

*Music and Theatre*  
*in France*  
1600–1680

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**OXFORD**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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PART I

*Music and Public Theatre  
in Paris*

## A. Musical Theatre before French Opera

### INTRODUCTION

As the first French repertory companies formed in the latter sixteenth century, they were naturally drawn to seek their fortunes in Paris. There, itinerant troupes struggled to survive in a city where a religious confraternity, the Confrérie de la Passion, held the rights to the only public playhouse as well as a monopoly on all theatrical performances. During this formative period of French theatre, Valleran Le Conte, his company of viol-playing actors, and his playwright-in-residence, Alexandre Hardy, emerged as the first Paris-based repertory company. By 1628 another company bearing the King's name and sponsorship had emerged as pre-eminent, and established itself at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Another troupe sponsored by Richelieu came to found the Théâtre du Marais, and built in Paris the first playhouse specifically designed for spectacular plays. These two rival theatres employed as their in-house playwrights Jean Rotrou and Pierre Corneille, who furnished a constant supply of fashionable comedies and dramas for a new theatregoing public.

Incidental music became an important element of the comedies, tragicomedies, and pastoral plays of the 1630s. In the following decade the Hôtel de Bourgogne and the Théâtre du Marais responded to the challenge posed by imported Italian opera by producing a new type of multigeneric play featuring music, ballet, and machine effects. Court composers and choreographers provided the music and dance for many of these spectacles, for which professional singers and dancers were engaged. The return of Molière and his company to Paris in 1658 began a new era (1658–69), during which time three theatres—the Hôtel de Bourgogne, the Théâtre du Marais, and soon the Théâtre du Palais-Royal—vied to attract Parisian audiences with their musical and non-musical dramatic offerings. When Perrin attempted to found the Académie Royale des Opéra, he faced stiff competition offered by Molière's *comédies-ballets* at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal; the musical comedies of Montfleury, Brécourt, and Boisrobert at the Hôtel de Bourgogne; the machine plays of Boyer and De Visé at the Théâtre du Marais; and the threat of a rival opera company from Guichard

and Sablières. Lully's appropriation of Perrin's opera *privilège* in 1672 and his establishment of a new Académie Royale de Musique finally led to Colbert's reorganization of the public theatres in Paris, and the foundation of the Comédie-Française.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For an overview of music in French plays during this period, see H. Prunières, *L'Opéra italien en France avant Lully* (Paris, 1913), introd. and ch. 7; É. Gros, 'Les Origines de la tragédie-lyrique et la place des tragédies en machines dans l'évolution du théâtre vers l'opéra', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 35 (Apr.–June 1928), 161–93; E. Borrel, 'La Musique au théâtre au xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle', *xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 39 (1958), 184–95; A. Niderst, 'La Tragédie à intermèdes musicaux (1650–1670)', in I. Mamczarz (ed.), *Les Premiers opéras en Europe et les formes dramatiques apparentées* (Paris, 1992), 141–51; and C. Mazouer, 'Théâtre et musique au xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Littératures classiques*, 21 (1994), 5–28.

# 1

## THE PRIMACY OF THE HÔTEL DE BOURGOGNE (1600–1628)

Most of the theatrical activity in Paris during the first three decades of the seventeenth century centred around the Hôtel de Bourgogne, the playhouse of the Confrérie de la Passion et Résurrection de notre Sauveur et Rédempteur Jésus-Christ. The royal privilege granted to them by Henri II in 1548 gave this confraternity of Parisian bourgeois a monopoly on theatrical performances in the city and suburbs of Paris. During the periods when they were not performing their mystery plays, the Confrères leased their theatre to itinerant acting companies. The political turmoils and civil wars that plagued the waning years of the Valois monarchy brought all theatrical activity in Paris temporarily to a halt, but with the return of Henri IV in 1594, the Hôtel de Bourgogne reopened. The Confrères petitioned the new king to be allowed to reinstate their old sacred repertoire, which had been forbidden them by the Paris Parlement.<sup>1</sup> Henri IV granted them the right to give mystery plays based on the Old and New Testaments, the lives of saints, and ‘all other honest and amusing plays, with restrictions for all others from performing elsewhere than in the theater of the Hôtel de Bourgogne’. However, the Parlement upheld its old restrictions on mystery plays—the mainstay of the Confrères’ repertory.<sup>2</sup>

After 1598 the Confrérie de la Passion gave up all dramatic aspirations and began to profit from their theatre monopoly. As the proprietors of the only existing public theatre in Paris, they rented out the Hôtel de Bourgogne to professional acting troupes. Should a visiting company choose to perform elsewhere, such as in a tennis-court, the Confrères would collect a tax of 1 *écu tournois* per day. The history of the Hôtel de Bourgogne during this early period can be traced through the financial and administrative transactions recorded by two municipal notaries, Martin Haguenier and Pierre Huart. On 25 March 1598 the Confrères signed a contract with ‘Jean Thays and his companions, English actors’, the terms of which stipulated that they would retain as rent the entire box-office

<sup>1</sup> C. and F. Parfaict, *Histoire du Théâtre François depuis son origine jusqu’à présent* (Paris, 1745; repr. New York, 1968), ii. 2–4 and iii. 225–6. The Parlement particularly objected to profane elements which had come into their religious plays.

<sup>2</sup> For a repro. of the *arrêt* registered by Parlement on 28 Nov. 1598 see *ibid.* iii. 242–3 n. The Parlement of Paris retained the right to register royal enactments, the process of which ‘entailed an examination of the law by men who knew the principles of French jurisprudence. . . . by the registration of laws, the Parlement restrained the monarchy and regularized it’ (F. Bluche, *Louis XIV*, trans. M. Greengrass (New York, 1990), 130).

receipts for every other performance; in addition, the Confrères were entitled to the income from the five boxes that they controlled for all performances.<sup>3</sup> Evidently, the English actors chose to perform in another theatre for a time, for on 4 June 1598 the Châtelet court sentenced them to pay the Confrères a quarter of their receipts, 6½ *écus* for each day that they performed in the Hôtel de Bourgogne, and 1 *écu* for each day they played elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

Italian *commedia dell'arte* companies also came to perform for the French court during this period, and they often remained to give public performances in Paris. In February 1583 the Confrères seized the belongings of a troupe directed by one Battista Lazaro, who evidently refused to pay their tax.<sup>5</sup> On 28 April 1599 the Châtelet forbade 'the so-called Italian comedians of the King' or any other acting troupe from performing anywhere except at the Hôtel de Bourgogne.<sup>6</sup> In December 1599 Henri IV invited the Accesi company, headed by Tristano Martinelli (Harlequin), to come and entertain the French court and his new Queen, Marie de' Medici. Pierre de l'Estoile reports that Harlequin's troupe performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1601, and he describes some of the musically accompanied acrobatics that they featured with their dramatic offerings:<sup>7</sup>

In this month of June at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in Paris, where Harlequin has been performing, something unusual and astonishing could be seen: an Italian girl of around 13 years old who, for a full quarter of an hour, danced on a rope the thickness of an arm while suspended high in the air; and in time to the music of the violins, she moved forward and backwards on it, no more uneasy than if she had been in the middle of a hall.

Upon royal invitation, the Gelosi company, headed by Francesco and Isabella Andreini, visited the French court in 1603.<sup>8</sup> Isabella was one of the most acclaimed singing-actresses of her day (five years later she would première the leading role in Monteverdi's *Arianna*). Also an accomplished musician, Francesco Andreini performed on-stage 'with various musical instruments, primarily flutes, with which he accompanied himself in singing rustic and singular poems in imitation of Sannazaro, and all like a true Neapolitan shepherd'.<sup>9</sup> After two extended stays with the court at Fontainebleau during 1603, the Gelosi gave performances at the Hôtel de Bourgogne from January until April 1604.<sup>10</sup> Over the next fifty

<sup>3</sup> This lease is reproduced in S. W. Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Le Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne* (Paris, 1970), i. 173–4: app. 3 ('Baïl par la Confrérie de la Passion à Jean Thays et ses compagnons, comédiens anglais', 25 Mar. 1598). E. Soulié (*Recherches sur Molière et sur sa famille* (Paris, 1863), 153) dates this lease 25 May 1598, and cites the lessee as 'Jehan Schais, comédien anglois'.

<sup>4</sup> This judgement is reproduced in Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Le Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne*, i. 176–7: app. 5 ('Un jugement de la Prévôté de Paris entre les maîtres et les comédiens anglais', 4 June 1598).

<sup>5</sup> See Soulié, *Recherches sur Molière et sur sa famille*, 153.

<sup>6</sup> See *ibid.* 155.

<sup>7</sup> *Mémoires-Journaux de Pierre de l'Estoile*, ed. P. Bonnefon, 12 vols. (Paris, 1888), vii. 299.

<sup>8</sup> See A. Baschet, *Les Comédiens italiens à la cour de France* (Paris, 1882), 126–49.

<sup>9</sup> Pref. to *Il Bravure del Capitan Spavento* (Venice, 1624); quoted *ibid.* 128–9.

<sup>10</sup> Raymond Lebègue discovered an account of a performance given by the Gelosi during this time and reported by Octavien Genêtay, Sieur de La Gilleberdière: 'On 4 January 1604 . . . I saw performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne by the company of Isabella and Pedrolino the tragedy of *Le Calyfe d'Egypte* killed in his tent by Numantia, wife of Acrisis and



years numerous Italian companies of actors and opera singers would be brought to the French court at royal expense.

Outside the Hôtel de Bourgogne, Parisian street theatre provided a hodge-podge of dramatic and musical offerings which often served as an aid to promote medicinal elixirs. *Les Tromperies des charlatans*, written around 1610 by one 'Sieur Courval', tells of an Italian quack doctor named 'il signore Hieronymo', whose platform stage in the courtyard of the Palais de Justice featured 'four excellent violin players seated on the four corners of the stage, and they did marvellous things assisted by a notable buffoon or funny-man, named Galinette la Galina from the Hôtel de Bourgogne, who for his part did a thousand mimics, acrobatics, and clownings'.<sup>11</sup> The most famous of the *charlatans* was Anthoine Girard, *dit* Tabarin, who established his medicine show in the Place Dauphine around 1618 and, together with his brother Philippe (*dit* Mondor), flourished there for several years. His entertainments consisted for the most part of comic monologues and short comic plays, some of which were published in 1622.<sup>12</sup> These farces are composed of stock situations, slapstick, and *scenari* borrowed from Italian *commedia dell'arte*, but set in Paris and with many references to Parisian landmarks. The main characters are Tabarin with his famous hat of many shapes, two old men named Lucas and Piphagne, two young women named Francisquine (played by Tabarin's wife) and Isabella, and a *miles gloriosus* named Captain Rodomont.<sup>13</sup> An engraving published in 1622 depicts Tabarin and another character, who may be singing the *chansons* that traditionally followed a farce; in the background are shown a hurdy-gurdy, a treble viol, and a bass viol (see Plate 1). Tabarin evidently employed professional musicians to perform in his shows, for in 1626 an agreement was drawn up between six instrumentalists for the period of eight years, during which time 'none of the said associates will be permitted to play on the stage of Montdor and Tabarin, or any similar stage under additional penalty of 50 livres tournois'.<sup>14</sup> Tabarin's street show was highly successful, which prompted one envious critic to write: 'everyone sees what Tabarin and Mondor make in Paris, and indeed it is necessary that their profits be great to feed so many mouths, to take around with them all their equipment of violins, acrobats, roustabouts, women, children, servants, and maids'.<sup>15</sup>

citizen of Numance, besieged by the aforesaid Calyfe'. See 'Les Italiens en 1604 à l'Hôtel de Bourgogne', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* (1933), 77–9 [77].

<sup>11</sup> See *Œuvres complètes de Tabarin*, ed. G. Aventin, 2 vols. (Paris, 1858), i. 213–14.

<sup>12</sup> For four of Tabarin's farces see *ibid.* i. 219–35; ii. 137–55, 193–200.

<sup>13</sup> See C. Mazouer (ed.), *Farces du Grand Siècle: De Tabarin à Molière, farces et petites comédies du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1992), 43 ff.

<sup>14</sup> 'Association de six joueurs d'instruments pour huit années', 21 août 1626; repr. in M. Jurgens, *Documents du Minutier Central concernant l'histoire de la musique (1600–1650)* (Paris, 1969–74), i. 392–3.

<sup>15</sup> 'Discours de l'origine des mœurs fraudes et impostures des Charlatans . . . par J.D.P.M.O.D.R.', repr. in *Œuvres complètes de Tabarin*, ed. Aventin, ii. 231 ff. Indeed, from their profits the Girard brothers were able to retire from the stage, purchase a *seigneurie*, and live out their lives as country gentlemen in Orléanais.

In these early years of professional French theatre, Valleran Le Conte emerges as a seminal figure who struggled for twelve years to gain a foothold for his company in Paris. In her research on the playwright Alexandre Hardy,<sup>16</sup> Deierkauf-Holsboer uncovered archival documents which shed significant light on many aspects of early French theatre, including repertory and performance practices, the musical training provided to apprentice actors, the employment of professional musicians, and the manner in which music was introduced into plays. The first record of Valleran Le Conte dates from 1592, when he was with a company of actors at Bordeaux that 'performed many tragedies and farces, with very great applause from the audience'.<sup>17</sup> He wisely avoided Paris during the turmoil of the early 1590s, and instead toured Angers, Rouen, and Strasbourg. In March 1593 his company visited Frankfurt, where Le Conte requested permission from the town council to perform 'biblical tragedies and comedies'. During this time his repertory may have included the Protestant dramas of Théodore de Bèze, Louis des Masures, and Jean de La Taille, which would have appealed to the French-speaking Protestants living in these cities. When Le Conte's company toured Rouen, Strasbourg, and Angers, they also performed the plays of 'Schodällen' (i.e. Etienne Jodelle).<sup>18</sup>

When Valleran Le Conte arrived in Paris in 1598, his company consisted of five members: himself, Gilles Godard, Jehan de Rennes, Fiacre Boucher, and Savinien Bony.<sup>19</sup> They soon joined forces with another company headed by Adrien Talmy. A document from the town of Arras (dated 11 February 1594) shows that Talmy's repertory at this time consisted of three tragedies by Robert Garnier (*Les Juifves*, *La Troade*, *Hippolyte*); two anonymous tragedies (*Le Ravissement de Philomène fait par Térée* and *Médée*); Claude Roillet's tragedy *Philanire*; an *histoire morale* entitled *Corps humain qui laisse son âme*; *La Taverne de Volupté endormie*; an *histoire vraiment chrestienne et catholique* entitled *Peché retiré par Discipline et Sapience*; a *comédie morale* entitled *La Calamité du pauvre peuple*; Nicolas de Montreux's pastorale *Les Amours d'Athlette et de Menalque* (from *Les Bergeries de Juliette*); and an anonymous pastorale entitled *Le Grand bon temps*.<sup>20</sup> Talmy and Le Conte shared an interest in producing plays of various genres and including music in their performances, for two of these works have a significant musical element: Roillet's *Philanire* (1577), which includes sung choruses, instrumental music, and dance,

<sup>16</sup> Hardy served as playwright to Le Conte's company beginning in 1597 or 1598. See S. W. Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Vie d'Alexandre Hardy, poète du roi (1572–1632)* (Paris, 1972).

<sup>17</sup> From the *Chronique Bordelaise* of Jean de Gaufretau, i. 308; quoted in ead., *Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne*, i. 41.

<sup>18</sup> Cited in K. Trautmann, 'Französische Schauspieler am bayrischen Hofe', *Jahrbuch für Münchener Geschichte*, ii (Munich, 1888), 201; quoted in J. Fransen, 'Documents inédits sur l'Hôtel de Bourgogne', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 34 (1927), 321–55 (at 322).

<sup>19</sup> Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne*, i. 41.

<sup>20</sup> See R. Lebègue, 'Le Répertoire d'une troupe française à la fin du xvi<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Revue d'histoire du théâtre*, 1 (1948–9), 9–24. When at Mons in 1599, Talmy's company also performed some comedies and pastorales which included songs accompanied by 'violins and regales'.

and Montreux's *Athlette* (1585), which features an accompanied song in Act 1, scene 3.

In March 1598 the two companies signed a three-year contract 'to perform together comedies, tragedies, tragicomedies, pastorales, and other works agreed upon in this city of Paris, as well as elsewhere in this kingdom of France'.<sup>21</sup> According to its terms, Le Conte was to provide the costumes, stage properties, and a chest of viols with which his viol quintet would perform entr'acte music. One of his actor-musicians, Fiacre Boucher, is described elsewhere as a *maître joueur d'instruments*—a title that implies that Boucher was a full-fledged member of the municipal guild of *ménétriers*.<sup>22</sup> The amalgamation of the two companies lasted less than a year, for on 4 January 1599 Le Conte signed another contract with Benoit Petit,<sup>23</sup> whose company had already leased the Hôtel de Bourgogne.<sup>24</sup> They would perform in the playhouse on alternate weeks, and lend each other whichever actors were needed for their plays. Petit was to pay the rent, while Le Conte provided the costumes and the instrumental music for the entr'actes—for which he would be paid 1 *écu* 40 *sols* per performance.<sup>25</sup> Less than two weeks later, Le Conte and Petit were in dispute over a romance in several *journées*; Le Conte's company was to have performed the first two episodes, but did not receive the scripts from Petit in time to prepare their parts. This altercation evidently brought their partnership to an end.<sup>26</sup>

By all appearances, in the spring of 1599 Valleran Le Conte and his company were preparing for an extended season at the Hôtel de Bourgogne.<sup>27</sup> On 22 March Le Conte contracted Nicolas Vattement, a scene-painter, to provide 'faintes et peintures' for his performances.<sup>28</sup> The following month Fiacre Boucher leased from the Confrères a 'loge des dépendances'—most likely a balcony from which the viol consort were to perform the entr'actes.<sup>29</sup> Their

<sup>21</sup> Reproduced in Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Vie d'Alexandre Hardy*, 171–2: app. 1 ('Contrat de Société entre Valleran Le Conte et sa Troupe du Roi et Adrien Talmy et sa Compagnie de Comédiens Français', 16 mars 1598). Le Conte had evidently already gained the King's protection, for in their three-year contract Le Conte's troupe was called 'comédiens du roi', whereas Talmy's troupe was listed as a 'compagnie de comédiens français'.

<sup>22</sup> Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Vie d'Alexandre Hardy*, 175: app. 3 ('Contrat de mariage de Savinien Bony', 27 July 1598). For more information on the musicians' guilds in Paris, see F. Lesure, 'La Communauté des "joueurs d'instruments" au xvi<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* (1953), 79–109 (at 101).

<sup>23</sup> Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Vie d'Alexandre Hardy*, 175–7: app. 5 ('Accord entre Valleran Le Conte comédien du roi, et sa troupe, et Benoist Petit, comédien français, et sa troupe', 4 Jan. 1599).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 175: app. 4 ('Sommatation des Confreres de la Passion a Benoist Petit et sa Compagnie', 21 Dec. 1598). This document lists the actors in Petit's troupe as Benoist Petit, Barthélémy Martin, Vespazien Brosseron, Jehan Courtin, Robert Guérin, and Sébastien Ganin. Of them, Robert Guérin would become the famous *farceur* Gros-Guillaume.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 175–7: app. 5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 177–8: app. 7 ('Declaration de Valleran Le Conte et sa compagnie a Benoist Petit et sa compagnie', 16 Jan. 1599).

<sup>27</sup> On 1 May 1599 the Confrères rented the Hôtel de Bourgogne to Le Conte and his 'comédiens français ordinaires du Roi' (Soulié, *Recherches sur Molière et sur sa famille*, 154).

<sup>28</sup> Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Vie d'Alexandre Hardy*, 179–80: app. 10 ('Promesse de Nicolas Vattement, maître peintre, à Valleran Le Conte', 22 Mar. 1599).

<sup>29</sup> Document dated 21 Apr. 1599, cited in Soulié, *Recherches sur Molière et sur sa famille*, 153–4. Musicians situated in balconies or in galleries above the stage can be seen in a series of tapestries on the morality play *La Condamnacion de Banquet*,

theatrical season appears to have been successful, for Le Conte renewed his lease with the Confrères on 2 October 1599.<sup>30</sup> Three days later he contracted two set-designers to provide some painted backdrops of cities, châteaux, rocks, deserts, woods, groves, artifices [fireworks?], 'and generally all other things whatsoever that will be needed and necessary to make and have for the decoration for the romance that the said Le Conte plays and performs in this present year at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in Paris, and will perform until next Easter, together with other plays—tragicomedy, pastorale, comedy'.<sup>31</sup>

Clearly, the public were very enthusiastic about these theatrical offerings, for on 6 October 1599 the company requested permission to set up barriers in front of the entry to the playhouse so as 'to block the pushing of the crowd'.<sup>32</sup> While in Paris that year, the Swiss student Thomas Platter provided an eyewitness account of one of Le Conte's performances at the Hôtel de Bourgogne:<sup>33</sup>

At the Hôtel de Bourgogne there is an actor named Valleran who is protected by the King. He plays daily in the afternoon a comedy in French verse and then gives a farce [i.e. a farcical monologue] on whatever amusing episode may have happened in Paris, either amorous adventures or other anecdotes of the same type. He performs this monologue (either in blank verse or in prose) so well, and he so liberally spices it with funny jokes, that one can hardly keep from laughing—especially if one knows the story or the persons involved. For Valleran hears of everything extraordinary that occurs in Paris as soon as it happens. He makes a play out of it, and everyone crowds in there to hear the farce that he relates at the end of the performance. Moreover, he is very skilled at adding many things in his play. The performances take place in a great hall, on a platform hung with backdrops. The lower classes pay only half price, on condition that they stand; but the spectators paying full price can go up into the galleries, where they can sit, stand, or lean against a rail in order to see much better. That is where the ladies are accustomed to going. There are so many people every day in this playhouse and the comedies last so long that they finish only by the light of torches.

Le Conte clearly viewed music as an essential part of theatrical performance, and took an active part in preparing young apprentice actors and actresses for the stage. He taught all his students gratis, and also provided their clothing, room, and board. In March 1599 Le Conte contracted to teach the 15-year-old Nicolas Gasteau 'the science of acting . . . to learn to play the spinet, the viol, and to sing music'.<sup>34</sup> Pierre le Messier (later known as Bellerose) received viol lessons, and

reproduced in G. Cohen, *Le Théâtre en France*, ii (Paris, 1931), pls. LVII and LVIII, and in A. Jubinal, *Les Anciennes Tapisseries historiées* (Paris, 1835), pls. I–VI.

<sup>30</sup> Soulié, *Recherches sur Molière et sur sa famille*, 154.

<sup>31</sup> Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Vie d'Alexandre Hardy*, 181–2: app. 12 ('Promesse faite à Valleran Le Conte par Bonniface Butays, maître peintre, et Sebastien Gouin, maître tissuyter rubannier', 5 Oct. 1599).

<sup>32</sup> Soulié, *Recherches sur Molière et sur sa famille*, 154.

<sup>33</sup> *Description de Paris par Thomas Platter Le Jeune de Bale (1599)*, trans. L. Sieber (Paris, 1896), 33 ff.

<sup>34</sup> Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Vie d'Alexandre Hardy*, 179: app. 9 ('Acte d'apprentissage de Nicolas Gasteau', 8 Mar. 1599). This association evidently did not work out, since the contract was dissolved by mutual agreement five weeks later; see *ibid.*

his sister Judicq le Messier was taught to play the virginals. Another young actress, Elezabel Diye, was instructed in 'reading, writing, and playing the virginals' together with 'performing on the stage and in public all comedies, tragicomedies, pastorales'.<sup>35</sup> The amount of musical training included in their education is remarkable, and attests to the practical skills required of professional actors.

During the next decade Le Conte struggled to survive in the face of competition from rival companies, dissension among his own actors, and dwindling box-office receipts. Evidently the situation became dire on 26 January 1600, when Robert Guérin and two other actors began to collect admissions at the door in person—counting the money after the performance, paying the operating expenses (torches, candles, and their *maître joueur d'instrument* Fiacre Boucher) from the daily receipts, and dividing the remainder among themselves.<sup>36</sup> When Le Conte was unable to pay his actors in 1606, he was forced to pawn his consort of viols, his wardrobe of costumes, and eleven painted backdrops to one of his actors—on condition that he could borrow them for performances.<sup>37</sup> In 1608 the Italian company of the Duke of Mantua leased the Hôtel de Bourgogne,<sup>38</sup> and several of Le Conte's actors took this opportunity to leave and join another company. This new troupe included Mathieu Le Febvre (known on-stage as Laporte) and his wife Marie Venier, François Vautrel and his two brothers Aubry and Claude Vautrel, Jacques Maugin, Mathieu Rubé, and Robert Guérin (known on-stage as 'Gros Guillaume').<sup>39</sup> The Vautrel brothers comprised a trio of viols who, according to the contract, were 'to fill in the entr'actes with their music, viols, instruments'.<sup>40</sup>

By March 1609 Le Conte and the remaining members of his troupe had reorganized, and rented the Hôtel de Bourgogne from September 1609 to *Mardi gras* 1610.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, Le Febvre's company moved to the Hôtel d'Argent,<sup>42</sup> and engaged three *joueurs d'instruments* (Jacques Gaigneron, Rollin Bonnard, and

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 193–5: app. 24 ('Acte d'apprentissage de Pierre le Messier', 8 April 1609), app. 26 ('Acte d'apprentissage de Judicq le Messier', 9 Dec. 1609), app. 27 ('Acte d'apprentissage d'Elezabel Diye', 15 Jan. 1610).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 182–3: app. 14 ('Consentement fait par Valleran Le Conte aux comediens Robert Guerin, Vasparail Brosseron, et Nicolas Revaillon', 26 Jan. 1600).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.: app. 19 ('Accord entre Valleran Le Conte et Estienne de Ruffin au sujet du reglement de ses gages', 3 May 1606), 188–9. Le Conte evidently repaid his debt, for when he formed a new company in 1607 with Nicolas Gasteau, Estienne de Ruffin, Hugues Gueru (known later as 'Gaultier-Garguille'), the Italian actor Savinian Bony, Loys Nyssier, Jullien Doielles, and two actresses (Gasteau de Rachel Trépeau and an unnamed girl), Le Conte furnished 'the costumes, viols, and backdrops suitable for the aforesaid performance of comedies, tragicomedies, pastorales, and other plays'. See *ibid.* 190–1: app. 21 ('Acte d'association d'une troupe de comediens du Roi sous la direction de Valleran Le Conte', 1 Dec. 1607).

<sup>38</sup> Fransen, 'Documents inédits sur l'Hôtel de Bourgogne', 323.

<sup>39</sup> Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Vie d'Alexandre Hardy*, 191–3: app. 22 ('Acte d'Association de la Troupe de Mathieu Le Febvre', 21 Feb. 1608). Le Febvre's company (like Le Conte's) also adopted the title *comediens françois et ordinaires du roy*.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 192–3.

<sup>41</sup> Fransen, 'Documents inédits sur l'Hôtel de Bourgogne', 332 and 352.

<sup>42</sup> According to the Frères Parfaict (*Histoire du Théâtre François*, iii. 244 n) the Hôtel d'Argent, located in the Marais quarter, possessed a theatre beginning in 1600. Le Febvre failed to receive authorization from the Confrères, and was sentenced by the Châtelet in Mar. 1610 to pay a fine; see Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne*, i. 77.

Vincent Bonnard) to play for their productions.<sup>43</sup> Evidently the competition did not benefit either side, for in January 1610 Le Conte and Le Febvre signed an agreement joining their troupes for three years.<sup>44</sup> According to Tallemant de Reaux, the assassination of Henri IV on 13 May 1610 brought a temporary halt to theatrical activity in Paris; consequently the actors left for several weeks to perform in the provinces.<sup>45</sup> After two more years of financial asperity, Valleran Le Conte gave up his losing battle in Paris. In March 1612 he organized a touring company composed of young actors and actresses he had trained: Judicq le Messier, Jehanne Crevé, and Guillaume des Gilberts (*dit* Montdory).<sup>46</sup> Their contract of association provided for a singer and a violinist, whose salaries were to be included among the daily operating expenses.<sup>47</sup> Le Conte's troupe travelled to the Hague and to Leiden, where on 2 May 1613 he obtained permission from the authorities to perform some tragedies and comedies;<sup>48</sup> after that, Valleran Le Conte disappears from recorded history.<sup>49</sup>

When Le Conte's company began to dissolve in 1611, many of his actors regrouped in Toulouse, where they formed a new company.<sup>50</sup> Upon returning to Paris in 1612, they adopted the name 'Troupe Royale des Comédiens'.<sup>51</sup> From 1615 the company featured a trio of comic actors that became closely associated with the Hôtel de Bourgogne: Robert Guérin (known as 'Gros-Guillaume' in farce and as 'La Fleur' in serious drama), Hugues Guéru ('Gaultier Garguille' / 'Fléchelles'), and Henri Legrand ('Turlupin' / 'Belleville'). By thus adopting two different pseudonyms, the actors were able to keep their dramatic personas as separate as their costumes and acting-styles (see Plate 2). Of this trio, Gaultier

<sup>43</sup> 'Association de trois joueurs d'instruments pour accompagner la troupe de Mathieu Lefebvre, sieur de La Porte', 9 Sept. 1609; in Jurgens, *Documents du Minutier Central*, ii. 370.

<sup>44</sup> Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Vie d'Alexandre Hardy*, 195–7: app. 28 ('Acte d'association de Valleran Le Conte et de Mathieu le Febvre', 28 Jan. 1610), 195–7; and also 198–201, app. 30 ('Acte d'association d'une troupe de comédiens de Valleran Le Conte', 29 Mar. 1610).

<sup>45</sup> According to Tallemant de Réaux, 'Il arriva qu'après la mort du Roy, les Comédiens, n'osant jouer à Paris, tant tout le monde y estoit dans la consternation, s'en allerent dans les provinces, et enfin à Bordeaux'. See Tallemant des Réaux, *Historiettes*, ed. A. Adam (Paris, 1960), 'Histoire du Maréchal de Roquelaure', i. 16–18 (at 18).

<sup>46</sup> Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Vie d'Alexandre Hardy*, 209–10: app. 38 ('Acte d'association des comédiens français de la troupe de Valleran Le Conte', 31 Mar. 1612). Montdory would later become the leader of the Marais troupe in Paris.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 209 ('à Jacque Vualete, musicien dix solz tournoiz par chacun jour soict qu'ilz jouent [*sic*] pour les dessusd. ou non et à Pierre Pesant, joueur de violon seize solz tournoiz aussy par chacun jour soict qu'il joue pour les dessusd. ou non').

<sup>48</sup> Fransen, 'Documents inédits sur l'Hôtel de Bourgogne', 321.

<sup>49</sup> Soulié (*Recherches sur Molière et sur sa famille*, 160) cites one final lease signed on 30 Sept. 1628 between the Confrérie and 'Valleran Lecomte et ses compagnons, et par Hugues Guéru, Henri Legrand, Pierre le Messier, et autres'. Fransen ('Documents inédits sur l'Hôtel de Bourgogne', 329), however, points out that Soulié is mistaken: the lease in question 'bears the signatures of Guéru, Legrand, Pierre le Messier, but not that of Valleran'.

<sup>50</sup> Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne*, i. 89. This new company consisted of Robert Guérin, François de Vautrel (a viol-player and former member of Le Febvre's troupe), Estienne de Ruffin, Hugues Guéru, Louis Nicier, Jehan Dumayne, and Colombe Venier.

<sup>51</sup> Fransen, 'Documents inédits sur l'Hôtel de Bourgogne', 335 and 352. Despite their title, the actors in fact received no royal subsidy at this time. Deierkauf-Holsboer (*Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne*, i. 109) shows that the Troupe Royale was the main renter of the Confrères' playhouse during these years.

Garguille was known for his animated performance of racy *chansons*.<sup>52</sup> Sauval described this singing-actor as follows:<sup>53</sup>

He was extremely supple, and all the parts of his body so perfectly obeyed him that one would have taken him for a marionette. He was very gaunt, with straight, thin legs, and with that an overly large face that he usually covered with a mask and with a pointed beard. He always played an old man in farce, and in this funny garb one could not see him without laughing. There was nothing but that was extremely comical in his speech, in his gait, and in his action. Also, there was never a more unaffected and natural comedian. Turlupin and Gros-Guillaume, two other actors of the same epoch, assisted him marvelously: but when he was to sing alone, even though the air and the words might have been usually in poor taste, he brought forth all the applause of the spectators. His posture, gestures, tones, and accents—all were so burlesque, that many went to the Hôtel de Bourgogne only to hear him, and 'the chanson of Gaultier Garguille' became proverbial.

Numerous anthologies of theatre songs appeared in print during this time. The two books of *Chansons folastres et prologues tant superlatives que drôlatiques des comédiens français par le sieur Bellone* (Rouen: Jean Petit, 1612) contain lyrics intended to be sung to known *timbres*, others *sur un air nouveau*. The two books of the *Recueil des plus belles chansons des comédiens français* (Caen: Jacques Mangeant, 1626) are the only collections of this early period to include both lyrics and their musical settings.<sup>54</sup> Another, later volume, entitled *Les Chansons folastres des comédiens, recueillies par un d'eux* (Paris: Guillot-Gorju, 1637), reproduces the texts of nine songs of the 1626 collection. Émile Magne discovered six musical settings of Gaultier-Garguille's song-lyrics in various *chanson* collections, and he proves that many of the melodies derive from familiar airs, or *pont-neufs*, borrowed from the popular *vaudeville* repertoire.<sup>55</sup> Whereas the theatrical *chanson* 'Jean de Nivelles' appears in both the 1626 and 1637 collections, its lyrics can be traced to the early sixteenth-century *Farce des deux savetiers*.<sup>56</sup>

In 1622 the company of the Prince of Orange arrived in Paris to challenge the primacy of the Troupe Royale.<sup>57</sup> Assisted by François de Vautrel, they leased the Hôtel de Bourgogne for six weeks that summer.<sup>58</sup> Another company soon

<sup>52</sup> Some of the more famous of his song-lyrics were published in *Les Chansons de Gaultier-Garguille* (Paris: François Targa, 1632), and many later appeared in the anonymous play, *La Comédie de chansons* (Paris: Quinet, 1640). For more on Gaultier-Garguille, see P. Dumonceaux, 'Bouffonnerie et chanson au xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle: Les Chansons de Gaultier Garguille', *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises*, 28 (May 1976), 119–32.

<sup>53</sup> H. Sauval, *Histoire et recherches des antiquités de la ville de Paris* (Paris, 1724); quoted in Parfaict, *Histoire du Théâtre Français*, iv. 320–2.

<sup>54</sup> This collection is briefly discussed in G. Durosoir, *L'Air de cour en France, 1571–1655* (Liège, 1991), 201–2.

<sup>55</sup> E. Magne, *Gaultier-Garguille, comédien de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne* (Paris, [1911]), 161, 164, 167, 168, 171, and 176. Magne publishes both the text and music for 'Jean cette nuit', 'Un jour un mignon de Paris', 'Je me boute a la desbauche', 'Je reserve en ma memoire', 'Ce fut sur nostre montée', and 'Un jour madame Perrette'.

<sup>56</sup> See É. Fournier, *Le Théâtre français avant la Renaissance, 1450–1550: Mystères, moralités et farces* (Paris, 1873; repr. New York, 1965), 210.

<sup>57</sup> This troupe included Charles Le Noir, Jehan Valliot, Anthoine Constant, François Mestivier, Louis de la Barre, Paul Bernier, Jacques Guillaume, and Guillaume des Gilberts (*dit* Montdory—one of Le Conte's former pupils).

<sup>58</sup> Franssen, 'Documents inédits sur l'Hôtel de Bourgogne', 342 and 354.

followed, headed by Pierre le Messier (*dit* Bellerose).<sup>59</sup> With them came the prolific dramatist Alexandre Hardy, who provided a steady supply of tragedies, pastorales, and comedies. They joined with the Troupe Royale, and replaced the Prince of Orange's company in the Hôtel de Bourgogne that autumn.<sup>60</sup>

During the 1620s plays of greater refinement began to replace the bawdy farces of Gros-Guillaume, Turlupin, and Gaultier-Garguille. Of this early repertory, *Les Ramonneurs* represents the new, sophisticated type of comedy that became popular in Paris during the years of the *précieuses'* salons.<sup>61</sup> On stylistic grounds Austin Gill has shown that it may be ascribed to Alexandre Hardy, and internal evidence in the play further suggests that it was first given at the Hôtel de Bourgogne sometime around 1624.<sup>62</sup> Of particular musical interest is the serenade performed on-stage in Act 1, scene 8 by an ensemble of singers, lutenists, and guitarists (for a description of this performance, see Chapter 7, p. 102). These kinds of set pieces composed in the latest musical genres and styles would be increasingly featured in the plays of the following decade.

<sup>59</sup> Its members included Philibert Robin, Nicolas Prud'homme, Louis Galian, and François le Messier (brother of Pierre le Messier).

<sup>60</sup> Fransen, 'Documents inédits sur l'Hôtel de Bourgogne', 343 and 354.

<sup>61</sup> The sole copy of this unpublished, anonymous play is found in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris (Fonds Rondel Ms. 194).

<sup>62</sup> A. Gill (ed.), *Les Ramonneurs, comédie anonyme en prose* (Paris, 1957), pp. lviii–lxxxix and xxx–xliv. Thirty-five years later the actor Claude Deschamps (*dit* de Villiers) wrote his own one-act version of this play (*Les Ramonneurs* (Paris: de Sercy, 1662)) based on the same plot and characters, and also incorporating a serenade in sc. 1 and 2. The title-page states that this play was also acted at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, probably in 1659–60.