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**Performing for the provinces: touring theatre troupes and the French  
political imaginary, 1824-64**

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Durham University

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This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

## Abstract

In this thesis I investigate the working practices and artistic conditions of travelling theatre troupes performing sung and spoken repertoire across France during the first half of the nineteenth century. The *troupes d'arrondissement* performed in a network of provincial towns between 1824 and 1864 as part of the government-managed infrastructure to provide nationwide access to stage culture, established from 1806. The practices of these troupes and the discourse that surrounded their work reveal an artistic environment profoundly shaped by artistic and physical mobility, by local priorities as well as communal theatrical bonds across an *arrondissement*, and by the demands of a state framework established to oversee and control theatrical experience. These varied conditions offer a new insight into the nineteenth-century French musical and theatrical industry that scholars have so far approached mainly through the capital, with notable exceptions. In my research, I not only resituate the working practices of an overlooked cultural environment within nineteenth-century French musical life, but I also draw attention to the ways that touring directors, performers, critics and administrators brokered theatrical connections between the touring environment, Paris and wider France through their actions and discourse. I argue that itinerant theatre articulated varying spatial relationships between the nation's peripheries and its centre, but also connections within the peripheries themselves, and links with the wider European theatrical and social landscape.

I draw on extensive archival research to examine four case study areas: the Nord/Pas de Calais departments in the north; the Pyrenees in the south-west; western Brittany; and Alsace, on the eastern French border. In Chapter 1, I investigate how ministerial officials conceptualised the shape of, and need for, national theatrical legislation between 1806 and 1824. In Chapter 2, I shed light on the way in which touring theatre established intra-provincial communities and hierarchies between departmental and town administrators,

and between provincial critics. In Chapter 3, I focus on the work of touring troupe performers, considering how provincial companies outside Paris provided artistic training that was recognised by theatrical professionals and ministers as part of a national career ladder. In Chapter 4, I examine how the provincial dissemination of *grand opéra*, and local and central debates about a national artistic framework for performances of this genre embodied and/or resisted centre-periphery dynamics. In Chapter 5, I consider how regional theatrical priorities and identity pushed back against the national theatrical system in a case study of the Franco-German troupe competition in Alsace.

Throughout my chapters, I reveal that travelling performances allowed provincial audiences, administrators, critics, directors and performers, to situate themselves at times as a part of, and at times in contrast to, a national community, depending on the geographical context and on the actions and priorities of local agents. In this way, the work of touring troupes, and the local socio-cultural contexts which their work helped to shape, embodied power dynamics and spatial relationships between French spaces during the first half of the nineteenth century.

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### Note on the text

I include the English translations of quotations in the main body of the text, with the original French quoted in the footnotes. All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.



## Abbreviations

### ARCHIVES

AN	Archives nationales de France
ADD	Archives départementales de Doubs
ADG	Archives départementales de la Gironde
ADHR	Archives départementales du Haut-Rhin
ADM	Archives départementales du Morbihan
ADN	Archives départementales du Nord
ADPC	Archives départementales du Pas-de-Calais
ADV	Archives départementales des Vosges
AMA	Archives municipales d'Arras
AMB	Archives municipales de Besançon
AMC	Archives municipales de Colmar
AMD	Archives municipales de Dunkerque
AME	Archives municipales d'Épinal
AMM	Archives municipales de Mulhouse
AMSB	Archives municipales de Saint-Brieuc
AMSM	Archives municipales de Saint-Malo
AMV	Archives municipales de Valenciennes
AMVa	Archives municipales de Vannes
BNF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
BASO	Bibliothèque d'agglomération de Saint-Omer
BHVP	Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris
BGM	Bibliothèque Grand'Rue Mulhouse
BMIE	Bibliothèque multimédia intercommunale d'Épinal
BMB	Bibliothèque municipale de Besançon
BMSB	Bibliothèque municipale de Saint-Brieuc
BUC	Bibliothèque universitaire Clignancourt (Paris)
MASV	Médiathèque de l'abbaye Saint-Vaast (Arras)
MEZ	Médiathèque Émile Zola (Dunkerque)

### NEWSPAPERS

<i>ACP</i>	<i>L'Ariel, courrier des Pyrénées</i>	Bayonne
<i>AL</i>	<i>L'Abeille de Lorient</i>	Lorient
<i>Au</i>	<i>L'Autorité</i>	Dunkerque
<i>LC</i>	<i>La constitution</i>	Pau
<i>CN</i>	<i>Le courrier du nord</i>	Valenciennes
<i>CPC</i>	<i>Le courrier du Pas-de-Calais</i>	Arras
<i>DP</i>	<i>Le drapeau tricolore</i>	Chalon-sur-Saône

<i>EF</i>	<i>L'Echo de la frontière</i>	Valenciennes
<i>EV</i>	<i>L'Écho des vallées</i>	Bagnères-de-Bigorre
<i>EN</i>	<i>L'Entracte</i>	Marseille
<i>FSO</i>	<i>La feuille de Saint-Omer</i>	Saint-Omer
<i>IA</i>	<i>L'Industriel alsacien</i>	Mulhouse
<i>IBP</i>	<i>L'Indépendant des Basses-Pyrénées</i>	Pau
<i>IN</i>	<i>L'Impartial du nord</i>	Valenciennes
<i>JA</i>	<i>Le journal d'Arras</i>	Arras
<i>JC</i>	<i>Le journal du Cher</i>	Bourges
<i>JCLR</i>	<i>Le journal du commerce de la ville de Lyon et du département du Rhône</i>	Lyon
<i>JHCHR</i>	<i>Le journal hebdomadaire de Colmar et du Haut-Rhin</i>	Colmar
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Le journal de la Haute-Saône</i>	Vesoul
<i>JLo</i>	<i>Le journal de Lorient</i>	Lorient
<i>JPDA</i>	<i>Le journal politique du département de l'Aube</i>	Troyes
<i>JV</i>	<i>Le journal de Valenciennes</i>	Valenciennes
<i>LL</i>	<i>Le lorientais</i>	Lorient
<i>LO</i>	<i>L'Observateur</i>	Rouen
<i>MSD</i>	<i>Mémoires de la société dunkerquoise</i>	Dunkerque
<i>MA</i>	<i>Le mémorial artésien</i>	Saint-Omer
<i>MP</i>	<i>Le mémorial des Pyrénées</i>	Pau
<i>LM</i>	<i>Le morbihannais</i>	Vannes
<i>OP</i>	<i>L'Observateur des Pyrénées</i>	Pau
<i>LP</i>	<i>Le patriote</i>	Clermont-Ferrand
<i>PAV</i>	<i>Les petites affiches de Valenciennes</i>	Valenciennes
<i>PB</i>	<i>Le phare de Bayonne</i>	Bayonne
<i>SM</i>	<i>Le sémaphore de Marseille</i>	Marseille
<i>TFC</i>	<i>Les tablettes franche-comptoises</i>	Besançon
<i>UF</i>	<i>L'Union faulconnier</i>	Dunkerque
<i>UMD</i>	<i>L'Union malouine and dinannaise</i>	Saint-Malo
<i>VD</i>	<i>La vigie de Dieppe</i>	Dieppe
<i>LCor</i>	<i>Le corsaire</i>	Paris
<i>LCou</i>	<i>Les coulisses</i>	Paris
<i>CT</i>	<i>Le courrier des tribunaux</i>	Paris
<i>DB</i>	<i>Le diable boiteux</i>	Paris
<i>EA</i>	<i>L'Europe artiste</i>	Paris
<i>LF</i>	<i>Le Figaro</i>	Paris
<i>LFM</i>	<i>La France musicale</i>	Paris
<i>LFT</i>	<i>La France théâtrale</i>	Paris
<i>LG</i>	<i>Le gaulois</i>	Paris
<i>GE</i>	<i>La gazette des eaux</i>	Paris
<i>GT</i>	<i>La gazette des théâtres</i>	Paris
<i>GM</i>	<i>Le guide musical</i>	Paris
<i>LGu</i>	<i>Le guignol</i>	Paris
<i>JAr</i>	<i>Le journal des artistes</i>	Paris
<i>JCo</i>	<i>Le journal des comédiens</i>	Paris
<i>JD</i>	<i>Le journal des débats, politiques et littéraires</i>	Paris
<i>JT</i>	<i>Le journal des théâtres</i>	Paris

<i>JGI</i>	<i>Le journal général de l'imprimerie</i>	Paris
<i>LMe</i>	<i>Le ménestrel</i>	Paris
<i>MC</i>	<i>Le messenger des chambres</i>	Paris
<i>LMS</i>	<i>Le miroir des spectacles</i>	Paris
<i>LMD</i>	<i>Le monde dramatique</i>	Paris
<i>LMon</i>	<i>Le moniteur universel</i>	Paris
<i>LMou</i>	<i>Le mousquetaire</i>	Paris
<i>NCR</i>	<i>Le nain couleur de rose</i>	Paris
<i>LR</i>	<i>Le réveil</i>	Paris
<i>RB</i>	<i>La revue britannique</i>	Paris
<i>RGM</i>	<i>La revue et gazette musicale</i>	Paris
<i>RT</i>	<i>La revue du théâtre</i>	Paris
<i>RN</i>	<i>La revue nouvelle</i>	Paris
<i>VV</i>	<i>Vert-vert</i>	Paris
<i>EZ</i>	<i>Eidgenössische Zeitung</i>	Zurich
<i>ISB</i>	<i>Intelligenzblatt für die Stadt Bern</i>	Bern
<i>GW</i>	<i>Good Words</i>	London
<i>WFCF</i>	<i>The World of Fashion and Continental Feuilletons</i>	London
<i>RPIM</i>	<i>Revue pittoresque de l'île Maurice</i>	Port-Louis

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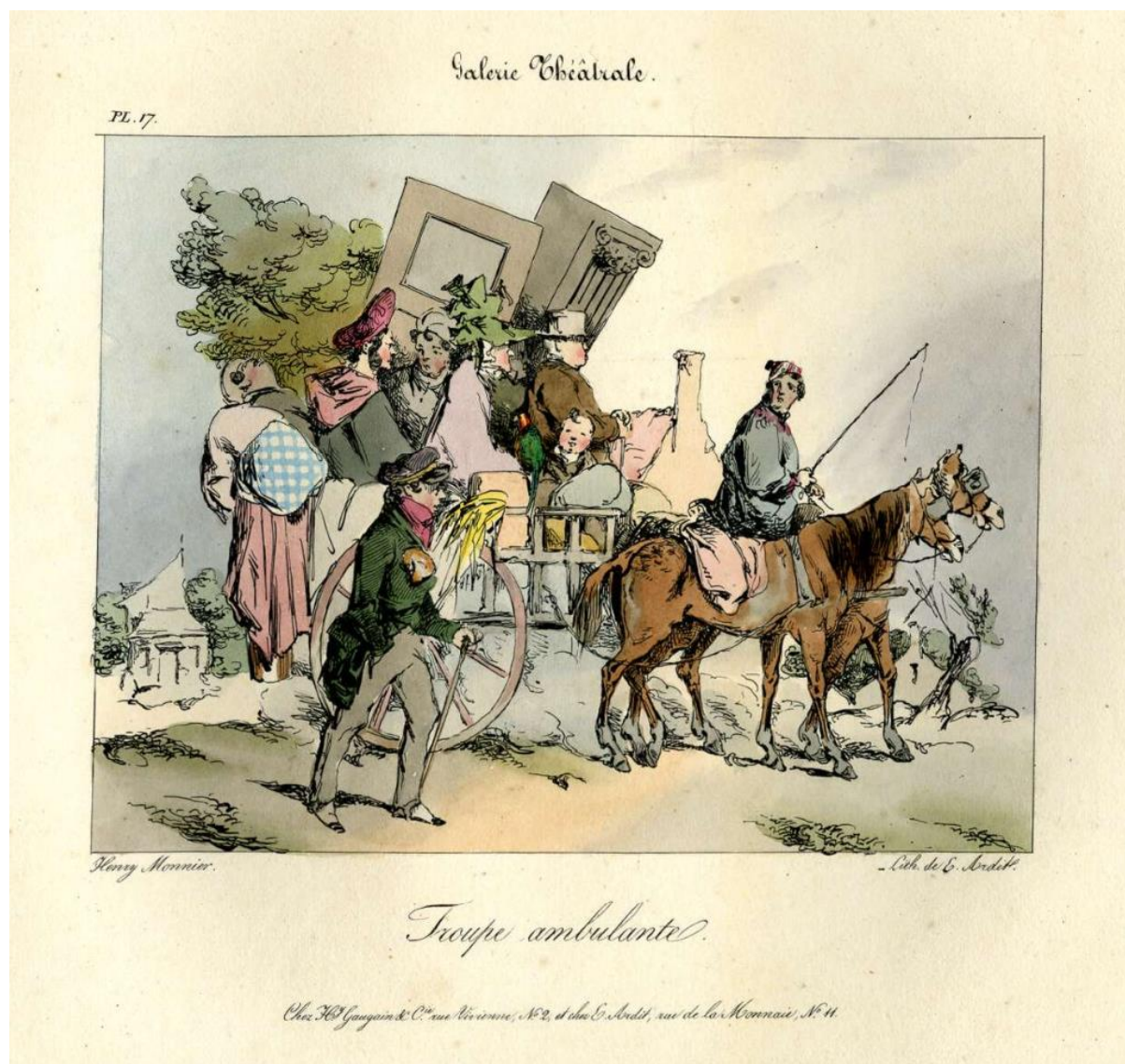
Finally, a million thanks to my husband Tudur for being a source of encouragement, laughs and comfort, and for making every day wonderful.

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## **Declaration**

This dissertation is the result of my own work, carried out at the Department of Music at Durham University. No part of this dissertation has previously been submitted for accreditation towards a degree in Durham or any other University.

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.



Frontispiece: Henri Monnier, "Troupe Ambulante", c.1828, British Museum [1861,1012.827]



## Introduction

Bousigue's troupe – that was the name of the director – brought with it brilliant costumes, marvellous decors, heavenly repertoire and, in particular, a range of diverse talents, celebrated without restraint in the Dijon newspaper [...] All of Lons-le-Saunier was enlivened by this seductive news, and the local fanatics came to block the postal depot to contemplate the actors as they descended from their carriage. We licked our lips when we read the [troupe's] posters.<sup>1</sup>

The excitement of the inhabitants of Lons-le-Saunier, a small town in the east of France, is palpable in this account of a touring theatre troupe's arrival in 1834. François-Xavier Guillermet, a journalist and archivist who worked in the department of Jura, sought to capture his memories of the frenzied encounter between itinerant artists and their new public. In this moment, the long-awaited company brought multiple delights to the latest provincial town on their circuit: new repertoire, lauded talent and visual splendour onstage. Bousigue's company was one of many travelling troupes working across France during the first half of the nineteenth century, touring a network of around four to ten provincial towns without theatrical provision all year round.<sup>2</sup> Weighed down by their artistic materials, weaving their way across the country in horse-drawn coaches, and greeted by a provincial crowd that licked its lips in anticipation, in Guillermet's depiction, Bousigue's troupe provides one of many colourful nineteenth-century anecdotes about provincial stage culture.<sup>3</sup> Yet to fully understand the significance of touring theatre in France at this time it is important, following Jelle Koopmans' approach for resituating provincial theatre within French historiography, to investigate the structures behind the anecdote:<sup>4</sup> in this case, to

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<sup>1</sup> "La troupe de Bousigue –c'était le nom du directeur- apportait avec elle de brillants costumes, de merveilleux décors, un répertoire aux oiseaux et surtout un stock de divers talents, fanfarés sans mesure par le journal de Dijon. [...] tout Lons-le-Saunier fut en l'air à cette affriolante nouvelle, et les fanatiques du terroir vinrent bloquer le bureau des Messageries, pour contempler les acteurs au débotté de la diligence. On se passait la langue sur les lèvres en lisant les affiches." François Xavier Guillermet, 'Histoire anecdotique de l'ancien théâtre de Lons-le-Saunier', in *Mémoires de la société d'émulation du Jura* (Lons-Le-Saunier: Declume Frères, 1887), 4: 173–4.

<sup>2</sup> Bousigues directed the 8<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* 1832–38. *Mémoires de la société bourguignonne de géographie et d'histoire* (Dijon: Darantiere, 1888), 4: 175. Municipal troupes were commonly referred to as sedentary or residential troupes and offered a much longer theatrical season for their town than touring ones.

<sup>3</sup> For similar tales, usually focusing on the small-scale resources or idiosyncratic practices of provincial companies see *EN* 18/08/1839; *EF*, 09/03/1845; *LMe*, 30/01/1853; *LGU*, 17/06/1866.

<sup>4</sup> Jelle Koopmans, "Un théâtre singulier ou un théâtre pluriel. Comment écrire une histoire du théâtre dans les provinces," in *Le 'théâtre provincial' en France (XVIe-XVIIe siècle)* ed. Bénédicte Louvat et Pierre Pasquier (Toulouse, Presses Universitaires du Midi, 2018), 36–54.

investigate travelling troupes' complex role within French society and culture that, at times, left audiences and administrators worrying or complaining about troupes and directors as much as licking their lips in anticipation of their visit.

Bousigue's company was known as a *troupe d'arrondissement*, a group of around twenty performers appointed by central officials in the Ministry of the Interior to tour a theatrical region (the *arrondissement*) and to provide performances for towns too small to have a sedentary municipal company.<sup>5</sup> Combined with a similar type of roving troupe, the *troupes ambulantes*, itinerant companies had a significant impact on French provincial culture in terms of sheer numbers and coverage alone: Bousigue's *troupe d'arrondissement* was one of 31 touring companies that served at least 62 towns across France by 1834, over double the number of municipal provincial theatres.<sup>6</sup> The impact of touring troupes lay not just in their successive performances of particular repertoire in different places, but in the role they played in the cultural transfer between the capital and the provinces and between provincial networks, as well as the connections and distinctions they forged between these spheres.<sup>7</sup> More so than in the case of municipal companies and Parisian institutions, theatrical mobility was central to the working lives of touring troupes, as well as to the theatrical experiences of provincial administrators and audiences. At the regional level, as glimpsed in Guillermet's recollection, not only did performers trundle into town for a

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<sup>5</sup> Romuald Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir au XIXe siècle: L'exemple de la Seine-et-Oise et de la Seine-et-Marne* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), 13-22. Throughout the nineteenth century, theatre was overseen by the Minister of the Interior and overseen by a team of government officials in a department known as the Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts and under various other names. I name individual Ministers of the Interior throughout my thesis but, taking my lead from Katharine Ellis, I refer to the "Minister" in footnotes and simply the "Ministry" in the body of text to refer to this department: Ellis, *French Musical Life: Local Dynamics in the Century to World War II* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1834* (Paris: Barba, 1834), 216-245. The *Almanach* lists 48 towns across the eighteen regions but flags up incomplete records for the 1st, 3rd, 7th, 9th, 10th, 15th, 17th, 18th *arrondissements*. From my four case studies I identify that the 1st, 6th, 9th and 16th troupes served 14 towns by 1834 that are not counted in the *Almanach*, bringing the lowest estimated total for this year to 62, although this is very likely much higher. Indeed, as I will shortly show, the records consulted in my thesis reveal that my four case study itinerant companies *alone* visited 50 different towns at some point during the period 1824 and 1864. The 1834 *Almanach* lists 39 cities outside my study area, meaning that there are at least 89 cities to which travelling troupes toured at some point during the 40-year period. By contrast, there are 30 provincial municipal theatres listed in the 1834 *Almanach*: three in the Parisian suburbs and 27 in the wider provinces. Besançon is erroneously listed as a residential theatre but was actually part of the 9th *arrondissement* at this point (*Almanach des spectacles pour 1834*, 199, 228).

<sup>7</sup> On this concept see Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist, "Introduction" in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer*, eds., Fauser and Everist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) 1-10.

season ranging in length from two weeks to six months after a journey of almost 100km from Dijon, but their reputations were already somewhat set in Lons-le-Saunier by this town's inhabitants' attention to Dijon journalism. Guillermet also implies a provincial awareness of Paris in his description of the public's wait for "heavenly" repertoire. As part of a government system overseeing national theatrical culture established between 1806 and 1864, all provincial companies were required to stage pieces created for the capital, and the Lons-le-Saunier audiences awaited Bousigue's troupe's dissemination of the latest Parisian pieces from across the spoken and sung, 'high' art and popular genres created by the capital's theatres.<sup>8</sup> As much as Guillermet's reflection describes a theatrical event in one provincial town, it also points towards a cultural experience that exemplified several spatial relationships within France, putting the local in touch with the regional and national. The way in which these spatial relationships are mediated by theatrical experience forms the subject of my thesis.

## Opera and theatre on the move

Themes of artistic mobility have taken centre stage in both opera and theatre studies in recent years.<sup>9</sup> In tracing the journeys of performers and theatrical entrepreneurs, specific genres and repertoires, or artistic practices across a network, scholars draw attention to the way in which the processes or products of travelling, translated and transplanted performance culture can deepen our understanding of the complex relationship between the stage and society.<sup>10</sup> Theatre on the move acts as a site of socio-political and artistic

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<sup>8</sup> J. B. Duverger, *Collection complète des lois, décrets, ordonnances, réglemens, et avis du Conseil-d'État* (Paris: Guyot and Scribe, 1826), 16:139.

<sup>9</sup> Louise Stein, "How Opera Traveled" in *The Oxford Handbook of Opera*, ed., Helen M. Greenwald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 843-861. Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire, Philippe Bourdin, and Charlotta Wolff, eds., *Moving Scenes: the Circulation of Music and Theatre in Europe, 1700-1815* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2018). Jens Hesselager, ed. *Grand Opera outside Paris: Opera on the Move in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018). Axel Körner and Paulo Köhl, eds., *Global and Transnational Perspective: Reimagining Italianità in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Walton, "Italian operatic fantasies in Latin America", *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 17, no.4 (2012): 460-471. Anne Sivuola, Owe Ander, Ulla-Brita Broman-Kananen and Jens Hesselager, eds, *Opera on the Move in the Nordic Countries during the Long 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (Helsinki: Sibelius Academy, 2012). Janice Norwood, *Victorian touring actresses: Crossing boundaries and negotiating the cultural landscape* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020). Danijela Weber-Kapusta, 'Travelling Theatre Companies and Transnational Audiences. A Case Study of Croatia in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Global Theatre History* 2, no.1 (2017): 1-21. Claudio E. Benzecry, "An Opera House for the 'Paris of South America': Pathways to the Institutionalization of High Culture," *Theory and Society* 43, no. 2 (2014): 169-196.

encounters between the communities and stage traditions represented by a point of departure and those at the point of arrival (of which there can be many), an encounter often resulting in cultural transfer.<sup>11</sup> Charlotte Bentley, for example, characterises operatic culture in New Orleans in the first half of the nineteenth century as transatlantic opera, typifying a culture forged by the encounter between a mixed North American audience and Francophone repertoire and performers brought over from the metropole.<sup>12</sup> In the same vein, performances in the French provinces embody a national, rather than purely provincial, culture of opera, *vaudeville* and spoken theatre because they bring together repertoire, artists and administrative structures from the capital with local and regional conditions, both artistic and socio-political.

As stage practices, personnel and repertoire transfer into new contexts, the meaning of theatrical experience, its social function, and its artistic or wider power is almost always transformed, with changes negotiated by the artists themselves, theatrical managers and administrators, audiences or critics. This is particularly true of the dissemination of theatre across colonial routes, where performances become embedded in power structures of subjugation and empire,<sup>13</sup> or in the circulation of an elite or dominant tradition, such as eighteenth-century Francophone theatre or nineteenth-century *grand opéra*.<sup>14</sup> The global microhistories featured in Jens Hesselager's recent edited volume *Grand opera outside Paris*, for example, demonstrate that dissemination of this genre to Europe and North America involved significant musico-dramatic and linguistic adaptation to take on appropriate local relevance and, at times, alternative political functions within a new society. Many of the studies demonstrate how Paris' originating shadow continued to loom

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<sup>11</sup> T. Becker, and K. A. Kulkarni, 'Editorial: Beyond the Playhouse: Travelling Theatre in the Long Nineteenth Century', *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 44, no.1 (2017): 3–7. Vlado Kotnik, *Small Places, Operatic Issues: Opera and Its Peripheral Worlds* (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Charlotte Bentley, *New Orleans and the Creation of Transatlantic Opera, 1819–1859* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022).

<sup>13</sup> Yamomo, meLê, "Global Currents, Musical Streams: European Opera in Colonial Southeast Asia," *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 44, no.1, (2017): 54–74.

<sup>14</sup> Rahul Markowitz, *Civiliser l'Europe: Politiques du théâtre français au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2014). Laura Protano-Biggs, "Introduction", *Cambridge Opera Journal* 29, no. 1 (2017): 1–4.

large or small in these contexts,<sup>15</sup> conditioning ideas of imitative cultural capital, or of what Jonathan Hicks calls “cultural cringe”: historical commentators assessing certain local operatic conditions as lacking because of a distance from Parisian operatic norms.<sup>16</sup> These studies reveal the centres and peripheries of a theatrical world, in most cases a transnational one, which conditioned performers’ and audiences’ experiences. Yet these studies can also reveal the limits of this mode of thinking about cultural transfer when, for example, opera becomes a “global aesthetic commodity”, significant precisely because this process of circulation blurs definitive and exclusive cultural hierarchies or origins.<sup>17</sup>

Much of the scholarship on artistic mobility and cultural transfer centres on transnational trajectories. Little has so far been said about regional theatrical circulation or the musical relationships between different points within one national body or collective state, with the exception of recent work by Austin Glatthorn and Francesca Vella’s work on touring opera and theatre in the Holy Roman Empire and the Italian peninsula, respectively.<sup>18</sup> This omission likely stems from the fact that the transnational turn was conceived to problematise national categories of analysis,<sup>19</sup> but also because the musical and theatrical culture of regional spaces has been repeatedly overlooked in favour of the capital city.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, in part thanks to both a turn towards global and colonial concerns and the lure of the capital city, provincialism and regionalism remains a generally under-studied topic within cultural history.

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<sup>15</sup> Hesselager, *Grand Opera outside Paris*.

<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Hicks, “Opera History, the Travel Edition”, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 33 (2021): 273–283.

<sup>17</sup> Körner and Köhl, “Opera and Italianità in Transnational and Global Perspective: An Introduction,” in *Italian Opera in Global and Transnational Perspective*, 4–5, 8–9.

<sup>18</sup> Austin Glatthorn, *Music Theatre and the Holy Roman Empire: the German Musical Stage at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022). Francesca Vella, *Networking Operatic Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021). The lack of regional studies is noted by Becker, and Kulkarni, “Editorial: Beyond the Playhouse”, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Körner and Köhl, “Opera and Italianità,” 8.

<sup>20</sup> Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). A. Belina, K. Kilpiö, and D. K. B. Scott, *Music History and Cosmopolitanism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019). William Weber, “Opera and the cultural authority of the capital city”, *Opera and society in Italy and France from Monteverdi to Bourdieu*, eds. Victoria Johnson, Jane E. Fulcher and Thomas Ertman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 160–180.

When provincial artistic environments *are* placed centre stage, scholars studying French contexts have largely focussed on one location, whether a resident municipally-funded troupe, for example Marc Précicaud's work on the Limoges theatre or Marie-Claire Mussat's examination of the Rennes opera company,<sup>21</sup> or the work of touring companies in just one locale, such as Christiane Jeanselme's studies of performances in Aix or Janine and Alex Bèges' research on troupe visits to in Bèges.<sup>22</sup> Where scholars have considered the mobility of touring companies between 1806 and 1864, they have tended to still focus on individual local issues, as shown in Cyril Triolaire's research on the Massif Central, and Romuald Féret's work on the departments bordering Paris.<sup>23</sup> These researchers demonstrate the impact of town conditions on an itinerant company and the priorities of local agents. These are important findings, revealing not only the daily pattern of troupe life but also how the actions of departmental prefects and town mayors at times challenged the centralising control of the state's theatrical legislation that sent the *troupes d'arrondissement* across the nation, and this type of work features in this thesis. I build on this research, however, by seeking to provide both a more focused and a wider lens on the work of itinerant troupes than offered by Triolaire and Féret.

<sup>21</sup> Marie-Claire Mussat, ed., *L'opéra de Rennes : naissance et vie d'une scène lyrique* (Rennes: Éditions du Layeur, 1998). Marc Précicaud *Le théâtre lyrique à Limoges, 1800-1914* (Limoges: Presses Universitaires de Limoges, 2001). See also Guy Gosselin, "Enfin, nos vœux sont exaucés! De l'influence de la presse dans l'évolution de l'institution théâtrale et du spectacle lyrique à Lille entre 1838 et 1848", in *Presse et opéra aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, eds., Olivier Bara, Christophe Cave and Marie-Ève Thérenty, Médias 19 [on line], 2019. Gosselin, *L'âge d'or de la vie musicale à Douai* (Liège: Mardaga, 1994); Marie-Odile Jubert-Larzul, 'Le théâtre à Toulouse au milieu du XIXe siècle', *Annales du Midi* 109, no. 217 (1997): 53-69. Sophie Leterrier, "Théâtre et concert : pratiques de sociabilité et pratiques artistiques dans le Nord au XIXe siècle", in *Un siècle de spectacles à Rouen (1776-1876), Actes du colloque organisé à l'Université de Rouen en novembre 2003 par Florence Naugrette et Patrick Taïeb* (Online: Publications numériques du CÉRÉdl, 'Actes de colloques et journées d'étude', 2009) vol. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Christiane Jeanselme, "Quelques aspects de la vie théâtrale de l'arrondissement d'Aix-en-Provence dans la première moitié du xix<sup>e</sup> siècle" in *La musique dans le midi de la France* ed. François Lesure (Paris : Klincksieck, 1997), 2 : 53-85. Alex Bèges and Janine Bèges, *Mémoire d'un théâtre: Opéra, théâtre, musique & divertissements* (Société de Musicologie de Languedoc: Béziers, 1987). Christine Carrère-Saucède studies touring troupes in Auch and Agen, but does not probe the implications of both being on the same network nor the relationship between these touring locales, Christine Carrère-Saucède, "La direction de troupe de province au XIXe siècle: une fonction polymorphe" in *Directeurs de théâtre, XIXe-XXe siècles: histoire d'une profession*, eds. Pascale Goetschel, Pascale and Jean Claude Yon (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2008), 31-45.

<sup>23</sup> Cyril Triolaire, *Tréteaux dans le Massif: Circulations et mobilités professionnelles théâtrales en province des Lumières à la Belle Époque* (Clermont-Ferrand: Université Blaise Pascal Clermont-Ferrand, 2022). Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province pendant le Consulat et l'Empire* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise-Pascal, 2012). Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*. Jean Nattiez, *La vie théâtrale des troupes ambulantes en Picardie, 1806-1864* (Amiens: CRDP, 1967). Graham Howard Bould gives an overview of the provincial theatre system in his thesis, but does not make clear the differences between residential and touring troupes, "The Lyric Theatre in Provincial France (1789-1914)," PhD diss., (University of Hull, 2006).

I do so by approaching itinerant theatre culture through three overlooked but key areas which I argue necessary to understanding the significance of touring theatre within nineteenth-century French society. First, while the scholars listed above speak of touring troupes in general across the full period of government theatrical oversight between 1806 and 1864, I focus on the *troupes d'arrondissement*. These were established as a separate theatrical tier from a second touring group, the *troupes ambulantes*, in a new theatrical legislation created by King Charles X on 8 December 1824. As I will show, my focus on this type of troupe serves to underline that the *troupes d'arrondissement* were characterised by crucial distinctive artistic working conditions and relationships with local administrators and audiences compared to other types of itinerant and also residential troupes during the forty years in which they existed, being dissolved on 6 January 1864 as part of the ministerial deregulation of French theatres. Responding to the lifespan of the *troupes d'arrondissement* as a cultural system, I use 1824 and 1864 as to define the timescale of my historical enquiry in this thesis as, with the disbanding of government legislation, the state-mandated network for regional touring gave way to the different dynamics of commercial entrepreneurship.<sup>24</sup> At times, though, I do contextualise the work of the *troupe d'arrondissement* within a larger theatrical period, for example in the first half of Chapter 1 when I examine how the 1824 reforms grew out of theatrical and political changes taking place in the eighteen years since the Napoleonic inception of the theatrical system in 1806.

The second insight that I bring to provincial theatre historiography is that I probe artistic issues inherent in travelling troupes' work that are left out of most of the existing touring studies, perhaps because many scholars, such as Triolaire and Féret, come from historical, rather than musicological backgrounds. In particular, I highlight that *troupes d'arrondissement* were synonymous with the operatic life of small provincial towns and, by studying this genre within the context of troupes' multi-genre performance requirements, I

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<sup>24</sup> Triolaire, *Tréteaux dans le Massif*, 271-359.

investigate phenomena such as cultural capital,<sup>25</sup> genre hierarchies, operatic adaptation and provincial performance practice. Third, and finally, unlike those scholars who concentrate on one town or region, I study the role of stage music in provincial society comparatively across four *arrondissements* spread across France.

In doing so, I bring a wider lens to the previously localised discussions of itinerant theatre that allows me to explore the coexistence of local, *arrondissement* or cross-provincial trends and also to situate these within broader issues such as national operatic circulation, state theatrical guidance, and performers' career paths across France and beyond. By using a comparative methodology, I aim to move beyond what Peter Jones describes as the limitations of the village monograph (or here the town one): the failure to bring a microhistorical study to bear on the bigger questions that need to be asked of French history.<sup>26</sup> Advocating a similar stance, Stéphane Gerson argues the need for scholars to keep in mind the national repercussions of local experiences, from town celebrations to learned societies, calling on researchers to prioritise the interchanges between the two.<sup>27</sup> As Gerson states, such connections can be glimpsed through local events as well as literary fields and symbolic capital: all of which are at play in nineteenth-century itinerant theatrical culture.

One way of examining the connections inherent in provincial theatre is to probe explicitly the relationship between centre and periphery, as Katharine Ellis has done in her studies of regional musical systems, particularly in her most recent book *French Musical Life*. Here, and with a particular focus on musical life from 1860 onwards, Ellis argues that two “resistance movements” within the structures of regional music-making embody

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<sup>25</sup> On this term, see Bridget Fowler, *Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Theory: Critical Investigations* (London: SAGE, 1997), 10–14.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Jones, *Liberty and Locality in Revolutionary France: Six Villages Compared, 1760–1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> Stéphane Gerson, 'Une France locale: The Local Past in Recent French Scholarship', *French Historical Studies*, 26/3 (2003): 547–548. See also W. Cohen, “Symbols of Power: Statues in Nineteenth-Century Provincial France”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31 no.3 (1989): 491–513.



nineteenth-century agents' problematisation of Parisian centralism within the nation.<sup>28</sup>

First, through decentralisation and devolution of musical power away from the capital, and second, although often concurrently, through cultural regionalism, the expression of French regional identities through musical practices and objects. Ellis situates these musical shifts within a long-term struggle to define the role of the regions and regional identity within the French state, as part of the 'provincial awakening' of the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup>

The majority of Ellis' work on stage music concerns municipal opera companies, funded by a town council and fixed in one place, although she includes a small section on touring troupes, mainly focusing on the period after the deregulation of the theatres in 1864.<sup>30</sup> Municipal opera, Ellis suggests, is one musical system that only rarely participates in challenging centralist practice before 1864. She argues that the system of resident companies instead "largely eradicated local difference" across France before 1864, since performers and managers were "nomadic cogs in a national machine" producing "overwhelmingly Paris-generated repertory".<sup>31</sup> Although there were some local arrangements that pressed against the centralisation of the theatre industry, for example the influence of German and Italian repertoire and visiting companies that Ellis draws attention to at the nation's north and south-eastern borders, she reads the theatrical system, as a whole, as embodying a ministerial cultural policy of "unity in uniformity", envisaged by the government to homogenise French identity as a social safeguard "against future revolution".<sup>32</sup> The municipal opera system, Ellis argues, above all emphasises the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Idem. 16. See also Clair Rowden, "Decentralisation and Regeneration at the Théâtre Des Arts, Rouen, 1889-1891", *Revue de Musicologie* 94, no. 1 (2008): 139-80; Julian Wright, *The regionalist movement in France, 1890-1914: Jean Charles-Brun and French political thought* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2003).

<sup>30</sup> Ellis, *French Musical Life*. Etienne Jardin adopts a similarly comparative approach in his thesis, Étienne Jardin "Le conservatoire et la ville: les écoles de musique de Besançon, Caen, Rennes, Roubaix et Saint-Etienne aux XIX siècle", PhD diss., (École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 172-4.

<sup>32</sup> Idem, 6.

power of the French centre over the peripheries during the period of government legislation, and only saw a substantial change in this dynamic after 1864.<sup>33</sup>

The *troupes d'arrondissement*, in some ways, tell a similar story. Like Ellis, in this thesis, I reveal significant centre-periphery dynamics that undoubtedly influenced the theatrical culture of provincial towns served by the *troupes d'arrondissement* between 1824–64. I argue, though, that itinerant theatre in fact reveals how stage culture also engaged with the nation in different, and multiple, ways. As already glimpsed in the link made between Dijon and Lons-le-Saunier in Guillermet's account of Bousigue's troupe, for example, influential theatrical relationships were also established between provincial towns. Moreover, there were other spatial relationships evident within touring theatre: practices that reversed the theatrical power dynamic between the capital and the provinces, or where theatrical communities could reach beyond the nation itself. I examine these varied relationships, and their interaction, through different theatrical phenomena in this thesis: critical reception of the *troupes d'arrondissement*; administrators' management of troupes; government legislation and oversight of companies; troupes' work and performances; directors' repertoires and artistic choices; and artists' trajectories.

### **The stage, society and the political imaginary**

In positioning provincial theatre beyond the centre-periphery dynamic, I argue that the *troupe d'arrondissement* was a nineteenth-century musical and theatrical phenomenon that articulated a diverse political imaginary within France. By the imaginary, I refer to what Héctor Fernández L'Hoeste, and Pablo Vila have described as a “symbolic field”, here articulated through theatrical events, institutions, and through the actions and discourses of local and central historical agents involved in provincial theatre during this period,

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<sup>33</sup> For these changes, including the development of open-air opera, tours of Wagner's operas see Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 227–268.

ranging from government and municipal administrators to critics and troupe members.<sup>34</sup>

Through these events, actions and discourses, different historical agents conceptualised the function and reach of theatre as a cultural system, and when analysed, they make apparent flows of theatrical and wider social and political power, in many directions, throughout France. This imaginary can be described as political, in nature, because these power dynamics both evoke and reflect itinerant theatre's national, local, provincial, regional and/or European significance throughout the century.

These categories at times conflicted with each other, at times obscured each other, and some were, in certain theatrical situations, absent or irrelevant. Considered together, however, these categories underline how, to use Charles Taylor and Manfred's Steger's terms, the political imaginary highlights the "mappings of social and political space" and the way in which certain nineteenth-century figures "imagine[d] their communal existence".<sup>35</sup>

The archival sources available do not let me speak about the reflections of ordinary citizens on the political imaginary, but, instead, to draw attention to the work figures of administrative and/or cultural power: administrators employed by state to control and shape touring theatrical culture at ministerial, prefectural and mayoral level, plus local journalists and troupe directors. Throughout the thesis, I chart how these historical figures outlined the different functions, definitions, and limits of national, local, provincial, regional

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<sup>34</sup> Héctor Fernández L'Hoeste, and Pablo Vila, eds., *Sound, Image, and National Imaginary in the Construction of Latin/o American Identities* (Blue Ridge Summit: Lexington Books, 2017), 1. Any use of the concept of the imaginary/imagined naturally in some way builds on Benedict Anderson's influential, although critiqued, theory of the "imagined community", as I do: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, revised and extended. edition (London: Verso, 1991), 6–7. Critiques include Craig Cairns, "Scott's Staging of the Nation", *Studies in Romanticism* 40, no. 1 (2001): 13–28. Christine Allison, "From Benedict Anderson to Mustafa Kemal: Reading, Writing and Imagining the Kurdish Nation", in *Joyce Blau l'éternelle chez les Kurdes* eds., Hamit Bozarslan and Clémence Scalbert-Yücel (Istanbul: Institut français d'études anatoliennes, 2018), Epub. Kevin Olson, *Imagined Sovereignities: The Power of the People and Other Myths of the Modern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 39–53. For uses of the term with the 'political', 'social' or 'global' affixed, see Olivia Bloechl, *Opera and the Political Imaginary in Old Regime France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018); Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 2, 23–26; Manfred B. Steger, *The Rise of the Global Imaginary: Political Ideologies from the French Revolution to the Global War on Terror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Claus Clüver, Matthijs Engelberts, and Véronique Plesch, eds. *The Imaginary: Word and Image* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2015); Dominique Kalifa, *Les bas-fonds : histoire d'un imaginaire* (Paris: Seuil, 2013).

<sup>35</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 2; Steger, *The Rise of the Global Imaginary*, 6.

and/or European frames of reference for understanding itinerant stage culture, and the relationship between these spatial categories.

When using the term 'national' as part of the political imaginary, it is important to acknowledge that I do not refer to historical agents discussing specific concepts of 'France' and 'Frenchness'. These terms are, in fact, remarkably absent in the archival sources studied in this thesis, with the exception of the theatrical situation in Alsace, studied in Chapter 5, where discussions of specifically French characteristics for culture and societal norms were forged through the friction of borderland politics. The general silence regarding theatre's relationship with a general understanding of 'Frenchness', however, supports the arguments put forward by Eugen Weber and Sudhir Hazareesingh that a shift in mass identification beyond the local to the realm of national French identity took place only from the later nineteenth century onwards.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, though, I will also demonstrate how, in this period, a 'national' element can certainly be discerned within specifically ministerial desires to establish, or at times press back on, a provincial theatrical system charged with carrying centrally prescribed socio-cultural goals throughout the nation, and to influence the behaviours of French citizens. In other words, for government ministers, and for certain rare local administrators, as comes to light in Chapter 5, there *did* exist national aims for itinerant theatre and its role in society: ministers used touring theatre to debate what types of performance practice, repertoire and societal role could be representative of national art, as will be seen in Chapter 1; should be fundamental to national education, as explored in Chapter 3; or could ensure linguistic-political control of the nation's people, as outlined in Chapter 5.

Overall, studying itinerant theatrical practices reveals the significant and diverse power dynamics inherent within France's cultural and social infrastructure during the first half of

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<sup>36</sup> Sudhir Hazareesingh *From Subject to Citizen: The Second Empire and the Emergence of Modern French Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen the Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

the nineteenth century. As mentioned already, the different perceptions of space and the relationships between these spatial units can, at times, be contradictory in the different aspects of provincial theatre and discourse seen across the nation and time period.<sup>37</sup> I thus suggest that part of the significance of the *troupes d'arrondissement* for French musicology is that this cultural system resituates the plurality and changing nature of the political imaginary at a time when more traditionally visible aspects of French theatrical life, such as the work of many Parisian artistic commentators, of government systems and of larger institutional models, including the municipal opera studied by Ellis, overwhelmingly present one specific view of the nation. That is: a nation defined by the centre-periphery dynamic that emphasised Parisian influence over provincial cultural and social life and, in doing so, accentuated the capital's position as the leader of, and representative of, France.<sup>38</sup>

Paris' domineering position as the national centre was naturally brought about through the highly centralised bureaucracy and governance of nineteenth-century French life, structures that formed part of the long shadow of Louis XIV's monarchical absolutism.<sup>39</sup>

Ministers of the Interior and their government cabinets established laws to regulate and to standardise many aspects of day-to-day life across the provinces from their seat in Paris, from education to the languages spoken in public spaces, as well as the theatrical stage.<sup>40</sup>

Many other historical agents, including writers of literary, social and theatrical discourse further configured Paris' perceived monolithic role over French society. Recurring tropes in fictional and travel literature by Honoré de Balzac, Jules Michelet and Stendhal (Marie-

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<sup>37</sup> It is this plurality that critics such as Craig Cairns have noted is not acknowledged in Anderson's thesis on nation building, Cairns, "Scott's Staging of the Nation", 23. I also draw on L'Hoeste and Vila's method of emphasising the coexistence of the regional, peripheral and marginal" within their study of the Latin American imaginary *Sound, Image, and National Imaginary*, 8.

<sup>38</sup> Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 5. Alain Corbin, "Paris-Province", *Lieux de Mémoire*, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1997) 2: 2851-2888.

<sup>39</sup> Phil McCluskey, *Absolute Monarchy on the Frontiers: Louis XIV's Military Occupations of Lorraine and Savoy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Sharon Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Roger Baury, Laurent Bourquin, Anne-Marie Cocula, Olivier Conrad, Maria Sofia Corciulo, Eveline Cruickshanks, Arnaud Decroix, *L'invention de la décentralisation: noblesse et pouvoirs intermédiaires en France et en Europe xviiie-xixe siècle* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2019); Ezra Suleiman, *Private Power and Centralization in France: The Notaires and the State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

<sup>40</sup> Robert Gildea, *Education in Provincial France, 1800-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Stewart McCain, "The Language Question Under Napoleon". PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2014.

Henri Beyle), for example, portrayed the peripheries as a distanced and secondary spatial unit that represented France's backwardness, marginality and irrelevance?, versus the capital city's embodiment of the nation's progression, power and presence.<sup>41</sup> This derogatory binary continually asserted the capital's determining influence over the provinces. The hierarchies conceived between Parisian and provincial theatre perpetuated this dynamic. Artistic figures such as Hector Berlioz, for example, did not hide their opinions that provincial musical life succeeded only when it imitated the capital. In newspaper columns, Berlioz repeatedly attacked adaptations made to operatic and musical repertoire by provincial troupes calling these "unjustifiable abuses" to French music, including accusing provincial directors of "executing" Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* (1831).<sup>42</sup> Other composers and librettists at times also used their work to poke fun at provincial practices, particularly those of touring troupes. Jacques Offenbach, Charles-Désiré Dupeuty and Ernest Bourget's *opéra-bouffe Tromb-al-ca-zar* (1856), for example, underlined the lack of talent of travelling performers, and highlighted the oddity of all provincial companies' remit to produce multi-genre performances.<sup>43</sup> This opera, and other metatheatrical pieces,<sup>44</sup> magnified the perception of a mediocre provincial theatrical world with practices that seemed alien to the capital's specialised institutions and their

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<sup>41</sup> Philippe Martel, "Province/provincial", *Le Théâtre provincial en France (XVIe-XVIIe siècle)* ed. Bénédicte Louvat et Pierre Pasquier (Toulouse, Presses Universitaires du Midi, 2018), 25–34. Gerson, 'Une France Locale: The Local Past in Recent French Scholarship'. *French Historical Studies* 26, no. 3 (2003): 539–59. Corbin, "Paris-Province". Gerson, though, notes some amount of nostalgia, at least in travel writing, in the promise of recovering a lost French identity that centred on the regional in a peasant's words or a monument encountered on the author's travels.

<sup>42</sup> Hector Berlioz, "De l'instrumentation de *Robert-le-diable*." *RGM*, 12/07/1835, translated by Cohen, *The Original Staging Manuals*, xx. *RGM*, 10/09/1848; *GaMu*, 30/07/1834.

<sup>43</sup> Beaujolais' entrance aria ('Oui je suis Buridan'), for example, is a send-up of troupe performers supposed versatility. He references his performances in twelve pieces in various genres from *grand opéra* to *drame*, which would appear alien to audiences of the specialised Parisian theatres. Beaujolais references the title characters in *Don Cesar de Bazan*, *mélodrame* (1844); *Marco-Spada opéra-comique* (1852); *Ruy Blas*, *drame* (1832); *Gastibelza opéra* (1847); *Gaspardo le pêcheur*, *mélodrame* (1837); *Fra Diavolo*, *opéra-comique* (1830); *Satan, ou le diable à Paris*, *vaudeville* (1844); *Robert le Diable*, *grand opéra* (1831); *Le Corsaire*, *ballet-pantomime* (1856); and the roles of Buridan in *La tour de Nesle*, *drame* (1832); Raoul in *Les Huguenots*, *grand opéra* (1826); and as a 'bravo' referencing *Il Bravo* (Saverio Mercadante, an Italian opera described as *drame lyrique* in French, 1834). Beaujolais' opening accompanied recitative for the aria also sends up *opera seria* recitative. Elsewhere, Offenbach riffs off the plurality of styles expected of provincial performers by inserting these directly into his score: the No 2. Trio employs techniques from *vaudeville*, setting new text to parts of Félicien David's *Air des Hirondelles*, and the penultimate number is written as a parody of a melodrama fight sequence ("Ballet sur une valse chantée"), in which Beaujolais' troupe forcibly recruit provincial innkeeper Ignace, a caricature of a provincial simpleton.

<sup>44</sup> Other metatheatrical pieces included Casimir Delavigne's *Les comédiens* (1820), set in Bordeaux.

audiences, further underlining the distance and hierarchy between provincial theatre spaces and performers with the capital.

Government actions in managing French theatre certainly also contributed to perpetuating this traditional sense of the political imaginary. Theatres such as the Académie and Théâtre-Français, but also the capital's popular companies, were considered nationally important because of their production values and influence over the provinces: it was in these institutions that new French operatic and theatrical pieces were created before being circulated to the provinces; and here that the highest French talent in stage performers and personnel (composers, librettists, decorators etc.) was showcased.<sup>45</sup> As artistic figures such as Adolphe Adam argued in the Parisian newspaper *L'Assemblée nationale* in 1849, the progress of Parisian theatre was seen to affect the whole nation, an argument that was used to justify state funding of the Opéra, in particular:

[creations at the Opéra] not only project our artistic glory abroad, but they make all the departmental theatres live. If the Opéra has a big success, it will be repeated in Marseille, in Lyon, in Toulouse, in Rouen. The sums spent on the Opéra de Paris thus come to the aid of all of the provincial institutions, and it is this that justifies the subventions given to our *grand théâtres*: their benefits extend over all of France.<sup>46</sup>

Notably, Adam did not even mention small towns of the likes served by touring companies in his comparison between Paris and the provinces, reflecting an additional internal provincial power dynamic in which the largest regional cities often stood for the rest of the nation beyond the capital. In his call for state funding, Adam participated in an ongoing parliamentary debate lasting through the 1830s to the 1860s about a contentious issue, since the money came from the nation's taxes and regional directors and commentators argued for a similar government provision for provincial companies.<sup>47</sup> Government

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<sup>45</sup> Hervé Lacombe, 'Introduction' in *Histoire de l'opéra français: Du Consulat aux débuts de la IIIe République* ed. Henri Lacombe, ed. Hervé Lacombe (Paris: Editions Fayard, 2021), 14-15; Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 3, 172.

<sup>46</sup> "non seulement projettent à l'étranger notre gloire artistique, mais ils font vivre tous nos théâtres de départements. Que l'Opéra ait un grand succès, ce succès se répètera à Marseille, à Lyon, à Toulouse, à Rouen. Les sommes dépensées pour l'Opéra de Paris viennent ainsi en aide à toutes les directions de province, et c'est ce qui justifie les subventions accordées à nos grands théâtres : leur bienfaits s'étendent sur toute la France." Mathieu Cailliez, 'Adolphe Adam, porte-parole de "l'école française" de l'opéra-comique. Inventaire et étude synthétique de ses critiques musicales (1833-1856)'. *Journal of Music Criticism* 3 (2019): 79.

<sup>47</sup> Sylvain Nicolle, "La Tribune et la Scène. Les débats parlementaires sur le théâtre en France au XIXe siècle (1789-1914)" (PhD, Université Paris Saclay, 2015), 127-133.

ministers and invited speakers to these debates, such as critic Jules Janin, however, repeatedly argued that the pomp of the capital's performances was important for "national self-esteem" and that "public spending on the Parisian royal theatre was thus considered "in the general interest of dramatic art" for the whole nation.<sup>48</sup> Government funding further emphasised that provincial theatre was seen as dependent on the capital and, some believed, even divorced from national art: as Janin argued in 1849, "we must not treat the provinces as a serious thing, dramatically speaking."<sup>49</sup>

In the prevailing power dynamics glimpsed in these examples, provincial theatres appear as a poor cousin to Paris, not able to have national significance, nor to escape Parisian influences or models of theatrical practice from the capital. This is a way of thinking about French theatre that is still perpetuated by some scholars today: Jürgen Osterhammel, for instance, describes the direction of operatic influence as flowing only from the capital out to the rest of France.<sup>50</sup> It is undeniable that certain working conditions of the *troupes d'arrondissement* did replicate this iteration of the political imaginary, and this forms part of the findings in my thesis. To cite three examples: Parisian ministers determined key features, if not all of the daily machinations, of provincial companies' work; as mentioned by Ellis, touring performers descended upon a new regional outpost year upon year after the casting season in Paris to disseminate a range of Parisian genres to their *arrondissement*, and many of the material conditions of touring performances, such as costumes and decors, were purchased from Paris-based theatrical agents, often in copies of the capital's theatres' resources.<sup>51</sup> In addition, certain local administrators' and critics' expectations

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<sup>48</sup> Nicolle, "La Tribune et la Scène", 127, quoting the parliamentary session on 15 May 1838.

<sup>49</sup> "Il ne faut pas traiter la province comme une chose sérieuse, dramatiquement parlant," session on 24 September 1849, *Enquête et documents officiels sur les théâtres* (Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1849), 70.

<sup>50</sup> Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 5. Additionally, Osterhammel gives the Académie a one-way influence on a global scale, a dynamic that Bentley has challenged in showing the co-existing reverse influence of New Orleans on Parisian theatrical culture, *New Orleans and the Creation of Transatlantic Opera*.

<sup>51</sup> Triolaire, *Tréteaux dans le Massif, Le théâtre en province*. Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*. Bould, "The Lyric Theatre in Provincial France". Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 172.



about the shape of their town theatre grew directly out of a desire for Parisian imitation, particularly in the nationwide dissemination of *grand opéra*.

If the *troupes d'arrondissement* certainly manifested traditional centre-periphery dynamics, this is not so determining a factor as to overwhelm other aspects of the political imaginary. Rather, I argue throughout this thesis that itinerant theatrical culture also conditioned several alternative spatial relationships. First, in Chapters 1, 3 and 4, I will suggest that various aspects of government theatrical legislation, the role played by troupes in French artistic education, and elements of the circulation of *grand opéra* emphasised how provincial conditions and practices might reverse the direction of theatrical influence: the provinces acting as beneficial and determining for the capital. Second, in Chapters 2 and 5, I will highlight the creation of a political imaginary in which Paris is bypassed altogether in theatrical experience because of the way in which theatre plotted out an imaginary that was based on more immediate geographical connections on a regional level.<sup>52</sup> In music, nineteenth-century regionalism has primarily been studied in terms of onstage representations of the historical regions, or in folk and popular music and theatre movements that demonstrate similar tensions.<sup>53</sup> What has not been discussed, however, is the regional significance of links *between* provincial towns in spaces that were not bound together by an established historical entity: such as the theatrically defined *arrondissement*. Here, the *troupes d'arrondissement* offer an intriguing insight into French theatrical culture since they were, at their core, a regionally shared resource. As I will show, troupes' working conditions were, in part, determined by the co-existence of distinctive towns in the *arrondissement*, and their tours bound audiences, critics and administrators from different departments together under an *arrondissement* jurisdiction.

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<sup>52</sup> For work on the region/regional and links with centralism and autonomy, see Patrick Young, *Enacting Brittany: tourism and culture in Provincial France* (London: Routledge, 2012). Caroline Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993).

<sup>53</sup> Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 276–355. Jean-Christophe Branger and Sabine Teulon-Lardic, eds., *La Provence et le Languedoc à l'Opéra au XIXe siècle: cultures et représentations* (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2017).

In particular, the *arrondissement* forced provincial administrators, such as prefects and mayors, to negotiate inter-departmental power dynamics through interaction with, and about, the touring troupe.

The region, though, was not the limit. Touring theatre at times interacted with European audiences, languages and stage traditions. This is evident in transnational musical exchange within the Haut-Rhin borderland studied in Chapter 5, artists' careers outlined in Chapter 3, and itinerant performances in spa towns, as noted in Chapter 2. As I will show, it is in such encounters that the reach and identity of the national element of French performance culture was at once both defined and challenged, at times coming close to articulating the clearest sense of a political imaginary in state-building terms at the very moment that it was under threat.

## Approach

Throughout the thesis, I draw from a rich variety of archival sources to reconstruct the work of itinerant troupes across four *arrondissements*, visiting forty-eight provincial towns.<sup>54</sup> The vast majority of these sources concern the management of travelling troupes by ministers and by regional officials: town mayors and departmental prefects, the former usually prominent local landowners elected to office,<sup>55</sup> while the latter were central agents of the state largely parachuted into a region to which they largely did not have prior connections.<sup>56</sup> The sources offer a vivid snapshot of the actions and motivations of these figures involved in the administration of the French state, as well as those of troupe directors. I also draw on newspaper criticism from different towns, an essential source of artistic information on troupe theatre because of the almost non-existent state of musical archival sources pertaining to the *troupes d'arrondissement*, as I will expand on in Chapter

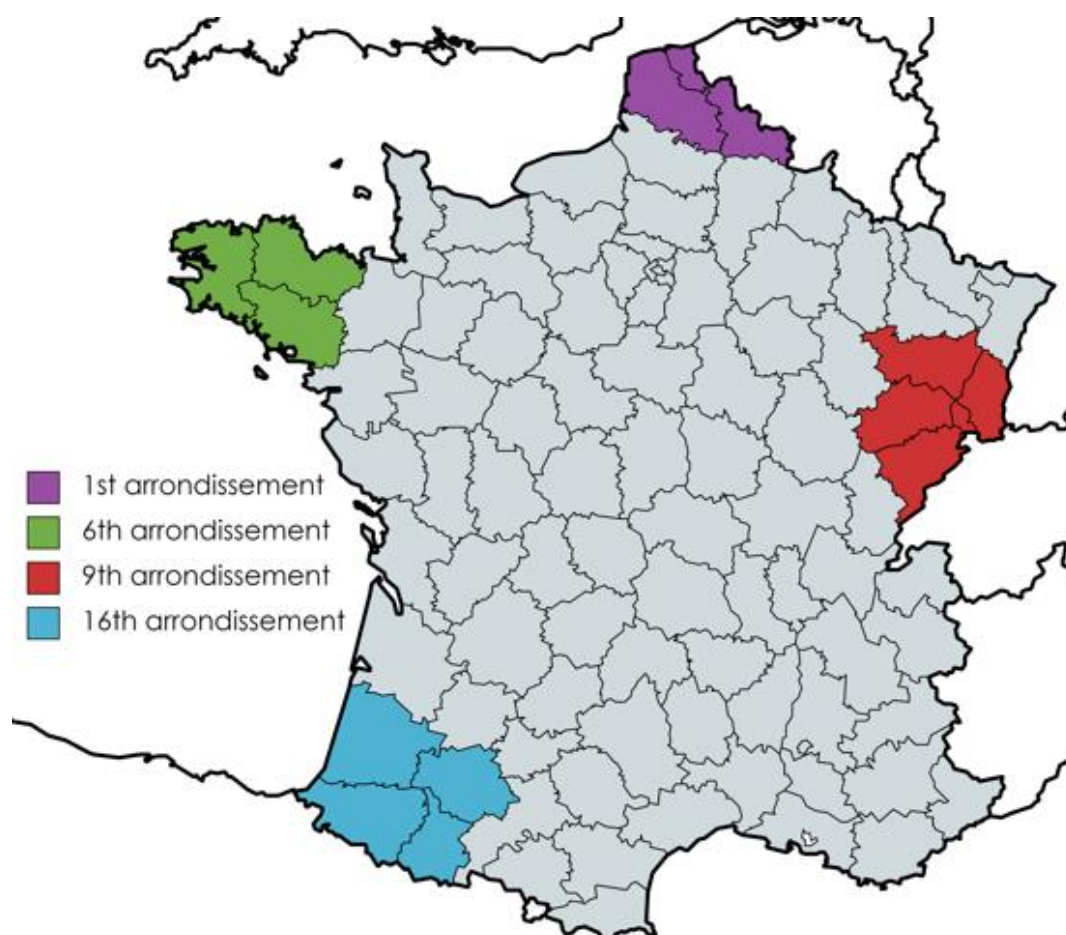
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<sup>54</sup> One troupe also toured to Jersey and Guernsey, although it is unsure to which towns.

<sup>55</sup> Barnett, Singer, *Village Notables in Nineteenth-Century France: Priests, Mayors, Schoolmasters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 53.

<sup>56</sup> Bernard Le Clère and Vincent Wright, *Les préfets du Second Empire* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1973).

3.<sup>57</sup> Using these sources, I concentrate on four case studies, examining touring theatre in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissements* (figure 1).



*Figure 1: The four case study arrondissements*

I chose regions scattered across the cardinal points of France to explore the notable geographical, social, and artistic differences of different cross-departmental regions.

The northern 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* had an abundance of travelling troupes (up to four concurrent companies in the 1860s), a relatively small theatrical territory that took up two departments connected by excellent road links, and was the first place in which *troupe*

<sup>57</sup> I will expand on the state of these sources in chapter 3.

*d'arrondissement* directors spearheaded the circulation of *grand opéra* into itinerant networks. The 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, in Brittany, was the only one of the four whose geography remained consistent during the sixty-two years of centralised theatrical infrastructure, was centred around the port town Lorient and was notable for the religious zeal of its audiences.<sup>58</sup> The eastern 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* was mountainous and tricky to navigate but required directors to serve the largest number of towns (fifteen), including industrial Mulhouse and spas such as Plombières. It also bordered Switzerland and Germany. This theatrical network suffered the loss of a key town, Besançon, after the municipal councils funded a year-long company in 1836, as did the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* when a resident troupe was formed for Bayonne in 1842. Like the 9<sup>th</sup>, the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* featured two spa towns (Bagnères-de-Bigorre and Pau), but it was rural and sparse, with few road connections between departments, making travel and the management of the shared theatrical space difficult for directors.<sup>59</sup>

It is worth noting here that, drawing from French scholars' use of the word 'province/provincial', throughout the thesis, I use the term provincial to denote France beyond the capital, acknowledging that the term can be a loaded or derogatory one.<sup>60</sup> Yet I chose this term instead of the French regions, favoured by Ellis for example, because, at various points in the thesis, I wish to make a distinction between the provinces, as a whole, and communities *within* the provinces that I describe as regional entities, such as the ancient *régions* (Brittany etc.) or the *arrondissement* grouping of different towns.

I do not reconstruct a comprehensive history of the cultural scene of specific provincial towns in this thesis, as is the aim of many single-town Francophone theatrical or musical studies. Rather, throughout my chapters, I highlight recurring trends that can be seen

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<sup>58</sup> AMSB, 113/Per/1, *UMD*, 13/02/1851.

<sup>59</sup> Graham Robb, *The Discovery of France: A Historical Geography from the Revolution to the First World War* (New York: Norton, 2007), 215.

<sup>60</sup> Kotnik, *Small Places, Operatic Issues*, 6.

across the four case studies and draw attention to significant moments in touring culture. In Chapter 1, I investigate how ministerial officials conceptualised the shape of, and need for, national theatrical legislation between 1806 and 1824. In Chapter 2, I shed light on how touring theatre established intra-provincial communities and hierarchies between departmental and town administrators, and between provincial critics. In Chapter 3, I focus on the work of touring troupe performers, considering how provincial companies outside Paris provided artistic training that was recognised by theatrical professionals and ministers as part of a national career ladder. In Chapter 4, I examine how the provincial dissemination of *grand opéra* and local and central debates about a national artistic framework for performances of this genre embodied and/or resisted centre-periphery dynamics. In Chapter 5, I examine how regional theatrical priorities and identity pushed back against the national theatrical system in a case study of the Franco-German troupe competition in Alsace.

Across these chapters, I explore the many ways in which the actions and discourses of provincial audiences, administrators, critics, directors and performers charted different spatial relationships and power dynamics interact through itinerant theatre. In doing so, I ask whether the work of the *troupes d'arrondissement* established a rich and complex nineteenth-century political imaginary, one that at times contributed to strengthening or weakening the veneer of the contemporary centralised state,<sup>61</sup> as well as the Parisian-led theatre industry prevalent at this time. Ultimately, I ask what it meant for administrators, audiences, critics and troupe members to relate to each other, and to the different categories and hierarchies of French space, in varying and various ways between 1824 and 1864.

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<sup>61</sup> On the theories and concepts of the state, centralisation, and society in France, with practical examples from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see Ezra N. Suleman, *Private Power and Centralization in France: The Notaires and the State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) 3–30, 299–303.



## Prologue: a season in the life of a touring troupe

A male director could respond to a vacancy for an *arrondissement* position managing a troupe as advertised in a theatrical newspaper, by agents, or by the government, but, under the 1824 legislation, female theatrical entrepreneurs could not.<sup>62</sup> Successful men received a *brevet* for the directorship of a specific *arrondissement* from the Ministry for one year.<sup>63</sup>

Once received, directors descended upon Paris for the Easter casting season where hopeful performers would gather to audition in the aim of brokering a one-year contract in a *troupe d'arrondissement*.<sup>64</sup> The theatrical season for touring companies usually lasted twelve months from April onwards, although some directors chose to shorten their tours and begin in October to save costs.<sup>65</sup>

Once cast, troupes set off for their *arrondissement* tours of between five and fifteen towns across two to seven departments.<sup>66</sup> Journeying across France in horse-drawn coaches was precarious and potentially perilous. In the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*, for example, troupes at times lost their luggage, including costumes and artistic materials, were involved in coach crashes, and feared meeting highwaymen, while, in the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, touring solo violinist Charles Lafont was killed in 1839 when his diligence overturned between Bagnères-de-Bigorre and Tarbes.<sup>67</sup> The *troupes d'arrondissement* had a responsibility to visit the towns in their itinerary at least once every six months for fifteen performances and, throughout the seasons, directors wrangled the competing desires of different local administrators to chart an itinerary across the region.<sup>68</sup> The *troupes d'arrondissement*

<sup>62</sup> JT, 24/12/1843. AN, F/21/1277, letter from the Prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées to the Minister, 04/05/1839. AMC, 2/R/4/5b2-5, letter from agent Louis-Baret to the Mayor of Colmar, 14/10/1861. Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry*, 162-3.

<sup>63</sup> AN, F/21/1250, Contract (Seymour), 21/01/1843.

<sup>64</sup> ADN, 1/T/301/3, Letter from Halanzier to the Prefect of the Nord, 05/04/1841. AN, F21/1278, Letter from Hermant to the Minister, 02/07/1862. Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry*, 194-5.

<sup>65</sup> Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 267. Patrick Taïb, "L'année théâtrale", *Histoire de l'opéra français*, 770.

<sup>66</sup> *Ordonnance*, 08/12/1824, *LMon*, 22/12/1824.

<sup>67</sup> PAV, 27/12/1826; 10/03/1827; 25/04/1827. *LCor*, 01/06/1826. *GT*, 22/10/1830. *LMe*, 14/12/1862. For information on travel networks, see Robb, *The Discovery of France*, 158, and Élise Fau, 'Le cheval dans le transport public au XIXe siècle, à travers les collections du musée national de la Voiture et du Tourisme, Compiègne, *In Situ*, 27 (2015) [online].

<sup>68</sup> *Ordonnance*, 08/12/1824, *LMon*, 22/12/1824; AN, F/21/1234, itinerary (Delorme) 20/05/1829; letter from Delorme to the Minister, 22/06/1829.

performed three times a week and would *début* in the first town on their itinerary, a process by which provincial audiences could decide which singers would stay in the company, and which were sent packing back to Paris.<sup>69</sup>

Performances in the touring network involved a significant degree of interaction between troupes and local inhabitants. *Troupes d'arrondissement* did not tour with their own musicians but sourced local players upon arrival in each town who were rehearsed and led by the troupe's *chef d'orchestre* (himself playing the violin).<sup>70</sup> Touring directors generally employed a string quartet to accompany *vaudevilles*,<sup>71</sup> and a fuller orchestra for opera, both made up of a mixture of paid professional musicians (local teachers, church musicians or soldiers) who were invited to join the theatre orchestra by the mayor, plus auditioned, unpaid, amateurs from the local Société philharmonique or who were the students of local teachers.<sup>72</sup> The instrumental forces assembled inevitably ranged in size and level of talent in different towns, and many orchestras suffered from an imbalance of instruments.<sup>73</sup> In Laon, served by the 2<sup>nd</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*, writer Champfleury recalls an “epidemic” of flutes moonlighting as missing clarinets, oboe, trombone and double bass.<sup>74</sup>

In some towns, inhabitants also trod the boards: employee lists from Dunkerque and Valenciennes record that locals were paid to sing as choristers in troupes’ operatic performances and to appear as *figurants* (crowd extras).<sup>75</sup> In the southwest and 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, military officers were often employed as onstage extras to bulk out crowd

<sup>69</sup> Malincha Gersin, “Les spectacles à Lyon sous le Second Empire : stabilisation locale et débat national sur les “débutants””, *Les spectacles sous le Second Empire*, ed. Jean-Claude Yon (Paris: Armand Colin, 2010), 290–302.

<sup>70</sup> AN, F/21/1258, troupe list (Maillart), 20/04/1825.

<sup>71</sup> AMV, J/8/47, Letter from the Mayor of Valenciennes to the Sub-Prefect of Valenciennes, 28/12/1843. AMC, 2/R/4/5b2–5, Letter from director Pechoux to the Mayor of Colmar, 07/04/1856.

<sup>72</sup> AMV, J/8/39, Letter from the Chief of the Garde Nationale (Valenciennes division) to the Mayor of Valenciennes, 09/06/1838. AMV, J/8/46, Letter from music teacher Laurent to the Mayor of Valenciennes, 09/01/1842. Letter from the Mayor to Laurent, 24/02/1842. J/8/45, Document 19/06/1839.

<sup>73</sup> Players in Montbéliard, in the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, were known for their distinctive lack of talent, ADD, 4/T/128, Letter from the Sub-Prefect of Montbéliard to the Prefect of Doubs, 10.10/1827.

<sup>74</sup> Champfleury, *Souvenirs et portraits de jeunesse: Autobiographie et mémoires* (Paris: Dentu, 1872), 51–56; 63–70.

<sup>75</sup> AMV, J/8/44, Letter from the Mayor of Valenciennes to the Prefect of the Nord, 28/05/1840. AMV, J/8/87, list of theatre, theatre costs c. 1860. UF, 31/05/1905, with a list of personnel costs, including ‘figurants’.



scenes.<sup>76</sup> Town inhabitants also worked in various roles backstage and front of house for *troupe d'arrondissement* performances, ranging from hairdressers to stage crews moving decors to members of the *garde militaire* policing public order in the auditorium.<sup>77</sup> Once again, the scale of these theatrical crews differed between towns: twenty workers per performance in Valenciennes by 1840,<sup>78</sup> costing troupe directors 72.25fr per performance,<sup>79</sup> but fifty-four in Dunkerque in 1850,<sup>80</sup> at 90.25fr a night.<sup>81</sup> The municipal provision of theatre decors, the local employment of musicians, and the work of behind-the-scenes roles meant that travelling theatre was, at its heart, a co-created act of performance that depended on the work of both touring and local agents.

While moving between *arrondissement* towns, versatility was the name of the game. Performers needed to adapt quickly to a new size of *salles de spectacle* or differences in the orchestra: for the troupe of the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*, that meant shifting from an orchestra of thirty-two men in Cambrai,<sup>82</sup> to only eighteen when performing in Valenciennes.<sup>83</sup> Singers also had to adjust to the tuning of orchestral instruments in different locales on their tour well into the 1860s as there was no fixed national tuning (*diapason*) for musical performances across France before 1859, and pitch standardisation took several years to be practically implemented in the provinces.<sup>84</sup> Additionally, onstage theatrical resources were determined by local collections, meaning that troupes also

<sup>76</sup> Regarding military involvement in stage performances in the South West, see Carrère-Saucède 'Les militaires et le théâtre dans le sud-ouest au XIXe siècle : de la salle à la scène', *Annales du Midi : revue archéologique, historique et philologique de la France méridionale*, 115/244, 2003.

<sup>77</sup> UF, 31/05/1905. *L'Indicateur valenciennois* (Valenciennes: Le Maitre, 1828), 126. AMSM, 204/32W/778, note of payment, 15/05/1800.

<sup>78</sup> Including four *machinistes*, three *habilleuses* and 10 *ouvreuses*, AMV, J/8/44, letter from the Mayor of Valenciennes to the Prefect of the Nord, 25/05/1840.

<sup>79</sup> In some places such as Dunkerque or Valenciennes, the *machiniste* was a salaried position employed by the municipality with a yearly salary, a role that presumably was meant to ensure the continual upkeep of theatrical equipment throughout the year, costing Dunkerque 600fr a year (for the *chief machinist*, 400fr for the second) in 1840, and 250fr per year in Valenciennes in 1856. AMV, 1/K/20, Contract (*machiniste*, Antoine Hiolle), 13/16/1856.

<sup>80</sup> UF, 31/05/1905. In both northern towns, the number of *machinistes*, *garçons de théâtre* and *habilleuse* rose gradually throughout the period, most likely as a response to increasingly large-scale and technical requirements for the staging and costuming of repertoire such as grand opera. AMV, J/8/45, list of orchestral costs, c. 1841, showing the lower rate of pay for opera and *comédie*.

<sup>81</sup> UF, 31/05/1905.

<sup>82</sup> AMV, 1/K/20, letter from the Mayor of Cambrai to the Mayor of Valenciennes, 18/03/1850.

<sup>83</sup> AMV, J/8/44, letter from the Mayor of Valenciennes to the Sub-Prefect of Valenciennes, 25/10/1840; J/8/63, list of musicians and payments, 21/07/1853; 1/K/20 orchestral petition (for a pay rise), 14/03/1850.

<sup>84</sup> Bould, 'The Lyric Theatre in Provincial France', 78-9.

worked around the variability of stock decors found in each town's theatre workshops.<sup>85</sup>

Several *salles de spectacle* offered less than illustrious conditions for touring companies: those such as Epinal and Colmar in the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, were known for decor collections that were old or damaged,<sup>86</sup> lacked variety, or were borrowed from town inhabitants' personal furniture.<sup>87</sup> Neither did all municipalities that received a *troupe d'arrondissement* necessarily provide a purpose-built theatre: troupes might perform in deconsecrated churches (as in Bagnères), inns or pubs (as in Mulhouse) or in barns and grain stores with temporary stages (as in Vichy), or in private *salons* in local *châteaux* (as in Montbéliard).<sup>88</sup> The variability of both musical and visual resources between towns not only required flexible and creative working practices from troupe directors and performers, but also meant that the scale of the productions of the same repertoire by the same company varied considerably across an *arrondissement* even when administrators and audiences shared an itinerant company.

On all stages, no matter their size or state of decrepitude, troupe members were expected to move nimbly between sung and spoken genres, mastering *grand opéra*, *opéra-comique*, *vaudeville*, *drame*, *comédie* and sometimes *mélodrame*. The 1824 legislation asked troupe directors to choose repertoire from across Parisian theatres to ensure a wide range of genres circulated from the capital to the provinces, but to also make sure that provincial audiences saw pieces that had already been censored by government officials for the capital's spectators.<sup>89</sup> In the *arrondissements*, audiences and critics primarily looked

<sup>85</sup> Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 145.

<sup>86</sup> Guillermet, 'Histoire anecdotique', 140, describing the same ten decors being used by troupes performing in Lons-le-Saunier for thirty-five years.

<sup>87</sup> AMV, J/8/29, letter from Dellemence to the Mayor of Valenciennes, 11/07/1826. AMC, 2R4/4c, letter from the Inspecteur du Theatre to the Mayor of Colmar, 19/03/1859. AMSM, 204/32W/778, list of accessories loaned to the theatre c. 1827; 118/32W/779, inventory 09/05/1856. AMD, 2/R/8, inventory, 10/01/1848. ADN, 20/604/455, inventory, c. 1821, inventory, 01/06/1820. ADHR, 4/T/92, *Salles* list (Belfort), 02/06/1840, *Salles* list (Mulhouse), 10/06/1840. AN, F/21/1236, letter from Bertéché to the Minister, 12/04/1844. AN, F/21/1277, *Salles* list (Hautes-Pyrénées), 16/07/1841. AN, F21/1259, letter from the Prefect of the Haute-Saône to the Minister 24/04/1841. AN, F/21/1259, ticket sales (Filhol) May 1845. MA, 25/10/1843.

<sup>88</sup> John Murray, *A Handbook for Travellers in France: Being a Guide to Normandy, Brittany; the Rivers Seine, Loire, Rhône, and Garonne; the French Alps, Dauphiné, Provence, the Pyrenees, and Nice* (London: John Murray, 1864), 9th edition, 323; Frédéric Soutas, *Guide aux établissements thermaux des Hautes et Basses-Pyrénées et de la Haute-Garonne, suivi d'un coup d'oeil rapide sur les thermes de l'Ariège et des Pyrénées-Orientales* (Bagnères-de-Bigorre et Tarbes: Dosson et Dufour, 1858), 19; *La Gazette des Eaux*, 01/05/1862. ADD, 4/T/128, letter from the Prefect of Doubs to the Mayor of Montbéliard, 10/04/1827.

<sup>89</sup> *Ordonnance*, 08/12/1824, *LMon*, 22/12/1824.

forward to receiving a diverse programme of new Parisian repertoire during troupe visits.<sup>90</sup> Novelty was the key to success for troupe directors, but, within these mixed programmes, opera was the genre most prized locally by administrators, critics and many spectators.<sup>91</sup> On occasion, though, travelling troupes received special ministerial permission to offer a programme that was not already seen on Parisian stages, premiering new pieces written by musical and literary enthusiasts in the towns to which they toured. The 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* was particularly fertile ground for the creation of new stage pieces by local writers and composers, with the *troupe d'arrondissement* premiering several *vaudevilles* written by amateurs from Dunkerque and by troupe members.<sup>92</sup> An *opéra-comique* entitled *Le barbier de Bagdad* (1829) was also written by Dunkerque composer Joseph Crispin and librettist Jean-Joseph Carlier and staged by the troupe,<sup>93</sup> as was a *grand opéra* written by Valenciennes military musician Henri Lotz, *La gitana, ou les Français en Espagne* (1847).<sup>94</sup> Such occasions for showcasing locally-grown creations were, however, rare during the forty-year period.

Within their troupe, French singers and actors were classified into *emplois*, categories designating a particular voice type, physique and onstage mannerisms, as well as the social hierarchy and age of their character.<sup>95</sup> The categories were named after particular singers who achieved fame and created memorable roles in Paris in one specific genre: in *opéra-comique*, for example, soprano Louise Dugazon or high tenor Antoine Trial.<sup>96</sup> Across

<sup>90</sup> ADN, 1/T/301/2, letter from the Prefect of the Nord to the Minister, 07/03/1839. AN, F/21/1258, letter from Desroches to the Minister, 23/12/1835.

<sup>91</sup> AN, F/21/1278, letter from the Prefect of Gers to the Minister, 30/04/1852.

<sup>92</sup> AMV, J/8/29, troupe list (Dellemeence) 1826–7. *PAV*, 31/01/1827; *JV*, 01/04/1830, 11/10/1830, 30/01/1831. Director Lefebvre also wrote his own creation in 1854 for the 1<sup>st</sup> troupe, *La Chine en France* (ADN, 1/T/301, letter from Lefebvre to the Prefect of the Nord, 05/07/1854). For all local creations, prefects had to write to the ministry for approval and censorship.

<sup>93</sup> The opera premiered on 16 November 1829. The libretto survives but, sadly, not the music. *MSD*, 01/01/1861. Crispin (1786–c.1843) was a marine commissioner who wrote music for amateur singers, pianist and the orchestra in Dunkerque throughout his life. Carlier based his text on a story by another local writer Victor Simon, as recounted in his preface for the 1854 printed edition of the opera's libretto *Le barbier de Bagdad, ou Le fils du calife* [libretto] (Dunkerque: Vanderest, 1854), 9–10, conserved at the BEZ. Carlier states that the opera's score was deposited in the Dunkerque municipal library in 1843 but it appears to have been lost since then, perhaps victim to the extensive Second World War bombing of the town.

<sup>94</sup> *CN*, 30/03/1847.

<sup>95</sup> Olivier Bara, "Emplois et tessitures", in *Histoire de l'opéra français*, 124–134.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 126–7.

all their performances, but especially when staging opera, directors' costs were high. Unlike residential companies in larger provincial towns who received a financial subsidy from the town council, the *troupes d'arrondissement* mainly relied on ticket sales to fund costs and travel. The growing desire for opera during the latter half of the century, though, allowed some directors to negotiate financial support from certain municipal councils on the condition that they produce this genre.<sup>97</sup> Directors were responsible for renting the *salle de spectacle* from the municipality or a private owner, for providing the musical and spoken materials for troupes and orchestras to perform from, for paying salaries, plus subsidising performers travel from Paris to the *arrondissement* and across the theatrical network during the season, as well as often finding lodging for the company.<sup>98</sup> Costumes, though, were provided by the actors themselves.<sup>99</sup> Unfortunately, due to the high expenditure needed to keep a troupe afloat, many directors finished a season broke or in debt: some performers were left without a manager halfway through the season if he renounced his post.<sup>100</sup> In this situation, performers usually formed a *troupe sociétaire*, playing without salaries but splitting the ticket sales between them.

To add to the financial complications of the *arrondissements*, troupes at times sometimes met with social resistance from provincial populations whose religious zeal prompted them to shun members of the theatrical profession, particularly in Brittany.<sup>101</sup> In general, though, the touring troupe was a prized feature of small-town provincial life: audiences clamoured to see performances, critics waxed lyrical about troupe artists and repertoire and administrators vied to secure troupe visits to their locality across the forty-year period.<sup>102</sup> At the end of the theatrical season, though, performers were not always guaranteed a

<sup>97</sup> AMVa, 1/D/1/18, municipal council minutes, 11/09/1839; 1D1/12, municipal council minutes, 17/02/1862, 15/07/1862. AMC, 2/R/4/5b2-5, municipal council minutes, 19/01/1861.

<sup>98</sup> EF, 15/04/1829; AMV, J/8/87, list of theatre, theatre costs c. 1860.

<sup>99</sup> John McCormick, *Popular Theatres of Nineteenth-Century France* (London: Routledge, 1993), 56.

<sup>100</sup> AN, F/21/1237, Letter from the Sub-Prefect of Valenciennes to the Prefect of the Nord, 14/09/1848.

<sup>101</sup> AN F/21/1250, letter from the Prefect of Morbihan, 29/10/1842.

<sup>102</sup> Some audiences, particularly upper class patrons, had concerns about the morality of theatrical performances, as will be touched on in Chapter 2.

renewed contract in the troupe and there was a high turnover between provincial companies. Even after a glorious stint in a *troupe d'arrondissement*, the leading lady or man would, more often than not, find themselves travelling back to Paris come Easter, ready to audition for the next troupe and to depart for a new season in another French region.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ellis, 'Broke: Tales from the French Opera Industry', in *Financing Music in Europe*, ed. Étienne Jardin (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022), 109–128; 'Systems Failure in Operatic Paris: the Acid Test of the Théâtre-Lyrique', in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830–1914*, ed. Mark Everist & Annegret Fauser (University of Chicago Press), 49–71.

## Chapter 1

### Constructing a national theatrical system, 1806–1864

On 21<sup>st</sup> December 1824, French Minister of the Interior Jacques-Joseph Pierre, count of Corbière, announced new legislation to govern provincial theatre, giving as justification the following urgent reasons:

[We decree the following law] considering that almost all of the theatrical enterprises in the departments have been suffering for several years; that a large number of towns have made efforts, in vain, to sustain these enterprises; and that several directors have lost their fortunes; [...] wanting to favour the progress of an art that has always been successfully cultivated in France, and giving directors the means of bringing better acting troupes to our towns; [and] given the necessity of organising departmental theatre on a new basis.<sup>104</sup>

Corbière painted a picture of provincial theatre in need of critical attention. His words made it clear, moreover, that finding a solution mattered to the government not only in order to enhance the livelihood of provincial directors and regional audience experiences, but also to protect the state of French theatre as a whole. The 1824 ordonnance built upon eighteen years of existing government theatrical legislation for Paris and the provinces, beginning with Napoleon's decrees of 6<sup>th</sup> June 1806 and 25<sup>th</sup> April 1807. In these laws, the Emperor established a network of fourteen residential theatres and thirty-seven travelling companies (known as *troupes ambulantes*) to provide performances for 254 towns across the nation.<sup>105</sup> These laws reversed the artistic and commercial freedom given to stage performers and managers in France since the 1791 Le Chapelier law,<sup>106</sup> and established

<sup>104</sup> "considérant que presque toutes les entreprises dramatiques des départemen[t]s sont, depuis quelques années, en souffrance; qu'un grand nombre de villes ont fait de vains efforts pour soutenir ces entreprises, et que plusieurs directeurs y ont compromis leur fortune [...] voulant favoriser les progrès d'un art qui a toujours été cultivé en France avec succès, et mettre les directeurs à même de conduire dans nos villes de meilleures troupes de comédiens; vu la nécessité d'organiser sur de nouvelles bases le théâtres de département", *Ordonnance du Roi relative à l'organisation des théâtres dans les départemen[t]s* (VIII, Bull. XI, no 225), 08/12/1824, printed in *LMon*, 22/12/1824.

<sup>105</sup> *Collection complète des lois, décrets, ordonnances, règlements, et avis du Conseil-d'État* (Paris: Duvergier, 1826), 15: 457, 16: 137–142. Triolaire, *Tréteaux dans le Massif*, 106. The 1806 legislation gave five towns the right to host two year-round theatre companies (Lyon, Bordeaux, Marseille, Nantes and annexed Turin) while fourteen other towns had one resident theatre (Rouen, Brest, Toulouse, Montpellier, Lille, Dunkerque, Metz, Strasbourg, Nice, Brussels, Genoa, Alexandria, Gent and Antwerp).

<sup>106</sup> F. W. J. Hemmings, *Theatre and State in France, 1760–1905* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 55–63. Bould, "The Lyric Theatre in Provincial France", 53–55; Mark Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution: Cultural Politics and the Paris Opera, 1789–1794* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 99–140; Sylvain Nicolle, "La tribune et la scène. Les débats parlementaires sur le théâtre en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (1789–1914)", PhD diss., Université Paris Saclay, 2015, 30–47. Florence Naugrette, "Le mélange des genres dans le théâtre romantique français: une dramaturgie du désordre historique," *Revue internationale de philosophie* 255, no.1 (2011): 27–41.

government control over French theatrical activity that lasted until the deregulation of the theatres on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1864.<sup>107</sup>

Napoleon's 1806 and 1807 laws created nationwide theatrical infrastructure for the first time. Seventeenth and eighteenth-century provincial troupes had been managed at local level,<sup>108</sup> with most residential theatres set up and managed by groups of shareholders,<sup>109</sup> and touring troupes were free to travel across France.<sup>110</sup> By contrast, between 1806 and 1864, directors were appointed by the Ministry after nomination by prefects,<sup>111</sup> and those heading up itinerant troupes were issued with a government licence (first called a *privilège*, then a *brevet*) to tour a specific *arrondissement*.<sup>112</sup> Touring troupes chose pieces from across the spoken and sung repertoire created in Parisian institutions, and directors' repertoire lists were subject to a double level of central and prefectural censorship.<sup>113</sup> Additionally, both ministers and prefects oversaw directors' itineraries, troupe lists (*tableaux*) and earnings (*recettes*), and directors contributed a 5% tax on their takings (*cinquième*) to the state's provision for the poor (*caisse des pauvres*).<sup>114</sup> In short, nineteenth-century government legislation determined the basic working practices of touring companies across metropolitan France through a centralised infrastructure that embodied the dissemination of theatrical experience, personnel, and repertoire from the nation's centre to its peripheries.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>107</sup> *Lois usuelles, décrets, ordonnances et avis du Conseil d'État* (Paris: Marescq Ainé et Plon, 1887), 542.

<sup>108</sup> Triolaire, *Tréteaux dans le Massif*, 49–95.

<sup>109</sup> Lauren R. Clay, *Stagestruck* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 4.

<sup>110</sup> Max Fuchs, *La vie théâtrale en province au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: personnel et répertoire* (CNRS: Paris, 1986), 90–94.

<sup>111</sup> AN, F/21/1168, 'Liste des directeurs de Spectacle, auxquels on propose d'accorder des privilèges pour les arrondissements', December 1807. The application process included background morality and financial checks on directors.

<sup>112</sup> Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 21. Triolaire provides maps of the 1807 and 1815 *arrondissements*, *Tréteaux dans le Massif*, 104, 143.

<sup>113</sup> Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 73–82. AMV, J8/26, letter from the Prefect of Nord to the Mayor of Valenciennes, 21/02/1823. ADN, 1T/1300/2, letter from the Sub-Prefect of Cambrai to the Prefect of Nord, 13/06/1844.

<sup>114</sup> The tax was in place since 16th August 1790, Alphonse Vulpian, *Code des théâtres, ou manuel à l'usage des directeurs, entrepreneurs* (B. Warée aîné libraire: Paris, 1829), 29. All directors also had to pay copyright to the authors and composers of the repertoire they performed (*droit d'auteurs*).

<sup>115</sup> Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 171–2. Ellis emphasises that the theatrical system was unique in its comprehensive centralised logic and national reach compared to other government-managed musical networks such as the regional conservatoires. Neither Corsica nor the French colonies were included in the state's theatrical infrastructure between 1806–64, but independent touring companies did tour from France to Ajaccio, Algiers and La Réunion, and to exploit theatres in Francophone cities that had previously been part of the empire, such as New Orleans and Port-Louis in Mauritius. Matthieu Cailliez, 'Le théâtre lyrique en Corse et en Algérie française au miroir de la presse musicale européenne (1830–1870)', in Yvan Nommick, Ramón Sobrino, eds, *Between Centres and Peripheries: Music in Europe from the French Revolution until WWI*

In this chapter, I investigate the development of theatrical legislation between 1806 and 1824 and its impact as a window onto shifting ministerial attitudes towards the purpose and shape of a national project for French theatre. By considering ministerial theatrical planning in the period 1860 to 1824 and its results, I address scholarly neglect of what I argue is an important turning point in French theatrical governance. Although scholars such as Triolaire, Féret and Pierre Jourda provide detailed analyses of the aims and impact of Napoleon's 1806 and 1807 reforms in Paris and the provinces, they minimise the significance of the 1824 legislation even though it contained large-scale changes for touring theatrical practice.<sup>116</sup> Similarly, while much attention has been given to the fissures that appeared in the system within the struggling provincial opera industry from the late 1830s onwards, partly as a result of the 1824 legislation,<sup>117</sup> little is known about the earlier challenges to the national project which the 1824 legislation aimed to solve.

Corbière alluded to the financial and artistic frailty of provincial troupes in his introduction to the 1824 law, yet much of the ministerial motivation behind this legislation remains a mystery from the wording of the ordonnance alone. Two large-scale reforms in the 1824 law distanced this iteration from earlier legislation, however, and from these can be extrapolated some likely concerns. Firstly, Ministers redrew the geographical division of France from 25 to 18 theatrical *arrondissements* and, secondly, created a two-tiered system of itinerant companies, establishing a distinction between *troupes d'arrondissement* and *troupes ambulantes*. In addition, several small-scale changes

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(1789-1914) (Brepols Publishers, Turnhout forthcoming 2023); *GT*, 10/05/1835; Bentley, *New Orleans and the Creation of Transatlantic Opera*; Isidore Lollot, *Revue pittoresque de l'île Maurice* (Port-Louis: n.d., 1842), 168-76.

<sup>116</sup> Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 40. Pierre Jourda, *Le théâtre à Montpellier: 1755-1851* (Voltaire Foundation: Oxford, 2001), 46-9. Bourdin, Françoise Le Borgne, Triolaire and Clothilde Trehorel, "Le programme THEREPSICORE. Personnels dramatiques, répertoires et salles de spectacle en province (1791-1813)," *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 367 (2012): 17-48. Bould, "The Lyric Theatre in Provincial France", 67, 71-2. Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 13, 40. Patrick Taieb, "Répertoire, troupes et emplois en province: un système national", in *Histoire de l'opéra français*, 65-72.

<sup>117</sup> Féret, '1848: Pas de liberté pour le théâtre', in *La République confisquée: 1848 en 'Essonne': actes du colloque de Crosne, 21 et 22 novembre 1998*, ed. Muriel Genthon (Grâne: Creaphis, 1999), 97-110. Malincha Gersin, "Les spectacles à Lyon". Ellis, *French Musical Life*; Ellis, "Funding Opera in Regional France: Ideologies of the Mid-Nineteenth Century", in *Art and Ideology in European Opera*, eds. D. Cooper Brown and Rachel Cowgill, (London: Boydell and Brewer, 2010) 67-84. Ellis, 'Unintended Consequences: Theatre Deregulation and Opera in France, 1864-1878', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 22, no. 3 (2010): 327-52. Féret, "Le décret du 6 janvier 1864: la liberté des théâtres ou l'affirmation d'une politique culturelle municipale", in *Les spectacles sous le Second Empire*, 51-60.



affected the working lives of travelling companies: women were banned from managing troupes; directors were restricted to overseeing just one group whereas previously they could oversee two under the 1815 legislation; and the new *troupes d'arrondissement* had an obligation to visit the towns on their itineraries at least once every six months for 15 performances.<sup>118</sup> Graham Howard Bould and Ellis see the geographical changes to the *arrondissements* and the new itinerant tiers as measures that expanded the national reach of the itinerant system, offering greater flexibility in spreading theatre to a larger number of provincial towns.<sup>119</sup> These arguments, while capturing the broad impetus of the ordonnance, need to be nuanced by resituating the reasoning behind the increase in the spread of touring theatre and clarifying the complex delivery of this aim. Bould states, for example, that the legislation increased the number of touring troupes when, in fact, as I will show, it reduced the maximum of 50 that were permitted under the 1815 legislation to 36.<sup>120</sup> This ministerial action alone, one that appears to go against an expansionist policy, hints at the existence of a more complex story to be told about the 1824 legislation that might also address the purpose of its smaller changes, such as the enforced biannual visits, or itinerant troupe tiers.

Throughout the chapter, I chart ministers' thinking about nationwide theatre and the role of troupes in such a system by reconstructing the archival trail of ministerial plans, draft proposals, and marginal scribbles penned between 1806 and 1824. These draft documents have not yet informed research on French theatrical governance in the provinces.<sup>121</sup> Triolaire, Féret and Jourda rely on the content of the final legislations of 1806–7, reforms from 30<sup>th</sup> August 1814 and 25<sup>th</sup> May 1815 and the wording of the 1824 ordonnance plus

<sup>118</sup> *Ordonnance*, 08/12/1824, *LMon*, 22/12/1824.

<sup>119</sup> Bould, "The Lyric Theatre in Provincial France", 72–3. Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 177.

<sup>120</sup> Bould, "The Lyric Theatre in Provincial France", 72.

<sup>121</sup> Rüdiger Hillmer discusses some of these draft plans in the context of Parisian legislation, *Die napoleonische Theaterpolitik: Geschäftstheater in Paris 1799–1815* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1999). Almut Franke-Postberg, 'Review of Hillmer, Rüdiger, *Die napoleonische Theaterpolitik: Geschäftstheater in Paris 1799–1815*.' *H-Soz-u-Kult* 2000 [online].

*circulaires* (instructions or questionnaires sent out to prefects).<sup>122</sup> I argue that, when used alongside final legislations, draft documents provide additional insights into evolving governmental concerns about the function of the national theatrical system. By tracing the process whereby issues were debated, acted upon or abandoned by successive ministers in these draft plans, the motivations of government agents involved in theatrical legislation come more clearly into view.

Crucially, I suggest that, through these documents, the government's priorities behind theatrical reforms emerge as a more complex set of theatrical endeavours than has as-yet been addressed by scholars. Several researchers, including Triolaire and Ellis, argue that ministerial involvement in theatre throughout 1806 to 1864 should be seen as a continued extension of three Napoleonic principles: to gain central control of theatrical activity post the freedom of 1791; to use theatre to provide educative and moralising onstage content for provincial audiences; and to use theatrical experience to condition public order in provincial towns.<sup>123</sup> There is no doubt that these issues were key to the national theatrical project throughout the first half of the century, and they do recur in this chapter. In an 1816 *circulaire*, for example, Minister of the Interior Lainé reiterated the sentiments voiced by several past government regimes that control of theatrical production, including itinerant troupes, was essential for cultivating an art that:

offers the noblest pastimes for the educated social classes. Overseen with care, performances can spread sound instruction and can serve useful purposes. Often magistrates find in theatre ways to occupy the leisure hours of an anxious population that, left to itself, might become dangerous.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Triolaire, *Tréteaux dans le Massif*, 96–110. Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 43–69. Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 23–40. Ellis and others talk of large-scale reform from 1813, referring to minister Montivalet's 22/05/1813 *circulaire*. Yet this only offered very small changes to the 1806 and was a temporary change that then led to the full-scale reform of 1814/15. Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 34.

<sup>123</sup> Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*; Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 171.

<sup>124</sup> "offre les plus nobles délassements à la classe instruite de la société. Surveillés avec soins, ils peuvent répandre des saines maximes et servir de vues utiles. Souvent les magistrats y trouvent les moyens d'occuper aux heures de loisir une population inquiète et qui abandonnée à elle même pourrait devenir dangeureuse", AMV, J/8/26, *Circulaire*, 15/05/1823.

<sup>124</sup> "important, sous divers rapports, à l'ordre public". Ibid.

Local prefects parroted similar sentiments between the 1820s and 60s, describing touring troupes as responsible for shaping the behaviours of provincial spectators.<sup>125</sup> In Saint-Omer, for example, deputy Mayor Bonnard included a telling statement in his regulations for the new theatre building, which opened in 1840 as part of a municipal campaign to attract the 1st *troupe d'arrondissement* more frequently to their town. In a statement eliding aesthetic and political categories, Bonnard wrote that theatre, when properly policed, offered clear social benefits: "maintaining good order and, with it, [providing] the joy of relaxation that peaceful people and friends of the arts search for in the theatre."<sup>126</sup> The recognised social value of theatre could also be exploited by theatre professionals: four years later, in the same *arrondissement*, director Colson wrote to the Mayor of Valenciennes to request vital funding for his *troupe ambulante* by underlining "the usefulness" of a troupe as "a tool of pleasure, order and civilisation."<sup>127</sup> Indeed, the spread of theatre to an increasing number of provincial towns was described by theatrical commentators as a civilising influence over wider town life. Consider, for instance, the visit by the Parisian troupe of the Théâtre de Madame in 1830 to Roubaix, a town which then had no formal *salle de spectacle*. The critic for *Le journal des comédiens* commented that Roubaix was now one of the 'tiny corners' of the Nord which "civilises, shapes, and enlightens itself" linking the arrival of professional performances, in his viewpoint, with the rational development of civilisation and enlightenment,<sup>128</sup> something that, in this case, was accomplished through the import of Parisian artists who physically enacted the civilising influence of the capital on the peripheries.

<sup>125</sup> ADM, M/5330, letter from the Prefect of Morbihan to the Mayor of Lorient, 16/01/1819. AN, F/21/1250, letter from the Mayor of Lorient to the Prefect of Morbihan, 08/09/1841. Directors also knew how to sell their repertoire as "useful" ("utile") ie. morally educative, to prefects: AN, F/21/1258, letter from director Desroches to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin, 23/12/1835; ADN, 1/T/301 4, letter from the Counsellor of State to the Prefect of the Nord, 24/07/1818. Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 35–6.

<sup>126</sup> "le maintien du bon ordre et, avec lui, la jouissance du délassement que les personnes paisibles et amies des arts viennent chercher au theatre," BASO, 50849/BRO, rules for the theatre building, signed by members of the municipal council, 09/12/1840.

<sup>127</sup> AMV, J/8/47, letter from Colson to the Mayor of Valenciennes, 26/03/1844.

<sup>128</sup> "se civilisent, se façonnent et s'éclairent", *JCo*, 22/07/1830.

While the educative and moralising aims of the state theatrical project throughout the *arrondissements* in this period are evident, in this chapter, I use my archival findings to suggest that there were also other significant ways in which ministers intended to shape theatre for the nation. Using the draft legislations and charting their impact in the post-1824 working practices of the *arrondissements*, I reveal that there were, indeed, different arenas in which officials envisioned a national purpose for provincial troupes: for example, ministers' concerns with bettering French artistic conditions and their questioning of which genres should circulate nationally. These arenas at times overlapped with moral questions but they also addressed wider aesthetic or social goals. In addition, Ministers were not homogenous in their approaches to theatrical change: Corbière and others such as baron Hyde de Neuville, Chief of the Ministry's Third Division, a subdivision of the Bureau des Beaux Arts, often revealed their divergent opinions about the function and shape of theatre in France and their times in post contributed to the varying shifts in ministerial priorities for the theatrical system.

My chapter is divided into two parts. In the first, I trace the development of government thinking about the purpose of national theatrical infrastructure between 1806 and 1824, demonstrating how ministers debated issues of nationwide access, artistic control and genre hierarchy that developed out of the system's national remit. In the second part, I move to the four case study regions of this thesis, examining whether the work of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> *troupes d'arrondissement* supported the ministry's aims between 1824 and 1864, and providing an overview of the itinerant circuits and repertoire selection of these travelling companies. Together, these sections provide a study of the confluences and contradictions between the theorised and the practical ways by which stage culture was distributed from the French centre into the peripheries.

Throughout the chapter, my discussion of ministerial thinking about theatrical questions on a nationwide scale also points to a larger issue beyond the nuts and bolts of the system

itself. This is the issue of the national value given to, or inherent within, theatrical infrastructure that spanned provincial France, and, consequently, the national role of provincial theatre as envisaged by ministers in the nineteenth century. As already mentioned in the introduction, government theatre funding during this period clearly delineated the state-funded royal theatres of the capital as institutions that represented national art, with the claims of provincial companies to such as status considered laughable by commentators such as Janin. I argue, though, that the ministry's provincial theatrical legislation that I study in this chapter tells a contemporaneous and different story about national theatrical value, as attributed by the government. I read the swathe of ministerial discussions about the state of provincial theatre as an indication that theatrical culture outside Paris did also hold a different type of representative status in the eyes of government ministers. After all, Corbière's introduction to his 1824 legislation stressed the importance of getting the provincial theatrical system right to develop French art, and not simply provincial environments. Indeed, in the chapter, I suggest that the purpose of theatre conceptualised by ministers between 1806 and 1864 as a right for all provincial towns, as an experience of a certain artistic quality, and as the dissemination of specific high-art genres, represents a new and complimentary ministerial way of thinking about theatre's national role in France.<sup>129</sup> In doing so, government theatrical infrastructure outlined a role for travelling troupes in French society that at times supported and at times differed from those of their Parisian counterparts, a role that showcased state-led patterns for cultural influence and control where the centre, while significant, was not always wholly representative or influential over its peripheries.

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<sup>129</sup> Sheryl Kroen, *Politics and Theater: The Crisis of Legitimacy in Restoration France, 1815-1830* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 155-160.

## Debating the function and shape of provincial theatre

The 1824 ordonnance grew out of a sixteen-year-long period in which successive French ministers attempted to ascertain the evolving conditions of provincial stages and, in response, create a series of reform proposals. It is clear from the archival trail that multiple ministers invested a colossal amount of effort in continuing to develop a national infrastructure for French theatre during the first quarter of the century. Moreover, this process was a collaborative one: between 1808 and 1823, successive ministers sent out nine *circulaires* to departmental prefects, enclosing new nuances in legislation and/or asking for local information.<sup>130</sup> As an arm of the state, the prefect had a key duty to act as the local observer for the state and gather information to report back to the centre. Ministers also commissioned reports on the provincial situation from theatrical correspondents such as Pierre-Étienne Perlet and de Champeaux,<sup>131</sup> and received speculative proposals for theatrical change from provincial directors such as Antoine Herbelot and Antoine Dumaniant,<sup>132</sup> the contents of which were later referenced in ministerial plans. These archival traces emphasise that, rather than being formed solely through the thought processes of high-ranking Parisian officials, the development of the 1824 decree was a shared endeavour.<sup>133</sup> Parisian ministers placed high value on the insights of local administrators and artists.

Judging by the sources, the process of generating theatrical change was simultaneously urgent and chronically delayed. The need to alter the provincial system was first raised in June 1808,<sup>134</sup> just a year after Napoleon's 1807 ruling, yet ministers only made prefects aware of potential large-scale reforms in February 1812 and their implementation was

<sup>130</sup> *Circulaires* dated 15/01/1808; 01/07/1808; ? 1810 (I have not been able to trace the date of this *circulaire*, and Féret mentions only the year, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 33); 28/12/1812; 22/12/1813; 18/05/1816; 17/11/1818; 24/02/1823; 13/05/1823.

<sup>131</sup> AN, F/21/1168, 'Correspondance de Perlet', 01/10/1810; Notice from 3<sup>rd</sup> Division of the Bureaux des Beaux Arts, 29/09/1810, 'Note M.V', c. 1810. *Almanach des spectacles pour 1826* (Paris: Barba, 1826), 392.

<sup>132</sup> AN, F/21/1168, 'Projet d'organisation des théâtres de départemen[t]s par M. Herbelot', c.1819.

<sup>133</sup> These findings contradict Jeanselme's view that systematic reforms were "thought up in the high places of government by technocrats without always taking into account the realities of the situation [in the provinces]", "Quelques aspects de la vie théâtrale de l'arrondissement d'Aix-en-Provence", 53).

<sup>134</sup> AN, F/21/1172, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of Pas-de-Calais, 14/06/1808.

delayed until 1814/15.<sup>135</sup> Similarly, proposals to again alter the shape of provincial theatre were floated in a *circulaire* from 18<sup>th</sup> May 1816, but it took a further three rounds of prefectural questionnaires before the 1824 legislation.<sup>136</sup> Notably, the laborious process of tweaking legislation meant that ministerial theatrical debates spanned the political ruptures of between 1807 and 1824. The announcement of the 1814 reform, for one, was ordered by Louis XVIII's royal administration, but its details, including outlining the geographic re-division of *arrondissements*, were executed by Napoleon during the Hundred Days.<sup>137</sup> The question of how best to manage theatrical culture across France thus persisted through imperial and monarchical regimes during the first part of the century, demonstrating the ongoing political weight of theatre across diverse authorities.<sup>138</sup>

Key to the ministerial project was the circulation of theatre performances across French territory in order to spread the moralising and orderly experience offered to provincial audiences by the stage.<sup>139</sup> Accordingly, almost as soon as the ink on Napoleon's 1807 decree had dried, ministers reopened debates about the practical means of dispersing troupes across France. The first twenty-five Napoleonic *arrondissements* were first shaped according to perceived needs: the regions were based on historical theatrical routes,<sup>140</sup> and the towns needing to be visited were drawn from prefects' responses to *circulaires*, sent in April and August 1806, about the state of towns' *salles de spectacles* and prior rhythm of departmental theatrical visits.<sup>141</sup> The 1807 groupings attempted to offer theatrical provision equitably to provincial citizens: each *arrondissement* was given one or two *troupes ambulantes*, decided according to population size and/or whether prefects and mayors

<sup>135</sup> AN F/21/1168, *Circulaire* draft, 25/02/1812. Note, referencing report 18/03/1813; *Circulaire* draft, 25/02/1812.

<sup>136</sup> 17/11/1818, 24/02/1823 and 13/05/1823.

<sup>137</sup> Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 36.

<sup>138</sup> Triolaire, *Tréteaux dans le Massif*, 32.

<sup>139</sup> Jourda, *Le théâtre à Montpellier*, 49–52; Clare Siviter, "Rewriting History through the Performance of Tragedy, 1799–1815" (PhD diss., University of Bristol, 2016), 240–245. None of the *arrondissements* ever spanned the entire nation, for example the 1824 arrangement covered only 63 of the 83 departments, with departments left out if they were close to Paris, had a particularly thriving resident theatre or did not have theatre buildings/enough provincial desire. See Triolaire *Tréteaux dans le Massif*, 97, 138.

<sup>140</sup> Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 54.

<sup>141</sup> Bould, "The Lyric Theatre in Provincial France", 60. Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 309. Triolaire, *Tréteaux dans le Massif*, 105–6.

believed that these towns had the “particular resources” to foster stage culture,<sup>142</sup> namely a large garrison population, *foire* or spa visitors, or an influx of commercial travellers needing to be entertained.<sup>143</sup> In practice, though, the varying suitability of provincial towns for theatrical visits meant that the 1807 *arrondissements* were quite uneven, creating a striking range of working conditions for different itinerant groups, ranging from a remit of six to sixteen cities across two to six departments.<sup>144</sup>

Ministerial tweaking to individual *arrondissements* was commonplace in response to these uneven conditions, often applied after prefects' complaints.<sup>145</sup> In an 1808 Bureau des Beaux Arts plan, the unnamed ministerial authors described the necessary reduction of the “too extensive” 7<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* (Tarn, Lot-et-Garonne, Lot, Gers and Landes) in which “some towns were too far away to receive enough performances”.<sup>146</sup> The 21<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* (Nord, Pas-de-Calais, Oise and Aisne) was similarly problematic. The Prefect of the Pas-de-Calais wrote to the Ministry in 1808 and 1813 to complain that the vast *arrondissement* forced director Saint-Romain to “neglect all the towns and displease everyone”, but that the frequency of visits to Boulogne and Calais and absence of the troupe in Béthune was particularly galling.<sup>147</sup> The Mayor of Béthune's complaint against Saint-Romain came at a time when the town had no *salle de spectacle* and no tradition of regular theatrical performances.<sup>148</sup> Yet the Mayor and Prefect's criticism of the *troupe ambulante* demonstrates that both local officials interpreted the *arrondissement* system as a guarantee that directors had a responsibility to visit any town that wanted a troupe within

<sup>142</sup> Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 31–2. Triolaire, *Tréteaux dans le Massif*, 105–6.

<sup>143</sup> AN F/21/1200, letter from the Prefect of the Nord to Minister, 27/08/1806. AMV, J/8/26, letter from the Mayor of Valenciennes to the Prefect of the Nord, 15/07/1823.

<sup>144</sup> Triolaire, *Tréteaux dans le Massif*, 105–7, 119. AN, F/21/1277, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of Lot et Garonne, 22/02/1842.

<sup>145</sup> AN, F/21/1168, report by Neuville, 03/03/1812.

<sup>146</sup> “trop étendue et quelques villes trop éloignées ne se sont pas trouvées suffisamment pourvues,” AN, F21/1168, report for ‘Son Excellence’ (Napoléon), c.1808, concerning “le changement dans l'état actuel des arrondissements de theatre”, c. 1808. The solution was breaking the *arrondissement* in half and making a new 26th region out of Lot et Garonne and Gers.

<sup>147</sup> “le force de négliger toutes les villes et de mécontenter tout le monde.” AN F/21/1172, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of Pas de Calais, 14/06/1808; Letter and report from the Prefect of Pas-de-Calais to the Minister, 27/01/1813, in response to a ministerial *circulaire* (AN F/21/1330, *Circulaire*, 02/12/1812).

<sup>148</sup> The town is not included in Nattiez's account of northern theatrical routes, *La vie théâtrale*, 5–7.



the *arrondissement*. Minister Emmanuel Crétet, count of Champmol's response confirmed the government's similar understanding of the function of the national theatrical system: he agreed that all towns in an *arrondissement* were eligible for a visit, a ruling that laid down the gauntlet for Saint-Romain to include Béthune in future itineraries.<sup>149</sup> The Minister's decision allowed local officials in the north, and elsewhere, to continue to expect performances every year and to lobby directors accordingly, as they did throughout the country until 1864.<sup>150</sup> Government attention to these problems as early as 1808 emphasises that the national system protected the right for itinerant theatre to be made available to all French inhabitants whose administrators were willing to fight for stage culture.<sup>151</sup>

The ministerial commitment to comprehensive theatrical coverage evidently required continual tweaking after the practical workings of the system and its difficulties, such as the Béthune concerns, were raised by local administrators. Accordingly, baron Hyde de Neuville was the first to envisage a large-scale reshaping of the theatrical system to further the ministry's aims in two plans from 1811 and 1812. In the second, Neuville acknowledged that the concerns seen in the 21<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* were replicated nationwide. Directors struggled to keep up with the local demand for performances because of *arrondissement* sizes:

directors find themselves unable to serve all the theatres that are in the region, because there are towns that are too far away from the places that troupes travel to, or because the connections between these towns and central towns are difficult. Numerous complaints from local authorities and theatre owners have come out of this situation.<sup>152</sup>

To provide more regular access to performances, Neuville envisaged increasing the number of touring troupes to forty-nine or fifty, each with an *arrondissement* of two to

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<sup>149</sup> AN F/21/1172, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of Pas de Calais, 14/06/1808.

<sup>150</sup> In Béthune, lobbying eventually led to visits: *Almanach des spectacles pour 1819* (Paris: Barba, 1819), 201; *Almanach des spectacles pour 1825* (Paris: Barba, 1825), 414.

<sup>151</sup> On theatre as a right, see Bould, 'The Lyric Theatre in Provincial France', 32; Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 170–180.

<sup>152</sup> "Les plus grandes causes des inconvénien[t]s et des abus même qui ont lieu dans le système actuel, provient de la fixation vicieuse des arrondissements. La plupart sont trop étendus, les entrepreneurs des spectacles se sont vus dans l'impossibilité de desservir tous les théâtres qui en font partie, parce qu'il y a des villes qui sont trop éloignées des points que parcourent les troupes, ou que les communications entre ces ville et les villes centrales se trouvent très difficiles. De là les réclamations nombreuses qu'on élevées les autorités locales et les propriétaires de salles de spectacles." AN, F21/1168, letter from Neuville to the Minister, 20/02/1812.

eleven towns.<sup>153</sup> He also aimed to circumvent directors' avoidance of smaller locales by dividing the provinces into three tiers: the first division with resident theatres; the second, *arrondissements* including towns that could host troupes for part of the year; and the third tier, *arrondissements* with the smallest locales that could only sustain performances for a few weeks or during *foires*.<sup>154</sup> Although a large proportion of the towns served by the *troupes ambulantes* at that time featured in the second order, some, like Auch and Dax, were relegated to the third. Neuville's arrangement shaped theatrical communities in which towns were more evenly matched in terms of size and capacity to host performances. These tiers aimed to help places, such as Béthune, from "missing theatre because of their distance from big troupes" since, in the present arrangement, companies were coaxed away by the competing bright lights of the likes of Boulogne and Calais.<sup>155</sup> Alongside these more equitable theatrical tiers, Neuville proposed subsidies of between 1000fr to 3000fr a year for the previously unfunded itinerant troupes, money that does not appear to have been budgeted for out of additional taxes on the constituent towns of each *arrondissement* but, rather, out of central funds.<sup>156</sup> This radical financial move demonstrates the Chief's understanding that nationwide theatrical spread came with a financial responsibility and that, currently, the system was offering a service for the nation for which no one was paying. No one except provincial directors, that is, whose frequent bankruptcies were well-known.<sup>157</sup> Neuville thus attempted to put the government's money where its mouth was in order to revitalise a theatrical system that had become unruly due to its national aims but lack of provincial support.

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<sup>153</sup> AN F21/1168, report 'Tableau des villes d'arrondissement destinées à former des directions théâtrales' c. February 1812, dated by Neuville's letter 20/02/1812 referring to the plan, a plan with fifty *arrondissements*. See also AN, F21/1168, report 'Divisions théâtrales', c.1812 with 49 touring *arrondissements*.

<sup>154</sup> AN, F21/1168, letter from Neuville to the Minister, 20/02/1812. Neuville's tiers drew on an early idea for three theatrical "orders" of *arrondissements* floated in the preparation for the 1807 legislation, AN/F21/953, "Historique", c. 1807.

<sup>155</sup> AN, F21/1168, report 'Divisions théâtrales' c. February 1812.

<sup>156</sup> Idem. The 1824 legislation, by comparison, asked towns to subsidise resident companies if their municipal councils wanted the privilege of a year-round troupe, rather than providing central funds.

<sup>157</sup> Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 166-174.

Neuville's plans were ambitious but, because they were not implemented, the practical problems related to providing nationwide theatrical access continued to plague ministers after 1811. In his 1816 *circulaire*, Minister Lainé again complained about the *arrondissements* but, particularly, about local administrators' actions in these shared regions. He suggested that mayors were often too territorial, keeping on itinerant companies too long and, as a consequence, making the rest of the *arrondissement* suffer.<sup>158</sup> Additionally, he cited how mayors and prefects hungry for regular performances frequently approved visits from non-authorised troupes made up of French performers but who operated outside the ministerial system. This was something that Ministers continually chastised between 1806 and 1864.<sup>159</sup> The same officials, though, appear to have turned a blind eye to competition from foreign-language troupes such as Italian, German and Swiss countries who regularly toured throughout the regions, particularly during the summer months.<sup>160</sup> There were several causes for concern over the French non-ministerially approved troupes. Their repertoire could not be censored, the government feared that unauthorised companies' actors were of dubious quality and that they might exploit their mobility across *arrondissement* boundaries to mask criminal activity.<sup>161</sup> To deal with this problem, government ministers re-emphasised the ban on non-authorised troupes in the 1815 and 1824 legislations,<sup>162</sup> and continually castigated regional administrators once they got wind of infractions. Yet these regulations were often no match for the zeal of local officials determined to secure more performances for their inhabitants.<sup>163</sup> These constant tensions show that, by creating a system that promised theatre as a provincial right but had only

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<sup>158</sup> AMV, J8/26, *circulaire*, 18/05/1816.

<sup>159</sup> Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 249–251. Mayors also approved visits from Italian companies across France and, particularly in Alsace, Swiss and German troupes, as I will expand upon in Chapter 5.

<sup>160</sup> Guy Gosselin, "Les Italiens en province au milieu du XIXe siècle", *D'un opéra à l'autre: hommage à Jean Mongrédien*, ed. Jean Gribenski, Marie-Claire Mussat and Herbert Schneider (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1996), 371–378; Cailliez, "La diffusion du comique en Europe à travers les productions d'opere buffe, d'opéras-comique et de komische Opern (France – Allemagne – Italie, 1800–1850)" PhD diss. (Universités de Paris-Sorbonne, de Bonn et de Florence, 2014).

<sup>161</sup> AN, F/21/1169, letter from the Prefect of the Bas-Rhin to the Minister, 30/12/1843. *GC*, 05/11/1835. For anecdotal evidence about the links between theatrical troupes and criminality, see Max Fuchs *La vie théâtrale en province*, 22–25.

<sup>162</sup> Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 36.

<sup>163</sup> *Idem*, 249–251.

limited troupes to deliver this right, Ministers unwittingly fostered a situation where the theatrical centre was at times unable to meet the demands of its peripheries, prompting certain local officials to dispense with the national infrastructure.

Amidst the unravelling shape of the national project during the 1810s and 20s, Ministers' determination to continually prioritise nationwide access to theatre is captured by the government's rejection of contemporary alternative plans dreamt up by theatrical correspondents and agents.<sup>164</sup> In one proposal sent to the ministry that was later referenced in a ministerial planning document c. 1816, de Champeneaux proposed that government-controlled professional actors need only tour to important urban centres, with the current *arrondissements* making do with amateur theatrical or ad-hoc troupes working beyond ministerial oversight.<sup>165</sup> De Champeneaux's plan meant the government abdicating their responsibility to provide theatre for as many towns as possible, and was predicated on the author's financial gain, since, as outlined in the proposal, the director-agent stood to earn a ministerial fee for his organisational services. The strategy though, would have shifted the nation's theatrical infrastructure to one which concentrated government-approved performances to a handful of important provincial centres, leaving the rest of France subject to the vagaries of the commercial market or amateur societies. In de Champeneaux's model, the ministerial concept of national theatre was defined by quality, rather than quantity, since it privileged the creation of regional, funded hubs where higher standards of artistry could thrive at the expense of nationwide coverage. Ministers' rejections of de Champeneaux's, and others', projects to privatise and reduce the scope of the national theatre project, however, underline the government's continued commitment to national theatrical access.<sup>166</sup> It is here that the links between theatrical legislation and

<sup>164</sup> AN, F/21/953, report: 'État actuel des théâtres', mentioning projects sent in by de Champeneaux and Antoine Dumaniant. AN, F/21/1168, 'Projet d'organisation des théâtres de départemen[t]s par M. Herbelot', c.1819.

<sup>165</sup> AN, F/21/953, letter by de Champeneaux to the Minister, 28/09/1815. The theatrical agent was to gain financially for this arrangement as he expected a fee to manage the national system.

<sup>166</sup> On the roots of such a movement at least as early as the 1790s, see Jourda, *Le théâtre à Montpellier*, 41-52.

national power dynamics begin to emerge. Despite ongoing difficulties with the practical rollout of theatre across France, Ministers continued to prioritise refining a system that would deliver nationwide performances. Crucially, in choosing to continue refining the *arrondissement* set up, the state positioned even small provincial locales, like Béthune, as valuable centres of French theatre-making. Rather than simply relying on the royal theatres in Paris to guide the nation, in choosing to continue with the *arrondissement* set up, Ministers' actions argued that only if as many provincial centres as possible received stage culture would national theatre be achieved.

### From control to cultivation

Alongside discussion of nationwide access to performance, Neuville identified a second theatrical question emerging out of the national system by 1811 and 1812: how best could the government control itinerant directors and their troupes? Bringing the theatrical profession under the ministry's thumb was a key governmental issue from the onset of Napoleonic theatrical control. As stated in a ministerial planning document produced in May 1807 to prepare the emperor's second decree, the *arrondissements* were crucial to controlling actors within proposed legislation:

the 8<sup>th</sup> article of the decree, which states that the Minister of the Interior will fix the *arrondissements* for the *troupes ambulantes* in the empire, is without a doubt the most important, and the one whose execution is the most difficult. [The *arrondissements*] for the first time [...] puts a class of man that was previously almost independent under the eyes and thumb of the authorities.<sup>167</sup>

In a post-Revolutionary world in which actors were now enfranchised citizens,<sup>168</sup> the *arrondissements* were seen as a controlling and sanitising measure to restrict the free

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<sup>167</sup> "l'art 8 du décret, qui ordonne que le Ministre de l'Intérieur fixera des arrondissements aux troupes ambulantes de l'empire est sans doute le plus important, et celui dont l'exécution est le plus difficile [...] met pour la première fois sous les yeux et la main de l'autorité une class d'homme qui autrefois était presque indépendante." Ibid AN, F21/953, report, received 23/05/1823, dated by a corresponding letter from an unnamed clerk to the Minister mentioning the report, 30/05/1807.

<sup>168</sup> Paul Friedland, *Political Actors: Representative Bodies and Theatricality in the French Revolution* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2002).

mobility of the provincial acting profession and the government's suspicions that such mobility and liberty might mask criminality:

A troupe of actors will no longer serve, as before, as a refuge for individuals who were forced to hide their names and existence because of corrupt morals or even crimes. All actors and actresses in France will be known and classified.<sup>169</sup>

Crucially, the 1807 author saw the *arrondissements* as a means of curbing what he called the current "specific existence" of travelling performers who "form what can be called a nation within the nation."<sup>170</sup> The 1807 decree, then, was a means of normalising and making visible itinerant actors' behaviours and of controlling the mobile theatrical workforce, a change quantified by ministers as making the performing profession part of the one French nation. In other words, theatrical order was seen as a nation-building exercise. In Napoleon's legislation, the provinces, as much as the capital, played an essential role in defining the French nation through theatre.

In 1811, Neuville reiterated the ministry's desire to manage theatrical personnel, yet his approach underlines how ministerial attitudes towards actors and directors had shifted over the past four years. Neuville was concerned that the theatrical system itself now forced directors to act outside government-approved national norms:

Many *arrondissements* were too expansive, and this was the pretext given by directors to excuse the exchange that they often did with their licenses. Since [directors] could not take their troupes everywhere, they would make an arrangement with other licensed directors who, because of secret understandings passed between them, were actually working entirely independently [...]<sup>171</sup>

Neuville referred to the common practice of subletting parts of an *arrondissement* to directors unknown to the ministry.<sup>172</sup> Forced by the confluence of a large *arrondissement* and the demands of administrators such as the Prefect of Pas-de-Calais and Mayor of

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<sup>169</sup> "Une troupe de comédiens ne servira plus comme autrefois de refuge aux individus qui de mœurs corrompues, ou souvent même des crimes forçaient à cacher leur nom et leur existence. Tout ce qu'il y a d'acteurs et d'actrices en France seront connus et classés." Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> "la profession d'acteur, dans les provinces, n'a jamais été bien déterminée. Les comédiens ambulan[t]s, surtout, ont une existence particulière, et forment pour ainsi dire une nation dans la nation." Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> AN F/21/1168, report presented to the Minister by the Chief of the 3<sup>rd</sup> division and cover letter, 19/02/1811.

<sup>172</sup> This practice was well known, see AN, F/21/1168, Report by Perlet (theatrical agent), 01/10/1810, mentioning that the 25<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* has been sublet to German troupes.

Béthune, for example, Saint-Romain managed one troupe and sublet up to three others between 1808–15 to cover his four departments.<sup>173</sup> The worry for Neuville was that such subletting took French performances out of the hands of ministers who did not recruit these directors nor oversee their repertoire as they did for *troupes ambulantes*. Neuville's concerns here reiterated earlier governmental fears about the potentially dangerous mobility and liberty of theatrical personnel, yet his plans highlight that he also had sympathy for directors, introducing additional concerns into the national system about how ministerial oversight should aid artists in fulfilling their duties.<sup>174</sup>

Indeed, the financial position of the *troupes ambulantes* that Neuville touched on in his funding plan was frequently discussed by ministers around this time: in the 1808 Bureaux des Beaux Arts document, for example, the authors described the need to expand certain *arrondissements* in which directors could not make ends meet.<sup>175</sup> The government did not commit to supporting troupes but attempted to foist financial responsibility onto municipal councils. In *circulaires* from 1816, 1818 and 1823, successive Ministers of the Interior discussed ways of alleviating the financial precarity of touring companies, asking councils to take some local responsibility for touring troupes by providing a free *salle de spectacle*.<sup>176</sup> In the last of these *circulaires*, Corbière even used “the multiple bankruptcies [...] and difficulties in supporting themselves felt by almost all [touring] enterprises” as an incitement to push as many town councils as possible to invest in a residential company.<sup>177</sup> These ministers' financial concerns revolved around a central issue: that the current theatrical infrastructure fostered poor artistic conditions in touring troupes in sung and spoken genres alike. Minister of the Interior Montivalet clarified his aim to reform the

<sup>173</sup> AN, F/21/1172, letter from the Prefect of Pas-de-Calais to the Minister, 27/01/1813; Troupe list (Saint-Romain) 11/01/1813.

<sup>174</sup> These issues also linked with wider anxieties about vagrancy and *saltimbanques*, or curiosity spectacles on the move, see Nicole Wild, ‘Les spectacles de curiosité du Premier au Second Empire’. *Vibrations: musiques, médias, société* 5, no. 1 (1988): 13–28.

<sup>175</sup> “ne peut suffire à une troupe de comédiens”. AN, F21/1168, Report to Son Excellence (Napoléon), c. 1808, concerning ‘le changement dans l'état actuel des arrondissements de théâtre’.

<sup>176</sup> AMV, J8/26, *circulaire*, 18/05/1816. ADN, 1/T/295/1, *circulaire*, 17/11/1818.

<sup>177</sup> AMV, J/8/26, letter from the Prefect of Lille to the Mayor of Valenciennes, 01/07/1823.

theatrical system to “return the brilliance to dramatic art” in 1813.<sup>178</sup> Similarly, Lainé, in *circulaires* from 1816 and 1818, encouraged local financing of troupes to try and help directors increase companies’ finances and actors’ pay in order to raise performance standards, to develop the quality of actors themselves and, in doing so, heighten the quality of French theatrical art.<sup>179</sup> These artistic priorities demonstrate an important shift in government thinking about theatrical personnel within France from 1806 to 1818: from a conception of provincial players as a dangerous part of the subversive nation within a nation, into a vital component of the one France, integral to the flourishing of national theatre. While the former did not necessarily disappear in either ministerial consciousness nor in the wider public perception of performers,<sup>180</sup> contemporary understandings of the role of an actor or singer in society were certainly pluralised through official backing of a more nuanced way of thinking about the theatrical profession.

### Reform: 1815 and 1824

The issues of theatrical access and artistic standards raised by ministerial plans and *circulaires* throughout the first two decades of the nineteenth century, including Neuville’s plans, went on to inform the reforms of 1815 and 1824. The 1815 reform established new theatrical regions as an attempt to redistribute directors’ workload. The troublesome 21<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*, for example, was split: the Nord now formed the new 1<sup>st</sup>, Pas-de-Calais the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and the departments of Oise and Aisne the 3<sup>rd</sup> *arrondissement*.<sup>181</sup> In his account of the 1815 reforms, Féret argues that ministers curbed sub-letting practices by forcibly re-setting the number of troupes from 43 to 25 in 1815, an inverse strategy to Neuville’s projected increase.<sup>182</sup> I read the decree differently. While the reform now banned directors

<sup>178</sup> Feret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 35

<sup>179</sup> AMV, J/8/26, *circulaire*, 18/05/1816; ADN, 1/T/295, *circulaire*, 17/11/1818.

<sup>180</sup> Fuchs, *La vie théâtrale en province*, 22-25.

<sup>181</sup> See Triolaire, *Tréteaux dans le Massif*, 143, for a map of the *arrondissements* after the 1815 reform.

<sup>182</sup> Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 34-36. This reform was pre-empted in 1813 in a partial legislation change which kept the 1807 *arrondissements* but allowed directors to manage troupes, see the *circulaire* of 22/05/1813.



from subletting to other troupes, it offered new officially sanctioned flexibility to address the unmanageable *arrondissements*. Each region was kept under the control of one director, but they were allowed to personally manage either one combined *comédie* and opera troupe, one of each company, or to use their *régisseur* as a proxy to manage a second troupe.<sup>183</sup> The arrangement came out of Neuville's playbook: with each director in the 25 *arrondissements* allowed to manage two troupes, the result was the extension of touring companies potentially up to his magic number of 50 in order to continue serving as many towns as possible, while keeping every theatrical employee under direct ministerial control. This expansion, rather than curbing theatrical endeavour, as in Féret's reading, underlines the growing momentum of the national system and ministers' continued dedication to spreading theatre far and wide, while also offering a small carrot to directors: the subversive working practices that they were forced into by the system were officialised in the hope of maintaining government control over theatrical personnel.

The 1824 reform also tackled both the issue of theatrical access and artistic standards head-on. One of Corbière's stated aims in his introduction to the legislation was to "[give] directors the means of bringing better acting troupes to our towns" within the redistributed *arrondissements*.<sup>184</sup> The ordonnance divided France into 18 *arrondissements*, ranging from one to seven departments. The provinces were divided into three tiers as Neuville had previously proposed: *troupes sédentaires*, for the largest 17 towns, plus two categories of itinerant troupes, *troupes d'arrondissement* to serve mid-size towns and *troupes ambulantes* to serve the smallest provincial centres capable of hosting performances at this time.<sup>185</sup> The *arrondissement* director had priority over his theatrical region, giving him

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<sup>183</sup> Article 11, decree 15 May 1815, quoted in 'Arrondissement théâtral', Arthur Pougin, *Dictionnaire historique et pittoresque du théâtre* (Paris: Éditions d'aujourd'hui 1885), 61. I pursue implications of the ministerial association of each troupe with specific genres later in this chapter.

<sup>184</sup> *Ordonnance*, 08/12/1824, *LMon*, 22/12/1824.

<sup>185</sup> The towns with municipally-funded residential theatres were: Bordeaux, Lyon, Marseille, Rouen, Le Havre, Toulouse, Montpellier, Lille, Strasbourg, Metz, Nancy, Toulon, Brest, Perpignan, Calais, Boulogne, Versailles. Other municipal councils soon voted to invest in a sedentary company, for example in Nantes (1825), Nîmes, Avignon, Orleans, Amiens, Limoges and Douai (1826).

first dibs in setting itineraries, over the *troupe ambulante*. Moreover, for the first time, a clause confirmed how often these larger provincial towns could expect the *troupes d'arrondissement*: at least 15 performances every six months. The *troupes ambulantes* had a differentiated role: they should tour towns that were not in a *troupe d'arrondissement's* seasonal itinerary, had been abandoned for more than six months by this other troupe, or were outside of the 18 *arrondissements*. On occasion, the law suggested, the *troupe ambulante* could programme performances in the same towns as the *arrondissement* troupe, but these needed to be negotiated with the local authorities. The total of up to 36 troupes permissible in the departments decreased the overall number of groups offering theatrical provision across France up to this point. The new theatrical hierarchy, however, provided greater flexibility for directors in serving provincial towns by establishing distinctive communities of regional towns separated by size, theatrical capacity and, newly, by itinerant troupe, reducing competition and saving small places from being overshadowed by larger ones: once more, a plan drawn from Neuville's ideas.<sup>186</sup>

At an artistic level, the new itinerant troupe divisions also supported Corbière's desire to heighten the artistic quality of French theatre. The minister saw a two-tier hierarchy as part of a theatrical system that allowed provincial troupes to serve as a training ground for artistic talent:

dramatic art is invested in the prosperity of provincial theatres, because they offer young performers, through the advantages of incremental training, all the means of making themselves known and of one day arriving at the royal theatres.<sup>187</sup>

The *troupes ambulantes* and *troupes d'arrondissements* formed the beginning steps in a four-part theatrical career ladder rising to the Parisian royal theatres: though notably not the popular companies, suggesting that the 1824 ordonnance was also invested with the

<sup>186</sup> At the same time, though, no itinerant networks was immune from internal hierarchies and competition as I will demonstrate in Chapter 2.

<sup>187</sup> "considérant que l'art dramatique est intéressé à la prospérité des théâtres de province, puisqu'ils offrent aux jeunes comédiens, avec les avantages d'une instruction graduée, tous les moyens de se faire connaître et d'arriver un jour aux théâtres royaux." *Ordonnance*, 08/12/1824, *LMon*, 22/12/1824.

protection of specific genres, as I explore in the next section. In practice, the *arrondissement* companies were bigger than *ambulante* ones (around 15 to 20, rather than five to twelve performers) and they performed slightly different genres: the *ambulante* specialised in *vaudeville* and spoken theatre, while the *troupe d'arrondissement* also staged *opéra-comique*, *grand opéra* and translated Italian opera. The differences between the two types of troupe positioned the *arrondissement* as a more advanced company than the *ambulante* because of the economic protection and artistic power given to it by the 1824 legislation. First, the right for the *arrondissement* director to choose his itinerary ensured that he could select the largest towns to visit and which moments of the theatrical season would be conducive to high ticket sales, for example during a spa season or local festivities, as I will explore in Chapter 2. Additionally, the *arrondissement* director had priority over taking a 5% tax from any curiosity spectacles performing in a town at the same time as the troupe, and had the sole right to stage balls, a lucrative source of income. These economic advantages represented another way in which the ministry attempted to secure the financial sustainability of the theatrical system, prioritising the troupes' work and their circulation of formal stage genres over other forms of contemporary roaming entertainment such as acrobatic troupes, but also over the *troupes ambulantes*. The differentiation between these itinerant troupes supported Corbière's idea of the national career ladder extending across France: a system who incremental differences between companies would lead to individual artist's career progression and would also develop the artistic standards of the nation.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Given the newly integrated role given to travelling troupes in the state's theatrical project to advance the quality of national art, it is useful to speculate on the explicit banning of female directors in the 1824 legislation. Discussion of female directors is entirely absent from the archival trail, meaning that the government's motivations can currently only be hypothesised. Is it possible, though, that it was women that bore the brunt of these fears about rogue directors raised between 1806-24? Problematic behaviour by female directors such as Dame Baudin, who failed to tour all of her designated region, was communicated to ministers in 1812, yet several male directors were guilty of the same infraction (AN, F/21/1168, report for the Minister, 03/03/1812). Indeed, comments on these planning documents do not show any indication that this behaviour prompted them to ban women from the managerial profession as a whole, leaving the reasoning behind ministerial interference in female theatrical management uncertain. Broader research about the status of nineteenth-century women managing theatres is needed to solve this lacuna and to build on Hemmings' hypothesis that it was contemporary derogatory social attitudes to women as a whole as a 'weaker sex' that led to this legislation (Hemmings, *Theater and State*, 162-3). Such studies might begin with Mlle Montansier, an ex-actress who managed several Parisian and provincial theatres between

Overall, the 1824 tiers and redistribution of the *arrondissements* demonstrate Ministers' ongoing attempts to foster two governmental priorities for the French theatrical system: the distribution of stage culture as widely as possible across the nation, and the development of the artistic standards of French theatre as a whole. In addition, the new tiers had the potential to increase the complexity of the way in which hierarchies of French geographical space were embedded into the government's theatrical infrastructure. The theatrical tiers created by Corbière were known as "orders" in broader artistic discourse: Paris was, naturally, the first order, and residential companies the second. Some local commentators discussed the difference between the two itinerant troupes, and the towns served by them, as distinguishing the third and fourth tiers, as well as civic status. A journalist in Valenciennes, in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*, writing in 1827, for example, positioned his town as a place of regional cultural importance compared to the smaller towns of St-Armand, Bavai and Bouchain because the latter were visited by the *seconde troupe ambulante*, while Valenciennes benefitted from the flagship *troupe d'arrondissement*.<sup>189</sup> In general, though, the new tiers appear to have had little impact on the conception of touring theatre as a general category within the hierarchies of the provinces and wider France. In all four case studies, touring towns served by the *troupes d'arrondissement* or *ambulante* were more frequently referred to in directors' letters and local criticism as all belonging to the "third order" below Paris and residential-company towns.<sup>190</sup> The new tiers of 1824 did not, then, significantly restructure geographical hierarchies within the national imagination as figures generally distinguished touring troupes, as a whole, as belonging to the lowest theatrical order, although, as I will explain shortly, the *troupes d'arrondissement* did have tangible economic and programming benefits over the *troupes ambulantes*.

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1775-1820 (Feret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 112-115) or Mme Dufresnoy (mother of Olivier Halanzier-Dufresnoy) who continued to head up a provincial troupe under the radar in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissements* after 1824 (AN, F/21/1235, Répertoire list (Mme Dufresnoy), 1836-7).

<sup>189</sup> *PAV*, 09/05/1827.

<sup>190</sup> AN, F/21/1234, letter from Delorme to the Minister, 16/09/1830. *EF*, 14/08/1834.

## Genre questions

Running alongside the issues I have raised in the past two sub-sections was a contemporary ministerial concern about legislating which genres were staged by travelling troupes. Between 1806 and 1864, there was only one government parameter laid down for the repertoire of touring troupes: directors could choose from the pieces created at the “grand” and “secondaire” theatres, terms referencing Napoleon’s genre-based categorisation of Parisian theatres, and their repertoire, into two levels in the 1806 and 1807 decrees.<sup>191</sup> In Paris, ministers used the 1806/7 decrees to firm up latent cultural distinctions between dramatic genres.<sup>192</sup> The terms “grand” and “secondaire” theatres clearly divided institutions, and their genres, into hierarchical terms within the national imagination, including affirming a division between theatres and genres directed at bourgeois elites or at the popular *parterre*.<sup>193</sup> Moreover, the institutional monopolies granted to the theatres producing *grand opéra*, *opéra-comique*, *comédie* and *tragédie* offered these companies economic protection compared to their competitors in the popular theatres whose generic distinctions were less clear: *vaudeville*, for example, could be performed both at the Théâtre du Vaudeville and the Théâtre des Variétés.<sup>194</sup>

On the surface, touring companies’ repertoire between 1806 and 1864 elided the capital’s distinctions because troupes performed across ‘high/low’ genres, often producing an *opéra-comique* and *vaudeville* or *comédie* in the same evening. Ministers’ censorship processes from the early nineteenth century onwards, though, already marked provincial audiences out as French citizens that needed to consume different repertoire from

<sup>191</sup> Mark Everist, ‘The Music of Power: Parisian Opera and the Politics of Genre, 1806–1864’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 67, no.3 (2014): 685–734. Bould, ‘The Lyric Theatre in Provincial France’, 61; Triolaire, *Tréteaux dans le Massif*, 97; Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 45–8, 287.

<sup>192</sup> Katherine Hambridge, ‘Genre Consciousness in the Napoleonic Theatre’ (Conference paper draft, 2023), privately communicated. The decree also distinguished French theatres from entertainment: the companies that had thrived during the Le Chapelier law by producing porous and multi-genre performances and were now separated from dramatic art and called “curiosity spectacles”: Wild, ‘Les spectacles de curiosité du Premier au Second Empire’, *Vibrations* 5 (1988): 15. Nicolle, ‘La tribune et la scène’, 49–50.

<sup>193</sup> Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 287.

<sup>194</sup> Nicolle, ‘La tribune et la scène’, 48–9. Everist, ‘The Music of Power’, 686–70.

spectators in the capital.<sup>195</sup> Ministers regularly sent prefects lists of pieces created in Paris that were banned from provincial stages, for example *L'Auberge des Adrets* (1823, by Benjamin, Saint-Amant and Paulyanthe), because these pieces touched on political or religious subjects that the government believed provincial audiences were more sensitive to than those in the capital.<sup>196</sup> Departmental prefects were also empowered to scrutinise directors' seasonal programmes and ban any titles that they felt might be "dangerous" in their region, because of local conditions such as particular religious communities or historical associations.<sup>197</sup> Giacomo Meyerbeer's *grand opéra Les Huguenots* (1836), for example, was kept off the stages of several *arrondissements* including the 1<sup>st</sup>, a region with traditional Huguenots sympathies that had been involved in the events depicted in the opera.<sup>198</sup> In short, not all theatrical repertoire was deemed suitable for provincial audiences, and censorship practices demonstrated local and central officials' perception of the different theatrical tolerances and susceptibilities of theatregoers outside Paris.

The archival trail between the 1806 and 1824 legislations reveals that ministers were not only attentive to censorship but considered extending their curation of provincial performance to oversight of troupe directors' choices of genre, both leading to the 1806 legislation and in subsequent reform projects. Two draft *Réglements* for the 1807 decree, for example, reveal that officials at first mapped the genre delineation of Parisian theatres onto provincial companies. In these documents, most likely created in May 1807, ministers drafted a clause that asked local authorities to enforce that in every four pieces staged by touring and resident troupes, "there are at least two that belong to the repertoire of the

<sup>195</sup> On Napoleonic censorship, see Siviter, "Rewriting History through the Performance of Tragedy".

<sup>196</sup> AN, F/21/1250, Ministerial note on director Clément's repertoire list, 30/03/1826. Letters from the Ministry to the Prefect of Finistère, 27/07/1841, 06/03/1844; 6 March 1844. AN F/21/955, report to the Minister by the Director of the Beaux Arts, June 1849. *Circulaires* with lists of censored titles for the provinces were sent out on: 24/07/1833; 10/02/1841; 03/08/1850; 30/07/1852, see Jourda, *Le Théâtre à Montpellier*, 49–52.

<sup>197</sup> Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 73–82. AMV, J8/26, letter from the Prefect of Nord to the Mayor of Valenciennes, 21/02/1823. ADN, 1T/1300/2, letter from the Sous-Prefect of Dunkerque to the Prefect of Nord, 19/09/1840.

<sup>198</sup> "L'opéra des Huguenots joué presque partout n'a jamais été autorisé dans les pays où les querelles religieuses ont laissé de funestes souvenirs, et ne pourraient être remises en question sans un certain danger." AN F/21/1169, letter from the Minister to all prefects, 29/10/1850. Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion 1562–1598* (Cambridge, 2005), 81.

*grand théâtres*".<sup>199</sup> Unlike in censorship, the issue was not religious or political sensibility, but, as revealed in a second author's comments on both plans, the need to guide provincial taste:

The interests of art and of authors demand this arrangement. Now only pieces from the *boulevards*, *mélodrames* and pantomimes are played in the provinces. It is time to return good taste to people.<sup>200</sup>

In the departments, almost no good pieces from the *grands théâtres* are played anymore. People only want *mélodrames* and *vaudevilles*. Isn't it advantageous to inspire taste in honest performances?<sup>201</sup>

The 1807 commentators classified "good" and "honest" taste as indistinguishable from *grand théâtre* repertoire and these officials aimed to use legislation to curate provincial responses to stage performance. Specifically, these commentators saw the role of provincial troupes as training a preference for specific high-art genres into a populace whom these officials currently believed naturally, but wrongly, preferred popular entertainment. In other words, provincial companies, including touring troupes, were tasked with educating provincial citizens according to government-set genre hierarchies.<sup>202</sup> Matters of taste in this context allowed provincial troupes to undertake another facet of cultural centralism.

Ministers' dreams of extending the Parisian genre hierarchies into the provinces were punctured, however, by revisions from a third commentator. In both drafts of the 1807 legislation, another unnamed official questioned the practicality of promoting 'honest' genres in the *arrondissement*. In the *Règlement*, the commentator worried about matching

<sup>199</sup> "néanmoins, les autorités locales vielleront à ce que, sur trois [pencil comment correcting to quatre] pièces représentées par ces troupes, il y en ait au moins deux qui appartiennent aux répertoires des grand théâtres." AN, F/21/953, report 'Règlement pour une nouvelle organisation des théâtres d'après les principes établis par le décret du 8 juin 1806', undated (article 20); report 'Projet de règlement pour les théâtres', c.1807, article 7.

<sup>200</sup> "l'intérêt de l'art et des auteurs exige cette disposition. On ne joue plus dans les provinces que les pièces des boulevards, que des mélodrames que des pantomimes. Il est temps de rappeler le peuple au bon goût." AN, F/21/953, 'Règlement'.

<sup>201</sup> "dans les départemen[t]s, on ne joue presque plus les bonnes pièces des grands théâtres. Le peuple ne veut que des mélodrames ou des vaudevilles. N'est-il pas avantageux de lui inspirer le goût des spectacles honnêtes?" AN, F/21/953, 'Projet'.

<sup>202</sup> On musical preferences and taste in France, see Hervé Lacombe, *The Keys to French Opera*, trans. Edward Schneider (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001), 26-30, 265, 306-7. McCormick, *Popular Theatres of Nineteenth-Century France*, 8, 81, 131-42.

the “interests of art” with those of actors, and he expanded on these difficulties in the *Projet*.

The status of [performers] dying from hunger cannot be imposed. The law alone cannot make people taste pleasures that they no longer enjoy, and there is not much use in performing Corneille and Racine pieces by actors who perform mediocrely.<sup>203</sup>

It is notable that the playwrights referenced both wrote *tragédies*, demonstrating the commentator’s conception of this specific spoken genre’s place in ministerial promotion of educative theatre and of a canon of French pieces that needed, at all costs, to be circulated. According to this commentator, though, the actual patterns of provincial theatrical consumption, and the power which preference for popular genres had over troupe finances, stood in the way of the government project to condition French taste, as did the lack of talent of provincial companies. The practical situation of provincial stage culture, ministers appear to have decided, did not allow for the implementation of government officials’ initial desire to train up theatrical taste across the country, and the final 1807 decree allowed troupes to respond to already-existing public preferences and financial imperatives in their repertoire choices.

Deference to practicality in 1807 did not, however, deflate governmental ambitions to direct provincial taste. Reforms from 1815, 1818 and 1824 continued to address genre limitation in different ways. As mentioned earlier, the 1815 legislation described the two types of troupes that a director could manage as a *comédie* and opera troupe.<sup>204</sup> These titles referred to colloquial terms given to the troupes by regional critics and administrators because of their flagship genres, rather than denoting one-genre specialisation.<sup>205</sup> Yet, notably, this was the first time that genre was specifically mentioned in touring legislation, suggesting that these were the most important ones, for Ministers, to be disseminated nationally. Developing this

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<sup>203</sup> “la condition de mourir de faim ne peut être imposée. La loi elle-même ne peut faire goûter au peuple les plaisirs qu’il n’aime plus, et il n’y a pas beaucoup d’utilité à faire représenter les pièces de Corneille et de Racine par les acteurs qui jouent médiocrement” AN, F/21/953, ‘Projet’.

<sup>204</sup> Article 11, decree 15 May 1815, ‘Arrondissement théâtral’, Pougin, *Dictionnaire historique*, 61.

<sup>205</sup> AN, F/21/1172, troupe lists (St-Romain), 11/01/1813.



theme, in 1816 Minister of the Interior Lainé made another attempt to enforce genres in a *circulaire*. He identified two problems with provincial directors' current choices. First, troupes were not keeping provincial audiences "up to date with [Parisian] novelties,"<sup>206</sup> highlighting his view that the theatrical system needed to efficiently distribute the centre's innovation to the peripheries. Second, troupe repertoire, Lainé thought, consisted mainly of pieces from "the Carnival, boulevards, or sketches from *vaudeville*."<sup>207</sup> His assessment, much like that of the commentators on the 1807 drafts, was hyperbolic. Triolaire and Mussat's work has demonstrated, for example, that touring and resident troupes in the Massif Central and Brittany regularly performed *comédie* and *opéra-comique*,<sup>208</sup> and the repertoire lists from troupes across the country from 1813 onwards were packed full of these genres.<sup>209</sup> Lainé's decision to state the issue so boldly in his 1816 *circulaire*, though, underlines continuing government fears that provincial audiences did not have access to genres that ministers prioritised as tasteful. Unlike the 1807 commentators, Lainé saw good taste as an innate French attribute: "Everywhere in France, we like moral comedies, nice operas, good music, good verses".<sup>210</sup> It was thus the directors, the Minister suggested, who were the problem by 1816 because they did not respond to or recognise French taste. In Lainé's view, directors misread spectator absence as a reaction against genre choices, whereas he saw empty *salles* as an indicator of poor troupe talent:

[directors] claim that they cannot find any spectators when they give performances of high *comédie* pieces, but they do not mention that these pieces are so badly produced, so badly performed everywhere that it is indeed impossible for men of taste to enjoy seeing [these pieces] so badly disfigured [...] there is nothing of [good *comédies* and operas] when there are no good, choice actors.<sup>211</sup>

<sup>206</sup> "tenir les villes des départements au courant des nouveautés." AMV, J8/26, *Circulaire* from the Minister, 18/05/1816.

<sup>207</sup> "[le] Carnaval, Boulevard ou les esquisses du vaudeville." Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 309–328; Mussat, 'Diffusion et réception de l'opéra comique dans les provinces françaises: l'exemple du grand Ouest', *Opéra comique und ihr Einfluss auf das europäische Musiktheater im 19. Jahrhundert* (Olms: Hildesheim, 1997), 283–98.

<sup>209</sup> AN, F/21/1172, repertoire list (Pitou), 30/06/1814.

<sup>210</sup> "On aime partout en France les comédies de mœurs, les jolis opéras, la bonne musique, les bons vers". AMV, J8/26, *circulaire*, 18/05/1816.

<sup>211</sup> "ils prétendent qu'ils ne trouvent point de spectateurs quand ils donnent des représentations d'ouvrages de la haute comédie. Mais ils n'ajoutent pas que ces ouvrages sont par eux si mal montés, si mal joués, qu'il est impossible en effet que

Lainé, just like the third 1807 commentator, identified provincial acting standards as a potential stumbling block to the dissemination of the approved genres. While taste in these genres was innately French, in Lainé's view, the theatrical personnel charged with enlivening this taste were potentially destructive to state oversight of provincial genres, and it is striking that the Minister suggests that the public, or at least the "men of taste", had more innate taste than the directors. Control of the provincial workforce and development of their standards, issues cited as a consequence of *arrondissement* geography and/or local desire for performances, as mentioned earlier, were thus also seen by Ministers as a pressing matter of forming national taste during the Restoration.

The closest Ministers came to actual reform of genre distribution materialised in a plan outlining the shape of a new theatrical system in late 1816, made in response to Lainé's *circulaire*.<sup>212</sup> Here, ministers dropped their original focus on *tragédie* and, following the 1815 legislation's definition of these as the key troupe genres, considered obliging provincial troupes in larger towns to play *comédie* and opera:

iii. Modifications proposed to the current administration. [...] Obligations imposed on directors [...] Some directors in the big towns to have a *comédie* and opera troupe.<sup>213</sup>

This clause referred asked troupes to produce these two repertoires, but it could also be read as asking provincial directors to split their personnel, a specialisation that might also have addressed concerns about talent. The "grandes villes" mentioned did likely target some *arrondissement* towns, since many residential-theatre towns already operated under genre obligations and would not have been eligible for the change. Towns such as Lyon, for example, that had two theatres were already legislatively bound by the 1806 law to focus on the "grand" and "secondaire" genres respectively,<sup>214</sup> and most residential companies were

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des hommes de goût se plaignent à les voir ainsi défigurés [...] il n'y a rien de tout ceci quand il n'y a point de bons acteurs." Idem.

<sup>212</sup> AN, F/21/953, report 'État actuel des théâtres', mentioning projects sent in by de Champeneaux and Dumaniant, dated from late 1816 from Champeneaux's letter, 28/11/1816.

<sup>213</sup> "Modifications proposées dans l'administration actuelle. [...] 2 i) Quelques directeurs dans les grandes villes à avoir une troupe de comédie et d'opéra." AN, F/21/953, report 'État actuel des théâtres', c. 1816.

<sup>214</sup> *Collection complète des lois*, 15: 457, 16: 137-142.

stipulated to produce opera and *comédies* by the municipal *cahier de charges*, a list of municipal obligations as a result of council funding.<sup>215</sup> The 1816 plan thus likely targeted “large towns” not currently under any genre obligation: these were the largest *arrondissement* ones receiving touring troupes, for example Dunkerque and Lorient, the centres of their respective touring networks.

The 1807 and 1816 plans reveal that Ministers positioned itinerant theatre as a means of disseminating not stage culture in general, but government-approved high art. In doing so, provincial troupes were seen as bearers and disseminators of a unified French taste, with an ambassadorial role for the elite, Parisian, stages. Moreover, the expected outcome of these draft plans was to condition provincial audiences to a national ideal that could not be forced onto the capital’s audiences in the same way. For the well-to-do of Paris, freedom of theatrical choice restricted ministerial interference in their spectatorship habits and, for the lowest classes, differences in ticket prices between, for example, the Académie and the popular theatres, meant that they were unlikely to experience a breadth of theatrical repertoire.<sup>216</sup> A provincial troupe, however, compiled all genres into one season, one building and, as often done by travelling companies, on one evening, playing to a mixed-class audience, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 2. By regulating a proportion of troupes’ mixed repertoire, then, the Ministry re-imagined the provinces as a space where theatrical preferences might be shaped in a way that was not possible in Paris. While these plans were not carried out, I will shortly argue in part two of this chapter that they did lay the foundations for a different type of ministerial genre protection inherent in the 1824 troupe distinctions. In all of these plans, Ministers situated the peripheries at the centre of national taste, and, in doing so, are significant because they show officials reversing the traditional

<sup>215</sup> On the *cahiers* see Jardin, “L’Opéra à tout prix: Les soutiens de l’activité sur le théâtre d’Avignon au XIXe siècle” in *Nouvelles perspectives sur les spectacles en province (XVIIIe-XIXe siècle)* eds., Joanne Élaré and Yannick Simon (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Presses Universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2018), 49–64. Bège and Bèges, *Mémoire d’un théâtre*, 119, 127.

<sup>216</sup> Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 287. Several scholars, though, have shown that the audience at the Académie was heterogenous and not uniquely bourgeois in the mid-nineteenth century, Everist, *Giacomo Meyerbeer and Music Drama in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Aldershot: Ashcroft Publishing, 2005). Steven Huebner, “Opera Audiences in Paris, 1830–1870.” *Music & Letters* 70, no. 2 (May 1989): 206–225.

power dynamics between the capital and the provinces, since it was the latter whose preferences and taste could, in their eyes, be shaped to a national standard.

Overall, ongoing ministerial debates about the function and shape of national theatre legislation in France reveal that, to misquote Janin in his 1849 statement against the importance of provincial theatre compared to Paris stated in my introduction, government officials *did* “treat the provinces as a serious thing, dramatically speaking” when putting together theatrical legislation to last from 1824 to 1864.<sup>217</sup> While the state’s money was funnelled towards the capital’s institutions so that these Parisian companies could represent the nation through their artistic developments,<sup>218</sup> changes in theatrical legislation for provincial and touring troupes showed that ministers did also consider access to theatre across France, heightened artistic standards, and the provision of specific genres as national issues that needed to be controlled, as much as possible, through government intervention. Furthermore, the level of consultation with provincial prefects and mayors that was present in ministerial reforms during this period highlights the fact that legislative change for provincial theatre was not enacted entirely in a top-down radiation of theatrical power. Rather, theatrical change, as imagined and carried out, depended on information collected from the ground up. Building national theatre, as the government saw it in terms of geography and heritage, during this period involved sourcing theatrical insights nationally and applying provincial intelligence to Parisian power and Ministerial motives.

### **1824: the system in action**

In the second half of this chapter, I turn to my four case study areas. I assess whether the practical impact of changes in government legislation supported the three ministerial aims for the national theatrical system that I have outlined in part one: to circulate theatre

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<sup>217</sup> Nicolle, “La tribune et la scène”, 133.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

comprehensively through the nation; to support and develop the standard of the theatrical workforce; and, potentially, to prescribe provincial access to high-art stage genres.

The changing shape of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissements* demonstrates that the circulation of troupes not only expanded the number of French towns receiving performances during this period, but also intensified the theatrical experience of several provincial centres. While the shape of the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* in 1824 remained unchanged from 1806 (Finistère, Morbihan and Côtes-du-Nord), the 1<sup>st</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> regions were redrawn in consultation between the ministry and local prefects, with the intention of making directors' lives easier and, by consequence, increase the stability and reliability of troupe visits.

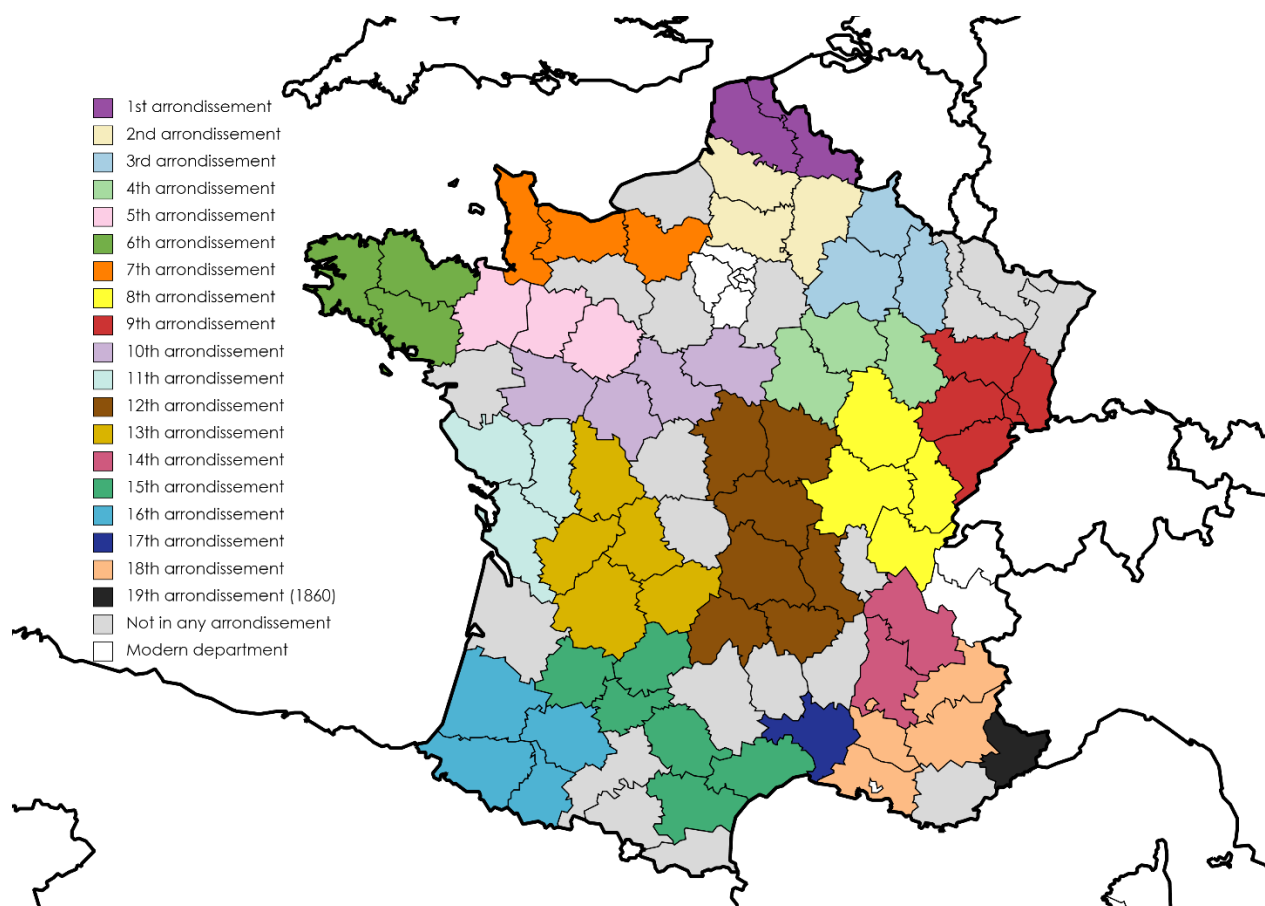


Figure 2: The 1824 arrondissements.<sup>219</sup>

Whereas in the 1815 ordinance the Haut-Rhin department was joined with Vosges and Bas-Rhin (7<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*), in the 1824 system it was paired with Doubs and Haute-Saône to create the new 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*. This change came about because the Prefect of Colmar informed Corbière that the *troupe ambulante* did not tour the Bas-Rhin, whose audiences did not express enough interest in the French stage (but who did get their theatrical fix elsewhere, as will be explored in Chapter 5).<sup>220</sup> The integration of the four departments not only offered the new 9<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* more towns in which to break even, including populous Besançon and Vesoul, but it also favoured the spectators in the newly-added Doubs and Haute-Saône, departments which, as part of the 1815 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*,

<sup>219</sup> This map corrects Triolaire's for the 1824 *arrondissements* which wrongly lists the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissements* twice in different places, *Tréteaux dans le Massif*, 145.

<sup>220</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1823* (Paris: Barba, 1823), 273. AMC, 4/T/92, Letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 05/09/1823. Fernand L'Huillier, *Recherches sur l'Alsace napoléonienne* (Strasbourg: Librairie Istra, 1947), 689.

had been subservient to the larger town of Dijon in which the troupe had spent most of its time.<sup>221</sup> In the south-west, the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* (Basses-Pyrénées, Hautes-Pyrénées, Landes and Gers) was also created for similar reasons. In 1824, ministers added the department of Gers to the 1815 22<sup>nd</sup> *arrondissement* to increase the stopping points for touring companies because of the lack of *salles de spectacles* in the Landes.<sup>222</sup> This change, again, maximised directors' chances of financial success and also provided Gers with more performances than when it was joined with six other departments in the previous 21<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*.<sup>223</sup> By contrast, the departments of Nord and Pas-de-Calais which, between 1815 and 1823, each formed individual *arrondissements*, were joined in 1824 to make the new 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* because of the loss of two key towns, Boulogne and Douai, from the touring network as these municipal councils invested in residential companies.<sup>224</sup>

The new *arrondissements* enabled the *troupes d'arrondissement* in the 9<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissements* to bring about a discernible increase in theatrical provision across the nation between 1824 and 1864. Directors visited a wide range of towns throughout this period. In the 9<sup>th</sup>, for example, directors served sixteen towns in total (Figure 3), an increase of seven compared to the itineraries of the old *troupe ambulante* operating in the same region between 1815 and 1823.<sup>225</sup>

<sup>221</sup> *L'Indicateur général des spectacles* (Paris: Almanach du Commerce, 1819), 203. *Almanach des spectacles pour 1823*, 277.

<sup>222</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1821* (Paris: Barba, 1821), 279. A permanent town in the department's largest town, Mont-de-Marsan was only built in 1831. AN, F/21/1277, table of theatre buildings, 18/04/1842.

<sup>223</sup> Prefects repeatedly flagged the south-west *arrondissement* as too large: AN, F21/1168, report to Son Excellence (Napoléon), 1808.

<sup>224</sup> François Morand, *L'année historique de Boulogne-sur-Mer: recueil de faits et d'événements intéressant l'histoire de cette ville* (Boulogne-sur-mer: Deligny, 1859), 155–6. Gosselin, *L'âge d'or de la vie musicale à Douai*, 94–6. *Troupe ambulante* director Dupré-Nyon was pushed out of Douai just before the creation of the permanent company, when, in 1823, town subscribers demanded their money back because of the low standards of his performances. AMV, J/8/26, letter from the Mayor of Valenciennes to the Prefect of the Nord, 01/07/1823.

<sup>225</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1823*, 273; *Almanach des Spectacles pour 1825*, 433.

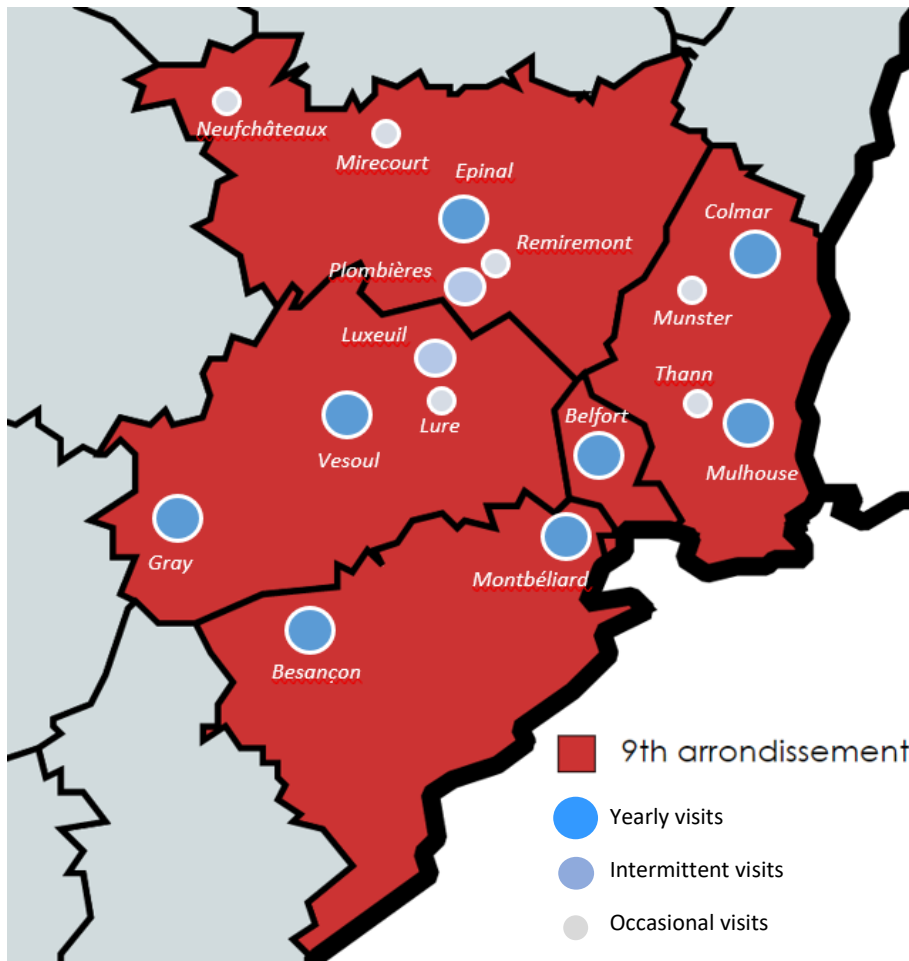


Figure 3: Towns visited by the 9<sup>th</sup> troupe d'arrondissement, 1824–64.

Across France, though, certain towns in each *arrondissement* featured more regularly than others in directors' itineraries. As seen in Figures 3–6, towns can be classified into three touring types. A handful of locations, such as Vesoul (with over 6, 000 inhabitants) or Colmar (over 15, 000 inhabitants) in the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* featured every year almost without fail in directors' itineraries between 1824 and 1864, often with two or three visits per year, and these are represented in the figures by the 'yearly visits' icon. At the next level down, towns such as the spa of Lure (with a population of 3, 000) either featured more sporadically on *troupe d'arrondissement* directors' networks, recurring some years but not others, or were added to the yearly itineraries later in the 40-year period, and these are represented by the 'intermittent visits' icon. Finally, the *arrondissements* included places such as Thann (4,000 inhabitants), in the 9<sup>th</sup>, to which directors only toured



occasionally, either for day trips or to perform at specific events such as *foires* or spas, indicated by the 'occasional visits' icon.<sup>226</sup> The frequency of town visits corresponded to the size of population and cultural infrastructure of each locale, as I explore in Chapter 2.

The 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* theatrical network was made up of five main towns with varying populations: Pau (11,500 inhabitants), Tarbes and Auch (both with a little under 10, 000), Bagnères-de-Bigorre (a population of 7,500), and, for the first twenty years before the municipal council backed a residential troupe, Bayonne (almost 15,000).<sup>227</sup> Directors also made intermittent trips into the Landes department towns of Dax (with a population of 5,000) and Mont-de-Marsan (4,000).<sup>228</sup> Additionally, certain troupes made one-off visits to towns further afield, either to the *foires* of the small towns of Condom, Lectour and Fleurance in the 1840s,<sup>229</sup> or, on one occasion, Roland's *troupe d'arrondissement* performed in Bordeaux in the summer 1849, taking advantage of the municipal company's holidays.<sup>230</sup> These new destinations increased the regional theatrical circuit from four towns compared to the *troupe ambulante* serving the region from 1815 (Figure 4).

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<sup>226</sup> I will expand on the different roles of provincial towns in a directors' itinerary in Chapter 2

<sup>227</sup> Population statistics taken from Abel Hugo, *France pittoresque: ou description pittoresque, topographique et statistique des départements et colonies de la France* (Paris: Delloye, 1835–38), 3 volumes.

<sup>228</sup> AN, F/21/1277, itinerary (Roland), 03/12/1842.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid. AN, F/21/1277, itinerary (Hermant), undated (1860–1). F21/1277, itinerary (Hermant), 11/01/1843; itinerary (Hermant) 20/10/1841.

<sup>230</sup> AN, F/21/1277, itinerary (Roland), 06/05/1839.

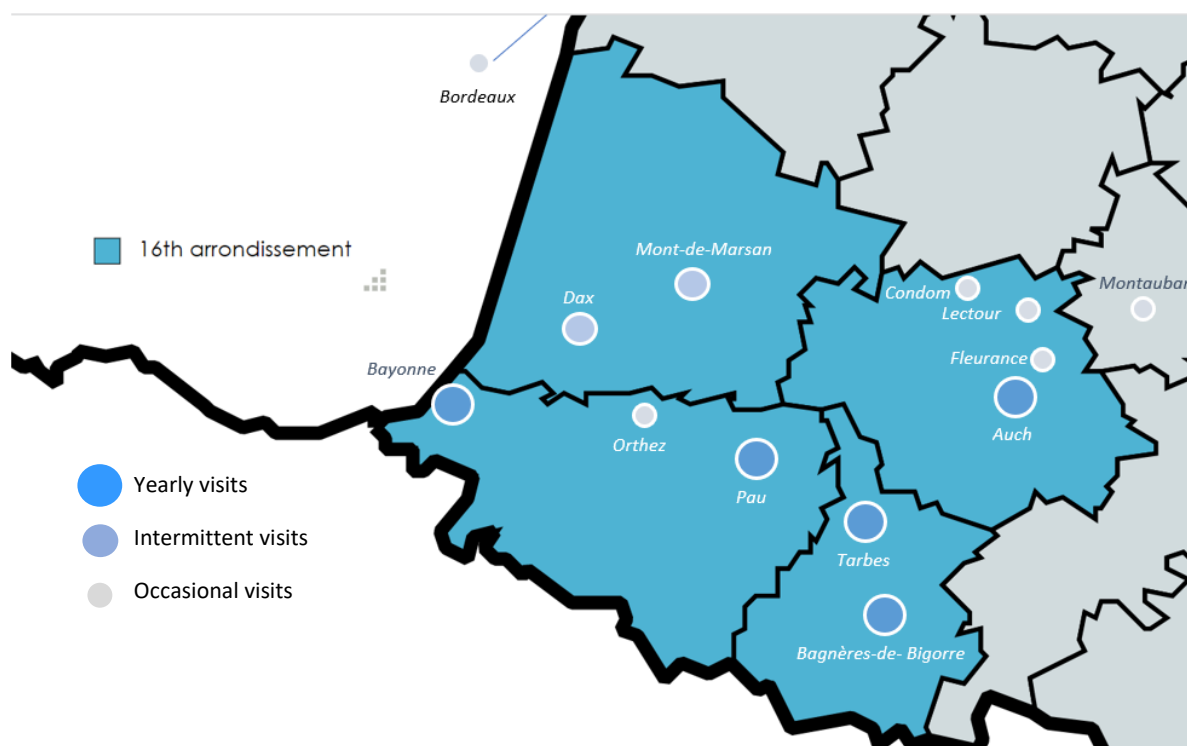


Figure 4: Towns visited by the 16<sup>th</sup> troupe d'arrondissement, 1824-64.

Not all changes in theatrical circuits after 1824, though, took place within the parameters imagined by ministers in their various decrees. In the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, only a few directors expanded the traditional theatrical circuit of Vannes, Saint-Brieuc Morlaix, Quimper (each with around 10,000 inhabitants),<sup>231</sup> and Lorient (with a population of over 18,000) to include day trips to *foires* in the much smaller towns of Lannion,<sup>232</sup> Dinan,<sup>233</sup> and the Napoléonville spa (Figure 5).<sup>234</sup>

<sup>231</sup> Hugo, *La France pittoresque*, 2 : 28, 29, 259-260, 293.

<sup>232</sup> AN, F/21/1250, itinerary (Morel-Bazin), 1/12/1840. AN, F/21/1250, itinerary (Pepin) 17/03/1828.

<sup>233</sup> AN, F/21/1251, itinerary (Girard), 21/07/1854. AN, F/21/1251, itinerary (Besombes) 13/08/1853.

<sup>234</sup> AN, F/21/1251, itinerary (Giraud) 28/02/1861.



Figure 5: Towns visited by the 6<sup>th</sup> troupe d'arrondissement, 1824–64.

Large-scale change in this *arrondissement* took place outside of the system's boundaries. Directors such as Robin, in his 1835–6 seasons, expanded the troupe's excursions to Jersey, Guernsey and the prosperous spa town of Saint-Malo and its neighbour Saint-Servan,<sup>235</sup> close to the *arrondissement* boundary but technically in the neighbouring 5<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*. Subsequent directors made use of these new destinations beyond the *arrondissement* and beyond France itself between the 1840s and 1860s, although not without ministerial complaints about the impropriety of stepping outside the system's lines.<sup>236</sup> While infractions were condemned in writing, ministers largely avoided active repercussions, yet one director, Prilleux, was momentarily sacked for touring outside the *arrondissement* boundaries before being reinstated thanks to local officials' support.<sup>237</sup> In

<sup>235</sup> AN, F/21/1251, itinerary (Besombes) 13/08/1853.

<sup>236</sup> AN, F/21/1251, itinerary (Girard), 21/07/1854. AN, F/21/1251, itinerary (Besombes) 13/08/1853.

<sup>237</sup> I will expand on this incident in Chapter 2.

this case, regional administrators' powers and directors' desires to reach new places, largely to increase their financial stability, trounced the official parameters of the government system.

The theatrical itineraries of the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* varied slightly from the other four areas during the same period. The *troupe d'arrondissement* visited Valenciennes (19, 000 inhabitants), Dunkerque (25, 000), Arras (23,000), Cambrai (18,000) at least twice each year, and came to Saint-Omer (19, 000) once almost every year (Figure 6).<sup>238</sup> Due to the strong theatrical taste of local critics and administrators in these towns, who often clamoured for longer and more frequent seasons, these *arrondissement* directors explored new theatrical locations much less frequently than their colleagues elsewhere in the provinces. Only around once a decade, for example, did the troupe perform further afield in the smaller towns of Avesnes and Condé (both with c. 3,000 inhabitants), Béthune (almost 7,000), and Maubeuge (6,000).<sup>239</sup> These more limited itineraries meant that the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* increased the number of towns visited by touring companies from 1824 by just one compared to the routes of the 1815-1823 troupes.<sup>240</sup>

<sup>238</sup> ADN, 1/T/301/3, Combined itineraries, 1840-1; Combined itineraries, 1854-55.

<sup>239</sup> AMV, J/8/38, itinerary (Bertéché) 13/04/1835; Letter from the Sub-Prefect of Valenciennes to the Mayor of Valenciennes, 14/09/1835. Letter from the Sub-Prefect of Valenciennes to the Mayor of Valenciennes, 05/12/1835. EF, 25/04/1846. AN, F/21/1234, itinerary (Delorme), 20/05/1829. AN, F/21/1235, itinerary (Bertéché), 01/05/1835. An unauthorised troupe headed by director Delhouck (1835-37) also toured to the smaller towns of Avesnes, Béthune and Maubeuge. AN F21/1235, itinerary (Delhouck) 23/08/1836. AMV, J/8/38, letter from the Sub-Prefect of Valenciennes to the Mayor of Valenciennes, 05/12/1835.

<sup>240</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1825*, 412-4.

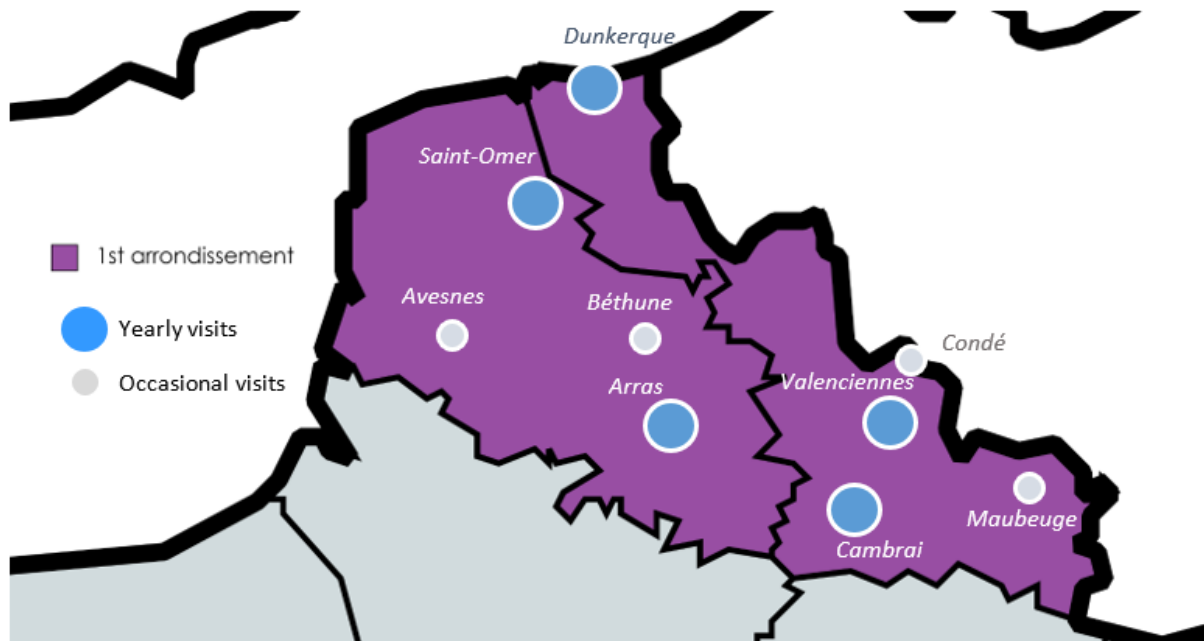


Figure 6: Towns visited by the 1st troupe d'arrondissement, 1824-64.

In general, the state of *troupe d'arrondissement* itineraries across the four *arrondissements* reveal that the ministry *did* achieve its aim of increasing theatrical access across France after 1824. It might be expected, though, that the new theatrical tiers of the 1824 ordonnance would enable even further theatrical expansion through the new *troupes ambulantes* since these, as already stated, were primarily expected to work in smaller provincial towns that did not receive the *troupe d'arrondissement*. The patterns of the *troupes ambulantes* working in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*, though, demonstrate a significantly different shift in the circulation of theatrical experience that was representative of the changes occurring in all four case study areas after the 1824 legislation.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*, demand for theatre from local administrators of the five key towns resulted in Ministerial approval for the rapid multiplication of the number of *troupes ambulantes* in order to supplement local theatrical experiences. By the 1860s, there were

three *troupes ambulantes* serving small towns across the Nord and Pas-de-Calais.<sup>241</sup> Some of these directors, particularly those working in the final four years of the theatrical system, did travel to new northern towns, integrating ten new town centres into the theatrical culture of the *arrondissement* (Figure 7).<sup>242</sup> Yet the vast majority of the time, the northern *ambulante* companies retraced, rather than diversified, the itineraries of the *troupe d'arrondissement*. As can be seen in Figures 8-10, the *troupes ambulantes* habitually toured to the same key towns as the *arrondissement* at different points in the year, a strategy also adopted by *troupes ambulantes* in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> regions.<sup>243</sup> In the 1840-1 season, for example, Arras, received a total of seven company visits given by three touring troupes, their itineraries charting a total of 218 days spent in the Pas-de-Calais town. Since the troupe usually performed at a rate of three evenings a week, this resulted in around 101 performances that season for Arras spectators.<sup>244</sup>

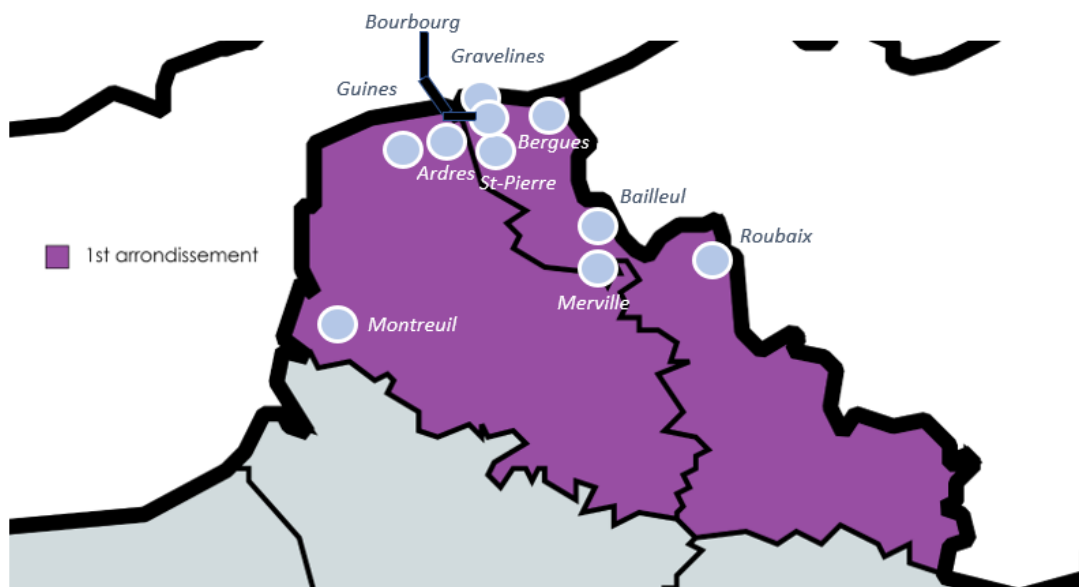


Figure 7: New towns visited by the three troupes ambulantes in the 1st arrondissement by the 1860s

<sup>241</sup>ADN, 1/T/301/7, letter the Prefect of the Nord to the Minister, 05/09/1860.

<sup>242</sup> ADN, 1/T/301/2, letter from the Prefect of the Nord to the Sub-Prefect of Valenciennes 20/08/1857; Letter from director Rancy to the Prefect of the Nord, 11/01/1861. Letter from the Sub-Prefect of Hazebrouck to the Prefect of the Nord, 11/06/1861. Letter from the Mayor of Bailleul to the Prefect of the Nord, 07/06/1861; Itinerary (Marcel), 18/12/1861.

<sup>243</sup>AN, F21/1258, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of Doubs, 29/05/1826. ADN, 1/T/301/3, combined itineraries, 1840-1; Itinerary (Atrux), 27/04/1841; Itinerary (Clément) 14/01/1843; Itinerary (Halanzier), 22/03/1843; Combined itineraries, 1854-55; 1T301/2, itinerary (René), 1862-63.

<sup>244</sup> ADN, 1/T/301/3, combined itineraries, 1840-1.

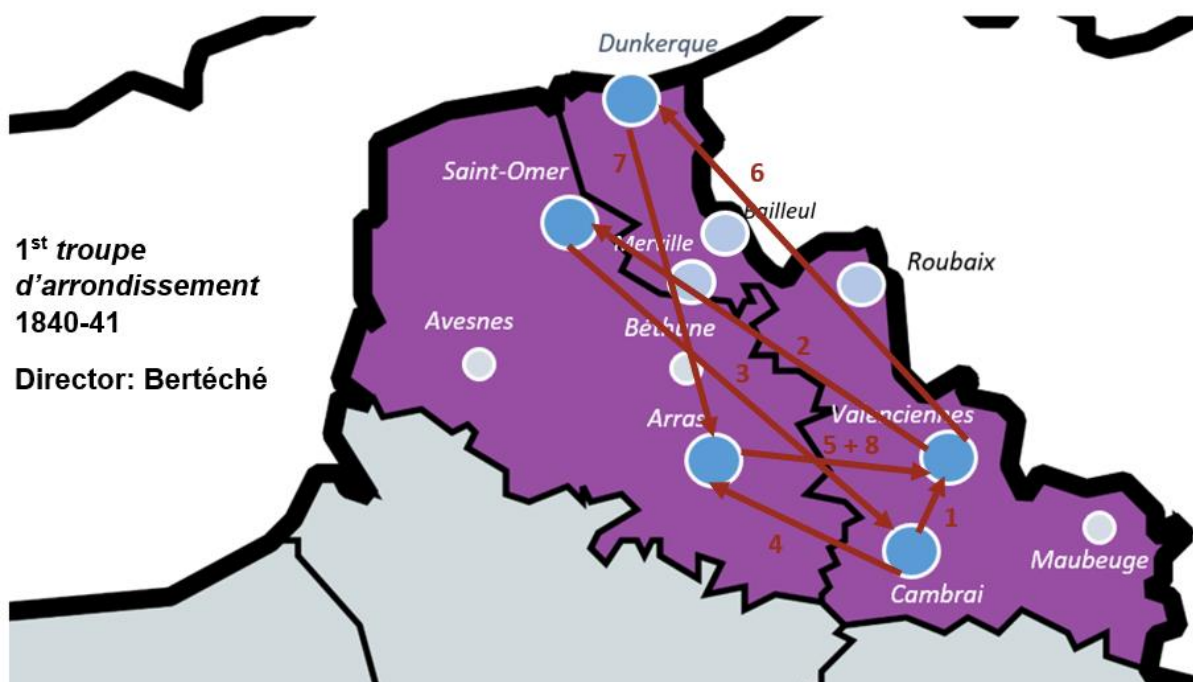


Figure 8: 1840-41 itinerary, troupe d'arrondissement

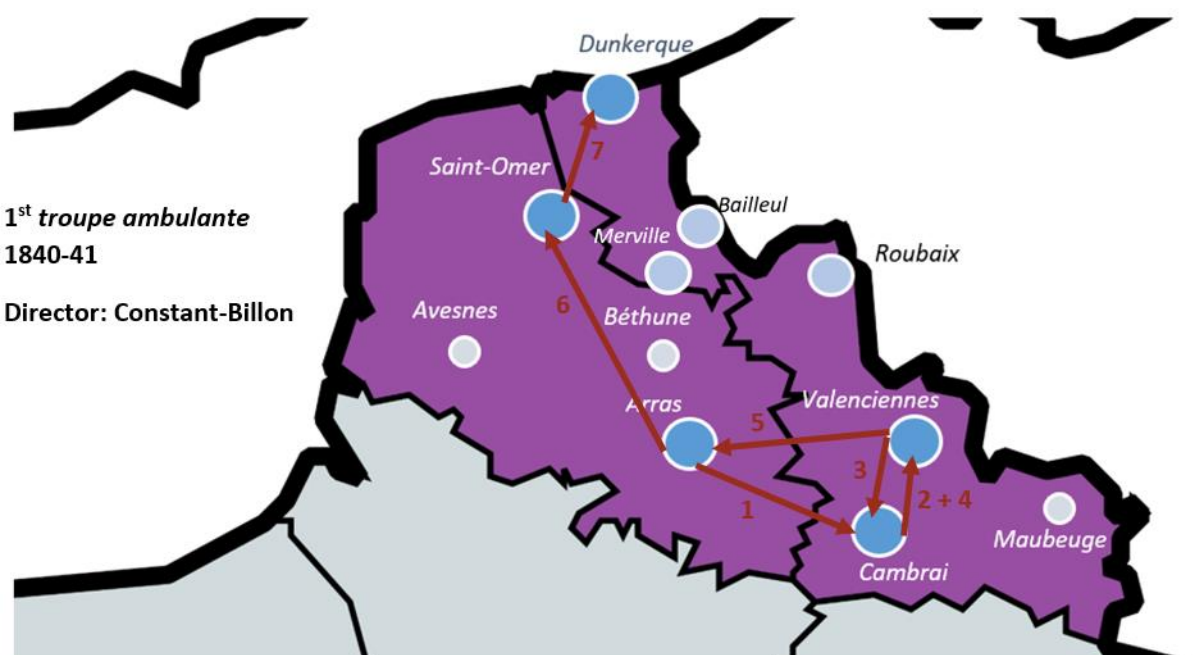


Figure 9: 1840-1 itinerary, 1st troupe ambulante

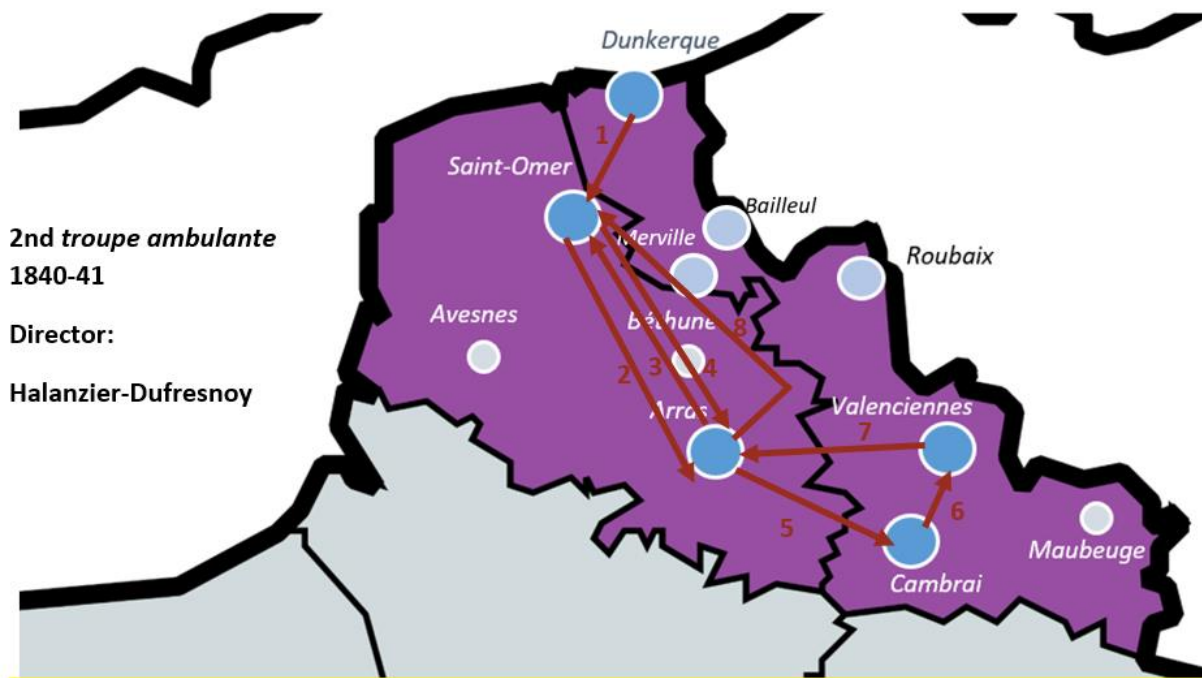


Figure 10: Itinerary 1840-1, 2nd troupe ambulante

The similarity between the *arrondissement* and *ambulante* troupe itineraries was hardly surprising. *Ambulante* directors, too, wished to benefit from the largest populated centres in each region. They could take advantage of these town audiences' taste in theatre as already stimulated and developed by the *troupes d'arrondissement* rather than, as suggested by the 1824 *ordonnance*, expend effort in fostering interest in theatre in new places where they risked low ticket sales and the time needed to develop a regular audiences. Yet the sharing of the theatrical network was not without competition. *Arrondissement* directors often complained that the novelty of their repertoire was compromised by sharing the touring circuit with *ambulante* companies and, at times, had to lobby local administrators for their right to have priority over their *ambulante* peers in the setting of itineraries, even though this was enshrined in the 1824 *ordonnance*.<sup>245</sup> These tensions aside, the combined troupe patterns of the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*, which were echoed

<sup>245</sup> PAV, 28/02/1829. ADN, 1/T/301/2, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of the Nord, 30/05/1839.



across my four case studies, reveal the real impact of the 1824 tier reforms: this was the intensification of theatrical visits to a region's larger towns, rather than large-scale regional expansion of the touring network. Thanks to the overlap between *arrondissement* and *ambulante* visits, these towns' spectators and administrators experienced a greater concentration of theatrical experiences each year, patterns that developed the importance of stage culture to a provincial community and its role in society, as will be explored further in Chapter 2.

As the competition between *arrondissement* and *ambulante* directors has brought to light, the national system remained beset by local challenges that threatened to stifle the practical impact of the second ministerial aim: namely, to support the artistic workforce. The key problem was that local administrators continued to invite performances from companies outside of the national system, despite directors' complaints and ministerial warnings. Directors Bertéché in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* to Marcillac and Verne in the 9<sup>th</sup>, for example, repeatedly wrote to their local prefect to denounce unauthorised troupes on their territory that were approved by the Mayors of St-Omer and Belfort in the 1830s and 40s.<sup>246</sup> Across France, the continued presence of unauthorised troupes not only demonstrated incidents of subversion of the centralised theatrical scheme, but were one of the inherent paradoxes and ultimate weaknesses of national touring infrastructure.<sup>247</sup> This was that, by providing access to performances in over 254 towns across France, and through the intensification of theatrical culture in provincial centres that came about as a result of overlapping troupe itineraries, the ministry stimulated a desire for a theatrical culture which, in many towns, quickly outgrew the capabilities of the *troupes d'arrondissement* and *troupes ambulantes* after 1824. Crucially, officials in provincial centres expected a greater

<sup>246</sup> AN, F/21/1237, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of the Nord, 16/04/1853. Letter from Prosper Bertéché to the Minister, 12/04/1849. F/21/1258, letter from the Minister to director Marcillac, 18/10/1832. Letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 18/10/1832. Letter from Marcillac to the Minister, 5/10/1832. AN, F/21/1260, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of the Haute-Saône, 10/03/1851. AN, F/21/1277, letter from the Prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées to the Minister, 12/09/1835.

<sup>247</sup> Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 127. Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 79-81.

regularity of town performances than government infrastructure alone could provide without some level of municipal subsidy that these local administrators were unwilling, or unable, to provide. Investment in a year-round company was the solution found by the municipal councils of Besançon (1836), Bayonne (1842) and Lorient (1850), yet this was not an option for most *arrondissement* towns. Indeed, many municipal councils fervently resisted giving subsidies to the touring companies throughout the period: the Saint-Omer and Vannes municipal councils, for example, repeatedly debated but failed to agree on the idea of funding their *troupes d'arrondissement* throughout the period.<sup>248</sup> The developing taste for theatregoing promoted by the government system thus, paradoxically, forced officials to step outside the lines of the national infrastructure: none more so than the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin who welcomed troupes from Germany and Switzerland into Colmar and Mulhouse, as I explore in Chapter 5. The issue of theatrical control that Ministers confronted after the 1824 legislation therefore shifted considerably away from policing theatrical personnel that were viewed as rogue agents to managing the infractions made by local administrators desperate for theatrical culture.

### **Genre distinctions in practice**

While none of the drafted genre obligations made their way into the 1824 ordonnance, I argue that the repercussions of ministers' concerns about provincial taste did live on, indirectly, through the practical effects of this decree. First, as already stated, Corbière's legislative creation of troupe hierarchies in 1824 and his understanding of the provincial training ladder positioned touring companies as leading, incrementally, towards the royal theatres. This conception of the touring workforce as steering towards the specifically state-funded high-art companies implicitly promoted opera and *comédie*, rather than popular genres, as the pinnacle of the system of which touring troupes were a part.

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<sup>248</sup> AMVa, 20/12/182, letter from Pépin to the Prefect of Morbihan, 03/04/1827; letter from the Sub-Prefect of Morbihan to the Prefect of Morbihan, 07/04/1827, rejecting Pépin's call for funding. AMC, 2/R/4/5b2-5, municipal council minutes, 19/01/1861.

Second, in practice, I now turn to my *arrondissement* case studies, to consider how the new touring tiers brought about economic and artistic protection for the *troupe d'arrondissement*, and how this group's repertoire became increasingly specialised in opera. Consequently, I suggest that, without formally championing opera, the 1824 legislation had the effect of offering ministerial advantages to the troupe promoting one of the genres that had previously been synonymous with government-approved taste.

The mechanism through which opera was indirectly promoted by the 1824 tiers bore no relation to the aforementioned genre clauses discussed by ministers, but it was nonetheless founded on Neuville and Corbière's itinerant troupe divisions. As already mentioned, the *troupe d'arrondissement* and *troupe ambulante* had an implicit hierarchy, since the second was subservient to the first's itineraries and was designed to mop up an *arrondissement's* smaller towns (with a reduced pool of ticket-buyers). In addition, the *troupe d'arrondissement* was offered two direct economic advantages: as stated earlier, only this troupe's director had the right to put on balls and exclusive right to collect a 5% tax on curiosity spectacles, an advantage that had previously been previously accorded to all *troupes ambulantes* in a 28<sup>th</sup> December 1812 *circulaire*.<sup>249</sup> These were tangible advantages in the tricky business of provincial theatre. Successive *troupe d'arrondissement* directors in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*, for example, made sure to claim their *cinquième* and lobbied prefects if this was not paid promptly.<sup>250</sup> Moreover, priority in itineraries allowed the *troupe d'arrondissement* to have the edge in producing new pieces not yet seen in the region at a time when audiences prized novelty.<sup>251</sup> In the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*, for example, skirmishes repeatedly erupted between directors Guillaume Bertéché, of the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*, and Oliver Halanzier-Dufresnoy, of the second

<sup>249</sup> Feret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 34–5. Désiré Dalloz, *Répertoire méthodique et alphabétique de législation, de doctrine et de jurisprudence* (Paris: Bureau de la Jurisprudene Générale, 1861), 315. Joseph Claude François Bousquet, *Nouveau dictionnaire de droit* (Paris: C. Hingray, 1847), 721.

<sup>250</sup> ADN, 1/T/296/2, letter from Delorme to the Minister, 23/10/1830.

<sup>251</sup> ADN, 1/T/301/2, letter from the Prefect of the Nord to the Minister, 07/03/1839.

*troupe ambulante*, during the 1840s over the sharing of the five central towns in the theatrical circuit.<sup>252</sup> Halanzier was forced to shift his seasons to follow the *troupe d'arrondissement* and, as consequence, present *vaudevilles* to a public that had already seen the same titles premiered by Bertéché earlier in the year, resulting in a loss of revenue.<sup>253</sup> As this example indicates, the 1824 tiers thus offered *troupe d'arrondissement* directors some level of protection from regional theatrical competition that was not given to those of the *ambulante*.

Although this legislated hierarchy bears no mention of genre, it was, in practice, significant for ministers' debates about French taste. This was because of the partial division of genre production according to troupe type between 1824 and 1864. As mentioned earlier, *troupes d'arrondissement* specialised in opera.<sup>254</sup> In the 1<sup>st</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissements*, opera typically formed the largest proportion of *troupe d'arrondissement* repertoire as compiled in their yearly lists. Director Guillaume Bertéché's repertoire list from 1836–7, for example, listed sixty operas, thirty-two *vaudevilles*, three *comédies*,<sup>255</sup> two *dramas*,<sup>256</sup> and two *mélodrames*.<sup>257</sup> In 1850–1851, the repertoire of his son, Prosper, heading the *troupe d'arrondissement* in the same region, listed seventy-two operas, sixty-seven *vaudevilles* and twenty-two *dramas*.<sup>258</sup> These lists were not necessarily representative of what troupes eventually performed as they were created for approval and censorship by the departmental prefect. They primarily highlight the menu of theatrical offerings envisaged by directors as producible at the outset of their theatrical campaign before being tempered by practical considerations such as troupe size or talent. By contrast, the *recettes*, lists of performances and ticket sales per evening produced by directors at the end of each town

<sup>252</sup> Halanzier went on to direct the Académie, see Ellis, 'Olivier Halanzier and the Operatic Museum in late Nineteenth-Century France', *Music & Letters* 96, no.3 (2015): 390–417.

<sup>253</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>254</sup> Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 177.

<sup>255</sup> AN, F/21/1235, repertoire list (Guillaume Bertéché), 21/05/1836. The *comedies* were *Une Famille au temps de Luther*, *Don Juan d'Autriche*, *Le jeune mari*.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.* *La Tour de Nesle*, *Héloïse et Abeilard*.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.* *Trente ans ou la vie d'un joueur*, *Latude*.

<sup>258</sup> AN, F/21/1237, repertoire list (Prosper Bertéché), 23/12/1849.

visit, are a much more reliable source for scholars to trace what troupes actually staged. Overall, the division of stage genres in practice followed the patterns given in repertoire lists, as companies performed very few spoken pieces (*drame* and *comédie*): only 2% of director Bertéché's staged pieces in his 1844–45 season with the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*, but a substantially higher 13% of fellow director Alphonse Seymour's performances the same year with the 6<sup>th</sup> company. The split between popular sung repertoire and opera per season, however, was in practice more flexible than the repertoire lists suggested. Across Bertéché's 1844–45 season, his 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* performed 23 *vaudevilles* and the same number of operas (98% of total productions), while Seymour programmed 41 *vaudevilles* and 26 operas (49% and 31% of performances, respectively).<sup>259</sup> Although these *recettes* show that the weighting of popular sung repertoire versus opera alternated according to director and season, likely influenced by the talent available each year, these figures make it clear that sung theatre did, in practice, provided the focus for the *troupe d'arrondissement's* work and for the entertainment provided for regional audiences.

Within the focus on sung theatre, troupes performed operas from three different subgenres: *opéra-comique*, *traduction* (Italian and some German opera in translation) and, surprisingly, for the limited resources of travelling companies, *grand opéra*, a phenomenon that I examine in Chapter 4.<sup>260</sup> A core repertoire of operatic pieces from *opéra-comique*, *grand opéra* and *traduction* pieces remained in the *troupes d'arrondissement* repertoires season after season, and the genre became synonymous with this type of itinerant company, with administrators and critics often referring to the group simply as the “troupe

<sup>259</sup> AN F/21/1235, F/21/1236, F/21/1250. The troupe also listed miscellaneous items on their *recettes* that were likely performed by soloists from the troupe or the town during an interval: for Bertéché's season this included three *chansons*, two trombone solos, and two titles that I have not been able to trace in formal theatrical titles and may well have been a type of curiosity spectacle: *Trente vues dissolvantes*, and *La portière romantique*.

<sup>260</sup> Bertéché's troupe performed 4 *grand operas* (*La muette*, *La favorite*, *Guillaume Tell*, *Robert le diable*), 4 *traductions* (*Le barbier de Seville*, *Lucie de Lammermoor*, *Norma*, *Marie de Rohan*), and fourteen *opéra-comique* (*Le chalet*, *Le domino noir*, *La part du diable*, *Les diamants de la couronne*, *Le nouveau seigneur du village*, *Le maître de la chapelle*, *Les rendez vous bourgeois*, *Le postillon du Longjumeau*, *L'Ambassadrice*, *La dame blanche*, *Le Roi d'Yvelot*, *L'escale du Camoens*, *La sirène*).

d'opéra".<sup>261</sup> The importance of producing opera for *arrondissement* directors can be gauged by the fact that even in the few companies whose region provided them with only limited artistic and financial resources, meaning that they habitually stuck to vaudeville and spoken theatre, several directors made repeated attempts to stage the genre. In the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* troupe, which lacked the ticket sales to produce opera consistently, for example, directors such as Briden in the 1820s, Ferchaud, Mercier and Grès in the 1830s, and Hermant in the late 1850s each experimented, sometimes briefly, with operatic seasons.<sup>262</sup> During this period, opera in general, and *grand opéra* in particular, was the flagship genre for the *troupes d'arrondissement*. The *troupes ambulantes*' repertoire, by contrast, focused on *comédies*, *vaudevilles*, *dramas* and *mélodrames*.<sup>263</sup>

The repertoire distinctions between a *troupe d'arrondissement* and *troupe ambulante* are, I argue, significant given the hierarchical system within which these companies existed. Between 1824 and 1864, one troupe had economic and practical advantages and this troupe specialised in opera, while the troupe without these benefits built its reputation on *vaudeville* and *comédie*. The conditions laid out in the 1824 legislation thus had the accidental effect of promoting operatic repertoire above the genres most associated with the *troupe ambulante* by virtue of the hierarchised troupe system. Without explicitly championing opera, through their economic and protective legislation that benefitted the *troupes d'arrondissement*, government ministers, therefore *did* manage to valorise one genre over others in travelling troupe contexts. By according the *troupe d'arrondissement* economic protection over the *troupes ambulantes*, ministers accidentally offered opera a level of protective status above other stage genres. In this way, the 1824 system indirectly

<sup>261</sup> AN, F/21/150, letter from the Sub-Prefect of Saint-Malo to the Prefect of Ile-et-Vilaine, 10/11/1843.

<sup>262</sup> AN, F/21/1277, Letter from Briden to the Minister, 10/09/1829, letter from Ferchaud to the Minister, 11/07/1835; Letter from the Minister to the Prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées, 13/05/1833; Letter from Grès to the Minister, 22/04/1833; Letter from the Prefect of Gers to the Ministry, 06/06/1852.

<sup>263</sup> ADN, 1/T/301/4, repertoire list (Rancy), 12/09/1862.

enacted one half of the high-art genre distinction that previous ministers in 1807 and 1818 discussed but failed to put into action.

Crucially, the advantages given to operatic production in the *arrondissements* after 1824 came about through local demand, rather than only through the side-effects of central legislation. The *troupes d'arrondissement* specialised in opera, despite its high production costs, because they responded to the widespread and vocal championing of this genre by administrators and newspapers critics. These local voices made it clear that opera was the genre most favoured by theatre goers in *arrondissement* towns, or at least by the educated spectators represented by critics and officials.<sup>264</sup> Directors recognised this fact and, as stated by Etienne Grès in his troupe list for the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* in 1833, attempted to stage as much of the “genre of choice for the public” of their towns,<sup>265</sup> or risk the displeasure of officials and audiences and its disastrous consequences. Only a few years before Grès, for instance, his predecessor Briden was ousted from the 16<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* by the Ministry in 1829 for choosing not to programme opera for Bayonne in order to lower troupe costs, a decision that incited an audience riot in the theatre.<sup>266</sup> Opera was favoured across the provinces not only because it was a genre that represented cultural capital,<sup>267</sup> but because critics and officials praised the differences between this and other troupe genres. Some officials saw opera as a moral genre: the Prefect of Gers, in the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, saw the genre as “favorable for morality” thanks to the “decency” and “charming ideal” inherent in *opéra-comique* singing, particularly in contrast to the “the monstrosities of *drame* and the brazen nature of *vaudevilles* [that are] always menacing for

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<sup>264</sup> AN, F/21/1278, letter from the Prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées to the Minister, 16/06/1852. AN, F21/1260, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 15/04/1862. AN, F/21/1250, letter from the Prefect of Morbihan to the Minister, 09/04/1841. AN, F/21/1251, letter from the Prefect of Morbihan to the Minister, 11/02/1845. AN, F/21/1260, letter from the Prefect of the Haute-Saône, 06/08/1851.

<sup>265</sup> AN/F/21/1277, troupe list (Etienne Grès), 13/07/1833.

<sup>266</sup> AN, F/21/1277, letter from director Briden to the Minister, 10/09/1829; Letter from the Mayor of Bayonne to the Minister, 21/11/1829; Letter from the Prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées to the Minister, 30/10/1829.

<sup>267</sup> Etienne Jardin, “L’Opéra à tout prix: Les soutiens de l’activité sur le théâtre d’Avignon au XIXe siècle”, in *Nouvelles perspectives sur les spectacles en province (XVIIIe-XXe siècle)*, 49-64.

public morals."<sup>268</sup> Others saw operatic plots as providing a more pleasurable theatrical experience than other genres: in the north, a Valenciennes journalist recommended that director Georges Dellemeence's troupe stage more opera than *dramas* and *tragédies* because of their effect to "amuse" rather than "indispose" spectators.<sup>269</sup> Still others prioritised opera for its scenic splendour, as did a group of subscribers from Besançon who wrote to the Prefect of Doubs to advocate for more opera productions because "after having turned our eyes away from the daggers and bloody rags of *drame*, we will happily rest our eyes on the rich costumes of the opera."<sup>270</sup> These comments highlight that, although ministers worried about the primacy of opera in provincial theatre environments while developing the 1824 legislation, the actions of local administrators and critics continued to uphold the importance of the genre in the *arrondissements* for many reasons without any formal government directions about doing so.

Since the championing of opera was fuelled by local agents, genre protection was, in practice, not entirely enacted in line with Ministers' pre-1824 legislative plans for the provinces. First, *comédie* was not brought to the fore in *troupe d'arrondissement* programmes. The lack of spoken genres evidently worried government officials since they looked beyond the *arrondissement* infrastructure to impose systems to promote this repertoire. One-off troupe tours were granted to non-*arrondissement* directors, such as Harel, on the condition that their programmes filled the gaps of the genres currently missing in the *troupe d'arrondissement* programmes: in Harel's case *comédie* and *tragédie*.<sup>271</sup> Second, even within the local push for opera, the division in artistic labour

<sup>268</sup> AN F21/1278, letter from the Prefect of Gers to the Minister of the Interior, 6 June 1852. 'favorable aux mœurs' since it provided 'cet idéal charmant qu'on ne trouve que dans les chants de l'opéra', 'les monstruosités du drame et les hardiesses du vaudeville toujours menaçantes pour la morale publique.' On the concept of opera's moral value, see Noel Verzosa, 'Criticism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Intellectual Culture in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Paul Watt, Sarah Collins, and Michael Allis (Oxford, 2020) 33–52. Hervé Lacombe, 'The Machine and the State', in *The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera* (Cambridge, 2003), 19–42.

<sup>269</sup> PAV, 27/12/1826.

<sup>270</sup> ADD, 4T/120, letter from subscribers to the Prefect of Doubs (undated, c. 1820–50) 'après avoir détourné nos yeux des poignards et des lambeaux sanglants du drame, nous reposerons agréablement nos regards sur les riches costumes de l'opéra'. Signed C. D. M. Q. N. V.

<sup>271</sup> ADN, 1/T/295/1, *circulaire* 29/10/1822. AN, F/21/956, letter from the Minister to director Colson, undated, 1850s.



between the two types of itinerant troupe cut across the clear distinction made between high/"grand" and low/"secondaire" genres articulated by the 1807 regulation and repeated by ongoing ministerial oversight of Parisian theatres. Indeed, both types of touring company relied on *vaudeville* to fill much of their programmes, meaning that neither the lower nor higher troupe in the hierarchy entirely lined up to the high-art/popular division discussed by Lainé, nor those showcased by Parisian companies. By consequence, the accidental ministerial protection of opera in the *arrondissements* allowed the promotion of one high-art genre to be undertaken in a very different way to the capital: in a mode that highlighted the primacy of this lyric genre but did not make the bodies and voices of troupe performers exclusively identified with it, as was the case at the Académie or Opéra-Comique in Paris. In this way, the practical nature of genre protection and predilection in the provinces established a more favourable environment for operatic production, despite its high costs, than other stage genres in a manner that actually diverged from initial Ministerial plans and, in doing so, emphasised the unique nature of provincial staging contexts compared with Paris.

## Conclusion

Ministerial attitudes towards provincial theatre and towards travelling troupes, in particular, in the period spanning 1806 to 1864 went further than a desire for theatrical control and moral censorship. The draft plans and official legislations that I have showcased in this chapter reveal that efforts to disseminate theatrical culture across the provinces and to uphold the right for as many regional centres as possible to experience stage performances were paramount for Ministers alongside contemporary moral issues, and they were integral in shaping the plans that eventually became the 1824 legislations. As I have suggested, in practice, the 1824 legislation on the whole allowed travelling troupes to carry out the government's aims to implement a policy of cultural centralisation. Yet, although a greater number of provincial towns received staged performances in the period

leading up to 1864 than before, the real impact of the theatrical reform lay in the intensification of theatrical experience offered to the most important towns in the *arrondissement* circuits thanks to the coexistence of the *troupes d'arrondissement* and *troupes ambulantes*, and their similar itineraries.

At the same time, artistic concerns about how the system affected the work of directors in the provinces and, consequently, the state of French theatre as a whole also motivated decisions about theatrical governance in the period leading to 1824. This is seen, in part, in the expansion of ministers' understanding of national theatre as geography to also encompass national quality and heritage. This marked a shift from the government's perception of theatrical personnel as a group of wayward workers needing to be put under the state's thumb to a valued group of professionals whose labour participated in the advancement of national art and artistic goals. This was nowhere more evident than in the creation of the new itinerant tiers of 1824 and Corbière's statements about reforming provincial companies in order to progress national art. Ministerial work in this arena demonstrates the government's understanding that, throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, French theatre needed to be developed *through* the provinces, as well as through new Parisian creation and the work and splendid conditions of the royal theatres, as argued by contemporary commentators such as Janin.

The third ministerial aim for provincial theatre that I brought to light in the chapter is the government's attempts to shape provincial taste through the debated question of genre protection. Although the question recurred until 1824, ultimately, Ministers decided that commercial sustainability and the safeguarding of provincial artistic standards was more important to the national theatrical infrastructure than government guidance of provincial taste. Local actions, though, succeeded in championing opera even when Ministers withdrew their projected state protection for the circulation of this genre and *comédie*. In this respect, the work of departmental prefects and town mayors went one step further

than central legislation in determining the genres seen on the *arrondissement* stages. In doing so, these local agents primarily shaped local tastes for opera and the shape of the canon of stage works seen across France during this period, introducing an aspect of the provincial devolution of decision making within the centralised system.

Across all three of these priorities, Ministers' theatrical plans and the 1824 legislation reveal that the process of achieving state cultural goals made visible two coexisting yet opposing relationships between the French centre and the provinces. On the one hand, a central law such as theatrical legislation was codified in the centre for the peripheries and, in doing so, appeared to embody the dissemination of theatrical power from Paris to the provinces, reiterating a traditional national structure with the capital as the head and representative. On the other hand, however, aspects of the 1824 legislation challenged this traditional political imaginary. Several of the changes in theatrical planning and legislation that I have highlighted in this chapter disrupted a top-down imposition of theatrical power and practice. Ministers' debates, for example, emphasised their desire to match the theatrical system to provincial needs and information. Information gathered from prefects and mayors was essential in the process of developing the government priority of nationwide theatrical access, just as the practical work of these local administrators was the determining factor in protecting operatic production, above other genres, as just mentioned. Similarly, Corbière, through his concept of artistic development involving the itinerant troupe tiers and positioning the provinces as leading to Paris, suggested that the capital's royal theatres, those that were representative of the nation in one sense, needed to, in fact, be fed artistically by provincial companies. These documents demonstrate that the provinces need not be of secondary concern, to ministerial officials, even when conceived of differently from Paris. The government's theatrical legislation thus also articulated a conception of French space, as perceived by ministerial officials, in which there was active interplay between the centre and peripheries, and moments where the

peripheries were considered theatrically formative for the capital and, in doing so, representative of national art.

## Chapter 2

### On tour and in town: troupes and *arrondissement* communities

On 30<sup>th</sup> April 1852, Paul Féart, the Prefect of the department of Gers, wrote to the Minister of the Interior, Victor Fialin, to share his opinions about the renewal of director Joseph Hermant's contract for the 16<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*.<sup>272</sup> Hermant's proposed 1852-3 season itinerary and repertoire, shared with all prefects and sent through to the mayors of the towns that he would visit, showed that his travelling troupe would revert to producing *vaudeville* and spoken theatre, a change from the experimental 1850-51 season in which they also staged *opéra-comique*, select *grand opéras* and *traductions*.<sup>273</sup> In his April letter and in a second one penned to Fialin on 6<sup>th</sup> June, Féart voiced his concerns and passed on those of Soulier, the Mayor of Auch, about the impact of Hermant's change on this town, the only Gers location regularly visited by the *troupe d'arrondissement*.

Auch was an old Roman settlement with around 10, 000 inhabitants at this time, a centre of small-scale textile manufacturing.<sup>274</sup> Féart and Soulier wanted to retain opera in this town at the expense of replacing Hermant, if needed.<sup>275</sup> The Gers administrators championed opera due to local cultural priorities: Auch's municipal council had recently "made great sacrifices to reconstruct the *salle de spectacle*" and the Prefect and Mayor saw opera as the preferred genre to attract audiences to this new building.<sup>276</sup> Moreover, they also considered opera to be a genre "favourable to morals" and one which had, in Hermant's 1850-51 season, "reawakened" a local taste in music: in particular, sparking the musical education of young people who accompanied troupe performances with the ad-hoc

<sup>272</sup> AN, F/21/1278, letter from the Prefect of Gers to the Minister, 30/04/1852. Hermant was born in Bourgneuf (Creuse) on 25/03/1815 (F/21/1278, tableau de troupe, 16/02/1848), was appointed as director of the 16<sup>th</sup> *troupe ambulante* in 1840 and upgraded to director of the *troupe d'arrondissement* in 1844. F/21/1278, letter from the Prefect of the Hautes-Pyrénées to the Minister, 06/01/1844.

<sup>273</sup> AN, F/21/1278, repertoire list, 15/08/1850. Hermant's opera repertoire was reportedly warmly received in the *arrondissement*. AN, F/21/1278, letter from the Prefect of the Hautes-Pyrénées to the Minister, 28/12/1850. LC, 08/06/1850, 22/06/1850.

<sup>274</sup> Abel Hugo, *France pittoresque*, 2: 52, 56.

<sup>275</sup> AN, F/21/1278, letter from Prefect of Gers to the Minister, 06/06/1852.

<sup>276</sup> "La ville s'est imposée cette année de grands sacrifices pour la reconstruction de la salle de spectacle." AN, F/21/1278, letter from the Prefect of Gers to the Minister, 30/04/1852.

orchestra formed from Auch inhabitants.<sup>277</sup> Soulier and Féart raised these local preferences with the Ministry because they feared that the priorities of Auch administrators would be overlooked by powerful players elsewhere in the *arrondissement*, notably officials in Pau. By 1852, Pau was the largest town in the troupe's circuit: a place of marble and handkerchief-making industries with a population of 11,500 inhabitants that grew during the spa season to accommodate large numbers of tourists.<sup>278</sup> The towns' seasonal importance, population and industrial advancement, compared to Auch, meant that its theatrical needs were more likely to be met than those of the department of Gers, as directors usually spent the largest part of their season in Pau. Féart's reminder to the Minister in his 1852 letter took issue with this fact, stating that, for once, "it is necessary to take into account [the people of Auch's] preferences" when approving Hermant's repertoire.<sup>279</sup> The Prefect suggested a simmering resentment that the process of theatrical administration thus far had not always balanced the needs of each town within the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*.

Féart and Soulier's worries reflect the fact that the *arrondissement* was a collective theatrical space. Audiences, critics and administrators spread across significant swathes of French territory shared the same travelling troupes. In the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, Hermant's company regularly served six towns across four departments that together stretched almost 28,000 km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>280</sup> In this shared space, the theatrical needs of one town were often subject to those of others because of internal *arrondissement* hierarchies, including the centrality of Pau. This was indeed the case in 1852: Soulier and Féart's operatic priorities were sidelined by Adolphe Fournier, the Prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées, the department in which Pau was situated. Fournier had the final say in submitting Hermant's plans to the Ministry of the Interior thanks to the importance of Pau within the *troupe*

<sup>277</sup> AN, F/1278, letter from the Prefect of Gers to the Minister, 06/06/1852.

<sup>278</sup> Hugo, *La France pittoresque*, 3: 14, 16.

<sup>279</sup> "Il est lieu de tenir compte de leurs préférences". AN, F/1278, letter from the Prefect of Gers to the Minister, 30/04/1852.

<sup>280</sup> Statistics taken from Gwillim Law, "Departments of France", *Statoids*. Hugo, *La France pittoresque*, 2: 50.

*d'arrondissement* network, and dismissed the Gers officials' desire for opera, by imposing on the *arrondissement* his own financial concerns. From his vantage point in Pau, Fournier concluded that it was too costly to force Hermant to produce opera, and he instead renewed the director's contract based on a personal conviction that Hermant was trustworthy and would provide good stage entertainment in another genre, rather than consulting with prefects to find another candidate.<sup>281</sup> As this incident shows, being a member of a theatrical network such as the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* involved the negotiation of cross-departmental power dynamics that had the potential to determine local stage practices.

In this chapter, I investigate how itinerant stage culture fostered complex relationships between the provincial towns joined in an *arrondissement*, involving inter-town hierarchies and power dynamics such as those glimpsed between Gers and Pau in 1852. I draw on the methodology of studying minor-to-minor intersections, also known as transversalism or transversal relations. This approach highlights relationships between minority subject places or social groups as means of circumventing the traditional historiographical focus on capital centres and their peripheries, recently pioneered by a handful of scholars in historical, political and literary studies.<sup>282</sup> In a methodological statement on the future of French studies, for example, Emmanuel Bruno Jean-François argues that minor-to-minor relations can bring a fresh perspective to research into colonial and post-colonial France by enlightening non-dominant sources of influence and non-typical hierarchical systems.<sup>283</sup> Harry Stopes' research on the cultural relationships between the municipal councils of Manchester and Lille in the late nineteenth century,<sup>284</sup> Nina Fischer's study of the links

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<sup>281</sup> AN, F/21/1278, letter from the (Prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées) to the Minister, 16/06/1852.

<sup>282</sup> Emmanuel Bruno Jean-François, "Introduction: Thinking through the Minor, Transnationally," in *Minor Transnationalism* eds. Françoise Lionnet and Shu-Mei Shi (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 3, 8.

<sup>283</sup> Jean-François, 'An Interview with Françoise Lionnet'.

<sup>284</sup> Harry Stopes, "From Manchester and Lille to the World: Nineteenth-century Provincial Cities Conceptualize their Place in the Global Order" in *Asymmetrical Encounters in European and Global Contexts*, eds. Tessa Hauswedell, Axel Körner, Ulrich Tiedau (London: UCL Press, 2019), 94-107.

between black Australians and Jews in twentieth-century Australia,<sup>285</sup> and Bethany Lacina's political study of recent separatist conflict in regional India offer diverse examples of the method in action.<sup>286</sup> All four scholars demonstrate that, by examining how issues such as global modernity, national ideology and political power are debated and worked out 'horizontally', rather than 'vertically' from the centre to the periphery, researchers can accentuate the inherent complexities and multiplicities in the socio-political narratives scholars construct around minority subjects and places. In the case of Auch, for example, attention to the relationship between this small town and its *arrondissement* centre of Pau in 1852 reveals that regional theatrical dynamics have the potential to disrupt a centre-periphery relationship between Auch and Paris, as although local administrators might want to experience the latest *opéra-comique* from the capital, they could not achieve this goal because neighbouring officials would not prioritise it.

I develop the concept of minor-to-minor relations by examining how itinerant performance established inter-provincial town relationships not only between two points, but across a theatrical network. This approach involves examining how troupe theatre fostered a sense of collective belonging—for administrators, audiences, critics, and readers of theatrical reviews—to a cross-departmental theatrical community (the *arrondissement* that gave travelling troupes their name). This regional comparison, competition and connection moves the focus away from provincial-Parisian relationships that frequently take centre stage in accounts of local theatrical life, including parts of this thesis.<sup>287</sup> see, for example, Chapter 4. The communal nature of the *arrondissement*, however, meant that cross-departmental references outnumbered Parisian ones in theatrical correspondence between administrators and in the theatrical newspaper criticism of all four case studies:

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<sup>285</sup> Nina Fischer, "Minor-to-Minor Intersections: Jewish and Aboriginal Australians Between Antisemitism and Racism" in *Sartre, Jews, and the Other: Rethinking Antisemitism, Race, and Gender*, eds. Manuela Consonni and Vivian Liska (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2020), 131-148.

<sup>286</sup> Bethany Lacina, 'Periphery versus Periphery: The Stakes of Separatist War', *The Journal of Politics* 77, no.3 (2015): 692-706.

<sup>287</sup> Jubert-Larzul, 'Le théâtre à Toulouse'.



in over 200 hundred letters conserved in the Archives Nationales that detail the correspondence between the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* prefects, directors and the Ministry, Paris is invoked only a handful of times.<sup>288</sup>

I approach the issue of transversal relationships from two angles. In the first half of the chapter, I focus on the sharing of the troupe and theatrical season. I uncover *arrondissement* power dynamics, showcasing how directors' working patterns, towns' socio-economic statuses, and administrative power and intervention defined clear, though sometimes changing, theatrical hierarchies. In the second half, I consider how provincial inhabitants experienced a sense of connected stage culture via the *troupe d'arrondissement*. I argue that practices of cross-departmental theatrical journalism built up an imagined theatrical community based around the *arrondissement* that tangibly allowed readers to engage with the travelling troupe in ways beyond spectatorship in their local *salle*, and which enabled critics to shape local artistic behaviours through regional comparison.

By focusing on 'horizontal' theatrical communities I offer a new way of thinking about the role of a regional *arrondissement* community in nineteenth-century France and its relation to national power dynamics. Regional character in this period has so far been discussed in terms of folkloric musical traditions and specific composition techniques that were inspired by or that expressed characteristics of the people and places of the ancient French provinces, for example *couleur locale* and setting of the dialect texts.<sup>289</sup> This type of creative expression affirmed a sense of affiliation, on the part of nineteenth-century composers, writers, performers and audiences, with recognisable historical regions and identities, such as Brittany/the Breton. Although these identities lived on in common parlance and artistic representations during the period of the *troupes d'arrondissement*,

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<sup>288</sup> AN, F/21/1277 and 1278.

<sup>289</sup> Jean-Christophe Branger and Sabine Teulon-Lardic eds., *La Provence et le Languedoc à l'Opéra au XIXe siècle: cultures et représentations* (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2017).

the historical regions were no longer part of French administration. The ancient provinces that made up France before the revolution were disbanded in favour of the eighty-three departments created in 1790.<sup>290</sup> Until 1954, the government instead formed larger geographical spaces bringing several departments together around different socio-political needs. France was carved up into military divisions, church dioceses and forestry commissions, among others, as well as theatrical communities. Accordingly, the theatrical *arrondissements* from 1824 offer an insight into a type of regional network, formed through administrative groupings, that was not cohesively aligned with the ancient provinces. The 16<sup>th</sup> melded the Béarn and Gascony; the 1<sup>st</sup> integrated Flanders with Artois and parts of Picardy; Brittany was split between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissements*;<sup>291</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> fused parts of Alsace with Franche-Comté and Lorraine. Consequently, the sense of collective membership to a theatrical space that, I will argue, formed the basis of administrative and spectator coexistence in an *arrondissement* was built around a new type of large-scale territorial community that not only went beyond the department but was dislocated from historical regional identities.

### ***Arrondissement centres***

The towns included in the *troupe d'arrondissement* circuits were those whose municipal councils declined to finance a residential company in the government's 1823 callout because they believed the town population was too small to maintain year-long interest in theatre.<sup>292</sup> By definition, then, audiences and administrators in the *arrondissement* system were reliant on their membership of a cross-departmental theatrical circuit for the vast majority of their professional stage culture.<sup>293</sup> This circuit was essential for the everyday

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<sup>290</sup> *Collection générale des décrets rendus par l'Assemblée Nationale* (Paris: Badouin, 1790), 11: 16; Marcel Roncayolo, "Le département" in *Les lieux de mémoire*, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1997), 2: 2937-2974; Jacques Revel, "La région" in *Les lieux de mémoire*, 2907-2936.

<sup>291</sup> The lower part of Brittany (Loire-Atlantique) was taken out of the *arrondissements* all together, leaving only a residential troupe in Nantes.

<sup>292</sup> ADHR, 4/T/92, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 05/09/1823.

<sup>293</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, there were unauthorised troupes (often small family companies) that toured independently and sought permission from town mayors to perform in specific towns but Ministers discouraged these. Provincial towns also

work of troupe directors, as these managers relied on ticket sales to support artists' salaries, travel and all other outgoings. Indeed, a successful financial season was usually only achieved because the *arrondissement* was greater than the sum of its parts. In certain towns, *troupe d'arrondissement* visits regularly ended in a deficit:<sup>294</sup> this was the case in Saint-Omer in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*, an ancient ecclesiastical centre with over 19, 000 inhabitants, and in the much smaller fishing port of Quimper, in the 6<sup>th</sup>, with a population approaching 10, 000.<sup>295</sup> The theatrical network, though, allowed directors to balance the profits and losses of individual towns across the collective space. In the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, for example, director Roland's troupe made a loss during the 1841-42 season in Dax, a rural town of barely 5, 000 people, and in his first visit to Tarbes, a market town twice the size of Dax.<sup>296</sup> Roland lost over 1,640fr, the equivalent of just over five weeks of the collective troupe salaries.<sup>297</sup> Thanks to his takings in Auch, in a second Tarbes visit and in Mont-de-Marsan (a smaller agricultural centre of under 4, 000 inhabitants),<sup>298</sup> however, Roland's complete season resulted in a profit of 2680fr, or over two months of troupe salaries.<sup>299</sup> The prospect of balancing troupe costs across the network thereby allowed certain towns to absorb the losses of performances taking place in others on the theatrical circuit. Since finances were a perennial problem for provincial theatres, it was not always the same towns in which the troupe could be sure of making a profit, and the *arrondissement* collective allowed a certain amount of economic flexibility and viability for itinerant directors across the half-century.<sup>300</sup>

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hosted performances by passing solo musicians and curiosity spectacles, ranging from demonstrating physicians to animals shows.

<sup>294</sup> AN, F/21/1235, ticket sales (Bertéché), 25/07/1843. AN F/21/1250, ticket sales (Seymour), 07/08/1844.

<sup>295</sup> Hugo, *La France pittoresque*, 2: 318, 28.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid, *La France pittoresque*, 2: 125-6; v. 3, 21.

<sup>297</sup> AN, F/21/1277, ticket sales (Roland), 06/07/1841, 12/11/1841. This is calculated at the recorded troupe salary of 1255fr a month. Roland was director of the *troupe d'arrondissement* between 1841-45. The spelling of the director's name differs in newspaper articles (Roland/Rolland), and Carrère-Saucède's uses the second spelling (Carrère-Saucède, "La direction de troupe de province) I use Roland, as this appears in his signatures in the archival documents quoted here.

<sup>298</sup> Hugo *La France pittoresque*, 2: 125.

<sup>299</sup> AN, F/21/1277, ticket sales (Roland), 02/08/1841, 31/12/1841/, 24/01/1842, 09/02/1842.

<sup>300</sup> Finances were a key problem for the entire provincial theatrical industry, as Ellis demonstrates in her study of the struggling funding system for residential troupes: Ellis, 'Broke'-128.

Even though troupe visits in one town could be fleeting, performers and directors interacted with the local community in different ways: liaising with mayors and departmental prefects; forging relationships with critics;<sup>301</sup> and, as mentioned in the prologue, working alongside theatre managers, crews, and orchestra players made up of employed and volunteer inhabitants. The size of the *salle de spectacle* ranged across the *arrondissement* network: in the 1<sup>st</sup>, the Arras and Saint-Omer theatres could hold almost 800 spectators,<sup>302</sup> that of Cambrai 850, and Dunkerque and Valenciennes could welcome up to 1,200 and 1,400 people, respectively, while the smaller buildings in Avesnes and Maubeuge only had 300 places.<sup>303</sup> In a typical *salle de spectacle*, troupes played to a cross section of society, from the leisured upper classes to local labourers.<sup>304</sup> Whole-town access to performances was enabled by tiered ticket prices ranging from 40c to just over 2fr, usually fixed by the municipality.<sup>305</sup> The top price could buy the local gentry and prefectural officials a private *loge*, while the lower price was equivalent to around 2.6 hours of manual labour.<sup>306</sup> This meant that even labouring workers could likely easily avail themselves of at least one evening performance a week in the *troisième places*.

At times, there were differences in the genres preferred by the classes united in the theatre and in their seasonal habits. Director Seymour, in the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, for example, programmed his tri-weekly performances in Lorient, a large port town in Brittany, so that *drame* featured prominently on Sundays, attracting labourers on their day off with the genre that the Prefect of Morbihan reported they preferred.<sup>307</sup> In the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, however, director Claparède found it harder to facilitate the divergent

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<sup>301</sup> Journalists were sometimes invited to rehearsals to get to know the troupe before their *débuts*, AL, 23/01/1842.

<sup>302</sup> AN, F/21/1235, *Salles de spectacle* table (Pas-de-Calais), 04/06/1841.

<sup>303</sup> AN, F/21/1235, *Salles de spectacle* table (Nord), 24/05/1841.

<sup>304</sup> AN, F/21/1251, letter from the Prefect of Morbihan to the Minister, 11/02/1845.

<sup>305</sup> ADN, 1/T/296/9, Letter from the Sub-Prefect of Valenciennes to the Prefect of the Nord, 05/06/1840. The military had reduced *premières place* tickets or could buy a month-long subscription for the rate of a day's wage and commanders often signed up their entire regiment.

<sup>306</sup> Ellis, 'Broke', 119. Troupe directors sold individual tickets for each evening but also managed subscriptions for a fixed number of performances, AMC, 2/R/42.

<sup>307</sup> AN, F21/1260, letter from the Prefect of the Haute-Saône, to the Minister 06/08/1851.

tastes of the local populace in the watch-making town of Besançon because he saw his role as forming, rather than responding to, town preferences. He described the upper classes' desire for opera as the taste befitting "real amateurs" of the theatre, and he struggled with reconciling his programming of opera with also providing the "ordinary public" with the popular "pieces favoured and followed by [this] class with little theatrical knowledge".<sup>308</sup> As Claparède found out, though, an *arrondissement* director's role was not to curate taste but to answer local needs. First, troupes had to attract audiences from across the classes in order to stay afloat financially, especially during the summer when the leisured classes often vacated the city for country homes or spas.<sup>309</sup> Second, directors had to appease local administrators who, although they championed operatic production, also asked directors such as Claparède and Seymour to provide popular genres for the working audiences.<sup>310</sup> In general, though, *troupe d'arrondissement* performances united the local populace in the *salle de spectacle* most evenings: as reported by administrators, troupes performed to "clerks and merchants" as well as gentry in Bayonne;<sup>311</sup> soldiers and local well to do families in Colmar;<sup>312</sup> business travellers and what Claparède called the "ordinary" working public in Besançon;<sup>313</sup> and the local upper crust plus tourists and the working classes in Pau.<sup>314</sup> The *troupes d'arrondissement's* mixed-genre evening programmes attracted this range of spectators from across the classes into the same theatre, as did the scarcity of theatrical experience in the touring network, a far cry from the situation of the capital's theatres that were not only segregated by genre, but often by audiences' class and social sphere.<sup>315</sup>

<sup>308</sup> "des pièces affectionnées et suivie par la classe peu connaisseur". AN F21/1258, letter from Claparède to the Prefect of Doubs, 18/04/1827.

<sup>309</sup> AN, F21/1258, letter from the Mayor of Mulhouse to the Minister, 28/02/1826. AN, F21/1260, letter from the Prefect of the Haute-Saône, to the Minister 06/08/1851.

<sup>310</sup> ADM, 1/Z/197, report, 30/01/1844.

<sup>311</sup> AN, F21/1277, letter from the Prefect of the Hautes-Pyrénées to the Minister, 28/07/1826.

<sup>312</sup> AN, F21/1258, letter from the Prefect of Doubs to the Minister, 28/06/1828. Hugo, *La France pittoresque*, 2: 43, 48.

<sup>313</sup> AN, F21/1258, letter from the Prefect of Doubs to the Minister, 12/01/1834.

<sup>314</sup> AN, F21/1277, letter from director Roland to the Minister, 19/06/1841.

<sup>315</sup> Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 287.

The majority of *troupe d'arrondissement* audiences appear to have been local, yet some accounts suggest that certain spectators did come from the wider region, including for special occasions. In 1852, for instance, 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* audiences from Saint-Omer were encouraged to travel to Dunkerque for the regional premiere of Giuseppe Verdi's *Jérusalem* (1847) by critics in the town paper *Le mémorial artésien*.<sup>316</sup> Others travelled on a more regular basis: records in the Valenciennes municipal archives, for instance, list up to a dozen "étrangers", a term used to designate anyone who was not a town resident, entering the town gates on performance nights in the 1820s.<sup>317</sup> Thanks to the presence of the *troupe d'arrondissement*, theatrical towns could be spectatorship centres of the wider region.

Troupes not only united *arrondissement* spectators but catalysed important regional administrative relationships. Officials actively sought to influence the shape and type of theatrical culture that itinerant troupes brought into their town: either in terms of stage genres, directors heading up a company, or the timings and length of troupe visits. It was here that the theatrical community could prove a curse, rather than a blessing. Féart's travaux in 1852, for instance, demonstrate that not all *arrondissement* towns were equal. Instead, administrators in smaller places such as Auch struggled to have their local needs met by a troupe due to a variety of socio-economic conditions that determined *arrondissement* power dynamics. The first of these conditions was town size and theatrical prominence. Every *arrondissement* had an unofficial centre, a town in which the *troupe d'arrondissement* performed for an extended winter season of up to four months (c. October – January). This was Dunkerque in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* and Besançon in the 9<sup>th</sup> until the formation of a residential company in 1836, after which the troupe wintered in Colmar. In the 6<sup>th</sup>, Lorient was the *troupe d'arrondissement* centre and later Vannes, after

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<sup>316</sup> MA, 23/10/1852.

<sup>317</sup> AMV, J/8/26, list, 'Porte de Mons', 20/02/1823; List, 'Porte de Lille', 14/05/1823.

the Lorient council's creation of a sedentary troupe in 1850, while Bayonne was the centre of the 16<sup>th</sup> until its municipal troupe was established in 1842, after which Pau gained *arrondissement* centrality.<sup>318</sup> Directors toured to the other towns in their region for much shorter visits: between two and six weeks, sometimes two or three times a year. Accordingly, *arrondissement* towns received very different numbers of performances per season: as stated by director Bordes in his 1847–8 itinerary, for example, Lorient was set to receive 70 performances compared to twenty in Vannes, twelve in Saint-Brieuc and six to eight in Morlaix and Quimper.<sup>319</sup>

Troupe itineraries such as Bordes' responded to and reinforced pre-existing social hierarchies, as the directors chose the most populated and commercially industrious centres as their wintering centres in order to maximise financial potential. Dunkerque was an important naval port with almost 25,000 inhabitants by 1835,<sup>320</sup> as was Lorient with almost 20,000.<sup>321</sup> Besançon, the watch-making centre of France, had a population nearing 30,000,<sup>322</sup> and Bayonne (with almost 15,000 inhabitants) and Pau were touristic and commercial centres.<sup>323</sup> The larger population of these towns, compared to others in their *arrondissement*, meant that the travelling troupe could be certain of attracting a range of audience members over a long period. Administrators of smaller towns, by contrast, reported that their spectators reached their theatrical limit, or "exhaustion" as described by director Roland, after around a month of performances, forcing directors to move on.<sup>324</sup> The size of *arrondissement* towns and their populations were thus key factors in determining whether they, and their administrators, played a key role in the *arrondissement*.

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<sup>318</sup> The creation of these residential theatres reveals that the *troupes d'arrondissement* had succeeded in developing an interest in theatre to such an extent that audiences and administrators outgrew the itinerant experience.

<sup>319</sup> AN, F/21/1251, Itinerary, 08/12/1846. Bordes visits to Saint-Brieuc, Morlaix and Quimper were in fact lower than the government's yearly requirements of fifteen performances every six months.

<sup>320</sup> Hugo, *La France pittoresque* 2: 285.

<sup>321</sup> Idem, 2: 260.

<sup>322</sup> Idem, 1: 320.

<sup>323</sup> Idem, *La France pittoresque*, 3: 12.

<sup>324</sup> AN, F/21/1277, letter from Roland to the Prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées, 20/12/1842.

Population, though, was not all. Directors also shaped their itineraries around other factors, including the state of *salles de spectacles*. The town of Gray (a centre for the department of Haute-Saône's agriculture and steelmaking industry with around 6,000 inhabitants)<sup>325</sup> did not feature highly in the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* circuit because the stage was degraded so much that it compromised performers' safety.<sup>326</sup> To add insult to potential injury, the owner of the *salle*, Emile Bertrand Finaton, charged the troupe 10fr rent on weekdays and 18fr rent on Sundays and festivities, whereas directors could access the other three Haute-Saône *salles* for free in Vesoul (like Gray, a hub for the steel industry, with over 6, 000 inhabitants) and the smaller spa towns of Lure (c. 3, 000) and Luxeuil (c. 4, 000).<sup>327</sup> In the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*, the troupe similarly spent the minimum time in Saint-Omer even though the town had a larger population than neighbouring Cambrai (an old fortified town with a population of around 18,000 and an important Catholic seminary) and Valenciennes (a lace-making centre with almost 19,000 inhabitants) because the theatre was reportedly decrepit.<sup>328</sup> Even after the building of a new *salle* in 1842 (within the *hôtel-de-ville*), though, directors such as Bertéché hesitated to spend too much time in Saint-Omer because of the town's religiosity. As stated by the Sub-Prefect in 1862, Saint-Omer, the site of an old Jesuit college, was "enveloped in a clerical network" that primed inhabitants to avoid the theatre on religious grounds.<sup>329</sup> In Vannes (a Breton port town with a population of more than 10,000),<sup>330</sup> Bayonne, Auch and Tarbes, local religious zeal was also a hindrance to troupe performances, causing "part of the upper classes, those whose morality is still in line with religion, [to] stay completely away from performances," as

<sup>325</sup> Hugo, *La France pittoresque*, 3: 68.

<sup>326</sup> AN, F/21/1259, *Salles* table, 29/08/1840.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid. Finaton was a lemonade merchant in Gray who owned and ran the *salle* privately, whereas the other theatres (the two latter only built in 1839) were owned by the towns' municipal councils. Hugo, *La France pittoresque*, 3: 68, 72.

<sup>328</sup> Hugo, *La France pittoresque*, 2: 285-6. AN F/21/1235, Itinerary (Bertéché), 16/03/1840.

<sup>329</sup> ADN, 1/T/301/3, letter from the Sub-Prefect of Saint-Omer to the Prefect of Pas-de-Calais, 23/01/1862. The Prefect saw an extended theatrical visit as a positive way by which the religious hold over the population might dissipate the "regrettable consequences of a misplaced devotion." This attitude is perhaps surprising given the Jesuit traditions of theatrical education during schooling, as will be mentioned in Chapter 3.

<sup>330</sup> Hugo, *La France pittoresque*, 2: 259.



reported by the Prefect of the Hautes-Pyrénées in 1841.<sup>331</sup> With so many potential difficulties according to local conditions, theatrical culture in towns in which the troupe found a good source of resources and a sufficiently welcoming population quickly thrived in contrast to smaller, less well-provided-for and potentially hostile locales as troupes favoured the former in their itineraries.

The resulting dominance in certain towns in an *arrondissement* was expressed and made visible to newspaper readers across the theatrical network by journalists who referred to travelling troupes under the name of only one town, rather than their official *arrondissement* title. A journalist in Saint-Brieuc in 1845, for example, at times referred to the 6<sup>th</sup> company as “la troupe d’opéra de Lorient,”<sup>332</sup> just as the Vesoul writer described the 9<sup>th</sup> troupe as belonging to Besancon.<sup>333</sup> In the eyes of these critics, the troupe could, at times, be seen as an extension of one central town, rather than belonging to the whole *arrondissement*. These titles reinforced the central position of the wintering centres in the theatrical network, making it seem, for readers of theatrical columns, that the local stage experience was disseminated from one regional centre.

*Arrondissement* positions were also accentuated through administratively contrived hierarchies. The reason that the Prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées was able to give the final go-ahead to Hermant’s repertoire in 1852, despite resistance from the Prefect of Gers, lay in the fact that administrative power to oversee the theatrical system was distributed unevenly across the *arrondissement*. Although there was no legislated hierarchy between administrators, in practice, the prefect of the department in which lay the winter centre wielded influence over their counterparts in matters such as the appointment of directors and the division of the troupe’s itinerary: thus the Prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées could

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<sup>331</sup> AN/F21/1277, *PB*, 13/12/1836. Letter from the Prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées to the Minister, 13/12/1836. AN F21/1277, letter from the Prefect of Gers to the Minister, 18/12/1841. AN F/21/1250, letter from the Prefect of Morbihan, 29/10/1842.

<sup>332</sup> *JT*, 18/06/1845.

<sup>333</sup> *JHS*, 07/06/1831.

sideline the priorities of Auch's administrators.<sup>334</sup> Prefects with this privileged position made use of their power to sway various theatrical decisions. In the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, the Prefect of Doubs led the search for new directors each year, often favouring the needs of Besançon audiences,<sup>335</sup> and he passed this responsibility and power to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin and his town of Colmar (a wool and textile manufacturing town of over 15, 000 inhabitants) after Besançon became a residential company. The power given to these administrators was, naturally, contentious since it allowed prefects to accentuate their towns' importance over others. Prefiguring the Prefect of Gers' later complaints about the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, for instance, in 1839 the Prefect of the Landes reminded the Ministry during discussions about which director to appoint that the *troupe d'arrondissement* "is not established only for Bayonne, and it is wrong that, until now, [this town] has considered itself authorised to keep this troupe for almost half the year and to exercise authority over the choice of directors."<sup>336</sup> The later 1852 complaint about Auch and its place in the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* was therefore an extension of the long-lasting administrative influence of the Prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées over this region.

Elsewhere, in the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, the power exerted by the officials based in Lorient resulted in a campaign to completely sideline the towns of Morlaix and Quimper in the department of Finistère. Directors chose to spend little time in either town between the 1830s-60s because of low ticket sales and the towns' small populations (under 10,000 inhabitants).<sup>337</sup> In 1841, however, Minister of the Interior Tanneguy Duchâtel finally responded to the Prefect of Finistère's outcries over this problem.<sup>338</sup> He insisted that

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<sup>334</sup> AN, F/21/1258, letter from the Prefect of Doubs to the Minister, 26/03/1831.

<sup>335</sup> In 1827, for example, the Prefect of Doubs brokered a deal with the Minister that Claparède would concentrate on Besançon and Gray, leaving the other *arrondissement* towns without *troupe d'arrondissement* visits. AN, F21/1258, letter and troupe list from the Prefect of Doubs to the Minister, 07/06/1827.

<sup>336</sup> "la troupe principale n'est pas établie uniquement pour la ville de Bayonne et que c'est à tort que jusqu'ici elle s'est vue autorisée à garder cette troupe près de la moitié de l'année et d'exercer une prépondérance sur le choix des Directeurs." AN, F/21/1277, letter from the Prefect of the Landes to the Minister, 10/05/1839. A new director was needed because post-holder Lafontaine had died in Bordeaux.

<sup>337</sup> Hugo, *La France pittoresque*, 2: 28. AN, F/21/1250, Itinerary (Prilleux), 15/05/1841.

<sup>338</sup> AN, F/21/1250, letter from the Minister to several prefects, 10/08/1841.

newly-appointed director Prilleux be made to visit both towns, a decision that emphasised the government's commitment to ensuring that the system offered *arrondissement*-wide coverage.<sup>339</sup> Cross-departmental competition, however, reared its ugly head during Duchâtel's intervention. At first, it appeared that Prilleux had ignored the warnings from the ministry and, in August 1841, the director was stripped of his position for failing to change itinerary.<sup>340</sup> It soon came to light, however, that the Mayor of Lorient, Auguste Charpentier, had played his part in Prilleux's sacking: he blocked the Minister's and Prefect of Finistère's warning letters from reaching Prilleux whose troupe was currently performing in Lorient and to whom correspondence was sent through the prefectural office.<sup>341</sup> Charpentier, in a sheepish letter to Duchâtel, argued that he had been concerned with keeping the *troupe d'arrondissements* itinerary unchanged, no doubt because making space for Morlaix and Quimper would have meant shortening Lorient's winter season.

In Charpentier's letter about the 1841 Prilleux situation, and in a second from 1843 when the issue of visiting Finistère was again raised, the Mayor implied that Quimper and Morlaix were drains on the *arrondissement* and a challenge to the theatrical needs of his populace. Charpentier drew on well-known rhetoric about the social function of provincial theatre to justify the troupe's six months in Lorient: as stated by the major in correspondence with the Minister, performances were needed in the town to provide "necessary public order" as a winter activity for the garrison, and to avoid "collisions and night-time incidents" among the populace.<sup>342</sup> In 1841 there was a happy ending for the peripheral towns: Prilleux was swiftly reinstated, made to include Quimper and Morlaix in his tour, and Charpentier was chided for his underhand antics.<sup>343</sup> As summarised by Duchâtel in his response to the whole incident, Charpentier's interference in Prilleux's itinerary aimed not to "reconcile all of the

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<sup>339</sup> AN, F/21/1250, letter from the Prefect of Finistère to the Minister, 02/08/1841. Report from the Maitre des requêtes, Directeur des beaux arts et des théâtres, 10/08/1841.

<sup>340</sup> AN, F/21/1250, letter from the Mayor of Lorient to the Prefect of Morbihan, 08/09/1841. AN, F/21/1250, Letter from the Minister to several prefects, 10/08/1841.

<sup>341</sup> AN, F/21/1250, letter brief from the Minister to the Prefect of Finistère, 07/09/1841.

<sup>342</sup> AN, F/21/1250, letter from the Mayor of Lorient to the Prefect of Morbihan, 08/09/1841.

<sup>343</sup> AN, F/21/1250, letter brief from the Minister to the Prefect of Finistère, 07/09/1841.

needs of all localities in the *arrondissement*” but to “sacrifice them to the demands of one town”: Lorient.<sup>344</sup> Yet Charpentier continued to advocate for Lorient’s dominance in the *arrondissement*. In an 1843 letter, he called the *troupe d’arrondissement* “our troupe”, defining it solely as belonging to Lorient and characterising Finistère as a department that was “the ruin” of directors, a strategy to curry favour from the Ministry in order to extend Lorient’s visits.<sup>345</sup> The incident demonstrates how some provincial administrators were not afraid to repeatedly turn on their peers in an attempt to strengthen their position within *arrondissement* hierarchy, even if they, like Lorient, were already at the top. Furthermore, the examples from Lorient, Besançon and Gers reveal that similar administrative intervention took place across the four case study areas between 1824 and 1864.<sup>346</sup> As these moments highlight, the power dynamics inherent in the sharing of one *troupe d’arrondissement* could be rendered increasingly cut-throat if certain provincial administrators decided to maximise their theatrical power over their neighbours.

Even when towns were not the pawns of administrative power play, it was difficult for certain officials to accept their status in an *arrondissement’s* theatrical hierarchy. The inherent sense of competition within the theatrical network was evident in administrators’ and newspaper critics’ jealous attitudes towards other towns’ theatrical advantages. Mayors and newspaper critics from Arras and Valenciennes,<sup>347</sup> for example, regularly complained that Dunkerque and other towns had performances to fill the long winter evenings, whereas they had to content themselves with summer visits when audiences had no desire to stay inside during the “suffocating temperatures”.<sup>348</sup> Rather than accepting the need to share travelling troupes, many saw directors’ itineraries as slighting their towns.

The Arras critic quoted in *La gazette des théâtres* on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1832, for instance,

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<sup>344</sup> AN F21/1250, letter draft from the Minister to the Prefect of Morbihan, 31/08/1841.

<sup>345</sup> AN, F/21/1250, letter from the Mayor of Lorient to the Sub-Prefect of Lorient, 07/12/1843. Charpentier’s solution was to invite the resident company from Brest to perform in Quimper as this was closer travel-wise, compared to the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* network of other towns.

<sup>346</sup> ADV, 10/T/1, letter from the Sub-Prefect of Besançon to the Prefect of Doubs, 15/04/1837. AN, F/21/1258 (various).

<sup>347</sup> CN, 09/04/1833, 19/03/1835. EF, 21/06/1838, 15/04/1847. GT, 08/02/1835.

<sup>348</sup> LC, 19/06/1828. See also GT, 13/10/1836, AN, F21/1258, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of Doubs, 29/05/1826.

complained that Dunkerque received “the major proportion of the *beautiful season*, that is to say, the heart of winter”, whereas their inhabitants had to be content with the shortest month of the year, February.<sup>349</sup>

Critics also complained if they received the troupe at the end of the theatrical year, at Easter. By this point, singers were nearing the end of a year of intense performances, most likely looking ahead to securing a new engagement since they were only on one-year contracts. The exhaustion and preoccupation of troupe singers leading up to this period were noted by a Valenciennes critic in 1835, for example, who wrote that the troupe “dissolves themselves on the stage”, exhibiting “that nonchalance and lack of care that actors employed for a year put into the last days of their contract.”<sup>350</sup> For the towns visited at this point in the year, the perceived relaxation of performance standards was interpreted as an insult to its deserving audiences. As stated by a different Valenciennes critic in April 1828, it was disappointing to him and the spectators that their long-awaited troupe had performed “like school children on the eve of their holidays.”<sup>351</sup> Many officials lobbied directors or wrote directly to the Minister of the Interior to request longer visits,<sup>352</sup> even though a pleasing outcome for these complainants could only be achieved with a reduction to the time a troupe spent in a different *arrondissement* town. In other words, these types of comments established competitive relationships between the theatrical network through the timing and length of troupe visits, emphasising the paradox at the centre of the *arrondissement*. This was that, although the towns were united by sharing the same troupe, and directors relied on the financial sustainability of the *arrondissement*, performances in one town always happened at the expense of another. Consequently, the position of the wintering centres and their powerful officials magnified administrators’ and critics’ sense

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<sup>349</sup> *GT*, 08/02/1835.

<sup>350</sup> “cette nonchalance et ce sans gêne que des acteurs à l’année mettent sans les dernier jours de leur engagement.” *GT*, 19/03/1835

<sup>351</sup> “en écoliers qui sont à la veille de leurs vacances.” *EF*, 02/04/1828. A similar phrase is used in the issue from 14/03/1829.

<sup>352</sup> *AMV*, J/8/26, letter from Dupré-Nyon to the Mayor of Valenciennes, 21/04/1823; letter from the Mayor of Cambrai to Dupré-Nyon, 29/03/1823.

that, within the *arrondissement* community, there were constant theatrical hierarchies that were potentially destructive to local engagement with a troupe.

### Seasonal events

Towns whose administrators and critics resented the lack of a winter season, though, were not necessarily peripheral in directors' networks throughout the entire year. During the summer, troupes sought to capitalise on a variety of local summer events that attracted visitors to many of the smaller *arrondissement* towns. To maximise profits, directors made sure to arrange their itineraries around a range of festivities: the *kermesses* of Valenciennes, a town festivity to celebrate a patron saint;<sup>353</sup> the horse races of Saint-Brieux<sup>354</sup> and Tarbes;<sup>355</sup> the sailing races of Dinan;<sup>356</sup> and the *foires* and *fêtes* of many towns including Dax and Auch.<sup>357</sup> Visits lasted around two weeks. Many troupes also aligned their itineraries with spa seasons in different thermal towns. In some, such as Luxeuil, Lure and Plombières in the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, or in Brittany's Saint-Malo, a coastal town attracting visitors to its large beaches and nearby *bains* in Saint-Servan and Dinan, served by the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*,<sup>358</sup> the touring troupe would spend only part of the spa season, continuing the usual pattern of a two-week visit.<sup>359</sup> In other spa towns such as Bagnères-de-Bigorre and Pau, though, companies stayed for the entire two to three month season and were integral to spa culture and tourism.<sup>360</sup> The 16<sup>th</sup> company was able to serve both spas in the same region because Pau had a winter season whereas that of Bagnères opened in late summer.<sup>361</sup> The opening of a new *salle de spectacle* was also a key event around which

<sup>353</sup> CN, 19/05/1832. J. Lebeau, *Archives historiques et littéraire du nord de la France, et du midi de la Belgique* (Valenciennes: Bureau des Archives, 1829), 1: 313-334.

<sup>354</sup> AMST, 2/R/10/2, itinerary (Pepin), 27/06/1825.

<sup>355</sup> AN, F/21/1278, itinerary (Hermant) 08/01/1845.

<sup>356</sup> AMSM, 113/Per/1, UMD, 25/08/1850.

<sup>357</sup> AN, F21/1278, itinerary (Hermant), 08/01/1845.

<sup>358</sup> Emile Ducrest de Villeneuve, *Guide historique et statistique du département d'Ille & Vilaine* (Rennes: Lanais and Oberthur, 1847), 12. AN, F/21/1250, itinerary (Morel-Bazin), 01/12/1840.

<sup>359</sup> AN, F/21/1259, itinerary (Belfort-Devaux), 25/08/1841.

<sup>360</sup> AN, F/21/1278, itinerary (Hermant), 23/01/1844. Pau was known as a wintering thermal hotspot, Jean Marie Vincent Audin ('Richard'), *Guide du voyageur en France* (Paris: L. Hachette et Cie., 1866), 26<sup>th</sup> edition, 462. *Les coulisses*, 06/12/1860; *La constitution* 28/06/1851; *Good Words*, 02/07/1866.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

directors reshaped their usual itineraries, as seen in Cambrai in 1832,<sup>362</sup> in St-Omer in 1842, and for the 16th *arrondissement's* first and only visit to Orthez to celebrate the opening of the town's first *salle*, in 1844.<sup>363</sup> On one occasion, the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* even reshaped its itinerary to play in front of the King during his visit to Arras in 1827.<sup>364</sup> For more regular events, though, directors specifically named *foires*, horse races and spa seasons in their itineraries,<sup>365</sup> demonstrating that these occasions were essential sources of troupe revenue and were non-negotiable patterns in the troupe's season.

Seasonal events also allowed travelling troupes to integrate the local community during these periods since performers provided an essential part of the local festivities through which smaller towns defined themselves to the outside world. A critic reporting on the Saint-Brieuc horse races in the national newspaper *Le Journal des théâtres* in June 1844, for example, emphasised the importance of these events in raising the town's status. He wrote that Saint-Brieuc had:

its period of jubilation, that of the horse races: where everything abounds around us [...] the joys of the world, the solemnities of sports, balls, pantomimes, performances! This last pleasure, especially, has been greatly appreciated this year, thanks to M. Seymour's excellent troupe, an opera troupe no less, and as capable, as deserving, as charming, at least, as those of other large towns, our proud neighbours."<sup>366</sup>

The author not only emphasised the *troupe d'arrondissement's* role in bringing to life the brilliant season of horse racing, but used Seymour's opera troupe to argue that Saint-Brieuc's cultural experience could match those of a "proud neighbour": most likely Brest, the municipal theatre company with the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*. In his eyes, theatre enabled intra-provincial 'levelling up'. Other provincial commentators emphasised the economic

<sup>362</sup> AN, F/21/1234, itinerary (Delorme), 1831–2.

<sup>363</sup> AN, F/21/1277, itinerary (Roland), 03/12/1842.

<sup>364</sup> *LCor*, 24/10/1827.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>366</sup> "son époque de jubilation, c'est celle des courses: alors tout abonde sur nous [...]des joies de ce monde, solemnités du sport, bals, *dérobés*, spectacles! Ce dernier plaisir, surtout, a été vivement apprécié cette année, grace à l'excellente troupe de M. Seymour, troupe d'opéra s'il vous plait, et aussi capable, aussi méritante, aussi chantante, au moins, que celles de plusieurs *grandes villes*, nos orgueilleuses voisines." *JT*, 01/07/1844. I translate 'Dérobés' as pantomimes, a term used to refer to *comedia dell arte* pantomimes, see Louis Simon Auger, "Discours sur la comédie", *Œuvres complètes de Molière, précédées d'une notice sur sa vie par Auger* (Paris: Furne et Cie, 1844), 13.

importance of performances in promoting local tourism, none more so than in spa towns. In places such as Pau and Bagnères, visitors not only sought healing from the town waters but entertainment. A regional spa guide printed in 1865, for example, positioned pleasure-seeking, and theatre in particular, at the heart of the visitor's experience:

The tourist enjoys himself in Bagnères, which has a well-made casino, a theatre served by a good troupe, and a society whose exquisite urbanity is never seen as transgressive by the large crowd searching for pleasures.<sup>367</sup>

As this critic states, theatrical entertainment was considered essential to the spa-going experience and, by attracting tourists, travelling troupes played an integral role in southern towns' wider economic status, as recognised by officials and journalists. The *Écho* critic did not mince his words, for example, stating that "this is the price of the prosperity of Bagnères," referring to Hermant's *troupe d'arrondissement*.<sup>368</sup> Letters written by the Prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées to the Minister of the Interior in 1856 also describe the centrality of the touring company to the vitality of spas in the surrounding region: he suggested that, if Hermant's troupe could be persuaded to perform in the mountain towns of Eaux-Bonnes, Oloron and Orthez, these would offer "strangers an agreeable pastime, [and the towns] would become livelier and would see [their] prosperity growing."<sup>369</sup>

Critics from Pau likewise saw touring troupes as essential to ensuring the future of their town because performances led to economic prosperity. I.C, the journalist for Pau's *La Constitution*, wrote in December 1849:

How many material interests are intimately linked to the time that foreigners spend in our town! [...] The theatre is one of these things. [Pau] needs performances for its winter guests, whose presence keeps up types of commerce that wouldn't exist without them, and allows a host of industries to survive that were uniquely created for them.<sup>370</sup>

<sup>367</sup> "Le touriste se plaît à Bagnères, qui possède un casino bien monté, un théâtre desservi par une bonne troupe et une société dont l'exquise urbanité n'est jamais prise en défaut par la foule bien portante qui cherche les plaisirs." J.-A. Lescamela, *Guide du touriste et du baigneur à Cauterets, à Saint-Sauveur et à Barèges* (Tarbes: J.-M Dufour 1865), 117.

<sup>368</sup> "La prospérité de Bagnères est à ce prix", *EV*, 05/09/1848.

<sup>369</sup> "aux étrangers une agréable récréation, [la ville] s'animerait d'avantage et verrait sa prospérité s'accroître." AN, F/21/1278, Letter from the Prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées to the Minister, 24/12/1856.

<sup>370</sup> "Que d'intérêts matériels sont intimement liées au séjour des étrangers dans notre ville ! [...] Le théâtre est une de ces choses [...] Il lui faut un spectacle pour ses hôtes de l'hiver dont la présence entretient des branches de commerce que vous n'auriez pas sans eux, et fait vivre une foule d'industrie qui se sont créées uniquement à cause d'eux [...]" *LC*, 02/12/1849.



As a town without manufacturing or agricultural industry, Pau was dependent upon what I.C later described as a “commerce of local consumerism,”<sup>371</sup> where “the expenses of luxury become for us useful expenses.”<sup>372</sup> In other words, Pau’s main economy was tourism, and the theatre, in particular, was key to tourists’ consumer experiences that town workers, business owners and landlords were selling. These statements from the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* reveal that spa towns were not only seasonal centres where the travelling troupe could be sure of a captive audience, but also, once again emphasised that performances during the spa season were central to the broader economic stability of these provincial towns on an annual scale. Seasonal events such as spas thus raised the importance of towns that were not the wintering centre within the theatrical community/network. Administrators across the region recognised the importance of these events: the Prefect of the Landes, for instance, stressed the need to resolve the 1839 tussle over the dominance of Bayonne in the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, because a new director needed to be appointed sharpish so that the troupe could travel to the Bagnères spa, a town not even in his own department. Such events, however fleeting, therefore held some sway over the *arrondissement* community.

If festivals and spa seasons could temporarily raise the prominence of relatively minor towns within an *arrondissement*, the spa season also allowed itinerant performers, and the locals within the spa community, to exhibit spatial relationships that problematised the central place of Paris within France. For one, spas allowed provincial towns to have a distinctive relationship with the capital that was not founded on imitation but by the provincial *replacing* the Parisian experience. Many critics, for example, praised spas as mini centres that rivalled Paris, or that represented an alternative seasonal centre for French society during the summer.<sup>373</sup> Pau, for example, was described as a ‘petit Paris’.<sup>374</sup> This moniker was perhaps

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<sup>371</sup> LC, 28/07/1851.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid and 02/12/1849.

<sup>373</sup> EV, 05/10/1861, 15/09/1862.

<sup>374</sup> “Pau, si calme naguère, va reprendre son allure de *petit-Paris*, bruyant, dansant et folâtrant”, LC, 10/11/1850. LMe, 06/09/1846.

less prestigious than it appears, as the concept of recreating Paris in miniature lay behind efforts to establish a wide variety of cultural infrastructure in regional towns, from museums to town halls. Yet there was still a particular theatrical power shift during the spa months since towns such as Pau took hold of the baton for the national theatrical season during the summer. This was due to a veritable exodus of Parisian performers from the capital, as well as the flocking of European visitors to spa towns, a feature that I will return to shortly.<sup>375</sup> Most Parisian theatres, although not the Opéra-Comique, shut down in the summer, and many company stars brokered contracts with provincial theatres, particularly spas, during their holiday.<sup>376</sup> In 1850 in Saint-Malo, for example, director Morel-Bazin and his 6<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* performed with Paul Bonjour, star of the Vaudeville theatre most known for his self-authored *chansonnettes*.<sup>377</sup> Spas, and their troupes, enabled Pau to Plombières to act as provincial cultural hubs in the season of social and artistic exodus from the capital. During this part of the year, theatre was one of the key elements that allowed provincial spa towns to subvert the usual centre-periphery dynamics between the province and the capital since, in the summer, Paris was simply out of season and spas gained national centrality. In doing so, theatrical performances allowed spa towns to display important moments in which the provinces topped the theatrical and social hierarchy of France.

Parisian relations also often informed intra-provincial ones in spa contexts. The importance of spa towns compared with the capital during France's summer seasons, for example, catalysed competition across the regions in which theatrical provision was paramount. In Saint-Malo, the importance of theatrical spa tourism prompted some mayors to disregard the government's national theatrical rules. In a letter from 10<sup>th</sup> November 1849, the Sous-Prefect of Saint-Malo explained to Minister Duchâtel that the Mayor of Saint-Malo had at first refused to let Seymour's 6<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* perform because this town was outside

<sup>375</sup> VD, 16/06/1838; LC, 25/11/1849, 10/11/1850.

<sup>376</sup> EV, 19/06/1851; 24/07/1851.

<sup>377</sup> Henri Lyonnet, *Dictionnaire des comédiens français, ceux d'hier* (Paris: Tappoinier et Soldini, 1912) 1: 191. AMSM, 11/Per/1, UMD 28/07/1850.

of its boundary (it belonged to the 5<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*).<sup>378</sup> The Mayor soon changed his mind, however, after a petition from the “numerous strangers”, no doubt including Parisians, visiting the spa to let the troupe perform.<sup>379</sup> The importance of a troupe to Saint-Malo’s visitors thus dissolved the ministerial boundaries between theatrical regions in 1849 and throughout the period, as the town was repeatedly included in the 6<sup>th</sup> troupe’s network. Indeed, across France, critics were conscious of the need for spa towns to compete with their provincial neighbours. As emphasised by journalists from the southwest, a vibrant theatrical scene was essential to outmanoeuvring other hotspots.<sup>380</sup> In September 1848, for instance, the *Écho de la vallée* critic wrote that Hermant’s troupe was needed in Bagnères because:

For three or four months in the year, Bagnères needs to be the capital of the *midi*. The town must flourish, foreigners must enjoy themselves here.<sup>381</sup>

In this quote, the journalist showed how travelling theatre was key to positioning Bagnères as the centre of the southern (‘*midi*’) French region. The statement emphasised the importance of regional superiority to a critic, rather than cultivating links with Paris since, as already mentioned, Paris was disregarded as secondary during the summer season. With the title of “petit Paris” up for grabs, provincial towns could use theatrical experience to vie for a regional centrality that also offered them national importance. To do so, critics discussed Hermant’s artists as being superior to the provincial norm: in Pau in 1849, one journalist advertised the troupe as showcasing “an art that is not easily found in another provincial troupe,” while in 1861, the Bagnères writer emphasised that the troupe rivalled that of unnamed larger cities, most likely nearby Bayonne or Toulouse.<sup>382</sup> These seasonal events highlighted the importance of regional positioning to these journalists, whose reference

<sup>378</sup> AN, F/21/1250, letter from the Sous-Prefect of Saint-Malo to the Prefect of Ile-et-Vilaine, 10/11/1849.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid.

<sup>380</sup> LC, 16/12/1849. ACP, 06/04/1845.

<sup>381</sup> “Il faut que Bagnères soit, pendant trois ou quatre mois de l’année, la capitale du midi. Il faut que la ville florisse; il faut que les étrangers s’y amusent [...]” EV, 05/09/1848.

<sup>382</sup> LC, 16/12/1849; EV, 05/10/1861.

points for praising their local culture and situating their towns within France did not depend on Paris.

France, though, was not the limit. Spa seasons catapulted provincial towns to the centre of a theatrical community that went beyond borders. As mentioned above, troupe spectators in spa towns included many Europeans: regional newspapers describe Pau, for example, as a “foreign colony” especially popular with English travellers.<sup>383</sup> An 1831 description of Bagnères by English traveller ‘D.V.’ describes the spagoers in more detail, listing “the grave Catalanian [...] the elegant Parisian; the lively brunettes of Castille; the Englishwoman fair and cold”.<sup>384</sup> His description of a pan-European group of spa-goers is supported, and expanded, by the critic from the Bagnères paper *L'Écho* who described a theatrical “public, come from the four corners of the world” that had attended an 1841 performance by Roland's *troupe d'arrondissement*.<sup>385</sup> According to this critic, spa performances not only brought global spectators together but, in doing so, emphasised their commonalities through a shared theatrical experience: a mark of theatrical cosmopolitanism.<sup>386</sup> Describing Roland's company's performance of *vaudevilles La Lectrice* (1834, by Jean-François Bayard) and *L'Article 960* (1839, by François Ancelot) on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1841, for example, the journalist for the *Écho* even turned to hyperbole to claim a truly global reach for the theatre:

It is a well-educated public, one that is of good company, a heterogeneous public, come from the four corners of the world....to amuse themselves and distract themselves here.<sup>387</sup>

Most likely employing some level of hyperbole, the critic positioned Roland's *troupe d'arrondissement* at the centre of a global meeting between audiences who shared common

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<sup>383</sup> *GT*, 14/09/1834, 23/07/1835; *GW*, 02/07/1866. *LFM*, 14/08/1859. Alexander Taylor, *On the Curative Influence of the Climate of Pau* (London: J. W. Parker, 1845) and “On the Curative Influence of the Climate of Pau, and the Mineral Waters of the Pyrenees”, *The Medico-chirurgical review* 40, no.79 (1844): 49–60. Mountains spas Plombières (9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*) and Cherbourg (coastal Normandy) also attracted European visitors, *AN*, F/21/1260, Letter from the Prefect of the Vosges to the Minister, 24/02/1862, describing a recent transformation since a visit by Emperor Napoleon III into a place of “rendez-vous d'un grand nombre d'étrangers.” *ADV*, 10/T/1, Letter draft from the Prefect of the Vosges to director Verne, 19/07/1839. Eugène Auriac, *Guide pratique, historique et descriptif aux bains de mer de la Manche et de l'Océan* (Paris : Garnier Frères, 1866), 279.

<sup>384</sup> D.V., ‘Recollections of the Pyrenees’, *WFCF*, 01/10/1831.

<sup>385</sup> *EV*, 12/08/1841. The performance was of the vaudevilles *La Lectrice* by Bayard and *L'Article 960* by Ancelot.

<sup>386</sup> I explore the term cosmopolitanism more fully in an Alsatian context in Chapter 5.

<sup>387</sup> *EV*, 12/08/1841. “C'est un public bien élevé, de bonne compagnie, un public hétérogène, venu des quatre coins du monde...pour s'y amuser, s'y distraire.”

theatrical sociability, education, and pleasure seeking, even if, according to the 1831 description by D.V, the 'global' nature of this community was, in practice, staunchly European and focused on France's direct neighbours. Itinerant theatre in this type of spa context thus not only fostered relationships between provincial French towns but with a global community of spectators, a transnational reach that I will explore further in the second part of this chapter. Spa seasons and local events allowed provincial towns moments of distinctive theatrical power and influence that differed from those of the wintering centres, establishing distinctive relationships between towns such as Bagnères with the capital, other provincial towns, and even the world, through theatre.

### Artistic influence

Besides the winter season and local festivities, there was a third time of year that was theatrically significant in the *arrondissements* and which conditioned particular relationships between *arrondissement* towns. This was troupe *débuts*, typically taking place in April at the start of the theatrical season.<sup>388</sup> Through this ritual, audiences in provincial towns with residential and itinerant companies influenced which artistic personnel made up the troupe for an entire season. Troupe members had to appear in three performances, after which the public enacted a vote to decide whether the performer could remain in the troupe.<sup>389</sup> No longer practised in Paris by the nineteenth century, the *débuts* were seen by the capital's critics as a backward oddity belonging to the provinces.<sup>390</sup> Ministers, too, were uncomfortable with the potential rowdiness of these provincial theatrical events, and the provincial *débuts* were threatened by nationally-enforced reform

<sup>388</sup> If directors shortened their seasons to begin in October, this was the season for the *début*.

<sup>389</sup> A performer returning to the troupe only had to perform in one *début*. The results of the *début* would be announced in a poster pasted/hanging outside the theatre the next day, or in person before the curtain of the next performance. National journals such as *Le journal des théâtres* also published columns which summarised the successful, uncertain or failed *débuts* of performers per locality. If a performer failed the *débuts*, the director was required to find a replacement in two weeks and the entire process would begin again. Bould, "The Lyric Theatre in Provincial France", 91; Bèges and Bèges, *Mémoire d'un théâtre*, 150.

<sup>390</sup> On the *début* system see Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 92-198; Bould, "The Lyric Theatre in Provincial France", 80-81, 93-96. Bèges and Bèges, *Mémoire d'un théâtre*, 125, 150-152. The relevance of *débuts* was actively debated in the Parisian press throughout the century including discussions of decentralisation around 1850-60, for example Anon., *Des théâtres de province en général et du théâtre de Toulouse en particulier / par un abonné du théâtre de Toulouse* (Toulouse: Lamarque et Rive, 1856).

in government *circulaires* from 1848 and 1862.<sup>391</sup> In the provinces, though, the opportunity for a town to participate in this theatrical ritual was highly sought after by critics and audiences.

As Alex and Janine Bèges note in their study of Béziers (15<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*), the *débuts* were an artistic event that brought together the town community: they were discussed weeks before and after they took place, creating a heightened emotion among spectators about the chance to judge performers and the shared responsibility to determine the year's troupe.<sup>392</sup> Different methods of casting the public vote put the decision in the hands of varied publics across France. In some theatres, performers' fates relied on the organic audience reaction each night, with the attending police chief deciding whether the noisiest party was reacting positively or negatively to a performer.<sup>393</sup> In other towns, a judgement was debated by an assigned (male) *début* committee made up of local dignitaries or professionals such as doctors and lawyers, or subject to an anonymous voting system.<sup>394</sup> The *débuts* were meant to ensure the creation of a troupe with competent artistic skills, yet many provincial writers reflecting on the practices in the second half of the century recognised that the judgement of talent enacted by a town populace, or its representatives, could also be subject to the vagaries of popularity contests or local intrigues.<sup>395</sup>

The power of the *début* spectators could be significant: in the June 1828 *débuts* in Besançon, for example, the public demanded that *troupe d'arrondissement* director Claparède change all but two of his singers.<sup>396</sup> Provincial journalists from Valenciennes and Arras writing in the 1830s also relished the potential power that the *débuts* would give

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<sup>391</sup> Gersin, "Les spectacles à Lyon sous le Second Empire." Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 173–4; 179–80.

<sup>392</sup> Bèges and Bèges, *Mémoire d'un théâtre*, 150–1.

<sup>393</sup> Bould, "The Lyric Theatre in Provincial France (1789–1914)", 91.

<sup>394</sup> Bèges and Bèges, *Mémoire d'un theatre*, 150.

<sup>395</sup> See for example the tensions between the audience and the appointed committee's judgements on Gustave Sujol's performance in Bordeaux, as recounted in Sujol, *Mes débuts à Bordeaux: avant, pendant, après* (Bordeaux: Mme V.-N. Duviella, 1858). Local press lobbied for Sujol to be accepted into the troupe of the Grand Théâtre, Bordeaux (with *Le train de plaisir* pronouncing 'Sujol ou la mort!' 11/07/1858) and he was eventually accepted after his supposed successor also failed in his *débuts*.

<sup>396</sup> *TFC*, 08/06/1828. The critic rebukes the power of the Besançon audiences, reminding them that performers were nervous in their first performances.

audiences, stating that “taking part, in some way, in the final formation of the troupe,”<sup>397</sup> enabled spectators to exercise their “right to control” performers and performance standards.<sup>398</sup> The *débuts* were a moment for audiences to come together in the act of delivering artistic judgement on a troupe, offering a rare opportunity for a group of spectators, potentially from across different classes if enacted by organic audience vocalisation, to voice opinions on a cultural issue and, crucially, to enact artistic ownership over a travelling troupe. Moreover, *débuts* represented a communal artistic event that allowed regional audiences to exert a collective theatrical influence that was distinct from the singular power of the critic or prefect.

There were, however, intricacies at play in the sharing of this practice within an *arrondissement*. The problem was that only one town's audience within the *arrondissement* could determine the performers that would then tour the rest of the theatrical circuit. The *débuts* belonged to the first town on a troupe's itinerary. Since the theatrical year began in April, this opportunity often fell to towns that were neither the wintering centre nor spa hubs, and directors were most likely grateful to try out new troupe combinations and repertoire in smaller towns within their networks. By virtue of hosting the *débuts*, the appointed town was seen to have significant, but contested, artistic influence over the *arrondissement*. The Valenciennes and Arras critics quoted above, for example, were writing imaginatively about the local power of the *débuts*, complaining that the artistic decisions of Cambrai, where the troupe actually *débuted* at this time, were being “imposed” on the spectators of both of their towns, “exclud[ing]” the artistic judgement of other *arrondissement* members.<sup>399</sup> The power, conferred by the *débuts*, for one town audience to

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<sup>397</sup> “assister en quelque sorte à la formation définitive de la troupe”, *CN*, 14/09/1830. See also *CN*, 10/05/1831. *JA*, 07/05/1835

<sup>398</sup> “droit de contrôle”, ADPC, PE/1/9, *CPC*, 10/06/1835.

<sup>399</sup> *CN*, 10/05/1831.

determine which performers would remain in the collective was evidently a matter of some jealousy.<sup>400</sup>

The latent artistic power behind participating in the formation of a troupe was so significant for critics in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* that, in 1830, the Valenciennes journalist led a campaign to change local practices. As part of his September column, the journalist for *Le Courrier* imagined an alternative shared *début* practice as the fairest distribution of artistic influence. He argued that the artistic ownership over the troupe that came from through judgement of singers in the *débuts* needed to be offered “in the interest of justice” to each *arrondissement* town in turn: justice because the theatrical region was supposed to serve all of its members, and if a town wanted sole control over the *débuts* they had better invest in their own municipal company, as encouraged by the 1824 legislation.<sup>401</sup> Moreover, the lack of *débuts* in Valenciennes not only represented a lack of opportunity for his own public to make aesthetic choices about the troupe they received, but also a missed opportunity to showcase the Valenciennes’ audience’s tastes and education to the rest of the *arrondissement*. The critic finished his column by lamenting that the Valenciennes public was currently forced to submit to sub-standard performers let through by their ‘indulgent’ neighbours in Cambrai, implying that his own audience would enact higher quality judgements. As the critic asked director Delorme in his 1830 column, did the *début* situation mean that the director saw Valenciennes as “less capable of appreciating the merit of actors than the good town of Cambrai?” Being excluded from the *début* ritual, it seems, put the reputation of a town’s audience and their artistic judgement at stake across an *arrondissement*.<sup>402</sup>

The *Courrier* critic’s 1830 column planted seeds of discord which led to significant change within *arrondissement* practices in the north. Delorme, who took over the directorial

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<sup>400</sup> A Dunkerque journalist also criticised directors for leaving their spectators out of the *début* process in *GT*, 19/03/1835.

<sup>401</sup> *CN*, 14/09/1830.

<sup>402</sup> “moins capable d’apprécier le mérite des acteurs que la bonne ville de Cambrai?” Ibid.



*privilège* in April 1829, *débuté* in Cambrai in his first two seasons, mirroring his predecessor Dellemece. In early 1831, though, six months after the *Courrier* column, letters sent to the Ministry of the Interior show that the Prefect of the North and Sub-Prefects of Dunkerque and Valenciennes echoed the journalists' sentiments about the substandard quality of Delorme's performers.<sup>403</sup> Perhaps responding to the *Courrier's* challenge, these prefectural accusations, and the implication in both that his troupe was not being selected rigorously enough by the Cambrai spectators, Delorme chose to change his *débuts* to Valenciennes in 1831-2. Later troupe directors also shifted the event to Arras, Dunkerque and Cambrai.<sup>404</sup> Unsurprisingly, this diversification was praised by the Valenciennes press and described as a change with *arrondissement*, rather than simply local, significance. The critic stated that, for the 1831 *débuts* Valenciennes theatregoers now held an important "right [...] which is almost a duty,"<sup>405</sup> to uphold high artistic standards for the *arrondissement* by being just but firm in their assessment of singers.<sup>406</sup> Once again, the artistic power of Valenciennes was calibrated comparatively: the critic criticised the judgement of Cambrai audiences under the bus by stating that these spectators had previously allowed a "lightness with which they admitted, in the *débuts*, this or that rubbish person, a lightness for which other towns in the *privilège* suffered all the consequences."<sup>407</sup> In the journalist's eyes, it was clear that a change in *début* locations and audiences would affect the artistic standards of the entire *arrondissement*, and he warned Valenciennes spectators of their solemn duty to make sound artistic judgements for the good of others: "Let us make sure not to fall into the faults for which we have reproached our neighbours."<sup>408</sup> For the Valenciennes critic, the opportunity to vocalise local opinions

<sup>403</sup> AN, F/21/1234, letter from the Prefect of the Nord to the Minister, 17/03/1831; Letter from the 'Bureau de Police' [unnamed location] to the Minister, 18/08/1830.

<sup>404</sup> Bertéché's troupe *débuté* in Arras in 1835 and 1838, in Valenciennes in 1836, 1837 and 1839 and in Cambrai in 1840. *CN*, 12/10/1835; 30/04/1836; *EF*, 29/04/1837; 21/04/1838; 16/04/1839; 16/05/1840.

<sup>405</sup> "un droit à exercer qui deviant presque un devoir". *CN*, 10/05/1831.

<sup>406</sup> "ne convient pas à son emploi" Ibid.

<sup>407</sup> "légèreté avec laquelle on admettait aux *débuts* telle ou telle véritable nullité, légèreté dont les autres villes du *privilège* supportaient toutes les conséquences." Ibid.

<sup>408</sup> "prenons garde de tomber dans le défaut que nous avons reproché à nos voisins." Ibid.

regarding performers was not only a way to prove the discernment of town spectators, but also a way to take responsibility for artistic success across the *arrondissement*.

The examples that I have brought to light reveal that, throughout the theatrical year, co-existence in the *arrondissement* was marked by a variety of inter-town power dynamics ranging from the administrative intervention of officials from wintering centres to the importance of spa seasons and local events, as well as the influence of artistic practices such as the *débuts*. Each of these seasonal moments allowed provincial towns to form new types of hierarchies within the theatrical network, shifting the centres and peripheries of the *arrondissement* itself. In doing so, the coexisting collaboration and tensions that underpinned the sharing of an itinerant troupe in these moments allowed the work of the *troupes d'arrondissement* to foreground the regional as a significant and determining influence ~~on~~<sup>over</sup> theatrical and social experience.

### Collective theatrical experiences

The provincial relationships described so far in this chapter demonstrate the competitive dynamics of an *arrondissement* theatrical community formed around audiences' and administrators' direct engagement with a troupe. In the second half of this chapter, I develop this theme further by argue that travelling troupes also stimulated a second type of theatrical community within their *arrondissement* which targeted a related but slightly different theatrical consumer. This was the newspaper reader, participating in a literary theatrical experience conditioned through the work and patterns of the provincial press: a town reader who, most likely, also physically attended performances, but for whom a sense of belonging to a collective group was, I argue, also articulated through the printed page independent of any theatrical attendance.

A town journalist's primary role was to report on local performances, yet this work nearly always involved some level of comparison made between their locality and the wider

*arrondissement*. Journalists frequently tracked the troupe's movements when their town was without theatrical visits, describing troupe journeys across the *arrondissements*,<sup>409</sup> printing reviews of performances in neighbouring towns,<sup>410</sup> and transmitting accounts of personal incidents happening to troupe directors and artists on their travels from the mundane to the eventful.<sup>411</sup> In 1844, for example, both Valenciennes papers published accounts of the "stormy" reception of Bertéché's troupe in Dunkerque which led to the departure of the tenor Alphonse Grousseau, and the journalist for Pau's *Observateur des Pyrénées* also dedicated a long column to a review of a Hermant's troupe performance of *La Favorite* in Tarbes, the first excursion into large-scale opera by a troupe which usually performed *vaudeville*.<sup>412</sup>

It was not just that journalists, and by extension their readers, cared about the fate of troupe performers and developments in troupe repertoire but that, through their columns, the press underlined that no local performances existed in a vacuum. Indeed, cross-*arrondissement* reporting evoked the constant connectivity between the theatrical network: in the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, for instance, the writer for *Mémorial des Pyrénées* described how Hermant's troupe had come to the Pau *foire* after performing in Tarbes in June 1844, just as, in the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, the reviewer for the *Abeille de Lorient* looked to Seymour's troupe's Vannes visit after it left Lorient in December 1842.<sup>413</sup> Columns referencing the theatrical network enabled readers to imaginatively follow the travelling troupe's physical movement throughout the season via the newspaper page and to establish an *arrondissement* frame of reference within which to link information about and

<sup>409</sup> *MP*, printed in *JC*, 03/03/1833.

<sup>410</sup> *PAV*, 26/04/1826, 09/05/1827, 10/10/1827, 19/07/1828; *FSD*, 08/10/1825, 08/08/1829, 25/01/1830; *CN*, 01/06/1830, 25/01/1834, 22/07/1834, 06/08/1844, 07/11/1844, 22/10/1858, 17/02/1861; *EF*, 02/11/1844, 08/04/1845. These terms were also used in reports on the troupes in Parisian newspapers, for example *GT*, 20/05/1832. Town administrative documents such as Valenciennes' annual almanac *L'Indicateur valenciennois* also referred to the larger *arrondissement* when listing the usual patterns of troupe visits in their town. *L'Indicateur valenciennois: almanach historique, statistique, administratif, judiciaire et commercial de l'arrondissement de Valenciennes* (Valenciennes: J. A. Prignet fils, 1827). *OP*, 24/07/1844.

<sup>411</sup> *MA*, 31/07/1831; 09/09/1841, 25/12/1844, 11/01/1845, 24/05/1845, 29/12/1855, 01/11/1856.

<sup>412</sup> *EF*, 02/11/1844; *CN*, 06/08/1844, 07/11/1844. *OP*, 24/07/1844. The change of genre was aided by collaboration with opera singers from the recently collapsed Bordeaux municipal company.

<sup>413</sup> *MP*, 27/06/1844; *AL*, 25/12/1842.

opinions on the travelling company. In this way, I argue that journalists' comparative descriptions of troupe performances developed the legislative entity of the *arrondissement* into a framework for positioning their own theatrical experience. This is the *arrondissement* imaginary, which I see as formed for newspaper readers through journalistic practices as part of the wider political imaginary. This concept exhibits Anderson's idea of an imagined community at the *arrondissement* level, moving from a symbolic concept to an experienced one through readers' engagement with print capitalism.<sup>414</sup>

The *arrondissement* imaginary evoked in provincial newspapers offered new ways for provincial readers to consume itinerant performances. For one, constant updates about the troupe's travels and travails across the theatrical network allowed commentators to conjure a virtual sense of yearlong theatrical provision when their inhabitants were without a physical troupe. In the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*, for example, the journalist for *La Feuille de Saint-Omer* published a report in June 1829 of the *troupe d'arrondissement* and *troupe ambulante's* work while they were absent from his town. Drawing on statements from the *Journal de Dunkerque* and *Feuille d'Arras*, the critic gave his readers an account of *arrondissement* director Delorme's new troupe *débuts* in Cambrai, the particular success of two opera singers, and news of *ambulante* director Tony's *vaudeville* and *comédie* troupe as they travelled to Valenciennes.<sup>415</sup> Intra-journalistic quotation such as this was an important rhetorical technique through which the press strengthened theatrical connections between places, audiences, and other critics during this period. Moreover, by conjuring a vicarious sense of the reader being involved in a troupe performance far from their locale, *arrondissement* reporting allowed writers to smooth over part of the tensions

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<sup>414</sup> Anderson, *Imagined communities*, 6–7.

<sup>415</sup> *FSO*, 06/06/1829; 26/05/1827.

inherent in the shared itinerant season that were central to the competition described in part one of my chapter.

In other columns, town journalists spoke directly to the *arrondissement* public at large, emphasising the regional importance of their opinions of a local event. In June 1845, for example, the *Mémorial* critic wrote that he would “abstain” in this edition from publishing critiques of Bertéche’s performers whom he had not yet had time to fully review in Saint-Omer because his opinions could have “repercussions [...] for these artists in other towns in the theatrical *arrondissement*.”<sup>416</sup> The journalist here implied that an incomplete critique of performers whom he only heard a handful of times might give other towns a false impression of their talents, having a knock-on effect on their regional reception. Not only did the Saint-Omer writer see his role as a reviewer as integral to the theatrical discourse of the entire *arrondissement* in this column, but his words confirm that it was normal practice for provincial audiences to build up their assessment of a troupe from a distance through the words of critics.<sup>417</sup> here all looking towards Saint-Omer while the troupe was not in their own town.

The *arrondissement* community described by the press also had a direct impact on readers’ assessment of the work of travelling troupes. Due to inter-*arrondissement* reporting, troupes lived their successes or failures across the itinerant network. The collective theatrical space could sometimes work in troupes’ favour. The arrival of new repertoire in one locality, for example, was often anticipated by columnists reports of its success elsewhere in the region. In 1829, the journalist for *L’Écho du nord* announced the Dellemence’s troupe performance of the *drame Le dernier jour de Missolonghi* (1828, written by Georges Ozaneaux, with music by Ferdinand Hérold) in Valenciennes, by

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<sup>416</sup> “des repercussions [...] pour les artistes dans les autres villes de l’arrondissement théâtral.” *MA*, 04/06/1845.

<sup>417</sup> Other journalists situated a local theatre within a wider network by publishing end-of-year theatrical statistics for the whole *arrondissement*. *EF*, 11/04/1829.

underlining the acclaim the piece had generated in Arras, Lille and Douai.<sup>418</sup> This regional reputation was likely a strategy for arousing public interest in a piece, boosting ticket sales, and establishing a troupe's reputation in advance of their arrival. Similarly, some artists were defined by *arrondissement*-wide accomplishments. Actor-director Bertéché was described by critics in Saint-Omer and Valenciennes with similar phrases emphasising his region-wide success, as a figure "deservingly appreciated in all of the *parterres* of the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement théâtral*."<sup>419</sup> These comments instilled local confidence in a director by invoking the shared judgement of the *arrondissements* combined audiences. More generally, journalists' depiction of *arrondissement* imaginary also benefited troupes by magnifying local successes on a regional scale. In the 1840s, a Valenciennes column announcing the arrival of Bertéché's opera troupe advertised how the troupe "seemed to please the inhabitants of Cambrai, where they have been for a month."<sup>420</sup> Similarly, a reporter for the Saint-Omer journal told its readers that, according to reviews from Valenciennes, Bertéché's troupe was superior in talent to last year's, and featured a young, talented tenor.<sup>421</sup> Similarly, in the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, the Vannes columnist described how, in September 1844, "a good reputation preceded Mr Seymour's troupe: we hasten to say that the artists in this troupe have victoriously justified this [reputation]",<sup>422</sup> a comment that underlines, again, just how frequently opinions from across the theatrical network were read, assessed and justified by other critics. The reports from both *arrondissements*, filtered through the eyes and agendas of town critics, could thus prime audiences to receive troupes positively far before performers had even set foot in a new locale.

Of course, the attention to performances across the *arrondissement* could also be to the troupe's detriment. Indeed, companies could have future stops on their itineraries marred

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<sup>418</sup> *CN*, 21/03/1829.

<sup>419</sup> *CN*, 25/01/1834. "apprécie à si juste titre de tous les parterres du premier arrondissement théâtral", *MA*, 11/12/1844. "toujours l'excellent acteur apprécié et aimé à Saint-Omer comme dans toutes les villes de l'arrondissement théâtral".

<sup>420</sup> *EF*, 04/06/1840.

<sup>421</sup> *MA*, 17/05/1845. in advance of the town premiere of *La juive*.

<sup>422</sup> *JT*, 18/09/1844. See also *JT*, 24/09/1843.

by transmitted accounts of their past failures. In 1824, for instance, an anonymous journalist in the *Petites affiches de Valenciennes* warned readers that 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* director Dupré-Nyon's company "marching towards us is not accompanied by an excellent reputation".<sup>423</sup> The *arrondissement* grapevine had the potential to prime audience to be wary of upcoming performers, especially since local columnists went as far as to anticipated poor troupe standards from a *lack of arrondissement* reviews or from regional silence about directors' successes. Writing about Dellemence's troupe in 1829, for example, the critic for the *Petites affiches* wrote that:

Dellemence's opera troupe must be making very little impact in Arras, because this town's newspapers do not mention their performances. *Le journal de Cambrai* has announced that Dellemence is doing everything to avoid going to [their] town, where he never makes enough profit.<sup>424</sup>

From the journalistic silence, the Valenciennes' critic inferred the artistic weakness of Dellemence's troupe and, from Dellemence's avoidance of Cambrai, assumed the director's mismanagement of the troupe, two elements that prepared a lacklustre reception for the group's initial Valenciennes performances, although the troupe was found to improve as their shows rolled on.<sup>425</sup> The fate of travelling troupes in one locale could therefore easily be affected by the reported successes and failures of their recent *arrondissement* history, since an ephemeral and geographically distant performance was preserved for posterity across the *arrondissement* through connected and comparative press reports.

Overall, the typical journalistic practices of provincial critics established a connected theatrical network produced by fragmented writers in different locales. The resulting *arrondissement* imaginary captured in print offered a sense of communal theatrical membership that allowed readers to transcend the limitations of the shared itinerant system by participating vicariously in the theatrical season taking place across the

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<sup>423</sup> *PAV*, 20/11/1824. "[la troupe] qu'on nous annonce ne marche point escortée d'une excellente renommée."

<sup>424</sup> "Il faut que la troupe d'opéra de M. Dellemence fasse bien peu de sensation à Arras, car les feuilles de cette ville ne rendent point compte des représentations. *Le journal de Cambrai* annonce que M. Dellemence fait tout possible pour ne pas aller dans cette dernière ville, où il ne fait pas d'assez bonnes recettes." *PAV*, 11/02/1829.

<sup>425</sup> *EF*, 14/03/1829.

region.<sup>426</sup> By placing performances, performers and theatrical culture as a whole within an *arrondissement* imaginary, critics raised the importance of provincial connections to the local experience of the stage, determining audiences, performers' and their own place within France primarily through the region.

### Self-definition through the community

Journalists' articulation of the *arrondissement* imaginary not only affected the way in which readers thought about travelling troupes, but also how they understood their hometown.

The imagined regional community was used by critics to reflect back on the local through outlining *arrondissement* hierarchies, in a similar way to administrators, and commenting on wider social issues, such as civic progress and local self-definition. Journalists, like officials, complained about the timings and length of theatrical visits, as well as channelling *arrondissement* comparisons through artistic discourse.<sup>427</sup> Taste offered one way for

northern critics to discuss the regional status of their town. In 1848, for instance, a Saint-Omer critic writing about the upcoming town premiere of Halévy's *Charles VI* used inter-town competition to make it known that his locality valued musical art, stating that the *grand opéra* "will not be less attended in Saint-Omer than in Arras, in Cambrai, in Valenciennes, in Dunkerque, or, in fact, anywhere Mr Bertéché has given this opera."<sup>428</sup> A few years earlier, the same journalist similarly included a review of the Dunkerque premiere of *Norma*, also given by Bertéché's troupe, and declared that this would "attract all those people who like music and have an interest in art to the theatre next Tuesday."<sup>429</sup>

In both of these columns, the critic made it known that Saint-Omer's spectators valued operatic culture, matching their compatriots in other *arrondissement* locales: this was a way of justifying the town's place in the artistic network of the north when Saint-Omer

<sup>426</sup> *LM*, 24/06/1843; *JT*, 16/07/1843, 28/01/1844, 01/02/1844, 16/07/1843, 11/08/1844; *MA*, 02/05/1841, 23/10/1859 (*débuts* in Dunkerque); *MP*, 09/11/1844.

<sup>427</sup> *GT*, 08/02/1835.

<sup>428</sup> "*Charles VI* ne sera pas moins bien vu à Saint-Omer qu'à Arras, à Cambrai, à Valenciennes, à Dunkerque, que partout enfin ou M. Bertéché a donné cet opéra." *MA*, 26/01/1848.

<sup>429</sup> "attiré au théâtre [de St-Omer], mardi prochain, toutes les personnes qui aiment la musique et qui portent intérêt à l'art." *MA*, 11/01/1845.



received many fewer *troupe d'arrondissement* visits than the towns to which it was compared.

Other reviewers compared theatrical resources. In an 1842 account of Bertéché's troupe performing Friedrich von Flotow's opera *Le naufrage de la Méduse* (1839) in Saint-Omer,<sup>430</sup> for instance, one journalist described how the stage effects used to depict the foundering boat appeared lacklustre: on their town stage, "the storm beat on one side of the waves, and calm on the other."<sup>431</sup> The writer could not help adding that this effect had been more convincingly executed on the larger Dunkerque stage, where the "audience's impressions were entirely in contrast to ours".<sup>432</sup> Indeed, he reported that Bertéché's performance there had led to an emotional connection with the audience ("everyone was moved").<sup>433</sup> The difference in theatrical resources here allowed Dunkerque to be positioned as a place where troupe performers offered a deeper level of artistic expression than was available in Saint-Omer. The reporter stated that the moving effect of the boat allowed Dunkerque spectators to make a connection between the onstage portrayal of sailors drowning and their lived experiences of similar events in their coastal town, a far cry from the "unflattering" effects seen in Saint-Omer.<sup>434</sup> It was not just theatrical resources that characterised the differences in *arrondissement* experiences of Flotow's piece and regional hierarchies within troupe experience, the Saint-Omer critic suggested, but the profundity of performed experience offered by these resources.

Across France, theatrical resources were indeed key features through which journalists charted *arrondissement* dynamics. In a similar way to the Dunkerque critic, the journalist

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<sup>430</sup> On the effects used in this opera in Paris, see Sarah Hibberd, 'Le Naufrage de la Méduse and Operatic Spectacle in 1830s Paris', *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 36.3 (2013): 48–263.

<sup>431</sup> "La mer n'avait pas assez de répétitions, la tempête régnait d'un coté sur les flots, le calme sur l'autre." *MA*, 27/10/1842.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>433</sup> "tout le monde était ému", *ibid.*

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*

'A.B', writing in the Vannes paper *Le Morbihan* in August 1841, emphasised the discrepancies between troupe performances in his hometown and Lorient:

there [Lorient] are the decors, there is the [music] library, there the *magasin*, there the orchestra. The voices that cannot make themselves heard here, the orchestral ensemble that we are searching for, and the interpretation that comes with it will no doubt also be found there.<sup>435</sup>

The critic referred to missing resources, décors and orchestra, in a smaller venue such as Vannes, but may also have been hinting at audiences' behaviours, suggesting that the noise levels of a less regulated audience potentially hindered comprehension of the singers. Indeed, a general dissatisfaction with what Vannes could offer versus Lorient was an ongoing concern in Brittany. Two years later, A. B. once more complained about the inferiority of Vannes' performances versus Lorient, calling his hometown, along with Quimper, the "thorns in the crown of the poor director".<sup>436</sup> In their comparison of the theatrical resources of Vannes, Quimper and Lorient, and of Saint-Omer and Dunkerque, both critics outlined a clear pecking order in terms of theatrical resources within the *arrondissement*. Saint-Omer and Vannes were seen as satellites of Dunkerque and Lorient by these critics because of the missing resources.<sup>437</sup>

Crucially, pointing out the power dynamics caused by theatrical effect was not the point of such columns. Rather, they were a means to a very particular end: bettering the town in question and potentially changing readers' conceptions of existing provincial hierarchies. An 1839 column written by journalist Alphonse Thinus for *L'Industriel alsacien*, a paper from the linen and cotton industry centre of Mulhouse (with over 13, 000 inhabitants and a further 7,000 workers travelling in every day to work in its factories), exemplifies the way in which the theatrical relationships were used to reflect more widely on the regional status of provincial towns.<sup>438</sup> Thinus stated that music was an educational art that he

<sup>435</sup> "là aussi se trouveront sans doute les voix qui ne peuvent parvenir à se faire entendre ici, l'ensemble que l'on cherche, l'intelligence qui viendra", *LM*, 28/08/1841.

<sup>436</sup> *LM*, 24/06/1843.

<sup>437</sup> Critics also highlighted the differences in decors provided for troupes in Cambrai versus Valenciennes, and used this comparison to call for greater municipal investment in the municipal theatre of the second town: ADN, 1/T/222, /N, 10/09/1860.

<sup>438</sup> Hugo, *La France pittoresque*, 3: 38.

believed many Mulhouse families had turned away from, although he did not describe why.<sup>439</sup> The critic, though, saw the work of the *troupes d'arrondissement* as a means to revitalise “the taste of the city for singing and theatre in general”, a quote that marks a rare differentiation between singing culture and theatrical culture in general in these types of provincial reviews.<sup>440</sup> Crucially, Thinus saw the development of Mulhousian taste as essential to wider civic development. Once Mulhouse had regained the title of “an artistic city”,<sup>441</sup> he argued, it could then become “a big town, benefitting from all the advantages of real civilisation.”<sup>442</sup> Thinus implied that, through artistic prowess, Mulhouse would gain the status of a large city and “real” civilisation, alongside its French neighbours. Other critics writing along the same lines were more barbed and directly cited differences between the civic status of regional centres when appraising theatrical culture. In 1827, for example, as already mentioned in Chapter 1, a Valenciennes reviewer cast the following scathing judgement on director Dumanoir’s *seconde troupe ambulante* performance:

Perhaps the size of our *salle* is not aligned with the level of talent of some of the troupe’s artists, who will no doubt be better appreciated in Saint-Armand, Bavai and Bouchain.<sup>443</sup>

The critic used comparison of the metaphorical size of travelling troupes’ talent to make a wider social comment about the differences between Valenciennes and three much smaller northern villages without a dedicated theatre building. Dumanoir’s *troupe ambulante* was not talented enough for Valenciennes, with its sizable *salle*, the critic suggested, but was appropriate for the scale of the other towns’ poky temporary stages and, by implication, their limited understanding of artistic talent. Through this metaphor, the journalist positioned Valenciennes as a town of greater regional importance and artistic taste than Saint-Armand, Bavai and Bouchain.

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<sup>439</sup> *JA*, 29/12/1839.

<sup>440</sup> le goût de la cité pour le chant et en général pour le théâtre”. Idem.

<sup>441</sup> “une cité artistique”, Idem.

<sup>442</sup> “Mulhausen sur le point de devenir une grande ville.” Idem.

<sup>443</sup> “Peut être que la dimension de notre salle n’est pas en rapport avec le talent de quelques uns des artistes qui la composent, qui seront sans doute mieux appréciés à St-Armand, Bavai et Bouchain.” *PAV*, 09/05/1827.

Once regional status was defined through theatre, journalists could also refer to the *arrondissement* community to train local readers' (and audiences') theatre-going behaviours. References to other towns' appreciation of certain performers could, for example, be used to model appropriate local behaviour towards singers. In the Saint-Omer journalist's review of 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* soprano Mme Lefèvre in 1845, for example, he wrote:

Mme Lefèvre deserved to be recalled; she was [recalled] twice in Dunkerque and will be, we predict, in all of the towns of the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*.<sup>444</sup>

Here, the Saint-Omer critic reported the Dunkerque audience's praise of Mme Lefèvre as a way of guiding his own populace's reaction to the singer: emphasising their artistic intelligence in having applauding her, and setting up the collective Saint-Omer/Dunkerque reaction to her singing as the gold standard for the *arrondissement*, expected to then be repeated, it is implied, by other audiences of similarly good judgement. In the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, positive comparisons of spectatorship practices between St-Brieuc and Lorient audiences were also invoked by the critic from the first town to affirm his local audience's appraisal of troupe members Guillemain (tenor) and Ferdinand (baritone) in 1844. Writing as if he was talking directly to these singers, the journalist stated that:

you are precious acquisitions for a director, and you contribute to an ensemble that will be heartily appreciated in Lorient, our principal town where, we don't doubt, our judgements shall be confirmed.<sup>445</sup>

In this statement, the Saint-Brieuc writer sought to capitalise on the established cultural hierarchy of the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, leaning on the centrality of Lorient, and its reputation as a place of artistic importance, to confirm the artistic judgement of the Vannes populace. In this way, regional critique in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissements* could help to shape the direction of local audiences' taste and engagement with troupes by creating a sense of

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<sup>444</sup> "a mérité d'être rappelée; elle l'a été deux fois à Dunkerque et elle le sera, nous le lui prédisons, dans toutes les villes du premier arrondissement." *MA*, 15/01/1845.

<sup>445</sup> "vous [êtes] de précieuses acquisitions pour un directeur, et vous contribuez à un ensemble qui sera vivement apprécié à Lorient, votre ville principale, où, nous n'en doutons pas, nos jugemen[t]s seront confirmés." *JT*, 11/07/1844.

communal, approved reactions to certain singers. In other words, what was artistically correct would, in these critics' eyes, be confirmed through *arrondissement* imitation.

It is, of course, possible to see the reverse happening too: regional comparison could be used to promote differences in the artistic judgement practices of *arrondissement* spectators and, in turn, to distinguish the behaviours of towns' inhabitants. The writer from the *Écho* in Valenciennes in 1845, for example, was at pains to emphasise that his town's spectators did not accept the new tenor Allard as warmly as those in Dunkerque.<sup>446</sup> Several town newspapers had previously reported Allard's success in Dunkerque,<sup>447</sup> but, once the *Écho* writer had heard the tenor in Valenciennes, he described Allard as "unremarkable".<sup>448</sup> Disappointed reviews of this type likely tell us more about the critic's preferences than the talent of provincial singers, since the *Écho* journalist's colleague at the *Courrier* found Allard a useful troupe member. Subjectivity aside, though, it is the *Écho* critic's reference to the *arrondissement* that is most significant. The commentator wrote that "we were wrong to boast so much about the troupe's new acquisition"<sup>449</sup> when he had earlier repeated the Dunkerque paper's praise for Allard, and he framed the local reception of this performer as a rejection of the artistic taste of the Dunkerque public.<sup>450</sup> In the same theatrical season, comparison of the reception of soprano Mme Gourdon in different towns also allowed Saint-Omer critic Georges Fleury to similarly establish his public's taste versus those of others in the *arrondissement*. Discussing Bertéché's troupe's production of *La juive* in Valenciennes in March 1845, Fleury criticised this town's audiences for having celebrated Mme Gourdon's singing. Fleury described that the Valenciennes' audience's behaviour "mised the director [...] recalling Mme Gourdon, who has no voice, nor the understanding of her *emploi*, is wrong."<sup>451</sup> By redefining Mme Gourdon's talent through the eyes of the Saint-

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<sup>446</sup> *EF*, 25/01/1845.

<sup>447</sup> *CN*, 16/11/1844.

<sup>448</sup> *EF*, 21/01/1845.

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>450</sup> *EF*, 25/12/1844.

<sup>451</sup> "égare le directeur [...] redemander Mme Gourdon, qui n'a ni la voix, ni l'intelligence de son emploi, c'est un tort." *MA*, 01/03/1845.

Omer public, Fleury reflected back on the Valenciennes' audience and denigrated their opinions, establishing the superior artistic tastes of his local populace. Comparative reviewing in this vein thereby allowed critics to impose their own regional hierarchies within the *arrondissement* based on taste and reception of troupe members.

Audience comparisons were also employed didactically by journalists as a means of bettering local spectators' judgements. In 1828, for instance, a Valenciennes critic compared their town's appreciation of singer Mme Dellemence (the director's wife) with recent reports that her performance in *Zaire* in Dunkerque had been "whistled and jeered at....those people there are not po...polite at all."<sup>452</sup> As well as positioning his populace as superior to their Dunkerque counterparts by insulting the Dunkerque audiences and underlining the Valenciennes' love for Mme Dellemence, the critic implicitly advocated for a correct type of behaviour that he wished to instil in his local audience. Through these types of comments, journalists suggested that there was a golden standard of artistic judgement and behaviour that *their* town embodied, and which others did not, again affirmed their town's central position within the *arrondissement*. In smaller towns such as Saint-Omer, especially, the rhetorical comparisons made between audience behaviours formed a potential strategy through which to surmount the peripheral nature of the town in other terms, for example through its poor theatrical resources. The *arrondissement* imaginary articulated through these newspaper columns thus hinged on a paradoxical axis: it created both a strong sense of theatrical collectiveness that allowed critics to smooth over the gaps in the theatrical year, but the shared readership and spectatorship of this community also allowed different hierarchies and power dynamics to be established between members of the network.

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<sup>452</sup> "sifflée et huée...ces gens-là ne sont pas po...polis du tout." *PAV*, 20/12/1828.

## Fighting for opera

It becomes apparent that the *troupe d'arrondissement*s specialised genre lay at the heart of most of the moments of inter-town competition, critical comparison, and *arrondissement* community glimpsed in the administrative actions and journalistic critique that I have discussed in this chapter. It was the provision of opera, and not just theatre in general, that was central to the Prefect of Gers' complaints about the influence of his colleague over Hermant's troupe in 1852, just as opera was central to the actions of the Mayor of Lorient and the Prefect of Doubs, in their administrative power play in the 1830s and 40s.

Furthermore, at the time of the aforementioned Morlaix and Quimper incidents in the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* in 1841, these Breton towns were all still visited by the 6<sup>th</sup> *troupe ambulante*.<sup>453</sup> The fight between the Mayor of Lorient and Prefect of Finistère — to maintain Prilleux's performances— was therefore not about their towns being bereft of *any* theatre, but about their determination to see more of the *troupe d'arrondissement* and its unique genre: opera. Similarly, in the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, the reason given by administrators and by Claparède for why the town of Besançon needed to be taken out of the touring circuit was the director's and Prefect of Doubs' wish to develop the troupe's operatic repertoire. Claparède wanted to specialise in opera, in response to pressures exerted by the Prefect to prioritise the genre,<sup>454</sup> yet both worried that the 9<sup>th</sup> *troupe* could not break even if forced to tour *arrondissement* towns besides Besançon with this costly genre, prompting Claparède's plan to remain in this town and reinforcing its centrality within the *arrondissement*.

The important position of spa towns within an *arrondissement*, too, centred on operatic repertoire. The boastful report of the Saint-Brieuc horse races in 1844 quoted earlier, for example, includes the critic's listing of many of the titles that the 6<sup>th</sup> *troupe*

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<sup>453</sup> AN, F/21/1250, itinerary (Morel-Bazin), 01/12/1840.

<sup>454</sup> AN, F/21/1258, letter from Claparède to the Prefect of Doubs, 18/04/1827.

*d'arrondissement* would be bringing to the event, including *Lucie de Lammermoor*, *La Muette* and *La favorite*. The writer made it clear that it was opera, and not just performances in general, that contributed to defining the 'glorious' position of Saint-Brieuc in the *arrondissement* at this point in the year. Additionally, the artistic centre of the *arrondissement*, determined by *début* practices, also focused on judging operatic performances. Throughout the period, the *troupes ambulantes* had their own itineraries and *début* locations, yet the ability to judge the merits of a *comédie/vaudeville* troupe was never debated or advocated in the press.<sup>455</sup> Instead, the *début* debates mentioned above, only involved the *troupe d'arrondissement* and their opera repertoire. The Valenciennes critic's initial article, in September 1830, for example did begin by asking: 'Why... the opera and *comédie* troupe *début* in the same place?' referring to the *troupe ambulante* by their main genre, yet the critic went on to spend the entire article talking specifically about Delorme's *troupe d'arrondissement* and their operatic *débuts*.

Critics also appear to have felt more slighted by the power dynamics of the shared *arrondissement* if it was the *troupe d'arrondissement* whom they missed out on. In Valenciennes, for example, the critic in *Le courrier* writing on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1834 related an increase in troupe visits but implied that this did not count towards *arrondissement* parity, since it was an increase in the *troupe ambulante* (and their *vaudeville/comédie* repertoire) and not Delorme's *troupe d'arrondissement* and its operatic fare. The disappointment is palpable in the critic's report that "this year we are favoured a little more, but by the *comédie* troupe".<sup>456</sup> This 'but' can be seen as a complaint against the lack of opera in Valenciennes as, later in the column, the journalist stresses the anticipated delights provided by the *troupe d'arrondissement*, including the local premiere of *Robert le diable*, communicating the Valenciennes critic's clear sense of genre, and therefore troupe,

<sup>455</sup> AN, F21/1234, itinerary (Tony) undated, 1827–30. Itinerary (Tony) 09/05/1831. AN, F21/1236, itinerary (Clément) 21/02/1844. *CN*, 12/05/1832, 17/07/1838.

<sup>456</sup> "Cette fois nous sommes un peu miex favorisés, mais par la troupe de Comédie." *CN*, 29/04/1834.



hierarchies.<sup>457</sup> A few years earlier, the *Courrier du Nord* critic similarly pinpointed the different values that they as critics gave to troupes according to their repertoire:

Immediately after M. Delorme's opera troupe came Tony's *comédie* troupe; this proximity is not a happy one, since after the charm of an opera score, after the noise of the brilliant instrumentation, the *flons flons* of a vaudeville always appear very feeble, and we too easily sense the emptiness of a *comédie*.<sup>458</sup>

Critics' prizing of operatic performance over spoken theatre and *vaudeville* thus intensified the stakes of *arrondissement* comparison between towns and the sharing of travelling troupes.

In fact, it was often only through opera that towns' municipal councils attempted to truly change their town's place in a theatrical hierarchy. Some councils such as those in Vannes, Lorient and Tarbes, for example, began to fund their *troupe d'arrondissement* for certain seasons between 1824–64 as a strategy to ensure that directors would visit more regularly,<sup>459</sup> a move that attempted to outmanoeuvre other towns through a financial carrot dangled in front of self-supporting directors. In all of these funding cases, however, the municipal councils demanded that the *troupe d'arrondissement* guarantee operatic productions, and I have found no evidence that councils funded touring troupes to promote *comédie*, vaudeville or other genres. Attempts to become a more dominant centre in the theatrical network were therefore tied to the local promotion of opera. These moments reveal that it was the act of choosing operatic talent for the *arrondissement*, of defining themselves regionally through the operatic troupe, and of competing with other provincial centres through opera that mattered most to regional critics and administrators. To be part of an *arrondissement* imaginary was, for many administrators and critics, primarily to

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<sup>457</sup> See also *EF*, 15/04/1847.

<sup>458</sup> "A la troupe d'opéra de M. Delorme, vient de succéder immédiatement la troupe de comédie de M. Tony; ce rapprochement n'est pas heureux, car après le charme d'une partition d'opéra, après le fracas d'une brillante instrumentation, les *flons flons* d'un vaudeville paraissent toujours bien faibles, et l'on ressent trop vivement tout le vide d'une comédie." *CN*, 19/07/1831. The shape and forces of a *grand opéra* production such as *Robert le diable* in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* will be examined in detail in Chapter 4.

<sup>459</sup> AMVa, 1/D/1/8, municipal council minutes, 17/11/1835, 11/09/1839; 17/02/1862, 12/02/1864. AN, F/21/1250, letter from the Prefect of Morbihan, 09/04/1841, *Salles* table, 07/09/1844; AN, F/21/1277, municipal council minutes, 27/11/1841.

belong to a shared operatic community, and issues of regional hierarchy were determined most significantly through this high-art lyric genre.

## Conclusion

Each regional theatrical community had recognisable power dynamics and their own centres and peripheries between 1824 and 64. Although the process of sharing a troupe across this community was often difficult, administrators' interference in theatrical patterns, critics' use of cross-departmental comparisons, and critics' articulation of the imagined theatrical community through newspaper columns all established the *arrondissement* as an integral unit for the mediation of everyday social and cultural life in the provinces. This unit certainly catalysed a fair amount of inter-town tension due to the shared troupe system, but, as we have seen, theatrical competition and comparison could also be used productively by local figures to reflect on and define cultural behaviours and identities in their towns. The importance of the *arrondissement* community for provincial theatre administrators and audiences was, ironically, perhaps even accentuated further after 1864. With the dissolution of the *privèlge* system, provincial towns were "free" to contract any troupe they wished: but, by consequence, directors were free to bypass towns offering no subsidies. For the municipal councils of these ex-*arrondissement* towns, the "liberty" of the 1864 law was thus no freedom at all, as the dissolution of the system actually took away a source of free, community-subsidised theatre. An *arrondissement* network and a theatrical community to share the load of provincial theatre was, once more, found to be the solution. Many towns turned to their neighbours to, once again, create a collective group with which to support a troupe, as was the case for Saint-Omer,<sup>460</sup> Valenciennes and Cambrai. Even after the end of the *arrondissement* system, therefore,

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<sup>460</sup> MA, 16/07/1864 ; EF, 19/01/1869, 22/02/1890 ; CN, 09/03/1890.

cross-departmental theatrical communities retained their importance in the creation of provincial stage culture.

I argue that the relationships conditioned by the *troupes d'arrondissement* that I have outlined in this chapter are significant beyond the purely theatrical experience because they configured a type of regional grouping within which the relationships and power dynamics between many provincial towns were distinct from those of other contemporary provincial groupings formed around other social and political entities within French life. As mentioned in my introduction, each provincial town was categorised into several administrative communities by the Ministry during the nineteenth century. Each fell within a *département* for political oversight, a diocese, bishopric and archbishopric for religious management, and was part of separate groupings for military and maritime divisions, judicial tribunals, educational affiliation, and forestry management, among several other collectives.<sup>461</sup> The theatrical positions of a few towns mirrored the place given to them in these other administrative groupings. Pau, for example, was the seat of the Hautes-Pyrénées prefecture and the centre of an education network that included Auch and the other 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* towns, as well as being an important winter and spa hub, theatrically.<sup>462</sup> Yet, in many cases, *arrondissement* communities reversed the direction of power inherent in provincial political and religious groupings. Auch for example, was the prefectural centre of the Landes department and the seat of an archbishopric extending over four departments (Gers, Landes, Hautes and Basses-Pyrénées).<sup>463</sup> This gave the town political power over its department, and religious authority over bishoprics that included Bayonne, Pau and Tarbes. In theatrical matters, though, as stated, the influence of the Prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées over the Mayor of Auch and the Prefect of Gers shows that Auch's place in the regional hierarchy was vastly diminished. Similarly, Vannes was the

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<sup>461</sup> See, for example, the various groupings of which Besançon was a part: Hugo, *La France pittoresque*, 1: 318–319.

<sup>462</sup> *Idem*, 3: 14.

<sup>463</sup> *Idem*, 2, 50.

prefectural *chief-lieux* of the department of Morbihan,<sup>464</sup> but it was its neighbour Lorient that benefitted from greater theatrical importance thanks to its position as a wintering centre. Similarly, back in the southwest, the spa of Bagnères allowed the town to be a more important theatrical centre than Tarbes, the prefectural hub of the Hautes-Pyrénées department in which Bagnères lay.<sup>465</sup> Theatrical networks, with their own centres and peripheries, were, therefore, a part of a wider system of provincial socio-political groupings which calibrated particular cross-departmental power dynamics linked to cultural experience and involvement that often diverged from the regional hierarchies given through church diocese or departmental administration. In other words, the *arrondissement* community, and its imaginary as established through criticism, provided a specific type of French territorial group dynamic that allowed many administrators, critics, readers and spectators a way to conceive of their place in the provinces in new ways.

The importance of intra-provincial relationships within provincial theatrical experience is also significant because it offers a nuanced conception of French centres of theatrical power within the nineteenth century. In placing the region, in all its competition and collaboration, at the heart of theatrical culture, directors' actions, administrators' competition, and critics' words turned away from the typical influence of Paris over the provinces and embraced a regional framework to understand theatrical experience, even within a government theatrical system conceived and managed from the capital. These alternative power dynamics are portrayed most acutely in the conditions of a spa town. Indeed, in these spaces, the competitive and even transnational appeal of the *troupe d'arrondissements* allowed small regional towns such as Pau and Bagnères to achieve temporary elevation with a national hierarchy. Through this season, these towns not only

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<sup>464</sup> Ibid, 259.

<sup>465</sup> Idem, 3: 21.

turned away from usual theatrical power dynamics but were also established as new, if temporary, theatrical centres for the nation.

## Chapter 3

### Artistic education and careers in the *troupes d'arrondissement*

On Sunday 6<sup>h</sup> May 1827, director Dumanoir and his *seconde troupe ambulante* beat a hasty retreat from Valenciennes after a less-than-illustrious performance.<sup>466</sup> Although Dumanoir's company had previously delighted the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement's* public with his *vaudeville* and *comédie* productions,<sup>467</sup> on this occasion, their performance drew very few spectators. It was also criticised by a reviewer from the *Petites affiches de Valenciennes*. When, as already cited in Chapters 1 and 2, a journalist snidely remarked that a troupe's limited talents may have matched the size of the smaller towns in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* but were not suitable for the importance of Valenciennes, Dumanoir's troupe was the target.<sup>468</sup> Participating in this ill-fated performance were Hippolyte Tisserand (1809-1877) and Étienne Marin Mélingue (1808-1875), actors who later gained recognition in various Parisian theatres.<sup>469</sup> Perhaps because of this inauspicious first foray into troupe life, the disappointing Valenciennes' performance and Dumanoir's tours to other northern towns in 1827 have become something of a theatrical legend, retold in nineteenth-century biographies of Tisserand and Mélingue and by modern-day scholars.<sup>470</sup> In these accounts,

<sup>466</sup> Dumanoir directed the troupe between 1825-27, *Almanach des spectacles pour 1825*, 359; *Almanach des spectacles pour 1826*, 323. AMV J/8/29, letter from Dumanoir to the Mayor of Valenciennes, 17/02/1826; Poster, 16/02/1826.

<sup>467</sup> A positive review was published in the *PAV*, 19/10/1825.

<sup>468</sup> *PAV*, 09/05/1827.

<sup>469</sup> Tisserand was employed as a *jeune premier* and *troisième amoureux* for *vaudeville* for one season in Dumanoir's *troupe ambulante*, *Almanach des spectacles pour 1828* (Paris: Barba, 1828), 322. Mélingue is not mentioned by name in the troupe list, but his presence in the troupe and in this performance remembered by the Valenciennes columnist for *CN*, 08/06/1850. It was also recorded by his biographer and friend Alexandre Dumas *père* in his account of Mélingue's career in a series of newspaper columns published in *Le Mousquetaire* between December 1853 and March 1854, and later published in book form as *Une vie d'artiste* (Paris: Cadot, 1854). The reasons for Mélingue's absence in the *Almanach* could be attributed to two reasons. First, the lists printed in the *Almanach* were not always accurate, and Dumanoir's troupe appears to have been an unofficial company, taking the title of 2<sup>nd</sup> *troupe ambulante* in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* without procuring a *brevet* from the ministry, meaning that the director's list of actors was not scrutinised by officials nor audited by Ministers (see AMV J/8/29, Letter from the Mayor of Valenciennes to Dumanoir 21/02/1826, on troupe competition in Saint-Omer, identifying the troupe as unofficial). Second, Mélingue used various stage names throughout his career and was known as Gustave in Rouen (although Dumas and others mistakenly assume that he used throughout his whole provincial career). It is thereby possible that Mélingue used a pseudonym in the 2<sup>nd</sup> *troupe ambulante* in 1827. The following can only be pure speculation, but perhaps Mélingue was the listed Edouard Mauduit on the *Almanach* list for Dumanoir's troupe, employed as a *second comique* in *vaudeville* (fitting Mélingue's *emploi*) and riffing on the same letters as his own name?

<sup>470</sup> Jules Truffier, *Mélingue* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1925), 18; Dumas, *Une vie d'artiste*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1860), 80; Eugène Mirecourt, *Histoire contemporaine: Portraits et silhouettes au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Librairie des Contemporains, 1869), 22; Mirecourt, *Mélingue* (Paris: Havard, 1856), 39; Joël Huthwohl, 'Mélingue, le mousquetaire de Belleville,' in *Les héroïsmes de l'acteur au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, eds. Olivier Bara, Mireille Losco, Anne Pellois (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2015), Epub; 'Tisserand, Hippolyte' in Henri Lyonnet, *Dictionnaire des comédiens français, ceux d'hier* (Paris: Tappoinet et Soldini, 1912), 2: 685.

the *seconde troupe ambulante* is a place of misery: writer Gustave Vapereau described the pair's "errant and unhappy" life under Dumanoir;<sup>471</sup> Jean Ferdinand accused Dumanoir of ill-treating his artists;<sup>472</sup> and Dumas *père* alluded to the Valenciennes audience as an ungrateful and illiterate provincial public.<sup>473</sup>

The Valenciennes "fiasco", as described by Eugène Mirecourt,<sup>474</sup> could stand in for any number of touring troupe tales or for general narratives about provincial theatrical culture penned by nineteenth-century writers. Harsh conditions, disordered or exploitative companies and lack of audience engagement were used in theatrical narratives to configure the provinces as a place where artists began their careers in obscurity or, alternatively, could flee after rejection by Parisian institutions.<sup>475</sup> By including events such as Tisserand's and Mélingue's Valenciennes *début* in their biographies, authors emphasised the great distance between the beginning of these celebrated performers' careers and their later stardom. In these narratives, fame in the capital could be read as earned through overcoming initial provincial hurdles: Tisserand and Mélingue's career paths traced a traditional narrative from peripheral anonymity to central acceptance. In doing so, such accounts of touring theatrical life and work clearly configured the provinces as a theatrical obstacle to overcome, a place obscure and separate from the French centre.

Provincial theatre work was, indeed, undeniably tough. The days were long and arduous: writer Edouard Monnais reported in 1839 that provincial companies would typically rehearse from 9.30am to 3pm, perform in the evenings and continue learning their roles during the night.<sup>476</sup> Touring came with additional complications. Travel across the departments, adjusting to different-sized theatres and orchestras, and playing to new

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<sup>471</sup> Gustave Vapereau, *Dictionnaire universel des contemporains* (Paris: Hachette, 1870), 1758, "ils menèrent quelques années une vie errante et malheureuse."

<sup>472</sup> Hoefer (Jean Chrétien Ferdinand), "Mélingue", in *Nouvelle biographie générale* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1861), 837.

<sup>473</sup> Dumas, *Une vie d'artiste*, 79–80.

<sup>474</sup> Mirecourt, *Mélingue*, 39.

<sup>475</sup> Armand comte de Pontmartin, *Souvenirs d'un vieux critique* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1884), 306. Castil-Blaze, *De l'opéra en France* (1820) 2: 252–88, in particular 256, 260, 262.

<sup>476</sup> *RGM*, 08/09/1839.

audiences. There was also financial uncertainty. Unlike municipal troupes, travelling companies were not usually funded by a municipal council, nor were they state-funded like the Académie and other Parisian institutions. Salaries were not high nor always forthcoming, and performers were only given one-season contracts.<sup>477</sup> Consequently, there was certainly a level of ongoing precarity for touring performers throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>478</sup> Responding to these conditions, modern scholars have tended to repeat the assumptions of the second-rate talent of provincial companies, and, crucially, the idea that the provinces were an isolated theatrical world with little to offer French artists and French dramatic art. This viewpoint is encapsulated by Olivier Bara's statement that actor Pierre François Touzé (1799–1862), known as Bocage, who was part of the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe ambulante* in the 1825–6 season,<sup>479</sup> was “reduced to tour in the provinces” at points in his career.<sup>480</sup> Evidently, such a blanket dismissal of provincial theatre and non-Parisian career stints is ripe for reassessment.

In this chapter, I rethink the artistic value of provincial theatre within the national dramatic and operatic landscape during the first half of the nineteenth century. I do so by asking what were the working conditions and skill sets of performers passing through the *troupes d'arrondissement*, and how did these inform career trajectories within the nation. First, I argue that a more nuanced view of the position of travelling troupes in French musical life is uncovered by examining the educative role taken by itinerant companies in artists' careers, particularly those starting out, like Tisserand and Mélingue.<sup>481</sup> While an educative

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<sup>477</sup> Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 267. This contrasted with Parisian Académie and Opéra-Comique contracts which could be up to 15 years during the Restoration, and later between 1–5 years. Pierre Girod and Kimberly White, “La carrière du chanteur” in *Histoire de l'opéra français*, 119.

<sup>478</sup> Kate Astbury, “Réécrire une histoire du théâtre en province: les Mémoires et confessions d'un comédien de Jean-Edme Paccard” in *Fièvre et vie du théâtre sous la Révolution française et l'Empire*, eds. Thibaut Julian and Vincenzo De Santis (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019), 309.

<sup>479</sup> PAV, 04/05/1825, 10/08/1825, 13/08/1825, 03/12/1825, 10/12/1825. Bocage was employed by director Sollé as actor and *régisseur*.

<sup>480</sup> Bara, “Bocage, acteur de la République: fulgurance d'un nouvel héroïsme théâtral en 1830,” in *Les héroïsmes de l'acteur au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Epub.

<sup>481</sup> My approach echoes Koopmans' suggestion that it is necessary to rethink the role of the provinces in seventeenth-century theatre, by reconfiguring, say, Molière's provincial years not as a “jeunesse excusable en province”, but as “une étape importante dans la professionnalisation de ces hommes,” “Un théâtre singulier”, 38.



position still underlines value coming from a state or experience that is preliminary to something else, this way of thinking about provincial companies emphasises a continuation of theatrical experience from the regions to the centre, rather than the disjunction favoured by traditional narratives. In the first part of the chapter, I demonstrate how formative troupe experiences were not only born out of the oft-maligned provincial conditions, but were acknowledged by many celebrated artists and theatrical figures in their writings, and also by the government in the 1824 legislation's national career ladder, already mentioned in Chapter 1. In the second part of the chapter, I delve deeper into the career paths of specific *troupe d'arrondissement* performers. By tracing individuals' journeys in and out of the itinerant circuit, I investigate what sort of artistic progression was offered to the average performer and whether the career paths of stars, such as Mélingue, were typical. In doing so, I question the practical reality of the national career ladder and the resulting relationship between Paris and the provinces.

In this chapter, I approach nineteenth-century theatrical working environments through two angles that offer new approaches for musicologists. First, I study the lives of performers who range in status and visibility. Some, such as Tisserand, achieved nationwide celebrity and theatrical importance in their lifetime. These types of performers left behind memoirs or inspired biographies (some more reliable than others) that provide invaluable insights into troupe experiences from the Napoleonic era to the end of the nineteenth century, sources that I draw from throughout the chapter. Most artists passing through a provincial troupe, though, left very little historical trace besides names on troupe lists and newspaper reviews. Even the biographical records that are available for only a small proportion of *troupe arrondissement* singers are largely incomplete: snippets of performance careers, recorded in encyclopaedias such as François-Joseph Fétis and Henri Lyonnet's *Dictionnaires*, list only a few postings, usually in large towns with a resident theatre. In these historical records, the presence and role of the touring troupe in an

artistic career is marginalised and often completely erased.<sup>482</sup> This has led to a corresponding lack of scholarship about the vast non-celebrity workforce of the French nineteenth-century stages, and the itinerant performer in particular, that is only beginning to be addressed by scholars such as Bentley and Kimberly White, writing about the lives of ordinary performers in New Orleans and Paris.<sup>483</sup> To bring Bentley and White's approach to the work of these types of artists in the French provinces, I use archival and newspaper sources to reconstruct snapshots of troupe members' careers, attempting to track the immediate before and after of an artist's stay in a touring company and whether this eventually led to a Parisian position.

The second new insight that I bring to research about French performers lies in my holistic treatment of the skill sets and careers of artists across sung and spoken genres. This feature that has been overlooked by scholars, including Bentley and White, who prioritise narratives of singers' operatic performances and career paths. In the *troupes d'arrondissement*, though, the multi-genre skill set has the potential to inform the nature of artists' careers and reveal the lack of transferability, to Paris, of certain genres compared to others. It is notable, for example, that although star performers recorded their participation in various stage genres, including opera, during their time in touring troupes, their later fame was never achieved in this genre: Tisserand joined the Comédie-Française and Mélingue appeared in *vaudeville* and spoken theatre at the Théâtres de Belleville, Porte-Saint-Martin and Historique.

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<sup>482</sup> François-Joseph Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de la musique* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1837-1844), 1st edition, 8 volumes; Lyonnet, *Dictionnaire Des Comédiens Français*. A separate historiographical challenge in these documents is that they do not list *arrondissements* but only one town, eg. stating that Tisserand was employed in Valenciennes, rather than by a troupe tasked with performing across several towns in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*.

<sup>483</sup> Bentley, 'Resituating Transatlantic Opera: The Case of the Théâtre d'Orléans, New Orleans, 1819-1859' (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 2017), 63-104; White, *Female Singers on the French Stage, 1830-1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). White concentrates on Parisian careers during the July Monarchy, although she notes the provincial beginnings of some opera singers and the significance of their tours to the provinces (75, 84-6). Sylvie Granger's detailed research on the music profession in Le Mans between 1600-1850 offers some insight into the livelihood of musicians in one provincial town, *Musiciens dans la ville, 1600-1850* (Paris: Belin, 2002). Féret notes the disparity and absence in provincial archival holdings and, consequently, focuses on directors, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 226. Triolaire gives some information about the way in which critics appraised touring troupes' skills, recruitment practices, and the makeup of troupes, but provides less regarding the training of performers and the artistic dimension of troupes' work, Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*.

What emerges from uncovering the work and careers of touring performers that were celebrated and anonymous, and that worked across sung and spoken genres, is a richer understanding of artistic education, career prospects, and patterns of theatrical mobility within nineteenth-century France. Moreover, I suggest that these three factors established significant but contrasting relationships between the provinces and Paris. On the one hand, creating a unifying, progressive national career ladder supported by government policy and artistic discourse, and, on the other hand, underlining a continued separation of the Parisian and provincial spheres, for many artists, due to the practical repercussions of the establishment of a nationwide theatrical system.

### Humble beginnings

A typical *troupe d'arrondissement* was made up of 15 to 20 performers employed on the same one-year contracts as their colleagues in residential companies.<sup>484</sup> Many companies included couples and families.<sup>485</sup> Director Guillaume Bertéché, for instance, employed his adult children (son Prosper, daughters Elisa and Louisa, and son-in-law Auguste Joly) for several years in the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* between 1839–48.<sup>486</sup> Other directors such as Annet, active in the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* in the 1840s, allowed singers Paul and Clothilde Mériel to travel with their children Julia and Marie who were cast in juvenile roles.<sup>487</sup> Singers' ages in these troupes ranged between eighteen to late-forties, with the majority being in their mid-20s to early-30s.<sup>488</sup> Directors' troupe lists at times recorded their performers' previous posts, showing that many artists already had experience working with another travelling troupe or a residential one before coming to a *troupe*

<sup>484</sup> AN F/21/1237, troupe list (Vital Lefevre), 1854–55. Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 259–61, 269.

<sup>485</sup> AN, F/21/1251, troupe list (Besombes), 1855–56. Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 265.

<sup>486</sup> AN, F/21/1235, troupe lists (Guillaume Bertéché), 19/04/1839, 21/06/1840, 12/05/1841, undated 1842–3; AN, F/21/1236, Troupe lists (Guillaume Bertéché), 13/06/1846; 14/07/1847. Auguste Joly, who married Bertéché's daughter Louise, died while on tour in Dunkerque and was denied the last rights by the local priest, an action which demonstrated lingering provincial reluctance to accept the morality of the acting profession, ADN, TT1300/2, letter from the Sub-Prefect of Dunkerque to the Prefect of the Nord 27/10/1843. *MA*, 28/10/1843. Barthélemy Bertéché was also employed in the 1838–39 season (AN, F/21/1235, Troupe list 24/08/1838) who may have been Guillaume's brother, judging by his age.

<sup>487</sup> AN, F/21/1259, troupe list (Annet), 15/10/1846.

<sup>488</sup> AN, F/21/1251, troupe list (Besombes), 1855–56; Troupe list (Bordes), 1846–7. AN F/21/1235, troupe list (Guillaume Bertéché), 21/06/1840. AN, F/21/1278, troupe list (Hermant), undated, 1846–47.

*d'arrondissement*.<sup>489</sup> One or two troupe members, however, arrived fresh into the profession. In director Joseph George Bordes's 6<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* in 1846-7, he employed two singers without previous positions: Antoine Lenormand, age 19, as 3<sup>rd</sup> *basse-taille* and Lucienne Vaussel, age 20, as 3<sup>rd</sup> *amoureuse*, both *emplois* that were low down in the hierarchy of supporting *opéra-comique* roles.<sup>490</sup>

Debuting professionals such as Lenormand and Vaussel could have gained their musico-dramatic skills from a variety of sources. They may have had private training with provincial music teachers,<sup>491</sup> attended one of the regional conservatoire *succursales* established from 1826 onwards,<sup>492</sup> or learned at the Paris Conservatoire. At least one pair of singers, Petit-Welter and his wife, who also performed under her maiden name Mlle Ozouf, were trained in this institution before pursuing careers in residential theatres such as Le Havre and later joining the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*.<sup>493</sup> Other performers learned the basis of their craft through the Jesuit colleges known for their theatrical education,<sup>494</sup> or by participating in amateur dramatics. In the early 1820s, for example, Tisserand and Mélingue met working as a porcelain painter and a sculptor on the Madeleine church in Paris and dabbled in amateur theatricals with other *pensionnaires* of the Hotel Carré boarding house.<sup>495</sup> There was always the option of independent study. Aspiring singers could use one of the many printed *Méthodes de chant* published by stars such as Laure Cinti-Damoreau (1801-1863) to study vocal technique and exercises.<sup>496</sup> As concerns actors, the memoirs of Jean-Edme Paccard (1777-1844), who toured eastern France during the

<sup>489</sup> AN, F/21/1251, troupe list (Bordes), 1846-7.

<sup>490</sup> AN, F/21/1251, troupe list (Bordes), 1846-7. See also AN, F/21/1278, troupe list (Hermant), undated 1855-56, with new performers Xavier Boujon and Lescmela Fossin.

<sup>491</sup> Granger, *Musiciens dans la ville*. Due to the scope of this project and the state of archival holdings, I was not able to consult lists of regional conservatoire students and compare these with troupe *tableaux* to ascertain whether students had progressed directly to an itinerant company in my case study areas, but Granger defines this as a possible career path for musicians.

<sup>492</sup> Jardin, "Le Conservatoire et la Ville"; Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 33-36.

<sup>493</sup> LCor, 25/09/1828. Maurice Alhoy, *Grande biographie dramatique ou silhouette des acteurs, actrices, chanteurs, cantatrices, danseurs, danseuses... de Paris et des départemen[t]s* (Paris: Fontaine, 1824), 255.

<sup>494</sup> Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 244-7.

<sup>495</sup> Hoefer, *Nouvelle biographie générale*, 836-7. Dumas, *Une vie d'artiste* 69-73. Pierre Larousse, "Tisserand" in *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX siècle* (Paris: Larousse et Boyer, 1876) 234. On amateur societies, see Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 448-50.

<sup>496</sup> Laure Cinti-Damoreau, *Méthode de chant* (Paris: Ménéstrel, 1849), sold for 20fr.

Napoleonic era, reveal that he grasped the first principles of the stage through personal study of plays, but also by observing performers on the Parisian *banlieue* stage.<sup>497</sup> Indeed, troupe lists show that some performers in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* were born in towns such as Cambrai or Valenciennes, suggesting that they potentially grew up attending performances given by the companies that they would eventually join.<sup>498</sup> On the other hand, Lenormand and others may have also simply followed a desire to tread the boards, made their way to Paris for casting season, loitered in one of the renowned *café des comédiens* and succeeded in getting an audition with a *troupe d'arrondissement* director and, potentially, a contract.<sup>499</sup> This process was well known, and parodied in meta-theatrical *vaudevilles* such as Eugène Scribe, Mélesville (Anne-Honoré-Joseph Duveyrier) and X. B. Saintine's *Le déluge* (1820) and Jean-Hippolyte and Charles-Théodore Cogniard's *Le café des comédiens* (1837). Indeed, troupe directors could recognise raw talent even without the trappings of experience or formal training. In memoirs published in 1810 and 1827, respectively, Comédie-Française *sociétaire* Joseph Dazincourt (1747-1809) and the writer and actress Ida Saint-Elme (1776-1845),<sup>500</sup> for instance, recalled that their first travelling troupe contracts were also their first experience of performance in any capacity.<sup>501</sup>

Although many performers' formative experiences remain obscure in the available archival holdings, the examples listed above already reveal that *troupe d'arrondissement* members entered a company having had a wide range of experiences. Their training was not finished, however, as the touring life offered specific theatrical challenges. Accordingly, it required a level of in-house artistic training. Paccard's and others' memoirs demonstrate that

<sup>497</sup> Jean Edme Paccard, *Mémoires et confessions d'un comédien* (Paris: A. Henry, 1839), drawing on an earlier publication, *Le Parisien, ou Les illusions de la jeunesse: mémoires publiés par Paccard* (Paris: Pigoreau, 1812), 3 volumes

<sup>498</sup> AN, F/21/1259, Troupe list (Péchoux), 1849-1850; Troupe list (Annet), 20/05/1846. AN, F/21/1278, Troupe list (Hermant), 1853-4.

<sup>499</sup> Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry*, 194-5. Hemmings notes that agencies gradually replaced face-to-face castings as the century wore on, although letters from several *arrondissement* directors in my four case study areas reveal that these professionals still chose to journey to Paris to audition for their troupes.

<sup>500</sup> Saint-Elme's memoirs must, admittedly, be taken with a pinch of salt as they are known for their unreliability.

<sup>501</sup> Some joining a troupe were running away from familial duties or debt, see AMC, 2/R/4/5b2-5, letter from Long to the Mayor of Colmar.

travelling troupes were long regarded within the theatrical industry as a place where performers were put through their paces via a rigorous education that was beneficial whether they had previous formal training or not. Despite his self-study, for instance, Paccard learned, upon auditioning for a boulevard director and later for the director of a company touring around Dijon, that he required a much more intensive and, crucially, practical theatrical education to make it as an actor at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>502</sup>

Paccard's account of troupe life in a travelling company that performed *comédie*, *tragédie*, *opéra-comique* and *grand opéra* in various towns including Dijon, Châlon-sur-Saône and Besançon, underlines the skills that he learned through hard graft and mentorship by director Villeneuve.<sup>503</sup> Paccard was at first employed to oversee the menial tasks of troupe life, scheduling rehearsals, copying out roles for actors' part books and overseeing the *garçons de spectacle*. Yet he also received daily personal coaching in practical performance skills from Villeneuve, learning how to use gestures, express through his voice, and observe and imitate people's mannerisms to form his characterisation.<sup>504</sup> In his spare time, Paccard was expected to memorise roles from across the stage genres, and he recalled foregoing communal meals, staying up late to study lines, and rehearsing alone in the empty theatre at night.<sup>505</sup> The steep learning curve for a new troupe actor could eventually pay off. Over the years, Villeneuve offered his mentee the chance to play small and then larger and more demanding roles, and Paccard eventually rose to the leading rank of *jeune premier*.<sup>506</sup>

The opportunity for mentorship of the kind offered to Paccard formed a central part of touring troupe work. It is notable, for example, that Tisserand's memories of his time with the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe ambulante* in 1826-7 do not retell the Valenciennes incident but record that he

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<sup>502</sup> Paccard, *Mémoires et confessions d'un comédien*, 45-51, 65, 80-81.

<sup>503</sup> In this period *grand opéra* meant the full-scale pieces produced at the Académie, for example those of Gaspare Spontini, Ellis, "Broke", 113.

<sup>504</sup> Idem, 82-3.

<sup>505</sup> Idem, 93.

<sup>506</sup> Idem, 130-149.

received suggestions about how to interpret his lines from Julie Pellegrin,<sup>507</sup> employed as the leading lady of Dumanoir's company.<sup>508</sup> Tisserand offers his intended reader, the budding actor, the key advice of learning from older performers and watching them in action.<sup>509</sup> Other memoirists recorded the fatherly relationship between directors and actors in a touring troupe: Paccard remembers later supporting ex-soldier Dericourt to learn his lines when he himself directed a travelling *opéra-comique* troupe;<sup>510</sup> and Dumas characterised Tisserand's *troupe ambulante* director as "père Dumanoir."<sup>511</sup> This type of peer-to-peer learning could also take place in Parisian companies and sedentary provincial companies, although at a smaller scale: choristers at the Académie could learn from the stars with whom they shared the stage,<sup>512</sup> and Comédie-Française actor Joseph Samson (1793-1871) remembered his filial bond with the director of the residential troupe of Rouen.<sup>513</sup> Yet a practice of regular and personal mentorship was much more marked in travelling troupes, not only because performers lived and travelled together for up to a year as well as rehearsing and performing, but because directors led from within.

Almost all *troupe d'arrondissement* directors were actors who continued to perform, at least occasionally, in the companies which they led.<sup>514</sup> These leaders understood the skill set needed for a performance career and, most often, were experienced in touring, unlike the mostly professionalised managers with a commercial background that ran the contemporary municipal companies and, further afield, figures such as Dr Véron in charge of the Académie. The vast majority of *troupe d'arrondissement* directors started out as performers: this was the case for Guillaume Bertéché, employed in Delorme's 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*, and for his son, Prosper, who began acting under his father. Most

<sup>507</sup> Hippolyte Tisserant, *Plaidoyer pour ma maison* (Paris: Librairie du Petit Journal, 1866), 12-14.

<sup>508</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1828*, 322.

<sup>509</sup> *Idem.* 14

<sup>510</sup> Paccard, *Mémoires et confessions d'un comédien*, 260.

<sup>511</sup> Dumas, *Une vie d'artiste*, 77, 90. Joseph Samson, *Mémoires de Samson, de la Comédie Française* (Paris: Paul Ollendorff, 1862).

<sup>512</sup> Girod and White, "La carrière du chanteur", 118.

<sup>513</sup> Samson, *Mémoires de Samson*, 175-182.

<sup>514</sup> AN, F/21/1259, troupe list (Devaux), 10/12/1841.

performers prepared the switch to director by first taking on an additional role as a stage director (*régis seur*) and, on many occasions, were put forward to central ministers as the choice for vacant roles by a departing director,<sup>515</sup> a move approved by local administrators who valued the appointment of someone with regional knowledge.<sup>516</sup> Moreover, in troupes with family members, personal connections and learning on the job could lead to opportunities at a young age: Bertéché's 1840-1841 troupe featured a 15-year old 3<sup>rd</sup> *chef d'orchestre*, Antoine Lacoste, the son of 1<sup>st</sup> *chef* Charles Lacoste.<sup>517</sup> Whether born out through familial networks or troupe membership, these examples demonstrate that artistic training, led by performer-managers, was integral to the *troupe d'arrondissement* experience.

Occasional visits from Parisian guest stars to itinerant companies also provided different opportunities for learning from the capital's personnel.<sup>518</sup> Guest stars employed for a few shows with the troupe brought with them specialised performance practices different to those of the *troupe d'arrondissement*. Unlike touring performers, celebrities were mainly known for their prowess in the specific genre of their home institution in Paris. Mlle Georges, performing with the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* troupe in 1826, for example, was revered for her performances in *tragédie*, a genre that this touring company rarely performed.<sup>519</sup> Additionally, Parisian performers often toured with a small selection of repertoire which they had chosen and which had been written for them by Parisian composers and librettists.<sup>520</sup> One such performer was soprano Julie Dorus-Gras, a native of Valenciennes who was supported by the municipal council to attend the Paris Conservatoire in the late 1810s before becoming one of the Académie's stars.<sup>521</sup> She returned to Valenciennes in

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<sup>515</sup> AN F/21/1235 (various).

<sup>516</sup> AN, F/21/1237, letter from Prosper Bertéché to the Minister, 23/12/1847 (date from the adjoining repertoire list). AN, F/21/1258, note for the Minister c. March 1830.

<sup>517</sup> AN, F/21/1237, troupe list (Bertéché), 21/06/1840.

<sup>518</sup> Hemmings, *Theatre and State*, 156-8.

<sup>519</sup> AN F/21/1258, 1235 (various).

<sup>520</sup> Hughes Bouffé, *Mes souvenirs, 1800-1880* (Paris: Dentu, 1880), 277-9. Gustave Roger, *Le carnet d'un ténor* (Paris: Paul Ollendorff, 1880), 204.

<sup>521</sup> René Goube, 'Connaissez-vous?...Les Dorus', *Valentiana*, 1 (1989): 77-82.



September 1834 to perform the role of Alice in *Robert le diable*, which she had created in Paris, with the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*.<sup>522</sup> Guest stars appeared in all shapes and sizes though: Bertéché's troupe appeared alongside celebrity Pyrenean mountain dog, Émile, in the summer of 1844 in the piece *Le chien des Pyrénées* (Cirque Olympique, 1842, by Ferdinand Lalou and Fabrice Labrousse)<sup>523</sup> while Mélingue performed with the famous elephant Kiouni while in the Rouen company.<sup>524</sup>

Considered the experts in their field and the authorities on the interpretation of their created roles, stars such as Dorus-Gras could act as models for itinerant troupe actors. Marie Dorval's letters, for example, demonstrate that the actress actively led rehearsals with provincial troupes and attempted to transmit her art to her supporting players.<sup>525</sup> Not only did these opportunities have the potential to expand the knowledge of troupe members, but, at the same time, such acts of teaching were described by theatrical critic and novelist Alphonse Daudet as simultaneously feeding the Parisian performer's sense of superiority.<sup>526</sup> Writers also reported that, like the Parisian chorus singers, touring troupe members could also learn by osmosis through admiring their technique or expression,<sup>527</sup> and from copying stars' stage presence. Frédéric Lemaître certainly recalled provincial actors imitating his gestures when they shared the stage.<sup>528</sup> Moreover, at times, guest stars' specialisations allowed touring troupes to experiment with new genres. As already stated, it was due to Mme Georges' presence in 1826 that Dellemence's 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe arrondissement* added the *tragédie Mérope* (1743) by Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet) to their repertoire of largely operatic works with only some spoken pieces.<sup>529</sup> Similarly, in the

<sup>522</sup> *CN*, 18/09/1834; *EF*, 16/09/1834.

<sup>523</sup> *EF*, 11/07/1844, 18/07/1844.

<sup>524</sup> Tuffier, *Mélingue*, 22–24.

<sup>525</sup> Bara, 'Le texte épistolaire comme source historique: les lettres de Marie Dorval à Alfred de Vigny (1833–1837), tableau de la vie théâtrale en province', *Le public de province au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, actes de la journée d'étude organisée le 21 février 2007 par Sophie-Anne Leterrier à l'Université d'Artois (Arras)* (Online: publications numériques du CÉRÉdl: 2009), vol. 2.

<sup>526</sup> Alphonse Daudet, *Chroniques dramatiques* (Paris: Champion, 2006), 64–67.

<sup>527</sup> Auguste Laget, "Physiologie du public", *Le chant et les chanteurs* (Paris: Heugel, 1874), 188.

<sup>528</sup> Frédéric Lemaître, *Souvenirs de Frédéric Lemaître* (Paris: Paul Ollendorff, 1880), 275–7.

<sup>529</sup> *PAV*, 13/12/26, 23/12/26; *MA*, 06/11/1832.

16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, troupes that produced only *vaudeville* and spoken repertoire made the leap into opera on two occasions thanks to guest stars. In 1832, Hénin's *troupe ambulante* braved Italian opera to sing Giacomo Rossini's *Tancredi* (1813) with the Théâtre Italien's Julia Robert in Bagnères-de-Bigorre and Pau,<sup>530</sup> while, in 1844, Hermant's *troupe ambulante* performed *grand opéra* with guest stars from the Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux.<sup>531</sup> Celebrity appearances, whether canine, elephantine or otherwise, were financially lucrative for provincial directors, who could raise prices for these performances.<sup>532</sup> They also provided important additional income for the capital's singers and dancers during their holiday season away from Parisian companies.<sup>533</sup> For some, though, the educative opportunity was as valuable as the economic benefit: Académie tenor Adolphe Nourrit wrote in a letter from November 1837 that he valued touring precisely for the opportunity to improve the musical standards of the provinces.<sup>534</sup> In these types of educational troupe experience, the top-down dynamics of the French stage were evident, exhibiting the traditional centralising power of Parisian artistic practices.

Provincial stints, however, could also be a time of artistic growth for guest stars as well as troupe performers. After breaking her contract with the Porte Saint-Martin, for instance, Marie Dorval organised her provincial tours and negotiated visibility of reviews of these performances in the capital's press as an attempt to leverage another Parisian contract.<sup>535</sup> Singer Jenny Colon also looked to the provinces to provide new opportunities. Colon sang at the Opéra-Comique, Vaudeville and Gymnase theatres in the 1820s and 30s, but decided

<sup>530</sup> *GT*, 01/11/1832; *MP*, 06/11/1832. It is unclear if these performances were in Italian or French. Robert would presumably have known the Italian version from her home Parisian theatre, but it is not impossible that Hénin's troupe would have sung the other parts in French, according to the contemporary translation by Edouard d'Anglemont with musical arrangement by Jean Frédéric Auguste Lemièrre de Corvey. *Tancredi* [vocal score, French] (Paris: Troupenas, 1827).

<sup>531</sup> AN F/21/1278, letter from the Prefect of Gers to the Minister, 24/10/1844; Takings, 04/10/1844. Tuffier, *Mélingue*, 22–24.

<sup>532</sup> Hemmings, *Theatre and the State*, 153. Hermant's takings with the Bordeaux troupe were plentiful, as seen in AN F/21/1278, Ticket sales, 04/10/1844.

<sup>533</sup> Louis Gentil, *Les cancans de l'Opéra: le journal d'une habilleuse, 1836–1848*, ed. Jean-Louis Tamvaco (Paris: CNRS, 2000) 1: 140. Marian Smith, "Backstage at the Paris Opéra in the 1830s". *Dance Chronicle* 27, no. 3 (2004): 427–31. White, *Female Singers on the French Stage*, 75, 84.

<sup>534</sup> Louis Quicherat, *Adolphe Nourrit, sa vie, son talent, son caractère, sa correspondance* (Paris: L. Hachette et Cie, 1867), 2: 21, 58.

<sup>535</sup> Bara, 'Le texte épistolaire comme source historique'.

to leave for the provinces in the 1840s because she wanted to perform *grand opéra*.<sup>536</sup> A contract with La Monnaie in Brussels, long considered an extension of the French provincial circuit, allowed her to take on larger lyrical roles such as Valentine in *Les Huguenots*, and she also performed Alice in *Robert* in Bordeaux.<sup>537</sup> The provinces could also provide Parisian chorus members with new opportunities: Anna Widemann sang at the Académie as a chorus member and in some secondary roles before leaving for the provinces in her quest to be the leading lady.<sup>538</sup> Some actors also looked to the provinces as a place in which they might experiment with interpretation. According to director Jules Claretie, star of the Comédie-Française Pierre-Mathieu Ligier (1796–1872) used to end his performances of Victor Hugo's *Hernani* (1830) in the provinces with Act 4, as he believed that the real drama of this piece lay in the pursuit of empire by Carlos, rather than the love story.<sup>539</sup> Whether it was troupe members learning from their directors or celebrities, or guest stars themselves taking new risks or personal control of their repertoire in the provinces, throughout the nineteenth-century, provincial companies, including the *troupes d'arrondissement*, acted as an important place of artistic growth and development for performers and not only a demonstration of Parisian expertise in the peripheries. While guest collaborations reiterated the top-down power of the capital over the peripheries, these moments in which regional companies allowed performers such as Colon to find new opportunities reveal that the provinces also held their own unique theatrical power to provide artistic options preferable to Paris for French theatrical personnel, or to offer a space for innovative development that could then provide for a later return to the capital.

<sup>536</sup> Fétis, "Jenny Colon", *Biographie universelle des musiciens* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1881), supplementary volume 1, 193. Pierre Soccane and Gilbert Chase, "Jenny Colon, the 'Somber Star,'" *The Musical Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (1940): 76–86.

<sup>537</sup> *Idem*. Colon did not have the time to attempt to return to Paris with her new found *grand opéra* talents, as she died shortly after the Bordeaux performance, on 5/06/1842: Soccane and Chase, "Jenny Colon, the Somber Star", 85.

<sup>538</sup> Girod and White, "La Carrière du chanteur", 120.

<sup>539</sup> Jules Claretie, *La vie moderne au théâtre* (Paris: Barba, 1869), 38

### The *arrondissement* skill set

A touring troupe was not only a space that allowed for the artistic education of its members: it was a group within which nineteenth-century performers developed a specific skill set built around the needs of itinerant companies and the *arrondissement*. These skills were manifold. In his memoir, Tisserant emphasised that the primary skill for a provincial actor was mastering the art of learning lines swiftly, since each performer needed to have 30 to 40 roles under their belt at all times.<sup>540</sup> These expectations developed out of the working conditions of provincial theatre. Directors included over 100 different pieces across all genres in their *troupe d'arrondissement* repertoire lists, due to audiences' and local administrators' desire for novelty.<sup>541</sup> In a typical three-week visit to Vesoul (9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*) between June–July 1845, for example, Filhol's troupe played 17 different *vaudeville* and spoken theatre pieces in eight evening performances, with no repeats.<sup>542</sup> Troupes also varied their programmes between successive towns as the theatrical year progressed, and frequently switched the combination of individual pieces making up an evening show.<sup>543</sup> Repertoires mixed old and new stage pieces. As seen in Table 1, in the 1844–45 season 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* director Seymour included Nicholas Dalayrac's *opéra-comique Adolphe et Clara* from 1799 but also three *dramas*, one *opéra-comique* and six *vaudevilles* that premiered throughout 1844, demonstrating the director's dual continuation of an operatic canon and a responsiveness, across genres, to new creations from the capital.

<sup>540</sup> Tisserant, *Plaidoyer pour ma maison*, 37, 44. A sentiment echoed by Alphonse Daudet, *Entre les frises et la rampe: petites études de la vie théâtrale* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1894), 56–7.

<sup>541</sup> AMD, 2/K/32, *Au*, 09/02/1854. AN, F/21/1251, Supplementary repertoire (Seymour) 29/09/1845.

<sup>542</sup> AN F/21/1236, ticket sales, 15/07/1845. Bertéché's 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* troupe performing in Arras for seven nights also prioritised showcasing different pieces, a total of 14 *grand opéras*, *opéra-comique*, *traduction*, *vaudeville* and spoken theatre pieces. In the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, Seymour's troupe played twenty pieces from these five genres in St-Brieuc across twelve evenings that June, only repeating Donizetti's *La favorite* (1840), *Don Pasquale* (1843), *Les armes de Richelieu* (1839) and *Les Poses Statuaires* (which appears to have been an evening entertainment with acrobats): AN F/21/1250: Ticket sales, 29/06/1845. Bertéché's 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* troupe performing in Arras for seven nights also prioritised showcasing different pieces, a total of fourteen *grand opéras*, *opéra-comique*, *traduction*, *vaudeville* and spoken theatre pieces.

<sup>543</sup> AN F/21/1250, ticket sales, 07/08/1844; ticket sales, 08/08/1844. AN F/21/1259, ticket sales, 16/06/1845; Ticket sales, 09/06/1845; Ticket sales, 15/07/1845; Ticket sales, 10/08/1845; Ticket sales, 08/09/1845; Ticket sales, 24/09/1845.

**Table 1: Repertoire performed by Seymour's 6<sup>th</sup> troupe d'arrondissement, June 1844-Feb 1845**

Title	Genre	Authors	Year	Premiere
<i>Jacques le Corsaire</i>	drame	Charles Desnoyer and Eugène Nus-Follet	1844	Théâtre de la gaité
<i>La Comtesse d'Altenberg</i>	drame	Alphonse Royer and Gustave Vaëz	1844	Théâtre de l'Odéon
<i>Les Bohémiens</i>	drame	Adolphe d'Ennery et Grangé	1843	Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique
<i>30 ans</i>	drame	Victor Ducangec	1831	Théâtre der la Porte Saint-Martin
<i>La folle de la cité</i>	drame	Charles Lafont	1843	Théâtre de la Gaité
<i>Le Facteur</i>	drame	Charles Desnoyer, Auguste-Louis-Désiré Boulé, and Charles Potie	1834	Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique
<i>Le Sonneur</i>	drame	Joseph Bouchardy	1838	Théâtre de la Gaité
<i>Don César de Bazan</i>	drame	Dumanoir and Adolphe d'Ennery	1844	Théâtre der la Porte Saint-Martin
<i>Latude</i>	melodrame	G. de Pixérécourt and Anicet Bourgeois, music by Alexandre Piccini	1835	Théâtre de la Gaité
<i>Kean</i>	comédie	Alexandre Dumas fils	1836	Théâtre des Variétés
<i>La marquise de Senneterre</i>	comédie	Mélesville and Charles Duveyrier	1837	Théâtre Français
<i>Le chevalier du gout</i>	comédie	Carlo Goldoni	1750	? Translated from the Italian
<i>Robert le diable</i>	grand opéra	Giacomo Meyerbeer; Germain Delavigne and Scribe	1831	l'Académie royale de musique
<i>La favorite</i>	grand opéra	Giacomo Rossini ; Victor-Joseph Étienne de Jouy and L. F. Bis	1829	l'Académie royale de musique
<i>Guillaume Tell</i>	grand opéra	Gaetano Donizetti; Alphonse Royer and Gustave Vaëz	1840	l'Académie royale de musique
<i>La muette de Portici</i>	grand opéra	Daniel Auber; Scribe, Delavigne	1828	l'Académie royale de musique
<i>Lucie de Lammermoor</i>	traduction	Donizetti; Royer and Vaëz	1839	Théâtre de la renaissance
<i>Don Pasquale</i>	traduction	Donizetti; Royer and Vaëz	1843	Théâtre Italien (in Italian)
<i>Le barbier de Seville</i>	traduction	Rossini; Castil-Blaze	1821	Grand théâtre, Lyon
<i>Norma</i>	traduction	Vincenzo Bellini; Étienne Monnier	1839	Théâtre royal français de La Haye
<i>Le pré au clercs</i>	opéra-comique	Ferdinand Hérold; François-Antoine-Eugène de Planard	1832	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique
<i>Le chalet</i>	opéra-comique	Adolphe Adam; Eugène Scribe and Mélesville	1834	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique
<i>La part du diable</i>	opéra-comique	Auber; Eugène Scribe	1843	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique
<i>Le nouveau seigneur du village</i>	opéra-comique	François-Adrien Boieldieu; Augustin François Creuzé de Lesser, Edmé-Guillaume-François de Favières	1813	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique
<i>Le maître de la chapelle</i>	opéra-comique	Ferdinando Paër; Sophie Gay	1821	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique
<i>Le domino noir</i>	opéra-comique	Auber; Scribe	1837	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique
<i>Fra Diavolo</i>	opéra-comique	Auber; Scribe	1830	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique
<i>La dame blanche</i>	opéra-comique	Boieldieu; Scribe	1825	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique
<i>Le puits d'amour</i>	opéra-comique	Michael Balfe; Scribe and Adolphe de Leuven	1843	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique
<i>La perruche</i>	opéra-comique	Louis Clapisson ; Dumanoir (Philippe François Pinel) and Jean-Henri Dupin	1840	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique
<i>La sirène</i>	opéra-comique	Auber; Scribe, Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges.	1841	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique
<i>Les diamants de la couronne</i>	opéra-comique	Auber; Scribe	1844	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique
<i>Le planteur</i>	opéra-comique	Hippolyte Monpou; Vernoy de Saint-Georges	1839	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique
<i>Masaniello</i>	opéra-comique	Michele Carafa; Charles-François-Jean-Baptiste Moreau de Commagney, A. M. Lafortelle	1827	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique
<i>La maison à vendre</i>	opéra-comique	Nicolas Dalayrac; Alexandre Duval	1801	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique
<i>Adolphe et Clara</i>	opéra-comique	Dalayrac; Benoît-Joseph Marsollier	1799	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique
<i>Le diable à l'école</i>	opéra-comique	Ernst-Henri-Alexandre Boulanger ; Scribe	1842	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique

<i>Le roi d'Yvelot</i>	<i>opéra-comique</i>	Adam; Adolphe de Leuven, Léon Lévy Brunswick	1842	Théâtre de l'opéra-comique
<i>La polka en province</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Alexis Decomberousse, Jules Cordier	1844	Théâtre du Vaudeville
<i>Arthur ou 16 ans après</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Charles Dupeuty, Charles-Joseph Loeuillard-d'Avrigny, and Louis-Marie Fontan	1838	Théâtre du Vaudeville
<i>Le bal d'ouvriers</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Charles Varin and Desvergers	1831	Théâtre du Vaudeville
<i>L'homme Blazé</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Augustin Théodore de Lauzanne de Vauroussel	1843	Théâtre du Vaudeville
<i>La rue de la Lune</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Charles Varin and Louis Boyer	1843	Théâtre du Palais-Royal
<i>Les deux divorcés</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Frères Cogniard	1831	Théâtre des Nouveautés
<i>Les gands jaunes</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Bayrd	1835	Théâtre du Vaudeville
<i>Madeleine la sabotière</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Bayard and Lafitte et Desnoyer	1836	Théâtre du Vaudeville
<i>Brelan de Troupiers</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Dumanoir	1843	Théâtre du Palais-Royal
<i>La cganoinesse</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Scribe and François Cornu	1833	Théâtre du Gymnase dramatique
<i>Le commis et la grisette</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Paul de Kock and Charles Labie	1834	Théâtre du Palais-Royal
<i>Le ménage de Rigolette</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Alfred Desrozières de Lérès and Édouard-Louis-Alexandre Brisebarre	1844	Théâtre des Délassements-Comiques
<i>Les trois polkas</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Paul Siraudin, Dumanoir and Pierre-Frédéric-Adolphe Carmouche	1844	Théâtre des Variétés
<i>Les saltimbanques</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Varin	1838	Théâtre des Variétés
<i>Passé minuit</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Lockroy (Joseph-Philippe Simon) et Anicet-Bourgeois	1839	Théâtre du Vaudeville
<i>La peau du lion</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Léon Laya	1844	Théâtre du Palais-Royal
<i>Ravel en voyage</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Depeuty	1844	Théâtre du Palais-Royal
<i>Trop heureuse</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	François Ancelot and Hippolyte Leroux	1837	Théâtre du Vaudeville
<i>L'égarement d'une canne</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Felix Duvert and Auguste Theodore de Lauzanne de Vauxroussel	1843	Théâtre du Palais-Royal
<i>La jolie fille de faubourg</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	de Kock and Varin	1840	Théâtre du Vaudeville
<i>L'héritière</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Scribe and Delavigne	1823	Théâtre du Gymnase-Dramatique
<i>Les vieilles amours</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Ernest Georges Petitjean and Félix Arvers	1841	Théâtre du Vaudeville
<i>Ma maîtresse et ma femme</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Dumanoir and d'Ennery	1842	Théâtre des Variétés
<i>Michel Perrin</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Mélesville and Charles Duveyrier	1834	Théâtre du Gymnase-Dramatique
<i>Moustache</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	de Kock and Varin	1838	Théâtre des Variétés
<i>L'ours et le pacha</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Scribe and X.-B. Saintine	1820	Théâtre des Variétés
<i>Un premier amour</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Bayard and Emile-Louis Vanderburch	1834	Théâtre du Vaudeville
<i>Un duel</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Lockroy and Edmond Badon	1832	Théâtre du Vaudeville
<i>C'est encore du bonheur</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Lockroy and Auguste Arnould	1833	Théâtre du Vaudeville
<i>Le Caporal et la payse</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Varin, de Kock, and Garin	1841	Théâtre du Palais-Royal
<i>Estelle</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Scribe	1834	Théâtre du Gymnase-Dramatique
<i>L'ami grandet</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Jacques-Arsène-François-Polycarpe Ancelot and Alexis Decomberousse	1834	Théâtre du Vaudeville
<i>Le philtre champenois</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Mélesville and Nicolas Brazier	1831	Théâtre du Palais-Royal
<i>Les mémoires contemporains</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Armand Dartois, Gabriel and Michel Masson	1829	Théâtre des Variétés
<i>Les rendez-vous</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Mathurin-Joseph Brisset	1827	Théâtre des nouveautés
<i>Les surprises</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Scribe	1844	Théâtre du Gymnase-Dramatique
<i>L'italien et le bas Breton</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Armand Durantin	1843	Théâtre du Gymnase-Dramatique
<i>Louissette</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Marc-Antoine-Amédée Michel	1840	Théâtre de la Gaité
<i>Matthias l'invalidé</i>	<i>vaudeville</i>	Bayard and Antoine-Léon (dit Léon Picard)	1838	Théâtre des Variétés

<i>Les mémoires du diable</i>	vaudeville	Etienne Arago and Paul Vermond	1842	Théâtre du Vaudeville
<i>Frontin ou le tricorne enchanté</i>	vaudeville	Théophile Gautier	1843	Théâtre des Variétés
<i>Paris la nuit</i>	Unidentified	Possibly a spectacle adapted from Edouard Gourdon's novel	1842	Novel
<i>Tring</i>	Unidentified <sup>544</sup>			
<i>1760</i>	Unidentified			
<i>Le bouffe</i>	Unidentified			

Such varied programmes required ongoing work from all troupe members. Additionally, as each season wore on, directors added newly created titles in different genres to their actors' load, calling *relâches* from performing to increase rehearsal time for a new piece.<sup>545</sup> The critic for the Lorient paper *L'Abeille* recognised the ongoing work that these programmes demanded of performers in 1845, congratulating soprano Elisa on her mastery of the title role in *Norma* and the "intensive work that this role must have cost her."<sup>546</sup> Broken down to individual genres, travelling troupes often produced double the amount of *opéra-comique* and *vaudeville* pieces than the equivalent Parisian companies staged in a year: while the 15<sup>th</sup> *troupe arrondissement* offered 62 *opéra-comiques* in its repertoire list for 1837, alongside other genres, the Opéra-Comique staged just 38.<sup>547</sup> Life in a provincial troupe thus demanded a flexibility of skill and a rate of repertoire renewal that was far different from the working conditions of the capital, with the churn of repertoire necessitated by the ensemble nature of the company where novelty, for an audience, had to be produced via new repertoire rather than changing personnel.

In order to juggle learning and performing several roles, performers on tour needed to develop stamina and versatility not only across a season, but also within a mixed evening programme. The Valenciennes journalist for *L'Écho de la frontière* reported that Dellemence's troupe performed on 177 evenings across the *arrondissement* during the

<sup>544</sup> Directors sometimes changed the names of stage pieces on their *recettes* and also in advertisements for their audiences, meaning that these unidentifiable pieces may well be eventually recognised under a different name.

<sup>545</sup> *MA*, 19/06/1844; AN F/21/1259, ticket sales, 03/07/1845. The *vaudeville Relâche pour Fernand Cortez* (1809) parodied the "relâche"/troupe learning process.

<sup>546</sup> *JT*, 25/01/1845

<sup>547</sup> Bould, "The Lyric Theatre in Provincial France", 258.

1828-9 season and, in his column, offered statistics about each troupe member's performances, calculated per piece, over these multi-piece evenings.<sup>548</sup> Leading men Dumas and Duchaumont performed 329 and 327 times over the year, respectively, while Milles Delattre and Boucher appeared on stage 281 and 243 times. That the local reporter saw fit to use up precious column space with these statistics implies that the resilience and flexibility required of *arrondissement* performers were impressive, even to audiences who watched them three nights a week.

At the same time, once they had proved that they could memorise and easily switch between different roles, performers could wield considerable power on a touring stage due to the artistic demands of the *arrondissement*. Local spectators' persistent desires for novelties aside,<sup>549</sup> it was performers' knowledge that determined directors' choices of repertoire. As testified by a letter from troupe director Colson to the Prefect of the Nord in 1844, for example, it was impossible for a director to draft a company's final repertoire list before he had engaged actors and discussed their known pieces.<sup>550</sup> Colson relied on the knowledge of his entire troupe before determining his programmes, but, in other companies, principal artists held the most power in this regard. In the southwest, director Etienne Grès advertised that it was the "beautiful repertoire" brought by leading soprano Mme Mercier, rather than his own choices, that would delight the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* audiences.<sup>551</sup> Grès underlined the singer's power as a positive thing for the spectators of Bayonne, likely setting up Mercier as a figure of local celebrity as a means of attracting audiences to the troupe's performances.<sup>552</sup> The formation of artists' repertoires thus allowed performers a certain level of artistic influence over troupe programmes.

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<sup>548</sup> EF, 11/04/1829.

<sup>549</sup> Astbury, "Réécrire une histoire du théâtre en province", 309. Frédéric Febvre, *Journal d'un comédien* (Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1896), 10.

<sup>550</sup> ADN, 1/T/301/6, letter from Colson to the Prefect of the Nord, 07/02/1844.

<sup>551</sup> AN, F/21/1277, troupe list (Grès), 13/07/1833.

<sup>552</sup> On provincial celebrities, see Florence Naugrette, "Qu'est-ce qu'une vedette de province? Le cas de Rouen au xixe siècle", *Le sacre de l'acteur. émergence du vedettariat théâtral de Molière à Sarah Bernhardt*, ed., Florence Filippi (Paris: Armand Colin, 2017), 151-160.



Versatility across genres was another essential skill for troupe members. *Troupe d'arrondissement* responsibilities were more porous than the typical contract for one *emplois* seen in municipal theatres. Directors' lists reveal, for example, that artists were either contracted for several *emplois*, were asked to play across "all genres" even when classed as one *emploi*, or were expected to play "associated" roles similar to their named *emploi*.<sup>553</sup> By the 1840s, singers' responsibilities encompassed roles in *grand opéra*, *opéra-comique*, *traductions*,<sup>554</sup> *vaudeville*, and spoken theatre, and newspaper notices advertising singers' availability for a new contract in the provinces underlined the versatility by naming each genre individually or using the shorthand "all genres".<sup>555</sup> In a travelling troupe, singers often had to switch in and out of different genres within an evening programme. In a performance taking place in Montbéliard (9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*) on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1834, for example, actor-director Louis Petigny played Gaveston in François-Adrien Boieldieu's *La dame blanche* (1825) and Le Franc Hussard in the *vaudeville* *Le siège du château* (1810),<sup>556</sup> and his employee Mme Girardot sang the role of Anna in the opera and then Laure in the *vaudeville*.<sup>557</sup> These changes emphasise the ease with which performers needed to move between characters and genres, but versatility was also needed at a second level. As mentioned in the prologue, singers had to adjust to the tuning of orchestral instruments in different locales on their tour well into the 1860s, as there was no fixed national tuning (*diapason*) for musical performances across France before 1859, and it took several years

<sup>553</sup> AN, F/21/1235, troupe list (Guillaume Bertéché), 24/06/1835.

<sup>554</sup> A general term used to refer to French translations of *bel canto* operas by Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini, and occasional translations of Weber and Mozart's operas.

<sup>555</sup> *JT*, advertising singers from touring troupes from Valenciennes, 25/06/1846; Orleans (12/05/1847); Moulins (25/04/1844); Grenoble (13/06/1844); and singers from residential troupes: Brest (16/05/1830); Strasbourg (16/05/1830), Avignon (08/08/1844); Nîmes (08/08/1844; 18/08/1847); Anvers (04/09/1847); Lille (18/08/1847), Grenoble (18/08/1845), Amiens (03/09/1845; 28/05/1846); Reims (20/08/1846); Nancy (20/08/1846); Nantes (20/08/1846); Toulouse (28/05/1846); Limoges (28/05/1846) Marseille (16/06/1847). By the 1860s, some travelling companies also added *opérette* to their repertoire: AN F/21/1278, letter from Hermant to the Minister, 02/07/1862.

<sup>556</sup> The local name given by the troupe to the piece *Le château de mon oncle* by Marc-Antoine-Madeleine Désaugiers and Armand d'Artois, demonstrating a local adaptation of the title.

<sup>557</sup> ADD, 4/T/128, poster, 24/07/1834. See also the posters held at the AMD (2R/14 and 2R/20) and MASV (Collection Cayat-Chartier I/1-9) which have rich holdings of theatrical posters with cast lists. These printed documents are called 'programmes' or 'affiches' interchangeably in archival catalogues. They were multi-purpose documents that were stuck onto theatre walls and posted through letterboxes to advertise performances, as well as being given to spectators to read during the evening show.

for pitch standardisation to be implemented in the provinces.<sup>558</sup> Furthermore, as mentioned in my prologue, travelling performers adjusted to the variable decors, size of the orchestra, and size of backstage and administrative personnel provided by each theatre that they visited.

The adaptability needed in an itinerant troupe was heightened compared to singers' workloads in large municipal companies. Small differences between the setup of residential troupes in towns such as Bordeaux, Marseille, Rouen and Lyon, for example, had major consequences for performers. Each of these towns had two theatres at the mid-century, with troupes specialised in either the repertoire of the "grand" theatres or those of the secondary Parisian companies. This meant that members of the troupe of an institution such as the Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux performed *grand opéra*, *opéra-comique* and *comédie*, while their counterparts at the Bordeaux Théâtre des Variétés focused on the popular genres:<sup>559</sup> a division of high-art and popular performance labour that the *troupes d'arrondissement* elided. Even in Rouen, where both the Théâtre des Arts and the Théâtre Français performed *vaudevilles* just like itinerant companies, troupes members were not stretched as far as their touring colleagues. In the Théâtre des Arts' company list from 1830, only one male actor, our old friend Mélingue, was listed in all three of the *comédie/drames*, opera and *vaudeville* troupes. This was because he played "rôles de convenance": the most flexible and lowest troupe *emploi*, meaning any character needing to be filled.<sup>560</sup> Apart from Mélingue, five male actors in the Rouen company were only employed for *comédie/drame*, three solely for opera, and the other 15 only played in two out of the three genres.<sup>561</sup> The management of Bordeaux's and Lyon's Grands Théâtres also

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<sup>558</sup> Bould, "The Lyric Theatre in Provincial France", 78-9. After the standardisation of the diapason by ministry officials, the practical regulation of this universalising pitch was inserted into troupe directors' contracts, although these directors were usually powerless to oversee the standardisation of pitch in their *arrondissement* because it depended on municipal funding to renew orchestral instruments. Gribenski, *Tuning the World*, 27-57.

<sup>559</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1830*, 171-2.

<sup>560</sup> *Idem*, 174-5.

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.*

employed singers for opera and separate actors for spoken genres at this time.<sup>562</sup> Similarly, in Toulouse, where there was only one company, just two men and two women out of 23 opera singers were contracted to also perform with the performers employed specifically for *comédie* and *vaudeville*.<sup>563</sup> Furthermore, by the mid-1830s even opera singers within a large municipal company were given much more specialised roles within this genre. Ellis has shown, for example, that overlaps between *opéra-comique* and *grand opéra* were “unthinkable” and acted as an “indicator of operatic seriousness” for those theatres large enough to divide the vocal work of these operatic genres.<sup>564</sup> The division of performance labour in these residential theatres demonstrates that the multi-genre work of the *troupes d'arrondissement* set these artists apart from the work of many of their colleagues in large municipal companies.

Not all itinerant performers taking on roles across sung and stage genres, though, showed proof of the same level of talent in each theatrical tradition. Indeed, regional critics did not shy away from celebrating performers in one genre, yet criticising them in another. In a performance of Moliere (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin)'s *Tartuffe* (1664) by Delorme's troupe in April 1829, for example, tenor Dumas was described as having “shown proof of enthusiasm....but the rest is not worth describing” in the *comédie*, but was praised for his ‘frank and open manner’ in the *vaudeville* *La Manie des places* (1819 by Scribe and Bayard).<sup>565</sup> Journalists looked for performers to display a range of different skills as a means of differentiating the stage genres for their local audiences in the absence of separate theatre buildings and companies. Reviewers such as those writing for the Valenciennes' *Écho de la frontière* and the Vesoul *Journal de Haute-Saône*, for example, expected 1<sup>st</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* troupe members to sing differently in *vaudeville* than in

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<sup>562</sup> *Annuaire des lettres, des arts et des théâtres pour 1846-7* (Paris: Lacrampe, 1846), 470-73.

<sup>563</sup> *Idem*, 477-8

<sup>564</sup> Ellis, “Broke”, 112. As Ellis states, smaller municipal companies still asked their singers to perform both types of opera, just like the *troupes d'arrondissement*.

<sup>565</sup> *EF*, 01/04/1829.

opera. Most likely responding to the sparser and less musically-complex music of *vaudeville*, critics asked singers to prioritise the primacy of text in couplets that journalists expected to be “less sung than acted,” and performing physically and vocally “with spirit”.<sup>566</sup> Reviewers described *opéra-comique* as the foundational operatic singing style that all troupe members should master.<sup>567</sup> The same critics saw *grand opéra* and *traduction*, the French translation of Italian or German operas, as two operatic subgenres that both demanded more, vocally, from itinerant performers.<sup>568</sup> Accordingly, journalists congratulated performers who showed a different vocal quality, compared to *opéra-comique*, in performances of pieces such as Fromental Halévy’s *La juive* (1835) and Vincenzo Bellini’s *Norma* (1831),<sup>569</sup> or who “‘surpassed’ themselves” by taking on “the largest burden that one can impose on these *opéra-comique* voices.”<sup>570</sup> By separating out the types of performance skills that troupe artists were expected to hone per genre, these journalists thus also made clear a hierarchy between operatic genres, placing that of the Académie at the top of troupes’ arsenal.

Even despite critics’ definition of the different types of singing and voices in varying genres, the difficulty of judging *troupe d’arrondissement* performers consistently across their multi-genre remit was not lost on some journalists. The Bayonne critic for *L’Ariel* writing in 1845, for example, reflected on how provincial troupe life set this artistic work aside from that of the capital. Writing a few seasons after the 16<sup>th</sup> *troupe d’arrondissement* was moved out of the town to make way for the resident company, author F. A. argued that regional critics “ask more of provincial artists than we reasonably have the right to expect.” F. A. reminded readers that Parisian artists each had an *emploi* in one genre, whereas provincial

<sup>566</sup> *EF*, 14/03/29; *JHS*, 09/05/1833; “avec entrain”, 26/06/1846. AN, F/21/1235, letter from the Prefect of the Nord to the Minister, 07/05/1839.

<sup>567</sup> *AL*, 12/10/1845.

<sup>568</sup> Despite the differences in these Italian and French opera styles, critics put them into the same category of weightier opera in their reviews to contrast with *opéra-comique*.

<sup>569</sup> *EV*, 05/03/1844. *CN*, 05/03/1844; 15/10/1844

<sup>570</sup> *CN*, 05/03/1844; 15/10/1844; “le plus grand fardeau qu’on [ne] puisse imposer à des voix d’opéra-comique.” *EF*, 22/06/1836,

mixed programmes usually “required contradicting qualities” from the performer, particularly in opera.<sup>571</sup> F. A. described that it was important to acknowledge the provincial performer’s diversity of roles as specialised work in itself and stated that:

to achieve being acceptable, the provincial artist has already done a lot. Should we take this into account?

As this review makes clear, the skills of a provincial artist needed to be diverse and flexible across genres in a way that their Parisian counterparts did not, but F. A. suggested that there was little acknowledgement that artistic quality might be judged differently if critics and audiences took account of plural genre work. In his wider column, F.A. thus went on to argue that it was necessary to take a provincialised view of performance practice as the fairest basis to appraise the worth of the Bayonne troupe.

In his critique, F.A positioned the regional stages as operating in a separate world to Parisian ones in terms of appraising performers. His insight was not only echoed in the words of contemporary northern critics who argued for the need to review *grand opéra* singing through an *arrondissement* lens, as I will detail in Chapter 4, but also by a Dunkerque journalist reporting on similar themes in 1830.<sup>572</sup> According to all of these writers, the French theatrical sphere could and should be divided in two according to performance practice: Paris did not need to act as a marker of theatrical standards for towns such as Bayonne and Dunkerque, since the artistic labour required of the capital’s performers was entirely different to the work of a provincial company. In other words, contemporary critics recognised that the contrast between the specialisation of Parisian institutions and the adaptable skills needed in provincial troupes placed these companies in entirely separate theatrical worlds. His was a prescription, rather than a reflection of how most critics discussed their town performers, yet, by emphasising that Parisian and provincial troupes adhered to distinctive, rather than imitative, stage spheres, F. A

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<sup>571</sup> *ACP*, 06/04/1845.

<sup>572</sup> *JC*, 11/10/1830.

underlined a new model for appraising provincial troupes that underlined the separation between the working conditions of the centre and the periphery.

### **An alternative education**

The working practices of provincial companies, and the *arrondissement* skill set of touring troupes, in particular, were significant on a national scale because they allowed these groups to hold a unique place within the landscape of French artistic education. Prior to the founding of the Paris Conservatoire, France's flagship training institution for musicians, singers and actors, provincial companies held a long-recognised role as the place to forge the next generation of performers. Not only did troupes such as Molière's polish their skills while touring the nation during the seventeenth century,<sup>573</sup> but, a century later, notable theatrical figures such as actor and theorist Henri-Louis Lekain (1728–1778) advocated for the state to recognise the utility of the provinces as essential to forging French talent. On 4<sup>th</sup> September 1756 in a speech to the gentlemen of the King's Chamber, Lekain argued that the provinces were *the* place in which performers gathered "the first notions of their profession" because there was no formal theatrical schooling currently available in France.<sup>574</sup> The links between the provinces and the royal stages were especially strong. Throughout the eighteenth century, members of the Comédie-Française, who wielded considerable power over the state of French theatre, viewed provincial companies as a recruitment arena for their royal company, and specific troupes such as Lyon's Grand Théâtre (particularly under the direction of Mme Destouches-Lobreau) were intricately associated with the training of new talent for this company.<sup>575</sup> Lekain, as an actor, spoke of provincial troupes as an education crucible specifically for spoken theatre, and it is true that companies' training role was most likely more important for this genre compared to

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<sup>573</sup> Koopmans, "Un théâtre singulier ou un théâtre pluriel", 38.

<sup>574</sup> Henri-Louis Lekain, *Mémoires de Lekain, précédés de réflexions sur cet auteur et sur l'art théâtral*, ed. François-Joseph Talma (Paris: Ponthieu, 1825), 174.

<sup>575</sup> Clay, *Stagestruck*, 109–113, 144.

music during the eighteenth century, at least for half of troupe members. This was because a network of regional *maîtrises* attached to cathedrals offered state musical education to young men across France before the Revolution.<sup>576</sup> The gendered nature of the *maîtrises*, however, meant that provincial troupes *did* offer the only available musical training for women during this period. Whether he was informed on the musical situation or not, it was Lekain's understanding of the vitality of the provincial training ground that was, in fact, one of the factors that catalysed the establishment of formal schooling in acting and singing in the capital. His 1756 speech to the chamber formed part of a plea to establish a French Conservatoire to take over performers' training should the high standards of the provinces deteriorate, and Lekain was granted the first patent to establish a Parisian school with actor Prévile (Pierre-Louis Dubus, 1721-1799) in 1774.<sup>577</sup> The hub for national training in Paris thus emerged out of a desire to formalise the important work taking place in provincial troupes.

Provincial troupes, though, retained a crucial role in French artistic education for music and singing even after the Conservatoire was founded in 1795, not least because of the destruction of the *maîtrises* network during the Revolution.<sup>578</sup> In his memoir, published when he was a teacher at the school, Samson argued for the continuing relevance of practical troupe education precisely because provincial companies offered different experiences and, as already mentioned, skills to the Parisian institution. Although Samson had won 1<sup>st</sup> prize in the Conservatoire's prestigious declamation competition and, as a result, was offered an *ordre de début* for the Comédie-Française, he argued that practical troupe experience in the provinces was first essential to complete his training. Samson

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<sup>576</sup> Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 27.

<sup>577</sup> Lekain, *Mémoires de Lekain*, 174. Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry*, 172. C. M. Edmond Béquet, *Encyclopédie de l'art dramatique* (Paris: Béquet, 1886), 98.

<sup>578</sup> Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry*, 172-189. The Conservatoire developed out of the École Royale de Chant, de danse et de déclamation (1784) which underwent several changes during the Revolutionary period.

chose instead to join the Dijon troupe in the 1810s because he felt that he still needed to develop certain skills, specifically confidence:

I knew that I needed to overcome my shyness through a long stint in the provincial theatres that would otherwise undoubtedly make me fail on the French stage.<sup>579</sup>

In his recollections, Samson used the term 'French stage' to mean the Comédie-Française, linking his sought-after provincial experience with career progression towards this prestigious national company. He was not the only performer who doubted that Conservatoire education only would fully prepare him to begin a career or to succeed in France's première institution. Tenor Bordas was offered a contract at the Académie in 1843 after much hype about his talent as a Conservatoire pupil, but he, too, turned the offer down.<sup>580</sup> According to the *Journal des théâtres*, Bordas sought first to undertake years of "good provincial work" to later return to the royal theatre at the "height of his talent."<sup>581</sup> Samson and Bordas' career moves suggest that, even for those who were lucky enough to train at France's flagship educational institution for acting and singing, provincial troupes retained an integral position as a provider of theatrical training throughout the nineteenth century.

I would argue that, paradoxically, the continued relevance of provincial troupes stemmed from the fact that these companies offered a wider range of artistic training than the Paris Conservatoire during this period. It is not that a Conservatoire education was not highly valued within nineteenth-century French musical life. The school was positioned as the centre of national training throughout the period. Government ministers organised recruitment drives to draw provincial talent to the Conservatoire,<sup>582</sup> established a boarding

<sup>579</sup> "je comprenais qu'il me fallait, par un long exercice sur les théâtres de province, vaincre une timidité qui me perdrait infailliblement sur la scène française." Samson, *Mémoires de Samson*, 172.

<sup>580</sup> *RGM*, 24/07/1842, *JT*, 07/09/1843.

<sup>581</sup> "Bon travail de province", "plénitude de son talent," *JT*, 07/09/1843. The column advertises provincial directors to take note that Bordas is free. The tenor ended up in Italy, performing in Rome before returning to the Paris at the Académie and Théâtre Italien. Benjamin Lumley, *Reminiscences of the Opera* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1864), 239.

and the Académie in 1847 (*LMe*, 26/09/1847). Despite frequent mentions of his name in Parisian papers between 1843–47, the tenor's first name is untraceable in the press or BnF record: <https://data.bnf.fr/fr/15593393/bordas/>.

<sup>582</sup> For example, a recruitment drive in 1805 where prefects were asked to scope out youngsters to send to the Conservatoire for audition: AN, AJ/13/64, Circulaire from the Premier Prefet du Palais, 11/03/1805; Letter from applicant Massé to the Prefet



house for provincial pupils and, with the creation of the first regional conservatoires in 1826, set up the Parisian institution as a finishing school for the satellite provincial ones.<sup>583</sup> These practices demonstrated the Conservatoire's national remit, yet the school also had an increasingly Parisian focus. The mission statement of training singers and actors for both the royal theatres in Paris and the provinces was mentioned in the Conservatoire's regulations from 1808,<sup>584</sup> yet a change in the 1822 document clarified that the school was now considered as a place to nurture "the education of young people who prepare themselves to perform in "l'Académie Royale de Musique, the Théâtre-Français, the Odéon and the Opéra-Comique."<sup>585</sup> The school's personnel strengthened these links with the royal theatres: pupils were given tuition in singing and acting from celebrated singers and actors, including Samson, often those still treading the boards of the capital themselves. Alongside the networks formed through contact with a celebrated performer-teacher, the public *concours* and concerts all provided crucial visibility for aspiring singers and actors within the capital's musical and theatrical scene that provincial troupes could never achieve, and the Conservatoire was valued as the main pathway for French performers into employment at the Académie, Opéra-Comique and Comédie-Française.<sup>586</sup>

A Conservatoire education was primarily geared towards serving high-art Parisian theatres and this was reflected in the curriculum. Training was split between singing and

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du premier Palais, 08/05/1805; Letter from applicant Ducaire to the Prefet du premier Palais, 10/04/1805. Only male singers replied to this call for personnel, most likely because they accessed musical training through military bands and, before the Revolution, church *maîtrises* that were not open to women. Youth and promise was emphasised in this recruitment, with older candidates (c.40) being rejected by Ministers.

<sup>583</sup> For more on the Conservatoire and its training, see Emmanuel Hondré, ed., *Le Conservatoire de Musique de Paris: regard sur une institution et son histoire* (Paris: Association du bureau des étudiants du Conservatoire national supérieur de musique de Paris, 1995) and White, *Female Singers*, 10–38.

<sup>584</sup> This echoing the foundation documents of the Conservatoire's earlier 1784 iteration as the École Royale de Chant, Constant Pierre, *Le Conservatoire National de Musique et de Déclamation: documents historiques et administratifs recueillis ou reconstitués par Constant Pierre* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1900), 2, 237.

<sup>585</sup> The 1822 priority to prepare artists for the capital's royal institutions remained unchanged until 1850, as no new mission statement was included in the 1841 and the Conservatoire was described as under the control of the Ministry's special commission for royal theatres, strengthening the link. A broader aim for the school was stated in the 1850 regulation (and repeated in the 1874 document), stating that the Conservatoire was "dedicated to the free teaching of vocal and instrumental music and dramatic declamation". Pierre, *Le Conservatoire National de Musique et de Déclamation*, 245, 251, 255, 260. The Académie was also central to the 1805 recruitment, as Ministers searched for singers to eventually perform for this theatre (AN, AJ/13/64, Circulaire from the Premier Prefet du Palais, 11/03/1805; Mode de l'examen, 04/05/1805), and similar seventeenth-century recruitment of provincial singers to perform in Versailles for the King was parodied in Auber's *opéra-comique* *Le Postillon de Longjumeau* (1836).

<sup>586</sup> Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry*, 172–189.

declamation pathways. Those enrolled as singers could access individual instruction in the repertoire for *grand opéra* and *opéra comique* and some ensemble classes,<sup>587</sup> but they could not switch to take the classes intended for actors, or vice versa.<sup>588</sup> This curriculum ensured that even a star-studded graduate was not taught how to move between spoken and sung genres: not a problem for the royal theatres, but a skill that was required in most, if not all, provincial companies. Nor were Conservatoire students trained to tackle popular genres, as there was only instruction offered for the two French opera genres, *tragédie* and *comédie* but none for *vaudeville* or *mélodrame*. Again, this meant that students were not trained to work for the capital's popular stages nor for half of provincial companies' repertoire.<sup>589</sup> Additionally, even though the Conservatoire's curriculum was based on Italianate singing principles,<sup>590</sup> neither did the school offer singers the chance to study Italian repertoire, as made obvious in a series of journalistic debates between Adolphe Adam (1803–1856) and Castil-Blaze (1784–1857) in *La France musicale* in 1843 about the controversial introduction of *traductions* of Rossini's works for the public concerts.<sup>591</sup> Adam argued that the "Paris Conservatoire is destined to form French singers who will sing French music and interpret French opera," stating that "the Italian tradition" had no place in this nationalistic institution and training programme.<sup>592</sup> The Conservatoire curriculum, just like its mission, thus supported advancement in only a narrow field of the stage genres seen in nineteenth-century France.

The Conservatoire's mission and curriculum were fitting for its Parisian aims and connections, yet the artistic education did not map onto the future demands of professional

<sup>587</sup> AJ/37/90, register for 1847–8; 1848–9; 1849–50; 1850–1.

<sup>588</sup> Maud Pouradier, "La Musique Disciplinée: Le Contrôle de La Musique Dans Les Conservatoires Français Du XIXe Siècle." *Musurgia* 14, no. 1 (2007): 9–10.

<sup>589</sup> *LFM*, 11/06/1843; Pierre, *Le conservatoire national de musique et de declamation*, 167.

<sup>590</sup> Emmanuel Hondré, "Le Conservatoire de Paris et le renouveau du « chant français », " *Romantisme* 93 (1996), 83–94.

<sup>591</sup> Adam's attack referenced broader tensions about the influence of Italian composers in Paris in the 1840s: Stella Rollet, "Les multiples enjeux de la critique musicale: l'accueil de l'œuvre de Gaetano Donizetti en France (années 1830–1850)", *Le Temps des médias* 22, no.1 (2014): 35–48. Cailliez, "La diffusion du comique", PhD diss. (Universités de Paris-Sorbonne, de Bonn et de Florence, 2014), 61–2.

<sup>592</sup> *LFM*, 04/06/1843. Castil-Blaze responded in the 11/06/1843 issue.

careers either in one of the capital's non-royal theatres performing popular genres or a provincial company where troupe members needed to chop and change between genres. Another potential shortcoming of the Conservatoire training was that students did not typically gain knowledge of full roles or of performing in full-length shows that, as Samson pointed out, were essential when transitioning to a professional career. This was because the curriculum prioritised the study of excerpts (monologues in spoken theatre and arias in *opéra-comique/grand opéra*) rather than complete roles;<sup>593</sup> singers only received 20 hours of vocalisation teaching a year; and only the best had the chance of working with a *répétiteur*.<sup>594</sup> The Conservatoire provided students with a few opportunities to perform in public (Sunday recitals and yearly *concours*) but no showcase for a full production.<sup>595</sup> hence Samson using the regional stages to conquer his shyness.<sup>596</sup> Additionally, the instruction provided by Conservatoire teachers, including Gilbert Duprez (1806–1896) and Cinti-Damoreau, were based on two specific outcomes. Teachers either showed pupils how to copy their own gestures and vocal inflexions, rather than following their instincts, or focused on preparing students to win prizes in the yearly *concours*, in which performers were judged on excerpts.<sup>597</sup>

Practical training in a troupe, by contrast, could also breed more personalised theatrical interpretation. Mélinuge, for example, was remembered for eschewing much of what biographer Truffier called the “preliminary studies” of acting training, instead relying on large gestures, a slightly too loud voice, and playing for audiences’ sympathies in his interpretation of characters in the final acts of *dramas*. While these were unconventional performance traits, it was these that made Mélinuge stand out, and he justified his loud cries when entering the stage for the first time as a trademark: “Otherwise no one will

<sup>593</sup> Pierre, *Le conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation*, 167.

<sup>594</sup> Girod and White, “La carrière du chanteur”, 118.

<sup>595</sup> Idem, 119.

<sup>596</sup> Pierre Veber, *Samson* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1930), 37.

<sup>597</sup> Rémy Campos, “La classe Au conservatoire de Paris au XIXe siècle. Éléments pour une description,” *Revue de musicologie* 83, no. 1 (1997): 105–116; Sophie Boudet, *Les coulisses d'un théâtre littéraire au XIXe siècle: le personnel de l'Odéon de 1852 à 1906*, MA diss. (Université Evry Val d'Essonne, 2008), 113.

know that it's Mélingue."<sup>598</sup> It is true that the mentorship received in a travelling troupe, as described earlier, may well have also promoted the pupil's emulation of the teacher in a similar way to the Conservatoire. Yet the examples given by Paccard and Tisserand of the instruction offered to them by Villeneuve and Mme Pellegrin both focused on helping the young actors find their own interpretation of a text, through physique and voice. This strategy was most likely chosen to aid the troupe member in his or her responsibility to take on many genres and roles in the course of a career, again revealing the difference between a Conservatoire and practical theatrical education. All of these differences between Conservatoire and troupe education were factors that were likely recognised by Bordas and Samson when they delayed their entry to the Académie and Comédie-Française stages to prioritise experience on non-Parisian stages.

Samson's and Bordas' decisions to turn down the royal companies were undoubtedly bold ones, presumably made on the assumption that these institutions would still later seek them out, and potentially partly as an advertising stunt to bolster their reputations since these decisions, at least in Bordas' case, set journalists' tongues wagging.<sup>599</sup> I argue that these choices, though, and Samson's and the *Journal* editors' reflections on the need to continue training through a troupe, demonstrate that provincial companies were seen to provide an educative experience that regularly supplemented practical gaps in Conservatoire training throughout the mid-century. This was certainly the case for young hopeful Mlle Ozouf who, as I have already mentioned, trained at the Conservatoire. She *débuted* at the Odéon in 1822 but failed.<sup>600</sup> Parisian writers agreed that, while Ozouf had talent, she needed experience and further training to be a seasoned actress. The critic for the *Journal des débats* explained that Ozouf would be able to "perfect" herself through "a few years of experience to achieve her peak", gaining another "theatrical education" in her

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<sup>598</sup> Truffier, *Mélingue*, 38.

<sup>599</sup> Bordas certainly got newspapers talking, following his progress before his return to Paris, *RGM*, 24/07/1842; *LFM*, 09/04/1848.

<sup>600</sup> Lyonnet, *Dictionnaire des comédiens français*, 499; *JD*, 07/10/1822.

consolatory contract with the Marseille company.<sup>601</sup> Part of the problem with Ozouf was her seriousness: although good in *tragédie*, she lacked lightness and *comédie* experience.<sup>602</sup> A provincial troupe such as Marseille, or later her turn in the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*, would thereby supplement her education by exposing her to a range of genres.

Perhaps because of the practical shortcomings of Parisian education, in some professionals' eyes the value of troupe training in fact supplanted the Conservatoire. When in a position of theatrical influence later in life, for example, Mélingue actively championed provincial troupes as *the* place of artistic education in France to his protégés including Frédéric Febvre (1835–1916). Febvre recalled that Mélingue advised foregoing the Conservatoire and instead joining troupes to “play, play a lot, everything and everywhere”, a suggestion that Febvre followed.<sup>603</sup> The value of provincial touring for young performers was even recognised by the Conservatoire's professors. Duprez, whose own formative experiences came in provincial French theatres before his time in Italy,<sup>604</sup> taught at the Conservatoire during the mid-century and founded his singing school in Paris in 1853 (the *École spéciale de chant*).<sup>605</sup> As part of his curriculum, the tenor prioritised organising provincial tours for his students in order to offer them practical experience in real theatres and with rowdy audiences.<sup>606</sup> In his words, these tours were essential to “develop, through practice, the talent of these young people, and to accustom them to the stage,”<sup>607</sup> echoing Samson's desire for his Dijon experience. At the same time, practical troupe experience could also be a leveller for artists who, unlike Febvre, did not have the luxury of even choosing whether to go to the Conservatoire, either because they failed the Conservatoire entrance exam,<sup>608</sup> or, if they came from the provinces, they were not offered a boarding

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<sup>601</sup> *JD*, 29/03/1823; *DB*, 13/08/1823.

<sup>602</sup> Maurice Alhoy, *Grande biographie dramatique*, 255.

<sup>603</sup> Febvre, *Journal d'un comédien*, 10.

<sup>604</sup> Gilbert Duprez, *Souvenirs d'un chanteur* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1880), 163–66.

<sup>605</sup> Girod and White, “La carrière du chanteur”, 117–8.

<sup>606</sup> Duprez, *Souvenirs d'un chanteur*, 189–200.

<sup>607</sup> *Idem*, 189.

<sup>608</sup> Two thirds of artists failed the audition, Girod and White, “La carrière du chanteur”, 117.

place in the *pensionnat* and had to finance their accommodation.<sup>609</sup> Bocage, born to textile workers in Rouen, for instance, was admitted to the Conservatoire but had to drop out due to financial problems.<sup>610</sup> Indeed, provincial students faced more challenges accessing formal artistic education than their Parisian peers throughout the nineteenth century as there were limited boarding places for men and even fewer for women.<sup>611</sup> This situation amplified the potential importance of training in provincial troupes for those who could not access the institutional musical and theatrical education offered in the capital.

Together, Duprez' plans, Samson and Bordas' paths, and the curriculum and mission of the Conservatoire highlight that provincial companies retained an essential national role in French artistic education during the nineteenth century because of their specialised training that supplemented the gaps in the Conservatoire curriculum and better prepared performers for a professional life in the popular theatres and provincial companies, a group of theatres that, numerically, outnumbered the high-art institutions of the capital throughout the century. In addition, at the touring theatre level, the importance of practical training offered in vaudeville by the provincial troupes highlights a rare moment in which a popular genre was more important to and unique within itinerant theatre culture than operatic repertoire and production.

The recognised importance of the artistic training, in general, offered by *troupes d'arrondissement* and wider provincial theatres, alongside the Conservatoire, is evident in the work of a number of nineteenth-century theatrical writers. Playwright Jean-Toussaint Merle described provincial troupes as "the nursery" for Parisian theatres, and a historic source of talent for the capital's opera companies in his books about dramatic and operatic art published in the 1820s.<sup>612</sup> Writer Maurice Alhoy also listed several performers in

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<sup>609</sup> Girod and White, "La carrière du chanteur", 118.

<sup>610</sup> Paul Ginisty, *Bocage* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1926), 7.

<sup>611</sup> Veber, *Samson*, 40–41.

<sup>612</sup> "la pépinière des théâtres de Paris doit être la province", Jean-Toussaint Merle, *De L'Opéra* (Paris: Badouin Frères, 1827), 17. Merle, *Du marasme dramatique* (Paris: Barba, 1829), 69.

resident and itinerant troupes in his 1824 biographies of celebrated artists, recognising provincial troupes as important within a narrative of national theatrical history.<sup>613</sup>

Numerous authors including Adolphe Aderer (1855 — 1923) reiterated a similar concept of provincial origins later in the century: Adere characterising the provinces as a “broth” that nourished performers for Paris when he looked back on the mid-century from 1894: nourishing if basic, he perhaps implied.<sup>614</sup> These sources demonstrate that theatrical professionals across the century upheld the importance of the educative provincial stages in order to shape the future of Parisian institutions, which, as Samson stated in the aforementioned quote from his memoir, were synonymous with the nation and the “French stage.” As these writers saw them, experiences such as Tisserand and Mélingue’s formative tours in northern France were not simply colourful anecdotes set aside from their Parisian celebrity, but the essential building blocks of their later national renown. These sentiments underline that Minister Corbière’s description of the tiers of the 1824 theatrical ordonnance as a training ground for the royal theatres and for French art should be read as part of a wider recognition of the importance of provincial troupes in shaping a national career ladder for artists and in contributing to the development of the nation’s art.

In the nineteenth-century theatrical world, the training function of the touring troupes make apparent two versions of French theatrical power hierarchies. On the one hand, the skill set needed in a *troupe d’arrondissement* defined provincial theatre as a separate world to Parisian companies, dependent on and training up stamina, flexibility and versatility that was not needed in the specialised theatres of the capital. On the other hand, the links made between formative provincial experiences and later Parisian success, both for individuals such as Samson and for the progress of the capital’s theatres more generally, gave the peripheries an important determining and leading power over the

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<sup>613</sup> Alhoy, *Grande biographie dramatique*.

<sup>614</sup> “le bouillon”, Adolphe Aderer, *Le théâtre à côté* (Paris: Ancienne Maison Quatin, 1894), vi-vii. See also Jean-Baptiste Fauré, *La voix et le chant* (Paris: Heugel, 1886), 5. Francisque Sarcey, *Quarante ans de théâtre: Feuillettons dramatiques* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Annales, 1900), 1: 6-7. Jules Claretie, *La vie moderne au théâtre* (Paris: Barba, 1869), 122.

centres. Together, these features redefined the place of the provinces as both distinctive and formative, rather than reactionary or obscure, in relation to national art and the French capital.

### Building a career

I have so far argued that provincial companies provided a place of national artistic education for performers in nineteenth century France. In the second half of this chapter, I pivot to focus on the career trajectories of itinerant performers in order to chart the repercussions of the *arrondissement* training on individuals' artistic pathways and the theatrical profession in general. The trajectories of stars such as Mélingue and others who made their way from touring troupes onto the Parisian stages certainly imply that the career ladder envisaged by the government from provinces to Paris could work in practice. After Mélingue abandoned the 2<sup>nd</sup> *troupe ambulante* in northern France in 1827, he joined a tour to the West Indies and later the residential company in Rouen before gaining a contract at the Porte-Saint-Martin in 1834.<sup>615</sup> Samson also worked his way through the ranks, from Dijon's small resident company and tours to Besançon through Rouen and to the Odéon in 1819.<sup>616</sup> Samson's positive account of his confidence training in the provinces and Mélingue's advice to Febvre to seek out practical experience suggests that these actors considered the skills that they learned in their initial troupe positions as essential in helping them graduate to a position in the larger company of Rouen and, from there, employment in the capital.

Yet these career moves also depended on key personal relations, a litany of them in Mélingue's case. Although Mélingue gained his 2<sup>nd</sup> *troupe ambulante* post through a regular audition, it was by presenting himself to the celebrated retired actress Joséphine Duchesnois that he was introduced to directors Alexandre Soumet, Jules Seveste and

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<sup>615</sup> Truffier, *Mélingue*, 18–25; Dumas, *Une vie d'artiste*, 313.

<sup>616</sup> Veber, *Samson*, 31.



Victor Marest, the latter of whom offered him the West Indies tour.<sup>617</sup> Mélingue's post in Rouen was similarly brokered through a personal connection with a man met on the West Indies tour, and his introduction to Alexandre Dumas *père* was brokered through Marie Dorval, who spotted the actor in Rouen while she was guest starring with the company.<sup>618</sup> It was then Dumas who presented Mélingue to Charles Harel and kick-started Mélingue's career at Harel's theatre, the Porte-Saint-Martin.<sup>619</sup> Mélingue's experience demonstrates that networking was essential in building up a career and especially one that culminated in Paris. Needless to say, this was not a feature that was explicitly mentioned in the concept of the national career ladder where it was implied that troupe training and hard graft naturally led to the next step in the performing profession. The importance of personal connections in the theatrical world, though, raises the question of whether the path from provinces to Paris actually existed, in practice, for a typical *troupe d'arrondissement* performer without these connections. In the second half of the chapter, I therefore investigate whether Mélingue and others' trajectories to Paris can be considered representative of the artistic opportunities open to troupe performers and, if not, what types of career paths were common for *arrondissement* artists. Surveying performers' careers in this way offers another insight into the shifting relationship between the peripheries and the centre, as shown by career trajectories.

The one-year contracts given to troupe performers catalysed near-constant mobility for many artists in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> *troupes d'arrondissement*. Only a few singers settled in a troupe for several years. Bernard, who played *troisième basse-taille* roles in opera and *premier comique* in *vaudeville*, for example, remained in the 9<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*

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<sup>617</sup> Truffier, *Mélingue*, 18–19. Duchesnois was a native of Valenciennes, opening the possibility that it was perhaps through a comical or desperate story about Mélingue's travails in this town that the actor gained her protection. Transatlantic career openings were quite common for performers of all ages, as many found work abroad in French colonies of La Réunion or Mauritius as well as closer to home in Belgium and the Netherlands. *CN*, 21/09/1862, *CN*, 09/03/1843, *GT*, 10/05/1835; Isidore Lolliot, *Revue pittoresque de l'île Maurice* (Port-Louis, Mauritius : s.n, 1842), 168, 176.

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.* 21, 25

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid.*

for at least nine seasons (1825–35) under four directors,<sup>620</sup> and Eugénie Durand, a *duègne* singer was part of Pépin's 6<sup>th</sup> *d'arrondissement* troupe from 1824 to 1830.<sup>621</sup> This type of longevity, though, was rare. It was common for *troupe d'arrondissement* singers to leave a troupe at the end of one year and, on average, most performers stayed in a company for just two seasons, patterns that echoed employment rates in residential French companies and in the Francophone orbit of New Orleans.<sup>622</sup> Besides Bernard, for example, troupe membership in the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* was more varied than constant: only four of the 1826–7 troupe run by new director Claparède's performed with Maillart's company the year before, and only six out of these 21 singers returned to Claparède's group for 1827–8 season.<sup>623</sup> Troupes were most likely to change completely when a new director was appointed,<sup>624</sup> and in some regions, this was a yearly occurrence as director upon director fell into financial ruin.<sup>625</sup> Even when there was a more stable director, though, more artists moved between troupes than remained year on year. Director Guillaume Bertéché managed the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* between 1835–1848, for example, yet his long tenure only marginally increased singers' stability: between the 1838–9 and 1839–40 seasons nine out of 20 singers renewed their contracts,<sup>626</sup> and five out of 19 singers did so between 1846–7 and 1847–8.<sup>627</sup> These examples suggest that it was usual for artists to look for new positions in a different geographic location at the end of their yearly

<sup>620</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1825*, 435; *Almanach des spectacles pour 1827*, 334. *Almanach des spectacles pour 1829*, 335. AN F/21/1258, letter from the Prefect of Doubs to the Minister, 11/08/1830; Troupe list (Milhès), 1830–1; Troupe list (Claparède), 29/11/1831; Troupe list (Arnaud-Brunet), 1834–5. Bernard was the stage name for Frédéric Gaspard Musy.

<sup>621</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1825*, 428; *Almanach des spectacles pour 1829*, 332; *Almanach des spectacles pour 1830*, 318, 362.

<sup>622</sup> Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 258–262; Bentley, 'Resituating Transatlantic Opera', 72.

<sup>623</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1826*, 334–5; *Almanach des spectacles pour 1827*, 334–5.

<sup>624</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1826*, 357–8; *Almanach des spectacles pour 1827*, 320–1.

<sup>625</sup> Financial troubles in the *arrondissements* were often raised by Prefects to the Ministry: AN, F/21/1251, Letter from the Prefect of Finistère to the Minister, 31/12/1852.

<sup>626</sup> See for example, troupe stability in Bertéché's companies for 1838 and 1839: AN F/21/1235, troupe lists, 24/08/1838; 19/04/1839. but also crossovers in the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* in the switch from directors Maillart to Claparède: AN F/21/1258, tableau de troupe, 20/04/1825; *Almanach des spectacles pour 1827*, 334–5.

<sup>627</sup> AN F/21/1236, troupe list, 1846–7; troupe list, 14/07/1847.

*arrondissement* contract, or perhaps not uncommon for performers to be forced by a director to leave a troupe.<sup>628</sup>

Performers might scatter far and wide at the end of a season, but there are discernible patterns of artistic movement within the provinces. Columns printed in northern newspapers highlight that the careers of performers working in travelling troupes were not restricted to itinerant theatre circuits. A journalist for *Le courrier du nord* tracked the movements of artists out of the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* for the 1830-1 season, showing how several singers moved into residential companies. Performer Alexandre and his wife, *dugazon* singer Mme Saint-Armand, won contracts in Orléans; Batiste, a *Martin*, joined Boulogne, second *basse-taille* Auguste moved to Brest, Mme Lejai went to Liège, and Mme Raoul was cast in Calais.<sup>629</sup> A similar column printed in *L'Impartial du nord* regarding the 1839-40 season showed that touring performers moved on to engagements in residential theatres in Le Havre and Marseille.<sup>630</sup> The career moves of these troupe members imply that performers who were engaged in itinerant circuits could access employment in sedentary companies with ease. These transitions suggest that the *troupe d'arrondissement* experience routinely allowed singers and actors to scale the second rung of the national theatrical ladder. A leap from the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* to Brest or Marseilles, for example, defined a move upwards within the rungs of the theatrical hierarchy outlined by the 1824 legislation.

The shift from an itinerant to a residential company was a move that embodied the first steps of theatrical progressions through the conceptualised training ground. Yet these career moves should not be regarded as one-way progressions up a ladder that led away from the *troupes d'arrondissement* to a residential company. In fact, it appears that two-

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<sup>628</sup> Some artists were not invited to renew their contract, for example Mlle Delattre in Delorme's troupe, to the disappointment of critics: *EF*, 17/06/1829.

<sup>629</sup> *CN*, 04/10/1830.

<sup>630</sup> *ADN*, JX/506/1839, *IN*, 30/03/1839.

way circulation between the itinerant and residential provincial stages was extremely common within performers' careers. This is exemplified by the career of soprano Eléonore Voituriez.<sup>631</sup> Voituriez was a singer employed in Claparède's 9<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* between 1826–7, alongside her husband (a *second chef d'orchestre*).<sup>632</sup> In the next season, they moved west into the employ of director Vidal in the 8<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* (Côte d'Or, Saône-et-Loire, Ain, Jura),<sup>633</sup> but in the 1829–30 season followed Vidal back as he took directorship of the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*.<sup>634</sup> Between 1830 and 1832, Mme Voituriez was then employed as a *première chanteuse* in the resident company at Amiens. She reintegrated the touring circuit in May 1832, joining the 12<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* for three years,<sup>635</sup> under directors Pastelot and Provence.<sup>636</sup> Mme Voituriez moved again in May 1835, to the 13<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* (Haute-Vienne, Vienne, Dordogne, Charente, Corrèze),<sup>637</sup> but by September returned to a resident company at Limoges.<sup>638</sup> She spent four years here before moving to another sedentary troupes in Orléans (by January 1838),<sup>639</sup> and Bruges (by July 1839).<sup>640</sup> In all of these troupes, Mme Voituriez sang *grand opéra*, *traduction* and *opéra-comique* roles, including Isabelle in Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Robert*,<sup>641</sup> Rosina in Rossini's *Le barbier de Seville*,<sup>642</sup> and Anna in *La dame blanche* (1816).<sup>643</sup>

Mme Voituriez' appointments reveal that this soprano easily moved backwards and forwards between touring and resident provincial companies during a ten-year segment of her career. These moves are representative of a greater trend. Director Seymours' *tableau*

<sup>631</sup> Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens*, supplementary volume 2: 710.

<sup>632</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1827*, 334–5.

<sup>633</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1828*, 334. *JCo*, 14/05/1829.

<sup>634</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1830*, 323 (spelling mistake 'Taituriez').

<sup>635</sup> The departments of Puy-de-Dôme, Nièvre, Cher, Allier, Haute-Loire, Loire, Cantal.

<sup>636</sup> *GT*, 06/05/1832; 18/05/1834; 16/11/1834. For this move, Voituriez appears to have separated from her husband, who remained as *maître de musique* in Amiens. *GT*, 07/06/1832.

<sup>637</sup> *GT*, 21/05/1835

<sup>638</sup> *GT*, 17/07/1836; 14/08/1836; 28/10/1836. Limoges had a resident theatre from 1825. Marc Précicaud, *Le théâtre lyrique à Limoges, 1800–1914* (Presses Univ. Limoges, Limoges, 2001), 64. This resident company occasionally toured to Poitiers and Angoulême (*GT*, 19/05/1836; 07/07/1836).

<sup>639</sup> *RT*, 03/01/1838.

<sup>640</sup> *LMD*, 18/07/1839

<sup>641</sup> *GT*, 16/11/1834.

<sup>642</sup> *GT*, 16/07/1835.

<sup>643</sup> *Ibid.*

*de troupe* from the 1841-2 season, for example, shows that all of the artists employed in his 6<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* that season came from various residential theatres (Besançon and Bayonne,<sup>644</sup> Limoges, Nantes, Reims, Amiens, Montpellier, Anvers, Strasbourg, Lille and Boulogne).<sup>645</sup> There were undeniably advantages to moving into a company with a fixed location, especially since salaries tended to be better in residential theatres because of municipal funding.<sup>646</sup> Yet these sources attest to the fact that it was as common for performers to move in both directions between residential and touring companies.<sup>647</sup> This is significant, I argue, because it reveals the practical artistic porosity between sedentary and itinerant troupes. This, in turn, suggests that there was no tangible hierarchy for these singers between the tiers of provincial theatre, as described in the 1824 legislation.

Although there were vast differences between the performing conditions of a large company such as the Grand Théâtre Bordeaux and the 16<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*, these distinctions did not stop artists moving from the former into the latter: as singers Jeandron and Charles Zo did in 1845.<sup>648</sup>

The porous provincial sphere, in terms of artists' careers, though, did not mean that all opportunities were equal from the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* to Bordeaux. In fact, artists likely chose certain career changes within the provinces in order to progress personal goals or artistic desires. Regional affiliation and preference were one factor that could be influential in determining contract choices. Director Filhol, for one, described in a letter that he gave up his position in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* in the 1850s to search for a position in the south because the northern climate was detrimental to his wife's health.<sup>649</sup> The stability of a residential troupe may also have prompted singers to search for new contracts, and there were likely regional networks that enabled performers' visibility, and potential career

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<sup>644</sup> These became resident in 1836 and 1840.

<sup>645</sup> AN, F/21/1250, troupe list (Seymour), 23/07/1841; ADM, 1/Z/197, troupe list (Seymour) 1841-2.

<sup>646</sup> ADG, 167/T/13, list of troupe salaries, August 1857.

<sup>647</sup> The *troupes ambulantes* show same patterns, with performers joining the travelling group from positions in resident theatres: AN, F/21/1250, troupe list (Morel-Bazin), 1841-1842. AN, F/21/1234, troupe list (Tony) 1830-31.

<sup>648</sup> AN, F/21/1278, troupe list (Hermant), 1845-6; troupe list (Hermant), 1855-6.

<sup>649</sup> AN, F/21/1237, letter from Filhol to the Prefect of the Nord, 08/08/1862.

prospects, within a certain radius of their *arrondissement*. Several artists from the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe*, for example, found employment in the resident troupes of Calais, Lille, Boulougne or Douai situated in the same two departments after leaving the touring circuit.<sup>650</sup> These types of short-distance leap not only indicate the local attachments likely felt by these performers to the northern region, but also the potential influence of personal connections in the region over casting.<sup>651</sup>

Some singers such as Mme Voituriez might also follow a favoured director across the *arrondissements*. Moreover, troupe lists suggest that not only couples, but other combinations of artists travelled in groups between their contracts, negotiating the same new engagements. Artists with no familial or personal connections, at least as recorded in troupe lists, travelled together across France: Jeandron and Charles Zo moved from Bordeaux to the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* together in 1844,<sup>652</sup> while singers Choery Meunier, Frédéric Miroir, Mme Charlotte Gouthier from the 16<sup>th</sup> *troupe* all took up new contracts under Seymour in the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* in 1841.<sup>653</sup> These shared pathways raise several possibilities: either that there were practices of group casting taking place in the annual Parisian casting sessions; that it performers valued the opportunity to move communally with colleagues between contracts; or that theatrical agents configured group moves from one troupe to another.<sup>654</sup> It would, after all, have been an advantage for director to employ an ensemble who already knew each other's skills and on-stage habits to facilitate the start of the new season.

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<sup>650</sup> AN, F/21/1237, letter from the Sub-Prefect of Douai to the Prefect of the Nord, 23/03/1854. EF, 01/04/1829.

<sup>651</sup> Paccard, *Mémoires et confessions d'un comédien*, 309. Alphonse Lemonnier also stressed the importance of personal connections to advance in a career: *Les petits mystères de la vie théâtrale, souvenirs d'un homme de théâtre* (Paris: Stock, 1895), 77–9.

<sup>652</sup> AN, F/21/1278, troupe list (Hermant), 1845–6.

<sup>653</sup> AN, F/21/1250, troupe list (Seymour), 23/07/1841.

<sup>654</sup> Little is currently known about the work of theatrical agents, although I have come across several letters from various agents in the course of this project, including Auguste Maillart (ex. Director of the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* in the 1820s) and Arthur Pougin. It is obvious from these letters that many directors found a new position through an agent, whose duty it was to write to mayors and prefects to suggest a candidate for an open position. Agents also acted on behalf of singers, and it was common practice for an agency to publish details of available singers and their *emplois* in newspapers. Further research is required to examine the exact dynamics through which agents controlled and/or collaborated casting and the makeup of a troupe, and their relationships with municipalities and directors.

A change of company could also mean new artistic opportunities. For singers such as Duchaumont, employed in the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* in 1827–8,<sup>655</sup> there was clear career progression in terms of his changing *emploi* available through moves between companies. The tenor scaled through the ranks available to provincial singers during the first eighteen years of his career as he journeyed around France. From lowly beginnings as a chorus member and *utilité* (a performer who played walk-on/small roles in any genre) at the Bordeaux Théâtre des Gaîtés (1817–19),<sup>656</sup> he rose to one of two *Elleviou* (first tenor) in Dellemence's 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe arrondissement* ten years later, passing through several intermediate positions.<sup>657</sup> The desire to leverage an *emploi* that was higher in troupe hierarchies, offered leading roles and, accordingly, provided greater financial remuneration, was likely one of several factors that catalysed movement between troupes of different sizes for many singers, including Duchaumont. Indeed, Duchaumont's career suggests that scaling the artistic hierarchies of the *emplois* were more important to him than the legislated and perceived hierarchical "orders" of different companies. He left the Bordeaux Théâtre Français (the second Bordeaux company with which he had a contract between 1820–1823) and the equally well-reputed Marseille opera troupe (1824 to c. 1827) for the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* and later gave up a job in the residential troupes of Calais (1829–31) and Lille (1832) to take on a position as sole first tenor (*Elleviou*) in the 5<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*.<sup>658</sup> These types of career moves emphasise that performers moving in and out of travelling troupes did so as part of provincial-wide career moves, in which they straddled the demands of residential and itinerant companies, but were also able to advance personal priorities or artistic development.

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<sup>655</sup> EF, 07/10/1829.

<sup>656</sup> L'*Indicateur général des spectacles de Paris* (Paris: Almanach du Commerce, 1819), 162.

<sup>657</sup> EF, 07/10/1829.

<sup>658</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1830*, 288. GT, 26/07/1832; 23/04/1835.

## Pathways to Paris

If mobility between sedentary and touring troupes was the norm, how prevalent was the move from the provinces to Paris? The *troupes d'arrondissement* boasted various success stories besides Tisserand and Mélingue. Their success was also shared by women:

Hortense Schneider began her career in the 15<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* before transferring to the Bouffes-Parisiennes,<sup>659</sup> and Victoria Lafontaine (née Valous) gained her formative experiences under director Hermant in the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement troupe* before achieving fame at the Gymnase and Comédie-Française.<sup>660</sup> Hermant emphasised the educative role of provincial troupes in such successes: in a letter to the Minister written in 1862, the director claimed that he had “trained several artists, who now shine on the Parisian theatres” in his travelling company, including Lafontaine, who had “only played in my troupe” before her Gymnase *début*.<sup>661</sup> As in Mélingue's case, though, personal relations also helped achieve Parisian positions: however excellent Hermant's training, Lafontaine's ticket out of the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* came through the influence of composer Loïsa Puget who lived in Pau in her later life but retained important connections in the capital and leveraged Lafontaine's transfer from the south-west touring troupe into Paris.<sup>662</sup>

Without such connections, most singers found it difficult to go straight from the travelling troupe to securing a contract with a Parisian theatre. This was not for lack of visibility of their work in the *arrondissements*. In the 1820s and 30s, Duchauumont, Mlle Martin, and Petit-Welter from the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* and Walter from the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe ambulante* all managed to become known enough to Parisian managers that they were offered *débuts* in the capital. Duchauumont had his first stab at the Théâtre des Variétés in 1823 but ended

<sup>659</sup> Bould, “The Lyric Theatre in Provincial France”, 203.

<sup>660</sup> *EV*, 01/05/1868, *IBP*, 19/01/1884; *LG*, 05/12/1889; *VV*, 09/12/1889. As seen in these columns, the provincial origins of these actresses became part of the received narrative of their rise to stardom from obscure beginnings, much like Mélingue and Samson.

<sup>661</sup> AN, F/21/1278, letter from Hermant to the Minister, 02/07/1862.

<sup>662</sup> Judy Tsou and William Cheng, ‘Lois Puget’, *Grove Music Online* [online].



up in Montpellier after failing his *débuts*.<sup>663</sup> According to the *Courrier du Nord*, eight years later the tenor had a second chance in the capital, called to *début* at the Opéra-Comique in Michele Carafa's *Masaniello* (1827) in 1831.<sup>664</sup> This chance too, , appears to have fallen through, or his disappointing performance was glossed over by critics, as there is no record of his performance in Parisian newspapers, and the tenor was later employed in Brussels for the 1831-2 season.<sup>665</sup> Mlle Denise Martin, who was part of Delorme's troupe 1828-9,<sup>666</sup> made her *débuts* at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in 1829 but was not successful enough to stay in the capital.<sup>667</sup> Neither was Walter, employed as a *jeune premier* in Sollé's *ambulante* troupe 1825-7,<sup>668</sup> who *débuted* at the Ambigu-Comique in 1827,<sup>669</sup> nor Petit-Welter (sometimes referred to only as Welter) who tried out at the Opéra-Comique in 1829 after seasons at Le Havre and with the 7<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* troupes (1828-9).<sup>670</sup> Coming from a different theatrical region, Mme Rabi also gained a *début* for the Opéra-Comique in 1844 straight from the 12<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, but she, too, was unsuccessful.<sup>671</sup>

Even though none succeeded, the fact that these five artists were called to *début* at three different theatres that produced genres with singing and spoken dialogue (the Opéra-Comique, Ambigu and Vaudeville) testifies to the recognized plural performance strength of a *troupe d'arrondissement* experience in preparing recruits with facility in speech and song. These examples confirm what Merle described as the key strength of practical troupe formation at this time: the breeding of performance skills in switching between singing and speaking, feats in a vaudeville context that were, as mentioned, not trained at the

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<sup>663</sup> *GT*, 17/09/1823; *LCor*, 25/09/1823.

<sup>664</sup> *CN*, 19/04/1831; *EF*, 02/04/1831. Lyonnet's dictionary suggests that there are three Duchaumonts working in the provinces (*Dictionnaire des comédiens*, 1: 583), presumably because the singer's *emplois* changed, yet newspaper sources suggest these are the same. His son Frédéric was also an actor.

<sup>665</sup> Jacques Isnardon, *Le Théâtre de La Monnaie depuis sa fondation jusqu'à nos jours* (Brussels: Schott frères, 1890), 244.

<sup>666</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1829*, 323.

<sup>667</sup> *JCo*, 17/05/1829; *EF*, 09/05/1829; *LCor*, 29/04/1829; *EF*, 13/05/1829. The Valenciennes reviewer hoped that Mlle Martin would return to the 1<sup>st</sup> troupe, but she appears to have found a contract in Toulouse (Lyonnet, *Dictionnaire des comédiens français*, 2: 401).

<sup>668</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1826*, 358.

<sup>669</sup> *PAV*, 05/05/1827.

<sup>670</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1829*, 322.

<sup>671</sup> *LFT*, 28/04/1844.

Conservatoire.<sup>672</sup> That these artists' were allocated these *débuts* suggests that the *troupes d'arrondissement* were recognised as a theatrical sphere where the performers' skills across all genres shaped performers to an appropriate standard to at least be called up for a trial run in the capital's companies producing declaiming-singing genres.

At the same time, though, Petit-Welter, Walter and Mlle Martin's failed *débuts* suggest that there was, in practice, more separation than porosity between Parisian and provincial theatre spheres during this period. Indeed, the critical reaction to their performances brings into focus some of the challenges inherent to making a mark on the capital's institutions. First there was the conceptual barrier. Reviewers' accounts of the performers' *débuts* displayed a pervasive association of the provincial with mediocrity. Mlle Martin was described as having certain "habits of the provinces" by the Parisian critic for *Le corsaire*.<sup>673</sup> Similarly, the critic for *Le Figaro* could not resist making a barbed comment that what was pleasing in Dunkerque, where Walter had last performed, did not cut the mustard in Paris, describing Walter as "one of the millions of French actors arriving in Paris from the provinces....who would be better to stay away."<sup>674</sup> Such reviews imparted clichéd prejudice towards the provinces as a whole, reiterating Paris at the top of the theatrical hierarchy and keeping the provinces distant from the capital's cultural life. Indeed, describing any artist's performance or mannerism as 'provincial' was shorthand for mediocre or inexperienced in the Parisian press vocabulary, and a predisposition to see performers from outside Paris as lacking, formed part of the wider centralist view of the backward provinces evident in broader literary and social discourse.<sup>675</sup>

Second, Petit-Welter and Walter's experiences reveal the uneasy centre-periphery dynamics at play within potential career progression by highlighting the importance of

<sup>672</sup> Merle, *Du marasme dramatique*, 14, 16.

<sup>673</sup> "habitudes de province", *CT*, 29/04/1829.

<sup>674</sup> *LF*, 09/05/1827.

<sup>675</sup> Martel, "Province/provincial", 25-34; Gerson, 'Une France Locale: The Local Past in Recent French Scholarship'. Stendhal described several of his characters as behaving like provincial actors in order to accentuate their ineptness in Parisian society, Martine Reid, "« Rires » (sur Lucien Leuwen)", *Stendhal et le comique*, ed., Daniel Sangsue (Grenoble: Ellug, 1999), 195.

Parisian networks. The *basse-taille* Petit-Welter appears to have landed his audition through journalistic talent scouting. He was already known to the Parisian press as he had studied singing at the Conservatoire. Consequently, in September 1828, a journalist from *Le corsaire* “called the attention of the directors [of the Feydeau and Odéon] towards the talents of Mr Petit-Welter and his wife Mlle Ozouf”, recalling their Parisian training and describing how they were “at the moment collecting their laurels in the provinces.”<sup>676</sup> It is unclear if the press did play a brokering role in talent scouting him but, by 1<sup>st</sup> April Petit-Welter had received his *début* order for Feydeau, causing him to pull out of renewing his contract with the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* troupe director Delorme.<sup>677</sup> Walter’s *débuts* two years earlier also emphasised the advantages of being part of a Parisian network. The comic singer gathered mixed reviews at the Ambigu in his April and May 1827 *débuts*, but the commentary, again from the *Corsaire* journalist, stated that above all Walter needed to “familiarise himself with the public and accustom [the public] to himself.”<sup>678</sup> A sentence previously, the journalist had referred to the success of Walter’s co-*débutant*, Mme Roux, in getting her Ambigu engagement, emphasising that “we have already seen her at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin.”<sup>679</sup> For this critic, Mme Roux’s previous experience in Paris was the key to her success, whereas Walter’s unfamiliarity from Parisian audiences and customs was his downfall. Together, Petit-Welter’s and Walter’s experiences demonstrates that previous familiarity with the Parisian theatrical world was an important advantage for performers.

A third challenge for provincial performers attempting the Paris stages was the mismatch between the performance skills needed in the capital compared to those on which they relied in the provinces, as brought forth by the criticism of Mlle Martin and Walter in their

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<sup>676</sup> *LCo*, 25/09/1828.

<sup>677</sup> *PAV*, 28/02/1829; 01/04/1829. The local critic reasoned that this was merited, since Petit-Welter had a “belle voix”, yet he stated to readers that the performer would need to start singing in tune if he didn’t want to fall foul of the axiom: “tel brille au second rang s’éclipse au premier.”

<sup>678</sup> *LCo*, 24/04/1827.

<sup>679</sup> *LCo*, 24/04/1827.

1820s *débuts*. Journalists' reviews suggested that these artists had no place in capital because they did not perform their roles or genres in the way that Parisian audiences, and critics, expected. For one, there was the problem of choosing a *début* genre when jumping from a multi-genre *troupe d'arrondissement* to Paris. A regional critic reporting Walter's Parisian fate, for example, suggested that the singer had made the wrong choice of *début* roles in the *vaudevilles* *Le concert de village* (1823, by Charles Hubert and Prosper Mars), the *vaudeville-mélodrame* *Amélie Mansfield* (1825, by Philippe-Jacques de Laroche) and the Pixérécourt *mélodrame* *L'homme à trois visages* (1818).<sup>680</sup> Similarly, the critic for the Valenciennes' *Petites affiches* drew on a column from the *Journal d'Arras* to echo the opinion that Walter did not succeed in Paris because he *débuted* in the genre of melodrama, and "it is thought that he would have succeeded in *comédie*."<sup>681</sup> This comment suggests that Walter perhaps fell afoul of his multi-genre versatility: with many to choose from, it was difficult to know how to switch from genre porosity to specialism for the capital. When you only had once chance, though, which genre to embrace became a significant strategic question about how best to transfer from province to capital.

Even when a provincial performer *had* chosen one genre with which to *début* in Paris, though, there remained the related problem of the refinement of the multiple roles *within* a genre that one played as part of an itinerant troupe. The critic for the *Courrier des tribunaux*, for example, suggested that Mlle Martin had chosen roles that "were not in harmony with her physique" in the *vaudeville* characters of Cécile in *La somnambule* (1819, by Scribe and Germain Delavigne) and Olivier in Rossini's *Le comte Ory* (1828).<sup>682</sup> Martin was employed as the *première chanteuse* of Dellemence's troupe, and the 1828-9 review of the troupe in the *Echo de la frontière* reveals that she appeared 229 times during the season, including five *opéra-comiques* and 19 *vaudevilles*.<sup>683</sup> She evidently had ample

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<sup>680</sup> *LF*, 22/04/1827.

<sup>681</sup> "Il est d'avis qu'il aurait obtenu des succès dans la comédie", *PAV*, 09/05/1827.

<sup>682</sup> "en harmonie avec son physique." *CT*, 29/04/1829.

<sup>683</sup> *EF*, 11/04/1829.

experience in the genre in which she *débuted* in Paris. Indeed, she was particularly praised in one review for her turn in the title role of the *Reine de seize ans* (1828, by Bayard) in Valenciennes.<sup>684</sup> Yet the mismatch between her physique and the Parisian *Courrier* journalists' view of the characters of Cécile and Olivier suggests that Martin was perhaps used to performing a range of *vaudeville* characters that would, elsewhere, be taken on by many different women, of different sizes, stature or looks. The Vaudeville company in Paris, for example, had twice the number of female performers than the entire 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* troupe.<sup>685</sup> Although Martin's physique might have been acceptable for all of the leading *vaudeville* roles in Valenciennes, the *Corsaire* review implies the need for more distinction in which types of performing body could take on a particular role in Paris, the likely source of her downfall. Parisian critics and audiences, it seems, prioritised a strict allegiance to typecasting and the *emploi's* most specific categorisations that was at odds with provincial troupe practices. Mlle Martin and Walter's experiences thus emphasise that the provincial artists' trained versatility had the potential to inhibit performers when transferring onto the specialised Parisian stages. In this way, the *arrondissement* skill set defined the touring troupe as an artistic sphere that stood apart from, and could not easily mesh with, the capital.

Unlike the four singers who failed their 1820s Parisian *débuts*, Mélingue and Tisserand were successful in bridging the gap between the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* and the capital. They achieved their initial Parisian positions after contracts in Rouen.<sup>686</sup> Their trajectories reveal that, while touring companies fostered a skill set and daily working conditions that contrasted with Parisian demands, the group of large residential companies with more specialised performance troupes was pivotal for artists' careers. Companies such as

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<sup>684</sup> Ibid.

<sup>685</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1828*, 148.

<sup>686</sup> Rouen was known for its notoriously critical public, Inès Rieul, "Le public de théâtre à Rouen sous la Monarchie de juillet", in *Le public de province au XIXe siècle, actes de la journée d'étude organisée le 21 février 2007 par Sophie-Anne Leterrier à l'Université d'Artois (Arras)* (Online: publications numériques du CÉRÉdl: 2009) vol. 2.

Rouen, Marseille, Lyon, Toulouse, and Bordeaux allowed performers to straddle a dual role in the nation's theatrical sphere: as part of the pan-provincial career network, but also leveraging contact with and introduction to Paris. This was partly because of the increased visibility of these large, permanent companies in the national theatrical sphere compared with itinerant troupes. Critics for newspapers such *Journal des théâtres*, for example, most frequently reported on performances and artists from large municipal companies because these theatres were next in scale to Paris. Additionally, though, the more specialised working patterns, as described earlier, of these large sedentary companies enabled artists to move closer to brokering a Parisian contract. Moving to performing only sung genres and not *comédie*, or even one type of opera in a theatre such as Toulouse or Bordeaux, for example, gave performers a steppingstone in the refinement of the artistic skill set for a Parisian contract, the shift in working practices that a performer such as Mlle Martin was lacking. Indeed, Lyonnet's dictionary records several entries for singers and actors who bridged the gap between Lyon, Marseille, Rouen and the capital, and this type of stepping stone was certainly instrumental for Mme Rabi later in her career. After failing her Opéra-Comique *début* in 1843, Rabi left the 12<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* to sing with the residential Bayonne and later Toulouse companies.<sup>687</sup> After three years in the southwest, she leveraged an audition at the Opéra in 1846 which won her a contract with the theatre.<sup>688</sup> Within the provincial theatrical sphere, larger provincial companies thus allowed artists to move away the hallmark skills needed in the itinerant troupes and to shift towards Parisian norms. For some, however, transfer to Paris came at a price: Rabi had been the *première chanteuse* of the 12<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* and the "prima donna" of Bayonne,<sup>689</sup> but was downgraded to the bottom of the operatic hierarchy to a *utilité* contract at the Opéra (a

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<sup>687</sup> *JT*, 25/09/1844, 22/08/1845, *LFM*, 08/06/1845.

<sup>688</sup> Charles Hervey, *The Theatres of Paris* (London: Galignani and Company, 1847), 43; *La revue nouvelle* (Paris: Au Bureau de la Revue Nouvelle, 1846), 46.

<sup>689</sup> *JT*, 27/11/1844

singer who would be used to fill in for any role, usually a small part).<sup>690</sup> The capital may have been the top of the provincial ladder, but, when achieved, the capital's institutions did not always allow performers to continue their individual artistic progression.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the *troupes d'arrondissement* held a significant role in French artistic education during the nineteenth century. These provincial troupes provided essential training for budding performers that contrasted with the skills taught in the Paris Conservatoire, particularly in terms of dramatic training. The mentorship and learning process of a typical troupe nurtured the plural genre skills needed in provincial companies plus knowledge of genres needed for the capital's popular stages, as well as offering practical experience treading the boards that some, like Samson, considered integral to his later work in the royal theatres. This process reappraised the perceived distance between an obscure province and bright lights of the capital as seen in Tisserand and Mélingue's Valenciennes' origin narratives. Indeed, these practices allowed companies such as the *troupes d'arrondissement* to fill a gap in educational provision and underlined how the Conservatoire's curriculum and mission did not, in fact, serve the theatrical needs of the entire nation. Instead, the versatility, adaptability, and cross-genre performance practices that characterised a particular *arrondissement* skillset, plus the practical experience of treading the boards in front of provincial audiences, were, in fact, recognised by nineteenth-century performers, writers and even the government as an integral sphere of theatrical tuition for national theatrical standards and practices. With its particular skill set and its own national task for theatrical learning, the provincial troupe thus represented an artistic sphere that was significant in its distinctions from the capital's artistic practice, but at the same time also formative for the theatrical progress and state of Parisian companies

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<sup>690</sup> *RGM*, 02/08/1846. She was paid 3,600fr a year. 300fr a month was around equivalent for a *première chanteuse* salary in the *troupes d'arrondissement*, so she was only artistically, but not financially, downgraded.

and the wider nation. In this way, the educative role given to provincial troupes challenged part of the traditional centre-to-periphery dynamics existent in the French theatrical marketplace because this model of theatrical training suggested that provincial theatre, and particularly touring troupes, had consequences for Parisian companies and for the state of the capital's dramatic art.

In part due to the separation between provincial Parisian companies, however, it must be admitted that there remained practical challenges for the members of the *troupes d'arrondissement* to scale the theatrical hierarchies to the capital during the nineteenth century. It appears that the mentoring and specialised skills offered in an itinerant troupe could only get you so far. Instead, the role of large provincial theatres was crucial to facilitating career progression: in large companies such as Bordeaux, the skills of a touring troupe could be refocused, through the larger institution's working practices, into being more suitable for Paris. These larger companies, then, exhibited their own national task and specific relationships with the French centre, emphasising how all peripheries were not the same within the nation. At the same time, the recognition that the provinces as a whole, including the different theatrical features of a touring or resident company, formed a pathway to Paris also silently reinscribed the importance of the capital at the pinnacle of national theatrical tradition and centre of the political imaginary. In this way, the *troupes d'arrondissement* also exhibited cultural centralism working precisely as intended *through* the rehabilitation of the theatrical worth and function of these provincial itinerant companies from obscure to formative.



## Chapter 4

### *Grand opéra* as touring repertoire

On 13 March 1830, in a disgruntled letter printed in the Valenciennes newspaper *L'Écho de la Frontière*, an anonymous theatre subscriber took issue with the upcoming local premiere of Daniel Auber's *La muette de Portici* (1828). The "amateur de spectacle" disparaged the work of 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe arrondissement* director, Henri Delorme, in his first year in the role:<sup>691</sup> he stated that the director neglected Valenciennes in his itinerary and suggested that Delorme was staging *La muette*, the town's first *grand opéra*, in an attempt to win back audiences' trust. Most of all, though the subscriber feared that Delorme would present "his *Muette* reduced to the size of his troupe."<sup>692</sup> This northern French theatregoer was actively concerned about *how* touring troupes would stage *La muette*, anticipating what he believed would be disappointing cuts and changes, most likely musical, dramatic or to the *mise-en-scène*.<sup>693</sup> The subscriber's worries reveal the tension involved in the dissemination of *grand opéra* to the touring theatrical circuit: while the theatregoer acknowledged that pieces needed adapting to local circumstances, he implied that "reducing" *La muette* to the resources of an itinerant company was an artistic process that would be disparaged by some audience members, potentially dampening the arrival of a prestigious new genre in Valenciennes.

The subscriber's letter prompts several questions: what constituted a non-reduced, one might say 'complete', *Muette* performance idealised by this spectator; how was the premiere of Auber's *grand opéra* actually staged by Delorme while on tour; and how was production received by Valenciennes spectators? Together, these questions encapsulate the complexities at play in the circulation of the Académie's large-scale *grand opéra* to

<sup>691</sup> *EF*, 13/03/1830. The critic writing for the *Journal de Valenciennes* voiced a similar concern, *JV*, 16/03/1830.

<sup>692</sup> "sa *Muette* raccourcie à la taille de sa troupe", *EF*, 13/03/1830.

<sup>693</sup> The editors of the *Écho* included a comment on this letter, stating that, although the writer's accusations were perhaps too strong, they agreed that Delorme had not always brought exacting care to his performances in Valenciennes.

small-scale environments such as the touring circuit, particularly in terms of the artistic practices expected in pieces such as *La muette*. The presence of *grand opéra* on the French touring circuit, though, has not yet been acknowledged by scholars due to the assumption that the scale of *grand opéra* meant it was not performed by travelling troupes.<sup>694</sup> The resources of an itinerant company certainly differed greatly from those of the Académie. During the July Monarchy, this Parisian theatre employed more than 80 musicians, almost 80 chorus members and the same number of supernumeraries, plus additional children.<sup>695</sup> A team of 60 *machinistes* worked to showcase lavish, historically-inspired decors of *La muette* and its complex stage effects, such as the eruption of Vesuvius.<sup>696</sup> Delorme's 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*, by contrast, included only 17 singers in the 1829–30 season.<sup>697</sup> The troupe did not tour with their own crew, decors or orchestra, but relied on municipal stock backdrops, a handful of locally-recruited *machinistes* and a group of around 20 orchestral musicians.<sup>698</sup> Furthermore, before March 1830, Delorme's performers, like their counterparts across the French touring system, did not habitually perform any of the Académie's repertoire. The 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement's* repertoire instead consisted of *opéra-comique*, *vaudeville* and spoken theatre, and, from the late 1820s, translations of Rossini's operas arranged into *opéra-comique* form by Castil-Blaze.<sup>699</sup> The difference between the Académie and the troupe's resources suggests that the subscriber's concern about the scale of *La muette* in Valenciennes was certainly justified.

Not only did Delorme bring *La muette* and *grand opéra* to the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* for the first time, though, but successive directors followed his lead. Between 1830–64, almost all of the Académie's new repertoire was staged in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*.<sup>700</sup> Directors in the

<sup>694</sup> Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 214.

<sup>695</sup> Karin Pendle, *Eugène Scribe and French Opera of the Nineteenth Century* (Ann Arbor: UNI Research Press, 1979), 50, quoting manager Dr Louis Véron.

<sup>696</sup> Ibid.

<sup>697</sup> AN, F/21/1234, troupe list, Delorme, 03/06/1829.

<sup>698</sup> Féret, *Théâtre et pouvoir*, 145.

<sup>699</sup> AMV, J/8/25, repertoire lists (Dupré-Nyon), 13/03/1821, 16/04/1822 ; 11/05/1822. PAV, 08/03/1828 (Rossini's *La dame du lac*); 06/09/1828 (*Le barbier de Séville*).

<sup>700</sup> Archives Nationales, F/21/1234–7.

6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> also began to programme *grand opéra* in many seasons shortly after 1830.<sup>701</sup>

The arrival of *La muette* on the touring circuit marked a turning point within the history of provincial musical culture as the arrival of *grand opéra* had significant repercussions for the artistic work of troupe performers and directors, and for the experience of provincial audiences.<sup>702</sup> This turning point remains obscure in research about the genre, however, as musicologists have largely discussed *grand opéra* in a French context as synonymous with Académie.<sup>703</sup> Several scholars for instance, have shown how the genre's musical and dramatic resources developed out of the institution's changing stage practices and business model, and how productions were informed by the expectations of Parisian audiences.<sup>704</sup> Researchers also read *grand opéra*, as performed at the Académie, as a space of ideological and political contest in which ideas of the nation's past, present and future were represented and debated.<sup>705</sup>

Where the provincial circulation of *grand opéra* is considered, scholars assume the direct influence of the centre on the peripheries, in particular, in terms of one key artistic parameter: *mise-en-scène*. Following H. Robert Cohen's influential claim, several scholars

<sup>701</sup> AN, F/21/1250-1; F/21/1258-9; F/12/1277-8. Delorme was likely the pioneer of the change to grand opera, as I have not found any references to earlier *La muette* performances in the available digitised newspapers for the rest of France. This hypothesis would need verifying with archival searches of the entire 18 *arrondissements*, something that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>702</sup> Mussat, Taiëb and Teulon-Lardic all discuss a shift in the repertoire produced in residential theatre companies around 1830. Mussat, "Diffusion et réception de l'opéra-comique dans les provinces françaises", 283-98. Taiëb and Teulon Lardic, "The Evolution of French Opera Repertoires in Provincial Theatres: Three Epochs, 1770-1900", in *The Oxford Handbook of the Operatic Canon*, eds. Cormac Newark and William Weber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), Epub.

<sup>703</sup> By contrast, studies of the transnational circulation of *grand opéra* abound: Vella, *Networking Operatic Italy*, Charlotte Bentley, "The Race for Robert and Other Rivalries: Negotiating the Local and (Inter)National in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans," *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 29 (2017), 94-112. Hesselager *Grand Opera Outside Paris*.

<sup>704</sup> Pendle and Stephen Wilkins, "Paradise found: The Salle Le Pelletier and French Grand Opera", in *Opera in Context: Essays on Historical Staging* ed. Mark A. Radice (Portland: Amadeus, 1998), 171-207. William Crosten, *French Grand Opera: an Art and a Business. French Grand Opera. an Art and a Business* (New York, Da Capo Press, 1972). Everist, *Giacomo Meyerbeer and Music Drama in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Aldershot, U.K., Ashcroft Publishing, 2005). Robert Cannon, "Grand Opéra and the Visual Language of Opera," in *Opera*, Cambridge Introductions to Music (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 170. M. Elizabeth C. Bartlet, "Staging French Grand Opera: Rossini's Guillaume Tell (1829)," in *Gioachino Rossini 1792-1992: Il testo e la scena*, ed. Paolo Fabbri (Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini, 1994), 623-47. Lacombe, *The Keys to French Opera*; "The 'Machine' and the State"; Steven Huebner, "Opera Audiences in Paris, 1830-1870", *Music & Letters* 70, no. 2 (1989): 206-225. Peter Mondelli, 'The Sociability of History in French Grand Opera: A Historical Materialist Perspective'. *19th-Century Music* 37, no. 1 (1 July 2013): 37-55.

<sup>704</sup> Jane Fulcher, *The Nation's Image: French Grand Opera as Politics and Politicized Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Hibberd, *French Grand Opera and the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Mondelli, 'The Sociability of History in French Grand Opera'; Huebner, 'Opera Audiences in Paris, 1830-1870'.

<sup>705</sup> Fulcher, *The Nation's Image*; Hibberd, *French Grand Opera*. Mondelli, 'The Sociability of History in French Grand Opera'; Huebner, 'Opera Audiences in Paris, 1830-1870'.

researching the staging manuals produced by authors, composers, *régisseurs* and publishers working in Paris between the 1820s and 1880s have argued that these printed operatic objects reveal that the nation's staging practices during this period were fundamentally imitative: "an art of preservation rather than creation [...] not intended to be altered."<sup>706</sup> This argument establishes the authority and fixity of an operatic printed model, inspired by the Académie's practices, as foundational to nineteenth-century stage practices across France. Neither Cohen nor others give example of practical provincial productions to back up their argument but base their theses largely on statements made by manual creators from 1849 onwards, extrapolating the preservation aesthetic outwards to cover the period between the 1820s and 1880s.<sup>707</sup> Cohen's arguments are, admittedly, a product of their time, prior to more recent developments in opera studies that recognise the malleable nature of stage culture. Yet even in an era of revisionism as to what operatic performance and its study entails, no scholars have as yet revisited *grand opéra* manuals to reconsider their purpose and content in light of our understanding of operatic malleability and what this might mean for operatic circulation in France. Instead, as recently as 2021, Leah Oberti has upheld Cohen's arguments views to characterise French operatic circulation as inherently centralised from 1828 onwards.<sup>708</sup>

<sup>706</sup> H. Robert Cohen, *The Original Staging Manuals for Twelve Parisian Operatic Premières*, xxiii; Cohen, *Cent ans de mise lyrique en France (environ 1830–1930): Catalogue descriptif des livrets de mise en scène, des libretti annotés et des partitions annotées dans la Bibl. de l'Association de la régie théâtrale* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1986); Cohen, "On the Reconstruction of the Visual Elements of French Grand Opéra," in *International Musicological Society: Report of the Twelfth Congress, Berkeley 1977*, ed. Daniel Heartz and Bonnie Wade (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1981), 463–80. Several scholars repeat Cohen's claims: Rebecca Susan Wilberg, "The 'Mise en Scène' at the Paris Opéra, Salle Le Peletier (1821–1873) and the Staging of the First French 'Grand Opéra': Meyerbeer's Robert le Diable", Ph.D. diss., (Brigham Young University, 1990), 9; Cormac Newark, "Staging Grand Opéra: History and the Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Paris", Ph.D. diss (Oxford University, 1999), 25. Arnold Jacobshagen has robustly challenged part of these claims for a Parisian context. He demonstrates that many manuals were created years after the premieres and/or by personnel not involved in the Académie, refuting claims that the recorded staging is an authentic representative of Parisian 'original conditions'; and he shows that contemporary Parisian staging practices were constantly in flux, departing from the recorded staging within the *mise-en-scène* booklets: Jacobshagen, 'Staging at the Opéra-Comique in Nineteenth-Century Paris: Auber's Fra Diavolo and the Livrets De Mise-En-Scène,' *Cambridge Opera Journal* 13 (2001), 239–60; Jacobshagen, "Analyzing Mise-En-Scène: Halévy's 'La Juive' at the Salle Le Peletier," in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer* ed. Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 176–194; Jacobshagen, "Staging Grand Opéra – Historically Informed?" in *Image and Movement in Music Theatre: Interdisciplinary Studies around Grand Opéra*, eds. Roman Brotbeck, Laura Moeckli, Anette Schaffer and Stephanie Schroedter (Schliengen: Edition Argus, 2018), 241–260.

<sup>707</sup> Leah Oberti, "Livrets de mise-en-scène", *Histoire de l'opéra français*, 737, 740. The oft-quoted source is a letter from Scribe to Palianti on 02/12/1849, in which Scribe applauds the "undeniable usefulness" of Palianti's work. Not all the sources used by these scholars are from the time of the operas' premieres though, with some manuals existing only in later reprints or in manuscript forms from other theatres, copied from an undated first source.

<sup>708</sup> *Idem*.

Recent studies by Ellis, Mélanie Guérimand and Sabine Teulon Lardic, though, offer impetus for reviewing Oberti's assertion. Studying municipal companies staging of *grand opéra*, these scholars give tantalising evidence suggesting that the reality of national operatic circulation and aesthetics, in terms of staging but also musical performance, was more complex. Imitation of the capital was certainly a driving force for certain managers. Ellis emphasises the significant cultural capital and civic prestige associated with producing *grand opéra* in a residential company and its impact on performance practices:<sup>709</sup> directors strained their budgets to match the forces of the capital and *La muette* would never have taken place if a manager could not recruit equivalents to the Académie's forces, such as a ballet company, for fear of being thought inadequate by local audiences and the municipal council.<sup>710</sup> At the same time, though, other companies did make provincial operatic adaptations to *grand opéra*. In their brief case studies of Lyon and Montpellier, for example, Guérimand and Teulon Lardic underline how directors also made significant musical and dramatic adaptations to Auber and Meyerbeer's pieces.<sup>711</sup> Moreover, in the touring circuit, the subscriber's fears of a potentially truncated *Muette* in Valenciennes suggests that performances of *grand opéra* by a *troupe d'arrondissement* were also pulled between contrasting principles of operatic imitation and adaptation. Indeed, directors such as Delorme chose to stage *La muette* even without ballet dancers, yet there was discernible local anxiety about the *arrondissement* need to "shorten" the genre, perhaps through omission of these very elements. Touring *grand opéra* thus reopens questions about the national reach of the production practices of the Académie, and about how nineteenth-century operatic figures, debated the authority and transferability of *grand opéra's* artistic parameters.

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<sup>709</sup> Ellis, "Broke".

<sup>710</sup> Idem, 111.

<sup>711</sup> Mélanie Guérimand, "La Muette à Lyon", *Histoire de l'opéra français*, 749-50; Toulon-Lardic, "Les Huguenots et Les Dragons de Villars à Montpellier", *Histoire de l'opéra français*, 750-752.

In order to address these questions, in this chapter I attempt to reconstruct the conditions of the Valenciennes stagings of *grand opéra* between the 1830s and 60s. Due to the scant archival evidence, this involves a large amount of archival sleuthing: piecing together fragmentary sources to examine and hypothesise how different local agents negotiated and expressed their artistic expectations of an operatic genre new to their locale. With no other evidence left behind about the origins of Valenciennes' subscriber's ideal for *La muette*, for instance, it would be remiss to not question whether his model necessarily came exclusively from Paris, or whether it may have sprung from a collection of influences, including see *La muette* in other provincial theatres, such as nearby Lille. The trail runs cold for this individual but, as I will show, it is possible to recover what type of operatic influences held power over director Delorme and local critics in 1830 and beyond, and how these at times challenge centralised concepts of *grand opéra*. In this chapter I also place the Valenciennes story in a wider narrative by comparing local attitudes to *grand opéra* with the contemporary work of Parisian creators involved in printing staging manuals, drawing attention to aspects of these booklets that were directed at smaller troupes including itinerant companies. Revisiting these familiar materials with a new lens uncovers a more complex story about French staging practices: close scrutiny of Louis Solomé's manual for *La muette* and later booklets, for example, reveals a more varied set of centrally-produced models for French *grand opéra* circulation than Cohen, and more recently Oberti, have suggested.<sup>712</sup>

Structurally, I treat the page and stage elements chronologically in this chapter: beginning with Solomé's manual for *La muette* produced in 1828, moving to the Valenciennes performance (1830), and back through local developments in touring productions in the 1830s and 1840s across the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* to finish with later printed manuals including Meyerbeer's *Le prophète* (1849). I cannot and do not claim that the staging manuals were

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<sup>712</sup> Oberti, "Livrets de mise-en-scène", 740.

necessarily used in northern staging practices. In fact, *grand opéra* production in Valenciennes appears notably lacking in the use of staging manuals as these are not recorded in the director's cost lists or the inventories of municipal theatres.<sup>713</sup> This absence may be representative of provincial practices in general: Arnold Jacobshagen reveals the low sales of Louis Palianti's collection of manuals across the mid-century and argues that these are suggestive of a lack of province-wide use of these materials.<sup>714</sup> Yet, considered together, the study of staging manuals such as *La muette* and the practical situation that I reconstruct in Valenciennes offers a means of comparing diverse central and local expectations, held by individuals from Delorme to Solomé and Meyerbeer, of how *grand opéra* should work on tour throughout the nation. I will show how, together, local staging and printed manuals outlined changing artistic parameters and models of operatic authority for touring *grand opéra*. These, in turn, highlight the different types of centre-periphery dynamics established through the circulation of this genre outside Paris from 1830 onwards.

In doing so, I also attend to how these dynamics offer a window onto the broader question of how *grand opéra* circulation in France contributed to the emergence of a mid-nineteenth century concept of the operatic work. Vella, Susan Rutherford and Rachel Cowgill have argued that circulating opera practices across Europe contributed to a shift in the understanding of opera: from an event specific to each performance context, adaptable to the needs and changes in the voices, bodies and institutional contexts, towards a definition of opera(s) as "permanent works amenable to endless reproduction."<sup>715</sup> Vella, in particular

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<sup>713</sup> Idem, 243.

<sup>714</sup> Jacobshagen, 'Staging at the Opéra-Comique in Nineteenth-Century Paris', 242.

<sup>715</sup> Vella, *Networking Operatic Italy*, 28–29. Susan Rutherford, "La Cantante Delle Passioni": Giuditta Pasta and the Idea of Operatic Performance', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 19, no. 2 (2007): 107–38. Rachel Cowgill, "Mozart productions and the emergence of Werktreue at London's Italian Opera House, 1780–1830" in *Operatic migrations: Transforming works and crossing boundaries*, eds. Roberta Montemorra Marvin and Thomas Downing (Aldershot, Ashgate: 2006), 145–186. See also, Nicholas Till, "The Operatic Work: Texts, Performances, Receptions and Repertories," in *The Cambridge Companion to Opera Studies*, ed. Nicholas Till (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 225–54. Flora Willson, "Of Time and the City: Verdi's *Don Carlos* and Its Parisian Critics", *19th-Century Music* 37, no. 3 (2014): 188–210. Rutherford uses the term "functional" to refer to the pre-work understanding of operatic flexibility, Rutherford, "La Cantante Delle Passioni", 122.

suggests that the Franco-Italian circulation of sets and productions resources for *grand opéra* encompassed such a shift, monumentalising operas through the process of musical mobility.<sup>716</sup> I suggest that the circulation of *grand opéra* by the *troupes d'arrondissement* reveals the complexity and plurality of the changing perceptions of the nature of operatic production and repertoire within France at this time, at once highlighting a shift towards a work concept conceived through similar visual practices to those studied by Vella, and, at the same time, reinforcing the locally-bound, adaptative definition of French operatic production and culture, particularly in terms of musical production.

### Staging in the provinces

Solomé's *Indications générales et observations pour la mise en scène de La muette de Portici*, published in 1828, was the first document that recorded and communicated staging practices for *grand opéra*.<sup>717</sup> Before this manual, the Académie's staging practices were recorded by *régisseurs* only for internal use.<sup>718</sup> Solomé's document rendered the blocking and scenic effects of *La muette* newly accessible to provincial directors, to whom the booklet was addressed, at the very reasonable sum of 6fr.<sup>719</sup> The manual's format, however, built upon a centuries-old tradition of similar booklets produced for spoken plays and *opéra-comiques*.

It is worth dwelling on the history of these booklets because it provides important context for Solomé's work and the changes he made to this tradition. The existence of manuscript documents containing staging information alongside a play's text can be traced as far back as the fifteenth century. Françoise Péliisson-Karro demonstrates how playwrights

<sup>716</sup> Vella, *Networking Operatic Italy*, 28-29.

<sup>717</sup> There is some confusion over the date of publication which Cohen and others have listed as 1829. An advert for the *Indications* was published in *LCor* on 03/07/1828, suggesting it was available five months after the opera's premiere on 29/02/1828. The manual's listing in *JG* on 14/06/1828 provides further evidence that it was produced this year.

<sup>718</sup> For example, the *mise-en-scène* that Tina Huettenrauch explores in "The Mise en Scène of Rossini's *Le Siège de Corinthe* and the conventions of staging at the Paris Opéra in the 1820s", MA diss. (Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2008).

<sup>719</sup> Louis Solomé, *Indications générales et observations pour la mise en scène de La muette de Portici* (Paris: Duverger, 1828). Solomé addressed provincial directors on pages 15, 47 and 60.



developed strategies to record staging as an extension of their intellectual authority, ensuring nationwide replication of the interpretation of their text as carried by actors' movements and gestures.<sup>720</sup> In the seventeenth century, for example, Corneille included descriptions of props and decors in his pieces, and, in the following century, Beaumarchais notated the order in which actors should stand in each scene, plus additional blocking for key moments.<sup>721</sup> Control over theatrical circulation was the top priority, with authors concerned about maintaining dramatic influence over productions across France. There is a lack of surviving sources for these early booklets, but the work of M. Elizabeth C. Bartlet and Gösta Bergman reveals further developments near the turn of the nineteenth century. Bartlet demonstrates that *opéra-comique* and libretti from the 1790s contained simple instructions about staging movements, costume and decors,<sup>722</sup> while Bergman uses the 1806 *Annuaire dramatique* to suggest that, by this point, the production of staging information had become a mainstream commercial industry.<sup>723</sup> Theatrical agents in the 1806 *Annuaire* publicised "indications [that] consist either of notes or of pictures and choreographic drawings of the stage business, the blocking, the costumes and the sets."<sup>724</sup> These instructions most likely covered a range of stage genres, as the agents advertised their booklets for "new pieces" in general, rather than specifying one theatrical tradition.<sup>725</sup> Although it is unclear how these instructions were gathered and presented to provincial directors, there is evidence that staging information was now collected in bespoke booklets sold separately from the text, libretto or score.<sup>726</sup>

<sup>720</sup> Françoise Péliisson-Karro, *Régie théâtrale et mise en scène : L'Association des régisseurs de théâtre (1911-1939)* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2014).

<sup>721</sup> Pierre Corneille, *Théâtre complet* ed. Pierre Lièvre (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1934), 1: 127-8. Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, *Théâtre complet*, ed. Pia Pascal (Paris: Club français du livre, 1956), 45: 304.

<sup>722</sup> Bartlet, "Etienne Nicolas Méhul and Opera During the French Revolution, Consulate and Empire: A Source, Archival, and Stylistic Study", Ph.D diss (University of Chicago, 1982), 49-50.

<sup>723</sup> Gösta M. Bergman, "Les agences théâtrales et l'impression des mises-en-scène", *Revue de la société d'histoire du théâtre* 8 (1956): 228-40.

<sup>724</sup> Translated by Jacobshagen, 'Staging at the Opéra-Comique', from *Annuaire dramatique ou étrennes théâtrales* (Paris: Delaunay, 1806), 28.

<sup>725</sup> *Annuaire dramatique* (Paris: Delaunay, 1816), 28. The *Annuaire* lists four Parisian theatrical agencies.

<sup>726</sup> For example, leaflets produced by Pierre-Étienne Perlet (sometimes known as Perle) a publisher, ex-provincial director, and agent. The leaflets included decorations and figures for plays and books describing costumes, decors and stage movements: Huetttenrauch, "The Mise en Scène of Rossini's *Le Siège de Corinthe*", 16. Jacobshagen, 'Staging at the Opéra-

One surviving example is the 1817 *Manuel dramatique* produced by Jean Colson, *régis seur en chef* of the Grand Théâtre, Bordeaux. In this encyclopaedia-type document, two to three pages are dedicated to each lyrical piece, containing “essential details” about the length of *opéra-comique* and *vaudeville* pieces, number of lines for performers, stage decors and accessories.<sup>727</sup> Colson drew from his own staging experiences in Bordeaux and, as stated in his prologue, created a document to help provincial *régisseurs* with the exhausting job of staging novelties from Paris.<sup>728</sup> A typical entry in Colson's *Manuel* demonstrates that the author aimed to reduce provincial artistic labour by recording one set of stage practices that could be followed anywhere in France. These instructions imply that provincial *régisseurs* were, at this point, used to considering the decors and props for each act of production as a fixed set of visual elements that should be reproduced across the country, a set of operatic and vaudeville materials as reliable and reproducible as the number of lines listed per character.<sup>729</sup>

Colson's *Manuel* reveals several subtle shifts in the function of staging documents by 1817. Not only were the instructions created by theatrical personnel and not playwrights, but the centralised authority of one set of recorded staging practices throughout the nation came from Bordeaux. His manual thus established a centralised model that melded the Parisian and provincial: he included the list of Parisian actors in every role as casting guidelines, the name of the originating Parisian theatre, indicated which musical numbers were cut or

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Comique in Nineteenth-Century Paris', 241. Perlet's leaflets were published between 1799–1810, although it is unclear from Huettneraach's work whether the leaflets concerned one or several plays.

<sup>727</sup> Jean-Baptiste Colson, *Manuel dramatique, ou détails essentiels sur 240 opéras comiques en 1, 2, 3 et 4 actes classés par ordre alphabétique, formant le fonds du répertoire des théâtres de France; et sur 100 vaudevilles pris dans ceux qui ont obtenu le plus de succès à Paris*, (Bordeaux: Foulquier, 1817) 3 vols. In his introduction Colson states that he was following on from a 1775 manual produced with instructions for the repertoire of the Comédie-Française. The manual was advertised in the *Annuaire dramatique* for 1816 (58–9). Colson also includes information about which authors/composers needed to be paid *droits d'auteur*.

<sup>728</sup> Colson, *Manuel dramatique*, v–vi. Bartlett puts forward another tantalising piece of evidence for the existence of single-piece *mise-en-scène* booklet by 1816 for Méhul's *opéra-comique* *La journée aux aventures*, yet I have not been able to trace a printed or manuscript copy of the source mentioned in her thesis or subsequent monograph, Bartlett, *Etienne Nicolas Mehul and Opéra*, 747.

<sup>729</sup> Dialogue in *opéra-comique*, *vaudeville* and spoken plays was fixed by Napoleonic and Restoration censorship laws, which forbade actors from changing any words that they uttered, although the policing of this practice across the country was left to departmental prefects and mayors. See AMV, J/8/30, Repertoire list (Sollé) 1827–8 season, with a note saying that *Othello* must be performed in Valenciennes with the correct text from the Comédie-Française (and not, it is implied, with the original ending that had recently been brought to Paris by an English troupe).

altered at the Opéra-Comique;<sup>730</sup> yet in the manual's subtitle, he described that the staging information provided in the document recorded the practices of the operas that formed "the repertoire of the French theatres."<sup>731</sup> This indicated that he recorded the theatrical practices that he considered national, most likely his own work in Bordeaux, rather than a copy of Parisian conditions. In doing so, Colson presented the codified staging instructions as combining the work of the provinces and capital to serve all.

Colson's foreword on the musical elements, however, demonstrates that the *regisseur* acknowledged that sung performance practice was much more flexible than staging. He listed all of the numbers in each *opéra-comique* without indicating practised cuts, because, as he stated, "habits and public taste are the only rules that can authorise [these cuts]."<sup>732</sup> Colson's manual thereby separated musical flexibility from visual, replicable production values within the circulation of opera across France. The musical dimension of operatic circulation, though, was not without debate within contemporary theatrical culture. Writers such as Castil-Blaze made it clear that the provinces had a reputation, whether rightfully or wrongly, for distorting repertoire through troupes' poor musical standards.<sup>733</sup> This theme was also explored in theatrical parodies about provincial opera productions such as the *vaudeville Relâche pour la répétition générale de Fernand Cortez* (1809).<sup>734</sup> As this *vaudeville* portrays, provincial performances of the Académie's operas were a specifically laughable concept: the plot of *Relâche* parodies a troupe attempting to stage Spontini's opera without the correct music or text, echoing the contemporary dearth of Académie repertoire on the provincial stages. It also sends up troupes' small-scale, cobbled together resources, including performers singing opera as well as *vaudeville*. *Relâche* portrayed a

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<sup>730</sup> Colson, *Manuel dramatique*, 76.

<sup>731</sup> Ibid, title page. Colson describe the 100 *vaudevilles* as the "most popular seen in Paris", indicating that these were pieces that had not yet become standard on the provincial stages, compared to the operas he listed.

<sup>732</sup> "l'usage et le goût du public sont la seule règle qui puisse les autoriser", Colson, *Manuel dramatique*, xv.

<sup>733</sup> Castil-Blaze, *De l'opéra en France* (Paris: Janet et Cotellet, 1820), 256.

<sup>734</sup> The *vaudeville* parodied the musical, staging and casting practices of small-scale provincial companies. Reviews of the premiere of *Relâche* indicate that Parisian audiences relished the portrayal of these companies' artistic struggles: *L'Esprit des journaux français et étrangers* (Paris: veuve Valade, 1810), 293–296.

binary between a reputable Parisian staging of an Académie piece and a distorted provincial one, echoing the sentiments of Castil-Blaze and others. Moreover, these sentiments had an impact on staging manuals. Olivier Bara argues that the development of operatic manuals in the 1830s was largely the result of concerns about falling provincial musical and wider artistic standards and the impact of troupes' skills on pieces created by Parisian theatres.<sup>735</sup> By the time of Solomé's manuals, then, the act of recording theatrical staging can therefore be seen as a process not only intending to facilitate provincial theatrical labour, but also to control and heighten provincial theatrical standards through recording staging instructions.

### **Solomé's *La muette***

Solomé's three *Indications*, published between 1827–31, are the next surviving records of staging booklets. He printed each booklet while employed as a stage director at different royal theatres:<sup>736</sup> for *Les trois quartiers* (1827), a *comédie* by Louis-Benoit Picard and Edouard Mazères, while at the Comédie-Française (1826–7); for *La muette* during his time at the Académie (1827–31); and for *Zampa* (1831) while employed by the Opéra-Comique (1831–2). Solomé's manuals built upon the theatrical and commercial context described above, yet they offered slightly different information for provincial directors, indicating his shift in thinking about the performative rules for provincial engagement with Parisian repertoire.

Solomé had comprehensive prior experience working in theatrical administration for provincial as well as Parisian companies before writing his manuals. The multiple turns of his career included arranging music for the Théâtre des Célestins in Lyon in 1810, working as a *régisseur* at the Panorama Dramatique in Paris in 1822,<sup>737</sup> and directing a travelling

<sup>735</sup> Bara, "Les livrets de mise en scène, commis-voyageurs de l'opéra-comique en province," *Un siècle de spectacles à Rouen (1776–1876), Actes du colloque organisé à l'Université de Rouen en novembre 2003 par Florence Naugrette et Patrick Taieb* (Online: Publications numériques du CÉRÉdi, 2009) Vol. 1.

<sup>736</sup> On the history of the *regisseur* role, see Huettenrauch, "The Mise en Scène of Rossini's *Le Siège de Corinthe*", 7–9.

<sup>737</sup> *LR*, 28/11/1822.

troupe in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and then 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissements* between 1824 and 1826.<sup>738</sup> Consequently, the content of his manuals reflects Solomé's understanding that not all provincial theatres had the same working conditions or resources, and his staging instructions sought to address these disparities. In his first manual, *Les trois quartiers*, Solomé not only included information about costumes, decors and stage action,<sup>739</sup> but, in two places, noted how his intended readers (provincial directors) might alter the setting described in the main text to suit their resources. In Act 1, Solomé wrote that "*One can take the salon de Molière*" (a standard inside room decor) to replace the opening shop decor, marking the whole sentence in italics to emphasise that it represented a change from the manual's surrounding description of the original scenery.<sup>740</sup> In Act 3 he suggested that directors substitute a decor they already used in old *comédies* still in their repertoire such as *Le dissipateur* (1736) by Destouches (Philippe Néricault), or *Le distrait* (1759) by Jean François Regnard.<sup>741</sup>

Just like Colson, the *régisseur* included the number of lines per character, but Solomé also added a new piece of information to influence provincial directors' castings: a list of *emplois* placed next to the character list, taken from those used in *comédie*.<sup>742</sup> Solomé's list was the first of its kind, as Colson's manual, earlier play texts, and opera scores and libretti mentioned only the names of the Parisian actors for whom roles were written. The new list inserted distance between Parisian performers and future provincial ones by offering a stock acting type as another point of reference for those using the manual. This implied that the Parisian reference needed translating into provincial conditions, a move that, I argue,

<sup>738</sup> *LMS*, 24/03/1825; 14/05/1825. *Almanach des spectacles pour 1826* (Paris: Barba, 1826), 362, 358. The name of this *arrondissement* changed from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> under the new legislation in December 1824, and the term was only updated in the 1826 *Almanach*. Solomé switched contracts with Dupre-Nyon in late 1826, before taking a contract at the Comédie-Française, *Almanach des spectacles pour 1827* (Paris: Barba, 1827), 69.

<sup>739</sup> Solomé, *Indications générales et observations pour la mise en scène, de Les trois quartiers* (Paris: Duverger, 1827), 8, naming the cylindrical shape of a desk in Act 1.

<sup>740</sup> *Idem*, 4. At the same time, Solomé lingers on the specific effect needed to create windows twelve small panes for the shop: "pourvue toute fois qu'on puisse établir trois grandes fenêtres au fond à petits carreaux, mais à deux battan[t]s de chacun des douze carreaux."

<sup>741</sup> *Idem*, 23.

<sup>742</sup> *Idem*, 1.

troubled the status of the Parisian model as repeatable beyond the centre. Overall, *Les Trois Quartiers* demonstrates Solomé slightly reconceptualising the task of a staging manual. His *Indications* did not present one model for provincial troupes to copy, like Colson's, but, in offering small adaptations from the Parisian original, the document demonstrated the need to negotiate the difference between Parisian and provincial conditions: a new element in the development of records to circulate stage practices throughout France.

Solomé's *Indications* for *La muette* built on these developments. The booklet is a 60-page document containing descriptions of the stage movements for the principals and chorus, and details about decors, props, costumes and stage effects, including the erupting Vesuvius in Act 5, but also featuring musical instructions.<sup>743</sup> Solomé's concept of staging practices expanded Colson's focus on the visual but also added guidance for the musical content of the piece. He also extended the small adaptations from his *Les trois quartiers*, printing several notices in *La muette* that offered changes to casting or the musical or dramatic elements described in the main staging description, plus adding final appendixes on how to create the settings through simplified accessories and costumes, repurposed decors, and a less complicated Vesuvius effect. Solomé intended these adaptations to his main text for smaller provincial theatres: in the manual he referred to changes that would not be needed in "big towns" but in "certain provincial theatres."<sup>744</sup> Although open to any company, the adaptive notices for *La muette* most likely targeted touring troupes since these were the companies with the most restricted artistic and financial resources, and with working conditions that were furthest from the Académie: conditions that Solomé had experienced first-hand in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> *arrondissement* during the three years before he moved to Paris.

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<sup>743</sup> Solomé, *Indications générales et observations pour la mise en scène de La muette de Portici* (Paris: Duverger, 1828), 6.

<sup>744</sup> Idem, 3, 47.

Solomé's adaptative notices have been skimmed over by musicologists. Cohen, for example, notes some of the alterations to the main text in the *Muette* manual but does not describe them in detail, nor follow up on the significance of their coexistence with the description of the main stage action in the same document.<sup>745</sup> Solomé's instructions, though, are noteworthy because, through adaptative options, they offered touring troupes a model for performing a *Muette* that could have been significantly different from the record of the Parisian conditions in the main text. First, Solomé suggested that companies could change the piece's genre, switching recitatives to spoken dialogue to make *La muette* an *opéra-comique*.<sup>746</sup> Second, Solomé instructed directors without a ballet company to cast a singer as Fenella.<sup>747</sup> Third, Solomé gave instructions on how to redistribute members of a small troupe across different roles to "fortify" the chorus parts without the dedicated choral forces of the Académie.<sup>748</sup> Fourth, Solomé offered pointers on how to repurpose costumes and decors already used in other *opéra-comiques*.<sup>749</sup> Fifth, Solomé built on his *emplois* technique for facilitating casting: he listed the *opéra-comique emploi* of the principal male roles followed by a *grand opéra emploi* (Figure 11).

As already mentioned in Chapter 3, the *emplois* expressed many things, including the required vocal colour, physicality, tessitura, sung/acted style, level of virtuosity and troupe hierarchy of a singer, as well as being the categories used to contract troupe members and define their responsibilities. Solomé's list of *emplois* for *La muette* was the first of its type to communicate such detailed operatic expectations for provincial castings, as musical scores printed during this period contained information that was not aligned with troupes' contracted *emplois*. Full scores, including the one published for *La muette*, listed the

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<sup>745</sup> Cohen, *The Original Staging Manuals*, xx-xxii. Bould also refers to these adaptations, calling staging manuals a record of "realistic working editions" of provincial theatres: "The Lyric Theatre in Provincial France", 121-6.

<sup>746</sup> Solomé, *Indications*, 47.

<sup>747</sup> Idem, 3.

<sup>748</sup> Idem, 55-56.

<sup>749</sup> Idem, *Indications*, 59, with named examples from the *opéra-comiques* *La neige* (1823), *Madame de Sévigné* (1809) *Cendrillon* (1810), *Le petit chaperon rouge* (1818) and *La joconde* (1814) or the *comédie* *Le chevalier de Canole* (1816).

Parisian singers who created the roles (Figure 12),<sup>750</sup> while vocal scores used generic voice types —soprano (sometimes referred to as ‘dessus’), tenors and basses— that were intended to guide amateur singers (Figure 13).<sup>751</sup> Solomé’s proposed changes may well have championed systematisation and replicability while also recognising the need to adapt a piece to the realistic working practices of a small provincial troupe. His intention was likely to make the Académie’s practices applicable for the rest of France through concessions to the more limited provincial resources. Yet his need to make changes to the *emplois* to address this difference in resources also highlights the very lack of transferability of the original artistic practice, and therefore its inherent limitations for replicability. Solomé evidently conceived the musical conditions of the Académie as too specialised to be disseminated on a national scale, since so many performance elements required translating or mediating through practices from *opéra-comique*. In doing so, Solomé’s manual represents an important shift in the way in which staging instructions were previously recorded: he put forward a printed model for *La muette* that allowed this opera and the Académie’s genre and repertoire, for the first time, to exist within a set of flexible and multiple stage practices, and which drew from across two genres.<sup>752</sup>

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<sup>750</sup> *La muette de Portici* [full score] (Paris: Troupenas, c.1828), title page.

<sup>751</sup> *La muette de Portici* [vocal score] (Paris: Troupenas, c.1828), title page. Neither score contains a printed date, but I date them to 1828 using column in *JAr* (23/03/1828, 27/04/1828) announcing that publisher Troupenas has bought the score of *La muette* (for 12,000fr) and was printed *morceaux détachés* with piano accompaniment.

<sup>752</sup> Solomé continued his adaptative approach in his manual for the *opéra-comique Zampa*, including instructions on how to switch *emplois* and use decors from *La dame blanche*, costumes from several other pieces including *La muette*, and a new lighting appendix. Solomé, *Indications générales et observations pour la mise en scène de Zampa, ou la fiancée de marbre* (Paris: Duverger, 1831).



PERSONNAGES.	ACTEURS DE PARIS.	EMPLOIS.
MASANIELLO, pêcheur napolitain. . . . .	MM. ADOLF. NOURRIT,	Elleviou, première haute-contre.
ALPHONSE, fils du comte d'Arcos, vice-roi de Naples. . . . .	ALEXIS DUPONT,	Gavaudan, ou forte 2 <sup>e</sup> haute-contre.
PIÉTRO, } BORELLA, } MORENO, } } compagnons de Masaniello.	DABADIE, PRÉVOST, POUILLEY, MASSOL,	Lays, Martin. 1 <sup>re</sup> basse-taille. 5 <sup>e</sup> basse-taille. Philippe.
LORENZO, confid. d'Alphonse.		
SELVA, officier des gardes du vice-roi. . . . .	FERD. PRÉVOST,	2 <sup>e</sup> basse-taille.
	M <sup>mes</sup>	
ELVIRE, fiancée d'Alphonse. . . . .	CINTI-DAMOREAU,	1 <sup>re</sup> chanteuse.
UNE DAME de sa suite. . . . .	LOTOTTE,	coryphée.
FENELLA, sœur de Masaniello.	NOBLET,	(1).

Figure 11: Solomé's Indications with a list of emplois and the Parisian singers

PERSONNAGES .	
MAZANIELLO, Pêcheur Napolitain . . . . .	MM. A. NOURRIT.
ALPHONSE, fils du Comte d'Arcos vice-Roi de Naples . . . . .	ALEXIS-DUPONT.
PIETRO, } BORELLA, } MORENO, } } Compagnons de Mazaniello . . . . .	{ DABADIE. PRÉVOST. POUILLEY.
LORENZO, Confident d'Alphonse . . . . .	MASSOL.
SELVA, Officier du Vice-Roi . . . . .	FERDINAND-PRÉVOST.
FENELLA, Sœur de Mazaniello . . . . .	M <sup>mes</sup> NOBLET.
ELVIRE, Fiancée d'Alphonse . . . . .	CINTI-DAMOREAU.
Une Dame de la suite d'Elvire . . . . .	LOTOTTE.

Figure 12: Full score [La muette] with a list of Parisian singers

PERSONNAGES.		
DESSUS.	TENORS.	BASSES.
ELVIRE.	MASANIELLO.	PIETRO.
.....	ALPHONSE.	BORELLA.
.....	LORENZO.	MORENO.
.....	.....	SELVA.

Figure 13: Vocal score [La muette] with generic voice types

Solomé's adaptations redefined the form of *La muette* in order to promote and facilitate the piece's dissemination into the smallest provincial locales. At the very least, these changes need to be viewed as communicating the *régisseur's* understanding that Parisian staging practices were only one option for future staging, rather than, as Cohen says, a fixed "preservation" model. This way of thinking is shown in Solomé's positioning of a provincial

and Parisian version of *La muette's* decors side by side as seen in the following two quotations from the decor appendix:

[Act 2] If [the director] has a farm pictured on a set piece, it could be put in front of the backcloth. In Paris, the backdrop represents Castel-Lamar, near Naples.<sup>753</sup>

[Act 4] In Paris, there is a floor cloth painted with rocks, which hangs from the door of the cabin to the ground near the bank of the stream. In theatres that might be too small to keep the fishermen's cabin, one could then include a complete rustic room set, and one will change the set in full view [of the audience] near the end of the act.<sup>754</sup>

These instructions describe separate possible renditions of the opera's narrative via visual effects, imitating Paris or moving away from these conditions: at least two possible versions of *La muette* co-existed side by side in this manual. Solomé's emphasis on adaptation throughout the *Indications* thus indicates that, even in the act of codifying *grand opéra* into a reproducible format for the provinces, the *régisseeur* established the plurality of production practices for *La muette* as a central component of these instructions and the genre's circulation.

Solomé's manual underlined the need for the capital's version of *grand opéra* to change in order to be fit for the nation. In doing so, Solomé underline what scholars would now term the event-based nature of operatic production while also creating a commercial document that, in its main text description and Parisian references, worked towards shaping aspects of operatic practice into a repeatable work concept.<sup>755</sup> Throughout this chapter, it will become clear that the melding of these two concepts of opera was essential to, and characteristic of, the national circulation of *grand opéra* immediately after 1828.

<sup>753</sup> "Si l'on a une ferme en point de vue, on pourrait la mettre devant le fond. A Paris, le rideau du fond représente Castel-Lamar, près de Naples." Solomé, *Indications*, 57.

<sup>754</sup> "A Paris, il y a à terre un tapis peint en rochers, qui pend depuis l'ouverture de la cabane jusqu'au terrain qui est au bord du rivage. Dans les théâtres qui seraient trop petits pour conserver la cabane de pêcheurs, on mettrait alors la chambre rustique complète, et on ferait un changement à vue sur la fin de l'acte." Solomé, *Indications*, 58.

<sup>755</sup> Vella, *Networking Operatic Italy*, 28-29.

## *La muette* in Valenciennes, 1830

I now move from Solomé's *muette* manual to the first performance in Valenciennes two years later. Delorme's touring troupe premiered *La muette* in Valenciennes on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1830, repeating the piece on 25<sup>th</sup> March and 4<sup>th</sup> April to public acclaim after they had first introduced it into their repertoire in Dunkerque in January 1830.<sup>756</sup> The director appears to have created the demand for *grand opéra* in Valenciennes as there is no evidence of a contemporary critical push to stage this genre in newspapers from this time, most likely because hardly any of the Académie's repertoire had previously been staged there.<sup>757</sup> Only Louis-Sébastien Lebrun's one-act comedy *Le rossignol* (1816) was staged in Valenciennes 1823 by *troupe ambulante* director Dupré-Nyon.<sup>758</sup> This opera, though, was hardly representative of the scale of the Académie's usual repertoire as it was a rare one-act piece produced by the institution and described in the score as an *opéra-comique*.<sup>759</sup> In fact, before 1830, while the Grands Théâtres in the important urban centres of Marseille and Lyon made sure to stage the Académie's latest hits,<sup>760</sup> very few contemporary smaller companies in the provinces attempted this repertoire. Only occasionally did touring directors rise to the challenge: in 1813, director Pitou of the 15<sup>th</sup> troupe included ten Académie operas in his repertoire list, including three by Christoph Willibald Gluck and Spontini's *La vestale* (1807),<sup>761</sup> and, in 1823, the 23<sup>rd</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* led by Gautrot also performed *La vestale* in Troyes.<sup>762</sup> Yet these two troupes were outliers of a general

<sup>756</sup> *JV*, 20/03/1830; *EF*, 06/01/1830; 30/01/1830; 20/03/1830; *CN*, 03/04/1830; 06/04/1830.

<sup>757</sup> Although some directors' lists included Académie titles such as Spontini's *La vestale* and Grétry's *Panurge* before 1830, according to newspaper records, these were either not performed or only produced after *La muette*. *AN*, F/21/1234, Repertoire list (Dupré-Nyon), 1825-6. *J/8/29*, Repertoire list (Dellemeence), 1826-27, including *La dame du lac*, *Le aarbier de Séville* and *La pie voleuse*, as well as *Robin des bois*, a translation of Weber's *Der Freischutz*. *CN*, 01/04/1830 (*Panurge*). *La vestale* was never staged in Valenciennes.

<sup>758</sup> *AMV*, J/8/25, repertoire list (Dupré-Nyon), 11/05/1822. *PAV*, 09/08/1823.

<sup>759</sup> *Le Rossignol* [libretto] (Paris: Pacini, 1816). The rarity of this type of short piece in the Académie's repertoire is noted in "Rossignol (le)", *Dictionnaire lyrique ou histoire des opéras*, ed. Félix Clement and Pierre Larousse (Paris: A. Boyer, 1867-69), 598. This piece was most likely used in the same evening programme as a ballet in the same manner as a *petit opéra*. Contemporary reviews show that critics and audiences accepted the piece without querying its genre or duration: *LO*, 27/04/1816; *NCR*, 15/03/1816; *JT*, 26/04/1816.

<sup>760</sup> *SM*, 15/07/1829; 29/10/1829; *JCLR*, 16/01/1829, 22/03/1829, 22/04/1829.

<sup>761</sup> *AN*, F/21/1172, tableau de troupe and repertoire list (Pitou), 22/02/1815. The operas included Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide* (1774) and *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1779), and *Orphée (date)* Luigi Cherubini's *Anacréon* (1803), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Don Juan* (1805), Antonio Sacchini's *Œdipe à Colone* (1786), André Grétry's *Panurge* (1785), Spontini's *La vestale* (1807); Étienne-Joseph Floquet's *Le seigneur bienfaisant* (date) and Marc-Antoine Ronchon de Chabanne's, *Les prétendus* (1789).

<sup>762</sup> *JPDA*, 18/05/1823.

trend. The vast majority of touring directors' repertoire lists include only *opéra-comique*, *vaudeville* and spoken theatre titles.<sup>763</sup> Moreover, Marie-Claire Mussat, Sabine Teulon-Lardic and Patrick Taiëb's research on residential companies such as Rennes and Rouen suggest that most sedentary companies besides Lyon and Marseille appear to have largely avoided the Académie's titles before 1830.<sup>764</sup> The national spread of the Académie's repertoire was thus distinctly limited prior to this date.

The reconstruction of the artistic conditions of the March 1830 performances of *La muette*, or any by an itinerant troupe, is a tricky business. The work of a *troupe d'arrondissement* has been rendered more ephemeral, for the historian, than the traces of their counterparts in residential or Parisian theatres because there are almost no direct records of their artistic practices beyond press reviews, including a lack of surviving musical sources. In my archival search for scores used by troupes between 1824–1864 I discovered only one source that can be definitively traced to a *troupe d'arrondissement*: a full score for Fromental Halévy's *opéra-comique Guitarrero* (1842), used by director Seymour for performances in Lorient in 1842.<sup>765</sup> All other scores in various holdings stemmed either from municipal theatre collections of residential companies,<sup>766</sup> from the private music collections of individuals, or from other town institutions such as choral and amateur dramatic societies.<sup>767</sup> The lacuna speaks to the transient nature of itinerant artists who

<sup>763</sup> AN, F/21/1258, ticket sales (Maillard), 19/09/1825.

<sup>764</sup> Mussat, 'Diffusion et réception de l'opéra comique dans les provinces françaises', 283–298; Taiëb and Teulon Lardic, 'The Evolution of French Opera Repertoires in Provincial Theatres', 159–203.

<sup>765</sup> BUC, *Guitarrero* [full score] F-Pim, Res. F7.110. Seymour and his co-director Prilleux's names are scribbled on one of the front pages and the score contains several small annotations to vocal lines, cue lines from the libretto written at the start of numbers, and a cast list. The name Maillard also appears in ink on the first musical page, demonstrating that the score was either rented from or previously belonged to agent Maillard. A list of 18 orchestral parts on the inside of the bound score suggests that the director also rented these materials from Maillard. The score was most likely used in January 1842, as Seymour's troupe premiere *Guitarrero* on 24/01/1842 (*AL*, 23/01/1842).

<sup>766</sup> The AMB contains an extensive but uncatalogued collection of scores from the collection of the town theatre. These scores, however, cannot be conclusively dated or pinned down to a specific location. There are several names written or printed on different scores, including director Pétrin dit Tony, who worked in different touring *arrondissements* between the 1820s–50s, and stamps from theatrical agencies run by Auguste Maillard and Arthur Pougin. Some scores such as the orchestral parts for *La juive* contain pencil marks or doodlings dated between 1880s–1910s. The co-existence of musical markings and non-musical annotations (including place names, notes between musicians and the names of players) in different pencils in these parts demonstrates that these sources circulated between different theatres, and the different methods of marking cuts in the same score (and traces of removed cuts) underlines that provincial companies performed the same pieces with varying musical changes.

<sup>767</sup> For example the collections in the BMSB, BGM, BMIE.

carried their scores and texts with them on the road, rather than depositing them in institutional collections, but it also highlights these troupes' working practices. The *Guitarrero* score, for example, plus directors' ticket sale lists from across the *arrondissements* (documents known as *recettes* which also included itemised troupe costs), make it clear that it was common practice for directors to rent musical materials from theatrical agents such as Auguste Maillart (himself ex-director of the 9<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*), meaning that these materials also circulated between different companies and back and forth from Paris to the provinces.

In the absence of direct musical traces of *grand opéra* on tour, I am reliant on a combination of newspaper accounts and archival administrative documents to piece together the musical and dramatic features of the 1830 Valenciennes *Muette* premiere and later performances. Some features are more tangible than others in these fragmentary sources: for example, the local press described which singers performed principal roles and the state of the opera's orchestral accompaniment. Other features must be inferred from a mixture of press reports and archival evidence. In the case of *La muette*, for instance, how much of the opera did Delorme's troupe perform? How did the director attend to the *mise-en-scène* of spectacular moments such as the eruption of Vesuvius? What is clear is the important role which the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* director held in the dissemination of *grand opéra*. Delorme straddled both managerial and artistic roles at a time when many Parisian and residential theatre directors were primarily entrepreneurs, engaged only with the financial and administrative management of their troupes.<sup>768</sup> By contrast, as mentioned in Chapter 3, most directors in the *troupes d'arrondissement* began their careers as actors, were also experienced as *régisseurs*, and often carried over at least some responsibility for staging into later management roles. Delorme, for example,

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<sup>768</sup> Pascale Goetschel and Jean-Claude Yon, *Directeurs de théâtre XiXe-Xxe siècles: Histoire d'une profession* (Paris: La Sorbonne, 2008), particularly Carrère-Saucède, "La direction de troupe de province au XiXe siècle: une fonction polymorphe", 31-45.

had been a singer and *régisseur* in his predecessor Dellemence's 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* troupe between 1826–1829.<sup>769</sup> Since the *tableaux de troupe* for Delorme's own company in his initial season at the helm (1829–30) does not include a newly appointed *régisseur*,<sup>770</sup> this also suggests that he continued to oversee the artistic component of troupe performances for *La muette*.

That is not to say that Delorme operated a one-man show. Musical choices were most likely taken in consultation with the troupe's *chef d'orchestre* Juste Labadie. Additionally, it is likely that the troupe's seventeen singers also advocated for small-scale changes such as shifts in tempos, ornamentation, transposition or melodic changes: these were hallmarks of the musical performance practices of travelling troupes throughout the century, as testified by contemporary press reports and the annotations in the Lorient *Guitarrero* score.<sup>771</sup> It would have ultimately been Delorme, however, who oversaw the casting of performers, choice of repertoire, *mise-en-scène* and the running of rehearsals for the 1830 *Muette*. Moreover, unlike his counterparts in residential theatre, as a touring director, Delorme was not subject to the *cahier de charges*, a contract made between a director and the town municipal council, often including repertoire or casting stipulations.<sup>772</sup> For this reason, the choices made in the staging of the Valenciennes' *Muette* primarily reveal this one director's understanding of the artistic expectations and operatic aesthetics involved in circulating the Académie's repertoire to the provinces.

<sup>769</sup> J/8/29, troupe list (Dellemence), 11/05/1826. It was common for a *régisseur* to take over as director, and this happened several times in the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*. Guillaume Bertéche was *regisseur* under Delorme and then took the helm, and his son, Prosper, trained under him.

<sup>770</sup> AN, F/21/1234, troupe list (Delorme), 03/06/1829. He also continued singing in some performances and was listed as the *emploi* of a *Philippe*.

<sup>771</sup> BUC, *Guitarrero* [full score] F-Pim, Res. F7.110, with pencil annotations which show small-scale cuts, adjustment of vocal lines for the tessitura of troupe singers, the doubling of principal roles with chorus lines, and a cut made to Zarah's aria (No.5). ADPC, PE 1/7, *CPC*, 21/01/1835. *EF*, 14/03/1839; 09/03/1850; *MA*, 11/11/1863.

<sup>772</sup> On the municipal *cahier de charges*, see Ellis, "Broke".

### Delorme's staging

From the outset, the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* troupe's working conditions meant that *grand opéras* would necessarily have to be adapted. For one, the travelling troupe specialised in *opéra-comique* so performers were inexperienced in singing the long, dialogue recitatives included in *La muette* and not used to singing characters written for the voices of the Académie's stars. One of Delorme's singers, though, was pushed particularly outside of her comfort zone for *La muette*. This was Mme Alphonse Jules Lejai, the troupe's *dugazon*. Lejai's *emploi* meant that she filled the troupe position for a light *opéra-comique* voice in second soprano/young lover roles.<sup>773</sup> Delorme cast Lejai in the danced, mute, title role of Fenella, choosing her over troupe member Louise who was specifically employed as a *coryphée*, a low-ranking ballet *corps* member.<sup>774</sup> Perhaps Louise was too young or inexperienced to take on a title role, but it seems most likely that Delorme's move away from a dancer, a choice that would have imitated Parisian conditions, was motivated by Lejai's place in troupe hierarchy. Lejai shared the status of the highest-ranking female singer in the troupe with Mme Scholastique Demateyer, the "*première chanteuse à roulade*", a coloratura voice type for the leading operatic lady.<sup>775</sup> Both women's superior status in the troupe was manifested by financial and artistic rewards. They earned 350fr per month, a higher salary than the other female performers (between 80-200fr),<sup>776</sup> and were cast in the alternative leading roles in different genres: Demateyer could expect to play *opéra-comique* lead roles and secondary ones in *vaudeville*, and Lejai vice versa.<sup>777</sup> For *La muette*, Delorme needed to correlate the women's *emplois* into *grand opéra* repertoire for the first time. By having Demateyer play Elvire, casting convention maintained that Lejai was given the only other principal female

<sup>773</sup> Triolaire, *Le théâtre en province*, 15.

<sup>774</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1830* (Paris: Barba, 1830), 309. *CN*, 10/04/30; *EF*, 27/03/1830. *AN*, F/21/1234, troupe list (Delorme), 03/06/1829. It is possible that Louise was a child performer as it was customary to only use a first name for a child on a troupe list, and many singers travelled with families. According to the troupe list, though, Louise was paid 80fr a month by Delorme, suggesting that she was most likely an adult whose surname was not recorded, because minors were not usually remunerated.

<sup>775</sup> *AN*, F/21/1234, troupe list (Delorme), 03/06/1829.

<sup>776</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>777</sup> *Ibid.*

role, above the troupe's designated dancer. Delorme's casting of Fenella showed the director responding to local conditions over the imitation of Parisian practices. In this way, Delorme's choice contrasted with Solomé's instructions for troupes without a ballet company. Solomé instructed directors to cast a singer with experience of playing Rose in Nicolas Dalayrac's *opéra-comique Deux mots* (1806) or Jules (a male travesty part) in the comédie *l'Abbé de l'épée* by Jean-Nicolas Bouilly (1799).<sup>778</sup> Both of these characters were portrayed as mute for all or part of the plot, implying that Solomé instructed directors to find a woman with experience in mime and/or gesture. While both the Parisian *régisseur* and northern director saw the need to recast the title dancer of Auber's opera, they thus both responded to the challenge of reproducing the Académie's piece in a touring troupe context in different ways. Not only did these figures offer fundamentally different estimates of which parts of the piece mattered most to interpret, but they outlining different coexisting viewpoints of the relationship between operatic authority, Parisian imitation and provincial resources.

A second type of local adaptation is evident at the musical level of the Valenciennes *Muette* performances. When piecing together the conditions of the premiere, it becomes apparent that the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* could not have performed Auber's opera in its entirety. The opera was staged in a triple or double bill: on 25<sup>th</sup> March with the *vaudevilles La Famille Normande* (1822) by Mélesville and Nicolas Brazier and *Le Gastronomes sans argent* (1821) by Scribe and Brazier,<sup>779</sup> on 4<sup>th</sup> April in an Auber double bill with his *opéra-comique La Fiancée* (1829),<sup>780</sup> and in its premiere with a second piece that is unnamed by the press.<sup>781</sup> Adding to the length of these multiple programmes, there would have been several scene-change intervals, (which, around 1830, could each last up to thirty minutes each in Valenciennes)<sup>782</sup> plus performances of symphonies by the Société Philharmonique between pieces (also

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<sup>778</sup> Solomé, *Indications*, 3.

<sup>779</sup> *EF*, 24/03/1830.

<sup>780</sup> *CN*, 03/04/1830, 06/04/1830; *EF*, 07/04/1830.

<sup>781</sup> *EF*, 20/03/1830.

<sup>782</sup> *AMV*, J/8/46, report from the Mayor of Valenciennes, 15/01/1842. J/8/47, letter from the Mayor of Valenciennes to Colson, 15/09/1843. J/8/24, letter from the Mayor to the Sub-Prefect of Valenciennes, 21/02/1821.



lasting up to half an hour).<sup>783</sup> The *salle de spectacle* also had a curfew: it usually opened around 6pm and municipal theatrical regulation stipulated that performances should end by 11pm,<sup>784</sup> with directors fined for running over.<sup>785</sup> The length of *La muette* was listed as three hours in Solomé's manual.<sup>786</sup> As there is no police record of a troupe fine for the evening, these combined pieces of evidence imply that Delorme must have made musical cuts to *La muette* to fit the opera, its accompanying pieces, scene changes and symphonies into the five-hour evening slot.

It can be hypothesised that the director cut some, if not all, of *La muette's* choruses and dances to fit into a typical provincial theatre evening programme, particularly since his troupe only employed one chorister (Joseph Ridoux).<sup>787</sup> If this were the case, the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* would have fallen in line with one of Solomé's recommendations to provincial directors that ballet numbers could be cut as needed.<sup>788</sup> In troupe casting and cutting down the opera, Delorme's artistic choices therefore did manifest the reduced performance conditions feared by the Valenciennes' subscriber in his letter: the director relied on a flexible approach to staging *La muette* in the town premiere through various artistic adaptations shaping the piece to the working conditions of a touring troupe.

At the same time, though, Delorme left behind a letter describing his artistic choices in *La muette* that suggests that the director was also keen to reassure the Valenciennes' subscriber that parts of his *Muette* production were explicitly non-adaptative. Delorme wrote to the *Écho de la frontière* six days after the subscriber's letter was published and directly addressed the issue of operatic scale in his upcoming premiere. The director re-spun the

<sup>783</sup> AMV, J/8/56, 'Arrêté' document, 04/06/1842; J/8/51, 'Salle de spectacle', An XI.

<sup>784</sup> AMV, J/8/51, 'Salle de spectacle' regulation, An XI Ibid., Article 15. AMV, J/8/47, letter from the Mayor of Valenciennes to director Colson, 15/09/1843. AMV J/8/51, 'Salle de spectacle', 1813; J/8/56, 'arrêté', 04/06/1842; J/8/51, 'Police des spectacles' regulation, 04/09/1851. These timings were similar across the provinces: AN, F/21/1250, Theatre regulation, (Morlaix), 23/11/1839.

<sup>785</sup> AMV, J/8/47, letter from the Mayor of Valenciennes to director Colson, 15/09/1843; J/8/85, letter from the Police commissioner to the Mayor of Valenciennes, 22/02/1856.

<sup>786</sup> Solomé, *Indications*, contents page.

<sup>787</sup> AN, F/21/1234, troupe list (Delorme), 03/06/1829.

<sup>788</sup> Solomé, *Indications*, 47.

subscriber's term 'reduced' to reassure the public of his commitment to providing a production of *La muette* that would, in fact, live up to their expectations:

*La muette de Portici* will be offered to the public next Sunday, not *reduced* to the size of my troupe, but in the way that [the piece] is played across the provinces, and in my theatre *without omitting anything*. People who know the piece will be convinced of this.<sup>789</sup>

In his postscript, Delorme promised spectators just what the subscriber feared could *not* be produced in Valenciennes: a *Muette* that they would recognise from their previous knowledge of the piece. Yet his description of the anticipated production is at once ambiguous and striking. The claim of performing *La muette* "not reduced" might suggest that the director envisaged not cutting the opera. From the evidence I have provided above, though, it appears that Delorme must have cut large chunks of musical material. Perhaps this letter instead refers instead to a different type of "reduction", or lack off, perhaps maintaining the *scale* of the opera in Valenciennes in other ways, the implications of which I will explore shortly.

Moreover, Delorme made it clear that his operatic model for the "not-reduced" performance practice was the way in which *La muette* was played "across the provinces."<sup>790</sup> Delorme's was the first *arrondissement* troupe to stage *La muette*, meaning the director must have been referencing resident provincial companies as his model. Consequently, the letter shows that Delorme contextualised his version of *La muette* within a provincial theatre environment, rather than as directly related to the Académie. The statement is important because it shows Delorme relying on horizontal operatic markers: although the piece is Parisian, its local implementation comes through a local relationship with the practices of the director's provincial peers. The director's reference to other provincial companies also lends clues to the reconstruction of which performance elements Delorme

<sup>789</sup> "P.S: *La muette de Portici* sera offerte au public dimanche prochain, non *raccourcie* à la *taille* de ma troupe, mais comme elle est jouée partout en province, et chez moi sans *rien passer*. Les personnes qui connaissent l'ouvrage pourront s'en convaincre." *EF*, 20/03/1830, Delorme's use of italics.

<sup>790</sup> *Ibid.*

may have considered “non-reduced” and, through this, how he attempted to appease the Valenciennes’ subscriber and wider audiences by showcasing a shared commitment to a more complete *Muette*. Notwithstanding the adaptations that I have already mentioned, three production elements could qualify as supporting Delorme’s statement of “non-reduced” *grand opéra*, imitating conditions seen in residential theatres. For one, in a notice published in *Le journal de Valenciennes* on 20 March, the director specified that “arrangements have been made so that the musical parts will leave nothing to be desired.”<sup>791</sup> Delorme was likely referring to two “musical parts” of his production. First, Delorme advertised that the town orchestra would be “reinforced and completed.”<sup>792</sup> This statement implies that Delorme made sure to recruit a more comprehensive instrumental accompaniment than was usual for operatic performances in Valenciennes, as the troupe was previously reliant on an assortment of instruments played by amateur musicians from the town’s *Société philharmonique* whose talents and instruments could range wildly.<sup>793</sup> It was not uncommon, as remembered by writer Jules Fleury-Husson, for orchestras in the *arrondissements* to be made up of a plethora of flutes standing in for other instruments, played by absent-minded clerks or students.<sup>794</sup> By mentioning the recruitment of additional musicians and the hope of a complete orchestra, Delorme’s advert assured potential spectators that all the expected instrumental sonorities of *La muette* would be reproduced locally. This type of care was as-yet unseen in terms of operatic accompaniment for the travelling troupe’s performances, and reviewers recognised the change. One journalist writing about the premiere described how the full range of orchestral instruments in *La muette* transformed “the normal and monotonous theatre orchestra” into “animated and

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<sup>791</sup> “Les dispositions sont prises pour que la partie musicale ne laisse rien à désirer.”

<sup>791</sup> Ibid. “renforcé et porté au complet.” *JV*, 20/03/1830.

<sup>792</sup> Ibid. “renforcé et porté au complet.”

<sup>793</sup> AMV, J/8/44, letter from the Mayor of Valenciennes to the Sub-Prefect of Valenciennes, 25/10/1840. The orchestra had eighteen musicians at this point.

<sup>794</sup> Champfleury (Jules Fleury-Husson), *Souvenirs et portraits de jeunesse: Autobiographie et mémoires* (Paris: Dentu, 1872), 51-56; 63-70.

sustained music”, a change that the columnist thought also improved singers’ performances.<sup>795</sup>

The second “musical part” for which Delorme advertised great care was his troupe’s singing. Reading between the lines of the archival evidence, it appears that the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d’arrondissement* expanded their singing technique to take on *grand opéra* recitatives. As already stated, Delorme argued that his Valenciennes *Muette* would be produced in the manner of other provincial theatres. A brief examination of newspaper accounts from residential companies such as Lyon and Marseille reveals that sedentary troupes that staged *La muette* between 1828–30 did so with recitatives.<sup>796</sup> Delorme’s troupe, it follows, most likely performed recitatives, too, since they used these provincial theatres as their operatic model.<sup>797</sup> Although there are no press reports that go into enough detail about singers’ performances to specifically mention recitatives and confirm this hypothesis for 1830, what is certain is that, from 1833, there was a widespread turn towards recitatives in *troupe d’arrondissement* singing practices across France. Press sources testify that companies such as the 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> *troupes d’arrondissement* sang Rossini’s *Guillaume Tell* (1829), Meyerbeer’s *Robert* (1831) and *Les Huguenots* (1836) and Halévy’s *La juive* (1835) in their original form with recitatives, likely developing out of the initial *Muette* experiment.<sup>798</sup> Together, both the implied development in troupe singing practices and certain expansion of orchestral accompaniment for the Valenciennes premiere portray Delorme’s concept of a “non-reduced” *Muette* in terms of musical scale, as well as revealing how the arrival of this piece developed long-term musical touring practices.

The Valenciennes’ director’s claim of producing a “non-reduced” *Muette* and the musical circumstances of the 1830 production demonstrate a local version of the opera that was

<sup>795</sup> *JV*, 27/03/1830 “l’orchestre ordinaire et monotone du spectacle” into “une musique animée et nourrie.”

<sup>796</sup> *JCLR*, 22/02/1824, 14/11/1824, 27/06/1827, 21/12/1828, 31/01/1830; *SM*, 18/07/1829, 23/11/1830.

<sup>797</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d’arrondissement* had certainly mastered the art of singing recitatives by 1845, as mentioned in a review of *Guillaume Tell* in Dunkerque, *LFT*, 09/01/1845.

<sup>798</sup> *DP*, 09/07/1833, 18/01/1838; *LP*, 10/05/1834; *JC*, 07/08/1841; *LL*, 14/11/1844; *LFT*, 09/01/1845.

vastly different to Solomé's conception of the shape that *grand opéra* might need to take in a small provincial environment. While Solomé reshaped *La muette* into an *opéra-comique* through its form and *emplois* to translate the distance between Parisian and provincial companies' experience, Delorme actively rejected the subscriber's claim that a touring troupe might resort to such means. At the same time, the director embraced provincial residential theatres, rather than Solomé's institutional home as his operatic model. In 1830, then, while the practical manifestations of how *grand opéra* would operate in a touring circuit differed considerably in terms of the musical elements for *La muette* from the paper model put down by Solomé, Delorme's adaptative yet imitative approach also mirrored Solomé embrace of both operatic ideals.

Delorme's statement about his "non-reduced" *Muette* likely also encompassed an expansion of the troupe's usual visual resources. Travelling troupes relied on the municipal decor collections of each town which they visited and re-used stock backdrops (depicting, for example, a farm, forest, interior salon) to create the varying situations in which different stage pieces were set.<sup>799</sup> These practices were a far cry from the bespoke scenery of the Académie, yet despite the gap between the touring troupe and the capital, Delorme placed an advert in the *Journal de Valenciennes* on 20<sup>th</sup> March that emphasised the efforts the troupe made with visuals to delight its spectators:

[*La muette* will be] staged with the greatest care by the administration: staging, costume, accessories, nothing has been neglected to give this beautiful production all of its advantages. In the third act, a scene portraying a busy market on one of the squares of Naples; in the fourth act, Masaniello's triumphal entry on his parade horse, and in the 5<sup>th</sup> act, the eruption of Vesuvius that ends the piece.<sup>800</sup>

In this advert, Delorme intimated that his troupe would faithfully recreate the staging and costumes of three of the opera's spectacular scenes without promising new decors. There

<sup>799</sup> AMV, J/8/39, list of decors, 11/08/36; J/8/22, report (for new decors), 18/04/1817.

<sup>800</sup> "montée avec le plus grand soin par l'administration; mise en scène représentant un marché animé sur l'une des places de Naples; au 4<sup>e</sup> acte, entrée triomphale de Masaniello, dans la ville sur son cheval de parade, et au 5<sup>e</sup> acte, éruption de Vésuve qui termine la pièce." JV, 20/03/1830.

is no further information about how the production looked (nor any evidence of whether Delorme sourced a real white horse). It is possible, though, to hypothesise what the troupe's "greatest care" might have produced, visually, for a Valenciennes spectator. On the one hand, Delorme likely imitated at least some of the Parisian effects used for the Vesuvius eruption. At the Académie, *régis seur* Solomé used Bengal fire,<sup>801</sup> a slow-burning firework commonly used to create fire effects on European stages from the mid-eighteenth century onwards.<sup>802</sup> Delorme had experience with this stage technology, having overseen the use of Bengal fire in Valenciennes to stage a dance in the *vaudeville* *L'Ours et le pacha* (1820) by Scribe and Joseph Xavier in 1829 during his time as *régis seur* for Dellemence, meaning that he could have easily transferred his skills to use the same technique for *La muette*.<sup>803</sup> On the other hand, Delorme's *recettes* do not indicate any additional spending on new scenery or costumes, indicating that the troupe staged their premiere by repurposing the *salle's* existing materials. Since it was a performer's responsibility to source their onstage garments, it was also unlikely that these artists procured new items: first, because this would have been outside the reach of their monthly wages,<sup>804</sup> but, second, because new costumes would have caused such delight to reviewers constantly used to critiquing performers' choices that this would surely have been mentioned in reviews.<sup>805</sup>

The historical record ends here and it is difficult to know whether Delorme repainted existing backdrops to evoke the settings described in his advert. Yet the director's advertisement of the "greatest care" given to the production, and his description of the three specific scenes that audiences should look out for, demonstrate Delorme's understanding that visual spectacle, and the evocation of specific settings, were still key to

<sup>801</sup> MC, 02/03/1828 ; LF, 02/03/1828; 07/03/1828. Solomé, *Indications*, 47.

<sup>802</sup> N. Daly, "Fire on Stage", 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 25 (2017); John A Rice, "Operatic Pyrotechnics in the Eighteenth Century" in *Theatrical Heritage: Challenges and Opportunities* ed. Bruno Forment and Christel Stalpaert (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015), 23–40.

<sup>803</sup> EF, 11/04/1829. The *vaudeville* is called *L'Ours blanc et l'ours noir* in the review – provincial titles were often changed by directors or mistaken by reviewers. This title comes from Scene XV in which the two main characters dress up as a black bear and a white bear, *L'Ours blanc et l'ours noir* (Paris: Huet, 1820), 24.

<sup>804</sup> Wages ranged from 80 to 350fr a month, AN, F/21/1234, Troupe list (Delorme), 03/06/1829.

<sup>805</sup> JHS, 11/06/1835 marvelling at "grande fraîcheur" and "richesse" of troupe costumes.

*grand opéra*, even in a touring locale. At the very least, he recognised the promise of bespoke settings matching an opera's narrative as a strategy to tempt audiences into the *salle*, even when these were depicted through recycled resources. These choices reveal that, in his approach to *La muette*'s visual spectacle, Delorme's practices followed Solomé's model much more closely. Solomé's ideas about the limitations of *grand opéra* spectacle in the provinces were therefore shared by local agents much more so than his concept of musical practice.

### Press reactions

In Delorme's decisions regarding casting, musical performance and visual spectacle, he showed himself to be aware of the importance of local adaptation to make *grand opéra* possible in Valenciennes, while also recognising the value of imitating Paris. The balance between these two elements was also debated by the local press. Unlike Delorme who used provincial theatres as a model, columnists for the *Journal de Valenciennes* and the *Écho* looked directly to Paris when assessing local *grand opéra*. The reviewers used Parisian references to suggest that the local *Muette* was a satisfying but not "complete" production:

This opera, of a large and sophisticated scale, no doubt demands a more complete staging and a larger theatre than ours, but it already means a lot that [La muette] was performed in so satisfying a manner.<sup>806</sup>

This piece was well directed and especially well accompanied [by the orchestra]. It would be ridiculous to ask for more in Valenciennes; all those who have not seen this charming production in its true theatre [Paris] will at least be able to glimpse an idea of the pleasure that [La Muette] can give when surrounded by all of the pomp of *grand opéra*.<sup>807</sup>

Both critics imply that the piece was not a comfortable fit as touring repertoire and that a better way of performing *La muette*, with all its pomp, existed only in the genre's "true"

<sup>806</sup> "Cet opéra, d'une facture large et savante, exigeait sans doute une mise en scène plus complète et un théâtre plus important que le nôtre, mais c'est déjà beaucoup qu'il ait pu être rendu d'une manière aussi satisfaisante." *JV*, 27/03/1830.

<sup>807</sup> "Cette pièce a été bien conduite et surtout bien accompagnée, elle est arrivée à bon port; il serait ridicule d'exiger davantage à Valenciennes; tous ceux qui n'ont pas vu cette charmante production sur son véritable théâtre pourront du moins se faire une idée du plaisir qu'elle doit faire étant entourée de toute la pompe du grand opéra." *EF*, 27/03/1830; *JV*, 27/03/1830.

home of Paris. These columns put distance between the local experience of *grand opéra* and a “true” rendition of the opera in the capital. In doing so, the local reception of *La muette* emphasised the ever-peripheral placement of Valenciennes, operatically, compared to the French centre. The Valenciennes critics made Paris the central reference point for assessing local *grand opéra* in a way that Delorme did not.

It is important to reflect on how the northern journalists, director and even the subscriber discussed the circulation of *grand opéra* in varying ways in March 1830. All three local figures responded to the arrival of a new piece and a new genre, and each grappled for an artistic model in doing so. The subscriber spoke of a general ideal form of a “non-reduced” *Muette*. Delorme staged a performance that embraced both local adaptation and scaling down in musical and visual terms, but he founded the introduction of *grand opéra* to Valenciennes on steadfast claims of musical completeness inspired by a provincial model. Journalists, meanwhile, could not shake off the spectre of Parisian dominance over the local. The arrival of *La muette* thus prompted a variety of local thinking about the operatic relationships between Valenciennes and wider France. In doing so, these local figures configured different national imaginaries within *grand opéra*: Delorme aspired to a place in a provincial community; the press saw the capital as the centre of operatic guidance; and the subscriber’s model for his *Muette* is unclear, but could have come from provincial experience, Parisian performances, or both. At the same time, the discourse surrounding the Valenciennes premiere reveals tensions with scholars’ modern revised views of operatic practice as an entirely functional, locally event-orientated practice. The backlash which the subscriber and press levelled at Delorme’s adapted elements, and the doggedness with which the director claimed his production of *La muette* would not be reduced, emphasises a fear within this northern community about the act of changing operatic practices that came from another source into the *arrondissement*, whether the source be the Académie or provincial theatres. A formative concept of the ideal or imposed



fixity of operatic practices within national circulation, or at least a public reckoning with fears about ideals falling short and how to address this slippage, was certainly in the offing within these local debates.

### ***Grand opéra* as the touring norm**

The arrival of *La muette* into the touring theatrical sphere in 1830 was a turning point for the circulation of *grand opéra* in France and for the configuration of its values on a national and local scale. I now turn my attention to investigating the long-term repercussions, on the printed page and regional stage, of this turning point. I do so by analysing trends in Delorme and his successor Bertéché's productions of subsequent *grand opéra* in Valenciennes, alongside the development of printed instructions addressed to provincial directors in operatic materials produced for later Académie operas. In both, the focus of local and central *grand opéra* aesthetics began to change after March 1830.

Directors across the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* embraced the new operatic subgenre over the next quarter century. As can be seen in Table 2, troupes staged nine different *grand opéra* titles across different northern towns between 1830 and 1862.<sup>808</sup> It is not possible to reconstruct a full list of performances of each title for this period given the current state of the archival holdings, but for the 23-year period for which complete records do exist (October 1839–October 1862) the troupe's commitment to this genre is clear since successive companies staged 213 performances of these nine *grand opéras*, with *La favorite* being the most popularly staged piece.<sup>809</sup>

<sup>808</sup> This data is compiled the available *recettes* listings in the Archives Nationales, departmental and municipal archives for the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* between October 1839 – October 1862.

<sup>809</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* troupe appears to have been exceptional in the rate of its *grand opéra* productions, as fewer performances and a small range of titles were presented by the 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> troupes during the period.

**Table 2: Performances of grand opéras by the 1st troupe d'arrondissement, 1830-1862**

Opera	First performance	Last performance	Number of performances (Oct 1839-Oct 1862) <sup>810</sup>
<i>La muette de Portici</i>	1830	1859	32
<i>Robert le diable</i>	1834	1859	25
<i>La juive</i>	1836	1859	24
<i>Guillaume Tell</i>	1841	1857	20
<i>La favorite</i>	1841	1860	66
<i>La reine de Chypre</i>	1846	1849	17
<i>Charles VI</i>	1845	1848	15
<i>Jérusalem</i>	1853	1853	6
<i>Le trouvère</i>	1860	1860	8

The conditions of northern *grand opéra* production and critics' engagement with the genre continued to develop after *La muette*. In the musical sphere, Delorme further expanded the resources of the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* to coincide with the premiere of *Robert le diable* in the 1834-5 season. He employed a *répétiteur* (Louis Wilson) for the first time, alongside his *chef d'orchestre* Honoré Lagier,<sup>811</sup> doubling the musical personnel of the troupe and moving the company closer towards the set-up of a residential provincial company, perhaps indicating Delorme's continued influence from larger regional theatres. Delorme's appointment of Wilson infers increasing attention given to musical preparation in the troupe now that performers had two *grand opéras* on their books: Wilson would have rehearsed singers and the ad-hoc Valenciennes' orchestra, whose accompaniment of *grand opéra* became a fixture after *La muette*.<sup>812</sup>

Musical flexibility, though, remained central to productions of Meyerbeer, Auber and Halévy's grand operas within the touring circuit. Troupe reviews across my four *arrondissements* demonstrate that large and small-scale musical changes, including the cutting of whole acts, and the transposition of numbers or changes to vocal lines, were still

<sup>810</sup> These figures include performances of some but not all acts of an opera in one evening, a typical programming practice,

<sup>811</sup> AN, F/21/1234, troupe list (Delorme), 17/12/1832.

<sup>812</sup> EF, 14/08/1834. AMV, J/8/74, Letter from the Mayor of Valenciennes to orchestral musician Allard, 13/02/1849.

routinely made by troupes to *grand opéras* between 1830 and 64.<sup>813</sup> As mentioned earlier, it was by now common practice for *troupes d'arrondissement* to sing recitatives, meaning that troupes likely excised choruses and dance numbers. Reviews of the 5<sup>th</sup> August 1834 Valenciennes premiere of *Robert*, for example, emphasise that the piece was “all truncated” just like *La muette*.<sup>814</sup> This phrase was used by the critic to acknowledge that the troupe had produced a scaled-down version of the opera and may have implied the journalist’s negative view of such shortening, yet the words were used in the context of an overall positive review of the premiere. Cuts to *grand opéra*, it seems, were accepted as part and parcel of its provincial existence, and in this musical vein critic retained their understanding of the event-orientated context of provincial musical practice in the genre.

### Directors and decors

Delorme’s efforts to change the visual effect of troupe productions after March 1830 demonstrate a push to move beyond troupes’ stock resources for *grand opéra*. He invested in a new backdrop depicting the eruption of Vesuvius for *La muette* as early as October of that year for his second set of performances of the piece in Valenciennes.<sup>815</sup> It is unclear whether this backdrop was painted locally or commissioned from Paris, but the connections between the capital and local productions of *grand opéra* certainly became increasingly more important in the 1<sup>st</sup> troupe’s premiere of *Robert*.<sup>816</sup> Delorme commissioned two bespoke decors (a graveyard and the cathedral of Parma) from Parisian workshops.<sup>817</sup> They were constructed by Achille Varnout, the *machiniste* of the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin,<sup>818</sup> and painted by artists Devoir and Pourchet, a collaborative duo whose work in the 1830s included backdrops for the Académie ballet *La tentation* (1832, with music

<sup>813</sup> Local newspapers featuring reviews of travelling troupe performances reference these practices. For example: *JLo*, 10/01/1847; 14/02/1847; *GT*, 29/11/1832; *MA*, 15/11/1862, 11/11/1863. MASV, Collection Cayat-Chartier I/1-9.

<sup>814</sup> “tout tronqué.” *EF*, 14/08/1834.

<sup>815</sup> *CV*, 09/10/1830.

<sup>816</sup> *Idem*, 05/08/1834.

<sup>817</sup> *EF*, 14/08/1834.

<sup>818</sup> *Idem*, 12/07/1834; *GT*, 05/06/1834.

by Halévy and choreography by Jean Corrali),<sup>819</sup> and pieces for the Folies-Dramatiques and the Porte-Saint-Martin.<sup>820</sup> The employment of a *machiniste* plus two painters, and the fact that Varnout travelled to install and service the decors,<sup>821</sup> suggests that Delorme ordered more complex set pieces than a flat backdrop: mostly likely a trap-door contraption to mimic the famous *dénouement* of the opera. Troupe costumes for the chevalier parts were also commissioned from Parisian *costumier* Moreau,<sup>822</sup> an artist who specialised in civil as well as theatrical clothing: he was known to have created ball costumes in Paris and London in the mid-century<sup>823</sup> and to have worked for 'several' of the capital's theatres.<sup>824</sup> These contracts reveal that, for his second *grand opéra*, Delorme prioritised imitating more of the specific visual effects and costumes that were bespoke to the setting, characters and action for *Robert* as created at the Académie. Accordingly, Delorme's investments transformed the experience of *grand opéra* in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* further towards the imitation of the capital. The influence of residential provincial theatres on Valenciennes, though, should not be dismissed too quickly. Even though Delorme did not reference them in his advertisements for *Robert*, it is possible to speculate that he may still also have been responding to the efforts made by companies in towns such as Lyon and Montpellier, as described by Ellis, Guérinand and Teulon Lardic, to match Parisian decors by commissioning Parisian artists. Delorme's imitation of the bespoke visual of the Académie may therefore, have come about through imitation of the surrounding provinces.

Whatever their origin, Delorme's bespoke decors for *Robert* are representative of a revolution in the artistic practices of touring troupes. Across the next twenty years,

<sup>819</sup> Germaine Bapst, *Essai sur l'histoire du théâtre* (Paris: Hachette, 1893), 621.

<sup>820</sup> *Almanach des spectacles pour 1830*, 218 ; Herbert Schneider, 'Scribe and Auber: constructing grand opéra', *The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opéra*, ed. David Charlton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 185, footnote 441.

<sup>821</sup> *CV*, 07/08/1834.

<sup>822</sup> *Idem*, 12/07/1834; *Almanach général de la France* (Paris: Urtubie et Worms, 1839), 546.

<sup>823</sup> Charles Philippon, *Paris et ses environs* (Paris: Auber, 1840), 6; *RB* (Paris: Paris, 1851), 156: 467.

<sup>824</sup> *CV*, 12/07/1834. He was most likely in the capacity of a workshop artist, rather than a credited lead designer, because his name is not officially linked with a Parisian institution in my searches. These set pieces had a difficult transfer from Paris to Valenciennes: they were damaged by the coach journey and required sending back to Paris for repairs, delaying the local premiere by a few weeks: *EF*, 24/07/1834.

Delorme's successors moved away from traditional dependence on stock local resources, variable between the town theatres, and towards a mode of operatic production that put standardised visual elements at the centre of touring *grand opéra*. Directors Bertéché father and son, for example, commissioned new decors and sometimes costumes for the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* premieres of *La juive* (in 1836),<sup>825</sup> Halévy's *La Reine de Chypre* (written in 1841, staged in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* in 1846),<sup>826</sup> for Halévy's *Charles VI* (1843, locally produced in 1845)<sup>827</sup> and for Verdi's *Jérusalem* (premiered in Paris in 1847, and in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* in 1853).<sup>828</sup> Investment in these decors for the first time ensured that all towns in the *arrondissement* experienced the same visual backdrop for troupe performances of these pieces. Moreover, increasing visual specificity became a calling card for *grand opéra* production and a vital way to attract audiences. Even when individualised decors were several years old, their use was continually re-advertised by directors, for example, as seen in the posters produced for the 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement's* Arras performances of *La juive* in 1838 and 1839,<sup>829</sup> and *Robert* in 1849.<sup>830</sup> These posters highlight that bespoke decors remained theatrical commodities that were used to pique audience interest and encourage ticket sales throughout the mid-century.

The move to bespoke decors in *grand opéra* also shifted the working conditions of travelling troupes. Their cost added further drains on troupe directors' already restricted purses, and the decors also needed to be physically carried around by the troupe during their seasonal circuit. The initial investments tended to be recouped, though, as many directors sold their decors to their successors or to municipal councils to replenish theatre

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<sup>825</sup> EF, 20/09/1826; CN, 20/09/1836.

<sup>826</sup> MASV, Collection Cayat-Chartiers, posters dated 17/02/1846; 01/03/1846; 05/03/1846.

<sup>827</sup> AN, F/21/1236, Ticket sales (Bertéché), 30/10/1845. New decors were still advertised two years later in Arras, MASV, Collection Cayat-Chartiers, posters dated 04/02/1847, 07/02/1847; 11/02/1847; 25/02/1847.

<sup>828</sup> Ibid. These decors were a desert (Act 2 scene 1), the 'divan de l'émir de ramla' (Act 2 scene 2) and the title city (Act 4 Scene 2). MASV, Collection Cayat-Chartiers, poster 27/01/1853. Bertéché also updated the decors and costumes for *Robert* in 1837, poster 31/08/1837. Later 1<sup>st</sup> *troupe* director Filhol also invested in new decors for *La juive* and a new Act 4 for *Robert* in 1862, Ibid, poster, 09/02/1862. Ibid., poster, 23/02/1862.

<sup>829</sup> Ibid., posters, 04/03/1838, 25/08/1839.

<sup>830</sup> Ibid., poster, 06/02/1848.

collections.<sup>831</sup> Through these sales, *grand opéra* decors significantly outlived their directors in an *arrondissement*. Delorme's 1834 decors for *Robert* and Bertéché's 1836 pieces for *La juive*, for example, were only updated in 1862 by later director Filhol.

Investment in specific costumes altered troupes' practices in a different way. In the 1840s, directors across the *arrondissements* turned to theatrical agencies to rent *magasins de costumes*.<sup>832</sup> This freed troupe performers from the responsibility of sourcing their garments and also ensured continuity of costuming in revivals of the same piece in different seasons after a performer moved on, important in a provincial troupe with one-year contracts.<sup>833</sup> Overall, investment in bespoke decors and costumes resulted in a distinct standardisation, both regionally and nationally, of the visual elements that made up troupe performances, as well as a centralisation of the methods of sourcing these elements.

Around the same time, directors also began to stage *grand opéras* individually rather than in multi-piece evenings. This programming change further focused audiences' attention on the singularity of each *grand opéra's* narrative and music, alongside the piece's visuals.

The centralisation of theatrical decors and costumes in *grand opéra* also had an influence over the sourcing of these items for some repertoire in other genres from the 1840s onwards. Usually, new decors or costumes were bought to herald troupe premieres: in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*, of the *mélodrame* *La Fille de l'exilé* (by C. Guilbert de Pixerecourt, written 1819, staged in 1840),<sup>834</sup> the *féerie tableau* *Les Pilules du Diable* (by Ferdinand Laloue, Anicet Bourgeois and Laurent from 1839, produced here in 1842),<sup>835</sup> Dumas' play *Le comte de Montecristo* (1848, premiered in the north the same year),<sup>836</sup> the *vaudeville* prologue *Les enfants des génies* (written by Hippolyte and Théodore Cogniard 1837, staged

<sup>831</sup> AMD, 2/R/8, list of decors bought by the municipality from Guillaume Bertéché, 10/06/1858.

<sup>832</sup> AN, F/21/1238, ticket sales (Lefevre) undated, July–August 1854; Ticket sales (Tonel-Dubuisson) 26/10/1855.

<sup>833</sup> A singer's responsibility for costumes is emphasised by the fact that provincial critics would reproach performers specifically if they felt a piece's costumes had not been artistically or historically appropriate, as in a review of an evening in Valenciennes featuring *Le comte Ory*, *Le pré aux clercs* and *Quentin Durward* in ADN, JX/506, 1N, 18/05/1839.

<sup>834</sup> ADN, JX/506, 1N, 09/03/1840.

<sup>835</sup> AN, F/21/1235, ticket sales, Guillaume Bertéché, 11/06/1842.

<sup>836</sup> AN, F/21/1236, ticket sales, Prosper Bertéché 21/08/1848.

in Arras in 1838),<sup>837</sup> Auber's *opéra-comiques* *La Sirène* (1844, produced by the troupe the same year),<sup>838</sup> *Haydée* (written and staged in 1848),<sup>839</sup> and *La Dame de Pique* (from 1850, locally premiered in 1852).<sup>840</sup> In Valenciennes, troupe directors also invested in decors for a local creation written in 1844, *André Bernard ou le siege de Valenciennes* by actors in Bertéché's troupe, P. Ayraud and E. Fillion.<sup>841</sup> Other directors took a more comprehensive approach to standardisation: Bertéché's successors Tonel-Dubuisson and Filhol rented from a *magasin de costume* for their entire sung and spoken repertoire.<sup>842</sup>

With no surviving decors, it is almost impossible to ascertain exactly how, visually, these theatrical resources imitated Parisian models. There is, however, one press illustration from the Valenciennes paper *L'Impartial du nord* of the ship decor used for Act II of Bertéché's production of *Haydée* in 1848. Newspaper illustrations were artistic depictions that did not necessarily offer exact representations of the backdrops as seen or used in the theatre, but the print (Figure 14) provides at least an impression of the type of backdrop and the potential scale of provincial decors and costumes commissioned to imitate a Parisian model (Figure 15).<sup>843</sup>

<sup>837</sup> MASV, Collection Cayat-Chartier, poster 26/02/1838.

<sup>838</sup> AN, F/21/1235, ticket sales, Guillaume Bertéché, undated, Sep-Oct 1844.

<sup>839</sup> AN, F/21/1236, ticket sales, Prosper Bertéché, 23/10/1848.

<sup>840</sup> AN F/21/1238, ticket sales (Prosper Bertéché), undated Oct 1851-Jan 1852 (costing 800fr).

<sup>841</sup> ADN, 1/T/300/3, letter, 14/09/1844. *Archives historiques et littéraires du nord de la France et du midi de la Belgique* (Valenciennes: Bureau des Archives, 1857), 6: 348. The decors were made by local painters Meurice and son, showing the Valenciennes *place d'armes*, its belfry, and the *porte de famars*.

<sup>842</sup> AN, F/21/1238. ADL, 1/T/301/4, ticket sales, Tonel Dubuisson, 26/10/1855. This trend was kickstarted by the circulation of grand opéra but some individuals did already rent a *magasin de costume* before this repertoire arrived on the scene: Tony's troupe ambulante did so in 1828-29 for their spoken theatre and *vaudeville* season. AN F/21/1234, Ticket sales, Tony, Valenciennes, undated, May-June 1829. The *magasin* them 40fr per month.

<sup>843</sup> ADN, JX/506, /N, 15/10/1848. This decor was painted by local artists, Meurice father and son (sometimes written as Maurice). For their work on this decor they were awarded a bouquet of flowers after the performance by audience members.

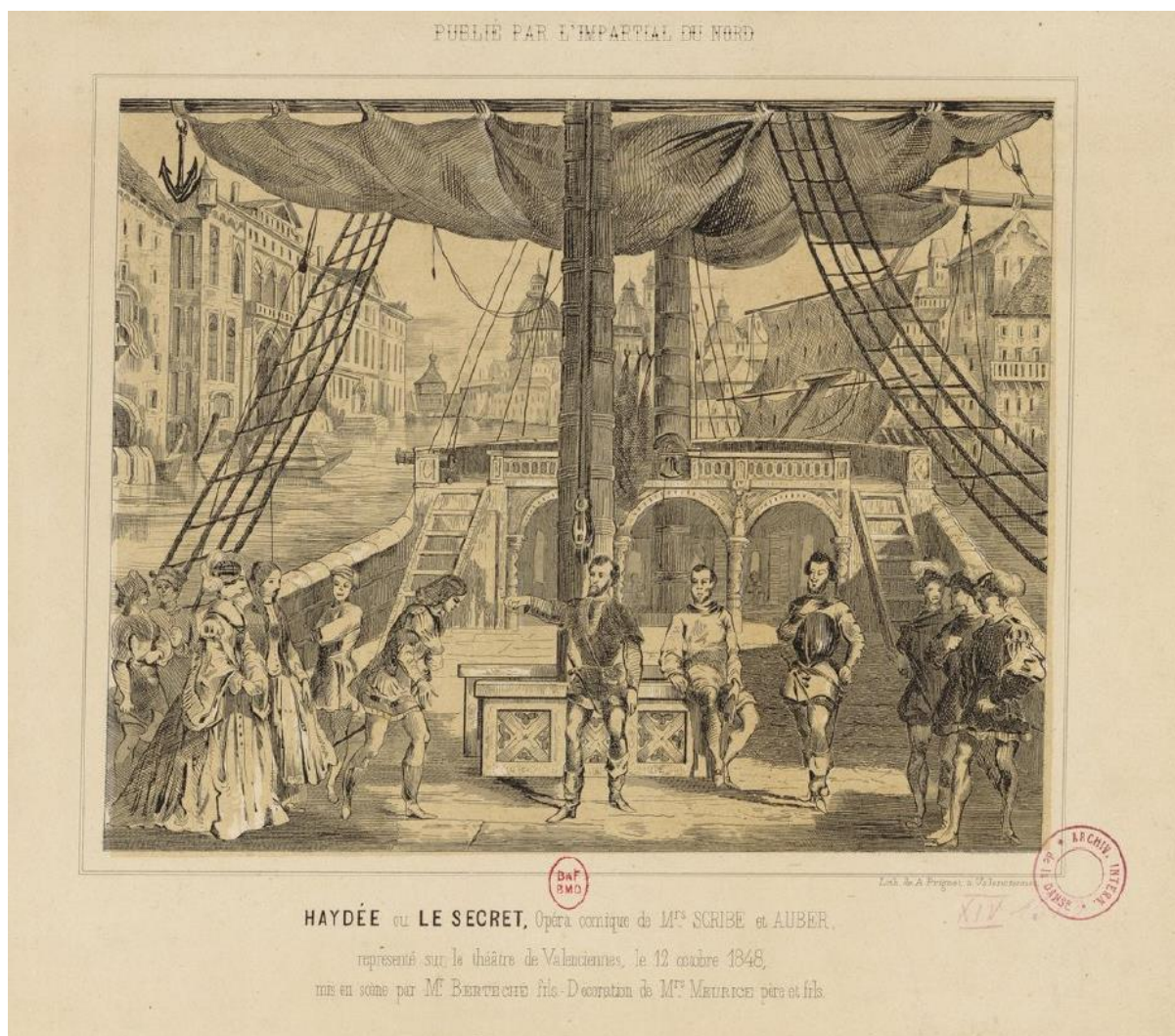


Figure 14: *Decor for Act II of Haydée in Valenciennes, printed in L'Impartial du nord.*<sup>844</sup>

<sup>844</sup> *Haydée ou Le secret, Opéra-comique de MM. Scribe et Aubert, représenté sur le théâtre de Valenciennes, le 12 octobre 1848, mise en scène par Mr Bertéché fils. Décoration de MM. Meurice père et fils* [illustration] BNF, département Bibliothèque-musée de l'opéra, ESTAMPES SCENES Haydée (2) 1848.





Figure 15: *Decor for Act II of Haydée in Paris (Opéra-Comique), printed in an unknown Parisian newspaper.*<sup>845</sup>

Both prints are identical. Or are they? While very similar at first glance, the artist for the *Impartial du nord* captures several key differences in a troupe's scale of operatic production: there are only twelve performers in the Valenciennes' rendition compared to well over fifty in the Parisian one, creating a very different sense of theatrical space and scale of the settings represented. There also appear to be artistic differences provoked by choice rather than practicality: the backdrops depict entirely different cities, suggesting that there was also a local decision made about where to portray this act within *Haydée*. Similarly, parts of the Valenciennes ship features different nautical details to what is visible of the more explicitly Venetian vessel in Parisian version, perhaps evidence of another artistic adaptation. The coexisting similarity and differences in these sketches underline

<sup>845</sup> *Haydée ou le secret, opéra-comique d'Esprit Auber: illustration de presse* [Illustration] BNF, département Arts du spectacle, 4-ICO THE-2802, 1848.

that, while there was undeniably an increasing level of standardisation for the visual aspects of *troupe d'arrondissement* performances in France during this period, the practical differences in touring conditions and the artistic choices of directors and/or painters also had an important, and as yet unacknowledged, impact on operatic spectacle. These illustrations showcase the persistence of local adaptation, however small, within provincial operatic practice, even when imitated from Parisian models.

### **Press criticism: embracing and avoiding Parisian comparison**

Journalists in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* responded to directors' investment in new visual elements with great fervour. For those such as the anonymous critic writing for the *Mémorial artésien* or the *Écho* columnist (known as J. P. L), bespoke visuals not only emulated Paris, but offered local audiences an experience of seeing operatic settings that were entirely "aligned with the [opera's] subject",<sup>846</sup> and, in doing so presented the "true" opera.<sup>847</sup> These press comments emphasised that the continuum of operatic experience refracted through the critic's lens was not only the distance between the French centre and the peripheries but the gap between what they considered to be "true" and unfaithful operatic experiences.<sup>848</sup>

Critics also reflected on troupes' musical developments as a process that moved their town's standards further towards those of Paris. After the *Robert* premiere, for example, the reviewer for the *Écho* thanked the Société, for "having been able to guess what Meyerbeer's music must be like when executed as it is in Paris."<sup>849</sup> Furthermore, journalists emphasised that there was a great delight, a sense of local pride, and recognition of local progress for a town classified in the "third order" of theatres to stretch to producing such a convincing performance of *Robert*.<sup>850</sup> Furthermore, one local critic did not hesitate to offer

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<sup>846</sup> *MA*, 27/09/1835, about a performance of *Robert* given during a visit by the residential company from Calais.

<sup>847</sup> *EF*, 14/08/1834.

<sup>848</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>849</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>850</sup> *CN*, 14/08/1834.

the highest Parisian compliment to director Bertéché: naming him the Véron of the provinces due to his activity, zeal and financial investment in *grand opéra* for the north and, in doing so, classifying Valenciennes as a northern outpost of the Académie.<sup>851</sup>

Reviewers found it harder, though, to trace positive local relationships with Paris in their assessments of troupe singing. The critic J. P. L initially stated that there was “no comparison” between the 1st *arrondissement* singers performing in *Robert* in 1834 and that of the original Parisian company.<sup>852</sup> Within a month, however, J. P. L reflected on the productivity of his use of Parisian reference points to classify itinerant singers. The critic reviewed *Robert* again in September in performances in which Delorme employed guest star Julie Dorus-Gras, performing the role of Alice, which Meyerbeer wrote for her.<sup>853</sup> In his review, J. P. L took issue with the appearance of guest stars in general, writing that the showcasing of Parisian artists would destroy “the enjoyment of the public.”<sup>854</sup> This was because, J.P.L argued, audience exposure to stars resulted in negative critique or apathy towards regular touring troupe artists: an attitude he categorised as spectators thinking that “the rest is rubbish for a crowd seduced by a big name”.<sup>855</sup> J.P.L’s worry was not an abstract one but was born out of recent events concerning troupe soprano Mme Vinzentini singing the role of Alice on nights when Dorus-Gras did not. After Dorus-Gras’ performances, J. P. L argued that Vizentini appeared even less talented than she usually was to local spectators because of comparisons made between both women:

Mme Vinzentini appeared to all, even to those who ordinarily sing her praises, significantly below the appraisal that was first given to her.<sup>856</sup>

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<sup>851</sup> *CN*, 05/03/1844.

<sup>852</sup> *EF*, 14/08/1834.

<sup>853</sup> *EF*, 18/09/1834.

<sup>854</sup> “les jouissances de son public.” *EF*, 16/10/1834.

<sup>855</sup> “le reste est nul pour la foule qu’un grand nom seul séduit.” Ibid.

<sup>856</sup> “Dans le rôle de Isabelle dans *Robert le diable*, Madame Delahourde a encore été entendue avec une faveur méritée, même après le passage de Madame Dorus parmi nous. Mais dans celui d’Alice, Madame Vinzentini a paru à tous, même à ceux qui lui prodiguent ordinairement des louanges, bien au-dessous du jugement qu’on en avait porté d’abord.” Ibid.

J. P. L came to the soprano's defence when reporting what he believed was unfair treatment of her performances because of comparisons with Dorus-Gras: he finished his review by suggesting that the reappraisal of troupe standards through a guest star was threatening to local *grand opéra*. Indeed, he argued that the vocal standards of the capital had to always be kept at bay to avoid "killing the illusion of the performance, always tending towards debilitating comparisons levelled at the director, at the troupe."<sup>857</sup> J.P.L's attitude is typical of the provincial critic, who, in his role as a local cultural arbiter gave himself, but not his audiences, the power to chop and change between invoking Parisian references and avoiding them. His comments, though, point towards the very real problem of how to locally assess singing talent in a genre such as *grand opéra* in a touring context, where the same performers still had to also lend their voices and bodies to *opéra-comique*, *vaudeville* and spoken plays.

In response to this problem, many critics found a way to appraise the work of travelling troupe singers without invoking Parisian references. Press criticism of *grand opéra* singing across the four *arrondissements* from 1830–64 overwhelmingly focused on performers' acts of great effort. Journalists across the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* defined *grand opéras* by Auber, Meyerbeer and Halévy as "difficult" for troupe voices and praised those such as tenor Bellecourt for playing the "exhausting and difficult" role of Masaniello.<sup>858</sup> In Saint-Omer, the anonymous journalist for the *Mémorial artésien* even underlined the great effort made by all troupe singers to rise to the challenge of *La juive* in 1845, congratulating Bertéché's artists' "tour de force", their efforts in not "shying away" from the task at hand, and praising the director's daring in choosing the piece.<sup>859</sup> These critics discussed the expected vocal style for *grand opéra* as something that required singers to push beyond *opéra-comique*, even when these reviewers were used to seeing performers tackle roles

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<sup>857</sup> "[de] tuer l'illusion du spectacle, toujours porté à des comparaisons funestes au directeur, à la troupe." Ibid.

<sup>858</sup> *EF*, 29/09/1835. *MA*, 27/09/1835.

<sup>859</sup> *MA*, 07/06/1845.

such as Rachel or Elvire year after year. Such rhetoric positioned *grand opéra* as an exception to the usual demands of touring operatic singing. Consequently, by constantly comparing the vocal demands of *grand opéra* to *opéra-comique*, critics accentuated troupes' vocal effort as a means of positive operatic expansion in the *arrondissement*, rather than as a symbol of performance standards that did not match up to the capital and might open local performances to potentially negative comparisons. In this way, many critics resisted assimilating all aspects of *grand opéra* production into a centre-periphery model, keeping Paris at bay in their understanding of touring troupes' vocal prowess and their encouragement of readers' perspectives. Critics thus asserted the primacy of the provinces in understanding *grand opéra* singing, locally, rather than resorting to Parisian exemplars.

### Models for *grand opéra*

Moving away from the local conditions of touring *grand opéra* and returning to Parisian-produced instructions, during the July Monarchy there was a sharp increase in the publication of staging manuals for repertoire from all stage genres, put together by printers and published as stand-alone booklets, and also written by journalists and printed in various theatrical periodicals.<sup>860</sup> *Grand opéra* manuals from *Robert* onwards were printed by directors-turned-publishers Vieillard Duverger and Louis Palianti in smaller commercial formats than Solomé's sixty-page *Muette*.<sup>861</sup> Duverger specialised in eight-page booklets and Palianti's extended to sixteen pages.<sup>862</sup> With this size reduction came a radical shift in the way that *grand opéra's* staging was communicated to provincial directors. Although several manuals made use of Solomé's *emplois* list, gone were most of the notices and annotations used by this *régis seur* to adjust the genre to the smallest

<sup>860</sup> Sylviane Robardey-Eppstein, "Les mises en scène sur papier-journal : espace interactionnel et publicité réciproque entre presse et monde théâtral (1828-1865)", *Médias 19 Presse et scène au XIXe siècle* [on line] 2019; Mary-Antoinette Allévy, *La mise en scène en France dans la première moitié du dix-neuvième siècle* (Paris: E. Droz, 1938), 128.

<sup>861</sup> Palianti and Duverger were also provincial directors before becoming publishers, Jacobshagen, 'Staging at the Opéra-Comique in Nineteenth-Century Paris', 245.

<sup>862</sup> See Jacobshagen's table in, "Staging Grand Opéra – Historically Informed?", 247.

provincial conditions. The manuals for *Robert* and *Les Huguenots* appear to include no staging adaptations,<sup>863</sup> and that for Auber's *Gustave III* (1833) only mentioned that the ballet could be cut.<sup>864</sup> Duverger's manual for *La juive* did include a few more potential changes: cuts to dances, instructions on how a small chorus could best be heard during the Act 5 procession, and tips to cheat a vast crowd scene in Act 5 by using a backdrop featuring painted cavalry.<sup>865</sup> The publisher also suggested that directors repurpose a decor from Act 5 of *Robert* to create a church backdrop, and that they reuse costumes from *Robert*, Rossini's *Le comte Ory* and Frédéric Gaillardet and Dumas' drame *La tour de Nesle* (1832).

<sup>866</sup> Besides *La juive*, though, the importance given to the main staging description in subsequent staging manuals published by Duverger and Palianti, such as *Le prophète*, contained few, if any, of the types of annotations offered by Solomé.<sup>867</sup> Consequently, these manuals moved *grand opéra* away from the latter's emphasis on possible adaptation for the smallest locales. Indeed, additional information provided in the *La juive* manual even provided a way for provincial troupes to engage in a new level of operatic reproduction, since the manual was also published with a set of costume illustrations for sixteen principal and chorus characters (and horses), plus lithographs of decors from each act of the Parisian production.<sup>868</sup> These new types of visual references available to provincial directors offered tools through which to increasingly centralise national practices for the staging of the Académie's repertoire, tools that most likely influenced and facilitated troupe

<sup>863</sup> Carl-Friedrich Baumann, "Livrets als bühnentechnische Quelle" in *Giacomo Meyerbeer, Musik als Welterfahrung: Festschrift für Heinz Becker zum 70. Geburtstag*, eds., Sieghart Döhring and Jürgen Schläder (Munich: Ricordi, 1995), 9–29. The staging manuals for these operas were printed by Duverger in 1831 and 1836 (*JGI*, 28/01/1832; 18/06/1836) but only manuscript copies have so far been rediscovered by scholars.

<sup>864</sup> Jacobshagen, "Staging Grand Opéra – Historically Informed?", 249. Troupes in the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement* did not stage *Gustave III*, but they did include scenes from the opera in balls held at the start of Lent and at Easter, MASV, Collection Cayat-Chartier I/1–9.

<sup>865</sup> *La juive* [Staging manual] (Paris: Duverger, 1835).

<sup>866</sup> *Idem*, 1, 3.

<sup>867</sup> Katherine Syer, 'Production Aesthetics and Materials', in *The Oxford Handbook of Opera*, ed., Helen M. Greenwald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 541; Arne Langer, "Die Optische Dimensions: Szenentypen, Bühnenräume, Kostüme, Dekorationen, Bewegungung, Tanz." *Verdi Handbuch*, eds., Anselm Gerhard and Uwe Schweikert (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001), 249–276.

<sup>868</sup> *Idem*, 5–6. These illustrations vastly expanded previously produced visual references for plays and *grand opéra*. Solomé had collaborated with Duvergier to produce lithographs for *Les trois quartiers* (three decors), and engraver/publisher Louis Martinet produced lithographs of Adolphe Nourrit's costume as Masaniello, Lise Noblet as Fenella and a Napolitan dancer (chorus), as part of his *Petite Galerie Dramatique* series, published between 1802–1840. *Bibliographie Générale de la France* (Paris: Pillet Ainé, 1828), 17: 319; Martineau de Soleinne, *Bibliothèque dramatique de Monsieur de Soleinne* (Paris: Administration de L'Alliance des Arts, 1844) 5: 210.

directors' increasingly standardised practices in the *arrondissements*, as mentioned above. In these developments, manuals do make visible a discernible artistic parameter concerned with the "preservation" of decors, specifically, and, crucially, only from the mid-1830s onwards and not, as has been claimed by Oberti, via Cohen, from *La muette* in 1828.

During the same period, though, the parameters for musical adaptability championed by manual creators developed in a different fashion, no doubt influenced by the role of composers such as Meyerbeer, Auber and Donizetti in writing staging booklets after *La muette*. For one, no manual after Solomé's included instructions to perform *grand opéra* as an *opéra-comique*. This change suggests that the practical conditions of the circulation of *grand opéra* to the provinces, including touring locales, also exerted influence over the printed manuals: publishers attuned to the work of provincial companies, likely communicated through newspaper reports, may have responded to how troupes tackled *grand opéra* singing and adjusted their later manual accordingly. By 1849, in Meyerbeer's work on the manual for *Le prophète*, the composer advanced, rather than reduced, provincial troupes' flexible approaches to his music by inserting several notices about changing musical practice into Paliani's booklet. Addressing the parts written for the bass clarinet, an instrument that had only recently been introduced to the Académie's orchestra, Meyerbeer included a note describing how smaller orchestras could instead work from a supplementary document that indicated which combination of standard orchestral instruments could "replace the effects" of this unusual sonority.<sup>869</sup> Meyerbeer's instructions most likely aimed to ensure that directors did not shy away from staging *Le Prophète* for lack of instrumentation so that he could collect his *droits*.<sup>870</sup> Significantly, though, this approach contrasted with a contemporary call for fidelity to the bass clarinet as voiced by the editors of the *Gazette musicale de Paris*. They published a rallying cry for provincial

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<sup>869</sup> Staging manual reprinted in Cohen, *The Original Staging Manuals*, 178.

<sup>870</sup> Robert Letellier, ed., *The Diaries of Giacomo Meyerbeer* (London: Associated University Presses, 1999–2004), 4 volumes, here 3: 34; 4: 200.

directors to procure themselves the instrument which was “not without importance” for the opera.<sup>871</sup> Much like Meyerbeer, the creators of the *Gazette* advert had commercial priorities, as this short column was most likely funded by the instrumental maker mentioned in the last sentence, M. Buffé. While the composer, editor, and instrument maker each wanted to encourage sales of the opera, the same context of theatrical commercialism produced contradictory views on the parameters for the music circulation of *grand opéra*: flexibility would guarantee Meyerbeer his *droits*, while advocating for imitation of the Académie's orchestra increased the chances of the editors of the *Gazette* and Buffé making sales.

Meyerbeer also offered vocal adaptations for *Le prophète*. In the staging manual, he guided provincial casting for the roles of Jean, Jonas, Fidès and Berthe,<sup>872</sup> and, in the vocal score, the composer outlined changes to the vocal line written for Fidès, created by Pauline Viardot.<sup>873</sup> To accommodate provincial singers who did not possess Viardot's extensive range, Meyerbeer inserted optional small notes into Fidès' melodies, for example restricting the tessitura of the role by taking away low notes such as B<sup>3</sup>.<sup>874</sup> In the staging manual, Meyerbeer stated that these alterations were needed not because of the deficiencies of provincial talent, but because the role stepped outside of the usual boundaries of the mezzo-soprano range, being written for “Mme Viardot's exceptional compass”.<sup>875</sup> The role, therefore, needed to be adjusted for a standard provincial *emploi*. This change positions Viardot's voice, and the role of Fidès, as a contrast to the French operatic norm beyond Paris. In this situation, then, Meyerbeer articulated that it was the originating operatic conditions that were the ‘problem’ which required adaptation rather than the anticipated conditions of a provincial troupe. Meyerbeer's approach was echoed by Auber, who also worked to fit his Parisian music to provincial forces in the score for *Le*

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<sup>871</sup> RGM, 24/04/1836.

<sup>872</sup> Cohen, *The Original Staging Manuals*, 178.

<sup>873</sup> Ibid. Lacombe, *The Keys to French Opera*, 26.

<sup>874</sup> Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Le Prophète* [vocal score] (Paris: Troupenas, c. 1849) 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 132.

<sup>875</sup> Cohen, *The Original Staging Manuals*, 178.



*philtre* (1831). The composer advised directors that only six singers were needed to perform the chorus of soldiers and young girls (No.4 and 12).<sup>876</sup> This notice gave directors such as Delorme the flexibility not to use all their singers in these numbers and, like Meyerbeer's work on *Le prophète*, offered parts of Auber's *grand opéra* as a piece to be moulded to local conditions.

There are hints, however, that composers working on *grand opéra* materials also itched to exert further control over provincial music making. Donizetti, for one, introduced flexible changes to the musical and dramatic fabric of *La favorite* (1840)<sup>877</sup> and *Dom Sébastien* (1843) specifically for provincial productions,<sup>878</sup> yet he also established one specific moment in the latter *grand opéra* that he ordered not to be changed in places such as Valenciennes. In his signed notices in the scores and staging manual for *Dom Sébastien*, Donizetti stated that, in Act 4, the singers in the roles of Dom Antonio, Dom Henrique, Ben Selim and all the Spanish knights "must indispensably sing as inquisitors".<sup>879</sup> The simple statement underlined the importance which the composer attached to the powerful vocal performance of this act, resulting in his codified musical guidance to bump the choruses in order to replicate, as far as possible, the sound of the Académie. Meyerbeer, too, created musical instructions for his earlier *grand opéras* *Les Huguenots* and *Robert le diable* that aimed to determine provincial practice, rather than leave them open for troupes. In the full scores of these operas, the composer included a guide of which numbers should be cut and which could be abridged in provincial performances.<sup>880</sup> These instructions could be read as

<sup>876</sup> *Le Philtre* [full score] (Paris: Troupenas, 1831), contents page.

<sup>877</sup> Donizetti added a list of vocal *emplois* to the staging manual to translate the opera's roles from their Parisian creators into workable categories to be taken on by provincial troupes. Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris, Relevés de mises en scène lyriques, 8-TMS-02913 (RES), *La Favorite* [staging manual] printed in *RGM* [supplément] 17 January 1841, 144.

<sup>878</sup> Donizetti worked with Scribe to simplify denouement of *Dom Sébastien* for the provinces *Dom Sébastien*, [vocal score] (Paris: c. 1843) contents page. Letter 02 November 1843, *Lettere inedite di Gaetano Donizetti a diversi, e lettere di Rossini, Scribe, Dumas, Spontini, Adam, Verdi a Gaetano Donizetti*, ed. Angelo de Eisner-Eisenhof (Bergamo: 1897), 39.

<sup>879</sup> "doivent chanter indispensablement comme inquisiteurs." *Dom Sébastien* [full score] (Paris: La France Musicale, 1843), contents page. *Dom Sébastien* [staging manual] (Paris: Brère, 1843), 62. Donizetti collaborated with Scribe and his publishers the Escudier brothers to create these printed materials: Letter 02/11/1843 printed in *Lettere inedite di Gaetano Donizetti*, ed. Angelo de Eisner-Eisenhof (Bergamo: 1897), 39.

<sup>880</sup> *Les Huguenots* [full score] (Paris: Schlesinger, 1836), title page; *Robert le diable* [full score] (Paris: Schlesinger, 1831), title page. On Meyerbeer's compositional process and these cuts, see Michael Kenneth Mitchell, "Melodrama and the Illusion of Tragedy in Meyerbeer's 'Les Huguenots'" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1994), 24-46; Newark, 'Review:

either adaptative or circumscribing: a practical help to combat the opera's length, or a model for directors to follow so that Meyerbeer might gain control over the musico-dramatic structure of his opera when played across the nation, lest directors choose to cut the wrong pieces, in Meyerbeer's eyes. Against the backdrop of operatic instructions described throughout this chapter, should these instructions, then, be read as indicating Meyerbeer and/or Donizetti's vision of fixed nature of the performance of these *grand opéra* moments, a step towards an operatic work concept?

Jacobshagen has argued so in terms of Meyerbeer's work on the staging directions and visual effects for the *Prophète* manual.<sup>881</sup> He reads Meyerbeer's collaboration with Palianti to codify the co-ordination of musico-dramatic effects in future productions as evidence of the composer's "quest for an all-embracing control of the theatrical process of his works".<sup>882</sup> Jacobshagen suggests that this model prefigured and potentially influenced Wagner and Verdi's later quests for "total authorship",<sup>883</sup> in themselves concepts in which the view of opera as work gains clarity.<sup>884</sup> Can Jacobshagen's argument be extrapolated onto Meyerbeer's musical instructions for his earlier repertoire, and onto Donizetti's *Dom Sébastien* instruction? More archival evidence than I have been able to find would be required to do so. It is evident, though, that both composers recognised the need to offer adaptative operatic practices in some areas and in certain pieces, while also working to control the very same provincial productions in terms of other, musical, aspects. Perhaps the musical instructions in *Les Huguenots*, *Robert le diable* and *Dom Sébastien* cannot be termed quests for "all-embracing" control of operatic performances in the provinces, but they do make clear these composers' developing desires for *some* musical fixity and

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The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera, Ed. David Charlton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Xxi+496 Pp.', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16, no.2 (2004): 245-6.

<sup>881</sup> Jacobshagen, "Staging Grand Opéra – Historically Informed?", 250-260.

<sup>882</sup> Idem, 260. Jacobshagen does not consider the musical adaptations in *Le Prophète* that I have outlined, however, meaning that his argument for Meyerbeer's "all-embracing control" should be tempered to include relinquishing control over the musical changes that he offered for provincial troupes.

<sup>883</sup> Idem, 250.

<sup>884</sup> Syer, "Production Aesthetics and Materials", 542-543.

control over the provincial circulation of their *grand opéra* repertoire, mirroring stricter visual instructions of this period and pressing against ongoing contemporary practices of operatic musical adaptation.

## Conclusion

By examining the ‘bottom up’, local perceptions of the artistic parameters of provincial *grand opéra* alongside central, ‘top down’ guidance for these staging elements, in this chapter I have revealed how directors, local critics, artists and publishers responded in varying ways to the arrival of the genre in the touring circuit and the process of establishing models for operatic imitation and authority within France. *Grand opéra* production in Valenciennes makes clear the increasing influence of the capital over provincial performance practices. After experiments with the shape of local *grand opéra* in 1830, *troupe d'arrondissement* directors developed visual staging practices that worked towards national standardisation through the imitation of Parisian models, just as printed manuals offered increased details for the reproduction of these visual elements far from the capital. The central place of Paris and the Académie within the national theatrical hierarchy gained strength through this development, but it was not without challenge. As I have shown, troupe’s “truncated” performances and provincial critics kept the vocal standards of Paris at bay in local reviews in Valenciennes. Similarly, the ever-present mark of local adaptation even within imitated decors, as seen in the *Haydée* ship backdrop, ensured that *grand opéra* on tour did not always replicate centre-periphery dynamics. Moreover, the differences in Paris-province relationships established by these situations not only underline that expectations concerning musical parameters could travel separately from visual ones, but that they could both also change with time, just as the influence of the capital, or of other provincial settings, could flicker, fade or grow stronger over a local artistic environment.

The contemporary development of the content of printed manuals in the late 1830s does demonstrate the solidification of a centrally controlled artistic parameter for the visual staging practices of the genre that were expected to be upheld on a national scale. Yet the practical reality of adjusting to provincial parameters mean that, within a move towards printed instructions for “preservation”, the onset of this practice came about through an intense process of change, trial and reflection, including provincial experimentation (for example, the provincial models that Delorme sought out for the 1830 *La muette*), plus the influence exerted by provincial conditions over commercial creators (as seen in the change from Solomé’s form-changing musical guidance in later manuals). It should thus be noted that the existence of a “preservation” paradigm did not simply emerge out of the imposition of the Académie’s conditions from above, but through provincial experience which likely influenced the capital’s makers. Overall, provincial *grand opéra*, at least in the touring circuit, should be characterised as exhibiting parallel growth in both adaptation and control between 1830 and 1860.

I have also argued throughout that *grand opéra* circulation makes apparent changing ideas about opera as event or work in nineteenth-century France. In my case studies, the concepts appear intertwined throughout the provincial development of this genre: plural practices encoded into Solomé’s instructions to replicate *La muette*; fears about Delorme’s adaptations for the opera in Valenciennes; discernible changes made to decors that came from a standardised model for *Haydée*; and the potential beginnings of a musical work concept within Donizetti and Meyerbeer’s musical instructions for *grand opéra* outside Paris. Within this complexity, the practices of provincial *grand opéra* demonstrate a tentative but certainly evolving relationship between operatic circulation and authorial intent, between troupe performances and operatic control, and between provincial reception of the genre and the concept of ownership of operatic repertory. In this way, productions of *grand opéra* by the *troupes d’arrondissement* sowed a seed for a gradual,

complex, and at times contradictory, change in the way in which people involved in nineteenth-century operatic culture reconsidered the nature of operatic performance and production, a way of thinking that has persisted into the next century and our own.<sup>885</sup>

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<sup>885</sup> Emanuele Senici, "In the Score": Music and Media in the Discourse of Operatic Mise-En-Scène', *The Opera Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (2020): 207–23.

## Chapter 5

### Theatrical competition on the eastern French borderland

The autumn of 1825 saw the administrators of the north-eastern towns of Colmar and Mulhouse suddenly grappling with their constituents' unruly theatrical preferences. During performances by the 9<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* led by director Maillart, certain spectators expressed their dissatisfaction with the region's touring troupe and their repertoire of opera and *vaudeville*. As reported by the Prefect of Doubs, Maillart's company "met with disfavour" in the Haut-Rhin as members of the public shouted from the stalls "Give us German plays!" inciting unrest during performances.<sup>886</sup> At stake were audiences' preferences for sung and spoken theatre in German, likely inspired by recent visits from Germanic troupes to Colmar and Mulhouse.<sup>887</sup> Unfortunately for the French troupes, this was not a one-off incident as, from 1818 until the end of the *arrondissement* system, foreign troupes travelled over the border from Switzerland and Germany into the Haut-Rhin to perform almost every summer. Their success with the local populace had a decidedly detrimental effect on the 9<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*. Maillart resigned from his post in November 1825, citing financial losses in part incurred by the autumnal incidents. His successor Claparède then attempted to exclude both towns from his itineraries in the 1830s due to the presence of foreign companies, and later directors continued to complain about competition with visiting Swiss and German troupes in the Haut-Rhin into the 1850s.<sup>888</sup> In this part of France, more than any other studied in this thesis, the limits of the national

<sup>886</sup> AN, F/21/1258, letter from the Prefect of Doubs to the Minister, 21/03/1826;

<sup>887</sup> AN, F/21/1258, letter from the Prefect of Doubs to the Minister, 25/05/1825; Letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 14/06/1825. It is unclear whether these were German or Swiss companies.

<sup>888</sup> AN, F/21/1258, report for the Minister, 09/12/1825; letter from Claparède to the Minister, 07/01/1834. F/21/1259, Letter from the Minister to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin 30/03/1850. After giving up his position as director, Maillart became a successful theatrical agent, helping directors recruit performers and renting musical scores. ADHR, 4/T/98, letter from Maillart to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin, 03/07/1829. AMB hold several scores with Maillart's agency stamp (eg. Mus. GF 20031 (1-3), *Le petit chaperon rouge*). Claparède was a singer, director and librettist who performed in Holland, Germany and Paris, had an important career as the director of the court opera troupe of Empress Elisabeth Alexeïevna in St Petersburg around 1805-1812, alongside Boieldieu, *GM*, 03/06/1869; Georges Favre, *Boieldieu: sa vie, son oeuvre* (Paris: Librairie E. Droz, 1944), 153-4. Anon., *Histoire critique des théâtres de Paris, pendant 1821* (Paris: Lelong and Delaunay, 1822), 68.

*arrondissement* system become apparent when confronted with regional socio-political conditions, such as the dual Franco-Germanic cultural and linguistic heritage of Alsace.

In this chapter, I explore the integration of theatrical personnel, repertoire and performances from outside the national theatrical framework into the social and cultural life of the Haut-Rhin between 1818 and 1864. The importance of German-language performance to Haut-Rhin spectators and administrators during this period raises two key questions that I seek to address. First, how does the competition between foreign companies and the *troupes d'arrondissement* challenge the reach and function of the ministry's national stage infrastructure? Second, how did local administrators and critics, as well as government ministers, discuss the function and place of German performances and identity in relation to French theatre and nation, particularly in terms of its artistic, social, and political significance in a borderland department? Additionally, key to both of these questions, and to this chapter, is the issue of how administrators' and audiences' interactions with performances in German in nineteenth-century Alsace participated in the definition of a community with distinctive regional, rather than national, characteristics.

Alsace was a Franco-Germanic region within France with shared linguistic and cultural influences from both sides of the borderland going back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>889</sup> By the nineteenth century, the Germanic dialect of Alsatian (*Alsacien*) was still the first language of most inhabitants of the Haut-Rhin. In 1806 there were 282, 000 "German-speaking inhabitants" in the Haut-Rhin, 83.6% of the entire department's population,<sup>890</sup> and there was minimal change throughout the half century: in 1866, half of the population of the Haut-Rhin, including 46% per cent of military recruits, a large proportion of rural inhabitants and many

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<sup>889</sup> Pierre Klein, 'L'Alsace, entre trois langues et deux cultures', *Diasporiques*, 8 (2009), 46–52. Peter George Wallace, *Communities and Conflict in Early Modern Colmar: 1575–1730* (Boston: Humanities Press Inc., 2005). Zsuzsanna Fagyal, Douglas Kibbee and Frederic Jenkins, "Historical Perspectives," in *French: A Linguistic Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), ed. Zsuzsanna Fagyal, 220–92.

<sup>890</sup> Charles-Etienne Coquebert de Montbret, *Mélanges sur les langues, dialectes et patois, renfermant, entre autres, une collection de versions de la parabole de l'enfant prodigue en cent idiomes ou patois différents, presque tous de France; précédés d'un essai d'un travail sur la géographie de la langue française*, ed. Sébastien Bottin (Paris: Delaunay, 1831), 12–13.

industrial workers, could still not understand or speak French.<sup>891</sup> Although Alsatian writer Joseph Writh, who gathered these statistics, noted the urban/rural and elite/working classes divide between citizens who spoke the Germanic language in everyday life during the period, it is notable that Alsatian was also cultivated as an expression of regional culture by upper-class societies, including in small-scale musical settings of regional texts in song in the 1860s.<sup>892</sup> The everyday use of the dialect and its place in the preservation of local cultural heritage emphasised that the Alsatian population's regional distinctiveness and linguistic autonomy, though described as 'German' by officials, was usually characterised as part of its membership of the French nation. Indeed, despite the linguistic differences, in 1849, 97% of the Haut-Rhin's inhabitants during this period were still classified as French citizens, rather than as immigrants.<sup>893</sup>

Consequently, categorising performers, audiences, or stage genres as 'German' in the Haut-Rhin at this time could mean one of two things. On the one hand, as just mentioned, officials used the term 'German' to describe someone or something internal to France but part of Alsace's regional sub-culture: Haut-Rhin inhabitants who spoke Alsatian but were national citizens. On the other hand, the term could also refer to an entity that was external to France: a foreign national that spoke German or a stage genre originating outside French territory. All foreign troupes performing in the German language, even when they came from Switzerland, were described as 'German' by local and ministerial French

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<sup>891</sup> Joseph Wirth, *La langue française dans les départements de l'Est: ou Des moyens et des méthodes à employer pour propager la langue nationale dans les parties de l'Alsace et de la Lorraine où l'idiome allemand est encore en usage* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1867), 16–28. Catherine T. Dunlop, 'Mapping a New Kind of European Boundary: The Language Border between Modern France and Germany', *Imago Mundi*, 65:2 (2013): 253–267;

. Marie-Noële Denis, 'Le dialecte Alsatian: état des lieux', *Ethnologie française* 33:3 (2003): 363–71.

<sup>892</sup> Dunlop, 'Mapping a New Kind of European Boundary', 261. Mulhouse choir director Joseph Heyberger even composed songs with Alsatian words written by Colmarian writer Joseph Mangold and had them performed at the Théâtre de Colmar in the 1860s and 70s by the Colmar Orphéon society: Jean-Marie Gall, *Le théâtre populaire Alsatian au XIXe siècle* (Strasbourg: Société Savante d'Alsace et des régions de l'est: 1974), 72.

<sup>893</sup> Jacques Baquol, *L'Alsace ancienne et moderne, ou dictionnaire géographique, historique et statistique du Haut et du Bas-Rhin* (Strasbourg: Jacques Baquol, 1849), 26. McCain, 'The Language Question Under Napoleon' (PhD. Thesis, University of Oxford, 2014), 272–3. According to Baquol, there were just under 11,500 combined German and Swiss immigrants living in the Haut-Rhin by this point, the largest percentage, by far, of the non-French residents in the department. There was also religious diversity in Alsace, with a large population of Catholics but a notable group of Protestants, although this issue does not appear to have been raised in theatrical correspondence. On the religious question, see Klein, 'Battleground of Cultures: «Politics of Identities» and the National Question in Alsace under German Imperial Rule (1870–1914)', *Revue d'Alsace*, 132 | 2006, 503–509; Claude Dargent, Claude, and Catriona Dutreuilh, 'Official Statistics on Religion: Protestant Under-Reporting in Nineteenth-Century French Censuses.' *Population (English Edition, 2002-)* 64, no. 1 (2009): 203–19.



administrators, as well as town journalists during this period. The dual identification is significant when seeking to study the repercussions of Franco-Germanic tensions, such as the Haut-Rhin theatre disruptions of 1825, as well as the long-lasting cross-border mobility of Swiss and German troupes in these French departments for forty-six years. Accordingly, I seek to also determine whether these foreign visitors, and their stage culture, represented an expression of the regional identity of Alsace that pressed against French state centralism during this period, and for whom, and/or whether foreign companies, and their repertoire, represented something that was beyond the French nation entirely, that had to be related to and managed as something external and foreign.

Scholars that have observed the frictions between visiting German companies and the resident French troupe in Strasbourg highlight the tensions around the theatrical embodiment of regional identity: German performances were discouraged in this part of Alsace by certain audience members and officials, particularly in the 1830s.<sup>894</sup> The largest town in Alsace, though, was not representative of its wider department (Bas-Rhin) nor the wider region. Indeed, Philippe Bourdin has shown that, during the Napoleonic era, German performances were the main source of theatrical culture in the Bas-Rhin beyond Strasbourg, tolerated by local authorities and welcomed by audiences because the French *troupes ambulantes* sanctioned by the ministerial system did not come to this part of France, most likely because of the dearth of French speakers.<sup>895</sup> This was a long-lasting arrangement: archival sources from the *troupe d'arrondissement* period reveal that Bas-Rhin towns continued to receive stage culture almost exclusively through foreign companies into the 1860s.<sup>896</sup> The Bas-Rhin was a department where the national aims and

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<sup>894</sup> Hemmings, *Theatre and State*, 141-142; Cailliez, *La diffusion du comique*, 797-812; Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 217-8.

<sup>895</sup> Bourdin, "Les Limites d'un Impérialisme Culturel", 89-112. The arrangement was not without tension, as individual administrators and spectators accused foreign companies of "poisoning good taste, perverting morals, and perpetuating the old Germanic spirit of the country", Bourdin, Le Borgne, Triolaire and Trehorel, "Le programme THEREPSICORE", [on line].

<sup>896</sup> AN, F/21/1207, letter and repertoire from director Carli to the Minister, 31/01/1836; Letter and repertoire from director Koppenhöfer to the Minister, 19/11/1835. Letter from director Lange Chiarini, 12/06/1838 (about German troupes posing competition to potential French tours in the Bas-Rhin). Between 1854-64, ten German directors were granted permission by the ministry to tour in the Bas-Rhin (AN, F/21/1207, various).

function of the ministerial theatrical system never reached and, consequently, where German performance culture became the uncontested norm.<sup>897</sup> a very different Alsatian context to Strasbourg.

The theatrical situation of the Haut-Rhin has the potential to offer additional insights into Alsace's socio-political context. I argue that this department offers a window onto a new type of theatrical relationship between French and German troupes that melded regionalism and transnationalism. In theory, ministerial theatrical legislation for the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* in which this department existed ensured a zero-tolerance policy towards performers from outside the *arrondissement* system, including foreign troupes.<sup>898</sup> As I show in this chapter, though, ministerial theatrical infrastructure was continually subverted in Colmar and Mulhouse through the actions of local administrators who encouraged German performances not only in 1825, but throughout the first half of the century, with consequences for the 9<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*. Crucially, troupe competition in the Haut-Rhin demonstrates that performances in German had the potential to generate identification, on the part of local and government administrators and Alsatian critics and spectators, with different types of communities within and outside of French borders.<sup>899</sup> Theatrical competition in the Haut-Rhin was thus a battle waged by these administrators and critics to control the shape of regional-central power dynamics and to limit the national status given to theatrical experience in Colmar and Mulhouse.

In the first part of the chapter, I reconstruct the Germanic operatic scene in Colmar and Mulhouse, using archival documents to establish the frequency and provenance of troupe

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<sup>897</sup> Uncontested, that is, apart from a brief period in 1848–50, where speculative directors received overwhelmingly negative responses to their petitions to manage troupes in the Bas-Rhin and all departments not included in the 1824 legislation. Perhaps as a result of the 1848 unrest and the transition into two new iterations of the French state over these four years, ministers adopted a restrictive legalistic approach to theatrical provision, now writing that: "on ne peut autoriser la formation des troupes dramatiques en dehors des limites fixée par l'ordre de 1824." AN, F/21/955, letter from the Minister to director Sainval, 22/08/1848; AN, F/21/954, letter from the Minister to director Barbier Beaumont, 05/06/1852.

<sup>898</sup> AN, F/21/1258, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin, 03/06/1825.

<sup>899</sup> On music making and identification, see K. K. Sheleman, "Music, memory and history", *Ethnomusicology Forum* 15, no.1 (2006): 17–37. T. Rice, "Reflections on music and identity in ethnomusicology", *Muzikologija/Musicology* 7, (2013): 17–37.

visits and their repertoire between 1818 and 1864.<sup>900</sup> In the second, I reveal how government ministers attempted to manage theatrical performance in the Haut-Rhin in line with socio-political policy aiming to centralise and homogenise French citizens throughout the nineteenth century. In the final section, I uncover how local agents (successive Prefects of the Haut-Rhin and town journalists) subverted ministerial policy to encourage German performances for a variety of political, social and artistic reasons. Here, I show that foreign troupes certainly did embody the regional for local administrators, as seen in their championing of cross-border visits as an expression of their regional difference. At the same time, though, I underline how foreign companies also represented, for certain officials and critics, a theatrical culture that was perceived as offering cosmopolitan experiences for the administrators and audiences of Colmar and Mulhouse between 1818 and 1864.

I use the term 'cosmopolitan' with care, as it has been used in recent musicology to typify several types of transnational encounters.<sup>901</sup> Some scholars, such as William Weber and Celia Applegate identify cosmopolitanism within the mixed European concert and operatic repertoire of various capitals or in the European-wide travels and careers of certain musicians.<sup>902</sup> Weber argues that these transnational environments must be read as cosmopolitan because they articulate, as Gooley summarises, "a bid for cultural authority on a European scale, as opposed to that of region and nation."<sup>903</sup> In these circumstances, cosmopolitanism is overwhelmingly the preserve of an elite: either a star musician, or

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<sup>900</sup> I finish in 1864 because theatrical deregulation brought about the end of the *arrondissement* system, meaning that no French troupe now had an inbuilt right to tour to the Haut-Rhin. Mayors and prefects were free to negotiate with any troupes which they wished to provide performances and with no state-legislated system designed to provide theatre across the French provinces, the protection of German troupes by local administrators no longer carried the same reactionary significance.

<sup>901</sup> Dana Gooley. "Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Nationalism, 1848–1914." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 66, no. 2 (2013): 523–49.

<sup>902</sup> Weber, "Cosmopolitan, National, and Regional Identities in Eighteenth-Century European Musical Life," in *The Oxford Handbook of the New Cultural History of Music*, ed. Jane Fulcher (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 208–27. Celia Applegate, "Mendelssohn on the Road: Music, Travel, and the Anglo-German Symbiosis," in *The Oxford Handbook of the New Cultural History of Music*, ed. Jane Fulcher, 228–44 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>903</sup> Gooley. "Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Nationalism, 1848–1914", 526, summarising Weber "Cosmopolitan, National, and Regional Identities", 210–18.

spectators and musical managers of the capital's high-ranking institutions. Yet Ryan Minor, Homi Bhabha and Kwame Anthony Appiah make the case for a co-existing, "everyday" or "vernacular cosmopolitanism" that occurs on an "unremarkable" scale for ordinary individuals and, at least in Minor's conception, avoids politicisation through its everyday rootedness.<sup>904</sup> Minor argues, for instance, that the music heard or played by ordinary people in small-scale music-making environments, perhaps like the theatres of Colmar and Mulhouse, demonstrate a particularly nineteenth-century cosmopolitanism because they, like Weber's capital institutions, "esch[e]w[er] allegiance to a purely national repertory and actively explor[e] others."<sup>905</sup> Minor, Appiah and Bhabha's opening up of the term cosmopolitan, however, is not without contestation. Dana Gooley and Sarah Collins suggest that, in musicologists' haste to undermine nation-orientated categories of analysis, the term is used too loosely by many musicologists to refer to any transnational encounter.<sup>906</sup> Gooley and Collins argue that cosmopolitanism is, at its heart, a philosophical ethical-political ideology in which elite people "invest a certain virtue in belonging to, or striving to belong to, a "larger" world as a way of keeping local and parochial attachments in check."<sup>907</sup> This "conscious and reflective" element is what keeps cosmopolitanism separate, they argue, from other kinds of "global relationality" that they would see as characterising, for example, the everyday musical moments which Minor discusses.<sup>908</sup>

It is evidently complex to pin down an adequate scholarly consensus on what musical cosmopolitanism might be in different historical and geographical situations. Here, I propose that troupe competition in the Haut-Rhin offers a theatrical case study in which both types of elite and everyday cosmopolitanism can and do exist at various points.

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<sup>904</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), xiv-xvi; Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: Norton, 2006), 241; Ryan Minor, "Beyond Heroism: Music, Ethics, and Everyday Cosmopolitanism", *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 66, no. 2 (2013): 529-34.

<sup>905</sup> Minor, "Beyond Heroism", 533.

<sup>906</sup> Sarah Collins, and Dana Gooley, 'Music and the New Cosmopolitanism: Problems and Possibilities', *The Musical Quarterly* 99, no. 2 (2016): 139-65.

<sup>907</sup> Collins and Gooley, 'Music and the New Cosmopolitanism', 141.

<sup>908</sup> *Ibid*, 148.

Granted, the power balance and local relevance of each type of cosmopolitan identity formation shifted according to socio-political circumstance, as did the relationship with regional and national values advanced by the same officials and critics, and it is important to acknowledge these shifts. Yet these changes and relations provide crucial insight into the coexistence or contradictions within moments of cosmopolitan encounter that, I suggest, are emblematic of a borderland and which, crucially, reveal the limits of a national or centralised framework for theatrical experience applicable in a liminal department such as the Haut-Rhin.

### *Troupes d'arrondissement and troupes allemandes*

The summer of 1818 was a turning point in the musical life of the Haut-Rhin, as Colmar's audiences experienced operatic performances in German for the first time. In contrast to the Bas-Rhin, towns in the Haut-Rhin appear to have been served solely by troupes operating under the official ministerial system during the Napoleonic period and first years of the Restoration:<sup>909</sup> that is, the *troupes ambulantes* performing French repertoire in the French language. Departmental audiences' introduction to German performances came via the director of the Strasbourg theatre, Brion, who masterminded an arrangement in which the Colmar theatre became a "satellite" of his Bas-Rhin company in 1818.<sup>910</sup> This unification was significant in that it stepped outside of the usual boundaries between residential and touring companies set out by the national theatrical system. Brion took the reins of the Strasbourg company in 1817 and quickly realised that he needed a second "satellite" town in which to make ends meet to recoup the costs of his opera troupe.<sup>911</sup> At the same time, the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin, André de Biaudos de Castéja, had artistic and political motivations to take the 7<sup>th</sup> *troupe arrondissement* out of the hands of Pépin, the itinerant director

<sup>909</sup> Pantaléon Deck, *Histoire du théâtre français à Strasbourg (1681-1830)* (Strasbourg et Paris: F.-X le Roux et Compagnie, 1948); Bourdin, 'Les Limites d'un Impérialisme Culturel', 95; Bourdin, Le Borgne, Triolaire and Trehorel, 'Le programme THEREPSICORE'.

<sup>910</sup> ADHR, 4/T/98, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin, 25/03/1818.

<sup>911</sup> ADHR 4/T/98, letter from Brion to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin, 27/11/1818. AN, F/21/1207, letter from Brion to the Prefect of the Bas-Rhin, 12/12/1817. Deck, *Histoire du théâtre français à Strasbourg*, 141-145.

currently allocated to the theatrical region including the Haut-Rhin.<sup>912</sup> The Prefect accused Pépin of lowering the artistic standards of the *arrondissement*, arguing that his troupe's lack of talent did not befit the importance of Colmar as a border town that attracted "a large number of French civil servants and employees."<sup>913</sup> The union was thus brokered by Prefect and director to mutual advantage.

The new arrangement raised important artistic questions for Colmar as a border town. In Strasbourg, Brion organised performances with his French *troupe sédentaire* for around nine months of the year but, like directors before him, also contracted summer seasons given by German companies: most recently by troupes from Augsburg, Bamberg and Mainz.<sup>914</sup> Consequently, Castéja and the Minister of the Interior Élie Louis Decazes debated whether the arrangement with Brion could include the German troupes, confronting the question of whether the national infrastructure for French theatre could permit foreign influence in the Haut-Rhin. After some wrangling, the final contract signed with Brion in March 1818, and valid for three years, made it clear that the director should arrange only "occasional visits" from "troupes allemandes" alongside longer stays by his French troupe.<sup>915</sup> Foreign performers and performances were thus allowed only as a sporadic exception to the national theatrical norm, hinting at ministerial concerns about the potential repercussions of the presence of foreign theatre in the nation that I explore later in this chapter. Despite the clear Franco-German hierarchy of the 1818 agreement, though, Colmar's position as a "satellite" of Strasbourg opened the floodgates to regular and longer performances by foreign companies in this town and in neighbouring Mulhouse, to which foreign companies began touring in 1823. While there were ongoing tensions between the visiting and national troupes, their coexistence was long-standing. During the 46 years until

<sup>912</sup> This appears to be the same director working in the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* in the 1820s

<sup>913</sup> "fixe momentanément ici un grand nombre de fonctionnaires et d'employés français." ADHR, 4/T/98, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 18/03/1818; Letter from Pépin to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin, 04/10/1817.

<sup>914</sup> Cailliez, *La diffusion du comique*, 309.

<sup>915</sup> AN, F/21/1260, Contract 'réunion des deux théâtres de Strasbourg et de Colmar sous une seule direction', 07/03/1818. ADHR, 4/T/98, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to Brion, 27/04/1818.

the end of the *troupe d'arrondissement* period, Colmar and Mulhouse hosted 52 troupe visits from at least twenty-eight different troupes between them. These troupe visits, directors' names and, where possible, the companies' provenance are listed below in Figure 16, with unknown troupe origins left blank, and uncertain directors' names marked with an asterisk.<sup>916</sup>

**Table 3: Germanic troupes in Colmar and Mulhouse, 1818–1864**

DATE	TOWN	TROUPE DIRECTOR	PROVENANCE
1818	Colmar	Koch and Herzog	Basel via Strasbourg
1822	Colmar	Guillaume Becht	? via Strasbourg
1823	Colmar	Guillaume Becht	? via Strasbourg
1823	Mulhouse	Unknown troupe	
1824	Mulhouse	Guillaume Becht	? via Strasbourg
1824	Mulhouse	Koch*	
1825	Mulhouse	Koch*	
1825	Mulhouse	Flisa (Female director)*	
1825	Colmar and Mulhouse	Unknown director	
1826	Colmar and Mulhouse	Scharrer	Fribourg
1827	Mulhouse	Hehl	Fribourg via Strasbourg
1828	Colmar and Mulhouse	Hehl	Fribourg via Strasbourg
1829	Mulhouse	Ferdinand Deny	
1832	Mulhouse	Unknown director*	
1833	Mulhouse	Hehl*	
1833	Colmar	Unnamed director	
1834	Mulhouse	Unknown director*	Fribourg
1835	Colmar and Mulhouse	Jean Zimmer	
1836	Mulhouse	Nanette Ringelmann	
1837 (winter)	Mulhouse	Hansen	
1838	Colmar and Mulhouse	Hehl	Fribourg via Strasbourg
1839	Colmar and Mulhouse	Hehl	Basel
1839	Mulhouse	Schmidt	

<sup>916</sup> The table includes names/provenance sourced from prefects' letters, newspapers columns, and from a handwritten booklet by Émile Pluck chronicling performances in Mulhouse (AMM, 64/TT/459). It is not always possible to decipher the handwriting in the book, especially as Pluck switches between German and French names, and these are marked with an asterisk.

1840	Mulhouse	Deanna and Schnepf	Basel
1840	Colmar	Hehl	Fribourg
1841	Mulhouse, Thann	Georg Müller	
1841	Colmar	Edouard Gerlach	Fribourg
1843	Mulhouse	Georg Müller	
1843	Colmar	Fix	
1844	Colmar	Hehl	
1845	Colmar	Hehl	
1846	Colmar, Besançon	Hehl	Basel via Strasbourg
1850	Mulhouse	Hehl	Basel
1850	Colmar	W. Keller	Fribourg
1851	Mulhouse	Hehl	Basel
1851	Mulhouse	Frey	
1852	Colmar	Hehl	Basel
1852	Mulhouse	Collot	
1853	Mulhouse	C. Meyer	
1854	Mulhouse	Schaufele	
1856	Colmar, Ribeauville, Munster	Weinsteller	
1856	Mulhouse	Schumann	Basel
1857	Colmar and Rouffach	Collot	Münster
1858	Mulhouse	Collot	
1858	Mulhouse	Reiffarth	
1861	Colmar	J. Chriminsky	Fribourg
1861	Colmar	Engelken	Basel
1862	Colmar	Engelken	Basel
1862	Mulhouse	Walter	Basel
1862	Colmar	J. Chriminsky	Fribourg
1863	Mulhouse	Lang	
1864	Mulhouse	Unnamed director	Basel

Foreign seasons lasted between three to six months in the summer. During this time, troupes integrated the wider theatrical life of both towns, including by instigating their own theatrical press. Prompters employed by various Swiss and German troupes between 1826



and 1841 published theatrical journals, in German, for audiences to read alongside the reviews of their troupes written in French by Colmar and Mulhouse's critics.<sup>917</sup> Through these publications, foreign troupes extended the relevance and influence of German performances and personnel beyond the experience of an evening's show and into local reading culture.

Although not all of the troupes' provenances can be traced, the surviving information reveals strong artistic links between Colmar and Mulhouse and Basel and Fribourg in Switzerland, and one visit from Munster, Germany. Two other directors from Luxembourg and Hanover applied to tour the department but were refused by the Minister.<sup>918</sup> Almost all the traceable Haut-Rhin visitors came from Switzerland. One director in particular, Carl Gottlieb Hehl, toured the Haut-Rhin 15 times over 25 years with troupes from both Swiss cities. At this time, Swiss municipal theatre managers only contracted directors and artists over the winter months, meaning that French tours offered directors, such as Hehl, and artists an important opportunity to secure employment during the off-season.<sup>919</sup> Only once does there appear to have been friction between the Haut-Rhin and Swiss municipalities because of the transnational theatrical exchange: in 1861 when the Basel council wanted their troupe to remain and perform in Switzerland for the summer.<sup>920</sup> In general, though, for troupe directors such as Hehl whose performances were besieged by anti-German riots in Strasbourg during the 1830s,<sup>921</sup> the Haut-Rhin offered a reliable French department in which to promote and produce performances in German. Moreover, the presence of foreign companies was quickly established as essential to Colmar's and Mulhouse's cultural life. In

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<sup>917</sup> These were called the *Journal des deutschen Theaters zu Colmar* and *Theater-Journal*, André Waltz, *Bibliographie de la ville de Colmar* (Colmar: J. B Jung, 1902), 284–5. Another foreign troupe newspaper, in 1827, was published in French.

<sup>918</sup> AN, F/21/1169, letter from Henri Salis to the Minister, 17/03/1842; Letter from Guillaume Nolté to the Minister, 31/05/1845. Director Schnell was also refused in 1843; AN/F/21/1169, letter from the Ministry to Prefects of the Haut and Bas Rhin, 21/09/1843.

<sup>919</sup> Laura Moeckli, "Parisian Grand Opera at the Basel Theater Auf Dem Blömlen: Traces of Transnational Circulation, Translation and Reception", in *Grand Opera Outside Paris*, 13–30. Hehl often toured to Zurich, Bern and Basel (and once the German spa town Aachen) before arriving in France for the summer, *EZ*, 30/09/1846; 03/06/1851. Hehl also made one-off tours to other French towns including Besançon, Dijon and Metz. Cailliez, *La diffusion du comique*, 311. Moeckli, "Parisian Grand Opera", 18.

<sup>920</sup> AMC, 2/R/4/5b2–5, letter from J. Chriminsky to the Mayor of Colmar, 07/11/1861.

<sup>921</sup> Cailliez, *La diffusion du comique*, 797–812. Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 217–8.

his response to the 1823 *circulaire* about the state of provincial theatre, for instance, Prefect Charles Jordan relayed back to the Ministry that performances of “German troupes” were well attended and applauded by the public. His report affirmed that foreign performances had become a staple of the Haut-Rhin culture scene in the short space of five years.<sup>922</sup>

In the early 1820s, most foreign troupes came to the Haut-Rhin after a season in Strasbourg, meaning that Colmar and Mulhouse acted as satellites of the Alsatian capital. As the century went on, though, Colmar and Mulhouse became operatic destinations in their own right, with troupes travelling directly to the Haut-Rhin from Switzerland. Emancipation from Strasbourg was helped in part by developments in cross-border infrastructure: a new 140-kilometre-long railway linking Strasbourg to Basel, via Colmar and Mulhouse, was opened in stages between 1840 and 1845, running five journeys of six hours a day.<sup>923</sup> While easing connections, trains could also provoke problems: director of the 9<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* Blot-Dermilly, accidentally left the troupe's scores on the train between Colmar and Mulhouse in January 1864. The music for *La favorite* sped on alone to Basel and the performance in Mulhouse had to be rescheduled.<sup>924</sup>

Throughout the Haut-Rhin, the French, Swiss and German troupes were each primarily known for their operatic performances, and there was an inevitable overlap between their repertoires. Foreign companies performed German translations of *grand opéra*, *opéra-comique* and *bel canto* repertoire that were also favourites of the *troupe d'arrondissement*. Pieces such as *La muette de Portici*, *La favorite*, *La dame blanche*, *Le postillon de Lonjumeau* (1836) and *Norma* could be heard in both languages.<sup>925</sup> Foreign troupes also

<sup>922</sup> ADHR, 4/T/92, Letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 05/09/1823.

<sup>923</sup> Prior to this, all troupes had to travel by road. According to measurements in 1827, Colmar-Basel was 9 postes (around 80-90 kilometers) and Colmar-Strasbourg 8 postes (around 70-80 kilometers), Adolphe Zerbin Lanöe, *Code des maîtres de poste, des entrepreneurs de diligences et de roulage, et des voitures en général par terre et par eau* (Paris: Roret, 1827) 393, 420. 'Richard', *Le guide classique du voyageur en France et en Belgique* (Paris: L. Maisson, 1851) 23<sup>rd</sup> edition, 198, 461.

<sup>924</sup> /A, 14/01/1864.

<sup>925</sup> /A, 30/08/1837; ADHR, JX/21/3, *JHCHR*, 21/08/1845; 11/09/1845; 18/09/1845. AMC, 2/R/4/5b2-5, repertoire list (Engelken) 18/11/1861). Their repertoire also included: *La somnambula*, *Tancredi*, *Mosè in Egitto*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, *Don Giovanni*, *Othello*, *Guillaume Tell*, *Robert le diable*, *Les Huguenots*, *La juive*, *Fra diavolo*, *Le maçon*, *La fille du régiment*. Cailliez, *La*

staged German translations of French *vaudevilles*, *dramas* and *mélodrames* in the *troupe d'arrondissement* programmes, such as Bayard and Emmanuel Théaulon's *Le père et la débutante* (1838), Adolphe d'Ennery and Gustave Lemoine's *La grâce de dieu*, (1841) and Victor Ducange's *Trente ans ou la vie d'un joueur* (1831).<sup>926</sup> Cross-border companies, though, also diversified the operatic programmes heard in the provinces by bringing new repertoires and genres from outside France into the Haut-Rhin. They performed spoken German plays, such as Friederich Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* (1804), and popular German sung genres, for example the *vaudeville* *Der Schiffskapitän* (1817) by Carl Blum, and Matthäus Stegmayer's *Rochus Pumpernickel* (1811), described as a "musikalisches quodlibet".<sup>927</sup> Additionally, German and Swiss directors staged translations of Italian operas that had not previously been seen in the Haut-Rhin: Bellini's *I Capuleti e I Montecchi* (1830) and Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algieri* (1813).<sup>928</sup> They also imported German *komische Oper* and *Singspiels* old and new, including Wenzel Müller's *Die Teufelmühle* (1799), Albert Lortzing's *Zar und Zimmermann* (1837), and Friederich von Flotow's *Martha* (1847).<sup>929</sup> These performances are significant for the transnational circulation of operatic repertoire in this period because, in several cases, they allowed Haut-Rhin audiences to hear a wider diversity of operatic repertoire than their counterparts elsewhere in France. No other troupe in my case study areas attempted to stage a translation of *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* in this period, von

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*diffusion du comique*, 312. ADC, JX21/3, *JHCHR*, 18/04/1840, 13/05/1841, 11/04/1850; JX21/2, 11/09/1845, 18/09/1845. ADC 4T95, repertoire list (Weinsteller), 28/12/1855; Letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Mayor of Ribeauville, 15/10/1856; *IA*, 01/06/1851; 22/06/1851; 12/10/1856; 25/11/1858; 15/12/1864. MM 64TT 459. According to the sources available, it appears that Germanic companies did not offer performances of Carl Maria von Weber's operas, although the *troupes d'arrondissement* occasionally staged Castil-Blaze's French translation of *Der Freischütz* (*Robin des bois*).

<sup>926</sup> *LA*, 13/12/1839, 29/12/1839, 19/10/1851, 11/04/1852, 30/05/1852; 13/06/1852; 15/03/1853; 30/08/1863; 13/09/1863; 25/12/1864; 29/12/1864. ADHR, 4/T/95, Letter and repertoire list, 29/07/1856; Repertoire list (Weinstoller) 29/07/1856 dated by accompanying letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Mayor of Munster. Letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Mayor of Rouffach, 10/12/1857. ADHR, JX/21/3, *JHCHR*, 25/07/1839. AN, F/21/1259, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin, 31/08/1841. The notice for *Le père et la débutante* in Mulhouse stated that the *vaudeville* was translated by Both (*IA*, 29/12/1839).

<sup>927</sup> ADHR, 4/T/95, repertoire list (Weinstoller), 15/10/1856; Repertoire list, 10/05/1856; Repertoire list (Collat) 10/12/1857; MM 64TT 459; *IA*, 02/08/1837, 29/12/1839; 11/04/1852, 15/05/1853, 18/11/1858, 25/11/1858, 13/09/1863.

<sup>928</sup> ADHR, JX/21/3, *JHCHR*, 25/09/1845. Cailliez, *La diffusion du comique*, 312. *IA* 13/12/1839; 29/12/1839; 01/06/1851; 22/06/1851. ADC, JX21/3, 04/04/1839, 11/04/1839, 18/04/1839, 04/07/1839; 25/04/1839, 08/08/1839, 13/05/1841, 06/05/1841.

<sup>929</sup> ADHR, 4/T/95, repertoire list (Weinstoller) 29/07/1856. AMC, 2R/4/5/a, b1, Posters, 14/08/1830; 07/09/1822; 09/09/1822; 14/09/1822; 18/09/1822; 19/09/1822; 16/09/1822; 21/09/1822. MM 64TT 459; ADC 4T95, repertoire list (Weinsteller), 28/12/1855; JX21/3, 04/04/1839, 11/04/1839, 18/04/1839, 04/07/1839; 25/04/1839, 08/08/1839, 13/05/1841, 06/05/1841; JX21/2, 25/07/1844; *L'Industriel alsacien*, 13/12/1839; 31/03/1850; 01/06/1851; 08/06/1851; 22/06/1851.

*IA*, 14/08/1830.

Flotow's opera was not heard in Paris until 1858, and only after this performance at the Théâtre Italien did the work appear in the repertoire of itinerant *troupes*.<sup>930</sup>

As glimpsed in the 1825 Colmar incident, the success and longevity of the transnational operatic culture of Colmar and Mulhouse came at a cost for the 9<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*. The prevalence of German as a spoken and theatrical language in the Haut-Rhin had a direct and adverse influence on the working conditions of the 9<sup>th</sup> *troupes d'arrondissement* in a way that did not affect their counterparts in other regions, such as the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* in Brittany, because regional languages, such as Breton, were not showcased on the professional theatre stages.<sup>931</sup> Director Claparède, who managed the 9<sup>th</sup> *troupe* intermittently between 1826 and 1834, for example, frequently complained that Alsace's languages and the influence of German opera troupes there threatened the livelihood of French artists. In two letters from 1827 and 1834, he described the local "taste for German troupes,"<sup>932</sup> and suggested that it was difficult to sell tickets for his own production, reflecting on how:

The towns of Colmar and Mulhouse might be less onerous [for a director] if everybody spoke French, and if all of the affection of the theatregoers was not directed towards the German theatre that comes on tour once or twice a year.<sup>933</sup>

Claparède's words, echoed by the Prefect of Doubs in a letter from the same year,<sup>934</sup> exaggerated the situation for persuasive effect. The director's ticket sales demonstrate that his *troupe d'arrondissement* continued to find some audiences in the Haut-Rhin, as did his successors.<sup>935</sup> Yet spectators' clear enjoyment of German theatre throughout this period certainly made things difficult for *troupe d'arrondissement* directors. Rivalry with German

<sup>930</sup> ADN, 1/T/301/4, Repertoire list (Filhol) 20/10/1858.

<sup>931</sup> In Dunkerque, an amateur theatrical society performed plays in Flemish between 1851–54 (ADN, 1/T/296/3).

<sup>932</sup> "n'ont du goût que pour les troupes allemandes". AN, F/21/1258, letter from Claparède to the Minister, 07/01/1834.

<sup>933</sup> "Les villes de Colmar et Mulhausen seraient peut-être moins onéreuses, si tout le monde y parlait français, et si toutes les affections des amateurs ne se portaient vers le théâtre allemand, qui vient y faire des incursions une ou deux fois l'année". The resistance of Haut-Rhin audiences to French repertoire was echoed by the Prefect of Doubs in the same year, who informed the ministry that audiences in Colmar, Mulhouse "ne veulent que des troupes Allemandes et négligent entièrement les troupes françaises." AN, F/21/1258, letter from Claparède to the Prefect of Doubs, 18/04/1827.

<sup>934</sup> AN, F/21/1258, Letter from the Prefect of Doubs to Claparède, 26/04/1827.

<sup>935</sup> AN, F/21/1258, ticket sales (Claparède), 03/11/1833. AN, F/21/1259, ticket sales (Filhol) 04/04/1845, ticket sales, Péchoux, 21/02/1850, 01/08/1850.

and Swiss troupes, for example, was one of the factors that pushed Claparède to experiment with a restricted *arrondissement* circuit for the 9<sup>th</sup> troupe in the 1830s, pushing out Colmar and Mulhouse to concentrate on Besançon or the Doubs department.<sup>936</sup>

Several other *arrondissement* directors found themselves victims of transnational competition. In Colmar in 1843, director Cavé was refused access to the town theatre after a recent fire and was distressed to learn that administrators had allowed a German troupe to perform there, accusing local administrators of favouritism.<sup>937</sup> Others, such as director Péchoux, complained directly to the Ministry about the financial repercussions of competition with foreign troupes who “come to tour our country at the expense of French directors.”<sup>938</sup> Only a few *arrondissement* directors decided to make use of their proximity to the border for their own transnational tours. Shortly before the 1825 incident, Maillart took half of his *troupe d'arrondissement* from Colmar to Basel with Parisian star Mlle Georges in tow.<sup>939</sup> Twenty years later, director Belfort-Devaux travelled with the 9<sup>th</sup> troupe to Lausanne, substituting this town for Mulhouse in 1843.<sup>940</sup> These two visits, however, were exceptions to the usual 9<sup>th</sup> troupe's itinerary. The possibility of more regular troupe travels from France into Switzerland was perhaps restricted by the nature of the *arrondissement* system in which directors' itineraries were strictly overseen.<sup>941</sup> Indeed, across France *troupes d'arrondissement* were officially and repeatedly dissuaded by ministers from venturing outside of their allocated regions throughout the period. Yet the practical policing of issue by departmental prefects was uneven throughout the country: neither 9<sup>th</sup>

<sup>936</sup> AN, F/21/1258, letter from Claparède to the Prefect of Doubs, 18/04/1827. Letter from the Prefect of Doubs to the Minister, 25/05/1825. Letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 14/06/1825. Letter from the Ministry to the Prefect of Doubs, 29/05/1826. Letter from the Prefect of Doubs to the Minister, 21/03/1826. Other directors more willingly recognised the need to work around foreign troupes: AMC, 2/R/42, Letter from Marcillac to the Mayor of Colmar, 15/07/1829.

<sup>937</sup> AMC, 2/R4/5a-b1, letter from Cavé to the Mayor of Colmar, received 18/12/1843.

<sup>938</sup> AN, F/21/1259, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin, 30/03/1850.

<sup>939</sup> AN, F/21/1258, ticket sales (Maillart), 1825.

<sup>940</sup> AN, F/21/1259, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 19/03/1843. F/21/1260, report from the Prefect of the Vosges to the Minister.

<sup>941</sup> One exception is the visits to Jersey and Guernsey undertaken by the 6<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*, sailing from Saint-Malo. See AN, F/21/1250, report from the Prefect of Côtes-du-Nord, 12/02/1844; F/21/1251, Contract (Besombes) 06/01/1855. Moeckli (“Parisian Grand Opera”) suggests that there were regular French troupe visits to Basel from the late eighteenth into the nineteenth century, including artists from Belfort, another town in the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*. Trips to Basel are not indicated in the French archival sources dealing with Belfort as part of the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, suggesting that these troupes was most likely unauthorised groups working outside of this theatrical system. Moeckli, “Parisian Grand Opera”, 25.

*arrondissement* director was rebuked for venturing briefly into Switzerland and, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the 6<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* regularly toured to Saint-Malo in the 5<sup>th</sup> region to which prefects turned a blind eye, despite mayoral frustrations. Ultimately, prefects appeared to acknowledge that directors needed to step outside official regional boundaries in order to maximise their changes of ticket sales. Thus, where Saint-Malo was a lucrative spa town attractive to *arrondissement* directors purses, it is most likely that the 9<sup>th</sup> company did not tour to Switzerland because there were notable barriers to their possible success: the difference in language between the troupe's French repertoire and those usually staged in Swiss towns by Hehl and his compatriots, and the fact that audiences were not used to summer theatrical seasons, hence Hehl and others touring to France.

Audiences, though, benefitted from cross-border connections with greater freedom. A notice advertising Meyerbeer's *Le prophète* in Basel in December 1845, for instance, noted that "for the first rerun of this opera an extra railway train will arrive from Mulhouse", revealing how developing railway infrastructure was used to promote cross-border spectatorship at least once during the period.<sup>942</sup> Audience mobility and the diversity of stage repertoire and personnel seen in the Haut-Rhin combined to create a regional stage culture that relied as much on theatrical professionals from outside of the national theatrical project than the *troupes d'arrondissement*. This combination suggest that, at this eastern edge of France, the power of the national theatrical system was distinctly limited and threatened by foreign influence because Swiss and Germany companies found favour with local administrators and audiences for many reasons, as I will explore shortly.

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<sup>942</sup> Ibid.

## Theatre and language for the nation

The Germanic theatrical culture of the Haut-Rhin thrived despite repressive government policy towards non-French performers during the *arrondissement* period, policies which, I will now argue, reveal how ministers conceptualised a specific socio-political function for the stage in this borderland. Due to the government's official zero-tolerance policy towards unauthorised companies, the applications of foreign troupes to tour French towns needed to be approved at ministerial level throughout the period. Ministers dealing with these requests made their concerns known about whether German performances were appropriate in the Haut-Rhin, not only because they posed an economic threat to the *troupes d'arrondissement* and troubled the national theatrical system, but for reasons of state control over a borderland region and its people when these citizens did not speak the nation's primary language. As mentioned earlier, the Haut-Rhin was almost entirely populated by French citizens, but the vast majority of these inhabitants spoke German on an everyday basis: they were therefore national citizens who did not conform to the nation's language.

These citizens were central to the discussion of the 1818 Colmar-Strasbourg project between Minister of the Interior Élie Louis Decazes and Prefect Castéja. The two exchanged letters about the possible effects of Brion's foreign troupes on the Haut-Rhin population, and the Prefect agreed that the arrival of a foreign company should "not impede the progress of the French language."<sup>943</sup> Castéja thought carefully about how to phrase this statement, as the letter includes a crossed-out sentence which explains the problem with different wording:

a German troupe [...] might bring about objections on account of the detrimental influence they might have on the progress of the [French] language.<sup>944</sup>

<sup>943</sup> ADC, 4T98, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 18/03/1818. The Prefect mentions a similar concern raised in 1810, but I have not been able to trace this letter.

<sup>944</sup> "une troupe allemande [...] donnera peut-être lieu à quelques objections fondées sur les inconvénients qu'il pourrait y avoir relativement en ce qui est du progrès de la langue." Ibid.

In both versions, Castéja conceptualised onstage language as the paramount feature of troupe performance. The delivery of sung or spoken text was construed by him as a communicative act between the troupe and spectator that could influence the linguistic habits of the latter: if audiences heard German onstage, Castéja argued, this might encourage the use of German in everyday life. The Prefect's mention of the need to "progress" the French language in the Haut-Rhin demonstrates his concerns that sung and spoken German might be detrimental to the spread of French in a region where most inhabitants spoke a dialect. Moreover, Castéja spoke of the linguistic progress of French as a social tool through which Ministers could impose "the French national character" in regions such as Alsace.<sup>945</sup> Although in his letter Castéja argued that, at least in the upper classes, the French language and character had already "taken root",<sup>946</sup> legitimising Germanic performances, his comments emphasised what was at stake in the correct management of the theatrical life of an *arrondissement*, and the competition between French and foreign troupes. This was, the ability for theatrical culture to influence the language and identity of peoples living in a borderland, as part of Ministers' desires to use stage performances to further nation-building.

Indeed, the linguistic theatrical project in which Castéja situated the Colmar-Strasbourg theatre project played its part in a broader series of ministerial interventions to standardise France's regional dialects as part of the nineteenth-century definition of the nation. In their research into Revolutionary and nineteenth-century language policy, Michelle A. Harrison, Stewart McCain and Matthew d'Auria have shown how important the homogenisation of languages spoken on French soil was to the processes of shaping a

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<sup>945</sup> Ibid. "La langue française, répandue dans mon département, elle est la seule dont les premières classes de la société faisant un usage habituel, et le caractère national français, à quelques légères nuances près, a jeté ses racines en Alsace."

<sup>946</sup> "Il faut se borner à comprendre dans l'arrêté [Brion's contract] ce qui concerne les acteurs français. Si des représentations peuvent être données par des acteurs allemands, ce ne doit être que pas des mesures spéciales et des rapports particuliers." ADC, 4T98, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin, 25/03/1818. In this plan, Decazes aimed to replicate the cultural hierarchies in Strasbourg's contemporary bilingual theatrical scene: to use Ellis' term, German companies were "allowable guests" in the local cultural scene, performing every summer in contrast to the 9-month season of the municipally funded French company. Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 172.



centralised French identity.<sup>947</sup> By the 1820s, regional dialects were no longer officially allowed to be spoken or written in public spaces such as schools, law courts and churches.<sup>948</sup> Education reforms such as the Guizot and Falloux laws of 1833 and 1850 also established access to schooling in French across most of the provinces for boys and girls.<sup>949</sup> The government's eradication of dialects was more easily said than done, however, and in the Haut-Rhin, the battle to establish French as the sole language of public life was ongoing throughout the *troupe d'arrondissement* period. Reports from as late as the 1850s demonstrate that German and Germanic dialects such as Alsatian were still spoken by a large proportion of the Haut-Rhin's population not only because it was spoken at home, but because it continued to be taught in schools in urban and rural areas and preached in the pulpit despite official measures.<sup>950</sup> In the Ministry's ideal state, though, these social reforms aimed to shape a unified French populace, using linguistic homogeneity to nationalise citizens.

Theatre's role within the "francisation" of the provinces into a national mould has not yet been articulated.<sup>951</sup> I argue, though, that the actions of government ministers demonstrate that these agents saw itinerant troupe performances as an essential tool by which to shape the identities and habits of France's borderland citizens into the ideal behaviours of a centralised nation. In 1818, as already mentioned, for example, Minister of the Interior Decazes, ignored Castéja's reassurances and deemed the French language and identity insufficiently established in the Haut-Rhin, ruling that Germanic troupes should only be

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<sup>947</sup> Michelle A. Harrison, "A Century of Changing Language Beliefs in Alsace", *Modern & Contemporary France*, 20:3 (2012): 357–374. McCain, "The Language Question Under Napoleon"; Pierre Klein, 'L'Alsace, entre trois langues et deux cultures', *Diasporiques*, 8 (2009), 46–52. Matthew, D'Auria, *The Shaping of French National Identity: Narrating the Nation's Past, 1715–1830, New Studies in European History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

<sup>948</sup> McCain, "The Language Question Under Napoleon", 152–278. As McCain notes, there was some official flexibility and some dialects were tolerated in places where standard French was rarely spoken, yet these situations all needed special brokering and permission.

<sup>949</sup> Harrison, 'A Century of Changing Language Beliefs in Alsace'. Henri Ehret, *L'École normale d'instituteurs du Haut-Rhin à Colmar: De sa constitution à la loi Falloux, 1832–1850* (Paris: Annales Littéraires de l'université de Besançon, 1971). Fagyal, Kibbee and Jenkins, "Historical Perspectives".

<sup>950</sup> Achille Penot, *Statistique générale du département du Haut-Rhin* (Mulhouse: Risler, 1831) 392. Wirth, *La langue française dans les départements de l'Est*, 16–28.

<sup>951</sup> This term is sometimes used interchangeably with 'internal colonisation' by historians to refer to state centralisation: P. McPhee, 'A Case-study of Internal Colonization: The *Francisation* of Northern Catalonia', *Review, Fernand Braudel Centre for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems and Civilizations* vol.3 no.3 (1980) 401.

seen “on an occasional basis, in particular, circumstances” in Colmar.<sup>952</sup> Even with foreign companies restricted to a summer season, though, ministers continued to voice their long-lasting concerns about the implications of German performance in later dealings with potential visiting troupes to the Haut-Rhin. In 1843, Minister of the Interior Duchâtel emphasised the state’s ongoing desire to maintain the dominant position of French for linguistic reasons when advising different prefects against accepting director Schnell’s troupe to tour the Haut-Rhin, Bas-Rhin and Moselle.<sup>953</sup>

Since the government has the constant desire to introduce the use of the French language in parts of Lorraine and Alsace where the German language is still in use, I believe that it would be more suitable to have the theatres served by French troupes, and to allow German troupes to perform only in exceptional circumstances.<sup>954</sup>

These sources from 1818 and 1841 indicate that, across the half-century, ministers consistently identified theatre as having a powerful role in potentially facilitating the spread of a vernacular language to Alsatian audiences. Ministers applied these arguments to both opera and spoken theatre produced by itinerant troupes, and it was only local administrators, as we will see later, who reflected on the differences in communicative power in a lyric genre as opposed to a spoken one. In line with ministerial social policy, Decazes and Duchâtel saw the need to manage troupe competition between French and Germanic companies in such a way as to reinforce the primacy of the national language in a department where almost half the population’s native language was not French.<sup>955</sup>

This ideal marked a shift in ministerial thinking about theatrical function since the 1806 legislation, in which many of the newly conquered French territories in Italy, the Netherlands and Germany, were left out of Napoleon’s theatrical system because, as Triolaire argues, their inhabitants were thought to be too newly French in both language

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<sup>952</sup> ADC, 4T98, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin, 25/03/1818.

<sup>953</sup> Schnell wanted to tour to Mulhouse and smaller towns in the Haut-Rhin but had been advised not to try for Colmar because of the presence of the *troupe d'arrondissement*. His request was rejected by the Ministry.

<sup>954</sup> AN, F/21/1169, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin, 21/09/1843.

<sup>955</sup> F. de Tapiès, *La France et l'Angleterre* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1845), 16. He calculated that 3.5% (1, 157, 000 people) of the entire population of France spoke German as their first language in 1836.

and cultural habits to participate in national culture.<sup>956</sup> The 1820s attitude picked up on but differed, too, from that advanced by governing French officials in occupied towns in Italy the 1790s and 1800s since, as Rahul Markowitz has argued, it was the content and perceived morality of French stage pieces, rather than language, that was here considered the reason to establish an occupying national theatre to cultivate non-French citizens in these towns.<sup>957</sup> By the 1820s in Alsace, though, it was no longer a matter of participation in, but of enforcement of, national culture within ministers' plans, positioning the Haut-Rhin as a space with theatrical influence on the formation of French identity. Ministers' linguistic priorities for theatrical experience in this department make explicit the nationalising aims of the government theatrical system that are elsewhere simply implied: in borderland places, theatrical experience could and should build the nation according to their standardised ideal. Accordingly, central administrators advocated careful control of Swiss troupes in Colmar and Mulhouse in order to enable touring theatre to work as a tool to mould Alsatian spectators' habits and behaviours into nationalised ones: a process through which the Alsatian was transformed into an 'interior' French citizen. The war on Germanic performances led by Decazes and Duchâtel was thus primarily a battle to undermine autonomous regional identity through theatre. If the stage was entirely French, these officials believed, then this borderland could also become truly homogenised within the nation.

### Local priorities

In wider Alsace and Lorraine, ministerial campaigns to restrict foreign performances in Moselle and Strasbourg during this period were supported by prefects and even by some town audiences in the Alsatian capital who used the theatre to voice anti-German protests

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<sup>956</sup> Triolaire, *Tréteaux dans le Massif*, 98. The 1820s attitude also differs from that of officials in occupied towns in the 1790s and 1800s, such as Turin, as Markowitz demonstrates that it was the content of French stage pieces, and their inherent morality, rather than language that was seen as a reason to establish a French theatre to cultivate non-French citizens. Markowitz, *Civiliser l'Europe*, 265-298.

<sup>957</sup> Markowitz, *Civiliser l'Europe*, 265-298.

during performances in 1832 and 1838.<sup>958</sup> In these departments, the government's nationalising theatrical policies had a direct impact on the presence of foreign troupes. The constant frictions associated with German performance in Strasbourg, for example, meant that visiting Swiss and German troupes largely avoided the city in the mid-1830s and 1840s, allowing the linguistic supremacy of French to remain uncontested on the town stage.<sup>959</sup> Not so in the Haut-Rhin. Here, government policy was constantly undermined by local administrators' actions who championed foreign companies under the radar. Germanic troupes barely appeared on the official record of departmental theatrical activity reported back to the Minister, as the departmental prefect often left out mention of Swiss and German troupe visits in his reports about the recent season.<sup>960</sup> In addition, several post holders ignored repeated ministerial calls to ban non-authorized "*troupes allemandes*".<sup>961</sup> Instead, many prefects worked with the Mayors of Colmar and Mulhouse to directly authorise foreign visits without passing all of these requests onto the ministry, as required by law.<sup>962</sup> When reprimanded, some regional administrators justified their actions by pointing to the limits of the national theatrical system. The Mayor of Mulhouse, for example, wrote in 1834 to the Sub-Prefect of Altkirch that it was "ridiculous" for the *troupes d'arrondissement* directors to expect to have sole authority to perform in this town because this would mean that inhabitants would be deprived of theatre during most of the year when the troupe toured the wider 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*.<sup>963</sup> Haut-Rhin officials such as this one continually challenged the national theatrical project. Not only did these administrators propose the need to look for theatrical experiences beyond France to

<sup>958</sup> AN, F/21/1169, letter from the Prefect of Moselle to the Minister, 07/12/1843. AN, F/21/1207, Letter from the Prefect of the Bas-Rhin to the Minister, 22/05/1838. Cailliez, *La diffusion du comique*, 797–812. Ellis, *French Musical Life*, 217–8. As reported in the *RGM*, 23/09/1838, "De grands désordres ont eu lieu au théâtre de Strasbourg pour les débuts de la troupe de chanteurs allemands. Faut-il que cette source de plaisirs si délicat[s] soulève quelquefois des passions si violentes et si haineuses!"

<sup>959</sup> Cailliez, *La diffusion du comique*, 809–12. In the final visit, the German troupe was directed by Halanzier-Dufresnoy.

<sup>960</sup> ADHR, 4/T93, letter from the Mayor of Colmar to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin, 18/08/1848. Letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 15/09/1848.

<sup>961</sup> ADHR, 4/T92, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Mayor of Colmar, 16/11/1841.

<sup>962</sup> AN, F/21/1169, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of the Bas-Rhin, 20/04/1841. AMC, 2R/4/5/a and b1, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Mayor of Colmar, 09/04/1841. Letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Mayor of Colmar, 08/07/1841. Letter from Cavé to the Mayor of Colmar, received 18/12/1843.

<sup>963</sup> ADHR, 4/T92, letter from the Mayor of Mulhouse to the Sub-Prefect of Altkirch, 28/07/1834.

overcome the system's limitations, but they saw foreign companies as fulfilling a significant socio-political function in borderland society that was not met by the *troupes d'arrondissement*. This was a regional function, as officials' correspondence with each other and the Ministry makes clear: Swiss and German troupes and their performances were perceived as an expression of regional identity by several administrators during this period, and their work was championed as a reaction against the French centralism embodied by the *troupe d'arrondissement* system, including Ministers' government language policies.

Perhaps indicating the potential thorniness of a reactionary viewpoint on an issue on which the Ministry's position was quite clear, the regional identity and importance of foreign companies was discussed in several different ways by varying local administrators. Some mayors made clear their primary desire to shape theatre to fit the linguistic and social needs of the Haut-Rhin populace. They argued that performances should reflect the habits of the peoples of the region in which they took place. In letters from 1823, 1826 and 1841, for example, successive Mayors of Colmar and Mulhouse used the ethnicity of the population to justify the place of German performance alongside the French.<sup>964</sup> Describing the population of Colmar as almost "entirely German", for instance, was a strategy used by Prefect Charles Jordan to legitimise the return of director Scharrer's troupe after the 1825 incidents.<sup>965</sup> Similarly, in 1841 director Muller's project to come to the Haut-Rhin was backed by Prefect Charles-Wangel Bret because the opportunity to provide German theatre "would be useful to the borderland populations" who mainly spoke this language.<sup>966</sup> Just like Ministers, these prefects defined performances, including opera, as mainly linguistic experiences for spectators. Unlike their central government colleagues, though, these

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<sup>964</sup> ADC, 4T92, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 05/09/1823. in a letter reporting on the state of theatre in advance of the reshuffling of the *arrondissements* in 1823, German troupes were said to be welcomed by the German inhabitants of the Haut-Rhin. AN, F/21/1169, report for the Minister, 29/06/1841.

<sup>965</sup> AN, F/21/1258, letter from the Prefect of Doubs to the Minister, 25/01/1827.

<sup>966</sup> AN, F/21/1169, letter draft from the Minister to an unknown official, 30/06/1841. Muller was given permission to tour to small towns such as Sélestat, but not to Colmar or Strasbourg.

officials prioritised offering vernacular theatre for the whole of the Haut-Rhin populace. In their eyes, the stage needed to *respond* to a borderland's distinctive languages, rather than participate in a nationalising and standardising linguistic policy. Making space for Swiss and German troupes alongside the *troupe d'arrondissement* thus meant making space for the Germanic dialect of Alsatian on the departmental stages. This linguistic-political move demonstrates the Prefects of the Haut-Rhin using theatre to prioritise regional behaviours and identity as an alternative to the 'francisised' national community put forward by the Ministry at this time through the *troupes d'arrondissement*.

Regional linguistic issues were particularly pressing in Colmar and Mulhouse because they also overlapped with social status. Germanic dialects were spoken by a large majority of industrial workers in Colmar and Mulhouse.<sup>967</sup> Accordingly, foreign performance was cultivated by some prefects, such as Jordan in the late 1820s, in order to provide vernacular entertainment for the "popular classes".<sup>968</sup> By the 1850s, the emphasis on developing a working-class form of performance through foreign troupe visits even led to the development of specifically Germanic cultural spaces in Mulhouse. Foreign troupes, such as Hehl's, performed opera, *vaudeville* and spoken theatre repertoire in urban spaces outside of the *salle de spectacle*, including the garden of a town inn (owned by publican Jean Georges Danner), a room in another public house (the Brasserie de Riedsheim), a garden in a small château (Jardin Steblin),<sup>969</sup> and in a pavilion in the garden of the Hôtel de Paris.<sup>970</sup> Moreover, in 1860, Danner even dreamt up a proposal to run a year-long German theatre aimed at factory workers from his pub, although this ambitious plan appears to have gone nowhere.<sup>971</sup> Jordan's and Danner's commitment to cultivating theatrical

<sup>967</sup> AN F/21/1258, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 25/01/1827

<sup>968</sup> "la langue populaire de ce département." Ibid. By contrast, administrators viewed the *troupe d'arrondissement* as the preferred entertainment of the towns' upper classes "les familles de cette ville qui ont l'habitude de fréquenter le théâtre français, passent ordinairement cette saison soit aux bains, soit à la campagne." AN F/21/1258, letter from the Mayor of Mulhouse to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin, 28/02/1826.

<sup>969</sup> /4, 15/03/1853.

<sup>970</sup> /4, 09/12/1858; 30/08/1863.

<sup>971</sup> AN F/21/1260, letter from Danner to the Minister, 15/03/1861 dated by the accompanying letter from the Minister to the . Prefect of the Haut-Rhin. Elsewhere in the Bas-Rhin town of Sélestat, municipal officials had concerns that the increase of

experiences for the working classes was not, in itself, a regional priority since it drew on long-established ministerial aims to use provincial theatre to order and distract the troublesome classes and keep labourers away from other temptations, particularly the gambling hall.<sup>972</sup> Yet the Prefect and the innkeeper's insistence that these audience members be offered vernacular theatre, in German, demonstrates the necessary regional inflection of a nationwide ministerial campaign concerning theatre and morality.

By arguing for the continued presence of Germanic troupes in Mulhouse and Colmar, officials and entrepreneurs advocated for a local theatrical scene that responded to the socio-ethnic-linguistic diversity of the Haut-Rhin. Local commitment to this regional theatrical project can be measured by the efforts of administrators who were ready to put their support behind these endeavours but not behind the *troupe d'arrondissement*. In the 1860s, for instance, the Colmar council offered subsidies to directors Chriminsky and Engelkhon in return for these directors' promise of producing opera.<sup>973</sup> Similarly, a decade earlier, the town council of Mulhouse sought to establish year-long links with Germanic troupes. In a letter written to the Minister of the Interior in 1851, the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin Ferdinand Eckbrecht, count of Durckheim-Montmartin, outlined a local plan "in the absence of French troupes for the majority of the year, to contract a German opera troupe" for longer periods in Mulhouse.<sup>974</sup> This request was unsuccessful, rebuffed by Minister Claude-Marius Vaisse on his last day in post in 1851. Vaisse argued that it was preferable to expand the national system and add a second *troupe ambulante* to the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*

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foreign troupes denied the French upper classes of operatic performances, and in 1860 the 9<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement* was exceptionally commissioned to tour into this department to make sure that they provided entertainment for "la classe la plus élevée de la société, la classe moyenne et les militaires de la garnison préféreraient une troupe française à celle du Sr Weinsteller [German director]". AN, F/21/1260, letter from the Sub-Prefect of Sélestat to the Minister, 04/02/1860.

<sup>972</sup> Sophie Leterrier, "Théâtre et concert : pratiques de sociabilité et pratiques artistiques dans le Nord au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *Un siècle de spectacles à Rouen (1776-1876), Actes du colloque organisé à l'Université de Rouen en novembre 2003 par Florence Naugrette et Patrick Taïeb* (Online: Publications numériques du CÉRÉdI, 2009) vol. 1. Robert Goldstein, "Introduction" in *The Frightful Stage: Political Censorship of the Theater in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed., Robert Goldstein (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), 5. AN, F/21/1250 8, letter from the Prefect of Morbihan to the Minister, 31/12/1842.

<sup>973</sup> AMC, 2R3 5b2-5, report from the Colmar municipal council, 19/01/1861; Letter from Chriminsky to the Mayor of Colmar, 26/11/1860; Letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Mayor of Colmar, 31/10/1860; Report from the municipal council, 28/12/1861. *L'Europe artiste*, 05/01/1862.

<sup>974</sup> "à défaut de troupe française pendant la plus grande partie de l'année, à traiter avec une troupe lyrique allemande." AN, F/21/1260, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 29/03/1851. This request was part of a larger plan to break up the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* which did not materialise.

to provide towns with more frequent visits.<sup>975</sup> In other words, the Minister turned a blind eye to the intricacies of the borderland problem, classing Durckheim-Montmartin's request as just another local desire for additional theatrical provision within the national system without acknowledging the Prefect's desires for regionally specific performances in German. The Mulhouse project to prioritise foreign companies and the Colmar municipal funding, though, together emphasise local officials' pressing insistence that foreign companies be allowed to take on increasing importance in the Haut-Rhin.

These organisational arrangements encouraged foreign troupes to rival the national theatrical system with the result that, as I have outlined earlier, certain *troupe d'arrondissement* directors were inconvenienced or pushed out of the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*. The funding offered by the municipal council of Colmar, particularly, demonstrates the extent to which administrators embraced foreign opera troupes as the cultural group that most represented the needs of their locality: this financial arrangement raised Chriminksy and Engelkhau's companies to the status of a municipally-funded group, a status for which the French companies had to fight throughout the century and which was not offered to the 9<sup>th</sup> *troupe arrondissement* touring during the same period as these foreign directors.<sup>976</sup> These funding decisions went one step further than the language and class debates that positioned foreign troupes as of equivalent importance to the French ones, since municipal backing promoted Swiss and German companies as providing the theatre of choice for regional administrators, above the 9<sup>th</sup> *troupe d'arrondissement*. Here, Germanic performances not only showcased one half of the region's identity but appeared to be considered as fully representative of it.

Across debates about language, class and theatrical funding, the promotion of German theatre as an integral part of Alsatian socio-political conditions by Haut-Rhin officials led

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<sup>975</sup> AN, F/21/1260, letter from the Minister to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin, 09/04/1851.

<sup>976</sup> ADC, 4T93, Draft subvention, 01/10/1849; Report on the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* c. 1854.



prefects and mayors to position departmental theatre as an expression of identity, rather than national ideals. The polarity between ministerial and local theatrical aims in this borderland region is striking. Yet I argue that it is in how ministerial and prefectural identity politics co-existed within itinerant theatre in Colmar and Mulhouse that is most significant for scholars' understanding of theatre's social function in Alsace at this time. During a period when ministry officials were determined to shape a homogenous national community through the standardisation of linguistic and cultural behaviours in borderland schools, law courts, churches and, as I have argued, the theatre, local officials' management of the troupe competition in Alsace fostered a rare nineteenth-century public sphere in which one could still behave like a regional citizen. In this way, the regionalism of Alsace's stages legitimised the wider social place of a Franco-Germanic populace by validating their roles as theatrical spectators.<sup>977</sup> In other words, while it was becoming more difficult to be socially or linguistically German as a French citizen due to ministerial reforms, prefects and mayors administered theatre in a way that prioritised regional character and function and, in doing so, and weakened the connection between the Haut-Rhin's stages and the comprehensive nationalised identity envisioned by central government for theatre, and its wider social context and community, in Colmar and Mulhouse.

### **Haut-Rhin cosmopolitanism**

The regional theatrical culture of the Haut-Rhin, as envisaged by departmental prefects between 1818 and 64 coalesced around the shared Franco-German linguistic habits and identities of the department's inhabitants. During the same period, however, exposure to German performances did not always signify Alsatian identity to the same officials nor to

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<sup>977</sup> Peter Sahlins, "Natural Frontiers Revisited: France's Boundaries since the Seventeenth Century." *The American historical review* 95, no. 5 (1990): 1423–1451; *Boundaries the Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989; *Unnaturally French: Foreign Citizens in the Old Regime and After* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

the local press. German troupes could also represent the foreign in certain aspects of troupe performance, for instance in Prefect Jordan's assessment of the communicative power of opera, or in journalist Pierre Baret *fil's* discussion of visiting companies' performance practice. In these situations, local administrators and journalists grappled with different ways of defining Colmar and Mulhouse as part of a European framework by emphasising the cosmopolitan nature of local theatrical experience.

As mentioned in this chapter's introduction, cosmopolitanism has been defined in different ways by musicologists talking about transnational, and often specifically European, encounters in the nineteenth century. The differences are largely drawn out of the types of figures used in scholars' case studies: whether this be elite society members, such as high-level musicians or musical managers that make up Gooley's and Collins' study of ethical-political cosmopolitanism, or the domestic musicians and spectators explored by Minor in his claims for everyday cosmopolitanism. Not often do the twain meet in such case studies, yet the theatrical environment of Colmar and Mulhouse has the potential to bring together aspects from both cosmopolitan concepts. In these provincial towns, the key theatrical players managing and experiencing the competition between German and French itinerant troupes came from all levels of society. Prefects were the towns' elites working as ministerial civil servants, and journalists held a similarly important status in society but did not have to perform governmental duties. Yet both administrators and critics worked to curate a theatrical sphere not solely for their own enjoyment but to serve spectators which, as I have already shown, spanned the lower and upper classes.

I therefore argue that the presence of foreign theatre troupes in Colmar and Mulhouse establishes a multi-level cosmopolitanism that encompasses Gooley's, Collins' and Minor's opposing concepts, and whose power and influence relied precisely on the coexistence of different understandings of how the Haut-Rhin might embrace cosmopolitan influence as part of its regional theatrical characteristics. Returning to the introduction of Germanic

performances to Colmar in 1818, for example, socio-political cosmopolitanism geared around town elites was central to Castéja's theatrical response to post-Napoleonic occupation. Following the Treaty of Paris in November 1815, the Austrian army were stationed across eastern France as part of the allied occupation, headquartered in Colmar until December 1818.<sup>978</sup> Castéja made clear in his letters to the Ministry that Austrian military presence was central to his desire to broker an arrangement with Brion to secure German troupes: he championed the need for German performances to satisfy the "headquarters of the Austrian soldiers" who did not frequent the French troupe.<sup>979</sup> His actions spoke even louder than his words. Castéja went behind Brion's back to personally arrange the first visit from the Basel opera company, directed by Koch and Herzog, in 1818, even though the contract signed with the director had given Brion authority to bring his choice of German troupe from Strasbourg into Colmar.<sup>980</sup> It appears that Castéja went to considerable lengths to shape the Colmar stage specifically for a foreign military audience. There is, of course, a forced political dimension to such cosmopolitanism: it is possible that behind Castéja's decision lay an element of political pressure exerted on the Prefect by members of the occupying forces. After all, depending on where occupation took place, it often involved some level of trauma, coercion and general hardship for French citizens including its officials.<sup>981</sup> Yet, unlike in contemporary Valenciennes where the Duke of Wellington brought over English actors to form a theatrical troupe to entertain his ranks stationed in nearby Cambrai,<sup>982</sup> there are no archival traces suggesting that the Austrian

<sup>978</sup> Christine Haynes, *Our Friends the Enemies: The Occupation of France after Napoleon* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018); J. E. Sitzmann, *Aperçu sur l'histoire politique & religieuse de l'Alsace depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: P. Pélot, 1878), 140

<sup>979</sup> "grand quartier général autrichien". ADHR, 4/T/98, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Mayor of Colmar, 30/04/1818. Across France, and soldiers received preferential monthly subscriptions at a lower rate. Christine Carrère-Saucède, 'Les militaires et le théâtre dans le sud-ouest au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle : de la salle à la scène,' *Annales du Midi : revue archéologique, historique et philologique de la France méridionale*, 115/244, (2003): 563. AN, F/21/1258, Letter from Claparède to the Minister, 03/11/1833.

<sup>980</sup> ADHR, 4/T/98, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Mayor of Colmar, 30/04/1818. Letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to Brion, 27/04/1818. The agreement was drafted until 1821, but, as early as September 1818, Brion stated his difficulties in coming to Colmar, and in 1819 he filed for bankruptcy. Colmar was returned to the 7<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*. ADHR, 4/T/98, letter from Brion to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin, 11/09/1818. AN, F/21/1207, letter from the Prefect of the Bas-Rhin to the Minister, 26/05/1819.

<sup>981</sup> Haynes, *Our Friends the Enemies*, 11-73.

<sup>982</sup> AMV, J/8/18, 8/J/JJP2015.

soldiers in Colmar demanded foreign performance, only that they stayed away from French ones.<sup>983</sup> It is therefore more likely that Castéja's invitation to the Basel troupe was born out of his aspiration to shape the theatrical scene for the Austrian visitors because of contemporary social bonds fostered by the occupation, rather than political pressures. Indeed, Christine Haynes and Brian Vick argue that important social integration between French and foreign forces characterised the years 1815–1818, especially at elite level, with Vick characterising such imposed amity as cosmopolitanism in action. Not only did local inhabitants in Colmar and Mulhouse house 3,300 Austrian soldiers between them, but foreign and French citizens, including prefects and military officials, socialised together in sporting activities, at church, and in national (both French and Austrian) celebrations, as well as in the theatre.<sup>984</sup> Moreover, Castéja himself was known for mingling with the occupied military forces, hosting weekly *soirées* attended by the Austrian commander Baron de Frimont, Austrian officers and the Colmar upper-crust.<sup>985</sup> The Prefect's push for a Swiss troupe thus was likely born from his desire to promote vernacular entertainment for a foreign social circle in which he, and other elites, socialised between 1815–18. Castéja promoted socio-political cosmopolitanism through theatre, disrupting both the Ministry's nationalising legislation and the regional importance for the stage put forward by later Prefects. To him, theatregoing allowed the elites of Colmar to exist in a cosmopolitan framework that went beyond either nation or region.

Castéja type of cosmopolitanism, though, did not necessarily transfer into later administrators' or critics' views of Germanic troupes after the retreat of Austrian forces. In fact, the subsequent shift in officials' engagement with the European highlights the porosity and flexible nature of the Haut-Rhin's cosmopolitanism. Several local officials sustained a

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<sup>983</sup> 4/T/98, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to Brion, 27/04/1818. "le spectacle allemand est plus fréquenté par les officiers autrichiens que le spectacle français."

<sup>984</sup> Haynes, *Our Friends the Enemies*, 49, 141–2, 145, 148–9; Brian E. Vick, *The Congress of Vienna: Power and Politics after Napoleon* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

<sup>985</sup> Haynes, *Our Friends the Enemies*, 151–2. Vick defines theatre as an important occupier-occupied arena of socialisation that fostered cosmopolitanism: *The Congress of Vienna*, 177, 180, 266–8, 283, 299.

European view of theatre in Colmar and Mulhouse after 1818 by arguing that it was local inhabitants' taste for foreign troupes' repertoires that justified the need to maintain these companies. Local administrators repeatedly described the popularity of the *troupes allemandes* in Colmar and Mulhouse in their correspondence, describing the fervent "taste for German troupes" shared across socio-linguistic and class divides between 1823 and the 1850s.<sup>986</sup> Justifying the return of Scharrer's company in 1826 to the Minister, for example, Prefect Jordan stated that the majority of the inhabitants of the Haut-Rhin "take great pleasure in the Italian and German operas "of Mozart, Paër and Rossini" in the troupe's repertoire."<sup>987</sup> In another letter, Jordan argued that Haut-Rhin audiences looked to the Swiss troupes to provide genres that the French one did not, such as the *drame allemand*.<sup>988</sup> In this talk of theatrical and operatic taste, Jordan underlined a different kind of cosmopolitanism in to Castéja, rooted in the multiple layers of Weber and Minor's everyday cosmopolitanism: largely Swiss performers, producing French, German and Italian repertoire, sung in German, on French stages. Also evident is the deep-seated local identification with a European theatrical sphere by a range of spectators: Jordan went as far as to note that many audience members would turn against French troupes and provoke even more "riots" like those in autumn 1825 against the *troupes d'arrondissement* if deprived of a range of German stage repertoire.<sup>989</sup> Jordan's arguments expanded the reach and relevance of the department's cosmopolitanism beyond Castéja's military and official elites to encompass all spectators and to centre on the matter of theatrical taste. The wider reach of cosmopolitanism in the Haut-Rhin was also extended in a different way through Jordan's reflections on the nature of operatic performance. In a letter written in March 1826 about the presence of Fribourg director Scharrer's troupe in Colmar, Jordan

<sup>986</sup> ADHR, 4/T/92, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 05/09/1823. AN, F/21/1258, letter from Claparède to the Minister, 07/01/1834. AN F/21/1260, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 14/03/1851.

<sup>987</sup> AN, F/21/1258, report from the Chief of the 2<sup>nd</sup> division to the Minister, undated, c. 06/04/1826, judging by a letter on the subject from the Minister to the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin.

<sup>988</sup> AN, F/21/1258, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 24/03/1826.

<sup>989</sup> "cabales", AN, F/21/1258, report from the Chief of the 2<sup>nd</sup> division to the Minister.

argued that operatic repertoire actually stood outside of linguistic and national boundaries.

He stated that banning Scharrer's repertoire, made up of Italian and German operas:

would hardly be justified for actors, and is not at all for opera. These [operas] are followed by the French as much as the Germans because it is the music alone which attracted them, and which we hear. German opera is therefore as unsuitable to spread the German language as the grand opera of Paris, where we don't even hear the words, would be to spread the French language.<sup>990</sup>

In these letters, Jordan made the case that, in performance, opera's means of communication was entirely musical. Although he classified repertoire as 'German' or, tellingly, as 'from Paris', this Prefect saw the act of performance, and audiences' operatic consumption during performances, as offering only musical signification. In Jordan's eyes, this musical signification meant that operatic repertoire could not be associated solely with French or German language or identity. This argument was a stark contrast to Jordan's coexisting contemporary arguments for the vernacular theatrical experience quoted earlier in this chapter. Adding much needed nuance into the Ministry's political-linguistic view of theatre's role in borderlands, the prefect suggested that he and the audiences he advocated for could enjoy and identify with cultural products from across the Rhine without it affecting their linguistic habits or identification on a national level.

It was not just local officials who positioned Colmar and Mulhouse within a European community through theatrical experience at this time. In their theatrical criticism, journalists Baret (of the Mulhouse *Industriel alsacien*) and Charles Hoffman (of the *Journal hebdomadaire de Colmar et du Haut-Rhin*) also emphasised the cosmopolitan axis of local theatre. When reviewing the *troupes d'arrondissement* and foreign companies, neither writer discussed the language in which operas were sung nor commented on the national distinctions of their repertoire. Instead, they discussed the pieces seen in Colmar and

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<sup>990</sup> "serais à peine fondée pour des comédiens, elle [n'est?] pas pour l'opéra. Ceux-ci sont suivis par les français autant que par les allemands, parce que c'est la musique seule qui attire, et qu'on écoute. L'opéra allemande est donc aussi peu propre à propager la langue allemande, que le Grand Opéra de Paris, où l'on n'entend même pas les paroles, le serait de propager la langue française." AN, F/21/1258, letter from the Prefect of the Haut-Rhin to the Minister, 24/03/1826.

Mulhouse as belonging to a European repertory of successful works, with Baret focusing on universally-applied musical standards: Bellini's *La sonnambula* (1831) was "a magnificent opera"; *Le prophète* a "sublime work"; *Zar und Zimmermann* a "charming opera".<sup>991</sup> Neither did the journalists see French opera as the exclusive right of the *troupe d'arrondissement*. Rather, in Baret's excitement to welcome the Mulhouse premiere of *Les Huguenots* and *Robert* in 1851 by Hehl's troupe, the critic conveyed it as natural that a German troupe could take on any Italian, German or French repertoire, thanking Hehl's performers for bringing "important pieces that have not yet been seen on our stage."<sup>992</sup>

By describing the repertoire seen in the Haut-Rhin as a continuum of European pieces, these critics differed to those commenting on Parisian institutions whose companies and repertoire were distinguished by operatic subgenre and nationalistic overtones. The separate building, company and repertoire of the Théâtre Italien and, for a short while, the Odéon that was given a licence to stage translations of foreign operas,<sup>993</sup> for example, halted any integration between French and foreign operatic traditions. Even more so, as I have already highlighted in detailing the furore around the introduction of translated Italian repertoire to the Conservatoire concerts in Chapter 3, many artistic figures considered it problematic for French repertoire and institutions to be brought into contact with foreign influences.<sup>994</sup> Outraged commentary about the place of Italian translations at the Conservatoire such as that spouted by Adolph Adam emphasised that, in Paris, opera was seen by many commentators as belonging to and exemplifying a specific nation,<sup>995</sup> even when the Académie's repertoire depended on transnational composers and influences.<sup>996</sup>

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<sup>991</sup> *IA*, 06/07/1851, 22/06/1851; 06/07/1851. This contrasts with the way in which travelling Italian troupes were received as authentically performing *bel canto* repertoire as an Italian operatic form in the Nord, in contrast to previous performances in translation by the *troupes d'arrondissement*. See Gosselin, "Les Italiens en province au milieu du XIXe siècle", *D'un opéra à l'autre: hommage à Jean Mongrédien*, ed. Jean Gribenski, Marie-Claire Mussat and Herbert Schneider (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1996), 371-378.

<sup>992</sup> "plusieurs grand ouvrages qui n'ont pas encore paru sur notre scène". *IA*, 01/06/1851; 15/06/1851.

<sup>993</sup> Everist, *Music Drama at the Paris Opéra, 1824-1828* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>994</sup> This can also be seen in the xenophobic rhetoric around Donizetti's 1840s operatic takeover of the capital, Rollet, "Les multiples enjeux de la critique musicale".

<sup>995</sup> *LFM*, 04/06/1843.

<sup>996</sup> Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 388-394.

The openness to European repertoire in the journalism of the Haut-Rhin, though, demonstrated that, in this borderland, operatic repertoire *could* represent European cohesion.

Overall, both the administrative management of foreign troupes in the Haut-Rhin and journalistic discussion advanced a multi-layered form of cosmopolitanism that embraced political elite sociability and everyday interactions between readers and foreign troupes, guided by theatrical critique. There is power, I argue, in this coexistence because it reveals the significance of the European, established in many forms, on a borderland region, and the inherent complexities in the ways that this category was grasped and voiced by historical actors. It is not just scholars that search for a way to describe cosmopolitanism as a concept, this case study suggests, but nineteenth-century theatrical managers and writers who also sought, on varying levels, to articulate their existence in a theatrical world that went beyond France. In this way, theatrical cosmopolitanism went further than the importance placed on regional autonomy by contemporary administrators. National limits were not given monopoly over theatrical experience nor prefects', critics and mayor's understanding of theatrical communities, but could interact with a European theatrical marketplace.

Within this multi-layered cosmopolitanism, however, there was also room for expressions of transnational theatrical experience that did highlight national self-definition. There were, indeed, moments by which Baret, in his columns, pointed out the differences, rather than commonalities, between French and German stage culture in Mulhouse. Baret may have discussed operatic repertoire as a European continuum but, in columns printed in 1839 and 1840, he located a specifically German identity within Swiss and German troupes' performance practices. First, he defined these as most suited to opera because of the tones and shape of their mother tongue:



The Germans are natural musicians; theirs is above all a musical language; it has a vagueness and semi-obscurity that suits music.<sup>997</sup>

More specifically, both Haut-Rhin critics described the singing of opera choruses in a range of repertoire as identifiably German. Baret and Hoffman both identified the “purity”, “beauty”, “ensemble and precision” of the choruses in Weber’s *Der Freischütz* (1821), Bellini’s *I Capuleti* and Meyerbeer’s *Robert le diable* as features which, in Baret’s words, “evoke so well their German *terre classique*”,<sup>998</sup> a nineteenth-century phrase used to describe a place where the arts were cultivated and flourishing.<sup>999</sup> This was not the concept of a national community embodied by the chorus’ role within operatic dramaturgy, as James Parakilas has argued was a central component of operatic political representation during this period and Stephen C. Meyer has identified as represented by the musico-dramatic content of the choruses in Weber’s operas.<sup>1000</sup> Instead, Baret and Hoffman identified a national performance *practice*, in the specific operatic chorus singing and musicianship *en masse* that was, to them, identifiably German.

In many ways, Baret and Hoffman’s reviews echoed the journalistic conception of Germanic singing practices elsewhere in contemporary France. Matthieu Calliez, for instance, argues that rhetoric about the high quality of chorus singing in Weber’s opera was a consistent feature of foreign troupe reception in Strasbourg and Metz towns in the first half of the century.<sup>1001</sup> Parisian critics also waxed lyrical about German chorus practices: “it is a recognised fact”, journalist A. Weil wrote in for *La France musicale* in 1841, that “there is more ensemble in a small operatic theatre in Germany than in the Paris Opera.”<sup>1002</sup> Weil put this down to the “musical intelligence” of German people but also Germanic theatrical

<sup>997</sup> “Les Allemands sont naturellement musiciens; leurs langue est musicale avant tout; elle a tout le vague et la demi-obscurité qui convient à la musique.” Ibid.

<sup>998</sup> “Nous parlerions encore de ces chœurs admirables, d’ensemble et de précision qui rappellent si bien leur terre classique d’Allemagne.” ADHR, JX/21/3, *JHCHR*, 18/04/1839. *IA*, 21/04/1838, 06/12/1840.

<sup>999</sup> *Dictionnaire de L’Académie française* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1835), 6<sup>th</sup> edition, 328.

<sup>1000</sup> James Parakila, ‘Political Representation and the Chorus in Nineteenth-Century Opera’, *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 16 (1992) 181–202. Stephen C. Meyer, *Carl Maria von Weber and the Search for a German Opera* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003) 68–71.

<sup>1001</sup> Cailliez, *La diffusion du comique*, 313.

<sup>1002</sup> “qu’il y a plus d’ensemble dans le plus petit théâtre lyrique allemand qu’au grand Opéra de Paris” in a column entitled “Mœurs musicales d’Allemagne: les chœurs d’opéra.” *LFM*, 09/05/1841.

infrastructure: the fact that chorus singers were appreciated as artists, working as a collective, by the public, and the way in which choruses trained singers for small roles which later led to solo careers. Haut-Rhin journalistic discourse thus mirrored the Parisian press conception of operatic chorus singing as an identifiably German trait that contrasted with French practices.

Given Baret's embrace of a European continuum of operatic repertoire, though, what did the articulation of foreign difference in performance practice mean for the Haut-Rhin's cosmopolitanism? The aim of Weil's 1841 comparisons made from Paris was clear: he proposed a reorganisation of the Académie's singers along German lines so that this theatre could better serve the rest of France, becoming "an important place of imitation for the talents of all the country."<sup>1003</sup> In a similar way, Baret used cosmopolitanism to reflect back on what it meant, theatrically, to be French in the Haut-Rhin: a layering of the national on top of the cosmopolitan that Gooley describes as an inherent instability within several nineteenth-century musical figures' discussions of nation and cosmopolitanism.<sup>1004</sup> In another column from 1852, for example, Baret established a differentiation between French and German identity as embodied by stage genre and performance practices. When discussing Hehl's troupes performing *vaudeville*, Baret argued that the singers were:

everything that they could be, consummate musicians, excellent singers, but mediocre actors. These artists should abstain from performing vaudevilles in France.<sup>1005</sup>

Baret went on to describe performance practices in *vaudeville* through the lens of ethnic differentiation, widening his discussion from Hehl's Basel troupe to the 'Germans' as a race. On the one hand, Baret suggested that the German propensity for operatic performance was thanks to their method of singing that was natural and tied to speech patterns: "the

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<sup>1003</sup> "un vaste champ d'émulation pour tous les talents du pays." Ibid.

<sup>1004</sup> Gooley. "Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Nationalism", 126-8.

<sup>1005</sup> "tout ce qu'ils pouvaient être, musiciens consommés, chanteurs excellen[t]s, mais acteurs médiocres. Ces artistes devraient s'abstenir de jouer les vaudevilles en France". *JA*, 11/04/1852.

Germans always sing more or less in a speaking manner".<sup>1006</sup> These qualities, though, did not transfer into *vaudeville*, as Baret scathingly stated:

[German performers'] gestures are exaggerated and lack grace; the calm and serenity of their facial expressions do not match the incessant mobility needed to interpret the thousands of nuances within dramatic thought, the nuances that are so small and fleeting.<sup>1007</sup>

In the lengthy review, Baret laid out his opinion that 'German' performers' physical movements and facial expressions were not suited to the dramatic needs of the French *vaudeville*.<sup>1008</sup> Indeed, he suggested that the performers' ethnic German identity (even though they were most likely from Switzerland) made them unsuitable for French genres outside of opera:

[The German language] lacks the clarity and precision that the French spirit demands. Let them sing, then, and let them give concerts and play opera when they come to visit us; but, in truth, let them abstain from *comédie*, *vaudeville* and even from *drame*.<sup>1009</sup>

Baret suggested that the vocal performance and language of German singers presented opera as a genre that expressed German identity, in contrast to the physical performance of *vaudeville*, and its French text, which he saw as a genre that captured the French spirit. Indeed, to reinforce his point, the journalist referenced Boileau's famous epithet about the French spirit and the invention of the *vaudeville* to make it clear to readers that he wished to fundamentally delineate the separation of these genres along ethnic grounds.<sup>1010</sup>

Let [the German troupes] remember that it isn't the German, but the *Frenchman* who, *born cunning, created the vaudeville*. This genre needs a particular aptitude, not only in the

<sup>1006</sup> "Les Allemands chantent toujours plus ou moins en parlant"

<sup>1007</sup> "Leurs gestes sont exagérés et sans grâce; le calme et la sérénité des traits de leurs visages s'accroissent mal à l'incessante mobilité nécessaire pour rendre les mille nuances de la pensée dramatique, ces nuances si fines et si fugitives." Ibid.

<sup>1008</sup> On the perceived cultural differences between French and German, see Harold Mah, *Enlightenment Phantasies: Cultural Identity in France and Germany, 1750-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

<sup>1009</sup> "elle manque de la clarté et de la précision qu'exige l'esprit français. Qu'ils chantent donc, qu'ils donnent des concerts, qu'ils jouent des opéras quand ils viennent nous visiter; mais, en vérité, qu'ils s'abstiennent de la comédie, du vaudeville et même du drame." Ibid.

<sup>1010</sup> Nicolas Boileau, *L'Art Poétique* (Paris: Duprat-Duverger, 1804), 69. This epithet was likely inspired by earlier *vaudevilles* which included phrases about "le malin vaudeville" in a meta-commentary on the genre: see the finale of Citoyen Pils, *Le Mariage du Vaudeville et de la Morale* (Paris: Librairie Théâtre du Vaudeville, 1794) 40-41. Bara, 'La revue de fin d'année à Paris au XIXe siècle: chambre d'écho de la culture musicale', *Musical Theatre in Europe 1830-1945*, eds., Michela Niccolai and Clair Rowden (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 4; J. Brander Matthews, *French Dramatists of the 19th Century* (London: Remington and Co, 1882), 79-80; Gustave Masson, *La lyre française* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1892), xix-xx.

language in which it is performed, but in the artist that performs it. One needs infinite spirit, and French spirit to play even the slightest *vaudeville*!<sup>1011</sup>

Baret's manifesto was clear: the cosmopolitanism of the theatrical scene of Mulhouse did not mean that *all* stage genres or stage practices were equivalent public property for all European troupes. Operatic repertoire could, in his eyes, be divorced from ideas of nation, yet parts of its performance practice (especially chorus singing) aligned the genre with German identity, just as the performance of *vaudeville* could not be separated from France and the French. The transnationalism of the Haut-Rhin's stages thus also prompted this critic to reflect on which protected national characteristics existed in tandem with cosmopolitanism. This, in turn, allowed Baret to re-evaluate the use of the national theatrical infrastructure in his region. The *troupes d'arrondissement* were ultimately useful within the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* because they transmitted French character and identity through their performances of *vaudeville*, and the contrast between French and Germanic troupes' performance in this genre allowed this critic and, he hoped, his readers to define what it meant to be theatrical French within a larger cosmopolitan sphere.

## Conclusion

The theatrical situation of the Haut-Rhin provides an important insight into the limits of the *troupes d'arrondissement* system during the first half of the nineteenth century. The work of itinerant companies in this department reveals the important way in which different historical agents, be they government ministers, departmental or town officials, or newspaper critics, conceptualised the regional, national or European significance of theatrical experience. As I have shown throughout this chapter, different aspects of theatrical culture brought one, or more, of these significances to the fore in Alsace. Troupe competition in Colmar and Mulhouse makes evident the government's intended role for the *troupes d'arrondissement* in upholding a system for national development in which theatre

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<sup>1011</sup> Baret's emphasis. "Qu'ils se rapellent que ce n'est pas l'Allemand, mais *le Français*, qui *né malin*, trouva le vaudeville. Ce genre veut une aptitude particulière, non seulement dans la langue où il est traité, mais encore dans l'artiste qui le rend. Il faut infiniment d'esprit, et d'esprit français pour bien jouer le plus mince vaudeville!" /A, 11/04/1852.

had a key social role to standardise the linguistic habits of provincial citizens to a central model. At the same time, local administrators' reactions against this theatrical ideal reveal the important regional influence of the Haut-Rhin's socio-political context on stage culture in Colmar and Mulhouse, including the way by which troupe competition between the *arrondissement* company and foreign groups could be managed, by these agents, in order to accentuate regional identity. Indeed, their efforts demonstrated, above all, a challenge to the centralisation intended to be undertaken across the nation through troupe theatre. The cross-border nature of the Haut-Rhin's theatrical community and the under-the-radar resistance of prefects to government policy highlight a rare example, in this period, of cultural decentralisation informed by an element of identity politics. In this department, the regional nature, function, and relevance of touring troupe theatre comes to the fore, driven by local administrators' resistance to ministerial policies of national standardisation and their contrasting valorisation of regional character and a shared linguistic and cultural Franco-Germanic identity.

Certain prefects' actions, though, and the theatrical journalism of town critics, went beyond the regional, highlighting the European world within which local German performances took place. The cosmopolitanism behind this European encounter, though, worked on different levels: in Baret's appraisal of Swiss troupes' performance practice, in particular, cosmopolitanism allowed this journalist to link back to national character as expressed through *vaudeville* and accentuated, he believed, by foreign troupes' performances of the genre. It is the interaction between these national, regional and European meanings for Haut-Rhin theatre that perhaps characterises the inherent artistic and socio-political situation of a borderland. Indeed, the battle to determine the meaning of stage culture across these categories accentuated the liminality of departments such as the Haut-Rhin, where the ministry's theatrical infrastructure was, arguably, doomed to always be lacking. It is significant, though, that similar rhetoric around theatrical language, regionalism and

cosmopolitanism is not present in any of the other two bordering case studies in this thesis: neither the Spanish nor Belgian border elicited similar theatrical rhetoric nor transnational troupe competition as in the Haut-Rhin. It is more fitting then, not to define the layers of national, regional and European theatrical significance as characteristic of *any* French borderland, but of the specifically Alsatian.

This specification is, indeed, significant for the study of this region. Historians of Alsace have argued that a defined regional consciousness was only forged in the displacement and trauma of the annexation of Alsace in 1871. Detmar Klein writes, for example, that prior to this date, although most citizens spoke German dialect, they lived out their lives in a French national context.<sup>1012</sup> I suggest, however, that the theatrical particularities of Alsace between 1818 and 1864 *do* reveal that stage culture fostered a regional frame of reference for cultural and social life in an earlier period, while acknowledging that the historical evidence that I have presented highlights the thoughts and discourse of specific administrators and critics rather than a wider communal consciousness. For these individuals, at least, I have shown how that a propensity to emphasise the regional aspects of stage performance went hand in hand with an openness to the wider European frame of cultural experience in a period involving military and political factions, as well as periods of reduced conflict after 1818. Theatrical experience, I therefore argue, *did* have the potential to cultivate a defined Alsatian identity straddling both regional and European consciousness in the first half of the century, one that had the potential to be communicated and understood by the audiences and readers that these administrators and critics acted and wrote on behalf of. These findings can, I argue, inform future scholarship on Alsace that typically focuses on period after annexation, as well researchers' understanding of the continued importance and definition of the region in today's world. In

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<sup>1012</sup> Detmar Klein, "Becoming Alsatian: Anti-German and Pro-French Cultural Propaganda in Alsace, 1898-1914" in *French music, culture, and national identity, 1870-1939*, ed. Barbara L. Kelly (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2008), 215-233; Klein, "Folklore as a Weapon: National Identity in German-Annexed Alsace, 1890-1914" in *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe During the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds. Timothy Baycroft and David Hopkin, (Cambridge: Brill, 2012), 162.

2021, for example, an administrative act renamed the Haut-Rhin and Bas-Rhin departments into a new geographical “identité institutionnelle” named the Collectivité européenne d’Alsace, demonstrating the modern relevance of embracing the region’s European, rather than French national categorisation.<sup>1013</sup> This modern administrative move reveals the enduring importance, to Alsatians at least, of comprehending their space and identity as part of a European community, a long-term process within which, I argue, nineteenth-century theatrical competition in the Haut-Rhin also played an important role.

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<sup>1013</sup> ‘La fusion du Bas-Rhin et Haut-Rhin signe le retour de l’Alsace’, *Le Parisien*, 01/01/2021 [online]. ADHR, Open-shelf magazine collection, *Toute l’Alsace: Le magazine de la collectivité européenne d’Alsace* (2021), 3.

## Conclusion

### Touring troupes and the French political imaginary

From ruffling the feathers of theatre subscribers in Valenciennes in northern France to appeasing the pleasure-seeking tourists of Bagnères in the south west, the work of the *troupes d'arrondissement* reveals the complex place occupied by stage culture in nineteenth-century French society. Beyond the differences between the theatrical life of towns such as Valenciennes and Bagnères, or for that matter any other towns mentioned in this thesis, though, lies a basic commonality that has become apparent throughout my chapters: none of these disparate artist environments in the four corners of France existed in a vacuum. In fact, performances, performance culture and theatrical administration in one provincial town held a significance far beyond the local due to the working conditions of itinerant music-theatrical culture.

The physical mobility of the *troupes d'arrondissement* brought with it the transfer of ideas, genres, practices and careers that affected provincial performance experiences. To give two examples: the dissemination of musical and visual aesthetics associated with *grand opéra*, as seen at the Académie and codified in Parisian-created manuals; or the circulation of troupe reputations between towns across the *arrondissement*. Such transfers, from one point to another or between several nodes on a theatrical network, informed the development of local ideas of theatrical taste, of the function of the stage in town society, of audiences' relationships with theatre and of critical expectations of troupe performances, as well as administrators' management of the *troupes d'arrondissement*. In other words, the work of provincial touring theatre troupes highlighted spatial connections and developed relationships between different spaces, people, and identities in nineteenth-century France.

Itinerant theatre's spatial relationships took on various forms and meanings for different historical agents in different places, whether they be local administrators, government



ministers, spectators, town critics, or troupe directors and performers. As I have shown these meanings primarily revolved around the perception of what constituted the local, regional and national, as well as the Parisian, provincial and European in theatrical culture. Touring theatre enlightens the connections made between the local and the regional, as shown in the distinctive *arrondissement* communities in Chapter 2, between the local and the national, as seen in ministerial oversight of provincial theatre as outlined in Chapter 1, between the region and the nation, as explored in the Franco-Germanic theatrical competition of the Haut-Rhin in Chapter 5, between Paris and the provinces, embodied by the educative role of troupes described in Chapter 3 or in the circulation of *grand opéra* studied in Chapter 4, and between the provinces and wider Europe or even the world, as glimpsed in spa contexts in Chapter 2, Alsatian cosmopolitanism in Chapter 5 and performers' careers in Chapter 4. Combined, these complex and plural representations of French space and their connections make apparent the way in which the *troupes d'arrondissement* provoked and represented a series of complex and coexisting power dynamics within French culture and society at this time. Crucially, these dynamics are richer than the simplistic hierarchy of Parisian dominance over the provinces that can be found in many nineteenth-century characterisations of the nation, and that has persisted since in some scholarship. In being so, these dynamics demonstrate how nineteenth-century itinerant theatre conjured a complex and multifaceted French political imaginary.

Granted, elements of itinerant theatre certainly did replicate the top-down dissemination of theatrical power from the centre into the peripheries. In this thesis I have demonstrated that the French government created a system for national theatrical infrastructure that did promote cultural centralism, albeit incorporating aspects of flexibility and diversity, at regional and local level. Ministerial theatrical legislation provided state management of the *troupe d'arrondissement*, determining certain working patterns, censoring repertoire, and conditioning, at least in theory, regional officials' attitudes towards troupes. Additionally,

there were also commercial factors that leant additional centralism to the touring circuit: local critics and administrators grounded part of their theatrical expectations in their perception of the capital's theatrical conditions and response to trends from Paris, materials sold by agents, publishers and composers, as well as acknowledgement of government guidelines. This two-way, central and local affirmation of Paris's influential role in determining provincial stage culture was explicit in the circulation of *grand opéra* in the touring circuit outlined in Chapter 4. This genre, above others, represented French artistic progress and cultural capital for town officials and critics, and the development of instructions for small troupes in printed staging manuals and the practices of *troupe d'arrondissement* directors after 1830 eventually both moved towards imitating the Académie. Government policy and intervention regarding the travelling troupe situation in Alsace discussed in Chapter 5, too, highlights the Ministry's intended use of theatre as a linguistic tool for social standardisation and for nation building led by a central model that rejected regional autonomy and difference, here manifested in the presence of foreign itinerant companies, and the persistence of French citizens using German. In the development of touring *grand opéra* culture and the Haut-Rhin cultural scene, the *troupe d'arrondissement* provided a theatrical experience that asserted the artistic and political power of the French centre over its peripheries. In these situations, touring theatrical culture did foreground Paris as the centre and representative unit of France, exerting its influence over the peripheries at many levels, from political control to regulating the emotional experience of spectators and their expectations regarding visual and musical experiences onstage.

At the same time though, neither of these theatrical situations are exclusively defined by this domineering Parisian-provincial relationship. Rather, as I recounted in Chapters 4 and 5, *grand opéra* circulation and troupe competition in the Haut-Rhin also brought to light other types of equally significant power dynamics within different national ramifications.

After all, in the initial transfer of *grand opéra* to the 1<sup>st</sup> *arrondissement*, it was intra-provincial artistic practices that director Delorme initially sought to imitate, just as Solomé's manual made room for a flexible reproduction of *La Muette* that left parts of the Parisian production model behind. Similarly, the government's Francisation ideals in Alsace met with resistance from several Prefects of the Haut-Rhin who preferred to shape theatrical experience around regional socio-ethnic conditions or who, in the case of Castéja, Jordan and the Haut-Rhin newspaper critics, defined operatic performances in their department as inherently transnational in various ways.

Challenges to the significance of Paris as the theatrical centre of France, even within the government's successful centralised system, also recur throughout my other chapters in three different ways. First, in Chapters 1 and 3, I argued that the key elements of the Ministry's legislative priorities for theatre and the travelling troupes' educative function within the French artistic sphere challenged Parisian hegemony and theatrical influence. In ministers' reliance on information gathered from provincial officials to set theatrical legislation from the Napoleonic period up to 1824 and Corbière's shaping of the tiers in the 1824 ordonnance in order to progress dramatic art, the theatrical situation outlined in Chapter 1 emphasised that it was the provinces which fed and led towards the Parisian stages. This relationship was partly echoed, practically, in the performance training that was offered to artists in provincial troupes, as described in Chapter 3. Although there were certainly difficulties for the multi-genre troupe players to find a way to excel as specialists in the capital, overall the provinces continued to be acknowledged as formative for the national performance industry by contemporary commentators and artists throughout the nineteenth century, a narrative likely spurred on by accounts of individual successes, such as Hortense Schneider's path to stardom. In these theatrical situations, the work of the *troupe d'arrondissement* inverted the direction of travel of theatrical influence across

France, placing the provinces in a new position of importance since the theatrical practices of the provinces were, in part, determining of Parisian ones.

Itinerant troupes offer a second nuance to the political imaginary via theatrical situations and discourses within which Paris had little to no role. Regional factors were not only most influential over the prefects' management of troupe competition and audience experience in the Haut-Rhin recounted in Chapter 5, but theatrical priorities drawn from Alsace's socio-political context forced these officials to not simply look away from central ministerial guidelines and the troupes and repertoire dissemination from Paris, but to actively subvert them. Similarly, in Chapter 2, I emphasised the determining nature of the *arrondissement* imaginary over stage culture as seen in administrators' oversight of troupes and in the constructed critical theatrical gaze that primed readers' engagement with touring companies. In both cases, it was the French provinces, and specifically the *arrondissement*, that regulated the scope of the theatrical communities, artistic models, and socio-political function of the *troupes d'arrondissement*, bypassing the capital. In these situations, the foregrounding of the provincial structures an alternative political imaginary in which the provinces and exist separately: the capital has a non-determining role in local theatrical experience and both Paris and the regions embody distinctive positions, and practices, within French theatre.

The *troupes d'arrondissement* also, at times, subverted the relevance of the national element within the political imaginary. In Chapters 2 and 5, I showed how the limits of the French national imaginary were redrawn and challenged by specific touring situations. In spa towns, the importance of European visitors to local tourism lent a cosmopolitan dimension to the companies' work. Local critics such as those of the 16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* used itinerant theatre to position their towns in a European social and economic circuit that was, as the Pau and Bagnères critics made clear, essential to the towns' civic identity and financial stability. Regional importance, in competing with other spa centres, and national

standing, in replacing Paris as the centre of the summer season, was achieved *through* the spa's European reach, demonstrating the interlinked nature of the different levels of identification at play within theatrical experience. In the Haut-Rhin, the importance of foreign troupes in the theatrical landscape of Colmar and Mulhouse also highlighted the limitations of the national theatrical system and, by consequence, the legitimacy of the national imaginary to describe this department's theatrical spatial relations. The mismatch between the national system and the needs of a borderland populace prompted local administrators to define their stage as a cosmopolitan sphere, defined by two spoken and performed languages, but also by a wider canon of European repertoire and the universality, as conceived by some prefects, of opera's genre. Such influences presented a direct challenge to the government's nationalising linguistic aims for provincial troupes, but the centrality of France as a whole, and not simply Paris, was called into question by itinerant troupe theatre since stage life in the Haut-Rhin and spa towns was placed within a wider European sphere.

The fact that different threads of theatrical relationships and positioning, from the regional to the European via the Parisian, run through each chapter in this thesis suggests that the varied conditions of touring theatre established a culture space wherein thrived different ways of arranging and perceiving French space and spatial relationships within a nation and outside of it: in other words, a rich political imaginary. Such multiplicity suggests that, although on the surface the itinerant theatre system provided successful cultural centralisation across France, at times, the work of the *troupes d'arrondissement* also pressed against the systematic and ingrained centralisation of not only the theatre industry, but of the wider social and culture sphere of nineteenth-century France. At its extreme, this multiplicity in fact when some way to underdoing the grip of centralisation, as seen in Chapter 5. In Alsace, prefects and critics' reflections on what it mean to be French in terms of touring theatrical culture, was to balance shifting spheres of belonging, some

turned inwards to the regional and others turned outwards across the borderland to embrace the European as an interlocking, but potentially also excluding, category.

My findings make clear the case for increased studies of provincial theatrical culture in the holistic way attended to in this thesis. Situating local actions and government systems within spatial relationships, as I have done in my chapters, demonstrates the relevance of provincial theatrical events and systems far beyond their locality, with a bearing not only on the significance and shape of French provincial cultural life but that of wider European musical and theatrical contexts. For one, while placing an oft-neglected emphasis on the world outside the French capital, this approach also brings to light the exceptional status of certain Parisian practices compared to the rest of the nation between 1824 and 1864. These findings should enable scholars to continue to be wary of equating Paris with the nation when speaking about theatrical culture and can also embolden scholars' claims of the capital's uniquely specific urban and institutional contexts relating to theatre. It must be recognised, as I have shown in this thesis, that the capital can be at once distanced from the rest of France's theatrical environment through circumstances where Parisian practices did not, in fact, lead the way for the rest of the nation, while still, concurrently, being representative of or influential over the nation in other contexts. Ultimately, then, this thesis demonstrates the importance of resisting the marginalisation of provincial France as a site of cultural production, since this site can nourish reflection on other parts of the French and European cultural scene during this period and its wider social, and at times political, context.

In the moments when genre difference and hierarchy are discussed throughout this thesis, it becomes clear that opera was central to the many iterations of the political imaginary within stage culture. According to correspondence, it was the genre most fought over and protected by central and local administrators, town critics and, on occasions such as the Bayonne riots over director Briden in 1829, by provincial audiences. To reiterate just two

examples from the thesis, opera was the only genre through which troupes were offered rare subsidies, and the one genre over which administrators fought with each other to manage the *troupe d'arrondissement*. Consequently, operatic production in provincial touring locations took many forms and calibrated varied meanings about French space and spatial relations. In Chapter 1, for example, I demonstrated how was opera supported, if accidentally, by ministerial legislation for touring troupes and through administrators' push for the genre. In Chapter 2, I revealed how opera was foundational to most of the intra-*arrondissement* competition and the definition of locality within an *arrondissement* imaginary. As I showed in Chapter 4, by contrast, operatic circulation linked the capital and the provinces: yet the scale of *grand opéra* lent itself to local adaptation, charting both a turn away from and move towards imitation of the capital. The Alsatian context of Chapter 5 underlined that it was operatic repertoire, too, that was most shared by the French and German troupes, and which promoted identification with a regional or cosmopolitan Haut-Rhin theatre space, as well as a ministry-defined sphere for linguistic standardisation. In Chapter 3, though, it is useful to note that the difficulties faced by travelling troupe performers in finding employment as opera singers in the capital make clear the separation between Parisian and provincial operatic spheres, while also showcasing a moment in which it was through *vaudeville*, but not opera, that itinerant troupes found a unique role in French society offering distinctive artistic education from the capital.

Together, the changing role of opera in these chapters suggests that nineteenth-century agents regularly engaged with the multiplicity of the political imaginary inherent in itinerant provincial theatrical life specifically through this genre. Without comparative attention to the status *vaudeville* or *comédie* during this period, which is outside the scope of this study, I cannot claim that opera was the genre *most* representative of the complex political imaginary conjured by touring theatre. Instead, I argue that my findings have significance for their potential to challenge current ways in which scholars understand opera, itself, in a

French context. As stated in my introduction and throughout this thesis, provincial opera is often discussed as a genre favoured by regional managers, audiences, and administrators specifically because the genre cultivated cultural capital through Parisian imitation,<sup>1014</sup> although I gave evidence that opera's morality, its perceived charm, and its large-scale spectacle also gave it primacy in touring theatrical environments. The complex political imaginary embodied by operatic culture, though, gives rise to the possibility that its prestige in provincial contexts may have come about precisely *because* the genre allowed the coexistence of these plural, alternative power dynamics. Indeed, the hypothesis that historical figures potentially actively embraced opera *for* this plurality can, for one, make sense of Prefect Jordan's seemingly contradictory thoughts, quoted in Chapter 5, about the transnational nature of opera due to its musical, rather than linguistic, primacy, but the parallel need for vernacular performances for German speakers in the Haut-Rhin. Similarly, the hypothesis can also enlighten the Valenciennes' press ambivalence about rejecting and embracing different parts of Parisian imitation versus local operatic flexibility in the realm of *grand opéra*, as well as the dual importance of the *arrondissement* and touring transnational community for critics and administrators in spa towns, explored in Chapters 4 and 2, respectively. These findings suggest that perhaps administrators' and critics' repeated push for opera, might, in fact, be read as indicative of nineteenth-century French administrators, journalists, and directors' desires to nurture a theatrical scene which embraced the many nuances of the political imaginary throughout the century.

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<sup>1014</sup> Ellis, "Broke"; Jardin, "L'Opéra à tout prix".



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