



The Online Journal of Bass Research

Volume 1, July 2003

Perfecting the Storm: The Rise of the Double Bass in France, 1701–1815

by Michael D. Greenberg

Abstract: After summarizing the evidence for the existence of sub-bass instruments in France before 1700, this article will endeavor to establish a precise chronology of the introduction of the double bass to the orchestra of the Académie royale de musique in Paris. Through a detailed examination of existing parts and scores of the works performed during this period, it will trace the evolution of the use of the double bass in early French opera.

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Michael D. Greenberg, "Perfecting the Storm: The Rise of the Double Bass in France, 1701-1815,"
Online Journal of Bass Research 1 (2003) <<http://www.ojbr.com/vol1no1.html>>, par. 1.2.

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Perfecting the Storm: The Rise of the Double Bass in France, 1701–1815

by Michael D. Greenberg

Introduction

1.1 The double bass as we know it has existed in many countries around the world for more than three centuries. Any attempt to treat such a vast subject in a single-volume work, as some writers have done, must necessarily result either in a superficial presentation of all issues, or an emphasis of certain issues at the expense of others. Current historians of the double bass agree that a more coherent and thorough vision might be obtained through coordinated independent studies of musical practice in individual countries. This approach was adopted for the session of the 17th International Congress of the International Musicological Society held in Leuven, Belgium, August 2002, titled “Rex Tremendae Maiestatis: the Double Bass and Its Adoption as a Standard Ensemble Member at the European Courts.” The findings of this article were first presented in that forum. Based on an examination of French primary sources, many of which are brought to light here for the first time, this inquiry will detail the earliest evidence of double bass instruments in France, and show how and when the double bass, as we know it, came into common use in that country.

Definition

1.2 At the outset, it is necessary to define what exactly is meant by the term “double bass,” or *contrebasse* in the original French. This has proven to be a most complicated undertaking, owing to the fact that in certain countries at certain periods, the instrument was known under a different name: *violone*. The complication arises from the fact that the term *violone* did not always serve to denote the double bass exclusively, obliging historians to elaborate a set of criteria to determine exactly when a *violone* is a double bass instrument. The definitions put forth have focused on such characteristics as: a range that reaches into the sub-bass region; the tuning of the strings in fourths or a combination of thirds and fourths; the construction of the instrument in gamba form, possibly mixed with details from the violin family; the position of the player, either standing or seated on a high stool; the use of a short endpin; and “the size of the instrument, which varies, but is generally that of a human being.”¹

1.3 While such criteria have enabled some historians to conclude a more widespread use of the instrument in certain periods than has been accepted—and provided the historical justification for a more frequent inclusion of the double bass in current performances of Baroque music—these prove particularly problematic when tested against the evidence from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in France, where the term *violone* was never employed. The range of instruments such as the French *basse de viole* (bass viol) and *basse de violon* (the bass member of the violin family, an ancestor of the violoncello), as well as of the music composed for these, extends into the sub-bass region, yet few scholars or performers would venture to classify these as doubling instruments. Details such as the form and size of the instrument, and playing techniques such as a standing position or use of an endpin, are unreliable references since they are superficial, may evolve in response to changing tastes, technology, or technical demands, and can be common to both eight-foot and sixteen-foot instruments. Relying on names as proof is equally hazardous since the meaning of words may change over time, a phenomenon that will be demonstrated below. Even today, the double bass is still designated by a variety of names, is produced in different sizes and shapes, and is played standing or sitting using many different tunings. However, one aspect remains constant

¹ Alfred Planyavsky, *The Baroque Double Bass Violone*, translated by James Barket (Lanham, MD and London: Scarecrow Press, 1998), 3.

regardless of the name, form, number and tuning of strings, or playing technique of the instrument: its *function*. For the purposes of the present inquiry, the double bass shall be defined as any string instrument whose function is consistently to double or perform the bass line an octave below notated pitch.

Sources

1.4 Since the scope of the present inquiry is limited to an individual country, the sources consulted—whether documentary, iconographic, or surviving instrumental specimens—will also be limited to those originating in that country. Theoretical works may have circulated widely in their own time, but the extent to which descriptions produced in one country apply to local musical practices in other countries is questionable. The 1694 revision of Bartolomeo Bismantova’s *Annotazioni sopra il Compendio musicale* (1677)² includes a section devoted to the double bass, yet François Ragueneau (see below) writes from Rome in 1697 that “it is assuredly an instrument that we lack in France.” Although quite a bit of evidence for bowed basses of various natures with a lower range descending into the sixteen-foot octave may be found in non-French sources prior to 1700, the French sources themselves—with one exception that will be discussed—remain mute about double bass string instruments.

1.5 Musical activity in France historically took place in a number of different venues—court (both chapel and chamber), opera, theater, public and private concerts—but the use of the double bass, or the evidence for its use, does not occur at the same time in each one. Rather than examine the use of the double bass in each venue separately, this inquiry will present the evidence chronologically, wherever it occurs.

The Double Bass in France Before 1700

2.1 A frequent subject of debate is whether the double bass owes its ancestry to either the viol or violin families exclusively. The sources suggest that in France, each family may have possessed a double bass member concurrently as early as the mid-sixteenth century. While these sources do not specifically confirm or dismiss the existence of a double bass instrument, it will be seen that the lack of detail—specification of a precise tuning or description of use as a doubling instrument—renders these without value as direct evidence.

Evidence for a Double Bass Member of the Viol Family

2.2 Two sixteenth-century legal documents suggest the existence of a larger instrument distinct from the *basse-contre de viole* or bass viol then in use in France. An estate inventory of 20 September 1557 of the musician (*joueur d’instrument*) Nicolas Robillard includes a “*double basse-contre de viole*,”³ while another of 1 October 1587, of the luthier Claude Denis, includes a “*double basse-contre de viole de Cambrai*.”⁴ It is uncertain whether this distinction designated an instrument tuned lower or simply referred to a larger size of *basse-contre de viole*. Eliminating the suffix “*contre*”—French for “against,” and employed in vocal music to determine a line’s relationship to the other lines—results in “*basse*” and “*double basse*,” such as appears in Sébastien de Brossard’s dictionary of 1703 (see below). If the terminology had the same signification in 1557 as in 1703 this would suggest a double bass instrument in agreement with our definition. Readers should be cautioned however against assuming that the French words *contre* and *basse* used in any combination have the

² Ferrara, REEm: Regg. E.41.

³ *F-Pan*, Minutier central, ét. III liasse 121, 20 septembre 1557. See François Lesure, “La Facture Instrumentale à Paris au Seizième Siècle,” *The Galpin Society Journal* 7 (April 1954): 11–52, at 25.

⁴ *F-Pan*, Minutier central, ét. III liasse 194, 1 octobre 1587. See François Lesure, *op. cit.*, 37.

same signification at different periods. Although the suffix was gradually dropped in reference to musical instruments—“*basse-contre de viole*” and “*basse-contre de violon*” became “*basse de viole*” and “*basse de violon*” respectively—the term “*basse contre*” remained in use throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century in France to designate a type of bass voice.⁵ One encounters both “*Contre Basses*”—double basses—and “*Basse Contres*”—the bass voices of the choir—in French sources, but the two terms are not equivalent.

2.3 The earliest known illustrations of human-size string instruments in France also date from around the mid-sixteenth century. The first known depiction is an engraving by François Desprez (fl1562–1565) (figure 1).⁶ The title page of Guillaume Boni’s *Sonetz de P. de Ronsard*, published in 1576 by Adrian Le Roy and Robert Ballard, suggests the existence of a human-size viol (figure 2). A 1583 drawing attributed to Nicolas Houel (figure 3)⁷ depicts a consort of which the bass member is playing a huge instrument almost as tall as himself.⁸ A large five-string instrument, played in a standing position with a bow held hand-under, appears in three engravings of the funeral ceremonies for Charles III, Duke of Lorraine, in July 1608 (figures 4, 5). The legends describe the “Musicians of the Chamber” as “fourteen in number, voices as well as lutes, chitarronne and Spanish viols.”⁹ This instrument is therefore a large viol, its five strings entirely consistent with the tunings for the viols provided in Philibert Jambe de Fer’s *Epitome musical des tons, sons et accords* (Lyons, 1556) and Mareschall’s *Porta Musices* (1589). In his *Harmonie Universelle* of 1636, Marin Mersenne (1588–1648) reports of bass viols “in which young pages can be hidden to sing the treble of several charming airs, while the player of the bass part sings the middle voice, in order to give a three-part concert, as Granier did before the Queen Marguerite,”¹⁰ and that “they can be made seven or eight feet tall [2.3 or 2.6 metres¹¹], provided one has arms large enough to play them, or can arrange to reach the positions on the fingerboard, and to handle the bow.”¹² An engraving by Abraham Bosse (1602–1676), *Mode Sous Dorien* (c1652)¹³ (figure 6) suggests the existence of such a large bass viol, although the allegorical subject perhaps casts doubt on the accuracy of the depiction. A less fanciful representation is the anonymous engraving after Louis Lichéry de Beurie *Lacord des nations par lemoien de la paix* gracing the royal almanach of 1679 (figure 7).¹⁴

⁵ François-Henri-Joseph Blaze, known as Castil-Blaze, defines *basse-contre* as the “name given historically in France to the bass voice that sang against the *basse-taille* or *concordant*, the only low voice admitted at the Opéra for solo roles. The *basse-contre* was reserved for the choirs.” (*Dictionnaire de musique moderne* [Paris, 1825], 1:54: *BASSE-CONTRE, nom que l’on donnait autrefois en France à la voix de basse, attendu qu’elle chantait contre la basse-taille ou concordant, seule voix grave admise à l’Opéra pour les rôles de récit. On réservait la basse-contre pour les chœurs.*)

⁶ François Desprez (fl1562–1565), *Comment le Prophete Ionas ayant esté trois iours & trois nuit au ventre de la Baleine en une extresme misere, eust recours en la grace & misericorde de Dieu: lequel il invocqua avec ferme esperance d’obtenir pardon de son peché, ce qui luy fut accordé. Et lors estant iecté de la Baleine sur le rivage de la mer, suyvât le commandement de Dieu, reprit son son chemin vers Ninive, ou il accomply la charge que Dieu luy avoit donée.* F-Pn, Estampes, Ed 5g Rés. fol., p. 57–59^v; Ea 25a fol., p. 54, 55, 59.

⁷ *Procession de Louise de Lorraine, femme de Henry III, allant du Louvre au Faubourg S^t Marceau pour poser la première Pierre de la N^{le} Maison dite Maison Chretienne Projettée, même commencée, en 1584*, pl. 11 (detail). F-Pn, Estampes, Rés. Pd-30-Fol.

⁸ Ian Woodfield, *The Early History of the Viol* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 204.

⁹ F-Pn, Estampes, Pe 52, engraving by Herman de Loye after Friedrich Brentel (1580–1651) and Claude de la Ruelle, *Pompe funèbre de Charles III Duc de Lorraine*, f. 7, 25, 26: *les Musiciens de la Chambre en nombre de quatorze personnes, tant voix que luthz, guittarrons & violes d’Espagne.*

¹⁰ Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie Universelle* (Paris, 1636; reprint Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1963), 4:192: *dans lesquelles on peut enfermer de jeunes Pages pour chanter le Dessus de plusieurs air ravissans, tandis que celui qui touche la Basse chante la Taille, afin de faire un concert à trois parties, comme faisoit Granier devant la Reyne Marguerite.*

¹¹ Bouillet, “Pieds,” in *Dictionnaire des sciences, des lettres et des arts* (Paris: Hachette, 1864), 1279.

¹² Mersenne, *Harmonie*, 4:192–193: *l’on puisse les faire de sept ou de huit pieds, si l’on a les bras assez grands pour en jouer, ou si l’on use de quelque artifice qui puisse suppléer le mouvement des doigts de la main gauche ou de celle qui tient l’archet.*

¹³ In Denis Gaultier, *La Rhétorique des Dieux* (Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett).

¹⁴ Paris, Musée de Louvre, Cabinet Rothschild, 26916LR.

2.4 A surviving specimen of these large viols might be the instrument (Paris, 1663) by Simon Bongard (Paris, 1644-?)¹⁵ (figure 8). Although currently set up as a four-string instrument, its form and details—flat/bevelled back, C-shaped sound holes, gamba corners—suggest an appurtenance to the viol family.

2.5 All of the preceding evidence would suggest the existence of a viol of a size commensurate with a double bass instrument. The theoretical works however provide no tuning for a double bass member of the consort. The lowest tuning provided for the viols in both Jambe de Fer's *Epitome musical* (1556) and Mareschall's *Porta Musices* (1589) is *E-A-d-g-c'*.¹⁶ The lowest tuning provided for the viols in Mersenne's *Harmonie universelle* (1636) is *D-G-c-e-a-d'* (the standard six-string tuning for a regular bass viol). A clue to this paradox is however provided by Jean Rousseau (1644–1700?), who reports in his *Traité de la Viole* (Paris, 1687) that the first viols played in France were very large.¹⁷ Before the development of wound strings, a string-length approaching that of today's double bass would have been necessary to obtain a satisfactory pitch from strings tuned in the eight-foot range. In spite of their human size, it is possible that the instruments discussed above may in fact be bass, not double bass, instruments. Therefore, the existence of a double bass member of the viol family in France cannot be confirmed. It is a different matter where the violin family is concerned.

Evidence for a Double Bass Member of the Violin Family

2.6 The earliest surviving example of a human-size string instrument made in France, by Wilhelm Azan (Aix-en-Provence, 1605)¹⁸ (figure 9), exhibits all those characteristics associated with the violin family: a rounded back, flared corners, and f-shaped sound holes. As discussed above, size in itself is not sufficient to qualify an instrument as a double bass. However, the existence of this specimen makes even more compelling the earliest tuning that can be considered that of a double bass in France. This is provided in 1636 by Marin Mersenne in his description of the *violin* family. According to Mersenne, to the five sections or parts into which the family was divided—*dessus*, *haute-contre*, *taille*, *quinte* and *basse*—“one could add a sixth part one fifth lower for a second bass, in the manner of Lorraine.”¹⁹ If the four-string *basse de violon* or bass violin was tuned in ascending

¹⁵ Paris, Musée des Arts et Métiers, Inv. 03690-0001. This instrument has never been the subject of a serious organological study. According to the museum's *Catalogue des collections* (1905), 2:75, it entered the collection prior to 1849. In 1942, it underwent “very important and complete repairs” (*Réparation très importante et complète*) by the luthier Emile-Marcel Français (1894–1984), who described it as a “very interesting and exceedingly rare instrument” (*Instrument très intéressant et excessivement rare*) in his estimate of 3 December 1941 (Inv. 1600). Français offered the museum the choice of reconditioning the instrument so that it might be played, or restoring it in the spirit of its original construction with an eye to preserving the original period character. In light of its documentary value, his own preference was that it be left in its original state. (Inv. 1600, letter from Français to Loiseau, Paris, 2 December 1941: *Je vous prierais seulement de faire savoir si vous désirez que ces instruments soient remis en état pour être joués ou simplement s'ils doivent être restaurés dans l'esprit où ils ont été construits, en leur conservant leur caractère original de leur époque. / Personnellement j'estime que ces instruments n'étant pas destinés à un usage courant et offrant surtout un intérêt documentaire, il serait préférable de les remonter en les laissant autant que possible dans l'état où ils ont été créés.*) Curiously, when informing the curator of the completion of the repairs, he referred to it as a “double bass viol.” (Inv. 1600, letter from Français to Loiseau, Paris, 12 June 1942: *J'ai l'honneur de vous informer que la contrebasse de viole ainsi que la viole de gambe sont maintenant réparées et que vous pouvez les faire reprendre.*) My thanks to Véronique Minot of the Musée des Arts et Métiers for providing the documents cited in this note and for allowing me to inspect the instrument.)

¹⁶ Woodfield, op. cit., 200.

¹⁷ Jean Rousseau, *Traité de la Viole* (Paris, 1687), 19: *Les premières Violes don't on a joiué en France estoient à cinq chordes & fort grandes, leur usage estoit d'accompagner [...].*

¹⁸ Paris, Musée de la Musique, E.979.2.63.

¹⁹ Mersenne, *Harmonie*, 4:179: *l'on pourrait ajouter une sixième partie une quinte plus bas pour une seconde basse, à la façon de Lorraine.*

fifths beginning on *B'-flat*, the tuning of this second *basse* would be *E'-flat–B'-flat–F–c*: its range would thus correspond to that of our modern double bass. Apparently it was not merely a matter of restringing the same instrument: the existence of a separate instrument is suggested by an estate inventory of 6 June 1656, which includes a “*basse de violon fasson de Lorraine*”²⁰ (although this could refer equally to its place of manufacture). Two engravings, *Le Triomphe du bonheur et de la gloire de la France* (1667)²¹ (figure 10) and *Le Concert royal des Muses* (1671)²² (figure 11), also suggest the existence of very large four-string instruments in seventeenth-century France.

2.7 Regrettably, although he provides the tuning, Mersenne does not specify the size of this second bass, a fact that suggests that he may not have even seen the instrument. Nor does Mersenne specify exactly how this second bass was employed, whether it performed a separate part or doubled the notated bass line at the octave, a fact that suggests that the instrument might not have been in use outside of the Lorraine region, then part of Germany. No second, independent bass part is to be found in the surviving repertoire of the official string orchestra of the kings of France since the beginning of the seventeenth century, the *Vingt-quatre Violons* (Four-and-Twenty Violins), also known as the *Grande Bande*: the rare works composed in six parts require two *dessus* but never two *basses*.²³ (The *Grande Bande* consisted of 6 *dessus*, 4 *hautes-contre*, 4 *tailles*, 4 *quintes* and 6 *basses*; by the time of Louis XIV’s death in 1715, this internal disposition was modified, increasing the number of *basses* to 7.²⁴) The testimony of Georg Muffat (1653–1704), who studied with Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687) and others in Paris from 1663 to 1669, argues against the use of an instrument doubling the bass line at the octave in this formation. In the preface to his *Florilegium secundum*, he suggests doubling the “small French bass” by “the double bass of the Italians, which is the violone of the Germans, the performance will be more majestic even though until the present the French have not used it at all in ballet music.”²⁵ This is corroborated by a member of the Papal legation visiting the court in July 1664, who notes only the presence of “*violoni, viole, violini e ciuffoli et tamburetti*,”²⁶ and by another Italian visiting Lyon in October 1664 who describes a concert of 40 to 50 *violini, viola* and *violoni*.²⁷ Evidence points to the use of the term *violone* during

²⁰ *F-Pan*, Minutier central, ét. LIV liasse 575, 6 June 1656.

²¹ Paris, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet Rothschild, 26818 LR.

²² *F-Pn*, Estampes, collection Hennin, t. 50, no. 4575.

²³ *F-Pn*, Music, Vm. Micr. 534 (1), collection Philidor. Those works that do include two bass clefs (nos. XVIII–XXVIII) are intended for wind instruments, as the absence of treble clefs and some of the titles suggest: *Pavane pour les hautbois*, *Pavane la Petite Guain fait pour les cornets en 1601*, *Concert des grands hautbois (pour les chevaliers faits par Henry III)*, *Ballet à cheval pour le grand carrousel à la Place Royale au mariage de Louis XIII (joué par les grands hautbois)*. The works transcribed by Jules Ecorcheville, *Vingt Suites d’Orchestre du XVII^e Siècle français* (Paris: L. Marcel Fortin & Cie, 1906), are in four and five parts, but never six.

²⁴ Bernard Bardet, “Violons, Vingt-quatre,” Marcelle Benoît, ed., *Dictionnaire de la Musique en France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 1992), 724–728.

²⁵ Georg Muffat, *Florilegium secundum* (Passau, 1693); ed. in *Denkmaler der Tonkunst in Österreich* 4, 48: *Pour bien jouer la basse, il faut se servir d’une petite basse à la française [...] de laquelle on ne saurait se passer sans estropier la vraie proportion de l’harmonie. On la pourra doubler, selon le nombre de la bande qui, étant grande, en y mêlant aussi la double basse ou contre-basse des Italiens, qui est le violone des Allemands, le concert n’en sera que plus majestueux quoique jusqu’ici les Français ne s’en soient encore point servi aux airs de Ballets*. Henri Prunières (*L’Opéra italien en France avant Lulli* [Paris: Champion, 1913], 80) specifies that it was the custom to call “ballets” the sung spectacles performed during carnival ([on] *avait coutume de nommer ballets les spectacles lyriques qui se donnaient au carnaval*).

²⁶ Jean Lionnet, “Les événements musicaux de la légation du Cardinal Flavio Chigi en France, été 1664,” *Studi Musicali* 25/1-2 (1996):127–153, at 147–148.

²⁷ Sebastiano Locatelli, *Viaggio di Francia: costumi e qualità di quei paesi, 1664–1665* (Moncalieri: Centro interuniversitario di ricerca sul “Viaggio in Italia,” 1990), 169: *Le musiche in questo paese non le so dire, che in una radunanza di sonatori da violini, viola e violoni in numero di 40 o 50 che a coro pieno suonano; tirano grandi arcate a tempo, e sempre pare invitino a battaglia*. My thanks to Jérôme de La Gorce for drawing both of these works to my attention.

this period in Italy, and in Rome in particular, to denote the instrument known in France as the *basse de violon*.²⁸

2.8 The iconographic evidence as well suggests the use of only one type of *basse de violon*, with a waist-high body and long neck that could be played seated or standing. Examples are provided by the c1580 anonymous painting *Bal à la cour des Valois* (figure 12),²⁹ Abraham Bosse's fresco *la sérénade* (figure 13),³⁰ and the engravings by Israël Silvestre³¹ (1621–1691) and Jean Le Pautre³² (1618–1682) (figure 14) of the royal entertainments at Versailles in 1664 and 1674 respectively.³³

2.9 Finally, it should also be considered that the composition of the *Vingt-quatre Violons* was a function of its repertoire: as French music of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was composed in the traditional polyphonic style, a style defined by the equality of all voices, reinforcing the bass line by doubling it at the octave would have been unidiomatic since this would allow the part undue prominence, distorting the texture.

La Grosse Basse: A Double Bass?

2.10 Beginning in 1692, the royal almanachs publish the names of the “*Symphonistes de la Musique de la Chappelle*” or musicians of the French Chapel Royal. Under the rubric “*Basses de Violon, & autres*,” Pierre Chabanceau de La Barre (1634–1710), who accumulated many charges during his career,³⁴ is described as playing both “*la grosse basse*” and the theorbo, distinct from his two

²⁸ See Stephan Bonta, “From Violone to Violoncello: A Question of Strings?,” *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* 3 (1977): 64–99, and Bonta, “Terminology for the Bass Violin in Seventeenth-Century Italy,” *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* 5 (1979): 5–42.

²⁹ Rennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts.

³⁰ Boissy-Saint-Léger, Château de Grosbois.

³¹ Israël Silvestre, *Première Journée*, in *Les Plaisirs de l'Isle enchantée, ou Les Festes, et divertissements du Roy, à Versailles, divisez en trois journées, et commencez le 7^{me} jour de may, de l'année 1664*. Example in *F-Pn*, Estampes, Pd 76 fol.

³² See Neal Zaslaw, “Lully's Orchestra,” in *Actes du Colloque Lully* (Laaber, 1990), 539–575.

³³ Considering that these are instruments of human size played in a standing position, should these be classified as double basses rather than *basses de violon*? Common to all the illustrations, the bodies of the instruments are waist high and rest on the ground. This might lead one to conclude that these are double basses, but there is one further aspect to consider, and that has never been addressed, to my knowledge, in organological studies: the evolution of human physiology. Anybody who has visited old castles or replicas of historic sailing vessels, or has seen surviving examples of clothing from centuries past, has undoubtedly noticed that human beings were on average *smaller* than is the norm today. In consequence, the ergonomic relationship between the performer and instruments such as the violoncello, the *basse de violon*, the bass viol, and the double bass, must have given rise to considerations different from those with which today's musicians are confronted. Conceivably, a large *basse de violon* could arrive at the height of an average seventeenth-century man's waist, while “double” basses, as the name implies, were proportioned accordingly: see for example Giovanni Paolo Pannini's (1691–1765) *Fête musical donnée par le Cardinal de La Rochefoucauld au Théâtre Argentina de Rome le 15 juillet 1747 à l'occasion du mariage du Dauphin de France, Louis, fils de Louis XV avec Marie-Josèphe de Saxe* (Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. 414) (figure 15). I wonder how many violoncellos and *basses de violon* in iconography have been erroneously labeled “double bass” because of the size of the player in relation to the instrument depicted; and whether “giant” double basses were in fact any more outsized than some instruments that have come down to us. Paul Brun, (*A New History of the Double Bass* [Villeneuve d'Ascq: Paul Brun Productions, 2000], 176) cites the 1787 double bass by William Forster II as one example of “giant instruments.” A colleague is the current owner of this instrument, and I myself have played it on one occasion. Although large by today's standards, it is by no means unwieldy, but considering the average height of humans in the eighteenth century, it must certainly have seemed “giant” to its first players!

³⁴ Marcelle Benoît, *Versailles et les musiciens du Roi 1661–1733. – Etude institutionnelle et sociale* (Paris: Picard, 1971), 119: “He appears on the rosters of the Queen's Household as spinet player, then bass viol player; on the rosters of the King's Household as lute player of the Chamber; on the rosters of the company of Swiss Guards as a French exempt; on the rosters of the Duchesse de Bourgogne's Household as a valet.” (*On le relève sur les Etats des la Maison de la reine comme joueur d'épinette, puis joueur de basse de viole avec ses deux charges semestrielles; sur les Etats de la*

colleagues who played simply the *basse de violon*.³⁵ Chabanceau de La Barre's testament unfortunately contains no mention of his worldly possessions that might provide a clue as to the exact nature of this *grosse basse*.³⁶ On the basis of posterior dictionary entries³⁷ this nomenclature has been interpreted to denote the double bass, and in consequence proof of its use at the French court.³⁸ Two examples support this conclusion: Pascal Colasse's (1649–1709) *Polixène et Pirrhus*, created at the Opéra on 21 October 1706, includes the indication "*La grosse basse*" in the air "*Va, dangereux Ulysse*" (II, 3) (figure 16). This in all likelihood denotes the double bass since earlier that year the first conclusive evidence appears for the use of the instrument, in *Alcyone* by Marin Marais (1656–1728), created on 18 February 1706 (figure 17). In the printed score of *Télégone* (1725) by Louis Lacoste (c1675–c1753) a part designated for "*basson et grosse Basse*" (I, 3) (figure 18) definitely means double bass since the same passage is marked "*contrebasse*" in the original performance material (figure 19). However, other clues cast doubt on this interpretation in the case of Pierre Chabanceau de La Barre.

2.11 First is the account of François Ragueneau, which suggests that the double bass still remained unfamiliar to French audiences at the end of the seventeenth century. Ragueneau, who attended concerts in Rome in 1697, reported that the Italian

basses de violon are once again as large as ours; and all those joined together, in our Opéra, do not produce as much sound as two of these large basses in the operas of Italy; it is assuredly an instrument that we lack in France, these deep basses which, for the Italians, form an admirable base upon which the entire performance is supported; it is a sure foundation, all the more solid as it is deeper and lower; it is a full, mellow sound that fills the air with an agreeable harmony in a sphere of activity reaching the uttermost bounds of the most capacious halls; the air carries the sound of their orchestras right up to the highest vaulting in

Maison du roi comme joueur de luth de la Chambre; sur les Etats de la Compagnie des Cent-Suisses, à titre d'exempt français; sur les Etats de la Maison de la duchesse de Bourgogne, en tant que valet de chambre.)

³⁵ N. Besogne, *L'Etat de la France où l'on voit tous les princes, ducs et pairs, maréchaux de France, et autres officiers de la couronne: les évêques, les chevaliers des ordres, etc. Ensemble les noms des officiers de la maison du roi, et le quartier de leur service; avec leurs gages et privilèges, et l'explication des fonctions de leurs charges. Comme aussi des officiers des maisons royales, de la reine et de Monsieur, etc. Avec plusieurs traités particuliers. Le tout enrichi d'un grand nombre de figures, et dédié au roi* (Paris: G. de Luyne, 1692), 1: 49–50:

Symphonistes de la Musique de la Chappelle, tous païés sur la Cassette.

Basses de Violon, & autres. Messieurs,

Pierre Chabanceau de la Barre: aussi Valet de Chambre de Madame la Dauphine, joue de la grosse basse ou du Théorbe. 1663

Prosper Charlot, aussi Somier de la Fruiterie de Madame la Dauphine. 1661.

Jean Batiste la Fontaine. 1680.

³⁶ Versailles, Archives départementales des Yvelines, 3E 44/32, 29 mars 1710.

³⁷ Paul Brun, *A New History of the Double Bass*, (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Paul Brun Productions, 2000), 24, cites the *Dictionnaire de L'Académie Française* (1762): "*Contrebasse, s.f. Grosse basse de violon sur laquelle on joue ordinairement la partie de la basse une octave plus bas que sur la Basse de violon commune.*" I suggest that in this context, the term is used evocatively, in the same way one might define a double bass as "a big cello" or "a big violin."

³⁸ Paul Brun, *Histoire des contrebasses à cordes* (Paris: La Flûte de Pan, 1982), 77, has interpreted *la grosse basse* to mean a double bass (*A l'occasion de la réorganisation de l'orchestre de la Chapelle du roi Louis XIV, deux ans après la mort de Mazarin, on recruta un artiste chargé de jouer de la contrebasse dans cette formation*), and cites as proof the painting by Puget (78–79: *Un tableau de François Puget daté de 1687 nous montre un contrebassiste de la cour en train d'accorder son instrument*) (see figure 20). Mary Cyr ("*Basses and basse continue* in the orchestra of the Paris Opéra 1700–1764," *Early Music* 10/2 [April 1982]: 155–170, at 158), citing the same painting, argues on the contrary that the instrument depicted by Puget is "a five-string cello tuned [...] C–G–d–a–d'," and supports her claim with other iconographical evidence in seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish painting. However, in seeking to approximate the *basse de violon* to the double bass or violoncello—just as the *haute-contre*, *taille*, and *quinte* are reduced to simple viola parts—we might be distorting the exact nature of the instrument, which might have been more versatile, as well as its initial function in the *Vingt-quatre violons*.

churches, and up to the sky in the open; as for those who play these instruments, we have very few people who approach them in France.³⁹

2.12 Judging from the equivalency in Ragueneau's use of the term *basse de violon*, this was the largest bass instrument in use in France at the time. As further proof, the double bass is conspicuously absent from Plate III of Joseph Sauveur's *Principes d'acoustique et de musique* (Paris, 1701), which indicates only the tunings of the *Basse de violon* (B'-flat-F-c-g; Sauveur's indication of A' as the lowest string is obviously an error), the *Basse des Italiens* (namely the violoncello, tuned C-G-d-a, or C-G-d-a-d' "according to some" [*selon quelques uns*]) and the seven-string *Basse de viole* (A'-D-G-c-e-a-d').

2.13 In light of this evidence, it is debatable whether at Versailles in 1692, the "grosse basse" denotes a sixteen-foot doubling instrument or, as Jürgen Eppelsheim has suggested, perhaps distinguishes a new model of *basse de violon*.⁴⁰ Several clues support this hypothesis.

2.14 In contrast to the long-necked instruments employed at the beginning of the reign of Louis XIV, a painting by François Puget (1651–1707), *Réunion de musiciens* (c.1687) (figure 20),⁴¹ depicts a five-string *basse de violon* with a short neck—approximately the same dimension as that of the bass viol in the lower left corner—and an apparently large body. The height of the upper bouts suggests a large-bodied instrument, but this might be due to an endpin such as appears on the *basse de violon* decorating the south side of the organ case (1708–1710) of the chapel at Versailles.⁴² Similar instruments are also depicted on an organ case at La Chaise-Dieu, France, attributed to Antoine Coysevox (1640–1720) (figure 21), and in a painting by Jan Joseph Horemans (1682–1759), *Le galant concert* (figure 22).⁴³ A surviving specimen might be the five-string *violon basse* by Hans Krouchdaler (Oberhalm, Switzerland, c.1652–after 1699) dating from 1694 (figure 23).⁴⁴ In this instance, the term "la grosse basse" might have been used to distinguish one model from the other.

³⁹ François Ragueneau, *Parallèle des Italiens et des Français en ce qui regarde la musique et les opéras* (Paris, 1702; reprint Geneva: Minkoff, 1976), 105–107: [...] leurs Basses de violon sont une fois plus grosses que les nôtres ; & toutes celles qu'on joint ensemble, dans nos Opéra, ne font point un bourdonnement aussi fort, que le font deux de ces grosses Basse, aux Opéra d'Italie ; c'est assurément un Instrument qui nous manque en France, que ces Basses d'un creux qui fait, chez les Italiens, une Baze admirable sur laquelle tout le Concert est comme soutenu; c'est un fondement seur & d'autant plus solide, qu'il est plus bas & plus profond ; c'est un son nourri & moëlleux qui remplit l'air d'une harmonie agréable dans une Sphère d'activité qui s'étend jusqu'aux extrémités des plus vastes lieux ; le son de leurs symphonies est porté par l'air jusqu'aux voûtes dans les Eglises ; & jusqu'au Ciel dans les lieux à découvert; Et pour ceux qui touchent ces Instrumens, nous n'avons que tres-peu de gens qui en approchent en France.

⁴⁰ Jürgen Eppelsheim, *Das Orchester in den Werken Jean-Baptiste Lullys* (Tutzing: Schneider 1961), 59: Es liegt deshalb näher, ein ähnliches Verhältnis zwischen des „grosse basse de violon“ des Jahres 1708 und der normalen basse de violon anzunehmen, wie es zwischen basse de violon und violoncelle vorliegt.

⁴¹ Paris, Musée du Louvre, INV. 7346. Although a gift of the artist to Louis XIV, the painting was likely executed in Marseille, and in consequence, the model for the *basse de violon* player may not have been a court musician. Cf. Lucienne Colliard, "Un 'Tableau de musique' de François Puget," *Gazette des beaux-arts* (November 1965):283–292, at 292: Il est donc vraisemblable [...] que ce tableau fut exécuté à Marseille, puis apporté à Versailles au moment où Pierre Puget rejoignant son fils essayait d'obtenir la confirmation d'une commande que les édiles locaux [...] lui refusaient.

⁴² Pierre de Nolhac, *La chapelle royale de Versailles (1698–1710)* (Versailles: A. Bourdier, n.d.), plate 157.

⁴³ Even if the body of the instrument is indeed large in the painting by Jan Joseph Horemans, the size of the neck suggests a string length that would correspond approximately with that of a *basse de violon*.

⁴⁴ Brussels, Musée des instruments de musique, Inv. M1442. This instrument and a number of others from the same school are described in detail in Olga Adelman, and Annette Otterstedt, *Die Alemannische Schule: Geigenbau des 17. Jahrhunderts im südlichen Schwarzwald und in der Schweiz*, (Berlin: Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung, 1997).

2.15 Then again, considering Sauveur's table, the term might have been used to distinguish the French four-string *basse de violon* from the smaller four- or five-string "*Basse des Italiens*" or violoncello, as Michel Corrette (1707–1795) did in his violoncello method of 1741.⁴⁵

2.16 Whatever their form, two different types of *basse de violon* apparently coexisted at the French court as late as 1714. Coincidentally, the evidence for this also provides the most compelling case against the use of the double bass at the court of Louis XIV. In 1714, Jean-Baptiste Matho (1663–1746), *maître de chant de la musique de la Dauphine* (singing master of the Dauphine's musical corps), scored a passage in his first and only opera, *Arion*, for "*4 Basses de violons à 4 cordes*" and "*4 Basses de violons à 5 cordes*," in addition to "*basses de violle*" and "*Bassons*," instruments that were obviously familiar to him at the court (figure 24).⁴⁶ However, when the time came for rehearsals at the Opéra in Paris, Matho apparently modified this instrumentation for the Opéra's orchestra. On his manuscript (figure 25), the part for the *Basses de violons à 5 cordes* is assigned to "*les huit basses de violon*," the part for the *Basses de violons à 4 cordes* to "*tous les bassons*," and the part for the *Bassons*, to instruments that doubled the bass line at the octave but the name of which Matho apparently did not know, despite its appearance in print in at least five previous works since 1706. These he called not *contrebasses*, but contrived the term "*basses de violons à l'octave*,"⁴⁷ which are logically double basses since the name clearly infers octave transposition and the part is designated for the musician credited with introducing the instrument to the Opéra, Michel Pignolet de Montéclair (see below). That Matho did not include the double bass in his original scoring, and then coined a new name to describe its function when adding it, suggests that it was not known at court. This conclusion is also reflected in the decoration of the musicians' gallery of the chapel at Versailles, constructed between 1698 and 1710: the trophies between the columns,⁴⁸ and the ceiling painting above the organ, *Le concert céleste* (1708–1710) by Louis Boullogne (1654–1733),⁴⁹ depict only six- and seven-string bass viols and four-string *basses de violon* with short necks; the juxtaposition of these with serpents, harps and lutes suggest that the dimensions have been accurately evoked.

2.17 Further iconographic evidence of the period suggests that the distinction between the *basse de violon* and the *grosse basse* might not have been a question of size, register, or function, but of the number of strings. Two engravings by Martin Engelbrecht (1684–1756), dating from the beginning

⁴⁵ Michel Corrette, *Méthode théorique et pratique pour apprendre en peu de tems le violoncelle dans sa perfection* (Paris, 1741; reprint Geneva: Minkoff, 1972), preface, A: *Depuis environ vingt cinq ou trente ans, on a quitté la grosse basse de Violon montée en Sol pour le Violoncelle des Italiens [...] avant que le Violoncelle fût inventé, les grosses basses ne jouoient guere que dans les Musiques a grand chœur [...];* Ibid., C: *Je donne aussi une autre position qui derive des anciennes basses montées en sol, que quelques uns ont appliquez au Violoncelle, ayans quitté la grosse basse de Violon [...]*

⁴⁶ *F-Po*, A.88b, p. 136.

⁴⁷ *F-Po*, A.88b, p. 135. These emendations are apparently in the hand of the Opéra's copyist Brice Lallemand (1684/5–c1754–1756) who likely transcribed Matho's instructions, since the composers themselves often directed the performances of their works at this time (see Lois Rosow, "Lallemand and Durand: Two Eighteenth-Century Copyists at the Paris Opéra," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 33 [1980]:142–163). The term *basses de violons à l'octave*, never encountered elsewhere, has occasioned conjecture as to what instrument is intended. In 1878, Théodore de Lajarte literally interpreted this as "an early attempt by the *basses de violon* to produce a double bass effect. This note proves that the double bass [...] had still not been introduced in 1714 by Montéclair, that it was effectively two years later, in his opera *Les Festes de l'été*, that the famous bassist used for the first time this instrument which is indispensable to every modern orchestra" (Théodore de Lajarte, *Bibliothèque musicale de l'Opéra* [Paris, 1878; reprint Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1969], 1: 82: *Voici donc un premier essai d'effet de contre-basse rendu par les basses de violon. Cette note nous prouve bien que la contre-basse [...] n'avait pas encore été introduite en 1714 par Montéclair; que c'est bien deux ans après, dans son opera des Festes de l'été, que le célèbre bassiste se servit pour la première fois de cet instrument, dont aucun orchestre moderne ne pourrait se passer*). It will be demonstrated that Lajarte is in error concerning the date that the double bass was first employed.

⁴⁸ Nollhac, *La chapelle royale*, plates 135, 136.

⁴⁹ Nollhac, *La chapelle royale*, plate 157.

of the eighteenth century, illustrate two different *basses* of roughly the same dimensions and pattern: a four-string instrument labelled “*Baß oder Violoncello*” (figure 26) and a six-string instrument labeled “*Violon oder Basso-grosso*” (figure 27).⁵⁰ If the Italian term *violoncello* was rendered *violoncelle* in French, *basso grosso* must have been translated as *grosse basse*. Thus, if the size of the instruments is accurately depicted, the *grosse basse* might have denoted a small six-string violone tuned *G'–C–F–A–d–g* or *D'–G'–C–E–A–d*, although such a tuning is equally not mentioned in Sauveur’s table, though it is commonly described by theorists of other nationalities at that time period.⁵¹ As it can be seen, then, the term *la grosse basse* can be interpreted to denote several different instruments: the double bass, but also the four- or five-string *basse de violon* and possibly the six-string violone. If, as has been demonstrated, the meaning of the term *violone* evolved to denote different instruments, it is possible that the meaning of the term *grosse basse* evolved as well.

2.18 Ultimately, with regards to register, the use of sixteen-foot doubling in the music performed at the court of Louis XIV (1638–1715) can be neither ruled out nor confirmed. But most researchers dedicated to reconstructing Lully’s orchestra are categorical in their assertion: there was no sixteen-foot doubling.⁵² It is not before 1745, during the reign of Louis XV, that conclusive evidence is found for the use of the double bass at the French court.⁵³ Before that date, we must turn to another royal institution for answers: the *Académie royale de musique*, commonly known as the Opéra.

The Double Bass in France After 1700

The *Académie royale de musique* or Opéra

3.1 Italian opera was first imported into France by Cardinal Jules Mazarin (1602–1661), Prime Minister from 1642 until his death, who organized a performance of Francesco Saccati’s *La Finta Pazza* (1641) at the *Théâtre du Petit Bourbon* in Paris in December of 1645. In spite of repeated attempts by Mazarin to acclimate it in France,⁵⁴ French audiences greeted the new art form with incomprehension until Pierre Perrin (1625–1675) recognized the potential of adapting it to local tastes. He collaborated with the musician Robert Cambert (c1628–1677) to produce the first French opera, *La Pastorale d’Issy*, in 1659. On 28 June 1669, Perrin obtained a royal privilege, valid for twelve years, to establish throughout the kingdom, “Opera Academies performing in French on the model of those of Italy” (*Académies d’Opéra ou représentation en langue française, sur le pied de celles d’Italie*). The *Académie de Paris* was inaugurated with *Pomone* in 1671. Although the venture was a success, Perrin himself was the victim of the duplicity of his unscrupulous associates, and imprisoned for the debts he personally contracted, was forced to sell his privilege to Jean-Baptiste Lully, an act confirmed by letters patent issued on 13 March 1672. With the benefit of royal patronage, the establishment was reborn as the *Académie royale de musique*, commonly called the Opéra.

Michel Pignolet de Montéclair (1667–1737): The First Double Bass Player

⁵⁰ Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Union centrale des arts décoratifs, Reserve Metiers Engelbrecht F-V.

⁵¹ This term might also have been derived from—or engendered—the English “great bass vyall,” which is thought to be a G-violone: Jerome Lanier and Alfonso Ferrabosco II provided two such instruments to the English court in 1624 and 1626 respectively. See Joëlle Morton, “The Early History and Use of the G Violone,” *Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society of America* 36 (1999):40–66, at 57–60.

⁵² See Jérôme de La Gorce, “Some Notes on Lully’s Orchestra”, in John Hajdu Heyer (ed.), *Jean-Baptiste Lully and the Music of the French Baroque* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 99–112, and Neal Zaslaw, “Lully’s Orchestra,” in *Actes du Colloque Lully* (Laaber, 1990), 539–575.

⁵³ I will address the history of the double bass at the French court in a future article.

⁵⁴ Francesco Cavalli’s *Egisto* in February 1646; the commission of Luigi Rossi’s *Orfeo*, created on 2 March 1647; Caprioli’s *Le Nozze di Peleo e di Teti* in 1654; Cavalli’s *Xerse* for the marriage of Louis XIV in 1660, substituting for the official commission, *Ercole amante*, created on 7 February 1662, after Mazarin’s death.

3.2 According to a contemporary witness, Evrard Titon du Tillet (1677–1762), it was a member of the Opéra, Michel Pignolet de Montéclair (1667–1737) who, around 1700, “was the first there to play the double bass, an instrument that makes such a great effect in the choruses and in the airs of magicians, demons, and storms.”⁵⁵ According to the title page of Montéclair’s own *Nouvelle méthode pour apprendre la musique* (1709), he served as music director of the Prince of Vaudémont in Italy⁵⁶ before entering the Opéra as a performer on the *basse de violon*, probably in 1699.⁵⁷ He seems to have brought an old Neapolitan double bass back with him from Italy:⁵⁸ thus, as was the case with so many other fields of human endeavour, the double bass may have been one more phenomenon imported into France from Italy.

3.3 From its inception, the orchestra of the Opéra was divided into the *petit chœur* (“small choir”) or continuo, and the *grand chœur* (“great choir”) or *ripieno*,⁵⁹ a distinction that would be observed until approximately 1792. Montéclair is listed as a member of the *petit chœur* in a legal document of 1704, for a salary of 400 *livres*;⁶⁰ in a roster of 1713, for 600 *livres*;⁶¹ in a list of 1719 as one of the two *basse de violon* players;⁶² and in an inventory of 1738, for a salary of 800 *livres*.⁶³ The simple fact that it was a member of the *petit chœur* who first played a double bass in his possession might account for the inclusion of the instrument in the continuo group, even after Montéclair’s retirement on 1 July 1737.⁶⁴

The Double Bass in French Opera 1701–1737

Gatti’s *Scylla*

⁵⁵ Evrard Titon du Tillet, *Suite du Parnasse François jusqu’en 1743* (Paris: J. B. Coignard Fils, n.d.), 696–697: *Montclair se fit connoître à Paris vers l’an 1700. [I]l entra dans l’Orchestre de l’Opéra, où il fut le premier qui y joua de la Contrebasse, Instrument qui fait un si grand effet dans les Chœurs & dans les Airs de Magiciens, de Démon & dans ceux de Tempête.*

⁵⁶ *Nouvelle méthode pour apprendre la musique Par M^r Monteclair de l’Académie Royale de Musique et cy-devant Maître de la Musique de Monseig^r le Prince de Vaudémont en Italie* (Paris, 1709).

⁵⁷ *F-Po*, Rés. 516, *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire de l’Académie Royale de Musique vulgairement l’Opéra depuis son établissement en 1699—jusqu’en l’année 1758*, p. 384: “Montéclair — pour la contrebasse, Entré à l’Opéra en l’année 169 aux appointements de 800^l.”

⁵⁸ *Annonces, affiches et avis divers*, 23 September 1756, 595: *Ventes [...] D’INSTRUMENTS de Musique, sçavoir très-bonne Contre-basse de Naples, fort ancienne laquelle a ci-devant appartenu à M. Monteclair, avec un Etui bien conditionné [...] (après le décès de M. Marchand, Ordinaire de l’Académie Royale de Musique).*

⁵⁹ *F-Pn*, Imprimés, Yf. 328, Pierre Perrin, *Avant-propos* appended to the *Lettres patentes du Roy pour établir, par tout le Royaume, des Academies d’OPERA, ou Representations en Musique en Langue Française, sur le pied de celles d’Italie*, 14: “there are more excellent musicians in Paris than in all of Italy [...] these are not Opera or theatre music decorations, neither for the great nor for the small choir.” ([...] *il y a plus d’excellents Symphonistes dans Paris qu’il ny en a dans toute l’Italie [...] ce ne sont point des meubles d’Opera ou de musique de theatre, ny pour le grand ny pour le petit chœur.*)

⁶⁰ *F-Pan*, Minutier central, ét. LXXV, 466, 24 septembre 1704, *Traicté au Sujet de la regie et produit de l’Opéra*. Cf Jérôme de La Gorce, “L’Académie Royale de Musique en 1704, d’après des documents inédits conservés dans les archives notariales,” *Revue de Musicologie* 65/2 (1979):160–191, at 178.

⁶¹ *F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 1, I, *Privilege accordé, Arrests Rendus Et Reglement fait par Sa Majesté pour L’academie royale de Musique* [1713], f. 21^r. Cf La Gorce, “L’Académie Royale,” 160–191, at 178.

⁶² Nicolas Boindin, *Lettres historiques sur tous les spectacles de Paris* (Paris, 1719), 115.

⁶³ *B-Bk*, MS II 4119, *Académie Royale de Musique, Vulgairement l’Opéra*, f. 157^r; *F-Po*, Opéra. Arch. 18 [20, *Detail de la régie actuel de l’Académie Royale de Musique avec un dénombrement de tout ce qui fait la recette et la dépense de ce spectacle en 1738*, f. 63. Brun (*A New History of the Double Bass*, 47) erroneously attributes this figure to be his initial salary, and indicative of his merit. It is more likely a reflection of Montéclair’s seniority: Caraffè père, a violinist in the *grand chœur* who was also admitted ca. 1699, earned the same amount at this date.

⁶⁴ *B-Bk*, MS II 4119, f. 157^r; *F-Po*, Opéra. Arch. 18 [20, f. 63.

4.1 Legend has it that Montéclair played the double bass only on Fridays, but this is unsubstantiated.⁶⁵ It does however appear that Montéclair did not play the instrument constantly, rather only at certain moments during the show for special effect. It might have been employed as early as 1701 in *Scylla* by Jean Theobaldo di Gatti, known as Théobalde (c1650–1727): in the fourth act, a “*Concert de Basses*” accompanies Ismène’s invocation of the Eumenides, “*Discorde affreuse*” (figure 28). This passage could be performed conceivably by three bass viols or *basses de violon*, or even a double bass and two other 8-foot instruments.⁶⁶ For the revival of 1732, Monteclair presumably performed the lowest part on the double bass along with four *basses de violon*, while six *basses de violon* performed the middle part and two bassoons executed the top stave.⁶⁷ This hypothesis is all the more plausible when one considers that two other scenes in which the double bass is specified also involve the Eumenides: the chorus “*Ordonne, nous obéissons*” (III, 5) in Marin Marais’ *Sémélé* (1709), and scenes 6 through 8 of act III in *Pirrhhus* (1730) by Jean-Nicolas Pancrace Royer (1705–1755). The association of the double bass with these underworld creatures can almost be considered a convention in early French opera for which “*Discorde affreuse*” might well have been the precedent. However, it seems more likely that the double bass was employed not in the fourth but third act of *Scylla*, for this contains all those scenes described by Titon du Tillet: *Entrée des magiciens*, *Entrée des esprits infernaux*, *Chœur de demons*, *Marche pour les magiciens*, and the chorus “*Le jour pâlit, la terre tremble, la foudre gronde dans les airs.*”

Campra’s *Tancredi*

4.2 It has been previously asserted that the double bass was first employed in *Tancredi* by André Campra (1660–1744), created on 7 November 1702.⁶⁸ The source of this claim is a manuscript passage inserted in the copy of the score used for performances, which includes a stave labeled “*contreb et alto*” (figure 29).⁶⁹ Before attributing the innovation to Campra, it should be considered that this inscription does not appear in the printed score and that the passage in question was most likely added at the time of a later revival, perhaps for a new series of performances beginning on 20 October 1707—at which time the opera underwent numerous modifications—but probably even later. *Tancredi* remained in the repertoire until 1764.⁷⁰ The clue that suggests a much later dating of this passage is the use of the word “*alto*” to designate the viola part: the term was rarely employed in France before 1750, long after the opera’s creation.

Jean-Sébastien de Brossard’s *Dictionnaire*

⁶⁵ François-Joseph Fétis appears to have instigated this canard in *La musique mise à la portée de tout le monde* (Paris, 1847), 166–167: “The first double bass was introduced to the Opéra in 1700; it was a musician named Montéclair who played it; in 1757, there was still only one of these instruments in the orchestra, and it was only used on Fridays, which was the great day for this theatre.” (*La première contrebasse fut introduite à l’Opéra en 1700; ce fut un musicien nommé Montéclair qui la jouait; en 1757, il n’y avait encore qu’un de ces instruments dans l’orchestre de ce théâtre, et l’on ne s’en servait que le vendredi, qui était le beau jour de ce spectacle.*) In his *Essai sur Montéclair* (Chaumont, 1879), p. 15, Emile Voillard conflates these independent claims to invent that Montéclair’s contract stipulated him to play on Fridays only: “*nous voyons notre contrebassiste passer un engagement aux termes duquel il ne devait se faire entendre qu’une fois par semaine, le Vendredi, qui était alors le beau jour de l’Opéra.*”

⁶⁶ Maurice Barthélémy, “Theobaldo di Gatti et la tragédie en musique ‘*Scylla*,”” “*Recherches*” sur la musique française classique IX (1969): 56–66. It was perhaps Gatti himself who played the double bass, since he is listed as one of the “*basses de violons à l’octave*” in Jean-Baptiste Matho’s *Arion* of 1714 (*F-Po*, A.88b, p. 135). Inserted in the part that bears his name, probably used for the revival of 1720, are two separate copies of the lowest stave (*F-Po*, MAT. 18 [220 (114)]).

⁶⁷ *F-Po*, MAT. 18 [220 (91, 93, 107, 109–112)].

⁶⁸ Sylvette Milliot, “Réflexions et recherches à propos de la Viole de gambe et du violoncelle,” “*Recherches*” sur la Musique française classique IV (1964): 180–240, at 225–226.

⁶⁹ *F-Po*, A60a, p. 295.

⁷⁰ Edmond Lemaître, “L’orchestre dans le théâtre lyrique français chez les continuateurs de Lully (1687–1715),” “*Recherches*” sur la musique française classique XXVI (1988–1990): 83–132, at 121.

4.3 Despite the incertitude surrounding the possible use of the double bass in these two works mentioned above, Jean-Sébastien de Brossard seems to confirm its employment during this period in his dictionary of 1703, where he defines the term *violone*:

It is our *basse de violon*, or more precisely, it is a *double basse*, of which the body and neck are approximately twice as large as those of the ordinary *basse de violon*; of which the strings are also approximately twice as long and thick as those of the *basse de violon*, and the sound is consequently an octave lower than that of ordinary *basses de violon*. It makes a very charming effect in the accompaniments and in the large choruses, and I am very surprised that it is not used more frequently in France.⁷¹

The ambivalence in Brossard's definition reflects the evolution in the use of the Italian term *violone*. As has been seen above, in the last half of the seventeenth century, it corresponds to the French *basse de violon*, but by the beginning of the eighteenth century it has migrated to the double bass.⁷² Here we have evidence of when it played: in accompaniments and in the choruses. Notice that Brossard does not mention its use in storms, because his dictionary predates the famous "Tempeste" in the fourth act of *Alcyone* (1706) by Marin Marais (1656–1728), in which a separate indication for the double bass appears in print for the first time (figure 17).

The Storm Scene

4.4 Although not the first example of the genre, Marais's "Tempeste" became a prototype—including the use of the double bass—for similar scenes in works that followed: the "bruit infernal" (IV, 3) in *Méléagre* (1709) by Jean-Baptiste Stück (1680–1755) (figure 30), the "Tempeste" (II, 5) in *Diomède* (1710) by Toussaint Bertin de La Doué (c1680–1743) (figure 31), the "orage" (III, 4) in *Arion* (1714) by Jean-Baptiste Matho,⁷³ the "Tempeste" (I, 3) in *Télégone* (1725) by Louis Lacoste (c1675–c1753) (figure 18), and the "bruit souterrain" (II, 3) in Royer's *Pirrhus* (1730) (figure 32). "Once its power and dramatic possibilities were recognized, the double bass also began to assume a role outside the opera house in smaller chamber works."⁷⁴ Louis-Nicolas Clérambault (1676–1749) made use of it in two "tempêtes" in his cantatas *Léandre et Héro* (1713) (figure 33) and *la Muse de l'Opéra* (1716) (figure 34), and François Bouvard (c1683–1760) included it in a "tempeste" in his *Léandre et Héro* (1729) (figure 35). Indeed, the evidence suggests that the double bass played a much greater role in eighteenth-century chamber music than is ascribed to it at present. Two paintings by Nicolas Lancret (1690–1743), *Das Konzert*⁷⁵ (figure 36) and *Concert chez Pierre Crozat, dans sa maison d'Enghien* (ca1720–1724),⁷⁶ attest to the use of the double bass in the private

⁷¹ Jean-Sébastien de Brossard, *Dictionnaire de musique contenant une explication des termes Grecs, Latins, Italiens, et Français le plus usités dans la musique* (Paris, 1703): *C'est notre Basse de Violon, ou pour mieux dire, c'est une Double Basse, dont le corps et le manche sont à peu près deux fois plus grands que ceux de la Basse de Violon à l'ordinaire; dont les cordes sont aussi à peu près plus longues et plus grosses deux fois que celles de la Basse de Violon, et le son par conséquent est une octave plus bas que celui des Basses de Violon ordinaires. Cela fait un effet tout charmant dans les accompagnements et dans les grands choeurs, et je suis fort surpris que l'usage n'en soit pas plus fréquent en France.*

⁷² Although posterior to the period in question, it seems appropriate here to draw attention to Domenico Cimarosa's *Il maestro di cappella* (c1786–93) in which the terms "violone" and "contrabasso" are used interchangeably in the libretto, depending on the number of syllables (three or four respectively) that the composer requires. The double bass community appears to be unaware of the existence of this work, in which the double bass features prominently.

⁷³ Although not indicated in the printed score, the manuscript copy used for performances (*F-Po*, A.88b) is annotated "basses de violons à l'octave" (*cf supra*).

⁷⁴ Mary Cyr, "Basses and basse continue in the orchestra of the Paris Opéra 1700–1764," *Early Music* 10/2 (April 1982):155–170, at 156.

⁷⁵ Munich, Alte Pinakothek, inv. 1480.

⁷⁶ USA, private collection. Readers may view reproductions of the painting in Mary Taverner Holmes, *Nicolas Lancret 1690-1743* (New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with the Frick Collection, 1991), 58-59; Florence Gétreau and

concerts organized by this wealthy financier from 1715 to 1724.⁷⁷ In 1727, the instruments of the *Concert italien* consisted of “violins, flutes, bassoons, alto-violin, violoncello, a harpsichord and a double bass.”⁷⁸ Michel Corrette described a performance he had witnessed by the famous violinists Somis and Guignon, probably during the 1730s, when both performers were in Paris: “they were accompanied not only by the harpsichord and the violoncello, but also by a double bass, which made a charming effect.”⁷⁹ From 1779 to 1782, a quartet consisting of two violins, violoncello and double bass played for Marie-Antoinette’s private concerts.⁸⁰

Other Scenes with Double Bass

4.5 Apart from the storm scene, the double bass also appears in another genre encountered after 1706, the instrumental prelude scored for bass instruments, for example in *Polixène et Pirrhus* (1706) by Pascal Colasse (II, 3) (figure 16), and the “Prélude à trois basses” (III^e entrée, 1) in Montéclair’s own *Festes de l’Été* (1716) (figure 37). In an orchestral prelude in Stück’s *Méléagre* (IV, 6), it performs with the bassoons a separate part from the *basses de violons* (figure 38). The double bass found favour particularly in choruses, where its sonority provided solid support for the ensemble: “Sous nos pieds s’ébranle la terre” (I, 3) (figure 39) and “Ordonne, nous obéissons” (III, 5) (figure 40) in Marais’ *Sémélé* (1709), “Assemblons-nous sur ces rivages” (III^e entrée, 6) in *Les Festes de l’Été* (figure 41), the trio “Dieux qui faites trembler la terre” (I, 5) in Lacoste’s *Télégone* (figure 42),⁸¹ and “Quels tremblements soudains?” (II, 4)⁸² and “Vous qui ne respirez que sang” (III, 7) (figure 43) in Royer’s *Pirrhus*. The double bass also plays in the airs “Va, dangereux Ulysse” in *Polixène et Pirrhus* (figure 16), “Quel tremblement affreux!” (IV, 4) in *Méléagre* (figure 44), and “Ne croy pas échapper à mes ressentiments” (II, 5) in Royer’s *Pirrhus* (figure 45).

Extant Performance Material

4.6 An invaluable primary source is the surviving performance material, held in the library of the Paris Opéra, which served at the creation of many of the works cited here. With few exceptions, double bass players did not read from a separate part but shared a *basse continue* or *basse générale* part with the performer of another instrument, most often the harpsichord. Unfortunately, these parts bear no annotations that might reveal how the double bassists interpreted their part: the complete absence of any markings by the players of phrasing, bowings or fingerings is striking. However the material does contain many indications, absent from the printed scores, of when the instrument should play. In addition to the selections discussed above, separate parts reveal that the double bass should play in the air “La nuit de l’avenir se déroule à mes yeux” in Lacoste’s *Télégone*,⁸³ and throughout scenes 6, 7 and 8 of act III in Royer’s *Pirrhus*.⁸⁴ The material also reveals that the earliest surviving part conceived specifically for double bass might be found in the chorus “Dieux, Dieux,

Denis Herlin, “Portraits de clavecins et de clavecinistes français (II),” *Musique-Images-Instruments* 3 (1997): 65-68, at 78.

⁷⁷ The estate inventory *F-Pan*, Minutier central, ét. XXX 278, 30 May 1740, does not list a double bass.

⁷⁸ *Mercur*, April 1727, 746: violons, flûtes, bassons, alto-violin, violoncelle, un clavecin et une contrebasse.

⁷⁹ Michel Corrette, *Méthodes pour apprendre à jouer de la Contre-Basse à 3, à 4, et à 5 cordes, de la Quinte ou Alto et de la Viole d’Orphée nouvel Instrum^t: ajusté sur l’ancienne Viole ; utile au Concert pour accompagner la Voix et p^r jouer des Sonates avec des leçons et des Sonates pour ces trois Instrumens* (Paris, 1781), 31: *J’ai entendu autrefois à Paris les fameux Somis et Guignon jouer des sonates sur le Violon, non seulement ils se faisoient accompagner par le clavecin et le violoncelle mais encore avec une contre-basse, cela faisoit un effet charmant.*

⁸⁰ *F-Pan*, O¹ 3055, 7, *Dépenses de la Reine, Troisième chapitre, Bordereau de la Dépense contenue en l’Etat des Dépenses ordonnées par la Reine en l’année Mil sept cent soixante dix neuf*; O¹ 3060, 1, 8^e Etat, Chapitre 5^e, no. 466; O¹ 3062, 2, no. 511.

⁸¹ *F-Po*, Mat. 18 [249 (92)].

⁸² *F-Po*, Mat. 18 [205 (96)], p. 22.

⁸³ *F-Po*, Mat. 18 [249 (92)].

⁸⁴ *F-Po*, Mat. 18 [205 (96)], pp. 27–29.

quelle tempête soudaine” (I, 3) in Lacoste’s *Télégone* of 1725—the score used by Montéclair and the harpsichordist Bertin⁸⁵ (figure 19) contains a simplified version of the bassoon part that is absent from the other *basse continue* parts,⁸⁶ and the double bass may well have been the only instrument of the *petit chœur* that played this passage (figure 46). (This would predate by fourteen years the earliest surviving part conceived explicitly for the double bass that served for the creation of *Les fêtes d’Hébé* by Jean-Philippe Rameau in 1739.⁸⁷) The same applies to the markings of “*contrebasse*” in the score shared by Montéclair and Campion for Royer’s *Pirrhus*, in the two “airs des démons” and the chorus “Jouissons des plaisirs cruels” in act III, scene 8.⁸⁸ As these numbers are absent from the other *basse continue* parts, the markings of “*contrebasse*” here imply that only the double bass should play. However, in the parts to the other operas that Montéclair shared, no separate indications for the double bass appear. Does the absence of the marking “*contrebasse*” in these works mean that he did not play the double bass but the *basse de violon*? Or on the contrary did he play the double bass constantly, rendering any such indication superfluous? The testimony of a contemporary witness, Michel Corrette (1707–1795), lends credence to the first hypothesis: according to Corrette, “the instrument was used for storms, subterranean noises and invocations, and remained inappropriately silent the rest of the time.”⁸⁹ However, another witness suggests the opposite: Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764) mentions the use of the instrument as customary in his *Dissertation sur les différentes methods d’accompagnement pour le clavecin, ou pour l’orgue* of 1732: “two consecutive octaves between the lowest note of the chords and the bass produce the same effect as a doubled bass [i.e. violoncello], according to the practice of doubling it with the double bass.”⁹⁰

The Double Bass in French Opera 1737–1815

Montéclair’s Successors, 1737–1780

5.1 Montéclair’s successors were Giuseppe (Joseph) Fedeli, known as Saggione (*fl* 1680–1745), from 1737⁹¹ to 1745;⁹² “Mr. degüé” from 1745 until 1748;⁹³ Pierre (Pietro) Giannotti († c1771)⁹⁴

⁸⁵ *F-Po*, Mat. 18 [249 (92).

⁸⁶ *F-Po*, Mat. 18 [249 (90, 91).

⁸⁷ *F-Po*, Mat. 18 [227 (328)]. See Mary Cyr, “Basses and *basse continue* in the orchestra of the Paris Opéra 1700–1764,” *Early Music* 10/2 (April 1982):155–170.

⁸⁸ *F-Po*, Mat. 18 [205 (96), pp. 28–29.

⁸⁹ Michel Corrette, *Méthodes pour apprendre à jouer de la Contre-Basse à 3, à 4, et à 5 cordes, de la Quinte ou Alto et de la Viole d’Orphée nouvel Instrum^t: ajusté sur l’ancienne Viole ; utile au Concert pour accompagner la Voix et p^r jouer des Sonates avec des leçons et des Sonates pour ces trois Instrumens* (Paris, 1781), 1: *du temps de M^r de Lulli cet instrument étoit inconnu ; ce n’est que bien du tems après luy qu’on a vü paroître la contre-basse à l’Opera encore ne seroit elle que dans les tempestes, dans les bruits souterrains et dans les invocations ; et gardoit le tacet assez mal a propos dans le reste.*

⁹⁰ Rameau, *Dissertation sur les différentes methods d’accompagnement pour le clavecin, ou pour l’orgue* (Paris, 1732), 61: *Deux Octaves de suite entre la partie inférieure des Accords, & la Basse, font le même effet qu’une Basse doublée, selon l’usage où l’on est de la doubler avec la Contre-basse: ces Octaves sont insensibles, & se sauvent même dans le milieu des Accords.*

⁹¹ *B-Bk*, MS II 4119, f. 157^r; *F-Po*, Opéra. Arch. 18 [20, f. 63.

⁹² *F-Po*, Rés. 516, p. 414.

⁹³ This name is written over that of Saggione on the double bass part used for the creation of Jean-Philippe Rameau’s *Les fêtes d’Hébé* in 1739 (*F-Po*, Mat. 18 [227 (328)]). Since Giannotti is listed in the press as *haute-contre de violon* from 1742 to 1748, this separate part was likely intended for “Mr. degüé” during the first revival of the opera between 27 July 1747 and the end of March 1748.

⁹⁴ Michelle Fillion, “Giannotti, Pietro,” in Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edition (London: Macmillan Publisher Limited, 2001), 9:826, gives 19 June 1765 as his date of death. Yet Giannotti’s name remains on the rosters of the pensioners of the Opéra until the first quarter of 1771 (*F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 28, XII), although never accompanied by his signature: except for July 1763, where one Bourbon signed for him, the signature of one Lavoisier appears next to Giannotti’s name in the statements from April 1763 until March 1771 (*F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 28, VI–XII).

from 1748 to 1758;⁹⁵ Jean-Antoine Huberty (1722–after 1774)⁹⁶ from 1758⁹⁷ until 1767;⁹⁸ and Hanot (†18 January 1799⁹⁹) from 1767¹⁰⁰ until 1780.¹⁰¹ Each of these players is known to have played the double bass exclusively. Therefore, the parts bearing their names were logically destined for execution by that instrument even if no specific indications appear on their parts, and presumably they performed whenever the *petit chœur* played.¹⁰² Before 1738, the continuo instruments did not play constantly, but beginning in 1738 for the double bass, and 1741 for the violoncellos, the bowed bass instruments joined those of the *grand chœur* in performing the overture, the choruses and some of the dances.¹⁰³ In 1754 it was observed that “the harpsichord at the opera is supported by at least three violoncellos and a double bass, all of who perform the same bass in the pieces without orchestra.”¹⁰⁴ The double bass might have been enlisted to compensate for the loss of sonority occasioned by the substitution of the smaller violoncellos for the *basses de violon*:¹⁰⁵ in 1757, Ancelet wrote that “It has been discovered just how much the double bass is necessary in the large

⁹⁵ The sources are contradictory concerning the dates of Giannotti’s employment. The Amelot manuscript (*F-Po*, Rés. 516, p. 345–346) states that he began playing the double bass at Easter 1752 (*A Pâques 1752 il a pris la Contrebasse*), yet he is included in the *basses* in the earliest surviving pay statements dating from September 1749 (*F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 19, I), and is listed as *contrebasse* in the *petit chœur* beginning in April 1750 (*F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 19, II). He is listed as *haute-contre de violon* from 1742 to 1748 and *contrebasse* from 1748 to 1757 in the press (Jérôme de La Gorce, “L’orchestre de l’Opéra et son évolution de Campra à Rameau,” *Revue de Musicologie* 76/1 [1990]: 23–44, at 41).

⁹⁶ Two acts of marriage catalogued by Léon de Laborde around 1862 provide Huberty’s Christian names and age (*F-Pn*, Manuscripts, N.A.F. 12123, f. 34.933–34.934). Huberty was the son of Jean-Antoine Huberti, “performer (*interprète*) of the Prince Emmanuel, infant of Portugal” and one Anne Marie. He married the 20-year-old Reine-Claude Champagne, daughter of Jacques-Benoist Champagne, “officer of the King” (*officier de chez le Roy*), on 17 September 1759 at Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois. His young bride died soon afterwards, for Huberty married the 20-and-a-half-year-old Marie-Louise Braillier, “daughter of the late François Braillier, farmer at Hybouvillier near Rouen,” on 7 May 1761 in the same church. The witnesses were “a luthier, a law student” (*un luthier, un étudiant en droit*).

⁹⁷ *F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 15, II, *Etats des Appointemens des Années 1757–1760*. It has been thought that a player by the name of D’Argent *ainé* played at the Opéra from 1758 to 1760 because he is listed in the *petit chœur* in *Les Spectacles de Paris, ou suite du Calendrier Historique & Chronologique des Théâtres* 7 (Paris: Duchesne, 1758), 11, and *Ibid.* 8 (Paris: Duchesne, 1759), 11. He appears to have ceased playing at the Opéra-Comique in the 1757–1758 season (*Les Spectacles de Paris* 6 [Paris: Duchesne, 1757], 105), and although slated to perform at the Comédie-Italienne beginning in April 1760 (*F-Pan*, O¹ 849, no. 106) did not take up his position until April 1761 (*F-Pan*, O¹ 849, nos. 126–127), which lends credence to a period of service at the Opéra. However, his name never appears on the Opéra’s rosters (*F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 15, II, III), nor on the *capitation* (head tax) statements (*F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 17).

⁹⁸ Huberty does not appear in the *capitation* for 1767–68 (*F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 17, *Capitation de 1767 à 1768*), and therefore ceased playing at the end of the previous season. He returned to the Opéra in 1774 to play in the 47 performances of Christoph Willibald Gluck’s (1714–1787) *Iphigénie en Aulide* and *Orphée et Eurydice* between 1 April and 20 November (*F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 22, V, *Simphonistes Extraordinaires 1774*).

⁹⁹ *F-Po*, PE 205, *Etats des pensionnaires de la cidevant Académie R^{le} de Musique et du théâtre de la République et des Arts pour L’an 7 Républicaine*, non foliated.

¹⁰⁰ *F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 21, IX; *F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 17, *Capitation de 1767 à 1768*.

¹⁰¹ *F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 15, IV. The roster for 1779–1780 is lost. Hanot’s name does not appear on that for 1780–1781, while Boutroy is listed as having joined the section in 1780. Although Louis 2^d joined in 1779, he likely replaced Jean-Baptiste Rochefort (1746–1819), who left “to take charge of the French opera at the Landgrave of Hesse’s court in Kassel” before returning to the Opéra in 1786, doing double duty as second conductor by 1788 (*F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 16, II–III). See Julian Rushton, “Rochefort, Jean-Baptiste,” in Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edition (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001), 21:482.

¹⁰² This entails some surprising implications where the revivals of Lully’s operas are concerned. According to the surviving separate parts, Saggione played in the revivals of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (*F-Po*, Mat. 18 [53 (20)] and *Cariselli* (*F-Po*, Mat. 18 [93 (78)]), Huberty for those of *Armide* (*F-Po*, Mat. 18 [27 (206)] in 1761 and 1764. The arrangement of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* for a decidedly uncharacteristic ensemble—including clarinets, trombones and an ophicleide—that provides a separate double bass part in an *Allegretto* was made by Jean-Baptiste-Théodore Weckerlin (1821–1910) in 1876 (*F-Po*, Mat. 18 [53 (46)], p. 59).

¹⁰³ Jérôme de La Gorce, “L’orchestre de l’Opéra et son évolution de Campra à Rameau,” *Revue de Musicologie* 76/1 (1990): 23–44, at 27.

¹⁰⁴ Anonymous [Louis-Antoine Travenol?], *La galerie de l’Académie Royale de Musique* (Paris, 1754), p. 40: *Ils observent, que cette Basse de Clavessin, à l’opéra, est soutenu de trois Violoncelles au moins, & d’une Contre-basse, qui rendent tous la même Basse, dans les morceaux sans symphonies.*

¹⁰⁵ La Gorce, “L’orchestre de l’Opéra,” 23–44, at 27.

orchestras. Montéclair, [Saggione] & [Giannotti] have shown us sufficiently how much this instrument supports and strengthens the harmony.”¹⁰⁶

Evidence for a Second Double Bass Player

5.2 Although there was officially only one double bass player at the Opéra until 1765, there is some indirect evidence for a second player before that date.¹⁰⁷ At least two are implied in Jean-Baptiste Matho’s *Arion* of 1714, where a separate part for *basses de violons à l’octave* is designated for “*M^r de Montclair M^r Theobald et 2 serpens*” (figure 24)¹⁰⁸ and Montéclair’s own *Festes de l’Été* of 1716 indicates the instrument in the plural, “*contrebasses*” (figure 37). Assuming that Montéclair still used his own instrument, it is conceivable that a second double bass was introduced, into the *grand chœur*, sometime between 19 November 1714 and 1 April 1721. During this period, the Opéra acquired a double bass,¹⁰⁹ probably the instrument by Nicolas Bertrand (*fl* Paris c1687– c10 Nov 1725) listed in a 1748 inventory of the instruments of the Opera,¹¹⁰ which would make it the earliest documented double bass by a Parisian luthier. The presence of this instrument alone in the inventory does not rule out a second double bassist in 1748: Marchand (†1756¹¹¹), a *basse de violon* player in the *grand chœur* from 1723¹¹² until 22 May 1750,¹¹³ had purchased the late Montéclair’s instrument,¹¹⁴ and even appears to have entered the orchestra of the *Opéra-Comique* as a double

¹⁰⁶ He also adds that “the last is capable of giving the best principles of composition.” Ancelet, *Observations sur la musique, les musiciens, et les instrumens* (Amsterdam, 1757; reprint Geneva: Minkoff, 1984), 25: *L’on a éprouvé combien la Contre-Basse est encore nécessaire dans les grands Orchestres. Montclair, Saggioni & Janotti nous ont suffisamment fait connoître combien cet Instrument soutient & nourrit l’harmonie : le dernier est en état de donner les meilleurs principes de la composition.*

¹⁰⁷ Graham Sadler (in “Rameau’s singers and players at the Paris Opéra: A little-known inventory of 1738,” *Early Music* 11/4 [October 1983]: 453–467, at 463) maintains that “Joseph Francœur (*père*) can be identified as the single *contrebasse* player normally included in the *grand chœur*” before 1738, but provides no source for his claim. I have requested clarification from Dr. Sadler, but none has been forthcoming.

¹⁰⁸ *F-Po*, A.88b, p. 135.

¹⁰⁹ *F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 1, III, *Mémoire concernant la régie de l’Opéra & sa situation au premier Avril 1721*, 8: *Situation de l’Opéra, le premier Avril 1721, sur laquelle les Interressez fondent leurs demandes en dommages interêts, & sur la restitution des avances qu’ils ont faites, lorsqu’ils sont entrez à l’Opéra [...]* Aquisitions, Bâtimens & Etablissements. Sçavoir, Clavesin, Contre-basse & autres. 2500.

¹¹⁰ *F-Po*, INV 1, f. 84^r: *La Contrebasse avec son Etuy et archet garnie de ses cordes par Nicolas Bertrand estimée deux cent livres cy...200*. This might well be the instrument for which Rameau requested the following modifications, no doubt after consultation with Giannotti who seems to have found it unsuitable for the repertoire he had to perform (*F-Po*, Opéra. Archives. Pièce 13):

Requested by Mr Rameau for the opera *Zoroastre*, and ordered by Mr Rebel following the orders that he received for this from the Provost of the Merchants on 16 December 1749:

For removing the back and the belly of the double bass, for rebarring it and lowering the ribs by two and a half inches; for dismantling the neck in order to tilt it backwards, and for making a new bridge...40^{lt} 0^s
Plus, 25 September 1750, for installing new strings on the double bass... 15^{lt}.

(*Mémoire des Réparations que Guersan Luthier a faites à la Contrebasse de L’Opéra ; les dites Réparations demandées par Monsieur Rameau pour l’Opéra de Zoroastre, et commandées par Monsieur Rebel suivant les ordres qu’il en avoit reçus de Monsieur le Prévost des Marchands*
Le 16 décembre 1749

*Pour avoir levé le fond et la table de la contrebasse, l’avoir rebarrée, baissé les éclisses de deux pouces et demi ; démonté le manche pour le jeter en arrière et fait un chevalet neuf, pour ce quarante livres cy...40^{lt} 0^s
Plus, du 25 septembre 1750, avoir remonté la contrebasse à neuf, prix fait à quinze livres cy ... 15^{lt}.)*

¹¹¹ *Annonces, affiches et avis divers*, 23 September 1756, 595.

¹¹² *B-Bk*, MS II 4119, f. 159^r; *F-Po*, Opéra. Arch. 18 [20, f. 67

¹¹³ *F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 1, IV, *Mémoires*, no. 7. His name and signature appears on the pay statements of the pensioners beginning in July 1750 (*F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 29, I).

¹¹⁴ *Annonces, affiches et avis divers*, 23 September 1756, 595. This might explain the “annual and special bonuses” that he received in 1736 and 1737 (*B-Bk*, MS II 4119, f. 159^r; *F-Po*, Opéra. Arch. 18 [20, f. 67]), and refute Graham Sadler’s assertion (see note 107) that there was no double bass present at the première of Rameau’s *Zoroastre* in 1749, due to the modifications to the instrument that Rameau specifically requested for this opera. This would also cast doubt on Sadler’s

bassist after retiring from the Opéra.¹¹⁵ A second double bassist is also suggested in the prologue to Rameau's *Zaïs*, created at the Opéra on 29 February 1748: in Oromazès' air "Les torrens s'ouvrent un passage," the instrument is specified in the plural, "*contrebasses*" (figure 47). The earliest surviving list of the players in the *Concert Spirituel* (see below), from 1751, names a second double bassist, Vincent, alongside Giannotti,¹¹⁶ but the only musician of this name listed in the rosters of the Opéra—from whence the personnel of the *Concert Spirituel* was recruited—is a flutist admitted in 1745.¹¹⁷ If Vincent did double duty, this was not noted, yet a description of the *grand chœur* in 1754 implies that a musician other than a cellist played the double bass, since all eight *basses du grand chœur* perform.¹¹⁸ However, the *Réponse aux observations sur la musique, les musiciens & les Instrumens* categorically refutes any idea of a second double bass:

The Observer will permit me to disagree with him concerning the number of persons he would apparently see compose the orchestra; I shall depict it as it is, to enable the public to judge for itself. There are sixteen violins, five flutes and oboes, two hunting horns, six violas, four bassoons, a harpsichord, three accompanying violoncellos, eight others in the *grand chœur* and a double bass, a trumpet, timpani, a musette, and a tambourin when necessary.¹¹⁹

5.3 This is corroborated by a watercolour by Gabriel-Jacques Saint-Aubin (1724–1780), *Lully's opera "Armide" performed at the Palais-Royal* (1761) (figure 48),¹²⁰ in which only one double bass scroll is visible protruding from the orchestra pit, which as well matches the original performance material, on which the names of the players are inscribed. When separate indications for the double bass appear, these are found only in the parts used by Montéclair, Saggione and Giannotti, never in the parts used by Francœur or Marchand in the *grand chœur*. Moreover, Vincent's name never appears on any *basse continue* or *basse de violon* part. A revealing example is the part shared by Pierre-Philippe Saint-Sévin, known as L'abbé *l'ainé* (c1700–1768), and Giannotti for the 1749 revival of Joseph-François Salomon's (1649–1732) *Médée et Jason* (1713). The *entractes* are absent from the continuo parts because the *petit chœur* did not play these interludes, but inserted into

hypothesis that the *basse de violon* player Cales, hired as an extra, possibly played it (Jean-Philippe Rameau, ed. Graham Sadler, *Zoroastre* version 1749, *Opera Omnia Rameau* 4 [Paris: Gérard Billaudot, 1999], 19: xlv). Giannotti also appears to have owned an instrument that he could have played in place of the Opéra's: in July 1755, during the summer residence of the French court at Compiègne, he was among the musicians summoned from Paris to perform in a series of eleven concerts commanded by the pregnant Dauphine, who remained at Versailles to give birth to the Comte de Provence (*F-Pan*, O¹ 2998, *Bordereau de la dépense contenue en l'Etat des concerts exécutés à Versailles en présence de Madame la Dauphine pendant le voyage de Compiègne en l'an 1755*). Giannotti signed a receipt dated 15 July 1755, certifying that one La Menard "transported my double bass to Versailles for the present concerts of Madame la Dauphine" (*F-Pan*, O¹ 2998: *a porté ma Contrebasse à Versailles pour les concerts actuels de Madame La Dauphine*).

¹¹⁵ *Les Spectacles de Paris* 1755, 102.

¹¹⁶ *Le Tableau des théâtres* (Paris, 1751), 84. Paul Brun (*A New History*, 49), citing Friedrich Wilhelm Marburg ("Nachricht von der Oper und dem Concert Spirituel zu Paris," *Historisch-kritische Beitrage zur Aufnahme der Musik* [Berlin, 1755], I, 3: 181–197, at 195) as proof that Vincent succeeded Marchand as double bassist in the *grand chœur*, has confused Marburg's list of the personnel of the *Concert Spirituel* with that of the Opéra.

¹¹⁷ *F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 15, I–III.

¹¹⁸ Anonymous [Louis-Antoine Travenol?], *La galerie de l'Académie Royale de Musique* (Paris, 1754), p. 40: "in pieces accompanied by violins, flutes or oboes, [the *petit chœur*] is supported by eight violoncellos, four bassoons and a double bass, instruments that are assembled and multiplied" *dans [les morceaux] où il se trouve des accompagnements de Violons, de Flûtes, ou de Hautbois, cette Basse est soutenue de huit Violoncelles, de quatre Bassons, & d'une Contrebasse, instruments réunis & multipliés*.

¹¹⁹ Anonymous, *Réponse aux observations sur la musique, les musiciens & les Instrumens* (Avignon, 1758), 7–8: *L'Observateur me permettra de n'être pas de son avis, quand [sic] au nombre des personnes dont apparemment il le voudroit voir composé: je vais le dépeindre tel qu'il est, pour mettre le public à portée d'en juger. Il y a seize Violons, cinq Flûtes & Hautbois, deux Corps de Chasse, six Quintes, quatre Bassons, un Clavecin, trois Violoncelles d'accompagnement, huit autres du grand Chœur & une Contrebasse, une Trompette, des Tymbales, une Musette, & un Tambourin quand il le faut*.

¹²⁰ Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 1970.36.

L'abbé and Giannotti's score before act IV is a leaf for the *entracte* labeled “*contrebasse*.”¹²¹ If the double bassist of the *petit chœur* was requisitioned to play in this piece while his colleagues kept silent, it was probably because there was no double bass in the *grand chœur*.

Introduction of a Second Double Bass to the *Grand Chœur*

5.4 It is most likely that a second double bass, assigned to the *grand chœur*, was added permanently during the 1765–66 season: Hanot, who first appears on the roster for that season among the *basses* of the *grand chœur*,¹²² was double bassist at the *Comédie-Française* the previous year.¹²³ A 1767 inventory of the instruments of the Opéra includes two double basses—probably the two by Jean-Baptiste Dehaye, known as Salomon (1713–1767), listed in a 1780 inventory¹²⁴—which permits us to affirm the presence of two double bassists in the orchestra by this date, but the nature of these instruments poses a new conundrum, since they are “fitted with six strings” (*garnies de six cordes*). Are these double bass viols, as Jérôme de La Gorce has hypothesized?¹²⁵ The full entry reads:

Item two double basses with their cases fitted with metal reinforcements The said double basses fitted with six strings, their bows and one of them fitted with tuning gears, appraised together for the sum of two hundred sixty four *Livres* 264.¹²⁶

Given the expense of double bass strings, it seems more likely that the appraiser, Louis Socquet, has simply described the total number of strings on *both* instruments, just as he appraised their value together and not separately. Since three-string double basses are described in French theoretical documents as early as 1767,¹²⁷ these are likely such instruments. And the tuning gears were a recent innovation, by Jean-Baptiste Domenjoud in 1756, who granted the rights to the luthier François Gaviniès (1683–1772).¹²⁸

Expansion of the Double Bass Section

5.5 In the period of transition from the Baroque to the Classical, from the music of Rameau to that of Gluck, the disposition of the Opéra's orchestra fluctuated in response to the stylistic evolution. Clarinets, horns, trombones, trumpets and timpani, instruments that were used occasionally for special effect, gradually became independent, permanent sections of the orchestra familiar to us today; while existing sections saw their numbers reduced or increased. A separate section of three double bass players, in addition to Hanot who is listed in the *petit chœur*, appears in the press for the

¹²¹ *F-Po*, Mat. 18 [164 (220)].

¹²² *F-Po*, PE 17.

¹²³ *Les Spectacles de Paris, ou suite du Calendrier Historique & Chronologique des Théâtres* 14 (Paris : Duchesne, 1765), 42.

¹²⁴ *F-Po*, INV 3 : *Cinq contrebasses dont une de Socquet N^{ée} 4 une de Fleury N^{ée} 5 une Allemande numérotée 3 une de Salomon N^{ée} 2 et une autre aussi de Salomon N^{ée} 1 avec Six archets, estimé le tout ensemble la somme de Douze cent cinquante livres 1250*. The double bass by Nicolas Bertrand listed in the inventory of 1748 was likely consumed in the fire that destroyed the Opéra on 6 April 1763, claiming all of its instruments except the harpsichord.

¹²⁵ La Gorce, “L’orchestre de l’Opéra,” 23–44, at 27.

¹²⁶ *F-Po*, INV 2, f. 96: *Item deux contrebasses avec leurs Etuys garnies de leur ferrure Les d^e contrebasses garnies de six cordes, leurs archets et une d'elle garnie de visses sans fin, estimées ensemble La somme de deux cent soixante quatre Livres cy...264*.

¹²⁷ *Recueil de planches, sur les sciences, les arts libéraux et les arts mécaniques, avec leur explication* (Paris, 1767), “Lutherie,” pl. XXIII, in Denis Diderot, *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Paris, 1751–1780; reprint Stuttgart–Bad Connstatt : Friedrich-Fromann [Günther Holzboog]), 26; Jean-Benjamin de La Borde, *Essai sur la musique ancienne et moderne* (Paris, 1780), t. I, 2:293; Michel Corrette, *Méthodes pour apprendre à jouer de la Contre-Basse à 3, à 4, et à 5 cordes [...]*, 5.

¹²⁸ Jean-Baptiste Domenjoud, *De la préférence des vis aux chevilles pour les instrumens de musique* (Paris: Thiboust, 1757; reprint Geneva: Minkoff, 1972).

first time in the 1767–1768 season, including players by the names Lechantre, Cupis and Kotzwara.¹²⁹ This list probably represents less a section that played full time than those members of the *grand chœur* who could play the second double bass on a rotating basis. Only one other double bassist is found on the Opéra's roster for 1769: a player called Louis, admitted the previous year, is listed in the *basses du grand chœur* "as well as for the double bass and the horn."¹³⁰ From 1770 to 1775, with the exception of Louis,¹³¹ the rosters do not distinguish those members of the *grand chœur* who played the double bass, but almanachs provide detailed lists of the orchestra. In 1770, *Les Spectacles de Paris* list a separate section of three players—Hanot, Moreau, and Lémans—while the *Etat actuel de la Musique du Roi et des trois spectacles de Paris* lists the same, three plus Louis.¹³² In addition to Hanot, who is listed separately in the *petit chœur*, *Les Spectacles de Paris* lists a separate section of six players in 1771,¹³³ five in 1772,¹³⁴ four in 1773,¹³⁵ and seven in 1774.¹³⁶ Opéra rosters indicate that the number was fixed at five in 1775, but until 1778 could be increased by three other musicians who doubled on the instrument.¹³⁷ Since the Opéra possessed at most only five double basses, these players probably took the place of those who doubled on other instruments, such as Louis, who also played the trombone and the horn, Guillaume-Ernest Assmann (Asman, Assman), known as Erneste (20 November 1742–?)¹³⁸ who played the clarinet, Braun who played the trumpet and horn, and Dessé who played the violoncello.¹³⁹ In the 1778–1779 season, the double bass was eliminated from the *petit chœur* on the orchestra rosters (the harpsichord had disappeared in 1776); Hanot then became the leader of a separate section of four players.¹⁴⁰ By 1781, Michel Corrette reported that the double bassists of the Opéra "play everything but the recitative."¹⁴¹ In spite of its exclusion from the *petit chœur*, the role of the principal double bassist was not diminished, for the regulations of the Opéra promulgated in 1778 specify that the position was not to be attributed automatically to the most senior player,¹⁴² who was nonetheless made one of fourteen members of the orchestra committee.¹⁴³ The double bass section was increased to five in 1786–87,¹⁴⁴ to six in 1796–97,¹⁴⁵ and finally to eight beginning on 1 May 1816.¹⁴⁶

Comédie-Française, Comédie-Italienne, Opéra-Comique, Concert Spirituel

¹²⁹ *Etat actuel de la Musique du Roi et des trois spectacles de Paris* (Paris: Vente, 1768), 40. The theatre season ran from 1 May to 30 April. The three musicians are listed among the ten "*basses du g^d chœur*" in a roster of May 1767 (*F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 21, IX, *Appointements des Acteurs Mois de Mai 1767*), but Lechantre does not appear in the roster for April 1768 (*F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 21, X, *Appointements des Acteurs Mois d'avril 1768*).

¹³⁰ *F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 21, XI: *tant comme contrebasse que pour donner du cor de chasse*.

¹³¹ *F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 22, IV, V, VI.

¹³² *Etat actuel de la Musique du Roi et des trois spectacles de Paris* (Paris: Vente, 1770), 39.

¹³³ *Les Spectacles de Paris, ou Calendrier historique & chronologique des théâtres* 20 (1771):16–17.

¹³⁴ *Les Spectacles de Paris, ou Calendrier historique & chronologique des théâtres* 21 (1772):15–16.

¹³⁵ *Les Spectacles de Paris, ou Calendrier historique & chronologique des théâtres* 22 (1773):16–17.

¹³⁶ *Les Spectacles de Paris, ou Calendrier historique & chronologique des théâtres* 23 (1774):17–18.

¹³⁷ *F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 1, II, *Etat actuel de L'Orchestre de L'Opéra Tel qu'il était au premier Juillet 1775*.

¹³⁸ *F-Po*, PE 205; PE 207, p. 65.

¹³⁹ *F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 1, II, *Etat actuel de L'Orchestre de L'Opéra Tel qu'il était au premier Juillet 1775*.

¹⁴⁰ *F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 15, IV, *Etat des appointements 1767–1775*.

¹⁴¹ Corrette, *Méthodes pour apprendre à jouer de la Contre-Basse*, 1: *A present il y en a six qui jouent tout excepté le Recitatif*. This is evident in the attribution of the separate parts. For the first performances of Rameau's *Platée* in 1749–50, or the first revival in 1754, Giannotti played the "*Basse General*" or continuo (*F-Po*, Mat. 18 [207 (144)]); for the revival of 1773, Hanot was assigned a "*Basse de violon*" or ripieno part (*F-Po*, Mat. 18 [207 (136)]).

¹⁴² *F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 2, IV, *Délibération pour la Nouvelle Composition de L'Orchestre de L'Académie Royale de Musique: L'orchestre sera composé, Sçavoir... Une premiere Contrebasse, point de rang d'ancienneté*.

¹⁴³ *F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 2, IV, *Délibération pour la Nouvelle Composition de L'Orchestre de L'Académie Royale de Musique: Ordre à Etablir pour l'Orchestre... Art. 2. Il sera fait un comité composé de quatorze personnes de l'orchestre. Savoir... La plus ancienne Contrebasse*.

¹⁴⁴ *F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 16, II, 6.

¹⁴⁵ *F-Pan*, AJ¹³ 57, *Théâtre de la République et des Arts* An 5–6 (1796–97, 1797–98).

¹⁴⁶ *F-Po*, PE 2.

5.6 The growing importance of the double bass was equally in evidence at the smaller theatres of the capital: the *Opéra-Comique* added two double basses to its orchestra in 1755,¹⁴⁷ the *Comédie-Italienne* added one to its orchestra in 1759,¹⁴⁸ as did the *Comédie-Française* in 1765.¹⁴⁹ In addition to the four stages of the capital, from 1725 to 1790 there was the *Concert Spirituel*, the perennial concert society founded to perform during Lent, when the theatres were closed. Lists of its personnel are not to be found before 1751:¹⁵⁰ the double bass section comprised two players until 1774, when it was expanded to include four.¹⁵¹ It was also at the *Concert Spirituel* that a virtuoso double bass performance was heard for the first time in Paris: on 26 March 1787, Joseph Kämpfer (1735–?1788)¹⁵² performed a concerto of his own composition.¹⁵³

Conclusion

5.7 It is impossible to date with certainty the first appearance of the double bass in France. The *double basse-contre de viole* mentioned in legal documents and the human-size string instruments depicted in iconography suggest that the double bass may have first appeared in France in the second half of the sixteenth century, but the theoretical treatises do not mention a sixteen-foot tuning that would provide confirmation. Although such a sixteen-foot tuning, for a member of the violin family, first appears in a French treatise in 1636, there is paradoxically no evidence that it was ever employed in France. The extant 1663 instrument by Simon Bongard suggests that the double bass might have appeared in Paris by the mid-seventeenth century, but this specimen has yet to be authenticated. The *grosse basse* mentioned in the royal almanachs beginning in 1692 might be a double bass, but depending on one's interpretation of the term it could equally denote the four- or five-string *basse de violon*, or six-string *violone*. A contemporary witness, Titon du Tillet, credits the introduction of the double bass to the Paris Opéra by Michel Pignolet de Montéclair "around 1700." Since Montéclair had previously worked in Italy, and is known to have owned a very old Neapolitan instrument, he may very well have been the first to introduce the instrument into France from Italy. Brossard's dictionary suggests that the double bass was in use at the Opéra by 1703, and the earliest formal indication for the double bass, in the published score of Marin Marais's *Alcyone*, proves that the instrument did perform there by 1706. Initially a curiosity used occasionally for special effect, the double bass was gradually assimilated into the continuo group as an integral member by 1737, ultimately assuming an independent role in punctuating the rhythm and harmony and providing harmonic support for the entire ensemble. Added to the orchestras of the smaller theaters by 1755, its number expanded at the Opéra beginning in 1765, the double bass had clearly earned its place as an indispensable member of the orchestra in France.

¹⁴⁷ *Les Spectacles de Paris, ou suite du Calendrier Historique & Chronologique des Théâtres* 4 (Paris : Duchesne, 1755), 102.

¹⁴⁸ *F-Pan*, O¹ 849, nos. 109–118, 124.

¹⁴⁹ *Les Spectacles de Paris, ou suite du Calendrier Historique & Chronologique des Théâtres* 14 (Paris : Duchesne, 1765), 42.

¹⁵⁰ *Le Tableau des théâtres, Almanach nouveau pour l'année MDCCLI* (Paris: V. Delormel & Fils, 1751), p. 84.

¹⁵¹ *Les Spectacles de Paris, ou Calendrier Historique & Chronologique des Théâtres* 23 (1774), 5.

¹⁵² Mary Térey-Smith, "Joseph Kämpfer, a Contrabass Virtuoso from Pozsony Bratislava," *International Society of Bassists* 11/3 (Spring 1985): 7–13.

¹⁵³ "Concert," *Journal de Paris*, 28 March 1787, p. 383–384, at 383: "Mr. Kämpfer overcame great difficulties: a double bass concerto, played with the greatest precision, is something rare, but will never be something agreeable." (*M. Kempffer a fait preuve de très grandes difficultés vaincues : un Concerto de contre-basse, joué avec la plus grande justesse, est une chose très rare, mais ne sera jamais une chose agreeable.*) "Spectacles. Concert Spirituel," *Mercure de France*, 7 April 1787, 32–34, at 33: "Mr. Kämpfer performed a double bass concerto, an undertaking more extraordinary than agreeable that only offers vanquished difficulties, without any charm for the ears of the audience. Mr. Kämpfer appears to possess perfectly his instrument, and if he did not obtain a more brilliant success, this must be blamed on the nature of the instrument." (*M. Kempffer a fait entendre un concerto de contre-basse, tentative plus extraordinaire qu'agréable qui n'offre que des difficultés vaincues, sans aucun charme pour l'oreille des Auditeurs. M. Kempffer paroît posséder parfaitement son instrument; & s'il n'a pas eu un plus brillant success, c'est à la nature même de l'instrument qu'il faut s'en prendre.*)

I wish to extend my thanks to Pascal Duc, Nicolas Monty and the staff of Les Arts Florissants, Pierre Vidal of the Bibliothèque-Musée de l'Opéra, Paris, Joseph Carver, Erin Greenberg, Daniel Kroft, Stan Label, Stan Lambert, Joëlle Morton, Zdzislaw Prochownik, J.-F. Ravet, and Zita Vad for their assistance.

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Figure 7. Anonymous engraving after Louis Lichéry de Beurie, *Lacord des nations par lemoien de la paix*, 1679 (detail). Paris, Musée de Louvre, Cabinet Rothschild, 26916LR. © Réunion des Musées Nationaux (RMN).

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Figure 9. Wilhelm Azan, human-size string instrument, Aix-en-Provence, 1605. Paris, Musée de la Musique, E.979.2.63.

Figure 10. Anonymous, *Le Triomphe du bonheur et de la gloire de la France*, 1667 (detail). Paris, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet Rothschild, 26818 LR. © Réunion des Musées Nationaux (RMN).

Figure 11. Anonymous, *Le Concert royal des Muses*, 1671 (detail). *F-Pn*, Estampes, collection Hennin, t. 50, no. 4575. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 12. Anonymous, *Bal à la cour des Valois*, c1580. Rennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts.

Figure 13. Abraham Bosse (1602–1676), *la sérénade* (detail). Mural frescos, Louis XIII Dining Room, Château de Grosbois, 94470 Boissy-Saint-Léger. Property of the Société d'encouragement à l'Élevage du Cheval Français (SECF). Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Kupferstichkabinett. Photo: the author.

Figure 14. Israël Silvestre (1621–1691), *Première Journée* (detail), from *Les Plaisirs de l'Isle enchantée, ou Les Festes, et divertissements du Roy, à Versailles, divisez en trois journées, et commencez le 7^{me} jour de may, de l'année 1664*.
<http://israel.silvestre.free.fr/biographies/israel/images/isle-enchantee/318-5.htm>

Figure 15. Giovanni Paolo Pannini (1691–1765), *Fête musical donnée par le Cardinal de La Rochefoucauld au Théâtre Argentina de Rome le 15 juillet 1747 à l'occasion du mariage du Dauphin de France, Louis, fils de Louis XV avec Marie-Josèphe de Saxe*, Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. 414.

Figure 16. Pascal Colasse (1649–1709), *Polixène et Pirrhus* (Paris, 1706), II, 3. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 17. Marin Marais (1656–1728), *Alcyone* (Paris, 1706), III, 4. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 18. Louis Lacoste (c1675–c1753), *Télégone* (Paris, 1725), I, 3. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 19. Score used by Montéclair for the first performance of *Télégone* (1725) by Louis Lacoste (c1675–c1753). *F-Po*, Mat. 18 [249 (92)]. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 20. François Puget (1651–1707), *Réunion de musiciens* (c1687), Paris, Musée du Louvre, INV. 7346.

Figure 21. Attributed to Antoine Coysevox (1640–1720), organ case (detail). La Chaise-Dieu, France. Institut de recherche sur le Patrimoine Musical en France.

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Figure 23. Hans Krouchdaler (c.1652–after 1699), *violon basse*, Oberhalm (Switzerland), 1694, body length 912 mm, original body and pegbox (for 5 pegs). Brussels, Musée des instruments de musique, Inv. M1442. © Institut Royal du Patrimoine Artistique, Brussels.

Figure 24. Jean-Baptiste Matho (1663–1746), *Arion* (1714), autograph manuscript, p. 136. *F-Po*, A.88b. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 25. Jean-Baptiste Matho (1663–1746), *Arion* (1714), autograph manuscript, p. 135. *F-Po*, A.88b. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 26. Martin Engelbrecht (1684–1756), *Un lutier*. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Union centrale des arts décoratifs, Réserve Métiers Engelbrecht F-V. Photo: the author.

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Figure 28. Jean Theobaldo di Gatti, known as Théobalde (c1650–1727), *Scylla* (Paris, 1701), IV, 2. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 29. André Campra (1660–1744), *Tancrède*, manuscript leaf inserted into the edition by Ballard (Paris, 1702). *F-Po*, A60a, p. 295. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 30. Jean-Baptiste Stück (1680–1755), *Méléagre* (Paris, 1709), IV, 3. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 31. Toussaint Bertin de La Doué (c1680–1743), *Diomède* (Paris, 1710), II, 5. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

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Figure 34. Louis-Nicolas Clérambault (1676–1749), *la Muse de l'Opéra* (Paris, 1716). © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 35. François Bouvard (c1683–1760), *Léandre et Héro* (Paris, 1729). © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 36. Nicolas Lancret (1690–1743), *Das Konzert* (ca1720–1724). Munich, Alte Pinakothek, inv. 1480. © Artothek.

Figure 37. Michel Pignolet de Montéclair (1667–1737), *Les Fêtes de l'Été* (Paris, 1716), III^e entrée, 1. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

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Figure 40. Marin Marais (1656–1728), *Sémélé* (Paris, 1709), III, 5. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

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Figure 46. Reconstruction from the original performance material of the chorus “Dieux, Dieux, quelle tempête soudaine” (excerpt) in Louis Lacoste (c1675–c1753), *Télégone* (1725), I, 3. © Editions Paribasse (Manitoba).

Figure 47. Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764), *Zaïs* (Paris, 1748), prologue. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 48. Gabriel-Jacques Saint-Aubin (1724–1780), *Lully’s opera “Armide” performed at the Palais-Royal* (1761), Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 1970.36.

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