Opera in Crisis?
Revealing the Cultural and Political Impact of
French Fourth Republic Opera, 1945-1958

by

Kristen E. Clough

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Jane F. Fulcher, Chair
Professor Charles Garrett
Professor Michèle Hannoosh
Professor Steven M. Whiting

Kristen E. Clough

cloughk@umich.edu

ORCID iD: 0000-0002-6424-3170

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Abstract

France in 1945 was reeling from the destruction wrought by the Second World War. As the Fourth Republic was formed, the new constitution made it clear that culture was a right of all French citizens. Further, culture was widely understood as a means of reestablishing French identity and global cultural prominance. Yet, critics proclaimed that French opera—one of the most central musical traditions of France—was in a state of crisis and stagnation. This narrative has largely persisted, maintaining that opera in France after the war lacked innovation, relevance, and cultural-political commentary.

My dissertation reveals that this is a mischaracterization of the operatic genre during the Fourth Republic. The operatic field, far from being stagnant, produced works with daring political messages that could not be presented freely elsewhere during the mounting tensions of the Cold and colonial wars. Opera was a vital site of contestation and of national memory-making that did not merely reflect French culture and politics but also influenced them and French identity. However, this reality has been unexplored in Fourth Republic operatic scholarship. Too often the narrative of crisis has been accepted uncritically and it has obscured understanding of these works and the remarkable survival of French operatic houses.

I examine the two major opera houses in Paris (the Palais Garnier and the Opéra-Comique known as the Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux or RTLN), and three houses in the provinces in Rouen, Strasbourg, and Marseille (each of which had a different relationship to state-sponsored operatic decentralization), and provide close analysis of several works performed

at these houses: for example, Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias,* Tailleferre's *Il était un petit navire,* Milhaud's *Bolivar,* an important restaging of Gounod's *Faust,* and a revival of Rameau's *Indes galantes.* By doing so, I re-contextualize the triumphs, and so-called failings, of the RTLN and the operatic decentralization plan and argue that political motivations were often the impetus behind critiques of these houses and their repertoire. These criticisms influenced these operas' reputations and these operas have been remembered as less innovative musical works because of this bias. However, studying these works has revealed their musical interest, the tenacity of the houses that produced them, and the relationship between the opera houses and the government that both supported and subverted government desires for the operatic genre. The French government viewed this repertoire as central to the reformation of French identity and the assertion of French cultural prestige, as records of correspondence and political debates have amply shown.

Yet, many of the works this dissertation considers, like Milhaud's *Bolivar,* presented messages (such as anti-colonialism) shockingly out of alignment with the current governments. Other works, like the revival of Rameau's *Indes galantes,* clearly and carefully reinforced the current political climate, while also offering a compelling image of French greatness and nostalgia to audiences. While the Fourth Republic was an incredibly challenging time for the operatic genre, innovators within the field were able to prevent a true operatic crisis. The operatic genre was a dynamic field where composers, artists, and musicians could support or contest the government's attempts to control opera, contribute to France's international reputation, and create operatic works engaged with the musical and cultural climate within which they worked.

Introduction

Interrogating the Crisis and Revealing Operatic Innovation

France in 1945 was reeling from the destruction wrought by the Second World War. After the fall of the Vichy government, the defeat of the German occupiers, and the brief temporary control of de Gaulle's provisional government from November 1945 to January 1946, the new French Fourth Republic was formed in October 1946. The new constitution reflected the social values of the former Resistance who were so instrumental to the construction of the Fourth Republic and guaranteed access to culture to all French citizens.[1] Further, culture was widely understood as a means of reestablishing French identity and authority after the crushing humiliations of the war and Occupation. However, critics warned that French opera—one of the most central musical traditions of France—was in a state of crisis and stagnation.[2] This narrative has largely persisted, maintaining that opera in France during the Fourth Republic was in imminent danger of disappearing altogether, and that it lacked innovation, relevance, and

[1] As described in the preamble to the new constitution of the Fourth Republic, "Culture at its best must be offered to all without limitation, other than the aptitude of each individual" ["La culture la plus large doit être offert à tous sans autre limitation que les aptitudes de chacun"]. See Philippe Gumplowicz and Jean-Claude Klein, *Paris 1944–1954. Artistes, intellectuels, publics; la culture comme enjeu* (Paris: Editions Autrement, 1995), 8; and Jeanne Laurent, *La République et les beaux-arts* (Paris: René Julliard, 1955), 85.

[2] André Boll, "A l'Opéra: Centenaire de *La Damnation de Faust,* reprise de *Padmavati.* A l'Opéra-Comique: Reprise de *l'Étoile.* Crise dans les Théâtres Lyriques," *La Revue musicale* 204 (January 1947): 33; René Dumesnil, "La crise du théâtre lyrique en France," *Le Monde,* 1 July 1946; Jacques Chabannes, "La France à la croisée des chemins," *Opéra,* 26 December 1945.

cultural-political commentary. Consequently, its ability to serve the French artistic *rayonnement,* or prestige, was compromised and its survival threatened.

This dissertation reveals this mischaracterization of Fourth Republic opera that has been perpetuated by both contemporary and scholarly sources. To say that the genre is in dire 'crisis' is to forget other moments when opera struggled in France and to ignore the natural cycle of the genre and its fortunes. Just as French opera survived the fall of monarchies and republics, it weathered the Fourth Republic's storms also. The crisis was not without precedent. This dissertation, for the first time, interrogates the roots of this narrative of 'crisis' and questions its previously accepted causes. While some argued that opera was dying as a musical genre from lack of development and innovation, or that French singers' voices were atrophying, this dissertation reveals the full extent of the systemic, political, economic, and cultural strains placed on the genre.

This re-contextualization allows a balanced appraisal of the operatic works produced in this period, their cultural-political commentary, their importance to French identity, and their opportunities for musical innovation. In particular, the life of the opera houses in the provinces has been deeply neglected and this dissertation will reveal their vital importance to the innovation and survival of the operatic genre in France. Opera was a vital site of contestation and of national memory-making. It not only reflected but also helped to shape French culture and politics and with them French identity. Further, despite the press's death knells, the operatic genre in France showed remarkable tenacity; while some houses certainly did disappear, others overcame astounding adversity and continued to offer full seasons and to mount premieres.

To re-inscribe Fourth Republic opera within its cultural and political contexts—and thus reveal its daring innovation, and also its resilience—this dissertation will examine the two

national opera houses in Paris (the Opéra de Paris and the Opéra-Comique known as the Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux or RTLN), and three houses in the provinces in Rouen, Strasbourg, and Marseille (each of which had a different relationship with the state-sponsored operatic decentralization plan).[3] Delving into close analysis of several works performed at these houses will reveal how the operas themselves became rich sites of debate over French identity and cultural memory. Further, an examination of the inner workings of the theatres, the directors and their political affiliations, and the theatres' finances, sheds light on how the genre was able to persist in the difficult conditions of the post-war period.

Key to understanding opera during the Fourth Republic is understanding the institutions and systems of government control that produced it; therefore, close attention must be paid to these structures and their constant evolution. In Paris the two national operatic stages had recently undergone a major transformation. Until their union in 1939, the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique operated as separate theatres—though they were linked symbolically as the premiere national operatic stages of France. However, as the Opéra-Comique faltered during the economic crisis of the 1930s, its administration and the French government were forced to contemplate radical changes, as will be discussed in Chapter One.[4]

By uniting the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique together as the Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux (RTLN), the government hoped the relative strength of the Opéra, and the

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[3] Please note that Opéra will always refer to the specific Opéra de Paris housed at the Palais Garnier, whereas opera (uncapitalized and unaccented) refers to the genre, except, of course, in the original French quotations where the capitalization alone delineates between the two.

[4] Jean Gourret, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris 1669–1971, portraits de chanteurs* (Paris: Les Publications Universitaires, 1977), 86, 94; Stéphane Wolff, "The Opera-Comique of Paris," *Opera* 12, no. 3 (March 1961): 164; Jean Gourret, *Histoire de l'Opéra-Comique* (Paris: Éditions Albatros, 1983), 195–198.

savvy of its seasoned director Jacques Rouché, would bolster the Opéra-Comique.[5] The move to create the RTLN also redefined the state's relationship with the National Operatic Theatres. Previous to the RTLN, the director of each of the theatres was personally responsible for its finances (a 'directeur-entrepreneur'), and often drew from their own fortunes to cover budgetary deficits.[6] Now the RTLN was directly linked to the state, which covered the RTLN deficits from its own budgets. Similarly, the state took on a much larger role in the life of some of the theatres in the provinces through its decentralization initiatives, as Chapter Five will examine.

The RTLN experienced rapid changes in its administration during this period, as did the theatres in Strasbourg and Marseille, much like the governments during the French Fourth Republic. In contrast, Rouen was more stable, perhaps because of its circumstances and size. One of the roots of this directorial instability at the state-run RTLN and state-overseen theatres in Strasbourg and Marseille was the multi-party system upon which the Fourth Republic government was built. It was a system of constant compromise and conflict to create a multi-party coalition to govern, and each shift in power resulted in new personnel in the ministries that had a direct effect upon the leadership and budgets at the RTLN.

After the Liberation, France was left still in dire crisis; though she was finally free of the German occupying forces the war was not over, and the French had rapidly to rally to join the Allied assault. Following the final victory of the Allied forces the arduous task of rebuilding

[5] Raphaëlle Legrand and Nicole Wild, *Regards sur l'Opéra-Comique. Trois siècles de vie théâtrale* (Paris: CRNS Éditions, 2002), 187, 197

[6] Rouché had personally covered around 18 million francs in losses by 1932. See Philippe Agid and Jean-Claude Tarondeau, *L'Opéra de Paris. Gouverner une grande institution culturelle* (Paris: Vuibert, 2006), 49; Gourret, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris 1669–1971*, 86–87.

France could begin.[7] Balancing the goals of the Resistance with practical attempts to reestablish normal order in France was a complex process. A large number of political figures, journalists, musicians, and intellectuals had been implicated as collaborators with the Germans and the Vichy regime; hence replacing all of these figures was impossible and choices had to be made between censure and rehabilitation.[8] France was free, but deeply divided by its wartime experiences.

In *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III: 1945–1958)* Berstein and Milza argue that France after the Liberation was primarily defined by two characteristics: a legal/political void creating a desire for renewal, and the indomitable personality of General de Gaulle.[9] After the war France was in effect without an established government. Temporary control fell to the Gouvernement provisoire de la République française with de Gaulle at its head from November 1945 to January 1946 when he stepped down, leaving the assembly to write the new constitution.[10] The Liberation and early post-war period saw a major shifting in French political parties: destabilizing some, affirming those tied to the Resistance, and the creation of entirely new parties. The communists (PCF) held a lot of power due to their Resistance reputation and organizational cohesion, and by joining together with the socialists (SFIO) and the Christian

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[7] Jean-Pierre Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944–1958,* trans. Godfrey Rogers (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1–13; Philip Nord, *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 98–100.

[8] Nord, *France's New Deal*, 11–12, 22.

[9] Serge Berstein and Pierre Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III: 1945–1958)* (Paris: Éditions Complexe, 1991), 11.

[10] This would take two attempts; the first constitution was rejected by referendum, forcing the draft of a second. Ibid., 12.

Democrats (MRP) they created an assembly majority known as tripartisme able to govern the Fourth Republic.[11]

Maintaining the majority coalition needed to govern proved difficult throughout the Fourth Republic; as Berstein and Milza note, each election ran the risk of returning a result that would in practical terms render France ungovernable.[12] Each time a government failed a new president of the council had to attempt to form new alliances to shape a majority coalition able to govern. Over the fourteen years of the Fourth Republic and Gouvernement provisoire, France had six presidents, the president of council (charged with forming the government) changed hands twenty times, and the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale (Ministry of National Education, which directly oversaw the RTLN) changed hands thirteen times.[13]

Similarly, the RTLN cycled through four leaders in 1945 and 1946 alone: Jacques Rouché was asked to leave the post in February 1945; he was temporarily replaced by René Gadave until Maurice Lehmann took over in June 1945, who quickly ceded his chair to Georges Hirsch in 1946 who held the position until 1951. In 1951, France's government had shifted away from the left-leaning coalition that had placed the socialist Hirsch in power. He was removed from the post, after a pitched battle in the press and a full legal trial, and replaced once again by the more conservative Lehmann. Lehmann only remained at the RTLN until 1955; he argued his health was not up to the extremely taxing nature of the position. He was replaced for a year by the now elderly Jacques Ibert, who actually resided in Rome. However, by 1956 the left and the socialists had regained some control with the election of the socialist Guy Mollet as president of

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[11] Ibid., 16–19, 35–44.

[12] Ibid., 58.

[13] See the work of Berstein, Rioux, and Elgey in order to trace these changes. Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III: 1945–1958);* Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944–1958*; Georgette Elgey, *Histoire de la IVe République* (Paris: Fayard, 1968).

the council and Hirsch was able to return to the RTLN where he remained until 1959. Similarly, the directors at the Opéra and Opéra-Comique also shifted frequently.

Conflicts, like France's relationship with America, the Cold War, scarcity of resources, and the growing unrest in the colonies, gradually pushed the bonds of the various coalition governments to the breaking point.[14] These changes influenced the RTLN and the theatres that were part of the state-sponsored decentralization plan. Administrators were often on tenuous footing because the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale had a role not only in their selection and dismissal, but also in daily affairs at the RTLN theatres. The RTLN had to work with both the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale and the Ministère des Finances (Ministry of Finance) to set the yearly subvention which accounted for about seventy percent of the RTLN's overall operating budget.[15] The theatres involved in the decentralization plan were also dependent upon the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale for important funding; however, government battles made it almost impossible to secure the funding rates they had been initially promised.[16]

Berstein and Milza stress how desperately France needed to restart its economy; this required a combination of an ambitious nationalization plan and large amounts of foreign aid from the Americans to pull the economy and production levels back to pre-war standards.[17] Obviously, France's economic planning had a large effect on the state-supported operatic theatres examined in this dissertation. France adopted a quite forward looking and progressive nationalization and social security program, including the nationalization of coal mines, energy,

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[14] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III: 1945–1958),* 44–52, 83–85, 258–261, 279–299.

[15] Agid and Tarondeau, *L'Opéra de Paris. Gouverner une grande institution culturelle,* 79.

[16] See Chapter Five for a detailed archival reconstruction of the subvention rates in the decentralization cities.

[17] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III: 1945–1958*), 47, 53–55, 101–106.

transportation, the radio, and the building of programs to disseminate theatre and music throughout the provinces.[18]

The nationalization plan and plans for economic revival depended heavily on American aid, primarily provided through the Marshall Plan of 1947. This plan was one of the causes of the Ramadier government's move to expel the communist ministers in 1947, which precipitated a major center-right shift in French politics.[19] Despite this, the communist party continued to be popular in France and to support the Soviet Union, which placed France precariously in the growing conflict between the USA and the Soviet Union that crystalized into the Cold War.[20] On the international stage, French attempts to maintain sovereignty over its colonies—manifested in the chronically unsuccessful wars in Indochina and French Africa—were politically contentious subjects at home and abroad and had an enormous effect on a nation reluctant to either lose these aspects of their international prestige or return to war-time austerity budgets.[21]

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[18] On the nationalization of the energy, transportation, and credit sectors see Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III: 1945–1958),* 99-106; for the nationalization of the radio and theatres see Nord, *France's New Deal*, 13–14, 217–219; for the state and decentralization of the theatre see Jeanne Laurent, *La République et les beaux-arts* (Paris: René Julliard, 1955), 108–114; David Bradby, *Modern French Drama 1940–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), xi-xii, 87–91; for the radio in general see Christian Brochand, *Histoire générale de la radio et de la television en France* tome II (1944–1974) eds. Comité d'histoire de la radiodiffusion (Paris: La Documentation française, 1994), 32, 48–59; for music on the radio see Henry Barraud, *Un compositeur aux commandes de la Radio essai autobiographique* eds, Myriam Chimènes and Karine Le Bail (Paris: Fayard/Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2010); for radiophonic opera see François Porcile, *Les Conflits de la musique française. 1940–1965* (Paris: Fayard, 2001), 255–259, 310–311, 344–345.

[19] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 51.

[20] Nord, *France's New Deal*, 9, 11–12; Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944–1958,* 112–126.

[21] The conflicts with the colonies, of course, had roots stretching back to their founding; however, here our focus is upon the troubles of the Fourth Republic. Ho Chi Mihn called for a national insurrection in Indochina starting in August 1945. It was not until May 1954 that they won a decisive victory against the French at Dien Bien Phu. Later that year after the Geneva settlement, France withdrew from Indochina. Similarly, conflict in Africa began swiftly after the war. May 1945 saw Algerian protests for liberation turn deadly. In 1947, an uprising in Madagascar resulted in massive bloodshed as the French put down the insurrection, and Tunisia and Morocco both had growing nationalist movements. In 1954, the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale fought in earnest, triggering France by 1956 to have more than four hundred thousand soldiers in the region. Morocco and Tunisia gained their independence in March 1956. Madagascar's independence came in 1958, and Algeria's not until 1962. Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 215–218, 238–240; Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944–*

The budget was also a major limiting factor at the RTLN during this period, and was stacked against them from the beginning. It was nearly impossible to balance a budget based on the requirements of the system set by the state. Between 70 and 80 percent of the RTLN's expenses went to personnel—their salaries, retirements, taxes, and the new social security laws—but these wages were set by the state and the unions, not the RTLN administrator.[22] Inflation and wages in France rose rapidly in the post-war period and thus so did the RTLN's costs.[23] Ticket prices were raised to attempt to create more revenue to cover these costs (not to mention the rising prices of materials) but they could not keep pace without losing audiences because the tickets were too expensive. Additionally, high prices would go against the democratizing mission of the RTLN to disseminate culture throughout France.[24]

Another key issue for the RTLN's huge deficits was the rule of alternation. As specified in their *cahier des charges,* or rules for the running of the theatres, the RTLN theatres were required to rotate continuously the works on offer. This meant that sets were constantly on the move, and created far more labor (and thus billable hours) than would be generated at a theatre that only showed one or two works at a time. The wear and tear on the sets and costumes was increased by this constant motion, as were the costs. While costly, alternation was insisted upon

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1958, 81–90, 209–217, 254–277; Paul Clay Sorum, *Intellectuals and Decolonization in France* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 3–18.

[22] Agid and Tarondeau, *L'Opéra de Paris. Gouverner une grande institution culturelle*, 49, 75–80; "Réponse à la note du 2 Mai 1952 du Ministère de l'Éducation nationale," 5 May 1952, in Archives Opéra, "Plan d'économies à réaliser 1952," *cote.* 20-1144, Bibliothèque-musée de l'opéra, BnF.

[23] Alessandra Casella and Barry Eichengreen, "Halting Inflation in Italy and France after the Second World War," in Michael D. Bordo and Forrest Capie, eds. *Monetary Regimes in Transition* (Cambridge, En.: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 315–318.

[24] See for example, the correspondence between Hirsch and the Direction des Beaux-Arts on the subject. Letter Jeanne Laurent to Hirsch, 5 May 1948, and Letter Hirsch to Jaujard, 27 October, 1948, both in Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1948," *cote.* 20-1953, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

by the government, as the RTLN had an important role to play in both education and tourism; they wanted vistors and students to be able to see a large array of works over a short span of time. The administrators were generally powerless to stem the hemorrhaging flow of money dedicated to these requirements. While the theatres of the decentralization plan had more independence than the RTLN, they too were yoked by huge state requirements that were not reflected in the subventions they were accorded. Initially the state and the city were each to assume half of the deficit caused by the 'improvements' required by the state to join the plan. This, however, was never the reality and the state fell extremely short of its promises, as Chapter Five reveals.

This constant change and financial struggle created a hotbed for controversy as the artistic and aesthetic goals of the RTLN and its audiences were in a perpetual state of flux and often outright disagreement. The governmental, and in turn artistic, uncertainty of the Fourth Republic was, in part, symptomatic of the challenge of reconstructing French national identity. This identity had to blend the nation's history with its need to join the new post-war world—a mission strongly mirrored by the RTLN's struggle both to innovate and to preserve France's musical patrimony. However, differing factions disagreed about how to accomplish these goals, and these competing influences affected the production of both repertoire pieces and new premieres.

Throughout the scholarly literature and the contemporary press the RTLN houses are sometimes likened to large ships, and the comparison is apt.[25] They are huge institutions that take a vast and technically-savvy personnel to maintain. Additionally, the larger the house (or

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[25] Charles Dupêchez, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris, Un siècle au palais Garnier 1875–1980* (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1984), 247; Laurent, *La République et les beaux-arts,* 168–170; Francis Poulenc, "Georges Hirsch à l'Opéra," *Musica* 31 (October 1956): 2.

ship), often the harder it is to turn quickly or change tack and the more challenging its navigation. The institutional inertia formed by the history of the opera houses was of course something that insulated them against the huge societal changes of the Fourth Republic. However, this same inertia often made it immensely challenging for the directors and administrators to adjust and respond to the new waters that the Fourth Republic brought. To do so sometimes required an aggressive stance.

Jeanne Laurent, the sous-directrice des Spectacles et de la musique (Assistant-director of Spectacles and Music, which was part of the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale) and one of the chief architects of the decentralization plan, argued that: "audacity is indispensable in a period of crisis" ["l'audace est indispensable en période de crise"].[26] Goetschel notes that by invoking a crisis, Laurent turned to a classic mechanism of public politics, creating a sense of urgency that forced and justified more radical solutions.[27] Laurent used this urgency to push through her ambitious plans for decentralization, and later to argue for a major, and indeed audacious, restructuring of the arts in the French government. However, she was unable to realize either of those plans fully.

André Boll, a metteur en scène and music critic, used a similar technique in the 1947 edition of *La Revue musicale,* where he wrote that "the crisis of the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique has never been more acute" ["la crise de l'Opéra et de l'Opéra-Comique n'a jamais été plus aiguë"].[28] Boll, who disliked Hirsch's left-leaning aesthetics and approach, used his

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[26] Laurent, *La République et les beaux-arts*, 164.

[27] Pascale Goetschel, "Penser le role de l'État en France durant les années 1950: Jeanne Laurent, *La République et les beaux-arts (1955)*," *Parlement[s], Revue d'histoire politique* 29 (2019): 246.

[28] André Boll, "A l'Opéra: Centenaire de *La Damnation de Faust,* reprise de *Padmavati.* A l'Opéra-Comique: Reprise de *l'Étoile.* Crise dans les Théâtres Lyriques," *La Revue musicale* 204 (January 1947): 33.

declaration of crisis to draw the assembly's attention explicitly to the lack of premieres at the RTLN, and push for his own solutions to the dire situation he outlined. Boll desired that stagings be created by dedicated and well-trained metteurs en scène; he argued often the position was given to aging singers who knew little of the craft and this was severely damaging operatic productions. Later in 1956, Hirsch himself would argue the RTLN needed 'shock treatment' in order to justify breaking away from the path Ibert had charted and promoting his own more progressive vision.[29]

Certainly, the Fourth Republic was a challenging time for opera in France, but as the following chapters will demonstrate, one should not accept these cries of crisis uncritically. Indeed, while the new social laws and strength of the unions placed great strain on the houses, they persisted remarkably well and certainly did not die as warned by so many. As the background that follows demonstrates, some scholarly sources have accepted this narrative too readily, and have thus largely ignored the Fourth Republic in their operatic histories. Others have begun to question it, and have shed some light on a few of the operas during this period. However, a comparative study that contextualizes these works within their institutions and these institutions within the cultural-political fabric of Fourth Republic France is lacking. This dissertation fills this void, and through its interrogation disproves the narrative of crisis and failure that has surrounded this period. As each chapter's case studies will demonstrate, opera was not stagnant, but instead innovation continued in the genre and its institutions. The operatic genre remained during the Fourth Republic as an important site of French identity formation and political contestation.

[29] Georges Hirsch, "Réveil de l'Opéra," *l'Opéra de Paris* XIII (1956): 1.

Opera in France was deeply tied to both the political and cultural fields, and throughout the Fourth Republic assembly members and minsters framed the RTLN and decentralization mission as crucial aspects of France's international prestige.[30] Understanding how French politics shifted during the Fourth Republic, and the conflicts of the political and cultural fields is vital to interpreting opera during this period, and so some background information is necessary. These fields shaped how operas were deciphered; often there were attempts to disguise dangerous political or cultural resonances in operas especially by the state-sponsored opera houses and their administrations. These meanings and resonances altered the reputation of some innovative new premieres like Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* or Milhaud's *Bolivar.* For example, Tailleferre's opera *Il était un petit navire* was so mangled by the competing interests at the RTLN that it caused a scandal that has mostly faded from memory. However, scholarship has often actively avoided discussion of the systems of cultural-political influence at the RTLN and state-sponsored houses, which this dissertation aims to redress. Happily, much work has been done on the history of politics and culture during the Fourth Republic, and these studies have been indispensable for this dissertation. However, their implications for music, especially the operatic genre, have not been charted until now.

Serge Berstein and Pierre Milza offer an essential text, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958,* that not only closely traces the domestic political battles in France, but also gives a clear view of France's international reputation and conflicts.[31] Similarly, Jean-Pierre Rioux's detailed study, *The Fourth Republic 1944–1958* (expertly translated by Godfrey

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[30] See for example the 1954 speech of Lamousse to the senate, "Intervention de M. Georges Lamousse Rapporteur du Budget des Beaux Arts au Sénat le vendredi 9 avril 1954," in Archives Opéra, "Nomination Lehmann Maurice (Administrateur) 1951–1954," *cote.* 20-1073, Bibliothèque-musée de l'opéra, BnF.

[31] Serge Berstein and Pierre Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III: 1945–1958)* (Paris: Éditions Complexe, 1991).

Rogers), provides much needed context throughout this dissertation.[32] Georgette Elgey's six tome study on the Fourth Republic *Histoire de la IVe République* is virtuosic and in particular has usefully revealed the key points of fissure in the Republic, which map so closely with the moments of rupture and change at the RTLN and in the decentralization plan.[33]

In *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* Philip Nord pays close attention to the interaction between the cultural and the political fields, and challenges the discourse of complete rupture between the Vichy government and the newly formed Fourth Republic by revealing the continuity, especially of personnel, between them. He further argues that while the Fourth Republic may have missed an opportunity to reconfigure France's parliamentary and imperial institutions significantly, France was nothing short of revolutionary in its approach to its new executive apparatus and national economic planning.[34] These new social reforms and economic plans had wide reaching effects on the RTLN and decentralization theatres, and contributed to their rapidly rising costs that completely unbalanced budgets, as this dissertation will reveal.

Central to Nord's argument is his insistence that the 'new' elite in power after the Liberation were not entirely new; in fact more people and institutions were held over from the Vichy regime than previous studies had supposed.[35] Members of the Resistance certainly had great power and influence in post-war institutions; however, their revolutionary desires were eventually tempered by the practical needs of running the French State and by conservative

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[32] Jean-Pierre Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944–1958,* trans. Godfrey Rogers (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[33] Georgette Elgey, *Histoire de la IVe République* (Paris: Fayard, 1968 through 2012).

[34] Nord, *France's New Deal*, 2.

[35] Ibid., 22.

individuals and institutions from the Vichy regime.[36] This was certainly true at the Opéra, while the long-time administrator Jacques Rouché was replaced in June 1945 by Maurice Lehmann who was a newcomer to the RTLN, much was retained of the personnel, systems, and repertoire in service under Rouché—a clear example of the institutional inertia discussed below.[37] This was similar in the provinces; theatres used what they could from before the war or even from the Occupation; even when the material objects of the theatre had been destroyed by bombs, the personnel and repertoire often remained as a matter of practicality in the face of difficult circumstances.

Nord notes that the Fourth Republic focused on culture as a public service and a right of the French citizenry—as was written into the Republic's constitutional preamble.[38] Jean Vilar, a notable figure in French theatre, contended that culture was a 'public service like gas, water, or electricity.'[39] However, what defined the 'culture' the Fourth Republic sought to bring to the people was a complex question.[40] Gumplowicz and Klein in their edited collection *Paris 1944-1954. Artistes, intellectuels, publics; la culture comme enjeu* make a similar case, stating that the central question both politically and culturally of this period was how to transmit and democratize culture.[41] This was a challenging question in a genre like opera where traditional stagings required large means and funding in order to stage a production or sustain a resident company. Nord's focus, however, is primarily on the dramatic theatre genre where the mission to

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[36] Ibid., 12, 20, 146, 149, 161.

[37] Jean Gourret, *Ces Hommes qui ont fait l'Opéra* (Paris: Éditions Albatros, 1984), 172.

[38] Nord, *France's New Deal,* 14, 217–219.

[39] Translation by Nord. Ibid., 312.

[40] Ibid., 312.

[41] Gumplowicz and Klein, *Paris 1944–1954. Artistes, intellectuels, publics; la culture comme enjeu*, 14.

democratize was somewhat more clear-cut. This dissertation builds on the work of Nord, revealing that similar mechanisms of continuity and desires for social improvement were acted out at the state-sponsored operatic theatres. However, the mission to decentralize opera was deeply complex and often what proved true of dramatic decentralization in Nord's study did not continue into the operatic field, as Chapter Five will show.

While the opera houses attempted to chart a path in the new Fourth Republic, memories of what had so recently transpired during the Occupation could not be avoided, especially on the operatic stage. French historian Henry Rousso, focused upon the issue of memory and how a nation or individual memorializes or represses the past, and his work is essential to interpreting these impulses in opera in a manner that other studies have not.[42] Rousso's *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* began to consider the memory and memorialization of Vichy, characterizing this process as a syndrome, a nation-wide obsession that had become as pervasive as it was intricate: "the Vichy syndrome consists of a diverse set of symptoms whereby the trauma of the Occupation, and particularly that trauma resulting from internal divisions within France, reveals itself in political, social, and cultural life."[43] It is in part this latent trauma that makes a comprehensive understanding of the cultural politics of this post-war period so elusive, and little has been done before this dissertation to understand how this trauma manifested in Fourth Republic opera.

Works like Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* or Milhaud's *Bolivar* engage subtly with this trauma, often through metaphor or veiled through distancing techniques, as this dissertation

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[42] Stanley Hoffmann, "Foreword," in Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), vii.

[43] Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, 10.

reveals. Rousso described much of the Fourth Republic as an era of incomplete mourning; the practical needs of France and the extent of the trauma it had undergone prevented French society from completely understanding and assimilating the Occupation experiences into the national memory.[44] This created yet another point of tension and rupture in the coalition-led country—a confused past contributed to discordant views of the future. Yet through the genre of opera, composers could comment upon this divide. The metaphoric and subtle commentary typical of the opera (as will be revealed through analysis of stagings, new works, the press, and controversies the works created) could allow for subversive and incisive comments on the state of French society. A prime example this dissertation will consider is Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* where Poulenc struggles with the personal, spiritual, and political ramifications of the choice between collaboration and resistance.

The musical field during the Occupation, Liberation, and finally the Fourth Republic is, likewise, drawing increased attention from musicologists and scholars, and their work has allowed this dissertation to situate the operatic genre and institutions within this larger context. Jane F. Fulcher's newest monograph, *Renegotiating French Identity: Musical Culture and Creativity in France during Vichy and the German Occupation,* considers how composers and institutions in the musical field could react to the constraints and changing realities of the Occupation and how different groups, figures, and works attempted to define French identity.[45]

Her chapter on Poulenc in particular reveals that contrary to the accepted post-war narrative that Poulenc had been resistant from the beginning of the Occupation, in reality he only

[44] Ibid., 10.

[45] Jane F. Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity: Musical Culture and Creativity in France during Vichy and the German Occupation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

slowly came to see the truth of the Vichy regime and was drawn progressively into Resistance circles by his friends and colleagues in the musical and literary Resistances.[46] This transformation is vital to understanding Poulenc's acceptance as a Resistance composer in the post-war period and influenced the reception of his controversial opéra-comique *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* premiered in 1947 at the Opéra-Comique, as Chapter One will explore. Additionally, Fulcher's approach to Honegger's *Antigone* serves as a model for exploring how operas can exploit their multivalent meanings and disputed definitions of French style and identity to create a space for sharp political commentary even when those in power attempt to censor those meanings.[47] This especially would complicate the reception of Milhaud's *Bolivar* in 1950.

One of the more recent works on music after the war is Leslie Sprout's *The Musical Legacy of Wartime France,* which exposes deep divides in the post-war musical field. Some musicians wished to return to the successful models of the past by picking up 'where France had left off' before the Occupation intervened, others demanded a new path reflective of the post-war world.[48] Sprout also considers the transitions made by individuals from the Occupation to the post-war period, revealing how some left the war with increased reputations (like Poulenc) while others' reputations suffered great, though often temporary, damage (such as Honegger). These changes in the fortunes of composers proved very important at the RTLN where a committee was in charge of selecting new works. Composers who were in favor, like Poulenc or Milhaud, had seats at this table, while others, such as Honegger, were notably absent.

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[46] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 239–288; See also Jane F. Fulcher, "From Hybrid to Metamorphosis: Poulenc's Path toward Symbolic Resistance and Counter-Discourse during Vichy," In *Verwandlungsmusik: Über komponierte Transfigurationen,* Andreas Dorschel, Editor (New York: Universal Edition, 2007): 432–484.

[47] Jane F. Fulcher, "French Identity in Flux: The Triumph of Honegger's *Antigone*" *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 36: 4 (Spring, 2006): 649–674; Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 200–218.

[48] Leslie A. Sprout, *The Music Legacy of Wartime France* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013).

François Porcile's work *Les Conflits de la musique française: 1940–1960* beautifully explained the conflicts in French music from 1940 to 1960, their roots during the Occupation, and their political ramifications during the Fourth Republic.[49] Porcile considers the new post-war situation that brought former Resistance members into power not only in the political arena but also in the ministries that oversaw musical institutions and within these institutions themselves. Porcile also clearly details the interactions between the various generations of musicians in the post-war period, including the important return of Les Six to musical life (especially Milhaud's return from exile in America) and their sometimes-tempestuous relationships with the younger generation.[50] As this dissertation uncovers, at the state-sponsored opera houses the composers in the generation of Les Six often had the upper hand, while younger or more avant-garde composers, like Pierre Boulez, were not on the RTLN committees.

Michèle Alten in *Musiciens français dans la guerre froide (1945–1956). L'indépendance artistique face au politique* pays particular attention to the transitions into peacetime made by the musicians associated with the Resistance movement, especially those associated with the French communists whose relationship with Soviet Union became increasingly complex and controversial.[51] When the communists were expelled from the government, the center-right shift had huge ramifications for leadership and funding at the RTLN and decentralization theatres, as this dissertation will demonstrate. The dynamics of the Cold War, and of French internal politics, also hindered the opportunities open to communist, or other left-leaning composers to present their operatic works.

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[49] François Porcile, *Les Conflits de la musique française. 1940–1965* (Paris: Fayard, 2001).

[50] Porcile, *Les Conflits de la musique française. 1940–1965,* 15, 60, 78–80, 138.

[51] Michèle Alten, *Musiciens français dans la guerre froide (1945–1956). L'indépendance artistique face au politique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000).

Some of the first studies of Fourth Republic opera appeared in larger collections that surveyed the history, repertoire, and venues of opera in France. However, the Fourth Republic is often largely skimmed over, and the myths of crisis and stagnation that this dissertation debunks were often repeated without deep interrogation. Of particular note are the detailed studies of Stéphane Wolff including his 1955 collaboration with André Lejeune *Les Quinze Salles de l'Opéra de Paris (1669–1955)* which listed the physical changes the Paris Opéra underwent throughout its history and his 1962 study *L'Opéra au Palais Garnier (1875–1962). Les oeuvres, les interprètes,* which focused on an inventory of the repertoire and singers.[52] Wolff also produced a similar work on the repertoire and singers of the Opéra-comique in 1955, *Un Demi-siècle d'Opéra-comique (1900–1950).*[53] Wolff was highly critical of the formation of the RTLN which he felt damaged both houses, even if their union had helped the Opéra-Comique survive the war. It was high time, in Wolff's opinion, for their separation. While Wolff's lists of repertoire and singers were extensive, he spent very little time on the history of the RTLN during the Fourth Republic or the opera's interpretations.

The works of Jean Gourret, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris (1669–1971)* (1977), *Histoire des salles de l'Opéra de Paris,* and *Ces hommes qui ont fait l'Opéra* (1984) developed the vein that Wolff had begun to explore. Gourret's *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris* and *Histoire des salles de l'Opéra de Paris* each offered snippets of the state of the Opéra during the Fourth Republic, which he went so far as to term as in 'hibernation' until the 1950s.[54] Gourret praised the new

[52] André Lejeune and Stéphane Wolff, *Les Quinze salles de l'Opéra de Paris (1669–1955)* (Paris: Librairie théâtrale, 1955); Stéphane Wolff, *L'Opéra au Palais Garnier (1875–1962). Les oeuvres, les interprètes* (Paris: l'Entr'acte, 1962).

[53] Stéphane Wolff, *Un Demi-siècle d'Opéra-comique (1900–1950). Les oeuvres, les interprètes* (Paris: Éditions André Bonne, 1953).

[54] Jean Gourret, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris (1669–1971). Portraits de chanteurs* (Paris: Les Publications Universitaires, 1977), 96–97.

premiere of Milhaud's *Bolivar* (the second opera premiered at the Opéra during the Fourth Republic) and Maurice Lehmann's restaging of Rameau's *Indes galantes* (mounted in June 1952).[55] While Milhaud and Lehmann's works were certainly exciting and important to the history of Fourth Republic opera, this dissertation will contest Gourret's characterization that before these moments there was an operatic hibernation. The RTLN was working and innovating, but time was needed to recover and rebuild from the war. Addtionally, there were battles being fought behind the scenes, as Chapter One and then the discussion of *Faust* in Chapter Four will demonstrate.

Gourret's work on the administrators of the Paris opera, *Ces Hommes qui ont fait l'Opéra,* published in 1984, begins to explore the relationship between the shifting politics of the Fourth Republic and its ramifications at the RTLN. He briefly considers not only the artistic effects each administrator had upon the opera, but also which political groups had placed them in power. Gourret, however, places too much emphasis on the so-called battle between the administrators Hirsch and Lehmann themselves.[56] This dissertation reveals the shifts in leadership at the RTLN were much more complex than a personal battle, and indeed were often proxy battles for the French political and musical fields.

Charles Dupêchez published his study *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris, Un siècle au palais Garnier 1875–1980* in 1984 also, and offers a thorough study of the history of the house with a more comprehensive examination of the Fourth Republic than previous works. Dupêchez, like Gourret, was dubious of the wisdom of the RTLN union; he refers to the entire period from 1945

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[55] Gourret, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris (1669–1971). Portraits de chanteurs*, 96–97; Jean Gourret, *Histoire des salles de l'Opéra de Paris* (Paris: Éditions de la Maisnie, 1985), 171–184.

[56] Jean Gourret, *Ces Hommes qui ont fait l'Opéra* (Paris: Éditions Albatros, 1984), 173–175.

to 1972 as “the shipwreck” [“le naufrage”].[57] However, Dupêchez largely ignores the skillful navigation that guided the house through the turbulent waters of the Fourth Republic. While Dupêchez praises the efforts of Lehmann, he was rather critical of Hirsch and his political motivations.[58] However, as subsequent chapters will show, Hirsch was in fact one of the most skillful and innovative of the Fourth Republic administrators.

Regardless of how hard the administrators worked they could not halt, according to Dupêchez, the ‘galloping gangrene’ [“gangrene galopante”] that was rotting the RTLN.[59] Dupêchez clearly points out the struggles the RTLN endured during this period, but often neglects its triumphs. Additionally, his study does not leave room for an in-depth examination of the root causes of this ‘crisis’ as he covers an entire century at the Opéra. This dissertation will correct the record and fill this gap, by bringing back to light some of the operatic successes of the period and explaining some of its failures.

Danièle Pistone’s edited collection *Théâtre lyrique français: 1945–1985* spans a massive array of topics in French opera: the state-sponsored RTLN in Paris, opera houses in the provinces (including Lyon, Marseille, Montpellier, Nice, Rouen, Strasbourg, Mulhouse, and Vichy), the economic troubles opera houses faced, surveys of contemporary composers’ operatic works, and the new developments in operatic radio and recordings. Each section is brief, giving only a snapshot of its topic and was generally written by administrators, directors, and other opera affiliates. This results in passionate and vivid writing, even with the economic figures, but lacks

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[57] Charles Dupêchez, *Histoire de l’Opéra de Paris, Un siècle au palais Garnier 1875–1980* (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1984), 247.

[58] Ibid., 248–252.

[59] Ibid., 252.

the cohesive approach and the contextualization this dissertation will offer. The volume also often focuses more on opera during the Fifth rather than Fourth Republic.

Philippe Agid and Jean-Claude Tarondeau offer a closer look at the administration of the opera in their 2006 volume *L'Opéra de Paris. Gouverner une grande institution culturelle.* Their archival research brings together financial figures for the Opéra throughout the twentieth-century that are extremely helpful benchmarks to compare the finances of the Fourth Republic found while researching this dissertation.[60] Further, they explore how radically the creation of the RTLN shifted the relationship between the Opéra and the government, and the confusion this caused.[61] However, they are also somewhat biased against the period of the Fourth Republic; by reiterating the narrative of decay and crisis they are able to set up the 1990s as a period of significant recovery. It is important to note, Agid was the director adjoint at the Opéra from 1995 to 2001, and thus has a vested interest in this interpretation.[62] This dissertation reframes some of their research, and by placing it in a more cohesive context reveals that their figures also help to question the legitimacy of the 'crisis' narrative rather than cement it.

The 2010 edited volume of Michel Noiray and Solveig Serre *Le Répertoire de l'Opéra de Paris (1671–2009). Analyse et interprétation* takes a cultural historical approach to the long history of the Opéra.[63] The volume was catalyzed by the inventory, digitalization, and database creation surrounding the "Journal de l'Opéra", a register of all the Opéra's performances. While

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[60] Philippe Agid and Jean-Claude Tarondeau, *L'Opéra de Paris. Gouverner une grande institution culturelle* (Paris: Vuibert, 2006), 44–50.

[61] Ibid., 3, 75–80.

[62] Ibid., vii.

[63] Michel Noiray and Solveig Serre, eds. *Le Répertoire de l'Opéra de Paris (1671–2009). Analyse et interprétation* (Paris: École des Chartes, 2010).

primarily a repertoire study, the authors situate the Opéra and its repertoire within the history of the institution and begin to consider the political context as well.[64] However, like the studies of Wolff, Gourret, and Dupêchez the chronological span of the volume limits the attention paid to the Fourth Republic.

Of most value to this dissertation is Cécile Auzolle's chapter, "Les Créations lyriques à l'Opéra de Paris entre 1945 et 1955". She begins by describing the "strikes, administrative challenges, power struggles, and personnel problems" ["… des grèves, des difficultés administratives, des luttes de pouvoir, des problèmes de personnel…"] that plagued the Opéra.[65] She ends with an insightful, though also brief, analysis of each of the premieres given during the Fourth Republic including: Delvincourt's *Lucifer* (1948), Milhaud's *Bolivar* (1950), Samuel-Rousseau's *Kerkeb, danseuse berbère* (1951), and Barraud's *Numance* (1955).[66] Auzolle also presents a chapter in Sabine Chaouche, Denis Herlin, and Solveig Serre's 2012 edited collection *L'Opéra de Paris, La Comédie-Française, et L'Opéra-Comique. Approches comparées (1669–2010).*[67] By extending her focus to include the period before the war, Auzolle is able to consider

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[64] The "Journal de l'Opéra" is held at the Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra (Paris), and may be accessed through the Bibliothèque nationale de France's digital interface at http://Gallica.bnf.fr. The database created to house the data from this journal is referred to as "Chronopéra" and can be accessed at http://chronopera.free.fr.

[65] Cécile Auzolle's chapter, "Les Créations lyriques à l'opéra de Paris entre 1945 et 1955" in Michel Noiray and Solveig Serre, eds. *Le Répertoire de l'Opéra de Paris (1671–2009). Analyse et interprétation* (Paris: École des Chartes, 2010), 103.

[66] These men were all very well positioned as part of the Liberation 'clique'. Delvincourt was known for his work as the head of the Conservatoire during the Occupation where he worked to spare the students and staff the worst of the demands of the Germans and Vichy. Milhaud spent the war in America, as a Jewish composer he would have been in particular danger, but returned to France well connected to those who had been in the Resistance, like Poulenc. Henry Barraud helped organize resistance broadcasting in Occupied France, and after the war he was made head of music for Radiodiffusion française. In general, the radio's programming was fairly conservative, but their musical programming was actually quite innovative under Barraud's command.

[67] Cécile Auzolle, "La Création lyrique à la Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux (1936–1972)," in Sabine Chaouche, Denis Herlin, and Solveig Serre, eds. *L'Opéra de Paris, La Comédie-Française, et L'Opéra-Comique. Approches comparées (1669–2010)* (Paris: École des Chartes, 2012), 219–238.

the formation of the RTLN and its transitions in and out of the Occupation. She highlights the instability the departure of Jacques Rouché caused and briefly considers the premieres offered at the RTLN during the Fourth Republic.

In addition to the context provided by scholarly studies on music and politics in the Fourth Republic, understanding how intuitions form, reproduce themselves, resist change, subtly shift, and impact individuals is central to comprehending opera in France and how its institutions and bureaucracies functioned. This dissertation draws upon institutional theories like those by Mary Douglas to frame these issues. In her work *How Institutions Think,* Douglas revealed how deeply interwoven social thought, individual choice, and institutional structures are in terms of both the formation of culture and the cultivation of individuals' patterns of thought.[68] Through critical analysis of previous work by Emile Durkheim and Ludwik Fleck, Douglas argued that individuals think through and with the systems that society furnishes them. In other words, while the metaphor that institutions "think" like people is a useful tool, the reality is much more complex. Often individuals have their thoughts defined by the social structures that have surrounded them as much as individuals define those structures themselves.[69]

Therefore, much like Bourdieu's theories of reproduction to be discussed below, institutions become self-sustaining. This tendency for institutions to reproduce themselves rather than undergo change was termed 'institutional inertia' by Douglas. As she noted, this serves a practical purpose as it steadies society; when change is too rapid the essential commonalities needed for basic communication would rupture.[70] Thus, as Andrew Schotter has also argued,

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[68] Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 4–10.

[69] Douglas, *How Institutions Think,* 10, 45; See also the work of Emile Durkheim in particular *Primitive Classification* (1903) and *The Rules of the Sociological Method* (1895).

[70] Communication and language have to be based on shared thought categories; unless both parties agree that sounds can have meaning, speech is impossible. Similarly, one cannot discuss the weather unless both parties class things

institutions are entropy-minimizing devices.[71] This would explain the aspects of continuity experienced at the RTLN during the Fourth Republic (especially at the moments of transitions created by the change of administrator) and in the decentralization theatres as they struggled to adjust to their new post-war realities and their (albeit fewer) directorial changes.

Institutions, like the RTLN, not only have a key role to play in shaping society and how people think, but they also structure how individuals and societies frame their past. Douglas argued, "public memory is the storage system for the social order."[72] In particular, Douglas highlighted the function of societal amnesia by building on the collective memory theories of French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and American sociologist Robert Merton. She claimed that forgetting was a key social function of institutions, as just much as storing and reproducing information. No society or person can pay attention to everything at once; forgetting manages size and scale. As this dissertation will argue, over time musical works, genres, and institutions accrue meanings and relevance. For example, the traditions surrounding the operation of the Opéra at the Palais Garnier or a staging of *Faust* are in part defined by how they have been done in the past. Societal amnesia is a counterbalance to this, in a manner 'selecting' *which* traditions and *which* stagings are retained and remembered and thus through forgetting create space for new interpretations. This selective forgetting was particularly key, not only to *Faust* but also to the 1952 staging of *Indes galantes.* The battle to control what was forgotten and what was essential tradition was a key aspect of the struggle to control the RTLN. By interrogating this amnesia this dissertation reveals the subtle innovations of these productions.

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like temperature, precipitation, wind, etc. together as phenomenon of weather. See Douglas, *How Institutions Think,* 63.

[71] See Andrew Schotter, *The Economic Theory of Social Institutions* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[72] Douglas, *How Institutions Think,* 70.

But institutional amnesia has another function, worth quoting directly from Douglas, "That there was once a period of unquestioned legitimacy is the idea that our institutions use for stigmatizing subversive elements. By this astute ploy, the idea is given that incoherence and doubt are new arrivals…"[73] Thus doubts that were experienced in the past have been 'forgotten' and can be framed as 'new arrivals' in society. This, in part, explains the effectiveness of the 'crisis' narrative surrounding Fourth Republic opera, when in reality the situation at the RTLN and provinces was not all that radically different from what it had been in the past. Certainly, there were challenges and new budgetary problems, but they were not completely unlike other challenging moments in the institutions' histories. By forgetting past moments similar to the post-war era, the changes in the operatic genre were framed as a disastrous degradation instead of a normal part of the genre's ebb and flow in terms of popularity, innovation, and financial solvency. A causal survey of French operatic history reveals the brilliance with which the genre and institutions persisted through political crises, including the fall of monarchies and empires, revolutions, and the establishment of the previous three Republics.[74] Surely the current 'crisis' was not entirely new, and the theories offered by Douglas support this assertion.

Yet no institution stands alone. Therefore, it will be important to consider the networks that these institutions form, and the fields to which they belong. Here I invoke Bourdieu's conception of the field and how agents within fields interact based on the fields' relative

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[73] Ibid., 94.

[74] See for example Jane F. Fulcher, *The Nation's Image: French Grand Opera as Politics and Politicized Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Mark Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution: Cultural Politics and the Paris Opera 1789–1794* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); John S. Powell, *Music and Theater in France 1600–1680* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Victoria Johnson, *Backstage at the Revolution: how the Royal Paris Opera Survived the Old Regime* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

positions and cultural capital.[75] As Jane Fulcher has shown in her own work, this concept is key for theorizing how individuals and institutions relate within the musical field, how the musical field changes in relation to political powers and pressures, the degree of autonomy the field has at specific moments, and the room available for innovation.[76] In particular, this dissertation attends not only to the smaller field of the operatic institutions, but to the fields of music, the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale which oversaw the arts, and of course the larger political field in France. How individuals and institutions navigated the relationships between these fields reveals the scope composers and administrators had for innovation in their works and stagings and the pressures exerted upon them to conform with tradition.

In his work *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture,* Bourdieu provided a vocabulary and a system for analyzing, and indeed revealing, hidden systems of power that reproduce themselves. The operatic field is a prime example of this type of reproduction, while also leaving room for often subtle innovation. Explaining these terms through the example of the education system is expedient. A teacher imparts knowledge to his/her students about how the world is, how it should be, and how it should become. Amongst the facts and figures that are taught, what knowledge is considered valuable, and what is not, is also transferred. Consequently, often unnoticed by both teacher and student, systems of value (resulting in cultural capital) are transmitted across the generations.[77]

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[75] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, edited and introduced by Randall Johnson (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1993), 30–32.

[76] See Jane F. Fulcher, "Symbolic domination and contestation in French music: Shifting the paradigm from Adorno to Bourdieu," in *Opera and Society in Italy and France from Monteverdi to Bourdieu,* Victoria Johnson, Jane F. Fulcher, and Thomas Ertman, eds. (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 312–329; Fulcher applies these theories in her monograph, Jane F. Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity: Musical Culture and Creativity in France during Vichy and the German Occupation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[77] Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture,* trans. Richard Nice (London: Sage Publications, 1990), x.

This 'pedagogic action' is in Bourdieu's terms an act of 'symbolic violence', an act which "imposes a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power."[78] These lessons can just as easily be applied to societal groups, institutions, and the inheritance and perpetuation of culture. Similarly, opera, especially at the RTLN, projected these systems of power and value. At the RTLN the consulting committee often served as the teacher framing what was allowed and what was valued at the RTLN. This 'symbolic violence' perpetuated certain values and standards and projected them to both composers and audiences. While this creates some stability in the genre that can be beneficial, it also could serve as a limit on innovation.

Layered with the work of Douglas, this reveals how powerfully the deck was stacked in a centralized system like France for a genre with moral, educational, and political capital like opera to perpetuate itself. It also suggests that pedagogic institutions and dissemination points (not only schools and universities, but also literature, newspapers, periodicals, and critical reviews, though, of course, all of these could also be confrontational in addition to pedagogic) had broad ranging influence that has not been adequately addressed in Fourth Republic operatic scholarship. Additionally, this highlights the importance of places external to the operatic institutions, like the radio and to some degree opera houses away from the strong influence of Paris in the provinces; here there was greater room for innovation beyond the constraints typical of the opera house and its systems of inertia and perpetuation.

The first four chapters of this dissertation reveal that the works being produced at the RTLN were more politically and culturally controversial than scholarship has remembered, and interrogate the motivations behind the narrative of 'crisis' that has surrounded the RTLN during this period. Because these premieres were critiqued for political reasons, they failed to take root

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[78] Ibid., 5.

in the repertoire. Therefore, the standard repertoire had to be relied upon to support the RTLN as state financial contributions steadily became less and less adequate—especially in the light of the demands written into the *cahier des charges*. By not attending to all these factors, our view of French opera during this period has been distorted. This dissertation re-contextualizes the triumphs and failings of the RTLN, arguing that political motivations were often the impetus of criticism and influenced the reputation of these operas that have been remembered as less exciting musical works because of this bias.

The first chapter, "Controversy at the Opéra-Comique: Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* and Tailleferre's *Il était un petit navire*" examines the contention caused by two early premieres at the Opéra-Comique, Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésais* (1947) and Tailleferre's quickly-quashed *Il était un petit navire* (1951). One might have imagined that works by established members of the popular Les Six would have been likely to have success, but instead even these operas struggled to take hold in the repertoire. Both were too daring politically and culturally, especially in regards to gender; one must remember women did not receive the vote in France until 1945. As France once again became increasingly conservative and nationalist there was little room for their boldness and criticism of bourgeois morality and gender at a state-sponsored theatre.

Milhaud's *Bolivar* had a similar fate, as the second chapter, "The Querelle *Bolivar*: Finding Grandeur, Renewal, and the Political in Milhaud's "Failed" Opera" explores. *Bolivar* was branded a 'failure' in the press and became the subject of a hot debate dubbed the "Querelle *Bolivar*." The conservative leaning press was keen to ascribe their critiques to musical deficiency; however, analysis of these articles reveals they were also motivated by anti-Semitism, anti-communism, and pro-colonial sentiments. Milhaud had intended *Bolivar,* written

in America during the Occupation and Milhaud's exile, as a celebration of his hopes for French liberation. However, by the time of its premiere it was read as a commentary on colonial, rather than French, liberation. This was an incredibly controversial stance, and the reputation of his opera in the press suffered greatly from the association.

Chapter Three, "Renewing Rameau's *Indes galantes*: The Rightward Shift of Aesthetics and Politics at the Opéra" focuses on the so-called 'rivalry' between the administrators Georges Hirsch and Maurice Lehmann and considers a major revival of Rameau's *Indes galantes* that has been solely credited to Lehmann in the scholarship. Hirsch has been nearly entirely written out of some histories of the RTLN during this period, and his accomplishments downplayed significantly. This was in part because of his strong affiliation with the French socialists, and the cutting campaign against him in the press led by *Le Figaro.* However, archival research has revealed that Hirsch began one of the most critically and financially successful productions of the period, the 1952 revival of *Indes galantes,* which had previously been ascribed to Lehmann alone. This production used spectacle to ensure its success and paint a favorable portrait of French culture and colonial nostalgia that avoided the political critiques lobbed at the premieres of Poulenc, Tailleferre, and Milhaud.

The last chapter on the RTLN, "Avoiding and Controlling the Political to Find Success: Gounod's *Faust* and Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*" considers two important productions from the close of the Fourth Republic. In 1956 the restaging of Gounod's *Faust* finally made it to the stage. It had been in the works since 1948, but the shifts in the political landscape and the subsequent changes in the RTLN administration caused an entire production to be scrapped (and the precious funds spent on it wasted) because it was too full of alleged symbolism and displeased Gounod's heirs. *Faust* was a central piece of the RTLN repertoire—it was the most

performed opera during the Fourth Republic and one of the highest earners. It was also one of the clearest examples of how political instability weakened the post of administrator at the RTLN who found themselves in a position where they could not even refurbish one of the Opéra's most important works without a pitched battle. The chapter concludes with Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites,* which was arguably one of the most enduring French operas premiered during this period, yet it was commissioned and premiered by La Scala in Milan rather than the RTLN in Paris. The turmoil at the RTLN pushed important works away from the house; despite this Poulenc's work was very popular at a time when operas struggled to find firm footing. Poulenc, ideally positioned with allies on the political right and left, was able to cloak political meanings in what was inherently a political opera to allow him to find success in the challenging climate at the RLTN.

The final chapter, "Operatic Decentralization: Innovation in Marseille, Strasbourg, and Rouen" moves beyond Paris and the RTLN to consider works in the provinces and the important decentralization plan that supported them. In many ways there was much more freedom and innovation in these spaces—though the constraints of tightening government control, increased requirements and demands, and lack of funding also limited these areas. After the Liberation there was a move to nationalize some of France's major industries in order to help with the country's economic recovery and hasten the return of higher standards of living.[79] There were similar initiatives in the arts, among which was Jeanne Laurent's push for operatic decentralization. The program was much less successful than its dramatic counterpart—in part because the costs and sheer number of personnel involved in producing an opera is so much larger than a dramatic production.

[79] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III: 1945–1958),* 99-106; Nord, *France's New Deal*, 13–14, 217–219.

Six cities were fully integrated into the decentralization plan; this dissertation examines Marseille. Marseille was the second largest city in France, located at a key port on the Mediterranean, and had an important and established opera house. Of the six decentralization cities, Marseille was able to persist the longest, meeting the state's huge demands (without commensurate funds) before the decentralization experiment largely failed. Strasbourg was not fully vetted into the program, but did receive special state attention and funding because it was in the recently annexed area of Alsace-Lorraine. In particular, the emphasis on returning French language productions to this region made it an important theatre to the decentralization process.

Rouen was very much on the periphery of this movement; the city's smaller size and close proximity to Paris limited its prospects. Additionally, its theatre was damaged during the war. During the Fourth Republic the operas had to be performed in a circus, complete with a ring and equine stables. By considering three diverse cities—in terms of their size, their proximity to Paris, and their relationship to the decentralization plan—a more complete picture of the scope of innovation available in these spaces emerges.

Challenging the narratives of operatic failure and crisis that have surrounded this period has revealed how central this repertoire was to the reformation of French identity and assertation of French cultural prestige during the Fourth Republic. Opera was, once again, a deeply politicized space. Thinking through the ramifications of the strains and expectations placed upon this genre has allowed for a recontexualization of this repertoire that has shown both these works musical value and their cultural-political complexity.

Chapter One

Controversy at the Opéra-Comique: Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* and Tailleferre's *Il était un petit navire*

The Fourth Republic was a time of instability and uncertainty for the Opéra-Comique. Because of its dire finances, it had been joined in 1939 with the Opéra to form the Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux (RTLN). During the Fourth Republic there were calls to cut its budget, its season, or even the theatre itself entirely.[80] Often the Opéra-Comique was outshone by the grander Opéra, and seen as a lesser, more-expendable theatre. Despite this, there were those who sharply defended the theatre, based on the importance of the RTLN and the national genre of opéra-comique to the recovery of French prestige after the war.[81] Given the symbolic, pedagogic, and political value of the RTLN, the political field deeply permeated that of music. The state of French politics and culture affected the RTLN, and the administrator's position was often tightly constrained. This lack of autonomy given to the leadership of the RTLN caused many of the houses' post-war struggles, and the Opéra-Comique was often second in priority.

However, its position in the shadow of the Opéra allowed the Opéra-Comique more leeway, and enabled it to pursue more controversial works at a time when the government

[80] "Réponse à la note du 2 mai 1952 du Ministère de l'Éducation nationale," 5 May 1952, in Archives Opéra, "Plan d'économies à réaliser 1952," *cote.* 20-1144, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[81] Georges Hirsch, "Organisation de l'art lyrique en France, Réforme des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux, Création de l'Office National du Théâtre Lyrique," in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Dossier Hirsch," *cote.* 4-col-8/45(11), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF; André Boll, *La Grande pitié du théâtre lyrique* (Paris: Éditions France-Empire, 1946), 108.

attempted close control of its National Operatic Theatres. During this period, the Opéra-Comique gave more operatic world premieres than the Opéra, ten to the Opéra's four, and these works were more daring and politically contentious than those at the larger house. In this way, the Opéra-Comique remained true to its roots as an arena for political critique as it had throughout times of revolution and change in France's history. Its works were more modern and their incisive cultural-political commentary was important to shaping and questioning French national identity and discourse in the post-war world. Two premieres in particular stirred passionate controversy: Francis Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* (1947) and Germaine Tailleferre's *Il était un petit navire* (1951).

Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias,* conceived during the Occupation, self-consciously drew from the subversive traditions of the opéra-comique and opera-bouffe genres in France and sought to assert the type of music Vichy and the German Occupants denigrated.[82] Poulenc's return to the national stage with *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* was greeted as a return to order for French musical life and as a Resistance triumph. But *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* was more complex than the humorous romp many anticipated, and used comedy and surrealism as a guise through which to critique political and cultural themes significant in post-war France. Poulenc's opera daringly challenged conceptions of gender and traditional bourgeois morality of the family unit. Though the radical nature of his subversion often went underreported in the press, journals did comment on audiences' displeasure with the surrealist plot that the critics also saw as outdated. *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* was multifaceted and multilayered; Poulenc both embraced and ridiculed bourgeois family values in a manner that reflected his own intricate negotiations of his sexuality, religion, and social status. Because of the work's pliable meanings, critics with

[82] Letter from Poulenc to Koechlin, August 1942, in Francis Poulenc, *Correspondance 1910–1963,* ed. Myriam Chimènes (Paris: Fayard, 1998), 520; Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 254.

different political positions each read the work very differently, as will be explored. Its reception in the press was far less clearly politically divided than other works of this period—as will be seen in the next chapter with Milhaud's *Bolivar,* which premiered at the Opéra in 1950.

Tailleferre's *Il était un petit navire* caused a huge scandal and was very vocally protested (reminding the composer later of the pandemonium that had occurred at the premiere of *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel* in 1921).[83] *Il était un petit navire* had begun as a small curtain raiser in 1938, was performed on the Vichy radio in Marseille in 1942 (before the total Occupation of France), and was accepted at the Opéra-Comique between 1946 and 1948.[84] The opera was repeatedly stretched and cut at the whims and requests of the various directors and administrators at the RTLN. Tailleferre's own wishes and good sense for the work were largely ignored. Tailleferre knew the plot her librettist Jeanson offered—essentially a wild and only somewhat coherent parody of Opéra-Comique conventions and a send-up of French society at large—would not support a full-length work. But, Tailleferre found her own voice outweighed by those of her male collaborators.[85]

Beyond these practical, and sexist, problems, the content of *Il était un petit navire* was too politically and culturally daring for France in 1951. Tailleferre herself was sympathetic to the political left, she had received commissions under the left-wing Popular Front government before the war, and later in 1968 she would formally join the French Communist Party.[86] Her

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[83] Germaine Tailleferre, "Mémoires à l'emporte-pièce," ed. Frédéric Robert, *Revue internationale de la musique française* 19 (February 1989): 72.

[84] Germaine Tailleferre and Henri Jeanson, *Il était un petit navire,* critical edition by Paul Wehage and Jean-Thierry Boisseau (Lagny sur Marne, Fr: Musik Fabrik, 2008), ii; Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture oeuvres examinées 1946–1962," *cote.* 20-1160, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[85] Tailleferre, "Mémoires à l'emporte-pièce," 55–56.

[86] "Le célèbre compositeur Germaine Tailleferre adhére à notre Parti," *L'Humanité,* 19 June 1968.

left-leanings in all likelihood contributed to the fierce attacks against the work in the press. The work itself took a strong stance criticizing society, centering on the perpetuation of truths and lies and the convenience of inaction and ignorance. This was a powerful satire that could easily be read onto the French government, and indeed the audience's own complicity in society's ills, in a very unflattering light.

One might suppose that liberal works that challenged conservative nationalist discourses would have been popular after the Liberation when the left and former Resistance were at the height of their power.[87] Indeed, it was during this time that the productions of Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* and Tailleferre's *Il était un petit navire* were begun. However, as French politics shifted towards the right, particularly with the departure of the communists from the government in 1947 and the failure of the left-leaning coalition government the same year, Poulenc and Tailleferre's works became too daring. The controversy that these works caused, and in particular the back-and-forth between the administration and its creators that Tailleferre's production endured, was a strong indication of the shifting powers and priorities of the political field in France and its far-reaching effect upon the musical field and the RTLN. Because these works failed to thrive, the innovation and daring productions at the Opéra-Comique have been largely ignored. Returning to these works, exploring their rich cultural critique (especially on the subjects of gender and bourgeois morals), and examining the impact French politics had upon their reception, offer keen insight into the artistic life of the Opéra-Comique during the Fourth Republic.

[87] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III: 1945–1958),* 30–32.

The RTLN, a New Republic, and Reasserting French Cultural Greatness

The Opéra, and Opéra-Comique, were highly symbolic spaces where France could attempt to redefine and reassert its identity in a post-war world in which it had lost much of its standing. This made the houses central to post-war debates, especially over the value of operatic theatre. Henri Collet, a French composer and the music critic who had named "Les Six," emphasized the important role the RTLN could play to the reassertion of France's cultural influence in his article in the November-December 1946 edition of *La Revue musicale:*

> If tomorrow we have a coherent musical policy and our Opéra *imposes* our operatic masterpieces that are so superior to Wagnerian or Verdist substitutes, then not only our Art will be saved, but the prestige of our nation will grow to unforeseen proportions. Dream of the enthusiasm of the Germans for Bizet, the Italians for Gabriel-Dupont, the Spanish for Saint-Saëns, the English for Debussy, the Americans for Darius Milhaud, the Russians for Maurice Ravel, and tell ourselves that it is only for our government to coordinate these influences, and to form around the Opéra of Paris—the best theatre in the world—a *French musical front*, a guarantee of our future intellectual supremacy.[88]

According to Collet, French opera was already first in the world, but without adequate support this area of French mastery, so important to France's reputation, could be lost. This was particularly relevant because of the emphasis that had been placed on the German repertoire during the Occupation. Collet not only argued that the Opéra was vital to France's international splendor and national artistic and intellectual identity, but was also a critical aspect of the artistic education of the French people.[89] It is worth noting, despite the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique

[88] "Que demain nous ayons une politique musicale cohérente et que notre Opéra *impose* nos chefs-d'œuvre lyriques si supérieurs aux succédanés wagnériens ou verdistes, et non seulement notre Art sera sauvé, mais le prestige de notre pays s'accroitra dans d'imprévisible proportions. Songeons à l'engouement des Allemands pour Bizet, des Italiens pour Gabriel-Dupont, des Espagnols pour Saint-Saëns, des Anglais pour Debussy, des Américains pour Darius Milhaud, des Russes pour Maurice Ravel, et disons-nous qu'il ne tient qu'à notre gouvernement de coordonner ces influences, et de réaliser autour de l'Opéra de Paris—premier théâtre du monde—le *front musicale français,* garantie de notre future suprématie intellectuelle." See Henri Collet, "À l'Opéra," *La Revue musicale* 203 (November–December 1946): 42–43.

[89] Ibid., 41.

being legally joined as the RTLN, Collet here focused his argument on the Opéra, largely leaving the Opéra-Comique in the shadows.

His opinion was far from isolated. Articles in journals and correspondence with the RTLN administration also referred to the importance of the RTLN to the reputation of France.[90] The significance of artistic education was stressed as part of the new social programs advanced at the Liberation; as outlined in the preamble of the Fourth Republic constitution, French citizens now had a right to culture.[91] The idea that culture was a public service was emphasized by former Resistants and the left, especially the French Communist Party who sought to bring artistic education and access to the workers and masses.[92]

The symbolic, pedagogic, and political value of the RTLN theatres meant that the political field deeply permeated that of operatic theatre in France—and indeed the larger musical field as well. The Fourth Republic was characterized by great political instability, due especially to its coalition governments. During the Fourth Republic, there were multiple political parties and often one party could not secure a governing majority on its own. In that case, several parties had to group together into a coalition that had enough votes to create a majority. This coalition system was quite volatile in France, and resulted in frequent government and ministry changes that influenced the RTLN. Maurice Lehmann, who was administrator of the RTLN for sixteen months from 1945 to 1946 and then again from 1951 to 1955, later recalled:

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[90] Hirsch's opinion is quoted in Auzolle, "Les Créations lyriques à l'Opéra de Paris entre 1945 et 1955," 105. The archives also contain letters where the administrator reminds the government directors and ministers of the importance of the RTLN to France's reputation. See for example Hirsch's 6 June 1946 letter to Jaujard or the letter from the Sociétés des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques to the Direction des Arts et Lettres, 10 December 1946, both in Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1946," *cote.* 20-1951, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[91] Gumplowicz and Klein, *Paris 1944–1954. Artistes, intellectuels, publics; la culture comme enjeu*, 8–14.

[92] Nord, *France's New Deal*, 14–19, 205, 217; Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944–1958*, 54–57; Bradby, *Modern French Drama 1940–1980*, 87–88.

> This director's chair at the RTLN is politicized to the maximum. Political pressure is used in favor of anyone and anything … for the three years [*sic*] that I have been there, *four* governments have succeeded one another. The current minister certainly has the best of intentions towards me, but how long will he last? And if he leaves, whom will I be dealing with?[93]

Lehmann highlighted the problems the changing governments could cause for the RTLN, as well as the degree to which politics were influencing affairs of the theatres.

Each shift in power resulted in new personnel in the ministries, which also resulted in changes to the leadership and budgets at the RTLN. For example, before the establishment of the Fourth Republic, during the provisional government headed by General de Gaulle, the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale (Ministry of National Education, which directly oversaw the RTLN) was held by two Gaullist politicians. After the provisional government ended, a left coalition comprised of the French Communist Party (Parti Communiste français or PCF), the French Socialist Party (Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière or SFIO) and the Christian democrats (Mouvement Républicain Populaire or MRP) joined together to form a left majority, known as Tripartisme.[94] Under Tripartisme, the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale was held by a socialist, Marcel-Edmond Naegelen, who probably helped fellow socialist Hirsch get the RTLN position.

Ultimately in 1947, the communist ministers were forced out of Ramadier's government, weaking both their own party and the socialist party as well. This transpired in part because of

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[93]"Ce fauteuil d'Administrateur de la R. T. L. N. est politisé au maximum. Les pressions politiques s'emploient en faveur du n'importe qui et à propose de n'importe quoi… depuis trois ans que je suis là, *quatre* gouvernements se sont succédés. Le ministre actuel est certainement animé des meilleures intentions à mon égard, mais combien de temps cela durera-t-il? Et s'il s'en va, à qui aurai-je affaire?" Lehmann misremembers the length of time he spent at the RTLN, a total of 5 years and 4 months. He did work under 4 governments (Pinay, Mayer, Laniel, and Pierre Mendès-France), his first tenure saw the transition from de Gaulle's provisional government to the formation of Tripartism. See Maurice Lehmann, *Trompe l'oeil, quelques souvenirs d'un homme de spectacles 1924–1968* (Paris: Éditions de la pensée modern, 1972), 167.

[94] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 30–32.

Ramadier's decision to take a large amount of American financial aid in the form of the Marshall Plan, and also because of the communist refusal to support the war in Indochina.[95] The left coalition of the PCF, SFIO, and MRP, was replaced in 1947 by the more center-oriented Third Force coalition of the SFIO, MRP, Radicals, and the Democratic and Socialist Union of the Resistance (Union démocratique et socialiste de la Résistance or UDSR).[96] This large change in the government caused transitions in the ministries who had direct control of the RTLN. As the socialists lost power, the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale passed to Radical ministers and Hirsch was pushed out in favor of a more conservative director, as will be explored in Chapter Three. During the Fourth Republic this ministry changed hands a dizzying thirteen times. In contrast, the post of Directeur Général des Beaux-Arts, who worked under the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, was held by Jacques Jaujard for the entirety of the Fourth Republic.

Under the new Third Force coalitions remained very tenuous.[97] The parties constituting the Third Force disagreed on major issues, including public education, the budget, social programs, and of course the colonies.[98] During the Third Force's control, 1947 to 1952, there were ten changes in government, which also resulted in changes in the ministries. The Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, which oversaw the RTLN, changed hands seven times between predominantly the radical and socialist parties. These changes effected the RTLN. Administrators were often on tenuous footing because the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale had a role not only in their selection and dismissal, but also in daily affairs at the theatres.

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[95] Ibid., 51.

[96] Ibid., 52–60.

[97] Jon Cowans, "French Public Opinion and the Founding of the Fourth Republic," *French Historical Studies* 17, no. 1 (Spring, 1991): 63.

[98] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 59–60.

Additionally, the RTLN had to work with both the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale and the Ministère des Finances (Ministry of Finance) to set the yearly subvention which accounted for about seventy percent of the RTLN's overall operating budget.[99]

The RTLN experienced rapid changes in its administration during this period, much like the French governments. The RTLN cycled through four leaders between 1945 and 1946: Jacques Rouché was asked to leave the post in February 1945, he was temporarily replaced by Gadave until Maurice Lehmann took over in June 1945, only to cede his chair quickly to Georges Hirsch in 1946, who held the position until 1951. At the Opéra-Comique directors changed just as quickly: Max d'Ollone was replaced by the former singer Lucien Muratore in 1944, Muratore was quickly fired and a committee took over until Albert Wolff took control in 1945, Wolff was replaced in 1946 by Henri Malherbe, Malherbe lasted two years and then was replaced by yet another committee in 1948, Emmanuel Bondeville took over in 1949 and lasted until 1951. The post was then filled by Louis Beydts until 1953, interim director Maurice Decerf until 1954, and finally François Agostini through the end of the Fourth Republic. It is telling that often only a committee could be produced as a solution, since a single person to direct the house could either not be agreed upon nor found. [Table 1.1]

[99] Agid and Tarondeau, *L'Opéra de Paris. Gouverner une grande institution culturelle,* 79.

Table: 1.1: Chart of Governments and RTLN Administrators

Year	President		Pres. Of Council		M. of Education		Arts and Lettters	RTLN	Opéra	Opéra-Comique
								Rouché		Muratore
1945	de Gaulle				Capitant then Giacobbi	UDSR then		Gadave		Committee
								Lehmann		Wolff
1946	Gouin	SFIO							Hahn	
					Naegelen	SFIO				Malherbe
	Bidault	MRP								
1947	Blum	SFIO								
			Ramadier	SFIO					Wolff	
1948			Schuman	MRP	Depreux					
			Marie	Rad	Delbos	Rad		Hirsch		Committee
			Schuman	MRP	Tony-Révillon	Rad				
1949			Queuille	Rad	Delbos	Rad-Soc				
1950			Bidault	MRP						
	Auriol	SFIO	Queuille	Rad	Morice	Rad			Büsser	Bondeville
			Pleven	UDSR	Lapie	SFIO	Jaujard			
1951			Queuille	Rad						
1952			Pleven	UDSR	Marie	Rad				Beydts
			Faure	Rad	Lapie	SFIO				
1953			Pinay	CNIP				Lehmann		Decerf
			Mayer	Rad	Marie	Rad				
1954			Laniel	Ind						
1955			Mendès France	Rad-Soc	Berthoin	Rad-Soc				
1956			Faure	Rad				Ibert	Bondeville	
1957			Mollet	SFIO						
	Coty	CNIP	Bourgès-Maunoury	Rad Soc	Billeres	Rad-Soc				Agostini
1958			Gaillard	Rad				Hirsch		
			Pflimlin	MRP	Bordeneuve	Rad-Soc				
1959			de Gaulle		Berthoin	Rad-Soc				

The statutes that governed and guided the RTLN were not updated after the Liberation to reflect the new situation in France and the national theatres, which added to the turmoil caused by the changing governments. In a rapidly changing musical and cultural field, the RTLN lacked the autonomy to change with the times, and the government did not prioritize its laws. Instead the laws of 1939 and 1941 were still in application, and with them their inherent flaws. In 1937, Rouché and Hirsch both submitted reports on the crisis at the Opéra-Comique to Jean Zay, the new Ministre de l'Éducation nationale (Minister of National Education) under the Popular Front, that would be developed into the 1939 law.[100]

[100] Letter from Rouché to Ministre de l'Education Nationale, 13 July 1937, and Georges Hirsch, "[illegible] Rénovation de l'art lyrique en France et réorganization du théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique," both in F/21/5194 "Réforme du théâtre," F21 Beaux-Arts, Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

In his report, Rouché suggested fusing the two national operatic theatres. He believed that bringing both the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique under the same authority would help stabilize the Opéra-Comique. It would also allow the houses to share resources, for example singers, which he claimed would cut costs and increase the quality of performances. Rouché's plan placed the Opéra-Comique further to the background, treating it more as an annex of the Opéra rather than the leading stage of its own French opéra-comique genre.[101] The legacy of this choice, and his movement of some of the Opéra-Comique's repertoire to the Opéra, contributed to the confusion over the Opéra-Comique's identity and worth during the Fourth Republic.

Hirsch did not recommend the unification of the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique as a solution, and instead suggested substantial changes to how the Opéra-Comique was run. (Later when he was in charge of the RTLN he was blocked by the laws from making the changes he suggested in this earlier report.) Hirsch argued that the problems at the Opéra-Comique were the fault of the artistic personnel and director, not the repertoire. He refuted the claim that opéra-comique as a genre was being abandoned by audiences, and in contrast asserted that opéras-comiques were succeeding in other theatres in Paris. Hirsch suggested establishing a committee that had the power to help guide the house—thus mitigating the risk that placing a less-talented director at the helm presented. Hirsch also wanted to renew the troupe, bringing in new artists and replacing those who were past their prime. Additionally, he wanted to refresh the repertoire by introducing more modern staging and technology.

[101] Letter from Rouché to Ministre de l'Education nationale, 13 July 1937, in F/21/5194 "Réforme du théâtre," F21 Beaux-Arts, Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

In an effort to expand the Opéra-Comique's audience, he suggested free performances twice a week for students and a lower standard ticket price.[102] While this aligned well with the desire to further democratize culture that was a prominent goal of the left just after the Liberation, Hirsch was only able to make these changes to a degree. The Jeunesses musicales de France (JMF), a student musical organization founded during Vichy and that continued after the Liberation, was one of the few groups to participate in the type of education outreach Hirsch had envisioned at the RTLN.[103] Members of the JMF were able to see a limited number of productions at the opera at a reduced rate.[104] Hirsch was unable to lower ticket prices as he intended because these were set by the Ministère des Finances and the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale. Tickets actually rose significantly over the Fourth Republic.[105]

Rouché's proposals were more closely followed at the time than those of Hirsch, which was unsurprising given the faith politicians and musicians alike had in Rouché's established directorial acumen.[106] In 1939, Zay issued the reforms that led to the union of the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique as the RTLN and transformed them into state institutions. Agid and Tarondeau argue that because of the government's belief in Rouché's capability he was given the latitude to act with relative independence, despite the new level of control the government could choose to

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[102] Georges Hirsch, "[illegible] Rénovation de l'art lyrique en France et réorganization du théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique," in F/21/5194 "Réforme du théâtre," F21 Beaux-Arts, Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

[103] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 56, 330; Porcile, *Les Conflits de la musique française 1940–1965*, 87–93.

[104] See the records in Archives Opéra, "Correspondances avec Jeunesses musicales de France," *cote.* 20-334, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[105] See for example the correspondence between Hirsch and the Direction des Beaux-Arts on the subject: Letter Jeanne Laurent to Hirsch, 5 May 1948, and Letter Hirsch to Jaujard, 27 October, 1948, both in Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1948," *cote.* 20-1953, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[106] Agid and Tarondeau, *L'Opéra de Paris,* 47.

exercise over the theatres. [107] The reverse proved true during the Fourth Republic; it was a lack of autonomy and freedom given to administrators in whom the government had less faith that precipitated many of the RTLN's post-war struggles.

When RTLN was formed in 1939 its statutes had unspecific rules and undefined expectations.[108] The results of this change, however, were at first mitigated by Rouché's continued presence. These changes later effected the role of the administrator, and the state exercised its new control in ways that interfered with the daily running of the theatres. The RTLN's mission was initially outlined in the decrees of 14 January 1939 and 11 May 1939.[109] These decrees created the RTLN as a state institution, outlined some of the administrator's powers, and the influence the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale had upon the choice of administrator and director for each house. It also established the comité consultatif, a consulting committee that guided the RTLN, and rules regarding the committee's membership. However, the committee's powers were not clearly outlined. The 1939 decree simply stated they were to give their opinion to the RTLN administrator and government ministers on the questions submitted to them.[110]

It was not until the introduction of the 8 January 1941 decree that the internal workings of the theatre were outlined in a manner similar to the previous *cahiers des charges.* This decree was issued under the Vichy government but was kept in place even after the Liberation. In particular, the decree outlined the expectations for repertoire and performances. The Opéra was

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[107] Agid and Tarondeau, *L'Opéra de Paris,* 64; Gourret, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris 1669–1971, portraits de chanteurs*, 86, 94.

[108] Agid and Tarondeau, *L'Opéra de Paris*, 75–76.

[109] Agid and Tarondeau, *L'Opéra de Paris*, 76; Gourret, *Ces Hommes qui ont fait l'Opéra*, 273–274.

[110] Gourret, *Ces Hommes qui ont fait l'Opéra*, 274–279.

to present at least two hundred evening performances (operatic or choreographic) per year (two-thirds should be French), at least two new evenings of French premieres, and revive at least one piece that had not been presented at the theatre for at least ten years.[111]

The Opéra-Comique had to offer and premiere more works than the Opéra, despite its often subordinate status. It needed to present at least three hundred performances per year (two-thirds by French composers) and at least three full evenings of new French premieres. The Opéra-Comique also had to revive a piece that had not been presented in the theatre for at least ten years.[112] That the Opéra-Comique had to offer one hundred more performances than the Opéra was not new and mostly due to the practicalities of the houses. For example, the Opéra-Comique had fewer seats yet less expensive tickets than the Opéra and had to perform more often to meet the audience demand. Additionally, the Opéra-Comique staged less elaborate productions than the Opéra and could manage to present a larger variety each day.

During the Fourth Republic there were fourteen new operatic works premiered at the RTLN—four at the Opéra and ten at the Opéra-Comique.[113] It proved difficult for administrators during the Fourth Republic to bring new works to the stage. I here argue, that this was due to a range of factors including, of course, the ever-worrisome budget. But it also proved challenging to select works in a style that could satisfy audiences, critics, and politicians simultaneously. Additionally, the frequent changes in administration (and changes in government) meant that premieres or restagings often stalled, were abandoned, or even had to be completely restarted. Because of this, each new work or presentation that made it to the stage—even if many did not

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[111] Pierre Jarniou, "Étude sur la fonctionnement de la Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux," (Paris: Ministère d'État chargé des affaires culturelles, May-December 1966), 9–10.

[112] Ibid., 9–10.

[113] Cécile Auzolle, "Les Créations lyriques à l'Opéra de Paris entre 1945 et 1955," 105.

remain long in the repertoire beyond their premiere—was particularly significant and revelatory of the intersecting musical, political, and cultural fields.

In contrast with the Opéra which only had four operatic premieres, at the 'floundering' Opéra-Comique there were ten: the first of which, Francis Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias,* premiered in 1947 and the last, Paul Le Flem's *La Magicienne de la mer,* in 1954.[114] Similar to the Opéra, the composers selected for premiere at the Opéra-Comique were already established in France and most emerged the Occupation with their reputations intact. The exception was Le Flem who had been active under Vichy and was a member of the group Collaboration: thus, it was not until later he was able to return to the RTLN.[115] Perhaps the least well-known was Pierre Wissmer who composed *Marion ou la Belle au tricorne,* which premiered in 1951. But even he had studied at the Conservatoire with Roger Ducasse and the Schola Cantorum with Daniel-Lesur, and after WWII headed the chamber music section of Radio-Genève.

Three of the new operatic premieres did relatively well and were performed about thirty times each during the Fourth Republic. These were the compositions by Francis Poulenc, Henri Büsser, and Emanuel Bondeville, and each opera remained in the repertoire for five years after the work's premiere. Five of the ten new works received fewer than ten performances, for example Tailleferre's *Il était un petit navire* was quickly pulled after its scandalous premiere, which will be discussed at the end of this chapter. [Table 1.2] Eight out of the ten premieres were staged while Hirsch was administrator from 1946 to 1951, leaving only two under Lehmann, and zero premieres during Ibert's brief administration from 1955 to 1956. The Opéra-Comique even achieved the three-evenings worth of French premieres (including ballets) required in 1947,

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[114] Ibid., 105.

[115] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 7.

1948, 1949, and 1951—a slightly more frequent success rate by this measure than the Opéra which only managed to meet the requirements three years. However, there were no new operatic premieres after the 1954 *La Magicienne de la mer* for the rest of the Fourth Republic at the Opéra-Comique. It is interesting that these premieres were able to come out earlier in the Fourth Republic. As positions became more entrenched at the RTLN, and the problems of the Fourth Republic intensified it became even harder to bring new works to the stage.

Table 1.2: Premieres at the Opéra-Comique 1945–1958[116]

Premieres at the Opéra-Comique 1945–1958			1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	Total 1945–1958
mamelles de Tirésias (Les)	1947	Poulenc			11	9	6	1	3								30
farce de Maître Pathelin (La)	1948	Barraud				5	1										6
carrosse du Saint-Sacrement (Le)	1948	Busser				9	14	1	6	3							33
Guignol	1949	Bloch					15										15
Oui des jeunes filles (Le)	1949	Hahn (finished by Busser)					10	1									11
Madame Bovary	1951	Bondeville							14	7	1	2	2				26
Il était un petit navire	1951	Tailleferre							4								4
Marion ou la Belle au tricorne	1951	Wissmer							4	1							5
Dolores	1952	Lévy									2						2
Magicienne de la mer (La)	1954	Le Flem										4					4

However, quantity is only one measure of the houses. While it was not a thriving period for premiering a wealth of new works, writing off this entire period as one of failure at the RTLN has caused critical works that made sharp cultural-political commentary and helped to shape French national identity and discourse, like Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias,* to be overlooked for too long. Even the works that did 'fail' like Tailleferre's ill-fated *Il était un petit navire* offer insights as to why it was so difficult to achieve operatic success during this period. But beyond this, these works often lacked resounding success and long careers more due to the logistical realities of the RTLN and the political forces at work than because of actual musical deficiencies.

The works premiered at the Opéra were quite ponderous thematically, focusing on high tragedy, exotic locales, grand productions, and past styles, as later chapters will show. In contrast, the offerings at the Opéra-Comique were more mixed in topic and style, and were more

[116] "Journal de régie 1945–1958," Archives de l'Opéra-Comique, magasin de la Réserve, *cote.* REGISTRES OC-89 through OC-101, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

modern. The productions that made it to the Opéra-Comique were riskier and more innovative than those at the Opéra. Its smaller stage and stature once again allowed it to be more flexible than the larger house. However, the works' successes, with both critics and audiences, were very inconsistent. This left the Opéra-Comique more vulnerable than the Opéra, despite having a rate of premieres that exceeded that of the larger house.

Because of this vulnerability, the future of the Opéra-Comique and the proper exploitation of the theatre were controversial topics among both politicians and musicians. The failure of several of the premieres during this period fueled calls to close the Opéra-Comique or at least reduce its season and personnel. Yet despite this, the Opéra-Comique was also central to the national conception of French operatic theatre, in particular because of the uniquely French nature of the opéra-comique genre, and was fiercely defended by many. While often these same individuals called for substantial reforms at the Opéra-Comique, they posited that this French genre, and its associated theatre, were integral to the future of French operatic theatre and French cultural prominence.

Hirsch clearly articulated the importance of the Opéra-Comique, and operatic theatre in general, in his plan for the "Organisation de l'art lyrique en France," written soon after the war, probably in 1945 or early 1946.[117] In this document, he noted that while Germany and Italy held first place in the operatic genre, the "opéra-comique forms an essentially, one could say specifically, French aesthetic."[118] Hirsch emphasized, that because music was one of the most universal of the arts it was also "directly tied to the destiny of the nation and had an essential role

[117] Georges Hirsch, "Organisation de l'art lyrique en France, Réforme des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux, Création de l'Office National du Théâtre Lyrique," in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Dossier Hirsch," *cote.* 4-col-8/45(11), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

[118] "l'opéra-comique forme une esthétique essentiellement, on peut dire spécifiquement française." Ibid.

to play in the modern world."[119] Therefore to allow the Opéra-Comique to fail would not only allow a rich French tradition to die, but also would render France less equipped to reassert its importance in a changing contemporary world.

Hirsch, now administrator at the RTLN, claimed in *Opéra* in May 1946 that, since the nineteenth century, France had been the foremost musical power in the world. He stated that his goal at the RTLN was to restore to French music this status. Thus, the fight to preserve the distinctively French Opéra-Comique could be viewed as a part of the wider struggle to reassert France's relevance and cultural superiority after the war. But how to accomplish this goal at the RTLN was controversial. Hirsch's efforts to modernize—for example the provocative decors produced by Valentine Hugo for the new staging of *Pelléas et Mélisande* or new works like Poulenc's *Mamelles de Tirésias*—were often met with resistance from more conservative musicians and politicians.[120] This antagonism between Hirsch's progressive views and the conservative viewpoint stretched beyond his musical choices to encompass his politics also. Hirsch was an active socialist, which in the immediate post-war period afforded him much support since they were in power as part of the coalition. However, it gave conservative forces another reason to oppose his initiatives and seek to remove him from power, as will be explored in Chapter Three.

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[119] "Il est directement lié au destin de la nation. La musique joue un rôle essentiel dans le monde moderne." Ibid.

[120] This debate was much discussed in the papers and in the RTLN documents. See for example, Francis Dhomont, "À propos d'un débat," *Réforme,* 26 July 1947; Maurice Brillant, "La saison passé, la saison nouvelle à l'Opéra-Comique," *L'Aube,* 10 August 1947; Letter from Hirsch to Jeanne Laurent, 5 July 1947, Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1947," *cote.* 20-1952, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; Letter from Gandrey-Rety to Malherbe, 20 June 1947, Archives Opéra, "Correspondance entre Administrateur et journal *Arts*," *cote.* 20-243, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

André Boll agreed that opéra-comique genre deserved special attention from the state as it was, along with operettes, a particularly French genre.[121] In his 1946 book *La Grande pitié du théâtre lyrique,* Boll argued that the opéra-comique needed to return to its original intentions, which ran counter to the 'monstrous and sublime' grandeur of Grand Opera. By increasingly adopting the grand style of these large works, opéras-comiques had become merely operas in reduction.[122] The original shorter, lighter, and suppler genre of opéra-comique seemed perfectly suited to composers' needs in the 1950s, who, according to Boll, were increasingly turning to shorter works with rapid action.[123] Boll insisted the way to save the Opéra-Comique was to remember what made it unique from the Opéra. It would seem that works like *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* and *Il était un petit navire* were in some ways what he had in mind. But their political stances, which was of course also a tradition at the Opéra-Comique, made them hard for even some defenders of the genre to swallow.

Yet, despite these arguments for the importance of the Opéra-Comique and its genre, the theatre was often short of funds and in need of repairs. The resources allocated to the RTLN went to the Opéra first and foremost. For example, in 1947 there was still rationing of electrical power in Paris. Hirsch wrote to Jeanne Laurent the sous-directrice des Spectacles et de la musique [Assistant-director of Spectacles and Music, which was part of the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale] to request a larger electrical allowance, but only the Opéra was granted the right to use the power each day; the Opéra-Comique had to make do without power for the majority of the day on Mondays and Tuesdays even though it technically offered more

[121] Boll, *La Grande pitié du théâtre lyrique*, 108.

[122] Ibid., 40.

[123] Ibid., 86–87.

performances than the Opéra.[124] Lehmann had requested a long list of repairs to be completed at the Opéra-Comique in 1945, yet in 1947 almost none had been accomplished despite his, and then Hirsch's, efforts.[125] Most of the work would take until late 1950 to be completed, and even then the construction was several months behind schedule and seriously disrupted the life of the theatre.[126]

Additionally, the Opéra-Comique was often the greater victim of the proposed budget cuts. Starting in 1950 in particular, the government put increased pressure on the RTLN to lower its subvention requests—and thus its internal budgets. As the government shifted more to the center and to the right, the arts budgets became increasingly tight. First Hirsch, and then starting in September 1951 Lehmann, were asked to project what kind of savings could be made if, for example, the Opéra-Comique were only open for seven-month seasons instead of the current eleven.[127] Reducing or eliminating the ballet at the Opéra-Comique was also proposed.[128] Similarly stark measures were not proposed for the Opéra—though it was also affected by the global demand to lower budgets and cut costs.

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[124] Letter Jeanne Laurent to Georges Hirsch, 6 October 1947, Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1947," *cote.* 20-1952, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[125] Letter Hirsch to Jaujard, 13 June 1947, Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1947," *cote.* 20-1952, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; Letter from Maurice Lehmann, 14 November 1945, Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1945," *cote.* 20-1950, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[126] Letter Hirsch to Jaujard, 15 November 1950, Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1950," *cote.* 20-1955, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[127] Letter Hirsch to Jaujard, 25 March 1950, Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1950," *cote.* 20-1955, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; Letters Lehmann to Jaujard, 6 May 1952, 9 May 1952, Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1952," *cote.* 20-1957, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[128] Letter Lehmann to Jaujard, 6 May 1952, Archives Opéra, "Plan d'économies à réaliser 1952," *cote.* 20-1144, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; Letter Lehmann to Jaujard, 1952, Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1952," *cote.* 20-1957, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

Reviving the French opéra-comique at the Opéra-Comique

The Opéra-Comique was placed at a difficult intersection; musicians and artists supported the house, but wanted it to return more frequently to the principles of the opéra-comique genre. They criticized the Opéra-Comique and its audiences for favoring foreign and dated works, like Puccini's *La Bohème*, over French opéras-comiques. However, the same short list of mostly foreign operas brought the highest ticket sales night after night—as Roland-Manuel reported in December 1946 in the left-leaning journal *Combat.*[129] If the Opéra-Comique directors moved away from this successful repertoire as many critics and musicians desired, the future of the house would be risked by pushing it into even greater financial peril when the government was looking for places to trim the budget. The Opéra-Comique did present some new premieres, as the *cahier des charges* demanded, despite their danger. Perhaps choosing well-known composers like Poulenc and Tailleferre was an attempt to mitigate the chances of failure—and it is important to remember that the comité consultatif had to sign off on and approve all new works at the RTLN. However, the committee did a poor job predicting and controlling controversy in these new premieres, as the example of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* will reveal.

Roland-Manuel, who was on the comité consultatif mentioned above, noted it was not just new opéras-comiques that tended to be largest fiscal flops at the Opéra-Comique, but even less-performed masterpiece opéras-comiques like Chabrier's *Le Roi malgre lui* in brilliant productions could not remain on the programs.[130] The root of the problem was, according to

[129] Roland-Manuel, "Musique: L'Opéra-Comique et son public," *Combat,* 29–30 December 1946.

[130] Ibid.

Roland-Manuel, the audiences who no longer recognized these French masterworks for what they were:

> …one does not know what type of hypogeum smelling of mothballs the strange public that haunts the salle Favart seem to have emerged from. Ghost of a disappeared world. It nonetheless represents the most solid obstacle to the renewal of operatic theatre in France.[131]

Roland-Manuel's observation highlights the bind the directors of the Opéra-Comique were in during this time: increased financial pressures made it necessary to mount operas and ballets that turned a profit. However, the works that made money were, according to critics, dying and speeding along the death of the national operatic theatres themselves. Attempts to find new works that could make a profit, please audiences, and satisfy the critics and musicians yielded varied results. Even established and popular composers like Francis Poulenc and Germaine Tailleferre proved to be gambles.

This issue was central to the reception of Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias,* and for several of the works premiered at the Opéra-Comique during the Fourth Republic. As will be seen, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* touched on very politically contentious themes, like gender and France's declining birthrate; however, many of the reviewers chose to focus on its importance to the opéra-comique genre rather than these topics raised in the work itself. Henriette Roget wrote in her article that "I heard several grouches complain that the whole piece was too cheerful! (A comic work at the Opéra-Comique, what a scandal at this moment when we are not in the habit of seeing each thing in its place!)"[132] Roget was not alone defending Poulenc by aligning him

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[131] "…d'on ne sait quelle espèce d'hypogée sentant la naphtaline que semble sortir l'étrange public qui hante la salle Favart. Fantôme d'un monde disparu. Il n'en continue pas moins le plus solide obstacle à la rénovation du théâtre lyrique en France." Ibid.

[132] "J'ai entendu quelques grincheux se plaindre de ce que l'ensemble de la pièce est fort gai ! (Un ouvrage comique à l'Opéra-Comique, quel scandale en ce temps où l'on n'est guère habitué à voir chaque chose à sa place !)" See Henriette Roget, "Le lieu de crime," undated; a copy is preserved in Francis Poulenc, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias,"*

with the history of the Opéra-Comique and its genre. Denise Bourdet, in the conservative *Le Figaro littéraire,* wrote that there was nothing in Poulenc's opera to shock audiences, and instead it was prolonging a clear echo of the grandest of the French tradition of sensibility and taste.[133] She and other reviewers framed audience complaints as intolerant of this established and nationally French genre. Interestingly, as will be seen in Chapter two, reviews took a similar approach defending Milhaud's *Bolivar* in 1950, arguing that the piece was deeply connected to the Opéra's roots and used this historical lineage to justify the opera's worth.

Poulenc's provocative opera could be framed as an effort to reestablish France's cultural splendor and the French opéra-comique genre. Maurice Brillant wrote that the score was a small miracle "through a sort of spontaneous genius, subtle and clear at once. What an authentic piece of Paris, what a precious example of France!"[134] Brillant, who sometimes wrote for the conservative Catholic paper *La Croix,* praised *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* highly. Support for Poulenc, and *Les Mamelles de Tirésias,* often cut across political lines. Poulenc was uniquely positioned in the post-war period with strong friends on the left who, along with other former Resistance members, were in power. But Poulenc also had allies on the right where his own more conservative political proclivities often lay. Thus, critics on both the right and the left had an interest in supporting Poulenc and his importance to the future of French operatic art.

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dossier 26, "Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur" VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF.

[133] "Rien ne devrait moins le choquer que celle de Poulenc, qui prolonge si clairement l'écho des plus grandes traditions françaises de sensibilité et de goût…" See Denise Bourdet, "Apollinaire et Poulenc à l'Opéra-Comique," (Bourdet's article likely appeared in *Le Figaro littéraire* to which she contributed); a copy is preserved in Francis Poulenc, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias,"* dossier 26, "Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur" VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF.

[134] "par une sorte de génie spontané, subtil et clair à la fois. Quel authentique article de Paris, quelle précieuse chose de France !" See Maurice Brillant, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias,"* 4 June 1947; a copy is preserved in Francis Poulenc, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias,"* dossier 26, "Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur" VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF.

Reviews also aligned Poulenc with past French composers, like Ravel and Chabrier whose opéra-comiques were not initially recognized for their genius and not appreciated by their audiences. By presenting Poulenc as the next step in this great French operatic tradition, it showed that France was recovering from the war, and was preparing to regain her prominence in the international cultural field. One of Poulenc's biographers, Henri Hell, wrote that *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* was a French masterpiece and compared it to Chabrier's *Le Roi malgré lui* or Ravel's *L'Heure espagnole.*[135] (The echoes of Ravel were not coincidence. Poulenc wrote to Pierre Bernac 24 June 1944 that he had been studying *l'Heure espagnole* as he worked on his own opera.)[136] Hell praised Poulenc's innate (and very French) sense of balance, which allowed him to mix the grave and the comic in the work tastefully. Hell ended by quoting the famous signature of Debussy "musicien français," but instead as Poulenc's own moniker—"Francis Poulenc musicien français."[137]

The invocation of Chabrier and Ravel in several reviews, especially their comic opera works, was significant as Chabrier and Ravel had been appropriated by the Resistance during the Occupation. Poulenc was, at the outset of the Occupation, accepting of Vichy France, but over the course of the conflict was gradually drawn into Resistance circles. Poulenc's use of Chabrier underwent a similar transformation. In 1942, Poulenc's ballet *Les Animaux modèles* had promoted Chabrier's more Wagnerian tendencies, as espoused by Vichy. However, as Poulenc

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[135] Henri Hell, "Les Dernières œuvres de Francis Poulenc," undated; a copy is preserved in Francis Poulenc, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias,"* dossier 26, "Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur" VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF.

[136] Letter from Francis Poulenc to Pierre Bernac, 24 June 1944, in Poulenc, *Correspondance*, 554.

[137] Henri Hell, "Les Dernières oeuvres de Francis Poulenc," undated; a copy is preserved in Francis Poulenc, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias,"* dossier 26, "Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur" VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF.

moved toward the Resistance, he turned increasingly to Chabrier's opera-bouffe models—as his former teacher Charles Koechlin advised him to do.[138] In a letter to Koechlin from August 1942 just after his ballet's premiere, Poulenc wrote that he was channeling the comic Chabrier for his first operatic composition *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*.[139]

A Surrealist Farce Emerges from the Occupation

While critics supported Poulenc's return of the opéra-comique genre, they deeply questioned his choice of libretto. Some, like the French musicologist Fred Goldbeck, struggled to understand why Poulenc would turn to a nonsensical play by Apollinaire during the dark days of the Occupation. Goldbeck wrote in the conservative *Le Figaro littéraire* "How Francis Poulenc, a man of such taste, could choose this text for an opera-bouffe, and from May to October 1944—around 6 June and 20 August—amuse himself by concentrating on this libretto?"[140] On 6 June 1944 was the Normandy landing of the Allied forces commonly known as D-day. 20 August 1944 saw not only the continuation of the pitched battle to liberate Paris but also massacres as the German troops retreated through the French countryside. Goldbeck believed that Apollinaire's surrealist farce was inappropriate material to focus upon during this time.

However, this reading discounted the powerful statements surrealist texts often sought to make, far beyond the surface 'nonsense' or apparent comedy they might imply. Indeed,

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[138] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 254.

[139] Letter from Poulenc to Koechlin, August 1942, in Poulenc, *Correspondance*, 520; Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 254.

[140] "Comment Francis Poulenc, cet homme de goût, a-t-il pu, pour un opéra-bouffe, choisir ce texte, et, de mai à octobre 1944 – autour du 6 juin et du 20 août – s'amuser et se concentrer devant ce livret?" See Fred Goldbeck, "Poulenc et Tirésias à l'Opéra-Comique," *Le Figaro littéraire,* 14 June 1947.

surrealism was an important language of musical resistance, as will be explored below.[141] *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* was not just amusing, but continued the surrealist and Resistance traditions of cultural critique. But reviewers, and the public, largely failed to explore or acknowledge this in their interpretations. Perhaps this was a willful misunderstanding, as surrealism had fallen out of favor with the political left and had never been allies with the conservative right. It is little wonder Goldbeck and his colleagues eyed Poulenc's libretto with some hostility, and worked to ignore all of its inconvenient connotations and subversions.

Thematically *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* centers on gender inversion and reproduction, but the plot ranges through the impossible, improbable, and surreal. The opera is set in 1910 in Zanzibar, a town placed in the region of Monte Carlo rather than its original location by Apollinaire in Africa.[142] (Perhaps Poulenc was attempting to side-step entanglement with colonial issues, which would have been potentially volatile.) The main plot follows Thérèse, who decides she wishes to be a man and to pursue men's careers, and her husband, who resolves to make up for Thérèse's abandonment of her maternal duties by bearing children himself. Thérèse physically transforms into a man by releasing her breasts (two balloons that float off to the ceiling), growing a beard, and changing her name to Tirésias. Tirésias then sets off to pursue various masculine careers off-stage.

Meanwhile, the husband concludes that if his wife is a man, then he must take up her duties (and clothing), thus restoring the balance. The husband attracts the attentions of a soldier who mistakes him for a woman. The husband then produces 40,046 babies in a day using little incubators, and immediately begins to profit off their various careers. It is interesting, in an opera

[141] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 173, 260–261, 273–275.

[142] These are two of the most significant changes Poulenc made to Apollinaire's text, which had set the action in 1917 and implied Zanzibar was in a more exotic African locale.

supposedly about Tirésias, that the husband has vastly more scenes. Thérèse/Tirésias is in a way a foil that both causes and permits the transgressions of the husband. In the end, Tirésias returns to her husband, but refuses to restore her breasts, arguing she and her husband are just fine without them. She thus retains an important physical symbol of her change and liberation from the traditional role of mother, and her transformation into a new modern woman. The final chorus pushes the audience to both a greater abundance of love and procreation. The company declares:

> Scratch yourself if it itches, love black or white. It is much more amusing when this changes. […] Listen, O French, to the lessons of the war, and make babies, you who hardly made any.[143]

It seems the work both promotes loving whom one fancies, and also having more children. This flew in the face of arguments that sexual liberation and homosexuality caused declines in birthrates.[144] The final moral of the plot is difficult to decipher because one is never certain what is serious, and what is ironic; this caused much confusion in the reviews. The main plot is occasionally interrupted by the duel between Presto and Lacouf, citizens of Zanzibar. The two argue over their location, Paris or Zanzibar, and shoot each other with pistols. However, even after dying they get back up and continue their fight. Their violence is cyclic and seemingly extremely pointless, a theme that would have been highly resonant during the increasingly unclear colonial wars—especially if Poulenc had set the action in Africa rather than Monte Carlo. Additionally, the eternal deadlock between Presto and Lacouf could easily suggest the seemingly endless battle between France and Germany.

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[143] "Grattez-vous si ça vous démange aimez le noir ou bien le blanc. C'est bien plus drôle quand ce change. […] Écoutez ô Français les leçons de la guerre Et faites des enfants vous qui n'en faisiez guére." Act II Scene 8, Poulenc, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* (Paris: Heugel, 1947).

[144] Martha Hanna, "Natalism, Homosexuality, and the Controversy over Corydon," in *Homosexuality in Modern France,* ed. Jeffrey W. Merrick and Bryant T. Ragan Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 204.

Often *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* has been framed as a giddy romp that Poulenc composed only for the joy of the piece. This made it challenging for some, like Goldbeck, to understand why he would choose to write it during the Occupation and the battle for France's Liberation. In 1954, Poulenc looked back on his war-time compositions in an interview with Claude Rostand and contrasted *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* with his Resistance cantata *Figure humaine,* which was also written on a surrealist text: "Having sung of my thirst for hope in *Figure humaine,* in 1943, I reckon I had the right to celebrate the joy of freedom recovered with a slightly crazy piece [*Les Mamelles de Tirésias*]…"[145] This statement taken alone might suggest a frivolous reading of the piece. However, while *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* was, and is, undeniably slightly 'crazy', it is a misconception that the opera was nothing more than this. Poulenc, in the same interview, called *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* his "most *authentic* work, together with *Figure humaine* and the *Stabat Mater.* Who cares what people may think of the libretto!"[146] Clearly to Poulenc the opera was important and truthful, not just a throw away farce. Under the guise of comedy and through the language of surrealism, Poulenc crafted an opera that firmly pushed back against conservative conceptions of society and gender, and was an important part of his personal Resistance efforts.

In 1944, he had also aligned *Figure humaine* with *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* in his letters to his friend Pierre Bernac. His letter from 22 July highlighted the importance of the finales he had yet to write for the opera, which were as essential to *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* as "Liberté"

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[145] Translation from Francis Poulenc, *Articles and Interviews: Notes from the Heart,* trans. and ed. Nicholas Southon (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 253-4; "Ayant chanté ma soif d'espérance dans *Figure humaine,* en 1943, j'estime que j'avais bien le droit de célébrer l'allégresse de la liberté retrouvée avec un œuvre un peu folle…" See the transcript of Poulenc's interviews with Claude Rostand in Francis Poulenc, *J'écris ce qui me chante,* Edited by Nicolas Southon (Paris: Fayard, 2011), 807.

[146] Translation from Poulenc, *Articles and Interviews,* 253; "je considère *Les Mamelles* comme ce que j'ai fait de plus *authentique* avec *Figure humaine* et le *Stabat.* Que m'importe ce qu'on peut penser du livret!" See the transcript of Poulenc's interviews with Claude Rostand in Poulenc, *J'écris ce qui me chante*, 806.

was to *Figure humaine.*[147] This reference to "Liberté" was particularly significant, as Éluard's poem was championed by the Resistance.[148] As Poulenc recalled in the passage from 1954 cited above, at the heart of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* was the joy of freedom regained. In this way the opera becomes the logical continuation of the desire for freedom expressed in *Figure humaine.* Poulenc wrote to Pierre Bernac on 27 August 1944 that he "hoped that *Figure humaine* and *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* would be a sufficient tribute to France."[149] These two works were at the heart of Poulenc's self-conception of his Resistance efforts and his contribution to France's musical prominence. Yet, it is clear from Goldbeck's review that not all the critics after the war saw or deeply acknowledged this aspect of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias.* It is also important to note that *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* pushes beyond the political freedoms embraced in *Figure humaine* and also envisions a liberation from moral norms and constraints of strict heterosexuality. This type of freedom would have been very desirable to Poulenc who was homosexual and closeted to all but his closest confidants.[150]

Les Mamelles de Tirésias must be examined as a part of Poulenc's complex journey over the course of the Occupation away from the conservative ideals espoused by the Vichy government and towards embracing the Resistance.[151] As Jane Fulcher has shown in her most

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[147] "I want to be in good form in order to attack the two finales and the entr'acte (which is all I have left to do) because it is as important as "Liberté" was for the Cantata" ["Je veux être en pleine forme pour m'attaquer aux deux finals et à l'entr'acte (tout ce qui me reste à faire) car c'est aussi capital que "Liberté" pour la Cantate"]. See Letter Poulenc to Pierre Bernac, 22 July 1944, in Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 560–561.

[148] The poem was even air-dropped into France. See Hervé Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc* (Paris: Fayard, 2013), 530.

[149] "J'espère que *Figure humaine* et *Les Mamelles* seront un tribute de Français suffisant." See Letter from Poulenc to Bernac, 27 August 1944, in Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 573.

[150] Chimènes, "Introduction," in Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 27.

[151] The Vichy government oversaw the civil administration of France during the Occupation in increasing collaboration with the German occupying forces. For an excellent discussion of the complex history of Vichy France see Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order 1940–1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); for more on Poulenc during this time see Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 239–244, 266–271;

recent work, Poulenc's style at the beginning of WWII was close to that promoted by Vichy and its program of National Revolution. Poulenc as a member of the bourgeoisie and as a Catholic had been at odds with the left-leaning Popular Front government in power in France in 1936.[152] He had been passed over during the Popular Front and instead cultivated private support.[153] Vichy, at first, seemed to offer an opportunity for France to realign itself with the more conservative political and religious views Poulenc espoused. Poulenc's 1942 ballet *Les Animaux modèles,* based on the fables of La Fontaine, reinforced Vichy's aesthetics—especially Vichy's promotion of the peasantry and their connection to the soil of France.[154] However, as the Occupation continued, the realities of Vichy's collaboration and the true horrors of the Holocaust were gradually revealed. As this happened, Poulenc's position shifted away from Vichy and towards the Resistance—he had friends, like Paul Éluard, already in the movement who helped draw him into its circles.[155]

Les Mamelles de Tirésias took a starkly different tack than Poulenc's ballet, very nearly thumbing its nose at Vichy orthodoxy and embracing both interwar France and surrealism. Poulenc clearly referred back to the type of interwar music Vichy sought to condemn along with the 'decadent' Third Republic: the opera was coy, satirical, and challenged traditional family values. Choosing the opéra-comique genre was also significant at a time when lighter works in

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see also Jane F. Fulcher, "From Hybrid to Metamorphosis: Poulenc's Path toward Symbolic Resistance and Counter-Discourse during Vichy," In *Verwandlungsmusik: Über komponierte Transfigurationen,* Andreas Dorschel, ed., (New York: Universal Edition, 2007): 432–484.

152 Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*. 239, 242–243; Letter Poulenc to Marie-Blanche de Polignac, 15 August 1936, in Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 419–420.

153 Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 242–243.

154 Ibid., 244–248.

155 Ibid., 255–257.

the more traditionally French genres, like opéra-comique and ballet, were being disparaged by the German occupants who sought to highlight their own musical superiority by invalidating these other, lighter, forms.[156] *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* pushed directly counter to the artistic initiatives of Vichy and the Germans by promoting the national genre of French opéra-comique and highlighting freedom. Though of an entirely different tone than the serious cantata *Figure humaine,* it was also a clearly Resistance work.

Margaret Atack argues that surrealism was often a key literary language of Resistance movements and tactics.[157] Jane Fulcher further demonstrates how vital the work of surrealist poets was to the musical Resistance.[158] Throughout France, though especially in the Occupied zone, the media and the arts were tightly controlled by censors. Surrealism was a technique that artists could use in order to get around this censorship. Surrealism sought to step outside everyday conventions, and to build a new context of its own.[159] It did so by juxtaposing seeming incongruences, highlighting syntactic ambiguities, and using puns and word-play, all to open up and suggest deeper layers of meaning. This new context, of course, made it harder to interpret and to pin down single meanings, making it an ideally vague language for resisters who wished to cloak their messages.[160] It is important to remember, however, that poets like Paul Éluard and Louis Aragon—both important figures to the Resistance—had left the formal surrealist

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[156] Yannick Simon *Composer sous Vichy* (Paris: Symétrie, 2009), 228–235.

[157] Margaret Atack, *Literature and the French Resistance: Cultural politics and narrative forms, 1940-1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 94.

[158] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 173, 260–261, 273–275.

[159] Jaqueline Chénieux-Gendron, *Surrealism,* Vivian Folkenflik, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 2.

[160] Atack, *Literature and the French Resistance*, 5.

movement in the 1930s, Aragon in 1932 and Éluard in 1938.[161] The Resistance meanings in Éluard's text that formed the basis of *Figure humaine* were easy to see, especially since his embrace of a more reality-based aesthetic after joining the PCF in 1942.[162] Meaning in Apollinaire's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* was significantly more veiled. This allowed Poulenc to write a piece that not only aligned with Resistance ideals but also one that questioned rigid constructions of gender and the family.[163] This was especially relevant, as Vichy had particularly persecuted homosexuals, and Poulenc pushed back against these conservative conceptions.[164]

Poulenc's opera was rich with potential cultural critique, yet this went largely unremarked by reviewers. Instead of seeking out the deeper meanings in the opera, reviewers were often dismissive of its libretto and odd-ball plot. The decreased stature of the surrealist movement was probably one of the reasons reviewers of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* were so critical of Poulenc's libretto choice. For example, Jean Gandrey-Rety, who often wrote for the left and communist-aligned *Les Lettres françaises,* argued that the real scandal of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* was the opera's obsolescence. He called Apollinaire's libretto aesthetic decadence, and argued the opera was a museum piece and blatant propaganda.[165] After WWII, surrealism was viewed quite negatively by many, especially the communists (who enjoyed a great deal of

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[161] Helena Lewis, *Dada Turns Red: The Politics of Surrealism* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 112–113, 150.

[162] Ibid., 150.

[163] Ethan Allred also reads *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* as a veiled expression of Poulenc's own sexuality, using surrealist techniques to discuss what he was not willing to discuss openly. See Ethan Allred, "Disembodied Identity. Patriotism, Gender, and Homosexuality in Francis Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias,*" *Gli spazi della musica* 2 no. 2 (2013).

[164] Ibid., 46.

[165] Jean Gandrey-Rety, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias,"* undated; a copy is preserved in Francis Poulenc, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias*," dossier 26, "Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur" VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF.

power and influence due to their role in the Resistance) and the growing existentialist movement.[166] After the 1948 Prague manifesto the communists, of course, held to a social realist aesthetic inimical to surrealism.[167] In *Le Surréalisme et l'après-guerre* Tristan Tzara, a surrealist turned Communist writer, questioned surrealism's ability simply to return to its inter-war artistic role in France, especially because in his opinion it had been of little help during the war.[168] Tzara and Gandrey-Rety both placed surrealism firmly in the past, and thought it of little relevance in the post-war world. Tzara overstated the absence of the surrealists, however, as several did remain in France. *Main à Plume,* formed in 1941, brought together both current and past surrealists, and published some of Éluard's wartime Resistance works.[169]

On the conservative side, Albert Palle in *Le Figaro* also wrote that surrealism had lost its cultural relevance: "We are no longer moved by it… the enormous destruction of the world which we lived through during the dark years has emptied surrealism of its explosive force."[170] Clarendon, also for *Le Figaro,* disapproved of Apollinaire's text and instead complimented Poulenc for composing pleasant, and even funny, music on a libretto that was neither funny nor pleasant.[171] Clarendon largely dismissed the text as unsuccessful because it was 'not funny,' and

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[166] Ellen E. Adams, "At the boundary of action and dream: Surrealism and the battle for post-Liberation France," *French Cultural Studies* 27, no. 4 (2016): 320–323.

[167] This manifesto was put forth at the Second International Congress of Composers and Music Critics in held Prague in 1948 and was signed by several French communist musicians including Serge Nigg, Roger Désormière, Elsa Barraine, Louis Durey, and Charles Koechlin. See Leslie A. Sprout, *The Musical Legacy of Wartime France* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 180, 248; and Mark Carroll, *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 50–53.

[168] Lewis, *Dada Turns Red: The Politics of Surrealism*, 165.

[169] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros, 1938–1968* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2005), 101–102.
[170] Ibid., 139.

[171] "Poulenc a su écrire une musique plaisante, et même drôle, sur un livret d'Apollinaire qui ne l'était pas." See Clarendon, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias," Le Figaro,* undated; a copy is preserved in Francis Poulenc, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias,"* dossier 26, "Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur" VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF.

thus missed the opportunity to explore the meanings hidden by the seeming chaos. After all, surrealism was meant to provoke rather than purely entertain. Goldbeck went even a step further claiming the libretto offered Poulenc "a paradise of music without responsibility."[172] Goldbeck ran the musical monthly *Contrepoints* from 1946 to 1953, on the editorial board were notable musicians such as Koechlin, Henri Barraud, Roland-Manuel, and André Schaeffner. Goldbeck actively separated Poulenc's opera from any potential resonance with current issues in France, like gender or nationalism. The opera, he insisted, was purely fun and beautiful, thus he undercut its potentially subversive messages.

Rediscovering the Subversive in *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*

Though it was composed during the Occupation, Poulenc knew *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* could not premiere until after the Liberation. Additionally, he hoped it would coincide with his dear friend Darius Milhaud's return to France from America. Because he was a well-known Jewish figure, Milhaud, his wife, and their son had fled, fearing for their safety in Occupied France—as the following chapter will discuss. Poulenc wrote to Rouché in the autumn of 1942 to inform him of his intention to write an opera on Apollinaire's play, and in December 1944 (after the Liberation) Rouché wrote to Poulenc to accept the opera for the 1946 season.[173] When communications between France and America improved after the Liberation, Poulenc wrote several letters to Milhaud to update him on musical life in France and told Milhaud he had

[172] "…un paradis pour une musique sans responsabilité…" See Goldbeck, "Poulenc et Tirésias à l'Opéra-Comique," *Le Figaro littéraire,* 14 June 1947.

[173] Letter Poulenc to Rouché, Autumn 1942 in Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 529; Letter Rouché to Poulenc 30 December 1944 cited in Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc*, 571.

dedicated his first opera to Milhaud for his return.[174] Poulenc complained to Milhaud in June 1946 that the premiere of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* kept being delayed because of the constant changes in the directorships of the RTLN and the Opéra-Comique.[175] The premiere took place 3 June 1947, though unfortunately Milhaud was still in America unable to return to Paris due to his poor health.

At first glance the views presented in the opera seem rather stark. On the surface, Thérèse appears to be a silly figure, running around bearded and abandoning her responsibilities. At the end of the opera, she apparently comes to her senses and returns to her husband to join the rousing final choruses enjoining the French to have more children. This facile interpretation, however, overlooks the subversive potential of the opera. Behind the pretense of comedy and surrealism, both much debated at this time, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* was able to deal critically with themes of great political and cultural significance in post-war France. *Les Mamelles de Tirésias,* was unquestionably a patriotic offering from Poulenc to France and received as such by critics and many members of its audiences. Yet, the opera also questioned the dominant constructions of the family unit and gender and by extension the societal basis of the Fourth Republic. *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* challenged rigid conceptions of society, and the roles in society men and women were allowed to play. Yet, Poulenc's approach at times also reinforced traditional values and gender norms and ran counter to the subversive potential of the work. This is particularly apparent in his framing of the singer Denise Duval, as will be shown, and reveals the dual directions Poulenc himself was pulled by his sexuality, his left-leaning friends from the Resistance, and his own conservative political stance.

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[174] Letters from Poulenc to Milhaud, 3 January 1945, 27 March 1945, 1 July 1945, 28 December 1945, in Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 577–578, 584–585, 593–594, 614–615.

[175] Letter Poulenc to Milhaud, 4 June 1946, in Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 623.

In order to contextualize Thérèse's gender transformation, the husband's baby-making antics, and reveal the destabilizing potential of the opera, one must consider the history of women in society, the natalist movement in France, and homosexuality in France. As Mary Louis Roberts states in *Civilization without Sexes,* constructions of gender were and are a key thinking tool for making change culturally intelligible. After WWI and WWII the French were reeling from the devastation and disruption of their cultural systems. Gender norms provided a constant, a seemingly unchanging star upon which to fix their gaze, and deviations from this norm were often represented as a threat. Anger directed at transgressions of gender norms often was the result of displaced anger and confusion stemming from the trauma of the war and resistance to societal change.

Women, through their bodies, their lives, and the coding of their femininity were the symbolic 'anchors' of society.'[176] By rebelling against motherhood and traditional femininity, Thérèse and *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* could threaten to disrupt this fundamental tether. Natalism was another key expression of these gender norms. The natalist argument insisted that France was weakened by its declining birth-rate. The call for the French to produce more babies reached highpoints at the end of each of the world wars. After WWI in particular, natalists argued that abortion, contraceptives, feminism, and homosexuality were the root causes of France's depopulation, and were indicative of the increasing moral degradation of the nation.[177]

[176] Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 12–16.

[177] The roots of the movement, however, date to the turn of the century, when figures like Max Nordau described the degeneration and loss of virility of a decadent and frivolous French society. See Max Nordau, *Degeneration,* New York, Appleton, 1895 (Berlin: *Entartung,* C. Duncker, 1893); for more on the natalist position vis à vis women see Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes,* 90-98; for more on the natalist position and homosexuality, see Allred, "Disembodied Identity," 46.

Homosexuality was similarly framed as a threat to the virility of the nation, which could leave France weakened, decadent, and open to attack.[178]

This stance had been emphasized by Vichy. In particular, Vichy encouraged placing blame on the Third Republic for allowing decadence, homosexuality, feminism, and low birth-rates to weaken, or feminize, France. Vichy's program of National Revolution had promoted a return to traditional gender roles and conservative peasant values with women in the home caring for children, and men providing for their families through hard labor. This was part of an attempt to rebuild and re-masculinize France after the decadent Third Republic and the humiliating 1940 defeat.[179] *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* was in direct resistance to these ideals. Some probably conservative audience members (perhaps former Vichy supporters) saw this defiance, and multiple conservative and right-wing news outlets reported that someone in the audience yelled "Décadence!" during the performance. Others reportedly made animal noises, stormed out, or complained about their taxes supporting such nonsense.[180]

The calls to reassert masculinity and family values had not been limited to Vichy and conservative forces; they were also encouraged on the left. During WWII the Resistance also promoted a return to increased masculinity and traditional gender-roles, especially as the Liberation drew near. Despite the important role women had played in the Resistance throughout the Occupation, even engaging in active combat, by October of 1944 the Forces Françaises de

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[178] Allred, "Disembodied Identity," 52–53.

[179] Luc Capdevila, "The Quest for Masculinity in a Defeated France, 1940–1945," *Contemporary European History* 10, no. 3 (November 2001): 427–430; Paxton, *Vichy France*, 146–147; Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 241.

[180] Palamede II, "Un Opéra démographique ou les mamelles de discorde," *Carrefour,* 12 June 1947; Henri Sauguet, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias,"* and "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias,"* both undated and unidentified, and Denise Bourdet, "Apollinaire et Poulenc à l'Opéra-Comique," (Bourdet's article no doubt appeared in *Le Figaro littéraire* to which she contributed), copies preserved in in Francis Poulenc, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias,"* dossier 26, "Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur" VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF.

l'Intérieur [French Forces of the Interior] and the Resistance, led by General de Gaulle, called for female resisters to return to their domestic lives.[181] Jakes studied this reassertion of patriarchal norms by examining a WWI folksong "Quand Madelon" that regained popularity as the battle to liberate France intensified during WWII. Jakes revealed that this song, and other new songs based upon it, presented a highly sexualized view of female contributions to the war effort, reducing their role to emotional and sexual support of male soldiers. Works like "Quand Madelon" contributed to the erasure of women's direct contributions to the Resistance and reframed the victory as a male—and masculine, thus not homosexual—endeavor.[182]

By 1944, both Vichy and the Resistance were promoting highly patriarchal gender standards; they urged French women to remain in their domestic, and maternal, roles and pushed men to embrace masculinity and fatherhood. Poulenc surely felt ill at ease with the increasingly rigid definitions of gender roles because of his own more fluid homosexuality. Poulenc's first love was his childhood friend Raymonde Linossier, who rejected his marriage proposal in 1928. His first romantic relationships with men seem to have begun around the time of her death in 1930.[183] Poulenc kept his sexuality private throughout his life, only divulging his relationships to close confidants, as would have been normal given his 'haut bourgeois' status.[184] While he was predominantly in homosexual relationships, Poulenc had at least one sexual encounter with a woman in early 1946—in September of that year his daughter Marie-Ange was born.[185]

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[181] Kelly Jakes, "Songs of our Fathers: Gender and Nationhood at the Liberation of France," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 20, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 385.

[182] Jakes, "Songs of our Fathers," 388–389.

[183] Myriam Chimènes, "Introduction," in Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 27.

[184] Ibid., 27.

[185] Marie-Ange grew up believing that Poulenc was her godfather rather than her biological father. See Poulenc's letter for Marie-Ange's second birthday, Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 650; also see Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc*, 601.

Poulenc's sexuality was complicated by his profound Catholic faith, which he had reembraced in the late 1930s.[186]

Les Mamelles de Tirésias was caught in the middle of these competing influences, personal and societal, traditional and revolutionary, and as such its interpretation is not a matter of black or white. Much like Poulenc's political journey through the Occupation, and his continuing exploration of his sexuality, his opera is not easily categorized. While the left and right sought to define themselves against one another, in terms of gender and the assertion of the masculine paradigm, the far left and far right were often quite closely aligned, and Poulenc's opera inevitably spanned both positions. This is true not only of Poulenc's personal intentions for the work, but also of its larger reception and interpretation. Much like Poulenc, French society and politics struggled to come to terms with how the wars had changed society, and they used gender as a proxy for thinking about and expressing these changes.[187] *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* was both challenging and reinscribing these dominant discourses. Its readings are inherently volatile and multifaceted. Unlike other operas premiered during this period with politically divided receptions, like Milhaud's *Bolivar* explored in the next chapter, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* defied such definition.

The multivalence of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* is particularly apparent when examining its titular character. Poulenc's treatment of Thérèse, and the singer who created the role Denise Duval, was indicative of his own mixed conceptions of gender and femininity. Further it was also symptomatic of the debates over gender and femininity that so deeply underpinned French society at this time. Thérèse's gender transformation is handled with a sense of fun and joy; she

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[186] Burton in particular examines the interaction of Poulenc's faith and his sexuality. See Richard Burton, *Francis Poulenc* (Bath, Eng.: Absolute Press, 2002), 43–55, 61–76, 84–85, 101–103.

[187] Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes,* 4–6.

is not scorned, nor made to look truly ridiculous. However, the music for her transformation is also a bit stereotypical. This conventionality simultaneously reiterates and challenges coded expectations about gender. Through overemphasis and exaggeration, the music questions the myth of masculine domination, as Bourdieu has termed it, and the assumption that gender traits are natural and unchanging.[188] But, to continue to borrow from Bourdieu, through the symbolic violence that perpetuates masculine domination, the dominated (Thérèse/women) must use the logic and language of the dominant (the husband/men) even to express her own domination.[189] Thérèse's challenge and reiteration of conventions is an excellent example of this concept.

For example, Thérèse's transformation and release of her breasts is accompanied by a soft and "feminine" waltz, [Example 1.1] and the arrival of her newly grown moustache and beard is greeted by a virile "masculine" Spanish dance [Example 1.2]. While the scene is structured fairly traditionally—opening with recitative (that merges in and out of more song-like styles), moving to the tender waltz, and ending in the up-tempo Spanish dance full of high Cs—the musical style is kaleidoscopic and constantly in flux. The score seems to set up a soft versus tough, or feminine versus masculine, dichotomy, but this is constantly subverted by the unexpected changes in style. It is also of note that Thérèse's highest tessitura is reserved for the 'masculine' section of the scene with several sustained high Cs and Bflats. High notes are often in opera key markers of heightened emotion, and these are poised at and after the moment of her transformation into a man. Her assertiveness, dominating the aural space with these notes, speaks to a freedom in her masculinity, but she commands this freedom in a register only available to feminine sopranos. Thérèse 'transformation' is actually more of a hybridization. Hybridity was a

[188] Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination,* trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, En.: Polity Press, 2001), 8.

[189] Ibid., 35.

theme that fascinated Poulenc, especially during the war, as Fulcher has shown in relation to his war-time ballet *Les animaux modèles.*[190]

Example 1.1: *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* Act I Scene 1, rehearsal number 28

Example 1.2: *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* Act I Scene 1, rehearsal number 32

Therese's gender-bending was received largely as comic, rather than subversive. Viewing *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* as a comic piece was, of course, tied to the national genre of opéra-comique, as already seen. But it was probably also in part because of Poulenc's aggressive, though perhaps unconscious, framing of Duval as the ultimate elegant French woman. There was a sometimes unwitting, societal fear that now that women had the vote (which they gained in

[190] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 245–246.

1945), they might usurp power from men.[191] This led to a strong backlash against women; even women's magazines like the popular *Elle* and *Marie France* ran pieces that frequently featured anti-solidarity themes; women were taught to view other women, especially those who transgressed the 'eternal feminine,' as their competition and enemy.[192]

Feminine elegance became the symbol of French women *par excellence*, who were purported to have an innate sense of couture fashion even when restricted by shoe-string budgets.[193] Christian Dior commented on his 1947 New Look, that the French were emerging from an "era of war… of female soldiers with the statures of boxers; I designed female flowers, soft shoulders, radiant bust, waist like a thin vine…"[194] Dior defined femininity against the type of physically capable woman who had emerged from the war; instead she was elegant and at ease—things French society had missed during the hardships of the war, and continued to lack during the difficult post-war recovery.

Duval later recalled that leading up to the premiere when Poulenc would take her out into society dressed in Dior, he always praised her beauty, rather than her talents or hard-work. This way it was a sensation at the premiere when Paris discovered the beautiful model could sing.[195] Poulenc gushed about Duval in a letter to Rose Lambiotte: "If Thérèse loses her breasts, me, I've lost my head for her interpreter, beautiful like the day, chicness on earth, a voice of

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[191] Kelly Ricciardi Colvin, "Solidarity or Suspicion: Gender, Enfranchisement, and Popular Culture in Liberation France," *Journal of Women's History* 24, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 90.

[192] Colvin, "Solidarity or Suspicion," 93.

[193] Sharon Elise Cline, "*Feminité à la française:* Femininity, Social Change and French National Identity: 1945–1970" (Ph.D. Diss. University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2008), 30–32.

[194] Cline, "*Feminité à la française:* Femininity, Social Change and French National Identity," 40.

[195] Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc,* 583.

gold, etc … I take her out often in the tiniest of Dior's dresses!!!"[196] Duval for the premiere sported a feminine, light and airy, dress that also very clearly displayed Duval's breasts—though this dress was designed by Érte (who had done the costumes) rather than Dior. [Figure 1.1] On Poulenc's arm, Duval was seen as elegant, a new and charming star seemingly risen from nothing, rather than from years of hard training. By firmly displaying Duval as the ultimate in post-war French elegance, it made it more permissible for her to transgress on the Opéra-Comique stage. Poulenc also used Duval, of course, to frame his own image and to present a suggestion of heteronormativity acceptable in his haut-bourgeois circles. Perhaps this spectacle that Poulenc created was part of what inspired Dior when he designed a frothy, cream colored, gown of layered and pleated petals that he named after Poulenc in 1950.[197]

Figure 1.1: Denise Duval at the Opéra-Comique premiere of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*

"Album de photographies constitué par Francis Poulenc, 1924-1958", Gallica, BnF.

[196] "Si Thérèse perd ses mamelles moi j'ai perdu la tête pour mon interprète belle comme le jour, le chic sur terre, une voix d'or etc … Je la sors beaucoup dans les plus minces robes de Dior !!!" See Letter Poulenc to Rose Lambiotte, 10 May 1947, in Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 637.

[197] Porcile, *Les Conflits de la musique française,* 246.

Duval's elegance sexualized and controlled the image of Thérèse; and made her on-stage gender transformation seem less like an ardent desire for freedom and agency and more like comic fantasy. Without the 'real world' framing of Duval, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* might have been interpreted as making a more challenging and aggressive statement about the constructed and changeable nature of gender and about the rights of women. The opera itself very much placed the desires of women into conversation with the needs of society instead of only into conflict with them. Thérèse was able to transform and find what she desired from the world, and because of the husband's transformation, society's needs (i.e. the continuation of the family) were met.

Yet, Thérèse's subversive potential is also not fully realized. Within the opera she only appears in six scenes, as compared to the fifteen scenes that feature her husband. The actual substance of her transformation and her life liberated from the control of her husband takes place almost entirely behind the scenes. While the attention Poulenc brought to Duval by 'showing her off' drew attention to the role of Thérèse, it also framed her. *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* certainly questioned gender norms, and explored women's rights at a key moment in French history, but it also reinforced some of traditional society's framing and sexualization of women. Furthermore, while it explored gender, the comic element of the opera allowed its more serious statements to be overlooked, or possibly tolerated, by critics and audiences.

While Thérèse's transformation could be interpreted in many ways, on the husband's 40,046 babies Poulenc made a clearer statement. Ultimately, Poulenc appeared to question the wisdom of creating children only to increase the population—a position even more critical of natalism than that of Apollinaire. However, he did so subtly enough that reviewers disagreed on his stance. Gandrey-Rety, a left-leaning critic, while praising Poulenc's musical acumen, accused

the opera of being outdated repopulation propaganda.[198] In the conservative *Carrefour* Palamede II wrote that *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* aligned well with conservative morals, as the husband provided France with many new conscripts. It is clear from his tone that Palamede II was mocking the bourgeois audiences for rejecting an opera as 'decadent' that actually supported their values.[199] Other reviewers like the conservative Clarendon and Maurice Brillant (who wrote for *L'Aube*), used the comic nature of the opera as a reason to dismiss any political or moral messaging it might contain be it conservative or progressive, in order to defend the work itself.[200] In this manner they distanced Poulenc from any political agenda, or opinion on repopulation, with which the opera might be associated.

The reviewers' assessments often seem to have hinged on interpretations of Apollinaire's original play. Apollinaire had made the issue of children central to his play, and highlighted the need for the French to have more babies in its prologue. The presence of this theme led to his work being associated with natalist ideals. However, Peter Read in his study *Apollinaire et Les Mamelles de Tirésias* argues that Apollinaire did not simply espouse wholesale the conservative rhetoric that came with the natalist position. While some natalists focused on banning abortion or contraceptives, or promoting births through enforcement of traditional gender roles, Apollinaire posited the problem as a lack of "*amour fécond*" ["fertile love"] in France.[201] Apollinaire did not

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[198] Jean Gandrey-Rety, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias,*" undated; a copy is preserved in Francis Poulenc, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias,*" dossier 26, "Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur" VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF.

[199] Palamede II, "Un Opéra Démographique ou les mamelles de discorde," *Carrefour,* 12 June 1947.

[200] Clarendon, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias," Le Figaro,* undated; Maurice Brillant, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias,*" 4 June 1947, copies of both articles are preserved in Francis Poulenc, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias,*" dossier 26, "Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur" VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF.

[201] Peter Read, *Apollinaire et Les Mamelles de Tirésias: et La revanche d'Éros* (Rennes, FR: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2000), 159.

necessarily embrace a conservative return to the family; rather his play showed how overly strict conservative gender norms pushed Thérèse away from her husband, and thus fertile love and becoming a mother. Despite this, Apollinaire's somber and serious prologue (written as a monologue for the "Director" who presents the moral of the play) was interpreted conservatively. Poulenc's setting for the Director was similarly sober. However, Poulenc regarded the scene as falsely serious, a type of feint that hid from the viewer what was to come.[202] This technique was similar to Offenbach's opera-bouffe model in which he mocked the bourgeois convention of presenting the moral as a play within a play.[203] Or later, Ravel's *L'Enfant et les sortilèges,* which, as already mentioned, was an important inspiration to Poulenc during the composition of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias.* Despite the reviews that claimed that the opera embraced a natalist message, Poulenc's score undermines this interpretation.

Despite his prolific success as a one-man baby creator, Poulenc's score negatively colors the husband's quest to have more children and highlights how the husband produced the children for his own financial and personal gain in a manner reminiscent of industrialized production. The husband's lack of love for his children is highlighted by the music's emotional language and by the gender reversal itself. The husband as the bearer of the children ought to display a *maternal* love. As has been seen, women, but not typically men, were expected to provide this kind of emotional support to their children. Perhaps the husband's level of care for the children would be seen as acceptable if he were truly in a paternal role (and the children had a maternal figure to

[202] Poulenc reveals this in a letter to Paul LeFlem whom he praises as the only critic to have understood the prologue. See Letter Poulenc to LeFlem, 16 June 1947, Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 639.

[203] Jane Fulcher, *The Nation's Image: French Grand Opera as Politics and Politicized Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 185–189.

nurture them), but without the foil of his wife to give this maternal care, his 'love' for the children is quickly revealed as hollow.

In Act II scene 1, the husband is quite harsh with his newborn children. The scene begins with his chipper compound-duple celebration of his baby-making success that verges on a bright march. The newborns sit up in their bassinets to sing a fitting "tra la la" response to each of the husband's lines. Interestingly, each time the newborns interject, the husband is angered and loudly spits out "silence! silence! silence!" In the 1953 recording, which Poulenc was extremely pleased with, the husband's shouted "silence" even sounds like the braying of a donkey, or at very least a child-like tantrum.[204] While singing a song about how clever he has been creating so many children and his great joy at being a father, the husband harshly rejects his babies' presence. Poulenc certainly could have chosen to set the husband's "silence" as a gentle hushing of the children. But the husband's severe silencing, makes his sudden love for the children in the next scene particularly unbelievable.

In Act II scene 2 the husband presents several of his newborns to a Parisian journalist. The newborns are extremely precocious, and though just a day-old have all already become accomplished in the profession the husband created them specially to pursue. (Later in the scene it is revealed that the husband uses tools of their future trade to create each newborn; for example, his journalist-child is created with ink, old newsprint, and a pen for a spine.) As the husband introduces each child and describes their achievements to the journalist, the music is overbearingly dreamlike: frequent glissandos on the harp, melodic flute lines, and lush strings

[204] In this recording Jean Giraudeau replaced Paul Payan who originally created the role of the Husband. Additionally, it was conducted by André Cluytens rather than Albert Wolff who had conducted the Opéra-Comique premiere. See Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 759; Poulenc described his joy to Simone Girard: "the recording of *Mamelles,* so sensational, so marvelous, so astonishing, that upon hearing it I cried with emotion, yes cried!!!!" ["… le disque des *Mamelles,* si sensationnel, si merveilleux, si étonnant que j'en ai pleuré d'émotion en l'entendant, oui pleuré !!!!"]. See Letter Poulenc to Girard, 4 December 1953, Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 771.

accompany the husband's tender vocal melody. Yet the description of each child culminates not in a father's loving praise, but with the in the total financial profit they have already earned for the husband, sung with the utmost fondness and veneration. Poulenc's tender setting strongly contrasts with the practical and capitalist desires of the husband. Through this disconnect, Poulenc's score mocks the father's false reverence for his children.

At no point does the husband truly take on any typically "maternal" characteristics and deeply care for his children. In Act II scene 6, the gendarme (or soldier) tells the husband that Zanzibar does not have enough food to feed all these children and the whole city will starve. The husband replies the children will eat cards. While the husband means literal tarot cards that they will procure from the fortune-teller, the double-meaning alluding to war rationing cards is obvious. In 1947, the rationing of bread in France had fallen below the lowest point it had reached during the war, and so for many in France feeding a family on rations was still a reality.[205] To resolve this problem France could not simply print more cards with which to feed its population, instead major American aid was accepted in the form of the Marshall Plan.[206] That the husband is completely unconcerned that his endeavors will stretch Zanzibar's resources too thin, or that his children will suffer from the poor conditions, would have appeared particularly reckless within this context.

Despite claims that Poulenc's opera was 'music without responsibility,' *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* was deeply engaged.[207] Poulenc's opera both challenged and reinforced conceptions not only of gender and society, but also what the future of opéra-comique and the Opéra-Comique in

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[205] Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, 114.

[206] Rioux, *The Fourth Republic* 114; Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958,* 51.

[207] Goldbeck, "Poulenc et Tirésias à l'Opéra-Comique," *Le Figaro littéraire,* 14 June 1947.

France might hold. Some were deeply resistant to Poulenc's brand of humor presented in a nationally subventioned theatre, others celebrated the arrival of one of France's Resistant composers on a national stage and the international attention this could draw to French culture. The opera's conflicted reception was not only due to its surrealist humor and potentially subversive messages, but was also indicative of the confusion at the RTLN and the divisions within France's musical field. It was revealing that Poulenc's next opera, *Les Dialogues des Carmélites,* was commissioned for La Scala in Italy. That he did not compose something for premiere in France in these intervening years, despite his notoriety, was not only the result of his personal struggle to find the subject of his next opera but also of the administrative hurdles composers faced at the RTLN. (His final opera *La Voix humaine* premiered at the Opéra-Comique in 1959.) Poulenc was particularly fortunate with the RTLN; he was able to have most of the collaborators he requested, and his wishes were respected. Not all composers were treated this way, and the turmoil at the RTLN had far greater impact on their works. A prime example of this was the utter failure of Germaine Tailleferre's *Il était un petit navire.*

The Sinking of Tailleferre's *Il était un petit navire*

Les Mamelles de Tirésias was the site of disagreement over surrealism's relevance, over the place of the comic at the Opéra-comique, and over the future of French operatic theatre. Not to mention the less discussed, but still important, challenges the work made to conceptions of gender and the family in France. Yet despite all this, the work did relatively well. It was performed thirty times between its 1947 premiere and 1951, and later had a career in the provinces and internationally.[208] Germaine Tailleferre's *Il était un petit navire,* premiered in

[208] *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* was performed in Waltham, Massachusetts (USA) in June 1953, in New York in February 1957, in Bâle in April 1957, in Aldeburg in June 1958, and in New York again in 1960. After 1960 it

1951 at the Opéra-Comique, was in many ways quite similar to Poulenc's work. It too caused loud consternation at its premiere and had a daring libretto that audiences struggled to understand. But Tailleferre's work was rapidly dropped from the Opéra-Comique and received only two performances. Tailleferre, leaned to the political left and joined the communist party in 1968, making her less well-positioned than the amply connected Poulenc. Additionally, Tailleferre endured sexism professionally and physical and emotional abuse in her marriages that was extremely detrimental to her career and self-worth.[209] These elements meant Tailleferre had much less control over her composition, and it suffered because of this.

Critics were quick to blame Henri Jeanson's libretto for the opera's failure (rather than Tailleferre's politics, gender, or music) in many of the reviews. Indeed, Jeanson got the lion's share of attention over Tailleferre in the articles in general. Jeanson, a noted journalist and film writer, had a complex political past. During the inter-war he was an outspoken pacifist.[210] He was later jailed in 1941 and 1942, and banned by the German Occupants from writing either for the press or for the cinema.[211] After the Liberation, Jeanson was accused of collaboration, but this was at least in part motivated by persons who took issue with his strong stance against the Blum-Byrnes accords, which were an agreement that sought to open the French cinema market to American films.[212] Jeanson's own filmic writing had mixed levels of success.

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continued to be performed internationally, and in also in France in Marseille, Strasbourg, and Paris. See Denis Waleckx, "*Les Mamelles de Tirésias*" (D.E.A. diss. Université Lumiere Lyon II, 1991): 70–74.

[209] For example, Claudel wanted to work with her because a female collaborator was, in his opinion, more likely to do what he told them to do. See Germain Tailleferre, "Mémoires à l'emporte-pièce," 55; See the same for more information on her restrictive and often abusive marriages, Tailleferre, "Mémoires à l'emporte-pièce," 51, 61, 63–64.

[210] Laurent Martin, "Collaboration 'chaude' ou collaboration 'froide'? Le cas d'Henri Jeanson (1938–1947)," *Vingtième Siècle Revue d'histoire* 86 (April–June 2005): 91–98.

[211] Ibid., 102–105.

[212] Ibid., 105.

In the case of *Il était un petit navire,* the libretto was rather heavy-handed. Additionally, it was perhaps unwise to mock so blatantly the traditional lovers of opéra-comique in their own theatre; however, this explanation is extremely incomplete. *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* was after all able to weather the ire it elicited from the same traditional section of the Opéra-Comique audience. Also similar to Poulenc, Tailleferre was often praised in the reviews for making the most out of an unsuitable libretto. Her compositional talents were affirmed almost universally in the reviews. Only Maurice Brillant took issue, who called her a charming musician but lacking in orchestration skills; she was in his opinion better suited to piano. His article in the conservative *L'Aube* reads as very gendered criticism; he praised her only for an amiable personality and suggested her work was better suited to the piano, thus implying that she was better in the smaller (domestic) settings with which the piano was associated.[213] However, other reviewers highly praised Tailleferre's orchestration and her melodic verve; it is clear her opera did not sink due to a lack of musical talent. First and foremost, *Il était un petit navire* was a victim of the constant changes at the RTLN, and the demands the RTLN made upon Jeanson and Tailleferre for revisions to their work. Additionally, Tailleferre lacked the diverse political and societal support that Poulenc had to help him defend his work from attack.

Il était un petit navire was originally entitled *Le Marin de Bolivar,* but its name was changed because Milhaud's *Bolivar* had premiered the year before in 1950 at the Opéra. The titles were too similar; however, the plots were completely different Tailleferre's Bolivar is simply the name of a boat, not a story of the colonial liberator. Sometime between 1932 and 1935, Tailleferre and Jeanson had imagined the work as a short thirty-minute curtain-raiser, and

[213] Maurice Brillant, "À L'Opéra-Comique," *l'Aube,* 19 March 1951.

the work was performed on Radio Marseille in January 1942 in this manner.[214] It is crucial to note that this performance took place before the total occupation of France in November 1942. Before the total occupation, Marseille was the seat of the Vichy national radio.[215] (Tailleferre began the war at her home in Grasse, but fled France in September 1942 for America.)[216] After its well-received performance on the radio, Roland-Manuel, Georges Auric, and Henri Sauguet encouraged Tailleferre to submit the work to the Opéra-Comique.[217] When exactly *Il était un petit navire* was accepted at the RTLN is unclear, but it must have been between 1946 and 1948 when Henri Malherbe was the director of the Opéra-Comique.[218] Malherbe, it seems, was very enthusiastic and requested it be lengthened from a curtain-raiser to a full-length piece.[219]

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[214] 1935 is mentioned as the date of the work's conception by Claude Brule in his article for *Opéra.* See Claude Brule, "la bombe Jeanson éclate vendredi," *Opéra,* 7 March 1951; Jeanson recalls having written it in 1937, See Didier Daix, "Rien n'est plus amusant que d'écrire un opéra bouffe," *Ce matin Le Pays,* 12 October 1949; There is only one print edition of the score available. The forward of the edition cites 1932 as the beginnings of the work and 1935 as its completion date. Ultimately it premiered on Radio Marseille in 1942. See Germaine Tailleferre and Henri Jeanson, *Il était un petit navire,* critical edition by Paul Wehage and Jean-Thierry Boisseau (Lagny sur Marne, Fr: Musik Fabrik, 2008), ii.

[215] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 46, 89.

[216] Janelle Magnunson Gelfand, "Germaine Tailleferre (1892–1983): Piano and Chamber Works" (Ph.D. Diss. University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, 1999), 78.

[217] Constantin Brive, "Henri Jeanson introduit à l'Opéra-Comique une atmosphere de cirque et de music-hall," *Combat,* 8 March 1951.

[218] The score cites 1946 as the date of its acceptance by the RTLN committee, See Tailleferre and Jeanson, *Il était un petit navire,* critical edition by Wehage and Boisseau, ii; However, the committee documents in the Opéra archives show the work as having been accepted in 1948. See Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture oeuvres examinées 1946–1962," *cote.* 20-1160 Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; The minutes from the committee meetings offer more details. The 13 July 1946 minutes reveal they have heard the work, and believe it is a little too long. The 29 April 1948 minutes suggest they, in fact, have only seen the libretto. The 15 June 1948 minutes note that they have retained *Il était un petit navire* but make no further comment on the work. See Comité consultatif des TLN, "Procès-Verbal de la séance du 13 juillet 1946, 29 avril 1948, et 15 juin 1948," Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture procès verbaux 1946–1965," *cote.* 20-272, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[219] Tailleferre remembers this in a memoire, see Germain Tailleferre, "Mémoires à l'emporte-pièce," 72; it was also mentioned in the newspaper articles. See Didier Daix, "Rien n'est plus amusant que d'écrire un opéra bouffe," *Ce matin Le Pays,* 12 October 1949; Constantin Brive, "Henri Jeanson introduit à l'Opéra-Comique une atmosphere de cirque et de music-hall," *Combat,* 8 March 1951.

However, the expanded length of *Il était un petit navire* became one of the main complaints about the work. The first reference to the work being too long is in the 13 July 1946 minutes of a meeting of the comité consultatif—though whether the committee was referring to its original thirty-minute form or its newly expanded one as requested by Malherbe is not specified.[220] This is surprisingly early because the expansion of the work requested by Malherbe does not appear to have been finished until 1948.[221] Jeanson complained publicly in *Ce matin Le Pays* in an October 1949 article that the RTLN wanted the opera cut, and was indignant that a theatre supported by a state subvention—which had failed to spell his name correctly or give the correct title for the work when it was announced—now demanded these cuts without consulting the authors.[222] The 10 February 1950 comité consultatif minutes indicate that the work had now ballooned to over two hours, and Hirsch wanted it reduced by Jeanson himself (contrary to what Jeanson had indicated in his interview with *Ce matin Le Pays*) to one hour and fifteen minutes.[223]

In the reviews of the 1951 premiere, many critics mentioned that the work was far too long, and that the plot simply could not support its great length. In the left-leaning *Combat* Marcel Schneider wrote, "it [the libretto] is frankly bad…an hour and a half is too long by half! If it manages sometimes to sail on, it is thanks to Germaine Tailleferre…"[224] Most, like Schneider, blamed the problems with the work on Jeanson, and praised Tailleferre for her efforts

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[220] Comité consultatif des TLN, "Procès-Verbal de la séance du 13 juillet 1946," Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture procès-verbaux 1946–1965," *cote.* 20-272, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[221] Tailleferre and Jeanson, *Il était un petit navire,* critical edition by Wehage and Boisseau, iii.

[222] Didier Daix, "Rien n'est plus amusant que d'écrire un opéra bouffe," *Ce matin Le Pays,* 12 October 1949.

[223] Comité consultatif des TLN, "Procès-Verbal de la séance du 10 février 1950," Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture procès verbaux 1946–1965," *cote.* 20-272, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[224] "il en est franchement mauvais… plus d'une heure et demie: c'est trop de la moitié! S'il arrive à naviguer quelque temps, ce sera grâce à Germaine Tailleferre…" Marcel Schneider, "*Il était un petit navire…* Naviguera-t-il bien longtemps?," *Combat,* 12 March 1951.

to sustain interest in the overextended libretto.[225] The disconnected advice and demands of the RTLN had clearly taken their toll on the opera's coherence and pacing.

The plot of the work was difficult for audiences to follow and overflowing with characters representative of various types typical to opéra-comique. The main substance of the plot centers around deceptions, primarily of the adulterous kind. Most of the characters have a public love interest and a secret affair—yet all of the secrets are widely known and simply ignored by common tacit agreement. When an outsider called Ferréol disrupts this delicate balance and forces these secrets to be acknowledged, the adulterers turn on him for forcing them out of their status quo rather than upon each other. The plot seems like a critique of bourgeois morality and was no doubt very resonant to Tailleferre who had such unhappy marriages. Towards the end of the opera the cigarette girls from *Carmen* burst on to the stage—they have arrived at the wrong theatre! (Their music is different here from the original opera, but they are clearly identified by another character as from *Carmen.*) This leads to the cast to realize they are in fact actually in a theatre and all their emotions and intrigues have been falsely pretended. This is strongly reminiscent of Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* premiered in 1944, which also emphasized the boundaries of the real and unreal within the play.[226] According to the review in the conservative journal *Opéra* this was the scene that caused the loudest protest among the audience.[227]

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[225] See for example, René Dumesnil, *"Il était un petit navire," Le Monde,* 13 March 1951; Hélène Jourdan-Morhange, "*Il était un petit navire* à l'Opéra-Comique," *Ce Soir,* 15 March 1951; André Gauthier, "À l'Opéra-Comique, *Il était un petit navire," Ce matin Le Pays,* 15 March 1951.

[226] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 213–214.

[227] C. B., "Elle a éclaté!," *Opéra,* 14 March 1951.

This moment went beyond the mocking of theatrical conventions, which had featured heavily in the previous scenes, and instead jarringly broke them. The entire conceit that the singers are their characters, and that they are unaware of the audience's watchful gaze, was shattered. These themes were also being explored in the new theatre movement in France. Plays dealt with ontological uncertainty and often parodied traditional dramatic action, like the Epic Theatre works of Brecht, or the later *En attendant Godot* (1953) by Samuel Beckett.[228] This, combined with the erroneous entrance of the cigarette girls proved too far for the Opéra-Comique audiences who resented such a brazen dismissal of the conventions of opera. But, as with *Les Mamelles de Tirésias,* beneath this surface reading lurked one of greater cultural and political import. *Il était un petit navire* revolved on the concept of truth and lies. Rather than face situations that were complex and emotionally messy, the characters chose to bury their heads in the sand and ignore the lies their romantic partners told them. Confronted by a falsehood that demanded action, they chose feigned ignorance and inaction.

This suggests a powerful potential satire of the French government. In order to form the coalitions to create majorities able to govern, politicians had to often choose to ignore the actions of their allies with whom they did not agree, or situations that were currently politically unresolvable.[229] Jean-Jacques Servan Schreiber highlighted this in his article in *Le Monde* about the government's passivity. He wrote "Silence resolves nothing" and that the government pretended nothing was wrong in order to justify their inaction, when in reality they were deceiving the public.[230] In many ways the Fourth Republic colonial policy in the early 1950s had

[228] Bradby, *Modern French Drama 1940–1980,* 53–57, 98.

[229] Rioux, *The Fourth Republic,* 97–103.

[230] Jean-Jacques Servan Schrieber, "Velléités et passivité de l'autorité gouvernementale," *Le Monde,* 19 January 1950.

also been one of inaction. The war in Indochina languished because despite heavy defeats (like that of the Viet Minh ambush near Cao Bang on 10 October 1950), the government could not agree on a decisive strategy.[231] Pulling out of the war altogether was unpopular, as holding Indochina was seen as key to France's international stature and to stopping the spread of communism in Asia.[232] But the public was in general too divided over the war to support the measures necessary to decisively win Indochina and still maintain the troops France had promised to NATO.[233] Governments failed because they were unable to resolve this issue.[234]

By violating the concept of the fourth wall that separates stage and audience, *Il était un petit navire* directly implicated the audience in its world of lies and pretended ignorance. While the text and music of the opera did not directly refer to the struggles the Fourth Republic labored to avoid acknowledging, articles like Schreiber's suggest it is likely that accusing the audience of self-deception would have carried not only individual but also political import. What have they chosen to ignore? Not only in their personal lives, but also in the life of the French community. On a practical level *Il était un petit navire* was scuttled by the controversies of the RTLN and the manipulation of Jeanson's libretto and Tailleferre's score. However, it also had the potential to be read as a daring critique of French society that proved too unflattering a mirror for audiences to accept.

Yet these potentially powerful cultural criticisms may have been somewhat lost in the performances, because the demanded cuts to the score made the work very challenging to

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[231] Mark Thompson, "Defending the Rhine in Asia: France's 1951 Reinforcement Debate and French International Ambitions," *French Historical Studies* 38, no. 3 (August 2015): 473-474; Paul Clay Sorum, *Intellectuals and Decolonization in France* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 6.

[232] Thompson, "Defending the Rhine in Asia," 489.

[233] Ibid., 476, 483.

[234] Ibid., 482.

comprehend. It is difficult to determine just how much of Tailleferre and Jeanson's score audiences and critics heard at the premiere—though we are certain from reviews they saw the entrance of the cigarette girls mentioned above. Additionally, it is difficult to determine when, and by whom, the various cuts were made. The score used in the premiere was in such poor condition, with sections crossed out or removed, that when the Paris Opéra library attempted to purchase the manuscript score in 1980, Tailleferre felt obliged to hand-write a new fair copy.[235] It appears that this original score is no longer among Tailleferre's papers.[236]

After extensive research, comparing the 1980 copied score and three piano-vocal editions in the Paris Opéra library, composers Paul Wehage and Jean-Thierry Boisseau were able to reconstruct a more complete version of the work. These are the only sources available. From these materials, only a limited picture of when the additions and cuts were made and what material was involved can be crafted. Wehage and Boisseau discovered while the piano-vocal scores had 4,716 measures, the 1980 orchestral score had only 2,502—they believed this orchestral version was closer to what the audiences had seen at the premiere. However, there seemed to be some sections Tailleferre had restored to this 1980 score that had been cut for the performance.[237] In all, Wehage and Boisseau deemed it likely audiences saw less than fifty-percent of the total work at the premiere. They also wondered if a third person was involved in these changes who was either incompetent or actively malicious towards the work or its authors because the cuts were often so illogical and awkward.[238]

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[235] Tailleferre and Jeanson, *Il était un petit navire,* critical edition by Wehage and Boisseau, vii.

[236] Ibid., vii.

[237] Ibid., viii.

[238] Ibid., ix–x.

By the time of its performance in 1951, *Il était un petit navire* had lost one of its strongest supporters as Malherbe had left the Opéra-Comique in 1948. Tailleferre later wrote that Hirsch hated Jeanson, and this was part of the reason the opera only had two performances.[239] Additionally, one can also imagine that her score might not have been undertaken with enthusiasm by the Opéra-Comique orchestra or Pierre Dervaux, who conducted at the Opéra-Comique from 1945 to 1953. Dumesnil questioned in his review how closely Dervaux was following Tailleferre's desires.[240] The integration of women into the orchestras of the RTLN was met by rather strong resistance during this period, and perhaps this might have extended to a bias against a female composer. In September 1947, Jacques Jaujard (the Directeur Générale des Beaux-Arts) had written to Hirsch to ask about the integration of women in to the RTLN as they were now afforded equal rights to men in the constitution and the Fédération Nationale du Spectacle were pressuring him on the subject.[241] By 1957 it seems little progress had been made, as Hirsch, once again at the helm of the RTLN, wrote in a letter to Jaujard that adding women would risk disrupting the unity of the orchestra and that the job was far too tiring for them.[242]

One can only speculate, but it seems unlikely such a merry-go-round of demands for cuts and expansions like those performed on Tailleferre's *Il était un petit navire* would have been inflicted on Poulenc. Further, even if these requests had been made he would probably have had complete control over these edits, as he had for *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*. Tailleferre does not

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[239] Tailleferre, "Mémoires à l'emporte-piece," 72.

[240] "I do not know if Mr. Pierre Dervaux's orchestra followed exactly the nuances desired by the author." ["Je ne sais si l'orchestre de M. Pierre Dervaux a suivi exactement les nuances voulues par l'auteur."] See René Dumesnil, "*Il était un petit navire," Le Monde,* 13 March 1951.

[241] Letter Jaujard to Hirsch, 8 September 1947, Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1947," *cote.* 20-1952, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[242] Hirsch to Jaujard, 13 September 1957, Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1957," *cote.* 20-1963, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

appear to have been afforded the same respect and courtesies granted to her male colleague, and this could have been in part caused by her gender. It is worth noting that another difference between the operas was that Jeanson was alive to edit his libretto, whereas Poulenc had crafted his from the late Apollinaire's text. Regardless of it was because she was a woman, because she was less famous than Poulenc, or because Jeanson was alive to do the edits, Tailleferre was less able to force the RTLN to conform to her artistic vision for her work. This exacerbated the problems created by the constant changes in direction at the Opéra-Comique and the RTLN, and ultimately resulted in the failure of the opera.

Deeming works like *Il était un petit navire* a failure, or *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* only partial successes has discouraged scholars more deeply examining these operas and the Opéra-Comique during this period. While it is true the Opéra-Comique struggled during the Fourth Republic to produce new works that could have enduring popularity with critics and audiences, Poulenc and Tailleferre's works are more artistically and politically interesting and significant than has previously been supposed. Even though Poulenc and Tailleferre's works did not go on to have particularly strong careers, they were daring and innovative critiques of French society. Each was executed with the composers' customary musical expertise and flair. These works carried on Opéra-Comique tradition of mixing the politically daring and the comic, and continued the trend of innovation and risk that had so often characterized the Opéra-Comique, especially in comparison with the larger Opéra. While often overshadowed in government discourse by the larger Opéra, with which it had been joined as the RTLN, the Opéra-Comique remained not only a space for cultural critique, but also an important site for preservation of the French patrimony.

Chapter Two

The Querelle *Bolivar*: Finding Grandeur, Renewal, and the Political in Milhaud's "Failed" Opera

One might expect, given the widely discussed state of crisis and constant financial deficits at the RTLN, that abstemious productions would have been favored by its administrators, not to mention the government financial controllers who oversaw all RTLN expenses. Yet, Hirsch, and later Lehmann, marked their RTLN administrations with financially—and artistically—ambitious projects at the Opéra. This would be particularly true during Hirsch's first tenure from 1946 to 1951, and Lehmann's second from 1951 to 1955. This continued a long-standing tradition encoded in the Opéra's *cahier des charges* that its productions must be of a scale and quality worthy of France's premiere stage, and helped sustain an image of the artistic vigor of France.[243]

As this chapter and the following will show, the administrators turned to grandeur, spectacle, and respected French composers as part of an attempt to attract a larger public, to reaffirm the world-class status of France's National Operatic Theatres, and as a result define French musical and national identity. In this mission, the administrators were guided and influenced by the RTLN comité consultatif, the Ministre de l'Éducation nationale (Minister of

[243] The original cahier des charges at the Opéra from 1831 instructed that the director of the Opéra must maintain the pomp and luxury suited to the national theatre. "L'entrepreneur sera tenu de maintenir l'Opéra dans l'état de pompe et de luxe convenable à ce théâtre national." as quoted by Agid and Tarondeau. See their work for an excellent summation of the history of the types of direction at the Opéra, and the evolution of language used in the *cahier* to indicate these expectations of grandeur. See Agid and Tarondeau, *L'Opéra de Paris. Gouverner une grande institution culturelle*, 31–36.

National Education), the Beaux-Arts direction under the authority of the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale (Ministry of National Education), and of course the Ministère des Finances (Ministry of Finance) who oversaw the RTLN budgets. As Philip Nord notes, the formation of the Fourth Republic created an opportunity for France to take a new approach to culture and to democratize it, extending cultural offerings to a larger portion of the citizenry. This attempt at a cultural reawakening was a key part of France's plans to modernize and to reassert France's presence on the world stage.[244] The Opéra was a central aspect of this cultural plan.

Milhaud's newest opera *Bolivar* seemed to fit the bill perfectly for a new grand French work to reassert the Opéra's global prominence. It offered the Opéra an opportunity for large choruses, impressive scenery, a noble epic plot, and a chance to promote a famous French composer. *Bolivar* also could be connected to the social capital of the Resistance, who were key to France's identity after the war.[245] Milhaud began *Bolivar* in 1943 while in exile in California. He and his family had fled France the summer of 1940 shortly after the German invasion, fearing for their safety because they were Jewish. Milhaud ardently hoped France would be liberated from the oppression of the Nazi occupying forces and turned to the history of Simon Bolivar, the famous liberator of several South American nations from Spanish colonial rule, to express this longing for France's freedom in his newest operatic offering.

Milhaud's return to France in the summer of 1947 after his exile in the United States during the Occupation was seen as a vital step in the recovery of the French musical world after the dark years of Nazi control—much as he and the other members of Les Six had been key to the recovery of the musical field after WWI. Leading up to the opera's premiere, Hirsch,

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[244] Nord, *France's New Deal*, 14.

[245] Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, 10.

Milhaud, and French journalists all highlighted the connection between *Bolivar* and Milhaud's desire for French liberation from the German Occupation. The critics and the musical world anticipated that *Bolivar* would be a great success, revitalizing French opera in the post-war world and illustrating the triumphant return of the music and musicians the Nazis had sought to eliminate.

Shockingly, after the premiere many conservative critics did a swift volte-face and declared *Bolivar* a failure, with Clarendon writing for *Le Figaro* leading the charge. Their coverage sparked a controversy in the press labeled the 'Querelle *Bolivar*.' Left-leaning journals rushed to defend Milhaud and accused conservatives of panning the opera because of its socially progressive vision and perceived anti-colonial statements. Conservative critics countered it was not on political but musical grounds that they objected to the work. *Bolivar's* alleged failure was blamed on a host of musical and dramatic reasons: that Milhaud's music lacked dramatic thrust, his musical styles were too scattered, his harmony too unsteady, and that the scale of the work was too large. This perceived failure of the opera in turn damaged the ability of *Bolivar* to reestablish France's prominence in the musical world, one of the stated goals of both the RTLN administration and Fourth Republic government for their National Theatres.[246] *Bolivar* faded from the repertoire at the Opéra and has been mostly ignored as one of Milhaud's lesser operas.

Very few scholarly sources address Milhaud's *Bolivar.* The longest discussion is in Jeremy Drake's work on Milhaud's operas. Drake's approach was quite narrowly focused and thus he misses the true importance of *Bolivar.* He argued that *despite* the opera's clear relevance to France's current colonial positions the opera failed because it was a somewhat-faded piece

[246] Hirsch outlines the importance of the RTLN to France's international musical reputation in Georges Hirsch, "Organisation de l'art lyrique en France. Réforme des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux. Création de l'Office National du Théâtre Lyrique," fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Dossier Hirsch," *cote.* 4-col-8/45(11), Département Arts du Spectacle, BnF; see also Nord, *France's New Deal*, 14.

lacking in musical interest.[247] This chapter challenges this interpretation, and argues that the political aspects of the work, far from helping *Bolivar,* were instead central to its failure. Erin Maher's approach is more satisfying, but her focus was on the American and trans-Atlantic aspects of *Bolivar* rather than its career in France. She did offer an excellent analysis of Milhaud's Jewish identity and how it affected his compositions during and after the war.[248] Annegret Fauser similarly considered *Bolivar* primarily in the American context and offered great insight into how Milhaud was framing his French identity for an American audience.[249]

Cécile Auzolle briefly considered *Bolivar* in her examination of the premieres at the Opéra between 1945 and 1955, and her insight into *Bolivar's* connections to the grand operatic tradition will be discussed in the next section.[250] Maureen Shanahan offered a view of the opera deeply contextualized by the icon-status of Bolivar himself. In particular, she considered Bolivar in his lineage as a symbol of revolution and liberation, but also as an authoritarian leader. Her chapter clearly connected the figure of Bolivar with Milhaud's desire for a masculine revolutionary hero that could symbolize French liberation and begins to explore the opera's unexpected anti-colonial reception.[251]

A study that considers *Bolivar* in more richly its French and musical contexts is needed. The narrative of its failure at the Opéra has created a fundamental misunderstanding of the

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[247] Jeremy Drake, *The Operas of Darius Milhaud*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), 295–296, 305.

[248] Erin Maher, "Darius Milhaud in the United States, 1940–1971: Transatlantic constructions of Musical Identity" (Ph.D. diss. University of North Carolina, 2016), 107–111, 285.

[249] Annegret Fauser, *Sounds of War: Music in the United States during World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 193–194.

[250] Auzolle, "Les Créations lyriques à l'Opéra de Paris entre 1945 et 1955," 108–109.

[251] Maureen G. Shanahan, "Bolívar on the Operatic Stage, Enlightenment Hero and Tyrannical Failure," in Maureen G. Shanahan and Ana María Reyes, eds. *Simon Bolivar: Travels and Transformations of a Cultural Icon* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2016), 115–132.

possibilities of this opera and its real innovation and cultural critique. The desire to brand *Bolivar* a failure was motivated by politics more so than musical style and has obscured an important moment in French Fourth Republic operatic history. This chapter will argue that the memories of the French experiences of the Occupation, the conflicts among the French political parties, and the attempt to maintain the French colonies, loomed large in *Bolivar.* These complicated its reception, success, and ultimately the understanding of Milhaud's music and the political import of the opera.[252]

Milhaud often identified deeply with oppressed peoples in his music (as has been shown with his inter-war ballet *La Création du monde*); *Bolivar* continued this trend in Milhaud's music and humanitarian politics. While French critics and audiences were eager to read the liberation of the French people from Occupation in *Bolivar,* its inherent criticisms of France's colonial mission (even if these were not intended as such by Milhaud at the time of composition, nor anticipated by the RTLN administration) grated uncomfortably at a time when the majority in France were in favor of retaining the French empire. It is vital to remember, as this chapter will explore, the shifts in France's relationship with its colonies and the importance of South America during the war, especially in the United States where Milhaud was writing. When Milhaud chose the subject, it was certainly not the powder-keg it was to become.

[252] See Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome,* 10; Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 51–57, 112–115; Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, 85–93, 112–115.

“El Libertador” Bolivar, a South American Hero to Save French Opera

Milhaud composed *Bolivar* from January to June in 1943, while teaching at Mills College in California.[253] He had been seeking a new libretto full of action that centered on a masculine character, and reflected his anxiety about occupied France.[254] Milhaud was already very familiar with the story of Simon Bolivar (1783–1830) and his fight to liberate several South American nations (now Venezuela, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Panama) from Spanish colonial rule; in 1936 he had written incidental music for Jules Supervielle’s play *Bolivar* that premiered at the Comédie-Française in Paris. But he did not consider the work as the basis of a libretto until his exile in America.[255]

Milhaud had fled France in July 1940 with his wife Madeline and their son.[256] Madeline knew that Darius was far too well-known as a Jewish composer to hope to be able to hide in France. During the Occupation Milhaud was included in Nazi musicologist Herbert Gerigk’s *Lexikon der Juden in der Musik*, his music was banned, his Paris apartment raided multiple times, and his car burned.[257] The Resistance attempted to circulate his works covertly despite the ban and performed them in clandestine concerts as unannounced encore pieces, or under misleading pseudonyms.[258] Meanwhile in California, the Milhauds had anxiously to await news

[253] Darius Milhaud, *My Happy Life,* trans. Donald Evans, George Hall, and Christopher Palmer (New York: Marion Boyars, 1995), 216.

[254] Pierre Loewel, “Darius Milhaud fait entrer le Général Bolivar à l’Opéra,” *l’Aurore,* 15 May 1950.

[255] Maher, “Darius Milhaud in the United States, 1940–1971,” 304.

[256] Ibid., 53–56.

[257] On the German ban of Milhaud see Simon, *Composer sous Vichy*, 34. On the loss of his car see the letter from Milhaud to Ministre de l’Économie nationale, 11 March 1947, Archives Opéra “Correspondance entre Administration et Auteurs divers 1950–1965,” *cote.* 20-184, Bibliothèque-musée de l’Opéra, BnF.

[258] Simon, *Composer sous Vichy*, 34; and Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 120–121; Schaeffer also recorded Milhaud’s music in the clandestine radio project “Émissions de minuit” in 1944. See Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 174.

as it slowly filtered out of occupied France. Milhaud lost forty family members, including his nephew Jean Milhaud, in the concentration camps, and his parents both passed away during the war.[259]

In her 2016 dissertation Erin Maher examined this period in Milhaud's life and the deep feelings of exile he and Madeline endured, as well as their efforts to help sustain French culture while even while in America. This experience of exile and yearning to return to and revitalize his homeland emerged as a key theme in the writing and reception of his *Bolivar*.[260] As Jane Fulcher noted in her book *The Composer as Intellectual,* Milhaud strongly identified as both French and Jewish, as was traditional among the highly assimilated Jewish population in the south of France, and believed in the universality of music and the French tradition.[261] His forced exile from the France that he so ardently supported and believed in was a bitter blow.

In her work *Sounds of War: Music in the United States during WWII* Fauser explored how, during the war, Milhaud manifested his identity as a Jewish and French composer while also incorporating styles, often conservative ones, that would suit his new American audiences. Milhaud employed styles traditionally associated with French music, like clarity, measure, and simplicity, as a means of exhibiting his particularly French identity to his American audiences.[262] He and Madeline believed maintaining American awareness of the value of true French culture, as opposed to the version being promoted by the Vichy regime, was an important aspect of the

[259] Milhaud, *My Happy Life,* 211–213; Jane F. Fulcher, "The Preparation for Vichy: Anti-Semitism in French Musical Culture between the Two World Wars," *The Musical Quarterly* 79 No. 3 (Autumn 1995): 472.

[260] Maher, "Darius Milhaud in the United States, 1940–1971," 23; Milhaud, *My Happy Life,* 211–213.

[261] Jane F. Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France 1914–1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 175–176, 231.

[262] Fauser includes Stravinsky, who also was in the United States, in this discussion. See Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 187–190.

war effort.[263] In *Renegotiating French Identity: Musical Culture and Creativity in France during Vichy and the German Occupation* Fulcher described how the Resistance used these styles, sometimes reappropriating them from Vichy, to define a French culture associated with the Enlightenment and humanist values.[264] Milhaud, who would have been aware of these tactics, was doing much the same.

Supervielle, who wrote the play upon which the libretto for *Bolivar* was based, was also following the French Resistance while exiled from France in Montevideo, Uruguay. He had been born in 1884 in Montevideo but traveled often between Uruguay and France.[265] Supervielle's letters with his close friend René Étiemble from this period attest to his involvement with the literary Resistance. Supervielle was close with the Resistant Jean Paulhan, who before the war had directed *La Nouvelle Revue française* and during the war helped to found *Les Lettres françaises.* This publication was associated with the Resistant Front national des écrivains.[266] This review would later be supported by the French Communist Party.

Supervielle's play had epic proportions, spanning twenty-six years of the life of Bolivar. Madeline Milhaud crafted the libretto for *Bolivar* by cutting material from Supervielle's play and shifting its structure to fit Milhaud's compositional needs. Madeline added text on one occasion

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[263] Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 181, 187; Madeline would later be made a *Chevalière* of the Légion d'Honneur for her wartime work in support of French culture in the United States. Darius was promoted from *Chevalier* to *Officier*. See Maher, "Darius Milhaud in the United States, 1940–1971," 126.

[264] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 12–13.

[265] *Jules Supervielle, Poète intime et légendaire* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1984), 11–14; see also the short biography of Supervielle written by his friend Etiemble included in the notes of their correspondence, Jules Supervielle and Etiemble, *Correspondance 1936–1959,* ed. Jeannine Etiemble (Paris: Société d'Édition d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1969), 186n99.

[266] Paulhan, the Vichy takeover of *La Nouvelle Revue française,* and the new publication *Les Lettres françaises* were constant topics of conversation between Supervielle and Etiemble. A few of the most significant references are cited here: Supervielle and Etiemble, *Correspondance 1936–1959*, 81, 86, 100, 108.

drawn from Bolivar's writings to highlight the ostracism and abandonment Bolivar experienced before his death—a sentiment, of course, that was particularly trenchant for the Milhauds, forcibly exiled from France.[267] Supervielle provided additional text for some of the opera's airs.[268]

From this libretto Milhaud created a monumental historical opera, about three-and-a-half hours in length, that required the majority of the Opéra's resources and performing forces to stage. *Bolivar* completed Milhaud's trilogy of operas on South American heroic—and tragic—figures begun in 1928 with his *Christophe Colomb* and followed by *Maximilien* in 1930.[269] All three operas are reminiscent of the classic Greek tragedy to which Milhaud was drawn.[270] To Milhaud, ancient Greek culture offered a basis of a collective identity, as so many cultures stemmed from it or studied it.[271] This idea of the unity of human experience, especially that of suffering, is particularly key to understanding Milhaud's interpretation of *Bolivar*. The operas also all feature prominent roles for the chorus, once again nodding to the classic Greek tragic form.

Unfortunately, the source material for *Bolivar* is now incomplete. There are large sections missing from the libretto and the score preserved at the Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra in Paris.[272] Jeremy Drake wrote of an anticipated edition by Salabert after the 1983 revival of

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[267] Milhaud, *My Happy Life,* 216.

[268] Milhaud, *My Happy Life,* 216; Maher, "*Darius* Milhaud in the United States, 1940–1971," 304; *Jules Supervielle, Poète intime et légendaire*, 53.

[269] See Cécile Auzolle, "Les Créations lyriques à l'Opéra de Paris entre 1945 et 1955," 108; and Drake, *The Operas of Darius Milhaud,* 291–292.

[270] Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual,* 176–177.

[271] Ibid., 176–177.

[272] The libretto manuscript to *Bolivar* is incomplete see *cote.* "Dossier d'oeuvre *Bolivar*" or an additional copy under *cote.* NLAS-122, both at the Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

Bolivar planned in Venezuela, but the edition never made it to press.[273] Shanahan mentions this 1983 as well as a 2012 revival in Caracas, but what materials were used and where they are now are unclear.[274] There is only one recording of *Bolivar.* It was produced at the Opéra for Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française in 1962 and is now distributed by Forlane.[275]

There were large cuts introduced to *Bolivar* which are reflected in the 1962 recording and the score, but are only sometimes in the libretto. Drake argues that these cuts were originally made without Milhaud's knowledge since they "are often without musical or dramatic justification" but that Milhaud later approved them.[276] However, in letters held at the Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, Milhaud clearly states to Lehmann that he and Max de Rieux were working on the abridged version of *Bolivar,* and then later in an additional letter inquires if the cut version of the opera had been performed more than once.[277] Therefore, the cuts should be treated as, at the very least, guided by Milhaud. By using all of these sources a fairly complete picture of the opera emerges.

Bolivar, a colonial landlord and slave-owner in Venezuela, frees his slaves in honor of his late wife Maria-Theresa. The slaves are overjoyed, but Bolivar receives a visit from the punctilious Visitador who objects, as free slaves are sure to cause havoc in the colonies. Bolivar ignores his advice and embarks on a campaign to free the colonies from Spanish rule. A decade

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[273] Drake, *The Operas of Darius Milhaud,* 295.

[274] Maureen G. Shanahan and Ana María Reyes, eds. *Simon Bolivar: Travels and Transformations of a Cultural Icon* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2016), 18.

[275] This recording adds a narrator who helpfully summaries the action before each scene. Clearly Radiodiffusion was concerned that audiences would not be able to follow the plot without this aid, see CD 9 and 10 in *Darius Milhaud* (Forlane, 2014).

[276] Drake, *The Operas of Darius Milhaud,* 297–298.

[277] Letters from Milhaud to Lehmann, 9 January 1952 and undated, Archives Opéra "Correspondance entre Administration et Auteurs divers 1950–1965," *cote.* 20-184, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

later, misfortune befalls the town of Caracas when a violent earthquake strikes. The priest calls this disaster an act of God punishing them for resisting Spanish rule. As the people tremble and wail, Bolivar strides in calling for calm and quickly marshals the village. Soon Bolivar meets Manuela, a beautiful local young woman keen to follow him and his cause.[278]

Bolivar's exploits earn him fierce enemies, including the notorious General Bovès. Bovès captures Manuela, her sister, her mother, and Bolivar's faithful servant Nicanor. The general throws a ball where he forces all the women widowed by his soldiers' butchery to dance with the men who killed their husbands, and places Manuela in front of a firing squad. But thanks to Bovès's superstitions Manuela is able to escape. Bolivar's men must cross the Andes mountains to defend the capital. They succeed and Bolivar is offered the crown, which he refuses—monarchies are in his opinion for the Old World. But soon Nicanor dies saving Bolivar from assassination. The opera ends with Bolivar alone and abandoned by those he fought to free. While writing his manifesto, the memory of his wife Maria-Theresa returns to ease his death.

Milhaud capitalized on the locale of the plot and turned to the South American folk music and Latin dance styles that he had become familiar with during his time in Brazil during WWI. These had also inflected his inter-war compositions.[279] In *Bolivar,* this music is most evident in some of the material written for the choruses, and the instrumental interludes. Fulcher has noted the importance of popular music, especially jazz, to Milhaud during the inter-war period. She

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[278] Manuela's origins are not explained in the opera. Historically speaking, there was a woman named Manuela Sáenz. She was married to an English merchant living in Lima, Peru, but left him to join Bolivar and fight for the independence of the Latin American colonies from Spain.

[279] Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual,* 177; Milhaud, *My Happy Life,* 67–77; James Harding, *The Ox on the Roof: Scenes from musical life in Paris in the Twenties* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972), 47, 74–76; Glenn Watkins, *Soundings: Music in the Twentieth Century* (Belmont, CA: Schirmer Thomson Learning, 1988), 275–279; Nancy Lynn Perloff, *Art and the Everyday: Popular Entertainment and the Circle of Erik Satie* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 89–90; Milhaud, *My Happy Life,* 67–70.

argued that, "Milhaud was highly sensitive to issues of racial justice in any guise; in fact, his interest in jazz was inseparable from his belief that Jews and blacks were similarly oppressed peoples."[280] Milhaud believed in the universality of the experience of oppression and human suffering; thus he as a Jewish person—especially exiled from his homeland during WWII while those who remained were imprisoned and murdered—could understand the suffering of other oppressed peoples, be they the African American slaves or the slaves in the history of Bolivar. Milhaud wrote that popular music of these oppressed peoples, specifically American jazz, was:

> the source of that formidable rhythmic power, as well as that of the melodies, which are so expressive, and which are endowed with a lyricism that only oppressed races can produce…[281]

It is little wonder that he turned to popular music styles of South America in order to express this subjugation. Milhaud wrote some of the most visceral moments of *Bolivar* for the chorus of African slaves, and their music is inflected with both Latin-American and African popular music styles. These styles, despite their often seemingly happy nature, are utterances of the oppression the characters endure as slaves, and offer a parallel of the suffering Milhaud endured in 1943 as he watched the Holocaust unfold and the suffering that he thought was inherent to the experience of oppressed races.

Drake argued that *Bolivar* stylistically harkens back to Milhaud's operatic writing of the 1920s and 1930s.[282] Fauser suggested that this return to an earlier style could have been motivated by the more conservative American compositional environment—especially during

[280] Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual*, 180.

[281] "la source de cette puissance rythmique formidable, ainsi que celle des mélodies si expressives, qui sont douées du lyrisme que seule des races opprimées peuvent produire…" Milhaud as quoted and translated in Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual,* 180.

[282] Drake, *The Operas of Darius Milhaud*, 303.

the period of the war. Additionally, Milhaud may have been driven by a desire to return to a style that had already been successful for him and that was to an American ear distinctly French.[283] By revisiting a more neoclassic inflected style, Milhaud could clearly display his French identity and create music that would be heard by Americans as "French" first and foremost. Milhaud hoped to remind them of the plight of his homeland, with which the United States had initially been reluctant to get involved. Similar to the neoclassic works of Les Six during the inter-war period, *Bolivar* does not mobilize this style in a straightforward manner.[284] *Bolivar* is fairly classic in structure, arranged into tableaux and with solo airs, duets, and choruses clearly defined throughout. However, Milhaud employs his usual and inventive harmonic language that makes prominent use of modes (a possible nod back to classical Greek culture) and strong dissonance, which was more progressive than the music promoted by Vichy.[285] The music is also often extremely dense in texture with many competing lines offered simultaneously, pushing to the borders of the idea of the 'clarity' of French music.

Additionally, choosing a Latin-American subject aligned with the push towards Pan-Americanism promoted in the United States as an attempt to prevent Nazis from gaining a foothold in South America. Mills College even added a new Spanish and Portuguese language program in part funded by Nelson Rockefeller's Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs.[286] Milhaud would have been well aware of this trend in American politics and arts towards so-called 'good neighbor' ideologies that sought to safeguard the freedoms of the United

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[283] Fauser, *Sounds of War,* 181, 187–190.

[284] Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual*, 14–15.

[285] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 34, 61–62.

[286] Maher, "Darius Milhaud in the United States, 1940–1971," 285.

States through the support of the entire American continent. This also offers partial explanation for why the liberation of colonized people seemed a safe subject in 1943, instead of reading onto the liberation of France's own colonies, the liberation of South America was still able to be framed as part of the current struggle against the Nazi forces.

While Milhaud was unable to find an American opera company willing to premiere *Bolivar* during the war, in Paris after the war's end Hirsch was particularly enthusiastic. He wrote to Milhaud in February 1947 when the RTLN comité consultatif (the body responsible for choosing new works, which at this time included Jacques Ibert, Henri Büsser, Claude Delvincourt, Alexis Roland-Manuel, Henri Malherbe, and Hirsch himself) accepted *Bolivar*.[287] While not all works accepted by the committee made it to the stage, Hirsch was determined to mount *Bolivar*. The Opéra had not yet premiered any new operatic works since the Occupation and Hirsch faced increasing pressure to produce a premiere. (The first operatic premiere after the war at the Opéra was Delvincourt's *Lucifer* staged after *Bolivar's* acceptance but before its premiere.) Few new operatic works were approved by the comité consultatif for the Opéra, and once something was approved the budget for new décors, costumes, and mise-en-scène were very limiting.[288]

The majority of the Opéra's performing forces and technical teams would need to be rallied to bring *Bolivar* to the stage. This production involved the bulk of Hirsch's budget for new premieres; in 1950 the total budget for mise-en-scène was set at 103,000,000 francs which

[287] For the minutes of this meeting see Comité consultatif de la Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux, "Procès Verbal de la séance du 9 octobre 1946," Archives Opéra "Comité de lecture procès verbaux 1946–1965," *cote.* 20-272, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[288] See the list of works examined by the comité consultatif. In 1946 they heard 31 works of which they accepted 10, *Bolivar* was the only operatic work accepted intended for the Opéra. In 1947 they heard 41, and accepted 7, none of which were operatic works destined for the Opéra. See Archives Opéra "Comité de Lecture Oeuvres examinées 1946–1962," *cote.* 20-1160, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

included the maintenance of the repertoire pieces, wig, shoe, and costume replacements, as well as new works. Hirsch reminded the Directeur Général des Beaux-Arts, Jacques Jaujard, of this in a letter in November 1950:

> …it cannot be concluded that this credit [mise-en-scène] is given to us exclusively for new works. In effect, for close to half, it is used to sustain the material of the repertoire and for all the other expenses that go with the work of the stage, accessories, primary materials, costs of cleaning leotards and costumes, wigs, and dance shoes, etc. . . . these make up the extremely heavy daily charges, that are also obligatory expenses.[289]

Of the just over 100 million Hirsch had for mise-en-scène in 1950, about 50 million would have been dedicated to maintaining the repertoire. That would have left Hirsch with approximately 50 million to stage new works (operatic and choreographic) at *both* the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique that year. The press reported that the production of *Bolivar* had cost the Opéra 100 million francs to produce, and 20 million just to stage.[290] The costumes and decors for the work were a large investment, Fernand Léger received 200,000 francs for the creation of the maquettes, and the fabrication of the costumes alone cost close to 9,000,000 francs.[291] It is likely that Hirsch had been forced to stretch the expenses of *Bolivar* over several fiscal years as the score, decors, and costumes were created from 1947 until the 1950 premiere in order to have sufficient funds to support such a production.

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[289] "…il ne faut pas en conclure que ce crédit nous est accordé exclusivement pour les œuvres Nouvelles. En effet, pour près de la moitié, il est employé à l'entretien du matériel du répertoire et pour toutes les autres dépenses qui concourent au travail de scène, accessoires, matières premières, frais de blanchissage des maillots et costumes, fournitures des perruques, chaussons de danse, etc. . . . . Ce qui comporte des charges quotidiennes extrêmement lourdes qui sont, elles aussi, des dépenses obligatoires." See Letter to Jaujard, 4 November 1950, Archives Opéra "Correspondance de la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra 1950," *cote.* 20-1955, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[290] André Gathier, "*Bolivar,*" *Ce matin Le Pays,* 15 May 1950; Fernand Caussy, "La Querelle de *Bolivar,*" *Le Populaire,* 19 May 1950; Denis Hermant, "Un tremblement de terre ravagera ce soir la scène de l'Opéra," *France-Soir,* 13 May 1950.

[291] "Réponses à des questions posées par Monsieur de Leotard," 28 May 1956, Archives Opéra "Administration rapports avec l'Assemblée Nationale 1951–1964," *cote.* 20-124, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

The importance of the Opéra to France's cultural influence was used to justify the large outlay of resources to produce Milhaud's newest opera at the appropriate level of grandeur for France's premiere stage. Hirsch argued that through music a country expressed their excellence and sophistication, and that this was vital to their standing on the world stage:

> By its numerous resources, gained unceasingly, sonorous art reveals to the world the level of advancement, culture, and civilization of a people. It is directly tied to the destiny of the nation. Music plays an essential role in the modern world. Remember that Germany, after its defeat in 1918, only conserved its prestige as a great nation thanks to its literature and its musical activity.[292]

Milhaud's *Bolivar* was an important aspect of saving the operatic arts in France, and by extension sustaining France's position in the global hierarchy that was increasingly dominated by the Americans and the Soviets.

Bolivar and the Cultural Capital of the Resistance

Aligning himself with Milhaud was a shrewd move on Hirsch's part. Milhaud's strong reputation and status as an exiled Jewish composer married well with Hirsch's own Resistance activities and solidified his position. Hirsch, a dedicated Socialist, had been a member of the Beaufils group in the Resistance and was awarded a medal for his services during the Occupation.[293] Resistants, like Hirsch, were in key positions of power in the musical field after

[292] "Par ses nombreuses ressources, sans cesse accrues, l'art sonore révèle au monde le stade d'avancement, la culture et la civilisation d'un people. Il est directement lié au destin de la nation. La musique joue un rôle essentiel dans le monde moderne. Rappelons-nous que l'Allemagne, après sa défaite de 1918 n'a conservé son prestige de grande nation que grâce à sa littérature et à son activité musicale." Georges Hirsch, "Organisation de l'art lyrique en France. Réforme des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux. Création de l'Office National du Théâtre Lyrique," fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Dossier Hirsch," *cote.* 4-col-8/45(11), Département Arts du Spectacle, BnF.

[293] Gourret notes he was part of the Beaufils group of the Resistance, see Gourret, *Ces Hommes qui ont fait l'Opéra*, 174; Hirsch also received the medal of the Resistance, as is noted in his biography in, "La nomination de M. Hirsch à l'Opéra est officielle," *Information,* 1 March 1956.

the war.[294] For example, the majority of the members of the RTLN comité consultatif had been important members of the Resistance, as well as those in control of the radio.[295] The cultural capital of being associated with the Resistance became increasingly important for Hirsch as his position at the RTLN was challenged repeatedly through smear campaigns and controversy, and as his socialist political party began to lose power, as the next chapter will discuss in more detail.[296]

At the Liberation parties of the left—for example the communists, socialists, and Christian democrats—were particularly strong, especially because of their association with the Resistance.[297] In May 1947, France accepted financial aid from the Americans in the form of the Marshall Plan. Shortly after, the communist minsters were expelled from the government.[298] As the communists were increasingly discredited by the news of Stalin's oppression in the Soviet Union (Sartre broke with the Party in 1950 over the issue of Stalin's concentration camps), the French government continued to shift further to the right.[299] The socialist ministers who had helped Hirsch gain his position were being moved out of power and those now in charge began to object to his politics.

Despite the changes taking place in the political landscape, the former Resistance did still have important influence. *Bolivar* was carefully framed as Milhaud's personal act of Resistance

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[294] Porcile, *Les Conflits de la musique française*, 110–115; and Nord, *France's New Deal,* 2–5, 217–220, 311.

[295] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 42, 49, 63, 66, 152, 243, 251; Francis Poulenc, *Correspondance*, 501.

[296] Dupêchez in his study on the Opéra also notes the importance of Hirsch's Socialist and political allies. See Dupêchez, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris. Un siècle au Palais Garnier 1875–1980*, 252.

[297] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 29–35, 54.

[298] Ibid., 51–52.

[299] Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, 155, 161.

as he 'feverishly' awaited the Liberation of France.[300] This narrative was constantly repeated in the articles leading up to and after *Bolivar's* premiere. Thus, Milhaud, and through him the Opéra, were aligned with the cultural capital of the Resistance and *Bolivar* was presented as a great work on the theme of French liberty and victory. In a way, Milhaud's return to the Opéra could be seen as the institution's own liberation, and, as Auzolle notes, a critical step distancing the house from the questions of its members' collaboration during the Occupation.[301] The Resistance had championed Milhaud during the Occupation despite the German ban on his works, and so the 1950 premiere of his opera at the Opéra felt like a final Resistance triumph returning the exiled composer to his rightful place. Hirsch, being a man of politics as much as of the arts, would not have failed to see the useful nature of these connections—both he and the press anticipated *Bolivar* would be greeted enthusiastically both as a musical and political object.

Bolivar seemed well suited to express Milhaud's stated longing for the liberation of France from the brutality of the Nazis. After all, Bolivar could be seen as the ultimate Resistant, freeing his people from the Nazi-like General Bovès and Spanish oppression. Manuela is one of the characters in which the audience becomes most invested and is the perfect female resistance counterpart to Bolivar; she is devoted, brave in the face of a firing squad, a plucky mascot for the independent army, and saves Bolivar from an assassination attempt.

The visual aspects of *Bolivar* were also centered on memories of the Occupation. Milhaud selected Fernand Léger to design the scenery and costumes; the two had previously collaborated on *La Création du monde,* a work also inflected by their WWI experiences. Léger

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[300] Milhaud, *My Happy Life,* 216; Louis Baudouin, "Le Palais Garnier va créer *Bolivar* 15e opera de Darius Milhaud," *Paris Presse,* 25 April 1950; Maurice Ciantar, "Ému comme un neophyte Darius Milhaud, auteur de *Bolivar* attend dans la fièvre le verdict du public," *Combat,* 12 May 1950; "La creation de *Bolivar* telle que l'a conçue Darius Milhaud," *Le Monde,* 13 May 1950.

[301] Auzolle, "Les Créations lyriques à l'Opéra de Paris entre 1945 et 1955," 111.

was deeply influenced by, and in turn influential upon, the cubist movement. After serving in WWI, Léger increasingly responded to the growing trends of technological innovation and urban living in his paintings that featured the mechanical and the city.[302] Léger was fascinated by the American city in particular. As Carolyn Lanchner notes, Léger worked hard to try to break into the American market, and so by the time of WWII, he had already made contacts within the country.[303] He left France and arrived in the United States in November 1940. He was offered a position to teach the upcoming summer session at Mills College.[304]

Léger had been involved with the political left and combatting the rise of fascism since the 1930s.[305] Léger was a central figure in the pre-war debates over socially engaged art, especially as he took on a leadership role at the leftist and communist-led Association des Écrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires (AEAR) in 1934.[306] Just before this, in 1933, he and Milhaud (probably because of Léger's encouragement) published statements against fascism in an AEAR leaflet. Milhaud wrote:

> It is distressing to see in Germany the liberty of thought and artistic expression stopped by the reactionary thrust that threatens to engulf the entire German musical renaissance. The ogre Wagner eats all.[307]

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[302] Carolyn Lanchner, "Fernand Léger: American Connections", 18–19, and Beth Handler, "Introduction," 174–177 both in Carolyn Lanchner, *Fernand Léger* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1998).

[303]Beth Handler, "Introduction," 234–237.

[304] Lanchner, "Fernand Léger: American Connections," 53.

[305] Sarah Wilson, "Fernand Léger Art and Politics 1935–1955," in Nicholas Serota ed. *Fernand Léger, The Later Years* (New York: Prestel-Verlag, 1987), 57–59.

[306] Matthew Affron, "Léger's Modernism: Subjects and Objects," in Carolyn Lanchner, *Fernand Léger* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1998), 138.

[307] "Il est navrant de voir en Allemagne la liberté de pensée et d'expression artistique arrêtée par la poussée de réaction qui menace d'engloutir toute la renaissance musicale allemande. L'ogre Wagner mange tout." Darius Milhaud, "La Culture contre le fascisme," *Feuille Rouge* No. 2 (March, 1933), 2.

Milhaud and Léger both worked to use *Bolivar* to push back against the oppression of Germany's wartime influence and control at the Opéra and to craft an operatic tribute to Resistance.

While Léger did not begin the real work of the hundreds of maquettes and croquis needed to produce *Bolivar* until 1947, he was already planning them during the war and his stay in America. This is evident not only because of the descriptions and sketches preserved in his letters, but also because of the clear influence his time in America had on his paintings and in turn his decors for *Bolivar*.[308] In a 1948 interview for *Les Lettres françaises* about his decors for *Bolivar,* Léger told Anatole Jakovski:

> During my last stay in America, I realized what they [America] are worth without men… I saw cemeteries of tractors, of cars, entire necropoli of scrap! So, I painted them, like that, with the pretty flowers through the twisted scrap. Flowers and crowns, as it were![309]

The influence of these sights can be seen in particular in his series of works *Paysages Américains*, and in the sketches for the scene of the Earthquake in *Bolivar*, Act I Scene 3. The juxtaposition of the non-organic elements, the bold lines, and the interruptions of the plant material are striking in the ensemble of these works. [Figure 2.1]

[308] Lista discusses some of the sketches present in Léger's letters. See Giovanni Lista, "Léger scénographe et cineaste," in *Fernand Léger et le Spectacle* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1995), 82.

[309] "Pendant mon dernier séjour en Amérique, je me suis bien rendu compte de ce qu'elle valait sans l'homme… J'ai vu des cimetières de tracteurs, de voitures, des nécropoles entières de ferraille ! Alors, je las ai peints, comme ça, avec de jolies fleurs à travers la ferraille tordue. Fleurs et couronnes, quoi !", Léger interviewed by Anatole Jakovski, *Les Lettres françaises,* 12 February 1948.

Figure 2.1: Léger, Maquette for *Bolivar,* Act I scene 3, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

In *Bolivar* his color palette was particularly bold, and leaned heavily on saturated yellows and browns to evoke the Latin American landscape. The opening curtain provides a clear example of his new color theory that transcended the lines of the painting to become independent blocks of color. Additionally, there are examples throughout the opera of his increased interest of blending the organic elements of a painting with the, often ruins, of the machine—in particular the scene of the earthquake in Act I is a clear illustration of this.

A large wheel image is prominent in Léger's studies for the earthquake scene in Act I. It is blended with the organic elements around the city, but rather than being a machine already in ruins, it is as if the wheel is causing the destruction. The wheel, however, is not visible in any of the 1962 photographs taken of the staging of *Bolivar*.[310] This, coupled with Léger's statements that he wanted real three-dimensional movement in the earthquake scene, suggests that the wheel was one of the moving elements of the set and it careened across the stage during the earthquake.[311] [Figure 2.2]

[310] This staging still used the Léger decors and costumes, and these photographs are the only of *Bolivar* available. See Roger Pic, *Bolivar* (1962) in Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[311] Léger for *Le Monde* 13 May 1950 see *Fernand Léger et le spectacle*, 178; Milhaud, *My Happy Life,* 223.

Figure 2.2: Photo by Roger Pic, 1962, *Bolivar* in Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

The wheel has a startling resemblance to the large spoked wheels used on French artillery during WWI.[312] [Figure 2.3] Léger was mobilized in the Argonne Forest in 1914 and spent the majority of the war at the front lines and in the trenches.[313] His letters from this time describe the violence, destruction, and dismemberment he witnessed continually, and have caused historian Stéphan Audion-Rouzeau to posit that Léger suffered from PTSD.[314] It seems that the wheel could be a visceral image associated with memories of war. This scene of chaos and destruction would have been particularly disturbing to audiences who had to recently endured war and occupation.

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[312] See for example the partially visible wheel in the drawing on this WWI era post-card captioned "Mit Zeppelin kühn voran!" consultable freely in the BnF Gallica portal: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10234118w; see also this August 1917 press photo "Canons et soldats français," BnF Gallica portal: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53003679f; and see also this January 1915 press photo of an anti-aircraft canon that required digging a hole or small trench to operate "Canon contre avion, pour donner à ce canon une inclinaision voulue on a été oblige de creuser un trou," BnF Gallica portal: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b531157613.

[313] Lanchner ed., *Fernand Léger,* 18; Maureen Shanahan, "Creating the New Man: War Trauma and Regeneration in Fernand Léger's Designs for *La Création du monde* (1923)," *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 76:4 (2007): 207–223.

[314] Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, "La Correspondence de guerre de Fernand Léger en 1914–1918," *Europe 75* 881 (June–July 1997): 51–56.

Figure 2.3: August 1917 press photo “Canons et soldats français,” BnF Gallica portal: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53003679f

Beyond the plot of the opera and its visual components, Milhaud also chose to use an operatic style clearly tied to the Resistance and to the great musical patrimony of France they sought to promote, French grand opera. Milhaud turned to a genre that had been defined by a fellow Jewish composer, Meyerbeer, and that was vilified by the Vichy and Nazi regimes.[315] Meyerbeer had also been the subject of anti-Semitism during the inter-war period.[316] It is unlikely Milhaud marshaled this style unthinkingly; he and his colleagues in Les Six were particularly adept in the inter-war period at using past musical styles to make critical commentary on current music and events.[317] *Bolivar*, like Milhaud’s previous neoclassical works of the inter-war period, can be viewed as Milhaud’s continuation and expansion of the French musical tradition that he (and the Resistance) wished to emphasize—universal and rooted in the

[315] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 108, 200.

[316] Jane Fulcher, “The Preparation for Vichy: Anti-Semitism in French Musical Culture between the Two World Wars,” *The Musical Quarterly* 79 No. 3 (Autumn 1995): 459.

[317] Jane Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual*, 155–156, 172, 181.

classics rather than the narrow definitions supported by Vichy.[318] He drew on the grand operatic tradition and adapted it to the needs of modern opera and current events.

Bolivar does not perfectly fit the formal labels of 'grand opera', after all one of the hallmarks of the genre is its five-act structure, and *Bolivar* only has three. But exploring the similarities and differences between *Bolivar* and some of the quintessential grand opera traits—especially its cultural and political import—offers a frame through which to consider audience expectations, the intentions of the production team, and Milhaud's own vision for the work. *Bolivar*, like grand opera, was not a primarily commercial venture (despite its showy production) but instead was an important moment that enunciated visions of French identity and the new political reality of France's changing stature in the post-war world. The RTLN and Milhaud attempted to imbue *Bolivar* with political meaning that highlighted France's victory over the Occupation and the culturally liberating values of the French artistic patrimony. The grand operatic style was a critical facet of this. However, when critics and audiences began to craft alternative readings that were more politically contentious, the same grand operatic style was used by critics to undercut the work and its significance.[319]

A few of Milhaud's contemporaries pointed out the connection between *Bolivar* and grand opera in their reviews of the work, but they did not consider it in depth or contemplate the larger meaning of this reference to the past tradition. In general, papers of the left responded positively to the connection. René Dumesnil writing for *Le Monde,* the major paper of the

[318] The Resistance firmly supported Enlightenment ideals, especially the universal right to human dignity and liberty. See Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 258.

[319] For more on the alleged commercialization of grand opera see William Crosten *French grand opera, an art and a business* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1948); and of course, Fulcher's response which argues for the political and artistic importance of the genre, see Jane Fulcher *The Nation's Image: French grand opera as politics and politicized art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Christian democrats, noted Milhaud's revival of Meyerbeer's historical opera style and also linked *Bolivar* to the luxurious productions at Châtelet:

> …one goes to see *Bolivar* as one went in the time of historical opera to see *Les Huguenots* and *Le Prophète,* as today one goes to see the spectacles at Châtelet. The Opéra cedes nothing to them.[320]

In the communist left-leaning *Ce Soir,* Hélène Jourdan-Morhange called *Bolivar* full of force and emotion, "a grand historical drama that could have tempted Meyerbeer."[321]

Journalists on the right were less convinced. André Gauthier, for *Ce matin Le Pays,* which would eventually become part of the right-leaning publication *L'Aurore,* wrote that if the opera evoked Meyerbeer, it was only a distant view of him:

> And if we come, in the course of the performance, to conjure up their presence, it is, alas!, by gazing at things through the small end of the spyglass! Massenet? Meyerbeer?[322]

Gauthier neatly attempted to divorce *Bolivar* from any real claim at artistic success or legitimacy by framing the production as commercial, and not even living up to the historical (and it seems implied from his tone, low) precedent of Meyerbeer.

Recently, Auzolle compared *Bolivar* with influential grand operatic works in her chapter on the repertoire of the RTLN during this period in Michel Noiray and Solveig Serre's 2010 edited volume. Auzolle noted in particular the scale and grandeur of the work. Auzolle also connected *Bolivar* with two other premieres at the Opéra during this period, *Kerkeb* (Samuel-

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[320] "…on ira voir *Bolivar* comme on allait au temps de l'opéra historique vois *Les Huguenots* et *Le Prophète,* comme on va voir aujourd'hui les féeries du Châtelet. L'Opéra ne leur cède en rien." René Dumesnil, "*Bolivar* à l'Opéra," *Le Monde,* 14–15 May 1950.

[321] "C'est un grand drame historique qui aurait pu tenter Meyerbeer." Hélène Jourdan-Morhange, "Le *Bolivar* de Darius Milhaud fait passer un vrai cyclone sur la scène de l'Opéra," *Ce Soir,* 18 May 1950.

[322] "Et s'il nous arrive, en cours de spectacle, d'évoquer leur présence, c'est, hélas ! en considérant les choses par le petit bout de la lorgnette ! Massenet ? Meyerbeer ?" André Gauthier, "*Bolivar,*" *Ce matin Le Pays,* 15 May 1950.

Rousseau, 1951) and *Numance* (Barraud, 1955). Samuel-Rousseau and Barraud had each been important in the Resistance, and like *Bolivar* their operas highlighted themes of oppression. Auzolle astutely argued that these operas elicited the revolutionary spirit of Daniel Auber's *La muette de Portici* (1828) or the political gravity of Gaspare Spontini's *La vestale* (1807) but her chapter did not have the space deeply to explore the not only musical but also political implications of recalling this moment in French operatic history.[323]

Despite the political and stylistic appropriateness of the grand operatic style, Milhaud's choice of this genre opened *Bolivar* up to some criticism. Audiences at this time flocked to Romantic-era operas with swift-moving emotional plots and Romantic music aesthetics. From 1945 to 1958 Verdi's and Gounod's operas were very popular at the Opéra: Gounod's *Faust* received 313 performances, his *Roméo et Juliette* had 107, Verdi's *Rigoletto* had 203 performances, and his *La Traviata* had 114. It is worth noting, despite Wagner's aggressive cooptation during the war by the Nazis, *Lohengrin* recovered quickly enough to be the 25th most performed work during this period. [See Table 2.1] *Bolivar* did not take its cues from Romantic opera, especially not from the all-encompassing operatic style of Wagner with its trademark leitmotifs and continuous melody. Romantic opera was for many deeply implicated after the war, it had proved too easy for the Nazis and Vichy to craft into powerful propaganda.[324] Therefore, Milhaud—and his former Resistance colleagues—turned to a style that had not been coopted, grand opera. However, this meant choosing a style that went against the dominant public tastes.

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[323] Cécile Auzolle, "Les Créations lyriques à l'Opéra de Paris entre 1945 et 1955," 13, 108–111; Cécile Auzolle, "La creation lyrique à la RTLN (1936–1972)," in Sabine Chaouche, Denis Herlin, and Solveig Serre, *L'Opéra de Paris, La Comédie-Française et l'Opéra-Comique. Approches comparées (1669–2010)* (Paris: École des Chartes, 2012), 223.

[324] On the Nazi use of opera, especially within Germany see Erik Levi, "Opera in the Nazi period," in John London ed. *Theatre under the Nazis* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2000): 136–186; on the RTLN during the war see Sandrine Grandgambe, "La réunion des théâtres lyriques nationaux," in *La Vie musicale sous l'occupation* ed. Myriam Chimènes (Paris: Editions Complexe, 201), 109-120.

Table 2.1: Twenty-five most performed ballets and operas at the Opéra 1945–1958

Title					1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	Total
Faust	Opera	1869	Gounod	French	19	15	26	15	21	28	14	22	19	19	22	34	26	33	313
Indes Galantes	Opera	1735	Rameau	French								37	65	43	34	20	2	7	208
Rigoletto	Opera	1851	Verdi	Italian	17	13	18	16	17	18	10	17	14	12	15	16	10	10	203
Namouna	Ballet	1882	Lalo	French	1	15	13	14	12	13	21	12	11	9	14	10	31	8	184
Flûte enchantée (La)	Opera	1791	Mozart	German	6	12	17	14	9	18	17	8	3	4	20	11		3	142
Giselle	ballet	1841	Adolphe Adam	French	19	13	9		10	9	8	8	8	12	5	3	9	11	124
Damnation de Faust (La)	Opera	1846	Berlioz	French	13	9	14	11	13	15	13	12	3			1	10	6	120
Coppélia	Ballet	1870	Léo Delibes	French	22	9	11	6	6	5	10	13	7	6	5	8	3	4	115
Traviata (La)	Opera	1853	Verdi	Italian							20	18	9	12	9	18	10	18	114
Roméo et Juliette	Opera	1867	Gounod	French	10	10	13	9	9	8	8	7	5	7	5	6	9	1	107
Palais de cristal (Le)	ballet	1855	Bizet	French			5	7	8	6	11	8	7	8	9	13	12	9	103
Boris Godounov	Opera	1874	Mussorgsky	Russian	17	12	7	13	6	8	8		11	7	6	4	1	2	102
Aïda	Opera	1870	Verdi	Italian	7	6		12	7	7	9	7	4	8	11	6		13	97
Belle au bois dormant	ballet	1890	Tchaikovsky	Russian				13	9	7	19	6	6	10	5	8	5	5	93
Jeanne au bûcher	opera	1938	Honegger	French						2	32	15	7	11	7	7	7	2	90
Samson et Dalila	Opera	1877	Saint-Saëns	French	11	12	11	13	9	10	3	5	2	1		9	2		88
Mirages	ballet	1944	Sauguet	French			3	16	8	7	9	8	8	9	4	6	4	3	85
Suite de danses	Balllet	1849	Chopin	Polish	17	10	6	5	5		3	5	4	5	6	14	3	2	85
Thaïs	Opera	1894	Massenet	French	6	14	11	11	5		6	6	8	6	4	6			83
Etudes (Czerny)	ballet	1948	Riisager	Danish							1	4	19	15	13	12	9	5	78
Soir de fête	Ballet	1866	Léo Delibes	French	9	7	4	1	3	3	8	7	3			6	16	8	75
Lac des cygnes	Ballet	1877	Tchaikovsky	Russian		15	14	6	3	6	5	7	6	6				4	72
Roi d'Ys (Le)	Opera	1888	Édouard Lalo	French	13	13	3	11	5	7	6	7	4	2					71
Lohengrin	Opera	1850	Wagner	German			12	12	4	5	7	4	3	7	7	6			67

For example, a common criticism of *Bolivar* was that it dragged and was far too long. While the RTLN had invested heavily in fantastic sets and costumes, audiences accustomed to the pacing of Romantic opera found the over three hours of historical grand opera less compelling. Milhaud, similar to Meyerbeer, focused on a larger unit-based dramaturgy. In Meyerbeer's operas the larger scene units create a sense of the structure of the plot, its building, its climax(es), the emotion, and the eventual catharsis of the story. While Milhaud did divide his opera into larger tableaux, the dramatic pull of this opera was not as successful as that of his predecessor. The emotional arc of some of the tableau was rather flat with long spans of repetitive recitative.

The libretto of *Bolivar,* for all its war and disaster, relied heavily on discussion rather than action, which made the drama hard to sustain. Elements meant to interrupt the action (or in this case often discussion)—typically arias, duets, choruses—do so with varying success. Manuela's airs however are outstanding, and heighten the dramatic impact of the Earthquake sequence (Act I scene 3), the soldier's march at end of Act I, and her two airs sustain the passage through the Andes nearly singlehandedly (Act II scene 3). But the duets between Bolivar and

Manuela sound too similar to the recitative truly to function as a moment of relief for the audience. It seems even Milhaud recognized this: when he made cuts to the opera, Bolivar and Manuela's first duet was shortened to half its original length.

Bolivar was often described more in terms of static fresques or panoramas.[325] With so much exposition, unless the spectator is carefully guided through the various 'levels' of tension and release with great care, individual moments lose their flavor rather than increase in excitement. The arching from action to emotion, building to climax, and tension to resolution is vital to the dramatic sweep of operas. Milhaud used an abundance of 'events', large dramatic statements, sudden bursts of sound, unexpected accents, staggering high notes, climactic harmonic arrivals, or deeply dissonant passages with abandon, which attempted to define and shape the long spans within the tableaux. However, this surfeit of climactic elements, sometimes muddied rather than enhanced the drama. This is particularly noticeable throughout Act I, and is compounded by the thick multilayered textures and extended dissonance employed by Milhaud. Audiences were no doubt hoping for an emotionally gripping portrayal of the very visceral occupation experience they had just endured—and something easier on their Romantic ears.

The sometimes-detached emotional stance in *Bolivar* is exacerbated by how little real character development takes place, and even the love story between Bolivar and Manuela often feels dull. Manuela herself has arguably some of the best music in the opera, along with a few choruses, and is in all likelihood one of the characters in which the audience becomes most emotionally invested. Yet, the final scene largely dismisses her presence in the work. Instead the memory of Maria-Theresa—who has been absent since her demise in the first scene—is recalled

[325] Drake, *The Operas of Darius Milhaud*, 304; Milhaud referred to the opera as a "vast fresque populaire" in "La creation de *Bolivar* telle que l'a conçue Darius Milhaud", *Le Monde,* 13 May 1950; See also, Henri Hell, "*Bolivar* de Darius Milhaud que l'Opéra vient de créer est-il ou non un échec?," *Le Figaro littéraire,* 27 May 1950.

at Bolivar's death. While it creates nice symmetry for the opera formally it is unsatisfying from a standpoint of emotional catharsis.

Additionally, we see only one side of the 'evil' characters. General Bovès and his men do not struggle with the violence they are asked to commit. This unnuanced reading probably stood in stark contrast with portrayals like the widely-read 1942 novel *Le Silence de la mer* (and 1949 film), which gave voice to the inner conflicts facing both the occupier and the occupied.[326] This rigid framework, juxtaposing good and evil, would have grated against the lived experiences of the Occupation, in which compromise and guilt were such complex issues. Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* was much more successful on this score, revealing the gradations of resistance and collaboration in a way *Bolivar* did not strive to do.

While Manuela was not present at the end of the opera, she did receive the most music that is akin to a classic aria format. Despite this gesture towards operatic norms, the writing for Manuela caused quite a stir. Critics called her tessitura 'inhumane' and 'perilous'. Praise for the singer, Jeanne Micheau, who sailed her way through the difficult role was, however, universal.[327] Upon examination, her part nods to some of the great coloratura roles in the operatic repertoire, a tour-de-force that takes a skilled singer to pull off. She reprises the soldier's march in a stirring moment that recalls the spirited Marie in *La fille du regiment* (Act I scene 4), briefly quotes Fauré's *mélodie* "Après un rêve" in "Si c'est pour ne plus le revoir" (Act II scene 1), and incants

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[326] Vercors, *Le silence de la mer et autres recits* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1979); the film was directed by Jean-Pierre Melville by his own production company and premiered in France in 1949.

[327] Dumesnil called her role 'inhumane', See René Dumesnil, "*Bolivar* a l'Opéra," *Le Monde,* 14–15 May 1950; in the right-leaning *l'Epoque,* Brilliant termed it perilous but wrote Micheau laughed in the face of all the role's obstacles. See Maurice Brilliant, "*Bolivar* deliver l'Amérique," *l'Epoque,* 15 May 1950; Gauthier called it un-singable. See André Gauthier "Bolivar," *Ce matin Le Pays,* 15 May 1950; Clarendon (Bernard Gavoty of *Le Figaro)* praised Micheau's execution of the high register. See Clarendon, "*Bolivar* de Darius Milhaud," *Le Figaro,* 15 May 1950.

a prayer in the style of and quoting *Lakmé* (Act I scene 3). That her pieces were popular with audiences accustomed to Romantic opera is not surprising.

Her centerpiece is a recitative and air "À moi, Vierge du grand secours… Mon Dieu donnez-moi un abri" sung during the earthquake of Act I scene 3. As Manuela asks for the intercession of the Virgin Mary to protect her, the solemn recitative is accompanied by a solo flute in the lower part of its range. A-flat minor is clearly established by both the vocal line and by the flute. Melomanes will be startled to hear the first phrase of both the recitative and the air is a direct quotation of the opening line of "Où va le jeune Hindoue" the famous Bell Song from Delibes's *Lakmé* transposed from its original B minor. [Examples 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3]

Example 2.1: Recitative "À moi, Vierge du grand secours", Act I scene 3

a moi, Vier - ge du grand se - cours.

Example 2.2: Air "Mon Dieu donnez-moi un abri", Act I scene 3

Mon Dieu don nez moi un a - bri

Example 2.3: "Où va la jeune Hindoue" from *Lakmé,* Act 2

Où va la jeune In - dou - e

"Où va le jeune Hindoue" is performed by the title character Lakmé who has been forced to sing by her father, a Brahmin priest, in order to draw out her forbidden European admirer. In *Bolivar,* Manuela has not been explicitly forced to sing or pray but as the scene continues it is revealed that the priest of Caracas is attempting to convince the people that the earthquake has been brought on by their sinful desire to defy Spain. In both *Lakmé* and *Bolivar*, the young soprano is caught up in a power struggle that combines the turbulent dynamics of religion and colonialism. While Milhaud did not comment on this quotation, nor did the press or his friends note it, the quotation is far too exact, and far too apt, to have been mere coincidence. And it is not the only place in *Bolivar* where Milhaud's score subtly emphasized the harsh oppressions of the colonial system.

Beyond the Surface Reading, *Bolivar* and an Unpopular Take on Colonialism

It is clear that Milhaud and Léger both associated *Bolivar* with the struggle to liberate France, and the administration at the RTLN in all likelihood assumed that this intended message would be what audiences would read from the work. However, *Bolivar* could also be read as a commentary on France's current policies regarding its colonies. It is important to remember, however, the situation of France's colonies during *Bolivar's* composition in 1943 was vastly different from their status in 1950, and thus the opera's potential meanings shifted. Much like the its grand operatic model, the political import of *Bolivar* proved hard to control, no matter the level of spectacle applied in an attempt to frame and distract from its political connotations. Milhaud's portrayal of the struggle of Black and Latino characters to liberate themselves from colonial rule (albeit under the leadership of Bolivar, the European 'savior' figure) was an uncomfortable topic. In the early 1950s the majority of the French were in favor of maintaining

French sovereignty throughout the colonies of the French union. The message *Bolivar* did or did not project about colonialism became a key issue behind the development of the "Querelle *Bolivar"* and was a major motivating factor in *Bolivar's* 'failure'.

Many believed at the Liberation that France's colonies could help France to reassert its greatness and influence in the world. This was especially embraced by General de Gaulle who believed that the colonies had not only been essential to the Allied war effort but also would be vital to France's post-war recovery. The importance of the colonies to the fight to liberate France would have been high in Milhaud's mind at the time of *Bolivar's* composition, as was the importance of South America to resisting the spread of Nazi influence, as discussed already above. After de Gaulle left power, the subsequent French governments pursued similar policies aimed at maintaining French sovereignty and influence in the colonies.[328] Even among the former Resistance the consensus was that the extension the French Republican liberties recently recovered in metropolitan France throughout the colonies would rejuvenate the empire—while the ideal of a democratic French empire of equal citizens was lauded, the independence of the colonies was not entertained.[329]

The colonial nationalist movements that had begun during the war, especially in North Africa, Madagascar, and Indo-China (today Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia), continued to grow. After the intentions of France and the terms of the French Union's control over the colonies became clear during the constitutional debates of 1945–1946, the Rassemblement démocratique africain (RDA) was founded by Houphouët-Boigny. At its 1946 conference the RDA rejected assimilation with France, and instead sought to work towards a united and free democratic

[328] Rioux, *The Fourth Republic,* 81, 85.

[329] Ibid., 85.

Africa.[330] The conflict over the independence of Indo-China also continued and became increasingly violent. These movements toward independence and violence shifted the context of *Bolivar* and its interpretation drastically.

In August 1947, the British colonies of India and Pakistan (soon to be followed by Burma, Ceylon, and Malaysia) gained their independence within the framework of the British Commonwealth—perhaps making Manuela's reference to *Lakmé* set in India seem all the more suggestive.[331] France, however, remained committed to maintaining their colonies, even when this required force.[332] In March 1947, the communists rejected the military credits destined for the colonies asked for by the Ramadier government.[333] Two months later in May 1947, the communists refused to support the government and the tripartisme government alliance of the communists (PCF), socialists (SFIO), and Christian democrats (MRP) that had maintained control of the Fourth Republic failed.[334] The PCF had balanced the more narrow policies preferred by the MRP on the colonies, and the communist departure shifted the colonial debate further to the right. Even the SFIO, who, in theory, would have supported a more liberal colonial policy, were, in practice, deeply attached to French sovereignty in the colonies—much to the dismay of the intellectuals and left minority of the party.[335]

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[330] Ibid., 88.

[331] Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, 115.

[332] Ibid., 116.

[333] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 49.

[334] Ibid., 47.

[335] Ibid., 65–66.

The new more conservative government alliance, the Third Force, was united over their desire to maintain control of the colonies, and saw this as a key aspect of the global battle to resist the spread of communism and soviet expansion.[336] In June 1950 Schuman, the Ministre français des Affaires étrangères (French minister of Foreign Affairs), had made a public statement that part of policy in Tunisia was to work towards its eventual independence. These remarks provoked an outcry from the right, the center, the military, and even a large section of the metropolitan press who sided with the French citizens living in the colonies who wished to remain in control and a part of France.[337] This was the climate in which *Bolivar* would be interpreted, even if it was not the climate in which it had been composed.

Reading *Bolivar* on its most surface level (and in particular relying on the text more so than the score), one could find a fairly pro-colonization narrative that aligned well with France's current political stance. It is probable this reading that the RTLN and the comité consultatif imagined would be projected, if indeed they thought it would be considered, rather than the Occupation narrative they were keen to foreground. Similarly, the press, who across the political spectrum anticipated good reviews for *Bolivar,* probably also expected a work in this vein. While the Spanish colonial leaders are harshly criticized in the work—especially as they are represented by the 'evil villain' characters like the priest, the Visitador, and General Bovès—this criticism does not extend to the entire colonial mission. The African slaves seem eager to assimilate into the European-dominated culture, rather than reclaim and rebuild their own culture. It is indeed a European, Bolivar, who fights to 'liberate' them to live according to the

[336] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 61, 65–66; Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, 121.

[337] Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, 146–147; Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 66.

civilized norms of the colonizers. The goal is equality under European democratic norms, not true cultural independence.

However, Milhaud's score takes a more forceful stance and encourages a more critical reading vis à vis the role of European nations in the civilizing (or oppressing) of the colonies. That Milhaud would deeply consider the plight of the African and Latino characters in his opera aligns well with what is known about his views on race. Milhaud was sensitive to issues of racial justice and believed in an empathy and unity of experience possible among similarly oppressed peoples, like his own Jewish community and African Americans, for example. While Jewish communities in France had long been very assimilated, after the genocide of WWII a sense of Jewish culture, even in diaspora, became increasingly important and the idea of full assimilation less embraced.[338] This growing awareness of the conflicts inherent in the minority experience probably influenced Milhaud and could explain the more critical stance his score took upon the colonizing mission.

One of the scenes often deemed most memorable in the reviews was the slaves' celebration of their newfound freedom in Act I scene 2, and it is one of the places where Milhaud's critique of the dominant discourse on colonialism and cultural assimilation is most readily visible. In this scene, Bolivar frees his slaves Nicanor and Précipitation, who are overjoyed. Soon Bolivar declares his intention to free all the thousand slaves on his property. Nicanor and Précipitation shout this news in a driving rhythm supported by particularly accented strings. The choir joins with a swelling cry 'libre!' that feels rooted in the earth—these black voices joined in a celebration of freedom was particularly resonant given the demonstrations for freedom taking place in French Africa.

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[338] Maher discusses Milhaud's relationship to these trends well. See Maher, "Darius Milhaud in the United States, 1940–1971," 136–140.

The celebration continues to build—but then comes to a pregnant pause. Suddenly, the music shifts to a lighthearted and nearly pastoral operetta style as the newly-freed slaves greet each other as "citoyen" and "citoyenne." The stylistic shift displaces the scene from South America to a European hamlet in the most jarring manner. A flute accompanies melodic verses sung by Nicanor and Précipitation over the constant choral exchanges, which then breaks into joyous dance music. The light and exuberant quality of the music obscures the serious nature of the text, which details their capture in Africa and their realization during the passage to the Americas that they would be slaves.

At first hearing, this scene seems a classic example of the 'happy savage' trope. Nicanor and Précipitation celebrate and thank Bolivar for freeing them, despite the fact he was the one enslaving them in the first place. The music throughout is dance-like but shifts between European and South American dance idioms. The newly-freed slaves seem the picture of child-like innocence, and they make a show of imitating the gracious European customs they now will be able to assume. The dynamics of the scene appear clear cut: noble hero frees innocent and grateful people from oppression who then adopt the enlightened and civilized principles of Spain for themselves.

But upon analysis of the score, details emerge that challenge this interpretation. Overall the scene fairly consistently employs F mixolydian; the use of modes as a basis for tonality is classic Milhaud, but tucked into the texture are an abundance of major 2nds. Overall the harmony is outlining progressions from the fourth scale degree to the tonic, yet the notes to complete these modal chords are often missing or replaced with the 2nds. The effect is quite subtle, but it is enough to put a listener off balance. The rhythms of this section are also unexpected. The violins, cello, and bass are dutifully playing a conventional type of pizzicato

support for a triple-meter dance. Clarinet, bass clarinet, harp, and viola, however, have coupled eighth-note rising figures that keep displacing by a half-beat or full-beat, alternating measures where they are on the beat and then a measure partly syncopated. [Example 2.4] The effect is a bit stilted, as if looking at one's reflection in a slightly distorted mirror, and suggests there is something to read between the lines, subverting and questioning the happiness of the scene.

Example 2.4: Rehearsal 533 Act I Scene 2, *Bolivar*, Strings and Vocals only

The dance styles themselves, which switch between European and Latin American inspired models, also work to push back against the seeming happiness and harmony of the scene. Milhaud often made very intentional choices when incorporating musical styles of African American or Latin American musics into his works as he did in *Création du Monde* or *Le boeuf sur le toit.* Rather than blending or assimilating the two styles, as is often the case in these earlier ballets, in *Bolivar* Milhaud left them to grate against one another, which seems a trenchant commentary upon life as a dominated people in a colonialized, or occupied, nation. Here the

juxtaposition of styles and other subversive elements call attention to the duality of life between one's own culture and the imposition of the culture of the hegemonic power.

As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin note in *The Empire Writes Back,* the cultural product of a dominated culture has an inevitable tendency toward subversion. Often this subversion will question the assumptions that are the basis of power in the dominant culture.[339] This is particularly relevant to Précipitation's solo, sung over the dancing chorus. The text details how Précipitation was abducted in Africa and then realized during the passage she was going to be sold into slavery. Her melody is lovely and simple, floating over the rest of the tumultuous texture, which pairs uneasily with the painful text. While singing in a style demanded by the dance music, Précipitation still speaks her truth of the horrors she underwent to arrive at this place and situation. Her message is hidden, obvious only to those who really listen.

While Milhaud's score draws subtle attention to the cruelties of slavery and the colonial system, his message was complicated and undercut because all the African characters were in fact being played by white performers wearing dark makeup, or "blacking-up" to pass as dark-skinned.[340] [Figure 2.4] Recently, Naomi André, Karen M. Bryan, and Eric Saylor, edited the collection *Blackness in Opera,* which has begun to fill a huge lacuna in opera studies when considering race and representation. While none of the essays in the work deal specifically with the Paris Opéra, the volume suggests a manner in which one can interrogate and understand

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[339] Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin's excellent work considered the hegemonic power of English literature and the English language, especially in relation to the colonial past of the British Commonwealth. While the work mainly considers post-colonial societies, it is still a helpful theoretical framework to consider the colonized world of *Bolivar.* See Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 3, 31–32.

[340] Naomi André, Karen M. Bryan, and Eric Saylor, eds. *Blackness in Opera* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 2.

works like *Bolivar,* and, as will be seen in the next chapter, *Indes galantes,* in which a white cast is used to portray blackness on the operatic stage.

Figure 2.4: Photo by Erlanger de Rosen, *Bolivar,* in Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

Bolivar clearly draws from the legacy of minstrelsy and translates these tropes onto the operatic stage. This is especially true of the depiction of Nicanor, as Shanahan has noted. Nicanor, especially in the original play by Supervielle, is a comic character—despite the tragedy of his life and his outstanding bravery in service of Bolivar. Shanahan observed that the costume for Nicanor by Léger, a polka-dot top and striped paints borrowed from the image of the circus clown.[341] Milhaud's desire for the audience to identify with the African and Latino characters was hindered by the racial dynamics at play that code these African characters as 'other' from the French audience meant to identify with them, and that actively mocked them.

[341] Shanahan, "Bolivar on the Operatic Stage," 122.

This seems a clear example of Eric Lott's argument that that blackface minstrelsy was a performance practice that played to the dual anxiety and desire of its white audiences.[342] In *Bolivar,* these black and brown bodies were objects of nostalgic admiration as liberation fighters, but also dismissed by being made childlike and unthreatening. For example, Nicanor and Précipitation opened the opera singing lullaby. The racism inherent in performance with a white cast "blacking-up" was unavoidable, and largely unquestioned in reviews.

<u>*Bolivar* Fails? The Querelle *Bolivar*</u>

Milhaud's colleagues, melomanes, and the press waited with baited breath for his return to France in 1947 and then *Bolivar's* arrival on the Opéra's stage in May 1950. Louis Baudouin for *Paris-Presse* wrote leading up to the premiere that *Bolivar* would "finally inject some much-needed new blood into the eternally rehashed old repertoire," noting that Paris had not had the pleasure of an operatic premiere at the Opéra in two years (Delvincourt's *Lucifer* had premiered in 1948).[343] The right-leaning *l'Epoque* predicted *Bolivar's* success, before even having heard the opera:

> We are not familiar with a note of it…; but we know already that it is a grand work; certainly, we will greet it better than his *Maximilien* which, for my part, I liked a lot.[344]

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[342] Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2013), 4–6.

[343] "Ce sang nouveau, infusé au vieux répertoire, éternellement ressassé…" Louis Baudouin, "Le Palais Garnier va créer *Bolivar* 15e opéra de Darius Milhaud," *Paris Presse,* 25 April 1950; similar themes about bringing new life to the Opéra are also expressed in Maurice Ciantar, "Ému comme un neophyte Darius Milhaud, auteur de *Bolivar* attend dans la fièvre le verdict du public," *Combat,* 12 May 1950; Claude Baigneres, "Darius Milhaud va nous apprendre si le théâtre lyrique a encore un avenir…," *Le Figaro littéraire,* 13 May 1950.

[344] "Nous n'en connaissons pas une note…; mais nous savons déjà que c'est une grande œuvre; on l'accueillera certainement mieux que son *Maximilien* que, pour ma part, j'ai beaucoup aimée." *l'Epoque,* 12 May 1950.

On the other side of the political spectrum Maurice Ciantar, writing for the left-leaning publication *Combat,* also had faith in Milhaud's new opera:

> Sometimes it is appropriate to believe in miracles. The Opéra after years of lethargy, is finally emerging from its long sleep. This evening is the grand premiere in the house of Charles Garnier, with *Bolivar* by Darius Milhaud. [. . .] According to his intimates *Bolivar* is the first injection of Bogomoletz serum to infuse the aging repertoire.[345]

Claude Baigneres for the conservative *Le Figaro littéraire* on 13 May 1950 was waiting to pass judgement until the opera premiered, but noted the significance *Bolivar* could have for operatic theatre in France. He wrote in his headline "Milhaud will show us if operatic theatre still has a future" ["Darius Milhaud va nous apprendre si le théâtre lyrique a encore un avenir…"]. Milhaud, he claimed, has a revolutionary opinion; he denies that melomanes are leaving the opera and that the genre is indeed in real trouble. Instead, he continued, Milhaud offers up an opera that is an act of perpetual imagination.[346] The subtext was clear; Milhaud could be the savior for which the Opéra had been waiting.

Milhaud received a standing ovation at the conclusion of *Bolivar's* first performance; the skilled personnel of the Opéra had pulled off its complex staging and challenging musical feats.[347] One might assume he went to bed rather satisfied with the birth of his *Bolivar.* However, many of the reviews that poured in the next morning and the days that followed were not as

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[345] "Il convient parfois de croire au miracle. L'Opéra, après des années de léthargie, sort enfin de son long sommeil. C'est ce soir grande première chez Charles Garnier avec *Bolivar* de Darius Milhaud. [. . .] Selon ses intimes, *Bolivar* est la première injection de sérum Bogomoletz infusé au répertoire vieillissant." Maurice Ciantar, "Ému comme un néophyte Darius Milhaud, auteur de *Bolivar* attend dans la fièvre le verdict du public," *Combat,* 12 May 1950.

[346] Claude Baigneres, "Darius Milhaud va nous apprendre si le théâtre lyrique a encore un avenir…," *Le Figaro littéraire,* 13 May 1950.

[347] Loewel writing for the anti-communist right-leaning journal *l'Aurore* tempered his report of the audience's ovation by noting they had been much more reserved during the performance itself. See Pierre Loewel, "Darius Milhaud fait entrer le général Bolivar a l'Opéra," *l'Aurore,* 15 May 1950.

complimentary as the audience had reportedly been. A heated debate over the merits of *Bolivar* began to simmer in the press, and soon boiled over into the 'Querelle *Bolivar*'.

While the majority of critics in the press claimed to be assessing *Bolivar* based on its musical and dramatic merits, in reality many of the criticisms were motivated by anti-communist and pro-colonial sentiments, as well as by anti-Semitism. By 1950, as has been shown, the political left (especially the PCF) had lost much of the power it had enjoyed directly after the Liberation. Instead the Third Force focused political power more toward the center-right, and in general embraced anti-communism and the importance of preserving France's colonies. The 'Querelle *Bolivar*' could be roughly divided into three camps: those who thought *Bolivar* was a complete or partial failure (mostly from the moderate to conservative press, especially those associated with the Third Force), those who praised it mostly on social justice terms (generally communist and some socialist leaning critics), and those who staunchly defended *Bolivar* and Milhaud's musical style in general (Milhaud's friends and devotees of his music).

Jane Fulcher points out the significance of the term 'querelle' in the course of her discussion of the 1910 *La Cas Debussy* noting that when journalists invoked the eighteenth-century musical "querelles" as a comparison with the current battle over Debussy, they referenced a conflict where art and politics had become deeply intertwined. *La Cas Debussy* and the famous eighteenth-century "Querelle des Bouffons" both involved debate over French identity and French musical style, which was also one of the central conflicts in the "Querelle *Bolivar"*.[348]

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[348] See Jane F. Fulcher, *French Cultural Politics and Music: From the Dreyfus Affair to the First World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 158–159, 221, 262n2; for more on the "Querelle des Bouffons" see Jane F. Fulcher, "Melody and Morality: Rousseau's Influence on French Music Criticism," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* Vol. 11:1 (1980): 45–57.

The criticisms of *Bolivar* ranged in tone, but overall the reviews collectively kept turning to the same themes and reasons for the opera's purported 'failure'. (However, it should be noted that comparatively *Bolivar* performed well for a new premiere at the Opéra and enjoyed early popularity with audiences.) Perhaps the most commonly cited reason for the opera's disappointment was the slow dramatic pace. Though Milhaud had searched for a libretto full of action, as the critic for the right-leaning *Aurore* put it, the "development languished, interminable love duets, and static scenes" slowed the opera immensely.[349] The opera was dubbed monotonous; one critic for the far-right Catholic journal *La Croix* asserted he had not met anyone who was not bored by *Bolivar.*[350]

The implication was, of course, that Milhaud lacked the skill and knowledge of the theatre to create a work that could hold audience attention. Interestingly the same article praised Léger's decors as having "a seductive audacity" ["une séduisante audace"], which was rather unexpected in such a far-right paper, given Léger's political, if not aesthetic, adherence to the PCF. The *Franc-tireur,* a former Resistance journal, disagreed with the conservative assessment and blamed the slow dramatic pacing on the libretto, positing that it was Milhaud's skilled musical hand that had managed to move the plot forward.[351]

Critics also decried *Bolivar* as cold, unemotional, and sterile. Jean Antoine wrote for *Paris-Presse,* a conservative publication, that emotions were "forbidden" and instead the opera was a "masterwork of statistical writing" and Clarendon writing for the conservative *Le Figaro*

[349] "Point de développement languissant, de duos d'amour interminables, de scènes statique…", Pierre Loewel, "Darius Milhaud fait entrer le général Bolivar à l'Opéra," *l'Aurore,* 15 May 1950.

[350] "Jusqu'à présent, je n'ai rencontré qu'une personne qui ait convenu ne s'être pas ennuyée à *Bolivar*...", Armand Pierhal, "À l'Opéra: *Bolivar* and *Dom Clément Jacob,*" *La Croix,* 27 May 1950.

[351] L. Algazi, "*Bolivar* remet en honneur l'ancien Opéra," *Franc-tireur,* 15 May 1950.

asserted in his review the "action leaves us cold."[352] In *Ce matin Le Pays* André Gauthier argued that *Bolivar* risked only giving detractors of modern music and those who believed operatic theatre to be dying more to talk about; he wrote they would likely ask, "how, they say, did we call upon a grand poet, Supervielle, a grand musician, Milhaud, a grand painter, Léger; we invested 100 million in this affair and this is the result!"[353] Gauther implied that the production of *Bolivar* had done more harm than good for contemporary music and operatic theatre—it seemingly had quality collaborators and ample investment but had failed. Similarly, Clarendon wrote that he feared the failure of *Bolivar* could be a fatal blow for operatic theatre in France, as, after all, *Bolivar* had every reason to succeed and proved to be not up to the task. He reasoned it would be some time before another administrator of the RTLN would be willing to take such a risk again.[354]

The score itself received rather mixed appraisals. René Dumesnil, who wrote for the Christian democratic publication *Le Monde*, gave his criticisms of the work a more positive spin than the strident articles of Clarendon; in particular he praised subject matter, calling Bolivar a "hero indifferent to glory and paid with ingratitude." But Dumesnil also found Milhaud's score overly dense, unequal, and a bit disappointing. *Bolivar*, in his opinion, sounded as though it had been written by many composers rather than one. Additionally, he thought, too much dissonance left the audience swimming in desperate search of a cadence. He dubbed the tessitura of Manuela's role "inhumane," an opinion widely shared despite glowing reviews of Jeanne

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[352] Jean Antoine, "*Bolivar* à l'Opéra l'Éblouissante technique de Darius Milhaud a glacé les spectateurs," *Paris-Presse,* 14 May 1950; Clarendon, "*Bolivar* de Darius Milhaud," *Le Figaro,* 15 May 1950.

[353] "Comment ! diront-ils, on fait appel à un grand poète, Supervielle, à un grand musicien, Milhaud, à un grand peintre, Léger ; on engage 100 millions dans cette affaire et voilà le résultat !" See André Gauthier, "Bolivar," *Ce matin Le Pays,* 15 May 1950.

[354] Clarendon, "*Bolivar* de Darius Milhaud," *Le Figaro,* 15 May 1950.

Micheau's execution of the difficult role.[355] One critic so disliked the role of Manuela in *Bolivar* they sent Micheau flowers and a set of earplugs—a snide jab at Milhaud's scoring.[356] Loewel for the center-right *l'Aurore* agreed that the score was unequal but defended Milhaud's use of a dissonant language, asking "why do people accept modern dissonance in sonatas or concertos, but at an opera house have a sudden nostalgia for melody?"[357] Loewel's comment suggests that he found Milhaud's language to be not dissimilar to what composers were writing in non-operatic idioms, and that opera audiences were particularly unwilling to accept these new trends.

Louis Beydts, a conservative critic, deeply criticized Milhaud's "un-researched harmonic language," and argued that Milhaud's desire for audacious originality overrode any sense of good taste.[358] Another critic wrote that Milhaud over-seasons with these harmonic elements perhaps from a lack of inspiration, though they continued that in general Milhaud's expertise allowed him to combine a range of operatic styles fairly well in most of the work.[359] Clarendon in the conservative *Le Figaro* strongly condemned the opera as inferior, due to Milhaud's practice of writing too much music too quickly. Milhaud, he stated, lacks discernment; "his musical hunger approaches a bulimia—the results of which are evident in this opera."[360]

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[355] René Dumesnil, "*Bolivar* a l'Opéra," *Le Monde,* 14–15 May 1950; Maurice Brilliant, "*Bolivar* deliver l'Amérique," *l'Epoque,* 15 May 1950; André Gauthier, "Bolivar," *Ce matin Le Pays,* 15 May 1950.

[356] Lehmann, *Trompe l'oeil*, 119.

[357] Pierre Loewel, "Darius Milhaud fait entrer le général Bolivar a l'Opéra," *l'Aurore,* 15 May 1950.

[358] Louis Beydts, "Bolivar," *Opéra,* 17 May 1950; For a letter from Hirsch accusing Beydts of collaboration and overall having bad taste see letter, 8 January 1947, Archives Opéra "Correspondance de l'administrateur avec la presse, correspondance avec *Opéra* 1947–1952," *cote.* 20-248, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[359] Marc Pincherle, *Les Nouvelles littéraires,* 18 May 1950.

[360] Clarendon, "*Bolivar* de Darius Milhaud," *Le Figaro,* 15 May 1950.

Clarendon's critiques of Milhaud were particularly aggressive and challenged Milhaud's status as a 'French' composer.

The theme that Milhaud wrote too fast, too prolifically, and without enough nuance and discernment not only appeared in these conservative reviews, but to some degree has even persisted into modern musicological scholarship. As Maher shows in her dissertation, Milhaud's music after the 1930s is often categorized as in a decline.[361] Drake is not as harsh as others, but does state that after the 1930s there were no new influences on Milhaud's work and little experimentation. His appraisal concludes that Milhaud simply wrote lots of music in his already established style.[362] Although he was disappointed by the conventionality of its music, Drake wrote that *Bolivar* was a "well-mellowed opera: a glass of ruby port held up to the last rays of a dying sun."[363] Clearly Drake thought that this opera was the work of a composer at the sunset of his life and literally told his readers so.

Looking at the terms used to describe Milhaud's writing in these sources—excess, speed, lack of taste, lack of sober reflection, and lack of true innovation—it is clear Milhaud was being subtly placed outside of definitions of French musical identity. Balance and clarity were key traits that both the Resistance and the Vichy regime emphasized as indicative of French identity during the Occupation—though in different ways. The Resistance praised Debussy and Rameau during the Occupation for their clarity, balance, and nuanced taste that they associated with French classic and humanist ideals.[364] Vichy was not consistent in their messaging over the

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[361] Maher also explores the idea that Milhaud's failing health and increasing disability play into ablest assessments of his output during this time. Maher, "Darius Milhaud in the United States, 1940–1971," 16.

[362] Drake, *The Operas of Darius Milhaud*, 38.

[363] Ibid., 305.

[364] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 12, 77.

course of the Occupation, but in general worked to align their call to 'National Revolution' with a sense of French clarity that was associated with the simplicity of the peasant class or on the more elite side, the classicism promoted by Vincent d'Indy.[365]

During the inter-war period the anti-Semitic intentions of calling a composer excessive in comparison to French measure—very much like Clarendon's accusation of Milhaud's musical bulimia—had been even more plain and was continued by Vichy.[366] Denying Milhaud association with these characteristics in the reviews of *Bolivar* could have been a means of excluding him from this definition of French identity without bluntly calling him un-French. As the center and the right gained increasing political power under the Third Force government, and people who had been active under Vichy returned to public life, nationalist arguments like these gained momentum.

Fernand Caussy—an ardent socialist who wrote for the party's journal *Le Populaire* and gained notoriety for his volatile criticism of the Catholic Church—pointed this out clearly in his review. Experts, he claimed, had already condemned Milhaud as not meeting these French standards before they even heard *Bolivar*; to get approval you must be "French and Catholic like the Nazi's wanted."[367] Caussy's point was that conservative forces were attempting to exclude Milhaud from French definitions of identity on both nationalist and anti-Semitic grounds, and that allowing such an exclusion to occur would be an extension of the Nazi's racist and totalitarian politics. Such a bold statement in a socialist paper is perhaps not entirely shocking,

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[365] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 15–16, 195; and on the turn to the figure of the peasant and a 'return to the soil' as part of Pétain's National Revolution see Paxton, *Vichy France*, 200–202.

[366] Jane Fulcher, "The Preparation for Vichy: Anti-Semitism in French Musical Culture between the Two World Wars," *The Musical Quarterly* 79 No. 3 (Autumn 1995): 459.

[367] Fernand Caussy, "La Querelle de *Bolivar," Le Populaire,* 19 May 1950.

but it does show that there was an awareness of the ongoing debate around who was given 'permission' to be considered French and Milhaud's relevance to this conversation. Milhaud's Jewish identity probably motivated some anti-Semitic critics to lambast his work, as Caussy implied. Caussy argued that the "Querelle *Bolivar*" was really started by a cabal who sought to sink *Bolivar* for political, and anti-Semitic, reasons rather than musical ones.[368]

This does not, however, explain the sudden reversal of opinion on the part of many members of the press who praised Milhaud before the premiere and then declared his work largely a failure after viewing it. After all, they certainly already knew he was Jewish before the premiere. This reversal of opinion took place once the political message of the opera became apparent. The communist aligned papers were unambiguous about the political import of the opera to which they believed the conservative press objected. Articles in *l'Humanité* and *Les Lettres françaises* argued for an interpretation of the opera as a popular work that dealt not only with recent occupation history, but also the current colonial wars for national freedom and liberation. Gilbert Bloch in the communist paper *l'Humanité* cited the connections between Nazi brutality and the atrocities being committed in Vietnam that one could read onto the opera. Bloch claimed that *Bolivar's* representation of the battle of a people against their imperialist oppressors was why the reactionary press attempted to demolish the opera.[369]

Claude Roy, who had joined the PCF in 1943 after distancing himself from Vichy, writing for the communist journal *Les Lettres françaises* squarely pegged the anti-colonial and Resistance resonances of the opera as the reason some of the conservative press sought to malign

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[368] Caussy, "La Querelle de *Bolivar*," *Le Populaire*, 19 May 1950.

[369] Gilbert Bloch, "*Bolivar* à l'Opéra," *l'Humanité-Dimanche*, 21 May 1950.

Bolivar.[370] Roy was employed during the war for a time at the Maison Française at Mills College with Milhaud and it is more than likely he had the opportunity there to discuss Milhaud's compositions with him first hand.[371] Roy praised *Bolivar:*

> But by the universality of the emotions and values it expresses, by the revolutionary whisper that animates it, by the eternal relevance of its themes, by the magisterial simplicity of the grand lines of its architecture, *Bolivar* is also a brilliantly popular work, the great musical work that the great currents of recent history, were to bring to life the resistance of people to fascism, the wars for national liberation, the liberty. From *Le Figaro* to *Le Monde,* no one was mistaken.[372]

Roy specifically invoked *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde,* who claimed to be partisans of "art for art's sake," but had taken issue with the "subject that has such dangerous resonances in 1950, the year of the Atlantic pact and the C. R. S." Roy characterized *Bolivar* as a progressive and revolutionary opera. He found that its connections to France's recent past were clear, suggesting that the sadistic General Bovès was a stand in for the German S.S., and that the accommodating Mayor was the collaborating Pétain.

Roy derisively replied to those who called the widow's ball and firing squad scene unrealistic that they clearly had never heard of Nazis or concentration camps.[373] (Roy could have pointed to the fact that there are also accounts of the actual historical Bovès throwing balls with

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[370] Claude Roy, "Supervielle, Milhaud, Léger. *Bolivar* entre à l'Opéra," *Les Lettres françaises*,18 May 1950.

[371] Milhaud, *My Happy Life,* 214.

[372] "Mais par l'universalité des émotions et des valeurs qu'il exprime, par le soufflé révolutionnaire qui l'anime, par l'actualité éternelle de ses thèmes, par la simplicité magistrale des grandes lignes de son architecture, *Bolivar* est aussi une œuvre génialement populaire, la grande œuvre musicale que devaient faire naître les grands courants de l'histoire récente, la résistance des peoples au fascisme, les guerres de libération nationale, la libération. Du *Figaro* au *Monde,* on ne s'y est pas trompé." Claude Roy, "Supervielle, Milhaud, Léger. *Bolivar* entre à l'Opéra," *Les Lettres françaises*, 18 May 1950.

[373] This theme persists in several reviews which cite the recent memories dredged up by the visual and aural representations of the firing squad. Helene Parmelin, "La Liberté traverse les Andes à l'Opéra," *l'Action*, 19 June 1950.

executions much like those described in the opera.)[374] Roy then turned his attention to the colonial situation in Africa; the tableaux where Bolivar frees his slaves was to Roy a representation of "a black cry" for liberation. He pointed out the irony of this freedom being displayed and celebrated on the national stage of France when the French government was throwing the black members of the RDA (Rassemblement Démocratique Africain) in prison as they worked towards their own liberation.

Roy did not stop at the political implications of the opera; he argued for the opera's merit by praising its powerful emotions that created tension and sustained the audience in what he reports was rapt attention.

> Milhaud conceived an opera that could move the spectator of 1950, the spectator of the cinema, an opera where the action would be continually present, […] where the melodies follow a clear line and are well drawn through the streaming of the orchestration's richness, the choral masses and the polyphony—a total performance.[375]

Roy argued the opera was musically and dramatically outstanding, and he was not alone in praising the work. Maurice Brillant, writing for *l'Époque*, called it an epic chronical and noted the public's positive reactions to the splendor of various scenes.[376] Algazi, for the former Resistance journal *Franc-tireur,* thought the libretto created more of a series of tableau than a drama, but that the element that held it all together was Milhaud's keen sense for the theatre.[377]

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[374] Juan Francisco Sans, "Dancing with the Enemy: Diplomacy in the Revolutionary Era," in Shanahan and Reyes, eds. *Simon Bolivar,* 50.

[375] "…Milhaud a conçu un opéra qui puisse émouvoir le spectateur de 1950, le spectateur du cinéma, un opéra où l'action soit continuellement évidente, […] où la mélodie suive un fil clair et bien dessiné à travers le ruissellement des richesses de l'orchestration, des masses chorales et de la polyphonie—un spectacle total." Claude Roy, "*Bolivar*," *Les Lettres françaises,* 18 May 1950.

[376] Maurice Brillant, "À l'Opéra de huit heures à minuit Bolivar deliver l'Amérique," *l'Époque,* 15 May 1950.

[377] L. Algazi, "*Bolivar* remet en honneur l'ancien Opéra," *Franc-tireur*, 15 May 1950.

In the socialist *Le Populaire,* Gambau praised *Bolivar's* moving grandeur, and Hélène Jourdan-Morhange in the left-leaning *Ce Soir* thought it was a grand historical drama with skillful vocal settings.[378] Parmelin wrote for the also left-leaning *Action* that the opera had everything one could want: love, death, battles, earthquakes, dances, and prayers with music to match. Even the conservative *Le Figaro littéraire* printed something positive when they published Henri Hell's appraisal of the work. Hell dismissed the criticisms of Milhaud for lacking discernment and overfilling the work, arguing it was like being mad at Matisse for not painting like Bouguereau.[379]

Certainly, some of the criticisms lobbed at *Bolivar* had merit, as discussed during the analysis above. However, calling *Bolivar* a failure, especially so soon after its premiere was an overstatement. *Bolivar* was well attended and had supporters in the press, who praised it musically and politically. Francis Poulenc wrote a strong response directed at Clarendon's articles that solidly defended *Bolivar*.[380] Despite this, the failure narrative was able to take hold in the press, and when Hirsch was removed from his position in 1951 *Bolivar* lost its champion and was performed even less frequently. *Bolivar* "failed" above all because the critics said so, and because of the political and practical challenges of running the RTLN during the Fourth Republic.

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[378] Vincent Gambau, "Grâce à Darius Milhaud *Bolivar* a sauté de 'Français' à 'l'Opéra'," *Le Populaire,* 15 May 1950; Hélène Jourdan-Morhange, "Le *Bolivar* de Darius Milhaud fait passer un vrai cyclone sur la scène de l'Opéra," *Ce Soir,* 18 May 1950.

[379] Henri Hell, "*Bolivar* de Darius Milhaud que l'Opéra vient de créer est-il ou non un échec?," *Le Figaro littéraire,* 27 May 1950.

[380] Francis Poulenc, "Encore *Bolivar* !" *Le Figaro,* 6 June 1950.

The Struggle to Keep Bolivar on the Stage

Despite the rocky reviews and controversy in the press, Hirsch was very interested in keeping *Bolivar* as an active part of the repertoire—but in order to do so he wanted to make some adjustments to the work. In October 1950, Hirsch wrote to Milhaud upon the Opéra ballet's return from a tour of South America. Hirsch's letter seemed to envision bringing *Bolivar* on tour to South America the next year as he specifically mentioned how the Opéra was invited to return again, but this time with operatic works instead of ballets. *Bolivar,* Hirsch wrote, continued to bring in good receipts (around 350,000–375,000 francs per performance) but they really needed to do something about the cold spots during the scene changes. He asked Milhaud to write some symphonic interludes to cover the noise of the scenery moving and hold the audience's attention. Hirsch also suggested relocating a ballet to the end of Act III Scene I.[381]

Milhaud wrote a week later to Poulenc, pleased that Hirsch's request for the interludes meant he planned on keeping the opera and that Milhaud would finally get the last word with the critics. He thanked Poulenc for writing to the papers to defend the work, which he thought really helped to save *Bolivar.*[382] Later in 1951, Milhaud wrote to Hirsch to ask if the new ballet and interludes had improved things and expressed his pleasure that *Bolivar* would be shown that season.[383]

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[381] Letter Hirsch to Milhaud, 16 October 1950, Archives Opéra "Correspondance entre Administration et Auteurs divers 1950–1965," *cote.* 20-184, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[382] Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 698.

[383] Letter Milhaud to Hirsch, 8 July 1951, Archives Opéra "Correspondance entre Administration et Auteurs divers 1950–1965," *cote.* 20-184, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; *Bolivar* was presented 16 and 25 June, and 24 September 1951. The performance on the 24th was the last work under Hirsch's administration before Lehmann took over on the 26th. All these performances were probably using the new interludes and the relocated ballet that Milhaud had mailed to Hirsch in December. See Letter Milhaud to Hirsch, 2 December 1950, Archives Opéra "Correspondance entre Administration et Auteurs divers 1950–1965," *cote.* 20-184, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; for the schedule at the Opéra see "Archives de l'Opéra. Régie. Journal de régie. Deuxième série" 1951, Archives Opéra, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; this source is also available through the BnF Gallica portal here http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb42271697n.

Bolivar was the last opera performed before Hirsch was relieved of his duties as head of the RTLN and replaced by Maurice Lehmann on 26 September 1951, the circumstances of which will be discussed in the following chapter. Perhaps if Hirsch had remained at the helm he would have been able to bring the new version of *Bolivar* more frequently to the stage. But Lehmann was now in control of *Bolivar's* destiny. In January of 1952, Milhaud wrote to Lehmann that he was working on the cuts to *Bolivar*; presumably Lehmann needed them because the addition of the interludes requested by Hirsch would have weighed down the already long opera. Milhaud also pushed Lehmann to try to work out the contract with the national radio to broadcast *Bolivar*. In England new operas were given several broadcasts right away, and Milhaud thought France should be able to manage as much.[384] In reality, negotiations between the national radio and the RTLN were rather fraught during the Fourth Republic, mainly due to personnel and their contracts.

Lehmann replied that he had not been programming *Bolivar* because the financial controller for the Opéra would not approve the extra hours required to stage it—or at least this is what he told Milhaud. One might doubt this justification since Lehmann's signature success would be the expensive *Indes galantes,* which also required extra hours and the full performing forces of the Opéra. Lehmann similarly blamed finances as the reason *Bolivar* had not been broadcast on the radio, though he hastened to praise the opera's importance and worth.[385]

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[384] Notice the clever use of the suggestion that Brittan's opera is more successful to pressure Lehmann into promoting his work. See Letter Milhaud to Lehmann, 6 January 1952, Archives Opéra "Correspondance entre Administration et Auteurs divers 1950–1965," *cote.* 20-184, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; *Bolivar* was broadcast on the radio in April 1952, which Lehmann is quick to point out in his letter to the State Secretary of the Beaux-arts, replying to the complaints during the theatre budget discussions at the National Assembly that the RTLN does not broadcast enough of its works. See Letters from Lehmann, 23 and 25 April 1952, Archives Opéra "Correspondance de la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra 1952," *cote.* 20-1957, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[385] Letter Lehmann to Milhaud, 9 January 1952, Archives Opéra "Correspondance entre Administration et Auteurs divers 1950–1965," *cote.* 20-184, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; And see similar letter Lehmann to Milhaud

Lehmann's letters to Milhaud are in general very flattering but explain that forces beyond his control have tied his hands. The sincerity of these letters is impossible to determine, as it seems just as probable that Lehmann did not care for *Bolivar* and thus did not work to champion it. However, budgetary documents and the reams of paper dedicated to the discussion of the collective conventions both for RTLN workers and for their collaboration with the radio attest to the herculean effort needed to get any flexibly in the scheduled hours of the staff.

Because *Bolivar* fell so quickly from the repertoire, it has been largely forgotten other than by scholars of Fourth Republic opera or aficionados of Milhaud's operatic output. This in turn has erased the memory of one of the Opéra's largest accomplishments during the Fourth Republic. As this chapter has demonstrated, *Bolivar* is an example of Milhaud subtly reimagining and reinventing the operatic tradition while also observing the level of grandeur and pomp expected for the National Operatic Theatres. The "Querelle *Bolivar"* and the opera's reported failure has shadowed the innovation and cultural relevance of this piece. The failure of *Bolivar* was motivated on political grounds, by conservative forces who objected to Milhaud's insufficiently "French" identity and who attempted to dismiss the opera's implied anti-colonial meanings, rather than because of musical deficiency.

The RTLN, and Milhaud himself, attempted to highlight the safer connections *Bolivar* had to France's recent occupation and Liberation. But the left-leaning press easily identified its significance to France's current colonial conflicts. Far from being too dull, or poorly constructed, *Bolivar* was too daring in its political commentary to find success. Without a strong and empowered administrator at the Opéra to champion such a work, standing by a controversial work like *Bolivar* was next to impossible. Operatic innovation was occurring during the Fourth

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11 October 1952, Archives Opéra "Correspondance entre Administration et Auteurs divers 1950–1965," *cote.* 20-184, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

Republic, but it struggled to take firm root among the constantly changing landscape of the musical and political fields.

Chapter Three

Renewing Rameau's *Indes galantes*: The Rightward Shift of Aesthetics and Politics at the Opéra

After the controversy over the 'failure' of *Bolivar,* Hirsch continued to struggle to appease the government and the critical press. As French politics steadily shifted to the right, Hirsch had to turn towards more conservative aesthetics due to increasing pressure placed on the RTLN, despite his own socialist beliefs. He thought to turn to Rameau, the memory of whom was supported by the left and former resistance, and also to the traditionalist conservative right that was steadily regaining power in France. Despite this attempt to appeal more widely, Hirsch was removed from the RTLN in September 1951. His successor, Maurice Lehmann, took up Rameau's *Indes galantes* and crafted a spectacular revival well-aligned with the more conservative aesthetics now espoused by those in power. His production played on the nostalgia for a mighty French empire and also pushed back against American cultural propaganda taking place in Paris. *Indes galantes* sought to locate French identity in France's past cultural superiority and demonstrate its continuance into their future.

Much has been made of the "battle" between these two administrators, and their times leading the RTLN are viewed through this lens of a deep divide.[386] This is, however, a mischaracterization. There was more continuity, logistically and aesthetically, between these two administrations than has previously been supposed, as sources in the archives reveal. Refusal to

[386] Gourret in his study of the administrators of the Opéra characterizes the period from 1945–1958 as a 'battle' between Hirsch and Lehmann. See Gourret, *Ces Hommes qui ont fait l'Opéra*, 171, 173; also see Dupêchez, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris, Un siècle au palais Garnier 1875–1980*, 249.

see this continuity—perhaps in order to credit Lehmann with some of Hirsch's successes—clouds the reality of how the institution of the RLTN weathered the changing tides of the political and artistic fields in France. This bears remarkable similarity to the desire to characterize the Fourth Republic itself as a complete rupture from the Vichy government, but as Philip Nord has shown, there was much continuity between Vichy and the Fourth Republic in French government and institutions.[387] The case was similar at the RTLN.

This narrative of the divorce between Lehmann and Hirsch has particularly distorted the history of the Opéra's 1952 revival of Rameau's *Indes galantes.* This production was, and continues to be, seen as one of the centerpieces of Lehmann's 1951 to 1955 administration at the Opéra.[388] In his introduction to *L'Opéra au Palais Garnier (1875–1962) Les œuvres, les interprètes* Stéphane Wolff, who has written widely on the Paris Opéra and Opéra-Comique, handily dismisses Hirsch altogether; Hirsch is neither mentioned in Wolff's text nor included on the page of photos of the administrators. Wolff, conversely, praises Lehmann highly as one of the few men who could bring any success to the misguided union of the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique as the RTLN. Wolff lists *Bolivar, Jeanne au bûcher*, and *Indes galantes* as three of the great successes of the post-war period, but does not credit them directly to any administrator; he almost seems to imply that they all occurred under Lehmann, when in reality these were Hirsch's projects.[389]

[387] Nord, *France's New Deal*, 22.

[388] Gourret, *Ces Hommes qui ont fait l'Opéra,* 171; Dupêchez, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris,* 249; Gourret, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris 1669–1971, portraits de chanteurs*, 98; Henri Busser in the introduction to Stéphane Wolff's study lists *Indes galantes, Obéron,* and *La Flûte enchantée* as Lehmann's main accomplishments at the RTLN. See Henri Busser, "Preface," in Wolff, *L'Opéra au Palais Garnier (1875–1962) Les oeuvres, les interprètes*, 4.

[389] Wolff, *L'Opéra au Palais Garnier (1875–1962) Les œuvres, les interprètes*, 18–19.

The glittering success of *Indes galantes* was, of course, in major part due to Lehmann and his experience creating grand and spectacular performances at the popular, privately-run Parisian Châtelet theater. But, as this chapter will reveal, the idea to restage Rameau and some of the major features of the production were originally put into motion by Hirsch, not Lehmann. This must shift our understanding of the production, and our characterization of the relationship between these two men's tenures at the RTLN.

Lehmann is remembered for a more conservative approach to running the Opéra, in which he focused on reviving successful works of the past.[390] During Lehmann's tenure, the only new opera premiered at the Palais Garnier was Henry Barraud's *Numance* in 1955. However, he did stage several new productions or local premieres including *Indes galantes, La Flûte enchantée* (though, this work had not left the repertoire), and the Palais Garnier premiere of *Obéron,* which had premiered at the Covent Garden Opera in 1826.[391] Hirsch, on the other hand, focused much of the RTLN's resources and energy on mounting new compositions. It has been largely forgotten that Hirsch also began the work on some key revivals of the period, namely *Indes galantes* and a production of *Faust* that when mounted in 1956 was near a decade in the making, as will be discussed in Chapter Four.

It is not surprising that a revival of one of Rameau's opera-ballets represents a link between Hirsch and Lehmann, as Rameau's works could be variously interpreted to fit the viewpoint, aesthetic, and politics of each man. Debussy had characterized Rameau as particularly and purely French during WWI, and subsequently both he and Rameau were promoted by the Resistance during WWII as examples of French clarity, elegance, and anti-German

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[390] See "Journal de l'Opéra," 1952–1955, Archives Opéra, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF, consultable on Gallica at https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb426079139/date&rk=21459;2#.

[391] Ibid.

compositional traits.[392] As has already been shown, Hirsch was attracted to works, like *Bolivar,* that could be aligned with the values of the Resistance and with the political left in power after the end of the war. As Hirsch was increasingly attacked, he could not afford another 'failure' like *Bolivar;* he had to find a work that aligned with his views *and* could produce popular and critical success. It was a risk to present a work that had been out of the repertoire for just under two centuries in an attempt to win over modern audiences. Yet, Rameau would at least be likely to gain the approval of the same conservative critics who had worked to sink *Bolivar,* and would show that Hirsch was an able guardian of the French patrimony as the Resistance had defined it.

Lehmann also valued Rameau as one of the consecrated masters of French operatic history, and believed the RTLN had a duty to preserve his works. Additionally, Lehmann, who had found such success at the popular Parisian Châtelet theatre, wanted to create something that would be well-liked by audiences and so he fought to lighten the work and create a luxurious and immersive performance reminiscent of those doing so well at Châtelet.[393] Bringing the style of this popular theatre known for its glitzy productions and revues to the Opéra was potentially a controversial move. Especially when one remembers the harsh criticism *Bolivar* had received for being too inflected with the Châtelet and music-hall styles.

Rameau's opera-ballet *Indes galantes* was selected in part because it lent itself so well to a sumptuous staging, and could feature the increasingly popular star dancers as well as the singers. In addition, Rameau's operas were not recommended by the comité consultatif, the committee in charge of reviewing new works for the RTLN and giving guidance to the administrator, because they considered the librettos of his operas poor in quality. As an opera-

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[392] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 12, 119.

[393] Dupêchez, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris,* 264; see also Lehmann quoted in Jean Roy, "Feu d'artifice à l'Opéra pour la reprise des *Indes galantes*," *Arts,* 12 June 1952.

ballet, or an opera in the form of a ballet, the success of *Indes galantes* was less dependent on the libretto, and Rameau's music would be able to 'transcend' his poor collaborators, or so the committee contended.[394] *Indes galantes* had not been performed in full at the Opéra since 1761, and consisted of four distinctive entrées (or tableaux) and a prologue, each with their own plot and setting.[395] For the revival, the work would be re-orchestrated, shortened, and have a final epilogue added to provide an excuse for a spectacular finale. It was a large project, that required many talented individuals to create. Luckily, *Indes galantes* was able to weather the political and administrative transitions at the RTLN and made it to the stage.

Hirsch is Forced Out of the RTLN: *L'Affaire de l'Opéra*

When Hirsch had been selected as administrator of the RTLN in 1946, the French Socialist Party (Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière or SFIO) to which he belonged had held considerable power in the government. Paul Ramadier, the Président du conseil, and Marcel-Edmond Naegelen, the Ministre de l'Éducation nationale (which was the ministry in charge of the Direction des Beaux-arts that oversaw the RTLN and musical field), were both socialists, and it is likely they were happy to encourage the appointment of their fellow socialist Hirsch.[396] By the time of Hirsch's dismissal in September 1951 both of these positions had passed out of socialist control: the Président du conseil had gone to René Pleven (a member of the Union démocratique et socialiste de la Résistance or UDSR), and the Ministère de

[394] See Comité consultatif des TLN, "Procès-Verbal de la séance du 28 mars 1949," Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture procès verbaux 1946–1965," *cote.* 20-272, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[395] Wolff, *L'Opéra au Palais Garnier (1875–1962)*, 120; Lehmann mistakes this date in his memoir as 1756. See Lehmann, *Trompe l'oeil,* 113.

[396] Elgey, *Histoire de la IVe République. La République des illusions 1945–1951*, 112.

l'Education nationale had been passed to André Marie (a Radical) in August of that year. These changes were just part of the rightward movement of French politics, as those on the right who had lost power directly after the Liberation started to regain influence and the Resistance's power began to wane. Having lost his powerful allies in the government, Hirsch was vulnerable to attack from the conservative right, and ultimately the rumors spread about his alleged incompetence and corruption cost him his job.

The changes in the musical field, like Hirsch's 1951 dismissal, aligned with and also foreshadowed the rise of the right in France. Ultimately, historians of the Fourth Republic in France cite 1952 as a critical break in the new republic's politics, but the divisions that caused the fall of the Third Force government in 1952 had been brewing since its formation in 1947—a time span mirrored by Hirsch's 1946 to 1951 tenure.[397] The Third Force brought together a center-oriented coalition of the SFIO, the Christian democrats (Mouvement Républicain Populaire or MRP), the Radicals, and the Democratic and Socialist Union of the Resistance (UDSR) after the 1947 collapse of the previous left majority (known as tripartisme) that had combined the French Communist Party (Parti Communiste français or PCF), SFIO, and MRP.[398]

Between 1947 and 1952 the Third Force shifted towards the right as the left-leaning MRP and SFIO both declined in power and the more conservative parties like the Radicals, Moderates, and Independents gained more of the vote. The SFIO and MRP found their ideals increasingly

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[397] Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, 95, 195; see also Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 52, 72; and also see Georgette Elgey's six volume work *Histoire de la IVe République* which also places the divide between 1951 and 1952. Her first volume *La République des illusions* covers 1945 to the 1951 elections, and the second *La République des contradictions* spans from the 1951 elections to June 1954 and the ending of the Laniel government; see Georgette Elgey, *Histoire de la IVe République. La République des illusions 1945–1951* (Paris: Fayard, 1965) and Georgette Elgey, *Histoire de la IVe République. La République des contraditions 1951–1954* (Paris: Fayard, 1968).

[398] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 52–60.

compromised by the shifting to the right of the Third Force.[399] This made the conservative parties even more vital in order to form a stable majority.[400] Despite the Third Force's efforts to consolidate power, the opposition parties (the PCF on the left and the Gaullist Rassemblement du Peuple français or RPF on the right) gained nearly half the vote in the 1951 elections, and the parties of the Third Force received too few seats to maintain their majority without bringing in new, and more conservative, allies.[401]

As already mentioned, this rightward shift precipitated correlating changes in the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale (Ministry of National Education), the Beaux-Arts directorate it controlled, and the RTLN administration they both oversaw. Both Georges Hirsch, and the more centrist Jeanne Laurent, sous-directrice des Spectacles et de la musique (Assistant Director of Spectacles and Music in the Direction des Beaux-arts), were removed from their positions as a direct result of the changing political situation and its influence upon the arts world. As they were pushed out a concerted effort was made to frame their removal as artistic difference and directorial incompetence rather than as a political play. Their cases reveal how deeply the political and musical worlds were intertwined and how much pressure really was placed upon the RTLN administration to please not only audiences, but also to remain in political favor. Criticism during the Third Force often served to push the RTLN towards a more conservative aesthetic, as the case of the Opéra's production of *Indes galantes* so clearly reveals.

The drive against how Hirsch was running the RTLN was already gaining momentum in 1948 as his end of season report to Jacques Jaujard, the Directeur Générale des Beaux-Arts,

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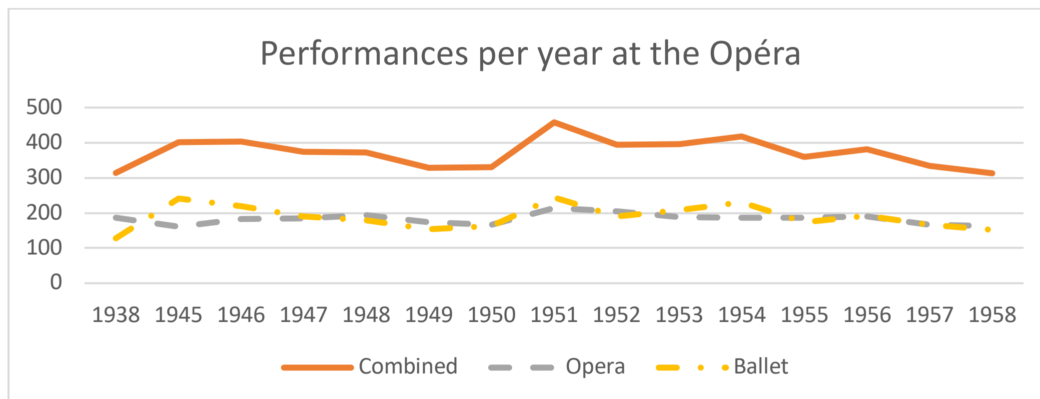
[399] Ibid., 59, 73.

[400] Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, 159–161.

[401] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 69–72.

revealed. Hirsch was accused of letting the operatic repertoire atrophy in favor of the new and trendy ballets. In his report, Hirsch argued the RTLN was approaching its pre-war rates of performances, and was maintaining its customary balance between operatic and choreographic works.[402] Hirsch's claims were true, in fact at the Opéra they were even slightly exceeding their pre-war numbers. The relationship between ballets and operas fluctuated slightly over Hirsch's tenure, but stayed overall quite steady. It certainly was not as significant as his critics attempted to imply. This comparison is of course complicated by the large number of strikes at the Opéra seeking pay competitive with the private theatres during the Fourth Republic.[403] Still this data is useful for verifying Hirsch's claims and considering the trends at the house. [See Figure 3.1]

Figure 3.1: Performances per year at the Opéra 1938–1958.[404]



[402] Letter Hirsch to Jaujard, 8 June 1948, Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1948," *cote.* 20-1953, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[403] There is a wealth of correspondence and internal documents preserved on workers' demands and their negotiations with the RTLN administration and the government in the archives. See in particular Archives Opéra "Administration rapports avec l'Assemblée Nationale 1951–1964," *cote.* 20-124, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF ; and years 1945–1958 in Archives Opéra "Correspondance de la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra," *cote.* 20-1950 through 20-1963, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[404] In this chart each individual ballet was counted as its own performance, rather than counting a whole evening of ballets as one performance. Data for this chart was collected from both the Opéra journal and the Chronopera project. See "Journal de l'Opéra" 1938–1958, Archives Opéra, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; This source is also available through the BnF Gallica portal here https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb426079139/date&rk=21459;2#; and the Chronopera project, completed by Institut de Recherche sur le Patrimoine Musical en France (IRMPF), CNRS (UMR 200), Bibliothèque nationale de France, and ministère de la Culture, the database is accessible here http://chronopera.free.fr/index.php?menu=accueil&contenu=accueil_questce.

Accusations claiming financial mismanagement, favoritism, and incompetence on the part of Hirsch came to a head in the 1951 "L'Affaire de l'Opéra" ["The Opéra Affair"], primarily driven by articles in *Le Figaro,* which had also played an important role in the panning of Hirsch's production of *Bolivar* the year prior. One of the central issues of the dispute was the August through September 1950 Opéra ballet tour to South America arranged by César de Mendoza Lasalle—who was not an RTLN employee.[405] The finances of the trip were disputed and Lasalle took the RTLN to court and won.[406] *Le Figaro* on 25 April 1951 published an inflammatory article "L'Affaire de l'Opéra" that suggested Hirsch's administration of the RTLN and the finances surrounding this tour were suspicious. The article argued before renewing Hirsch's contract a full inquiry needed to be made.[407] The conservative *Le Figaro* had a vested and politically motivated interested in seeing Hirsch replaced with an administrator who reflected their own values, and by branding the disputes surrounding the Opéra an 'affaire' they drew increased—and again, politicized—attention to them. (One of course recalls the famous Dreyfus Affair that polarized French society and politics at the turn of the century.) These sentiments were echoed the following week in debates at the National Assembly and published in their journal *l'Information.*[408]

Hirsch responded to *Le Figaro* defending his conduct, citing the increase in profits at the RTLN, and the strict government oversight of all RTLN finances. He argued that the only

[405] See "L'Affaire de l'Opéra: une letter de M. de Mendoza," *Le Figaro,* 21–22 April 1956, in Archives Opéra, "Correspondance entre l'adminstrateur et *Le Figaro,* 1947–1965," *cote.* 20-244, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[406] See a later article by Mendoza which outlines his take on the affair, Ibid.

[407] "L'Affaire de l'Opéra," *Le Figaro,* 25 April 1951.

[408] Letter Hirsch to Minister of Education, 30 April 1951, fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Dossier Hirsch," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(11), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

'affairs' at the Opéra were the lies being told to discredited him.[409] These accusations were highlighted again on the 7th of May in the *Le Figaro*, which ran an article when the Senate decided to sanction the RTLN budget by 1,000 francs as a symbolic protest of this potential mismanagement. Hirsch had clearly lost much of his support in the government. The article went on to claim that Hirsch had only been re-confirmed due to the instability and confusion caused by changes in the cabinet and ministries. The nomination of an administer of the RTLN, the article argued, should not be approved so quickly and without wider-consultation.[410]

By August, Hirsch was accused of overspending on gratuities during the South America ballet tour, selling the tour's tickets in Argentina and Brazil on the black market, firing artists over personal grievances rather than artistic capability, and unfairly distributing commissions to costume houses.[411] Hirsch provided thorough answers to the minister about these allegations in his letter of 31 August 1951, and showed that many of the complaints on the list never even crossed his desk. Hirsch was confident he would be cleared in an inquiry despite the ugly and politically motivated attempts to slander him.[412]

The minutes from the ensuing investigation indicate the committee decided Hirsch mismanaged some funds and situations, but not in a suspicious manner.[413]

> In general, the committee wishes to underline, that in the face of these attacks of which the administrator is currently an object, it has not been able to be established that M. Hirsch had committed any acts or serious mistakes of

[409] Letter Hirsch to Pierre Brisson Director of the *Le Figaro,* 25 April 1951, Archives Opéra, "Correspondance entre l'adminstrateur et *Le Figaro,* 1947–1965," *cote.* 20-244, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[410] "L'Affaire de L'Opéra à son tour, le sénat vote une réduction symbolique de 1.000 francs," *Le Figaro,* 7 May 1951.

[411] Letter Hirsch to Minister of Education, 31 August 1951, Archives Opéra, "Correspondance de la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1951," *cote.* 20-1956, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[412] Ibid.

[413] Held in the fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Dossier Hirsch," *cote.* 4 col 8/45(11), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

> management. The committee only unovered some awkwardness, notably in regards to the deals made with the Madelle company [costume makers], and the insufficient application of the current policies that surely results from the lack of administrative training of M. Hirsch, who does however possess artistic and commercial skills that the committee heard praised.[414]

The committee concluded that if the government did decide to renew Hirsch's tenure, he should be given a shorter term (rather than the customary three years), in order to show he could improve his administrative skills.[415]

Despite this, in September 1951 Hirsch's mandate at the RTLN was not renewed. Olivier Merlin speculated in *Le Monde,* which generally took the Christian Democratic political stance, that because Hirsch's political friends were no longer in power his contract was not renewed.[416] Merlin also took care to reminded his readers the committee were the only people who really knew what the dossier assembled against Hirsch contained:

> What does the "Opera file" in fact contain? Only the finance inspectors and the members of the court of auditors, who must have seen it in the committee and unanimously gave a report, apparently unfavorable, could say. Still, it is in view of this report that the council of ministers—where M. Hirsch no longer has his socialist friends—decided to not renew his duties, which have already expired.[417]

Merlin noted the correlation between the fortunes of the SFIO and Hirsch. Merlin also seemed to suspect the committee findings were more negative than they actually were, and as they were not

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[414] "D'une manière générale la commission désire souligner, devant les attaques dont l'administateur sur actuel a fait l'objet qu'il n'a pu être établi que M. Hirsch ait commis un acte ou une faute lourde de gestion. La Commission a seulement relevé des maladresses, notamment à propos des marchés passés avec la société Madelle, et une application insuffisante des textes en vigueur paraissant surtout résulter de l'absence de formation administrative de M. Hirsch qui présente, par ailleurs, des qualités artistique et commerciales dont la commission a entendu l'éloge." Ibid.

[415] Ibid.

[416] Olivier Merlin, "Le depart de M. Hirsch," *Le Monde,* 28 September 1951.

[417] "Que contient en fait le "dossier de l'Opéra" ? Seuls les inspecteurs des finances et les membres de la Cour des comptes qui ont eu à en connaitre en commission et ont rendu à l'unanimité un rapport, paraît-il défavorable, pourraient le dire. Toujours est-il que sur le vu de ce rapport le conseil des ministres—où M. Hirsch ne compte plus d'amis socialistes—a décidé de ne pas renouveler ses fonctions, déjà expirées." Ibid.

published he and his readers were free to suspect the worst of Hirsch. This uncertainty, and the leading tone of Merlin's article, meant that the inquiry did little publicly to clear Hirsch's name. Based on the evidence it is certain that the political sphere—and its manifestations in the press—influenced the decision to remove Hirsch from the RTLN. Further, he was not the only figure in the arts for whom this was the case.

Jeanne Laurent, sous-directrice des Spectacles et de la musique, was also a victim of the changing political landscape. Laurent worked diligently while sous-directrice from 1946 to 1952 to promote theatrical and operatic decentralization and to disseminate culture as widely as possible to the French citizenry. In general, she and Jaujard worked together with little friction.[418] Similar to Hirsch, Laurent was the subject of a press campaign that alleged she mismanaged the funds under her control and distributed them with abandon to her artist friends. These articles appeared starting in March 1947 in the largely conservative *Aux écoutes du monde* directed by Paul Levy. Laurent attempted to respond to the accusations, but she later wrote that *Aux écoutes du monde* ran her letters only in part, if at all, twisting their wording and intentions.[419]

In August 1951, the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale (Ministry of National Education) passed to André Marie and André Cornu became the Secrétaire d'État aux Beaux-arts (Secretary

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[418] Pascale Goetschel, *Renouveau et décentralisation du théâtre (1945–1981)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004), 62.

[419] Letters from Laurent to Paul Levy, 28 and 29 March 1947, see Dossier 13 "Pièces relatives au procès de Jeanne Laurent, sous-directrice des spectacles et de la musique, contre le périodique *Aux écoutes du monde,"* in F/21/5182 "Radiodiffusion, medicine préventive, Section d'études artistiques divers," F21 Beaux-Arts, Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine; also see the undated note where Laurent accuses *Aux écoutes du monde* of not publishing her responses, or not publishing them in full in the same dossier.

of State to the Beaux-Arts).[420] Both Marie and Cornu sought to have Laurent removed.[421] Cornu later wrote that Laurent was "willfully impulsive, mean and undoubtedly frustrated and was known throughout Paris as 'the dictator, the 'tsarine' of the theatre."[422] He accused her of being a Pétainist (despite her Resistance medal) and of continuing to pursue Vichy's nationalist and boy-scout-like objectives while working in the Fourth Republic.[423] Laurent had worked under the Vichy government and started out as a Pétanist, but by the war's end was firmly in the Resistance movement.[424] Cornu's criticisms painted Laurent as a frigid and duplicitous woman, and his choice of language is clearly sexist. As the government continued to shift to the right, there was little room for a woman championing a project as seemingly leftist as decentralization. By October of 1951, Cornu succeeded in forcing her out, and Laurent was shifted to the "Service universitaire des relations avec l'étranger et l'outre-mer" [University service of foreign and over-seas relations]. While Laurent would write extensively on culture and the decentralization project she had spearheaded, she was never returned her previous post.[425]

Hirsch and Lehmann: Their Goals for Rameau's *Indes galantes*

As Lehmann took over the RTLN it was clear that he needed to produce success quickly to help steady perceptions of the institution after the controversy of Hirsch's dismissal. In 1952,

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[420] Elgey, *Histoire de la IVe République, La République des contradictions 1951–1954,* 624–27.

[421] Marion Denizot, *Jeanne Laurent, une fondatrice du service public pour la culture 1946–1952* (Paris: Comité d'histoire du ministère de la Culture, 2005), 74, 124–125.

[422] "…une femme volontaire, méchante, sans doute insatisfaite…", "…connue du Tout-Paris comme la dictatrice, la tsarine du théâtre…" Quoted in Denizot, *Jeanne Laurent*, 125.

[423] Ibid., 125–126.

[424] Nord, *France's New Deal*, 203.

[425] Denizot, *Jeanne Laurent*, 124–125.

he set his sights on a grand production of Rameau's *Indes galantes,* which had not been performed in full at the Opéra since 1761.[426] This 'ballet héroique' or alternatively 'opéra-ballet'—an opera in the *form* of a ballet—was first performed at the Opéra in 1735 and was based on a loosely-arranged scenario that featured love's victory over violence and war.[427] Lehmann hailed *Indes galantes* as one of the central successes of his time at the RTLN and this is precisely how he and the revival have been remembered in scholarship.[428] Lehmann maintained in his memoir that Hirsch had rejected the project as too complex; though it seems more likely that Hirsch was delayed because of the time needed to amass the funding for the endeavor.[429] In reality, Lehmann was not quite the maverick he made himself out to be; archival research reveals that Hirsch, not Lehmann, not only chose *Indes galantes,* but also shaped many of the major elements of the revival before he was fired. This critical detail complicates the rigid lines that have been drawn between these two administrators and indicates that while history has remembered Lehmann heroically and single-handedly bringing *Indes galantes* to the stage, it was actually Hirsch who set the revival into motion. Rameau created a point of intersection between the two administrators who each had their own aesthetic, and political, reasons for mounting this revival.

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[426] While all four of the entrées that make up *Indes galantes* had not been presented together since 1761, the "Les Fleurs" entrée was still in the repertoire and would prove to continue to be a success in the full production. Lehmann, *Trompe l'oeil*, 113. Lehmann mistakenly states the last full performance was in 1756, Wolff, however, cites it as 1761. See Wolff, *L'Opéra au Palais Garnier (1875–1962)*, 120.

[427] Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux, "Programme *Indes galantes"* (Paris: 1952); A copy of the program is preserved in a book of press clippings, see "*Indes galantes," cote*. 8 RSUPP-3736, Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

[428] Gourret, *Ces Hommes qui ont fait l'Opéra,* 171; Dupêchez, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris,* 249; Gourret, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris 1669–1971,* 98; Büsser, "Preface," in Stéphane Wolff, *L'Opéra au Palais Garnier (1875–1962)*, 4; Wolff, *L'Opéra au Palais Garnier (1875–1962)*, 18–19.

[429] Lehmann, *Trompe l'oeil*, 113.

The first trace of the project to produce *Indes galantes* is in the 28 March 1949 comité consultatif meeting minutes, more than two years before Hirsch left the RTLN and Lehmann arrived there. (At this time the committee included Henri Büsser, Roland Manuel, Robert Rey who was the Directeur des Arts Plastiques, Jacques Ibert who was in Rome, Darius Milhaud who was in the United States often, Claude Delvincourt, and Hirsch himself. Often only half the committee was present at meetings.) Hirsch wanted to stage a "dazzling tribute to Rameau" ["un homage éclatant à Rameau"], preferably an opéra-ballet in the 1950 season.[430] The committee favored an opéra-ballet in part because they viewed many of Rameau's opera librettos as particularly weak, and because ballet revivals at this time were producing better profits.

Returning to Rameau made sense as a political utterance of Hirsch's Resistance and humanist values. Rameau was championed during WWII by the Resistance as one of the true creators of the French musical tradition. This alignment could be traced back to Debussy who during WWI had expressed his admiration for Rameau and Couperin because of their clarity, elegance, and representation of the French tradition. Rameau was used first by Debussy, and then later during WWII by the Resistance (who championed both Debussy and Rameau), as an example of pure French art and was linked to the Enlightenment and humanist values they sought to support.[431]

Roger Désormière, a key member of the French musical Resistance, conducted Rameau during the Occupation.[432] *Indes galantes* was recorded during the Occupation by Maurice Hewitt, who was arrested in November 1943 and deported to Buchenwald for his clandestine

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[430] Comité consultatif des TLN, "Procès-Verbal de la séance du 28 mars 1949," Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture procès verbaux 1946–1965," *cote.* 20-272, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[431] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 12, 119.

[432] Ibid., 72, 283.

Resistance activities and for hiring Jewish musicians.[433] It is very likely that Hirsch and the comité consultatif (whose membership was largely former Resistants) hoped performing Rameau would have similar resonances in the post-war period, linking the Opéra's struggle to return France's cultural prestige with the Resistance's struggle for freedom. This type of positioning is consistent with the sort of productions Hirsch had chosen to stage during his tenure, as has already been seen with *Bolivar* in Chapter Two.

As the political landscape shifted to the right, reviving a French masterwork of the past offered Hirsch an opportunity to demonstrate that he took seriously the role of the RTLN in preserving the French operatic patrimony in a way that was more appealing to the right as well as the left. This became especially important for him as his administration was increasingly called into question; perhaps he hoped a successful revival of Rameau would be able to cut across political lines and win him some additional support from the conservatives who objected to his running of the RTLN and his socialist political stance. It might have been able to provide his directorship some stability.

Hirsch was also no doubt responding to criticisms that the French eighteenth-century repertoire was being abandoned at the RTLN. This was especially important as nationalism was on the rise, even on the left, and amidst increasing anti-American sentiments.[434] Henri Collet published in the *Revue musicale* in 1948 that only about twenty works from 1671–1875 still survived in the repertoire, and these were only rarely performed.[435] No French operatic works

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[433] Ibid., 264.

[434] Mark Carroll, *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 69–87; Serge Guilbaut, "Postwar Painting Games: The Rough and the Slick," in *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal 1945–1964* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 34; Nord also notes the French resistance to American commercialization, especially in regards to Hollywood's influence on theatre and cinema. See Nord, *France's New Deal,* 153–155.

[435] Henri Collet, "Repertoire de l'Opéra," *La Revue musicale* 208 (1948); 11–12.

from the eighteenth century were still in performance (other than the ballets extracted from Rameau's *Castor et Pollux* and Gluck's *Alceste*) at the Opéra at this time, only the French ballets had lasted. [See Table 3.1.]

Table 3.1: Performances per year at the Opéra of 18th Century Repertoire from 1945–1951[436]

Title	Genre	Date	Composer	Nationality	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951
Eléments	Ballet	1737	Jean-Féry Rebel	French						2	
Castor et Pollux (ballet)	ballet	1738	Rameau	French	8	15	2	3			
Fêtes d'Hébé (Les)	ballet	1747	Rameau	French						2	
Dramma per musica	ballet	1750	Bach	German						1	
Blaise et le savetier	ballet	1759	Danican Philidor	French					1		
Alceste (Divertissement)	Ballet	1767	Gluck	French/Multi-national	2	12	8				
Enlèvement au sérail (L')	opera	1782	Mozart	German							8
Don Juan	Opera	1787	Mozart	German		5	13	6	5		
Flûte enchantée (La)	Opera	1791	Mozart	German	6	12	17	14	9	18	17

Bringing Rameau back, in a dazzling and full-length production, would prove that the RTLN could maintain French masterworks from the past and reinforce growing nationalist trends. In February 1951, Jaujard wanted the work previewed at the Versailles summer festival.[437] This implied that Jaujard believed a successful revival of Rameau would demonstrate the strength of the Beaux-arts in France and prove his administration's ability to promote and protect the artistic patrimony of France. This would have been especially important as the state of disrepair of Versailles, an important national historic landmark, was gathering increasing attention; in 1952 André Cornu would launch an extended effort to restore the palace and grounds.[438]

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[436] Data for this chart was collected from both the Opéra journal and the Chronopera project. See "Journal de l'Opéra" 1945–1951, Archives Opéra, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; This source is also available through the BnF Gallica portal here https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb426079139/date&rk=21459;2#; and the Chronopera project, completed by Institut de Recherche sur le Patrimoine Musical en France (IRMPF), CNRS (UMR 200), Bibliothèque nationale de France, and ministère de la Culture, the database is accessible here http://chronopera.free.fr/index.php?menu=accueil&contenu=accueil_questce.

[437] Letter Jaujard to Hirsch, 16 February 1951, Archives Opéra, "Correspondance de la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1951," *cote.* 20-1956, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[438] For more on Cornu's efforts to save Versailles see Églantine Pasquier, "André Cornu et la sauvegarde de Versailles," *Bulletin du Centre de recherché du château de Versailles* (July 2015): online edition http://journals.openedition.org/crcv/13234.

It is probably the effort and expense of mounting *Bolivar* in 1950, and increasing criticism he faced, that slowed Hirsch's plans. Still, he publicly announced his intentions in the October-November 1950 issue of the RTLN's own publication, *Opéra de Paris*:

> The Opéra will give Rameau his deserved place. The time has come to honor a school that was once stifled by Italianism and by Gluck but that retains its magnificent value, that the prestige of the ballet will contribute to making known. […] *Les Indes galantes,* a masterpiece of dramatic music, will be also a grand performance, if success crowns our effort, but in any case, we will mount it with fervent faith.[439]

In addition, he noted that each entrée would have its own cast of star vocalists and dancers from the Opéra. Hirsch's intention was that *Indes galantes* would be one of the Opéra's crowning efforts and would be staged with attentive fidelity to Rameau and his style. This statement was well aligned with the discussions that had been taking place in the meetings of the comité consultatif, and with the Resistance values the majority of the committee members shared.[440]

However, in 1951 Hirsch's tenure was not renewed and so he would not be able to guide the project to completion. Lehmann was called upon in late September 1951 once again to pilot the unwieldy RTLN. The next committee minutes to mention the *Indes galantes* project are those from 17 January 1952. The committee members were largely the same: Ibert, Delvincourt, Roland-Manuel, Milhaud, Bondeville, and Büsser with Lehmann taking Hirsch's place. According to what has been preserved in the minutes, throughout the meeting Lehmann acted as though the production was a new idea of his own—there was not a single mention of, or reference to, Hirsch in connection to the project. Even aspects of the performance already

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[439] "L'Opéra va rendre à Rameau sa place méritée. Le temps est venu de mettre en honneur une école qui fut jadis étouffée par l'italianisme et par Gluck mais qui garde sa magnifique valeur que le prestige du ballet contribuera à faire reconnaître. […] *Les Indes Galantes,* chef-d'œuvre de musique dramatique, constitueront aussi un grand spectacle si la réussite couronne nos efforts mais qu'en tout cas nous monterons avec une foi fervente." Georges Hirsch, "Et puis voici le programme de la saison," *Opéra de Paris* II (October-November 1950): 2.

[440] Comité consultatif des TLN, "Procès-Verbal de la séance du 6 octobre 1949," Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture procès verbaux 1946–1965," *cote.* 20-272, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

decided or set into motion were broached as if brand new: the need for splendorous decors and costumes, the debate over how to respect Rameau while gently modernizing the work, and the different cast for each tableau. One idea was apparently genuinely new, to ask the writer René Fauchois—who had written the librettos for Fauré's *Pénélope* and Bondeville's *Madame Bovary*—to craft some clarifying texts to help unite the work and bridge the plot between the entrées to make the production more coherent for the audience.[441]

Lehmann boasted in interviews leading up to the premiere that no other theatre in the world could have pulled off such a huge production in four months. By reducing the work on *Indes galantes* to the past four months, Lehmann erased the effort that that took place before he arrived at the RTLN.[442] It was not until reviewing the committee minutes and the *Opéra de Paris* that Hirsch's labors were once again revealed.

Lehmann, similar to Hirsch before him, was careful to highlight the importance of Rameau to the French patrimony and to emphasize Rameau as an example of a pure French style without foreign influence. Both the political right and the left were increasingly nationalist as American intervention in France and French politics increased as the Cold War intensified.[443] The production of *Indes galantes* was therefore defended from all sides, by both the left and the right leaning press who sought to reinforce ideas of French cultural superiority.

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[441] Comité consultatif des TLN, "Procès-Verbal de la séance du 17 janvier 1952," Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture procès verbaux 1946–1965," *cote.* 20-272, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF. In addition, in his memoir Lehmann writes that the idea to stage *Indes galantes* had come to him long before his return to the RTLN when he was reading Dukas on the subject. See Lehmann, *Trompe l'oeil,* 113.

[442] Lehmann quoted in Jean Carlier, "*Les Indes galantes* de Jean-Philippe Rameau," *Combat,* 14–15 June 1952.

[443] Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France between Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 124.

René Dumesnil—an active music critic for the left-leaning Christian Democratic and previously Resistant paper *Le Monde*—agreed with Lehmann. Dumesnil believed that Rameau, and the classic French genre of opéra-ballet, might well be the means of saving their operatic theatre from its current crisis and returning its cultural strength. Rameau and his contemporaries, Dumesnil argued, had been largely forgotten because "the legend that this period [of French musical history] was 'sterile' has been allowed to persist" ["la légende d'une période 'creuse'"].[444] But in reality, "the French school, in this period that was nearly contemporary with Bach and Handel, produced masterworks of the same grandeur as these German masters."[445] In a later article he expressed shock that some thought Rameau's "melody is without a soul" ["mélodie est sans âme"] or that his orchestrations were "brutish, noisy, and intolerable" ["barbare, bruyant, intolérable"].[446] Invoking Debussy, he reminded his reader that Rameau was free of foreign influences and thus was a pure example of the French style.

That Rameau had recently been overlooked in favor of Germans, with whom he was more than equal, would have been a powerful argument for Rameau's revitalization. France was still deeply worried about Germany once again becoming a threat, and this desire not to see Germany rearmed and reasserting its position in the world affected everything from art to foreign policy.[447] Using Rameau to take back this musical narrative from the Germans was an opportunity to show French cultural superiority. This desire to show the national strength of French culture also played into the increasing anti-American sentiments as the United States

[444] René Dumesnil, "L'Opéra du XVIIIe siècle et le style de Jean-Philippe Rameau," *Le Monde,* 13 June 1952.

[445] "l'école française, en cette période à peu près contemporaine de celle qu'illustrèrent Bach et Haendel, a produit des chefs-d'œuvre de même grandeur que ceux des maîtres allemands." Ibid.

[446] René Dumesnil, "Autour de la reprise des *Indes galantes* actualité de J.-Ph. Rameau," *Le Monde,* 6 March 1952.

[447] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 157–165.

exercised more influence in both French political and cultural spheres that many were keen to resist.[448]

The significance of the opera-ballet as a uniquely French genre was highlighted by Paul-Marie Masson, the Rameau specialist who consulted on the score revisions for the revival, in his article for *Opéra de Paris*. The opera-ballet, he argued, is its own genre; it is not an opera with ballets interpolated but instead an opera in the *form* of a ballet where the plot is often only loosely connected.[449] His article encouraged audiences to feel a sense of national pride in the luster of this genre, and helped to prepare audiences for the absence of dramatic cohesion throughout the parts of *Indes galantes*. During the post-war period music critics had spilt much ink over the crisis of the opera in France, and the question of how to affect the RTLN's salvation. Masson suggested the French had already invented the means with the opera-ballet and simply needed to remember the wealth of their own musical patrimony.[450]

The musical community carefully prepared the public to appreciate and enjoy this production—which would be a key factor in its success and its nationalist tilt. The state controlled Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française honored Rameau each morning on the radio leading up to the June 1952 premiere of *Indes galantes* during their culture hour, highlighting important melodic themes and presenting Rameau as the French master par excellence.[451] The RTLN's own publication, *Opéra de Paris,* featured many articles on Rameau leading up to the

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[448] Carroll, *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe,* 69–87; Guilbaut, "Postwar Painting Games: The Rough and the Slick," 34; Nord, *France's New Deal,* 153–155.

[449] Paul-Marie Masson, "Rameau, ce méconnu," *l'Opéra de Paris* V (1952): 12–16.

[450] Ibid.

[451] Henri Büsser, *De Pelléas aux Indes galantes* (Paris: Librairie Artheme Fayard, 1955), 256.

premiere, including quotations from other famous French composers supporting the importance of Rameau to French music history.

Honegger underscored how revolutionary Rameau had been in his time: "It seems very difficult today to see in Rameau a fierce revolutionary. Yet this was how he appeared to his contemporaries, who criticized his works with passion…"[452] Honegger concluded that the revolutionary Rameau was one of the three greatest French musicians. Jolivet called Rameau the prototype of French musical intelligence and expression:

> Debussy, Dukas, and Ravel, half a century ago, rediscovered Rameau. They owe to him the best of the powers that have allowed them to renew French music. The renewal of French operatic art, will probably be due to Rameau's lesson. Rameau, the prototype of a French musician, whose acute intelligence continuously controlled his sensibility, without stopping his music being what it always should be: an "expressive art."[453]

He argued that Rameau had already been a source of inspiration to composers like Debussy, Dukas, and Ravel, and could also be the inspiration needed to renew operatic art. The way Jolivet characterized Rameau is interesting; he balanced Rameau's intellect with his expressivity. Jolivet cut a fine line: by praising Rameau's intelligence that guided his feelings Jolivet distinguished Rameau from the emotion-laden Romantic tradition or Wagnerian opera, and on the other hand avoided Rameau's music being called sterile or unfeeling by praising his expressivity. Jolivet highlighted the type of balance and humanist approach to emotions that had been so central to the Resistance during the war.

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[452] "Il nous semble bien difficile aujourd'hui de voir en Rameau un farouche révolutionnaire. C'est pourtant ainsi qu'il apparaissait à ses contemporains, qui critiquaient ses œuvres avec passion…" Debussy, Fauré, Louis Aubert, Tony Aubin, Marcel Delannoy, Arthur Honegger, André Jolivet, Raymond Loucheur, Georges Migot, Darius Milhaud, and Roland-Manuel, "Hommage à Rameau," *Opéra de Paris* V (1952): 9.

[453] "Debussy, Dukas, et Ravel ont, il y a un demi-siècle, redécouvert Rameau. Ils lui doivent le meilleur des forces qui leur ont permis de renouveler la musique française. Le renouveau de l'art lyrique français, ce sera probablement à la leçon de Rameau que nous le devrons. A Rameau, prototype du musicien français, dont l'intelligence aiguë contrôle sans cesse la sensibilité, sans que la musique cesse, pour lui, d'être ce qu'elle devrait toujours être : un 'Art expressif.'" Ibid.

Returning to the classics as a source of rejuvenation and restoration of French cultural superiority was not unique to the RTLN or the operatic field. Jacques Copeau (1879–1949) had called during the inter-war period for a return to classic theatre pieces, like those of Molière, as a way to correct for the decadence that had infected modern theatre. His enacted his ideals at his Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier where his company presented classic masterworks of the past and modern plays he deemed of high quality.[454] His choice to use minimal staging in order to focus on the text of the play was echoed in the mise-en-scène and techniques favored by the Cartel, an informal alliance of four Paris based directors Charles Dullin, Louis Jouvet, and Gaston Baty, and Georges Pitoëff, during the inter-war period and after.[455]

The emphasis Copeau and the Cartel placed upon the classics and quality, and their rejection of complex and luxurious staging, influenced Jeanne Laurent's theatrical decentralization efforts.[456] Copeau had also been on the board of Pierre Schaeffer's Jeune France during the war, which, as Chapter Five will reveal, was also very influential upon decentralization.[457] Though the RTLN and theatre influenced by Copeau and the Cartel were both seeking their renewal through quality presentations of classic masterworks, the 1952 production of *Indes galantes* was in some ways diametrically opposed to Copeau and the Cartel's ideals. Lehmann embraced the luxury of the popular stages, which Copeau and the Cartel had vehemently rejected.[458] But this embrace would not be without controversy.

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[454] Bradby, *Modern French Drama 1940–1980*, 1.

[455] Nord, *France's New Deal*, 145.

[456] Denizot, *Jeanne Laurent,* 83.

[457] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 140.

[458] Nord, *France's New Deal,* 145.

From 1951 to 1955 at the RTLN, Lehmann made large luxurious presentations of past masterworks his signature.[459] In 1953, a year after the success of *Indes galantes,* Lehmann was accused by Jean Hamon in the non-communist left journal *Combat* of privileging lavish works like *Indes galantes* and neglecting young French composers' works.[460] Hamon argued Lehmann's methods were risk adverse, and that by favoring works that were already proven he was stifling young composers—and French musical progress along with them. Hamon asked if Lehmann would have turned down operas like *Pelléas et Mélisande* or *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* as too high risk, thus, depriving France of these masterworks.

While it is certainly true that Lehmann took on few new operatic compositions at the RTLN, at the Châtelet he had commissioned several new works from young Prix de Rome winners despite this not being required, as Châtelet did not receive state funding. Unfortunately, most were not very popular.[461] It seems he struggled to find new works of the quality he believed was required at the National Operatic Theatres. Lehmann, according to his writings, was "always willing to welcome young composers, but on the condition they were viable."[462] To Lehmann, the "Opéra was not a theatre for trials, but for consecration."[463] Lehmann agreed that the RTLN was not designed to exclusively be a museum rehashing the old repertoire, but asserted in a 1952 edition of *l'Opéra de Paris,* it also was not meant to be a laboratory for the trials of new

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[459] Dupêchez, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris,* 249–250.

[460] See Jean Hamon, "Les Théâtres Lyriques d'État, ont-ils le devoir d'aider les jeunes compositeurs?" *Combat,* 6 January 1953; Lehmann also reflects on how some pushed for him to include more modern music in the programming for the RTLN in his memoir. See Lehmann, *Trompe l'oeil*, 137.

[461] Lehmann, *Trompe l'oeil*, 100–101; Lehmann did stage new ballets regularly during his time at the RTLN, as did Hirsch.

[462] "Je suis toujours prêt à accueillir les jeunes musiciens, mais à condition qu'ils soient valables…" Ibid., 137.

[463] "l'Opéra n'étant pas un théâtre d'essai, mais de consécration," Ibid., 137.

experiments. The RTLN must serve French music above all regardless of school or style, but was for established and proven composers or outstanding newcomers.[464]

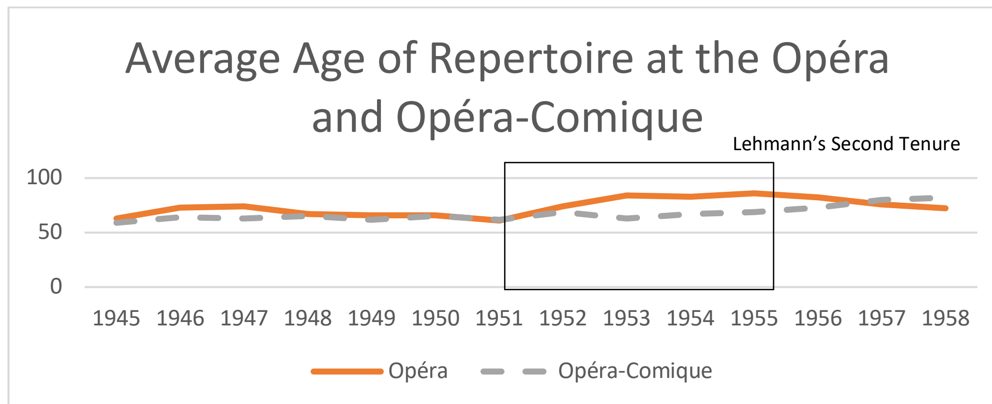
> The Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux is not a museum; nor can it be used in any case as a laboratory. It is one, indivisible, in the service of French music first, then welcoming all geniuses. It serves no school, is not prisoner to any aesthetics. Its only goal is to fulfil the wishes of the happy connoisseurs, and to attract in order to seduce, and to conquer, those laymen who cross its peristyle and climb its stairs of honor.[465]

This tension over how to move forward at the RTLN, through brilliant consecrations of established works and composers or by premiering new works, ran not only throughout Lehmann's tenure, but was a question debated at the Opéra and Opéra-Comique throughout the Fourth Republic. As can been seen in Figure 3.2, during Lehmann's tenure the average age of the repertoire was slightly older than it was under Hirsch, as Lehmann focused on revivals, especially of the eighteenth-century work *Indes galantes.*

[464] Maurice Lehmann, "Éditorial," *l'Opéra de Paris* V (1952): 3.

[465] "La Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux n'est pas un musée; elle ne peut non plus server en aucun cas de laboratoire. Elle est une, indivisible, au service de la Musique française d'abord, accueillante ensuite à tous les génies. Elle ne sert aucune chapelle, n'est prisonnière d'aucune esthétique. Son unique but est de combler les vœux des heureux initiés et d'attirer pour les séduire, et les conquérir, les profanes qui franchissent son péristyle et gravissent ses escaliers d'honneur." Ibid.

Figure 3.2: Average Age of the Repertoire at the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique 1945–1958.[466]



While the theatres of the RTLN were not to be used as trial stages, they should be beacons of hope for their audiences, according to Lehmann. Lehmann prized the ability of his theatres to provide audiences with experiences that lifted them away from daily life (and perhaps political life) and gave them emotional and spiritual respite:

> I believe that a man goes to the theatre to change his surroundings, to be mystified, to look for hope, to find a false paradise. And if when the performance is over, when the amazing palaces have flow away into the flies, when all this phantasmagoria has disappeared, he feels a bit liberated from his natural anguish, then we have honestly accomplished our mission.[467]

Lehmann viewed the theatre as a key provider of amazement and awe, and believed that this should be one of the RTLN's central goals. At first blush, Lehmann's words bear much similarity to the aims of the theatrical movement begun by Copeau and members of the Cartel

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[466] Data for the Opéra in this chart was collected from both the Opéra journal and the Chronopera project. See "Journal de l'Opéra" 1938–1958, Archives Opéra, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; This source is also available through the BnF Gallica portal here https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb426079139/date&rk=21459;2#; and the Chronopera project, completed by Institut de Recherche sur le Patrimoine Musical en France (IRMPF), CNRS (UMR 200), Bibliothèque nationale de France, and ministère de la Culture, the database is accessible here http://chronopera.free.fr/index.php?menu=accueil&contenu=accueil_questce; Data for the Opéra-Comique was collected from the Opéra-Comique journal of performances, see "Archives de l'Opéra-Comique, régie," magasin de la Réserve, *cote.* Registres OC-89 through OC-102 (1945–1958), Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[467] "Je crois que l'homme va au théâtre pour être dépaysé, mystifié, pour y chercher un espoir, y trouver un faux paradis. Et si lorsque la représentation est terminée, lorsque les mirifiques palais se sont envolés dans les cintres, lorsque toute cette fantasmagorie a disparu, il se sent quelque peu libéré de son angoisse naturelle, c'est que nous avons honnêtement accompli notre mission." Lehmann, *Trompe l'oeil*, 10.

and brought to its height by the appointment in 1951 of Jean Vilar to the Théâtre National Populaire (TNP). These directors focused on bringing exceptional and quality theatrical works to the people and creating a near religious experience for their audiences. Vilar's work at the TNP aspired to foster the audience's political engagement—with a left-leaning slant—through these experiences.[468]

However, Lehmann's own aims were much more aligned with the political center-right and bourgeois values. Rather than attempt to promote political engagement in broad audiences, Lehmann's productions did the opposite. The spectacle and splendor of *Indes galantes* was carefully crafted so as to deflect, rather than emphasize, the opera-ballet's political relevance. Each entrée provided a nostalgic and glamorous view of colonization, and the ending finale reemphasized the theme of unified, and Eurocentric, love which discouraged contrasting the entrées with the realities of harsh oppression and violence taking place in Indochina or that had recently occurred in Madagascar.[469] Audiences experienced the important awe and emotional catharsis of theatre, without the push to any sort of revolutionary zeal.

The Opéra Verses the Americans: The Congress for Cultural Freedom

The increasing influence of America and the Soviets in France made it urgently important that the French National Operatic Theatres give a shining example of the strength of the French arts. This display of cultural potency was a means of the French asserting their independence

[468] Bradby, *Modern French Drama*, 91–98.

[469] Sorum offers an excellent look at the slow and arduous process of decolonization in France, especially paying attention to the role intellectuals had in this process and French public opinion. See Paul Clay Sorum, *Intellectuals and Decolonization in France* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 3–10; Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 49–50, 66–68, 75; Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944–1958,* 81–94, 215–217.

from both American and Soviet control.[470] This was critical as France was drawn deeper into the Cold War escalating between America and the Soviets, which had the potential to be "even more destructive than WWII."[471] This was made clear by the juxtaposition of Lehmann's lavish production of *Indes galantes* and the American-backed festival "l'Oeuvre du vingtième siècle" that took place the month before *Indes galantes* premiered. The festival was produced by the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) one of America's secret, CIA-funded, cultural weapons in the Cold War struggle.[472]

The CCF was a part of the ever-increasing American attempt to sway European and French culture away from the influence of the Soviets and Communism and towards a greater acceptance of what they politely-termed American values. While the Marshall Plan of 1947 had made American influence in France overt, the CCF was part of an attempt at a more subtle and covert politics.[473] The CIA carefully concealed their relationship to the CCF by laundering the money they sent to the organization through fronts like the faux-charitable fund the Farfield Foundation.[474] However, even in their earliest operations in Berlin, which had been their base before they established Paris as their headquarters in 1951, the amount of funding available to the CCF caused intellectuals to be suspicious about the organization's benefactor. Given the

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[470] Nord, *France's New Deal*, 19–22, 144; Carroll, *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe*, 3–4.

[471] Carroll, *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe*, 6.

[472] Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 2, 32.

[473] Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 1–2, 24–27.

[474] Ibid., 116.

wide-spread economic crisis in Europe, some concluded the Americans must be bankrolling the CCF despite its claims to be an international organization.[475]

Operating under code-name QKOPERA, the CCF at its height had offices in thirty-five countries, more than twenty publications, owned a news service, and had a wide variety of means to reach their target audiences.[476] Their purpose was to attempt to push the intelligentsia away from Marxism and Communism and towards a viewpoint friendlier to American objectives and ideals. Their festival was intended as a vehicle to promote relations between American and European artists and as a means to counter Soviet propaganda in France that asserted America was culturally inferior to the European nations.[477] The CCF promoted freedom of artistic expression and argued that great art was created in free societies, not places like the Soviet Union. Though, in reality, the CCF itself did actually exercise a fair amount of control over artistic output associated with its festivals.[478]

"L'Oeuvre du vingtième siècle" spanned the month of May in 1952 and included performances of operas, symphonies, concertos, and ballets by more than seventy different composers and performed by nine different orchestras invited for the occasion.[479] The works ranged widely in style and technique.[480] Despite attempts to camouflage the political goals of the festival, the event was received by some in France as an American affair, and the attempt to tie

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[475] Ibid., 81, 116.

[476] Ibid., 1, 27, 86, 119–120.

[477] Ibid., 113.

[478] Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 4; Ian Wellens, *Music on the frontline: Nicolas Nabokov's struggle against communism and middlebrow culture* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 2.

[479] Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 117.

[480] Carroll, *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe*, 1.

these masterworks to a political agenda was disliked.[481] Serge Lifar, who had been ballet master at the Opéra since 1930 (other than from 1944–1947 when he was suspended on charges of collaboration), wrote a contemptuous open letter about the festival and its involvement of other ballets he considered inferior to his own stating, "from the point of view of spirit, civilization, and culture, France does not have to ask for anybody's opinion; she is the one that gives advice to others."[482] Lifar clearly asserted that France, and her artists at the Opéra in particular, were greatly superior to those used in the festival. Beyond that, he mocked the idea that Americans believed they could come in and teach the French something about culture.

Critics on the left did not shrink from comparing the festival to the efforts of the RTLN and its production of *Indes galantes* the month after the festival. In the left-leaning *Combat* the Opéra's production was hailed as superior to those of the conference:

> With *Les Indes galantes* […] the Opéra of Paris, which has a large stage, budget, decorators, and choice interpretants, gave its response in June to the May festival organized by the Masterworks of the XX century; and this response was like a cymbal crash […] Only our Opéra could assume such a charge with magnificence.[483]

The communist *L'Humanité* went even further, and argued not only for the Opéra's superiority, but explicitly aligned the conference with hidden American agendas:

> In this sense, the reprise of *Indes galantes* gave the deathblow to the so-called "Masterworks of the XX century" made in U.S.A., if, that is, it had not already given it to itself through its own performances.[484]

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[481] Wellens, *Music on the frontline*, 56; Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 122; Carroll, *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe,* 69.

[482] Translation by Stonor Saunders, see Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War,* 122.

[483] "Avec *Les Indes galantes* […] l'Opéra de Paris, qui dispose d'une vaste scène, de crédits, de décorateurs et d'interprètes choisis, donne sa réponse en juin au festival de mai organisé par l'Oeuvre du XXe siècle ; et cette réponse ressemble à un coup de cymbale. […] Seul notre Opéra pouvait assumer cette charge avec magnificence." Marcel Schneider, "*Les Indes galantes* à l'Opéra," *Combat,* 23 June 1952.

[484] "En ce sens la reprise des *Indes galantes* donnerait le coup de grâce à la prétendue "Oeuvre du XXe siècle" made in U.S.A., si celle-ci ne se l'était donnée elle-même par ses propres manifestations." Gilbert Bloch, "*Les Indes galantes,* Hommage féérique à la musique française," *l'Humanité,* 23 June 1952.

In *l'Humanité* the Opéra was framed as so far exceeding the American conference that it strikes it dead. Both these papers voiced anti-American sentiments and used the Opéra and *Indes galantes* as a means of asserting French dominance. While the progressive left was indeed being continually pushed to the margins at the Opéra, as the removal of Hirsch showed, it seems it was still vastly preferable to the American influence the CCF represented.

The Score and the Spirit of Rameau

Lehmann, and Hirsch, knew that simply remounting *Indes galantes* would not succeed, it had to be infused with new life in order to affirm the importance of the French patrimony and the prestige of French music.[485] The ensuing debate over how musically to approach a historical work, and if one should modernize it, revealed the long-standing political associations with the treatment of French music history. The central issue to this debate became how to deal with Rameau's harpsichord accompanied recitatives. How to realize and orchestrate the basso continuo (the notation that was used to indicate harmonic accompaniment in Baroque opera) under the recitatives was a perennial problem for revivals of Rameau that past directors at the Opéra and Opéra-Comique had attempted to resolve in a variety of ways for practical and political reasons.

Roland-Manuel, a music critic, professor at the Conservatoire, and former Resistant, during the 6 October 1949 meeting of the comité consultatif was a staunch defender of Rameau's original scoring. He had studied early in his career at the Schola Cantorum, where, of course,

[485] Lehmann, *Trompe l'oeil*, 113.

tradition and the French masters were emphasized.[486] He argued that Rameau's scoring and music must be preserved as much as possible rather than rearranging it to suit modern tastes. While a former Resistant, he espoused a more conservative aesthetic. In order to protect the original intensions of Rameau, he suggested calling upon the musicologist Paul-Marie Masson to advise on the project, who had made an extensive study of Rameau's operas.[487]

Henri Büsser led the re-orchestration and abridgement of the score. Büsser (1897–1973) had been director of the Opéra-Comique from 1939 to 1940 and then was music director at the Opéra under Hirsch, and briefly Lehmann, from 1949 to 1952.[488] Emmanuel Bondeville (who was elected music director at the Opéra after Büsser in 1952) also helped to complete the score revisions. Büsser in particular disagreed with Roland-Manuel's views and argued for the merits of Paul Dukas's revisions and orchestrations of the work.[489] He took a more modern and left-leaning approach, which perhaps what part of what motivated his removal from his post as the RTLN shifted to Lehmann's more conservative direction. In the end, the harpsichord parts were orchestrated as Büsser suggested. Paul-Marie Masson argued that Rameau had believed one must adapt the orchestration of works to suit the size of the hall in which they were to be performed,

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[486] For more on the Schola Cantorum and its traditional and nationalist tendencies around the turn of the century, see Jane F. Fulcher, *French Cultural Politics and Music: From the Dreyfus Affair to the First World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 24–30.

[487] See Comité consultatif des TLN, "Procès-Verbal de la séance du 6 octobre 1949," Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture procès verbaux 1946–1965," *cote.* 20-272, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[488] Büsser first arrived at the Opéra-Comique when his work *Daphnis et Chloe* premiered in 1897. During the Fourth Republic, in addition to being music director at the Opéra from 1949 to 1952 he also frequently served on the RTLN comité consultatif. See the 27 September 1949 and 7 October 1949 letters between Hirsch and Jaujard for Büsser's commission, Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1949," *cote.* 20-1954, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[489] See Comité consultatif des TLN, "Procès-Verbal de la séance du 28 octobre 1949, 14 février 1950, 17 janvier 1952," Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture procès verbaux 1946–1965," *cote.* 20-272, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

and this was used to justify the new orchestrations of the recitative.[490] Lehmann, who often embraced a more conservative approach, in this case argued strongly for the removal of the harpsichord—likely his theatrical savvy knew the instrument simply could not project adequately for the size of the Palais Garnier and the level of splendor he had in mind.[491]

This new realization had mixed critical reviews, some contended, including Maurice Brillant writing for the right-leaning Catholic journal *La Croix,* that by removing the harpsichord "the effect can become a bit gray, pasty, or monotone" ["l'effet en peut devenir un peu gris, empâté, ou monotone"].[492] Similar to the Schola educated Roland-Manuel, Brillant wanted close fidelity to the original score. Jean Gandrey-Rety, in the now communist *Les Lettres françaises,* disagreed. Gandrey-Rety quoted Masson's argument that Rameau employed the harpsichord more for harmonic than timbral qualities. He continued, that those who bemoaned the disappearance of the harpsichord were disserving the spirit of Rameau's works in their quest for authenticity. In his view, *Indes galantes* need to be modified for the size of the 1952 Opéra if one wanted to give a true sense of the work of Rameau.[493] The left reacted against the argument that authenticity was found in close adherence to the original text, as had been espoused by Vichy.[494] Gandrey-Rety argued that one should be faithful to the spirit of the composer rather than the written score.

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[490] Büsser, *De Pelléas aux Indes galantes,* 259–261.

[491] Lehmann, *Trompe l'oeil*, 120; See also Comité consultatif des TLN, "Procès-Verbal de la séance du 17 janvier 1952," Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture procès verbaux 1946–1965," *cote.* 20-272, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[492] Maurice Brillant, "Deux actes de Rameau—Une classe de castagnettes," *La Croix,* 27 September 1952.

[493] Jean Gandrey-Rety, "Jeunesse de J.-Ph. Rameau, II. –l'ame du complot: Le musician," *Les Lettres françaises,* 4 July 1952.

[494] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 14.

The removal of the harpsichord clearly did not dissuade the public from attending; *Indes galantes* was continually performed for large audiences. From June to December in 1952 it had 37 performances, for comparison *Faust* (which was the most frequently performed opera when totaling performances from 1945 to 1958) during this same period had only 9 performances. [See Table 3.2]

Table 3.2: Performances of *Indes galantes* and *Faust* at the Opéra between June 1952 and 31 December 1958.[495]

			June-Dec 1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	Total
Indes Galantes	1735	Rameau	37	65	43	34	20	2	7	208
Faust	1869	Gounod	9	19	19	22	34	26	33	162

The instrumentation was not the only aspect of *Indes galantes* modified for its 1952 revival. Büsser and Bondeville worked to lighten the opéra-ballet, eliminating many of the repeats to shorten its running time and quicken the pace of the drama.[496] In Rameau's final version (he revised the work several times, as was not uncommon during the time), *Indes galantes* ended with the "Les Sauvages" entrée leaving the opening prologue between love and war feeling somewhat unresolved. The Lehmann production added an epilogue to bring closure to the prologue, and to create a reason for a large ending number to give the performance an increased sense of completion and splendor.[497] It also served to distract from the final tableau "Les Sauvages" which had the most potential for dangerous political interpretation as it was set

[495] Data for this chart was collected from both the Opéra journal and the Chronopera project. See "Journal de l'Opéra" 1938–1958, Archives Opéra, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; This source is also available through the BnF Gallica portal here https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb426079139/date&rk=21459;2#; and the Chronopera project, completed by Institut de Recherche sur le Patrimoine Musical en France (IRMPF), CNRS (UMR 200), Bibliothèque nationale de France, and ministère de la Culture, the database is accessible here http://chronopera.free.fr/index.php?menu=accueil&contenu=accueil_questce.

[496] Jean Roy, "Feu d'artifice à l'Opéra pour la reprise des *Indes galantes,*" *Arts,* 12 June 1952.

[497] Lehmann, *Trompe l'oeil*, 120.

in the African colonies. Adding a new section to a master's work certainly would seem a gamble, but there was far more debate over the harpsichord in the reviews than the addition of this material, which was generally well-received.[498]

Spectacle and Luxury as an Attempt to Control the Discourse

While the score revisions were subject of detailed debates in the comité consultatif, the staging of the work seems to have been mostly left to the administrator's own devices. Lehmann was highly experienced in the art of grand and luxurious spectacle from his time at Châtelet and applied it to his production and mise-en-scène of *Indes galantes* with aplomb. The Opéra pulled out all the stops at its disposal: deploying sixty of its star dancers and vocalists, one-hundred and fifty artists and musicians, eighty figurants, eighty-seven machinists, unparalleled luxury in staging—including eleven kilometers of pipe and fifty firefighters for the erupting volcano, seven artists to design the decors, and three choreographers in an effort to create a production that could finally bring the post-war Opéra an unequivocal success.[499]

Indes galantes traces the conflict between Love and Violence and the journey of Love's disciples to exotic lands after being abandoned in favor of the glories of war. The prologue sets up the initial conflict where the youth of France, Spain, Italy, and Poland abandon the goddess Hébé against the advice of L'Amour and head to war. Hébé's cupids travel far and wide now that Europe has abandoned them. The first entrée "Le Turc généreux" finds the young French woman Emilie a captive and as the love interest of the Turkish noble Osman. When Emilie's lost love Valère arrives Osman generously gives them both their freedom. The second entrée whisks

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[498] Ibid., 120.

[499] Guy Dornand, "Un volcan éteint depuis 1761 entrera ce soir en eruption dans *Les Indes galantes* … à l'Opéra," *Libération,* 18 June 1952.

across the ocean to Peru in “Les Incas”. The princess of the Incans, Phani, has fallen in love with one of the Spanish conquerors, Don Carlos. But, the powerful Incan priest Huascar desires Phani and uses a volcanic eruption to attempt to convince her the gods are angered by her betrayal with Don Carlos. Don Carlos saves Phani, and Huascar perishes.

Moving from fire to flowers, the third entrée “Les Fleurs” takes place in a Persian garden. Tacmas and Ali discover that they are in love with each other’s slaves, Zaïre and Fatima, and the slaves love them in return. The men trade slaves, and the newly-formed happy couples attend a flower festival with beautiful dancing. The final entrée “Les Sauvages”, in the original Rameau production, took place in an American forest. The Native American Zima is caught between two colonial suitors, the French Damon and the Spanish Alvar. Zima rejects them both as Damon is too flighty and Alvar too passionate, and instead remains faithful to her Native American fiancé Adario. In the 1952 production the action is moved to Africa, which created potentially dangerous colonial resonances.

In the epilogue added for the 1952 production, the young Europeans return to Hébé’s palace, and are joined by the casts of each entrée. Together they all celebrate the ultimate victory of Love. This ending, returning love to Europe and mixing the European prologue cast with the casts from the non-European nations of the entrées takes on particular significance in the context of the colonial wars in which France was then engaged. Rather than ending with the “Les Sauvages” entrée where love and virtue are still out in the empire, the finale brings the European nations back into the center of the drama and implies a type of international unity. This would have aligned well with the myth that had dominated colonial discourse that the colonial system was mutually beneficial to both France and the colonized, and that France’s duty was to spread

its culture freely.[500] It also seems reminiscent of the post-war belief that the colonies had been vital strongholds during the Occupation, and that maintaining the French Union was key to France's safety and stature.[501]

It was somewhat unusual at the Opéra to hire more than one designer or choreographer for the same work, but Lehmann stressed the importance that each entrée to have its own character and style and thus not only its own cast, but also decorator and choreographer suited to its style. This, he hoped, would help to allay some of the 'monotony' some claimed Rameau's score had by adding visual variety, and of course the longer list of collaborators was helpful to create more interest in the production.[502] Lehmann's tactic convinced the press across the political spectrum; Clarendon in the conservative *Le Figaro* hailed Lehmann and the visual elements the real champions of the opening evening, and Dumesnil in the Christian Democratic *Le Monde* supported Lehmann's choice by saying it aligned with Rameau's own intentions for the work, as has been discussed.[503] Dolly Davies quoted in the right-leaning *Aurore*, seemed to share the audience's enthusiasm, though with a somewhat back-handed compliment "it's so pretty, you forget it's boring!" ["C'est tellement beau qu'on oublie que c'est un peu ennuyeux !"].[504] Lehmann recalled that the public liked the decors and special effects so much they

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[500] Rioux, *The Fourth Republic,* 81, 85; Sorum, *Intellectuals and Decolonization in France,* 21–31, 74–75; D. Bruce Marshall, *The French Colonial Myth and Constitution-Making in the Fourth Republic* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), 4–7, 103, and for a history of the development of this myth over France's colonial history see 11–67.

[501] Sorum, *Intellectuals and Decolonization in France,* 7, 27–31; Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 155; Marshall, *The French Colonial Myth*, 2, 80–82.

[502] Lehmann, *Trompe l'oeil*, 155–117.

[503] Clarendon, "À l'Opéra *Les Indes galantes*," *Le Figaro,* 21–22 June 1952; René Dumesnil, "Autour de la reprise des *Indes galantes* actualité de J.-Ph. Rameau," *Le Monde,* 6 March 1952.

[504] Le Strapontin, "À l'Opéra le plus difficile des publics a accueilli, hier soir, triomphalement la première des *Indes galantes," l'Aurore, 19* June 1952.

applauded over the music and forced them to take up the curtain several times at the end of each act.[505]

The public and critics alike were enchanted by the ethereal "Les Fleurs" tableau with decors by Fost and Moulène and choreography by Lander.[506] The décor had the arched openings, bulbous domes, and thin minarets typical of Mughal Indo-Islamic architecture, and the costumes also pointed to an idealized exotic and erotic location. [See Figure 3.3] It is important to note that at this point France's North African colonies with their large Islamic populations were not yet in wide-spread revolt, as had happened in other areas further south in Africa, like Madagascar. Thus, invoking this type of architecture was a safer, but still exotic, option. The main ballet of the flowers took place in a seemingly expansive hall hung with a multitude of crystal chandeliers. [See Figure 3.4] During the performances, floral perfumes (alternatively identified as heliotrope, jasmin, or roses) were dispersed into the hall.[507] The experience was immersive and dreamlike, and incredibly successful with audiences.[508] Clearly this tableau realized the ideal of escapist theatre that took away the audiences cares that Lehmann believed to be a main part of

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[505] Lehmann, *Trompe l'oeil*, 128–129.

[506] Pierre Loewel, "*Les Indes galantes,* Plaisir des yeux, des oreilles, de l'esprit," *l'Aurore,* 29 June 1952; Gaston Dufy, "*Les Indes galantes,* un splendide spectacle," *Ce matin Le Pays,* 23 June 1952; The cast was like-wise star-studded. Micheau, who had success creating the role of Manuela in *Bolivar,* played Fatima, and Denise Duval, who created the title role in Poulenc's *Mamelles de Tirésias,* played Zaïre. Giraudeau and Jansen played Tacmas and Ali respectively. Among the leading dancers were Bardin, Dayde, Ritz, Renault, Andreani, and Dynalix. See Wolff, *L'Opéra au Palais Garnier*, 121.

[507] "Parfums dans la salle," *l'Aurore,* 16 June 1952; Jacques Chantraine, "L'Opéra a construit un volcan chauffé par 11 km. de tuyaux pour presenter le plus grand spectacle du siècle, Pour la première fois, des nuages de parfun seront vaporisés sur les spectateurs," *France-Soir,* 17 June 1952.

[508] Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux, "Programme *Indes galantes"* (Paris: 1952), 32; A copy of the program is preserved in a book of press clippings, see "*Indes galantes," cote.* 8 RSUPP-3736, Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

the theatre's mission, and it also safely packaged colonial exoticism in a manner to deflect from the more violent conflicts in South East Asia and parts of Africa.

Figure 3.3: Décor for "Fleurs"[509]

Figure 3.4: Décors for "Fleurs" ballet in hall with chandeliers[510]

[509] Bernard Gavoty was, of course, also known by his nom de plume Clarendon in *Le Figaro.* See Bernard Gavoty, *Les Indes galantes à l'Opéra de Paris 1952* (Paris: Imprimerie Georges Lang, 1952), 25.

[510] René Dumesnil, "La Leçon de Rameau," *L'Opéra de Paris* VI: 11.

Less popular with the critics was Carzou's 'surrealist' take on Incan entrée—though the music of this entrée was especially praised. Dismissal of Carzou's design as 'surrealist' in this context was particularly cutting, and political. By espousing a surrealist design Carzou would have been perceived as not honoring Rameau's intentions for the piece. As Rameau was being held up as an example of French excellence in art, this would have been a rather unpatriotic move. This was compounded by the association of surrealism with the communists, who were highly criticized in conservative circles in 1952 France, even if the surrealists and communists themselves often did not get along.[511] While the critics found the decors tinged with surrealism, they certainly had less of a sense of the surreal than decors for works like *Bolivar,* not to mention the surrealist tour-de-force of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* at the Opéra-Comique, and instead were well-aligned with the fairly representative decors for the rest of the entrées. [Figure 3.5] Calling Carzou a surrealist was, in fact, more of a political than artistic criticism.

The generally conservative André Boll in his review noted that while Carzou was a gifted artist, his designs for the entrée were not well aligned with the spirit of Rameau's music.[512] Boll, a director and scenic designer, believed that scenic design must strive to offer the ideal or true interpretation of the music and the composer's voice as he wrote in his work *La mise-en-scène contemporaine* in 1944. Jane Fulcher has noted that Boll's position here is well aligned with Vichy's perspective on scenic design which also sought to reflect the 'true' interpretation of the

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[511] Helena Lewis, *Dada Turns Red: The Politics of Surrealism* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 108, 150; for more on Breton's anti-political, anti-colonial, and anti-communist statements and presentations see the discussion of the surrealist tract "Liberté est un mot vietnamien" (June 1947) and the show "Surrealism 1947" at the Galerie Maeght see Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros, 1938–1968* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2005), 115–116.

[512] André Boll, "Décors: un concours d'enchantements," *Arts,* 26 June 1952; The choreography for this entrée was provided by Lifar and the leading roles were danced by himself, Vyroubova, and Bozzoni. Phani was sung by Ferrer, don Carlos by Nore, and Huascar by Bianco. See Wolff, *L'Opéra au Palais Garnier,* 121.

composer's intentions.[513] Perhaps Carzou's vision had aligned more with Hirsch's left-leaning interpretation of *Indes galantes* and in the final conservative context of the Lehmann production seemed overly liberal, at very least this seems to be the implication in the conservative reviews.

Figure 3.5: Carzou's decors for "Les Incas".[514]

The Incan entrée also called for a huge technical feat, an exploding volcano which took eleven kilometers of piping to create and spewed flames that Prasteau in *Le Figaro* claimed to be of about three meters.[515] [See Figure 3.6] The Opéra went to great lengths to produce such a spectacular stage effect, perhaps to distract from the possible political connotations of the tableaux. This was of course strongly reminiscent of the tactics that had been used in the grand opera, *La Muette de Portici* in 1828 to quell the stirring of too much revolutionary emotion.[516] In

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[513] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 82.

[514] René Dumesnil, "La Leçon de Rameau," *L'Opéra de Paris* VI: 9.

[515] Jean Prasteau, "Un conte de fees à l'Opéra," *Le Figaro,* 20 June 1952.

[516] Fulcher, *The Nation's Image*, 35–37.

1952, the volcano served as an illustration of the French Empire's splendor and distracted from the anger of the colonized Incan people. Instead in this tableau, it is as though the earth itself punishes the "barbarism" of the colonized and subtly aligns with the civilizing and rational forces of the colonizer.

Figure 3.6: The volcano from "Les Incas".[517]

The volcano required intensive labor from the machinists and this was highlighted in the news. Jacques Chantraine in the popular journal *France-Soir* went so far as to call it each machinist's "own personal Hiroshima" ["son petit Hiroshima personnel"].[518] In the Communist aligned journal *Libération,* Dornand quipped in his review of the performance, "A volcano, even in the atomic age, is not just found in the bazar…" ["Un volcan, même à l'âge atomique, ne se

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[517] Gavoty, *Les Indes galantes à l'Opéra de Paris 1952,* 23.

[518] Jacques Chantraine, "L'Opéra a construit un volcan chauffé par 11 km. de tuyaux pour présenter le plus grand spectacle du siècle, Pour la première fois, des nuages de parfum seront vaporisés sur les spectateurs," *France-Soir,* 17 June 1952.

trouve pas dans les bazars…"].[519] In the article, he highlighted the difficulty of this technical feat and in particular the toil of the machinists, but he leaves his reference to atomic-power without further explanation.

These seemingly offhanded comments are actually extremely revealing, despite receiving no further discussion within the article or in the larger press. Drawing attention to the laborers aligned well with left-leaning politics, rather than centering on the splendor of the production that the Opéra sought to project. Additionally, the reference to American bombing of Hiroshima seems a possible critique of America, especially, when one considers the current cultural propaganda being employed by the Americans in Paris in the form of the CCF and "l'Oeuvre du vingtième siècle." Culture was central to French national pride and identity; this reference seems to imply it was in this domain even their workers excelled rather than the rampant destruction of American weapons of war.

The spectacle in the Incan and Flower entrées, along with the flying machines featured in the Olympus set of the prologue, attracted the most attention from the critics just as they were designed to do. "Les Sauvages," in contrast, received little commentary. "Les Sauvages," here set by Roger Chapelain-Midy on an African island or coast, was the tableau that deviated most strongly from Rameau's precedent, which had set the entrée in a North American forest. However, the careful framing and addition of a stunning finale to follow this final tableau drew attention away from its potential political controversy. It is possible Hirsch had planned to highlight the work, while Lehmann sought to temper and control its implications.

To illuminate the importance of Chapelain-Midy's changes, a survey of the history of the entrée is helpful. "Les Sauvages" was added to *Indes galantes* by Rameau in 1736, a year after

[519] Guy Dornand, "Un volcan éteint depuis 1761 entrera ce soir en éruption dans *Les Indes galantes* … à l'Opéra," *Libération*, 18 June 1952.

the work's initial premiere. The music for the entrée was based on music Rameau had already written for an exhibition of live 'savages' at the Comédie-Italienne in 1725.[520] The word 'sauvage' in French is ambiguous, meaning uncultivated in a general sense, and so it is not immediately clear who the people performing at the exhibition were. Roger Savage in his article "Rameau's American Dancers" considered accounts of the performance at the Comédie-Italienne and compared these with the writings of early explorers to the Americas. He convincingly concluded that it was most likely that the people performing the exhibition were Native Americans from French Louisiana and members of the Natchez tribe.[521] Therefore it is reasonable to surmise that the "Sauvages" entrée was staged in these early productions in a North American forest setting. This is certainly how the entrée is described in Rameau scholarship.[522]

The decorator for the entrée, Chapelain-Midy, chose to relocate the scene for the 1952 staging, which takes place not in a North American forest, but in an indeterminate tropical locale with half the white cast "blacking-up" to perform African characters. The décor is lush and green with palms and tropical leaves circling a clearing the middle. The sparkling blue ocean in the background is framed by a rock archway. [See Figure 3.7] Occasionally, European style balusters are visible in the far right and far left of the stage. The colonists are dressed in stylized, light, bright, period clothing; complete with panniers and parasols for the women. [See Figure 3.8] The African characters wear spectacular plumed headdresses with red and white feathers that strongly recall the inter-war costumes of Josephine Baker. Many wear leaf skirts with flowers, feathers, and leaves attached at waist, wrists, and ankles, and all are in extremely dark

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[520] Gavoty, *Les Indes galantes à l'Opéra de Paris 1952*, 12; and Roger Savage, "Rameau's American Dancers," *Early Music* 11 No.4 (Oct., 1983): 444.

[521] Roger Savage, "Rameau's American Dancers," *Early Music* 11 No.4 (Oct., 1983): 444–446.

[522] See for example, Cuthbert Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau: His Life and Work* (New York: Dover Publications: 1969), 323; Paul-Marie Masson, *L'Opéra de Rameau* (Paris: Henri Laurens, 1930), 67.

black makeup. [See Figure 3.9] One of the African ballets is performed by a cast of ballerinas in head-to-toe panther unitards. Costumes for both the colonists and the colonized Africans are bright and exaggerated, creating a technicolor image of exoticized colonial nostalgia and cloaking the reality and hardships of subjugated colonial life.

Figure 3.7: Décor for "Les Sauvages"[523]

Figure 3.8: Costumes in "Les Sauvages"[524]

[523] Gavoty, *Les Indes galantes à l'Opéra de Paris 1952,* 30.

[524] Ibid.*,* 32.

Figure 3.9: Dark make-up and costumes for African characters in "Les Sauvages"[525]

This approach focusing on colonial idealism and nostalgia aligned Chapelain-Midy with the more conservative forces now in control at the Opéra, and was a natural progression of his style dating back to the inter-war period. He had taken a different approach from Picasso, Léger, and other avant-garde artists during the interwar period; instead of turning toward the abstract, he cultivated a realist aesthetic. He, along with other painters in the inter-war movement Les Peintres de la Réalité Poétique turned their focus toward tradition, the subject, and humanism, with an emphasis on craftsmanship and skill. Nature and peasants often took on a central role in their works.[526] During the Occupation, Vichy cultivated an aesthetic with similar emphasis in the arts, of which Chapelain-Midy was considered an example.[527]

[525] Dumesnil, "La Leçon de Rameau," 28.

[526] Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia*, 124.

[527] Laurence Bertrand Dorléac, *Art of the Defeat: France 1940–1944,* trans. Jane Marie Todd (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2008), 199.

As Golan notes, in the late 1930s the aesthetics of realism on the far-left and the far-right actually were quite similar, as on the left Socialist Realism also advocated for a realist-style rooted in the traditions of the nation. The subject matter was what set the traditionalists of the right apart from the Socialist Realists of the left, the latter choosing to focus on the proletariat's struggles rather than the peasantry.[528] It makes sense in this context that how to artistically represent the colonial peoples, as an oppressed working class or as natives rooted in the soil, was a space of ideological contention. In 1931, Paris hosted the Paris International Colonial Exposition, where there was significant emphasis on the benefits of the colonies to mainland France, especially in the way of natural resources.[529] The exposition painted an image of peaceful collaboration between France and her colonies—which would align with the colonial nostalgia aesthetic seen later in "Les Sauvages". This exposition was opposed by the Surrealists, who at that time often worked with the PCF, in their pamphlet *Ne Visitez pas l'exposition coloniale.* They called for a boycott of the exposition that they claimed served bourgeois interests and contributed to the oppression of colonial peoples who were a natural ally of the proletariat.[530]

In this context, Chapelain-Midy's choice to move the "Sauvages" entrée from North America to a tropic, likely-African, local was clearly not motivated by the kind of colonial liberation spirit seen in *Bolivar.* Instead, Chapelain-Midy embraced the colonies and the sovereignty of the French Union—as did most in France at this time.[531] He painted a nostalgic

[528] Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia,* 123.

[529] Ibid., 114.

[530] Lewis, *Dada Turns Red,* 95.

[531] Rioux, *The Fourth Republic,* 81, 85.

image of the idealized jungle where Africans and colonists live in harmony. Henri Büsser interpreted it this way, and described this tableau as an example of pure fantasy.[532] It seems that North America was no longer a convincingly, or satisfyingly, 'exotic' space for contemporary French audiences. Moving the scene had the additional benefit of keeping the entrée within the French Union, so Zima instead of rejecting the French Damon for an American, is rejecting him for Adario, an African French colonial subject. It likely would have been unpleasant to show a representation of Americans as the peace-keeping arbiters between France and Spain on stage when France's international prominence had taken a decline and America's continued to be on the rise. In this entrée, the 'native' characters are portrayed as the happy inhabitants of a utopian forest society—as was a common portrayal of Native Americans during Rameau's time.[533]

The duet "Forêts paisibles" between Zima and Adario in particular highlights this; in this duet, they praise their peaceful forests where vanity and ambition are never found and desire is always fulfilled, because it is never in excess. This is placed in clear opposition with the French and Spanish colonists whose excess and changing emotions are a symbol of their society's decadence.[534] America as non-materialist and balanced utopia would have been a less unappealing image than putting France's own colonies as the stand-in for this type of utopic grace and wisdom. Instead American consumerism and excess was blamed for attempting infiltrate French culture.[535] This "death by Coca-Cola" was discussed in the French press,

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[532] Büsser, *De Pelléas aux Indes galantes,* 261.

[533] Joellen A. Meglin, "*Sauvages,* sex roles, and semiotics: Representations of Native Americans in the French ballet, 1736–1837, part one: The eighteenth century," *Dance Chronicle* 23 No. 2 (2000): 94–95.

[534] Savage, "Rameau's American Dancers," 451; Meglin, "*Sauvages,* sex roles, and semiotics," 97–99.

[535] Carroll, *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe,* 69–87; Guilbaut, "Postwar Painting Games: The Rough and the Slick," 34; Nord, *France's New Deal,* 153–155.

especially in regards to the American-funded "l'Oeuvre du vingtième siècle." *Indes galantes* seems to have been presented in part as an antidote of sorts.[536]

Lehmann proved with *Indes galantes* not only was he successful director, but that he had the political savvy needed at the highly politicized RTLN. He crafted a revival that was popular without being populist, and that fed the nostalgia for a time of French greatness, quietly promoted French sovereignty in the colonies, and spoke to anti-American sentiments. *Indes galantes* offered a fantasy of prosperity and splendor that audiences embraced. While *Bolivar* ended in despair, a cautionary tale about the fate of great resistants, in *Indes galantes* love always triumphed—and the oppression of slavery or colonialism was washed away under a guise of happiness. *Indes galantes* held up Rameau as evidence of France's long-standing musical superiority. This was important as American influence in French culture increased, especially in the face of the presence of the Congress for Cultural Freedom and the presentation of their large May 1952 festival, "l'Oeuvre du vingtième siècle." The RTLN could use *Indes galantes* to justify its claims that the Opéra was one of the world's finest operatic institutions, and to combat foreign influences in French art unwelcome in an increasingly nationalist climate.

Lehmann's luxurious production of *Indes galantes* was one of the Opéra's most popular, and frequently performed new productions. Between its premiere in 1952 and 1958, *Indes galantes* was shown 208 times, more than any other opera during that period. *Faust,* the most frequently performed work from 1945–1958, was only offered 175 times from 1952 to 1958. For comparison, the most frequently performed newly premiered work was *Kerkeb* by Samuel-Rousseau and it only received 25 performances. Lehmann continued to promote the revival throughout his tenure, publishing extensive photos of the production in many issues of the RTLN

[536] Robert Escarpit, "Mourir pour le Coca-Cola," *Le Monde,* 26 March 1950.

journal *Opéra de Paris,* and even sent the entire production to Italy in 1953. The work remained in the repertoire at the Opéra until 1965 and was performed 76 times between 1959 and its final 1965 performance.

While *Indes galantes* was an uncontested success, the RTLN still faced many challenges as administrators and the government sought a sustainable model for their National Operatic Theatres. Lehmann would continue in the vein of *Indes galantes,* turning to large-scale productions of previously successful works with luxe stagings of Mozart's *La Flûte enchantée* and Carl Maria von Weber's *Oberon.* It is interesting that Lehmann turned to two German composers when Rameau's status as a French composer working in a French genre, the opera-ballet, had played such a key role in the promotion of *Indes galantes.* To favor German works over more French revivals would have been unthinkable in the early aftermath of the Liberation. But as French culture and politics shifted its focus from Germany to Communism, and anti-fascism to anti-communism, Lehmann could move away from French composers to some degree.

Indes galantes was situated at a nexus of French art and politics. As this chapter has revealed, the roots of the production stemmed from the left-leaning Hirsch who sought to use Rameau to reinforce his Resistance ideals while catering to the increasingly conservative French governments who exercised immense influence at the RTLN. His successor Lehmann crafted a production that not only aligned with the more conservative viewpoints in power, but also used his experience in the popular theatres to craft a performance popular with audiences. Like throughout the history of opera in France, *Indes galantes* used the language of spectacle to control and cloak its political utterances. While some saw this glittering production as a strictly commercial affair, it was at the forefront of the debate over the future of French culture and identity.

Chapter Four

Avoiding and Controlling the Political to Find Success: Gounod's *Faust* and Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*

The first three chapters have clearly established how the political struggles during the Fourth Republic deeply influenced the production and aesthetics of new works and important revivals at the RTLN. But how did the political and artistic battles of this period alter other works, like repertoire staples or new works that had already premiered at other houses? While often overlooked in studies of the RTLN—in particular because these productions did not count towards the yearly new work requirements outlined in the *cahiers des charges*—these works were vital to the daily operations of the theatres, their financial solvency, and indeed produced some of the most successful stagings of contemporary opera during the period.[537] They also offer a unique insight into the political and ideological debates of the period; Gounod's *Faust* and Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* were able to find success through purposeful framing that presented them as if they were apolitical works. Of course, at the Opéra nothing was truly non-political but this posturing was an effective strategy. Operas perceived as having controversial political resonances, like Milhaud's *Bolivar,* struggled during the Fourth Republic. Avoiding this helped to ensure success.

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[537] See Chapter One for more detail on the development of the RTLN's *cahiers des charges;* See also, Agid and Tarondeau, *L'Opéra de Paris. Gouverner une grande institution culturelle*, 75–76; Gourret, *Ces Hommes qui ont fait l'Opéra,* 274; Pierre Jarniou, "Étude sur la fonctionnement de la Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux," (Paris: Ministère d'État chargé des affaires culturelles, May-December 1966), 9–10; While his book is an important study on the Opéra and RTLN, Dupêchez does not cover these works, see Dupêchez, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris. Un siècle au Palais Garnier 1875–1980*, 253–262; Gourret mentions *Dialogues des Carmélites* but still assesses Hirsch's 1956 to 1959 tenure as poor, Gourret, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris 1669–1971, portraits de chanteurs*, 99.

Discounted as they have sometimes been in histories of Fourth Republic opera, the refurbishing of repertoire staples like Gounod's *Faust* or new stagings of contemporary works premiered elsewhere like Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* were much discussed and debated at the time. Because of this, they were just as changed by politics, the claims of crisis, and the opinions of the press as many of the world premieres and revivals. Additionally, if one does not consider these works, it would be as if all innovation and creation practically ceased at the RTLN in 1955, after which there were no new world premieres and no high-profile revivals. This chapter will reveal that far from being a dead period where the RTLN treaded water, that 1955 through 1959 had much success. This was in part because of the return of Georges Hirsch, who constantly pushed for the RTLN to feature new composers and tried to promote innovation in stagings of the repertory pieces. In particular, Hirsch and Poulenc, were able to reclaim *Dialogues des Carmélites,* which had been commissioned for La Scala and premiered in Milan months before its arrival in Paris, as a distinctly French work. They shielded its potential political resonances in a manner that allowed the work to flourish in a way the world premieres at the house had not.

This period was a very challenging time for the RTLN to navigate, even with the experienced Hirsch returned to the helm in 1956. After 1954, events were accelerating the Fourth Republic towards its close; in the terms of historian Georgette Elgey this period was *La République des tourments* [the Republic of torments]. She outlines the stages of the Republic's fall as three subsequent Presidents of the council attempted life-saving reforms: Pierre Mendès France (a radical-socialist who governed from June 1954 to February 1955), Edgar Faure (a radical in control from February 1955 to January 1956), and Guy Mollet (a socialist who led

from February 1956 until May 1957) each attempted to address the mounting domestic and international crises and ultimately each failed to do so.[538]

France had gradually shifted back towards left-leaning governments. This in part resulted in the return of the socialist Georges Hirsch as administrator at the RTLN in 1956, much to the consternation of conservative forces. During this time France suffered severe blows to her reputation: the painful decolonization process in Indochina, Tunisia, and Morocco drained resources and ended in French defeat, the war in Algeria became increasingly violent and controversial, and the failed joint mission with England to regain control of the Suez Canal was an unmitigated disaster.[539] Elgey goes so far as to refer to the increasing hostilities in Algeria from 1955 to 1957 as "La Passion" and in many ways this conflict was the pathway to the death of the Fourth Republic.[540]

This religious theme neatly extends to *Faust* and *Dialogues des Carmélites*. Perhaps it was cathartic for France to see suffering (and salvation) mirrored on the operatic stage. The Carmelites in Poulenc's opera offered their deaths to help to bring a misguided France back onto the path of righteousness, and Poulenc offered a path forward for contemporary French opera with a compelling and emotionally satisfying masterpiece. One would imagine because of the obvious relevance of its revolutionary resistance plot to current events and recent history in France that *Dialogues des Carmélites* would have had a complicated and political-divided reception. However, Poulenc and the Paris production team carefully backgrounded these plot elements in the score and the staging, and therefore these resonances were nearly entirely

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[538] Georgette Elgey, with collaboration of Marie-Caroline Boussard, *Histoire de la IVe République: La République des Tourmentes (1954–1959) tome premier* (Paris: Fayard, 1992), 18.

[539] Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, 275–276, 285–309; and also see Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958,* 83–88, 181–188, 252–255, 279–282, 293–295.

[540] Elgey, *Histoire de la IVe République: La République des Tourmentes,* 19.

avoided. *Dialogues des Carmélites's* Paris premiere in 1957 was one of the last big events at the RTLN before the end of the Fourth Republic in October 1958. Poulenc avoided key controversies that had damaged other operatic premieres at the RTLN during this period. Instead, *Dialogues des Carmélites* was one of the most enduring successes of French contemporary opera during this period. It was much to the disappointment and embarrassment of the RTLN that the work premiered in Italy instead of in Paris, and thus they worked hard to present the Paris production as the 'authentic' premiere rather than the production in Italy.

Gounod's *Faust* features a similar drama of suffering and salvation through Marguerite, who in the 1956 production was dressed in the tricolors visually linking her to France. *Faust* was the most performed operatic work in the Opéra's repertoire of this period, as it had also been during the Occupation[541], yet its restaging languished and was argued over for nine years from 1948 to 1956. An entire staging was tossed aside without receiving a single performance because of these political and aesthetic battles. *Faust's* restaging spanned three different RTLN administrators and fifteen governments, each seeking to use the most frequently performed work on the RLTN roster for their own ends. *Faust* offered a starkly clear example of how detrimental the political battles raging in France were to the RTLN and its works.

Hirsch Attempts to Reclaim and Reassert *Faust*

Calls to dust off the RTLN's aging production of *Faust* began soon after the Liberation.[542] The work had to be reclaimed after its frequent performance during the tainted

[541] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 64.

[542] In a letter written shortly after taking over the RTLN Hirsch described the Faust décors as needing to be completely redone. Hirsch to Jacques Jaujard, 6 June 1946, in Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1946," *cote.* 20-1951, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

Vichy regime.[543] However, there was much disagreement over how to breathe new life into this classic cornerstone of the Opéra's repertoire—and subsequently, how best to preserve France's operatic patrimony and promote the future of the operatic arts in France. Some sought to rejuvenate the classics through new stagings by introducing more modern interpretations and stage techniques; others argued this would be a betrayal of the intentions of the composer and advocated for more gentle and traditional updates to décors in disrepair. This debate at the RTLN in many ways was a proxy argument for the questions that plagued France at large; should they to push into the modern world or attempt to return to glories from before the war?[544] *Faust* was caught in the cross-fire of these political and aesthetic debates, and deeply influenced by the administrative instability at the RTLN.

As previous chapters have shown, Georges Hirsch (RTLN administrator from 1946 to 1951 and 1956 to 1959) and Maurice Lehmann (RTLN administrator from 1945 to 1946 and 1951 to 1955) each took different approaches to guiding the house and its new stagings that were in line with their own political and aesthetic views, as well as those that currently dominated the government. This was very true of *Faust*; its restaging, begun in 1948 and premiered in 1956, spanned both their tenures (as well as the brief leadership of Jacques Ibert) and offers a unique case study through which to compare their directorships and the influence of French politics upon the RTLN repertoire. Hirsch attempted a more left-leaning and also lightly avant-garde production; he knew anything too radical would not be tolerated at the traditional house and for such a beloved and prestigious work. Despite this, Lehmann quashed Hirsch's production upon his arrival at the RTLN in 1951. Lehmann ordered a completely new, and supposedly more

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[543] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 64.

[544] Sprout, *The Musical Legacy of Wartime France*, 168; Porcile, *Les Conflits de la musique française,* 319–320; Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958,* 21.

traditional, set of décors. Lehmann's return to the RTLN coincided with the return of the right to power in the French government, and more conservative forces once again had increased influence at the RTLN.[545] Making their mark on a hugely popular work like *Faust* would have been a particularly high profile means for each man to assert his own aesthetic.

Faust was one of the most successful and enduring works in the RLTN repertoire; it was also profitable and its strong ticket sales helped to subsidize the repertoire that sold poorly at the Opéra.[546] Because of this, *Faust* was played constantly and was the most frequently performed work at the Opéra during the Fourth Republic.[547] Any updates had to be undertaken with caution and care as *Faust* was a very visible and valuable piece of the French patrimony and the RTLN. Henri Collet, the French composer and music critic who had named "Les Six", understood this and argued that because of its popularity and symbolic value audiences were resistant to new adaptations of *Faust.* As much as audience demanded it, they did not really want innovation, to Collet's dismay. He posited that the enduring success of *Faust* was due in part to how it touched on popular and time-honored themes: the seduced girl, the devil, military parades, convivial drinking companions, the purity of angels, and how it encapsulated an entire compressed catechism of life and death. Collet scathingly concluded it contained everything its bourgeois audiences needed to have an untroubled night's sleep, providing emotional catharsis without any challenge or growth. Collet described *Faust* as a type of sedative, a comforting opera enjoyable

[545] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958,* 69–78.

[546] Henri Collet, "Répertoire de l'Opéra," *La Revue musicale* 208 (1948): 11–13; René Dumesnil, "Le problème du répertoire lyrique," *Le Monde,* 28 July 1955; Claude-Henry Leconte, "Offensive de 'dépoussièrement' déclenchée à l'Opéra, Le Diable lui-même va être rajeuni par Max de Rieux," *Combat,* 9 April 1956; Dupêchez, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris, Un siècle au palais Garnier 1875–1980*, 174, 195.

[547] *Faust* was performed 313 times from 1945 to 1958.

and familiar without anything challenging and new.[548] If this was what audiences sought from *Faust,* then it makes sense that any attempt to inject something more avant-garde, disturbing, or topical would be met with stiff opposition from audiences, not to mention more conservative-minded critics.

This resistance to innovation was evident in the battle over the new décors for *Faust* that unfolded. Hirsch ordered new décors for *Faust* from the surrealist painter and stage designer Félix Labisse in November 1948.[549] This was not the only time Hirsch turned to a fellow progressive and sought a new take on a classic work. He made a similarly controversial choice when he selected Valentine Hugo to do the décors for Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* sometime before the summer of 1947.[550] Hirsch wrote to Jeanne Laurent the sous-directrice des Spectacles et de la musique (Assistant-director of Spectacles and Music, which was part of the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale) in July 1947 to defend his choice of Hugo, and in general to argue that the RTLN should pursue more innovative and modern stagings. He wrote that abroad they do classic operas in avant-garde stagings, even in France this is done for dramatic works, why not operatic theatre? Why must it suffer beneath immutable tradition?[551] He also noted that curiosity about the controversial décors was increasing ticket sales to *Pelléas et Mélisande.* This opera, like

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[548] Henri Collet, "Le Succès de *Faust* à l'Opéra," *La Revue musicale* 201 (September 1946): 253–254.

[549] The date of the commission is cited in Labisse's later lawsuit, see "Le peintre Labisse réclame 50 million à l'Opéra," *Le Monde,* 21 July 1954.

[550] Gandrey-Rety (a journalist for the conservative journal *Arts*) wrote to Malherbe (at the time the director of the Opéra-Comique) that he wanted to resist this terrible staging of *Pelléas,* see letter, 20 June 1947, in Archives Opéra, "correspondance entre l'administration et le journal *Arts* 1948–1962," *cote.* 20-243, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[551] Letter Hirsch to Jeanne Laurent, 5 July 1947, in Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1947," *cote.* 20-1952, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

Faust, also had to be reclaimed from Vichy's appropriation, as Jane Fulcher has demonstrated so clearly.[552]

However, unlike the *Pelléas et Mélisande* production, Labisse's *Faust* never graced the RLTN stage. The mere rumors of what Hirsch might have in store for *Faust* were enough to incite protest before Labisse was even officially brought on board for the production. Léopold Marchand wanted to run an article in the conservative journal *Opéra* in November 1947 that bemoaned the poor state of the *Faust* production and to protest Hirsch's metteur en scène, Max de Rieux who he argued should have retired years ago. Max de Rieux (as Max Ernest Gautier was commonly known) had recently been called from the Opéra-Comique to the Opéra in 1946 and remained there through 1957.[553] Once again the idea of 'crisis' and the decline of opera was being used to further the agenda of a particular critic and their cultural-political position. Marchand, who wrote for the conservative journal *Opéra*, no doubt objected to Hirsch, Hirsch's politics, and his more liberal aesthetic more than anything else. By attacking the most important and lucrative work in the repertoire he called into question Hirsch's competence as an administrator. Protesting de Rieux seems especially pointless as he remained at the RTLN under all the administrators and his many stagings generally garnered praise in the press.

Hirsch responded in a letter also in November 1947, assuring Marchand of his qualifications and accusing Marchand of being unpatriotic and potentially injuring France's reputation. He protested the article, noting that they would soon be giving *Faust* in a new décor that would be very traditional and worthy of the work. Additionally, he argued that calling the

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[552] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 87–106.

[553] Jacques Chabannes (the editor-in-chief of *Opéra*) to Hirsch*,* 20 November 1947, in Archives Opéra, "Correspondance entre l'administrateur et le journal *Opéra* 1947–1952," *cote.* 20-248, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

Faust production subpar was both inaccurate and unpatriotic. “In a time where we think of a French renaissance, I find it inopportune, anti-national even, to only speak of the dusty nature of *Faust* while neglecting all of its beauties that compensate largely for certain insufficiencies.”[554] According to Hirsch, the Opéra’s production was still one of the best in the world thanks to the beautiful Palais Garnier and her talented artists. Printing such criticisms in an international paper like *Opéra* was akin to slandering France herself.[555] Each man framed his position as a defense of France, her patrimony and prestige, through the vehicle of *Faust.* This was especially important in 1947, as France’s political field shifted greatly in the wake of the acceptance of the American Marshall Plan aid money and the subsequent fall of the left-coalition government.[556]

Hirsch’s selection of Félix Labisse, a painter associated with (though not officially affiliated with) the surrealist movement, for décors did little to quell the worries about *Faust.* (The surrealists were still associated with the Resistance movement and with the communists as well, though the two groups had ruptured before the war, see Chapter One.) Labisse’s paintings were often political and very focused on the erotic and fetishism—as was common among surrealists at this time.[557] Though, it is important to note, Labisse’s style for stage décors was informed by his painting style and not synonymous with it. Often his décors were far less daring and created collaboratively to suit the needs of the piece and the vision of the metteur en

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[554] “Dans un temps où nous pensons à la renaissance française, je trouve inopportun, antinational même, de ne parler que de la poussière de *Faust* en négligeant toute les beautés qui compensent largement certaines insuffisances.” Hirsch and Jacques Chabannes*,* 22 November 1947, in Archives Opéra, “Correspondance entre l’administrateur et le journal *Opéra* 1947–1952,” *cote.* 20-248, Bibliothèque-musée de l’Opéra, BnF.

[555] See the exchange of letters between Hirsch and Jacques Chabannes the editor-in-chief of *Opéra* dated 19, 20, and 22 November 1947, in Archives Opéra, “Correspondance entre l’administrateur et le journal *Opéra* 1947–1952,” *cote.* 20-248, Bibliothèque-musée de l’Opéra, BnF.

[556] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958,* 45–52, 11–113.

[557] Hélène Parmelin, *Cinq peintres et le théâtre: décors et costumes de Léger, Coutaud, Gishia, Labisse, Pignon* (Paris: Éditions Cercle d’art, 1956), 22, 105–112; Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros, 1938–1968*, 137–141.

scène.[558] Labisse had frequently worked on productions for the traveling Compagnie de Regain (founded by Christian Casadesus in 1941 with the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale or Ministry of National Education) during Vichy. After the Liberation, he worked on several productions for Jean-Louis Barrault, especially at the Théâtre Marigny in Paris. He also designed the décors for the ballet *Zadig* at the Opéra in 1948, as well as Tailleferre's *Paris-Magie* at the Opéra-Comique in 1949.[559] While Labisse was no stranger to working for the theatre and had the necessary experience, his reputation as an avant-garde painter caused issues at the Opéra.

In November and December 1948, Labisse's décors were approved by the comité consultatif—the guiding committee at the RTLN that at this time included Henri Büsser (soon-to-be music director at the Opéra), Claude Delvincourt (director of the Conservatoire until his death in 1954), Roland-Manuel (music critic, professor at the Conservatoire, and former Resistant), Robert Rey (the Directeur des Arts Plastiques), and Hirsch himself.[560] Only a limited amount of information about Labisse's décors and costumes is available today. Maquettes of costumes for some of the smaller characters are held at the Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and of course there are references to the décors in the Opéra's correspondence archive and the committee minutes—though they are sadly lacking in details. Copies of the sketches for costumes for Méphistophélès, the queen of Walpurgis, and the Walpurgis decors from Labisse's 1952 *Faust* production at the Opéra de Liège, which were in all

[558] Parmelin, *Cinq peintres et le théâtre,* 127–129.

[559] Established from the performances database in the BnF catalogue and Parmelin, *Cinq peintres et le théâtre,* 103.

[560] Comité consultatif des TLN, "Procès-Verbal de la séance du 18 novembre 1948, et 13 décembre 1948," Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture procès-verbaux 1946–1965," *cote.* 20-272, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

likelihood the same or very similar to those conceived for Paris, are included in Parmelin's 1956 publication on French painters and the theatre.[561]

The plot and setting of Gounod's *Faust* are well-known and thus will only be briefly outlined here for clarity's sake. *Faust,* set in sixteenth-century Germany, follows Dr. Faust who, in Act I, makes a bargain with the devil to be made young again and pursues the beautiful Marguerite. In Act II, Faust glimpses her at the fair as her brother and other soldiers prepare to leave for battle. In the end of Act II and outset of Act III, Marguerite modestly resists Faust's advances until, with the help of the devil Méphistophélès, Faust manages to seduce her in the garden. Act IV finds Marguerite having borne Faust's child and thinking he has abandoned her. Her brother returns from battle and is outraged with his sister for what he views as her transgression. He loses a duel with Faust and dies cursing her. Marguerite flees to the church, but even there is tormented and cursed by Méphistophélès. Méphistophélès carries Faust off in Act V for a night of debauchery during Walpurgis night, but the memory of Marguerite prompts Faust to return to her. Marguerite is in jail, and Méphistophélès attempts to convince them to flee. She defies the devil, dies, and ascends to heaven as Faust falls to his knees in prayer.

Labisse's costumes for the minor characters were inspired by medieval dress, but were not overly historically accurate and detailed, instead featuring saturated colors and simple shapes.[562] Germaine Henriot (née Gounod), one of Gounod's heirs did not care for his costumes, thinking they were 'ugly'. This was surprising; his costume for Méphistophélès was very traditional, with a large feather in his hat and clothed in head-to-toe scarlet. This was an

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[561] Parmelin, *Cinq peintres et le théâtre,* 110–117.

[562] Félix Labisse, "*Faust:* cent-quatre maquettes de costumes" ca 1950, digitized by the BnF, IFN-10527765, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

interpretation very in line with previous costumes for the role. [See Figures 4.1 and 4.2] The most controversial aspect of Labisse's work appears to have been the symbolism tucked into some of the décors, especially the massive crown of thorns that encircled the garden scene.[563] Henriot objected to this particular choice strongly. Given the Christian themes prevalent in the work, one might think such a religious symbol might have been tolerated. Perhaps Henriot wanted Marguerite's garden to be more of a beautiful Eden and less of a suffering Christ in the garden at Gethsemane that the crown of thorns would imply. The crown of thorns would have also offered an interesting foil to the jewels and riches Marguerite uses to adorn herself during Faust's seduction, perhaps foreshadowing her suffering to come. But this addition was apparently unpleasant and unacceptable to Henriot.

Figures 4.1 and 4.2: Costumes for Méphistophélès

Left: Morlon, A. (illustrateur, lithographe), Lithographe. Jean-Baptiste Faure dans le role de Méphistophélès du "Faust" de Gounod, 1869, www.gallica.bnf.fr, BnF.
Right: Labisse's Méphistophélès in Parmelin, *Cinq peintres et le théâtre,* 111.

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[563] Letter Henriot to Hirsch, 9 March 1951, in Archives Opéra, "Correspondance entre l'administrateur et Mme Henriot, héritière de Gounod au sujet de la reprise de *Faust* 1951–1960," *cote.* 20-198, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

The series of letters between Henriot and Hirsch (and later Lehmann) reveal Henriot's strong protests, which she argued were shared by Jacques Jaujard (the Directeur Général des Beaux-Arts in the Ministry of National Education). She objected to the overuse of symbolism and general 'ugliness' of Labisse's décors. She feared they were not of a caliber worthy of *Faust,* a work she claimed to have the 'right and duty' to protect. Hirsch reasoned that when the new décors and mise-en-scène were premiered he would be the one the press would hold accountable, and thus he must protect his directorial freedom over the work. While he and Labisse did consent to some revisions to please Henriot, Hirsch pushed ahead with Labisse's design. Henriot was distressed to discover the costumes and décors were largely already completed by December of 1950. She need not have worried, Labisse's décors never made it to the Opéra's stage. They were tucked away in the workshops when Hirsch's contract was not renewed in 1951.

Lehmann Attempts His Own Deal with the Devil

Lehmann, who took over from Hirsch in 1951, reportedly did not care for Labisse's designs, and suggested a more traditional set be commissioned in their place that was also more in line with Henriot's desires.[564] Despite the increasing need to be frugal and efficient at the RTLN, the confusion and constant changes in leadership led to waste. In this case an entire décor and costume design that had already been in large part fabricated was jettisoned. When Labisse formally petitioned Lehmann to release his designs, he claimed twenty-million in work had already been undertaken. Labisse argued that the acceptance and execution of the décors meant that the RTLN was under an obligation to present them. He asserted his right to reclaim the

[564] Letter Lehmann to Jaujard, 30 March 1954, Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1954," *cote.* 20-1959, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

designs not yet fabricated, and his moral rights over the ensemble of the work, which he desired to have returned and/or photographed.[565] Labisse sued the RTLN for fifty million in damages in 1954, but when the matter went to trial in 1956 he lost the suit. The argument was that the RTLN paid him in full for his completed work and that the house was under no contractual obligation to present his work to the public.[566]

Lehmann passed the job instead to Georges Wakhevitch, who worked extensively in the theatre during this time, both in France and abroad. Lehmann had collaborated previously with Wakhevitch in 1952 when he designed the "Le Turc généreux" tableaux for the successful *Indes galantes.* Wakhevitch crafted a more traditional and historically informed décors style—without falling too deeply into historical realism according to Claude Rostand's review.[567] Working with Max de Rieux who did the mise-en-scène, they crafted a luxurious performance, similar to the splendor of *Indes galantes* or the abundant décors and costumes for *Bolivar.* His décors were planned to be shown to the comité consultatif in 1954 at least twice, but the minutes discussing them have not been preserved.[568] Henriot asked for revisions to Wakhevitch's designs also. Like Hirsch, it appears Lehmann had to push to keep things moving forward and chose to fabricate the designs before receiving her full approval.[569]

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565 Summation from André Dautriche representing Félix Labisse, 30 November 1954, in Archives Opéra, "Correspondance entre l'administrateur et Mme Henriot, héritière de Gounod au sujet de la reprise de *Faust* 1951–1960," *cote.* 20-198, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

566 "Le peintre Labisse réclame 50 million à l'Opéra," *Le Monde,* 21 July 1954; "M. Labisse est débouté de son action contre la Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux," *Le Monde,* 16 March 1956.

567 Claude Rostand, "Restauration de *Faust* au Théâtre national de l'Opéra," *Carrefour,* 18 April 1956.

568 The meetings are referenced in Lehmann's letters, but not preserved in the file on the committee minutes. See letters 39 November 1954 and 3 July 1954, in Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1954," *cote.* 20-1959, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

569 Letters between Lehmann and Henriot, 3 and 10 May 1955, in Archives Opéra, "Correspondance entre l'administrateur et Mme Henriot, héritière de Gounod au sujet de la reprise de *Faust* 1951–1960," *cote.* 20-198, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

Wakhevitch, de Rieux, and Lehmann produced a version of *Faust* that was largely traditional and also inflected by the type of spectacle the Opéra was known for under the Lehmann direction.[570] Lehmann was often asked to extend his tenure at the RTLN and had much more stability and latitude than Hirsch who was regularly fighting to keep his position.[571] Therefore, Lehmann and his collaborators were able to produce their version of *Faust* with less interference (and despite Henriot's protests) when Hirsch had been unable to do the same. Max de Rieux continued the techniques he had been developing in previous productions, and animated the crowds on the Opéra's stage to be more life-like and engaging.[572] The stage was often packed quite full for the crowd scenes, the fair scene especially was praised for de Rieux's creative liveliness of the crowds replete with jugglers, showmen, and violinists stashed in the boughs of a large tree. Additionally, machines were once again a key feature of the Walpurgis ballet with Faust and Méphistophélès arriving in a giant 'meteorite' that according to one review appears to have been set aflame.[573]

Marguerite was treated to a lovely tricolor dress, perhaps Lehmann and Wakhevitch had managed to sneak a bit of symbolism past Henriot after all.[574] Marguerite being so clearly

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[570] André Boll, "*Faust* à l'Opéra dans ses nouveaux atours," *l'Information,* 17 April 1956.

[571] Lehmann, *Trompe l'oeil,*95, 106–107, 169, 184–194; for Hirsch's struggles see Chapter Three and See "L'Affaire de l'Opéra," *Le Figaro,* 25 April 1951; "L'Affaire de l'Opéra: une lettre de M. de Mendoza," *Le Figaro,* 21–22 April 1956, in Archives Opéra, "Correspondance entre l'administrateur et *Le Figaro,* 1947–1965," *cote.* 20-244, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[572] The beginnings of Max de Rieux's new technique is discussed already in 1949, see "À temps nouveaux, formules nouvelles, réclame le Théâtre Lyrique," *l'Époque,* 15 August 1949; regarding his techniques and *Faust* see J.C., "A l'Opéra, *Faust* rajeunira vraiment le 13 avril et Méphisto plus encore," *L'Aurore,* 3 April 1956; Maurice Tassart, "l'Opéra va rajeunir *Faust* l'œuvre la plus populaire de son répertoire," *Franc-Tireur,* 4 April 1956.

[573] Jacques Bourgeois, title, date, and journal unknown. A copy of the article is preserved in a dossier of press cuttings, see "*Faust"* R SUPP 4857, Département Arts du Spectacle, Richelieu, BnF.

[574] "Le (vendredi) 13 avril *Faust* aura véritablement rajeuni son nouveau costume a été dessiné cette nuit (par Wakhevitch)," *France Soir,* 7 April 1956.

labeled as symbol of France made for intriguing topical parallels. While Marguerite is temporarily seduced by riches in her famous Jewel Song ("Ah! je ris de me voir si belle en ce miroir" Act III), ultimately, she defies the devil and sets herself back on the correct path even if that path does result in her death. This was thought-provoking in a France that had accepted much American money and aid in 1947–1948 as a solution to get France back on its feet, but now perhaps wished to disentangle from the riches that brought with them potential conflict and problems.[575] Marguerite had hoped for a bright future, which Faust's seduction ruined. Yet, she is able to save her soul by forsaking the easy solution of running away and by facing up to her punishments. In a way Marguerite, visually tied to France through her attire, becomes a Joan of Arc like figure and through her suffering offers France a path to salvation, a theme that was central to Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* and popular with the Opéra's audiences.

The Devil underwent the most radical, and remarked upon, change. In the past Méphistophélès had a rather cartoonish costume, cloaked in red and often with a large feather in his hat or even horns; Labisse's costume had very much drawn upon this tradition. In Wakhevitch's version he was dressed as a rich gentleman in a golden doublet. By dressing Méphistophélès as a gentleman, he blended into the scene as if he is any other (rich) human being in the crowd—implying anyone could be the devil in disguise. This was probably a powerful image after the recently endured war and Occupation where one could never be certain who was a collaborator and who was a Resistant. It also seems strongly to echo Sartre's play *Huit clos,* which had premiered in 1944 at the Théâtre du Vieux-Columbier in Paris. In the play three individuals are trapped together in a room in hell and gradually realize they have been

[575] Rioux, *The Fourth Republic* 114, 214–215; Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958,* 51.

placed there as each other's torturers because "hell is other people."[576] This modern theme of the evil that could reside in seemingly normal characters was perhaps more convincing, and less ridiculous, to audiences than the cartoonish devil had been.

Lehmann, Ibert, and Back to Hirsch: *Faust's* New Look Finally Premieres in 1956

Before this new *Faust* could reach the stage, Lehmann resigned from the RTLN citing his poor health in August 1955, and was succeeded by Jacques Ibert in October 1955.[577] The delay was likely because it was challenging to select Lehmann's replacement. The Fourth Republic was at a critical juncture. The government of Pierre Mendès France had failed in February and took with it hopes for increased stability. Mendès France had worked to clear some of the issues facing France, like Tunisian and Moroccan independence, and the controversial European Defense Council, but in many ways his government had revealed how deeply the political disagreements in the Fourth Republic ran. The war in Algeria was also deadlocking the government and continuing debate over French identity and France's role in the colonial world. Mendès France was also the victim of rising anti-Semitic sentiments—often at the hands of the deeply conservative Poujadists. Because of his own Jewish heritage and his liberal political affiliations, this political climate would have prevented Hirsch from resuming his position at the RTLN. Instead, Jacques Ibert was called upon to attempt to steer the institution.

Ibert was an interesting choice; he was often away from Paris in Rome attending to his duties as the director of the Académie de France at the Villa Medici. He had held the position since 1937 (interrupted by WWII) and he continued even while at the RTLN. During the war

[576] Bradby, *Modern French Drama 1940–1980*, 39–41.

[577] See Lehmann's description of his reasons for leaving the RTLN and the selection of Ibert, See Lehmann, *Trompe l'oeil,* 184–194.

Ibert, who was a reserve officer in the Navy, went to North Africa on 2 June 1940 to continue the fight, despite being a political conservative like Poulenc.[578] At the Villa Medici, Ibert worked to promote French music abroad. Perhaps his role as a cultural ambassador made him attractive at this moment where France's international status was uncertain and the RLTN sought to help restore it, as well as his resistance during the war. However, Lehmann remembered in his memoire that Ibert would tell "anyone who would listen that they must set fire to those theatres [the RTLN]. And that until they drive out the public it will be impossible to build anything."[579] Ibert thought the RTLN was being too dominated by the desires of the audiences, rather than its artistic missions. Lehmann continued that when he defended his choice to stage Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène* arguing it made a nice profit, Ibert exclaimed "why not just naked women!"[580] Despite disagreeing with Lehmann on the proper management and future of the theatres, Ibert saw the new *Faust* project to completion. It was mounted in April 1956.

Ironically Wakhevitch's décors debuted the day that Hirsch's return to the RTLN was announced. Ibert was often in Rome attending to his duties at the Villa Medici and his health was poor, so it makes sense that he would desire to leave the RTLN. Yet an article in *Combat* addressed the accusations that Jacques Bordeneuve (the new Secrétaire d'État aux Arts et Lettres) was folding to political pressures allowing Ibert to leave the RTLN—his response to the interviewer was that he had a strong spine and was not being influenced or pressured. Further, he had complete faith in Ibert's successor Hirsch. Despite the controversy surrounding Hirsch,

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[578] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 243.

[579] "il déclarait à qui voulait l'entendre: 'il faut mettre le feu à ces théâtres' et 'Tant qu'on n'en aura pas chassé le public, il sera impossible de rien construire'." Ibid., 193.

[580] "Oui, mais alors, pourquoi pas des femmes nues!" Ibid., 193.

Bordeneuve indicated he had seen Hirsch's dossier and found him blameless.[581] In all likelihood, the subtext of this line of the questioning was that Hirsch was only returning because his political party (the SFIO) was once again in power—Mollet had been asked to form a government in February 1956. Hirsch's return was much to the dismay of *Le Figaro* which resumed its previous campaign against him with vigor.[582]

Overall, the reviews reflected Lehmann's (and Ibert's) choice to play it safe with a fairly traditional take on *Faust.* Most commented upon was, of course, the new sartorial bent for the devil. Wakhevitch's vibrant décors, firmly rooted in their medieval German setting were generally praised.[583] Claude Rostand, writing for *Carrefour,* a Gaullist journal, thought the restaging was a missed opportunity to breathe new life into the old work. He argued that while the staging would please those who already loved *Faust,* it would do nothing to draw young new listeners. Other operas have been redone in modern stagings, which have enhanced their music and drawn new audiences. Why can we not apply this to *Faust*?[584] Perhaps he would have preferred the Hirsch/Labisse version had it ever made it to the stage, especially because he was a proponent of French contemporary composition. He had done interviews with Milhaud in 1952 and Poulenc in 1954.

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[581] Claude-Henry Leconte, "Situation nouvelle aux théâtres lyriques nationaux," *Combat,* 14 April 1956.

[582] "l'Affaire de l'Opéra nouvelle suite," *Le Figaro,* 11 April 1956; César de Mendoza Lasalle, "l'Affaire de l'Opéra: une lettre de M. de Mendoza," *Le Figaro,* 23 April 1956; "l'Affaire de l'Opéra M. Hirsch a peur," *Le Figaro,* 25 April 1956; C.B., "l'Affaire de l'Opéra organisation de la surveillance," *Le Figaro,* 14 May 1956; "M. Hirsch se décide," *Le Figaro,* 22 May 1956; Marcel Gabilly, "Nouvelle phase du scandale de l'Opéra Pourquoi *Le Figaro* a jugé inadmissible le rappel de M. Hirsch," *Le Figaro,* 19 December 1956; "l'Affaire de l'Opéra l'aveu," *Le Figaro* 21 March 1957.

[583] See for example reviews like, J.C., "A l'Opéra, *Faust* rajeunira vraiment le 13 avril et Méphisto plus encore," *L'Aurore,* 3 April 1956; Maurice Tassart, " l'Opéra va rajeunir *Faust* l'œuvre la plus populaire de son répertoire," *Franc-Tireur,* 4 April 1956; Clarendon (Bernard Gavoty), "Une nouvelle présentation de *Faust,*" *Le Figaro,* 16 April 1956.

[584] Claude Rostand, "Restauration de *Faust* au Théâtre national de l'Opéra," *Carrefour,* 18 April 1956.

On the other hand, Jean Mistler writing for the more conservative *l'Aurore*, objected strongly to the liberties Wakhevitch had taken from the *Faust* tradition. Clearly even this more traditional version was too new for Mistler. Wakhevitch, he claimed, had flippantly played with the local color of the piece: suggesting the French Cote d'Azur with the rocks in Margarite's garden, and relocating the soldiers from a rampart to a port with the shadow of two minarets in the background. This visual reference to Islamic culture and Northern Africa was especially fraught because of the controversial war in Algeria. Additionally, the colonial implications of this alleged re-location were probably high on Mistler's mind as the opening gala for *Faust* was in fact given in benefit of the combatants of the war in Indochina which had been lost in 1954.[585]

As Dumesnil noted in his own review in *Le Monde,* restaging a work often proved even more complex than premiering one, as the production team has to navigate the audience's twin desires for something new and their attachment to the previous version.[586] This was true throughout the process of revamping the *Faust* production. Audiences, the Gounod heirs, the critics, and those who worked at the RTLN all had attachments to the old production and expectations about how the piece should be performed. Yet, they wanted to have a new production worthy of such an important piece—the old version had been deemed dusty and embarrassing and was perhaps too associated with Vichy when it had been shown frequently. The bone of contention seems to have been over what the new production should look like, simply refabricated? Perhaps more luxurious? Reflective of a more modern aesthetic? Even in a repertoire piece the debate over if the future of French opera was to be found. Perhaps Poulenc's

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[585] Jean Mistler, "*Faust,* 2,222," *l'Aurore,* 14 April 1956; see letter, 1 February 1956, Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1956," *cote.* 20-1961, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[586] René Dumesnil, "La nouvelle présentation de *Faust* à l'Opéra," *Le Monde,* 15 April 1956.

Dialogues des Carmélites ability to bridge this gap, creating an opera that felt both traditional and new, was part of its success. But, like *Faust,* it had a staging history (albeit a much shorter one) to contend with and the audience was quick to make comparisons.

Success at the Opéra!? Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*

The 1957 Paris premiere of Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* was one of the last big events to take place at the RTLN as the Fourth Republic drew its close in October 1958.[587] With Hirsch once more at the helm new compositions were once again a priority. Though Hirsch staged no world premieres from 1956 to 1959, he did stage contemporary works new to the RTLN repertoire like *Dialogues des Carmélites* or Tomasi's *l'Atlantide* (finally brought to the Opéra in 1958) that had already premiered elsewhere. Technically, the Opéra only produced four *world* premieres during the Fourth Republic [*Lucifer* by Delvincourt (1948), *Bolivar* by Milhaud (1950), *Kerkeb* by Samuel-Rousseau (1951), and *Numance* by Barraud (1955)]; because Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* was commissioned by and first produced at La Scala in Milan, it did not count as a true premiere according to the stipulations of the *cahiers des charges* which governed the RTLN.[588] There were, of course, attempts to save face by Poulenc, the RTLN, and the French press, in order to reclaim the work from Milan. They argued that the

[587] General de Gaulle was once again tasked with the governmental transition. He was given full powers in June 1958 and the Fourth Republic was dissolved by referendum in October that year, see Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958,* 299–305.

[588] See Chapter One for more detail on the development of the RTLN's *cahiers des charges.* See also, Agid and Tarondeau, *L'Opéra de Paris*, 75–76; Gourret, *Ces Hommes qui ont fait l'Opéra,* 274; Jarniou, "Étude sur la fonctionnement de la Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux," 9–10; Cecile Auzolle details the premieres at the RTLN during this period, see Auzolle, "Les Créations lyriques à l'Opéra de Paris entre 1945 et 1955," 105, 111; and of course the RTLN itself kept a meticulous schedule, see "Journal de l'Opéra" 1938–1958, Archives Opéra, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; This source is also available through the BnF Gallica portal here https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb426079139/date&rk=21459;2#.

Milan production had missed the true spirit of the work and that the Paris production would be the first time the work was seen according to the composer's true, and specifically French, intentions.[589]

Despite its Italian roots, Poulenc was able to craft an opera that was both innovative and well-received, despite the difficulty of pleasing critics and audiences at the Opéra.[590] Poulenc's success came at a vital moment in French history as the Fourth Republic hurdled towards its collapse, and France's international reputation was further damaged by the botched mission in Suez in 1956 and of course the continuation of painful war in Algeria.[591] *Dialogues des Carmélites* encapsulated an artistic redemption for France as much as it was also deeply tied to the composer's own spiritual self-conceptions. While uncharacteristically no attempt was made in the press to connect Poulenc's opera to current events or the recent past, its importance as a piece spreading French cultural prestige and identity was repeatedly emphasized.

Dialogues des Carmélites was praised across political spectrums in the press. While there were certainly some scattered negative reviews, these were not neatly divided into political camps. (The most common element of the negative reviews was a belief that Georges Bernanos's text on which the libretto was based was cheapened through musical setting.)[592] This was very

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[589] Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc*, 686; See Poulenc's letters with Hirsch 15 June 1956, 25 August 1956, 12 September 1956, with Bernac 17 August 1956, January 1957, with Jacquemont 25 November 1956, 7 December 1956 in Poulenc, *Correspondance 1910–1963*, 837–838, 846–848, 849–852, 854–855, 858–859; and in the press Nicole Klopfenstein, "Une "première" française à la Scala de Milan *Les Dialogues des Carmélites,*" *Gazette littéraire de la gazette de Lausanne,* 16 February 1957.

[590] Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc,* 687.

[591] For more on the Algerian war, the crisis of the failed Suez mission with England, and their political ramifications See Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944–1958*, 285–309; and also see Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958,* 181–188, 279–282, 293–295.

[592] Unfortunately, these negative reviews are undated and the name of the journal in which they were published was not preserved when they were clipped. See for example, articles by Raphaël Cuttoli and by Jean Achaguer, "A propos du *Dialogue des Carmélites* de Bernanos, musique de Francis Poulenc," (in what appears to have been a

different from the reaction previously seen to works like Milhaud's *Bolivar* where the reviews aligned strongly with political party.[593] The lack of political divide in the reviews, or indeed overtly political content, was particularly surprising. *Dialogues des Carmélites* detailed resistance to a bloody political revolution that was rife with potential resonances with France's recent past and current predicaments—exactly the type of elements the press had been keen to foreground in other opera's receptions. Even silhouettes of towers and rocks had be given political meaning in one of *Faust's* reviews, as seen above.

This lack of overt political discussion was on one level because of Poulenc's and the late George Bernanos's own political positions. Both had firm allies on either end of the political spectrum, as will be explored. This political multivalence made them, and their work, particularly difficult to pin-down and helped to diffuse any of the press's impulses to attack the work. Additionally, Poulenc carefully framed the political content of the opera by shifting its Revolutionary context into the background.[594] This is not to say the opera was not political, in fact it dove deeply into issues from the Occupation that society was not yet ready to discuss openly. But it did so in a veiled manner, and was cloaked in the deep spirituality that made it less volatile. Musically and in the press, Poulenc worked to foreground the opera's spirituality rather than any relevance to France's current affairs or recent past.

While its subtle political positioning certainly protected *Dialogues des Carmélites* from the fate of *Bolivar,* it does not fully explain the opera's success at a time when contemporary

religious publication), both are preserved in Francis Poulenc, "*Dialogues des Carmélites,"* dossier 27, "Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur" VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF.

[593] See Chapter Two for the political divided reception of Milhaud's *Bolivar.*

[594] See Lowther's discussion of this, which will be discussed in detail below, Gail Lowther, "Spiritual Transcendence and Political Estrangement in Francis Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*," *Music Research Forum* 27 (2012): 53-76.

works struggled to be embraced by audiences and critics. Poulenc's opera was emotionally satisfying and cathartic, and this was vital to its success. It gave opera audiences the exact type of experience they craved: beautiful, transformational, and one where suffering and humiliation are converted into strength and grace. This theme, of the female heroine who dies to bring salvation was pleasing to audiences both personally and politically. It was also a proven winning plot: after all *Faust* is centered around the struggle, death, and then salvation that Marguerite earns not only for herself but in a manner also for Faust and her community by casting out the devil. Through their death the Carmelites offered hope, not only of the audience's own liberation from their personal fears but also of France's from her current struggles. While some worried about the non-traditional lack of a love intrigue in the opera, they perhaps underestimated the appeal of operatic heroines dying beautiful deaths for the salvation of those around them.

Dialogues des Carmélites was set during the Terror, which was a period of intense violence during the French Revolution spanning from the fall of 1793 to summer of 1794. Around the time of the Terror, King Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, aristocrats, and many priests and nuns were guillotined as enemies of the Revolution. During the Terror, those executed numbered in the thousands in Paris alone.[595] The opera used as its basis the historical case of the Carmelites of Compiègne who were expelled from their convent and executed by guillotine during this time.[596] When Poulenc began the composition of his opera in 1953 the Fourth Republic was still relatively stable; however, by the time of its premiere in 1957 the Republic was dying. The public lacked faith in the authority of the government and its apparent disarray

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[595] For an excellent history of the Terror see William Doyle *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 247-271.

[596] William Bush, *Bernanos' 'Dialogues des Carmélites': Fact and Fiction* (Compiègne, France: Service Ateliers Carmel de Compègne, 1987).

made them doubt its ability to handle the Algerian crisis. Both the left and the right found themselves weakened by their previous missteps: the fall of the Mollet government was a fatal blow on the left and the repeated military defeats of Indochina and Suez humiliated the nationalists on the right.[597] Even the military itself had strong doubts about the Republic.[598] Soon de Gaulle was preparing to once again take the reins.[599] This could have added some piquancy to a plot that outlined the fall of a French government and violent beginning of the Republican project. However, as will be shown, these resonances were largely ignored.

The opera primarily focuses on the young aristocrat Blanche de la Force (a fictitious character added to the historical basis for work), who seeks to join the Carmelite order because of her fearful nature and her shamed sense of honor at her failure to be brave. The ailing Prioress of the Carmelites takes Blanche under her special spiritual protection and guidance. Shortly thereafter, the Prioress dies in agony doubting God. Her last moments of fear and doubt shock the Carmelite community who found her death agonies ill-suited to so holy a woman. However, her death did not shock the youngest Carmelite, Sister Constance, who hints to Blanche that the Prioress had suffered so that another person could die gracefully: "We do not die for ourselves alone... but for, or instead of, each other." This idea that suffering could generate grace that could then be transferred to another fixated Poulenc, and no doubt appealed deeply to audiences. Constance joyously confides in Blanche that she and Blanche will die young together—just as Constance had always hoped!

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[597] See Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944–1958*, 285–309; Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958,* 293–295.

[598] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958,* 296–297.

[599] Ibid., 297–305.

The Revolution begins to press more deeply into convent life; religious orders are outlawed, and the Revolutionaries come to expel the Carmelites from their convent. While there, one of the Revolutionaries reveals his pity for the Carmelites and warns them about informers who would betray them. Mother Marie leads the Carmelites in a vow of martyrdom in the hope their deaths will help to redeem France and guide her back to the Church. Blanche takes the vow but is overwhelmed by her fears and flees back to her father's home only to find him already executed by the Revolutionaries and herself in terrible danger. Mother Marie seeks her there and finds Blanche hiding disguised as a servant girl, too terrified to return to her sister Carmelites who are now living in hiding.

While Mother Marie is away finding Blanche, the Carmelites are arrested and sentenced to death. As the Carmelites approach the scaffold and each climbs to her death, they sing a dramatic "Salve Regina." Each voice is silenced one-by-one as the guillotine blade falls. Constance, the last remaining and who has been consistently delighted to die a martyr, sees Blanche in the crowd and begins to climb the scaffold with a beatific smile, content that Blanche has joined them at last. Blanche, overcome by a great calm, begins to sing as she climbs the scaffold. Blanche falls silent with the final strike of the guillotine. The opera ends with the return of its opening motive, but now transformed from a 9th to an octave giving aural resolution to the plot and suggesting the success of the Carmelites' spiritual mission.[600]

Francis Poulenc composed *Dialogues des Carmélites* over a period of three years from 1953 to 1956. Act I and the first three tableau of Act II were completed rapidly from September 1953 to March 1954. Poulenc then stepped back from the opera, plagued by self-doubts,

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[600] Lowther, "Spiritual Transcendence and Political Estrangement in Francis Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*," 68.

depression, and fears of illness. He completed Act II a year later in March 1955, and by August of that year had finished the vocal score of the entire opera. Poulenc completed the orchestration in June 1956 at Cannes, and the work premiered at La Scala on 26 January 1957 and then later in Paris on 21 June 1957.[601]

At this point in his career, Poulenc was in his early fifties and already an established composer in France. His choral work *Figure humaine,* written during the Occupation and premiered after the Liberation, had cemented his reputation as the composer of the Resistance.[602] This helped to spare him from the problems that some of his fellow artists suspected of collaboration would face after the war and had given him strong left-leaning allies from the Resistance.[603] His first foray into opera, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*—discussed in Chapter One—had premiered at the Opéra-Comique in 1947 and had both sparked controversy and enjoyed some success. After *Les Mamelles de Tirésias,* Poulenc was actively searching for another libretto.

Poulenc recalls he had been thinking about creating a stage work on a mystical plot when Guido Valcarenghi, from the Ricordi music publishers based in Milan, approached him in the spring of 1953 desiring to commission a religious ballet for La Scala. Valcarenghi suggested Saint Margaret of Cortona as a subject. Poulenc eventually rejected this proposal saying that he would rather do an opera, but a mystical subject still interested him. Valcarenghi then proposed

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[601] Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc*, 643, 649–651, 660–670, 675, 687; Carl B. Schmidt, The Music of Francis Poulenc (1899-1963): A Catalogue (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 431-32.

[602] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 283–288; see also Jane F. Fulcher, "From Hybrid to Metamorphosis: Poulenc's Path toward Symbolic Resistance and Counter-Discourse during Vichy," in *Verwandlungsmusik: Über komponierte Transfigurationen*, ed. Andreas Dorschel (New York: Universal Edition, 2007), 452– 484; and Richard D. E. Burton, *Francis Poulenc* (Bath, UK: Absolute Press, 2002), 84-85.

[603] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 266–272; Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc*, 549-51.

Bernanos's *Dialogues des Carmélites*. Poulenc had read the piece before and asked for some time to consider it. As Poulenc retells the story, he stumbled upon a copy of *Dialogues des Carmélites* in a bookstore window in Rome and decided to reread the work to see if he could find the musical spirit in the prose on the spot. He opened the book at random, landing upon a speech by the stern Prioress and was able to find a musical line in the text quickly. Poulenc remembers this as a moment where he felt an immediate spiritual affinity with Bernanos and his work. Inspired, Poulenc telegraphed Valcarenghi that he would set *Dialogues des Carmélites*.[604]

As Denis Waleckx has admirably shown in his research, Poulenc was particularly selective when choosing libretti. Despite Poulenc's frequent descriptions of chance encounters with texts that led to spontaneous libretto selections, Waleckx's study reveals that instead Poulenc chose librettos after "long periods of reflection" and with writers with whom he felt a strong matching of minds.[605] Waleckx's research shows that Poulenc was constantly searching for new libretti, even if he only selected a few, and that he rejected more than he chose.[606] Rather than the instant connection that Poulenc's words often imply, years or sometimes decades passed between his first experience with a text and his decision to use it for an opera.[607] However, this idea of serendipitous and spiritual connection became an important element of how Poulenc promoted his opera, and how it was discussed in the press.[608]

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[604] Waleckx summaries this story in his chapter see Denis Waleckx, "In search of a libretto," In *Francis Poulenc: Music, Art and Literature*, ed. Sidney Buckland and Myriam Chimènes (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1999), 261-63; See also Francis Poulenc "Comment j'ai composé les *Dialogues des Carmélites*" *l'Opéra de Paris* 14 (1957): 15–17, also found in Francis Poulenc, *J'écris ce qui me chante,* ed. Nicolas Southon (Paris: Fayard, 2011), 194-201; Poulenc, *Correspondance*, 752; Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc*, 642–643.

[605] Waleckx, "In search of a libretto," 252.

[606] Ibid., 260.

[607] Ibid., 252.

[608] Francis Poulenc "Comment j'ai composé les *Dialogues des Carmélites*" *l'Opéra de Paris* 14 (1957): 15–17.

Interestingly, two of Poulenc's operas were on librettos he had been encouraged to consider by Ricordi editors—the subject for his last opera *La voix humaine* was suggested to him by Hervé Dugardin from Ricordi in Paris.[609] The RTLN administrators seem to have not made any attempts to encourage Poulenc to write specifically for the Opéra or Opéra-Comique. The official state commissions given by the RTLN during this period functioned haphazardly at best. Few of the works ordered ever made it to the RTLN stage—that the RTLN was not required to accept or perform the commission was worked into the contract.[610] They did not attempt to commission Poulenc directly, yet expressed deep disappointment that Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* was already promised to a different theatre.[611] It appears to be a case of 'ask and you will receive' that Milan was able to scoop Poulenc's second opera away from Paris. Even when famous composers did submit their works to the RTLN, like Tomasi's *l'Atlantide,* often they were rejected in the turmoil of the selection committees. *L'Atlantide* was rejected several times, it was not until after it had found success at other theatres this important French work made it to the RTLN stage in 1958.[612] Other composer's works languished in the drawers at the RTLN

[609] Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc,* 712.

[610] See for example the 17 December 1946 committee minutes where they discuss the beginnings of the commission process. It seems they only ordered a few works, mostly ballets, most did not make it to the RTLN stage. See Comité consultatif des TLN, "Procès-Verbal de la séance du 12 décembre 1946 et 15 juin 1950," Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture procès-verbaux 1946–1965," *cote.* 20-272, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[611] Maurice Lehmann expressed disappointment *Dialogues des Carmélites* would be performed in Milan in a meeting in 1954. See Comité consultatif des TLN, "Procès-Verbal de la séance du 8 janvier 1954," Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture procès-verbaux 1946–1965," *cote.* 20-272, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[612] Lehmann attempted to get *l'Atlantide* accepted in 1954. See Comité consultatif des TLN, "Procès-Verbal de la séance du 5 novembre 1954," Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture procès-verbaux 1946–1965," *cote.* 20-272, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF ; see also Comité de lecture des TLN, Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture œuvres examinées par le comité de 1946 à 1962," *cote.* 20-1160, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

waiting to be heard by the committee, or sometimes even after being accepted they never made it to the stage despite years of waiting.[613]

Additionally, Poulenc was well aware of the struggle it took to get a work not only accepted at the RTLN, but also staged. Poulenc was certainly treated much better by the RTLN than some composers were (especially Tailleferre as Chapter One revealed), but as he helped Milhaud work towards the staging of *Bolivar* he experienced the challenges at the Opéra first hand. As much as Poulenc wanted his works done in Paris—as his comments about the Paris premiere of *Dialogues des Carmélites* being the 'true' premiere attest—it seems Milan's offer was enough to attract and inspire him. It is indicative of the situation and instability at the RTLN, especially when communicating with composers, that they did not even directly inform Poulenc when they decided to stage *Dialogues des Carmélites.* Poulenc indicates in a letter to Hirsch on 15 June 1956 that he was glad when someone had asked him for a photograph because it confirmed the *rumor* he had heard that the RTLN was going to pick up *Dialogues des Carmélites.*[614]

It is worthy of note that Lehmann was in charge of the RTLN when *Dialogues des Carmélites* was promised to Milan. Lehmann premiered fewer new works than Hirsch did and so perhaps Poulenc thought he would not be interested. Though Poulenc did write to Lehmann in

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[613] For a list of works accepted and rejected each year, see Comité de lecture des TLN, Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture œuvres examinées par le comité de 1946 à 1962," *cote.* 20-1160, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; the archives hold quite a few letters from composers upset that their works had either taken years to be reviewed, years to have their scores returned, or once accepted were never staged. For example, see letter from a composer to Hirsch, 22 June 1950, and a letter from Emile Roger to Hirsch, 21 March 1957, in Archives Opéra "Correspondance entre Administration et Auteurs divers 1950–1965," *cote.* 20-184, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; see also a letter from Malherbe to Lehmann 21 November 1951 and a letter from Agathe Mella to Ibert, 13 October 1955, in, Archives Opéra "Correspondance entre Administration et Auteurs divers 1950–1965," *cote.* 20-185, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[614] Letter Poulenc to Hirsch, 15 June 1956, Archives Opéra "Correspondance entre Administration et Auteurs divers 1950–1965," *cote.* 20-184, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; also published in Poulenc, *Corresponance,* 837–838.

1953 when he heard Lehmann was disappointed *Dialogues des Carmélites* would premiere in Italy. In his letter Poulenc blames the French editors who seem less motivated to offer commissions than their Italian counterparts.[615] Poulenc also seems to have had a good friendship with Hirsch, maybe he would have preferred to work with him rather than Lehmann.[616] When Hirsch returned to the RTLN Poulenc penned an article for *Musica* about his joy at his return. Poulenc wrote that:

> For a while now, this great ship [the RTLN] has been drifting, and we all wished for a valiant pilot capable of a great shift in direction. Georges Hirsch is intelligent, bold, tenacious. It is this that fills us with optimism. […] Georges Hirsch, who knows his profession well, will put all of this in good order, of that I am certain.[617]

Poulenc highlighted in his article all the contemporary French works Hirsch had brought to the stage, and ended stating his faith that Hirsch would once again make the Opéra one of the first stages of the world. As mentioned above, *Dialogues des Carmélites* was accepted to the Opéra in 1956 under Hirsch, neither Lehmann nor Ibert had begun to make provisions for its performance. Once again it seems Hirsch was at the vanguard of bringing new works to the RTLN.

While the work was performed first in Milan, Poulenc always wanted it to be done in Paris—a type of true premiere and homecoming.[618] As Poulenc put it "It is superb [the Milan production] but the real *Carmélites* will be in Paris" ["C'est superbe mais les vraies *Carmélites*

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[615] Letter Poulenc to Lehmann, 22 September 1953, Poulenc, *Corresponance,* 767.

[616] After Poulenc's death Hirsch wrote an article in which he called Poulenc a dear friend and remembered how Poulenc had stood by him when his administrations were criticized. See Georges Hirsch, *Démocratie,* 7 February 1963; this article is also published in Poulenc, *J'écris ce qui me chante,* 190.

[617] "Depuis quelque temps, ce grand vaisseau s'en allait à la dérive, et nous souhaitions, tous, un Vaillant pilote capable d'un grand coup de barre. Georges Hirsch est intelligent, hardi, tenace. C'est cela qui nous remplit d'optimisme. […] Hirsch, qui possède à fond son métier, mettra bon ordre à tout cela, j'en suis certain." See Francis Poulenc, "Georges Hirsch à l'Opéra," *Musica* 31 (October 1956): 2; this article is also published in Poulenc, *J'écris ce qui me chante,* 190–193.

[618] See for example his correspondence, Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 837, 847, 849–852, 854.

seront à Paris”].[619] Poulenc probably envisioned this performance as he crafted his work, and he certainly would have considered how *Dialogues des Carmélites* would have been received on one of the RTLN stages. After watching the rampant politicization of *Bolivar,* Poulenc would have been keenly aware how resonances could be read onto his opera. This was likely part of why Poulenc so carefully framed and shaped the both the political and spiritual aspects of the opera. His choices when cutting Bernanos's texts down to form a libretto, to his musical settings, to his choices for collaborators, to his public statements surrounding the work, each contributed to this.

Downplaying the Political Amidst a Political Revolution

Despite premiering outside of France—or even because of this—Poulenc's opera was greeted with enthusiasm and hailed as a major composition in French operatic history.[620] This was particularly remarkable because Poulenc triumphed at a time of great instability; the Fourth Republic was in turmoil, and Hirsch, the RTLN's most controversial administrator, was once again at the helm. However, even in face of this challenging climate, Poulenc and his opera were optimally placed to find success. Poulenc and the late Bernanos's own personal political convictions and connections insulated them from attack. Beyond this, as will be explored, Poulenc carefully reframed the political elements of the opera in a manner that rendered them

[619] Letter Poulenc to Jacquemont, 25 November 1956, Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 854.

[620] Clarendon, “Première mondiale à la Scala F. Poulenc et les *Dialogues des Carmélites* triomphent à Milan,” *Le Figaro,* 28–29 January 1957; Claude Rostand, “Première mondiale à la Scala de Milan *Dialogues des Carmélites* de Georges Bernanos et Francis Poulenc,” *Carrefour,* 6 February 1957; Jacques Bourgeois, “Le plus grand succès d'opéra-comique depuis Puccini, *Dialogues des Carmélites* de Francis Poulenc à la Scala de Milan,” journal unknown, 30 January – 5 February 1957; Jean Laurent, “*Dialogues des Carmélites* un chef-d'œuvre de Francis Poulenc,” journal unknown, undated; copies of all these are preserved in Francis Poulenc, “*Dialogues des Carmélites,”* dossier 27, “Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur” VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF.

more stable and drew the focus tightly around Blanche's spiritual transformation rather than a dangerously resonant political revolution.

Politically Poulenc and Bernanos were perfectly positioned, they both had sterling Resistance reputations that shielded them from attack on the left, but their bourgeois status and adherence to the Catholic Church endeared them to many on the right. They were challenging for either side to attack, and Poulenc in particular was easy to champion. Poulenc politics had always been more of the right than the left, and he had felt out of favor in 1936 when the leftist Popular Front government came to power.[621] His re-alignment with the Catholic Church had occurred after a powerful journey to the Marian shrine at Rocamadour, also in 1936, which reinforced his conservative bourgeois and Catholic values.[622] However, his experiences during the Occupation brought him into close friendships with people of the left, like Paul Éluard, especially as Poulenc was increasingly drawn into Resistance (and left-leaning) circles.[623] Therefore, after the war Poulenc found himself in the unique position of having friends across the political spectrum, which helps to explain why the reviews of his operas are much less politically divided than those of his colleagues—for example Milhaud's *Bolivar*.

Georges Bernanos (1888-1948) was much more overt in his political stances than Poulenc—he wrote many specifically political essays as well as his politically-charged novels. Yet, he also had friends on multiple sides of the political debate. He came from a middle-class bourgeois royalist family, and joined the conservative Catholic league *l'Action Française* while a

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[621] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 239, 242–243; Letter Poulenc to Marie-Blanche de Polignac, 15 August 1936, in Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 419–420.

[622] Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc,* 423–429; Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual*, 261–265.

[623] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 261–263; Fulcher, "From Hybrid to Metamorphosis: Poulenc's Path toward Symbolic Resistance and Counter-Discourse during Vichy," 432– 484.

student.[624] However, while many Catholic conservatives supported the Vichy government, especially in the beginning of the Occupation, Bernanos vocally and vehemently protested against it. He sided firmly instead with de Gaulle and the Resistance despite their political differences.[625] Bernanos was a man of neither the right nor the left, and often despaired that both political groups had things desperately wrong; he argued that totalitarian and republican democratic governments were both ill equipped to guide a de-spiritualized people through the dangers of the modern machine age.[626] His *Dialogues des Carmélites,* upon which the opera's libretto was based, and his literary skills were highly praised in the reviews of Poulenc's opera in 1957.[627] Bernanos's *Dialogues des Carmélites* lived up to his previous writings. It deeply questioned the Republican project and the ability of this form of government to attended to humanity's deep spiritual needs. His piece is both political and philosophical, in addition to being profoundly religious. Poulenc, true to his own tendencies, made more veiled political statements and instead focused on the intensely personal and emotional connections he had with the text. This shift was key to the opera's reception and acceptance.

In order to illuminate Poulenc's subtle positioning of the text, a brief review of history of the libretto is helpful. Poulenc, as already mentioned, crafted the libretto for *Dialogues des Carmélites* from the text of Georges Bernanos's screen play of the same name, which had been

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[624] Thomas Molnar, *Bernanos: His Political Thought and Prophecy* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), 23–25.

[625] Ibid., 116-118.

[626] Ibid., 118-123.

[627] Bernard Gavoty, "Près de Francis Poulenc j'ai vu créer à la Scala *Dialogues des Carmélites," Le Figaro littéraire,* 2 February 1957; Jean Laurent, "*Dialogues des Carmélites* un chef-d'oeuvre de Francis Poulenc," journal unknown, undated; copies of all these are preserved in Francis Poulenc, "*Dialogues des Carmélites,"* dossier 27, "Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur" VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF.

based on a novella by a German writer, Gertrude von le Fort (1876-1971). Von le Fort wrote her novella, *Die Letzte am Schafott* (in English known as *The Song at the Scaffold*) over the course of ten years from 1921 to 1931.[628] It was a response to her growing concern over the political situation in 1920s Germany. Von le Fort's fear found its voice in her character Blanche de la Force—note the telling similarity of their surnames. Far from being strong as her name implied, Blanche was:

> born of the profound horror of a time in Germany clouded by the shadow of destinies on the march, this character [Blanche] rose up before me as if it were the incarnation of man's anguish faced with an entire era moving inexorably towards its end.[629]

Von le Fort was particularly concerned by the marginalization of Christianity in Germany. When she came across a small note referencing the martyred Carmelites of Compiègne in a book of Catholic Orders, she felt an affinity with their story. They also had lived through a time of religious persecution. She joined her own character Blanche de la Force to the Carmelites' story, and drew on historical accounts of their martyrdom available to her in the Munich Municipal Library. Her novella has been viewed as a response to and condemnation of totalitarianism and Bolshevism. Yet, it is equally an account of her very personal fears and her doubt that she had the strength to die a martyr.[630]

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[628] Claude Gendre, "*Dialogues des Carmélites*: the historical background, literary destiny and genesis of the opera," in Francis Poulenc: Music, Art and Literature, ed. Sidney Buckland and Myriam Chimènes (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1999), 279.

[629] Gendre, "*Dialogues des Carmélites*: the historical background, literary destiny and genesis of the opera," 279.

[630] For more on le Fort's novella see Gendre, "*Dialogues des Carmélites*: the historical background, literary destiny and genesis of the opera," 278–84. For more on the actual historical figures of the Carmelites of Compiègne see William Bush, *Bernanos's 'Dialogues des Carmélites': Fact and Fiction* (Compiègne, France: Service Ateliers Carmel de Compègne, 1987).

Die Letzte am Schafott was an international success after its publication in 1931. It was quickly translated into English by Olga Marx and published in the United States in 1933.[631] In France, it was translated by Blaise Briod, and published by Jacques Maritain, an important figure in the French Catholic literary world and a friend of Georges Bernanos.[632] Maritain sent a copy of Briod's translation to his friend Father R. L. Bruckberger, who thought the novella's story would make an excellent subject for a film. He waited to attempt the film until after the end of WWII when he wrote to von le Fort to request her permission. He indicated that he wanted to use her novella as the basis for a film to be written by Georges Bernanos. Bernanos was by this time well-known for his Catholic novels, like *Sous le soleil de Satan* (1926) or *Journal d'un curé de campagne* (1936), and for his news pieces written from abroad during the war vocally criticizing the Vichy regime.[633] Fr. Bruckberger wrote the scenario for the film in October 1947. The scenario consisted of fifty-two sequences taken largely from the novella. A few characters from the novella were cut, and two new figures, Blanche's brother and a coachman, were introduced. Bruckberger also interpolated additional scenes focused on the Revolution.[634]

Bernanos accepted Bruckberger's proposal on 15 October 1947, while living in Tunisia. While Bernanos is known for his powerful writing on the situation in domestic France—not only during WWII but also warning of the dangers of modern society and governments after the Liberation—he actually spent the bulk of his time living abroad after 1938. He left France for Brazil in 1938 and did not return to France until General de Gaulle himself requested his return

[631] Gendre, "*Dialogues des Carmélites*: the historical background, literary destiny and genesis of the opera," 283–84.

[632] Molnar, *Bernanos: His Political Thought and Prophecy*, 23–25, 51–52.

[633] Molnar, *Bernanos: His Political Thought and Prophecy,* 123–127; Gendre, "*Dialogues des Carmélites*: the historical background, literary destiny and genesis of the opera," 283–84.

[634] Gendre, "*Dialogues des Carmélites*: the historical background, literary destiny and genesis of the opera," 283–84.

after the Liberation. Bernanos did not remain in France long and in 1947 he departed for Tunisia. He only briefly returned to France to have an operation in 1948 where he died in July.[635]

While Bernanos had read the von le Fort novella several times, he only had Bruckberger's scenario on hand when he was writing *Dialogues des Carmélites*. Fr. Bruckberger had sent along additional documents, but Bernanos reportedly did not consult them, relying instead on his own internal spiritual conception of the work. After Bernanos had sent his first hundred pages to the film producer the project was deemed far too long, and the producer suggested the film be abandoned. Fr. Bruckberger kept this decision from Bernanos because he believed what Bernanos was writing had deep spiritual merit, and that it deserved to be brought to completion even if it was never made into a film. Bernanos continued to write and finished the work on 8 April 1948. Bernanos was ill while writing *Dialogues des Carmélites* and had to travel to a hospital in Paris shortly after completing the manuscript. He died in France with his draft lying unpublished in a trunk. It was found and published by his literary executor, Albert Béguin, as a play. Béguin wrote to von le Fort for permission to publish the work. Von le Fort not only granted her permission but also gave up all her royalties to Bernanos's widow and children out of respect for the author.[636]

While Bernanos's *Dialogues des Carmélites* were being readied for publication, another writer, the American Emmet Godfrey Lavery, approached von le Fort for permission to create a stage version of her work. Von le Fort happily consented to his adaptation but seems to have not realized that the contract he sent her to sign granted him exclusive rights to stage the work.

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635 Molnar, *Bernanos: His Political Thought and Prophecy*, xi, 110–111.

636 Gendre, "*Dialogues des Carmélites*: the historical background, literary destiny and genesis of the opera," 284–294.

Additionally, it granted him rights over all subsequent film or television adaptations. This was a fairly standard contract in the United States at the time. Von le Fort seems to have been unaware of the breadth of the rights she had signed over to Lavery, as now her agreements with Bruckberger and Béguin would be potentially voided. These battles were still ongoing when Poulenc began his opera, and was at first ignorant of the work's legal entanglements. These issues would become a source of acute distress to Poulenc, and exacerbated his mental and emotional instability that even stopped the composition of the work for a time.[637]

In 1954, Poulenc had several emotional crises that impeded progress on *Dialogues des Carmélites*. A tumultuous on-off relationship with Lucien Roubert and the embroiled controversy over the rights to stage *Dialogues des Carmélites*, both aggravated his natural depressive tendencies.[638] Additionally, Poulenc's hypochondria made him convinced he had cancer.[639] Though his doctors insisted he did not have cancer, his fears nonetheless had a profound effect on him.[640] During this time Poulenc established contact with Fr. Griffin, an American Carmelite priest from Texas, whom he asked to pray for his health so that he could finish his opera and bring glory to the Carmélites of Compiègne.[641] But this brought him only a

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[637] Gendre, "*Dialogues des Carmélites*: the historical background, literary destiny and genesis of the opera," 292–94; Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc,* 245–247.

[638] For a look into how Roubert sparked Poulenc obsessive and depressive tendencies see Kristen Clough, "Faith and Obsession: Poulenc's Explorations of Self in the Autobiographical roles of Blanche (*Les Dialogues des Carmélites*) and Elle (*La Voix humaine*)," *The Musicology Review* 8 (2013): 83–108; also Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc,* 661–671.

[639] Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc,* 662–665; Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse*, 365; and John Howard Griffin, *Prison of Culture: Beyond Black like Me,* ed. Robert Bonazzi (San Antonio, TX: Wings Press, 2011), 86.

[640] For a discussion of Poulenc's hypochondria contextualizing it within the medical discourse surrounding hysteria, especially religious hysteria, see Colette Patricia Simonot, "Unraveling Voices of Fear: Hysteria in Francis Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*" (Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 2010), 255–256.

[641] Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc,* 663–664; Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse*, 365; also Father Griffin has written about his correspondence with Poulenc, see Griffin, *Prison of Culture*, 86.

small measure of peace. Poulenc's worries pushed him to a breaking point, and resulted in a stay at a clinic to rest and recover.[642] When Roubert fell terminally ill Poulenc ironically regained some of his balance.[643] Poulenc strongly believed that it was Roubert's sufferings that transferred to him the strength to finish the opera, an exchange of suffering and grace Poulenc found analogous to the vicarious grace Blanche receives in the finale of *Dialogues des Carmélites*.[644]

In the midst of his legal and emotional fears surrounding *Dialogues des Carmélites,* Poulenc carefully crafted an introspective and deeply cathartic opera. He pulled focus off of the larger historical context of the Revolution in order to home in on the spiritual dimensions of the work and to show the subtle gradations of grace and fear present in the characters. *Dialogues des Carmélites* offered a study in human strength and weakness that was keenly relevant to the often-unresolved crises many in France had endured during the Occupation and the turbulent climate in France as the Fourth Republic hastened to its ultimate death.[645] Yet these resonances in the work went almost entirely unnoted in the contemporary press who instead chose to focus on the spiritual dimensions Poulenc himself highlighted.[646]

Once again *Bolivar* makes a relevant comparison, as seen in Chapter Two. Even Milhaud's overt connecting of *Bolivar* to his yearning for France's liberation from the Nazis did

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642 Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc,* 662–664; Poulenc mentions his stay in the clinic in a letter to Bernac, 28 July 1954, in Poulenc, *Correspondance*, 796.

643 Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc*, 669-670; Burton, *Francis Poulenc*, 101-3; and letters to Rose Dercourt-Plaut, 2 July 1955, and Pierre Bernac, 19 August 1955 in Poulenc, *Correspondance*, 821–822, 825–826.

644 See his letter to Simone Girard, October 31 1955, in Poulenc, *Correspondance*, 831; Burton, *Francis Poulenc*, 101-3.

645 Rousso details unresolved trauma of the Occupation in France, see Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, 15–20, 60–68.

646 One can review a wide variety of the reviews in the press-clipping box preserved at the BnF, see Francis Poulenc, "*Dialogues des Carmélites,"* dossier 27, "Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur" VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF.

not protect the opera from the critics comparing it to the volatile colonial situation. Many of the operas staged during the Fourth Republic were hindered deeply by the political messages they either contained or were perceived to contain. In 1958, the committee outright rejected an opera (Dessanges's *Aroudj Barberousse*) based on the battles between the Spanish and the Moors because its plot was too potentially explosive while the conflict in Algeria raged.[647] By backgrounding the Revolutionary aspect of his opera, Poulenc contained its potential danger. This is not to say Poulenc 'removed' the political dimensions of the work; they are inherent, however by foregrounding Blanche and the emotional catharsis rather than the Revolution itself Poulenc created a work that could easily cut across the political spectrums in France. The perception that Poulenc was either far too flighty or far too spiritual to be weighed down by caring about French politics also helped to background the political aspects of his opera, as it had for *Mamelles de Tirésias* as seen in Chapter One.

Gail Lowther has examined how Poulenc purposefully backgrounded the political dimensions of Bernanos's work.[648] In particular, her comparison of the texts for the scene of the deaths of the Carmelites is very helpful. She helped to push back against the dominant narrative of the absolute unity between the Bernanos text and Poulenc's libretto—a narrative Poulenc encouraged in his own statements. Lowther did tend to focus on Poulenc's own aversion to politics as his main motivating force, which, of course, was typical of Poulenc. However, especially at the Opéra, even the "un-political" is in itself a political stance. Additionally, whether it was by intentional design or not, Poulenc's backgrounding of politics was an

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[647] Comité consultatif des TLN, "Procès-Verbal de la séance du 4 novembre 1957," Archives Opéra, "Comité de lecture procès-verbaux 1946–1965," *cote.* 20-272, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[648] Lowther, "Spiritual Transcendence and Political Estrangement in Francis Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*," 53-76.

incredibly effective tactic for success at the Opéra. Poulenc took an overtly political text that articulated strong doubts about modern government and pulled its focus inward—thus diffusing the danger of Bernanos's actually quite radical ideas. It is unlikely an opera that attacked the roots of the French Republican project and the authenticity of its ideals would have been well-received at the Opéra that was so synonymous with the glories of French culture and the Republic.

Throughout the opera, Poulenc consistently downplayed the invasiveness and ruthlessness of the Revolution and Revolutionaries in comparison with the Bernanos or von le Fort versions. A clear-cut instance is found at the end of the opera during the death of the Carmelites in Act III Scene 4. This is a striking change from the plots of both the original novella and the Bernanos text. In von le Fort's novella, the crowd brutally kills Blanche with their bare hands before she can reach the scaffold. (The novella has many dark moments like this; Von le Fort frequently uses images that create a climate of palpable terror at the inhumanity of the Revolutionaries. For example, Blanche is forced by the revolutionaries to drink a cup of human blood in order to attempt to save her father from execution, though they kill him anyway.) Bernanos's version is slightly less cruel; he instead indicates that a group of women from the crowd should surround Blanche and push her to the scaffold.[649] In both these versions, the crowd plays an active role in Blanche's death, and therefore are clearly culpable in this ultimate shame committed on behalf of the French Republic. Showing Frenchmen in such a blood-thirsty context would have been an extremely volatile image at the Opéra. It could have been read not only onto France's own culpability in the slaughter and holocaust of WWII, but also the violence in the French colonies.

[649] Ibid., 65–67.

In Poulenc's version, the crowd in the final tableau of Act III is eerily calm as they watch the Carmelites ascend the scaffold one-by-one to their deaths. Some later directors have gone so far as to not show the crowd on stage for the scene at all, having them sing instead from the wings.[650] Poulenc's directions do include the crowd on the stage, but the crowd functions mostly as background. In fact, they are so unobtrusive that they could go unobserved amidst the dramatic final moments of each Carmelite. The crowd reacts with small a gasp at the first fall of the guillotine, but otherwise does not interact with, or interfere with, the execution of the Carmelites. They merely observe and witness.

Table 4.1: Indications for Blanche's death [651]

le Fort	Bernanos	Poulenc
Distinctly I heard the profession of faith to the Trinity. The amen I did not hear. <u>(You know that those furious women fell upon Blanche at once.)</u> And now, my friend, the rainbow over the Place de la Revolution was over.	There is a sudden movement in the crowd. <u>A group of women surround Blanche and push her towards the scaffold.</u> She is lost to view. A moment later her voice stops short as the voices of her sisters have done, one after the other.	Blanche, her face stripped of all fear makes her way through in the crowd in which she mingles. Constance sees her and her face radiates with happiness. She stops for a short moment, and then resumes her walk to the scaffold smiling softly at Blanche. <u>Incredibly calm, Blanche emerges from the stunned crowd and ascends to her ordeal</u>.
	Brusque mouvement de foule. Un groupe de femmes entoure Blanche, la pousse vers l'échafaud, on la perd de vue. Et soudain sa voix se tait comme ont fait une à une les voix de ses sœurs.	Blanche, le visage dépouillé de toute crainte se fraye un passage dans la foule où elle se confond. Constance l'aperçoit. Son visage s'irradie de bonheur. Elle s'arrête un court instant. Reprenant sa marche à l'échafaud, elle sourit doucement à Blanche. Incroyablement calme, Blanche émerge de la foule stupéfaite et monte au supplice.

[650] For example, the February 2004 performance at the Teatro alla Scala staged by Robert Carson available on DVD.

[651] Gertrud von le Fort, *The Song at the Scaffold*, trans Olga Marx (San Francisco: Igantius Press, 2011), 102; Georges Bernanos, *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, trans. Gerard Hopkins (London: Fontana books, 1961), 159; Georges Bernanos, *Dialogues des Carmélites*, ed Yvonne Guers (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 230; Francis Poulenc, *Dialogues des Carmélites* (San Giuliano Milanese, Italy: Ricordi, 1985), 252-3; English translation of Poulenc's version my own.

Poulenc strips the crowd of both the agency and culpability found in the von le Fort and Bernanos versions; instead of the focus being on the Revolutionaries killing the Carmelites through force, it is on the free choice the Carmelites made to surrender their lives. Poulenc instructs that Blanche walk to the scaffold on her own, without interference. Musically the crowd also impinges very little into the scene. While Carmelites sing a powerful and inspiring "Salve Regina" as they each walk to their death, the crowd only has some supporting, and textless, harmonic lines. They are really only filling out the vocal depth of the scene, it is almost a spiritual utterance as if it rises from the crowd unconsciously in reflection of what they are witnessing. Perhaps it could even be stretched to be seen as a quiet empathy for the fates of the women before them.[652]

This is reinforced by the crowd's musical relationship to the Carmelites. Often their parts are well aligned, for example the crowd's first vocals are a unison "A", which was also how the Carmelites begin their prayer. The crowd merely repeats this "A" until the first drop of the guillotine, where they have a sort of pitched, dissonant gasp. A moving harp glissando pushes the crowd and Carmelites into the next line of the prayer where the harmonies expand beyond the previous unisons. But still, the crowd's voices are also encapsulated by the voices of the Carmelites and serve to support the nuns' voices. While ostensibly the crowd is there to witness the spectacle of the nuns' gory deaths and to support the Revolution, aurally they are very supportive of the Carmelites in their final moments. Far from being a bloodthirsty crowd, they can be viewed as witnesses to a tragedy and tide of history they were powerless to stop.

[652] Lacombe suggests the crowd's music could indicate some compassion, see Lacombe, *Francis Poulenc,* 702.

Throughout Bernanos's text the events of the Revolution and the Revolutionaries themselves were pressing insistently into lives of the Carmelites. Poulenc, as Lowther has noted, chose to omit many of the scenes that make the most direct reference to the Revolution or call for Revolutionaries on the stage.[653] By also considering Poulenc's musical treatment of these characters, a more dynamic picture emerges of these choices. Poulenc takes a particularly sympathetic stance towards some individual Revolutionaries, suggesting that they were motivated by fear more than they were political conviction. This more nuanced and subtle approach to the politics that motivated the opera's tragedy was likely part of what made his opera so satisfying to audiences who had so recently endured the Occupation. During the Occupation many in France had to decide how much they were willing to collaborate with or resist the German and Vichy forces. Fear for their safety and that of their families would have been a major motivating factor in their choices as well as political convictions.[654]

This was particularly relevant as the trials of those who had committed crimes during the war and Occupation continued. In January 1953, shortly before Poulenc began his work on *Dialogues des Carmélites,* the contentious Oradour-sur-Glane trial began in Bordeaux, which centered on determining the guilt of those forced to fight for the enemy. The town of Oradour-sur-Glane had been completely and brutally massacred in June 1944 by a German Waffen-SS company. There was only one survivor. The question of how to deal with unwilling conscripts, mostly from Alsace-Lorraine, who had been forced and frightened by threats against themselves

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[653] See for example, scenes omitted by Poulenc: scenes 5 and 6 of the 3rd tableau where the commissioners enter the convent to search for girls held there against their will. Bernanos, *Dialogues des Carmélites*, 74; The first scene of the 4th tableau where the priest reads the decree to the nuns Bernanos, *Dialogues des Carmélites*, 85; The arrest and trial of Blanche's father 5th tableau scenes 1, 2, 3, and 4 Bernanos, *Dialogues des Carmélites,*115-119; and Lowther, "Spiritual Transcendence and Political Estrangement in Francis Poulenc's Dialogues des Carmélites," 62–64.

[654] Paxton has an excellent discussion of the motivations behind collaboration. See Paxton, *Vichy France*, 52–63.

and their families to fight for the Germans made the trial complex. Of the twenty-one members of the SS that were on trial for the Oradour massacre, twelve were forced conscripts from Alsace. Many people from the area surrounding Oradour felt an intense need for justice and recognition of the tragic murder of the town, while people in Alsace-Lorraine felt that men who had joined the SS against their will deserved amnesty status.[655] The twelve forced conscripts were given harsh sentences, which shocked many and caused outrage in Alsace.[656] Five days after the sentencing, there was a vote on special amnesty laws that mitigated the sentences of the forced conscripts who had been convicted in the trial.[657] Poulenc's treatment of several of the Revolutionaries in the opera reflects an understanding of the complexity of war and the choices one is forced to make that was being discussed so publicly in the trial. It was also a subtle way for French audiences to emotionally exorcise the demons of this time they were not ready to face head-on, like the issue of determining guilt when people committed horrible crimes out of fear.

The commissioner who enters the convent in Act II Scene 4 to formally evict the Carmelites and order them to disband offers a clear example of a figure forced to collaborate out of fear. Poulenc changed little from the Bernanos text here, but underscored his empathy for the commissioner musically. As the commissioner is first presented in the scene, he is particularly blank and menacing. His recitation of the degree of expulsion has frequent repeated notes and stepwise motion that make his speech sound rehearsed and unemotional. When he does make leaps, they are disjunct and angular and create a choppy and uneven feel giving the impression of a mechanical malfunction. Overall his speech is stilted and unnatural. He is a cog in the horrible

[655] Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, 55-59; Rioux, *The Fourth Republic,* 207.

[656] Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, 48-57.

[657] Ibid., 311.

machine of death that is the Revolution and a very threatening presence in the convent—despite Mother Marie's complete lack of fear of him.

However, when the commissioner is left on his own with the nuns his individual personality and compassion are allowed to peak through. This is reflected by a marked change in his musical manner. *Subito piano* the commissioner tells Mother Marie that he is not really one of the blood thirsty Revolutionaries; he was dear friends with his childhood priest. "Do you take me for one of these blood drinkers? I was sacristan in the Chelles parish. Our priest… was like my brother." ["Me prenez-vous pour un de ces buveurs de sang? J'étais sacristain à la paroisse de Chelles. Le seigneur vicaire était mon frère de lait."] This phrase is accompanied by a drum motif in trombone parts that strongly resembles the rhythm associated with military drums especially at executions and battle. By placing this so deep in the orchestral texture some distance is placed between the commissioner and the Revolutionaries, but it reminds the listener aurally of their nearby, watchful and vengeful presence. It also foreshadows the next moment this rhythm is present as the Carmelites are sentenced to death in Act III Scene 3 at rehearsal 49.

The commissioner goes on to tell Mother Marie "But I must howl with all the wolves!" ["Mais il faut bien que je hurle avec les loups!"]. [Example 4.1] This Poulenc underscores with a double repetition of the theme that has been associated with Blanche's fear and that was present during the Prioress's death. It returns again to interrupt in the middle of the commissioner's final phrase, "Beware of the blacksmith Blancard. [fear motive] He is an informant" ["Méfiez-vous du forgeron Blancard. C'est un dénonciateur"]. This fear, not knowing whom to trust and whom to help must have stirred visceral memories not only for Poulenc, who was himself in the Resistance where secrecy was paramount, but for many in the audience.

Example 4.1: Poulenc, *Dialogues des Carmélites,* Act II Scene 4, pg 176

The political parallels in the work appear obvious, even with Poulenc's nuanced and caring hand that sought to push the political dimensions of the Revolution to the background. However, almost none of the reviews that have been preserved in the archives make any mention of these resonances at all. This is particularly surprising given how quickly allusions to France's past politics and current events were draw out of other works at the RLTN during this period. The only review to mention it was American, the *New York Times,* where Christina Thoresby wrote after the Milan premiere:

> But throughout this drama of the Revolution which, culminating as it does in tyranny and senseless massacre, is highly pertinent to our times, it is above all the small community of nuns with their individual characters and common destiny that we are concerned with, that we feel with and that we love.[658]

Thoresby was quick to note that politics were not the focus of the opera, but that she mentions how relevant the opera was to 'our times' was somewhat of an anomaly in the reviews of the opera, including both the Milan and Paris productions. Poulenc's skillful composition and cuts succeeded in drawing attention away from this aspect of the work, as did his own political

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[658] Christina Thoresby, "Carmelite Dialogues, New Opera by Poulenc Staged at La Scala," *New York Times*, 10 February 1957.

proclivities. In Milan, Poulenc had only moderate control of the production, but in Paris his requests were nearly all honored by the RTLN. In the Paris production, all aspects of the work played important roles in this refocusing of the work from politics onto spirituality, and aided France in reclaiming *Dialogues des Carmélites* from the Italians.

<u>Bringing the Carmel to the Operatic Stage</u>

The differences Italian and the Parisian premieres of *Dialogues des Carmélites* were strongly emphasized in reviews after the July premiere at the Opéra. Some attempted to frame Paris as the true premiere, returning the work not only to its original language (the Milan production had been given in Italian) but also to the true French Catholic spirit of the work. While both productions were fairly predictable in their décor, costumes, and staging, taking their notes strongly from the real religious costumes and life of the Carmelite Order—and thus in many ways very similar—their differences were stressed even by Poulenc himself. Poulenc, and the production team, highlighted how Paris was more authentic, introspective, and pulled the focus of the opera even more tightly on the spiritual life of Blanche and the Carmelites. This focus on spirituality rather than the Revolution in the staging and the score of the opera, also served to background any potentially dangerous political content. Additionally, by highlighting the differences between the productions the French and the RTLN could in a manner reclaim it from the Italians who commissioned it. This lessened the blow of one of France's foremost composers premiering his masterwork in a foreign country.

The aligning of Poulenc's opera with the strength of French culture began as soon as the work premiered in Milan. Clarendon in particular praised Poulenc's work arguing, "The score is

simple enough immediately to touch the heart of the public, it is also personal enough to resist analysis and seduce the refined."[659] He goes on to say:

> As for us, Parisians, numerous in the hall, we felt the pride of seeing triumph on the most famous operatic stage of Europe a work doubly national, that, better than long speeches, will explain to the entire world, that according to the formula of Paderewki, France is "this and that…"[660]

Paderewki (1860–1941) was a Polish pianist who used his artistic status to argue for Poland's independence and famously helped to influence President Woodrow Wilson to include Poland's independence in his Fourteen Points, which were principles for the negotiation of peace at the end of WWI. By linking Poulenc to Paderewki, Clarendon argued that *Dialogues des Carmélites* could have a real and lasting impact on French cultural diplomacy. Clarendon, however, could not resist a little jab at the Opéra (and thus Hirsch) in his review of the Paris production complaining that there had not been adequate rehearsal time scheduled with the sets.[661] This is unsurprising as *Le Figaro* and Hirsch were still deeply at odds, and their attacks and counter-attacks had resumed as soon as Hirsch returned to the RTLN.

While Clarendon harbored some doubts about the Opéra's production, Poulenc worked for the Paris production to be exactly as he envisioned the opera. In Italy he had much less control over the production, and it was a bit too grand in his opinion.[662] In Milan the décors and

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[659] "sa partition est assez simple pour toucher immédiatement le cœur populaire, elle est assez personnelle pour résister à l'analyse et séduire les raffinés." Clarendon, "Première mondiale à la Scala F. Poulenc et les *Dialogues des Carmélites* triomphent à Milan," *Le Figaro,* 28–29 January 1957.

[660] "Quant à nous, Parisiens, nombreux dans la salle, nous éprouvions la fierté de voir triompher sur la plus fameuse des scènes lyriques européennes un ouvrage doublement national, qui, mieux que de longs discours, expliquera au monde entier, selon la formule de Paderewski, que la France est "ceci et cela …" Clarendon, "Première mondiale à la Scala F. Poulenc et les *Dialogues des Carmélites* triomphent à Milan," *Le Figaro,* 28–29 January 1957.

[661] Clarendon, "À l'Opéra *Dialogues des Carmélites* de Georges Bernanos et Francis Poulenc," *Le Figaro,* undated; copy preserved in Francis Poulenc, "*Dialogues des Carmélites,"* dossier 27, "Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur" VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF.

[662]Letter Poulenc to Hirsch, 15 June 1956, Archives Opéra "Correspondance entre Administration et Auteurs divers 1950–1965," *cote.* 20-184, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF, also Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 837–838.

costumes had been designed by Wakhevitch, who one remembers also did the 1956 staging of *Faust* and one entrée of *Indes galantes,* and the mise-en-scène was placed in the hands of Marguerite Wallmann. Wakhevitch continued to be a popular choice to design for *Dialogues des Carmélites,* in addition to the La Scala production he also did versions for Vienna, Covent Garden, Catane, Marseille, Monte-Carlo, Rome, and Berlin.[663] The most striking element of Wakhevitch's set was the division of the space into two-levels in the majority of the scenes. [Figure 4.3] It was a bit like peering into a convent-shaped doll house on a much bigger scale. A variety of rooms were all visible at once, giving a wider view of the life of the convent. Sometimes lighting was used to isolate one section of this set and create a smaller intimate space, but often the entirety of the stage was lit, including rooms that were empty. Jacques Bourgeois noted in his review that the Milan production sacrificed some of the intimacy of the work in order to favor a solemn grandeur reminiscent of grand opera.[664] This type of large-angle staging, along with its style of decoration, contributed to this effect.

[663] Georges Wakhevitch, *l'Envers des décors* (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 1977), 110.

[664] Jacques Bourgeois, "Le plus grand succès d'opéra-comique depuis Puccini, *Dialogues des Carmélites* de Francis Poulenc à la Scala de Milan," journal unknown, 30 January – 5 February 1957; a copy is preserved in Francis Poulenc, "*Dialogues des Carmélites,"* dossier 27, "Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur" VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF.

Figure 4.3: Wakhevitch's décor for *Dialogues des Carmélites* Act 2 Scene 4

Milan, 1957. Gallica, BnF.

This strongly contrasted with the approach taken in Paris by Suzanne Lalique whom Poulenc had requested for the décors and costumes.[665] Lalique was an interesting choice as she worked primarily for the Comédie-Française. The only other opera she had worked on was the *Le Barbier de Séville* at the Opéra-Comique. Lalique was the daughter of the famous jeweler and artist René Lalique for whom she had often designed and who was known for a sumptuous art-deco style—the antithesis of the aesthetic of *Dialogues des Carmélites*.[666] Poulenc requested de Rieux for the mise-en-scène; this Hirsch denied as he preferred Maurice Jacquemont.[667] Poulenc

[665] Letter Poulenc to Hirsch, 15 June 1956, Archives Opéra "Correspondance entre Administration et Auteurs divers 1950–1965," *cote.* 20-184, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; also Poulenc, *Corresponance,* 837–838.

[666] Mélina Gazsi, "Suzanne, l'autre Lalique: Une exposition au Musée des beaux-arts de Limoges rend justice à la fille de René Lalique, une artiste touche-à-tout dont le rayonnement fut étouffé par l'emprise paternelle,' *Le Monde,* 12 December 2012, p 24.

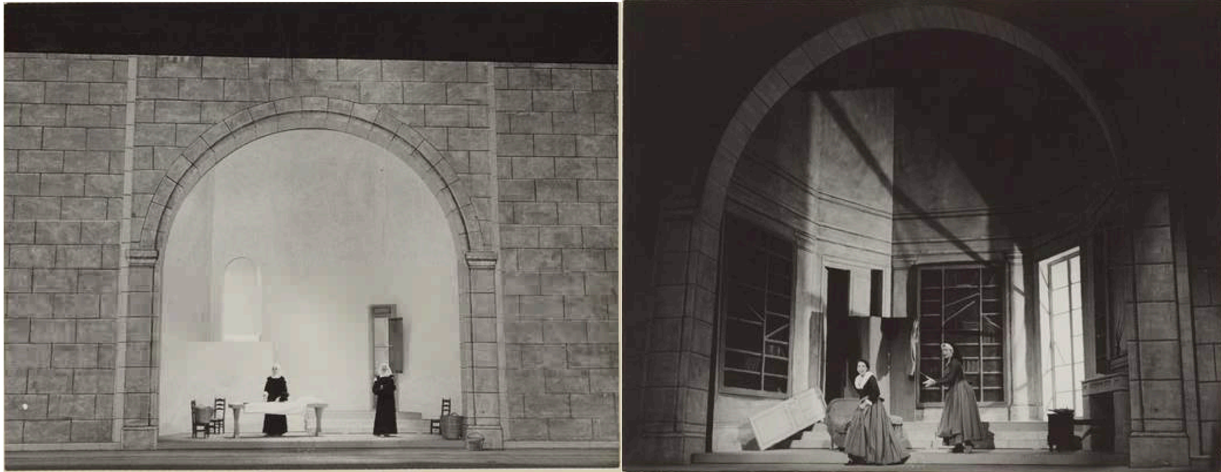
[667] Letter Hirsch to Poulenc, 3 September 1956, Archives Opéra "Correspondance entre Administration et Auteurs divers 1950–1965," *cote.* 20-184, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; also see letters between Hirsch and Poulenc dated 15 June 1956, 25 August 1956, 12 September 1956, in Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 837–838, 849–852.

came to appreciate Jacquemont and wrote to him complimenting his understanding of what Poulenc wanted to accomplish in the Paris staging.[668]

Despite her experience in the luxury arts, Lalique crafted a very austere aesthetic for the Carmelites in line with Poulenc's vision. In Lalique's version, each room was isolated, a whole world unto itself. Often the rooms were framed by a substantial stone archway that encapsulated the scene. The interior rooms of the convent often had only small doors or minimal windows so the rooms each felt very sequestered from the life of the rest of the convent. [Figure 4.4] Visually Lalique's production was much more inward facing and intimate, whereas Wakhevitch's focused instead on the community and the world of the Carmelites. Even beyond the convent, Lalique sometimes maintained its framing, for example, in Act III Scene 2 set in the ransacked de la Force home, the stone archway of the convent curiously remained, perhaps symbolic of how its protection followed Blanche spiritually. [Figure 4.5] But while Lalique restricted space on the horizontal plane by confining the eye to one room at a time, the sheer height of her sets were impressive. The archway that framed each scene and individual doors (both of which indicated the ceiling height) were all extremely tall. Based on the height of the singers the ceilings would have been between twenty and thirty-feet high. All the space for the Carmelites to move was upward in these cathedral-like dimensions. Rather than interacting with the rest of the world each space visually pushed them upward, toward their climb up the scaffold and toward their heavenly reward.

[668] See letters between Poulenc and Jacquemont, 25 November 1956, 7 December 1956, 15 December 1956, and 28 February 1957, in Poulenc, *Correspondance,* 854–856, 862–863.

Figures 4.4 and 4.5: Lalique's décor for *Dialogues des Carmélites,* Paris, 1957.



Left: Act I Scene 3, Workroom of the Convent, Gallica, BnF.
Right: Act III Scene 2, The Library of Marquis de la Force, Gallica, BnF.

Lalique's set relied on impressive shapes and scale rather than decoration to give the convent its spiritual atmosphere. She did, however, include striking half-circle transom windows above the convent's doors that strongly resembled large clock-faces. [Figure 4.6] Perhaps this was incidental, but it does seem a subtle allusion to how outside the convent's walls the Revolution is about to thrust itself into the seemingly timeless convent. Wakhevitch's decors and costumes, while certainly not gaudy or overly sumptuous did feature more decoration than those of Lalique. The convent in particular had a rather nice religious fresco presented on the second-floor stage-left. Wakhevitch also placed a lot of importance on having the set pieces for the de la Force home have the proper luxury to them. Apparently, it took some convincing to get the budget controller in Milan to authorize the purchase of a pair of second-hand silver Louis XVI style candlesticks for the stage rather than having them fabricated in wood.[669]

[669] Wakhevitch, *l'Envers des décors*, 108.

Figure 4.6: Lalique's décor for *Dialogues des Carmélites,* Paris, 1957.

Act II Scene 2, The Chapter Room, Gallica, BnF.

Costumes for the Carmelites were similar in the two productions, both taking their cues from the Carmelites' traditional habits. However, in Milan the Carmelites all wore stage make-up. In Paris, they were all bare-faced.[670] (Though either Denise Duval, who created the role of Blanche de la Force in Paris and for whom Poulenc wrote the role, had preternaturally beautiful eyelashes or she had a little bit of subtle make-up for at least her press photos). This authenticity was stressed in the press when discussing the Paris premiere. Duval, Lalique, and Jacquemont were allowed to visit the Carmelites at Compiègne. This honor was particularly unprecedented for Jacquemont, as no man had ever been allowed to enter. He was strictly forbidden from seeing any nuns and was only allowed to observe the convent itself. Duval, however, was allowed to speak to the Carmelites, absorb the atmosphere of the convent, and gather tips on how to carry

[670] Denise Bourdet, "Comment Blanche de La Force fit signe à Francis Poulenc. *Les Dialogues des Carmélites* à l'Opéra," *Le Figaro littéraire,* 22 June 1957, p. 11.

herself in her habit. The Carmelites sent her home with a real habit upon which to model those at the Opéra. All of this was reported in the press.[671]

The Carmelites granted the Opéra one more exceptional favor and sent a real Carmelite to observe a final rehearsal and help the Opéra further create a spirit authentic to the Carmelite Order. The description of the nun's visit reads like a secret service plan for a diplomatic trip. To arrange the visit Hirsch had to call the Archbishop who gave him a phone number to a secret Carmelite convent located somewhere in France. The mother superior at this unknown convent then gave the hour of arrival and departure planned for the Carmelite nun in Paris. The nun arrived in a sealed car with her face completely veiled. No one was to speak to her unless absolutely necessary, and she was only allowed to answer pre-approved questions cleared with her own mother superior.[672] The article detailing the nun's exploit is enticing reading, and likely served the dual purpose of peeking Parisian audience's curiosity and giving the Paris production a particular stamp of authenticity that the Milan production had lacked.

Faust and *Dialogues des Carmélites* satisfied audiences with their beautiful vocal writing and emotionally engaging and cathartic plots. As one of the most popular pieces at the Opéra during this period, *Faust* was continuously performed, regardless of the heated debates over its décors and mise-en-scène. It became a very visible space for administrators and critics to assert

[671] "Une entité supervise les carmélites de l'Opéra," undated, journal illegible; see also Clarendon, "Denise Duval au Carmel de Compiègne," undated; and see "Derriere les Grilles du Carmel une chanteuse: Denise Duval" undated, journal illegible; all preserved in Francis Poulenc, "*Dialogues des Carmélites,"* dossier 27, "Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur" VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF; Denise Bourdet, "Comment Blanche de La Force fit signe à Francis Poulenc, les *Dialogues des Carmélites* à l'Opéra," *Le Figaro littéraire,* 22 June 1957, p. 11.

[672] "Une entité supervise les carmélites de l'Opéra," undated, journal illegible, copy preserved in Francis Poulenc, "*Dialogues des Carmélites,"* dossier 27, "Dossiers de coupures de presse constitués par l'auteur" VM DOS–10 (1–28), Département de la Musique, Richelieu, BnF.

their beliefs about how to modernize, or preserve, the great works of the French patrimony. These ideals often aligned with their political and aesthetic convictions and thus the fortunes of *Faust* were strongly influenced by the political fluctuations of the Fourth Republic. In the case of *Faust,* this instability resulted in an entire wasted production—a large investment and years of labor were scrapped. Additionally, in an attempt to avoid this fate administrators were forced to cater carefully their productions to the tastes of the government and Gounod's heirs. Perhaps with a more stable administrative structure Hirsch and Lehmann could have brought a more daring production to the stage, or even have simply brought a traditional one to completion in less than nine years.

One had to be very lucky and savvy to keep above the fray, and Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* managed this more than many other works. Perhaps this explains some of the work's success. By backgrounding the political elements of the work, and focusing instead on his personal spiritual convictions, Poulenc was able to mitigate the danger of his opera being coopted for political means or critiqued heavily for its content. His own political multivalence meant that Poulenc had a wide array of friends to help champion the work regardless of political fortunes. Poulenc's opera also avoided some conflict by not being a world premiere at the RLTN. By the time *Dialogues des Carmélites* made it to Paris it had already been deemed a success in Milan, and reviews often focused on the comparative value of the two productions. Despite this, Paris was carefully framed as a 'premiere' of sorts, and the first staging according to Poulenc's true intentions. However, staging *Dialogues des Carmélites* did not help Hirsch to meet the state's requirements for new works at the RTLN, even though it did align with his personal conviction to stage new and contemporary works at the RTLN.

Journalists and music enthusiasts were quick to point out the lack of world premieres at the RLTN and decried the operatic crisis they perceived in France. However, if one looks beyond these surface readings and definitions a more dynamic picture of the operatic genre in France emerges. New premieres fell out of the repertoire not solely based on their popularity and artistic value but because of the politically and aesthetically motivated reviews and the changing personnel in the government and RTLN. Additionally, dynamic new compositions, like *Dialogues des Carmélites,* were pushed away because of the poor functioning of the selection process for new works and the confusion and difficulty working with the RTLN, or even were not accepted at the houses at all. The cry of crisis in the press was calculated. It was used to cut down whoever was currently in power at the RTLN, but hid this motivation behind a litany of 'problems' in France like poor singers or composers who no longer wanted to write for the genre. That the RTLN survived this turmoil, and also managed to produce new works and stagings, was a remarkable testament to the persistence of the operatic genre in France.

Chapter Five

Operatic Decentralization: Innovation in Marseille, Strasbourg, and Rouen

After the war and Liberation, French theatres were attempting to reopen, recover, and reassert French art, and audiences were eager for a return to normal life and its comforts. This task varied greatly from city to city. The situation in Paris, where both of the RTLN theatres were not only physically intact but had continued to operate during the war, has been examined in the previous chapters. But what of the rest of the nation? In Rouen, located in Normandy about two-hours north-west from Paris in what had been the occupied zone during the war, the situation was challenging. Their operatic theatre had been damaged and then destroyed in the fighting and they were forced to relocate performances to the local Cirque, complete with a ring and horse stables.[673] Strasbourg, five-hours east of Paris in the Alsace-Lorraine region that had been annexed completely by Germany, still had a theatre but had suffered losses of décors, of costumes, and of their language during the Occupation. They had endured the complete disruption of operations when the Germans took over the theatres.[674] Marseille located on the Mediterranean in the south of France in what had been the unoccupied zone before the total occupation of France in November 1942 and the second largest city in France, had been home to

[673] Bénédicte Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen: Lieu d'accueil des saisons lyriques Rouennaises de 1945 à 1962 (l'exemple de la création de l'opéra *Le Roy fol*)" (Master's Thesis, Université de Rouen, 2002–2003), 5–6.

[674] Bernard Vogler, *l'après-guerre à Strasbourg: Vie quotidienne, intégration à la France, ouverture à l'Europe* (Illkirch, France: Le Verger Éditeur, 2002), 141–147; for more on Strasbourg's musical life under German annexation during WWII see Sandrine Fuss Nikolić, *La Vie musicale Strasbougeoise* [sic] *à l'ombre de la croix gammée* (Doctoral Thesis, University of Bale, published by Jérôme Do Bentzinger Editeur, 2015).

many artists who fled during the war. Their theatre was happily still standing after the Liberation; they were in the best position of these three cities to quickly resume a full operatic season.[675]

Figure 5.1: Map of Marseille, Strasbourg, and Rouen

Approximate Populations in 1946:
Rouen, 107,700; Strasbourg, 175,500; Marseille, 636,300; Paris 5,600,000

How to help the cities throughout France re-establish their operatic seasons quickly became an important question, especially at the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale [Ministry of

[675] André Segond, *L'Opéra de Marseille 1787–1987* (Paris: Editions Jeanne Laffitte, 1987), 86–94; Archives de Marseille, *Divines divas … et vivat l'opéra! Marseille 1787–1987* (Marseille: Archives de la Ville, 1987), 106; Frédéric Ducros, "1945–1985: Quarante années de théâtre lyrique à Marseille," in Danièle Pistone, ed. *Le Théâtre lyrique français 1945–1985* (Paris: Éditions Champion, 1987), 329.

National Education] which over saw the RTLN and theatres throughout France. A plan of 'decentralization' was proposed, for both operatic and dramatic theatre. The idea was to 'de-centralize' by bringing more quality theatre to the provinces, rather than concentrating all the best works, artists, and funding in Paris alone. The dramatic theatre decentralization plan was more successful and therefore has been better remembered, especially its resulting regional dramatic centers.[676] Operatic decentralization proved a much more difficult task, in part because of the huge expenses involved with running an opera, and in part because of the highly specialized nature of the staff and artists required. However, despite its challenges operatic decentralization did have some success, especially in regards to promoting new premieres. Indeed, these determined theatres outside of Paris provided the bulk of new premieres during the Fourth Republic that took place in state or municipal theatres. The private theatres are a fascinating case for a subsequent study.

The decentralization plan began with six cities, including Marseille, willing to sign a heavy *cahier des charges*—a set of regulations for the running of the theatre—in exchange for a state subvention. The *cahier des charges* increased the number of artists required, locked the theatre into year-round seasons, and required dance, choir, and children's schools to be maintained. The hope was to expand to include more cities and theatres in time. The requirements in the *cahier des charges* were meant to encourage the formation of year-round troupes (thus creating better employment opportunities), to improve quality of the repertoire productions, and to catalyze the creation and composition of new works.[677] Strasbourg and

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[676] Denizot, *Jeanne Laurent*, 59–91; Pascale Goetschel, *Renouveau et décentralisation du théâtre (1945–1981)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004), 47–76.

[677] "Arrête, Le Ministre de la jeunesse, des arts et des lettres," undated, in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Décentralisation lyrique budget," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(5), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF; Maurice Bertrand, "Note sur la poplitique [sic] de décentralisation lyrique et dramatique," pg 2, in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Décentralisation lyrique divers reports," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(4), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

Mulhouse were added to this plan without having to adhere fully to the *cahier des charges* because of their recent annexation, and the government's commitment to seeing the French arts return and flourish in the Alsace-Lorraine region.[678] Rouen, without a theatre, was unable to join the plan in the beginning. However, the operatic arts, and the director Paul Douai, proved their tenacity in Rouen by mounting shortened seasons at the Cirque despite the war-time destruction of the operatic theatre, décors, and costumes.[679]

Decentralization was part of a larger trend in France after the Liberation to organize national schemes in industry as well as the arts for the greater public good, a movement spearheaded by the former Resistance. Important sectors like energy, deposit banking, insurance, and transport were brought under state control.[680] The French economy was organized carefully under the auspices of the "Plan" and the watchful eye of Jean Monnet (the first Commissariat-général au Plan and later President of the Council). This plan helped to repair France's economy and increase social security for its citizens.[681] The French radio was also nationalized, and important committees and centers were formed to oversee arts and culture. Culture was, of course, now a guaranteed right of all French citizens according to the preamble of the Fourth Republic constitution.[682] This mission to democratize culture and to bring access to opera to

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[678] See letter sous-Directeur chargé des Services d'Architecture, des Arts et des Lettres du Bas-Rhin, du Haut-Rhin et de la Moselle to Major of Strasbourg, 8 June 1945, and internal note "Subvention de l'Etat pour le Théâtre," 8 August 1945, both in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 391, "Subventions de l'Etat 1945–1950," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg; also see Vogler, *l'après-guerre à Strasbourg: Vie quotidienne, Intégration à la France, Ouverture à l'Europe*, 47, 141–147.

[679] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 25–28.

[680] Nord, *France's New Deal*, 10.

[681] Ibid., 10.

[682] Nord, *France's New Deal,* 14; and Gumplowicz and Klein, *Paris 1944–1954. Artistes, intellectuels, publics; la culture comme enjeu*, 8–14.

more citizens was a central tenet of decentralization's promotion of the operatic and dramatic arts throughout France. Yet, decentralization was equally about preserving France's theatres and musical patrimony as a means of asserting France's cultural prestige and power domestically and abroad.

René Dumesnil, music critic for *Le Monde* and member of the decentralization committee, wrote in March 1946 that decentralization was vital to the recovery of the operatic arts in the French provinces. Substantial subventions, he argued, were needed for the theatres, some of which were in dire shape. Dumesnil praised the cities ready to sign onto the plan, and in particular highlighted Strasbourg (despite it not being one of the six official cities) for its director Paul Bastide's efforts to return the city to its previous musical strength.[683] The decentralization plan, according to Dumesnil, was a viable plan that would assure not only the existence of the theatres in the provinces, but their ability to thrive and prevent "irreparable damage to French music" ["dommage irréparable à la musique française"].[684]

Later a report by the decentralization inspector reflected back on the reasons the Direction Génerale des Arts et Lettres housed in the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale had when creating this decentralizing plan in 1946. It outlined three main motivations: first, they wanted to prevent the disappearance of the prestige of operatic theatre in France. The provinces were essential in artist training and thus needed to be supported in order to produce artists of the caliber needed to defend French music. Second, they wanted to encourage intellectual and artistic activity in the provinces and the important role operatic theatre played in education. Third, they hoped the plan would inspire composers to write more operatic works because the

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[683] René Dumesnil, "Un plan de décentralisation lyrique un France," *Le Monde,* 21 March 1946.

[684] Ibid.

provinces would be able to stage them in quality and worthy productions.[685] At the time, the wait times to get a work staged at the RTLN, or to even find out if your work had been accepted, were extensive and burdensome for composers.[686]

While decentralization was an extremely complex project involving many officials from Paris and the Provinces, as will be examined, Jeanne Laurent was one of the figures most central to its initial conception and implementation.[687] Jeanne Laurent hailed originally from the provinces—she was born in Cast in Brittany in 1902—and remained interested in the development of cultural and intellectual life there even after her career took her to Paris.[688] Her path in public service began in 1930 at the Commission nationale des Monuments historiques [National Commission for Historic Monuments]. In 1939, she became sous-chef du bureau de la Musique, des Spectacles et de la Radiodiffusion in the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale [Deputy Head of the Office of Music, Spectacles, and Radio in the Ministry of National Education].[689] During the war and Occupation, Laurent remained at the ministry and worked for the Vichy government. However, she also engaged with the Resistance in order to help safe-

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[685] Maurice Bertrand, "Note sur la poplitique [sic] de décentralisation lyrique et dramatique," pg 2, in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Décentralisation lyrique divers reports," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(4), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

[686] The archives hold quite a few letters from composers upset that their works had either taken years to be reviewed, years to have their scores returned, or once accepted were never staged. For example, see letter from a composer to Hirsch, 22 June 1950, and a letter from Emile Roger to Hirsch, 21 March 1957, in Archives Opéra "Correspondance entre Administration et Auteurs divers 1950–1965," *cote.* 20-184, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF; see also a letter from Malherbe to Lehmann 21 November 1951 and a letter from Agathe Mella to Ibert, 13 October 1955, in, Archives Opéra "Correspondance entre Administration et Auteurs divers 1950–1965," *cote.* 20-185, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[687] See for example, the work of Goetschel and Denizot on her impact. Pascale Goetschel, "Penser le role de l'État en France durant les années 1950: Jeanne Laurent, *La République et les beaux-arts (1955)*," *Parlement[s], Revue d'histoire politique* 29 (2019): 239–253; Denizot, *Jeanne Laurent*, 1–11.

[688] Denizot, *Jeanne Laurent,* 16–18.

[689] Ibid., 19.

guard important works of art. She was awarded a Resistance medal for these efforts in 1947.[690] In October 1946, she was promoted to sous-directrice des Spectacles et de la Musique where she would remain until 1952.[691]

Like Laurent's own career path, decentralization had its roots in more than one political movement and moment in French history. It was influenced by, among others, the 1936 Popular Front government, the Révolution nationale policies of Vichy, and the Resistance.[692] In 1937 under the Popular Front, the then Minstre de l'Éducation nationale, Jean Zay, created the "Office central des théâtres de province" which was set to distribute 17.75 million francs in subventions to over two hundred theaters. Of course, the Popular Front fell in 1938 before this program could be properly established.[693] The Révolution nationale of Vichy relied heavily on the mystique of public service, and favored life in the cities and towns of France over cosmopolitanism or centralism. These ideas, albeit greatly modified and stripped of their more racist implications, did influence the decentralization movement.

An even better example from the Vichy era is found in Jeune France, which through its actions effectively began the decentralization program Laurent would formalize after the liberation. Jeune France was founded in November 1944 by Pierre Schaeffer and Paul Flamand, and sought to bring art to the younger generation and create employment for artists. Jeune France, however, relied on touring troops, which operatic decentralization ultimately did not

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[690] Ibid., 25.

[691] Denizot, *Jeanne Laurent*, 20; See also Chapter Three of this dissertation.

[692] Denizot, *Jeanne Laurent*, 45, 57, 84, 87–88; for more on these movements and their artistic and musical aspects see Jane Fulcher's monograph on music in France during WWII, Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 15–16, 35–54, 66–67, 114–118.

[693] Denizot, *Jeanne Laurent*, 84; for more on the Popular Front and its politics see Fulcher, *Composer as Intellectual*, 199–210; Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 33, 136.

favor.[694] The Resistance created the conditions where a decentralization plan was possible, not only because of their role in the Liberation of France, but because of the high value the Resistance place on social welfare and the desire to disseminate access to culture throughout society.[695] These values were written directly into the Fourth Republic constitution.[696] As the Resistance, and the left-leaning parties most represented in it, lost power in France, decentralization lost important champions. The increasingly right-oriented governments were much less inclined to fund the project.[697]

Reflecting back upon the work of Laurent, Robert Abirached [the Directeur du Théâtre et des Spectacles au ministère de la Culture from 1981 to 1988] saw three main tenets to her work on decentralization. First, a politics of general public benefit and interest, by installing permanent troupes in stable theatres that benefited the region and were able to play to wide and diverse publics. Second, that Laurent believed directors had to be chosen with the utmost care and the government must allow them to perform their functions by balancing their directorial liberty and the oversight needed for the government assurances. Third, Laurent held that the responsibilities of the state had to be accomplished with complete dignity, equality, and when necessary neutrality.[698] These points were clearly attested to in the body of Laurent's writings and work.

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[694] Denizot, *Jeanne Laurent*, 45–47, 57; Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 135–158.

[695] Denizot, *Jeanne Laurent*, 87–88; Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 255–265, 342–348.

[696] Nord, *France's New Deal,* 14–20; Gumplowicz and Klein, *Paris 1944–1954. Artistes, intellectuels, publics; la culture comme enjeu*, 8–14.

[697] The movement of Frances's government away from the Resistance towards the right and its impact in the arts, especially at the RTLN has been outlined in previous chapters, see also Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III: 1945–1958)*, 30–32, 51–60; Jon Cowans, "French Public Opinion and the Founding of the Fourth Republic," *French Historical Studies* 17, no. 1 (Spring, 1991): 63; Nord, *France's New Deal*, 14–19, 205, 217; Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, 54–57; Bradby, *Modern French Drama 1940–1980*, 87–88.

[698] Denizot, *Jeanne Laurent*, 11.

The requirements for the decentralization plan Laurent envisioned were developed in part at meetings of the committee on operatic decentralization which was headed by Jacques Jaujard [Directeur Générale des Arts et Lettres in the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, who was Laurent's direct boss]. The earliest set of minutes held at the National Archives in Paris date to 4 July 1946, about a month before the official law on decentralization was released. The original plans were ambitious and envisioned the eventual creation of centers like those in the dramatic decentralization plan.[699] However, instead of independent regional centers as were created for dramatic decentralization, the operatic decentralization plan was linked to already existing municipal theatres with all their history and complexity.

There was also much discussion at these early meetings about how the decentralized operatic theatres would relate to the RTLN and the Paris stages. Some, like Reynaldo Hahn, believed it would be an important consecration if the works premiered in the provinces were brought to Paris, which did eventually become an important aspect of the plan. Jaujard, true to his centralization tendencies, suggested instead that premieres take place in Paris and then travel to the cites.[700] At the next meeting on 25 July 1946 the Ministère des Finances weighed in; they sent a proposal to unite the orchestras in each city. This would involve creating one enlarged orchestra with eighty-eight members who would serve the theatre, radio, and symphony. They believed this would save money. The proposal was met with resistance, especially from the Fédération Nationale du Spectacle, and did not make it into the August law.[701]

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[699] Commission de la Décentralisation lyrique Procès-Verbal," 4 July 1946, in "Spectacles et musique. Tome 1 (XIXe–XXe siècle)," *cote*. F/21/5204, "Décentralisation lyrique," in Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

[700] "Commission de la Décentralisation lyrique Procès-Verbal," 4 July 1946, in "Spectacles et musique. Tome 1 (XIXe–XXe siècle)," *cote*. F/21/5204, "Décentralisation lyrique," in Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine; Goetschel, *Renouveau et décentralisation du théâtre*, 62.

[701] "Commission de la Décentralisation lyrique Procès-Verbal," 25 July 1946, in "Spectacles et musique. Tome 1 (XIXe–XXe siècle)," *cote*. F/21/5204, "Décentralisation lyrique," in Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

The terms of receiving the approximately twelve-million-franc subvention destined for the cities selected to participate in operatic decentralization were clearly outlined in the law of 17 August 1946. The requirements were substantial, especially for theatres in cities hard-hit by the war and Occupation. The organizers of decentralization were committed to hiring artists by the year, a choice they argued would increase artistic quality as well as help artists make a proper living.[702] The law also asked for significant increases in the numbers of artistic personnel, for similar reasons. However, this increase caused large problems. Like at the RTLN, personnel expenses became huge burdens for these theatres as the state and the unions negotiated ever increasing pay-rates in line with the rising costs across France.[703] The law also made provision for a marked increase in state supervision at these regional operas. The state had a major role in selection of directors, financial oversight, inspections, and selection of repertoire.

Table 5.1: Arrête of 17 August 1946[704]

1	The city's support cannot decrease, the state subvention is for the additional needs of decentralization.
2	Directors must be chosen from the ministry list of candidates. Cities and the Fédération Nationale du Spectacle will be represented on the committee that creates the list.
3	By June 15th the program, budget, and artist contracts must be submitted to the ministry. The decentralization committee and ministry will return an opinion by the end of June.
4	Cities must allow the appointed inspector access to assess the quality of programs and the adherence to the *cahier des charges.*
5–10	Financial Control: Budgets must be submitted to the ministry of finance by October 15th the year before they apply; details on how to categorize and itemize the budget; any irregularities can result in loss of subvention
11	Minimum staffing requirements to be employed for full-year terms: Directorial staff, 11; Orchestra, 60; Choir, 52; Dancers, 30
12–16	Number of services per month/week and pay rates of different categories

[702] "Commission de la Décentralisation lyrique Procès-Verbal," 25 July 1946, in "Spectacles et musique. Tome 1 (XIXe–XXe siècle)," *cote*. F/21/5204, "Décentralisation lyrique," in Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine; "Arrete, Le Ministre de la jeunesse, des arts et des lettres," undated, in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Décentralisation lyrique budget," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(5), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

[703] Agid and Tarondeau, *L'Opéra de Paris. Gouverner une grande institution culturelle*, 49, 75–80.

[704] "Arrete, Le Ministre de la jeunesse, des arts et des lettres," undated, in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Décentralisation lyrique budget," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(5), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

17	At least 20 artists must be hired for full year for the permanent troupe, contract must include artist working at other theatres in region, no artist can write into their contract a refusal to learn new roles. Directors must come to the opera and opera-comique competitions at the Conservatoire to help recruit younger artists.
18–20	Children's, dance, and choir schools that must be formed as a part of the theatre and its operations.
21	Theatre must either present a reprise of a French work not done on their stage in at least 8 years or a French work they have never done at that theatre. Composer must be consulted about casting and conductors, and must be attend at least 3 rehearsals. If the state will help finance, the new work must be submitted to the ministry for consideration.
22	The inspector or his delegate may come at any time.
23	If this contract is not respected, in part or in full, the subvention can be revoked.

The original state subvention was set at approximately 12 million francs per city. The idea was that the state and city would each cover half the deficit for each theatre. But in 1946 this was already beginning to not be true. At the July meeting, Lyon presented its budget: 69 million in expenses, 20 million from sales, 15 million from the state, and 12 million from Lyon, which left a 10-million-franc deficit the city had to cover making their contribution total 22 million.[705] The state was covering 30% of their deficit not 50%. The budgets would never come this close to the ideal again. In Strasbourg in 1947 the deficit was over 40 million, but the state subvention only covered about 33%. In 1948 the state subvention covered slightly less at 30% of the deficit. In Marseille, in 1947 the deficit was nearly 53 million francs and the state covered 26% of this. In 1948, the deficit sharply increased to nearly 79 million francs (likely because Marseille so strictly applied the *cahier des charges* that Strasbourg was not fully held to), and the state

[705] "Commission de la Décentralisation lyrique Procès-Verbal," 25 July 1946, in "Spectacles et musique. Tome 1 (XIXe–XXe siècle)," *cote*. F/21/5204, "Décentralisation lyrique," in Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

covered less than 20%.[706] For reference, before applying the *cahier des charges* Marseille's deficit for the 1945–1946 season (9 months that year) was just over 16 million.[707]

The state subventions became a smaller and smaller percentage of the overall operating budgets of the municipal theatres, and these numbers are available over a longer span of time. For example, in Strasbourg the subvention went from 25% of their overall operating budget to 13% in 1950, and by 1955 it was less than 1% of the overall budget. Costs had skyrocketed: in Strasbourg in 1945 the overall budget was just over 41 million and by 1950 it was over 125 million francs.[708] These increasing numbers however did not correlate to increased spending power or more luxurious productions. The percentage of the budget taken up by personnel costs held very steady ranging in Strasbourg from 74% to 79% of total operations—a number very similar to the percentages seen at the RTLN.[709]

It was not that theatres were getting particularly careless with their money, showing radically more works, or creating overly expensive productions. Costs in France were rising along with inflation.[710] Because of the this, the theatres not only had to pay more for materials but also faced tense negotiations with the artists unions who sought to keep their pay

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706 Maurice Bertrand, "Note sur la poplitique [sic] de décentralisation lyrique et dramatique," pg 6, in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Décentralisation lyrique divers réports," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(4), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

707 Note "Décentralisation lyrique" Marseille, 24 November 1950, "Opéra: fonctionnement 1905–1953," *cote.* 614W 28, in "Direction des Beaux-Arts," in Archives de la Ville de Marseille, Marseille, France.

708 See the budgets preserved in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 394, "Budget et comptabilité 1945–1950," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

709 See the budgets preserved in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 394, "Budget et comptabilité 1945–1950," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg; for the RTLN see Agid and Tarondeau, *L'Opéra de Paris. Gouverner une grande institution culturelle*, 49, 75–80; "Réponse à la note du 2 Mai 1952 du Ministère de l'Éducation nationale," 5 May 1952, in Archives Opéra, "Plan d'économies à réaliser 1952," *cote.* 20-1144, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

710 Alessandra Casella and Barry Eichengreen, "Halting Inflation in Italy and France after the Second World War," in Michael D. Bordo and Forrest Capie, eds. *Monetary Regimes in Transition* (Cambridge, En.: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 315–317.

commensurate with the rising cost of living. However, the state was unwilling and unable to adjust their subventions to keep pace with these changes.[711] The ideal that the state invest equally with the city was quickly abandoned. Despite the real decrease in the support of the state, the requirements in the *cahier des charges* outlined in the August 1946 law were not substantially changed. The cities were saddled with the huge requirements of the state but left out to dry when it came time to pay for these requirements. Despite already being concerned about the low state subvention, in February 1947 Marseille, Lille, Lyon, Toulouse, Nantes, and Bordeaux formally accepted the *cahier des charges.*[712]

The Beginnings of the Plan in Marseille and Strasbourg

In the early days of decentralization, cities were eager to join and hopeful for its success. Marseille, was the second largest city in France and had an established and important opera. Its further distance from Paris prevented it from having to compete too closely with the RTLN and the theatres in Paris. Marseille was one of the original cities to sign onto the project, and one of the cities able to maintain adherence to the heavy *cahier des charges* the longest. By May 1946 the city administration of Marseille had been in talks with the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale (and its counterpart under the provisional government which controlled France from the Liberation until the formation of the Fourth Republic in 1946) for over a year. Marseille wanted an increased subvention, and as they heard about the formation of the decentralization plan they took steps to ensure they would qualify. For the 1945 to 1946 season, which had been nine

[711] See the minutes of the committee on decentralization for discussions of the insufficiency of state funds, in "Commission de la Décentralisation lyrique Procès-Verbal," 25 July 1946, 27 February 1947, 17 December 1947, 9 October 1948, 9 December 1948, in "Spectacles et musique. Tome 1 (XIXe–XXe siècle)," *cote*. F/21/5204, "Décentralisation lyrique," in Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

[712] "Commission de la Décentralisation lyrique Procès-Verbal," 27 February 1947, in "Spectacles et musique. Tome 1 (XIXe–XXe siècle)," *cote*. F/21/5204, "Décentralisation lyrique," in Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

months in Marseille, they had run a 11,722,718-franc deficit and received 500,000 in a state subvention.[713] In their May 1946 letter, Marseille outlined their continued efforts by detailing their new choir school, plans for a dance school, and plans for expansion of their season—all future requirements of decentralization. They already exceeded the required personnel numbers for the orchestra, choirs, and dancers that would be outlined in the 1947 decentralization plan.

Marseille had the distinct advantage that its opera had not permanently closed, been annexed like Strasbourg, and or destroyed like the opera house in Rouen. The war damages to the theatre seem to have amounted to some broken glass.[714] From 1941 to 1945 the opera had been directed by Paul Bastide (who had previously directed Strasbourg), who ran it as at his own financial peril and even managed to sometimes turn a profit with the enterprise.[715] Marseille transitioned into a fully municipal-run opera in 1945, and for its first four years was directed by Jean Marny. The post was then assumed by Michel Leduc from 1949 to 1961.[716] The seasons presented operas, opéras-comiques, the ever-popular operettes, and choreographic pieces. The summer seasons were often performed in the outdoor Théâtre Silvain.[717] In 1947, in a printed gala program Edouard Lieutier [adjoint à l'Instruction Publique et aux Beaux-Arts in Marseille] celebrated the addition of Marseille to the decentralization program. He argued the change was so much more than just an administrative one:

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713 Letter Préfet Administrateur de la Ville de Marseille to Ministre de l'Éducation nationale, 15 May 1946, in "Spectacles et musique. Tome 1 (XIXe–XXe siècle)," *cote*. F/21/5204, "Décentralisation lyrique," in Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

714 Marseille, *Divines divas … et vivat l'opéra!,* 106.

715 Note "Resultats financiers des gestions théâtrales," 14 February 1945, "Opéra: fonctionnement 1905–1953," *cote.* 614W 27, in "Direction des Beaux-Arts," in Archives de la Ville de Marseille, Marseille, France.

716 Frédéric Ducros, "1945–1985: Quarante années de théâtre lyrique à Marseille," in Pistone, ed. *Le Théâtre lyrique français 1945–1985*, 329.

717 Ibid., 330.

> It is the climax of a total transformation of the structure of our great operatic stage. Marseille has always been proud of its opera. The Beauvau hall has been, for a century and a half, the most beautiful hall in the provinces and able already to rival the Paris national stages.[718]

The change to having the theatre directly run by the municipality, he argued, reflected Marseille's belief that the opera was a public good and should be run to all the citizens' benefit. Lieutier also highlighted that the plan supported additional schools for children, for choir singing, and for dance which provided tuition-free education in their city. All this would contribute to making Marseille "an important cultural and artistic center" ["un important centre culturel et artistique"] worthy of its status as the second largest city in France.[719]

Marseille's theater produced fifty-seven different works (including operettes) in the 1947–1948 season, totaling over 190 performances.[720] For comparison the Opéra in Paris produced about fifty different works (but not operettes) and had over 390 performances.[721] Luckily the *cahier des charges* did not hold the decentralization theatres to alternating works every night like was required at the Paris Opéra, which was very difficult and expensive. Instead Marseille offered two extended-runs of operettes, which were more profitable and required less labor than the schedule of rotating operas they offered the rest of the year. The operatic repertoire was very similar to that offered at the RTLN theatres, and focused on works well-known to the audiences rather than new premieres or reprises of forgotten masterworks.

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[718] "C'est l'aboutissement d'une transformation totale de la structure de notre grande scène lyrique. Marseille a toujours été fière de son Opéra. La salle Beauvau était, il y a un siècle et demi, la plus belle salle de province et pouvait déjà rivaliser avec les scènes nationales de Paris." Quoted in Marseille, *Divines divas … et vivat l'opéra!*, 108.

[719] Ibid., 108.

[720] "1947–1961 Opéra: Registre des recettes des spectacles," *cote.* 614W 52, in "Direction des Beaux-Arts" in Archives de la Ville de Marseille, Marseille, France.

[721] For simplicity and accuracy, these figures count each work as a different performance, even if they occurred in the same evening's program.

Strasbourg was also eager to be included in the decentralization plan, and many considered the reestablishment of artistic life in this region (along with the reassertion of the French language after their German annexation during the war) to be a pivotal part of France's post-war recovery. The Ministère de l'Éducation nationale was interested in investing, through subventions, in the arts in the region of Alsace-Lorraine to help with their revival after the German annexation and Strasbourg benefited from this initiative.[722] People were deeply devoted to the restoration of French language and culture; the French language and Alsatian dialect had been banned in schools during the Occupation.[723] After the Liberation, attempts were made to limit the use of German, including a poster campaign "It's cool to speak French" ["C'est chic de parler français"].[724] [Figure 5.2] There is a copy of this poster preserved in the Strasbourg Municipal archives, the proponents of the campaign wrote to request it be hung in the dressing area of the municipal theatre. The mayor refused as the artists already spoke French and he thought the poster might been seen as unfortunately similar to signs that had promoted German during the Occupation.[725]

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[722] See letter sous-Directeur chargé des Services d'Architecture, des Arts et des Lettres du Mas-Rhin, du Haut-Rhin et de la Moselle to Major of Strasbourg, 8 June 1945, and internal note "Subvention de l'Etat pour le Théâtre," 8 August 1945, both in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote*. 180 MW 391, "Subventions de l'Etat 1945–1950," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[723] Vogler, *l'après-guerre à Strasbourg : Vie quotidienne, intégration à la France, ouverture à l'Europe*, 47.

[724] Ibid., 47.

[725] Letter Mayor of Marseille to Fédération du Spectacle, Syndicat des Artistes des Chœurs Groupe Strasbourg, 23 January 1946, in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote*. 180 MW 519, "Divers 1945–1950," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

Figure 5.2: Poster "C'est chic de parler français"[726]

Paul Bastide left Marseille in 1945 and returned to his previous post at the Strasbourg opera, which he had held from 1919 to 1939 before the war and Occupation interrupted.[727] With the experienced Bastide one again behind the wheel the season was off and running, already in 1945 Strasbourg was granted special subventions to support their French premiere of Berlioz's *Beatrice et Benedict.*[728] This production was particularly important in order to reclaim Berlioz's image back from the Germans who attempted to coopt his music as Germanic and as linking French and German cultures.[729] The 1945–1946 season was able to be a full season with 154

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[726] Poster in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote*. 180 MW 519, "Divers 1945–1950," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

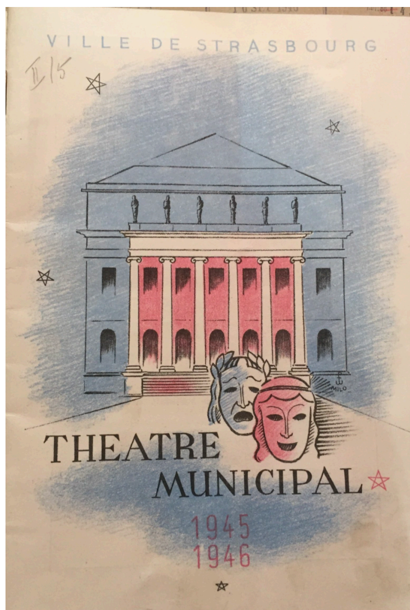
[727] Vogler, *l'après-guerre à Strasbourg: Vie quotidienne, intégration à la France, ouverture à l'Europe*, 143.

[728] Letter Jaujard to Mayor of Strasbourg, 21 October 1945, in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote*. 180 MW 391, "Subventions d'Etat 1945–1950," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg; letter Lucien Darras to Mayor of Strasbourg, 25 Jan 1946, in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote*. 180 MW 519, "Divers 1945–1950," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[729] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 45–46, 58–59, 72–76, 109–114, 121–123.

performances of opera, opera-comique, operettes, and dance.[730] The cover art for the season booklet was a patriotic tricolor drawing of the façade of the Municipal Theatre. Inside a note from Bastide celebrated that Strasbourg through hard work and the patronage of the public powers had regained its place at the head of French operatic stages.[731] [Figure 5.3] The theatre's good physical condition and the return of a seasoned director helped Strasbourg restart its operatic theatre more quickly than other cities, despite having been annexed during the German Occupation.

Figure 5.3: Strasbourg 1945–1946 Program[732]



The season did have a little bit of a rocky start with a poorly reviewed production of *Carmen*; the quality of the singers disappointed reviewers. Zed (the pen-name for Henri Weill) writing for *Les Dernières nouvelles d'Alsace* wrote that instead of celebrating Bizet, he pitied

[730] Letter Mayor of Strasbourg to Préfet du Bas-Rhin, 27 June 1946, in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," cote 180 MW 394, "Budget et comptabilité 1945–1950," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[731] 1945–1946 program in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote*. 180 MW 515, "Imprimés, affiches, programmes 1945–1955," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[732] Ibid.

him.[733] The next performance, *La Fille du Tambour-major,* was greeted more favorably, overall in these early performances the quality of the singers was the main subject of debate.[734] Zed was willing to give the new decentralization plans some of the credit for the quality of art in Strasbourg; he praised the visit of the Opéra-Comique troupe who performed *Le Roi malgré lui* in October 1945:

> I am pleased to decompose this word [decentralization] which, until now, has always seemed to me like a joke. Very humbly, I proclaim a 'mea culpa'. But truly, we had nattered on about decentralization for many long years, this word has been spoken, has been printed, has been overused! And so, decentralization is no longer a sham. Bravo, Bravissimo.[735]

But others had their doubts about the project, Jean Guinand penned an article about a decentralization conference taking place in Strasbourg in January 1946 and opened by writing "something is changing in the kingdom of Denmark, excuse me, I mean to say in the French Republic" ["Il y a quelque chose de change dans [*sic*] le royaume de Danemark, pardon, je veux dire dans la République Française"].[736] While he praised some aspects of the project, he feared that decentralization might prove actually quite centralizing.

Despite these doubts in the press, in March 1947 the Syndicat national des acteurs [National performer's union] wrote to Jaujard in order to make the case for Strasbourg's further

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[733] Zed, "Réouverture au Théâtre municipal *Carmen* de Georges Bizet," *Les Dernières nouvelles d'Alsace,* 17 October 1945.

[734] Henry Berton, "*La Fille du Tambour-major* fait oublier *Carmen*," *Journal d'Alsace,* 19 October 1945.

[735] "il me plaît de décomposer ce mot [décentralisation] qui, jusqu'ici, m'avait toujours fait l'effet d'une bonne blague. Très humblement, je proclame mon 'mea culpa'. Mais vraiment, s'était-on gargarisé de décentralisation et pendant de longues années, ce mot l'avait-on prononcé, l'avait-on imprimé, l'avait-on galvaudé ! Ainsi, la décentralisation n'est plus un bobard. Bravo, Bravissimo." Zed, "*Le Roi Malgré lui* en préséance de M. Capitant ministre de l'Éducation nationale et du général Kœnig commandant en chef des troupes françaises d'occupation," *Les Dernières nouvelles d'Alsace,* 28 October 1945.

[736] Jean Guinand, "La Décentralisation artistique en Alsace a fait l'object d'une conference au Commissariat de la République, à Strasbourg," *Les Dernières nouvelles,* 19 January 1946.

integration into the decentralization plan. Strasbourg, located in the recently annexed Alsace was on the north of the eastern border of France, and had about one-third as many residents as Marseille. In their opinion, Strasbourg was a city of as much importance (if not more) to French operatic theatre as any of the other six cities of decentralization, and already hired much of its staff for the full year. It would be in the interest of operatic art (and, of course, the union) if Strasbourg were to benefit from a larger state subvention and hire its singers and dancers for the year like the rest of its staff.[737] No doubt, had decentralization expanded in the manner originally planned Strasbourg would have been at the top of the list to be added. However, the funds available for decentralization while 'increased' until 1949, actually represented a smaller and smaller portion of the cities' deficits, and the plan could not take on more cities as had been anticipated.

Life Outside of the Plan: Rouen

Rouen was not able to join the decentralization plan as it was conceived in 1946, and instead was largely on its own until joining a new decentralization plan in 1956. This was no doubt in part because of its proximity to Paris, Rouen is about two-hours north-west of the city in the Normandy region, and because of its smaller population. The resilience of operatic theatre in this particular city makes it a worthy case-study and an interesting comparison with cities that benefited from and took on the burdens of the original decentralization plan. The Théâtre des Arts de Rouen, where the operatic seasons had been held each year before the war, had been

[737] Letter Noguera and Chastenet to Jaujard, 26 March 1947, in "Spectacles et musique. Tome 1 (XIXe–XXe siècle)," *cote*. F/21/5204, "Décentralisation lyrique," in Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

damaged in 1940 by fire when the Germans occupied Rouen, and destroyed in 1944 by Anglo-American bombs after the Normandy landing during the struggle to liberate France.[738]

From 1945 to 1962 the operatic seasons had to take place in an alternate venue, the Cirque de Rouen, until the Théâtre des Arts was rebuilt. (During the war there were some performances at the insistence of the German occupiers, which also took place at the Cirque due to the damages at the Théâtre des Arts.)[739] Additionally, the décors of the Théâtre des Arts were destroyed along with the theatre during the war, meaning much had to be rebuilt.[740] This period in Rouen's operatic history has sometimes been overlooked. But while the physical Théâtre des Arts disappeared, its seasons did not. Bénédicte Percheron completed an important reconstruction and reevaluation of this part of the theatre's history in her 2002 master's thesis, which remains the most thorough text on the operatic seasons housed at the Cirque de Rouen from 1945 to 1962. She has also recently produced a book chapter on the subject.[741]

The Cirque de Rouen was the only large performance space to survive the war in Rouen, and thus was the most logical spot to host the operatic seasons of the Théâtre des Arts while they awaited reconstruction of the theatre. (The Cirque was not merely a circular theatre, but a circus with a ring and attached horse stables.) This took seventeen years; despite its long and important history in Rouen, the Théâtre des Arts was not rebuilt until 1962.[742] Paul Douai had been the

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[738] Christain Goubault, "Les Creations lyriques au Théâtre des Arts de Rouen (1965–1978)," in Pistone, ed. *Le Théâtre lyrique français 1945–1985*, 359.

[739] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 25–26.

[740] Ibid., 45.

[741] Bénédicte Percheron, "Une parenthèse dans l'histoire du Théâtre des Arts de Rouen: Le Cirque (1941–1962)," in eds. Joann Élart and Yannick Simon, *Nouvelles perspectives sur les spectacles en province (XVIIIe-XXe siècle)* (Rouen, France: Presses Universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2018).

[742] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 5.

director of the Théâtre des Arts de Rouen before its destruction and in 1945 he proposed a "reduced season adapted to circumstances" ["saison lyrique réduite et adaptée aux circonstances"] to the city.[743] The city granted him permission to use the Cirque for a season of approximately twenty performances and offered a small subvention to help with costs. Douai opened the season with a performance of *Carmen* which gathered positive reviews from the press and sold well.[744]

The archives indicate that Douai often was challenged for control of this temporary opera, there are frequent letters from other potential directorial candidates, applications, and discussions with the directorial licensing office.[745] In 1948, seven candidates presented themselves for the position of directing the operatic season at the Cirque.[746] Each year Douai's contract was renewed, giving him an implied vote of confidence from the city. Despite Douai's continued presence, the temporary nature of its buildings and instability of its personnel only engaged for short season would not have made Rouen a strong candidate to join the decentralization scheme. Rouen seems to have only benefited from small occasional state subventions during these early years.[747]

At first the city granted a small 'subvention' which was actually advantages given to the director rather than monetary support: for example, use of the stage, the electrical installations,

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[743] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 26; and letter from Douai to Tissot (Adjoint aux Beaux Arts de la Ville de Rouen), 21 August 1945, in Archives municipales de Rouen, *cote*. 2R6.

[744] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 27.

[745] See Letter Jaujard to Mayor of Rouen, 4 February 1947, Letter Jacky Gaillard to l'Adjoint à l'Instruction Publique, 15 April 1946, Letter Douai to the Mayor of Rouen, 16 April 1946 in Archives municipales de Rouen, *cote*. 2R6.

[746] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 34.

[747] Letter Prèfet de la Seine-Inférieure to the Mayor of Rouen, 12 Dec 1947, in Archives municipales de Rouen, *cote*. 2R6.

the city owned décors and accessories, scores in the municipal library, and the services of a few of the city's machinists and electricians.[748] Later the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale did attribute to Rouen some small subventions, a retroactive one for 1945–1946 of 30,000 francs, and in 1947 they were accorded 50,000 francs.[749] Douai would have likely been very open to participating had conditions been different; he had begun his own decentralization initiative in 1938 that sought to promote exchange and tours both domestically and internationally among French provincial theatres. He even still occasionally wrote on the organization's letter head.[750]

Despite the temporary lodgings, Paul Douai was able to bring quality operatic seasons to the Rouennaise public that were well-received. (Though Percheron suggests that the difficult circumstances led the press to be more indulgent than they had been in the past.)[751] The unusual staging situation at the Cirque did not scare off vocalists luckily, and Douai was able to bring in some of France's most famous singers—something which was vital to most regional stage's success.[752] Perhaps Rouen's proximity to Paris helped to facilitate these exchanges. Douai also focused on traditional repertoire pieces to ensure good sales. When he did venture into more modern or less-well-known repertoire he had to do so at his own risk and without support from the city. The world premiere of *La Dame de Mercoeur* by Marc Berthomieu in 1947 reportedly

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[748] Letter Mayor to Douai, 3 December 1945, in Archives municipales de Rouen, *cote*. 2R6; and Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 31.

[749] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 32; also letter Tissot to the Préfet de la Seine-Inférieure, 27 December 1945, in Archives municipales de Rouen, *cote*. 2R6; and Letter Prèfect de la Seine-Inférieure to Mayor of Rouen, 12 December 1947, in Archives municipales de Rouen, *cote*. 2R6.

[750] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 66; and see Letter Douai to Tissot (Adjoint au Maire de la Ville de Rouen), 26 July 1947, in Archives municipales de Rouen, *cote*. 2R6.

[751] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 64.

[752] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 8; see also "Commission de la Décentralisation lyrique Procès-Verbal," 28 February 1947, in "Spectacles et musique. Tome 1 (XIXe–XXe siècle)," *cote*. F/21/5204, "Décentralisation lyrique," in Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

only attracted thirty-six audience members and made just under 4,000 francs. The performance before it, *Samson et Dalila,* made over 141,000 francs.[753] Operettes sold especially well and were shown frequently to help offset the other performances that were in deficit.[754]

The first real *cahier des charges* for the operatic seasons at the Cirque did not appear until 1947.[755] There were fourteen articles for the direction to follow, the first of which simply outlined the circumstances that had led to the displacement of the operatic season to the Cirque. The other articles made the director responsible for the costs of renting the Cirque, and also summarized the personnel the city would offer the director at no charge. The season was defined as running from 15 January to 30 April 1947, and that it should contain twenty performances of opera or opera-comique—shows beyond this were at the director's own risk and without subvention. For each performance the city would participate to a maximum of 100,000 francs. The orchestra had to have 45 musicians, the choir 40 singers, and the ballet needed to have 13 dancers, and all had to be of quality or the city would terminate the contract. In the orchestra, professors at the Conservatoire were to be given priority and used whenever possible. Vocally, often the leading roles were sung by singers hired only for a handful of performances from the Opéra and Opéra-Comique, though this was not stipulated in this contract.[756]

There was a mandatory financial control, overseen by the city, and the director had to carry insurance against accidents. Ticket prices were set in agreement with the city, and certain seats had to be held for the government and school children. Additionally, some seats had to be offered a half price for the Jeunesses musicales de France (JMF) and families with at least three

[753] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 47; and see the Annex volume to the same, pg. 27.

[754] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 48.

[755] Ibid., 38.

[756] Ibid., 42.

children.[757] JMF was a music education initiative founded under Vichy that sought to present great works with scholarly commentary widely to French youth.[758] Tickets for the expensive seats in Rouen were in general about half the price of the expensive seats at the Paris Opéra, however the most economical seats were nearly the same price as those at the Opéra.[759] Exceptionally the tickets as the Cirque could be raised by fifty-percent for particularly costly or special productions, as was also common practice at the RTLN.[760]

The Cirque was certainly not a traditional operatic venue; performances, staging, mise-en-scène, rehearsals, everything about the life of the theatre had to adapt to the new space. A collapsible stage took over one-third of the circus ring and extended into some of the seating and one of the exit paths.[761] The orchestra was placed in the ring in front of the stage, and the rest of the ring was occupied by audience chairs. [Figure 5.4] Behind the scenes was perhaps even more challenging than the front of house. Hallways or odd rooms had to make do as dressing areas, costume storage, decors storage, and everything that normally took place in the extensive wings of a theatre.[762] While revisions to make the Cirque more suitable for these types of performances were considered, since it was only ever considered a temporary venue the credits were rejected in favor of more pressing projects.[763] Douai eventually decided to take advantage of his unusual

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[757] "Conditions de participation de la ville dans l'exploitation, Saison lyrique 1947," in Archives municipales de Rouen, *cote*. 2R6; and Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 38–39.

[758] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 330.

[759] For Rouen see Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 40; see RTLN ticket prices in their archives, Archives Opéra, "Lettres adressées par la Direction des Beaux-Arts à l'administrateur de l'Opéra, 1945–1955," *cote.* 20-1950 through 20-1960, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[760] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 41.

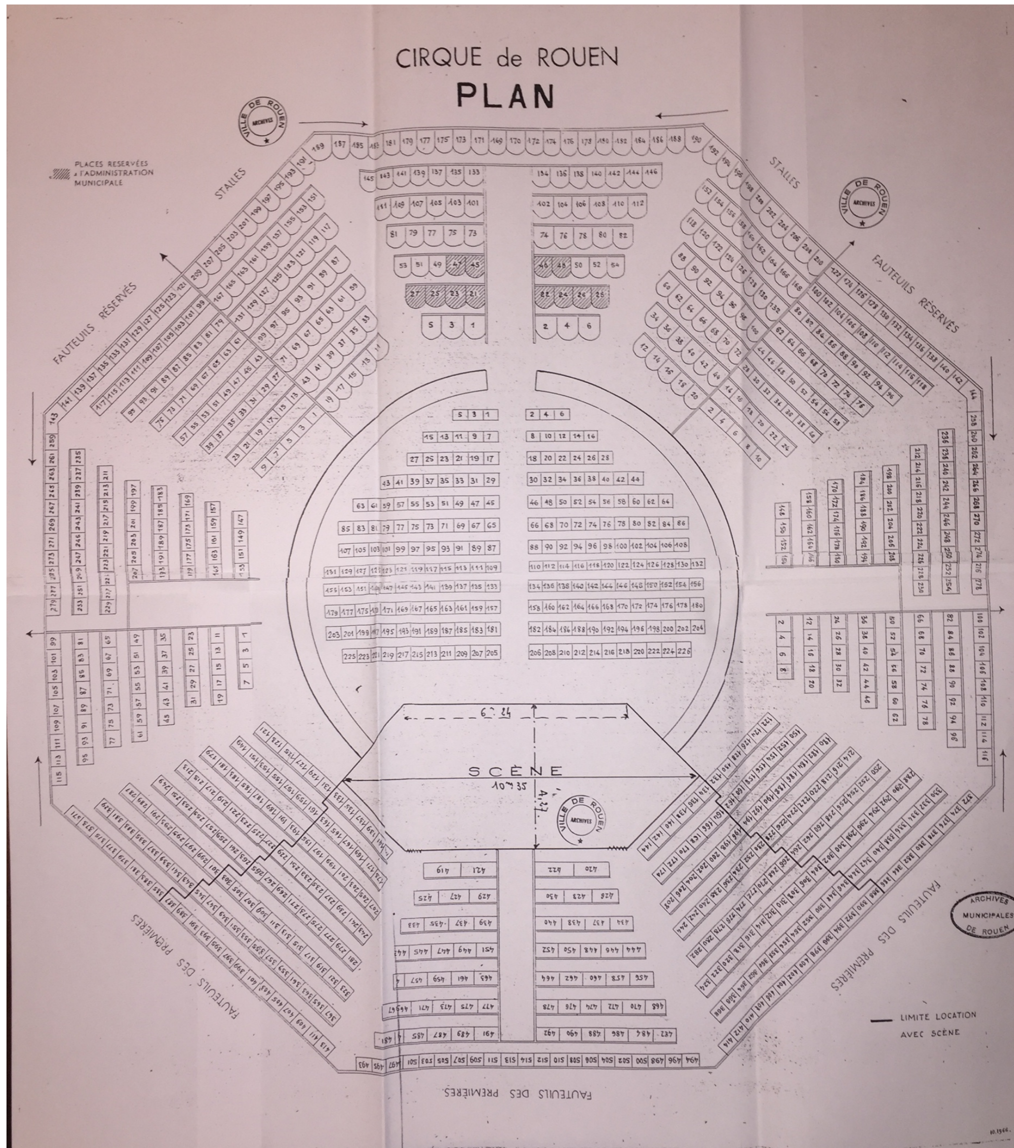
[761] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 27; and the Annex of the same, 13.

[762] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 28–30.

[763] Ibid., 28.

venue and used not only the stage but also the ring in creative mise-en-scène schemes, though this was predominantly for operettes rather than the operatic repertoire.[764]

Figure 5.4: Cirque de Rouen, Floor Plan[765]



Unusual, especially outdoor, venues were popular at this time throughout France. In Rouen, Douai staged a production of Honegger's *Jeanne au Bûcher* in front of the Palais de

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[764] Ibid., 49–50.

[765] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 27; and the Annex of the same, 13.

Justice, and Planquette's *Les Cloches de Corneville* at the chateau de Dieppe.[766] Later in 1956 the premiere of Henri Tomasi's *Triomphe de Jeanne* was performed on the banks of the Seine.[767] In 1948, Marseille decided to begin a program of outdoor performances beyond those already held in its summer opera-air venue the Théâtre Silvain. The mayor's office wrote to the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale that these performances were part of:

> our efforts tending towards the decentralization and popularization of operatic art, the city of Marseille plans to organize, during the summer season […] a series of popular performances in various locations of the city with the best of open air performances.[768]

This effort began with two performances of Massenet's *Jongleur de Notre-Dame* in front of the Cathedral in Marseille.[769]

In the summer of 1951 Marseille put an entire production of the operette *Une Nuit à Venise* floating on the lake in the Parc Borély. The archives attest to the huge effort this required, and coordination with the park's service—who were not pleased with the damage done to the park. There was also a significant risk that inclement weather could force the production back inside the theater and cause all of their work and preparations to be wasted—as was a risk for all these outdoor venues. The production team visited Lausanne where a similar aquatic

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[766] Ibid., 49.

[767] "A la pointe de l'île Lacroix où sera joué *Le Triomphe de Jeanne* Henri Tomasi et Albert Beaucamp ont anticipé hier ce grand spectacle," *Paris-Normandie,* 1 June 1956.

[768] "ses efforts tendant à la décentralisation et la vulgarisation de l'Art Lyrique, la Ville de Marseille a projeté d'organiser, pendant la saison d'été, […] une série de manifestations populaires sur divers points de la Ville se prêtant le mieux à des spectacles de plein air." Letter Mayor of Marseille to Ministre de l'Éducation nationale, 8 July 1948, "Théâtres activités 1929–1952," *cote.* 614W 24, in "Direction des Beaux-Arts," in Archives de la Ville de Marseille, Marseille, France.

[769] Letter Mayor of Marseille to Ministre de l'Éducation nationale, 8 July 1948, in "Théâtres activités 1929–1952," *cote.* 614W 24, in "Direction des Beaux-Arts," in Archives de la Ville de Marseille, Marseille, France.

performance of the operette had already been mounted.[770] These productions were probably in part the municipal theater's response to the growing popularity of outdoor summer festivals, both for dramatic and operatic works, and an attempt to capitalize on this trend.[771] Mass performances of this format also had to be reclaimed from their association with similar performances held under the Vichy regime.[772]

Decentralization Weakens: Inspections and the Rightward Shift in France

While cities were still attempting to join into and implement the decentralization plan, the budget was already in danger of being slashed. In July 1947, Jean-Fernand Audeguil (a member of the Socialist party, representative for Bordeaux at the National Assembly, and until October that year also mayor of Bordeaux) stood up in the National Assembly to defend the decentralization plan and argue against a proposed budget cuts that would have eliminated nearly one-third of the decentralization funds. This economy of funds would cost France dearly in the long run, he argued, as they were essential to the protection and propagation of the musical patrimony.[773]

It is worth remembering that right around this time was the announcement of the American aid package known as the Marshall Plan, the funds from which were so important to

[770] See advertising flyer, also "Note pour Monsieur l'Adjoint délégué à la Santé Publique," 26 June 1951, also "Note pour Monsieur le Secrétaire général de l'Opéra," 25 June 1951, also "Note pour Monsieur l'Adjoint délégué aux plantations," 18 June 1951, also "Voyage à Lausanne de MM. Leduc, Magne, et Ciccalini," 24 April 1951, all in "Théâtres activités 1929–1952," *cote.* 614W 24, in "Direction des Beaux-Arts," in Archives de la Ville de Marseille, Marseille, France.

[771] Laurent, *La République et les beaux-arts*, 122; Pistone, ed. *Le Théâtre lyrique français 1945–1985*, 401.

[772] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 33, 136, 148.

[773] "Assemblée Nationale, 3e séance du 22 julliet 1947," pages 3373–3375, 22 July 1947, in "Spectacles et musique. Tome 1 (XIXe–XXe siècle)," *cote*. F/21/5204, "Décentralisation lyrique," in Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

the French economy and Monnet's Plan. The Americans expected a thorough accounting of how their money was being used in France. The entire budget came under scrutiny and, of course, the arts budgets were often the subject of debate.[774] However, Audeguil, as a socialist, supported public initiatives like decentralization. His city, Bordeaux, benefited directly from the subvention of the state, and their budget was being negatively impacted by the costs associated with the *cahier des charges* they had accepted that the state was now underfunding. The left in France was steadily losing power as the government coalitions shifted back towards the center and right. Even through the socialists were still in the majority in 1947—along with Christian democrats (MRP), the Radicals, and the UDSR—they were being forced by their alliances to move further towards the center.[775] Therefore, Audeguil only had so much clout to defend the decentralization project against its detractors.

Very shortly after the decentralization plan was established the inspections began—the funding had to be justified with results in the state's eyes. Amable Massis (l'Inspecteur général de l'Enseignement musical, and founder of the Troyes conservatoire in 1920) visited the various cities and reported back to the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale. In June 1948, Massis inspected Marseille. He was joined by André Boll, a metteur en scène and music critic, and Duprez, who examined the dance offerings.[776] His findings were generally not positive. In particular, Massis was not impressed by Marseille's current administrator, Marny. He argued Marny was unqualified for the post—Marny had been a singer but had little directorial

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[774] Nord, *France's New Deal*, 108–111; Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 51.

[775] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 52–60; Cowans, "French Public Opinion and the Founding of the Fourth Republic," 63.

[776] Massis, Boll, and Duprez, "Inspection de l'Opéra de Marseille 25-26-27 juin 1948," 25–27 June 1948, in "Spectacles et musique. Tome 1 (XIXe–XXe siècle)," *cote*. F/21/5204, "Décentralisation lyrique," in Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

experience. André Boll's report agreed and argued Marny mostly assessed artistry through the money a work made. However, Boll praised the municipal administrator Magne who had been there for more than two-decades and was in his opinion committed to artistic quality. Marny's struggles were likely compounded by the fact, like at the RTLN, the opera in Marseille was dealing with a transition into a fully government-run theatre rather than a semi-private concession.[777]

Massis also found deficiencies with the quality of musical performance, even the rehearsal pianos were greatly out of tune. The inspectors saw an operette, *M'mselle Nitouche* by Hervé, which Massis estimated only contained 30% of the original work, the rest was interpolated new music. They also saw an open-air performance of *Faust* that was just adequate in their opinions. Both Massis and Boll believed works were under-rehearsed and recommended a reduction in the number of the works being offered each season in order to have more time to dedicate to their quality. As referenced above, in the 1947–1948 season Marseille produced a wider variety of works than even the Opéra in Paris. Marny seems to have objected strongly to the report, but only Massis's rebuttals to Marny's complains remain in the archive.[778]

Marny was also disparaged in the press; two articles deeply critical of his directorship appeared in the journal *l'Accent* in early 1949 both penned by Jos. Corbeto. Corbeto blamed Marny for the large deficit at the theatre, and asserted Marny ran the theatre poorly. The article also formally withdrew his work *Vendetta* from the city because of major delays and problems with its premiere and production—also Marny's fault according to Corbeto.[779] His second article

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[777] Segond, *L'Opéra de Marseille 1787–1987*, 86.

[778] Massis, Note, 4 October 1948, and letter Massis to Ministre de l'Éducation nationale, 24 June 1948, in "Spectacles et musique. Tome 1 (XIXe–XXe siècle)," *cote.* F/21/5204, "Décentralisation lyrique," in Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

[779] Jos. Corbeto, "Lettre ouverte à M. le Maire de la cite phoceenne," *l'Accent,* 20 March 1949.

described the debates over the future of the theatre, and attempts to maintain the status-quo there, as “a waltz of millions… continued” [“la valse des millions… continuerait!”].[780] Lack of clear conviction and a strong director doomed the theatre, in Corbeto’s opinion, to continue to waste millions of francs.

Massis’s report was a precursor for a larger review of the results of decentralization. Maurice Bertrand, Auditeur à la cour des comptes, submitted his findings on the progress of the overall operatic decentralization project in 1948, and his report caused quite a stir.[781] He echoed an earlier report from May 1947 (mere months after the initial decentralization laws had been passed and the cities agreed to their conditions), that had concluded thus far operatic decentralization had not proved worth its cost. Bertrand went a step further arguing in its current form, operatic decentralization was on the path for “certain failure” [“un échec certain”].[782] While decentralization was supposed to be about the premiere of regional artistic centers, according to Bertrand it corresponded in reality to “an extension of the control of the central administration” [“une extension du contrôle de l’administration centrale”].[783]

Bertrand highlighted what he termed the ‘heavy conditions’ that were demanded in return for the state subvention and concluded that the plan was far costlier than the current numbers made it appear. He reasoned that the return on investment was not sufficient for the costs, and

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[780] Jos. Corbeto, “La question de l’Opéra Municipal,” *l’Accent,* 27 February 1949.

[781] Goetschel mentions the importance of this report, and Bertrand’s second report in 1949, to the eventual abandonment of the decentralization project, see Goetschel, *Renouveau et décentralisation du théâtre,* 79–82.

[782] Maurice Bertrand, “Note sur la poplitique [sic] de décentralisation lyrique et dramatique,” in fonds Jeanne Laurent, “Décentralisation lyrique divers reports,” *cote.* 4-col-8 45(4), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

[783] Ibid.

argued with a different plan they could obtain better results for a smaller investment.[784] Bertrand claimed the cities themselves were unhappy with the plan, and that they would be better served if the plan was abandoned in all but two cities. By reducing the number of cities involved the subvention could be increased for each to 30 million francs, a number more in line with what the municipalities claimed they needed, while still saving the state significant funds.[785]

Bertrand outlined the steep acceleration of subvention costs, though the numbers he cited only somewhat correlated with the numbers revealed in the archives. He also failed to convincingly contextualize these figures, and did not account for the incomplete seasons in 1945 or 1946 due to war recovery, the increased costs and requirements of the 1947 season, the large changes to salaries and the laws surrounding them, and the huge financial instability and inflation in France itself.[786] A cursory glance at economic figures from this period in France is more than enough to expose the problems with trying to make year-to-year budgetary comparisons. As Casella and Eichengreen have shown, over the course of 1946 prices in France rose by 80%.[787] Even if the state maintained a subvention at the 'same' level, 12 million in 1947 had much less purchasing power than it had in 1946. In effect, maintaining a subvention was like decreasing it, and in order for the cities to receive a real increase the subvention would have had to increase rapidly in pace with the rest of the economy—as the cities themselves argued.

[784] "1.) que le coût de cette politique est infiniment plus élevé que les chiffres actuels ne le laissent paraître 2.) que son rendement est insuffisant et qu'un rendement meilleur pourrait être obtenu à moindre frais par d'autres mesures." Ibid.

[785] "Rapport adresse par le Secrétariat de la Fédération Nationale du Spectacle, à Monsieur Maurice Bertrand," in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Décentralisation lyrique divers reports," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(4), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

[786] Maurice Bertrand, "Note sur la poplitique [sic] de décentralisation lyrique et dramatique," in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Décentralisation lyrique divers reports," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(4), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

[787] Alessandra Casella and Barry Eichengreen, "Halting Inflation in Italy and France after the Second World War," in Michael D. Bordo and Forrest Capie, eds. *Monetary Regimes in Transition* (Cambridge, En.: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 315.

Bertrand did make a brief comparison with the acceleration of prices in France, but not enough to truly understand these numbers and allow for meaningful analysis of the problem.

Bertrand then considered the results in each city. Marseille was reportedly not fully observing the *cahier des charges,* poorly administered, and its performances were lacking in quality. (Marseille's own documents argue strongly, however, that they were the city most closely following the *cahier des charges* for the majority of the decentralization project.) Overall, Bertrand asserted, the results at the theatre were not in alignment with the importance of the city.[788] Most of the cities were reported as having below standard productions. Bertrand also noted that Lyon was going to leave the plan the next year. However, Strasbourg and Mulhouse were praised for getting a lot out of very little money—they were not fully a part of the project and thus not saddled with the requirements and expenses of the *cahier des charges.* Bertrand suggested further regulation of directors and their licensing as a means of improving quality.[789] Laurent also thought better directors were a key to the future of decentralization, as mentioned above. Bertrand argued for the metters-en-scène to be sent to Paris for additional training since so many were simply retired singers without real education in the craft.[790] Additionally, Bertrand thought economies could be found by reconsidering combining the radio and decentralization orchestras, and reducing spending on costumes.[791]

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[788] "Les clauses du cahier des charges ne sont pas toujours observées, mauvaise administration – la qualité des spectacle n'est pas compatible avec l'importance d'une ville comme Marseille." Maurice Bertrand, "Note sur la poplitique [sic] de décentralisation lyrique et dramatique," in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Décentralisation lyrique divers reports," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(4), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

[789] "Rapport adressé par le Secrétariat de la Fédération Nationale du Spectacle, à Monsieur Maurice Bertrand," in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Décentralisation lyrique divers reports," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(4), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

[790] Ibid.

[791] Ibid.

Bertrand concluded that the application of decentralization had not noticeably improved artistic quality in the provinces. The plan had also not noticeably expanded audiences, or improved the success of new premieres. Bertrand argued:

> In any case, nothing in this expensive policy foresees a renewal of the activity of operatic theater, nor a greater attachment of the public to this genre of performance. Operatic art in effect becomes more outdated day by day.[792]

Bertrand saw a need to also reform public music education in order to save operatic theatre, but decentralization in its current form was having too little of an impact on students. [793] Needless to say, this report and its findings were not greeted with enthusiasm by proponents of the decentralization plan.

The Secrétariat de la Fédération Nationale du Spectacle issued their own report responding to the Bertrand report, which argued against the soundness of some of its findings and offered explanations for other weaknesses it had exposed. At a meeting of the decentralization committee on 9 December 1948 those in attendance realized Bertrand had not in fact made a personal examination of any of the theatres in question and that his report was based on second-hand information from reports being submitted by Beaux-Arts employees and the mayor's offices of the cities. Furthermore, they found that the only performance Bertrand had attended was of an operette in Lille that was not even a part of the decentralization program.[794]

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[792] "De toute façon, rien dans cette politique dispendieuse ne fait prévoir un renouveau d'activité du théâtre lyrique, ni un attachement plus grand du public à ce genre de spectacle. L'art Lyrique en effet se démode de jour en jour." Maurice Bertrand, "Note sur la poplitique [sic] de décentralisation lyrique et dramatique," in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Décentralisation lyrique divers reports," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(4), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

[793] "Rapport adresse par le Secrétariat de la Fédération Nationale du Spectacle, à Monsieur Maurice Bertrand," in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Décentralisation lyrique divers reports," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(4), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

[794] Ibid.

The Secretariat also took issue with Bertrand's accounting, which they argued failed to adequately adjust for increases in the cost of living that explained some of the subvention and deficit increases.[795] The Secretariat's report argued there had been a great lack of faith and lack of funding that were sinking the decentralization plan. The state had not adequately revised its subventions to keep pace with the cost of living, in general only half-heartedly committed to the plan, and often put far too little thought into the selection of directors.[796]

The report argued that the terms were too short for the plan to produce real change, which was an argument Laurent also made in her own writings.[797] Three-year contracts would help to stabilize the theatres and the rampant growth of salaries.[798] The report argued that sorting out the operatic theatres was extremely important to France's reputation, especially when Germany (the losing nation in the WWII conflict) was not only sending outstanding productions to tour the French provinces but also still had fifty municipal orchestras when France (the victors) only had about a dozen.[799] Further, the report argued that the cities were only dissatisfied with decentralization because the state so drastically underfunded its demands. If the subventions were fixed, they would be prepared to embrace it once again.[800] They demanded that the state make plans to reconstruct and reopen the five-hundred theatres that had been damaged during the

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[795] Ibid.

[796] Ibid.

[797] Laurent, *La République et les beaux-arts*, 168–170.

[798] "Rapport adresse par le Secrétariat de la Fédération Nationale du Spectacle, à Monsieur Maurice Bertrand," in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Décentralisation lyrique divers reports," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(4), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

[799] Ibid.

[800] Ibid.

war and the past thirty years. The report requested a central office be created to help organize tours of both private and municipal theatres, and to support them in general. In concert with this, they asked for the construction of regional centers to encourage operatic theatre, dramatic theatre, cinema, radio, and concert music. The radio, they argued, should also have stable troupes in order to create better quality operatic broadcasts. Additionally, they wanted a commitment not to cut subventions, and for the state instead to raise them continuously.[801]

By the 9 December 1948 meeting of the decentralization committee cited above, things had taken a turn for the worse, three of the six cities (Lyon, Nantes, and Lille) were declining to continue with the decentralization project—unless the state revalued the subvention appropriately.[802] Jaujard noted at the same meeting that while the municipal operatic theatres in decentralization were slated to receive 48 million francs the following year, in Germany the subventions were much higher. The Munich Opera alone received 2 million marks, which would be 160 million francs.[803] The fear that Germany would pull ahead of them culturally was clearly a powerful motivator at these meetings.

These funding issues were taken up in the National Assembly. The Fédération Nationale du Spectacle indicated that in August 1948 sessions of the Assemblée Nationale and the Conseil de la République it had been unanimously agreed upon to undertake a project of a new law to save operatic art in France.[804] The Syndicate Nationale des Acteurs also reported on this and had

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[801] Ibid.

[802] "Commission de la Décentralisation lyrique Procès-Verbal," 9 December 1948, in "Spectacles et musique. Tome 1 (XIXe–XXe siècle)," *cote*. F/21/5204, "Décentralisation lyrique," in Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

[803] Ibid.

[804] "Rapport adresse par le Secrétariat de la Fédération Nationale du Spectacle, à Monsieur Maurice Bertrand," in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Décentralisation lyrique divers reports," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(4), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

high hopes for the project.[805] This effort seems to have produced some results, according to the numbers Jaujard submitted to the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale in 1953, the decentralization subvention was raised for 1949 (1948 had been 86,300,000 and it was raised in 1949 to 125,375,000). However, in 1950 it plummeted back to the 48-million figure, previously cited by Jaujard.[806]

Despite the temporary raise in the overall subvention, in 1949, Marseille published a summary of the state of affairs of their theatre. They wrote the situation was becoming increasingly untenable. The report on the budget argued:

> Despite strict management, the operation of the Opera [Marseille not Paris] is still a charge for the city budget. This situation is a result of the failure of the state, which after creating a policy for operatic decentralization that has had encouraging results, has not faced up to its own commitments.[807]

The report concluded that while Marseille's Opera had done well this season, because of budget cuts economies had to be found. The report suggested two possible solutions: either returning to a shorter season rather than the year-round model required by decentralization or increase revenue by showing more operettes.[808] Ultimately, they decided not to abandon their decentralization efforts yet and maintained the year-round model at their opera longer than any other city in the decentralization plan was able to do so.

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[805] *Bulletin du Syndicat National des Acteurs* 11 (November 1949), in in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Décentralisation lyrique," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(12), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

[806] "Crédits Accordes au Titre de la Décentralisation lyrique depuis 1946," in "Spectacles et musique. Tome 1 (XIXe–XXe siècle)," *cote.* F/21/5132, "1952–1955," in Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

[807] "Malgré une gestion rigoureuse, l'exploitation de l'Opéra n'en constitue pas moins une charge pour le budget de la Ville. Cette situation résulte de la défaillance de l'Etat qui, après nous avoir engagés dans une politique de décentralisation lyrique dont personne ne conteste les résultats encourageants, n'a pas fait face à ses propres engagements." in "Opéra Municipal Compte d'Exploitation Exercice 1949," pg 26, in "Opéra fonctionnement 1905–1953," *cote.* 614W 27, in "Direction des Beaux-Arts," in Archives de la Ville de Marseille, Marseille, France.

[808] "Opéra Municipal Compte d'Exploitation Exercice 1949," pg 34–35, in "Opéra fonctionnement 1905–1953," *cote.* 614W 27, in "Direction des Beaux-Arts," in Archives de la Ville de Marseille, Marseille, France.

The remaining cities that had fully re-committed to the *cahier des charges*—Marseille, Bordeaux, and Toulouse—met in Toulouse in February 1949 to discuss the situation. They submitted a joint text to the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale that the requirements were too heavy, and in reality, would require subventions more like a 40 million per city from the state. Since this figure would not be met, the cities believed they should not be held to the requirements of the *cahier des charges* which had been designed for the state and the city to support the deficits of the theatres 50-50.[809] A few months later the Fédération Nationale du Spectacle compared the state of operatic art to that of a victim of a plague in its bulletin and also drew attention to how the state subvention had not kept pace with the rising costs in France.[810] Interestingly, the cover of this same bulletin called the Marshall Plan a huge mistake, and argued that it, and the policies it subsequently inspired, were doing damage to intellectual life and the musical patrimony in France.[811]

In the Christian democratic paper *Le Monde,* René Dumesnil also defended the decentralization project in January 1949; he argued it had already produced good results despite the state's under-support. Dumesnil attempted to stir people's patriotism in order to get them to support decentralization, writing that while France was indeed currently poor, other war-stricken nations had managed to invest in their theatres. Was France going to "abandon their operatic theatres to ruin?" ["et abandoner nos théâtres lyriques à la ruine?"].[812] Both Dumesnil and the

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[809] "Reunion à Toulouse des Théâtres de Décentralisation lyrique," 23 February 1949, in "Opéra fonctionnement 1905–1953," *cote.* 614W 35, in "Direction des Beaux-Arts" in Archives de la Ville de Marseille, Marseille, France.

[810] René Houdet, "L'art lyrique, ce pestiféré," in Fédération Nationale du spectacle, "Bulletin d'Information," 1 (June 1949) in "Opéra fonctionnement 1905–1953," *cote.* 614W 35, in "Direction des Beaux-Arts," in Archives de la Ville de Marseille, Marseille, France.

[811] Fédération Nationale du spectacle, "Bulletin d'Information," 1 (June 1949) in "Opéra fonctionnement 1905–1953," *cote.* 614W 35, in "Direction des Beaux-Arts," in Archives de la Ville de Marseille, Marseille, France.

[812] René Dumesnil, "Où en est la décentralisation lyrique," *Le Monde,* 1 January 1949.

Fédération Nationale du Spectacle used strong language of crisis, and made dire warnings about how the disappearance of operatic art would weaken France artistically and politically. They used these statements as tactics in an attempt to push the increasingly conservative government to support more liberal policies diverting more funds towards these arts initiatives. Funding for decentralization had been easier to procure shortly after the Liberation when the left-leaning coalitions had greater control.[813] As politics in France shifted further to the center and the right more conservative economic policies were enacted.[814]

Centering Decentralization: Strasbourg's *Puck* Travels to Paris

In Strasbourg, the estimable Paul Bastide had retired. He had directed the municipal opera from 1919 to 1939 and again from 1945 to 1948, and was replaced in June 1948 by Roger Lalande.[815] By the 17 June 1948 meeting of the Strasbourg opera committee, *Puck* by Marcel Delannoy had been chosen as a new premiere for the 1948–1949 season.[816] Delannoy was at this point a well-known dramatic composer, and had already premiered three works at the Opéra-Comique: *Le Poirier de Misère* (1927), *Le Fou de la dame* (1930), and *Ginevra* (1942). However, his reputation was also in the process of rehabilitation after being a member of the groupe Collaboration during the Occupation.[817] André Boll was the librettist for *Puck*. Working

[813] See Chapter One and Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 30–32.

[814] Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III) 1945–1958*, 52–60.

[815] "Procès-Verbal de la séance de la Commission du Théâtre" 7 February 1948, "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 355, "Commission du Théâtre—Réunions: Procès verbaux 1945–1950," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg; Vogler, *l'après-guerre à Strasbourg: Vie quotidienne, intégration à la France, ouverture à l'Europe,* 144.

[816] "Procès-Verbal de la séance de la Commission du Théâtre" 17 June 1948, "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 355, "Commission du Théâtre—Réunions: Procès verbaux 1945–1950," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[817] Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity,* 60–61, 198, 308.

from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* he crafted a one-act opéra-féerique with an epilogue and prologue. Boll was a prominent music critic and had done décors for the Opéra. He also wrote a biography of Delannoy published in 1957. Boll had often written about the crisis of operatic theatre in France, for example his 1946 book *La Grande pitié du théâtre lyrique* and several publications from before the war.[818] Later in his 1953 publication *Pour un renouveau de théâtre lyrique,* Boll specifically cited Delannoy's style which blended text and music as the ideal path forward for the operatic arts.[819]

Delannoy and Boll took a unique approach to text in *Puck,* often relying on spoken text that was freely interpolated into sung passages rather than a firm divide between the spoken dialogue and sung numbers like was more conventional in the opera-comique genre.[820] They also chose to cast the title character Puck as a mute dancer, giving his character's necessary text to other figures on the stage.[821] Despite the mute character, Delannoy's score was very focused on the voice, and overall very melodic. The décors and costumes, designed by Boll, were reportedly full of fantasy and took advantage of the magical forest setting of the work.

Strasbourg invested heavily in the detailed costumes and decors needed for the production, spending just under 2 million francs.[822] Another million went to pay the vocalists

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[818] André Boll, *La Grande pitié du théâtre lyrique* (Paris: Éditions France-Empire, 1946).

[819] André Boll, *Pour un renouveau de théâtre lyrique* (Paris: Société d'Éditions Françaises et Internationales, 1953), 18–20.

[820] Boll, *Pour un renouveau de théâtre lyrique*, 21–22; André Boll, *Marcel Delannoy* (Paris: Ventadour, 1957), 26.

[821] Boll, *Marcel Delannoy,* 27; "Traduction *Neue Zurcher Zeitung* 2 février 1949 Un opéra français *Sommernachtstraus*," in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 470, "*Puck*," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[822] Letter to Receveur-Percepteur Municipal from Administration of theatre, 22 May 1950, in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 470, "*Puck*," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

hired for this specific production.[823] All in all, even with an almost 1.2-million-franc subvention from the state, the city ran a deficit of 1,165,509 francs on the seven performances of *Puck* given at the Municipal theatre from 29 January to 13 February 1949 and the one additional performance given at Colmar.[824] After these eight performances, *Puck* dropped out of the repertoire in Strasbourg. Boll and Delannoy did attempt to encourage Lalande to show the work again, especially in June 1949 when there were a lot of international visitors in Strasbourg.[825] However, the is no evidence in the seasonal programs that *Puck* had any additional performances during this period.[826]

Puck had been broadcast, in a piano-vocal version, on the Paris-Inter radio station in July 1947, and Boll obtained a copy of this performance for Ernest Bour who rehearsed and conducted the Strasbourg premiere.[827] Radio-Strasbourg promoted *Puck* after its premiere: "You are under its charms from beginning to end, it is enchantment for the eyes and the ears—we are sure that this world premiere, of which Strasbourg can be proud, and the success that has greeted it promises to *Puck* the future that it merits, which is to say a global career."[828] While *Puck* did

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[823] Ibid.

[824] Ibid.

[825] Letter Boll and Delannoy to the Mayor of Strasbourg, 13 June 1949, in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 452, "Représentations et programmes—Organisation 1945–1949," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[826] See the published program booklets, held at the Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg *cote.* M 500.600.

[827] Letter Boll to Lalande, 23 November 1948, in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 470, "*Puck*," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[828] "On est sous le charme du commencement à la fin, c'est l'enchantement des yeux et des oreilles—nous sommes persuadés que cette création mondiale, dont Strasbourg peut être fier, et le succès qui l'a accueillie promettent à *Puck* l'avenir qu'il mérite, c'est-à-dire une carrière mondiale." hand-written note from Radio-Strasbourg, 4 February 1949, in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 470, "*Puck*," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

not find this kind of success, it did managed to tour for one performance to Paris under the decentralization plan and with the sponsorship of the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale.

Some notes detailing particularly laudatory reviews are preserved in the dossier on *Puck* in the Strasbourg municipal archives—though they are sadly undated and unlabeled. For example, a note attributed to a Professeur Pautrier praised the premiere highly calling Delannoy's music "sober, light, and without ever crushing them, underlines the delicate contours of the libretto" ["sobre, légère, et qui sans jamais les écraser, souligne les contours délicates du livret"].[829] He also praised the visual aspects of the production. Pautrier went as far as to call Lalande the best metteur en scène in France and argued Strasbourg was lucky to have him. Strasbourg, he claimed, was the city most capable of mounting such a magnificent effort for the work. The visiting singers, he stated, all were amazed at the working conditions in Strasbourg that were so beneficial to art.[830] Similarly, the Abbé Hoch shared the professor's high opinion and added that Strasbourg had proven itself with the premiere of *Puck* to be a bastion of French culture.[831]

In general reviews of the Strasbourg production were positive, and greeted the premiere as a success for decentralization. Louis Aubert writing for conservative Parisian journal *Opéra* claimed *Puck's* "magnificent welcome" ["accueil magnifique"] in Strasbourg was further evidence that "bit by bit […] the operatic theatres are awakening from their sleep imposed by the difficult material circumstances" ["Les théâtres lyriques sortiraient-ils du sommeil que leur

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[829] "Impressions sur *Puck* (de M. le Professeur Pautrier)" in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 470, "*Puck*," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[830] Ibid.

[831] "un vrai bastion de la culture française," "Impressions sur *Puck* (de M. l'Abbé Hoch)" in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 470, "*Puck*," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

imposent de dures circonstances matérielles ? Coup sur coup…"].[832] Aubert praised Delannoy's score which he said was not afraid to use operatic conventions to its benefit in a Mozartian manner. Aubert also liked the choice to cast Puck as a mute role, and the beautiful visual aspects of the production. The Christian democratic *Le Monde* also applauded the Strasbourg premiere of *Puck* in a short article that called the music expressive, and in particular drew attention to the superb lighting and décors completed for the production.[833]

Work to bring the Strasbourg production of *Puck* to Paris began shortly after its premiere.[834] At first, they planned for a June performance, however, locating an appropriate theatre with these dates available was a struggle.[835] Eventually they were able to secure the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées for 16 and 17 November 1949. Even as late as 8 November, Jeanne Laurent was writing to the team in Strasbourg looking for ways to lower the costs of the tour.[836] While the performance did receive some coverage in the Parisian newspapers leading up to the premiere, it had only mediocre attendance. The maximum income from ticket sales at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées was predicted to be 1,149,900 for the performance on the 17th and the limited reduced-rate tickets sold to the general rehearsal on the 16th.[837] However, the reported

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[832] Louis Aubert, "*Puck* à Strasbourg" *Opéra,* 2 February 1949.

[833] "La Création de *Puck* à Strasbourg," *Le Monde,* 1 February 1949.

[834] Letter Delannoy to Woerth (Secrétaire general de la Mairie de Strasbourg), 12 March 1949, and Letter Delannoy and Boll to Woerth, 7 April 1949, in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 452, "Représentations et programmes—Organisation 1945–1949," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[835] Letter from Jeanne Laurent to Strasbourg Opera administrator, 13 April 1949, and Letter from Delannoy, 19 April 1949, both in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 470, "*Puck*," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[836] Letter Jeanne Laurent to Strasbourg Opera administrator, 8 November 1949, in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 470, "*Puck*," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[837] Note "*Puck* Théâtre des Champs-Elysées Recette Maximum," in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 470, "*Puck*," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

sales from the performances were only 322,295 francs, so only approximately 28% of the seats sold.[838] Even with a million-franc subvention from the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, the production ran a 623,674-franc deficit. According to the contracts, this deficit was also to be assumed by the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale in addition to the subvention already granted.[839]

The poor attendance was surprising, as the Strasbourg production had reportedly sold well.[840] In addition, the reviews for Paris were much more mixed than they had been in Strasbourg. René Dumesnil writing for *Le Monde* argued it was a big accomplishment for the decentralization project:

> Decentralization … allows regional capitals to create important operatic works, and then to show the Parisians the fruits of their labor, they persuaded them that the truth of yesterday, is also the truth of tomorrow, that the large cities of France are worthy of their artistic past.[841]

Overall, Dumesnil found the work full of life. However, he did not like the odd transitions between spoken and sung text that he thought seemed unnatural and put undue strain on the singers. He also thought the Paris production's staging had some errors in

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[838] "Décompte définitif des representations de *Puck* au Théâtre des Champs-Elysées à Paris les 16 et 17 novembre 1949," in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 470, "*Puck*," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[839] "Décompte définitif des representations de *Puck* au Théâtre des Champs-Elysées à Paris les 16 et 17 novembre 1949," in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 470, "*Puck*," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg; and Letter Strasbourg Opera Administrator to Jeanne Laurent, 9 December 1949, in "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 180 MW 470, "*Puck*," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[840] Claude Chamfray, "Avant la creation de *Puck*," *Arts,* 11 November 1949; H.K., "Au Théâtre des Champs-Elysées *Puck*," *Le Monde,* 10 November 1949.

[841] "Décentralisation … permettre aux capitales régionales de créer des ouvrages lyriques importants, puis de montrer ensuite aux Parisiens le fruit de leurs travaux, les persuader de cette vérité d'hier, qui doit être aussi la vérité de demain, que les grandes villes de France sont dignes de leur passé artistique." René Dumesnil, "*Puck* avec la troupe de Théâtre de Strasbourg," *Le Monde,* 18 November 1949.

taste that had not been present in the Strasbourg performances.[842] In the left-leaning and former Resistance journal *Combat* Bernard Lucas also praised the production, though he had some reservations about the vocal ranges of some of Strasbourg's singers.[843] André Gauthier for *Ce matin Le Pays* was more critical: "First attempt? Without a doubt. Masterstroke? I would like to be able to write so" ["Coup d'essai? A n'en pas douter. Coup de maître? J'aurais voulu pouvoir l'écrire"].[844] He praised some aspects of Delannoy's score, but found it a bit conventional and also did not like the transitions between spoken and sung text. Gauthier found the performance in Paris to be unequal, with some outstanding talents and others lacking.[845]

There seems to have been some—possibly manufactured—controversy in the press, that attempted to claim there was pitched battle over the work. Rather than the normal differences of opinion cited above. An article in *Images musicales* by Jacques Feschotte published after the Strasbourg premiere claimed that even the 'cabal' could not prevent *Puck's* triumph, but his long article provides precious few details as to who this cabal was or why they would seek to sink *Puck.*[846] Later, after *Puck* was performed in Paris, the same publication claimed "*Puck* caused a fairly violent controversy: Puckists and anti-Puckistes, even during the Strasbourg performances, clashed in the press."[847] They placed side-by-side reviews from *Liberation* and *Opéra* to

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[842] Ibid.

[843] Bernard Lucas, "*Puck* de Marcel Delannoy ou la consecration d'un art," *Combat,* 18 November 1949.

[844] André Gauthier, "*Puck* opéra d'André Boll et Marcel Delannoy," *Ce matin Le Pays,* 18 November 1949.

[845] Ibid.

[846] Jacques Feschotte, "La cabale de Strasbourg n'empêchera pas le triomphe de *Puck,*" *Images musicales,* 25 February 1949.

[847] "*Puck* a soulevé une assez violente polémique: Puckistes et anti-Puckistes, de même que lors des représentations strasbourgeoises, se sont affrontés dans la presse." "*Puck* à Paris," *Images musicales,* 20 December 1949.

illustrate the controversy over *Puck.* André Boll also referenced this battle in his book on Delannoy.[848] However, both of the negative reviews cited by Feschotte dated from after the Paris production of *Puck.* Perhaps it was the difference in location that changed opinions rather than a sustained battle in the press.

An article in *Journal d'Alsace* claimed that there was a marked difference in the reception of *Puck* in Paris and its premiere in Strasbourg. Some had claimed that the Parisian critics simply had their heads turned by their charming vacation in Strasbourg to see *Puck,* and that the opera was actually quite poor in quality and they only realized it once back in their own city. However, the author argued that the Paris production had been inferior to the premiere in Strasbourg and that it was not simply the rustic charm of being out of Paris that had influenced critics to deem the work a success when they first heard it.[849]

<u>Decentralization Reconfigured, More Cities, Smaller Subventions</u>

While the results from the tours to Paris yielded varying results, the musicians' unions were particularly adamant in their defense of decentralization and persistent in their calls for the state to allocate appropriate funds to the plan. In June 1950 the *Bulletin du Syndicat National des Acteurs,* the union was dismayed to report the government was seeking to drastically reduce the decentralization budget from 125 million to 48 million francs. They offered comparisons with other nations to show how under invested France was in their arts sector, and reminded their readers that some of the provinces' most beautiful theatres had been destroyed and their

[848] Boll, *Marcel Delannoy*, 36.

[849] Numance, "Avez-vous vu *Puck* l'Espiègle?," *Journal d'Alsace,* 25 November 1949.

reconstructions often had still not been planned.[850] In what appears to have been an internal note from the sous-direction des Spectacles et de la Musique dated in 1950, the subvention decrease was called an abandonment of the policy; the note also called attention to the higher levels of fiscal support other countries provided to their theatres.[851] *Le Provençal* ran an article about the dire state of decentralization and warned of the disappearance of important French theatres due to the lack of state support for the project. Even Bordeaux and Toulouse were in danger according to the article.[852] The Mayor of Marseille wrote to the Direction Génerale des Arts and Lettres multiple times at the end of 1950 arguing because Marseille was the only city that truly managed to continue to follow the *cahier des charges,* they should be granted an additional subvention.[853] Decentralization was in dire straits.

By 1951, the director of the Marseille opera, Michel Leduc, reported he had heard a rumor from Maurice Lehmann (administrator of the RTLN) that the government was strongly considering closing the Opéra-Comique and dedicating its funding to the municipal theatres in the provinces instead as a way to bolster the decentralization credits.[854] The potential closure of the Opéra-Comique is certainly supported by the archives, which contain studies investigating

[850] *Bulletin du Syndicat National des Acteurs* 13 (June 1950), in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Décentralisation lyrique budget," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(5), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

[851] sous-direction des Spectacles et la musique, "Les attribution des services des spectacles et de la musique…," 1950, in fonds Jeanne Laurent, "Décentralisation lyrique budget," *cote.* 4-col-8 45(5), Département Arts du spectacle, BnF.

[852] L. Lamouroux, "La Grande pitie des théâtres lyriques de province, La Féderation nationale du spectacle jette un cri d'alarme qui doit être entendu," *Le Provencal,* 20 October 1950.

[853] Note "Décentralisation lyrique," 24 November 1950, and letter Mayor of Marseille to Ministre de l'Éducation nationale, 5 December 1950, in "Opéra fonctionnement 1905–1953," *cote.* 614W 28, in "Direction des Beaux-Arts," in Archives de la Ville de Marseille, Marseille, France.

[854] Marseille's opera director Michel Leduc heard this on a trip to Paris in November 1951, see "Compte Rendu, Voyage à Paris de Michel Leduc du 15 au 20 Novembre 1951," 23 November 1951, in "Théâtres activités 1929–1952," *cote.* 614W 24, in "Direction des Beaux-Arts," in Archives de la Ville de Marseille, Marseille, France.

how much funding could be saved by either reducing the season at the Opéra-Comique or closing the theatre all together.[855] The overall deficit for 1952 at the Opéra-Comique was anticipated to be 319,206,223 francs, or 132,500,793 francs for a five-month season.[856] The deficit at the RTLN was fully funded by state subventions because they were state-run theatres. By reducing or eliminating the deficit at the RTLN, theoretically it would free up credits at the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale who paid for both the RTLN and the decentralization subventions. In March 1952, *Le Monde* published that the inquiry committee had suggested either closing the Opéra-Comique all-together or running it more like the provincial theatres. However, the committee also thought decentralization had yielded few results, and there was no mention of moving the funds saved from the proposed cutbacks at the Opéra-Comique to the provinces, instead they sought an overall reduction of the budget.[857]

Also in 1952, several French composers and music professionals of significance, including George Auric, André Boll, Roger Désormière, René Dumesnil, Louis Fourestier, Arthur Honegger, and Maurice Lehmann, with La Fédération Nationale du Spectacle, penned a "Manifeste du Théâtre Français" ["Manifesto of French Theatre"].[858] The manifesto emphasized the important role theatre had played in France's cultural reputation, and warned that French theatre was in danger of dying. They claimed that in the past thirty-years four hundred and fifty of the five hundred theatres in France had disappeared, and that professionals in the field were

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[855] "Réponse à la note du 2 Mai 1952 du Ministère de l'Éducation nationale," 5 May 1952, in Archives Opéra, "Plan d'économies à réaliser 1952," *cote.* 20-1144, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra, BnF.

[856] Ibid.

[857] "Les Théâtres Nationaux coûtent trop cher à l'État affirme le comité central d'enquête," *Le Monde,* 28 March 1952.

[858] Signed by Georges Auric, Roger Désormière, Arthur Honegger, among others; "Manifeste du Théâtre Français," *l'Annuaire du Théâtre* 70 (1952): 167–168.

thinking of abandoning their careers because they could no longer make a living. (The figure of four hundred and fifty disappeared theatres occurs in other documents around this time, for example in 1949 at the National Assembly the figure of five hundred theatres vanished over the past thirty-years was cited.)[859]

The manifesto argued the poor economy was a prime cause of these issues, and because of this ticket prices could not keep pace with the costs at the operatic theatres. Subventions were the only means to remedy this situation until the financial conditions in France recovered, yet these were being drastically cut rather than maintained or increased. They reminded readers that Nantes, Lyon, and Lille had been forced in 1948–49 to withdraw from decentralization, and Toulouse had decided to shut its doors in April 1950. Even Bordeaux had been forced to reduce to a ten-month season. (For those counting this meant only Marseille was still maintaining the *cahier des charges*.) The manifesto demanded that the decentralization credits be revalued in pace with the current economy and prices, that a new decentralization law be enacted, and the theatres destroyed during the war be rebuilt quickly.[860]

However, the situation continued to decline. In February 1954, Hirsch called out the grim state of the theatres of France and in an article for *Carrefour* entitled, "Il faut sauver le théâtre lyrique en France" that got a lot of attention from the decentralization circles. Hirsch was asked in March to speak at a meeting of the Centre Européen du Spectacle to further outline his concerns and ideas. Hirsch highlighted the disconnect between operatic theatre—which he argued contrary to popular opinion was not stagnant but continuously evolving—and the

[859] "Extrait du Journal officiel – Assemblee Nationale," 1 April 1949, in "Opéra fonctionnement 1905–1953," *cote.* 614W 35, in "Direction des Beaux-Arts," in Archives de la Ville de Marseille, Marseille, France.

[860] Signed by Georges Auric, Roger Désormière, Arthur Honegger, among others; "Manifeste du Théâtre Français" *l'Annuaire du Théâtre* 70 (1952): 167–168.

sclerosis of the means given to directors to produce the works.[861] Hirsch noted that nations like Italy and Germany, who had less means than France, had invested in operatic theatre and had good results, which increased their arts offerings to their citizens and their international reputations.[862] Additionally, audiences were under-exposed to the developments in operatic theatre and thus unwilling to accept them.

Hirsch also argued that a large part of the problem was not a lack of talented singers and technical personnel in France, but a lack of proper training for them. Singers, despite their good training at the Conservatoire, were forced to take on odd and diverse roles fresh out of school to earn their living and this haphazard introduction to their profession ruined their voices. Similarly, technical personnel and metteurs en scène lacked opportunities to hone their craft, and a formal program to train in at the Conservatoire. In a way, decentralization had put the cart before the horse by attempting to have year-round troupes and theatres without solving these underlying causes of operatic theatre's difficulties. Hirsch noted:

> It will be necessary to recreate what existed in the past: municipal theatres with troupes and permanent orchestras. But for the moment, I think that we cannot put the cart before the horse. Before returning to decentralization, it will be necessary to find a sufficient number of theatre technicians and artists to compose as many troupes as there are cities with a theater. It will also be necessary to awaken the musical public's curiosity. We are not there.[863]

[861] "Il y a donc un déséquilibre entre l'art lyrique en constante évolution, et des moyens qui, au contraire, se sont sclérosés parce que les directors ne disposaient pas de crédits suffisants." Georges Hirsch, "Il faut sauver le Théâtre lyrique en France" Conference Centre Européen du Spectacle, 16 March 1954, in in Archives municipales de Rouen, *cote*. 2R6.

[862] Ibid.

[863] "Il faudra recréer ce qui existait dans le passé: des théâtres municipaux avec des troupes et des orchestres permanents. Mais pour l'instant, j'estime qu'on ne peut mettre la charrue avant les bœufs. Aavant [sic] de revenir à la décentralisation, il faudra trouver les techniciens du théâtre et les artistes en nombre suffisant pour pouvoir composer autant de troupes qu'il y a de villes qui possèdent un théâtre. Il faudra aussi avoir réveillé la curiosité du public musical. Nous n'en sommes pas là." Ibid.

It is interesting that Hirsch spent most of his speech on these ideas and not on the plan he was purportedly there to provide further details upon; he argued the subject was a bit complex and dull to get too deeply into the nuts and bolts of the plan. His plan, simply put, was to centralize instead of decentralize. Hirsch suggested creating a central committee (made up of the municipal interests) that governed a troupe that would put on productions of a high-caliber and then tour the provinces.[864]

In an article from March 1954, André Boll argued that Hirsch's plan in reality simply represented the ideas Boll himself had already published in *La Grande pitié du théâtre lyrique* in 1946. Further, Boll cited the excellent work that had been undertaken to promote operatic composition and renewal—even outside the auspices of the RTLN and the decentralization plan—that he felt yielded promising results and were worthy of further consideration. However, he cautioned against despair and accepting the 'failure' of the decentralization plan as Hirsch had claimed. Other nations, like Germany and Italy, "seem to prove that a sane policy of financial aid to operatic art is not a policy of lost funds" ["semblent prouver qu'une saine politique d'aide financière à l'art lyrique n'est nullement une politique à fonds perdus"]. France, a nation of great musicians, should not lose a competition to these other nations that they deserved to win.[865]

In reaction to Hirsch's statements, and the increasingly difficult position of the municipal theatres, the mayor's office of Nice called for twenty-six different cities and their theatrical staff to convene in Paris to discuss the way forward. His letter argued that

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[864] Ibid.

[865] André Boll, "A propos d'une conference de M. Hirsch, La Crise du Théâtre Lyrique," March 1954, sent to Jaujard by the Agence France-Presse, 22 March 1954, journal unknown, in "Spectacles et musique. Tome 1 (XIXe–XXe siècle)," *cote*. F/21/5132, "1952–1955," in Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.

they could not count on additional funds from the state in the current state of affairs, and thus they had to rely on themselves and find their own way to solve their problems.[866]

By June of 1954 it was clear decentralization could not continue in the manner it was conceived, by supporting several cities with "large" subvention, and instead it shifted to a work-by-work format. Rather than supporting half the deficit for an entire season, which it never really had done due to underfunding, instead cities could apply for a grant to cover the production of a premiere or important reprise. Jaujard proposed two formats, one where each city would be given a small grant to help support the new work being presented on their stage, and the other where the new premieres all took place first in Paris and then toured the provinces (like Hirsch had suggested). The later was met with resistance.[867]

This change in format of the decentralization funding at first meant each city received substantially less support from the state, but also meant state funds were divided among many more cities than before. Instead of the six decentralized cites, plus the theatres of Strasbourg and Mulhouse in Alsace-Lorraine, meetings of the operatic theatres of the provinces had often over a dozen cities represented.[868] Rouen attended these meetings beginning in June 1954, though Percheron cites their 'official' entry into the decentralization plan in 1956. Over the course of the summer and fall of 1954 the details of this new plan were ironed out, perhaps aided by the more liberal government formed the by radical-socialist Mendès France in June 1954. For example, it was decided that works would tour with their décors, metteur en scène, and principal

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[866] Letter J. Medecin (Député-Maire de Nice), 12 June 1954, in Archives municipales de Rouen, *cote*. 2R6.

[867] "Procès-verbal Réunion pour l'étude des problems de décentralisation lyrique," 25 June 1954, "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 181 MW 21, "Décentralisation lyrique," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[868] "Procès-verbal Réunion pour l'étude des problems de décentralisation lyrique," 2 April 1955 and 27 February 1956, "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 181 MW 21, "Décentralisation lyrique," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

interpretants, but that the host theatre would provide the orchestra and choir, except when the work's difficulty demanded its original orchestra and choirs.[869] This format worked fairly well, and theatres exchanged works frequently.[870]

In her 1955 book, Laurent reflected upon what had caused Operatic decentralization to not succeed in the form laid out in 1946.[871] She argued that the state practically abandoned the project, and as a result it was drastically underfunded.[872] Additionally, the plan was not given time to work, expecting results in the span of one fiscal year was insanity. Ideally, Laurent suggested in the theatrical sphere a plan needed seven years to be planned, built, and implemented before its efficacy was judged.[873] She wrote:

> A work that, to succeed, needs a guarantee of time, cannot be undertaken within the framework of an annual budget where nothing is sure after 31 December and where it is necessary, six months after opening the credits, to give account of the results obtained if one wants funds for the next year to be augmented or only maintained […] This plan must be compared with those designed to prepare a fleet, while the boats are built, one recruits and instructs the crew[874]

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[869] "Procès-verbal Réunion pour l'étude des problems de décentralisation lyrique," 26 July 1954 and 21 September 1954 in Archives municipales de Rouen, *cote*. 2R6; "Procès-verbal Réunion pour l'étude des problems de décentralisation lyrique," 21 September 1954, "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 181 MW 21, "Décentralisation lyrique," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[870] See the various committee meetings discussing these exchanges in the archives, "Procès-verbal Réunion pour l'étude des problems de décentralisation lyrique," in Archives municipales de Rouen, *cote*. 2R6; "Procès-verbal Réunion pour l'étude des problems de décentralisation lyrique," "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 181 MW 21, "Décentralisation lyrique," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[871] Laurent, *La République et les beaux-arts,* 113.

[872] Ibid*.,* 113, 158.

[873] Ibid., 168.

[874] "Une œuvre qui, pour réussir, a besoin d'une garantie de durée, ne saurait être entreprise dans le cadre d'un budget annuel où rien n'est sûr au-delà du 31 décembre et où il faut, six mois après l'ouverture des crédits, rendre compte des résultats obtenus si l'on veut que les fonds soient, l'année suivante, augmentés ou seulement maintenus. […] Ce plan doit être comparable à ceux qui sont conçus pour la préparation d'une flotte pendant que l'on construit les bateaux, on recrute et on instruit leurs équipages." Ibid., 168–170.

The comparison with the multi-year accounting and training needed in the armed forces was apt. Laurent also argued passionately for theatre to be moved out from under the auspices of the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, which she thought stifled it.[875] Laurent had been forced out of her position in 1952 due to changes in the leadership of the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale—and the rightward shift in the government that precipitated these changes—and thus was unable to continue to work on the decentralization project for which she is now remembered.[876] While it is tempting to tie the failure of the 1946 decentralization plan to her departure, it was already in deep trouble and severely lacking funds before that time. Her exit may have sped its end, but it was not the sole cause.

In 1956 Rouen was integrated into the new decentralization plan.[877] Before this point the repertoire in Rouen had been fairly traditional, sticking to famous and classic pieces that sold well and avoiding new and risky works. After joining the decentralization plan there were more premieres and new works in Rouen—though the season was still dominated by the more profitable traditional works.[878] In the 1955–1956 season they programed *La Farce du Cuvier* (Gabriel Dupont), *Gonzagues* (Jacques Ibert), and *La Nuit Vénitienne* (Maurice Thiriet), and the next year *Madame Bovary* (Emmanuel Bondeville) and *le Fou* (Marcel Landowski).[879]

However, in the March 1956 meeting the representative from Toulouse, Dr. Bouvier, argued passionately that the state needed to help not just with money for premieres but also for

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[875] Ibid., 160-170.

[876] See Chapter Three, and Denizot, *Jeanne Laurent*, 74, 124–125; Elgey, *Histoire de la IVe République. La République des contraditions 1951–1954*, 624–27.

[877] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 47.

[878] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 47, 56; for the schedules of the season see Annex of the same, 25–40.

[879] Percheron, "Le Cirque de Rouen," 56–57.

the general running of the very distressed theatres—some of which the cities were contemplating closing because of the expense. Bouvier stated that all these premieres that decentralization was funding would be impossible without theatres to produce them:

> But for these premieres to be possible, the theatres must survive. The theatres of the provinces, if they are not given further aid, are threatened with extinction. Is it permissible that the state spends 1.6 billion for the two national operatic theatres, and only grants 40 million to all the theatres of the provinces?[880]

This problem could not be resolved at the March meeting, and the cities voted to continue in the plan. The cities received little to no support for regular operations of the theatre; for premieres and tours they received significantly less than the 12 million they had fought so hard for in the earlier days of decentralization. In the 1956 review it was reported that Rouen had received a total of about 9.3 million francs (as mentioned above they had a lot of premieres that year as they were just starting out), Strasbourg 4.5 million, and Marseille 6.8 million.[881]

The credits in 1957 shifted several times. At first in January they were awarded an additional 30 million francs, bringing the total to 105 million, but by the February meeting these credits had been blocked and they were back to 85 million. In March there were high hopes for supporting subventions in addition to those for premieres and tours. At the meeting it was reported decentralization was going to get 212 million in subventions, 107 of which was reserved for the theatres themselves, and 105 for premieres and tours.[882] This figure was also on the

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[880] "Mais pour que ces créations soient possibles il faut que les théâtres subsistent. Or les théâtres de province, si on ne les aide pas davantage, sont menacés de disparaître. Est-il admissible que l'État qui dépense 1 milliard 600 millions pour ses deux théâtres lyriques nationaux n'accorde que 40 millions à l'ensemble des théâtres de province ?" "Procès-verbal Réunion pour l'étude des problems de décentralisation lyrique," 26 March 1956, in Archives municipales de Rouen, *cote*. 2R6; "Procès-verbal Réunion pour l'étude des problems de décentralisation lyrique," 26 March 1956, "Archives Théâtre Municipal," *cote.* 181 MW 21, "Décentralisation lyrique," Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg.

[881] "Procès-verbal Théâtres lyriques de province," 15 January 1957, in Archives municipales de Rouen, *cote*. 2R6.

[882] "Procès-verbal Théâtres lyriques de province," 27 March 1957, in Archives municipales de Rouen, *cote*. 2R6.

September 1958 copy of the 1958 budgets for decentralization. This budget does indicate the cities getting both subventions for individual performances as well as supporting subventions for the daily function of the theatres. In 1958, Rouen was slotted to receive 4.1 million in performance subventions and 2 million in supporting subventions, therefore a total from the state of 6.1 million francs. Strasbourg received 9,874,600 for performance, and 22 million in support, for a total of 31,874,600 in state subventions. Marseille received the most, 23,620,000 and 12 million in support for a total of 35,620,000.[883] As the Fourth Republic came it its close the cities were finally receiving numbers closer to the support they requested at its outset. However, events in France had driven prices and pay-rates so high that even this level of support, which was so hard won, had become a tiny fraction of their annual costs.

The crisis of operatic art in France was much cited during this period, and has continued to be a headline throughout the twentieth-century. But for a so-called dying art, the operatic genre has had remarkable persistence in France. The Municipal theatres in Marseille, Strasbourg, and Rouen all survived the trials and tribulations of the decentralization project, and ultimately all outlived the Fourth Republic itself. Rouen finally got its Théâtre des Arts rebuilt in 1962 and under the guidance of André Cabourg produced six world premieres, 5 French premieres, and 3 ballet premieres from 1965 to 1978.[884] Its productions gathered success, and Jean-Louis Caussou wrote in *Opéra* in 1967 regarding a production in Rouen, that "it is in the provinces one must go to seek the truth" ["c'est en province qu'il faut aller chercher la vérité"].[885]

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[883] "Procès-verbal Théâtres lyriques de province," 23 September 1958, in Archives municipales de Rouen, *cote*. 2R6.

[884] Goubault, "Les Creations lyriques au Théâtre des Arts de Rouen (1965–1978)," 361–363.

[885] Ibid., 363.

Strasbourg very nearly did not survive despite having been one of the more successful theatres during the Fourth Republic. In 1969 the city considered abandoning the theatre completely in the face of rising deficits the city could no longer assume. The same had occurred throughout the region, and so Strasbourg joined with Mulhouse and Colmar to create the Opéra du Rhin which presented its first season in 1972. In the next decade the Opéra du Rhin presented six world premieres, this was less than the eight presented at the Strasbourg opera from 1945 to 1958.[886] The decentralization years were particularly prosperous in this aspect in Strasbourg, despite the growing financial struggles. There was also an Atelier Lyrique du Rhin established in 1974 that produced more experimental works.[887] There had been frequent calls during the Fourth Republic for a trial theatre for opera, but neither the state nor the city managed to produce one.

Marseille persisted and continued to offer star singers in the repertory productions as it had been known to do.[888] Instead of focusing on world premieres (they only offered three from 1958 to 1975) the theatre worked to bring in works new to their stage and audiences. From 1958 to 1975 they offered the Marseille premieres of thirty operas, including works by Tomasi, all of Poulenc's operas, Jolivet, Daniel-Lesur, and several works by international composers like Menotti and Britten.[889]

The Fourth Republic was a fiercely difficult time for the operatic arts. The tight economy in France, risings costs, and the strength of unions negotiating pay raises, all contributed to a

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[886] Luc Jacques Brote, "l'Opéra du Rhin l'Art Lyrique Regionalise," in Pistone, ed. *Le Théâtre lyrique français 1945–1985*, 383–388.

[887] Marie-Noël Rio, "L'Atelier lyrique du Rhin: La Fidelite," in Pistone, ed. *Le Théâtre lyrique français 1945–1985*, 395–400.

[888] Frédéric Ducros, "1945–1985: Quarante années de théâtre lyrique à Marseille," in Pistone, ed. *Le Théâtre lyrique français 1945–1985*, 329–332.

[889] Ibid., 334–336.

situation that left no room for error. However, the left-leaning coalition in power after the Liberation placed great value on the arts, and the democratization of culture. Therefore, despite the challenges the government took on the ambitious decentralization plans. Ultimately, as governments shifted back to the right in France decentralization lost some of its support and its funding. However, as has been shown, the operatic theatres of France were considered key pieces of the French patrimony and were able to secure slightly more funding as the Fourth Republic came to its close. Decentralization was an important aspect of the operatic arts during the Fourth Republic. While its initiatives were greeted with mixed success and given varying support, it is equally true that the bulk of new premieres of operatic works took place in these tenacious theatres outside of Paris, large and small, that survived the war and the constantly changing tides of Fourth Republic politics.

Conclusion

The turbulence of the political and cultural climates of the Fourth Republic created an incredibly challenging environment for French opera. Financial and political constraint greatly influenced the artistic output of the houses and the reception of the few works that did premiere. Particularly in Paris critics searched for political connotations of the operas, often that the composers themselves had not envisioned, and used them as a means of criticizing works that went against their aesthetics, or denigrating administrators who went against their own political views. Works that engaged more subtly with political issues, as did Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites,* were able to avoid these issues and find more success. However, despite these difficult circumstances the RTLN and operas in the provinces persisted and premiered interesting and innovative works, even if their futures were sometimes dashed by the battles surrounding these symbolic houses.

Opera extended beyond these venues, however, and had a promising career on the radio during the Fourth Republic. Examining these works, either produced specifically for the radio or premiered there before they moved to a physical opera house, is an area for future investigation. Composers like Germaine Tailleferre, Claude Arrieu, and Henri Tomasi, wrote innovative works specifically for broadcast rather than for the stage.[890] Systems were in place at the radio, some

[890] Cécile Auzolle, "Don Juan de Mañara: la redemption, figure emblématique de l'opéra francophone dans l'après-guerre," and Cécile Quesney, "*Le Silence de la mer:* un drame lyrique d'après Vécors," in Jean-Marie Jacono and Lionel Pons, eds., *Henri Tomasi: du lyrisme méditerranéen à la conscience révoltée* (Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2015), 367, 405.

continued from the days of Vichy and the radio projects of Pierre Schaeffer, to encourage and foster the development of these new compositions.[891] Additionally, the radio was a natural home for experiments with opera and electronic music.

Tailleferre was commissioned in 1955 to create a set of short operas for the radio, *Du Style galant au style méchant,* which parodied various historical operatic styles.[892] Tailleferre worked frequently for the Radio Television Française because of her friendship with Jean Tardieu who was chief of dramatic programs.[893] Arrieu, who wrote many operatic works premiered in the provinces during this period like *Noé* in Strasbourg or *Cadet Roussel* in Marseille, also worked frequently for the radio. She often collaborated with Schaeffer and together they created an innovative serialized operatic work *La Coquille à plantètes.* The radio was also important to Tomasi's career, and he wrote diverse works for the medium.[894] Between 1941 and 1965 Tomasi composed eleven operatic works, most premiered in the provinces, one at the Opéra-Comique, and one was commissioned for the radio. This opera, *Le Silence de la mer,* is one of the few operatic works from this period that directly addressed the Occupation. It was commissioned in 1958, however, because of Tomasi's stance against torture in Algeria he and several singers were sanctioned and the work could not be broadcast until 1960.[895]

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[891] Porcile, *Les Conflits de la musique française 1940–1965*, 310, 344; for more on Schaeffer during the war see Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 125–170.

[892] Robert Shapiro, *Germaine Tailleferre* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 21–22; Georges Hacquard, *Germaine Tailleferre: la dame des Six* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1998), 176–177; Robert Shapiro, ed., *Les Six: the French composers and their mentors, Jean Cocteau and Erik Satie* (Chicago: Peter Owen, 2011), 269, 275.

[893] Hacquard, *Germaine Tailleferre: la dame des Six,* 171.

[894] Christophe Bennet, "Henri Tomasi et la radio, un musicien protéiforme sur les ondes," in Jacono and Pons, eds., *Henri Tomasi,* 142.

[895] Cécile Quesney, "*Le Silence de la mer:* un drame lyrique d'après Vécors," in Jacono and Pons, eds. *Henri Tomasi,* 405–408.

This study of the repertoire presented at the RTLN, Rouen, Strasbourg, and Marseille, combined with an investigation of the operations of the institutions that staged them has presented a detailed picture of French opera during the turbulent Fourth Republic. In the literature, examinations of the struggles these houses underwent had been, up to this point, lacking in context. By reframing them within a rich cultural history, this dissertation has shown that many of the problems that opera faced were part of the predicaments in France at large, rather than solely the fault of a 'moribund' and dying genre. Fiscally the opera houses suffered because of the aspirational *cahier des charges* that were crafted to encourage artistic excellence but lacked the flexibility needed to respond to the economic fluctuations and inflations of the Fourth Republic. The social values of the left and the former Resistance had strongly prioritized social welfare and the right of all citizens to culture. But their programs and budgets were greatly reduced in the wake of the return of the center-right to power and the demands of financial austerity tied up in American aid packages, especially in 1947 and 1952. The odds were stacked against the survival of these houses; yet they not only remained afloat but offered premieres and restagings that were new, interesting, sometimes controversial, and that were engaging to their audiences. Indeed, often new works, like *Bolivar,* were more successful with the audiences than with the critics.

The Réunion des Théâtres Lyriques Nationaux, like the operatic seasons in Rouen, Strasbourg and Marseille, outlived the Fourth Republic, which fell in 1958 unable to sustain its coalition governments in the face of escalating colonial and domestic conflict.[896] Despite the constant threats that the genre was on the verge of disappearing, these houses weathered the difficult times remarkably. The RTLN held on until 1978 when the Opéra and the Opéra-

[896] Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, 282, 296; Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle (III: 1945–1958)*, 248, 289–306.

Comique were once again separated as they had been in 1939 prior to their union. However, this was nearly not the case. In 1958 a commission was asked to present a report to the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale and the Ministère des Finances on the future of the RTLN. The journals reported that these ministries were once again very seriously considering abandoning the Opéra-Comique, returning it to private directorship, and allowing it to show more profitable operettes, as they had already several times during the Fourth Republic.[897] Despite producing significantly more new premieres than the Opéra, the Opéra-Comique, as the smaller house, was constantly viewed as secondary to the Opéra, especially in the eyes of the government budgetary officials. Often these individuals, who were frequently not musicians, struggled to understand what made the Opéra-Comique different than the Opéra other than its size. On a balance sheet the Opéra-Comique seemed like an unnecessary duplication.

The narrative of crisis, explored throughout this dissertation, persisted also. Journalists from the political right and left seemed horrified at what they viewed as a new desertion of French operatic art and France's artistic reputation. *L'Aurore* castigated Jaujard for giving into the draconian desires of the budget rather than defending French culture as he was hired to do.[898] *Les Lettres Françaises,* of the communist left, said the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale resembled a "hangman's noose" ["une tutelle qui ressemble à la corde du pendu"] over their decision to close the theatres and lock-out the employees during the strike and labor dispute that had taken place in February and precipitated these newest studies.[899] However, some believed the RTLN itself was the problem. Oliver Merlin, reporting for the left-leaning *Le Monde* argued

[897] "Théâtres Lyriques nationaux le Conseil Supérieur demande à être entendu sur les projects de réforme," *l'Aurore,* 28 October 1958.

[898] Ibid.

[899] L.L., "La Fermeture des Lyriques Farce en combine d'actes?," *Les Lettres Françaises,* 27 February 1958.

the only way forward was to "split the two-headed hydra" ["trancher cette hydre à deux têtes"] and free the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique from each other in order to negotiate not only the strikes but their independent futures.[900] If this path of separation would have brought more success, or more agency, to these theatres is the subject of speculation; what is certain is that the arguments that had plagued the operatic genre throughout the entire Fourth Republic remained unsolved and were debated as bitterly as ever as the Fourth Republic came to it close.

The Opéra-Comique remained tied to the Opéra, to the joy of some and despair of others. Hirsch left the RTLN permanently in 1959, and the post of administrator was filled by A.M. Julien from 1959 to 1962 and then Georges Auric from 1962 to 1968 under the Fifth Republic and the leadership of de Gaulle. Many texts have disparaged opera during the Fourth Republic—for example, Dupêchez called the period from 1945 to 1972 a shipwreck— yet, scholars have shown increased optimism about opera during the Fifth Republic.[901] Pistone cited the 1960s and Julien and Auric's directorships as the beginnings of a renaissance and recovery of French opera.[902] Ameille, placed the resurgence of opera in France in the 1980s, after the dissolution of the RTLN.[903] Agid and Tarondeau argued that true recovery did not come to the Opéra and Opéra-Comique until the 1990s, and that the social conflicts that were playing out at the RTLN never found durable solutions during its lifetime.[904] This dissertation has shown that these dates are to some degree arbitrary; yes opera during the Fourth Republic struggled, but it also

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[900] Oliver Merlin, "La Fermeture de l'Opéra," *Le Monde,* 4 March 1958.

[901] Dupêchez, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris, Un siècle au palais Garnier 1875–1980*, 247.

[902] Pistone, ed. *Le Théâtre lyrique français 1945–1985*, 14.

[903] Aude Ameille, *Aventures et Nouvelles aventures de l'opéra, pour une poétique du livret depuis 1945* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2016), 8.

[904] Agid andTarondeau, *L'Opéra de Paris. Gouverner une grande institution culturelle*, 67.

persisted. Why mark a later date as such a clear turning-point? Too often Fourth Republic opera has been written-off as a period of failure only to set-up an argument for a later renaissance.

By tracing the claims of crisis, controversy, and stagnation at the RTLN this dissertation has revealed that the political and cultural place of operatic genre in France was more complex than history has remembered it. Certainly, the Fourth Republic was an extremely challenging period for opera in France, and the RTLN in particular. The cultural-political battles at the RTLN and in opera houses across the nation prevented new repertoire from taking firm root, and without time on the stage many of the works have faded from memory. Only the works that went on to have international careers, like the operas of Poulenc, or works that have been the subject of revival projects, like Tailleferre's radio operas, have been given space in modern studies and on stages today.

However, one cannot accept the narratives of crisis in the genre uncritically. Looking closely at the individual administrators, composers, operas, and the pressures exerted on opera in France during this period has revealed that often the assertion of the impending death of French opera was used to justify individual aesthetic and political agendas. While this threat of doom was intended to motivate and call attention to the issue, it has unfortunately caused these operas to be sometimes disregarded and often undervalued. However, as this dissertation has shown, opera during the Fourth Republic was a key space for aesthetic and political contestation and innovation and formed an important space for thinking about French identity and reasserting France's cultural prestige on the world stage. Fourth Republic opera was not stagnant, even the revivals like *Indes galantes* bore the stamp of their times, as did, of course, the new premieres. The survival of these operatic houses during the challenging climate of the Fourth Republic was remarkable, and so was the innovative and polically engaged repertoire they produced.

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