
La Feste de Chantilly and the dances of Guillaume-Louis Pécour, August 1688

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Guillaume-Louis Pécour (1653–1729) is best known today for his numerous dances for the ballroom and the stage, many of the latter being created for magnificent productions at the Paris Opéra and performed by the leading dancers of their day. Thanks to the work of Jérôme de La Gorce we know much about Pécour's background and career,¹ but one source worthy of closer attention is the detailed description of the extraordinary entertainments put on at the chateau of Chantilly by Henri-Jules, the new Prince of Bourbon-Condé (his father, Le Grand Condé, having died in 1686), for the eight-day visit of Monseigneur le Grand Dauphin and his entourage in August 1688.² The description, probably penned by Jean Donneau de Vizé, was published in a special issue of the *Mercure galant* that September and also issued separately as a small volume.³ It confirms that entertaining the heir to the French throne and his entourage was not for the faint-hearted: it required stamina, good taste, and much money. Along with the wolf and deer hunts, visits to the menagerie and the maze, the many banquets, concerts and evening *appartements*, there was also opera in the Orangery theatre, and a huge open-air *divertissement* for which Pécour created the dances. Since he had only recently begun to take over some of Pierre Beauchamps' choreographic responsibilities at the Académie royale de musique (the Paris Opéra), the Chantilly entertainments were among the earliest major events that Pécour undertook in his burgeoning career as choreographer to that institution. The event also marks what may be the earliest documented performance of the young Anthony L'Abbé, who would later attract considerable fame in London.⁴

The estate of Chantilly, situated about thirty miles north of Paris, was home to the princely Condé family. Louis, 'le Grand Condé', a powerful opponent of the King during the wars of the Fronde, had forfeited the estates in 1654 but managed to regain favour partly by his military prowess and partly by making Chantilly second only to Versailles for its outstanding beauty and lavish hospitality.⁵ Louis XIV himself visited in 1671 (the occasion now, alas, best remembered for the suicide of Condé's major-domo Vatel after the catering went awry), and Henri-Jules in turn continued to pour money into the spectacular park, hunting grounds and entertainments for which Chantilly became renowned; small wonder that the Grand Dauphin was keen to visit in August 1688. There was another reason too, for three years earlier his half-sister Louise had married Henri-Jules's eldest son, the next heir to Chantilly.

Despite some discrepancies in his arithmetic, the commentator's detailed descriptions of the entire eight-day visit convey an excellent sense of the extravagant nature of each entertainment: see Table 1 for a summary of the main events. Those which involved theatrical dance were the open-air procession and ballet by woodland deities; the opera *Orontée*; and a staged *divertissement* titled *Le Dieu Pan*.

Day 1: open-air procession, ballet and *Lysisca's Hunt*

The first musical entertainment took place on the day of Monseigneur's arrival (Sunday 22 August). He and his hosts spent the day hunting, ending up at a clearing in the forest known as La Table where twelve avenues met. At their point of intersection a wooden rotunda was built, with views out across the avenues; and inside the rotunda was a large circular table reached by a flight of steps. After a repast of hot and cold dishes had been served, Monseigneur heard drums and trumpets, giving way to 'hautbois, flutes, musettes and several other rustic instruments' (pp. 26–27), and saw a procession coming towards him along one of the avenues. It was the god Pan (in reality Jean-Louis Lully, son of the late composer and now Superintendent of the King's Music), beating time with his staff as he walked, and followed by ninety instrumentalists dressed as 'fauns, sylvans, satyrs and other woodland deities' (pp. 29–30) marching in three columns. Then came twenty-four satyrs, and twenty-one dancers⁶ holding cudgels, 'standing on each others shoulders to form groups and looking as steady as if they were on the ground' (pp.30–31).⁷ After them came fifty-one singers, also dressed as forest deities. As they approached the rotunda, the hautbois players ranged themselves beside the steps, and when they were in place 'the dancers executed perfectly what they had devised, which was to jump down to dance while still in their formations. For this effect those who were highest ('les plus élevez') jumped down together in four measures and, 'because no more than three at a time jumped down, one always saw three people forming the same figure as the three previous' (p.33). Clearly the twenty-one dancers came forward in rows, and however they were grouped, each threesome jumping down would add to the sense of a continuous cascade from row to row. The singers coming along behind them went off to one side, the music changed, and 'all the fauns and satyrs performed a most extraordinary dance...which one might call a small ballet' (p.35), and it greatly pleased Monseigneur and his entourage. By now the singers had moved to an area where some huntsmen were apparently fast asleep.⁸ As the dancing ended, the singers commenced a vocal air, calling to the huntsmen to wake up for *Lysisca's Hunt* (p.39). The men made a great dumb-show of waking up, hunting horns blared out and a captured stag was released across Monseigneur's field of vision. Predictably, he called for hounds and horses, which of course appeared immediately, and off they went in pursuit. The commentator noted that all the music was by Jean-Louis Lully⁹ and all the dances by Guillaume-Louis Pécour, and that Jean Berain, 'Dessinateur ordinaire du Cabinet du Roy', designed all the costumes as well as the rotunda itself (pp. 44–46).

Days 2 & 3: the opera *Orontée*

The next theatrical entertainment occurred on the following two evenings (Monday 23 and Tuesday 24 August), in performances of Paulo Lorenzani's only French opera, *Orontée*.¹⁰ It was staged in Berain's specially-constructed theatre in the Orangery.

According to the commentator, this building was seventy *toises*¹¹ (approximately four hundred and twenty feet) long,



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Table 1. Programme of events at Chantilly, August 1688

1st day: Sun. 22nd	Monseigneur comes from Versailles to the edge of the forest; met by le Prince de Condé & Mons. le Duc, and hunts game birds. 5.00 pm Repast in the Forest at La Table; <i>Divertissement</i> and Lysisca's Hunt. Return to chateau; Supper.
2nd day: Mon. 23rd	Wolf hunt near the village of La Chapelle. Visit to gardens and fountains. Opera <i>Orontée</i> in the Orangery theatre. Return to chateau; <i>Appartement</i> .
3rd day: Tue. 24th	Visit to park, woodlands, canals and cascades. Repast. Visit to Menagerie. Stag hunt. Opera <i>Orontée</i> in the Orangery theatre. Return to chateau; <i>Appartement</i> .
4th day: Wed. 25th	Hunts game birds and hares. Repast. Visit to Galerie des Cerfs & Pavillon des Etuves; Cascades; Pheasantry; Bois de Lude & Pavillon de Manse. Displays of jousting and water sports; boating & fishing. Return to chateau by carriage; <i>Appartement</i> and Supper.
5th day: Thu. 26th	Princesses* arrive from Versailles, and are met and escorted by fauns & satyrs in cavalcade. Princesses retire to the chateau while Monseigneur goes on a wolf hunt at Merlou. After dining, the Princesses watch a water tournament beneath the chateau ramparts.
6th day: Fri. 27th	Stag hunt (2 hours) around l'Etang de Comelle; collation served in a specially built arbour with tents for the ladies. Boar & deer hunt from boats; some prey netted and released. Return to chateau; <i>Appartement</i> and opera (music concert).
7th day: Sat. 28th	Monseigneur goes on a wolf hunt; ladies remain at chateau (poor weather), but he returns to dine with them. Concert in the apartments of La Princesse de Conti (Lysisca's Hunt verses adapted). <i>Appartement</i> and opera (music concert); Medianoche.
8th day: Sun. 29th	Mass. Stag hunt with le Grand Prieur's hounds. 'Disné' (déjeuner) at la Maison de Sylvie. Visit to the Maze, and collation; displays of tennis, archery &c.; marble statues and Enigmas. 8 -9.00 p.m. Staged divertissement in the Orangery theatre: <i>Le Dieu-Pan et les Divinités des Bois</i>. 9.00 p.m. Gardens, steps and grottoes lit by flambeaux; illuminations along canal, cascades and fountains; fireworks.
Mon. 30th	Monseigneur, 'despite being tired', hunts for most of the day before leaving for Versailles.

* Madame la Princesse (Anne of Bavaria, wife of Henri-Jules de Condé), Madame la Duchesse (Mademoiselle de Nantes, legitimised daughter of Louis XIV & Madame de Montespan, now wife of Condé's eldest son Monsieur le Duc), the dowager Princesse de Conti (Mademoiselle de Blois, legitimised daughter of Louis XIV & Mademoiselle La Valliere), La Princesse de Conti (Condé's newly-married daughter).

twenty-seven feet wide, twenty-six feet high, and divided into three chambers opening off each other. The audience congregated in the first chamber, a Vestibule some one hundred and eighty feet long, inside which live trees were planted behind low porcelain walls either side of a pathway leading to a great marble and gold doorway sixteen feet high and eight feet wide. This doorway opened into the second chamber or Gallery, ninety-six feet long, decorated with wall-panels and tapestries depicting scenes from the mythology of Venus, and lit by crystal lustres and candelabras. At the far end of the chamber was another door leading into the third chamber. This was the *Salle de l'opéra*, one hundred and forty-two feet long, and even more sumptuously decorated than the other chambers. Its walls were punctuated by fourteen marble pilasters decorated with gilded festoons carved in relief, and between the pilasters were marble panels and tapestries with similar designs to those of the doorways picked out in gold against a crimson velvet background, and topped by a marble cornice. The area for the musicians in front of the stage was similarly of marble, and the stage itself was flanked by life-sized statues:

Music on one side, Poetry on the other. 'This room', added the commentator rather unnecessarily, 'was so brilliant and so rich that one could not look at it without astonishment followed by admiration' (pp. 96–97); and that was even before the opera began.

The stage was to reveal yet more wonders, and the commentator's detailed description (pp. 99–166) of the opera itself adds valuable information to the published livret for this '*tragédie-en-musique* decorated with ballet entrées, machines, and changes of scenery'.¹² Indeed the entire work adds to our knowledge of what was happening to French opera for a few years following Jean-Baptiste Lully's death, as his rivals vied for recognition. *Orontée* was the work of the Italian composer Paolo Lorenzani (1640–1713), who had been the highly respected Master of Music in the Queen's Chapel¹³ but had always been prevented by Lully from presenting any theatrical works at Court, apart from the successful staging at Fontainebleau in 1681 of his pastoral opera *Nicandro & Fileno* under the patronage of Mazarin's nephew, the Duc de Nevers.

Table 2. Dancers in *Orontée* at Chantilly, 23 & 24 August 1688 (female dancers in italics)

Name in livret	Status in <i>Orontée</i>	Identity
Balon	Child (Ensemble)	Claude Balon (1676-1739). Debut with ARM 1688
<i>Beauchamps</i>	<i>Ensemble</i>	
Blondy	Child (Ensemble)	Michel Blondy (1675-1739), nephew of Pierre Beauchamps, successor to Pécour at ARM 1729
<i>Breard</i>	<i>Ensemble</i>	<i>Mlle Bréard, danced in Lully's Temple de la Paix at Fontainebleau in 1685</i>
<i>Carré</i>	<i>Ensemble</i>	<i>Debut with ARM 1681</i>
Colin	Ensemble	Perhaps from the family of acrobats
<i>De Sesve/Seve</i>	<i>Ensemble</i>	
Deshayes	Ensemble	Jacques Des Hayes/Dezais?
Desnoyers	Ensemble	Perhaps a son of Charles Desnoyers, Paris dancing-master who died 1653
Desnoyers C.	Ensemble	Perhaps a son of Charles Desnoyers, Paris dancing-master who died 1653
Diot	Ensemble	
<i>Durieux</i>	<i>Ensemble</i>	
Gaudon	Ensemble	
L'Abbé	Ensemble	Antoine [Anthony] (1666-1757). Debut with ARM 1688, career in London 1698-1737
<i>La Fontaine</i>	<i>Solo; Duet with Pécour; Ensemble</i>	<i>Mlle La Fontaine (1655-173). Debut with ARM 1681; danced in Lully's Temple de la Paix for the Dauphin at Fontainebleau in 1685. Retired to a convent c. 1696</i>
<i>Le Sueur</i>	<i>Ensemble</i>	
L'Estang, Lestang	Solo; Duet with <i>Pesan L.</i>	Louis Lestang (died c. 1739). Debut in court ballets, and ARM 1673 (where he and Pécour became composers of ballets from 1687); danced in Lully's <i>Temple de la Paix</i> for the Dauphin at Fontainebleau in 1685
<i>Lestang</i>	<i>Ensemble</i>	<i>Mlle Geneviève Lestang. Debut with ARM 1688</i>
Magny	Child (Ensemble)	Claude-Marc Magny (1676-1727), debut in court ballets from 1681; employed at the court of Lorraine 1698-1709
Morel	Child (Ensemble)	
Pecour	Solo; Duet with <i>La Fontaine</i>	Guillaume-Louis Pécour (1653-1729), pupil and successor of Pierre Beauchamps. Debut in court ballets 1673, soloist 1680-1702; composer of ballets, with Lestang, at ARM from 1682; danced in Lully's <i>Temple de la Paix</i> for the Dauphin at Fontainebleau in 1685
<i>Pesan C.</i>	<i>Ensemble</i>	
<i>Pesan L.</i>	<i>Solo; Duet with Lestang; Ensemble</i>	<i>Debut with ARM 1681</i>
Piftot	Ensemble	
Piquet	Ensemble	Perhaps Pierre Piquet, dancing-master in the household of Madame, 1670s
Poitier	Ensemble	
Prevost	Ensemble	
Renaud	Child (Ensemble)	Perhaps Pierre or Jacques-Claude Renaud; both brothers worked at the Paris Fairs with the acrobat Allard in 1702
Roussel	Child (Ensemble)	
<i>Subligny</i>	<i>Solo; Ensemble</i>	<i>Mlle Marie-Thérèse Perdou de Subligny (1666 – after 1735). Debut with ARM 1688, successor to Mlle de La Fontaine, retired 1707</i>
Thibaut	Ensemble	

In *Orontée* Lorenzani created an opera which appealed to French taste while still retaining aspects of Italian form, and this may be seen in its structure and use of dance: consisting of a prologue and five acts, the typical form of a French *tragédie-en-musique*, but removing all the dancing from the action and placing the divertissements at the end of each act, which would have been unusual in France.¹⁴ Also significant was the collaboration, as librettist, of the lawyer Michel Le Clerc (1622–1691), member of the Académie Française and by 1688 author of several odes in praise of the King, Monseigneur le Grand Dauphin, Madame La Princesse de Conti, and an epitaph to Le Grand Condé.¹⁵ The dances in *Orontée* were all devised by Pécour apart from two which were created by his colleague Louis Lestang, and were performed by thirty-one dancers (fourteen men, six young boys, and eleven women: see Table 2).

The *Orontée* livret states that all the performers were from the Académie royale de musique, and although that may not be strictly accurate for some of the singers¹⁶ it does provide valuable evidence for some of the dancers. Livrets of the Académie operas prior to 1699 rarely name the dancers: of those listed for *Orontée* at Chantilly only messieurs Lestang, Pécour and Prevost appear in one or more Lully livrets prior to 1686, plus Michel Blondy from 1690, and Claude Balon and Mademoiselle Subligny from 1699. None of the other dancers is named in the Lully livrets, so their presence in *Orontée* in 1688 may throw light on the membership of the Opéra dance troupe at that date; indeed it indicates that Blondy, Balon and Subligny in particular made their debut with the company earlier than the 1690s, and also confirms that L'Abbé did indeed join the Académie royale de musique in 1688. On the other hand, some of the dancers clearly had links with both the Opéra and with ballets put on independently at Court.¹⁷

As for *Orontée* at Chantilly, the woodland deity theme of the previous day was put to good use again. Set in a beautiful forest, the Prologue opened to reveal the god Pan (sung by Antoine Moreau) surrounded by woodland deities singing, playing hautbois (six on-stage musicians including members of the Hotteterre family), and dancing. As in many French opera prologues, all the singing and dancing was designed to pay tribute to the monarch and his heir: Pan and his followers praised Monseigneur as the glorious son of a glorious king, and the 'slayer of monsters in our forests' (a reference to his prowess as a huntsman). Regrettably the livret does not give any indication of how the dancers were used, although it does identify soloists and places them at the head of the list, and also identifies at least one duet, as a faun and a hamadryad, by the established stars of the Opéra Monsieur Pécour and Mademoiselle de La Fontaine (see Table 3). Everyone else is listed without any indication of partnering or of divisions within the ensembles: six dancing fauns (who including L'Abbé) and seven dancing dryads (led by Mademoiselle Subligny 'seule') and six 'petits faunes dansans' (including future Opéra stars Claude-Marc Magny and Claude Balon, then aged twelve, and Michel Blondy, aged thirteen). That suggests however that each faun may have been partnered by a dryad, as well as dancing in larger ensembles of fauns, dryads, and small fauns.

The main story of the *tragédie* concerns Orontée, Queen of Egypt, whose status demands that she may only take a husband of royal blood. She therefore shuns love – until she

meets a Phoenician refugee named Alidor. After the complicated plot and subplots of disguised identities and jealous rivalries so beloved of Italian opera, and the intervention of demonic forces so popular in French opera, Alidor turns out to be the long-lost heir to the Phoenician throne and so becomes eligible to rule Egypt as Orontée's husband.

The livret confirms that, unusually for *tragédie-en-musique*, the dancing occurs only in the closing scene of each act. The end of Act I (set near the temple of Venus and Orontée's palace) has singing and dancing Egyptians 'and other nations', trying to convince Orontée that she must marry, by sacrificing to the goddess of love. Pécour is named as a solo Egyptien, and Mademoiselle Pesan l'ainée as a solo Egyptienne, and each has six followers (see Table 3). The divertissement seems quite French in its form, with vocal music and dance alternating, but no danced duet is specified. At the end of Act II, the men and women 'of various nations', together with four little 'Amours' (the young boys Magny, Balon, Renaud and Blondy), dance to express their joy that Orontée has at last fallen in love. This scene includes solos from Pécour (supported by four male dancers including L'Abbé) and from Mademoiselle de La Fontaine (supported by four female dancers including Mademoiselle Subligny), and a duet for Lestang and Mademoiselle Pesan.

The rest of the opera is set in magnificent gardens for which Berain's stage design still survives.¹⁸ It depicts a rectangular stage with the proscenium arch flanked by the statues of Music and Poetry, which the Chantilly commentator had noted, and beyond which were architectural porticos leading the eye to avenues, fountains and steps towards a domed temple in the far distance. The livret names no dancers in Act III, but they doubtless appeared as some of the demons and statues which come to life to warn Orontée that she may only marry someone of royal blood. This scene would have been made particularly impressive by Berain's use of machines: the sorceress Ismenie strikes the ground with her staff to summon demons to raise the five tombs of Ptolomé and other ancient Kings of Egypt. Traps open and the five tombs, each with white marble statues carved along their sides in attitudes of grief, rise up from beneath the stage to a height of twenty-four feet, that of Ptolomé's being centre stage. The demons then circle round, animating the statues on each tomb; and after the prophecy has been delivered they all sink down beneath the stage again.¹⁹

Act IV belongs to the Italianate comic subplot, and ends with the servant Gelon (sung by Monsieur Morel, who only a few months earlier had sung in the court masquerade *Le Mariage de la Grosse Cathos* and was also a stalwart of Molière's comédie-ballets) holding an increasingly drunken feast for his friends (led by Arcas, played by Monsieur Philbert – who had sung and danced as Grosse Cathos's hapless bridegroom), before falling asleep on a grassy bank, only to be rudely reawakened by the racket his friends were making. The scene ends with a bucolic dance for eight men, one of whom was L'Abbé, and quite likely Arcas joined in too. Finally, Act V reveals Alidor's royal status, and the whole opera ends with a *fête galante*, the dancing (by five men and four women) being led by Lestang.

Table 3. Dancers and roles in the livret for *Orontée* at Chantilly, 1688

	Order of appearance	Names
Prologue	‘Le Theatre represente une grande & belle Forest’	
	Six Faunes dansans	Messieurs Piffetot, L’Abbé, Desnoyers, Diot, Thibaut, Gaudon
	Six petits Faunes dansans	Messieurs Magny, Balon, Renaud, Blondy, Roussel, Morel
	Sept Dryades dansantes	Mlle de Subligny seule. Mlles de Sesve, Durieux, Beauchamp, Lestang, Le Sueur, Pesan L.
	Un Faune & une Hamadryade dansans ensemble	Mons. Pécour & Mlle de La Fontaine
La Tragédie	‘La scene est à Memphis dans le Palais d’Orontée’	
	Troupe de peuples differens qui viennent à la Feste de Venus; Troupe de Demons	
Act I	‘Le Theatre represente un grand Palais & dans l’enfoncement le Temple de Vénus’	
Sc.8	Sept Egyptiens dansans	Mons. Pécour seul. Messieurs des Hayes, Provost, Desnoyer C., Piquet, Poitier, Piffetot
	Sept Egyptiennes dansantes	Mlle Pesan L. seule. Mlles de La Fontaine, Pesan, de Sesve, Breard, Subligny, Carré
Act II		
Sc.8	Cinque hommes dansans	Mons. Pécour seul. Messieurs Thibault, Piffetot, Poitier, L’Abbé
	Cinque demoiselles dansantes	Mlle de La Fontaine seule. Mlles de Subligny, Carré, Breard, de Seve
	Quatre petits Amours [Duet]	Messieurs Magny, Balon, Renaut, Blondy Monsieur de Lestang & Mlle Pesan
Act III	‘Le Theatre change, & represente un Jardin magnifique...’	
Sc.8	[Demons & Statues]	[no dancers named]
Act IV		
Sc.8	Huit Compagnons de Gelon dansans	Messieurs Diot, Piffetot, Desnoyers, Provost, Colin, Deshayes, Labbé, Gaudon
Act V		
Sc.7	‘Un Troupe d’Egyptiens & d’Egyptiennes forme une espece de Feste galante’	
	Cinque Egyptiens dansans	Monsieur L’Estang seul. Messieurs Poitier, Piffetot, Provost, Desnoyers C.
	Quatre Egyptiennes dansantes	Mlles Durieux, Pesan, Lestang, Beauchamps

Day 8: the divertissement *Le Dieu-Pan et les Divinitez des Bois*

The woodland theme was picked up in dance yet again on the last full day of the visit, following an afternoon collation in the Maze and other entertainments. The intention had been to repeat the great open-air entertainment which had taken place at La Table on the first day, now that the princesses had come from Versailles to join the party (see Table 1), but the weather was breaking up and so that evening the Orangery theatre was taken over at short notice for a staged divertissement called *Le Dieu-Pan et les Divinitez des Bois*. The opening scene revealed Pan enthroned far upstage, surrounded by fifty-four fauns, satyrs and sylvans who had taken part in the first day's procession. Twenty-four 'nymphs, magnificently attired' were seated at the front of the stage, with a group of shepherds behind them. The commentator (pp. 278–283) noted the wonder and novelty of the first scene, which opened with a *passepied* in which one nymph stood up and started to dance solo, then another suddenly appeared as if from nowhere ('sans être aperçuë') and joined in, following behind her, then a third joined the line in the same way, and then others 'imitating these first three' started to dance until all the nymphs had formed a circle in the middle of the stage which so far had been empty (pp. 282–4). Perhaps each dancer suddenly emerged from the scenery or from behind the singers, and this raises intriguing questions of how many of the twenty-four magnificently attired nymphs were singers, singers who also danced, or dancers. The commentator notes that some of the nymphs sang as they danced, after which Pan and his followers came forward to join the nymphs, shepherds and (mentioned for the first time) shepherdesses, the mixture of their different costumes producing a charming sight. The description provides a rare and fascinating insight to Pécour's choreographic management of the opening of this divertissement, in which (p. 285) his dances were set to new airs by Lorenzani, added to airs and symphonies from his earlier opera *Nicandro & Fileno*.²⁰ The commentator also noted (p. 288) that the dancing was imaginative and well executed, despite being performed at very short notice, although, he added (pp. 290–291), it was doubtless one of several entertainments held in reserve at Chantilly that week just in case they were needed. None of the dancers is named, but they no doubt comprised some if not all of those who had danced in *Orontée*. The evening's entertainment finished in the gardens with illuminations and fireworks.

Conclusion

The expense of the visit was colossal,²¹ but the benefits to the Condé family were immense. They resulted, three years later, in another dynastic alliance by which the King's son Louis-Auguste, duc du Maine, married Henri-Jules's daughter Louise-Bénédicte (who as la Duchesse du Maine, would become famous for her innovatory nocturnal ballets at Sceaux), and Chantilly grew further in prestige.

Nevertheless, sumptuous and impressive as the Feste de Chantilly was, it poses many questions. We do not yet know who initiated negotiations for it to take place at all: perhaps the Prince de Condé, or the Grand Dauphin himself, or some other powerful party at court. Nor is it known whose idea it was to commission an opera and divertissement from Paolo Lorenzani; he had been Queen Marie-Thérèse's director of

music and had become one of Jean-Baptiste Lully's strongest rivals at court, but the Queen had died in 1683 and Lorenzani's influence had waned considerably after that date. The Grand Dauphin had no musical household of his own, and the Prince de Condé was treading a political tightrope in trying to impress the royal family, so neither man is likely to have been in a position to dictate the choice of composer for the staged works at Chantilly. Yet both had an interest in signalling that they looked to the future as Lully's era came to an end. On the other hand, however much the theatrical legacy of Lully was set aside for this event, it still relied on the personnel and expertise of dancers, musicians, and a designer already in the employ of the Paris Opéra and the Menus Plaisirs du Roi; there was nobody else experienced enough to carry it off, and therefore it could not be a total break with the past. Moreover, Lully's son was involved in the *Feste* as the new Superintendent of the King's Music, and some of the dancers were seasoned performers from Lully's Académie royale de musique. Yet the unique descriptions of the performances at Chantilly also reveal how Guillaume-Louis Pécour, through his dancers, seized the opportunity to explore new forms of choreography and staging which would bring fresh life to dance in opera during the following decades.

References

- ¹ Jérôme de La Gorce, 'Guillaume-Louis Pécour: a biographical essay', *Dance Research* 8/2 (1990), 3–26.
- ² An early version of this research was given as a paper presented at the 14th Annual Oxford Dance Symposium in April 2012. I am most grateful to Rebecca Harris-Warrick, David Parrott, and Giora Sternberg for calling my attention to a variety of primary and secondary sources for these Chantilly festivities; and to Rebecca Harris-Warrick, Ken Pierce, and the anonymous reader of the article in its present form, for their valuable and constructive comments on it.
- ³ *La Feste de Chantilly* (Paris: Michel Gerout, 1688), copies of which are held in the British Library and the Bibliothèque nationale de France; all the page references cited in the present essay are taken from this source, and all quoted extracts are my translations. The journalist and royal historiographer Jean Donneau de Vizé (1638–1710), founder of the *Mercurie galant* in 1672, is identified as the author of *La Feste de Chantilly* in the BnF catalogue.
- ⁴ The evidence for Monsieur L'Abbé being Anthony L'Abbé is very strong. The Parfaict brothers noted that a Sieur L'Abbé joined the Académie royale de musique in 1688, aged twenty-one, and left for London in 1698, returning to France in 1738: Claude & François Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris* (Paris: Rozet, 1767), III, 252. Thus he was very likely the dancer named in the ARM livrets for the opera *Orontée* at Chantilly in 1688 and the *Ballet de Villeneuve-Saint-George* 'dancé devant Monseigneur' in 1692 (in which many of the *Orontée* dancers appeared), and the 1698 and 1738 dates also tally with Monsieur/Anthony L'Abbé coming to London as a very successful performer, choreographer and teacher, from 1698 until his retirement in 1737.
- ⁵ All described, with illustrations of the time by Israel Sylvestre and Adam Pérelle, in Jean-Pierre Babelon's illustrated guide, *The Chateau of Chantilly* (Editions

- Scala, 1999/2008), 67–108.
- ⁶ The twenty-one dancers are not named, and later described (p.46) only as ‘the best-costumed dancers in France’. However, fourteen men and six boys would dance in *Orontée* the next day and it is likely that they also comprised most of the dancers in this procession.
- ⁷ The commentator’s description is difficult to follow. In particular it is not clear whether the twenty-one dancers stood on the shoulders of the satyrs, or formed their own acrobatic groups. Various permutations are feasible, but the number three (or multiples of it) is a recurring factor throughout the description.
- ⁸ The idea for Lysisca’s Hunt may have been inspired by a very similar event depicted in the humorous first *intermède* to *La Princesse d’Elide* which Lully and Molière staged on the second day of *Les Plaisirs de l’île enchantée*, the huge extravaganza for Louis XIV at Versailles in 1664: for descriptions see John S. Powell, *Music and Theatre in France 1600–1680* (Oxford: O.U.P., 2000), 342, and Cynthia Ruoff, ‘Enchantment in Baroque Festival Court Performances in France: *Les Plaisirs de l’île enchantée*’, in Marlies Kronegger and Anna-Marie Tymieniecka (eds), *The Aesthetics of Enchantment in the Fine Arts: Analecta Husserliana 65* (2000), 310.
- ⁹ Jean-Louis Lully died in December 1688.
- ¹⁰ Music from the opera was also played in concert at the evening *Appartements* in the chateau, held on the Friday and Saturday (6th and 7th days of the visit).
- ¹¹ A French *toise* prior to 1812 consisted of 6 *pieds* and measured 1.949 metres, thus 1 *pied* measured just under 13 inches. For the purposes of this article I have rounded the conversion figures to modern linear feet.
- ¹² All but a fragment of the score of *Orontée* is lost. A copy of the livret exists in the British Library (ref. 1560/3751), and clearly refers to this production as its licence to print was issued on 18 August 1688 and its title-page notes the performance before Monseigneur at Chantilly.
- ¹³ Queen Marie-Thérèse died in 1683, but in view of his long service to her a royal proclamation allowed him to retain his title and privileges, albeit with no formal position at Court: *Oxford Music Online, New Grove Dictionary*, article by Albert La France, ‘Lorenzani’.
- ¹⁴ Rebecca Harris-Warrick (private communication). The plot derived from another Italian opera, Antonio Cesti’s *Orontea* (1656 and frequent revivals) which contained a prologue and three acts, and in its comic element is considered an important antecedent of *opera buffa*: Jennifer Williams Brown, ‘Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen’: Cesti, *Orontea*, and the Gelone problem’, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 12/3 (2000), 179–180.
- ¹⁵ Le Clerc was a member (seat 40) of the Académie Française from 1662 until 1691, according to the official database of Académie membership (<http://www.academie-francaise.fr/les-immortels/>).
- ¹⁶ The commentator for instance notes that the singers included ‘three of the best singers from the King’s Music’ (p.99).
- ¹⁷ For instance, the child-dancers Magny le petit and Balon appeared in Delalande’s *Ballet de la Jeunesse* at Versailles in 1686.
- ¹⁸ Archives nationales, Dessins d’Atelier (A. Pan.) O1*3239 fol. 15; it is reproduced in Jérôme de La Gorce, *Jean Berain dessinateur du roi soleil* (Paris 1986), 120.
- ¹⁹ It seems likely that this scene also incorporated the use of acrobats who may have also appeared as some of the satyrs and dancers in the procession and ballet the previous day.
- ²⁰ See Paul Rice, *The Performing Arts at Fontainebleau* (1989), 68–9, for its significance as the only opera in Italian to be performed in France between 1662 and 1729.
- ²¹ Some 300,000 *livres*: Katia Béguin, *Les Princes de Condé* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1999), 360; Jean-Pierre Babelon, *The Château of Chantilly* (Chantilly, Editions Scala, 1999, repr. 2008), 106. A mid-seventeenth century *livre* was reckoned to be worth about 1s 6d in English money of the time, thus the Chantilly *feste* perhaps cost the equivalent of £25,000 at that date; several millions today.