musicale. Le Sacchini des Concerts. — Théorie du Son, par M. Azaïs.
— Franz Liszt, pianiste improvisateur. — Nouveaux pianos de MM. Erard. — Variétés

9 April
1-4 Chronique musicale. L'Odéon

14 April
1-4 Chronique musicale. Sur le diapason de l'Académie royale de Musique

21 April
1-4 Chronique musicale. Concerts spirituels

22 April
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal Italien. Début de Mlle Mombelli dans la Cenerentola. — Théâtre de Venise. Il Crociato in Egitto, opéra de Meyerbeer. — Théâtre de Vienne. La Neige

3 June
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal italien. — Première représentation de Ricciardo e Zoraïde, opéra seria en deux actes, musique de Rossini. Début de Mari, premier ténor. Le Barbier de Séville. Débuts de Veixelbaum, etc.

23 August
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal de l'Odéon. La Pie Voleuse

7 September
9 September
1-4 Chronique musicale. Première représentation de *la Donna del Lago*; opéra en deux actes, musique de Rossini

13 September
1-4 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. *Didon*, de Piccinni. — Début de Mme Noël

6 October
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal italien. — *La Donna del Lago*, musique de M. Rossini

19 October
1-4 Chronique musicale. Du drame lyrique. — Mme Pasta. — M. Rossini, etc.

28 October
1-3 Chronique musicale. Reprise d' *Otello*, début de Curioni

1 December

25 December
2-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal de l’Opéra-Comique. *Les Deux Mousquetaires, ou la Robe de chambre*, opéra comique en un acte, paroles de MM. Vial et Justin Gensoul, musique de M. Berton

28 September

1825

2 May
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal italien. *Otello*. — Début de Donzelli

13 May
1-4 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. *Alceste*. — Changement du diapason

9 June
1-4 Chronique musicale. *Œuvres de Grétry*
21 June
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal italien. Première représentation de *Il Viaggio à Reims, ossia l’Albergo de Giglio-d’Oro* (le Voyage à Reims; ou l’Auberge du Lys-d’Or), opéra en un acte, paroles de M. Balocchi, musique de M. Rossini, ballets de M. Milon, décors de M. Blanchard. [Spectacle honoré de la présence du Roi et de celle de la Famille royale]

7 July
1-4 Chronique musicale. Concert de Mme Catalani

14 July
2-4 Chronique musicale. *Il Crociato in Egitto*, opéra en deux actes, de M. Meyerbeer.
— Velluti à Londres. — *La Clemenza di Tito*. — Messe de M. Berlios [sic]. — Concert de Mlle Bertrand

23 July
1-4 Chronique musicale. *OEuvres de Grétry*. (Deuxième article)

2 August
1-4 Chronique musicale. Odéon. Deuxième représentation d’*Otello*, opéra en trois actes, paroles de M. Castil-Blaze; musique de M. Rossini

6 August
1-3 Chronique musicale. *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, pour la rentrée de Galli

12 August
1-4 Chronique musicale. *Traité du contrepoint et de la fugue*, contenant l’exposé analytique des règles de la composition musicale, depuis deux jusqu’à huit parties réelles; par F.J. Fétis, professeur de composition à l’École royale de musique

21 August

28 August
1-4 Chronique musicale. *Stratonic*. — *Les Deux Journées*

14 September
1-4 Chronique musicale. *OEuvres de Grétry*. (Troisième article. *Voy. les Nos des 9 June et 23 July*)

24 September
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal italien. Première représentation d’*Il Crociato in Egitto*, opéra en deux actes de M. Meyerbeer

1 October
1-3 Chronique musicale. Correspondance théâtrale au sujet de *la Semiramide*
8 October
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal italien. Cenerentola. — Début de Rubbini [sic] dans le rôle de Ramiro. — Nouvelles d'Italie

16 November
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal italien. Représentation de Tancredi à la nouvelle salle. — La Donna del Lago. Troisième début de Rubini, premier début de Mme Schütz

10 December
1-4 Chronique musicale. Sévireamidé. — Armide

17 December
1-3 Chronique musicale. Début de Rubini dans Otello. — Diapason à de M. Matrot

1826

25 January

20 February
1-4 Chronique musicale. Armide, Lulli, Quinault, Gluck

17 March
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal italien. Première représentation de Zelmira, opéra de Rossini. — Il Barbiere di Siviglia, représentation au bénéfice de Rubini

18 June
1-3 Chronique musicale. Nécrologie. Carl-Maria Von Weber

23 June
1-2 Chronique musicale. La Donna del Lago; Mlle Sontag

10 August
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Mlle Sontag. — Mlle Canzi. — Rentrée de Mme Pasta

19 August
1-4 Chronique musicale. Armide

22 August
1-4 Chronique musicale. OEuvres de Grétry. (4e article)
7 September
1-4 Chronique musicale. Mémoires ou Essais sur la Musique, par Grétry. (1er article)

9 September
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Première représentation d'Adelina, opéra en un acte, musique de Generali. — Débuts de Mme Cantarelli. — L'Inganno fortunato, de Rossini

18 September
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal de l'Odéon. Le Mariage de Figaro, opéra

25 September
1-4 Chronique musicale. Mémoires ou Essais sur la Musique, par Grétry. (IIe article. Voyez le Numéro du 7 September)

10 October
1-4 Théâtre-Italien, Semiramide, début de Mlle Cesari dans le rôle d'Arsace. — Trompettes à soupape. — Requiem de Mozart. — La Vieille. — Marie

6 November
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de Madame. Concert donné par Mlle A. Bertrand

1827

13 May
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Reprise de Torvaldo e Dorliska, opéra en deux actes, musique de Rossini. — Début de Mlle Garcia. — Arrivée de Mme Pisaroni

28 May
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Semiramide. — Début de Mme Pisaroni

1 June
1-4 Chronique musicale. Concerts spirituels. Institution de Musique religieuse, dirigée par M. Choron. — Exercices

11 June
1-4 Chronique musicale. Solfèges, par F.J. Fétis. — La Donna del Lago. — Mme Pisaroni

1 July
1-4 Chronique musicale. De la Musique dans les départemens (1er Article)

8 July
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtres étrangers. Extraits du Journal d'un Amateur de musique en tournée
12 July
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique. Les Petits Appartemens, opéra comique en un acte, paroles de MM. Dupin et Varner, musique de M. H. Berton

19 July
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtres étrangers. Extraits du journal d’un amateur de musique en tournée. (Voyez le 1er extrait dans le numéro du 8 juillet)

22 July

25 July
1-4 Chronique musicale. Lalande

28 July
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique. Jean de Paris. — Paul et Viriginie. — Débuts de Mlle Verteuil

2 August
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Tebaldo e Isolina, mélodrame héroïque en deux actes, musique de Morlacchi, 1re représentation

4 August
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique. Les Deux Journées, reprise de cet opéra

8 August
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique. La Dame blanche. Début de Mme Casimir et de Tiany

13 August
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. La Donna del Lago. — Début de Poggi

14 August
1-2 Chronique musicale. Concours du Conservatoire

29 August
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique. La maison isolée, la Dame blanche. — Débuts de Serda

1er September
1-4 Chronique musicale. Le piano

4 September
1-4 Chronique musicale. Le piano (Deuxième article. Voy. le Numéro du 1er September)
5 September
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. Michel-Ange, Marie, les Rendez-vous bourgeois, pour la rentrée de MM. Huet, Ponchard, Féréol, Chollet, Lafeuillade, et de Mmes Boulanger, Rigaut, Prévost, Ponchard

14 September
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Giulietta e Romeo, opéra en deux actes, musique de Vaccai

23 September
1-4 Chronique musicale. Exposition de 1827

2 October
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. Une Nuit de Gustave Wasa, opéra en deux actes, musique de M. Gasse; première représentation. — Milan; théâtre de la Scala; l'Ultimo Giorno di Pompei, musique de Pacini

5 October
1-4 Chronique musicale. Des chanteurs

11 October
1-4 Chronique musicale. Orchestres des Théâtres des départemens

5 October
1-4 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. l'Orphelin et le Brigadier, opéra-comique en deux actes, paroles de M.***; musique de M. Prosper

18 October
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Giulietta e Romeo. — Mme Pisaroni

23 October
1-4 Chronique musicale. Lulli

30 October
1-4 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de Musique. Fernand Cortez. — Début de Damoreau

6 November
1-4 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de Musique. La Vestale. — Troisième début de Damoreau

10 December
1-4 Chronique musicale. Petite revue. — Le Colporteur. — Mme Lalande

14 December
1-3 Chronique musicale. L'Italiana in Algeri. — Le Colporteur
18 December
1-3 Chronique musicale. Galeries des Musiciens célèbres, Compositieurs, Chanteurs et Instrumentistes, par F.J. Fétis

30 December
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. Première représentation de Mazaniello, opéra en quatre actes, paroles de MM. Moreau et Lafortelle, musique de M. Carafa

1828

5 January
1-3 Chronique musicale. Concerts. — Otello. — Mlle Sontag

11 January
1-3 Chronique musicale. Otello. — Mlle Sontag

12 January
1-2 Chronique musicale. La Donna del Lago. — Mme Pisaroni, Mlle Sontag

16 January
1-2 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. (Représentation au bénéfice de M. Galli.) Semiramide. — Il Barbiere di Siviglia. — Mme Mallibrand-Garcia [sic]

26 January

3 February
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Il Barbiere di Siviglia — Mlle Sontag. — Début de Balfe dans le rôle de Figaro. — Messe de M. Lesueur

8 February
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. Le Prisonnier d'État, opéra en un acte

23 February
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Tancredi. — Mme Pisaroni, Mlle Sontag

25 February
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. Le Camp du drap d'or, opéra en 3 actes
2 March
1-3 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de Musique. *La Muette de Portici*, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de MM. Scribe et Germain Delavigne, musique de M. Auber, divertissement de M. Aumer, décors de M. Cicéri

3 March
1-3 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. *La Muette de Portici*. — *La Musique et la Danse*. — *(Voir le numéro d’hier.)*

6 March
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique. *Le Mariage à l’anglaise*, opéra comique en un acte, paroles de MM. Vial et Justin Gensoul, musique de M. Frédéric Kreubé

10 March
1-3 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de Musique. *La Muette de Portici*

19 March
1-3 Chronique musicale. Concerts du Conservatoire

29 March
1-3 Chronique musicale. Concerts du Conservatoire; Beethoven, Kalkbrenner, Mme Herault, Mme Malibrand

17 April
1-3 Chronique musicale. Premier Concert spirituel

19 April

24 April
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, débuts de Santini. — Mme de Malibran

3 May

29 May
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique. Reprise de *Guillaume Tell*, opéra en trois actes, paroles de Sedaine, musique de Grétry, avec des changemens faits par MM. Pelissier et Berton. Première représentation

10 August
1-3 Chronique musicale. Grands prix de composition. — *Tancredi*, Mmes Schutz, Adelina Catalani

Appendix
Feuilletons 1828

236
23 August
1-2 Académie royale de musique. *Le Comte Ory*, opéra en deux actes, musique de Rossini

26 August
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtres lyriques de Paris. (1er Article)

28 August
1-3 Chronique musicale. Concours du Conservatoire. — Nouveaux pianos de M. Erard. — Rentrée de Mlle Sontag et de Zuchelli. — M. Benazet

3 September
1-3 Chronique musicale. Œuvres de Méhul. (1er article)

5 September
1-2 Chronique musicale. *La Gazza ladra*. — Mlle Sontag

8 September
1-3 Chronique musicale. Opéra-Comique. *Adolphe et Clara*. — *La Dame blanche*. — Pour l'ouverture du théâtre

11 September
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique

15 September
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. *La Dame blanche*. — Début de Duprez. — *La Nascita del Sole* à Dresde. — Langue musicale inventée par M. Sudre. — Nouvelles

26 September
2-3 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. *La Muette de Portici*, pour les débuts de Lafont

27 September
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. *Une Folie*. — Débuts

2 October
1-3 Chronique musicale. Œuvres de Méhul. — (Deuxième article)

4 October
1-2 Chronique musicale. *Otello*, pour la rentrée de Mme Malibran. — Ordonnance de police du 10 September 1828

9 October
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. Première représentation de *la Violette, ou Gérard de Nevers*, opéra en trois actes, paroles de M. de Planard, musique de M. Carafa
12 October
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, pour les débuts de Manuel Garcia, fils

21 November
1-2 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. Représentation au bénéfice de Mme Marinette-Launer

27 November
2 Chronique musicale. *La Gazza ladra*, Mme Malibran. — Ballade; MM. Baillot, de Vicq; écoles de musique. — Nouvelles d'Italie

1 December
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. *L'Exil de Rochester*, opéra comique en un acte, paroles de MM. Moreau et Dumolard, musique de M. Russo

10 December
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. Reprise d'*Aline, reine de Golconde*

12 December
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Première représentation de *Clari*, opéra en trois actes, musique de M. F. Halévy. (Premier Article)

20 December
1-2 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. Début de Mlle Lebrun dans *le Rossignol*. Début de Mlle Taglioni dans *Cendrillon*

29 December
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtres lyriques de Paris; causes de leur décadence. (Deuxième article)

1829

5 January
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. *Clari*, opéra en trois actes, musique de M. F. Halévy. (Deuxième article)

13 January
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal de l'Opéra-Comique. *La Fiancée*, opéra en trois actes; paroles de M. Scribe, musique de M. Auber. Première représentation

19 January
21 January
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre lyriques de Paris; causes de leur décadence. (IIIe Article)

30 January
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. Pour la rentrée de Mlle Sontag

6 February
1-2 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. *Le Siège de Corinthe*, pour les débuts de Mme Maraffa-Fischer

11 February
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique. *Pierre et Catherine*, opéra en un acte; paroles de M. de Saint-George; musique de M. Adolphe Adam. (Première représentation)

18 February

25 February

3 March
1-2 Chronique musicale. Gossec

9 March
1-3 Chronique musicale. Deuxième concert du Conservatoire. Concert de M. Bériot

24 March
1-3 Chronique musicale. Troisième concert du Conservatoire. — Théâtre-Italien, *D. Giovanni*

29 April

9 May
1-3 Chronique musicale. Septième concert du Conservatoire

22 May
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique. *Les deux Nuits*, opéra en trois actes, paroles de MM. Bouilly et Scribe, musique de M. Boïeldieu
25 May
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre allemand à Paris

20 July
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. *L'Illusion*, opéra en un acte, paroles de MM. de Saint-George et Ménissier, musique de M. Hérold

5 August
1-3 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de Musique. *Guillaume Tell*, opéra en quatre actes, paroles de MM. Jouy et Bis, musique de Rossini, ballet de M. Aumer, décorations de M. Cicéri

11 August
1-2 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. Deuxième et troisième représentation de *Guillaume Tell*. (Deuxième article)

13 August
1-3 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. *Guillaume Tell*. (Troisième article)

20 August
1-3 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. *Guillaume Tell*. (Quatrième article)

5 September

16 September
1-3 Chronique musicale. Orgue expressif de M. Erard. — Académie royale de musique, *le Siège de Corinthe*. — Début de Mlle Saint-Romain

17 September
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. *Semiramide*, pour la rentrée de Mlle Sontag

21 September
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. *Zelmira*, pour le début de Mlles Heinefetter et Speck

26 September
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, pour la rentrée de Garcia

28 September
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. *Jenny*, opéra-comique en trois actes, paroles de M. de Saint-George, musique de M. Carafa
3 October
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Semiramide, pour les débuts d’Inchindi

6 October
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal italien. Il Barbiere di Siviglia, pour les débuts d’Inchindi

11 October
1-3 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. Guillaume Tell. (Cinquième article)

17 October
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal italien. Matilda di Sabran, opéra en deux actes, musique de Rossini

21 October
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Matilde [sic] di Sabran. (Deuxième représentation)

24 October
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal italien. Reprise d’Elisabetta, opéra en deux actes, de Rossini

6 November
1-2 Chronique musicale. Concerts. — Débuts de Mlle Albert à l’Académie royale de musique. — La Gazza ladra, pour la rentrée de Mme Malibran

9 November
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique. Le Dilettante d’Avignon, opéra-comique en un acte, paroles d’Hoffman et de M. L. Halévy, musique de M. Halévy

12 November
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de Mexico. — Guillaume Tell. — Mlle Javureck

7 December
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal italien. Don Giovanni

14 December
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre royal italien. Le Nozze di Lammermoor (la Fiancée de Lammermoor), opéra en deux actes, paroles de M. Balocchi, musique de M. Carafa. (Première représentation)

23 December
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. (Représentation au bénéfice de M. Garcia.) Premier acte de D. Giovanni; deuxième acte de Tancredi. La Guerre des Dilettanti, par M. d’Ortigue
28 December
1-3 Chronique musicale. Musée Colbert, Harpolyre de M. Salomon. — *La Table et le Logement*, opéra comique en un acte, paroles de MM. Dumersan et Gabriel, musique de M. Chélard; première représentation. — Concert de l'Opéra et du Théâtre-Italien

1830

10 January

19 January

28 January
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Reprise de *Clari*, opéra en trois actes, musique de M. Halévy. — Concert de M. Moschelès

30 January

9 February
1-2 Chronique musicale. Paganini

12 February

11 March
1-2 Chronique musicale. Concerts du Conservatoire

19 March
1-2 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. *François 1er à Chambord*, opéra en deux actes, paroles de M.***, musique de M. Prosper, danses de M. Vestris, décorations de M. Cicéri. Première représentation

30 March
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. — Troisième concert du Conservatoire. — Variétés
7 April
1-2 Chronique musicale. Quatrième concert du Conservatoire. — **Pimmaglione, Tancredi**, clôture du Théâtre-Italien

8 April
1 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de Milan, Mme Méric-Lalande. — **Il conte Ori**, à Venise. — Médaille de Beethoven

11 April
1-2 Chronique musicale. Conservatoire de musique. Premier et deuxième concerts spirituels

19 April
1-3 Chronique musicale. **Chroniques musicales du Journal des Débats**, 1re livraison, contenant les années 1820 et 1821. — Ouverture du Théâtre-Allemand, première et deuxième représentations de Freyschütz

3 May
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre allemand. **Bibiana**, opéra en trois actes, musique de M. Pixis. — **Das Unterbrochene Operfest (le Sacrifice interrompu)**, opéra en trois actes, musique de Salieri

5 May
1-3 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. **Manon Lescaut**, ballet pantomime en trois actes, de M. Aumer, musique de M. Halévy, décors de M. Cicéri. (Première représentation)

8 May
1 Chronique musicale. **Freyschütz**. Début de Woltereck et de Mme Schroeder-Devrient

11 May
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de Rouen. — Concerts. — Quatrième messe solennelle de M. Cherubini. — Télégraphe de société de M. Darel. **Fidelio**, opéra de Beethoven. — Mme Schoeder-Devrient

13 May
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. **L'Auberge d'Auray**, opéra-comique en un acte, paroles de MM. Moreau et d'Epagny, musique de MM. Hérold et Carafa; première représentation. — Théâtre-Allemand, **der Freyschütz**

27 May
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre allemand. **Obéron**, opéra en trois actes, musique de C. M. Weber. (Première représentation)
5 June
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre allemand. *Fidelio.* — *Adelaide,* cantate de Beethoven. — *La Famille suisse,* opéra en trois actes, musique de Weigl

10 June
1 Chronique musicale. Théâtre allemand. Au bénéfice de Mme Fischer, 1re représentation de *Cordélia,* opéra en un acte, musique de Conradin Kreutzer

17 June
1 Chronique musicale. Théâtre allemand. *Le Serail,* opéra de Mozart. — *Liebe kann Alles,* comédie de Holbein. — Le 2e acte de *Fidelio*

26 June
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre allemand. *La Fiancée du Brigand,* opéra en trois actes, musique de Ries. — *La Vestale.* — Mme Schroeder-Devrient. — *Fidelio*

14 July
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. Clôture

4 October

14 October
1-2 Chronique musicale. Liberté des théâtres

15 October

25 October
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. *Ricciardo e Zoraide,* pour les débuts de Davide et de Mmes Tadolini et Micheli

28 October

4 November
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. *Il Matrimonio segreto,* [sic] pour les débuts de Lablache

15 November
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. *Otello,* pour la rentrée de Mme Malibran
18 November
1  Chronique musicale. L’Amazone, opéra comique en 2 actes, musique de M. Amédée de Beauplan. (Première représentation.) — Sémiramide

29 November
2-3  Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Il Barbiere di Siviglia. Lablache, Mme Malibran

28 December
1  Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Cenerentola. — Lablache

1831

8 January
1-2  Chronique musicale. Théâtre-Italien. La Prova d’un Opera seria, opéra en deux actes, musique de Gnecco. — L’Académie royale de Musique. — L’Opéra-Comique

18 January
1-2  Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique. Les deux familles, opéra-comique en trois actes, paroles de M. Eugène, musique de M. Labarre; première représentation

2 February

15 February
1-3  Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. — Don Giovanni. — Madame Fodor. — Euriante

9 March
1  Théâtre italien. Fausto, opéra semi-seria en 3 actes

12 March
1-2  Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Fausto, opéra en trois actes. — Première représentation

13 March
2-3  Chronique musicale. Paganini. Premier concert

20 March
23 March
1 Chronique musicale. Paganini. Deuxième et troisième Concerts

4 April
1 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Fausto

25 April
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique. L'Hôtel des Princes, opéra-comique en un acte, paroles de MM. Ferrière et M...., musique de M. Prévost

27 April
2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Fin de la saison

29 April

6 May
1-2 Chronique musicale. Ouverture du Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. Zampa, ou la Fiancée de marbre, opéra en trois actes, paroles de M. Mélesville, musique de M. Hérold, décroations de M. Gué, mise en scène de M. Solomé. — Première représentation

10 May
1-2 Chronique musicale. Freyschütz. — Zampa, la musique, les acteurs

18 May

19 May
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre allemand. Fidelio

25 May
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre allemand. Obéron

28 May
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre allemand. Don Juan

3 June
1-2 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. Ouverture de la Salle : Guillaume Tell, la Somnambule
4 June
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre allemand. *Don Juan*

16 June

21 June
1-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre allemand. *Euriant*, la musique, les acteurs

22 June

11 July
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. *Le grand-Prix ou le Voyage à frais communs*, opéra-comique en trois actes, paroles de MM. Gabriel et Masson, musique de M. Adolphe Adam

20 July
1-2 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. *L'Orgie*, ballet en trois actes, de MM. Scribe et Coralli, musique de M. Carafa, décorations de M. Cicéri, première représentation

3 August

8 August

29 August
1-2 Chronique musicale. Sébastien Erard. — Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique; clôture. — Théâtre des Nouveautés; *le Barbier de Séville*. — Théâtre de l'Académie royale de musique; *le Philtre*, *L'Orgie*

3 September
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien

5 September
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. *Anna Bolena*, la musique, les acteurs

13 September
25 September
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Tancredi. Mme Pasta, Rubini

29 September

3 October
1-2 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. La Bayadère, rentée de Mlle Taglioni. Théâtre italien. Il Barbiere di Siviglia, pour les débuts de Mme Caradori

28 October
2-3 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. — La Sonnambula, opéra en deux actes, musique de Bellini, première représentation donnée au bénéfice de Mme Pasta

14 November
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. Cenerentola, pour le début de Nicolini

22 November
1-2 Chronique musicale. Opéra italien. Les deux derniers actes d'Otello. — La Prova d'un Opera seria, réduite en un acte. — Représentation au bénéfice de Mme Malibran

23 November
1-3 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. Robert-le-Diable, opéra en cinq actes, paroles de MM. Scribe et Germain Delavigne, musique de M. Meyerbeer, ballets de M. Coraly, décorations de M. Cicéri

28 November
1-2 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. Robert-le-Diable. La musique, premier acte. Deuxième représentation. (IIe article)

4 December

8 December
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre des Nouveautés. Casimir, opéra en un acte, paroles de M. Desnoyers, musique de M. Adolphe Adam. — Concert de M. Ferdinand Hiller. — Théâtre-Italien; l'Italiana in Algeri, pour les débuts de Mme Raimbaux

16 December
1-2 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. Robert-le-Diable. Troisième acte. (Quatrième article)
8 January
1-2 Chronique musicale. Opéra-Comique. — Théâtre italien, *Otello*

5 February
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre italien. *Il Pirata*, opéra en deux actes, paroles de Romani, musique de Bellini. (Première représentation)

14 February

24 February
1-2 Chronique musicale. Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique. *Zémire et Azor*, réduit en deux actes

28 February

4 March

14 March

4 May

23 June
1-2 Chronique musicale. Académie royale de musique. *La Tentation*, ballet en cinq actes, de MM.*** et Coralý, musique de MM. Halévy et Gide, décorations de MM.....