

## 1 | Introduction

Popular opera deserves a history, if only to reveal the origins of today's flourishing musical theatre. Operas with spoken dialogue originated in Paris as well as London some years before *The Beggar's Opera*.<sup>1</sup> In both countries a tradition of social critique was inscribed from the first. The *vaudeville* tradition has changed, but its roots are not actually remote: Marie-Justine Favart, the legendary singer, writer and actress discussed in Chapter 10, created the role of Roxelane in *Soliman II*, a musical play by Charles-Simon Favart: 'The last Roxelane on stage was Madeleine Renaud (1900–94) [. . .] also one of the first performers in plays by Samuel Beckett (1906–89) and Marguerite Duras (1914–96).'<sup>2</sup>

One might, like Derek Scott, argue that *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*) – even with its spoken dialogue – would have been perceived at the time as an opera, not as a musical (in our sense).<sup>3</sup> Another viewpoint would regard it as a German-language opéra-comique. In either case its mixed musical styles, prose dialogue and moral discussions align it with works covered in this book.

Popular opera in the French capital was permeated by images of society and attended by a wide cross-section of citizens. One journalist in 1754 referred to 'amusing plays set to music', 'portraying the *mores* of our century'.<sup>4</sup> Sustained commercially, it was vulnerable to both market forces and anticompetitive politics. In 1762 it was ordered into the fold of state supervision, but then the cycle of exploration began again elsewhere.

Many differences are found between the worlds of 'opera' and of opera with spoken dialogue, though their origins were closely linked. There are crossover aspects (opéra-comique could be sung throughout in *vaudevilles*), but the rules are different: the nature of spoken dialogue must be considered alongside the music as a piece of drama potentially saying

<sup>1</sup> Rogers, 'John Gay'. For Germany, Spain and Sweden, see Keefe, ed., *Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, 351, 417, 422.

<sup>2</sup> Moindrot, 'The "Turk" and the "Parisiennne"', 429.   <sup>3</sup> Scott, 'Musical Theater(s)', 53.

<sup>4</sup> Chevrier, *Observations* (1755), 83, praising Jean-Joseph Vadé. All translations are by the present author unless otherwise mentioned. See [www.cambridge.org/9781316515846](http://www.cambridge.org/9781316515846) for original French texts.

something about the world. The acted scene joins with various musical forms. Dynamically, the media combine to form some kind of larger experience. They complement each other, successfully or otherwise.

David J. Levin and Reinhard Strohm have both written about understanding opera – as a whole – from a viewpoint fairly measuring literature and drama against music. In 1994 Levin’s *Opera Through Other Eyes* presented a wide-ranging challenge to ‘opera studies’ orthodoxy that remains relevant, as is obvious from reading the *Oxford Handbook of Opera* (for example) two decades later.<sup>5</sup> *Handbook* chapters favour theory and performance criteria (e.g. ‘voice’, production, gender, costume) over literature, drama, theatre history or libretto studies.<sup>6</sup> Strohm’s challenge in *Dramma per Musica* was politely explicit: its starting point was ‘the conviction – or some may say, the prejudice – that Italian opera [in the earlier eighteenth century] was theatre in the first place and music in the second’. For an unfamiliar tradition like popular opera, it is yet more important to ‘attempt to recover something like a collective feeling of being “within” [an] artistic tradition, through the analysis of social and repertorial patterns of which audiences would have been aware’.<sup>7</sup>

By the early nineteenth century, opéra-comique, now institutionalised, was unofficially ‘the national genre’ – not, however, for being known only in France: international success had conferred its cultural prestige on the genre. A hundred years before, travelling opéra-comique players had brought numerous pieces to London.<sup>8</sup> Favart premiered *Les Nymphes de Diane* in Brussels. After changing its style in the 1750s, popular opera travelled more: research projects now trace traditions in Spain, Russia, Germany, Poland, Sweden and the Caribbean.<sup>9</sup>

‘Opéra-comique’ became a common term, but there was always a desire for an alternative name to reflect its varied subject-matter and (see Chapters 11 and 12) its new musical language. ‘Why do you call this theatre the Opéra Comique? It’s not my fault. Who asks you to keep the name? What does it mean?’ asked the writer and librettist, Nicolas-Étienne

<sup>5</sup> Levin lambasted ‘a history of opera criticism that places music at the centre, and the suppression or banalization of the libretto that has enabled that criticism’: *Opera through Other Eyes*, 2; Greenwald, ed., *Oxford Handbook*.

<sup>6</sup> Its most relevant chapters for our subject are by Thomas Betzwieser, Andreas Giger, Vincent Giroud, Derek Scott and John Warrack.

<sup>7</sup> Strohm, *Dramma per Musica*, vii–viii. <sup>8</sup> Rogers, ‘John Gay’; Levenson, ‘Traveling Tunes’.

<sup>9</sup> Schneider, ‘Übersetzungen’; Marica, ‘Rappresentazioni’; Brown, ‘La Diffusion’; Kleinertz, ‘Zur Rezeption’; Evstratov, *Les Spectacles*; Beaurepaire et al., eds., *Moving Scenes*; Wolff, ‘Lyrical diplomacy’; Clay, *Stagestruck*.

Framery.<sup>10</sup> The *Mercure de France* juggled with alternative labels: ‘drama of the new type’; ‘play mixed with singing’; ‘intermède’; ‘opéra bouffon’.<sup>11</sup> ‘Popular opera’ in this book refers to comedy where dialogue occurs in music as well as speech. The term is not limited to any subject-area, place or particular musical style. Opera in the inclusive sense is, in Howard Mayer Brown’s words, ‘a drama in which the actors sing some or all of their parts’,<sup>12</sup> but this book makes a semantic distinction between ‘operas’ (with some or all dialogue sung) and ‘musical comedies’ or ‘plays’ lacking dialogue in music. The historical importance of this will emerge in many chapters to follow.

Ulrich Weisstein’s article ‘Librettology’ considered opera as music theatre, plotted along a continuum between the ‘Romantic’ model (maximum weighting of musical elements) and the *King Arthur* model (maximum weighting of libretto elements).<sup>13</sup> His open concept could have clarified Herbert Lindenberger’s point that ‘tragic opera [. . .] resisted the movement towards contemporary middle-class themes’ in the age of Diderot.<sup>14</sup> *Popular* opera certainly did address them.

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Louis XIV’s theatre companies all used music, and, following an established view, this book accepts that their repertoires connect with the origins of popular opera; Chapters 2 and 3 will survey plays with music as developed in the seventeenth century.<sup>15</sup> Musical innovation was restricted from 1672 by certain royal orders favouring Jean-Baptiste Lully’s monopoly of the Opéra (Académie Royale de Musique) at the expense of rivals. These politics must be understood in context: Louis XIV’s suppression of long-standing structures and guilds in order to control cultural output. Effected by his First Minister, Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–83), this ‘centralizing policy applied not only to the administrative and economic life of the kingdom: with the foundation of the various academies, it had already extended to the intellectual field’<sup>16</sup> – academies of dance (1661); inscriptions and belles-lettres (1663, discussing

<sup>10</sup> Framery, ‘Sur le genre larmoyant’ (1770), 5.

<sup>11</sup> Review of Anseume and Duni’s *Mazet*, *Mercure*, 1761, Oct./1, 192–3.

<sup>12</sup> Thus, only in the ‘most narrowly conceived’ sense should ‘opera’ mean an all-sung drama: ‘Opera’ in *Grove*.

<sup>13</sup> Weisstein, ‘Librettology’, referring to Dryden and Purcell’s *King Arthur* (1691).

<sup>14</sup> Lindenberger, *Opera the Extravagant Art*, 52.

<sup>15</sup> Cucuel, *Les Créateurs*, 14–17; Grout, ‘The Origins’, *passim*.

<sup>16</sup> Mongrédien, *Daily Life*, 97. See Isherwood ‘Centralization’, 157–8, and *Music in the Service of the King*, Chap. 4.

the texts of operas); painting and sculpture (1664); music (1669) and architecture (1671).

The anticompetitive orders awarded to Lully when he gained the *privilège* of the Académie Royale de Musique were:

- March 1672 '[No-one is permitted] to organise the performance of any piece that is completely sung, whether in French verse or in other languages, without the written permission of the said Sieur Lully.'<sup>17</sup>
- 12 August 1672 'His Majesty similarly forbids [all companies of actors in Paris] to use musicians [singers] in excess of six in number, or [to use] instrumentalists in excess of twelve in number.'<sup>18</sup>
- 22 April 1673 'His Majesty has revoked the permission [above] and permits [companies] to use only two singers and six players of string or other instruments. His Majesty expressly forbids all troupes [. . .] to use any external musicians, nor a larger number of instrumentalists for the entr'actes, nor any dancers, nor any orchestra, on pain of punishment for disobedience.'<sup>19</sup>

Following the death of Molière in February 1673, the king centralised public art once again by imposing a new theatre regime, merging two companies: see Table 1.1. There were to be four official troupes, two giving French plays. One of these, the King's company, shared an erstwhile opera house on the rue Guénégaud with the Italian players.<sup>20</sup> In fact, the Italians were in London from April to September 1673 at Charles II's invitation; they would visit London again in 1675.<sup>21</sup>

**Table 1.1** Theatre troupes, 1673–1680.

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- (a) The King's company at the Hôtel Guénégaud (including actors from Molière's former company and the former Marais company).
- (b) Biancolelli's Italian company, sharing the Guénégaud theatre with the players mentioned earlier.
- (c) The Hôtel de Bourgogne theatre players.
- (d) The Académie Royale de Musique (Opéra) at the Palais-Royal theatre.
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<sup>17</sup> Ranum, 'Lully plays deaf', 24. Offenders would be fined 10,000 *livres* and have their equipment and theatre confiscated: Isherwood, 'Centralization', 167.

<sup>18</sup> AN, O<sup>1</sup>.16, f<sup>o</sup> 142, ed. in Benoit, *Musiques de cour*, 38–9 and in La Gorce, 'Le Collier de perles'.

<sup>19</sup> Wood and Sadler, *French Baroque Opera*, 8, from AN, O<sup>1</sup>.17, f<sup>o</sup>.72, ed. in Benoit, *ibid.*, 41.

<sup>20</sup> Built for Pierre Perrin and Robert Cambert (see Table 2.2), the Guénégaud held nearly 1,500 spectators: Scott, *Commedia dell'Arte*, 164–5; Mongrédien, *Daily Life*, 93, 99–103.

<sup>21</sup> Scott, *Commedia dell'Arte*, 158–9.

In 1680 the king formed the Comédie-Française by combining the Hôtel Guénégaud and Hôtel de Bourgogne companies. It was substantial enough to perform at Versailles and in Paris on the same day. Royal power could ‘make its authority felt more easily’ over this company,<sup>22</sup> having created ‘a system of state subsidy in which specified kinds and numbers of performances were expected in return for subventions’.<sup>23</sup> Strategically freer, the Italian players received 15,000 *livres* a year plus allowances when playing at court.<sup>24</sup> Louis now passed the Hôtel de Bourgogne theatre over to them; after their suppression (see Chapter 3), it lay empty until the arrival of Luigi Riccoboni’s new company in 1716 (see Chapter 10).

The Opéra, Comédie-Française and Comédie-Italienne supplied the monarch’s operas, plays or Italian comedies in various palaces, yet life for them also meant competing for audiences: admission charges provided the income needed for their musicians, actors, staff, scenery and pension funds.<sup>25</sup> They had official status, but their degrees and definitions of monopoly were not comparable; this complicated their relations with independent Fair theatres and indeed with each other.<sup>26</sup>

The Opéra had a *directeur* with private financial backers but no regular subsidy: it was a devolved monopoly, able to make management and policy decisions with some independence.<sup>27</sup> Comédie-Française actors formed an association, players taking a direct stake in profits and losses. They were ‘eager to see that their monopoly of [spoken] dialogue was respected’<sup>28</sup> and sued Fair theatres regularly, especially if the Opéra Comique attracted such crowds that spoken plays became unprofitable.

Popular opera took the name Opéra Comique and grew up outside the official matrix. It performed seasonally and was managed by entrepreneurs with financial backers. In winter it played during the Saint-Germain Fair (3 February until Palm Sunday) and in summer during the Saint-Laurent Fair (early July to September: exact dates varied). Jurisdiction over these Fairs belonged to their landowners, the Vincentian Order (Saint-Germain) and the clergy of Saint-Lazare.<sup>29</sup> Theatres identified with opéra-comique (see Chapter 6) were often outside the main Fairs with their booths,

<sup>22</sup> Mongrédien, *Daily Life*, 97.   <sup>23</sup> Scott, *Commedia dell’arte*, 241.

<sup>24</sup> Scott, *ibid.*, 157, 241; paid only ‘when State finances allowed’: Moureau, *Gherardi à Watteau*, 21.

<sup>25</sup> Lagrave, *Théâtre et public*, 21–55. Royal bailouts were infrequent.

<sup>26</sup> Lancaster, *Sunset*; Marcetteau-Paul, ‘L’Obstacle’; Campardon, *Spectacles*, II, 256–85.

<sup>27</sup> But answerable to the monarch’s relevant Secretary of State: see *OAR*, 59–60.

<sup>28</sup> Lancaster, *Sunset*, 22.

<sup>29</sup> Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy*, 22–3; Fair theatre’s evolution: Lindsay, *Dramatic Parody*, 11–26.

**Table 1.2** Disruptions to musical Fair theatre. Marionette theatres continued when opéra-comique was prohibited.

Saint-Germain Fair (Winter)		Saint-Laurent Fair (Summer)	
1708–13	Restrictions: see Chapter 5.	1708–13	Restrictions: see Chapter 5.
1719–20 <sup>a</sup>	No performances.	1719	No performances.
1722	Marionettes only.	1721	Comédie-Italienne arrives; there is some disruption.
1727–28, 1733	Marionettes only.	1722–23	Comédie-Italienne performs: marionettes only could compete.
1746–51	Closure, except for dance and pantomimes.	1745–51	Closure, except for dance and pantomimes.

<sup>a</sup> On 1720, see J.-M. Hostiou, 'Notice' to *L'Ombre de la Foire* in Rubellin, ed., *Théâtre de la Foire*, 221–41.

marionettes, jugglers and so on; however, rope-dancers originally formed the curtain-up to popular opera.<sup>30</sup>

Legal disputes between free-enterprise troupes and official ones meant disruptions and closures for the former: see Table 1.2.

From 1699 the Opéra began a profitable relationship with Fair theatre that will be seen at several points in this book. It leased out musical rights, normally to one entrepreneur at a time.<sup>31</sup> Fair theatre joked about its reliance on this income:

L'OPÉRA: Sans la Foire, sans ses ducats,      No Fairs, no funds:  
 Croyez-vous que je puisse vivre? O how shall I survive without  
 you?<sup>32</sup>

By 1730 the Opéra gained the permanent right to profit from these arrangements.<sup>33</sup> Without such shackles, marquis d'Argenson observed, popular opera would have evolved differently:

[1734] Pontau has resumed as leaseholder of the Opéra Comique, with an extra 3,000 *livres* he gives to the Opéra, which makes in total 15,000 *livres* paid each year: an unjust practice to oblige one theatre to pay tribute to another. It always affects the enjoyment of the public, which would otherwise have more sumptuous shows. Pontau is extremely suitable to direct this company.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Isherwood, *ibid.*, chaps. 2, 3, 4; Lancaster, *Sunset*, 317–20.

<sup>31</sup> Marcetteau-Paul, '*L'Obstacle*'; Porot, '*Aux Origines*', 288–9. The CF disputed this procedure.

<sup>32</sup> Lesage and d'Orneval, *Les Funérailles de la Foire* (1718): TF III, 403 (R/I/362), music from Lully's *Alceste*.

<sup>33</sup> 'Arrêt du Conseil', 1 June 1730: AN, E.2104, ff. 108–15, para. 2.

<sup>34</sup> D'Argenson, *Notices* (1725–57), II, 533.

Documents left by Louis Fuzelier set out the reasons why the Opéra Comique should be made a department of the Opéra;<sup>35</sup> this actually occurred in 1744–5, as Chapter 8 will show.

Opéra-comique's great achievements between 1714 and 1718 provoked its suppression, instigated by the Comédie Française. Then the new Italian company moved into the Saint-Laurent Fair during 1721 to 1723, seeking custom by giving spectacular *comédies-ballets* like *Danaé* and *Belphégor* while effectively blocking opéra-comique.<sup>36</sup> It is interesting to see how this stalemate was apparently resolved by the young Louis XV just after assuming power at the age of thirteen, 15 February 1723.

Eighteen months earlier, Louis was already being introduced to stage works (Molière, Lully, Italian *commedia*).<sup>37</sup> Thus, he might have seen opéras-comiques at the Palais-Royal on 2 October 1721 given for his aunt, the Duchess d'Orléans: in fact, these petitioned for the existential rights of Fair theatre.<sup>38</sup> Months later, his uncle the Regent visited the Saint-Germain Fair (after closing time) to see opéras-comiques that the Comédie-Française and the Parlement of Paris had obliged to be given by marionettes.<sup>39</sup>

As the first king to be crowned since 1654, Louis was a celebrity whose actions were intently scrutinised. To coincide with ceremonies for his birthday and majority, two Fair companies prepared ambitious musical works for the winter season of 1723: *L'Endriague* (*The Dragon*) by Piron, featuring a monster that filled the stage space, and *Les Trois commères* (*Three Married Women*) by Alain-René Lesage, Jacques-Philippe d'Orneval and Alexis Piron involving a prologue, three acts, and elaborate stage sets, see pp. 151, 165.<sup>40</sup> For *L'Endriague* the Opéra's *directeur* backed the sponsors of a fourteen-year-old prodigy, Mlle Petitpas. Piron recalled that they 'showed off her voice to me and begged me to compose a piece for her'; '[Jean-Philippe] Rameau, then very little known, composed for my

<sup>35</sup> In 1740: Porot, 'Chants de Momus', 36–9.

<sup>36</sup> Details: Viollier, *Jean-Joseph Mouret*, 122–6; le Blanc, *Avatars*, 243ff. Lesage's 1722 comedies for the CI are at the end of TF, V.

<sup>37</sup> Antoine, *Louis XV*, 94. Louis, whose parents died when he was two, was educated in Paris under the guidance of the Regent, Philippe II d'Orléans (1674–1723).

<sup>38</sup> Francisque's troupe gave Lesage and d'Orneval's *Les Funérailles de la Foire* (*The Fair's Funeral*), *Le Rappel de la Foire à la vie* (*The Fair summoned back to life*) and *Le Régiment de la Calotte* (*The Calotte Regiment*); see TP of the latter, TF V, 1 (R/I/528) and le Blanc, *Avatars*, 217–23.

<sup>39</sup> Lesage and Fuzelier, *L'Ombre du cocher poète* (*The Phantom of the Coachman Poet*), *Le Rémoleur d'amour* (*The Sharpener of Love*) and *Pierrot Romulus* (TF, V): Parfaict, *Mémoires* (1743), II, 4–6; Cucuel, 'Sources et documents', 255–6; Lindsay, *Dramatic Parody*, 22.

<sup>40</sup> Parfaict, *Mémoires* (1743), II, 12–13; *L'Endriague* was staged by Dolet & Laplace's troupe and *Les Trois commères* by that of Restier: see p. 138 for theatres.

sake the music of this piece' (he and Piron both hailed from Dijon), the idea being that it should be in a 'lofty style'.<sup>41</sup> This was Rameau's operatic premiere, in fact.

While not attending the Fair himself,<sup>42</sup> the young king contrived to send a signal: after arriving in Paris on 20 February, Louis made ceremonial visits and met elite functionaries but declined to attend either the Opéra or the Comédie-Française.<sup>43</sup> He might simply have feared boredom, having seen *Persée* after his coronation the previous October, but in Oscar Brocket's view it was a snub: 'After this, the official theatres did not dare to object, and although the order against the Fair theatres was not revoked [before 1724] it was universally ignored.'<sup>44</sup>

Thanks to the Orléans family, eleven or more opéras-comiques were given on the stage of the Opéra – adjoining their Palais-Royal – between 1718 and 1726, including *La Princesse de Carizme*, *Les Amours de Nanterre* and *Les Pèlerins de la Mecque* (*The Princess of Carizme*, *The Loves of Nanterre*, *The Pilgrims from Mecca*). In fact, the duchess and her sisters-in-law visited the Opéra Comique at the Saint-Laurent Fair in 1725.<sup>45</sup>

## Structures, Events and Systems

The plight of popular opera was that its genre and practice were different from those of official theatres and yet threatened those same theatres. We shall benefit, therefore, by understanding these frictions. An essay by Fabrizio Della Seta offers for this purpose the twin notions of 'structure' and 'event'.<sup>46</sup> 'While events are produced or experienced by specific subjects, structures are [. . .] long-term processes that occur independently.'<sup>47</sup> An idea from Wittgenstein can be useful in understanding performance traditions: 'the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some

<sup>41</sup> Piron, *Œuvres* (1776), III, 135; Sadler, 'Rameau, Piron', 14; Sylvie Bouissou, 'Petitpas' in *DOP*, IV, 130–2. Petitpas entered the Opéra in 1727. Neither this music by Rameau nor that for Piron's *Les Jardins de l'Hymen ou La Rose* has survived. Banned in 1726, it was successful later: see Tables 8.4, 8.12, 8.14; Sadler, *Rameau Compendium*, 170.

<sup>42</sup> Albert, *Théâtres de la Foire*, 144, misreads Barbier, *Chronique* (1718–63), I, 254, 259, followed by Brocket, 'Fair Theatres of Paris', 261.

<sup>43</sup> Antoine, *Louis XV*, 135–6; Barbier, *Chronique* (1718–63), I, 259.

<sup>44</sup> *Persée* seen on 9 Nov.: Antoine, *Louis XV*, 132. Brocket, 'Fair Theatres of Paris', 261.

<sup>45</sup> See *TF* between 1718 (four works) and 1726 (four works) with others in 1721 and 1725, always indicated on the TP. The duchess's 1725 visit: Parfaict, *Mémoires* (1743), II, 31.

<sup>46</sup> Della Seta, 'Some difficulties', 9.

<sup>47</sup> Reinhardt Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft* (Frankfurt, 1979), 146–8, trans. in Della Seta, 'Some difficulties', 9–10.



one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres'.<sup>48</sup>

In opera, a 'structure' might be applied to theatre legislation, but an 'event' to a performance, a revival or act of government. These concepts are 'constructions made by the historian, who assembles fragments [and] decides what is a structure and what an event'.<sup>49</sup> To bring these together, one might apply knowledge concerning audience experience. In Chapter 8 we shall assemble data about events (revivals) to consider audience judgement or expectation, and the possibility of a 'core' repertory – evidence for a type of structural organisation.

The metaphor of 'threads' helps our narrative to overcome certain difficulties presented by an apparent break around 1753 when the musical nature of *opéra-comique* undoubtedly changed. Questioning this supposedly nodal point, Thomas Betzwieser's critique of earlier opera historians seems entirely correct: it centred on the unacceptable perspective that denies *vaudeville* a legitimate existence in the history of opera.<sup>50</sup> Wittgenstein's metaphor can be applied to various continuities around that point. First are the musical (vocal) forms and their functions that continued in some way after 1752; second are elements like subject matter, character, incident, social critique, typology and humour. And then there are the 'structures' of practice that were common to popular theatre – dance, scenery, *commedia* characters and probably a hundred now-lost conventions of acting and delivery.

'Threads' can exist in forms of words, for example, when denoting a genre. Being unofficial in genre, popular opera was legally heterogeneous, defined in non-Aristotelian terms, yet documents still observe semantic continuity. At the Fairs in 1717 they refer to 'song-and-dance shows with instruments', but after 1721 the consistent legal formula was '*vaudevilles*, dance, stage machines and instrumental music'.<sup>51</sup> In 1751 – see Chapter 8 – a modification of this wording signalled the intentions of the entrepreneur Jean Monnet.

In Paris, theatre structures were not unified, each company constituting a different 'system' by reason of its permitted form and separate repertory. As one result, for example, *opéra-comique* was impossible at the Comédie-Italienne; only the Opéra Comique had a leased-out permission to use music as its medium of comedies, alongside spoken dialogue. *Parodies* of

<sup>48</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford, 1958), 32e, quoted in *ibid.*, 'Some difficulties', 7.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Some difficulties', 11. <sup>50</sup> Betzwieser, 'Zu einer Theorie', 135–52.

<sup>51</sup> Campardon, *Spectacles*, I, 95, 155; Marcetteau-Paul, '*L'Obstacle*', 265–75.

opera formed an expedient for the Comédie-Italienne: comedy with dialogue sung in *vaudevilles*. They were newly written yet not wholly new works.<sup>52</sup> In the online supplement to Chapter 10 an exceptional *parodie* from 1729 has been edited, with introduction: *Le Joueur* (*The Gambler*), the Comédie-Italienne's version of Orlandini's *Il giocatore*, recently given by visiting soloists at the Opéra.

But it is wrong to think of *ancien régime* Paris as a place where rules could not be challenged. It was a litigious place, and orders made by the king's Council were not always obeyed. With 'tacit permission' the Comédie-Italienne was able to give opéras-comiques from 1760, as Table 8.7 shows. But no new 'structure' was introduced when the Opéra Comique was merged with it in 1762: ministers instead contrived that the Comédie-Italienne should have access to the former's repertory, its five best singers and its entitlement to give operas with spoken dialogue. Armed by this 'event' the Comédie-Italienne was freed from the limitation that its musical pieces must be *parodies*, versions of some other opera, French or Italian. The 'threads' of the legal and practical definition of repertory remained unchanged, just as the company's inner structure (with profit-sharing members) also did.

Musical *parodies* soon became instruments of rivalry between Fair theatre and the Italian company. They were also staged by marionettes: an accessible example is Susan Harvey's edition of *La Grand-mère amoureuse, parodie d'Atys*, showing how Lully's opera was burlesqued in winter 1726 at the Fair. Because its authors were not working at the time with the entrepreneur who had secured that season's permission to mount opéra-comique with real actors, sophisticated puppets replaced them.<sup>53</sup>

What were *vaudevilles*? Chapter 5 begins with an official definition, and Robert Darnton's *Poetry and the Police* is easily the best modern introduction, linked to free-access recordings.<sup>54</sup> French practice was to constantly invent new words for them so that they became a vehicle for wit and satire, whether privately or on the public stage of opera. Harvey offered a judgement based on practical experience:

The most crucial elements for a successful performance of *La Grand-mère amoureuse* are sensitivity to the dramatic nuances of the text itself, as it careens swiftly

<sup>52</sup> Harvey, 'Opera Parody'; Beaucé, *Parodies d'opéra*. 'Parodie' can mean 'version' or even 'translation'; its serious purpose was critical, to pass judgement on the faults of a play or opera.

<sup>53</sup> Harvey, ed., *La Grand-mère amoureuse*, with contextual introduction.

<sup>54</sup> Darnton, *Poetry*, incl. chapter on 'Music', 77–102, with many texts. An associated 'Electronic Cabaret' is intended not as historically accurate but to give aural life to the words: *ibid.*, 174–88 and [www.hup.harvard.edu/features/darpoe](http://www.hup.harvard.edu/features/darpoe) (30 Dec. 2020).