

S C E L T A
Delle più belle
ARIETTE, e CANZOCINE
I T A L I A N E,

De' più famosi Autori,

Che in quella lingua ne habbino composte nelle Opere,

Accomodate al suono di Flauto, Violino, & altri Stromenti,

Racolte

D'AMÉDEO LE CHEVALLIER.



I N A M S T E R D A M,

Stampate da P. & J. B L A E U, e si vendono nel Pype-Markt, vicino
l'Arme di Francia. 1691.

Title page, *Scelta
delle più belle ariette,
e canzocine italiane*,
edited by Amédée
Le Chevalier
(Amsterdam:
Blaeu, 1691). Leiden
University Libraries,
542 F 16

THE MUFTI AT HOME

The music of the *comédies-ballets* has sounded uneasily across the traditions of Molière scholarship. Put simply, Molière scholars have been unsure of how to account for its function: To what extent are the musical numbers, with their danced entrées, songs, and choruses, an unmissable feature of the work? The sources for Molière's oeuvre have contributed to negligence of the music. Printed sources might have included song texts, but Molière's authorship of those texts is (often) questionable. Too, the music itself was never published as part of Molière's oeuvre. These factors have contributed to a tendency to ignore the musical scenes, or at least place them to the side.

To prove that the music was not extrinsic, other scholars, primarily musicologists, have concentrated on the "other" Baptiste—Jean-Baptiste Lully. Much labor has been expended in attempting to reconstruct the musical scenes at the moment of their creation at the court of Louis XIV, resulting in monumental critical editions and lavish historically informed performances. Such productions, while tantalizing, have tended to confirm a belief that the *comédie-ballets* and machine plays are simply too expensive and too difficult to produce. In decentering Molière by recentering Lully, scholarship has adopted a too narrow view that ignores the peripheries of lyric performance, beyond the court, beyond the limitations of Lully's "Lettres patentes" of 1672 that sought to silence the musicians of the French theater. Arrangements and domesticated airs have been almost completely ignored, and still too little is known about the trajectories of performance and performers beyond *la France*.

This contribution offers a novel perspective by tracing the associations and practices that led to a singular publication in Amsterdam in 1691: the *Scelta delle più belle ariette, e canzoncine italiane*.¹ Compiled by the Savoyard singer Amédée Le Chevalier, it is the only seventeenth-century print to include music from *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*. Yet the collection presents its contents anonymously, with no reference to its sources. Indeed, the adaptations presented in the *Scelta*, particularly its treatment of the famous "Turkish" scene, raise fundamental questions about the relationship between text and

music, between spectatorship and singing. As I will demonstrate, the music of the *comédie-ballets* took on a new life when transposed from the stage to the home, from the world of professional performers to that of interested amateurs: as popular tunes, suitable for students, and appealing to a wide (non-French) audience.

THE MUFTI AT HOME, IN PRINT

Amédée Le Chevalier first appears in the historical record in the 1680s, as a bass singer in the royal chapel of Spanish Brussels. He was involved in some of the first performances of Lully's operas outside France in Brussels in the early 1680s. A libretto for Lully and Philippe Quinault's opera *Thésée*, performed in Brussels in 1682, lists Le Chevalier as performing the important bass role of *Ægée*, king of Athens.² By 1688 he had migrated north to the Dutch republic to found an opera company in The Hague. There, Le Chevalier encountered difficulties in realizing his operatic dreams. Despite some early successes, his company in The Hague ran out of funding, and he was unable to move his productions to Amsterdam owing to resistance from the city authorities. Frustrated in his efforts on the stage, Le Chevalier turned to vocal coaching as a means to support himself. He obtained a patent from the States of Holland in December 1690 to print his pedagogical repertoire, which largely consisted of the works of Lully.

Le Chevalier hoped to fashion a durable career with his turn to publishing, one that would open new possibilities for patronage and fame. As he expressed in the dedication of his first publication of Lully airs, addressed to the Savoyard ambassador in Amsterdam, "I have need of an illustrious patron in the enterprise that I have undertaken to print these sorts of works in a novel manner for the satisfaction of the curious. . . . I would be most pleased if, after fourteen years since my bad fortune attached me to the study of music, I would have the pleasure to see that my labors are agreeable to Your Excellency."³ Le Chevalier's fortune was indeed miserable because he dreamed of a career on the stage but was forced to earn a living as a singing teacher.

The *Scelta* was Le Chevalier's third publication with the Blaeu firm of Amsterdam. It was first advertised in a Dutch newspaper on July 14, 1691, as "very beautiful Italian airs for one voice and two instruments."⁴ The collection contains twenty-four arias, drawn largely from operas. Yet a quick glance at the table of contents calls into question the meaning of "Italian" in this publication. Three of the pieces are clearly not in Italian, though their composer was born in Italy: the last two numbers in the print, "Ay que lo cura" and "Alegresse enamorado" are in Spanish, while another is in what is now agreed to be Sabir or Mediterranean lingua franca. These three numbers are the only seventeenth-century prints of Lully's music from *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, though they appear in an unexpected form.

Particularly notable is the treatment of the famous "Turkish" scene. Le Chevalier's unique arrangement presents the Mufti's sung interventions as a single aria for solo voice, rather than multiple airs interspersed with dialogue, dance, and ensemble

I N D I C E.		
D Ate all'armi. Non vantar, non vantar libertà. Cieca diuina inesorabile. Mufti pur chi vuol Amor. Io non credo alla Speranza. Deh piangete al pianto mio. Abbi martire! Empia sorte! Com'esser può fravoi. Abbi ch'indarno si tarda. Quanto vale, quanto può Bella bocca di cinabro. Cieco Dio fra tante pene Dammi morte. Che farai misero Core?	Pag. 1 5 8 10 12 14 15 16 18 19 22 23	Fiero Amor tua fatal forza. Spargi altrove il tuo velen gelosia. O che felicità. Ove con piè d'argento porta. De l'Amore. Se ti sabir, ti respondir. Berenice, Ove, ove sei? Si si crude stelle, chio sempre rubelle. Non prendo consiglio. Lieto o pensiero, ch'al fin goderò. Ay que lo cura con tanto rigor. Alegresse en amorado y tome mi parecer.
		25 27 30 33 42 44 45 48 50 51 53 ibid.
I L F I N E.		

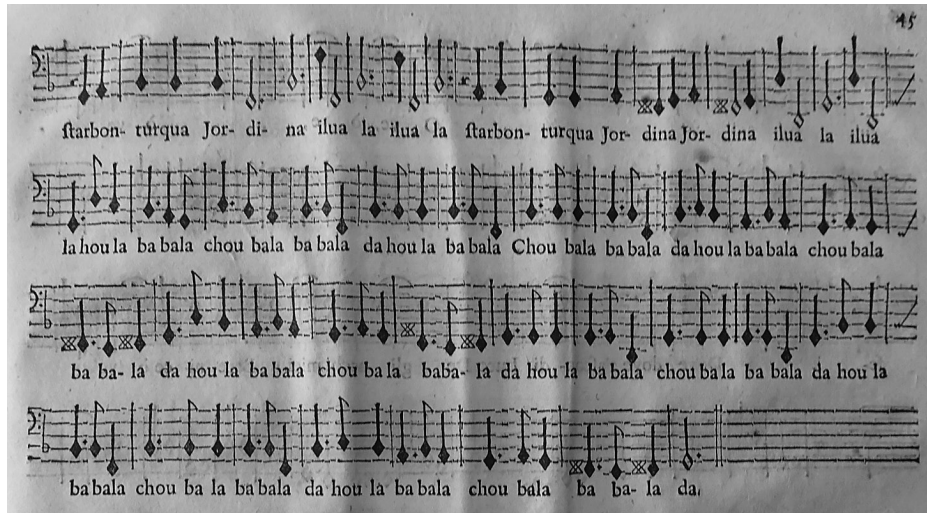
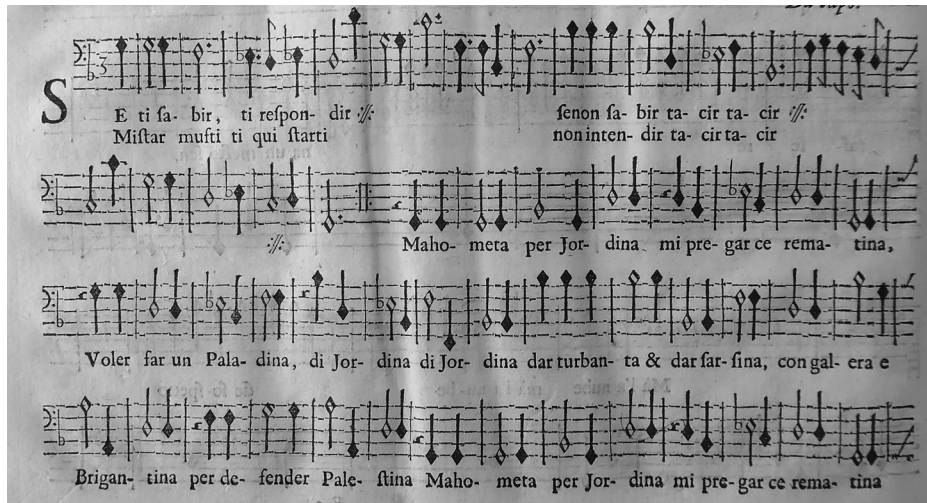
Detail from
*Scelta delle più belle
ariette, e canzocine
italiane*, 54. Leiden
University Libraries,
542 F 16

singing for a large group of performers. Until now, it has been impossible to analyze Le Chevalier's version of the scene because of a lack of material evidence, as the *Scelta* was published in three easily lost partbooks: one for the voice and basso continuo, and one each for the two treble instruments. Only one copy of the second treble part has come to light, in the collection of the Leiden University Library.⁵ There is a simple explanation for why the only complete set of partbooks exists in Leiden: Le Chevalier's privilege from the States of Holland and West Friesland, reprinted in the forematter to the *Scelta*, contains an obligation to deposit one copy of each work printed under the terms of the privilege in the collections of "the Library of our University in Leiden."⁶

Having the complete set of partbooks allows for a fuller picture of the arrangement to emerge. While a full analysis is out of the scope of this article, a glance at the text reveals that the two solo airs for the Mufti, "Se ti sabir" and "Mahameta per Giourdina," have been retained. Dialogue after the second air, in which the Mufti converses with the "Turks" ("Dice mi Turque"), has been cut. Most notably, the ensemble "Star bon Turca Giourdina," with its interjections of hullabaloo from the "Turks," has been compressed into a solo. The arrangement presents itself as a continuous piece, eliminating the stage action of the play that interrupts the musical moments. Le Chevalier's instrumental accompaniment is also wholly different. While the texture of two treble parts and bass has been retained, the published treble parts are newly composed. Textures are clarified, and the accompaniments are more homogenous. The harmonies have been altered: sevenths are avoided, while newly trendy cadence types (like the famous "Corelli clash") have been added. Overall, one could say that the edition published in the *Scelta* "updated" Lully's harmonic language to reflect the trends of the 1690s rather than those of the 1670s.

THE MUFTI AT HOME, ELSEWHERE

But the question remains: How did Le Chevalier get his hands on the music? No music related to *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* was printed until 1720, and even manuscript copies including the "Turkish" scene were exceedingly scarce.⁷ To find an answer, we must



Molière and Lully,
"Se ti sabir," arr.
Le Chevalier, from
*Scelta delle più belle
ariette, e canzocine
italiane* (voice and
basso continuo
only), 44-45. Leiden
University Libraries,
542 F 16

revisit the restrictions placed on lyric productions in France due to Lully's intervention, and then trace the paths of the traveling theater troupes who carried his music—and Molière's plays—far beyond France's borders.

The famous falling out between Molière and Lully that resulted in Lully's monopolistic control of stage music in France effectively spelled doom for any aspiring opera composer during Lully's lifetime and severely limited the possibilities for music on the dramatic stage. Lully's *lettres patentes*, signed by Louis XIV and Colbert in March 1672, established him as the sole proprietor of opera in the French kingdom for life. Merely controlling the operatic stage was not enough: the powerful *surintendant de la musique du Roi* sought to eliminate any musical competition on the stage, and especially that presented by Molière's Troupe du Roi—which was, after all, performing his music. The irritated composer moved to impose restrictions on the number of sing-

ers and instrumentalists who could perform onstage, restrictions that would make it impossible to perform works like *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* in their original form. While Molière was able to save his shows through his own petitions to the king, his death on February 17, 1673, paved the way for further machinations from his former collaborator. Just five days after the great actor died, a royal ordinance was passed that limited all theatrical productions including music to a mere two singers and six instrumentalists.⁸ This standard would remain in effect in France for decades afterward.

Lully's restrictions on music in the theater might seem oppressive to us, but they in fact proved conducive to a number of important creative developments. Old works were adjusted to the new constraints, making them (ironically) more performable. The injunctions encouraged performer mobility as well, as newly unemployed theatrical musicians, singers, and dancers headed abroad, beyond the purview of Lully's *privilège*. Traveling theater troupes in particular seem to have played a primary role in the transmission of practices and repertoire.

The interconnectedness of the theatrical world meant that materials (and people) traveled quickly, yet we still know little about what they did and how. Occasionally, evidence does emerge for just how fast plays—and their music—moved. For example, the diary of Dutch patrician Pieter Teding van Berkhout reveals that he saw a number of Molière productions between 1669 and 1671, including *Sganarelle ou le Cocu imaginaire*, *Tartuffe*, *Le Misanthrope*, and, on November 14, 1671, *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*. Teding writes: "In the afternoon, I fetched my cousin van der Dussen and my cousin Boogart at around 3 o'clock, with whom I went to The Hague in my carriage to the French Theater, where *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* of Moliere was performed very pleasantly. We returned to Delft at 9:30 pm."⁹ That Teding saw this play just a few months after its first public production closed in Paris in July of 1671 may seem remarkable to us. Yet it should be noted that the troupe in The Hague at that time was particularly well connected. Officially known as Les Comédiens du Monseigneur le Dauphin, it was made up primarily of members of the famous Raisin family.

We cannot underestimate the effects of the traveling French acting troupes on the reception of the comédies-ballets, for their performance practices shaped knowledge of how these plays and their music ought to sound. Following the tradition established in Paris, the typical lyric ensemble outside France included only two singers and five dancers accompanied by a small ensemble of six "violins," who were usually hired locally. Theater troupes did generally have at least one staff musician traveling with them, who was almost always a bass violinist. *Basse de violon* players generally also possessed skills in music arranging and copying, thus providing troupes with the ability to make musical arrangements as needed, if the troupe had not already acquired arrangements from their friends, relatives, and colleagues back in France.

The Parisian norm of only two singers on the dramatic stage may explain Le Chevalier's arrangement of the Mufti's sung contributions. We do not know who made the arrangements in the *Scelta*; what we do know is that Le Chevalier crossed paths

with the well-connected French theater troupe of the Duke of Hanover in Brussels in the 1680s. This troupe was led by Auguste Pierre Patissier de Châteauneuf, who had been a member of Molière's Troupe du Roi until 1672, and thus involved in the first run of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*. Indeed, this play remained in his repertoire, receiving multiple performances by the Hanoverian troupe.¹⁰ Perhaps the *Scelta* gives us a rare glimpse into a performing world we still know so little about, when the Mufti was no longer sung by Lully himself, when he came home to other places and other contexts.

THE MUFTI, AT HOME

It is the domestic context of the *Scelta* arrangement that is perhaps most pertinent, given the nature of the publication. The *Scelta* was, after all, intended to provide materials for Le Chevalier's singing students—to advertise his repertorial knowledge and demonstrate what progress could be made under his tutelage. That this publication was an advertisement for Le Chevalier might be one reason the songs were published without attribution: if you wanted to know who wrote these famous airs, you would have to ask Le Chevalier for a lesson!

Yet, considering that the partbooks were advertised all the way until 1744, twenty years after Le Chevalier's death, it might not always have been possible to ask. Which leads to the question: How likely was it that Le Chevalier's arrangement of this scene into a single singing number was recognized as being part of Molière's play? A copy of the *Scelta* owned in the late seventeenth century by a retired Huguenot soldier in London might give us some clues.¹¹ Mr. de Fonronce had campaigned in Flanders in the 1690s and settled in England by 1696, bringing with him a collection of music acquired in the Low Countries. He proudly embellished the blue paper wrapper of his copy of the *Scelta*, adding his name to the flyleaf as a mark of ownership. Fonronce was savvy enough to realize that not all the songs were in fact in Italian—he noted in the margin of the print's last page that "Ay que locura" and "Alegrese enamorado" are "en Espagnol." Fonronce even managed to identify the source of one piece. Above the lament "Deh piangete al pianto mio," Fonronce penned "*Psiché*" in a bold hand, perhaps proud of himself for recognizing the source of this most famous of Lully's laments—and also testifying to how important this play was for many years across a wide swath of Europe. But the Mufti's scene receives merely a star. Six other pieces in the collection are similarly marked, most of them arias for bass voice. Perhaps Fonronce was marking those pieces that he was learning, for he, like Le Chevalier, like Lully, sang the bass parts.

The invitation to identify these songs—or not—with Molière's play speaks to the liveliness of theatrical music beyond the stage. My interest is in the lived experiences that made this music at home elsewhere; in how numbers from the stage have had independent afterlives; in how they were, are, and can be transposed. Considering that most people back then experienced Lully's stage music almost exclusively in extracts

and arrangements, should we not, then, adopt a different approach that moves away from the court of Louis XIV, away from the monumental figure of Lully, one that imagines transposition as musicians do—as a strategy that renders performance possible, by oneself or with friends, on the stage or at home?

NOTES

1. Amédée Le Chevalier, *Scelta delle più belle ariette, e canzoncine [canzoncine] italiane, de' più famosi Autori . . . Racolte d'Amedeo Le Chevallier* (Amsterdam: P. & J. Blaeu, 1691), 542 F 16–18, Leiden University Libraries, Leiden.
2. *Thésée, tragédie en musique . . . Représentée par l'Académie Royale de Musique, ce 18. May . . .* (S.l.: s.n. 1682), D1 4649 (D1 4650), Martin-Luther Universität, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt, Halle, Germany.
3. “J’avois besoin d’un patron illustre dans l’entreprise que j’ay faite d’imprimer ces sortes d’ouvrages d’une manière particulière pour la satisfaction des curieux . . . je serai trop heureux si depuis quatorze ans que ma mauvaise fortune m’a fait attacher à l’étude de la Musique, j’ay le plaisir de voir que mes soins sont agréables à Vostre Excellence.” Amédée Le Chevalier, ed., *Les trio des opera de Monsieur de Lully* (Amsterdam: P. & J. Blaeu, 1690), *3v.
4. “Item seer schone Italiaensse Airs met een Stem en 2 instrumenten.” *Oprechte Haerlemse Saturdaegse Courant*, no. 28, July 14, 1691 (Haarlem: Abraham Casteleyn).
5. Le Chevalier, *Scelta delle più belle ariette*, Leiden University Libraries.
6. Le Chevalier, *Scelta delle più belle ariette*, “Privilegie,” [*4v].
7. See Hanna Walsdorf, “Lully and His Music for the Turkish Ceremony: Sources and Discourses, Old and New,” in *Ritual Design for the Ballet Stage: Revisiting the Turkish Ceremony in “Le Bourgeois gentilhomme,”* ed. Hanna Walsdorf (Berlin: Frank und Timme, 2019), 275–340.
8. Jérôme de La Gorce, *Jean-Baptiste Lully* (Paris: Fayard, 2002), 180–85.
9. “L’aprezmidy i’alloys querir vers les troys heures ma Cousine van der Dussen et ma Cousine Boogart avec les quelles i’alloys a La Haye dans mon carosse a la Comedie Françoisse, ou on representa fort playsamment le Bourgeoys Gentilhomme de Moliere, nous reuinsmes a Delft a neuf heures et demye.” Pieter Teding van Berkhout, *Livre contentant mes occupations*, entry of November 21, 1671, Ms. 129 D 1,6, Royal Library, The Hague.
10. See Gerhard Vorkamp, “Das französische Hoftheater in Hannover (1668–1758),” *Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* 29 (1957): 121–85.
11. Le Chevalier, *Scelta delle più belle ariette*, Mus. Sch. E.498, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Oxford.