

“Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam”: Charpentier’s Psalm Settings and the Use of Opera Singers at l’Église de St Louis

C. Jane Gosine

Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada

During the 1680s and 1690s Marc-Antoine Charpentier was *maître de musique* at the Jesuit Church of St Louis in Paris where he benefited from the Jesuits’ liberal approach to the arts and religious education. Free from the artistic constraints of Court, Charpentier was able to develop a style of vocal composition distinct from that of his contemporaries. With particular reference to Charpentier’s use of bass singers, this paper examines the context in which opera singers were employed by the Jesuits at the church of St Louis.

In his *Comparaison de la Musique Italienne et de la Musique Française* of 1704-1706, Le Cerf, who was educated by the Jesuits, states that a motet should be: “the expression of the feelings of a Christian who speaks to his God” (p. 158) and that “the music of a motet . . . must be expressive, simple and pleasing” (p. 168). Le Cerf adds that “singers of motets must be expressive, know how to pronounce what they say, be sure of their part, be simple and be modest. Instrumentalists must also play with expression, knowledge and modesty” (p. 188).¹

According to Le Cerf, a composer should mirror in his sacred music the *general* sentiments expressed in the psalm. The author does, however, acknowledge that certain words, such as *fluvius* (stream) and *fulgar* (lightning), demand special attention. He also notes that certain changes in mood or changes in the form of narration should be mirrored by a change of style in the music.²

The leading seventeenth-century French thinker Marin Mersenne, who like Le Cerf was educated by the Jesuits and was in holy orders, had recommended in 1636 a similar treatment of the text: “One must consider the text in its entirety and the design and intention of what it contains . . . so that being sung it has at least as much power over listeners as if it were recited by an excellent orator” (Duncan, 1989, p. 154).

Mersenne argues that the composer, like the orator, must address an intended audience. Both Le Cerf and Mersenne expect their “harmonic orators”, as Mersenne terms them, to compose and perform music according to the expectations and needs of a specific audience.

In *Von der Singe-Kunst, oder Maniera*, which was written c.1649, the German theorist Christoph Bernhard comments on how a singer should approach a text. According to Bernhard, a singer must take care over pronunciation and have a sound understanding of the meaning of the text. He adds that:

The anger of learned listeners is . . . all too frequently aroused by singers who apply passage-work to a word like *confirmatio* (establishment), or place an ascending run on one like *abyssus* (hell), bringing their ignorance to the light of day. The words, once understood, suggest what affects, occurring therein, should be elicited. (Bernhard, 1649, p. 20)³

Bernhard makes it clear that it is not just the composer’s responsibility to set the text in an appropriate manner; it is also the singer’s responsibility to convey the meaning of the text to the listener.⁴ A singer’s choice of ornamentation, for example, should not be based solely on musical considerations, but should also be dictated by the syntax and semantics of the text.

The renowned Italian singer, Pier Francesco Tosi, makes similar remarks in his *Opinioni de'cantori antichi e moderni*, published in 1723:

With the study of music, let him [the student] learn also at least the grammar to understand the words he is to sing in churches, and to give the proper force to the expression in both languages [namely, the vernacular and Latin]. (p. 36)

Just as the orator uses language, the composer uses music as a powerful tool in expressing and communicating the meaning of the text. Appropriate pronunciation, accentuation, ornamentation, and gesture were (and should still be) used to enhance rather than detract from what the composer is trying to achieve in his setting of the text. If, for example, stresses are placed on incorrect syllables, then much of the beauty of the music, as well as its rhetorical power, is lost. The music can then no longer speak to and persuade its listeners.

In his book entitled *Rhetoric*, Peter Dixon analyses the role of the rhetorician. In the opening chapter, he echoes the views of seventeenth-century writers such as Mersenne when he notes that: "To speak in public presupposes an audience which is spoken to, an audience which the speaker wishes to influence, to persuade, perhaps to exhort and instruct" (Dixon, 1971, p. 1).

The great Jesuit preachers, such as Louis Bourdaloue, knew that only too well; so did Charpentier. He knew that in order for the music to serve its liturgical function as a vessel through which the listener might come to a closer understanding of God, his music must stir the emotions of the listener. His music must speak directly to those present in church.

Charpentier's music was composed with particular listeners in mind. The worshipping congregation at St Louis mainly comprised members of the nobility who lived in the sumptuous mansions of the Marais district surrounding the rue St Antoine. Contemporary accounts mention frequent visits to St Louis by the King and Queen and prominent members of Court who came to hear the Jesuit preachers and enjoy the excellent quality of the music.⁵

Throughout Le Cerf's writings, the author stresses the need for dignified devotion within the church. He believed that the altar of the church should be of a "noble and Christian simplicity" (Le Cerf, 1704-1706, p. 188), such as the high altar of St Peter's in Rome.⁶ The altar of St Louis could hardly have been further from this image of simplicity. According to an anonymous contemporary writer: "Nothing is more sumptuous, nor more magnificent than this altar" (*Les curiositez de Paris, de Versailles, de Marlay, de Vincennes, de S. Cloud, et des environs*, 1716, p. 42).⁷

Vast amounts of gold and silver bedecked the altar, dazzling the beholder. The monstrence was shaped in the form of a great golden sun, laden with expensive diamonds and pearls. Machines were used to lower the Blessed Sacrament into the hands of the celebrant (*Journal d'un voyage à Paris en 1657-1658, 1657-1658*).⁸ In addition to exquisite ornaments, vestments and sculptures, artwork of the highest quality adorned the altars and walls of the church. Cardinal Richelieu commissioned two paintings for the high altar at St Louis, including "The Presentation in the Temple" and "The Apotheosis of St Louis" by the renowned French artist, Simon Vouet (Koslow, 2001).

In Vouet's depiction of "The Presentation in the Temple," the artist draws our eyes immediately to the image of the infant Jesus in the middle of the picture through the hands and eyes of the characters portrayed in the painting. Their bodies lean towards the infant, while

their faces radiate a sense of adoration. Vouet's religious paintings reveal an Italianate style which has been described as combining the "sensuous Baroque style", "classical composition" and "rich colour" of the Venetian school (*Explore Art: Simon Vouet*, 2001). It is a style of painting that shares many similarities with Charpentier's style of sacred vocal music. What distinguishes much of Charpentier's music from that of his contemporaries is the highly sensuous, yet profoundly devotional quality of the writing.

Clearly simplicity was not a feature of the *Maison Professe* of the Jesuits: the intention there was to attract and educate the Parisian nobility through aesthetic enticement, leading to intense religious devotion. Against this background of religious grandeur, it is easier to understand why the Jesuits welcomed opera singers into their church, even if these singers were excommunicated! The use of opera singers at St Louis appealed to members of the congregation who were familiar with the extravagant theatrical productions staged at the Opéra and at Court.

How then did some of Charpentier's contemporaries view the use of opera singers in church? Le Cerf (1704-1706) has some very disparaging remarks on the subject:

the opera singers—lazy, idle, debauched, accustomed only to singing roles that they can study at leisure—, are usually less sure of their part than any other musicians. They do not know Latin: the language of the Church is very unfamiliar to them. Their pronunciation is pitiful. They cut, they distort, they mutilate the words in a ludicrous manner, and it is impossible to stop oneself from laughing at the incredible nonsense and the ridiculous gibberish that they produce. (p. 192)⁹

Le Cerf (1704-1706) continues in his vitriolic attack by commenting on the behaviour of the singers, noting their outrageous attire, their constant turning around, laughing and even sniffing tobacco during the service! (pp. 192-194).¹⁰ The only opera singer spared criticism is Monsieur Dun who was one of the singers identified by Charpentier.¹¹

In view of Le Cerf's remarks, how should we interpret Charpentier's use of opera singers in the psalm settings? Why did the Jesuits employ singers who were excommunicated from the church, who showed no respect for the solemnity of the occasion, and who were paid for their services but usually left the church before the end of Vespers to sing at the evening opera performances?¹²

Although Charpentier would have had other highly talented musicians at his disposal, he made repeated use of opera singers for sacred works composed for the Jesuits. In his autograph manuscripts, Charpentier names seven opera singers on sacred works which were intended for use at the Jesuit church.¹³ All seven singers were known to have performed leading roles in theatrical productions during the latter part of the seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth centuries. Of the 32 sacred works on which opera singers are named, 24 are written on Jesuit paper, and almost certainly date from the late 1680s and 1690s when Charpentier was *maître de musique* at St Louis. These works were intended for use during celebrations of the Mass, *Tenebrae* and, most frequently, Vespers.¹⁴

Four of the seven opera singers identified on sacred works written by Charpentier for the Jesuits are bass singers: *monsieurs* Beaupuy, Dun, Hardouin and L'Escuyer. There was a preference for the bass voice in French music of the seventeenth century. According to François Raguenet, writing in 1702 and a vehement opponent of Le Cerf, the bass was used

more often in French opera than in Italian and was particularly suited to represent gods and kings.¹⁵ Just as French operatic composers showed a preference for using the bass voice for particular roles, so there is a preference for certain types of text to be set for the bass in Charpentier's psalm settings. In the works using bass opera singers, there are four main types of sentiment expressed in the psalms: dramatic text, particularly those referring to the depths or darkness; texts related to strength and the effects of strength; references to kings and judgment; and references to God's compassion and love. These parallel closely the types of roles played by basses in many operas of the period.

In Charpentier's psalm settings, there are more than twice as many examples of solo passages for bass than for any other voice. The bass has, for the most part, a wider range than that of any of the other voices, spanning just over two octaves.¹⁶ This extended range can be explained through an examination of the role played by the vocal bass. In addition to functioning in a melodic capacity, like the other voices, the vocal bass sometimes serves as the harmonic foundation for the work by doubling the continuo line. While the bass rarely remains for extended periods at the lowest extreme of its range, there are frequent leaps down an octave at cadence points, thus extending its range beyond that normally given to vocal parts. The range is also extended for the purposes of word painting.

It is striking and perhaps surprising to discover that there is little difference in range between the solo and the chorus passages. When, however, one recalls that the *grand chœur* (or chorus) sections comprised the soloists with the possible addition of regular choir members, this is less surprising. Differences between solo and choral writing occur more in style than in range. In the choral sections, for example, the bass voice tends to perform a primarily harmonic role, doubling the continuo; while in the solo sections the emphasis is more often on a melodic role, with most of the melodic writing independent of the continuo.

There are three different types of accompaniment employed with the solo bass: continuo alone, such as in "Beatus vir" (H. 199) at the words "Exortum est in tenebris lumen"; two treble obbligato instruments and continuo, such as in "Domine Deus salutis meae" (H. 207) at the words "Posuerunt me in lacu inferiori"; and orchestra with continuo. The latter type of scoring is reserved for moments of great drama, often including the instructions "sourdines" for the orchestra, such as in "Beatus vir" (H. 208) at the words "Peccator videbit, et irascetur, dentibus suis fremet et tabescet."

As one would expect in French music, there is little of the virtuosity one tends to find in Italian music of the period, particularly early seventeenth-century Italian music. Most of the word setting is syllabic, but with a judicious use of melismatic writing that is chosen to highlight words or syllables of syntactic or semantic importance. In Charpentier's dramatic setting of verses six to nine of "Domine Deus salutis meae" (H. 207), for example, the writing is essentially syllabic, with the only melismatic writing reserved for the word "egrediebar" (I came forth).

Harmonic, melodic, textural and rhythmic writing all contribute to the effectiveness of the word setting. For example, at the opening of Charpentier's setting of "Beatus vir" (H. 199), the composer focusses the listener's attention on the word *exortum* (rising) with an anabatic melisma spanning an octave. Here, the composer uses a gesture that is the musical equivalent of the gestures used by a painter, such as Vouet, who draws the viewer's gaze to the most significant part of the painting. In contrast to the rising melody, Charpentier portrays the word *tenebris* (darkness) with a descending figure, followed by a leap up an octave for the word

lumen (light). Charpentier stresses the importance of the word *rectis* (righteous) by placing it at the climax of the phrase on a high *e^b*. In another setting of the same text (Beatus vir, H. 208), the composer focusses immediately on the word *tenebris* with a melodic line that descends to "tenebris." Through a change in melodic direction, rhythmic pace and tessitura, as well as in a shift from syllabic to melismatic writing at the word *lumen*, Charpentier portrays the contrast between dark and light.

Throughout the psalm settings, Charpentier fulfills Le Cerf's expectations that the composer should convey to the listener the general sentiments of the psalm: his choice of scoring and tonality serve this purpose perfectly. Like the theorists, Mattheson and Rameau, Charpentier explains keys in terms of their affective attributes (Mattheson, 1713; Rameau, 1722; Charpentier, n.d.). In addition, however, Charpentier imbues the text with further meaning through the close attention given to detail in word setting and word painting.¹⁷ Probably to a greater extent than his French contemporaries, Charpentier draws on the full gamut of rhetorical figures borrowed from speech to convey the meaning of the text in much the same way as the Jesuit preachers would have done.¹⁸

In the thirteenth-century treatise, *Summa musicae*, the author writes: "Those who explore the usefulness of music should note what Horace says concerning the good poet; only praising him, he says that 'the one who combines the useful with the delightful wins all the applause'" (Page, 1991, p. 54).

The Jesuits of the rue St Antoine clearly shared Horace's view. For the Jesuits to communicate most effectively with the faithful and to move their congregation to deep spiritual devotion, they had to provide what was tantamount to entertainment. In a sense, these seventeenth-century Jesuits practised "inculturation": they adopted the practices of the culture (here secular artistic practices) as a means of evangelizing. They integrated the values and taste of contemporary secular culture into their own Church traditions.

In the passage from the *Spiritual Exercises* of 1548 St Ignatius, founder of the Jesuits, wrote that "it follows that man should make use of all creation so far as they do help him towards his end" (Buchan, 1990, p. 4).

In seventeenth-century Paris, the artistic boundaries that existed between sacred and secular were broken by the Jesuits as a means to a spiritual end. The Jesuits recognized the intrinsic value of art as a tool in religious education and devotion: Jesuit preachers used rhetoric as a means of persuasion; artists, architects and sculptors used the visual arts to draw the eyes of the faithful towards God; musicians, such as Charpentier, composed and opera singers performed music that retained the deep spirituality of the Roman Catholic liturgy, yet drew on secular influences in order to convey the text in the most dramatic, most musical, most affective and sensual manner—all to fulfil the Jesuit's motto of "Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam" (for the greater glory of God).

Reference List

- Bacilly, B. de. (1668). *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter*. Paris (trans. and ed. by A. Caldwell [1968]. as *A commentary upon the art of proper singing*. New York: Institute of Mediaeval Music.).
- Bernhard, C. (c.1649/R1973). *On the art of singing; or, Manier*. In W. Hulse (Ed. and trans.). (1973). The treatises of Christoph Bernhard. *Music Forum*, 3 (pp. 1-196).
- Brice, G. (1713). *Description de la ville de Paris et de tout ce qu'elle contient de plus remarquable*. F Pn 8°Z Le Senne 13781. In F. Fournier (Ed.), vol. 2. 6th ed.

- Buchan, J. (1990, September 9). The Jesuits: In the kingdom of men. *The Independent on Sunday*, 2-5.
- Buelow, G. (2001). Rhetoric and music. In S. Sadie (Ed.). *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians* (2nd ed.). New York: Macmillan.
- Catalogue des livres de la bibliothèque de la maison professe des ci-devant soi-disans Jesuites.* (1763). F Pn 7880.d.225. Paris.
- Charpentier, M.-A. *Meslanges autographes.* (F Pn: Rés. Vm' 259).
- Charpentier, M.-A. (1996). Psalmus David centesim[us] undecimus "Beatus vir qui timet dominum" (H. 199). In *Cœuvres complètes de Marc-Antoine Charpentier: Meslanges autographes* (Vol. 8, pp. 73-80). Genève: Minkoff.
- Charpentier, M.-A. (1997a). Psalmus Davidis post octogesimum septimus [87^{ua}.] "Domine Deus salutis mee" (H. 207). In *Cœuvres complètes de Marc-Antoine Charpentier: Meslanges autographes* (Vol. 10, pp. 14-24). Genève: Minkoff.
- Charpentier, M.-A. (1997b). Psalmus undecimus Davidis post centesimum [111^{ua}.] "Beatus vir qui timet d[omi]num" (H. 208). In *Cœuvres complètes de Marc-Antoine Charpentier: Meslanges autographes* (Vol. 10, pp. 103-122). Genève: Minkoff.
- Charpentier, M.-A. *Regles de composition par Mr Charpentier.* (F Pn: MS Nouv.Acq. Française 6355, ff. 1-15'.
- Les curiositez de Paris, de Versailles, de Marlay, de Vincennes, de S. Cloud et des environs.* (1716/R1883). Paris
- Dixon, P. (1971). *Rhetoric.* London: Methuen.
- Duncan, D. A. (1989). Persuading the affections: Rhetorical theory and Mersenne's advice to harmonic orators. In G. Cowart (Ed.), *French musical thought 1600-1800* (pp. 149-175). Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press.
- Explore Art: *Simon Vouet* [On-line]. (2000). Getty Museum. Available: www.getty.edu/art/collections/bio/9223-1.html
- Gazette de France.* (February 1690).
- Hitchcock, H. W. (1982). *Les œuvres de/The works of Marc-Antoine Charpentier: Catalogue raisonné.* Paris: Picard.
- Journal d'un voyage à Paris en 1657-1658.* (1657-1658/R1862)
- Koslow, S. (2001). *French art and architecture in the seventeenth century: Simon Vouet* [On-line]. Available: <http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/art/koslow/french/vouet.htm>
- Le Cerf de la Viéville, J. L. (1704-1706/R1972). *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique française.* 2nd ed. Geneva: Minkoff.
- Lecky, W. (1878). *History of the rise and influence of the spirit of rationalism in Europe.* Available: <http://www.positiveatheism.org/hist/leckytoc.htm>
- Masson, C. (1705/R1971). *Nouveau traité des règles pour la composition de la musique.* 3rd ed. Geneva: Minkoff.
- Mattheson, J. (1713). *Das neu-eröffnete Orchestre.* Hamburg: B. Schiller's widow.
- Le Mercure Galant.* (August 1692).
- Mersenne, M. (1636). *Harmonie universelle, contenant la théorie et la pratique de la musique.* Paris.
- Page, C. (1991). *The summa musica: A thirteenth-century manual for singers.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Raguenet, F. (1702-1706; R1976). *Parallèle des italiens et des français en ce qui regarde la musique et les opéras/Défense du parallèle des italiens et des français en ce qui regarde la musique et les opéras.* Geneva: Minkoff.
- Rameau, J.-P. (1722/R1967-1972). *Complete theoretical writings, volumes I-VI.* Paris. (facsimile: E.R. Jacobi (Ed.). published by American Institute of Musicology).
- Tosi, P. F. (1723/1987). *Observations on the florid song.* (J.E. Galliard, trans.; M. Pilkington, ed.). London: Stainer & Bell.
- Wittkower, R., & Jaffe, I. (1972). *Baroque art: The Jesuit contribution.* New York: Fordham University Press.

Endnotes

¹. "L'expression des sentiments d'un Chrétien qui adresse sa voix à son Dieu" (p. 158). "La musique d'un Motet . . . doit être expressive, simple, agréable" (p. 168). "Les chanteurs de Motets doivent être expressifs, sachant prononcer ce qu'ils disent, sûrs de leur partie, simples, modestes. Les joueurs d'instrumens doivent aussi avoir de l'expression, de la science, de la modestie" (p. 188).

². Le Cerf (1704-1706) writes that:

Il est constant que la plupart des Pseaumes, des Cantiques, etc. ont une espece de dessein, une passion qui domine, & à laquelle tous les autres sentimens viennent aboutir: je croirois que le Compositeur doit suivre principalement celle-là, & selon que les autres y ont plus ou moins de raport, les faire plus ou moins sentir . . . Il me semble que l'expression particuliere de chaque verset, doit être ainsi liée & subordonnée à l'expression générale du Pseaume. Néanmoins, quand le Verset est d'un chant singulier, ou beaucoup plus vif que le reste, quand le Prophete lui-même a voulu faire une oposition de mouvements, ou quand il raporte les sentimens & les discours de plusieurs personnes, ce qui lui arrive quelquefois: on doit sans doute s'attacher à donner à ses Versets, une expression singuliere & remarquable, & la génie du Musicien peut se déployer & briller là par une variété seconde....Ce seroit une petitesse que de n'oser passer "Fluvins et Fulgar", sans y mettre des roulements, parce qu'il est vrai que les roulements sont propres à peindre le cours d'un Fleuve & la chute du Tonnerre. (p. 164)

³. Bernhard (1649) notes that:

The first [task that the singer must do when interpreting a text] consists in the proper pronunciation of the words which he must set forth in song . . . Latin he is free to pronounce as is customary in the district where he is singing, since it is pronounced differently in different countries . . . still more necessary . . . is an adequate understanding of the text. Accordingly it is to be deplored that only a few singers concern themselves with a proper and solid grounding in Latin and Italian—two languages which, besides their mother tongue, all singers ought to understand passably, if not indeed speak well. (p. 20)

⁴. Bernhard adds that:

The question may here be raised, whether a singer's face and bearing should reflect the affects found in the text. Thus let it be known that a singer should sing modestly, without special facial expressions; for nothing is more upsetting than certain singers who are better heard than seen, who arouse the expectations of a listener with a good voice and style of singing, but who ruin everything with ugly faces and gestures. Until they learn better facial expressions and manners, such singers should only be heard in the choir, behind the grating, but not openly, within sight of everyone. In ordinary music-making, especially in the performance of motets and the like, it is in my opinion not proper to use even simple theatrical gestures. (pp. 21-22)

⁵. The following appears in *Le Mercure galant*, August 1692:

Il y avoit une affluence extraordinaires de gens de qualité . . . La Musique qui estoit de Mr Charpentier, charma toute l'Assemblée, & particulierement un Motet, composé exprés pour cette Feste. On ne peut rien ajouter à la réputation qu'il s'acquiert de jour en jour. (pp. 219-20)

Writing in 1657, two brothers from Holland noted that:

l'apres dinée nous fusmes à l'église des Jesuites de la rue Saint-Antoine, pour entendre le sermon de l'Evesque de Valence. Le Roy, la Reine, Monsieur le Cardinal et la plupart des grands de la Cour y assistèrent. (*Journal d'un voyage à Paris en 1657-1658, 1657-1658/R1862, p. 42*)

On 4 February 1690 the *Gazette* reported that: “l'apres dinée, Sa Majesté entendit la Prédiction du Père Gaillard Jésuite, & Vespres chantées par la Musique.”

⁶ “La principale décoration des Eglises, est celle de l'Autel, & la meilleure décoration d'un Autel, est une simplicité noble et chrétienne, de n'avoir rien que d'auguste, rien de superflu. Le grand Autel de saint Pierre de Rome, qui dans la magnificence incroyable de ce superbe édifice, n'est paré que d'une Croix & de quelques Chandeliers, en est une preuve & un exemple sans replique.” (*Le Cerf, 1704-1706, p. 188*)

⁷ Anonymous 1 (1716): “rien n'est plus somptueux ni plus magnifique que cet Autel” (p. 122).

⁸ The writer notes that: “et par des machines et des ressorts ou faisoit descendre l'hostie jusques dans les mains de l'Evesque” (Anonymous 2, 1657-1658), p. 42). Germain Brice (1713) described the interior of St Louis in glowing terms:

il n'est point d'endroit dans le royaume, où il y ait une plus grande quantité de reliquaires, de vases, de candelabres, de chandeliers, de girandoles, de lampes & d'autres choses semblables. Toutes ces pieces sont d'argent, ou de vermeil doré; il y en a même quelques unes d'or, dont la plus remarquable est un grand soleil enrichi de quantité de diamans & de grosses perles, d'un prix tres-considerable, donné par des personnes de piété. Les ormemens sont aussi tres-riches. (pp. 39-40)

⁹ *Le Cerf* (1704-1706):

les Acteurs de l'Opera, paresseux, faineans, débauchez, accoûtumez à ne chanter que des rôles qu'ils ont étudié à loisir, sont d'ordinaire moins sûrs de leur partie qu'aucuns Musiciens. Le latin n'est pas une langue de leur connoissance: le langage de l'Eglise ne leur est pas très-familier. Ils prononcent à faire pitié. Ils coupent, ils estropient, ils défigurent les mots d'une manière burlesque, & il n'est pas possible de s'empêcher de rire des contre-sens extraordinaires, & des plaisans galimathias qu'ils font. (p. 192)

In *Les Curiositez de Paris* of 1716, an anonymous writer commented in a more positive manner that “la Tribune, où sont les Orgues que l'on estime beaucoup, est l'ordinairement remplie des plus fameux Musiciens de Paris, qui s'y font entendre avec plaisir les Dimanches & jours de Fêtes particulieres (*Les Curiositez de Paris, 1716, p. 124*). While the writer does not specify that the “most famous musicians of Paris” were opera singers, this is the most plausible interpretation of the phrase.

¹⁰ *Le Cerf* (1704-1706) writes:

Quel spectacle dans le Choeur ou dans le Jubé d'une Eglise, que cinq ou six figures ébrailées, habillées de diverse façon & véritablement comme des Comédiens, enfarinées jusqu'à le ceinture, tournant sans cesse la tête, prenant du tabac, riant, causant & grimaçant! . . . On loüe des Actrices, qui, derriere un rideau qu'elles tirent de tems en tems, pour sourire à des Auditeurs de leurs amis, chantent une Leçon le Vendredy Saint, ou un Motet à voix seule le jour de Pâques. (pp. 192-194)

¹¹ Le Cerf (1704-1706) writes:

Hormis "Dun", en qui j'ai plusieurs fois remarqué un air différent de celui de ses camarades, une apparence de Chrétien, je n'en connois pas un que je voulusse justifier d'être un Acteur détestable à l'Eglise par nos règles de bienséance. (p. 193)

¹² Le Cerf writes that "les Musiciens d'Opera sont, dis-je, excommuniés en France, indignes d'entrer dans l'Eglise pendant leur vie, comme d'y être enterrez après leur mort . . . On les paye pour exécuter les Motets les plus pieux & les plus solennels!" (p. 187). He later adds that:

La Musique de Vêpres fut chantée par des Musiciens particuliers, que je ne connoissois point. J'avouë que les Musiciens de l'Opera avoient de plus belles voix . . . mais en récompense, qu lieu, qu'à la fin de Magnificat, l'Opera délogeoit vite du Jubé pour aller au Théâtre qui l'attendoit à son tour, la Musique demeura ce jour-là; & après un Sermon . . . on chanta au Salut un "Credidi propter" passable. Il étoit sensible que la figure de ces Musiciens étoit plus modeste que celle de l'Opera. (p. 199)

¹³ The seven opera singers identified by Charpentier on his sacred works are: Messieurs Beaupuy (F4), Boutlou (C3), Des Voyes (C4), Dun (F4), Hardouin (F4), L'Escuyer (F4) and Ribou (C3).

¹⁴ With the exception of the *Dialogus inter Christum et homines* (H. 417 which is a dramatic motet) and the *Te Deum* (H. 146), all the following works are liturgical works which are written on Jesuit paper and on which the names of opera singers are identified. Both H. 417 and H. 146 may be classified as extra-liturgical works.

H. 67: *Ave maris stella* (includes the names of L'Escuyer (F4) and Dun (F4)) [Vespers]

H. 74: *Magnificat à 8 voix et 8 instruments* (Mr Dun (F4)) [Vespers]

H. 79: *Troisième Magnificat à 4 voix avec instr[uments]* (includes the names of Mr Boutlar (C3), Mr Desvoyer (C4), Mr Hard[ouin] (F4), Mr Dun (F4)) [Vespers]

H. 123-125: [*Leçons de ténèbres*] (Mr Beaupuy (F4)) [Matins/Tenebrae]

H. 129: *Second répons après la seconde leçon du second nocturne du Jeudi s[ain]t* (Mr Dun (F4)) [Matins/Tenebrae]

H. 131: *Troisième répons après la 3e leçon du s[econ]d noct[urne] du Vendredi s[ain]t* (Mr Ribou (C3)) [Matins/Tenebrae]

H. 132: *Troisième répons après la 3e leçon du second nocturne du Mercredi s[ain]t* (Mr Dun (F4)) [Matins/Tenebrae]

H. 133: *P[remie]r répons après la p[remière] leçon du s[econ]d noct[urne] du Jeudi saint* (Mr Beaupuy (F4)) [Matins/Tenebrae]

H. 146: *Te Deum* (Mr Beaupuy (F4)) [Hymn of Thanksgiving]

H. 260: *Elevatio* (Mr L'Escuyer (F4)) [Mass]

H. 417: *Dialogus inter Christum et homines* (includes the names of Mr Ribou (C3), Mr Beaupuy (F4), Mr Dun (F4)) [Dramatic motet/oratorio]

Psalm settings:

H. 160: "Nisi Dominus" (Mr Beaupuy (F4), Mr Dun (F4)) [Vespers]

H. 161: "Laetatus sum" (Mr Beaupuy (F4), Mr Dun (F4)) [Vespers]

H. 162: "Exaudiat te Dominus" (Mr Dun (F4)) [2nd Nocturn, Corpus Christi; also used as royal motet]

H. 190: "Dixit Dominus" (Mr Dun (F4), Mr Beaupuy (F4)) [Vespers]

H. 199: "Beatus vir" (Dun (F4), Mr L'Escuyer (F4)) [Vespers]

H. 200: "Confitebor tibi Domine" (L'Escuyer (F4)) [Vespers]

H. 206: "Notus in Judaea Deus" (Mr Dun (F4)) [Matins/Tenebrae]

H. 207: “Domine Deus salutis meae” (Mr Dun (F4)) [Matins/Tenebrae]

H. 208: “Beatus vir” (Dun (F4), Beaupuy (F4)) [Vespers]

H. 209: “Credidi propter” (Beaupuy (F4), Dun (F4)) [Vespers]

¹⁵ Ragueneau (1702-1706) writes:

Il n'y a rien de plus charmant qu'une belle Basse-contre; le simple son de ces Basses que l'on entend quelques-fois s'abimer dans un creux profond a quelque chose qui enchante, ces grosses voix ébranlent une bien plus grande quantité d'air que les autres, & le remplissement par conséquent d'une bien plus agréable & bien plus vaste harmonie. Dans les personnage de Dieux et de Roys . . . nos Acteurs, avec le son de leurs grosses voix, ont toute une autre Majesté que ceux des Italiens. (pp. 12-14)

¹⁶ The range of the solo bass in Charpentier's psalm settings is F-f#¹. When discussing vocal range, Masson (1705) notes that:

On ne doit point donner plus de dix ou douze notes d'étendue à chaque Partie, afin de ne pas gêner les voix . . . La Basse rarement [ne doit pas monter plus haut que] l'E si mi, & tout cela doit être réglé par la discretion du Compositeur. (pp. 14-15)

¹⁷ In April 1691, *Le Mercure Galant* reported that Tenebrae was celebrated at the “Eglise du Collège de Louïs de Grand” with music by Charpentier. The writer continues: “Cette Musique a fait d'autant plus d'impression, qu'elle exprimoit parfaitement le sujet des paroles qu'on chantoit, & qu'elle en faisoit comprendre la force.”

¹⁸ In the Jesuits' library catalogue there are a number of musical treatises listed, including works by Zarlino, Artusi, Mersenne and Kircher. Many of the musical-rhetorical figures found in Charpentier's music are those discussed by Kircher. Charpentier would probably have been familiar with other treatises that discussed the relationship between music and rhetoric either while he was working for the Jesuits or while he was visiting Italy during the 1660s.
