A STUDY OF THE SETTINGS FOR THREE FRENCH

BALLETS DE COUR: 1580-1640

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.

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Shirley Elliott Swarthout

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE SETTINGS FOR THREE FRENCH
BALLETS DE COUR: 1580-1640

by Shirley Elliott Swarthout

The primary purpose of this study has been to
analyze the scenery used in staging three representative
ballets de Cour: the Ballet comique de la Reine, Circé,
presented at the French Court in 1581; the Ballet de la
Délivrance de Renaud of 1617; and the Ballet de la Douair-
ière de Billebahaut of 1626.

To provide a context for this analysis, each bal-
let was considered, first, from a general, over-all point
of view, as a composite of elements including music and
dance, as well as decor. A consideration of the relative
emphasis given to each of these components revealed a change
from a relatively balanced emphasis achieved in Circé, to
an emphasis upon music in Renaud, and finally, in Billeba-
haut, to an emphasis upon the element of dance. The influ-
ence exercised by both Renaud and Billebahaut upon the later
French theatre was observed. Renaud contributed directly
to the development of the French Opera, while Billebahaut
was instrumental in shaping the Ballet as it is known today.

After the element of decor was seen in its context,

along with the elements of music and dance, it was removed
from this context for more intensive analysis. Problems
and inconsistencies in the information presently available
concerning the staging of the three ballets were considered
and possible solutions to these problems proposed. Atten-
tion was focused upon the conflicting evidence concerning
the size and character of the <u>Salle du Petit-Bourbon</u> where
<u>Circé</u> was staged, and a reconstruction of a floorplan for
<u>Circé</u> was constructed. The scene changes for <u>Renaud</u> were
analyzed in detail and a possible method for their execu-
tion presented. In all, an attempt was made to present a
picture, as graphic as possible, of the actual staging of
the three ballets from a designer's or stage technician's
point of view.

The analysis of decor undertaken in the present
study revealed two developments in staging methods during
the sixty-year period from 1580 to 1640. The first was a
progression from the <u>décor dispersé</u> of <u>Circé</u>, with its set
pieces scattered about on the auditorium floor, through the
<u>décor successif</u> of <u>Renaud</u>, in which a revolving stage made
possible five changes of scene, to the informal and spon-
taneous <u>Douairière de Billebahaut</u>, with its generalized
backdrop upon a platform stage. The second tendency, that
of the concentration of scenery at one end of the auditorium,
paralleled the progression outlined above. This trend,
though barely discernible in <u>Circé</u>, was clearly visible in
<u>Renaud</u> and fully realized in <u>Billebahaut</u>.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The importance of the French <u>Ballet de Cour</u> of
the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries lies
in what would be described, in present-day terminology, as
its experimental nature. The French Court theatre during
the years 1580 through 1640 was an artistic proving ground
which contributed directly to the development of three now
quite clearly differentiated art forms: the opera, the
ballet, and the machine play.

The primary purpose of the present study is to
analyze the scenery used in staging three representative
<u>ballets de Cour</u>: the <u>Ballet comique de la Reine, Circé</u>,
presented in 1581; the <u>Ballet de la Délivrance de Renaud</u>
of 1617; and the <u>Ballet de la Douairière de Billebahaut</u>
of 1626. To provide a context for this analysis, each bal-
let will be considered, first, from a general, over-all
point of view, as a composite of elements including music
and dance, as well as decor. A brief consideration of the
relative emphasis given to each of these components within
the ballet will be presented. After the element of decor
has been seen in its context, along with the elements of
music and dance, it will be removed from this context for
more intensive analysis. Problems and inconsistencies in

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the information presently available concerning the staging
of the ballets de Cour will be considered and possible solu-
tions to these problems proposed. An attempt will be made
to present a picture, as graphic as possible, of the actual
staging of these ballets from a designer's or stage tech-
nician's point of view.

Three main limitations have been imposed upon the
subject matter for this study. The first limitation is
dictated by the very words, "Ballet de Cour." This thesis
is to be concerned with the productions of the Court theatre
in France, rather than with those of the public theatres.
The second is a limitation to the sixty-year period between
1580 and 1640. The earlier date was chosen fairly arbi-
trarily on the basis of a statement by Henry Prunières that
the Ballet comique de la Reine, Circé, presented in 1581,
was the first true ballet de Cour.[1] The reasons underlying
his judgment will be made clear during the discussion and
analysis of that production. The limiting date of 1640
was purposely selected to exclude from the study the reign
of Louis XIV, for during his reign the theatre exhibited
the more or less solidified results of experimentation
rather than the experimentation itself. It was during
his reign that

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[1]Henry Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France
avant Benserade et Lully (Paris: Henri Laurens, Éditeur,
1914), p. 82.

the literary and intellectual movement which
had begun in the days of Richelieu culminated
in a blaze of glory. . . . The "Age of Louis
XIV" was not only the golden age of French
literature but a landmark in the history of
European culture; the domination of French
thought over the European world of letters
was complete.[2]

A third limitation is that which has been imposed
upon the number of ballets to be analyzed. The decision
to limit the discussion to three only of the many ballets
presented at the French Court from 1580 to 1640 was made
primarily in the interests of more detailed analysis. Henry
Prunières, in his book, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant
Benserade et Lully, has provided an excellent survey of the
bulk of the ballets presented during this time. It there-
fore seemed advisable to limit this study to a more concen-
trated analysis of a few ballets. Certainly, such an an-
alysis is more within the scope of the limited powers and
sources available to this writer. The ballets which have
been selected are, it is believed, representative and are,
in addition, among the better documented of the ballets de
Cour. The relatively extensive material available about
them makes more detailed analysis possible.

The rigorous examination to which the scenery
for the three ballets is subjected provides one of the

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[2]H. C. Darby, "The Centralization of the State,"
A Short History of France from Early Times to 1958, ed.
J. Hampden Jackson (Cambridge: The University Press, 1959),
p. 60.

justifications for the present study. In none of the pre-
vious works on the Ballet de Cour has the attention been
focused primarily upon the technical aspects of production.
Prunières includes an account of the available evidence
concerning the staging of the majority of the ballets but
does not attempt to analyze this material in any detail.
The present study endeavors to carry a step further the
work begun by Prunières. A second justification is to be
found in W. L. Wiley's recently published book, The Early
Public Theatre in France.[3] In his preface to that book,
Mr. Wiley states that his "more than two decades of contact
with the theatrical history of France have led to the con-
clusion that the fifty years from around 1580 to a little
beyond 1630 needed further study."[4] Professor Wiley's
recognition of this need resulted in his study of the French
public theatre during the years 1580-1630; the present the-
sis, as has been stated earlier, concerns the French Court
theatre during the same period of time. The fact that one
author, at least, recognizes the value of more detailed
investigation of this particular period of theatrical his-
tory has provided encouragement and an excellent incentive
to complete this study.

Within the bounds of the historical method, this

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[3]W. L. Wiley, The Early Public Theatre in France
(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

[4]Ibid., p. vii.

study has been organized with a view to fulfilling the purpose outlined above.

Following a brief résumé of the sources from which the elements of the <u>Ballet de Cour</u> derived, each ballet will be examined from two points of view: (1) a general, over-all view of each ballet as a whole, and (2) a more intensive analysis of the element of decor as it appears in each ballet. The first ballet considered will be the <u>Ballet comique de la Reine, Circé</u>. In its form, this ballet established a precedent which was followed, more or less rigidly, by all of the succeeding <u>ballets de Cour</u>. In its content, it achieved a balance among the elements of poetry, music, dance, and decor. Because the element of poetry was placed on an equal footing with those of music and dance, <u>Circé</u>, and the ballets of its genre, have been designated as Dramatic ballets. The <u>Ballet de la Délivrance de Renaud</u> is the second ballet chosen for analysis. The musical element tended to dominate in this ballet, and it has therefore been classified as Melodramatic. <u>Renaud</u>, and the ballets of its genre, contributed to the later development of the French opera. The final ballet to be considered is the <u>Douairière de Billebahaut</u>, "mounted with magnificence"[5] in 1626. In this ballet, the entries and the dancing were of far more importance than either the music or the decor,

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[5]Prunières, pp. 127-28.

and it is therefore representative of the <u>ballets à entrées</u>.
The <u>ballets de Cour</u> of this type were the forerunners of
what would, today, be termed Ballets.

None of the ballets considered in this study was
dominated by the spectacular element. To some degree, all
were spectacular, but in no one of them was the decor given
an emphasis greater than that of the other two components.
Not until the appearance of the Italian Opera in France
did the element of decor reach a level of prominence suffi-
cient to warrant the use of the term "machine play." The
way was paved for the machine play, however, by the <u>Ballet
de Cour</u>. Throughout the period under consideration, the
element of decor in the Court ballets underwent a series
of transformations, and each transformation brought the
ballets closer to the "polarized"[6] manner of staging char-
acteristic of Court spectacles during the reign of Louis
XIV. Prunières refers to the method of staging used for
<u>Circé</u> as <u>décor dispersé</u>.[7] Various units of the setting were
scattered throughout the auditorium, and the action of the
ballet moved freely from one unit to another. <u>The Deliver-
ance of Renaud</u> was staged in <u>décor successif</u>,[8] a method of

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[6]The term is Lawrenson's. See T. E. Lawrenson,
<u>The French Stage in the XVIIth Century</u> (Manchester: at
the University Press, 1957), p. 155.

[7]Prunières, pp. 80-81.

[8]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 144.

staging in which most, but not all, of the scenery was concentrated on a raised platform at one end of the auditorium. The decor for the ballets à entrées was extremely simple, but it was, in contrast to that of the Dramatic and Melodramatic ballets, concentrated entirely upon a raised stage at one end of the hall. In summary, these were the transformations experienced by the element of decor in the years from 1580 to 1640.

It is hoped that the plan of organization just outlined will make it possible to present a two-dimensional view of the French Ballet de Cour giving an insight into the genre as a whole and, more importantly, an understanding of the methods of staging used in its presentation.

The works published thus far on the Ballet de Cour from 1580 to 1640 have been exclusively French. The most comprehensive study is that of Henry Prunières who has written, in Le Ballet de Cour en France, a complete history of the origins and evolution of the Ballet de Cour to 1640. The one available study in English is Benserade and his Ballets de Cour, by Charles I. Silin,[9] which concerns the Ballet de Cour during the last half of the seventeenth century. The present study, therefore, necessarily relies heavily upon Prunière's work. The documentary

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[9]Charles I. Silin, Benserade and his Ballets de Cour (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1940).

material, included by him and not otherwise readily acces-
sible, has provided a foundation upon which the present
analysis rests. Additional details of production together
with illustrations of settings have been taken from <u>Le Décor</u>
<u>de Théatre en France du Moyen Age à 1925</u>, by Nicole Decugis
and Suzanne Reymond,[10] and from <u>Le Ballet</u>, by Boris Kochno
and Maria Luz.[11] Material for the brief discussion of his-
torical background which comprises the next chapter has
been obtained both from Prunières' work and from Volume I
of <u>Early English Stages: 1300 to 1660</u>, by Glynne Wickham.[12]

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[10]Nicole Decugis and Suzanne Reymond, <u>Le Décor</u>
<u>de Théatre en France du Moyen Age à 1925</u> (Paris: Compagnie
Française des Arts Graphiques, 1953).

[11]Boris Kochno and Maria Luz, <u>Le Ballet</u> (Paris:
Arts du Monde, Hachette, 1954).

[12]Glynne Wickham, <u>Early English Stages: 1300 to</u>
<u>1660</u>, Volume I 1300-1576 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul,
1959).

CHAPTER II

SOURCES FROM WHICH THE ELEMENTS OF THE
BALLET DE COUR WERE DERIVED

Before proceeding to the analyses of the particular ballets de Cour, it will be helpful to survey briefly the sources of the elements which were incorporated into these ballets. Glynne Wickham, in accounting for the origins of the English Masks, advances the theory that these courtly entertainments took their genesis not in religious festivals but in social recreation.

> This social recreation was provided of an evening in part by the amateur pastimes of singing and dancing, in part by the diversions provided by paid troupes of minstrels, either maintained or hired, and in part by customs of long, traditional usage. Some of these were derived from pre-Christian origins, the chief among which was mumming [the French momerie]. By the close of the fourteenth century, two outdoor recreations had developed far enough to become potential sources for borrowing: the secular Tournament and the religious Miracle Cycles. . . . The street pageant theatres of Royal Entries, too, were showing that it was possible to present an allegory of political intention in terms of dramatic spectacle.[1]

Mr. Wickham, moreover, is convinced that these origins were common to court entertainments throughout Europe.

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[1]Glynne Wickham, Early English Stages: 1300 to 1660 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), I, 206-207.

> The starting point of the enquiry must
> be the constitution and activities of the
> minstrel troupes; for, as early as the be-
> ginning of the fourteenth century, they had
> become firmly established in all European
> countries as the recognized entertainers of
> the lords temporal and spiritual.[2]

A look at the activities of these minstrel troupes and at the other entertainments mentioned by Mr. Wickham will reveal the elements which eventually make their way into the <u>Ballet de Cour</u> and are, therefore, of concern in this study.

The musical element is intimately bound up with that of poetry, and thus with the minstrels.

> Landowners of the fourteenth century
> who were willing to maintain a private troupe
> of minstrels or to hire one from a neighbor
> for occasional festivities could expect an
> evening's entertainment not dissimilar to
> the vaudeville or variety bill of our own
> times. . . . The troupe was led by a poet
> whose recitations were quite as popular as
> the skills of his dependent buffoons, gym-
> nasts and instrumentalists.[3]

This poet was called a <u>trouvère</u>; his poems, <u>chansons de geste</u>.

> The trouvères managed to convince edu-
> cated society in South-Western Europe that
> a modern language was as suitable for com-
> position as the ancient ones. Their verses
> conveyed stories in a familiar tongue, in-
> telligible to the ladies as well as to the
> men.[4]

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[2]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 181.

[3]<u>Ibid</u>.

[4]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 182.

The Crusades, by bringing together men from all over Christendom, "assured to the new literature a far wider hearing than it might otherwise have obtained,"[5] and, themselves, supplied inspiration for tales of chivalry and romance.

> These tales, whether of Godfrey of Boulogne and the Conquest of Jerusalem or of Jason and the Golden Fleece, were told in terms of contemporary ideals and contemporary manners. . . . Significance counted for more than fact and, as time went on, the original tales were embellished with every literary fiction which fancy could invent to decorate them.[6]

These poems were recited or, "more probably, chanted to the accompaniment of some musical instrument."[7] In this, the poets were but "repeating the practice of their predecessors in Greece, Homer being the chief among them."[8] The musical accompaniment of the lyre or harp was intended to supply rhythmic rather than melodic assistance. "The 'recitative' of the opera and oratorio," Mr. Wickham adds, "is probably a direct survival."[9]

The chanting of poems or _récits_ played an important part in many of the spectacular entertainments of the sixteenth century. At the fêtes of Bayonne, for example,

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[5] _Ibid._

[6] _Ibid._ The character of Godfrey appears in the _Ballet de la Délivrance de Renaud._ _Infra,_ pp. 60-61.

[7] _Ibid._

[8] _Ibid._, p. 378.

[9] _Ibid._

in 1565, which "were reckoned among the most sumptuous of the century,"[10] the court admired this unusual nautical spectacle:

> Up the river advanced a whale and a gigantic tortoise, carrying on their backs numerous sirens singing the praises of the Queen, while Orpheus celebrated on his lyre the virtues of Phillip II. Finally, Neptune, himself, arrived drawn in his chariot by sea horses and accompanied by tritons.[11]

Musical elements, such as those in this spectacle at Bayonne, will be seen, throughout the remainder of this survey of sources, to play an important part in court festivities of all kinds.

Sources of scenic elements are found primarily in the Royal Entries, the Tournaments, and the Feasts given in connection with these festivities or on other special occasions. Typical of the Royal Entries celebrated in the sixteenth century was that honoring Henry II at Rouen in 1561. It consisted of a series of wagons or floats on which were represented the adventures of Hercules and other allegorical and mythological scenes. Upon a rock (built to roll on wheels) Orpheus stroked his harp and the Muses accompanied him, playing violins. The char or chariot of Religion carried five ladies magnificently costumed who "after having humbly greeted the King" began "to sing

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[10]Henry Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France (Paris: Henri Laurens, Éditeur, 1914), pp. 45-46.

[11]Ibid.

together melodiously, each one her own part of the music,
a pleasant song of praises."[12] The similarities between
this real life entry and the entrées which form an integral
part of the ballets de Cour will become apparent in the
course of this study.

Scenic elements of a slightly different type appear in connection with the royal Tournaments. Floats or
chariots were used in these spectacles, as they were in the
Entries, but, in addition, the Tournaments boasted stationary units of decor. Such, for instance, were those used
in the most elaborate type of Medieval Tournament, the Pas
d'Armes.

> Originally, some suitable spot in open
> country had been chosen for this, with a
> narrow defile such as a pass or bridge which
> the challenger could only get through or
> over by fighting with the defendent. By
> the fifteenth century, however, so popular
> had the Pas d'Armes become that it was
> normal to erect an artificial obstacle,
> with lists adjacent, in the streets and
> squares of towns. Castles, gateways and
> arches were set up to be defended against
> all comers. . . . Nor would it suffice
> simply to appear before the Pas in armour.
> A labyrinthine, allegorical fantasy was
> thought necessary to explain the presence
> of the knight [who] designed his method of
> arrival before the Pas to suit his story;
> and, ever more frequently, this became a
> symbolic pavilion or pageant car.[13]

Prunières provides a description of one such Pas

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[12] Ibid., pp. 40-41.

[13] Wickham, pp. 17-18.

d'Armes, given by Charles IX at the Carnival of Fontaine-
bleau in 1564.

> At the entrance to the field rose a
> hermitage whose belfrey announced the coming
> of the assailants. At one side, there was
> an enchanted palace defended by a band of
> demons, its door guarded by a giant and a
> midget. Six ladies, whose Beauty was the
> object of the challenge, appeared "dressed
> as Nymphs on horseback," and, after having
> made the tour of the field, they ranged them-
> selves beneath the royal gallery. Thus began
> the joust, in the course of which the defend-
> ers of the palace were victorious over the
> assailants.[14]

After a tournament such as this one, everyone

retired to the castle for dinner, which was followed by

the prize-giving, perhaps some singing, and most certainly

dancing. A detailed account of the activities which fol-

lowed the Tournaments at Chauvenci in 1285, is recorded by

one Jacques Bretex. His colorful description provides many

details concerning the elements of music and dance.

> In pavilions, in rooms and in arbours
> as large as markets, trestle tables were laid
> out. . . . Of the food I'll say no more be-
> cause it defeats description, so much was
> there to eat and drink. After eating for a
> while, the guests devoted themselves to sing-
> ing. They rose to their feet and removed
> the tables, trestles and tops. They played
> flutes, tabors and flageolets and, generally,
> were as merry as could be. Then the singing
> began, Madame de Chini first as she was the
> initiator of the feast, its very pivot, a
> lady of wealth and breeding. After her
> everyone stepped forward to sing. Curses

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[14]Prunières, p. 45, citing Recueil et discours
du voyage du Roy Charles IX. . . . ès années 1564 à 1565
(Bibl. Nat. Lb 33/156), pp. 6-7.

descend on those that won't join the dances. Nothing could look more delightful than the ladies as they advance, each led forward by the hand by a knight-bachelor. Beautiful it seemed and beautiful, indeed, it was.[15]

It is interesting to note that this account by Bretex was written in the form of a <u>chanson de geste</u>. By the end of the fourteenth century, royal guests at feasts such as the one he describes were being entertained by dramatized versions of these poems of the trouvères. One of the primary uses of scenic elements seems to have been in connection with such dramatizations. There was, for instance, the feast given in 1389 to celebrate the marriage of Charles V of France to Isabella of Bavaria. It was the occasion for an enactment of the siege of Troy and the following scenery was provided:

"In the middle of the banqueting hall was a castle built on a square frame, forty foot high and twenty foot square. It had four towers, one on each corner, and another, higher tower placed in the middle. The castle itself represented the City of Troy, and the central tower the Palace of Ilion. . . . This castle moved on four wheels, subtly concealed within.

"Mounted on a similar vehicle, in which the means of motion could not be detected, was a pavilion carrying those Grecian Kings and others who long ago laid siege to Troy. There was also, as if by way of reinforcement, a ship, splendidly made, which could easily contain a hundred soldiers. All three--castle, pavilion and ship--moved by the art and ingenuity of these wheels.

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[15]Wickham, pp. 17-18.

> "A great assault was made by those in
> both the ship and the pavilion against the
> castle, whose occupants stoutly withstood
> it."16

In spite of their great size, these scenic units were pro-
vided with casters. They could thus be moved during the
course of the action and removed, at length, to clear the
floor for dancing. These French entertainments of the late
fourteenth century are important, according to Wickham,
because

> the design to which they conform is funda-
> mental for the next two hundred years. . . .
> The multiple scenic structures employed in
> the representation of the siege of Jerusalem
> and the siege of Troy are of the same type
> as those used in Balthassar Beaujoyeaux's
> Ballet Comique de la Royne, of 1582, or any
> Mask of the Tudor Court.17

The element of dance has already been accounted
for indirectly; it seems to have accompanied festivities
of every kind. But what of occasions which were devoted
specifically to the dance? Quite probably, they grew out
of the informal dancing at feasts such as the ones just
described. Eventually, it may be supposed, some of the
dancers took it upon themselves to become "professionals,"
performers rather than merely guests. In 1377, at a feast
given by Charles V to entertain the Emperor Charles IV,
such dancers played an important role in the entertainment.

16Ibid., pp. 213-15, citing Sir John Froissart,
Croniques de Froissart, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove (Brussels,
1872), XIV, 24.

17Ibid., pp. 215-16.

> Upon a signal from the master of the
> house, the trumpeteers sounded brilliant
> fanfares and the momerie [i.e. the proces-
> sion of disguised personages] entered, being
> in retinue, preceded by torch bearers and
> musicians, mounted upon a wagon which came
> to rest facing the tables. . . . The figures,
> masked and costumed in painted cloths, de-
> scended from the wagon and danced a morris
> dance to the accompaniment of voices and
> instruments.[18]

In the fifteenth century, says Prunières, the

morris dance was the theatrical dance par excellence, be-

cause, for its execution, it was necessary to be disguised

and to carry a mask. In the fêtes of the court or the pre-

sentations of Mysteries, the morris was danced by persons

magnificently dressed.

> The step of the morris dance seems to
> have been, in the Middle Ages, very free and
> capricious. It consisted essentially in a
> skipping march, interrupted by the clicking
> of heels, which permitted graceful evolutions
> across the hall. Although danced generally
> by several persons, the morris was not, as
> the Italian brando, a figure dance symmet-
> rically ordered. Each dancer followed his
> fancy without bothering to trace patterns
> determined in advance.[19]

The influx of Italian choreographers to the French

Court in the second half of the sixteenth century started

a vogue for the Italian figure dance, one form of which

was the brando.[20] These dances, referred to in French as

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[18]Prunières, pp. 7-8.

[19]Ibid., pp. 8-9.

[20]Ibid., p. 53.

<u>ballets</u>, were enthusiastically received, and the Italian choreographers basked in the favor of Henry II and the monarchs who succeeded him. Catherine de Medici, particularly, loved the dance. She liked to dabble with the invention of dance steps and to dream up new figures.[21] "With such strong protection," says Prunières, "the ballets could not fail to win a place of honor in the entertainments of the Court."[22]

The most famous ballet danced at the Court during the reign of Charles IX was that staged by Catherine de Medici in 1573 to honor the Polish ambassadors. Of this ballet, Prunières writes:

> One cannot mistake . . . the real character of this fête. It marked, not, as some say, the coming of the <u>ballet de Cour</u>, but more simply the vogue and the triumph in France of the figure dance. The <u>ballet des Polonais</u> introduced nothing new. We are already familiar with the wagons in the form of mountains, the clouds of silver gauze, the <u>récits</u> sung by nymphs and characters in the ballet. The <u>ballet comique de la Reine</u>, on the contrary, will be an original invention.[23]

Though the <u>ballet des Polonais</u> was not, in Prunières' view, a true <u>ballet de Cour</u>, it nevertheless revealed the progress which had been made in France by this time in the development of the dance. The <u>Ballet de Cour</u> will reflect this progress.

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[21]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 54.

[22]<u>Ibid</u>.

[23]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 56-57.

An attempt has been made in this brief background survey to indicate the kinds of entertainment enjoyed by French courtiers in the years prior to 1580. The over-all impression is, as Wickham observes,

> one of visual splendour, at once rich and delicate, as substantial and ornate as the corresponding decoration of churches, palaces and mansions of the Middle Ages.[24]

An attempt has been made, also, to bring into focus three of the elements which will play an important part in the development of the Ballet de Cour: the music, derived from the chants of the trouvères; the decor, used in connection with Royal Entries, Tournaments, and Feasts; and the dance, developed early in conjunction with courtly feasts and elaborated by the Italian choreographers in their more formal ballets.

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[24]Wickham, p. 11.

CHAPTER III

AN ANALYSIS OF THE BALLET COMIQUE DE LA REINE, CIRCÉ

The Elements of Music, Dance, and Decor in Circé

Like its courtly predecessors, the Ballet comique de la Reine, Circé, was conceived as social recreation. It was requisitioned by the Queen Mother, Louise, to highlight the celebrations in honor of the marriage of her sister, Mademoiselle de Vaudemont, to the Duke of Joyeuse. The responsibility for composing and producing the ballet was given to Balthassar Beaujoyeux, an Italian violinist and conductor, who had been at the French Court for about twenty-five years and had been active in staging earlier entertainments.[1] Despite feverish activity on the part of the composers, choreographers, and technicians under Beaujoyeux's direction, "preparations for Circé were not fully completed in time for the marriage."[2] The wedding celebration took place, as scheduled, from the eighteenth to the twenty-fourth of September, 1581; the ballet had to be postponed until the following month.

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[1] Henry Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France (Paris: Henri Laurens, Éditeur, 1914), pp. 70-71, 78-79.

[2] Ibid., p. 89.

> On Sunday, October 15, 1581, the French
> Court was treated to a new type of <u>diver-</u>
> <u>tissement</u>, a performance which offered all
> the attractions of earlier entertainments,
> but grafted them upon a coherent and unified
> drama in such a way that music and dancing,
> instead of interrupting the action, partici-
> pate in it actively: <u>récits</u>, songs, dances,
> and pantomime all have a real dramatic pur-
> pose within the whole.[3]

It is difficult, when considering a production which involves

elements not usually in a "script," to demonstrate the rea-

sons for a statement such as the foregoing one by Silin.

Music, dance, and pantomime, in performance, do not lend

themselves readily to written analysis. In spite of this

difficulty, however, it is possible to present in summary

form the plan of the ballet, <u>Circé</u>--a verbal account of

what took place--and to point out the elements of music,

dance, and decor as they appear in this summary. In this

way, it may be possible to estimate the relative emphasis

placed upon each of these elements and to see, moreover,

their "dramatic purpose within the whole."

The ballet, <u>Circé</u>, established a form which was

followed, more or less rigidly, by all succeeding <u>ballets</u>

<u>de Cour</u>. A Prologue or opening <u>récit</u> is followed by three

main acts, consisting of several entries each, which are,

in turn, followed by the Grand Ballet. The evening's enter-

tainment culminates in the no longer dramatic, but strictly

social, dancing of the Grand Ball. In succeeding ballets,

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[3]Charles I. Silin, <u>Benserade and his Ballets de</u>
<u>Cour</u> (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1940),
p. 176.

the number of acts will vary, as will the number of entries
within each act, but otherwise all will be moulded to the
basic pattern set by <u>Circé</u>. This form may be seen in the
following summary, as the action of the ballet unfolds.

<u>PROLOGUE</u>: A gentleman comes running out of Circe's <u>garden</u>, and, showing by his actions a deep-rooted terror, approaches the foot	DECOR
of <u>the King's throne</u> where <u>he explains</u> that the fearsome magician, Circe, has enticed him into the enchanted gardens and holds him captive	DECOR AND POETRY
there. <u>He begs</u> the King to combat the sorceress and put an end to her deadly exploits.	POETRY

<u>FIRST ACT</u>: Scarcely has he finished when Circe appears, furious, and, though she looks everywhere, she does not see her fugitive. She breathes out her sadness in a <u>complaint</u> and goes back in "with the countenance of a woman most vexed." At this moment, some sirens and	MUSIC
tritons enter the hall, <u>singing</u>. A <u>wagon built in the form of a fountain</u> advances in their wake, carrying the marine divinities, Thetis and Glaucus, surrounded by nereids. Upon seats of gold at the base of the fountain are naiads, magnificently dressed. These are the dancers of the ballet, the heroines of the fête, and include the Queen Mother, Louise, as well as the princess of Lorraine, the Duchess of Guise, and other ladies of noble birth. A <u>choir</u> of eight tritons, represented by the "singers of the King's chamber," <u>playing upon lyres, lutes, harps, and flutes</u>, close the march.	MUSIC DECOR MUSIC

The procession stops, and Thetis and Peleus (played by the composer Beaulieu and his wife) hold <u>a conversation to music</u>; the naiads, descending from their wagon, give themselves up to the pleasure of <u>the dance</u>. At that moment, Circe happens by, and, with her magic wand, at once strikes all the figures immobile.	POETRY AND MUSIC DANCE

<u>SECOND ACT</u>: Scarcely has she retired than <u>a cloud</u> is seen descending from the top of the hall, carrying Mercury, who <u>sings a long récit</u> in mid-air and, before touching ground, sprinkles the oil of Moly on the violinists and on the nymphs, who instantly resume their interrupted <u>dance</u>. Circe, furious, again fixes	DECOR MUSIC DANCE

them to the spot. She even enchants Mercury, himself, and, after <u>exulting in a long mono-logue</u>, leads away all the captives into her garden. Such a crime cannot go unpunished.   POETRY

<u>THIRD ACT</u>: From all sides, satyrs and nymph-dryads run up to deliver the maids of the sea. The numph, Opis, <u>adjures Pan</u> in   POETRY
<u>his grove</u> to aid them in their enterprise, and   DECOR
he promises his support. The four virtues come to the rescue. Minerva makes her entrance on
<u>a wagon drawn by a monstrous serpent</u> and declares DECOR
to the king that she comes to rob Circe of her   POETRY
charms. Summoned by Minerva, Jupiter descends
from the sky <u>upon an eagle</u> to the <u>strains of</u>   DECOR
<u>the choir</u> from <u>the gold arch</u>. Pan comes out   MUSIC AND
of his grove accompanied by satyrs armed with   DECOR
stout rods, and all march in a band to assault
the palace. Circe greets them with <u>a harangue</u>
"firey and full of arrogance" but the gods rush   POETRY
upon the garden and enter it. Jupiter strikes
Circe with his thunderbolt, drives her prisoner
across the hall, and places her in the hands
of the king, to whom <u>he presents</u> his two child-   POETRY
ren, Minerva and Mercury, finally delivered.
The dryads, as a sign of rejoicing, begin <u>to</u>
<u>dance</u> and thus approach the garden of Circe   DANCE
to seek their sisters. The naiads, "disen-
chanted," appear then and, joining with the
other nymphs, they form the <u>Grand Ballet to</u>   DANCE
<u>the sound of violins</u>.   MUSIC

After an infinity of figures and revolutions across the hall, "the Naiads and Dryads make a grand bow to his majesty" and
<u>the grand ball</u> begins. The dancing continues   DANCE
until 3:30 in the morning when the King and
Queen retire, "since the night is already
very advanced."[4]

Judging from this brief account, the elements

of which <u>Circé</u> was composed were fairly evenly balanced.

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[4]<u>Balet comique de la Royne faict aux nopces de</u>
<u>Monsieur le Duc de Joyeuse et de Mademoiselle de Vaudemont</u>
<u>sa soeur. Par Baltasar de Beaujoyeulx, valet de chambre</u>
<u>du Roy et de la Royne, sa mère</u> (Paris: Adr. le Roy. Rob,
Ballard et Mamert Patisson, 1582), Bibl. Nat. <u>Reserve</u> Ln[27]
10436 (in-4°), cited by Prunières, pp. 90-93.

The element of poetry, although not of concern in this study, received an emphasis comparable to that of the music, dance, and decor. For this reason, Circé has been classified as a Dramatic ballet.[5]

> Circe is the first ballet de Cour which shows a theatrical intention; in which one finds a plot, certainly very vague, but sequential nevertheless; in which the diverse entries, the récits, the songs, the dances contribute equally to the dramatic action. . . . One senses here a creative will which organizes the disparate elements borrowed from earlier fêtes.[6]

The musical element in this ballet is found in three main forms. The first is that of vocal solos such as Circe's complaint in Act I and Mercury's récit in Act II. These solos were probably sung to the accompaniment of a lute.[7] Secondly, there are choruses, including that sung by the sirens and tritons at the beginning of Act I and the "strains of the choir from the gold arch" which accompany Jupiter's descent in Act III. A forty-voice choir was concealed in the voûte dorée for this chorus.[8] Finally, there is instrumental music, beginning with an Overture from behind the scenes,[9] and including music by the musicians of the King's chamber during the entrance procession of Act I,

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[5]Prunières, pp. 77, 94-95.

[6]Ibid., p. 57.

[7]Manfred F. Bukofzer, Music in the Baroque Era: from Monteverdi to Bach (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1947), p. 142.

[8]Prunières, pp. 186-87.

[9]Ibid., p. 90.

accompaniment for the spoken dialogue between Thetis and Peleus in Act I, and accompaniment for the dancing in all three acts.

The dances for the ballet were all, no doubt, elaborately choreographed, and the majority were probably Italian figure dances. The dance of the naiads, in Act I, is halted prematurely by Circe, leaving the dancers frozen in mid-figure until the arrival of Mercury in Act II; the rallying of the troops in Act III, though not literally a dance, must certainly have required choreography; finally, the dryads dance at the conclusion of Act III and are soon joined by their sisters, "the heroines of the fête," for the finale, or Grand Ballet. That this dance, at least, was a figure dance is apparent from Prunières' description of the "infinity of figures and revolutions" made by the dancers across the hall.[10]

The decor for the ballet, Circé, consisted in a number of separate units, some permanent, some probably semi-permanent, and some entirely mobile. Circe's palace and the enchanted garden were stationary units located at one end of the hall. The voûte dorée (gold arch) which sheltered the musicians, together with the Grove of Pan, were probably semi-permanent structures which remained in place throughout the performance but could be removed at

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[10]Supra, p. 19.

its conclusion to make room for the purely social dancing
of the grand ball. Of the movable units, there were four:
the fountain float; Minerva's chariot, "drawn by a monstrous
serpent"; Mercury's cloud machine; and Jupiter's eagle.
The staging of Circé, according to Prunières, "offers a
good example of décor dispersé."[11] He explains: "The
ballet comique de la Reine was played, sung, mimed, and
danced, not upon a stage but in the whole expanse of the
hall. The mise en scène was thus dispersed."[12] The arrange-
ment of the decor for the ballet may be seen in the reprint
of an engraving of the Prologue (Fig. 1, p. 27).

In addition to achieving a balance among the di-
verse elements of music, dance, and decor, Beaujoyeux man-
aged to weave these elements into a coherent dramatic pre-
sentation. Although the plot of Circé is reminiscent of
the "labyrinthine, allegorical fantasies"[13] of the Medieval
Tournaments, it does tie together the various elements and
give unity to the production as a whole. It is this in-
herent unity which has earned for Circé its designation
as the first ballet de Cour.[14]

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[11]Prunières, pp. 80-81.

[12]Ibid., pp. 144-45.

[13]Glynne Wickham, Early English Stages: 1300 to
1660 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), p. 17.
Supra p. 11.

[14]Prunières, pp. 82, 93.

Fig. 1 - Engraving of the Prologue for the Ballet comique de la Reine, Circé, from Cyril W. Beaumont, Ballet Design: Past & Present (New York: Studio Publications, Inc., 1946).

The Element of Decor and its
Representation in Circé

The setting for the ballet, Circé, exemplifies
the earliest type of staging to be considered in tracing
the development of decor from 1580 to 1640. As has already
been noted, Circé was presented with décor dispersé, a type
of staging which involved units of scenery scattered through-
out "the whole expanse of the hall."[15] For this reason,
an analysis of the decor of this ballet must take into con-
sideration not only the scenery used but also the theatre
or hall in which that scenery located.

The place was the Hôtel de Bourbon, situated on
the rue des Poulies a little in front of the site now oc-
cupied by the colonnade of the Louvre.[16] On Sunday night,
October 15, 1581, one room in this building--the Salle du
Petit-Bourbon--was the scene of great excitement.

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[15]Prunières, pp. 144-45. Prunières writes: "The
decor simultané and dispersé served for the ballets-comiques,
the décor successif, for the ballets-melodramatiques."
Decugis uses only the term simultané in referring to the
decor of Circé: "the décor simultané was transformed then
into the décors successifs under the influence of the in-
ventive Italian machinists." (p. 56). The two terms, simul-
tané and dispersé, would seem to be distinguished by the
fact that the one implies a reference to time, the other
to place. Under this interpretation, the above statement
by Prunières would mean that the settings for Circé were
scattered in various places throughout the hall and were
all visible to the audience at the same time, or simultane-
ously.

[16]Ibid., p. 134, n. 2.

>According to a chronicler, a bit of a
>braggart, ten thousand persons gazed, in
>1581, upon the marvels of the Ballet comique
>de la Reine in the salle de Bourbon. This
>number must be very exaggerated, but it is
>certain that the announcement of ballets
>danced by the King or Queen at each carnival
>created a great furor in Paris and that it
>was not only the petit bourgeois who dreamed
>of penetrating the hall for the spectacle.
>But how much punishment, how much embarrass-
>ment, how much bother it must have been
>necessary to endure to see the King's ballet
>when one was not a great noble or prince of
>the blood.[17]

The spectators who thronged the Salle du Petit-Bourbon for
the ballet sat either on bleachers in the amphitheatre which
had been especially constructed for the occasion,[18] or in
one of the two galleries which ran along the sides of the
room above the bleachers. The galleries may be seen in the
engraving of the Prologue; one small section of the amphi-
theatre is also visible in the lower right hand corner of
the picture.

"The Petit-Bourbon," writes Prunières, "was one
of the more vast among the halls where ballets were ordi-
narily given."[19] Lawrenson adds that it was "bigger than
the Grande Salle du Louvre" (where the Deliverance of Renaud
was presented in 1617), and that "it housed those

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[17]Ibid., p. 134.

[18]Prunières, p. 135. "For the Ballet comique de
la Reine, Beaujoyeulx had erected bleachers in the amphi-
theatre which rose through forty degrees from the floor to
one gallery, above which ran a second gallery."

[19]Ibid., pp. 134-35.

para-theatrical ceremonies whose public could not be con-
tained in this latter."[20] Exactly how large was the hall
in which Circé was staged? There seems to be little agree-
ment among authorities as to its dimensions. Of the two
known sources of information about the size of the hall,
the one most often quoted is Sauval's Histoire et recherches
des antiquités de ville de Paris, published in Paris in
1724. Although Prunières seems to have had access to this
work, for it appears in his bibliography, he does not give
it as the source of his dimensions, but refers, rather, to
a second source, a description found in the fourth tome of
the Mercure françois, dated 1615.[21] Sauval's measurements
are quoted by Lawrenson, and a translation of the relevant
passage is given by Wiley in his book, The Early Public
Theatre in France. The two passages are included at this
time, since they provide a basis for the analysis which
follows.

> Sa largeur est de dex-huit pas communs
> sur trente-cinq toises de longeur, et la
> couverture si rehaussée que le comble paraît
> aussi élevé que ceux des édifices de Saint
> Germain et de Saint Eustache.[22]

> It is eighteen normal paces wide by
> thirty-five toises long and the roof is
> lifted so high that the summit seems to be

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[20]T. E. Lawrenson, The French Stage in the XVIIth
Century (Manchester: at the University Press, 1957), p. 168.

[21]Prunières, p. 135.

[22]Lawrenson, p. 168, citing Eugene Despois, Le
théatre français sous Louis XIV (Paris: 1874), p. 24.

as elevated as those of the churches of
Saint Germain and of Saint Eustache.[23]

One look at the key words in the first passage,
pas communs and toises, suggests immediately the main cause
of disagreement among the various authors who have relied
upon Sauval's work. The problem is one of transposing
Sauval's measurements, given in "normal paces" and "toises"
or fathoms, into corresponding measurements in meters or
feet. The confusion that results may be readily imagined;
it becomes manifest when a few actual figures are brought
into the discussion. Wiley, for example, writes: "The
salle du Petit-Bourbon was, then, around forty-five feet
wide by two hundred twenty-one feet long,"[24] but he pro-
vides a footnote explaining that his measurements "are based
on the assumption that a pas commun was thirty inches and
a toise six feet four inches."[25] Lawrenson contributes
the following interpretation: "This length of 70 yards
by a width of about 18 would make it an extraordinarily
long building, but the iconography of the subject bears
this out on the whole."[26] He gives no basis for his fig-
ures, but he does take exception to the measurements offered
by Madeleine Horn-Monval for, he says, she "gives Sauval's

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[23]W. L. Wiley, The Early Public Theatre in France
(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 231.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Lawrenson, p. 168.

35 _toises_ as 70 meters, presumably on the assumption that
the _toise_, or fathom, is two meters and not two yards."[27]
From this statement, it may be inferred that Lawrenson equates
two yards with one fathom, and in this, he agrees with both
the _Webster's Collegiate Dictionary_[28] and _Webster's New
World Dictionary of the American Language_.[29]

Pruniéres supplies still another set of measure-
ments, differing basically from those cited so far. The
hall, he writes, "measured eighteen fathoms in length by
about eight wide, plus, at its end, a sort of half-circle
'a half-round of seven fathoms deep by eight and one half
wide.'"[30] His footnote referring to the article in the
Mercure françois immediately follows, and presumably docu-
ments, the quotation concerning the dimensions of the apse.
The article may also be his source for the dimensions of
the hall, itself, since his figures bear no resemblance
to Sauval's. Pruniéres transposes his measurements into
meters, giving, for the hall, 35 meters long by 15.50 meters

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[27]_Ibid_., citing Madeleine Horn-Monval, "Le théatre
du Petit Bourbon," _Revue d'Histoire du Théatre_, tomes I-II,
1948, pp. 46 et seq.

[28]_Webster's Collegiate Dictionary_, 5th ed. (Spring-
field, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., Publishers, 1940), p.
365. _Webster's New International_ (unabridged, 2nd ed.)
gives 1 fathom = 6'0" or 1.829 meters, p. 1522.

[29]_Webster's New World Dictionary of the American
Language_ (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing
Company, 1957), p. 529.

[30]Pruniéres, p. 135.

wide, and for the apse, 16.50 long by 13.50 wide. Apparent-
ly, Prunières has obtained these figures upon a basis of
1.94 meters = 1 fathom. He is thus in agreement with Wiley,
for 1.94 meters equal 6.3647 feet or six feet four inches.[31]
In view of this basic agreement between the two men, the
wide divergence in their measurements becomes a matter for
speculation. An effort to resolve the confusion resulting
from the different methods used by these authors for express-
ing their measurements and to reconcile the conflicting
dimensions which are evident regardless of how they are
expressed has led to the preparation of the following chart,
giving each author's opinion on the dimensions of the hall,
and a translation of all measurements into fathoms, normal
paces, meters, and feet. Figures not given by the authors
have been supplied and enclosed in brackets.

Several points of agreement and disagreement are
brought into focus by this chart. For the discussion which
follows, it will be well to concentrate upon the clash be-
tween Wiley and Prunières, since they presumably represent
two different sources, whereas Lawrenson and Horn-Monval
simply reiterate Sauval's figures, and their interpretations
of these figures have already been considered. To aid in

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[31]The basis for this calculation: 39.37" = 1
meter. Miss Horn-Monval's basis for transposing Sauval's
measurements is 2 meters = 1 fathom, which approximates
very closely the basis used by both Prunières and Wiley.
Wiley uses 6'4"; Prunières uses 1.94 meters which is 6.38';
Miss Horn-Monval uses 2 meters which is 6.56'.

TABLE 1: MEASUREMENTS OF THE <u>SALLE DU PETIT-BOURBON</u>

| Dimensions	Fathoms	Paces	Meters	Feet
Wiley:				
Length of hall:	35	(88.4)[a]	(67.9)	221
Width of hall:	(7.10)	18	(13.7)	45
Prunières:				
Length of hall:	18	(45.93)	35	114-114.83[b]
Width of hall:	8	(20.26)	15.50	50.66-50.85
Length of apse:	7	(17.73)	13.50	44.33-44.29
Width of apse:	8 1/2	(21.53)	16.50	53.83-54.13
Lawrenson:				
Length of hall:	35	(88.4)	(67.9)	70 yds. (210 ft.)
Width of hall:	(7.10)	18	(13.7)	18 yds. (54 ft.)
Horn-Monval:				
Length of hall:	35	(88.4)	70	(229)

a. Measurements have been figured on the following bases:

   1.94 m. = 1 fathom; 6'4" = 1 fathom; 39.37" = 1 meter, 30" = 1 pace.

b. First figure indicates number of feet in 18 fathoms; second figure indicates number of feet in 35 meters.

the analysis of the disagreement between Wiley and Prunières, the dimensions given by each are represented diagrammatically in Fig. 2.

What can be said, in view of the foregoing chart, concerning these diagrams of the Salle du Petit-Bourbon? Where do the disagreements lie? First of all, there is the matter of how the various dimensions are expressed: Prunières uses fathoms throughout, Wiley (Sauval) uses both fathoms and paces. It is curious that Sauval chose to express his measurements in two different units. Why should he have done so? One theory which might account for his strange behavior--and would also account for the disagreements between the measurements of the two authors under consideration--is based upon the fact that Prunières' source is dated 1615 (27 years after the production of Circé) whereas Sauval's is dated 1724. The theory assumes that Prunières' source is the original one and that Sauval had access to this source, but either misread it, or erred in his translation of the dimensions from fathoms into paces. Suppose that the dimensions were originally given entirely in fathoms, as Prunières' are. Suppose, in addition, that Sauval mistook fathoms for paces, and, further, mistook the measurements of width for those of length, and vice versa. Prunières gives two width measurements, 8 fathoms and 8 1/2 fathoms. These two numbers, if placed side by side, would become 88 1/2. If this last number were read as paces,

Fig. 2 – Two Diagrams of the Salle du Petit-Bourbon Showing the Measurements of Prunières and Wiley.
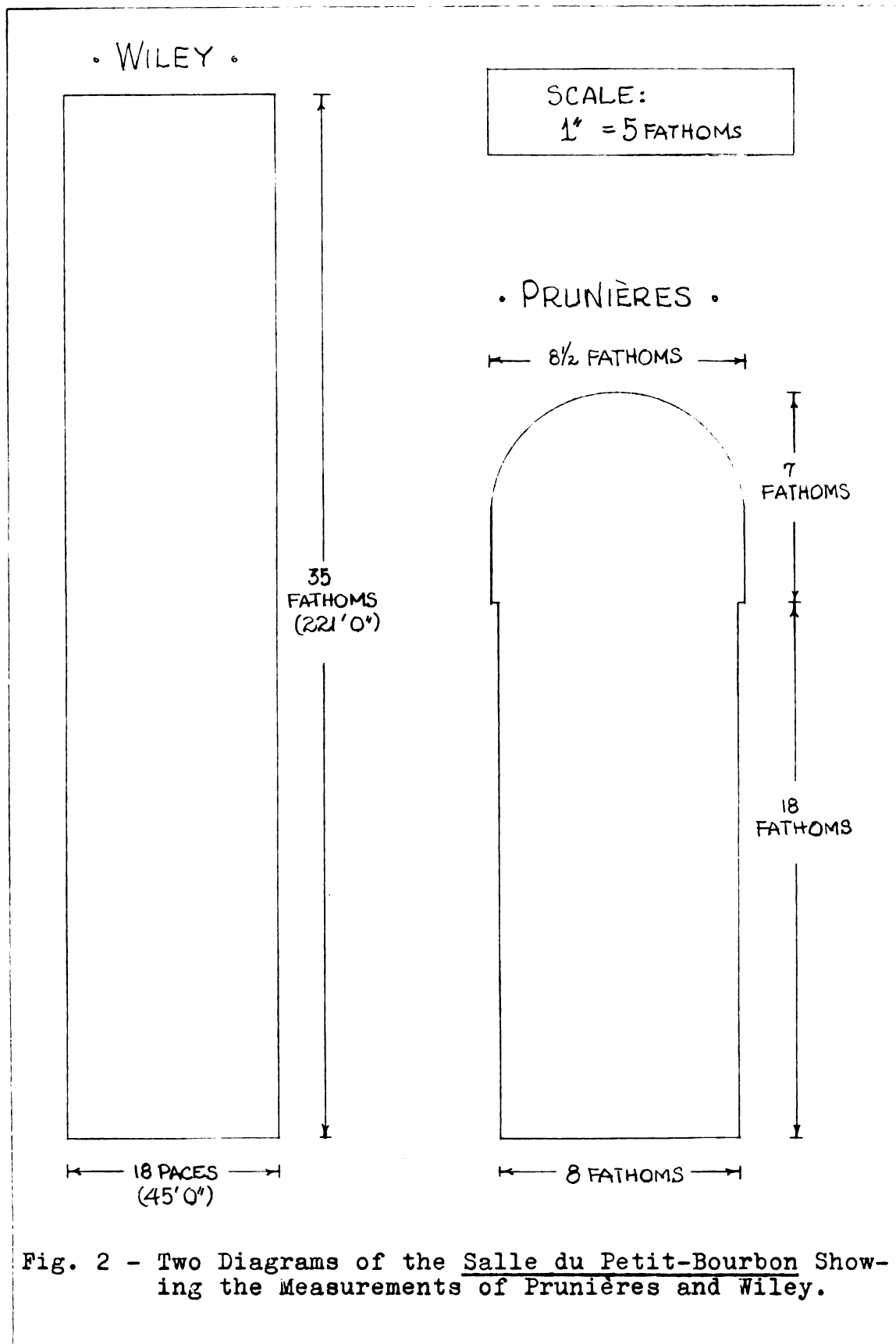
it would be equivalent to 35 fathoms, which is the figure
which Sauval gives for the length of the hall;[32] while
Prunières' 18 fathoms in length, read as 18 paces, would
give the figure which Sauval records as the width of the
hall. If this theory were correct, and it is admittedly
a bit strained, Sauval's measurements would all be in paces,
and credit for the correct measurements would go to Prun-
ières and to the source from which he obtained his figures.
Prunières would probably subscribe to this theory, for, at
one point, he writes:

> Sauval, who made himself the echo of
> traditions relative to the Academy, without
> concerning himself further with chronological
> exactness, has recorded the memory of the
> influence exercised by Baif and his collab-
> orators upon the fêtes of the Court. . . . [33]

On the other hand, it is possible that Prunières misread or
misinterpreted his source, splitting the figure 88 1/2 in
two and taking the two figures as width measurements, while
assuming the 18 to refer to length. Whichever way the
matter is viewed, however, there still remains a measure-
ment of 7 fathoms, given by Prunières as the length of the
apse, to be accounted for. Its presence brings this par-
ticular flight of speculation to an abrupt landing.

Another take-off might lead in this direction:

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[32] 88.4 paces = 35 fathoms on the basis of 30" =
1 pace, and 6'4" = 1 fathom.

[33] Prunières, p. 68.

the width of the hall given by Wiley, when transposed into
fathoms, equals almost exactly the figure given by Prunières
as the length of the apse.[34] Along with this fact, consider
an apparent inconsistency which shows up in the two width
measurements given by Prunières. If they are correct, the
width of the apse (8 1/2 fathoms) exceeds that of the hall
proper (8 fathoms), a state of affairs which seems archi-
tecturally unlikely. Suppose that these two measurements
were, in truth, not measurements of width, but of length,
and that the length-of-the-apse measurement of 7 fathoms
were, instead, a measure of the width of the hall, as Wiley
maintains. If the newly obtained length measurements were
added to Prunières' already existing length measurement of
18 fathoms, the resulting 34 1/2 fathoms would approximate
very closely the length of 35 fathoms given by Wiley. This
theory is one way of reconciling the measurements of Wiley
and Prunières, but whether or not it is a valid way--whether,
indeed, there ought to be a reconciliation--cannot be known
with certainty. One set of figures may be correct, the
other incorrect; but any choice between them, at the present
time, would have to be made in the face of the inconsistency
which appears to exist in Prunières' measurements of width
and the strangeness of Sauval's use of two units of measure
to express his dimensions.

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[34]18 paces, or 45 feet, equal 7.10 fathoms, using
the bases of 30" = 1 pace, and 6'4" = 1 fathom.

For the reconstruction of a floorplan which has
been prepared for this study, Wiley's measurements have
been pressed into service. The decision to use his dimen-
sions rather than Prunière's was an arbitrary one, as any
decision, in the absence of further evidence, would have to
be.

The separate units of scenery which composed the
decor of Circé have already been mentioned in connection
with the summary of the action of the ballet. The problem,
now, is to determine the exact nature of these units and
their positions in the hall. The engraving of the Prologue
will be of assistance, as will the verbal descriptions pro-
vided by Prunières, Lawrenson, Wickham, Decugis, and Kochno.
By combining these sources, it may be possible to obtain
a reasonable reconstruction of the floorplan used in the
staging of Circé.

The King's throne, though not considered scenery
in the modern sense, played an important role in the decor
of this ballet. It was the focal point of the entire pro-
duction and was the first thing to arrest the attention of
the spectators when they entered the hall. The King and
Queen Mother were seated upon a raised platform, concealed
by a canopy.[35] Although the throne platform, itself, is
not visible in the engraving, the engraver has shown, in

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[35]Prunières, p. 90.

its stead, three carved stools which appear, appropriately enough, to have been placed in the very center of the room. Like these stools in the engraving, the throne platform "faced the diverse decorations scattered through the hall."[36]

At the foot of the hall, "facing the King and on the same level," the stage designer Jacques Patin, painter to His Majesty, had built the palace and garden of Circe.[37] This unit of the decor comprised three foliage arches, a back drop, and an inclined platform. The arches of the garden were constructed in perspective.[38] Behind the center arch was a drop depicting a city in perspective with the palace of Circe, clearly discernible, in the foreground.[39] Each of the two side arches measured "about 4 meters wide by 7 meters high,"[40] and through them the entrances and exits of the actors and wagons were made.[41] The garden, itself, was a "practicable"[42] extending out from the front of the palace and built "on a gentle incline."[43] The dimensions of this raked platform are recorded by Prunières:

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[36]Ibid., p. 135.

[37]Nicole Decugis and Suzanne Reymond, Le Décor de Théatre en France (Paris: Compagnie française des Arts Graphiques, 1953), p. 55.

[38]Wickham, p. 399.

[39]Prunières, p. 145.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Decugis, p. 55.

[43]Ibid.

> It measured about 3.90 meters behind
> and 5.90 in front. It was, close to the
> palace, raised by a meter from the ground
> and dropped to 0.30 from the floor at the
> front.[44]

The garden platform boasted "a flower-bed divided cross-
wise, bordered with lavender, aspic, rosemary, and sage."[45]
"The balustrade around it was ornamented in gold and silver,"
writes Wickham, "and animals can be seen parading within."[46]
These were, says Decugis, "savage animals, which had been
charmed by the magician."[47] Before the ballet begins, "both
the palace and the garden of Circe are hidden by a heavy
veil or cover."[48] Later, when Circe leads away the captive
nymphs, the palace and garden, "appear brilliantly lighted
by a multitude of colored glasses in which burn some wicks."[49]
That the "whole unit was lit by oil lamps," Wickham agrees,[50]
but neither he nor the other authors contribute any further
informations concerning the "heavy cover." The engraving
offers no clue as to how such a covering might have been
rigged or operated. One possibility, only, is suggested

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[44] Prunières, p. 145, n. 1.

[45] Boris Kochno, Le Ballet (Paris: Librairie
Hachette, 1954), p. 18.

[46] Wickham, p. 399.

[47] Decugis, p. 55.

[48] Prunières, p. 145.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Wickham, p. 399.

by Prunières' use of the word, <u>couvert</u>. It may be trans-
lated as "covered, screened, protected, or roofed."[51] Per-
haps Circe's garden was screened from the view of the audi-
ence by a covering in the form of a cloud, which could have
been raised to reveal the garden at the beginning of the
ballet. A cloud, used in this way, would not have appeared
unusual to Renaissance audiences who were quite accustomed
to seeing clouds descend from the top of the hall and rise
again, as Mercury's does in this ballet. There is the fact,
too, that one of the other set pieces for the ballet, the
<u>Voûte dorée</u>, is described by Decugis as a "starry cloud,"[52]
and by Wickham as "a sky-palace."[53] Circe's palace may have
been conceived as a similar sky-palace, but of the "break-
away" variety.

The <u>Voûte dorée</u>, or gold arch, is visible on the
left hand side of the engraving and is described still fur-
ther as "a brilliant gold-encrusted vault"[54] and a "gilded
arch surrounded by clouds on the outside, all resplendent
with light inside."[55] It sheltered some forty musicians,
according to Prunières,[56]--both singers and instrumentalists--

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[51]<u>Larousse's French-English, English-French Dic-
tionary</u> (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1955), p. 69.

[52]Decugis, p. 55.

[53]Wickham, p. 399.

[54]Kochno, p. 18.

[55]Prunières, p. 90.

[56]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 186-87. Kochno writes of the "bril-
liant gold-encrusted vault where ten concert musicians played
in unison." Kochno, p. 18.

who had to respond in echo to the airs of the <u>figurants</u>,
or supers."[57]

>"Some thought that this was the voice
>of Echo himself," and "others better in-
>structed in the Platonic discipline" thought
>it to be "the true harmony of the Spheres
>by which all things which are are to be
>preserved and maintained."[58]

The <u>Voûte dorée</u>, writes Prunières, was, in reality, simply
a long vault of wood which measured about six meters by
three.[59]

The Grove of Pan occupied the right hand side
of the hall. A detail engraving of this set piece is re-
printed by Wickham in <u>Early English Stages</u>.[60] "The trees,"
he writes, "were artificial, being made of the usual painted
fabrics."[61] They were burdened down with golden acorns and
oil lamps,[62] a strange combination indeed; one of the lamps
is, however, plainly visible in the Prologue engraving on
the off-stage side of the grove, near the heads of the audi-
ence members. Decugis adds that the grove concealed "the
entrance to the cave of Pan just able to be glimpsed through

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[57]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 90.

[58]Kochno, p. 18. The source of the quoted remarks
is not given by Kochno.

[59]Prunières, p. 145.

[60]Wickham, Plate XXVIII, No. 41.

[61]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 399.

[62]Kochno, p. 18.

a _tulle_ or scrim."[63] The use, in this way, of scrim sug-

gests that perhaps the covering used to conceal the palace

and garden of Circe was also of this material. Whatever

the device employed, the grove of Pan was concealed in like

manner until the arrival of the nymph Opis in the Third

Entry.[64] The dimensions given by Prunières for the grove

are "about 3.90 meters by 2.85."[65]

The fountain float is discernible in the engraving

just to the left of Circe's garden. An additional engraving,

showing the float in detail, is reprinted by Wickham.[66]

"The fountain," he writes, "was set on wheels and carried

the orchestra, dressed as Tritons."[67] Lawrenson contributes

a few more details:

> During the first _intermede_ of this
> ballet the Tritons and Sirens execute a
> typical maneouvre: they make a complete
> tour of the room before their final couplet
> announces the _fontaine de Glauque_, a machine
> which arrives at that moment. The machine
> is still a machine in the earlier sense
> of the term; it is a vehicle for entry.
> Composed of two parts, the lower represents
> a sea, protruding beyond the upper portion,
> which is the fountain proper.[68]

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[63]Decugis, p. 55.

[64]Prunières, p. 145.

[65]_Ibid._, p. 145, n. 2.

[66]Wickham, Plate XXVIII, No. 42.

[67]_Ibid._, p. 399.

[68]Lawrenson, p. 144.

From the detail engraving, it appears that the fountain
float was drawn by sea horses, a touch reminiscent of that
used for Orpheus' chariot in the fêtes at Bayonne in 1565.[69]

Of Minerva's chariot, no description is available
to supplement the lone mention in the summary of its being
drawn by "a monstrous serpent."[70] No description at all
is available of Jupiter's eagle, but of Mercury's cloud,
Prunières writes:

> On the ceiling, a silver cloud, lighted
> inside, permitted the divinities to make
> their descent from the sky. This same cloud
> had already served for the grand mascarades
> presented at the marriage of the King of
> Navarre.[71]

This mascarade was mounted at the Petit-Bourbon nine years
prior to the presentation of <u>Circé</u> in the same hall. No
doubt the rigging for the cloud machine had been left in-
tact, and may, indeed, have been a permanent fixture of
the hall. In the earlier production, the cloud was but a
part of the complicated heaven rigging.

> The empyrean heaven boasted a great
> wheel with the twelve signs, seven planets,
> and an infinity of small stars. . . . which
> gave a grand brilliance and clarity by means
> of lamps and torches arranged behind.[72]

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[69]<u>Supra</u> p. 12.

[70]<u>Supra</u> p. 20.

[71]Prunières, p. 145. The mascarade, an Italian
form of entertainment involving "entries of masquers, seri-
ous or grotesque," and "floats carrying pagan divinities
or allegorical scenes," gained popularity among the French
nobility early in the sixteenth century and gradually re-
placed the ancient French <u>momerie</u>. (Prunières, p. 34).

[72]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 72.

At the designated moment, Mercury and Cupid, carried by a cock, descended from the sky; Mercury presented himself to the three knights who awaited his arrival and, after a melodious song and a speech, remounted his cock and was carried back to the sky.[73] From this description, it may be inferred that one machine served for the descents of both Mercury and Jupiter in the ballet, Circé. Logically, such would be the case, and practically, the operation would require only the substitution of a cloud for the cock of 1572, and an eagle for the cloud. Mercury's cloud is not visible in the Prologue engraving, but a probable reason for its omission is contained in the following account by Wickham of the way in which descent machines were usually operated.

> It is difficult to say of what materials these early mechanical devices were made or how they operated: but it is quite clear that means were available to permit the heavenly superstructure to open, and for a figure to ascend or descend at will, before the fourteenth century was out. . . . The mechanism in question is undoubtedly a simple winch, windlass or vice. Installed in the roof above a stage or under its floor, it could be turned unseen and the spectators provided with the required surprise. Thus, after a panel or trap had been opened, the mere turning of a winch could make an angel [or Mercury] appear to descend from heaven or a flower grow in the desert. A slightly more elaborate winch, employing the principle of the mill wheel, could, when operated, cause globes to turn and even offer

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[73]Ibid., p. 44.

the producer a revolving stage![74] (Italics mine.)

More will be said concerning the revolving stage in the analysis of the _Deliverance of Renaud_ in the following chapter. At this time, however, a floorplan for _Circé_ is needed in order to place the various scenic elements just described in their proper environment, the _Salle du Petit-Bourbon_. The reconstruction presented in this study (Fig. 4, p. 53) was inspired by the fact that the engraving of the Prologue was produced at a time in history when the methods of perspective were being uncovered and put to use with great enthusiasm. The engraver, as is evident from his work, had some knowledge of these methods. A discovery of the horizon line and vanishing point used by him would permit a reconstruction of his drawing with the aid of mechanical perspective. A tracing was therefore made of the engraving and a reconstruction attempted. One problem presented itself to which no real solution was available. It was the problem of determining depths. No measurement of depth, such as that of the garden platform or of the arches, was given by any of the authors consulted. Knowing the length of the entire hall was of no assistance, for the engraving represents only a portion of it. In the face of this difficulty, an arbitrary depth of 46'6" was settled upon and the measuring line established accordingly. The

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[74]Wickham, p. 94.

measurements of height and width are not affected by the
placement of the measuring line and thus may be considered
fairly reliable. The measurements of depth, however, are
affected and must be recognized as dependent upon the over-
all depth measurement of 46'6". With this caution in mind,
an interpretation of the engraving, in mechanical perspective,
is presented for consideration, together with the floorplan
derived from this interpretation. (Figs. 3 and 4, pp. 52
and 53)

' The measurements obtained from the perspective
rendering have been set down in the following chart (Table
2); Prunières' measurements, when available, have been in-
cluded for the sake of comparison.

In passing, two points might be noted in connec-
tion with the perspective rendering. The bleachers, men-
tioned by Prunières, "which rose through forty degrees from
the floor to one gallery"[75] are, for the most part, obscured
by the bodies of audience members in the original engraving.
The reconstructed drawing clearly indicates that there was
plenty of room in the hall to contain these bleachers.
Secondly, there is a question concerning the use of the
apse in the production of Circé. Lawrenson writes:

> An engraving of the prologue to the
> Ballet comique de la reine gives us an
> idea of the long rectangle, with two rows
> of galleries, the high one set back, and

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[75]Prunières, p. 135.

TABLE 2: DIMENSIONS OF HALL AND SET PIECES OBTAINED
FROM PERSPECTIVE RENDERING

Dimensions	Reconstruction of Engraving Feet	Prunières' Measurements M.	Ft.[a]
From Ground Line to Horizon Line	23'6"[b]		
Width of Proscenium Opening	45'0"		
From Proscenium to Back (Masonry) Wall	46'6"		
Proscenium to downstage edge of Voûte	1'0"		
Proscenium to upstage edge of Voûte	11'0"		
Proscenium to downstage edge of garden riser	27'0"		
Proscenium to downstage edge of foliage arches	33'0"		
Proscenium to upstage edge of foliage arches	37'0"		
Over-all height from floor to ceiling	19'6"		

Voûte dorée:

Length	10'0"	6	19.68
Width	5'0"	3	9.84
Height	c. 6'0"	–	–

TABLE 2-<u>Continued</u>

Dimensions	Reconstruction of Engraving Feet	Prunières' Measurements M.	Ft.
Grove of Pan:			
Length	6'6"	3.90	12.79
Width	5'0"	2.85	9.35
Height	c. 12'0"	-	-
Garden Platform:			
Length	6'0"		
Width at downstage edge	12'0"	5.90	19.35
Width at front of foliage arch	9'0"		
Width at back of foliage arch	5'6"	3.90	12.79
Depth of arches	4'6"		
Height of center arch	15'0"		
Inside width of center arch	9'0"		
Outside width of center arch	11'0"		
Height of side arches	14'0"	7	22.96
Inside width of side arches	5'0"	4	13.12

TABLE 2-Continued

Dimensions	Reconstruction of Engraving	Prunières' Measurements	
	Feet	M.	Ft.
Back Wall:			
Height of center arch	18'6"		
Width of center arch	16'0"		
Height of side arches	16'3"		
Width of side arches	6'0"		
Fountain float:			
Height	6'0"		
Width	3'0"		

[a]Measurements in feet are figured on basis of 39.37" equal to 1 meter.

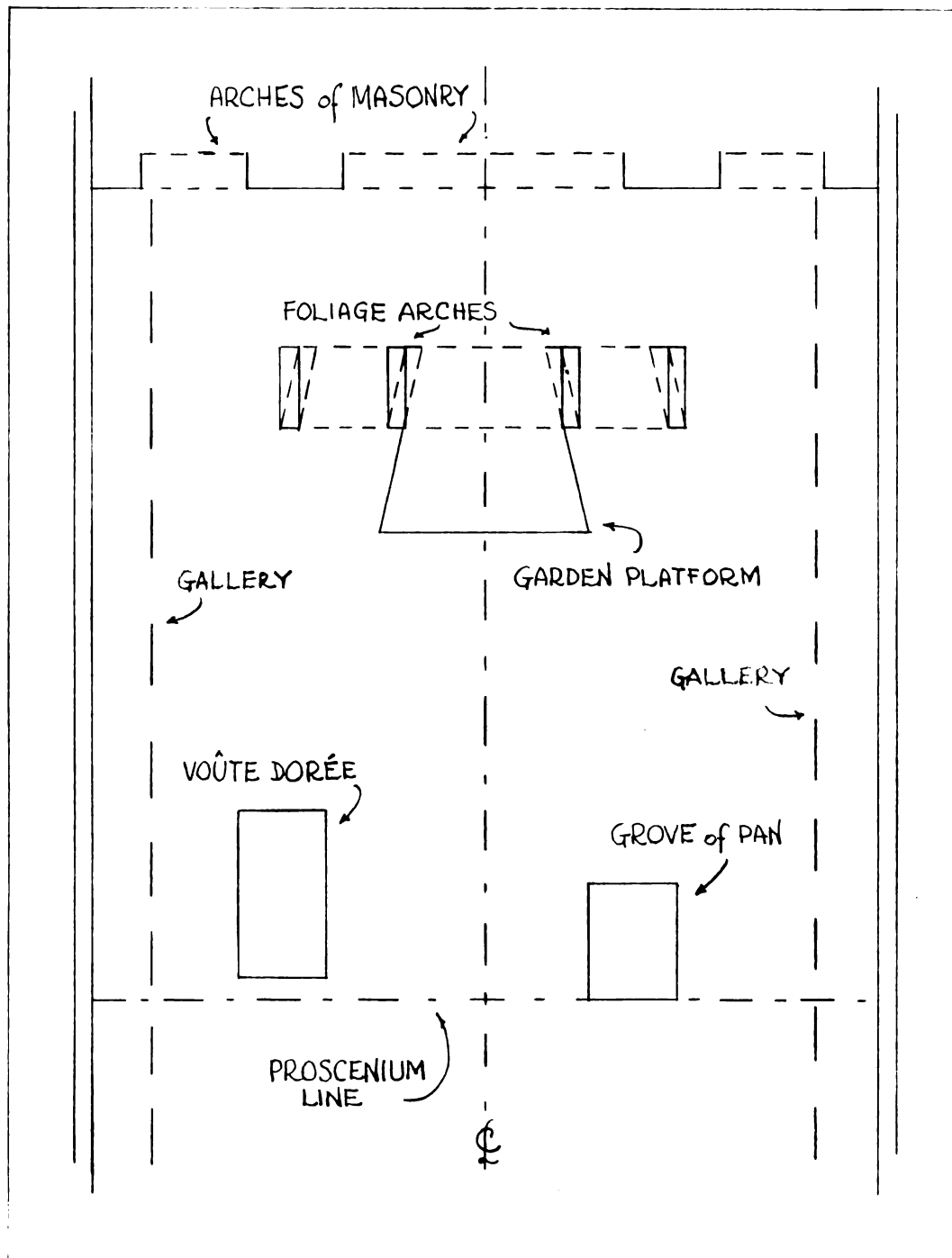[b]Vanishing point located at intersection of center line and horizon line.

Fig. 3 - Reconstruction of the Prologue Engraving in Mechanical Perspective. Scale: 1" = 5 ft.
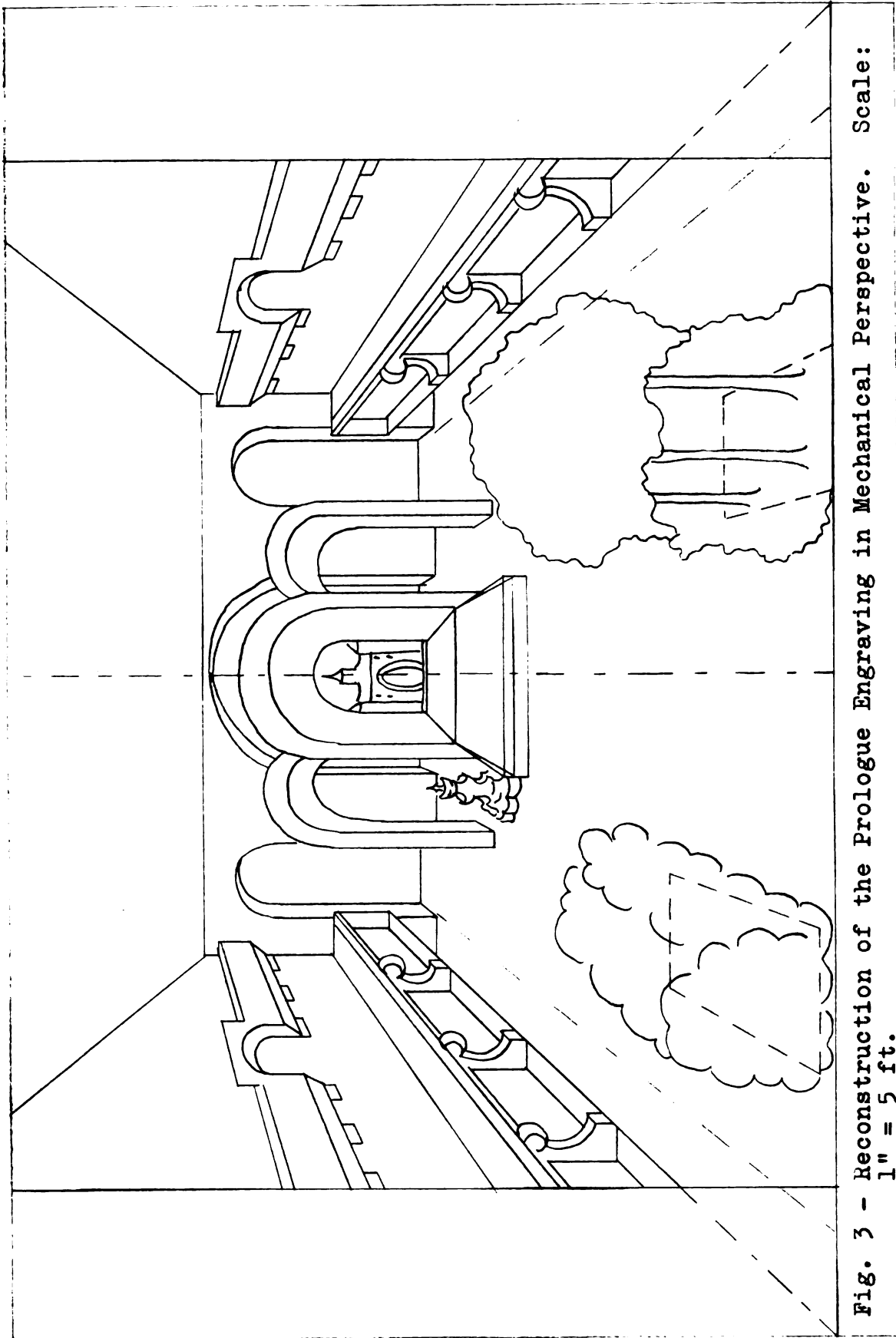
Fig. 4 - Reconstruction of a Floorplan for Circé.
Scale: 1/2" = 5 ft.

the decor occupying the apse.[76] (Italics mine.)

He writes, further, concerning the "whole family of engravings" inspired by the holding of the Estates General in the Salle du Petit-Bourbon in 1614:

> They confirm, as distinct from the sixteenth-century engraving, the capacity of the hall, the galleries following the lines of the rectangle, with a row of ground-floor loges rising backwards, and above all the natural predestination of the apse for a stage, with even the makings of a proscenium arch.[77] (Italics mine.)

The question is, did the decor for the ballet, Circé, in fact occupy the apse? The engraving of the Prologue certainly does not suggest that it did. At the far end of the hall, behind the foliage arches, there are three additional arches which appear to be structural parts of the building. If they are not, they have been disguised as masonry to make them appear permanent. It would seem logical to suppose that these arches would be located on the boundary line between the apse and the hall proper rather than at some point within the apse itself. This is pure conjecture, of course, but if the masonry wall were so located, the apse would be found behind these arches. It has been observed that the two side arches of greenery were used for the entrances of the wagons.[78] Might it not be that

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[76]Lawrenson, p. 168.

[77]Ibid., p. 169.

[78]Supra p. 34.

the apse, in the production of <u>Circé</u>, served not to house
the decor, but to house the wagons and actors when they
were off-stage? In this capacity, it could contain, as
well, the apparatus required to operate the cloud machine.
This whole problem, however, with all of its ramifications,
can only be indicated; it cannot be more fully explored,
nor can it be solved, within the limits of the present work.

A final word might be said concerning the light-
ing for <u>Circé</u>. The descriptions of the individual scenic
units give some indication of the lighting effects used.
Thus, Prunières recounts that when Circe led away the cap-
tive nymphs, her palace and garden were "brilliantly lighted
by a multitude of colored glasses" containing wicks;[79] Kochno
mentions oil lamps hanging from the branches of the trees
in Pan's grove;[80] and the starry vault of the musicians
is described as "resplendent with light inside."[81] Kochno,
in another passage, refers to the over-all effect in these
words: "Such was the brilliance of the torches and lamps
that it put to shame the most beautiful and serene day of
the year."[82] The engraving indicates but two of the light-
ing fixtures of the hall. They appear as cross pieces of

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[79]<u>Ibid</u>.

[80]<u>Supra</u> p. 36.

[81]<u>Supra</u> p. 35.

[82]Kochno, p. 18. Cf. Prunières, p. 137, n. 4.

wood, suspended from the ceiling at the extreme rear of the hall near the side arches of masonry.

It is interesting to speculate upon the over-all effect of the lighting of Circé. Was there, as Kochno's last description suggests, a great deal of general illumination in the hall, or was the lighting confined primarily to the various set pieces? The latter alternative, using specific illumination from within the Voûte dorée, the grove of Pan, and Mercury's cloud,[83] would certainly have been effective. Perhaps the combination of this specific illumination with the general illumination of the garden by the colored glasses to which Prunières refers would have provided sufficient light for the entire spectacle, with the addition, of course, of a "special" for the King's throne.

The Ballet comique de la Reine was counted a successful experiment by its authors, who saw in Circé "an image, pleasing but exact," of the "ancient tragedy with its declaimed tirades, its songs and its dances."[84] It may be said, at least, that under Beaujoyeux's direction a balance was achieved by these artists in the emphasis placed upon the variables of poetry, music, and dance. In its decor, Circé embodied no revolutionary ideas; it did, however, exhibit the beginnings of a tendency which

[83]Supra p. 37.

[84]Prunières, p. 94.

was to gain momentum in the years to follow. A gravitation
of the scenery toward one end of the hall may just barely
be glimpsed in this ballet; the symptoms are apparent in
the foliage arches, the back-drop, and the garden platform.
In general, the scenery showed signs of having been care-
fully selected to meet the needs of the ballet. Each unit
fulfilled a necessary function within the production as a
whole. Thus, each served to enhance rather than hinder
that unity which was the hallmark of this first ballet de
Cour.

In succeeding ballets, although they were inspired
by Circé, this unity was not sustained.

> The balance realized by Beaujoyeulx
> among the diverse elements constitutive
> of the ballet did not retard its being
> broken to the benefit of the music and
> the dance.[85]

In the years following 1581, the ballet de Cour
was drawn relentlessly "in the direction of the opera."[86]
A possible explanation for this trend is offered by Manfred
Bukofzer in his book, Music in the Baroque Era:

> Originally a renaissance form, the
> ballet de cour gradually assumed baroque
> characteristics. The first step toward
> baroque style was taken after 1605 when
> the récits were as a rule no longer spoken
> but sung. Thus the ballet de cour lost
> its distinctive renaissance feature: the
> equivalence of poetry and music, and became

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[85]Ibid., p. 244.

[86]Silin, p. 176.

> a stylized form, unified by the medium
> of sung and danced music. This important
> innovation was possibly prompted by the
> presence at the court of Henri IV in
> 1604-05 of Caccini, whose dramatic manner
> of singing impressed Guefron, music master
> to the Queen and composer of numerous bal-
> lets.[87]

In short, writes Prunières, "The literary element was sac-
rificed and the new spectacle became a sort of musical
drama . . . an opera-pantomime."[88] The complete substitu-
tion of singing for declamation was accomplished in the
Ballet d'Alcine, danced at the Louvre on January 17, 1610.[89]
This ballet marked the advent of a new genre, the Ballet
melodramatique, which enjoyed a period of popularity at
the French Court from 1610 to 1620. The finest example
of a Melodramatic ballet is generally recognized to be The
Ballet de la Délivrance de Renaud presented in 1617.[90]
An analysis of this ballet, paralleling the analysis of
Circé, is offered for consideration at this time.

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[87]Bukofzer, p. 143.

[88]Prunières, p. 244.

[89]Silin, p. 177.

[90]Silin, p. 178. Cf. Prunières, p. 115.

CHAPTER IV

AN ANALYSIS OF THE BALLET DE LA
DÉLIVRANCE DE RENAUD

The Elements of Music, Dance, and Decor in Renaud

The <u>Deliverance of Renaud</u> was not, as <u>Circé</u> had
been, composed for presentation upon an occasion of state.
It was, quite literally, devised to provide social recrea-
tion for young King Louis XIII, who had succeeded to the
throne of France following the death of Henry IV in 1610.
In the ballet, the King had an opportunity to dance several
<u>entrées</u> at the side of his favorite, DeLuynes, who played
and sang the role of Renaud.[1] The ballet was performed,
after two rehearsals,[2] on January 29, 1617,[3] in the <u>Grande
Salle du Louvre</u>, a hall much preferred by Louis to the <u>Salle
du Petit Bourbon</u>.[4]

In both its theme and its form, the <u>Délivrance
de Renaud</u> was patterned after the <u>Ballet comique de la Reine</u>
and other ballets of its genre. Variations may be found

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[1]Henry Prunières, <u>Le Ballet de Cour en France</u>
(Paris: Henri Laurens, Editeur, 1914), p. 116.

[2]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 116, n. 2.

[3]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 116.

[4]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 153.

in the details of the plots, writes Prunières, but the theme
itself changes very little. "As in the <u>Mascarade du duc
de Longueville</u>, as in the <u>Ballet comique de la Reine</u>, one
finds that a magician holds captive some prisoners who, at
the end, regain their liberty."[5] This is, indeed, the theme
of the ballet, <u>Renaud</u>. The form of this ballet also re-
sembles that of <u>Circé</u>, although it was composed in two acts
instead of three. Within each act, the scenes are set off
by changes in decor.

The elements to be considered in connection with
<u>Renaud</u> no longer include Poetry, for, as has been noted,
this ballet contained no spoken dialogue. The relative
emphasis placed on each of the remaining elements, however,
may be seen in the summary of the action of the ballet which
follows:

<u>PROLOGUE</u>: At rise, Renaud is dis-
covered reclining on the ground at the foot of
a <u>mountain</u>; he is being guarded by Armide's de-   DECOR
mons. Before the action of the ballet proceeds,
time is taken for four elaborate entries in
which the King and the nobles of the court
participate. Following the last entry, the
demons of Armide <u>dance</u> and then disappear into   DANCE
a <u>grotto</u>, taking Renaud with them.   DECOR

<u>FIRST ACT</u>: Two of Renaud's knights
enter in search of their leader. They attempt
to follow the demons into the grotto, but, at
this very moment, the scene changes, as if by
magic, and the knights find themselves in the
<u>garden of Armide</u>. They meet a nymph who tries   DECOR
to <u>dissuade them</u> from separating Renaud and   MUSIC
Armide; they <u>wage a battle, in cadence</u>, with   DANCE

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[5]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 113-14.

six monsters, finally putting them to flight;
then, suddenly they see Renaud lying on a bed
of flowers, <u>singing of his happiness</u>. They   MUSIC
draw near to him and "show him the shield of
crystal which gives him consciousness of his
indignity." Renaud immediately breaks his
irons and leaves the enchanted gardens.

    Armide enters and begins looking
everywhere for Renaud, but finds that he has
deserted her; moreover, her fountains have dried
up, her nymphs have become mute, and her mon-
sters have been put to flight. She <u>summons</u>   MUSIC
<u>her demons</u> by new incantations, but <u>they mock</u>   MUSIC
<u>her</u> and, after <u>a bizarre dance</u>, they withdraw,   DANCE
carrying Armide away with them. As they do so,
the beautiful gardens are transformed into "<u>a</u>
<u>deserted and horrible cavern</u>."   DECOR

    <u>SECOND ACT</u>: After a moment of inter-
mission, a <u>small wagon-stage</u> is rolled into   DECOR
position in front of the stage. During the
scene which is enacted on this wagon, some
soldiers of Renaud together with some knights
of Godfrey, who are all searching for their
general, meet a magician, dressed as a hermit,
who <u>informs them</u> of the deliverance of Renaud.   MUSIC
He then <u>sings a grand hymn</u> of rejoicing.   MUSIC
Meanwhile, the scenery on the stage has
changed once more, revealing a <u>pavilion of</u>   DECOR
<u>gold cloth</u>, in which the knights of Godfrey
are seated. They rise to dance <u>the grand</u>   DANCE
<u>ballet</u>, in company with the King and the nobles
and princes of the court. On this triumphant
note, the ballet ends.

The last words of the play-script express very well the

spirit of the occasion: "Ainsi le Ballet se finit et fit

passer une nuit plus délicieuse que la plus belle journée

du Printemps"--Thus ends the Ballet and passes a night more

delicious than the most beautiful day of Spring.[6]

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[6]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 265. The account of the action of
this ballet is summarized from Prunières, pp. 116-119.

The element of music in <u>Renaud</u> is found primarily in three forms: (1) vocal solos, including the nymph's <u>récit</u> of dissuasion and Renaud's soliloquy in Act one, and the hermit's <u>récit</u> informing the knights in Act two; (2) dialogues between one person and a choir such as the "summoning and mocking" dialogue between Armide and her demons at the end of Act one, and possibly the "grand hymn of rejoicing" by the hermit and the knights in the wagon-stage scene; (3) choral numbers, beginning with the overture, "a <u>grand concert</u> for accompanied chorus,"[7] and including "ensembles calling for more than a hundred performers."[8] The dances, too, may have been accompanied by the chorus; this practice, known as <u>ballet aux chansons</u>, was later "taken over by Lully into the opera."[9] Prunières gives an idea of the calibre of the music in <u>Renaud</u> in the following passage:

> The <u>récits</u> of the ballets <u>d'Alcine</u>, of <u>Renaud</u> and of <u>Tancrede</u> marked a great progress over all those which preceded them. The style is freer, more moving, the declaiming is more subtle, and more varied also. . . . The musical theatre in France had made rapid and unceasing progress when the <u>ballet à entrées</u> dethroned the <u>ballet melodramatique</u>. The decadence was then rapid. Not that the melody of Boesset had not the beauty of Guedron's, but the <u>récit</u> lost its aspect

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[7]Manfred F. Bukofzer, <u>Music in the Baroque Era</u> (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1947), p. 144.

[8]<u>Ibid</u>.

[9]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 145.

> of musical declamation. . . . In a word,
> the récit became an air, in the modern
> sense of the word, instead of remaining
> what it ought to have been in essence, a
> récitatif.[10]

There were three main dances in Renaud in addition to the traditional Grand Ballet. The first was the dance of Armide's demons which brought to a close the Prologue; the second, their "bizarre dance" at the end of Act one. The battle waged "in cadence" by the knights with Armide's monsters undoubtedly had the character of a dance and could very well have been the most delightful of the three.

The most important elements of the decor of Renaud appeared, during the course of the ballet, upon a revolving stage set into the floor of a raised platform at one end of the hall. This turning plaque revealed successively a mountain, the garden of Armide, a deserted and horrible cavern, and finally a pavilion of gold cloth. The scenery also involved a pair of wing flats, which masked the sides of the stage, and a small wagon-stage, rolled on for a scene immediately following the intermission. In contrast to the décor dispersé of Circé, the staging of Renaud is referred to by Prunières as décor successif.[11] In this method of staging, scene changes allow most of the action, excluding

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[10]Prunières, pp. 237-38.

[11]Ibid., p. 144. The term is also employed by Decugis, p. 56.

the dances, to take place in the vicinity of the stage. An analysis of how these scene changes were effected constitutes the main burden of the section which follows.

What can be concluded concerning the relationship among the elements of music, dance, and decor in Renaud? The music, by assuming in addition to its own duties those formerly reserved to the poetry, takes on an increased importance. In Renaud, it is the music, in company with the pantomime, which bears full responsibility for the exposition of the plot line. The element of decor plays a more important role in this ballet than it did in Circé; the use of a revolving stage permits the decor to contribute actively to the unity of the production. The dance, though not slighted by any means, seems to receive less emphasis in Renaud than it did in Circé. In the words of Bukofzer, quoted earlier, the ballet melodramatique, as exemplified by The Deliverance of Renaud, was "a stylized form, unified by the medium of sung and danced music."[12] The emphasis, as this statement makes very clear, was on music.

The Element of Decor and its
Representation in Renaud

The ballets melodramatiques differed from the Dramatic ballets in their method of staging. The Dramatic

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[12]Bukofzer, p. 143. Supra p. 45.

ballets, such as <u>Circé</u>, were staged, as has been noted,
in <u>décor dispersé</u>. Various units of the setting were scat-
tered throughout the theatre, and the action moved from one
of these units to another. The <u>ballets melodramatiques</u>,
on the other hand, used <u>décor successif</u>, in which the scen-
ery was concentrated upon a stage at one end of the theatre,
with only a few minor pieces, such as a tree or some rocks,
being placed on the auditorium floor. The action directly
concerned with the development of the plot likewise was
concentrated on the stage, although the dances and entries
were still performed in the area in front of the stage.

The first appearance in France of the <u>décor suc-
cessif</u> was in connection with the production of the pastoral,
<u>Arimène</u>, presented in Nantes on February 25, 1596.[13] Four
changes of scene were accomplished by means of periaktoi.[14]
It is believed that the designer of this production was
Ruggieri, a noted astrologer.[15] As to the designer of the
<u>Ballet de la Délivrance de Renaud</u>, there is some uncertainty.
Undoubtedly, according to Prunières, it was one of the Fran-
cini brothers, and quite probably, it was Tomaso Francini,
an Italian architect and engineer. Tomaso was born in Flor-
ence in 1571. He journeyed to France in about 1598, settled

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[13]Prunières, p. 146.

[14]<u>Ibid</u>.

[15]<u>Ibid</u>.

down, became a naturalized citizen in 1600, and married a
French girl in 1606. In that same year, he received the
position of Intendant General of waters and fountains, and,
in 1617, he received the title of Engineer to the King and
Controller of the house of the Queen. Because of Tomaso's
more well established reputation as an architect and his
many varied talents, Prunières believes that he, rather than
his brother Alessandro, was the true inventor of the machin-
ery for the Deliverance of Renaud.[16]

The following analysis of Francini's decor is
based primarily upon four sources: a reconstruction of the
floorplan for the ballet which is reprinted by Macgowan
and Melnitz in The Living Stage-A History of the World The-
atre;[17] engravings of the settings for the ballet reprinted
by Decugis[18] and by Kochno;[19] and the verbal descriptions
provided by Prunières and Decugis. Although Pierre Sonrel's
book, Traité de Scénographie, contains a copy of the floor-
plan, it contains no description other than a brief one
quoted directly from Prunières.[20] The analysis will attempt

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[16]The information concerning Francini's life has
been summarized from Prunières, pp. 148-49.

[17]Kenneth Macgowan and William Melnitz, The Living
Stage: A History of the World Theatre (Englewood Cliffs,
N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 213.

[18]Nicole Decugis and Suzanne Reymond, Le Décor
de Théatre en France (Paris: Compagnie française des Arts
Graphiques, 1953), p. 54, Plates 2, 3.

[19]Boris Kochno, Le Ballet (Paris: Librairie
Hachette, 1954), p. 16, Plates 10, 11.

[20]Pierre Sonrel, Traité de Scénographie (Paris:
Odette Lieutier, 1944), pp. 65-66.

first, to describe each of the individual elements of the setting; second, to describe the scene changes from an audience point of view, using the description given by Prunières as a basis; and third, to analyze the scene changes from a technician's point of view in an attempt to explain how the changes were executed.

The Ballet de la Délivrance de Renaud was presented in the Grand Salle of the Louvre, where most of the ballets during the reign of Louis XIII were danced. According to Prunières, the room was "a vast rectangle" which measured one hundred fifty feet by forty-five."[21] Between the numerous windows of the hall were platforms and galleries filled with seats for the spectators.

> At one end of the room were seen the
> decorations necessary for the spectacle;
> at the other, the royal throne, raised
> three steps and covered by an immense
> canopy of crimson red velours. From the
> ceiling hung a large number of chandeliers,
> with white and yellow wax candles which
> spread a lively brightness. Large bar-
> riers prohibited the spectators from
> entering the area reserved for the dancers
> and buffoons.[22]

The elements of the setting were eight in number. Each of these elements is given a number on the floorplan (Fig. 5, p. 68) which corresponds to its number in the following list:

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[21]Prunières, p. 137. Prunières also gives the measurements of the hall in meters (50 meters by 15) apparently on the basis of 36" = 1 meter. Ibid., p. 147.
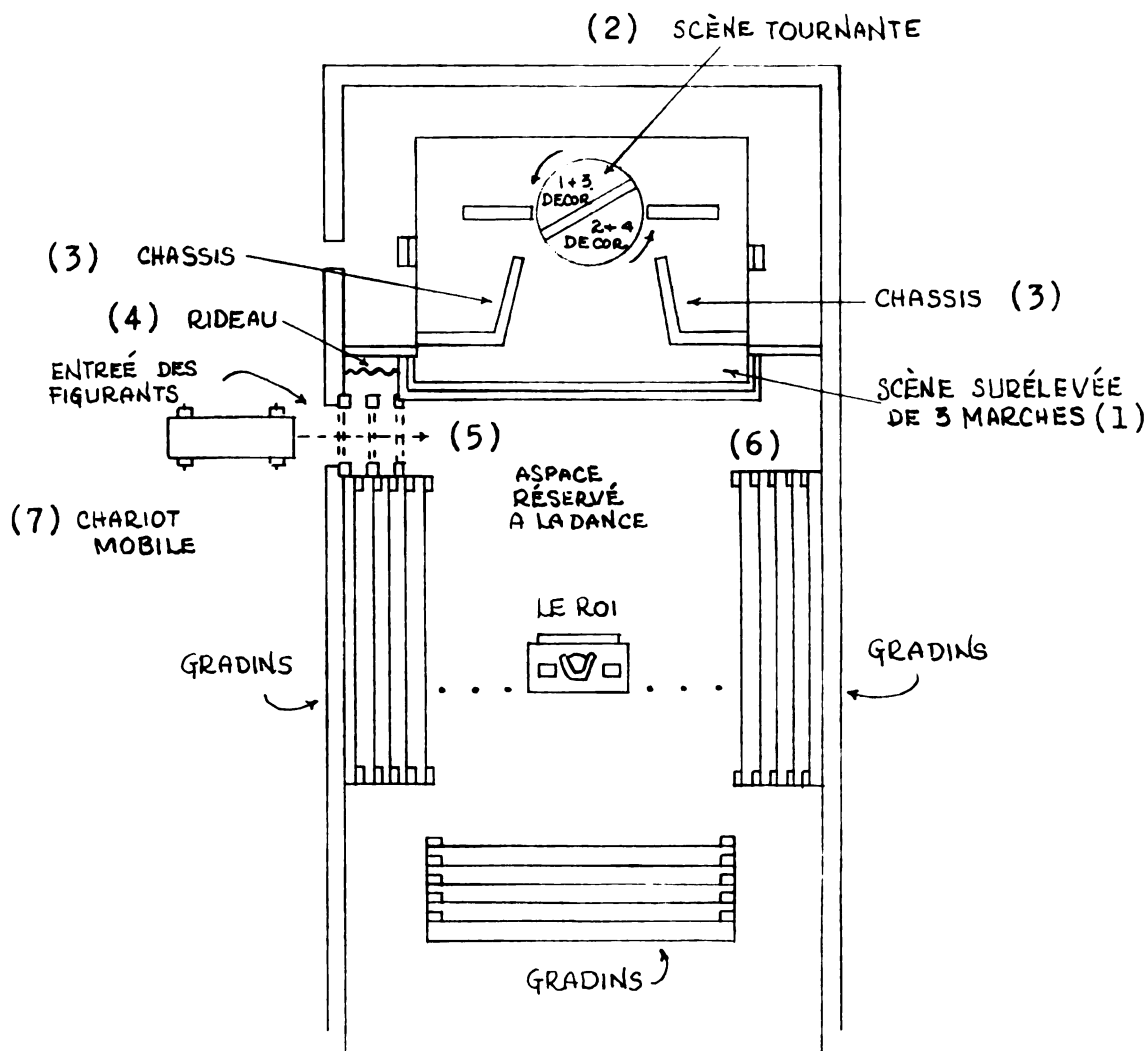
[22]Ibid., p. 137.

Fig. 5 - Reconstruction of a Floorplan for Renaud, from
Sonrel, Traité de Scénographie. Reprinted, with
permission, from Kenneth Macgowan & William Mel-
nitz, The Living Stage: A History of the World
Theatre (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall,
Inc., 1955).

1. __scène surélevée de 3 marches:__
This was the stage, which was raised three
feet above the auditorium floor. On the
floorplan, three steps are shown leading
from the stage to the auditorium, and
these steps "of a foot in height" are
mentioned by Prunières.[23] At another
point, however, he speaks of the stage
as communicating with the hall "by some
inclined planes."[24] These ramps are also
mentioned by Lawrenson,[25] but no indica-
tion of them is to be found on the floor-
plan.

2. __scène tournante:__ or revolving
stage. Instead of the usual flats or drop
upstage center, Francini substituted a
turning plaque on which he placed prac-
tical decorations.[26] On each half of the
plaque was placed a setting for one scene.
"Thus one is able to change the scenery on
half of the platform while one is playing
on the other."[27] No dimensions for the
plaque were provided by the authors con-
sulted.

3. __chassis:__ side flats, wing flats,
or frames. Prunières writes: "Upon the
stage, in the first plane, were placed
two frames sideways, to which were attached,
at right angles, two frames perpendicular
to the foot of the stage. Between these
kinds of cubes, the decor was seen in per-
spective as in the Italian theatres."[28]
No further details concerning the construc-
tion of the frames are available. Silin
merely mentions the "__changements à vue__

[23]__Ibid.__, p. 154.

[24]__Ibid.__, p. 116.

[25]T. E. Lawrenson, __The French Stage in the XVIIth
Century__ (Manchester: at the University Press, 1957), p. 127.

[26]Prunières, p. 153.

[27]Decugis, p. 56.

[28]Prunières, p. 153.

produced by a new system of lateral and
perpendicular chassis."29

    4. <u>rideau</u>: or front curtain. Accord-
ing to Prunières, "a curtain masked the
stage before the beginning of the spectacle;
it was painted to represent a palace sur-
rounded by green foliage. In falling, it
revealed the first decor."30 Elsewhere,
however, he says: "Before the rising of
the curtain, one hears a tender, amourous
chorus. . . . "31 From the way in which
the curtain is indicated on the floorplan,
the possibility presents itself that it
neither rose nor fell, but was drawn to
one side.

    5. <u>trellis</u>: This set piece appears
in the floorplan to the left of the stage
on the auditorium floor. Prunières says:
"To the right of the spectator were seen
on the side some rocks, to the left a long
arcade of foliage or trellis, through which
the characters entered onto the stage."32

    6. <u>Rocks</u>: These are not shown on
the floorplan but are referred to by Prun-
ières in the above description and later
in his description of one of the scene
changes: "In proportion as the mountain
turns, the rocks on the sides are drawn
off and trees replace them."33

    7. <u>chariot mobile</u>: The wagon-stage
is described by Prunières as "a sort of
rolling platform, moved by unseen men or
animals. It was bristling with trees and
bushes and carried the soldiers of Re-
naud. . . . "34 The scene played on this

    29Charles I. Silin, <u>Benserade and his Ballets de
Cour</u> (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1940),
pp. 184-85.

    30Prunières, p. 154.

    31<u>Ibid</u>., p. 116.

    32<u>Ibid</u>., p. 154.

    33<u>Ibid</u>.

    34<u>Ibid</u>., p. 155.

platform is recorded in the engraving on
page 74.

     8. <u>ciel</u>: or sky, which is not indi-
cated on <u>the</u> floorplan. In the engravings
of the sets for the ballet, a cloud effect
with stars is visible at the top of each
picture. The only author who mentions
this element, however, is Decugis, who
writes that the two fixed frames were
joined to the arches by "a starry sky."[35]
Decugis does not indicate <u>what</u> arches he
means, and this is a <u>problem</u> which must
remain unsolved for the time being.

These, then, were the elements of the setting for the bal-

let. On the floorplan, two entrances to the theatre are

indicated: the first, backstage on stage right; the second,

which was, no doubt, the main entrance, just in front of

the stage and to the left of the spectators.

    With the foregoing account of the separate scenic

units in mind, it is possible to proceed to a description

of the scene changes as they occurred during the course of

the ballet.

     1. At rise, one sees, on the mobile
plaque or revolving stage, a grotto at the
foot of a mountain, upon which are seated
the demons of Armide. (Fig. 6, p. 72)
Renaud is reclining at the foot of the
mountain. After the dance of the demons,
the two knights enter, to the music of
trumpets, and attempt to penetrate the
grotto into which Renaud and the demons
have disappeared. Immediately, as if by
magic, <u>the decor changes</u>. The mountain
turns and the second decor comes into view.
As the mountain turns, the rocks on the
sides are drawn off and groves of trees
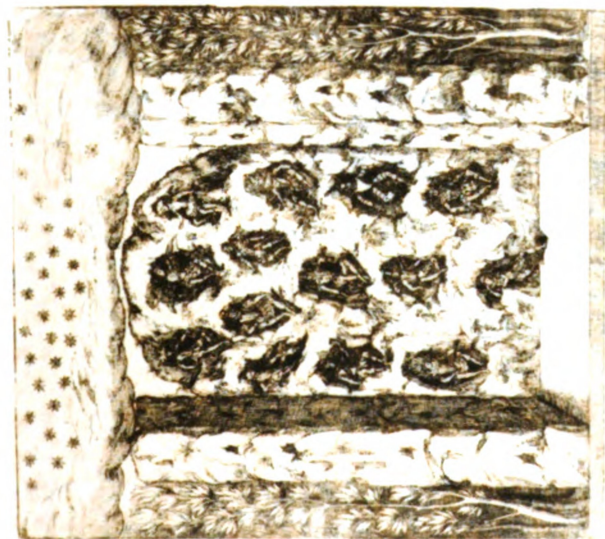replace them.

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[35]Decugis, p. 56.

Fig. 6 - The Deliverance of Renaud,   Fig. 7 - The Deliverance of Renaud,
Scene 1: The Mountain.   Scene 2: Circe's Garden.

From Nicole Decugis and Suzanne Reymond, Le Décor de Théatre en France
(Paris: Compagnie Française des Arts Graphiques, 1953).

2. The second decor represents the
enchanted gardens of Armide, adorned with
three large fountains spouting water.
(Fig. 7, p. 72) The knights enact their
scene with the nymph of the fountain and
battle with the monsters; then they see
Renaud, reclining on a bed of flowers
(probably located on the auditorium floor
to the right of the spectators, where in
the first scene were rocks). Renaud and
his knights exit. Armide returns to find
her prisoner gone, her fountains dried up,
her nymphs mute, and her monsters put to
flight. The demons dance and mock Armide,
after which they exit carrying her off with
them. As they do so, the scene changes;
the palace and gardens which had been so
beautiful are transformed into a deserted
and horrible cavern. (No scene is played
in this setting, however.)

3. After a brief intermission, a
sort of rolling platform moves into the
room. It is bristling with trees and bushes
and carries sixteen persons dressed as
knights. (Fig. 8, p. 74) These are the
soldiers of Renaud out in search of their
leader. They converse with a hermit who
announces to them the delivery of their
hero. As the platform withdraws, all the
scenery changes by itself.

4. The grand pavilion comes into view
and reveals to the eyes of the spectators
the dancers of the grand ballet who are
seated there. (Fig. 9, p. 74) The dancers
are none other than Godfrey and the chiefs
of his army who are all assembled to re-
joice over the happy return of Renaud.[36]

This description, together with the engravings

which serve to illustrate it, make it clear that the scene

changes in the ballet depended primarily upon the revolving

stage and the wing flats. As for the other elements, the

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[36]This account of the scene changes for the ballet
has been summarized from Prunières, pp. 116-19, 154-55.

QUATRIÈME DÉCORATION, OÙ L'ON
VOIT LE PALAIS D'ARMIDE DÉTRUIT,
ET UN BOIS REMPLI DE MUSICIENS
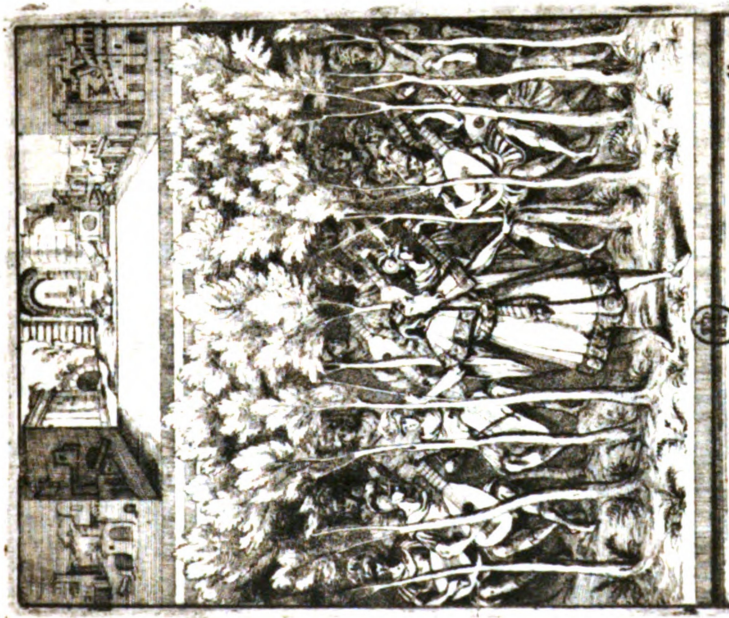POUR CHANTER LE TRIOMPHE DE RENAULT.

LE ROI DANS SON TRÔNE, ACCOMPAGNÉ
DES SEIGNEURS, ACTEURS DU BALLET.
CINQUIÈME DÉCORATION.

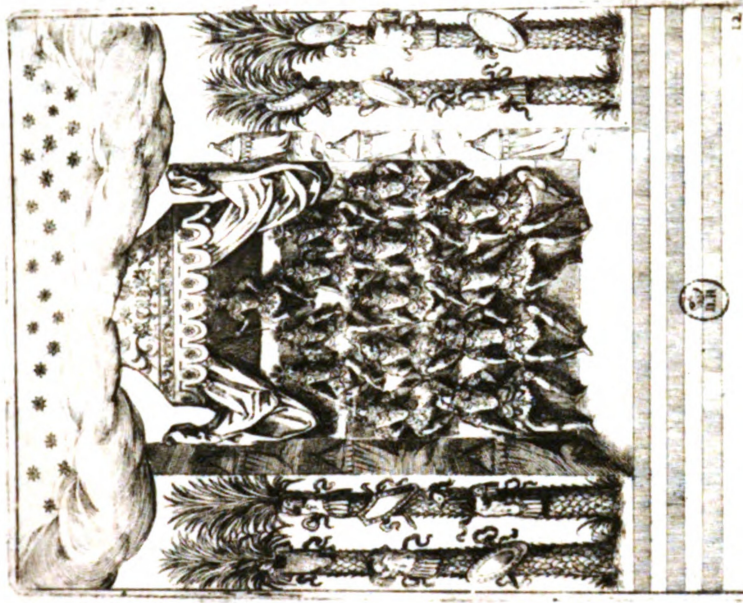Fig. 8 - The Deliverance of Renaud,
Scene 3: The Wagon-Stage.

Fig. 9 - The Deliverance of Renaud,
Scene 4: The Pavilion.

From Boris Kochno and Maria Luz, Le Ballet (Paris: Arts du Monde,
Hachette, 1954).

front curtain is, apparently, used only once, at the begin-
ning of the performance; the sky and the trellis remain
permanently in place throughout the performance; the rocks
at the right of the auditorium change once, when they are
replaced by trees; the wagon-stage is used for one important
scene, and will be discussed as this analysis proceeds. At
this time, attention is focused upon the two most important
scenic elements.

The revolving stage receives first consideration.
How was it set up and used to effect the various changes
demanded by the script? In connection with the engravings,
first of all, it should be noted that in Scene 1 (Fig. 6)
and in Scene 4 (Fig. 9), actors are shown sitting, bleacher-
fashion, in four ascending rows. This observation leads
to the inference that a scaffolding of some sort must have
been required and that it probably occupied one half of the
revolving stage. In the interests of simplicity, this scaf-
folding would no doubt have been permanent, remaining-in
its position on the revolving stage throughout the perform-
ance. Its character could easily have been altered by canvas
painted to represent "mountain" in Scene 1, and by gold
cloth draped to represent "pavilion" in Scene 4. During
Scene 1, the scaffolding side of the revolving stage would
be visible to the audience. The off-stage half would be
pre-set for Scene 2, the garden of Armide, which requires
some sort of garden back-drop and a large fountain. Seen

in cross-section, the revolving stage, during Scene 1, might
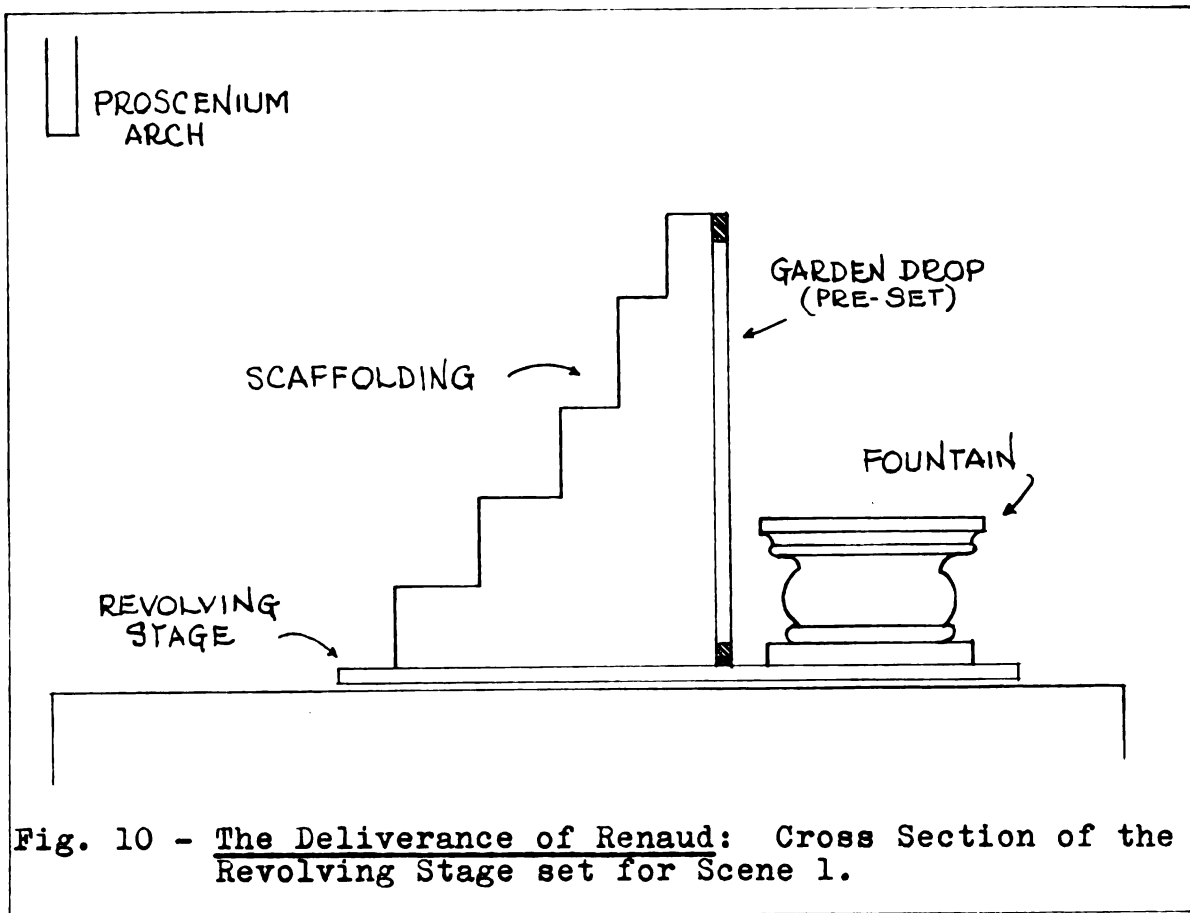
look like the drawing in Fig. 10.

Fig. 10 - The Deliverance of Renaud: Cross Section of the
          Revolving Stage set for Scene 1.

Scene 1 ends with the knights attempting to pene-

trate the grotto into which the demons have disappeared.

As does the bookcase in the mystery thriller, the revolving

plaque swings around "and the knights find themselves in

the garden of Armide."[37] So far, the scene shifts present

no difficulties whatever. At the end of Scene 2, when the

demons leave the stage with Armide, the revolving stage

turns once more and "the garden which seemed to have been

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[37]Supra p. 47.

so beautiful becomes nothing more than a deserted cavern. . . .
Everything trembles and changes all together."[38] A conjec-
ture about the mechanics of this change is offered by Prun-
ières:

> One would love to have some details on
> the way in which this transformation was ef-
> fected. It is probable that once again the
> plaque turned and showed the decor of the
> first act altered by a breadth of cloth or
> another [set] which had been substituted for
> it.[39]

A short intermission immediately follows this
change. Scene 3 takes place on the small wagon-stage which
is moved into the auditorium after the intermission. Appar-
ently, the cavern setting remains on the main stage, and is
shown in the engraving of Scene 3 (Fig. 8, p. 74) Prunières
justifies the insertion of the wagon-stage scene in the
following way:

> Logically, the final apotheosis ought
> to have followed immediately the ruin of the
> palace of Armide, but the machinists did not
> have time to prepare the new decor upon the
> rear of the plaque, so they had to resort
> to an emergency device to give them time to
> replace the fountains and flowerbeds of
> Armide's garden with a pavilion of gold
> cloth.[40]

A problem arises at this point, however, Tech-
nically, the final scene should require not only the pavilion

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[38]Prunières, p. 154.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid., pp. 154-55.

of gold cloth, but also the scaffolding, which is supposedly
on stage during the wagon scene, disguised as a cavern.
It is hardly logical to assume that Francini would design
the ballet in such a way that it required two sets of scaf-
folding, one of which would have to be set up during the
relatively short span of time occupied by Scene 3. It seems
more reasonable to suppose that he would arrange, if at all
possible, to use the same scaffolding for both Scene 1 and
Scene 4. Furthermore, a closer examination of the setting
on the revolving stage behind the wagon stage reveals that
it does not look particularly like a "deserted and horrible
cavern." If it is not the cavern setting, however, what
setting is it? In the above quotation, Prunières mentions
"the ruin of the palace of Armide," but none of the settings
described by him represent the ruin of a palace. Was there
such a setting? The caption which appears above the engrav-
ing reprinted by Kochno (Fig. 8, p. 74) confirms that there
was, for it reads:

> Fourth decor, in which one sees the palace
> of Armide ruined, and a wood filled with
> musicians to sing the triumph of Renaud.

It should be noted, also, that the caption specifies this
as the fourth decor, rather than the third; further, that
the caption above the pavilion engraving refers to it as
the fifth decor. It appears, then, that the setting pic-
tured behind the wagon stage represents the ruined palace
of Armide and that there was also a deserted cavern setting

(the third decor), for which no engraving is provided. This
added information permits a solution to the problem of the
scene changes of <u>Renaud</u>. Here is a projected plan of how
the changes on the revolving stage would be carried out,
given five settings instead of four:

<u>Scene 1</u>: On stage - mountain (with scaffolding)

Pre-set - Armide's garden (no scaffold-
ing)

<u>Scene 2</u>: On stage - Armide's garden (no scaffold-
ing)

Pre-set - Cavern (with scaffolding dis-
guised)

<u>Shift</u> at the end of Scene 2: plaque turns
placing Cavern set on stage, Armide's
garden off stage.

<u>Intermission</u>: During the brief intermission,
Armide's garden is struck and the ruin
of Armide's palace is set. (The palace
drop could be pre-set behind the garden
drop). As the wagon-stage rolls on
after the intermission, the plaque is
turned, for:

<u>Scene 3</u>: On stage - Ruin of Armide's palace (no
scaffolding)

Pre-set - Pavilion (with scaffolding)

<u>Scene 4</u>: On stage - Pavilion (with scaffolding)

Off-stage - Ruin of Armide's palace.

It is clear that this plan provides a solution to the prob-
lems raised by Prunières' descriptions. Moreover, the cap-
tions to the engravings reprinted by Kochno appear to con-
firm that the plan presents an accurate account of the way
in which the scene changes for <u>Renaud</u> were effected.

Attention must now be directed to the problems involving the wing flats at the sides of the stage. Apparently, these flats were also changed for each scene. The engravings indicate that the wing flats parallel to the foot of the stage were painted to represent trees and rocks in Scene 1, fountains in Scene 2, the ruined palace in Scene 3, and palm trees in Scene 4. The wings perpendicular to the foot of the stage, on the other hand, show rocks in Scene 1, trees in Scene 2, the ruined palace in Scene 3, and tents in Scene 4.

The following theory as to how these wing flats were changed for each scene arises from three observations: (1) the available floorplan for Renaud is a reconstruction; Sonrel labels it "a sample of a reconstruction,"[41] but does not reveal the name of the artist. The floorplan may have been done by the same man who did the engravings which are included in this thesis. According to Sonrel, these engravings are from a complete set contained in a work entitled, Discours au vray du ballet dansé par le Roy le dimanche XXIX jour de janvier M DC XVII, avec les desseins tant des machines et apparences différentes que de tous les habits des masques, written by Pierre Ballard in 1617.[42] (2) In the production of Arimène, referred to earlier in

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[41]Sonrel, p. 66.

[42]Ibid.

connection with the first appearance in France of _décor_

successif, four changes of scene were accomplished by means

of periaktoi. Prunières writes:

> The author of the stage decorations
> which accompanied the presentation at Nantes,
> February 25, 1596, of _Arimène_ . . . resolved
> in an original manner the problem of the
> successive decor. Recalling the periaktoi
> of the ancients, he placed at the foot of
> the stage four frames, movable around a
> vertical axis; these frames affected the
> form of _polyèdres pentagonaux_ and the four
> faces which they presented to the public
> were painted so that they constituted the
> same decor.[43]

(3) The third observation pertains to a statement made by

Prunières which is unintelligible in the light of the re-

constructed floorplan. He writes:

> Upon the stage, in the first plane,
> were placed two frames sideways, to which
> were attached, at right angles, two frames
> perpendicular to the foot of the stage.
> _Between these kinds of cubes_, the decor
> _was seen in perspective as in the Italian
> theatres._[44] (Italics mine.)

Seen in the light of the settings for _Arimène_, this passage

becomes completely intelligible and, furthermore, provides

a solution to the problem of shifting the wing flats in

Renaud.

The solution calls for one addition to the recon-

structed floorplan. In this plan, the wing flats appear

as shown in Fig. 11, p. 82.

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[43]Prunières, p. 146.
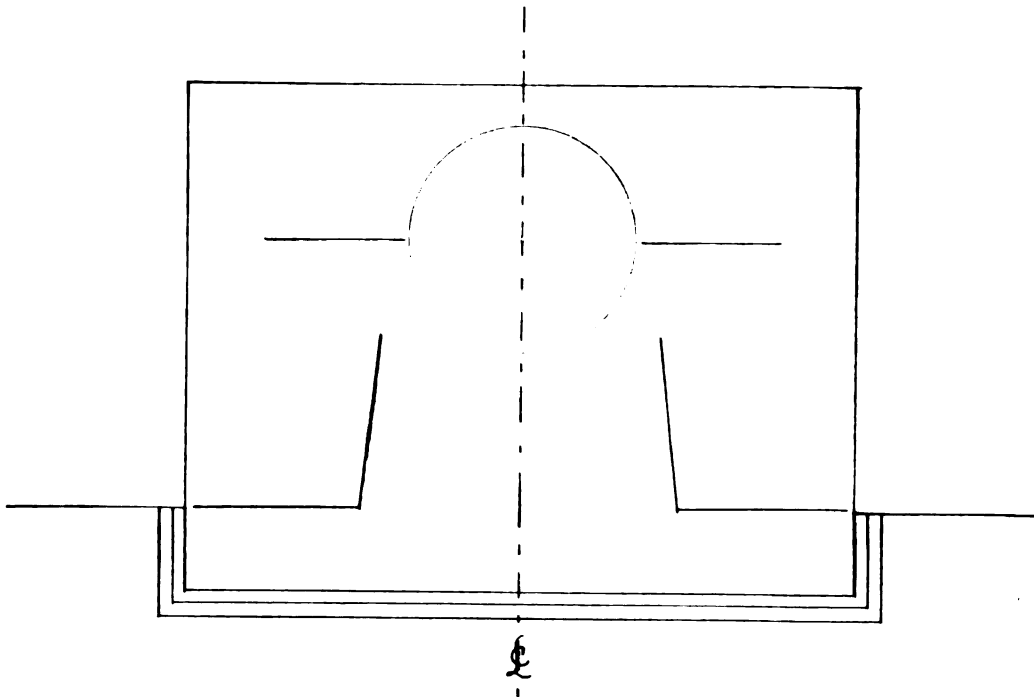
[44]_Ibid._, p. 153. _Supra_ p. 54.

Fig. 11 - <u>The Deliverance of Renaud</u>: Wing Flat Units as They Appear in the Floorplan.

Since the floorplan is a reconstruction, it is entirely possible that the artist neglected to indicate, fully, the wing flat units. Each of these units, therefore, might well have possessed two additional flats as shown in Fig. 12, p. 83. Given these units, the scene changes called for by the script and indicated in the engravings could easily have been carried out.

The foregoing solution to the problem of shifting the wing flats makes clear the reasons behind the wording of one of the descriptions quoted earlier. It concerns the shift from Scene 1 into Scene 2 and reads, "In proportion

as the mountain turns, the rocks on the sides are drawn off and trees replace them."[45] This description was thought at first to refer to the rocks located on the auditorium floor to the right of the spectators. However, it can now be seen to refer to the perpendicular wing flats which change from rocks in Scene 1 to trees in Scene 2.[46]
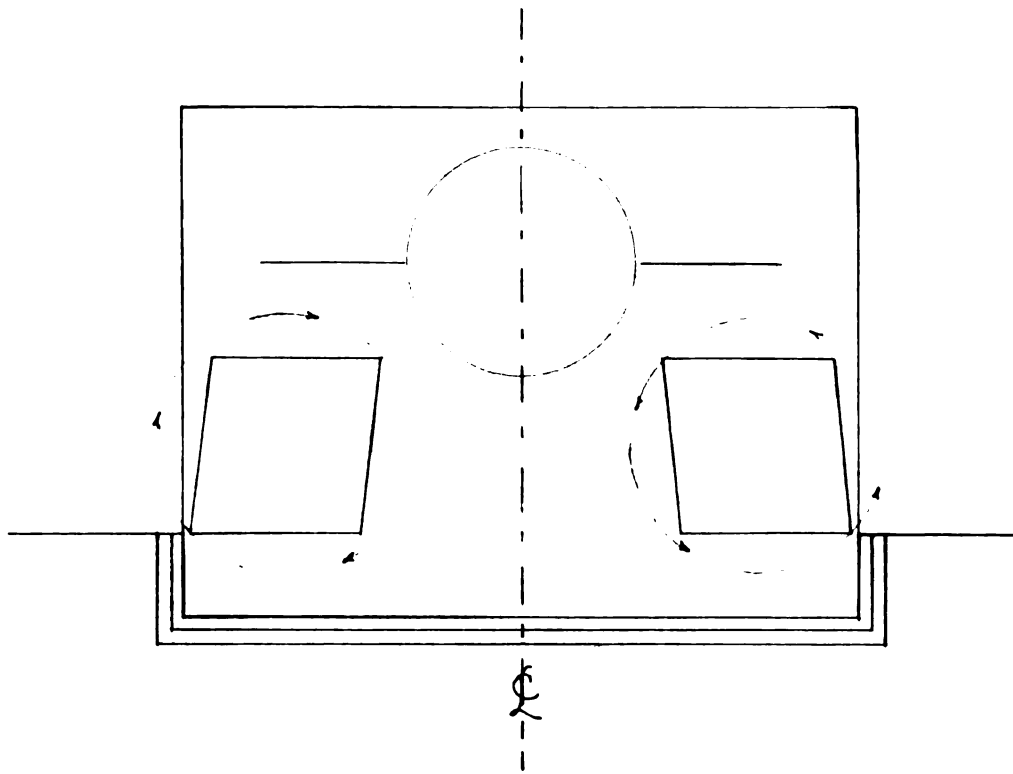

Fig. 12 - The Deliverance of Renaud: Reconstruction of Wing Flat Units Using Four-Sided Periaktoi.

[45]Ibid., p. 154.

[46]Supra p. 61.

The words "drawn off" express quite accurately what would have been the effect of four-sided periaktoi revolving at the sides of the stage.

The importance of the <u>Ballet de la Délivrance de Renaud</u> was two-fold. It is to be found, first, in the increased emphasis placed by its authors upon the variable of music. The results of their experiment had a direct influence upon the development of the French opera.

> Many literary and musical threads of the <u>ballet de cour</u> were woven into the fabric of the French opera, which has, down to the present, remained partial to ballets. Choral dance music, recitative, and programmatic orchestral music were first established in the <u>ballet de cour</u> before their integration into the opera. Certain literary motives also confirm the relations: Lully returned in his <u>Armide</u> to the subject of the <u>Délivrance de Renaud</u>, and Campra (<u>Tancrède</u>) made use of the plot to the ballet <u>Tancrède en la forest enchantée</u> (1619).[47]

Secondly, <u>Renaud</u> added impetus to the trend, already glimpsed in <u>Circé</u>, toward the concentration of the decor at one end of the auditorium. Francini's use of the raised platform, together with the revolving stage and side wings, clearly foreshadows the style of setting which will be created by Torelli for the French opera in the second half of the seventeenth century.[48]

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[47]Bukofzer, p. 147.

[48]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 148.

CHAPTER V

AN ANALYSIS OF THE BALLET DE LA
DOUAIRIÈRE DE BILLEBAHAUT

The Elements of Music, Dance, and
Decor in Billebahaut

The third and last ballet to be considered in this study is the Douairière de Billebahaut danced by the King at the Hôtel de Ville in 1626. The circumstances surrounding this production bring to light still another variation on the theme of courtly social recreation. Circé, it will be remembered, was designed to honor a royal marriage; Renaud was staged to allow King Louis XIII an opportunity to dance in company with his favorite, DeLuynes; Billebahaut, too, was danced by the King, but was intended not for the exclusive view of nobles and courtiers, but rather for the entertainment of the people of Paris. This gesture on the part of the King was deemed such a great honor that "the Provost and Aldermen of the city spared nothing to receive their royal host with magnificence."[1]

> Upon their order, masons, joiners, and
> carpenters erected "scaffolding, stages,
> galleries in the grande salle" in order to
> offer the most comfortable seats to the
> "most beautiful ladies and the gentlemen
> of the City" who gathered together in a

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[1]Henry Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France (Paris: Henri Laurens, Éditeur, 1914), p. 139.

throng for the great spectacle. They
ordered "the spicer to hold in reserve
quantities of white candles, both large
and small, to place in the chandeliers
and crosiers . . . and to prepare great
quantities of sweet meats for the repast
of the Princes, masquers, and others of
the company." A chef was ordered to pre-
pare feasts of fish, for the ballet had
to be danced into the night of Shrove-
tide.[2]

Early in the morning of the scheduled day, the

King's guards arrived at the _Hôtel_ to keep the already as-

sembled crowds in order. Throughout the day, spectators

arrived and took their places in the galleries; some stayed

there stoicly for more than twelve hours, waiting for the

ballet to begin. To distract their minds, twenty of the

City's violinists played airs and dances, from four in the

afternoon until the performance began at five the next morn-

ing. About four in the morning, the masquers began to ar-

rive. On the steps of the _Hôtel_, the Provost of the mer-

chants greeted the King, who excused himself for being late

and repaired immediately to his dressing room. At five

o'clock, the King's violinists made their entrance, mounted

the stage, and the ballet began. It lasted, in all, three

hours, after which the dancers "flung themselves avidly"

upon the superb repast prepared for them. Finally, the

king, still in costume, mounted his coach to return to the

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[2]_Ibid._, pp. 139-40, citing Lomenie de Brienne,
Memoires, ed. Barriere, 1828, tome I, p. 337 _et suiv._

Louvre, and left amid shouts of "Vive le Roi!"[3] Such were

the circumstances surrounding the performance of the Dou-

airière de Billebahaut.

Comparative spontaneity and informality marked

both the occasion of this ballet and the ballet, itself,

as will be seen during the course of this analysis. To

understand these characteristics of Billebahaut, which was

typical of the Ballets à Entrées, it is necessary to return,

for a moment, to the courtly entertainments of the fourteenth

century. It will be remembered that dancing played an im-

portant part in most of these fêtes. In a momerie such as

that presented at Charles V's banquet for Emperor Charles

IV in 1377 may be found the seeds of the Ballet à Entrées:

> Upon a signal from the master of the
> house, the trumpeteers sounded brilliant
> fanfares and the momerie [i.e. the proces-
> sion of disguised personages] entered, being
> in retinue, preceded by torch bearers and
> musicians, mounted upon a wagon which came
> to rest facing the tables. . . . The fig-
> ures, masked and costumed in painted cloths,
> descended from the wagon and danced a morris
> dance to the accompaniment of voices and
> instruments.[4]

In the Middle Ages, the momerie was usually even

less formal than this one of 1377.

> The momerie, in the Middle Ages, con-
> sisted of an entry of personages disguised
> and costumed oddly in masks. They shouted

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[3]Account of the circumstances surrounding the
presentation of Billebahaut summarized from Prunières, p.
140.

[4]Ibid., pp. 7-8. Supra p. 16.

and gamboled about but did not mix with
the spectators. At other times, the <u>momerie</u>
had for its object a game of chance; in
this case, those who took part were held
to an observation of silence and to making
themselves understood only by signs. They
solemnly carried a deck of cards or dice
and presented them successively to differ-
ent bystanders.[5]

During the reign of Henry IV, nobles still dis-

guised and masked themselves to carry the dice into joyous

assemblies. "They entered the halls in boisterous groups . . .

with their retinue of torch-bearers and musicians."[6] At

this time, the <u>momerie</u> or Mascarade of Society[7] did not

necessarily involve either dances or songs.[8]

Under the influence of the Dramatic ballets, such

as <u>Circé</u>, the mascarade underwent a transformation. It

adopted the dancing and the costuming of these ballets, as

well as their structure, and became a hybrid form of enter-

tainment, "devoid of dramatic interest but pleasant and

inexpensive."[9] In these spectacles, designated by Prunières

as <u>ballets-mascarades</u>, many of the characteristics of the

<u>Ballet à Entrées</u> are clearly recognizable.

The <u>ballet-mascarade</u> . . . did not
demand really long preparations; one day

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[5]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 4-5.

[6]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 98.

[7]The term is Prunières', <u>Ibid</u>.

[8]<u>Ibid</u>.

[9]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 99.

> some courtiers would get together and decide
> to dance a ballet; they assembled a choice
> of disguises: sorcerers, Moors, barbers,
> tavern keepers, Jews, etc.. . . When the
> costumes and masks had been made and the
> nobles had learned the steps which they
> had to execute, they set out for the palace
> in which the fête was to be given. It was
> not unusual for a ballet to be planned in
> Paris and presented at Saint-Germain or
> Fontainebleau, in which case, they traveled
> with their musicians in a state-coach. No
> stage or decor was required for such a spec-
> tacle, any large hall was sufficient.[10]

The custom of traveling from place to place to present bal-

lets was still popular at the time of the presentation of

Billebahaut.

> A troup of nobles might dance the same
> ballet, in divers places, two and sometimes
> three times in the course of a single night.
> It was their custom to end up, [as did the
> King in 1626], at the Hôtel de Ville where
> they had supper.[11]

The decline of the Dramatic Ballet left the bal-

let-mascarade as popular as ever. It flourished throughout

the reign of the ballet melodramatique which, in 1620, quite

suddenly began to decline. According to Silin:

> This type of royal entertainment con-
> tinues to be given, but from a dramatic
> point of view it marks a retrogression;
> the action, in the melodramatic ballets
> that follow, is still mythological and
> allegorical, but it becomes obscure, the
> interludes lack motivation, and even the
> récits are without much clarity. In a
> word, the ballet de cour becomes more and

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[10] Ibid., pp. 99-100.

[11] Ibid., p. 140.

more lacking in dramatic interest.[12]

The melodramatic ballet, in short, practically ceases to exist, while the ballet-mascarade enjoys an even greater vogue and enriches itself with the spoils of the defunct dramatic ballet,[13] adopting its lyric scenes and sometimes even its settings.[14] Thus, the scene is set for the birth of the Ballet à Entrées. The ballets of the new genre are composed of several parts linked to one another by a vague common idea. Each of the parts preserves the structure of a ballet-mascarade with its initial récit followed by the entries, and the whole terminates in a grand ballet.[15]

The Ballet of the Douairière de Billebahaut is constructed in four parts. Since each of these parts is, in itself, a ballet-mascarade, it is important to understand the typical structure of this form of ballet. An excellent description is presented by Prunières:

> The violinists formed the first entry;
> they were bizarrely dressed and masked;
> sometimes they appeared playing their in-
> struments behind their backs. Then came
> the pages, carrying torches, who ranged
> themselves around the place reserved for
> the buffoons. The first group or quadrille
> then made their appearance; after having
> danced, it relinquished its place to a
> second quadrille and so on. At the end,

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[12]Charles I. Silin, Benserade and his Ballets de Cour (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1940), p. 178.

[13]Prunières, p. 207.

[14]Silin, p. 178.

[15]Prunières, p. 124.

> all the personages of the mascarade came
> together for the <u>grand ballet</u>. The pre-
> sentation over, each raised his mask and
> took a lady in waiting for the ball which
> lasted until morning.[16]

Prunières adds to this description a postscript which will

aid in understanding the available, but all too brief, ac-

counts of the ballet, <u>Billebahaut</u>.

> It is a mistake to believe that there
> was nothing but dancing in entertainments
> of this genre. Often scenes of pantomime
> or feats of acrobatics alternated with the
> figure dances. Perilous leaps, human pyra-
> mids, and wrestlers found their places in
> these spectacles. Even sometimes little
> farces.[17]

The "vague common idea" which links together the

parts of the <u>Douairière de Billebahaut</u> is that of a wedding

celebration. "The news flies quickly,"[18] and the four parts

of the world, America, Asia, Africa, and Europe, informed

of the marriage of the Douairière with his faithful beloved

Fanfan de Sotteville, have come to congratulate the happy

couple. Each part of the world is the occasion for a dis-

tinct ballet, preceded by a <u>récit</u> and composed of several

entries. Details of these entries have been obtained pri-

marily from pictures of the ballet which show some of the

characters in costume.[19] The details are, for this reason,

extremely sketchy.

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[16]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 100.

[17]<u>Ibid</u>.

[18]Boris Kochno, <u>Le Ballet</u> (Paris: Librairie
Hachette, 1954), p. 25. Cf. Prunières, p. 127.

[19]<u>Ibid</u>.

Bukofzer supplies a description of "an amusing entry of 'American' music in which four Indian bagpipe players lead onto the stage a truly exotic lama pulling a Chinese gong chime which no Indian of the time could possibly have seen!"[20] The bailiffs of Greenland and Freesland are escorted by their "capriolleurs de louage"[21] who perform in place of their superiors, "for the customs of the country do not permit grave people to go gamboling about."[22] The Africans are led by the Cacique upon his elephant, preceded by three negroes who beat upon small drums and followed by five Africans gesturing and gamboling.[23] The grand Khan follows with his caravan of camels,[24] and the people of Europe enter last, led by the musicians of Granada who sing a song in Spanish.[25] Many of the entries are not, properly speaking, dances. A few of these are sketched by Prunières:

> The amorous sexagenarian of the Dou-
> airière de Billebahaut advances heavily,
> followed by four dotards who wear immense
> boots and spurs too long, which embarrass
> them and make them stumble. A judge accom-
> panied by his recorder waddles in with a
> ridiculous gravity. Mohamet, a plume in
> his hand, a gigantic turban on his head,

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[20] Manfred F. Bukofzer, Music in the Baroque Era (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1947), p. 143.

[21] Kochno, p. 25.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Prunières, pp. 169-70.

[24] Kochno, p. 25.

[25] Ibid.

> marches behind two children who carry the
> Koran open upon their backs.[26]

From the very nature of this account of the ballet, one fact emerges clearly: it has no plot whatsoever. The <u>ballets de Cour</u> have become "no more than a succession of tableaus and scenes of pantomime, a passage of characters variously costumed."[27]

In the face of the difficulty presented by the lack of concrete information about this ballet, what can be said concerning the three elements of music, dance, and decor, and their treatment? The best that can be offered is a selection of estimates given by the various authors consulted. The <u>ballet à entrées</u>, according to Prunières, "gave to the music no more than a very limited role, relegating it to the <u>récits</u> at the beginning of each part, or using it for certain comic entries."[28] In <u>Billebahaut</u>, a <u>récit</u>, sung by a royal musician, was also used to introduce the dancers of the grand ballet, and there was, as well, the Spanish song rendered by the musicians of Granada during the European entry. The judgment of Prunières, however, appears to be valid: "As for the musicians, they have given up every new or dramatic tendency. They order their <u>récits</u> cast from the same mould. The vocal music held, moreover,

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[26]Prunières, p. 169.

[27]<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 246.

[28]<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 128.

less and less of a place in the ballet."[29]

The dance appears to receive the greatest emphasis, of the three components, in the <u>ballets à entrées</u>. This conclusion is not surprising, however, when it is realized that ballets of this genre derived from the <u>ballets-mascarade</u>, which consisted primarily of dancing. Only two dances are mentioned in the foregoing summary: that danced by the servants of the bailiffs of Greenland and Freesland, and the "gesturing and gamboling" of the five Africans. A statement by Prunières, however, leads to the belief that the dancing was one of the mainstays of this genre:

> Throughout some years, the luxury of the costumes, <u>the skill of the dancers</u>, the extravagance of the disguises held the illusion, and the <u>ballet de Cour</u> seemed to be able to exist on the margin of modern theatrical forms which were then organized definitively, but soon the decline began.[30] (Italics mine.)

The <u>ballets à entrées</u> were presented before decors of extreme simplicity.[31] The influence of the <u>ballet-mascarade</u> may once again be held responsible.

> It was, moreover, through habit and routine that the personages appear and sing their <u>récits</u> upon a stage: the <u>ballets à entrées</u> were able to dispense with scenery as easily as the <u>ballets-mascarades</u> of the reign of Henry IV. In general they had only a single decor, very indefinite, which was

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[29]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 133.

[30]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 246.

[31]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 158.

at the back of the stage. Often, in place
of a stage, they were content with a plat-
form, with or without back drop.[32]

The influence, too, of earlier court entertainments, par-
ticularly of the tournaments, is to be found in the decor
of Billebahaut. This ballet, in contrast to most of the
others of its genre, boasted an unusual scenic unit, "a
large sentry-box type shelter which we know to be . . . the
inn of Clamart."[33] The King retired into this building and
watched from there the entries in which he did not take
part.[34]

The machines of the ballet à entrées were extremely
rudimentary and many of them appear to have been direct
descendents of those used in the Tournaments:

> Dummy giants which beat time, or skirts
> into which troups of dancers vanish are very
> much in vogue. [One design represents a
> female giant, whose robe is pierced by three
> openings through which the dancers enter
> onto the stage.] Also popular are the
> images of exotic animals: camels, elephants,
> rhinoceros, parrots, crocodiles, and monkeys.[35]

The apparatus used to represent the camel which carried the
Cacique in Billebahaut is illustrated in one of the exist-
ing designs.[36]

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[32]Ibid., pp. 158-59.

[33]Ibid., p. 159.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid., p. 160.

[36]Ibid.

The over-all effect of the <u>ballets à entrées</u> is summed up by Prunières in the following statement:

> This spectacle, without dramatic impact, without coherent plot, became incoherent; fatigue made itself felt; the imaginations of the librettistes and the musicians was spent.[37]

It can only be added that the imaginations of the technicians and designers appear to have been exhausted as well.

The picture painted by Prunières of the <u>ballets à entrées</u> is a dark one indeed. His judgments derive, however, from his belief that, ideally, the <u>ballet de cour</u> should be a balanced production in which the poetry receives an emphasis equal to that of the music and dance.

> The <u>ballet de cour</u> disappeared before the opera. It could not have been otherwise. From the day when the balanced harmony between the poetry, the music, and the dance had been broken to the detriment of the literary element, the ballet . . . was blended with the opera. . . . It was allowed . . . to become a simple feast for the eyes, incapable of either interesting or affecting.[38]

In an earlier statement, Prunières recognizes in the very nature of the ballet the reason for its dramatic inadequacies. "The ballet," he writes, "never knew any other law than that of pleasure."[39] Despite its faults, however, or perhaps because of them, the <u>ballet de Cour</u> remained, throughout

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[37]<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 246.

[38]<u>Ibid.</u>

[39]<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 128.

the reign of Louis XIV, extremely popular with the French courtiers. An illustration of their attitude toward the ballet, and toward the Italian opera, is found in this account by Bukofzer:

> In a desperate move to bolster the Italian faction at the court Mazarin invited Cavalli, the greatest celebrity of the day, to compose a festival opera for the imminent marriage of Louis XIV. . . . For the preliminary festivities Cavalli's Serse was performed in a revised version in which, symptomatically, the choruses were replaced by ballets that had no relation to the plot. Composed and danced by Lully, the inserted ballets were more successful than the opera itself.[40]

The same reaction met the production of Cavalli's Ercole amante in 1662:

> The splendor of this spectacle . . . outshone all previous operas. Each act was concluded by huge ballets for which Lully wrote the music, the last one having twenty-one entrées. The French reaction to the spectacle is revealing: it was taken not as a musical drama with inserted ballets, but as a gigantic ballet with inserted dramatic interludes.[41]

Thus it is seen that at this time in French history the ballet was extremely alive and active. The seeds, however, which produced these lavish spectacles of the last half of the seventeenth century are to be found in the early ballets à entrées such as the Douairière de Billebahaut.

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[40]Bukofzer, p. 148.

[41]Ibid., p. 149.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In this study, an attempt has been made to explore
the experimental nature of the French Ballet de Cour through
analysis of three representative ballets: the Ballet co-
mique de la Reine, Circé, of 1581; the Ballet de la Déliv-
rance de Renaud, of 1617; and the Ballet de la Douairière
de Billebahaut, of 1626. The aim of the analysis was, first
of all, to observe the relative emphasis in each ballet upon
the elements of music, dance, and decor. A change was ob-
served from a relatively balanced emphasis, achieved in
Circé, to an emphasis upon music in Renaud, and finally,
in Billebahaut, to an emphasis upon the element of dance.
An influence was exercised by both Renaud and Billebahaut
upon the later French theatre. Renaud, which exemplified
the melodramatic ballets de Cour, contributed directly to
the development of the French opera; Billebahaut, as a rep-
resentative of the ballet à entrées, was instrumental in
shaping the Ballet, as a dance form.

The element of decor was viewed, at first, in its
context together with the elements of music and dance. Al-
though an interest in spectacle was characteristic of the
Ballet de Cour as a genre, in none of the ballets considered

did the decor receive primary emphasis. A more detailed analysis of the scenery for each of the three ballets brought to light a number of problem areas and revealed, in addition, two developments in staging methods during the sixty-year period from 1580 to 1640. The first was a progression from the décor dispersé of Circé, with its set pieces scattered about on the auditorium floor, through the décor successif of Renaud, in which a revolving stage made possible five changes of scene, to the informal and spontaneous Douairière de Billebahaut, with its generalized back-drop upon a platform stage. The second tendency, that of the concentration of scenery at one end of the auditorium, paralleled the progression outlined above. It was a trend just barely discernible in Circé, clearly visible in Renaud, and fully realized in Billebahaut.

The Ballet de Cour, which began as a dramatically unified, coherent production, had, by the time of Billebahaut, "lost its theatrical character."[1] It became, writes Prunières, "a simple feast for the eyes."[2] His words suggest those of Jean Nicholas Servandoni, who presented at the Salles des Machines, in the Tuilleries in 1737, a diorama or Spectacle Muet, which he defined as "une Poesie qui parle aux yeux"--a Poetry which speaks to the eyes.[3] Although

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[1]Prunières, p. 128.

[2]Ibid., p. 246.

[3]Lawrenson, pp. 159-60.

Servandoni's production possessed no text, music, dance, or actors, it nevertheless was akin to the _ballet à entrées_. In both, the primary emphasis was placed not upon dramatic import, but upon spectacular effect.

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