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**Pierre Baillot (1771-1842)**  
**Institutions, Values and Identity**

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**Pierre Baillot (1771-1842): Institutions, Values and Identity**

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PhD in Music

King's College London

## Abstract

On 12 December 1814, an unusual concert took place in Paris, one exclusively featuring chamber works. The audience gathered to listen to string quartets and quintets led by acclaimed violinist Pierre Baillot. The *Séances de quatuors et de quintettes de Baillot* were thus born and continued to operate until 1840. Parisian musical life was dominated by opera, a genre that the majority of modern historians working on nineteenth-century Paris tend to focus on. However, we discover that, owing to Baillot's efforts, the public chamber music concert seemed to have a future. The central aim of my thesis is to give chamber music the place that it deserves in music history and to demonstrate that a deeper knowledge of concert culture can enhance our perception of conservatism and canon formation during the first half of the nineteenth century.

I discuss the circumstances under which Baillot set up his *séances* and his ability to educate his audience through his programmes. The result was a genealogy of instrumental music, which represented the early stages of historization. We also look at Baillot's status as a violinist, prompted by Paganini's concerts in Paris, through a juxtaposition of the two performers, but also through Baillot's own compositions. Further, Baillot's treatises *Méthode de violon du Conservatoire* (1803) and *L'Art du violon* (1834) allow us to gain a deeper understanding of his aesthetic values, including the much-discussed *beau idéal*.

The *séances* were made possible by the strong support network that Baillot had surrounded himself by, consisting of his contemporaries, as well as artists of the next generation. We acknowledge critic François-Joseph Fétis, whose writings in *La revue musicale* helped advance Baillot's project, and composer George Onslow – the only French composer to have his works performed *chez* Baillot – whose nickname 'le Beethoven français' stimulates a discussion on French musical identity, or indeed frenchness. In the new generation of musicians, Eugène Sauzay and François Habeneck were both Baillot's students at the Conservatoire; the former's *mémoires* offer invaluable information on concert culture at the time, while the latter's founding of the *Société des concerts du Conservatoire* in 1828, which featured Beethoven's symphonies as the concert centrepiece for several decades running, illustrates how Baillot's work shaped the future of Parisian instrumental music.

# Contents

List of illustrations | 4

Acknowledgements | 5

Introduction | 6

1. Séances de quatuors et de quintettes de Baillot (1814-1840) | 12

1.1 Winning over the right audience: Baillot's subscribers

1.2 Collaborations and inspiration: Russia and Vienna

1.3 Baillot's legacy: virtually unknown?

2. 'Une espèce de magie attachée à son nom': Baillot's programmes and his celebrities | 41

2.1 Towards a musical museum

2.2 'Un bon vieux maître, plein de charme': Luigi Boccherini

2.3 Beethoven

2.4 'Papa' Haydn and his son Mozart

3. Pierre Baillot: a virtuoso in disguise? | 78

3.1 Baillot's treatises and the *beau idéal*

3.2 Paganini and the *Revue musicale*

3.3 An unlikely connection: Giovanni Battista Viotti

3.4 Baillot: Soloist, teacher, writer, concert organiser...and composer

4. 'Le Beethoven français': George Onslow and French chamber music aesthetics | 115

4.1 *Le quintette de la balle*, left-ear deafness, and Beethoven

4.2 Frenchness

5. Inspiring the next generation: Société des concerts du Conservatoire | 149

5.1 Habeneck, the *Eroica*, and an emerging pattern

5.2 Mendelssohn: a new hero entices the French

5.3 Developing a canon: conservatism or progress?

Afterword | 181

Bibliography | 184

## Illustrations

Jean-Baptiste Singry, *Pierre Baillot* (1815), Bibliothèque nationale de France | 16

Pierre Baillot, *L'Art du violon. Nouvelle méthode* (Paris, 1834), front cover, Bibliothèque nationale de France | 48

Antoine-Achille Bourgeois de la Richardière, *Luigi Boccherini* (1814), Bibliothèque nationale de France | 57

Eugène Delacroix, *Théâtre Italien: Rossini soutenant à lui seul tout l'Opéra italien* (1828), Bibliothèque nationale de France | 77

Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), *Paganini* (1831), Phillips Collection, Washington DC | 97

Henri Grévedon, *Georges Onslow* (1830), Bibliothèque nationale de France | 124

P. C. Van Geel, *François-Antoine Habeneck* (1835), Bibliothèque nationale de France | 159

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## Introduction

When I first embarked on this project, my intention was to study the aesthetics of the so-called French Violin School, represented by three violinists and professors at the Paris Conservatoire, Pierre Baillot (1771-1842), Rodolphe Kreutzer (1766-1831) and Pierre Rode (1774-1830), while concentrating on the musical values and the matters of performance that differentiated their school from other European ones. However, it was the pessimistic and hugely dismissive views of composers Hector Berlioz and Camille Saint-Saëns with regard to the Parisian chamber music scene in the first half of the nineteenth century that instantly captured my attention and ultimately shifted the central aim of my research to giving chamber music at the time the place that it deserves in music history. As a result, I focussed my attention on Pierre Baillot and his chamber music society in particular, the Séances de quatuors et de quintettes de Baillot, which was founded in Paris in December 1814 and which was the first of its kind in that it exclusively presented string quartets and quintets in its programmes. Taken by the overwhelming outpouring of opera in the first half of the nineteenth century, historians tend to overlook chamber music entirely, and so access to information on chamber music in the French capital initially appeared very limited, to some extent confirming Berlioz and Saint-Saëns's views. As time went by, however, a few different sources began to provide answers to my numerous questions, the most pressing of which was whether there was enough interest, time, space and resources for chamber music in a city that was so engrossed in opera and ballet. Were Berlioz and Saint-Saëns right?

Obviously Pierre Baillot's project has to be placed in its volatile cultural context. In the turbulent two decades after the Revolution of 1789, France had witnessed the violent end of a monarchy that had lasted for centuries and the

execution of King Louis XVI by guillotine, the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte, whose influence over much of western Europe was followed by his two subsequent falls, and the entry of foreign troops into Paris for the first time in four hundred years. The same year that Baillot started his quartet and quintet series, France saw the first abdication of Napoleon in April and the immediate Restoration of the Bourbons with Louis XVIII as king. The political circumstances brought with them such turmoil that musical life could not have been left unharmed: the Conservatoire was temporarily closed down, also bringing the student concerts known as *Exercices* to a halt. Music societies and public concerts at the beginning of the Restoration were particularly disorganised and even private music salons were hit by confusion, as the nobles contemplated the Bourbons' return. At this troubled time, which was even proving thorny for already-established musical institutions, Baillot achieved the seemingly impossible: he was able to set up his own public concert series, which was an admirable achievement not only because it was a new establishment during difficult times, but most importantly because it was considered, in several ways, an innovation.

The significance of the chamber music society set up by Baillot lies in that it was institutionally organised, and that is also a main reason for its success. Baillot's strong ties to the Conservatoire were of course vital, but, as we will see, he had surrounded himself with a strong network of support that came from several different sources. My thesis is arranged in such a way that the individual supporters of Baillot's *séances* each serve as a distinct lens through which we gain further insight into the chamber music culture of the period.

First in the list of supporters we must acknowledge Baillot's audience: despite reports of an increasing quietness, or indeed attentiveness, of Parisian



listeners in the early nineteenth century, two and a half hours of uninterrupted instrumental music certainly required an unprecedented level of seriousness and dedication from Baillot's public. However, the fact that the latter was largely made up of musically amateur aristocrats, who already devoted a great deal of their time performing chamber music in a domestic setting, meant that they were more educated and therefore more likely to enjoy the *soirée* and return time after time – which they did. Examining Baillot's choice of composers as a way of maintaining the audience's engagement, we discover his concept of a genealogy of instrumental music and are consequently offered the opportunity to examine the beginnings of historization. Furthermore, and still while studying the choice of programmes at the *séances*, I seek to contribute to the debate about style dualism (which, through Carl Dahlhaus's theory, seeks to establish a strict differentiation between opera and instrumental music, by contrasting the music of Rossini and Beethoven), arguing that the popularity of opera and its aesthetic values, including vocal virtuosity, brought a great deal to the newly-conceived chamber music concert, as it represented an important and familiar context for the audience. The *quatuor concertant*, or *dialogué* as it was often referred to in France, encouraged conversation between instruments, emphasising discourse, or indeed words and thus vocal music, and bringing us closer to a more theatrical event, reminiscent of the opera house.

Baillot was undoubtedly one of the brightest stars France had to offer and we are fortunate enough to have been left with two of his violin treatises (the *Méthode de violon du Conservatoire*, jointly written with Pierre Rode and Rodolphe Kreutzer, and *L'Art du violon*), which give us access to the ideals of string playing at the time. Baillot paints his own picture as a conservative figure, tied to the *beau idéal* and the values of beauty, expression, honesty and the elevation of the soul. Yet with

the imminent arrival of the grotesque touring magician that was Niccolò Paganini in the French capital, we will find some concealed connections between the two violinists, who one might have thought to represent the opposing principles of Classicism and Romanticism, and who ultimately share more than one might expect.

Baillot benefited from the support of some of the most influential personalities of the Parisian musical world. Belgian music critic François-Joseph Fétis (1784-1871) helped paint a picture of what was at stake culturally at the time, by recording and interpreting the action and reaction of the Parisian musical happenings. He persistently promoted Baillot's work from the privileged standpoint of the most circulated musical newspaper in Paris, the *Revue musicale*, and has left us with an abundance of eulogies for the French violinist. In return, Baillot's influence on Fétis cannot be questioned: the latter's educational lecture recitals known as *Concerts historiques* (1832-1835) were a result of the increasing popularity of Baillot's model of an instrumental music concert in the 1830s. Violinist Eugène Sauzay (1809-1901), one of the most distinguished violin students of Baillot's at the Conservatoire, who also married his daughter Augustine in 1835, plays an important role in unearthing core chamber music values through his *mémoires*. Sauzay provides a viewpoint on Baillot's efforts to establish a French tradition for instrumental music in a wholly new fashion. However, he also represents the generation after Baillot: even though he regularly performed alongside Baillot at the *séances*, we are told in his *mémoires* that he and his peers, 'jeunes révolutionnaires de 1830', dreamed of nothing else than to perform Beethoven's Ninth symphony and late quartets, as the works responded so well to their new ideas, thus moving a step forward from Baillot's concert programme model of Boccherini, Haydn, Mozart and early Beethoven.

Also a student of Baillot's at the Conservatoire and an important figure in Baillot's circle of supporters was violinist and conductor François Antoine Habeneck (1781-1849), who, like Sauzay, can be seen as a successor of Baillot's vision, having been heavily influenced by him. Habeneck founded the Société des concerts du Conservatoire in 1828, remaining its director for twenty years, and was almost single-handedly responsible for the sudden popularity of Beethoven's symphonies in the late 1820s. However it is the *société's* tendency towards increasingly conservative repertoire, as the years went by, that will concern us the most, as we examine the emergence of a canon and we seek to establish that, within this fundamentally conservative notion, there is creativity, and therefore that conservatism can at times be as valued as innovation.

Another member of Baillot's support network was composer George Onslow (1784-1853), a wealthy aristocrat, who was celebrated by his contemporaries, but forgotten very soon after his death, and who was the only French composer to feature as a regular in the *séances's* programmes. Onslow's social status, music appraisals and conservative demeanour – both musical and otherwise – urge us to evaluate his position as a *Biedermeier* composer, while with an investigation of his nickname 'le Beethoven français' we seek to establish which of the two words – Beethoven or French – bears more weight in such a tag, and to determine what unites, but mostly what separates, the two composers. An emphasis on Onslow's likeness to Beethoven prompts a discussion on Onslow's left-ear deafness, owing to a hunting accident, while underlining his French nationality leads us to an analysis of French national identity. We reveal frenchness to be very much synonymous with an attachment to or a nostalgia for the past and all that it brought with it. Amid an already-established German quartet tradition, we cannot but wonder

where French instrumental music stood; we will discover that what the French lacked in composers of instrumental music they made up for in institutions and quality of performance, which they took with a sense of heightened national pride.

Finally, I hope that my dissertation provides further insight into the Parisian chamber music aesthetics of the first half of the nineteenth century and that it gives chamber music the place it truly deserves in music history. Secondary sources on the topic tend to be more documentary than interpretative, concentrating on establishing basic facts about chamber music societies (which is understandable, to an extent, given the lack of information available). As a result, I wish to reconstruct the set of values and beliefs that permeated *la musique de chambre à Paris* and to demonstrate that deeper knowledge of concert culture can enhance our perception of conservatism and canon formation during the first half of the nineteenth century.

## 1 | Séances de quatuors et de quintettes de Baillot (1814-1840)

*Harmonie, ô transports de mon âme étonnée,  
Quel est ton ascendant sur notre destinée,  
Es-tu la voix du Ciel, et Dieu dans sa bonté  
Aurait-il sous tes traits voilé sa majesté?*  
Pierre Baillot<sup>1</sup>

On 12 December 1814, a concert took place in Paris, one exclusively featuring chamber works. The audience gathered to listen to string quartets and quintets led by acclaimed violinist Pierre Baillot. A professor at the Paris Conservatoire and founder of the French Violin School along with Rodolphe Kreutzer and Pierre Rode, Baillot was a student of the Italian violinist Giovanni Battista Viotti (1755-1824) and was recognised for his exceptional solo appearances. On that day, he was joined by Charles Guynemer on second violin, Joseph Tariot and Saint-Laurent on viola, Jean-Michel de Lamarre and Louis-Pierre Norblin on cello.<sup>2</sup> The programme included

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<sup>1</sup> All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated. 'Harmony, Oh transport of my astonished soul, what is your influence over our destiny, are you the voice of Heaven, and God in his kindness, might He have hidden his majesty under your veiled traits?' Pierre Baillot, *Commencement d'une Epître à l'Harmonie*, in Pierre Soccanne, 'Quelques documents inédits sur Pierre Baillot' (1771-1842), *Revue de Musicologie*, vol. 22, no. 2 (1943), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Guynemer (1770-1862), Joseph Tariot (1802-1872), Saint-Laurent (1790-1849), Jean-Michel de Lamarre (1772-1823), Louis Norblin (1782-1854); François-Joseph Fétis, 'Baillot', *Biographie universelle des musiciens* (Paris, 1866-68), vol. 1, p. 221. The venue of the first concert was 16 rue Bergère, and although it is not exactly clear what type of property this was or who was its proprietor, one can presume that the venue would have been of similar grandiosity as the period buildings on the street today. It is interesting that after a few venue changes over the years, Baillot held his last concerts, from 1836 until their end in 1840, at 14 rue Bergère, in the salons of the residence of banker André Leroux. ('Il reçut en 1836 l'hospitalité de M. Leroux, banquier, qui lui offrit dans son bel hôtel de la rue Bergère deux grands et beaux salons, donnant sur des jardins. Dans ces salons, bien appropriés à la musique de chambre, Baillot donna longtemps ses séances à l'abri de tout bruit importun'; 'He received in 1836 the hospitality of Mr. Leroux, banker, who offered him two large and beautiful salons at his beautiful residence at rue Bergère, overlooking the gardens. In these rooms, well suited for chamber music, Baillot gave his concerts for a long time, free from all unwelcome noise'. Brigitte François-Sappey, 'La vie musicale à Paris à travers les mémoires d'Eugene Sauzay (1809 - 1901)', *Revue de musicologie* 60/1-2 (1974), p. 193). Leroux's residence later belonged to another banker, named Rougemont, before becoming the headquarters of the CNEP (Comptoir National d'Escompte de Paris), one of the ancestors of BNP Paribas – the bank situated there today. However, the construction of the current building started in 1878 and was completed in 1913, almost a century after Baillot's concert, so it is not possible to view the

Boccherini's Quintet op. 39 no. 3, Haydn's Quartet op. 20 no. 2, Mozart's Quartet K 575, Haydn's Quartet op. 71 no. 3, Boccherini's Quintet op. 29 no. 6 and ended with Beethoven's Quintet op. 29.<sup>3</sup> This event was the first of many that Baillot was to organise in the years up to 1840. According to Belgian critic François-Joseph Fétis, Baillot's concerts lasted between two and a half and three hours (which seems reasonable given the programme), with an interval.<sup>4</sup> This challenging endeavour formed into a chamber music society known to Parisians, and not only, as *Séances de quatuors et de quintettes de Baillot*, which was the only one in Paris presenting chamber music exclusively until 1830, when the Bohrer brothers started up their own series, followed by the Tilmant brothers in 1833, Alard and Franchomme in 1837 and then many others.<sup>5</sup>

The success of Pierre Baillot's *séances* cannot be questioned; it would

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actual building where the concert was held. (*1851-1913: Comptoir National d'Escompte de Paris et Comptoir d'Escompte de Paris. La construction du Siège social 14 rue Bergère*, BNP Paribas online at [<http://banque.bnpparibas.com/fr/pid643/de-la-restauration--a-la-iiiie-r-epublique.html>]). It is also likely that the venue was the Salle de l'ancien Conservatoire, which is known today as the Salle du Conservatoire d'art dramatique. Today the Conservatoire d'art dramatique's only entrance is on 2bis rue du Conservatoire, which is on the corner with rue Bergère. In the nineteenth century, however, the Conservatoire had three entrances: on rue du Conservatoire, on rue du Faubourg Poissonnière and on rue Bergère. The building at 16 rue Bergère is situated only one door west of the junction with rue du Conservatoire; bearing in mind that there might have been a slight change in the street numbering since 1814, it is possible that 16 rue Bergère served as one of the entrances to the Conservatoire. Given Baillot's obvious ties with the Conservatoire, this seems a likely location for the first concert. Until that time, Baillot had regularly been invited to the salons of aristocrat amateur musicians, who often paid professional musicians to join them in their private chamber music making in order to enhance their performance and guide them. Baillot was therefore well connected with the aristocracy: judging from venues that were used by his society later on, which were often the residences of noble amateurs, another possibility would be that 16 rue Bergère belonged to one of his noble supporters. In 1811 the premises were inhabited by a person named Fesquet. (Jean de La Tynna, *Almanach du commerce de Paris, des départements de l'empire français et des principales villes du monde* (Paris, 1811), p. 373). His name is listed as a non-merchant, so belonging to the bourgeoisie is indeed a possibility, although we cannot be sure whether he was still residing there on 12 December 1814.

<sup>3</sup> Joël-Marie Fauquet, *Les Sociétés de musique de chambre à Paris de la Restauration à 1870* (Paris, 1986), pp. 293 and 335-344.

<sup>4</sup> François-Joseph Fétis, *Revue musicale*, vol. 5 (1829), p. 181.

<sup>5</sup> *Séances de Quatuors des Frères Bohrer (1830-1831); Séances de Quatuors des Frères Tilmant (1833-1849); Société Alard et Franchomme (1837-1847)*. Fauquet, *Les Sociétés de musique de chambre à Paris*, pp. 41-115.

suffice to say that by 1830 he had to move his concerts to a much larger venue, the Hôtel de Ville, which seated seven hundred, to accommodate the ever-growing audience.<sup>6</sup> And it seems that this success was attributed largely, if not solely, to the series' inspirer. Fétis confirms in the *Revue musicale*:

[...] Baillot suffit pour perpétuer, parmi les vrais amateurs, le gout des belles choses. [...] personne n'a cette âme, ce feu, cet accent, cette variété qui tiennent du prodige. [...] on songe que son influence s'étend non-seulement sur ses accompagnateurs, dont il agrandit le talent, mais sur tout son auditoire, dont il excite la sensibilité au plus haut degré, on doit convenir que ce sont là des facultés bien rares, ou plutôt uniques.<sup>7</sup>

Fétis's reference to beautiful things, to genius, to a soul that influences others and to a most elevated sensibility, demonstrates values which will accompany us throughout this dissertation, and which will become *leitmotifs* in our journey to discover the extent of Pierre Baillot's achievement in post-Revolutionary Paris. But first, one must establish the reason why this chamber music series, which otherwise sounds most normal to our modern-day ears, was indeed seen as unique and unprecedented. It would be helpful to take a look at the type of music society concert audiences were accustomed to at the time. On 8 January 1797, for example, the concert programme at the Théâtre Feydeau – a popular venue that was established in 1791 – consisted of a symphony by Haydn, a violin concerto by Viotti, an aria by Mengozzi, a piano concerto by Viotti, an excerpt from Cimarosa's *Le Sacrifice d'Abraham*, the overture of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide*, Devienne's *Sinfonia Concertante* and Mengozzi's

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<sup>6</sup> 'In 1830 the violinist Pierre Baillot moved his regular performances of trios, quartets, and quintets – performances he had held steadfastly since 1814 – to the great hall of the Hôtel de Ville to accommodate their surge in popularity. The hall seated seven hundred'. James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris* (Berkeley, 1995), p. 264.

<sup>7</sup> '[...] Baillot is enough to perpetuate among true amateurs, the taste for beautiful things. [...] no one has that soul, that fire, that accent, that variety, all of which verge on a miracle. [...] we think that his influence extends not only to those accompanying him, whose talent he expands, but to all of his audience, whose sensibility he excites to the highest degree; one must agree that these qualities are very rare, or rather unique'. Fétis, *Revue musicale*, vol. 2 (1828), pp. 607-8.

*Air Savoyard*.<sup>8</sup> This eclectic programme did not differ drastically from any other in concert societies in Paris at the time; concerts adhered to the same standard programme, alternating a selection of symphonic excerpts, concertos and excerpts from operas. The concept of an entirely vocal or an entirely instrumental recital was still unknown and variety in programmes existed to avoid monotony and to ensure the audience's attention, given the absence of stage effects in a world that was flooded by opera. This variety in genre was arguably an important substance for concert-goers: a journalist in 1803 tells us that a concert consisting entirely of vocal works might just have been tolerated if there were artful variety, but if only symphonies or concertos were heard, such uniformity would create 'total boredom', while another goes as far as to plead to 'banish from concerts all that is sad, mournful or pathetic, and all sentimental pieces'.<sup>9</sup>

However, apart from public concerts which displayed a diverse programme, there existed many societies in Paris at the time, such as the Lycée des Arts, whose function was not exclusively musical, as they advanced scientific and literary interests and also organised conferences and exhibits. This might allow us to take the idea of monotony a step further and assume that members of such societies needed more than just music to satisfy their need to entertainment. Baillot himself confirmed these circumstances of variety:

[...] la maladie va toujours son train. La musicoragicomanie fait des ravages. [...] Il n'est pas un cercle qui ne soit devenu un concert, toutes les tables sont des pianos, les femmes des musiciennes, les hommes de petits Garat. [...] Dans l'espace d'un quart d'heure, on a chanté trois opéras de Gluck, on a parcouru quelques finales italiens, on a joué des ponts-neufs, des pots-pourris, des romances et une grande sonate de Steibelt. Rien de médiocre, rien de mauvais. Tout charmant, parfait,

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<sup>8</sup> Jean Mongrédien, *French Music from the Enlightenment to Romanticism 1789-1830*, trans. Sylvain Frémaux (Portland, 1996), p. 210.

<sup>9</sup> *Correspondance des professeurs et amateurs de musique* (15 January 1803); *Journal de l'Empire* (4 April 1812), in Mongrédien, *French Music*, p. 207.





Jean-Baptiste Singry, *Pierre Baillot* (1815), Bibliothèque nationale de France

délicieux, sublime. Quand les voix sont un peu fatiguées, on attaque le quatuor.<sup>10</sup>

Despite Baillot's disapproving tone, there is, of course a positive side to this, as it seems that the Revolution had not halted concerts in the capital; to the contrary, it appears that music was everywhere. But another element of versatility recorded at this Théâtre Feydeau concert is the multinational status of the composers whose works were performed that evening: German and Italian, as well as French. After all, emigration had allowed the French nobility to explore the German cultural scene, and generally familiarise themselves with what was being performed outside Paris. At the same time, there was an ever-increasing presence of German artists in Paris, which inevitably had an effect on concert programmes. But in spite of this expansion of purview and in the midst of a tradition that survived solely on the basis of its audience's distraction (with music concerts parading regular alternations of genre, instrumentation and composer to that same end), Baillot's concerts provided a complete contrast: the composers were unvarying (Beethoven, Boccherini, Haydn, Mozart, Baillot's own works, and those of Onslow in the 1830s), the instrumentation stayed within the string quartet and quintet genres, and the entire concert consisted of multi-movement works.

It might seem that Baillot was inventing a new need for such an innovative type of concert, given the sudden appearance of the *séances* in the French capital. In truth, however, the need had shaped itself over a certain period of time.

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<sup>10</sup> '[...] the disease still takes its course. Musicoragicomania wreaks havoc. [...] There is no club that has not become a concert, all tables have become pianos, women have become musicians, men little Garat. [...] Within a quarter of an hour we have sung three operas by Gluck, we have gone through some Italian finales, we have played pont-neufs, potpourris, romances and a great sonata by Steibelt. Nothing mediocre, nothing bad. All lovely, perfect, delicious, sublime. When the voices get a bit tired, we attack the quartet'. Brigitte François-Sappey, 'Pierre Marie François de Sales Baillot (1771–1842) par lui-même: étude de sociologie musicale', *Recherches sur la musique française classique*, vol. 18 (1978), p. 202.

Chamber music had been dominating private salon concerts for decades, with amateurs devoting themselves to string quartets on an everyday basis. Baillot witnessed this first hand, as he was often invited, at a fee, to lead their ensembles. Despite the fact that the style of the *quatuor brillant*, with its virtuosic first-violin part, allowed for such an interaction between professionals and amateurs, the level of performance was often mediocre, as we will see in accounts later on. Therefore, a desire, by performers of Baillot's calibre, for performance at a higher level, presented itself quite desperately. Baillot first attempted the musical, and indeed social, experiment of a concert exclusively featuring chamber music during his stay in Moscow, 1805-1808. The definite support he received from the aristocracy and the unquestionable success of the sixteen concerts he organised there surely encouraged him to go ahead with a similar project in Paris a few years after his return. But there was a further factor that influenced this need for high-quality chamber music performance: only a matter of weeks after the first of Baillot's *séances*, the *exercices*, the student concerts at the Conservatoire, came to a sudden halt as the Conservatoire had to be temporarily closed, owing to the political turmoil troubling the capital.<sup>11</sup> The level of performance at the *exercices* was reportedly quite high, with Conservatoire professors taking part alongside students, and this was indeed serious concert tradition in the making, combined with much-needed institutional support. As James Johnson notes, 'The audience of the Exercices came to listen. Was it the silence of proud parents? The press read it as a tribute to the quality of playing'.<sup>12</sup> The abrupt termination of the popular, and indeed profitable, series created a gap in musical life, and although it is argued that they provided a solid foundation for the

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<sup>11</sup> See Constant Pierre, *B. Sarette et les origines du Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation* (Paris, 1895), pp. 155-60.

<sup>12</sup> Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, p. 203.

Société des concerts du Conservatoire, which we will examine in a later chapter, these were not founded until 1828, making Baillot's *séances* the only outlet for performance excellence of instrumental music at the time. He, too, boasted the benefit of institutionally-organised concerts, along with a significant network of supporters, who we will discover in due course.

### Winning over the right audience: Baillot's subscribers

Setting an agenda for 'serious' music in a wholly new fashion, as it seemed, would not have been a simple task to achieve under the circumstances, especially since the success of the series was to be decided by the audience. In reviews of Baillot's concerts or announcements of his upcoming events, Fétis repeatedly emphasised that those were intended for 'des vrais amateurs'.<sup>13</sup> This was perhaps an intelligent way to reduce the numbers of disappointed audience members, who might have not been able to appreciate what Baillot had to offer. Those who did attend, however, were 'dans un délire continuel', according to Fétis,<sup>14</sup> as he was in awe of 'ces soirées [...] où la perfection, qu'on ne trouve nulle part, semble s'être réfugiée'.<sup>15</sup> And this was a result of no other but Baillot's tremendous talent: 'un seul homme a le secret de parler passionnément sur le violon, et de faire de la musique un art sublime: cet homme est M. Baillot'.<sup>16</sup> It certainly seems like the 'vrais amateurs' were in for a

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<sup>13</sup> See Fétis, *Revue musicale*, vol. 1 (1827), p. 96 and vol. 2 (1828), p. 607.

<sup>14</sup> '[...] in constant delirium', Fétis, *Revue musicale*, vol. 5 (1829), p. 181.

<sup>15</sup> '[...] these soirées, where perfection, which we find nowhere, seems to have found refuge'. Fétis, *Revue musicale*, vol. 5 (1829), p. 104.

<sup>16</sup> '[...] one single man has the secret of speaking passionately on the violin, and to make of music a sublime art. That man is Mr Baillot'. Fétis, *Revue musicale*, vol. 5 (1829), p. 181. Baron de Trémont, a representative figure of the time, also stated: 'I beg the public's pardon – but Baillot was a talent beyond its comprehension. A crowd assembled at a concert to hear a solo instrument is open to impression by hardly more than two disparate qualities – difficulty and grace.[...] Baillot is one of the greatest violinists who ever lived, as Chopin is one of the greatest pianists'. Jacques-Gabriel Prod'homme, 'The Baron de Trémont: Souvenirs of Beethoven and Other Contemporaries', *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 6, no. 3 (July 1920), p. 373.

real treat, especially as Fétis argued chamber music was indeed Baillot's *forte*: 'dans le concerto, dans le solo, M. Baillot est un grand artiste: dans la musique de chambre il est inimitable'.<sup>17</sup>

We are quick to notice Fétis's firm support of Baillot, which, coming from one of the most influential music writers of the time, undoubtedly helped in advancing Baillot's *séances* project tremendously. Such was Fétis's persistent promotion of Baillot's activities that one might even wonder whether there was an ulterior motive to the numerous recurrent eulogies found in the *Revue musicale*. However, a brief look at Fétis's life and beliefs proves enough to explain his fondness towards Baillot's ideals and musical endeavours. Only about a decade his junior, Fétis studied at the Conservatoire from 1800 onwards and became professor there in 1821. His Conservatoire education enhanced his interest in early music and music theory, resulting in instrumental compositions that were classically inspired and somewhat conservative in form.<sup>18</sup> But this fascination with the musical past later also triggered a reaction against a good part of the music of his time, namely against the compositions of Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner.<sup>19</sup> Fétis's immersion in the past also gave birth to his *Concerts historiques* in 1832, a series of lecture recitals centred on specific themes, such as the history of opera or sixteenth-century music, which, as we will see in a later chapter, trace their inspiration from Baillot's arguably educational *séances*, which ultimately offered the listener a genealogy of instrumental music. The two men shared a strong connection with the past and came from a generation and an institutional background that valued the *beau idéal* and

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<sup>17</sup> 'In the concerto, in solo, Mr Baillot is a great artist: in chamber music he is unmatched'. Fétis, *Revue musicale*, vol. 1 (1827), p. 38.

<sup>18</sup> See also Daniel Fryklund, *Contribution à la connaissance de la correspondance de Fétis* (Stockholm, 1930), and Katharine Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-century France: La revue et gazette musicale de Paris, 1834-80* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 33-6 and 61.

<sup>19</sup> See also Katharine Ellis, 'François-Joseph Fétis', *Grove Music Online*.

embraced the philosophy of the *juste milieu*, which inevitably brought their musical ventures very close together.<sup>20</sup> Fétis was one of the most important figures that formed the strong support network that surrounded Baillot – a network whose main characters we will progressively discover throughout this dissertation. His continuous backing of the *séances* was instrumental to the success of the series, as it ensured that their reputation reached beyond France, to the musical audiences of neighbouring countries, but also that Parisians were constantly updated of upcoming events and were encouraged to attend.

But who were those who had the opportunity, or indeed the honour, to listen to Baillot and his colleagues? Concert goers paid a fee of six francs per concert; the costly ticket meant that the audience consisted mostly of the aristocracy and the haute bourgeoisie, a fact which Johnson confirms: ‘judging from subscription lists, the upper middle class dominated’.<sup>21</sup> The society’s season confirms this too: concerts took place in winter and spring, after which the noblesse left Paris for their country houses.<sup>22</sup> William Weber presents a reasonable argument in order to justify the presence of the bourgeoisie, and not just of the aristocracy: concerts started later and later, which shows that there were members of the audience who spent their day in the pursuit of business or other professional duties, rather than at leisure, as aristocrats would usually do.<sup>23</sup>

But should one still clearly separate the two classes at this point in time?

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<sup>20</sup> See also François Lesure, ‘L’affaire Fétis’, *Revue belge de musicologie*, vol. 28-30 (1974-1976), pp. 214-21.

<sup>21</sup> Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, p. 204.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Elles [les séances] ont lieu pendant l’hiver, et peuvent s’étaler jusqu’au printemps, c’est-à-dire jusqu’au moment où l’aristocratie quitte la capitale pour la campagne’. ‘The séances take place during winter, and can go up to spring, until the moment that the aristocracy abandons the capital for the countryside’. Fauquet, *Les Sociétés de musique de chambre à Paris*, p. 48.

<sup>23</sup> William Weber, *Music and the middle class. The Social Structure of concert life in London, Paris and Vienna between 1830 and 1848* (London, 1975), pp. 27-34.

During the course of the eighteenth century the bourgeoisie had grown both in numbers and in wealth and the term ‘bourgeois’ was associated with an economically active and independent commoner. In essence, it was a convenient way to describe the commoners who were neither labourers nor peasants. At the same time, the nobility was rather large in numbers, and very diverse, a situation that occurred during Louis XIV’s lengthy reign. But as Timothy Blanning argues, ‘there can be no doubt that a Frenchman of the eighteenth century could tell without difficulty whether such and such a person belonged to the aristocracy or stemmed from the bourgeoisie’.<sup>24</sup> In the nineteenth century, however, it becomes more difficult to distinguish between the two classes, perhaps because from the end of the eighteenth century the concepts of honour and worthiness (which until then had defined what was unique about the nobility) were overtaken by personal merit and a middle class value, or perhaps because the bourgeois did not fight the nobles, but, on the contrary, attempted to join them in their lifestyle. Given that the chief characteristic of the bourgeoisie was wealth, this must have been fairly easy to achieve.<sup>25</sup> The end result was a new broader social layer of the nineteenth century which incorporated eighteenth-century bourgeois and nobles, who peacefully coexisted, especially in artistic circles, such as Baillot’s *séances*.

Although we do not seek to separate bourgeoisie and nobility, there is an important part of the nobles’ lifestyle that stands out and ultimately explains Baillot’s success: private salon music-making. Amateur aristocrats regularly performed chamber music in a domestic setting and formed numerous chamber groups in the

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<sup>24</sup> Blanning, *The French Revolution*, p. 16. See also Pamela M. Pilbeam, *Republicanism in Nineteenth-century France, 1814-1871* (London, 1995).

<sup>25</sup> See also Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century: from Feudism to Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1985) and Albert Soboul, ‘Classes and Class Struggles during the French Revolution’, *Science and Society*, vol. xvii (1953).

capital. Their enthusiasm and dedication played a vital role in the rise of instrumental music and the fact that this was not their profession demonstrated not only their wealth, but predominantly their devotion and genuine interest in music. This, in turn, made chamber music a hobby of the wealthy and hence involved many members of the aristocracy, as their affluence meant that they could afford to spend their time making music. Such groups of amateurs often hired a professional musician to perform among them and essentially to guide them. One of those professional artists who assisted amateurs in their musical endeavours was Pierre Baillot. We shall soon discover how this relationship proved crucial for the future of public concert series, but first we shall take a closer look at the use of the term *amateur*.

In the early nineteenth century the word becomes associated in music with an individual who participates in music-making without it becoming his profession: out of love for music and for his own pleasure.<sup>26</sup> There is no reference to musical proficiency in this definition; Rémy Campos confirms that in the early nineteenth century there was no negative suggestion in the word as we use it today.<sup>27</sup> However, we are led to believe that the involvement of amateurs in chamber music lowered the quality of performances.<sup>28</sup> First, one wonders whether they were

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<sup>26</sup> 'Amateur - On nomme ainsi celui qui, sans être musicien de profession, fait sa partie dans un concert pour son plaisir et par amour pour la musique'. 'Amateur – we name thus those who, without being musician by profession, take part in a concert for their pleasure and by love for music'. Marie et Léon Escudier, *Dictionnaire de musique théorique et historique* (5e édition) (Paris, 1872), p. 40.

<sup>27</sup> 'Le mot n'a pas au XIXe siècle les connotations péjoratives qu'on lui connaît aujourd'hui. La frontière entre ceux qui ne font pas de la musique leur métier et les artistes proprement dit n'était alors pas aussi nette'. 'The word in the nineteenth century does not have the negative connotations that we assign to it today. The barrier between those who do not make music their profession and proper artists was therefore not as clear'. Rémy Campos, *Dictionnaire de la musique en France au XIXe siècle*, ed. Joël-Marie Fauquet (Paris, 2003), p.38.

<sup>28</sup> A difference less obvious than the terms *amateur* and *artiste* in France at the time is that of *amateur* and *dilettante*. Quite a few documents mention that the word *amateur* was translated from the Italian word *dilettante* ('Ce mot est traduit de l'italien *dilletante*'. Marie et Léon Escudier, *Dictionnaire de musique*, p. 40), yet in chamber music societies we come across both terms. The term *dilettante* comes with a suggestion of pretentiousness and implies a man of the salons who is



musically educated. As part of the revolutionary ideal of equality, all individuals had the right to enrol at the Paris Conservatoire, although it is not clear how many of the students there became professional musicians. This rule did not last long, as an entrance examination was introduced to test the abilities of future students, who were going to train to become masters of several musical disciplines, in combination with strict age limits. By 1800 students who were beginners were still accepted on the condition that they were young,<sup>29</sup> while in 1808 such applicants were ruled out altogether.<sup>30</sup> We therefore encounter a swift change in education rules: from the revolutionary principles of equal educational opportunities for all citizens – regardless of age, sex, social class or abilities – to a more realistic (yet with the risk of becoming newly elitist) approach that aimed at forming capable professional musicians.

This change did not occur without a reason: as the chamber music repertoire was becoming increasingly demanding during the first decades of the nineteenth century, the gap widened between the contemporary repertoire and amateurs' performing abilities. Prosper Seligmann presents an anecdote confirming exactly how much of a struggle it was for amateurs to simply play together. He describes a *soirée* of a provincial amateur string quartet whose violist was playing on a cracked instrument and before starting a Beethoven quartet had warned the others that, as he was ill, he was obliged to slow down the movements:

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sometimes separated from the genuine musical atmosphere and who is not necessarily drawn by sincere passion for music. It is rather a man of good taste than an individual who has made a conscious choice to be involved in the musical world, and his character appears somewhat dogmatic and prejudiced towards his favourite subjects.

<sup>29</sup> Bernard Sarette, *Organisation du Conservatoire de musique*, titre II, article 3, in *Musical Education in Europe (1770-1914)*, ed. Michael Fend and Michael Noiray (Berlin, 2005), vol. 1, p. 92.

<sup>30</sup> 'Les aspirants [...] qui n'ont point de notions suffisantes de musique sont formellement exclus'. 'The candidates who do not possess the sufficient knowledge of music are formally excluded'. Bernard Sarette, *Organisation du Conservatoire de musique*, Règlement, 14 Octobre 1808, chapitre III, art. 17.

Mais cela ne fait rien, avait-il ajouté, tâchons seulement de commencer ensemble, ensuite chacun fera son petit bonhomme de chemin comme il pourra; mais le premier qui arrivera au point d'orgue attendra les autres'. Je ne voulus pas contrarier ce pauvre malade et je l'attendis même assez longtemps au rendez-vous du point d'orgue. Celui qui jouait le second violon arriva un peu après moi; mais le violoncelle fit le mutin, ne voulut pas attendre, il finit le quatuor un bon moment avant nous. Après l'exécution de ce quatuor, il fut convenu d'un commun accord que Beethoven avait du bon, et qu'on l'avait mieux compris que les autres fois.<sup>31</sup>

As time went by, dictionaries in the middle of the nineteenth century started painting the status of the musical amateur (whose image devalued by increasing professional pursuit of virtuosity and specialisation) the way we know it today. The distinction between amateurs and professionals became more obvious by the end of the 1820s. The publication of the *Dictionnaire des musiciens, artistes et amateurs, morts ou vivants* in 1817 is certainly testimony to this, if only by its title.<sup>32</sup> By the middle of the century this differentiation had progressed even further; in the 1856 edition of the *Dictionnaire national ou Dictionnaire universel de la langue française* by Louis-Nicolas Bescherelle (1802-1883) we read that the word *amateur* has a negative meaning when mentioned between artists and the author goes on to give an example of the word in the sentence 'be wary of amateurs' concerts'.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Pierre Larousse (1817-1875) in his publication of 1866-1877 includes the example 'he is

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<sup>31</sup> "But that does not matter, he added, let's just try to start together, then each will make his merry way as he can; but the first that arrives at the fermata shall wait for the others". I did not want to upset the poor sick guy and I even waited a rather long time at the fermata. The one who played second violin arrived a little after me but the cello was mischievous, did not wish to wait, and ended the quartet a little while before us. After the execution of this quartet, it was decided by mutual agreement that Beethoven was good, and that we had understood him better than other times'. Prosper Seligmann, 'Le premier concert', *Feuilletons*, p. 15, in Fauquet, *Les Sociétés de musique de chambre à Paris*, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> Alexandre Choron and François Fayolle, *Dictionnaire des musiciens, artistes et amateurs, morts ou vivants* (Paris, 1817).

<sup>33</sup> 'Se prend en mauvaise part, parmi les artistes. Se méfier des concerts d'amateurs'. Louis-Nicolas Bescherelle, *Dictionnaire national ou Dictionnaire universel de la langue française* (Paris, 1856), vol. 1, p. 160.

not an artist, he is only an amateur'.<sup>34</sup> Therefore a clear distinction between an amateur and an artist is in place – the artist being admirable for his skill, his talent and even his lifestyle, while the amateur was a man of mediocre talent,<sup>35</sup> who was often mocked by professional musicians.<sup>36</sup>

Consequently, with a rising disparity between professionals and amateurs, a repertoire that was proving harder to tackle, and a society that was keen on attending concerts led by estimable virtuosos, Fauquet's statement that by 1830 amateur musicians in Paris stopped performing and started paying the society concert fee to listen to professional musicians,<sup>37</sup> may indeed be true. Baillot's aristocratic contacts were plenty, mostly owing to his activity in their private salon circles. As a result, not only did Baillot count on them for providing the venue (as his *séances* often took place at the very salons where he was hired to play with his amateur companions), but they were to become his audience, paying the entrance fee to admire Baillot's and his colleagues' artistry.

With an audience that did not only enjoy listening to chamber music, but had experience in performing it too (no matter how well), Baillot had the additional benefit of knowledgeable listeners, to some extent. He did not stop there however; he

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<sup>34</sup> 'Il n'est pas artiste, il n'est qu'amateur'; Pierre Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle : français, historique, géographique, mythologique, bibliographique* (Paris, 1866-1877), vol. 1, p. 248.

<sup>35</sup> 'En mauvaise part: "C'est un amateur, c'est un homme d'un talent médiocre"'. Émile Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Paris, 1873-1874), vol. 1, p. 123.

<sup>36</sup> 'Vaniteux, pétri d'un amour-propre, pour qui Beethoven est un demi-dieu a ses yeux parce qu'il ne le comprend pas et ne le comprendra jamais', P.D., 'L'amateur de musique de petite ville', *La France musicale*, vol. 29 (19 July 1840), p. 273. Baillot even wrote about how a note that was out of tune constituted a shock: 'un ton faux me choque l'oreille parce qu'il détruit l'ordre établi par la Nature dans le corps sonore, ou du moins celui qu'on nous a habitué y distinguer; il est plus sensible pour l'oreille dont l'organisation est plus parfaite, moins ordinaire'. *Revue de musicologie*, vol. 22, no. 2, (July 1943), p. 17.

<sup>37</sup> 'Ils cesseront de jouer et paieront pour aller écouter. En 1828, Fétis confirme ce qu'a constaté Trémont: il n'y a plus à Paris que deux ou trois foyers d'amateurs, alors qu'il en existait quarante au début du siècle'. 'They stopped playing and paid to listen. In 1828, Fétis confirms what Trémont had noted: there were no more than two or three clubs of amateurs in Paris, whereas there existed forty at the beginning of the century'. Fauquet, *Les Sociétés de musique de chambre à Paris*, p. 22.

continued their musical education by presenting a palette of composers who each possessed their own musical colour. Thanks to Baillot's work, audiences in Paris were increasingly interested in issues of interpretation, as Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny (1762-1842) reports:

*L'allegro, l'adagio, le presto n'ont pas seulement leur caractère déterminé et leur expression propre, mais chacun de ces morceaux, selon qu'il appartient à Corelli, à Geminiani, à Tartini, à Handel, à Boccherini, à Haydn, à Mozart, à Beethoven, ou à M. Baillot lui-même, prend une teinte chronologique et une couleur différente qui semblent en nommer l'auteur et en indiquer la date. Nul ne possède d'un plus haut degré que M. Baillot, l'art de se plier à tous les styles, de deviner les intentions, de rendre les gradations et de saisir toutes les nuances. La nature l'avoit plus disposé à rendre les grands sentimens que ce qui n'est que naïf ou gracieux; mais quoique l'énergie et la noblesse de son âme entraînent M. Baillot vers le sévère et le sublime, et dans le domaine de la tristesse plutôt que dans celui de la gaieté.*<sup>38</sup>

Along with achieving a new level of audience engagement, Baillot brought about an increased professionalism in musical performance. The fact that he was able to pay his chamber partners from ticket sales meant that he could invite professional musicians to perform alongside him. This, in turn, advanced relations between amateurs (Baillot's audience) and professional artists, who, although did not share the same social status, began a journey of close interaction, exploring new musical projects together. Professional musicians were praised for their artistry by the *haute société* audience (a good share of which was amateur musicians who could only

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<sup>38</sup> The *allegro*, the *adagio*, the *presto* do not only have their determined character and their own expression, but each piece, whether it belongs to Corelli, Geminiani, Tartini, Handel, Boccherini, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, or Mr. Baillot himself, takes a chronological hue and a different colour that seem to name the author and indicate the date. No one possesses to a greater degree than Mr Baillot the art of complying with all styles, of guessing the intentions, of rendering gradations and capturing all the nuances. Nature has made him more able to render great feelings rather than that which is simply naive or graceful; although the energy and the nobility of his soul lead Mr Baillot to the severe and the sublime, and to the field of sadness rather than that of cheerfulness'. Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny, 'Soirées musicales', *Encyclopédie méthodique. Musique*, ed. Frammery, Ginguené, de Momigny (Paris, 1818), vol. 2, p. 374.

dream of their expertise), immediately gaining their approval and subsequently a place among them in social circles.

Momigny's striking words prophesy several topics explored in the following chapters: first, how Baillot chose his programmes and what he achieved through them; second, his exceptional qualities as a violinist, to the point that we shall question whether he should indeed be seen as comparable to Paganini, in any feasible way; and third, Baillot's profound musical ideals, which, although firmly tied to Classicism, hint at novel ventures and beliefs.

#### Collaborations and inspiration: Russia and Vienna

Pierre Baillot's series displayed regularity and consistency – features necessary for the success of such establishments. However, as is often the case with such enterprises, Baillot was not unassisted; one should consider two significant figures, who contributed to Baillot's accomplishment. First, fellow Parisian violinist Pierre Rode was close to Baillot in various ways: they both learnt with Viotti, they later taught at the Conservatoire and collaborated in numerous concerts in Paris. In 1800 Rode joined Napoleon's private band as a solo violinist, and in 1803 he became a member of the Emperor Alexander's court orchestra in Russia.<sup>39</sup> Following in his footsteps, Baillot joined Napoleon's private orchestra in 1802 and then relocated to Russia in 1805, a move that was to prove crucial to the realisation of his chamber music series in December 1814. Baillot stayed in Moscow until 1808 and, during that time, he organised sixteen chamber music concerts there, which were supported by approximately two hundred members of the aristocracy. However, he quickly felt nostalgic of his country and his family and refused prestigious positions in order to

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<sup>39</sup> Georges Foucher, *Treatise on the History and Construction of the Violin* (London, 1897), p. 57.

return to Paris.<sup>40</sup> It is reasonable to assume that since the Russian aristocracy gave him its dedicated support, secured him an income and helped make his series increasingly popular in Moscow, he would have nothing to lose from applying the already-tested formula in Paris. The concerts in Paris, in spite of the financial risks, were therefore hardly an experiment. They did not begin until 1814 – six years after his return from Russia – most probably because of Baillot's financial difficulties, which he describes in one of his letters in 1810:

J'avais, en revenant de mes voyages, des espérances d'améliorer mon sort dans la carrière musicale, aucune ne s'est réalisée, aucune des promesses que l'on m'avait faites n'ont eu leur effet et les ressources que m'offre en ce moment la musique étant absolument insuffisantes pour soutenir ma famille devenue plus nombreuse, j'ai pensé qu'il était de mon devoir de lui assurer une existence que je puis espérer de lui procurer en rentrant dans une carrière vers laquelle j'avais dirigé mes premières études et où j'ai exercé un emploi pendant 17 ans, savoir 7 ans dans une Intendance et 10 ans aux Domaines Nationaux.<sup>41</sup>

Another influence, or indeed an inspiration, for Baillot must have been the work of an eminent violinist of the time, based in Vienna: Ignaz Schuppanzigh (1776-1830). Even though Baillot and Schuppanzigh were active in different countries, there is a connection between their work in the quartet world, albeit one that is not immediately apparent. In 1804, Schuppanzigh, who was a close friend of Beethoven (some even claim he was his viola teacher), introduced the first series of public

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<sup>40</sup> '[...] pris du regret des siens et de son pays pendant ce long voyage, il avait dû refuser des offres avantageuses, notamment la succession de Rode à la Cour des Tsars, et son retour lui fut une délivrance'. [...]taken by homesickness of his family and his country during this long journey, he had had to refuse advantageous offers, including the succession of Rode at the Court of the Tsars, and his return was a relief'. Soccagne, 'Quelques documents inédits', p. 77.

<sup>41</sup> 'Upon return from my travels, I had hopes to improve my lot in my musical career, none of which came true; none of the promises that had been made to me have had their effect and the resources that music offers me at the moment being absolutely insufficient to support my family which has become more numerous, I thought it my duty to secure its existence, which I can hope to procure through a career towards which I had directed my first studies and in which I had been employed for 17 years, i.e. 7 years in Administration and 10 years in the National Domains'. Soccagne, 'Quelques documents inédits', p. 75.

chamber music concerts in Vienna.<sup>42</sup> Although his first concert certainly took place even before Baillot's own attempt in Moscow, Schuppanzigh's series seems less organised and, generally speaking, not as consistent as Baillot's in Paris, which also means that we are left with very little information on his concerts.<sup>43</sup> In 1808, Count Razumovsky instructed Schuppanzigh to assemble 'the finest string quartet in Europe', and so Schuppanzigh and his three colleagues received the hospitality and financial support of the Count, while enthusiastically promoting mostly Beethoven's works. In 1815 the Razumovsky Palace was destroyed in a fire and, after a farewell concert in Vienna in February 1816, Schuppanzigh went on tour to Germany and Poland before settling in St Petersburg, where he resided until 1824.<sup>44</sup>

However, one wonders how European artists, like Baillot and Schuppanzigh, were received in Russia at the time. Napoleon's dominant presence in Russia was not official before the invasion of 1812, yet with Russia's military defeats at Austerlitz in 1805 and in Friedland in 1807, Russia was made to sign the Treaty of Tilsit and to maintain peaceful relations with France from 1807 until 1812. During these years Russia was part of Napoleon's so-called Continental System.<sup>45</sup> Yet the first half of the nineteenth century was in general a period of friendly relations between France and Russia, especially between representatives of the arts and letters. The Revolution of 1789 resulted in a wave of emigration from France to

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<sup>42</sup> 'Ignaz Schuppanzigh', *Grove Music Online*.

<sup>43</sup> 'Unfortunately we know so few details of Schuppanzigh's activities during these years that no complete program of even a single one of Schuppanzigh's "Razumovsky concerts" has yet been found'. John M. Gingerich, 'Ignaz Schuppanzigh and Beethoven's Late Quartets', *The Musical Quarterly* (September 2010), p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> See also Donald W. MacArdle, Katherine Schultze, Ludwig van Beethoven, 'Five Unfamiliar Beethoven Letters', *The Musical Quarterly* (October 1951), pp. 490-500.

<sup>45</sup> See also Lee A. Farrow, 'Moscow, Retreat from 1812', *Encyclopedia of the Age of Imperialism, 1800-1914*, ed. Carl Cavanagh Hodge (Westport, 2008), pp. 492-3.

Russia, including many French nobles who settled there.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, the welcome that France offered to Russian political exiles strengthened its status as a country of revolution and liberty; travelling to France became connected with cultural and intellectual education for the Russians, and many intellectuals were often more fluent in French than in Russian. Pushkin, for example, initially only wrote in French and it was not until later that he started writing in Russian. Yury Lotman describes the French language as the bridge for the movement of ideas and cultural values from Europe to Russia at the time.<sup>47</sup> Hence the attitudes towards French culture in Russia provided a fertile environment for the activities of European musicians such as Baillot and Schuppanzigh.

Both Schuppanzigh and Baillot's fundamental innovation was to perform chamber music in public for a paying audience at a time when chamber music was still generally performed privately. One cannot be sure of who influenced whom in this process. With both virtuosos travelling extensively (interestingly, Baillot visited Vienna in 1805 on his way to Russia),<sup>48</sup> and with the musical worlds of different countries coming closer over time, one can only assume that Baillot heard of Schuppanzigh's series in Vienna and tried to create a similar chamber concert atmosphere while he was in Russia, although it is possible that he had already conceived the model of the chamber music society beforehand. By the time Schuppanzigh returned to Vienna in 1824, Baillot's series in Paris had been running for a decade and surely Baillot's experience must have provided some guidance for Schuppanzigh, who was now entering challenging territory: Beethoven was

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<sup>46</sup> Dmitry Shlapentokh, *The French Revolution in Russian intellectual life. 1865-1905* (Westport, 1996), pp. 105-7.

<sup>47</sup> Priscilla Meyer, *How the Russians Read the French. Lermontov, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy* (London, 2008), p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Boris Schwarz, *Great Masters of the Violin: from Corelli and Vivaldi to Stern, Zukerman and Perlman* (London, 1983), p. 165.



composing his late quartets and Schuppanzigh's ensemble was to perform them in the coming years, which meant that some concerts were not seen as successful by the audience.<sup>49</sup>

The third important music capital of the time, London, did not follow in Baillot's or Schuppanzigh's footsteps until much later, when in 1835 two quartet societies appeared. However, London was perhaps the most active in chamber music of all three cities, even before the founding of these quartet societies, as alternative paths existed. First, concerts at the Philharmonic often featured chamber works between orchestral pieces,<sup>50</sup> and second, the clear line that can be drawn between private and public chamber-music-making in Vienna and Paris at the time, does not seem to apply to London, where some events also functioned as private concerts.<sup>51</sup>

#### Baillot's legacy: virtually unknown?

Several violinists of Pierre Baillot's time survive today solely owing to their educational compositions and are thus best known among string players: Rodolphe Kreutzer's *Etudes*, Pierre Rode's *Caprices*, Jacques Féréol Mazas's *Etudes*, and Charles Dancla's numerous short pieces are still repeatedly performed by young violinists throughout Europe. Yet, even in this context, Baillot's name is seldom mentioned today. In terms of scholarly representation, researchers working on music in nineteenth-century Paris tend to concentrate their efforts on opera, and understandably so, given the extent, variety and importance of opera at the time.

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<sup>49</sup> Robert Adelson, 'Beethoven's String Quartet in E Flat Op. 127: A Study of the First Performances', *Music & Letters* (May, 1998), vol. 79, no. 2, p. 219-43.

<sup>50</sup> John Rink, 'The Profession of Music', *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth Century*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge, 2002), p. 74.

<sup>51</sup> Christina Bashford, *The Pursuit of High Culture: John Ella and Chamber Music in Victorian London* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 101-2. For an in-depth study of London concert customs in the years leading up to 1800, see Simon McVeigh, *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge, 1993).

However, the work of Mark Everist, Sarah Hibberd, Steven Huebner, Cormac Newark and Benjamin Walton, among others, provides us with a wealth of information on the musical language of the time and how the audience understood it, aesthetic values, social etiquette and audience customs.<sup>52</sup> The aforementioned academics also happen to be members of Francophone Music Criticism, 1789-1914, a project that unites the efforts of its members in preserving numerous collections of nineteenth-century sources and carrying on the discussion about the operatic stage and the concert hall.<sup>53</sup>

One of the most significant publications that deals with Baillot's *séances* specifically is Joël-Marie Fauquet's *Les sociétés de musique de chambre à Paris de la Restauration à 1870*, which examines just over twenty Parisian chamber music societies, but naturally starts out with Baillot's *séances*. With three out of six appendices dedicated entirely to details on the running of Baillot's society, including a list of complimentary tickets intended for friends and artists, full records of all concert programmes, and statistics on the most popular composers, Fauquet gives us access to an enormous amount of information, and has therefore understandably been one of the first points of reference while researching my thesis. In the rather short space of just under forty pages, Fauquet documents the Séances de quatuors et quintettes de Baillot as part of a chapter entitled *L'idéal classique*, giving details about the dates and frequency of the events, the performers, halls, a brief programme

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<sup>52</sup> See Mark Everist, *Giacomo Meyerbeer and Music Drama in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Aldershot, 2005); Mark Everist, *Music Drama at the Paris Opéra, 1824-1828* (Berkeley, 2002); Sarah Hibberd, *French Grand Opera and the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, 2009); Steven Huebner, 'Opera and Ballet after the Revolution', *The Cambridge Companion to French Music*, ed. Simon Trezise (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 221-41; Steven Huebner, 'Opera Audiences in Paris, 1830-1870', *Music and Letters*, vol. 70, no. 2 (May 1989), pp. 206-25; Cormac Newark, *Opera in the Novel from Balzac to Proust* (Cambridge, 2011); Benjamin Walton, *Rossini in Restoration Paris. The Sound of Modern Life* (Cambridge, 2011).

<sup>53</sup> For more information on Francophone Music Criticism see their website, at [<http://music.sas.ac.uk/fmc/>].

philosophy, the level of performance, the audience, complimentary tickets, subscribers, as well as a surprisingly comprehensive report on Baillot's accounts (expenses, hall hire, payment of performers, lighting and printing costs, followed by some impressive mathematical equations, tables and a chart).<sup>54</sup> As a result, and in the absence of any significant discussion on music, even though it is readily available, this seems more a sociological rather than a musical study. The distinct systematic tone of the first half of the book (the second being a series of appendices) makes it ideal for reference, but at times might appear off-putting to read. But it is precisely the amount of factual information that makes Fauquet's publication almost a gift to the present-day researcher, as the sense of the larger trends and their connotations are almost ignored, leaving things open to interpretation.<sup>55</sup>

Jeffrey Cooper's *The Rise of Instrumental Music and Concert Series in Paris, 1828-1871*,<sup>56</sup> published three years prior to Fauquet's book, does not concentrate on chamber music exclusively and, given that the period it focuses on starts fourteen years after Baillot's first *séanse*, it naturally does not give Baillot's innovation the attention it deserves, since the first years of the establishment are omitted. Yet Cooper takes on the task of proving wrong the views of Berlioz and Saint-Saëns that there was nothing significant taking place in the world of French instrumental music at the time, and succeeds in giving his reader a good view of

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<sup>54</sup> Fauquet, *Sociétés de musique de chambre à Paris*, p. 41-79.

<sup>55</sup> See also Edward Blakeman, 'Review. *Les sociétés de musique de chambre à Paris de la Restauration à 1870*. By Joël-Marie Fauquet', *Music and Letters*, vol. 68, no. 4 (October 1987), pp. 374-5; Matthias Brzoska, 'Review. Joël-Marie Fauquet: *Les sociétés de musique de chambre à Paris de la Restauration à 1870*. Paris: Aux Amateurs de livres (1986)', *Die Musikforschung*, vol. 44, no. 4 (October-December 1991), pp. 379-80; Ralph P. Locke, 'Review. Joel-Marie Fauquet. *Les sociétés de musique de chambre à Paris de la Restauration à 1870*. Paris: Aux amateurs de livres, 1986', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 43, no. 3 (Autumn 1990), pp. 504-12.

<sup>56</sup> Jeffrey Cooper, *The Rise of Instrumental Music and Concert Series in Paris, 1828-1871* (Ann Arbor, 1983).

some otherwise concealed or neglected Parisian musical secrets.<sup>57</sup> What Cooper and Fauquet have in common is the fact that their work firmly paves the road for further research. In *French Instrumental Music between the Revolutions, 1789-1830*, by violinist and musicologist Boris Schwarz, we quickly discover a narrative that leans towards the performer's point of view, rather than that of a sociologist or a historian.<sup>58</sup> Schwarz does not have much to contribute in terms of primary sources, compared to Fauquet and Cooper. Furthermore, the fact that this is a book that originates from a PhD dissertation written over thirty years before its publication, with minor changes or additions in between, adds to its secondary role in advancing current research.<sup>59</sup>

A publication that has assisted my understanding of concert life in relation to social change is William Weber's *Music and the Middle Class*, which might only cover the period of the July Monarchy (1830-1848), yet provides us with a consistent study of the growth of concerts and their audiences, the social impact of concert life, as well as a social-class description of subscribers and voluntary concert organisations for London, Vienna and Paris. In other words, Weber does not aim to offer a discussion of music, musicians or the newly established professional musician *per se*, but uses them as a means to identify the social groups that made up the audiences, as concert life gradually emerged into its modern structure.<sup>60</sup> Also

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<sup>57</sup> See also Allan B. Ho, 'Review. The Rise of Instrumental Music and Concert Series in Paris, 1828-1871. By Jeffrey Cooper', *Notes*, Second Series, vol. 40, no. 4 (June 1984), pp. 779-81.

<sup>58</sup> Boris Schwarz, *French Instrumental Music between the Revolutions, 1789-1830* (New York, 1987).

<sup>59</sup> See also Hans-Jürgen Rydzyk, 'Review. Boris Schwarz: *French Instrumental Music between the Revolutions (1789-1830)*', *Die Musikforschung*, vol. 41, no. 3 (July-September 1988), pp. 270-1; Jean Gribenski, 'Review. Jean Mongrédien. *La musique en France des Lumières au Romantisme, 1789-1830*'. Boris Schwarz, *French Instrumental Music between the Revolutions (1789-1830)*', *Revue de Musicologie*, vol. 74, no. 1 (1988), pp. 114-7.

<sup>60</sup> See Leon Botstein, 'Review. Music and the Middle Class: The Social Structure of Concert Life in London, Paris and Vienna. By William Weber', *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 49, no. 4 (December 1977), pp. 681-3; Priscilla P. Clark, 'Review', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 85, no. 5 (March 1980), pp. 1297-9; Vernon Lidtke, 'Review', *International Labor and Working-Class History*,

productive, but neither specific to Baillot's work nor to chamber music in Paris, is James H. Johnson's *Listening in Paris*, probably the most influential recent study of Parisian musical culture, as it offers an exhaustive exploration of Parisian audiences' reaction to the many musical transformations that were taking place at the time.<sup>61</sup> In essence, the author attempts to explain how Parisian audiences became silent and respectful by 1830, enchanted by the musical experience. However, Johnson's study covers a period in music history that is fundamental to our understanding of music today, as it gave birth to institutions, canons and listening patterns that survive well into the twenty-first century. It is hard to disagree with Mary Ann Smart's claim that Johnson's explanation of what happened to Parisian audiences in the early nineteenth century can be summarised in one word: Beethoven.<sup>62</sup> This emphasis on Beethoven, though understandable, has its problems, however, not least because it leads to the hypothesis that musical compositions are in fact responsible for the type of reception they obtain.

Johnson may trace this new behaviour to musical causes, but Richard Sennett, from a generally sociological view, relates it to the public's fear of reacting, brought on by a lack of self-confidence as a result of the growing importance of individualism. In *Fall of Public Man*, Sennett suggests that audiences chose to remain silent out of fear of expressing their spontaneous opinion, and in an overall

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no. 11 (May 1977), p. 48; Leon Mayhew, 'Review', *Nineteenth-century Music*, vol. 1, no. 2 (November 1977), pp. 176-8; Nicholas Temperley, 'Review', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 81, no. 4 (October 1976), p. 844.

<sup>61</sup> See William Weber, 'Review. James H. Johnson. *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History*', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 101, no. 3 (June 1996), pp. 853-4; Mary Ann Smart, 'Review', *Nineteenth-century Music*, vol. 20, no. 3 (Spring 1997), pp. 291-7; Mark Everist, 'Review', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, vol. 121, no. 2 (1996), pp. 258-67; Maribeth Clark, 'Review', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 8, no. 1 (March 1996), pp. 77-81; Richard Butsch, 'Review', *Contemporary Sociology*, vol. 24, no. 5 (September 1995), pp. 692-3.

<sup>62</sup> Smart, 'Review', p. 292.

withdrawal from public attention.<sup>63</sup> As paradoxical as this might sound (my thesis does examine the move of chamber music from the private to the public sphere after all), Sennett very successfully demonstrates the decline in public life, in a city where public places where strangers might meet were rapidly growing in numbers – big urban parks, wide streets for pedestrian strolling, and coffeehouses. In a city filled with spectacles, one might expect public relations to be nurtured, but, to the contrary, Sennett maintains that the emergence of personality, or indeed individualism, did exactly the opposite: ‘personality [...] was composed of three terms: unity between impulse and appearance, self-consciousness about feeling, and spontaneity as abnormality’.<sup>64</sup> As a result, ‘the identity of the public man split in two’;<sup>65</sup> a small number of people continued to assertively express themselves in public and became professionals at it, while the rest became spectators, who did not participate in public life, but observed it instead. It is under these circumstances that Baillot, the professional performer, gained recognition by his audience, the (mostly) quiet spectators. However, we do know from various reviews that Baillot’s spectators were not afraid to voice their disapproval (for example during the performance of Beethoven’s op. 131), a quality they owed to Baillot himself, who educated them, as we have seen, in recognising the music of different composers and in discussing matters of interpretation over time.

Sennett and Johnson handle the same topic yet offer us two entirely different perspectives. Their opinions do not seem to meet, but neither do they directly clash. Such circumstances help one comprehend the vastness of the topic, or any topic for that matter, and the large number of available paths of interpretation

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<sup>63</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York, 1977).

<sup>64</sup> Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, p. 193.

<sup>65</sup> Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, p. 195.

one might follow. Pierre Bourdieu's theory on position-takings lends a helping hand in understanding this further:

Every position-taking is defined in relation to the *space of possibles* which is objectively realized as a *problematic* in the form of the actual or potential position-takings corresponding to the different positions; and it receives its distinctive *value* from its negative relationship with the coexistent position-takings to which it is objectively related and which determine it by delimiting it. [...] a position-taking changes, even when the position remains identical, whenever there is change in the universe of options that are simultaneously offered for producers and consumers to choose from. [...] The meaning of a work (artistic, literary, philosophical, etc.) changes automatically with each change in the field within which it is situated for the spectator or reader.<sup>66</sup>

One can thus establish how sensitive a research topic can be, since there is a substantial set of external factors defining it, and in extent altering it, at any given moment. Consequently, one might argue that the thinner the slice of history looked at, the larger the number of parameters interacting with it, and ultimately controlling it, making research exceptionally fine in detail. Therefore, the researcher faces the added challenge of tracking the changes in these parameters, which often go unrecorded. Bourdieu confirms:

One of the major difficulties of the social history of philosophy, art or literature is that it has to reconstruct these spaces of original possibles which, because they were part of the self-evident givens of the situation, remained unremarked and are therefore unlikely to be mentioned in contemporary accounts, chronicles or memoirs.<sup>67</sup>

Applying this to musical progress, if one can name it thus, we have to appreciate that even when events seem stationary, or indeed repetitive, the ever-changing external circumstances surrounding such a situation might in reality add value to it. Pierre Baillot's chamber music society is a superb example of this. As we will see, Baillot was loyal to the Classical ideals of beauty and the elevation of the soul that he had

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<sup>66</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson (Oxford, 1993), p. 30-1.

<sup>67</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 31.

grown up with, and naturally carried them over to his new venture, his *séances*. As revolutionary as the notion of the public chamber music society was at the time, Baillot's programmes consisted predominantly of the same composers throughout the twenty-five years of the life of the society, blowing an air of conservatism over his organisation. Yet no one will deny that Baillot's concept and its execution, which in turn set off the founding of numerous other such societies, constituted great progress for Parisian musical life and for instrumental music worldwide. Tagging it as conservative would mean to overlook the parameters surrounding it: the recent detrimental historical events and hence the lack of resources, the power that opera had held for quite some time, both as a spectacle and as a social outing, as well as its continuing evolution which succeeded in causing a stir, the existing aesthetics to do with the private salon performance of chamber music, often mediocre, and the predispositions about the meaning of instrumental music, to name a very general few. It would thus be an utter gaffe to misjudge Baillot's efforts by ignoring the circumstances that accompanied his work. A tool that proved imperative to reconstructing this set of parameters was the Bibliothèque nationale de France's digital library, Gallica,<sup>68</sup> which offers a sizeable amount of documents one can consult with great ease and on a regular basis, as opposed to being on site, which, although often allows access to non-digitised archives, requires time and travel and can thus only take effect a limited number of times during the research period. The same way technological progress during Baillot's time thoroughly assisted him in his project (with the mass production of sheet music and musical instruments), so it lends a hand to the modern researcher, who can now access an enormous amount of

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<sup>68</sup> Gallica Bibliothèque numérique, Bibliothèque nationale de France, online at [gallica.bnf.fr].



information, with just a few clicks, gaining precious insight into the historical slice of truth that they aim to reconstruct in their work.

## 2 | ‘Une espèce de magie attachée à son nom’: Baillot’s programmes and his celebrities

The previous chapter outlined the main circumstances under which acclaimed violinist Pierre Baillot founded the Séances de quatuors et de quintettes de Baillot, the chamber music society that was established in Paris in 1814, and which presented public chamber music concerts until 1840. This was the first society in Paris to present chamber works exclusively and its founder can thus be seen as a pioneer in the Parisian music world of the first half of the nineteenth century. In this chapter we turn to the choices of programme that Baillot made, a crucial aspect to the success of such an establishment and one that hides several important secrets. We have seen that Baillot’s model was innovative because it represented the first public chamber music concert and further because it was institutionally organised – with a clear *modus operandi*, a set of values and an established network of supporters. However, in this chapter we will discover its significance in establishing a genealogy of instrumental music and therefore providing audiences with something approaching an introduction to music history – perhaps a little earlier than one might expect. At the same time, the repertoire and its performative presentation were not purely instrumental: they drew upon the model of vocal music, and even took on operatic elements, features which caution against a prim division of Parisian music into opera, on the one hand, and instrumental music on the other. Moving between the polarity articulated in Dahlhaus’s famous dualism (that is, the twin Italian and German cultures of Romanticism), chamber music in Paris encompassed work- and performance-based values. More pragmatically, there were significant crossovers between audience behaviour, performance practices and even, to some extent, the repertoire performed in chamber and theatrical venues.

### Towards a musical museum

Both Carl Czerny and Pierre Baillot believed that technique, once mastered, should be forgotten,<sup>69</sup> and so after some 250 pages on numerous ways of playing scales and double-stops for the suppleness and precision of the left and right hands of the aspiring violinist, Pierre Baillot dedicated ten pages of his treatise *L'Art du violon*, published in 1834, to preparation for performing in public.<sup>70</sup> Here Baillot was very clear in telling his students (to whom he dedicated his method), in a manner that resembles the advice of a doting father, that the choice of programme is vital not only for highlighting the performer's talent and abilities, but for finding what is most suitable for the audience, who, albeit constantly changing, will always be moved by what is beautiful.<sup>71</sup> He goes on to explain that it does not suffice to be prepared for the public, but it is necessary that the public is prepared for what the performer is about to play.<sup>72</sup> One can therefore expect that Baillot would put his own experience into practice when deciding on the programmes of his *séances* and thus take into consideration not only his skills as a violinist, but also the audience's ability to welcome his choice of works. Joël-Marie Fauquet's list of Baillot's programmes between 1814 and 1840 quickly shows a clear pattern of composers: Boccherini,

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<sup>69</sup> Mary Hunter, "To Play as if from the Soul of the Composer": the Idea of the Performer in Early Romantic Aesthetics', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 58, no. 2 (Summer 2005), p. 390.

<sup>70</sup> Pierre Baillot, 'Préparation nécessaire pour jouer en public', *L'Art du violon* (Paris, 1834), p. 253.

<sup>71</sup> 'Le point le plus important, suivant nous, est le choix des morceaux; l'expérience peut seule éclairer l'artiste sur ce qui convient le mieux à son genre de talent, et surtout à un auditoire qui change, à la vérité, chaque jour, mais dont le sensibilité est cependant, toujours la même et toujours émue par le vrai beau'. 'The most important point, in our opinion, is the choice of pieces; experience can only illuminate the artist on what is best for his type of talent, especially for an audience that changes, in truth, every day, but whose sensitivity is, however, always the same and always moved by true beauty'. Baillot, *L'Art du violon*, pp. 256-7.

<sup>72</sup> 'Il ne suffit pas que l'artiste soit bien préparé pour le public, il faut aussi que le public le soit à ce qu'on va lui faire entendre'. 'It does not suffice that the artist is well prepared for the public, it is also necessary that the public is ready for what we are going to make it hear'. Baillot, *L'Art du violon*, p. 258.

Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Baillot.<sup>73</sup> In a total of 154 concerts over twenty-six years, Boccherini's name appears 222 times at the *séances*, rendering him by far the most performed composer. Haydn comes second, with 166 occurrences, then Baillot himself with 125, followed closely by Mozart with 122, and – last but not least – Beethoven with 109. With the exception of just three concerts over the first ten years of the society,<sup>74</sup> Baillot presented those five composers exclusively. In 1824 he occasionally introduced works by Jadin (most probably Louis-Emmanuel Jadin, 1768-1853), the Italian violinist composer Emanuele Barbella (1718-1777), French-English composer Georges Onslow (1784-1853) and Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837). In the years 1825-1827 we find compositions by A. Romberg (most likely violinist composer Andreas Jakob Romberg, 1767-1821), Friedrich-Ernst Fesca (1789-1826) and two of Baillot's colleagues at the Conservatoire, violinists Rodolphe Kreutzer and Pierre Rode. The list below shows all composers presented by Baillot at the *séances*, apart from the five 'regulars', and the number of times their works were performed during the course of twenty-six years.

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Bach, Johann Sebastian               | 2 |
| Barbella, Emanuele                   | 4 |
| Cherubini, Luigi                     | 9 |
| Fesca, Friedrich-Ernst               | 7 |
| Geminiani, Francesco                 | 1 |
| Girard, Narcisse (Baillot's student) | 1 |
| Herz, J.S. (also found as Herz ainé) | 1 |

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<sup>73</sup> Joël-Marie Fauquet, 'Les programmes', *Les Sociétés de musique de chambre à Paris de la Restauration à 1870* (Paris, 1986), p. 50-68.

<sup>74</sup> Notably a work by Cherubini was presented in the third concert, on 26 December 1814, and another by Viotti on 9 December 1817.

|                           |    |
|---------------------------|----|
| Hummel, Johann Nepomuk    | 2  |
| Jadin, Louis-Emmanuel     | 3  |
| Kalkbrenner, Frédéric     | 1  |
| Kreutzer, Rodolphe        | 1  |
| Mendelssohn, Felix        | 1  |
| Onslow, Georges           | 18 |
| Panseron, Auguste         | 1  |
| Pugnani, Gaetano          | 1  |
| Reicha, Anton             | 1  |
| Rode, Pierre              | 2  |
| Romberg, Andreas Jakob    | 2  |
| Tartini, Giuseppe         | 3  |
| Titz, Anton Ferdinand     | 1  |
| Viotti, Giovanni Battista | 16 |

We can therefore confirm a stability in the choice of composers in the programmes, which persisted throughout the series, with the occasional insertion of a different composer – either from the previous century (Bach, Tartini, Pugnani, Barbella) or contemporaries such as Onslow, Mendelssohn and Panseron. According to Fauquet,<sup>75</sup> and in conjunction with Baillot’s own writings about the careful consideration one must give to the choice of works with regard to the audience, the programme at the time very much depended on the public’s interest, involvement and reaction, and hence a steady style of programming for almost three decades must surely mean that the audience was content. This is also mirrored in the rising number

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<sup>75</sup> Fauquet, *Les Sociétés de musique de chambre à Paris*, pp. 50-1.

of attendees, as we have already discussed, and the move to larger venues, such as the Hôtel de Ville, later on. So, in other words, Baillot had it right from the start. However, the rationale behind the choice of these four composers (Boccherini, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven) is not quite obvious to us yet. Let us take a look at how Baillot maintained this audience satisfaction.

We gain valuable information from the advice he gives to the readers of *L'Art du violon*: according to Baillot, the most important means of capturing the audience's attention remained in the reputation of the performer; the work of an unknown artist – no matter how commendable – was not received with the same confidence inspired by a well-established 'celebrity'.<sup>76</sup> He talks of the magic and the power connected with the names of such distinguished musicians, which ultimately tend to influence the audience's reception of their work. Going back to the *séances*, surely this notion applied to celebrity composers such as Boccherini and Haydn, whose works he regularly presented at his series. However, one might expect such a statement to also relate to famous performers, rather than just composers: Baillot was one of the foremost violinists Paris had ever known, and this must have contributed to the success of his series and the satisfaction of the audience, who admired and often looked up to him, a good part of them being amateur musicians themselves.

Although not immediately apparent, the most interesting part of Baillot's advice lies in the expression 'captiver l'attention' – to capture the attention. This

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<sup>76</sup> 'Le premier moyen de captiver l'attention dépend d'abord de la réputation de l'artiste: une espèce de magie attachée à son nom doit disposer les esprits en sa faveur; cette magie, cette puissance, c'est le vrai talent qui la donne'; and further, 'L'œuvre d'un artiste inconnu et quel que soit son mérite, ne frappe point ainsi au premier abord et n'est point accueillie avec la confiance qu'inspire toujours une célébrité bien établie'. 'The first way to capture the attention depends firstly on the artist's reputation: a kind of magic attached to his name will turn minds in his favour; this magic, this power is given by real talent' and 'The work of an unknown artist, whatever their worth, does not strike in the first instance and is not always greeted with the confidence inspired by an established celebrity'. Baillot, *L'Art du violon*, p. 258-9.

does not simply refer to rendering the audience quiet, although increasing audience quietness and indeed attentiveness was already taking its course in the French capital. Most importantly, one must consider the audience's many alternatives to attending a concert at Baillot's: in a city bustling with spectacle, Baillot had several events to compete with, most of which included stage effects, costumes, a story to follow, and an overall experience of entertainment. As the chapter progresses, we shall discover various masked ways through which Baillot attempted to create an event that had hints of his principal competitor: the opera. Carl Dahlhaus's controversial and much-discussed *Stildualismus* might seek to establish a strict differentiation between opera and instrumental music, by juxtaposing the music of Rossini and Beethoven, as the main musical fact of the nineteenth century, but this 'far reaching rift' between the two styles, as Dahlhaus puts it,<sup>77</sup> in an unmistakably authoritative tone, might indeed hide a secret pathway that connects rather than isolates these two worlds, as we will see shortly. In other words, by taking away the strict and somewhat forced separation of the two styles represented by Rossini and Beethoven respectively, or indeed Italian opera and German instrumental music, we may discover that they share more than Dahlhaus wished to acknowledge.

Going back to *L'Art du violon*, Baillot goes on to say that the second way of ensuring the audience's attention is the choice of programme, a topic which he does not explain further, as he did so at the very start of the chapter titled 'Préparation nécessaire pour jouer en public'. Music critic Joseph d'Ortigue (1802-1866), who attended Baillot's concerts, writes in *Le Balcon de l'Opéra* that Baillot's

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<sup>77</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley, 1989), p. 8.

simple programme was a lesson in music history,<sup>78</sup> while Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny goes so far as to claim that Baillot set up the society in order to give a course in ancient and modern music up to his time.<sup>79</sup> This might initially seem like an overstatement, given the list of works we have already seen. However, with the general stimulation of historical consciousness in Europe, as a result of the first-hand experience of history, given the intense political events of the time, and with opera's indisputable thrill with historical themes and heroes drawn from the past, making it historically contingent, Baillot's attempt to create a genealogy of chamber music composers might indeed be real.<sup>80</sup> Katharine Ellis traces this fairly recent interest in music history back to Conservatoire director Bernard Sarrette's idea of a

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<sup>78</sup> 'Le simple programme est un cours d'histoire tout entier. Boccherini, avec ses allures antiques et naïves, respire je ne sais quel parfum de moyen âge. Haydn représente une société perfectionnée et pleine de raffinements. Plus tumultueuse, plus passionnée dans Mozart, elle semble pressée d'un immense besoin de développemens. Beethoven, dans ses rêveries et jusque dans ses folies sublimes, est l'image d'une civilisation qui surabonde, qui déborde. Eh bien! M. Baillot est l'homme de toutes ces époques. Non seulement il se transporte au temps qu'indique le nom de l'auteur, mais encore il s'identifie avec le compositeur lui-même'. 'The simple programme is an entire course in history. Boccherini, with his ancient and naive movements, exudes an indescribable fragrance of the Middle ages. Haydn represents the sophisticated society, full of refinement. More tumultuous, more passionate in Mozart, it seems in a hurry by an immense need for development. Beethoven, in his daydreaming and in his sublime folly, is the image of a civilization that abounds, that overflows. Well! Mr Baillot is the man for all these eras. Not only is he transported to the time indicated by the name of the author, but he identifies with the composer himself'. Joseph d'Ortigue, *Le Balcon de l'Opéra* (Paris, 1833), p. 267.

<sup>79</sup> In the *Encyclopédie méthodique* (1818) under the entry 'Soirées musicales' Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny writes: 'Son dessein, en les établissant, était de former un cours de musique ancienne et moderne, depuis Corelli et jusqu'à nos jours. [...] L'*allegro*, l'*adagio*, le *presto* n'ont pas seulement leur caractère déterminé et leur expression propre, mais chacun de ces morceau, selon qu'il appartient à Corelli, à Geminiani, à Tartini, à Handel, à Boccherini, à Haydn, à Mozart, à Beethoven, ou à M. Baillot lui-même, prend une teinte chronologique et une couleur différente qui semblent en nommer l'auteur et en indiquer la date'. 'His purpose in setting up these sessions was to develop a course in ancient and modern music from Corelli up to our own time. [...] The *allegro*, the *adagio*, the *presto* do not only have their determined character and their own expression, but each piece, whether it belongs to Corelli, Geminiani, Tartini, Handel, Boccherini, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, or Mr. Baillot himself, takes a chronological hue and a different colour that seem to name the author and indicate the date'. Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny, 'Soirées musicales', *Encyclopédie méthodique. Musique*, ed. Frammery, Ginguené, Momigny (Paris, 1818), vol. 2, p. 374.

<sup>80</sup> See also Sarah Hibberd, 'Politics, History and Opera', *French Grand Opera and the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 1-19.



e.

3

L'ART DU VIOLON

Nouvelle Méthode

Dédiée

A SES ÉLÈVES

PAR

P. BAILLOT

Membre de la Légion d'honneur de la musique particulière du Roi  
et Professeur au Conservatoire de musique

Prix : 50<sup>!</sup>



de l'imprimerie du Conservatoire de Musique

à PARIS, au DEPOT CENTRAL DE LA MUSIQUE, et de la Librairie, Rue des Filles S<sup>t</sup> Thomas, N<sup>o</sup> 7, Place de la Bourse.

Vm<sup>3</sup>.c.24

Pierre Baillot, *L'Art du violon. Nouvelle méthode* (Paris, 1834), Bibliothèque nationale de France

‘Conservatoire library that would provide a link between student musicians and their past’.<sup>81</sup> The concept of the musical museum was thus born and took its place in the musical world, beyond education. The Concerts spirituels, which began as early as 1725, were also responsible for the development of a musical history, especially due to the performance of sacred works in a secular setting, which distanced the composition from the religious celebration, thus placing more importance on the work itself.<sup>82</sup> Of equal interest, perhaps more so because of their title, are Fétis’s Concerts historiques, from 1832 onwards, which were more educational in that they took the form of a lecture recital, with supporting texts in the *Revue musicale*.

Given the general stability of the programmes *chez* Baillot, one can be certain that the audience gradually developed the ability to distinguish between the different styles of Boccherini, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. The audience would have probably been familiar with the work of Boccherini and Haydn, whereas chamber works by Mozart and Beethoven would not have been performed to the Parisian public very often before 1814. Baillot was thus introducing something fairly new alongside more established works. However, he did not make his series about presenting Beethoven’s late quartets, as the timing of the series might have led one to believe, or as Austrian violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh did in Vienna.<sup>83</sup> As a matter of

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<sup>81</sup> See Katharine Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past. Early Music in Nineteenth-century France* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 1-41.

<sup>82</sup> The Concerts spirituels that began in 1725 and lasted until the French Revolution were founded by the musicians of the Paris Opéra, as a result of the frustration of the musicians at the lack of opportunity to perform on the twenty-four days of religious festivals, during which the Opéra was closed. In order to lend legitimacy to the playing of instrumental music on these days, they included on the programmes some of the major sacred cantatas for soloists, chorus and orchestra that were sung in the royal chapel at the king’s mass on a daily basis. By doing so they justified the spiritual character of the event and were sure to avoid the disapproval of the clergy. Up to this time, these works would have only been heard at the court of Versailles, but were suddenly brought before a wider public in the capital. See also Constant Pierre, *Histoire du Concert Spirituel (1725-1790)* (Paris, 1975).

<sup>83</sup> Schuppanzigh presented quartet concerts in Vienna from as early as 1804 and, together with his three quartet partners, he was considered as the main representative of Beethoven’s string quartet

fact, only two of Beethoven's late quartets were performed at the *séances*: the *lento* of the quartet op. 135 was presented on 23 March 1828, and the entire quartet op. 131 on 24 March 1829. Hector Berlioz, who attended the second of the two concerts remembers that from the 300 members of the audience, only six (supposedly the five performers that evening and Berlioz himself) were astonished by the emotions they experienced from the music, whilst the rest of the audience found it absurd, incomprehensible and barbaric.<sup>84</sup> Whatever the truth of the matter, Baillot did not persist. Although his audience can be seen as somewhat more educated, as we have established in the previous chapter, their *maître* must have known where to draw the line. Given his own advice in *L'Art du violon* about the importance of the audience's ability to listen to what the artist was presenting, this was hardly surprising.

A third point that he makes in *L'Art du violon* on the topic of securing the audience's attention has to do with the spoken introduction of the works to be performed. There were no printed programmes at the *séances* until May 1831, so the programme was initially hand-written on the wall of the salon. But Baillot also thought it important to engage with the audience and to present the works with a small speech at the start of the concert. He states:

Un troisième moyen, non moins efficace que les deux autres, serait de rendre le public attentif par quelque discours qui le mit, sans qu'il s'en aperçut, dans une situation d'âme propre à recevoir de vives et profondes impressions.<sup>85</sup>

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performances, having been under the patronage of Prince Galitzin for several years as well. However, Schuppanzigh's effort to establish a public chamber music society was not as organised as Baillot's and concerts were not always very frequent.

<sup>84</sup> 'Il y avait près de trois cents personnes, nous nous sommes trouvés six à demi morts à la vérité de l'émotion que nous éprouvions, mais les seuls qui ne trouvassions pas cette compositions absurde, incompréhensible, barbare...'. 'There were about three hundred people, and only six found ourselves half dead to the truth of the emotion we experienced, but the only ones not to find this composition absurd, incomprehensible, barbaric'. Hector Berlioz, 'Lettre à sa sœur Nanci' (Paris, 29 March 1829), *Correspondance générale*, ed. Pierre Citron (Paris, 1972), vol. 1, p. 244.

<sup>85</sup> 'A third way, no less effective than the other two, is to render the public attentive through a speech that will put it, without it being perceived, in an suitable condition of the soul so as to receive lively and profound impressions'. Baillot, *L'Art du violon*, p. 258.

He also believed that the mention of an historical fact or anecdote played a vital role in the success of the piece: ‘le moindre fait historique, une date, un mot, une anecdote, une observation ont la plus grande influence sur la destinée et le succès d'un morceau de musique’.<sup>86</sup> And it must indeed have done so; in the absence of text and stage effects that were most effective in guiding the listener through the character and indeed the meaning of the music at the *Opéra*, instrumental music required a subtle instruction from the artist, so that the audience would not get lost in the vastness that they tended to hear in instrumental music. This would allow them to follow with greater ease and more interest, with the ultimate goal being to be moved by the music. This instruction could often be limited to the title of the movement, which in itself provided the character of the piece: ‘grave, ou sérieux, *allegro*, ou gai, *mesto*, ou triste, *adagio*, ou lent, *vivace*, ou animé, *presto*, ou vif’.<sup>87</sup>

Apart from this subtle indication about the character of the music and the brief spoken introduction about the piece, Baillot also relied on his performing abilities as a violinist to convey the different tone of his four main composers. Fétis marvels at the violinist’s ability to heavily vary the character of each of the four main composers he presented:

Passant dans la même soirée de Boccherini à Mozart, de celui-ci à Beethoven et ensuite à Haydn, il est tendre et naïf avec le premier, mélancolique et passionné avec le second, fougueux avec le troisième, et noble avec le dernier. Une inépuisable variété d’archet ajoute encore à ces nuances délicates le charme d’une exécution parfaite.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> ‘any historical fact, a date, a word, an anecdote, an observation have the greatest influence on the destiny and success of a piece of music’. Baillot, *L’Art du violon*, p. 259.

<sup>87</sup> ‘grave, or serious, *allegro*, or happy, *mesto*, or sad, *adagio*, or slow, *vivace*, or lively, *presto*, or vigorous’. Baillot, *L’Art du violon*, p. 258.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Moving in the same evening from Boccherini to Mozart, and from the latter to Beethoven and then Haydn, he is soft and naive with the first, melancholic and passionate with the second, spirited with the third and noble with the last. An endless variety of bowing adds to the delicate nuances the charm of a perfect performance’. François-Joseph Fétis, ‘Soirées musicales de quatuors et de quintetti, données par M. Baillot’, *Revue musicale*, vol. 1 (1827), p. 38.

This description of a Baillot who is tender and naïve when playing Boccherini, melancholic and passionate with Mozart, spirited with Beethoven, and noble with Haydn, could not have been simply limited to the listening experience; facial expressions must have accompanied the performance, while the presence of varied physical gestures is indisputable, given that the critic goes on to mention the variety of different bowings depending on the composer. This genuinely theatrical description of a performer who takes on a different character, or indeed a different face, with each work and employs different *coups d'archet* as a result, reminds us that a chamber music concert is still embodied and costumed, and hence does not necessarily remain within the boundaries of a purely acoustic experience, as we are often led to believe. Gestures and facial expressions, in combination with a variety of bowing styles added to the audience's understanding and appreciation of the music and to the spectacle as a whole, as we may indeed call it so. With a spoken introduction that helped the audience engage with the work, a stage setup that was new to those who were used to private salon performances, the appropriate attire of the musicians, and the theatrical embodiment of each composer mirrored in the gestures and expressions of the performers, this was indeed getting close to what we might call an opera unstaged.

'Un bon vieux maître, plein de charme': Luigi Boccherini

In his letter to Ignace Pleyel (1757-1831) on 17 July 1797, Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805) requested that his music receive a good performance before it was judged.<sup>89</sup> Unfortunately, Boccherini was no longer alive in 1814 when Baillot started up his

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<sup>89</sup> 'Je vous recommande ma musique: qu'elle reçoive une bonne exécution avant que vous ne la jugiez'. 'I recommend to you my music: may it receive a good performance before you judge it'. Germaine de Rothschild, *Luigi Boccherini: sa vie, son œuvre* (Paris, 1962), p. 149.

society; had he been, however, he would surely have felt content and perhaps honoured to have been placed in the spotlight by such an acclaimed violinist. As I already mentioned, in the 154 Séances de quatuors et des quintettes de Baillot, Boccherini's name appeared 222 times, meaning that Baillot often included more than one of his works in his programme. But let us first look at how Baillot came to appreciate Boccherini to such an extent. Baillot's teacher, Viotti, was an admirer of Boccherini,<sup>90</sup> and so one might expect that Baillot was exposed to his music from quite early on in his education.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, violinist Pierre Rode and other Parisian musicians of the time often went on holiday to Spain, where Boccherini lived, and were thus given the opportunity to meet the composer in person. As a result, Baillot would have heard a fair amount about him through his colleagues, not to mention that he would have had direct access to his compositions in Paris, as Pleyel, and other publishers later, were the exclusive distributors of Boccherini's works.

Baillot presented his audience with fifty-five different works by Boccherini, and therefore each work was on average performed four times over the years.<sup>92</sup> In truth, some were performed once or twice and then abandoned, while others returned to the programme as many as fifteen times. The two works by Boccherini presented at the very first concert on 12 December 1814 were the quintets op. 39 no. 3 (G. 339) and op. 29 no. 6 (G. 318). Baillot performed the first thirteen times and the latter fifteen times. After their first appearance, it was not until two years later, on 18 November 1816, that they reappeared in the programme – and as a

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<sup>90</sup> Rothschild, *Luigi Boccherini*, p. 86.

<sup>91</sup> Viotti performed Boccherini's chamber music at Boccherini's Parisian patron named Boulogne in the 1790s. Christian Speck, 'Luigi Boccherini', *Grove Music Online*.

<sup>92</sup> Another matter worth mentioning is that out of the fifty-five works, only six were quartets and one was a trio; the remaining compositions were all string quintets, most of them for two cellos.

pair again. However, following that concert Baillot did not hesitate to include them more often, sometimes even in consecutive concerts from one week to another.<sup>93</sup> This leads us to believe that it must have been the popularity of the works that brought them back so often. On this topic of repeat performances, Fauquet argues that Baillot's audience preferred to re-listen than to discover.<sup>94</sup> Bearing in mind the statistics of Boccherini's works, the audience did a great deal of re-listening, which we might relate to Dahlhaus's idea of a Rossini opera as 'a recipe for a performance': each version could not be 'authentic, first-hand or final', but 'a series of instances standing side by side as equivalent realizations of a mutable conception, like a set of variations without a theme'.<sup>95</sup> Could a Boccherini quintet *chez* Baillot have taken the same form? In other words, could the score indeed provide a recipe for a performance, which was reinvented with its every appearance at the *séances*?<sup>96</sup> Possibly so. Consequently, we must handle Fauquet's statement about the audience preferring to re-listen than to discover with much reservation, since it is quite possible that, as with Dahlhaus's concept of a Rossini opera, the listener considered that the chamber work was created anew each time it was performed.

Whatever the truth of the matter, Boccherini was a welcome celebrity among the Parisians attending the *séances*. His significant popularity in Paris in the

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<sup>93</sup> Quintet op. 29 no. 6 (G. 318) was performed on 12 December 1814, 18 November 1816, 24 March 1817, 7 April 1818, 15 and 22 December 1818, 23 March 1819, 25 January 1820, 9 February 1822, 15 March 1823, 3 December 1825, 29 March 1827, 17 February 1829, 1 March 1831 and 27 December 1834.

Quintet op. 39 no. 3 (G. 339) was performed on 12 December 1814, 18 November 1816, 25 November 1817, 28 April 1818, 1 December 1818, 17 February 1820, 17 February 1821, 1 March 1823, 8 March 1827, 20 April 1830, 14 February 1832, 29 January 1833 and 13 December 1834.

<sup>94</sup> Fauquet, *Les Sociétés de musique de chambre*, p. 51.

<sup>95</sup> Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-century Music*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>96</sup> Sauzay tells us in his *Mémoires* that the audience knew the pieces performed by heart: 'Les [...] auditeurs qui, sachant par cœur les morceaux et connaissant le détail de l'exécution'. 'The [...] listeners who, knowing by heart the pieces and knowing the details of the execution'. Eugène Sauzay and Brigitte François-Sappey, 'La vie musicale en France à travers les Mémoires d'Eugène Sauzay (1809-1901)', *Revue de Musicologie*, v. 60, no. 1/2 (1974), p. 194.

first half of the nineteenth century was not only a result of the availability of his scores in Paris through Pleyel, Sieber and other publishers, but was also due to his compositional style. Musicians and critics alike praised his individuality;<sup>97</sup> in effect, Fétis thought Boccherini to be such an original composer that he went as far as to claim it seemed that he had known no other music than his own:

Jamais compositeur n'eut, plus que Boccherini, le mérite de l'originalité; ses idées sont toutes individuelles, et ses ouvrages sont si remarquables, sous ce rapport, qu'on serait tenté de croire qu'il ne connaissait point d'autre musique que la sienne.<sup>98</sup>

Joseph d'Ortigue speaks of a scent of the middle ages in his music, of an antique and even naïve style, gothic forms and youthful character,<sup>99</sup> while Baillot found 'une grâce naïve et pour ainsi dire primitive, de la suavité à ses chants et de la douceur dans les harmonies' in Boccherini's works.<sup>100</sup> Therefore besides originality, which was hugely appreciated in musical circles, as we will see in a later chapter, the youthfulness and naïve nature of Boccherini's music were of prime importance and could perhaps constitute genuine reasons why he maintained his fame well into the 1830s and beyond.<sup>101</sup> Mendelssohn characteristically wrote to his sister after

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<sup>97</sup> '[...] compositions originales, dont la richesse et la nouveauté des formes, la fraîcheur, la grâce, la naïveté des pensées excitèrent un enthousiasme général'. '[...] original compositions, whose richness and novelty of shapes, freshness, grace, naive thoughts excited a general enthusiasm'. Louis Piquot, *Notice sur la vie et les ouvrages de Luigi Boccherini, suivie du catalogue raisonné de toutes ses œuvres* (Paris, 1851), p. 4.

<sup>98</sup> 'No composer has ever had, more than Boccherini, the merit of originality; his ideas are all individual and his work is so remarkable, in this respect, that we would be tempted to believe that he did not know other music than his own'. François-Joseph Fétis, 'Biographie: Boccherini', *Revue musicale* (Paris, 1829), p.536.

<sup>99</sup> D'Ortigue, *Le Balcon de l'Opéra*, p. 268.

<sup>100</sup> 'A naive grace, almost primitive, sweetness in his songs and softness in his harmonies'. Pierre Baillot, *Notice sur Beethoven*, p. 2, manuscript collection Lainé, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

<sup>101</sup> 'A Paris, notamment, ses quatuors sont appréciés aujourd'hui encore' (1835). 'In Paris, notably, his quartets are still appreciated today'. Gustave Shilling, *Enzyklopädie der Gesamten Musikalischen Wissenschaften*, in Rothschild, *Luigi Boccherini*, p. 101. Furthermore, possibly flattered by the popularity of his compositions in Paris, Boccherini dedicated his six piano quintets op. 57 to the French nation in 1799, perhaps hoping for patronage, which he found in the French ambassador of Madrid, Lucien Bonaparte, in 1800. Christian Speck, 'Luigi Boccherini', *Grove Music Online*.



attending one of Baillot's chamber concerts: 'on commença par un quintette de Boccherini, une perruque, mais une perruque sous laquelle il y a un bon vieux maître, plein de charme'.<sup>102</sup> Mendelssohn's reference to Boccherini as a wig points to the idea that the historical character of the programming meant beginning with something from the past, even if it was the recent past. This would then indicate that Boccherini was indeed an acceptable version of the past, understood as youthful and relatively uncomplicated, while D'Ortigue's mention of a scent of the middle ages and an antique and gothic style reinforces Boccherini's status as the base of Baillot's chamber music family tree.

However, Boccherini was also seen as a composer with a natural inclination towards exquisite melodies,<sup>103</sup> and who often aimed for a gentle and suave result in his music, as he directed the performer to play *dolce*, *dolcissimo*, *con grazia* and *soave*. In fact, his music was seen as so gentle and charming that violinist Giuseppe Puppo (1749-1827) went so far as to call it feminine, as he famously described Boccherini as 'Haydn's wife'. Boccherini uses scale figurations, trills and appoggiaturas abundantly, as well as tremolos, double stopped or double open notes and often instructs instrumentalists to play *sul ponticello*. His writing texture is thus rather rich and, in combination with the fact that the first cello has a similarly – if not more – soloistic role as that of the first violin, makes the harmony quite simple and often awkwardly inactive during the presentation of melodic material.

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<sup>102</sup> 'We started with a quintet by Boccherini, a wig, but a wig under which there is a good old master, full of charm'. Felix Mendelssohn, *Lettres inédites de Mendelssohn*, trans. Abraham-Auguste Rolland (Paris, 1864), p. 297. In the same letter, Mendelssohn also commented on the attentiveness of Baillot's audience, which, as he wrote, was made up of very musical patrons. However, negative comments were not absent; after listening to one of Boccherini's quintets at Baillot's, violinist Louis Spohr (1784-1859) declared that this did not deserve to be called music: 'Cela ne mérite pas le nom de la musique', Rothschild, *Luigi Boccherini*, p. 100.

<sup>103</sup> '[...] Boccherini que la nature avait doué de l'instinct mélodique le plus exquis'. '[...] Boccherini whom nature had endowed with the most exquisite melodic instinct'. Piquot, *Notice sur la vie et les ouvrages de Luigi Boccherini*, p. 4.



Antoine-Achille Bourgeois de la Richardière, *Luigi Boccherini* (1814), Bibliothèque nationale de France

Most interestingly though, a crucial factor to the composer's popularity was certainly the exoticism portrayed in his music; critics at the time found Spanish qualities in his works, which they thought not artificial but a natural gift that Boccherini inherited during the time he spent in Spain. Concurrently, the fact that he lived in Spain for most of his life separated him from the happenings of Paris and isolated him from Europe's musical main-stream. Biographer Georges de Saint-Foix (1874-1954) writes in 1930:

[...] le caractère typique des anciens rythmes espagnols et l'impression tour à tour sensuelle, passionnée, douloureuse, quelquefois terrible de la musique autochtone de la péninsule. Il ne l'a pas cherchée, il s'en est nourri inconsciemment, c'est le génie même de l'Espagne qui lui a fourni son langage lyrique, qui a empreint dans toute son œuvre cette âme ineffaçable d'une nationalité, qui est la force secrète de toutes ses compositions.<sup>104</sup>

It is fascinating how Saint-Foix talks of this Spanishness as being the secret force of Boccherini's compositions, and one can assume that it is what made him so popular with chamber music amateurs in Paris. But one wonders whether this feature provides a link between Baillot's concerts and the opera house, as Spanish local colour was popular there too. It is certain that this would have provided a familiar context for Baillot's audience. To this successful notion of the exotic was added Boccherini's talent as a cellist; in his obituary in the *Gazette musicale de Paris*, Boccherini's status as 'a marvellous cellist' came to the fore.<sup>105</sup> Remembering him as an exotic virtuoso who left them with an abundance of chamber music overflowing with originality, must have been the selling point Baillot used when presenting

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<sup>104</sup> '[...] the typical character of old Spanish rhythms and the sensual, passionate, painful and sometimes terrible impression of the native music of the peninsula. He has not sought it, it has been fed to him unconsciously, it is the genius of Spain itself that provided him with his lyrical language, which has marked all his work with the indelible spirit of a nationality, which is the secret force of all his compositions'. Georges de Saint-Foix, *Boccherini, notes et documents nouveaux* (Paris, 1930), pp. 33-4.

<sup>105</sup> See Rothschild, *Luigi Boccherini*, p. 88.

Boccherini's quintets at his *séances*. By presenting such works at his first series, Baillot would have shown the audience his astounding abilities as a violinist, but would have also passed the message that his chamber music series was not going to be about his solo career (giving the chance to the first cello to shine through in Boccherini's quintets), but it would be about cultivating a musical dialogue between the instruments, and ultimately between the performers and the audience.

### Beethoven

Beethoven vous introduit dans un nouveau monde. Vous traversez des régions sauvages, vous longez des précipices, la nuit vous surprend, vous vous réveillez et vous êtes transportés dans des sites ravissants; un paradis terrestre vous entoure, le soleil luit radieux pour vous faire contempler les magnificences de la nature.<sup>106</sup>

These words by Baillot occur in a letter to Prince Galitzin, who had just sent him the parts of Beethoven's quartet op. 127. We learn from Sauzay's *Mémoires* that Baillot played Beethoven's late quartets with his students in class at the Conservatoire and was moved to tears, which explains the beautifully expressive words communicated to Prince Galitzin.<sup>107</sup> However, the late quartets only featured twice in his *séances*, as we have seen; Sauzay deduced that their failure to trigger audience interest might have resulted from the fact that Beethoven had – unexpectedly for the period – treated all parts as equal, instead of bringing the first violin to the forefront, as in his op. 18 quartets, and in most of the works of Haydn and Mozart.<sup>108</sup>

Apart from the audience's disapproval, a great deal could be said about

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<sup>106</sup> 'Beethoven introduces you to a new world. You cross the wilderness, you walk along precipices, night surprises you, you wake up and you are transported in enchanting sites; an earthly paradise surrounds you, the sun shines brightly for you to contemplate nature's magnificence'. Wilhelm von Lenz, *Beethoven et ses trois styles* (Paris, 1855), vol. 2, p. 5.

<sup>107</sup> Sauzay and François-Sappey, 'La vie musicale en France', p. 169.

<sup>108</sup> See also Ora Frishberg Saloman, *Listening Well. On Beethoven, Berlioz, and Other Music Criticism in Paris, Boston, and New York, 1764-1890* (New York, 2009), p. 57.

Baillot's perception of the first violin's role in the string quartet based on this choice to stay away from the late quartets: it is, for example, documented that he performed standing while his quartet colleagues were seated. It therefore comes as no surprise that the most often presented of Beethoven's quartets at his series were the op. 18 – except the first of the set, which was never played. He performed two of Beethoven's sonatas for piano and violin – op. 12 no. 1 and op. 47 *Kreutzer*, five string trios (of which the op. 8 and op. 9 no. 1 were presented nine and eight times respectively), the piano trio op. 97 *Archduke* once, three quintets (opp. 4, 29 and 104) and a quintet transcription of the very popular septet op. 20, which Baillot presented twelve times. The virtuoso also made sure that he alternated quartets, trios and quintets, unlike when programming Boccherini's works, where he seemed to have a genuine inclination towards the quintets. Apart from the op. 18 string quartets, he also performed the quartet op. 59 no. 3 five times, and the op. 74 once. On 7 April 1832 Baillot was even planning to perform Beethoven's violin concerto, as soloist, followed by the C minor sonata with Mendelssohn on the piano, but the concert was cancelled owing to a cholera outbreak.

Beethoven, unlike the already famous Boccherini, was among the composers that Baillot was introducing to his audience through his series. Sauzay notes that by 1828 all of Beethoven's symphonies were known and performed in England and Germany, whereas in Paris only the first two had been heard.<sup>109</sup> However, we learn from various sources that the *Eroica* symphony was performed in Paris as early as 1811, but not received with the same success as when conducted by François Habeneck (1781-1849) at the inaugural concert of the Société des concerts du Conservatoire on 9 March 1828. Sauzay must have had this concert in mind when

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<sup>109</sup> Sauzay and François-Sappey, 'La vie musicale en France', p. 183.

making the above statement, and James H. Johnson supports him, stating that ‘vaguely familiar, but strangely inaccessible by 1815, Beethoven’s symphonies were fanatically demanded by Parisian audiences in 1830’.<sup>110</sup> This does not mean that his symphonies were not performed at all in Paris before 1828; it seems though that Beethoven’s sudden popularity in the late 1820s had to do with the growth of romantic ideals, which could now support his works, as opposed to the traditional notions of classicism, which were still permeating Paris at the start of the century and which were likely to resist Beethoven’s symphonies (or even ‘repulse’ them, according to Johnson).<sup>111</sup> The view that his compositions were thought of as unnatural – and hence were overlooked – comes up in a number of writings; Leo Schrade points out that ‘all that goes beyond the limits of an ideal that has been venerated over a sufficiently long period of time is cast aside into the category of aesthetic ugliness’ and that ‘the issue does not depend upon rational understanding’.<sup>112</sup> It was indeed this treatment that Beethoven’s symphonies initially received, as they went against the aesthetic values the audience were used to. For example, in Momigny’s entry ‘symphonie’ in the *Encyclopédie méthodique* published in 1818, eight pages of analysis are dedicated to a symphony by Haydn and another by Mozart, after which a mere paragraph is devoted to Beethoven. He wrote: ‘[Beethoven] montre partout un grand musicien, mais il manque souvent de

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<sup>110</sup> Johnson goes on to add that ‘Beethoven held an unwelcome marginal place on French programs for twenty years before the public rushed to him as a soul mate’. James H. Johnson, ‘Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience in France’, *Nineteenth-century Music*, vol. 15, no. 1 (Summer 1991), p. 23.

<sup>111</sup> ‘In 1811 [...] there was no idea that could play escort to Beethoven; there were only traditional ideas of classicism ready to repulse him’. Johnson, ‘Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience’, p. 26.

<sup>112</sup> Leo Schrade, *Beethoven in France. The Growth of an Idea* (New Haven, 1942), p. 5.

naturel et de ce beau et grand savoir que l'on remarque dans les vrais modèles, qui sont Haydn et Mozart'.<sup>113</sup>

Beethoven might have been escaping from the traditional and the familiar, but it seems that Parisian audiences were gradually becoming more knowledgeable and thus preparing for his triumphant arrival. Benjamin Walton argues that opera and Rossini's works in particular helped listeners to become more engaged in Beethoven's 'effects and timbres – by its electrifying performance – than its symphonic logic'.<sup>114</sup> It is precisely this new symphonic logic that the audiences must have been struggling to comprehend. Fétis tells us of an audience that had started seeking the help of teachers and critics in order to become familiar with the vocabulary necessary to describe the music they were listening to.<sup>115</sup> According to Walton, amateurs who had learnt to recognise modulations, features of orchestral writing and especially long development sections in an opera by Rossini, could apply such knowledge to a newly-introduced symphony by Beethoven.

Pierre Baillot introduced a movement from Beethoven's op. 135 quartet (the very first performance of a late quartet movement at his series) on 23 March 1828, two weeks after Habeneck's famous *Eroica* performance. One might conclude that Baillot now deemed his audience ready to receive the late quartets. Unfortunately, though, as we have already seen, the *Lento* from op. 135 came across as barbaric and absurd to most listeners. Admittedly, several French critics were quite judgmental in the early nineteenth century, in particular finding dangerous

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<sup>113</sup> '[Beethoven] shows everywhere a great musician, but he often lacks naturalness and this beautiful and great knowledge that we notice in the real models that are Haydn and Mozart'. Momigny, 'Symphonie', *Encyclopédie méthodique*, vol. 2, p. 416.

<sup>114</sup> Benjamin Walton, '1828. The Discovery of the "Twin Styles"', *Rossini in Restoration Paris. The Sound of Modern Life* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 220.

<sup>115</sup> François-Joseph Fétis, *Revue musicale* (Paris, 1827), vol. 1, p. 21.

‘Germanisms’ in his music. A characteristic example can be found in *Les Tablettes de polymnie* in 1810, published by Giuseppe Maria Cambini (1746-1825):

[...] un exemple dangereux pour l’art musical. La contagion d’une harmonie tudesque semble gagner l’école moderne qui se forme au Conservatoire. On croira produire de l’effet en prodiguant les dissonances les plus barbares et en employant avec fracas tous les instruments de l’orchestre. Hélas! on ne fait que déchirer bruyamment l’oreille, sans jamais parler au cœur.<sup>116</sup>

However, we also come across the occasional exaggeration in the modern interpretation of how negative these commentaries actually were. Let us take a look at a fine example: Leo Schrade summarises the author of an article in *Le globe* about one of Beethoven’s symphonies simply as ‘utterly disgusted at the Germanism of Beethoven’.<sup>117</sup> Robin Wallace sites a large portion of the original text, which reveals that Schrade, perhaps unintentionally, seems to be missing the author’s point in his attempt to bring forward the negative of his writings. A subtle disapproval of German school *bizarrierie* comes long after the author has praised the ‘masterpiece’ for being unsurpassed in grandeur, picturesqueness and richness in new and learned developments.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> [...] a dangerous example for the musical art. The contagion of a tudesque harmony seems to win over the modern school that is being formed at the Conservatoire. We believe to be producing an effect by providing the most barbarous dissonances and by noisily using all the instruments of the orchestra. Alas! we are only noisily destroying the ear, without ever speaking to the heart’. *Les tablettes de polymnie* (March 1810), p. 9, in Jacques-Gabriel Prod’homme, *Les symphonies de Beethoven* (Paris, 1906), p. 20.

<sup>117</sup> Leo Schrade, *Beethoven in France*, p. 28. For original text of the *Le globe* article of 14 May 1828, see Robin Wallace, *Beethoven’s Critics: Aesthetic Dilemmas and Resolutions during the Composer’s Lifetime* (Cambridge, 1986), pp.106-7.

<sup>118</sup> The author in *Le globe* states: ‘It would be difficult to find a musical composition grander, more picturesque, richer in new and learned developments, than this symphony. The third movement in particular is an admirable masterpiece. Its instrumentation is as indefinable as it strewn with ne effects: the rhythm, the melody, the harmony, everything is original, everything is cast into a pattern which could only belong to the metaphysical and mysterious genius of Beethoven. One does discover from time to time the faults of the German school, more *bizarrierie* than charm, more calculation than true inspiration, and a development too subtle, too analytical of the phrases, even the least singing ones, but one is overcome by the vigor and the interconnection of the thoughts, by contrasts as ingenious as they are unexpected, by the truly imposing grandeur of the masses of harmony’, in Wallace, *Beethoven’s Critics*, pp.106-7.



From its inaugural concert in 1828 until 1859, the Société des concerts du Conservatoire presented 280 symphonies by Beethoven, fifty-eight by Haydn and thirty-seven by Mozart. As we have seen, the ratio in Baillot's society differed greatly, with Beethoven being the least performed of the five main composers presented. However, on 18 March 1820 two compositions by Beethoven were played on the same night for the first time, while from January 1828 onwards, Baillot rarely excluded Beethoven from a concert. On 26 March 1836 three of his works were played, and on 19 April of the same year there were two works on the same night. Therefore, we observe that, although Baillot had managed to keep his audience interested in Beethoven's chamber music throughout the twenty six years of his society, there was an increase in Beethoven activity (and perhaps even interest), which is in line with the growing popularity of his symphonic works in the 1830s, and the development of romantic musical ideals in Paris.

In his mid-century *Etude sur le quatuor*, Sauzay highlights that the string quartets of Haydn lead to those of Mozart, and the string quartets of Mozart to those of Beethoven.<sup>119</sup> With that in mind, the varying number of works by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven presented by Baillot in his concerts makes perfect sense; Haydn got the most exposure with Mozart second and Beethoven third. But this also confirms our hypothesis that Baillot was attempting to create a genealogy, or indeed a history, of chamber music through his programmes. Furthermore, it seems that Baillot knew exactly how much of each composer his audience could bear with respectful interest, based on its familiarity with the work's musical language.<sup>120</sup> While Fauquet's

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<sup>119</sup> 'Les quatuors se succèdent. Haydn mène à Mozart, Mozart à Beethoven'. 'The quartets succeed one another. Haydn leads to Mozart, Mozart to Beethoven'. Eugène Sauzay, *Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven. Etude sur le quatuor* (Paris, 1861), p.23.

<sup>120</sup> 'Les programmes du premier ensemble de chambre constitué en France, celui de Pierre Baillot, témoignent des musiques auxquelles les Français, amateurs ou professionnels, acceptaient de se

statement that Baillot often changed his programmes at the last minute and that the ensemble frequently appeared in concert without having rehearsed a piece that was added to the programme in haste might indeed be true, painting the picture of a musician who, rather selfishly and lacking in organisation, put his own musical pleasure before that of his colleagues and audience is quite an unfair point. Baillot lies far from such a portrayal; on the contrary, the programming of his *séances* seems carefully constructed, with the needs and predilections of the audience at the forefront.

#### 'Papa' Haydn and his son Mozart

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), unlike many of his famous contemporaries, had no professional musicians in his ancestors, except merchants and craftsmen. His biographer Georg August Griesinger noted in 1810: 'la vie de Haydn n'est signalée par aucun événement marquant'.<sup>121</sup> Some might argue that this, along with his relatively long life, were the reasons why he did not prompt more of an explosive public triumph. His contribution to instrumental music, however, was celebrated and critics throughout the nineteenth century did not cease to draw attention to this. One cannot describe Haydn's impact in a better way than with Joseph Carpani's words of 1837:

Quand donc on pense en quel état Haydn trouva la musique instrumentale, lorsqu'il commença à en composer; quand on considère ensuite à quel degré de perfection il la porta et combien il en étendit le

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laisser initier: Boccherini et Haydn, Mozart à doses plus réduites, et les six Quatuors op. 18 de Beethoven'. 'The programmes of the first chamber ensemble formed in France, that of Pierre Baillot, show music to which the French, amateurs or professionals, were willing to be introduced to: Boccherini and Haydn, Mozart in smaller doses, and the six quartets op. 18 by Beethoven'. Brigitte François-Sappey, 'Les quatuors à cordes dans le premier tiers du XIXe siècle', *Le quatuor à cordes en France de 1750 à nos jours* (Paris, 1995), p. 77.

<sup>121</sup> 'Haydn's life is marked by no significant event'. Georg August Griesinger, *Joseph Haydn. Autobiographie et premières biographies*, ed. and trans. Marc Vignal (Paris, 1997), p. 54.

domaine, ayant à peine vingt-cinq ans, on ne peut s'empêcher de s'écrier: qu'il fut certes l'inventeur de ce genre, presque'inconnu avant lui à tous les siècles et à toutes les nations. Mais il l'inventa pas seulement, il le porta comme je l'ai dit, à un point de perfection tel, que la réputation de grand symphoniste n'a été obtenue après lui et ne pourra l'être à l'avenir que sur les traces de Haydn dans la route qu'il fraya le premier, et dont il est impossible de s'écarter sans erreur.<sup>122</sup>

Michel Brenet too, in the early twentieth century, points out Haydn's effortlessness at composing instrumental music: 'Haydn est chez lui dans la musique instrumentale. C'est là que, délivré de la contrainte des textes, il peut donner cours à cette abondance de pensée, qu'à propos de sa musique religieuse il comparait lui-même au jet qui s'échappe d'un réservoir débordant'.<sup>123</sup> We gain the image of a prolific composer of instrumental music, who not only brought the genre to a new level, but was credited with inventing it altogether. Naturally, such a figure could not have been missing from Baillot's genealogy.

Like Boccherini, Haydn had also already passed away when Baillot set up his music society in 1814. Haydn had his first piece published in France as early as 1764 and so his music was being performed in Paris for several decades already. By 1814, his work was thus both familiar and venerated; the commission of the 'Paris' Symphonies No. 82-7, by the director of the Concerts de la loge olympique in 1784, with a rather large fee attached to it,<sup>124</sup> is consistent with the international reputation Haydn had gained at the end of the eighteenth century. Baillot performed

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<sup>122</sup> 'So when we think in what state Haydn found instrumental music, when he began to compose, when we consider to what degree of perfection he brought it and how much he extended the field, at barely twenty-five years of age, one cannot help but exclaim that he was indeed the inventor of this genre, almost unknown before him in all ages and all nations. But he did not just invent it, he brought it, as I said, to such a point of perfection that the reputation of a great symphonist was only obtained after him and in the future it will only be in Haydn's footsteps, in the road he paved first, and of which it is impossible to distance oneself without wandering'. Joseph Carpani, *Haydn, sa vie, ses ouvrages, ses voyages et ses aventures*, trans. D. Mondo (Paris, 1837), p. 12.

<sup>123</sup> 'Haydn is at home in instrumental music. It is there that, freed from the constraint of text, he can allow this abundance of thought to flow freely, while he himself compared his religious music to a water stream escaping from an overflowing reservoir'. Michel Brenet, *Haydn* (Paris, 1909), p. 150.

<sup>124</sup> Bernard Harrison, *Haydn: The 'Paris' Symphonies* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 1.

thirty six of the sixty eight string quartets which Haydn composed during his rather long musical career. Interestingly, he did not choose to present any of Haydn's *divertimenti* or *trii*, which included string instruments in various combinations. As we have already seen, he divided his Beethoven performances almost equally between quartets and quintets, while with Boccherini he clearly leaned towards quintets; however, it comes as no surprise that Baillot only presented quartets by Haydn, as the latter was seen at the time (and arguably still today) as the father of the string quartet genre. Sauzay makes this rather clear, while enhancing the idea of a genealogical, or historical programme *chez* Baillot, in his laconic statement: 'commencer par Haydn, c'est prendre le quatuor à sa véritable source, historique et chronologique'.<sup>125</sup> It can therefore be said that Baillot paid tribute to the man without whom the whole concept of his society would perhaps not even exist. One cannot ignore the historical significance of Haydn's instrumental music and, given that Baillot's contemporaries saw his chamber music series also as a lesson in music history (see note 77), it seems reasonable that Haydn was the second most performed composer at the *séances*, after Boccherini.

Haydn's quartets were written in the *style concertant*, in which each member of the ensemble participated in the presentation of the melodic material or mutually created the main line of a melody.<sup>126</sup> This contrasted markedly with the *quatuor brillant*, which was essentially designed as a showcase, focusing on the virtuosity of the first violin while the other instruments accompanied. The most important difference between the two styles was that the *quatuor brillant* showed almost no change in the roles of the four instruments throughout the work, leaving no

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<sup>125</sup> 'starting by Haydn is to take the quartet at its true source, historical and chronological'. Sauzay, *Etude sur le quatuor*, p. 37.

<sup>126</sup> See also Mara Parker, *The String Quartet, 1750-1897* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 49-50.

room for dialogue between them. However, as Framery confirms, dialogue was one of the principal characteristics of any work said to be *concertant*:

On appelle symphonie concertante, celle où le motif est dialogué entre deux ou plusieurs instrumens. On dit un trio, un quatuor concertans, pour les distinguer de ceux où il n’y a qu’une partie principale, et où les autres ne sont que d’accompagnement.<sup>127</sup>

Emphasis should be put on the term *dialogué*, which was practically synonymous with *concertant*, but which introduced more directly the concept of conversation in music. In the French aesthetic it underlined words, discourse and the salon practice of polite exchange of ideas. Conversation was effectively an artform at the time: ‘a finely tuned mode of communication with its own rules of etiquette and forms of gamesmanship’.<sup>128</sup> Haydn’s op. 1 quartets were published in Paris in the 1760s as *Six symphonies ou quatuors dialogués*, confirming the emergence of a quartet whose texture – the manner in which the parts relate to each other and to the work as a whole – allowed all four instruments to take turns in presenting the melodic material.<sup>129</sup> However, Barbara R. Hanning argues that such a title was initially perhaps just a catchphrase used by publishers to entice the potential buyer, seeing as Haydn’s op. 1 did not present the kind of interactive participation of all instruments that became a distinguishable feature of the more mature quartets of Haydn and Mozart in the 1780s.<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, the French preoccupation with the art of conversation made the private salon concert an ideal occasion for the flourishing of the *quatuor dialogué*.

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<sup>127</sup> ‘We name *symphonie concertante* one whose motif is presented in dialogue between two or several instruments. We say a trio, a quartet *concertant* to distinguish them from those where only one main part exists and where the others are of accompaniment’. *Encyclopédie méthodique*, ed. Nicolas Etienne Framery, Pierre-Louis Ginguené, vol. 1 (Paris, 1791), p. 298.

<sup>128</sup> Barbara R. Hanning, ‘Conversation and Musical Style in the Late Eighteenth-century Parisian Salon’, *Eighteenth-century Studies*, vol. 22, no. 4 (Summer 1989), p. 512.

<sup>129</sup> See also Janet M. Levy, *Quatuor Concertant in Paris in the Latter Half of the Eighteenth Century*, PhD dissertation (Stanford University, 1971), p. 46.

<sup>130</sup> Hanning, ‘Conversation and Musical Style’, p. 519.

In *L'Art du violon* Baillot describes quartet playing in a socially

agreeable way:

Dans le Quatuor, il [le génie d'exécution] sacrifie toutes les richesses de l'instrument à l'effet général, il prend l'esprit de cet autre genre de composition dont le dialogue charmant semble être une conversation d'amis qui se communiquent leurs sensations, leurs sentimens, leurs affections mutuelles: leurs avis quelquefois differens font naitre une discussion animée à laquelle chacun donne ses developpemens [...]<sup>131</sup>

Baillot emphasises that all personal interests were cast aside for the benefit of this charming musical conversation among friends that was the string quartet. Nothing of this description relates to André Morellet's (1727-1819) list of features that ruin conversation in his essay entitled *De la conversation*: 'l'inattention; l'habitude d'interrompre, et de parler plusieurs à la fois; [...] l'empressement trop grand de montrer de l'esprit; [...] l'égoïsme; [...] le despotisme ou esprit de domination'.<sup>132</sup>

At Baillot's *séances*, repertoire that provided such pleasant and refined musical dialogue between instruments would make the experience – both acoustic and visual – more theatrical for the audience. In addition, this dialogue principle also presents a connection with vocal music because, in so far as instruments interact, they resemble agents or people – they have to be assumed to be listening as well as speaking – and in this manner they become *personae* or characters. This, in combination with the spoken introductions, the animated gestures of the performers, their varying bow strokes and facial expressions, as we have seen, would reinforce the idea of the chamber music concert being more of a comprehensive spectacle, rather than simply

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<sup>131</sup> 'In the quartet, he sacrifices all the richness of the instrument for the general effect, he adopts the spirit of this other genre of composition whose charming dialogue seems to be a conversation among friends who communicate their feelings, their emotions, their mutual affection: their opinions, sometimes different, give birth to a lively discussion to which each one adds their development'. Baillot, *L'Art du violon*, pp. 268-9.

<sup>132</sup> '[...] being inattentive; the habit of interrupting someone or speaking simultaneously; [...] the eagerness to show off, [...] being egotistical, [...] despotism or dominating the conversation'. André Morellet, 'De la conversation', *Eloges de Mme Geoffrin*, ed. Morellet, Thomas, d'Alembert (Paris, 1812), pp. 169-70.

an acoustic experience, bringing it closer to the features of an event at the competing opera house.

Haydn's music was also a vital part of music education, another area in which Baillot excelled. However, Leon Botstein makes an important comment about the fact that educational material 'often emerges tainted by the brush of official approval'.<sup>133</sup> Botstein talks of the attachment of Haydn's music to 'serious musical education' (by serious he supposedly suggests institutions preparing students for a professional music career, such as the Conservatoire). But, far from tainted, Haydn's music also made its way into amateur salons and became an integral part of both private and public concert life. Baillot, knowing his audience was made up of enthusiastic amateur musicians and artists alike, could surely not go wrong by including Haydn's string quartets in the programme; as we have seen, familiar music actually appealed more to Parisian audiences (as opposed to new 'bizarre' and 'barbaric' quartets). However, there is another dimension to Haydn's music that contributed to his widespread recognition: the composer's interest in aesthetic theory. Haydn's interest in beautiful melody is undeniable, and was surely appreciated by the connoisseurs, but Bernard Harrison takes this a step further by claiming that Haydn's instrumental music exemplified 'a sub-category of works which somehow preserved or reinvented the aesthetic qualities of vocal music'.<sup>134</sup> We are not able to confirm whether Baillot's contemporaries felt the same way at the time, however Baillot's own writings about the timbre of the violin add to our understanding of such a connection between vocal and instrumental music: in the *Méthode de violon du Conservatoire* we read that the violin 'has the honour of competing with the human

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<sup>133</sup> Leon Botstein, 'The Consequences of Presumed Innocence: the Nineteenth-century Reception of Joseph Haydn', *Haydn Studies*, ed. W. Dean Sutcliffe (Cambridge, 1998), p. 14.

<sup>134</sup> Harrison, *Haydn*, p. 41.

voice',<sup>135</sup> while in *L'Art du violon* we are told that its timbre is a second human voice.<sup>136</sup> Establishing that the audience made some kind of association between instrumental and vocal music will help us comprehend the manner in which European audiences gradually became more interested in instrumental music (or 'pure music', as Daniel Chua puts it).<sup>137</sup> Vocal music and opera provided an important and familiar context for the audience, not only because of the presence of text, but also because Baillot's subscribers, who were more knowledgeable and hence more present in the musical happenings of the capital, surely must have been attending opera productions long before Baillot set up his *séances* in 1814.

Apart from achieving musicians' and audiences' appreciation, Haydn also had a young admirer who 'called him his father', and who in turn Haydn himself admired profoundly.<sup>138</sup> Mozart was heavily influenced by Haydn, and this seems to have been reciprocal, not in a rival manner, but rather in a creative, competitive way. Mozart had visited Paris twice, when he was seven and ten years old; he was greeted with sheer enthusiasm and praised for his phenomenal talent and rare prodigy. He played for the baron-diplomat Friedrich Melchior von Grimm (1723-1807), who was a friend of Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau, among others, and who introduced him to music-lovers from the highest tiers of society, for some of whom little Mozart composed sonatas for harpsichord and violin *ad libitum* (namely Madame Victoire de France, second daughter of Louis XV, and the comtesse de Tessé, *dame de*

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<sup>135</sup> 'il obtient l'honneur de rivaliser avec la voix humaine'. Pierre Marie François de Salles Baillot, Pierre Rode, Rodolphe Kreutzer, *Méthode de violon du Conservatoire* (Paris, 1803), p. 1.

<sup>136</sup> 'Son timbre est une seconde voix humaine'. Baillot, *L'Art du violon*, p. 5.

<sup>137</sup> Daniel K.L. Chua, 'Haydn as Romantic: a Chemical Experiment with Instrumental Music', *Haydn Studies*, ed. W. Dean Sutcliffe (Cambridge, 1998), p. 120.

<sup>138</sup> "'Mozart et moi nous nous estimions beaucoup, et il m'appelait son papa", déclara-t-il en 1799 à son futur biographe Georg August Griesinger'. "'Mozart and I appreciate each other a lot, and he called me his dad", he declared to his future biographer Georg August Griesinger in 1799'. Marc Vignal, *Haydn et Mozart* (Paris, 2001), p.15.



*compagnie* of the Dauphine Marie-Josèphe de Saxe). However, when Mozart returned to Paris in 1778 – aged twenty two – he did not receive the same response. According to a late nineteenth-century source, Mozart would have stayed in Paris permanently if it were not for the jealousy of the ‘cabales des envieux’ who stood in his way.<sup>139</sup> Some of the works he was asked to compose at the start of his stay were ignored and Mozart himself attributed this to jealousy, and specifically to Cambini (who, as we have already seen, did not have positive comments for Beethoven’s works either). Despite Leopold Mozart’s view that good composers in Paris at the time could be ‘counted on the fingers of one hand’,<sup>140</sup> Mozart seemed to go unnoticed; the memories of his previous visits may have set high expectations for both father and son, yet Parisians did not seem to remember the little boy that had charmed them some fifteen years ago, even though he had achieved the compositional greatness we are aware of today.<sup>141</sup>

Therefore, one can understand how introducing Mozart’s quartets in 1814 would have been more challenging than Haydn’s for Baillot. He excluded from his series the quartet K80, the ‘Milanese’ quartets (K155-160) and the first five of the six ‘Viennese’ quartets (K168-173), thus being left with later works: the ‘Haydn’ quartets (K387, K421, K 428, K464, K465) and the ‘Prussian’ quartets (K575, K589, K590). He also included the two piano quartets; K493 was performed once and K478 only twice, but its transcription for string quintet was played twelve times in total (perhaps showing Baillot’s preference for a string ensemble without piano). He also

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<sup>139</sup> ‘Il allait se fixer chez nous si les cabales des envieux ne lui avaient barré le chemin’. ‘He was going to set home here if it were not for the envious cabals who blocked his way’. Charles Poisot, *Lecture sur les trois séjours de Mozart à Paris* (Paris, 1873), p. 4.

<sup>140</sup> ‘Quant à Paris, selon Léopold, les bons compositeurs, Dieu merci, se comptent pour le moment sur les doigts d’une main’. ‘As for Paris, according to Leopold, good composers, thank God, are counted for the moment on the fingers of one hand’. Natalia Smirnova, *Mozart à Paris* (Paris, 2011), p. 74.

<sup>141</sup> See also Marie Christine Vila, *Sotto voce. Mozart à Paris* (Arles, 1991), p. 39-40.

presented several other string quintets, among which was K593, which was also the most frequently performed work by Mozart at Baillot's series (it was performed fifteen times), with quintet K 515 in second place at twelve performances – a tie with the K478 transcription and K581, the transcription of the clarinet quintet.

Out of the first thirty five concerts of the society, only two did not include a work by Mozart, but from 1819 onwards, Baillot would on average give Mozart a miss once every three concerts.<sup>142</sup> This is in agreement with the fact that in later years he started introducing composers such as Jadin, Barbella, Onslow and others, as we have already seen at the start of this chapter. It was therefore Mozart, out of the four 'regulars' of the series, who would be replaced occasionally by other composers – students, friends or colleagues of Baillot's, or simply a composer from the past who he felt was worth the mention. But this is also consistent with the increase in Beethoven's works' appearances at the *séances* in the late 1820s.

As Marc Vignal points out, 'vers 1800, beaucoup d'œuvres de Haydn et Mozart étaient jugées, par opposition au tout venant de la production contemporaine, "inégalables et exemplaires". Eux-mêmes n'étaient pourtant pas perçus comme des "classiques", mais comme d'audacieux réformateurs grâce auxquels la musique avait conquis de nouveaux territoires, bref comme des "modernes"'.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, in line with Baillot's efforts towards innovation and chamber music reform, Mozart could not have been left out; after all, he was an irreplaceable part of the instrumental

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<sup>142</sup> Concerts not to include a work by Mozart, as arises from Fauquet's list of works: 10 March, 9 December 1817; 8 December 1818; 2 February, 9 March, 23 March 1819; 18 January 1820; 21 March, 31 March 1821; 16 February, 9 March, 23 March 1822; 8 May, 14 May 1824; 25 February, 11 March 1826; 15 February, 22 March 1827; 29 January, 5 February, 18 March, 25 March 1828; 3 February, 10 February, 17 February, 24 March, 7 April, 20 April 1829; 1 March 1831; 31 January 1832; 29 January 1833; 20 December 1834; 16 March 1836; 30 December 1837; 10 February 1838.

<sup>143</sup> 'Around 1800, many works of Haydn and Mozart were considered, as opposed to all contemporary production, "incomparable and exemplary". They were not, however, seen as "classics", but as bold reformers through whom music had conquered new territories, in short as "modern"'. Vignal, *Haydn et Mozart*, p. 21.

music family tree that Baillot was endeavouring to establish at his concert series. However, knowing just how much his audience could tolerate, and conscious of Haydn's Parisian popularity against Mozart, he kept the latter in smaller doses.

Given Mozart's prolific operatic brilliance, it would have been very fitting for our overarching theme of bringing the chamber music concert closer to the opera, as an important context for chamber music audiences, had Parisians been introduced to Mozart's operatic works at the time. However, with the exception of a performance of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in Paris in 1801, it was not until later that opera-goers discovered Mozart's prominence as a composer of opera. Yet there is an interesting point to be made about a proposed relationship between music and words at the time: in the final section of Momigny's discussion of Mozart's D minor quartet K421 in the treatise *Cours complet d'harmonie et de composition*, published in 1806, the author chose to add words to the first-violin part of the first movement of the work. He explains: 'J'ai cru que la meilleure manière d'en faire connaître la véritable expression, à mes lecteurs, était d'y joindre des paroles'.<sup>144</sup> In other words, for the purpose of critical understanding, Momigny creates, seemingly out of nowhere, a *scène lyrique*, Dido's lament as she is about to be abandoned by the hero who she loves.<sup>145</sup>

We may find Momigny's approach bizarre and even pointless today, but it says a lot about what his contemporaries were accustomed to. It emphasises the closeness of the relationship between words and instrumental music, with the former aiding the comprehension of the latter, and strengthens the possibility of translation

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<sup>144</sup> 'I thought that the best way in which to make clear to my readers its true expression was to attach some words to it'. Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny, *Cours complet d'harmonie et de composition, d'après une théorie neuve et générale de la musique* (Paris, 1806), vol. 1, p. 371.

<sup>145</sup> See also John Irving, *Mozart. The 'Haydn' Quartets* (Cambridge, 1998); Elaine Sisman, 'Observations on the First Phase of Mozart's "Haydn" Quartets', *Words about Mozart*, ed. Dorothea Link, Judith Nagley (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 33-58.

from one medium to another. Roger Parker comments on this association: ‘[...] what strikes us as certainly odd about Momigny is his certainty, his assumption that the connection between words and music is so inevitable and unchallengeable that the two matrices, the two systems, may enfold one another even given no overt encouragement from the creative exterior’.<sup>146</sup> In other words, despite the fact that Mozart’s K421 was composed as a string quartet and that the range of the first-violin part could not have been sung by a human voice, Momigny still assumed that the presence of music would produce words capable of voicing the specific expressive qualities of the work. But perhaps the most significant part of this assumption is written from the point of view of an opera-goer, as it was at the opera house that audiences experienced music most frequently and most powerfully. Thus, thinking of a piece of instrumental music as an operatic aria with a grammatical structure and a programme of its own, would have provided the audience of Baillot’s chamber music concert with the necessary context in order to understand and appreciate the music.<sup>147</sup>

In conclusion, considering the *séances*’s programmes as a whole, one observes that Baillot was good at rousing and maintaining his listeners’ attention and used that to educate them further by introducing a succinct genealogy of composers who represented chamber music at the time. With the growing sense of historical consciousness arising from the recent political events, this seemed perfectly timed. However, even though Baillot sought to create an event that would separate chamber music from all other genres, given the nature of the programmes at the *séances*, it seems that he nevertheless recognised the tremendous popularity of opera at the time and used it as a tool to provide his audience with a familiar context that would

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<sup>146</sup> Roger Parker, ‘On Reading Nineteenth-century Opera: Verdi through the Looking-glass’, *Reading Opera*, ed. Arthur Groos, Roger Parker (Princeton, 1988), p. 290.

<sup>147</sup> See also Peter le Huray, ‘Mozart’s D Minor String Quartet K 421: a Contemporary Analysis’, *Authenticity in Performance* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 113-22.

strengthen their engagement with the music he was presenting. Did his audience make the connection between the opera house and the Spanish colour in Boccherini's quintets, Haydn's *style dialogué* and melodic flair that recreated the aesthetic values of vocal music, and Mozart's *scènes lyriques*? We cannot be sure. What is certain, however, is that these associations existed, they were often emphasised further by critics such as Momigny, and have a lot to tell about the significant crossovers between the two genres that are often ignored today.



Litho de C. Melin, R. des mousier.

*Théâtre Italien.  
Rossini soutenant à lui seul  
tout l'opéra italien*

*Miroir (Journal)*



Eugène Delacroix, *Théâtre Italien: Rossini soutenant à lui seul tout l'Opéra italien* (1828),  
Bibliothèque nationale de France

### 3 | Pierre Baillot: a virtuoso in disguise?

In the previous chapters I discussed the circumstances under which the *Séances des quatuors et quintettes de Baillot* first appeared in Paris in 1814, their popularity, as well as the general Parisian attitude towards chamber music at the time. I touched on the musicians, amateurs and professionals, the audiences, as well as the newly-reformed bourgeoisie, before delving into Baillot's concert programmes at the *séances*, with a discussion of the importance in educating audiences through a historization of instrumental music and through a skilful association with opera, which provided an important and familiar context for the listener. In doing so I concentrated on four out of the five main composers presented at the society:

Beethoven, Boccherini, Haydn and Mozart – the fifth being Baillot himself, who performed quite a few of his own works during the twenty six years of the existence of the society, usually at the end of the *soirée*. This chapter explores Baillot's significance as a violinist and assesses his relationship to one of the most characteristic developments of the 1820s and 1830s: the rise of the virtuoso soloist.

According to his contemporaries and based on reviews that we have seen in previous chapters, Baillot was one of the finest violinists of the time. His profile as a violinist was wide-ranging: his career brought together orchestral playing, solo performances, teaching at the Conservatoire, some concert touring, composition, and, of course, chamber music. Baillot was a violinist in the orchestra of the Théâtre Feydeau in the 1790s, led the second violins in Napoleon's private orchestra in 1802, was leader of the Opéra orchestra for a decade (1821-1831) and leader of the

orchestra of the Chapelle Royale from 1825.<sup>148</sup> As a soloist, he often performed *concerti* in Paris (with the 1795 performance of a Viotti concerto gaining him a position as professor at the Conservatoire): notably the French *première* of Beethoven's violin concerto at the Société des concerts du Conservatoire in 1828, among many other events, including charity concerts.<sup>149</sup> His tours took him to Russia (1805-1808), England (1815-1816), and Switzerland and Italy in 1833.<sup>150</sup> His status as an experienced professor at the Conservatoire cannot be questioned; many of his successful students (especially François Antoine Habeneck and Eugène Sauzay) became part of the vital support network Baillot relied on for the success of his *séances* and, inspired by their great *maître*, carried on his vision for the expansion of instrumental music in France.

Baillot was also a prolific composer: he composed nine concertos and a symphonie concertante for two violins, numerous *airs variés*, caprices and études, duos, trios, string quartets, and a sonata for piano and violin.<sup>151</sup> In line with Baillot's works being forgotten today, Fétis notes that, although original, they did not enjoy much success at the time either: 'La musique de M. Baillot est originale, et en général mélancolique; elle n'a pas eu tout le succès qu'elle méritait'.<sup>152</sup> However, there was a persistent emphasis then, as now, on Baillot's unsurpassed abilities in chamber music performance. This is not an incidental feature of Baillot's reputation: it evokes the

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<sup>148</sup> Pierre Soccane, 'Quelques documents inédits sur Pierre Baillot' (1771-1842), *Revue de Musicologie*, vol. 22, no. 2 (1943), pp. 74 and 76.

<sup>149</sup> François-Joseph Fétis, 'Baillot', *Biographie universelle des musiciens* (Paris, 1866-68), vol. 1, pp. 219-23.

<sup>150</sup> See also Paul David, Manoug Parikian, Michelle Garnier-Panafieu, 'Pierre Baillot', *Grove Music Online*.

<sup>151</sup> 'Pierre Baillot', *Grove Music Online*.

<sup>152</sup> 'Mr Baillot's music is original and generally melancholic; it has not had the success it deserved'. Fétis, 'Musique instrumentale', *Revue musicale* (1831), p. 224.



idea of musical equality and connoisseurship, and distances him from the more romantic, and perhaps commercial, aspects of the musical scene.

At the same time, the rapid rise of the virtuoso soloist in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was one of the most characteristic features of the time, and Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840), the extraordinary touring virtuoso with the frightening exterior and the array of violinistic innovations, with the grotesque yet cathartic experience of his concerts, represented the new, romantic ideals of virtuosity. Digging deeper, however, the two violinists shared more than their reputations might suggest. Although Paganini's principles, and indeed intentions, appear to be clear, as we will see, Baillot's prove more challenging to decipher.

#### Baillot's treatises and the *beau idéal*

Though not straightforward to reconstruct, Baillot's musical ideals permeate his two treatises on violin performance. The first is the *Méthode de violon du Conservatoire*, jointly written in 1803 with his colleagues Pierre Rode and Rodolphe Kreutzer, while Baillot appears as the sole editor. Denise Yim considers this to be 'in reality largely the work of Baillot',<sup>153</sup> and one can easily agree after reading just a few paragraphs of the second treatise we shall examine: Baillot's *L'Art du violon* of 1834 – of which he was the sole author. His very personal, poetic and evocative writing style, filled with metaphors, becomes immediately apparent in the *Méthode*. Further, the fact that large parts of the *Méthode* are repeated without being altered in the least in *L'Art du violon*, and are presented without a citation, adds to the argument – especially considering Baillot's gallantry towards his two beloved colleagues and friends (who

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<sup>153</sup> Denise Yim, *Viotti and the Chinnerys. A Relationship Chartered Through Letters* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 109.

had already passed away at the time of publication of *L'Art du violon*, and to whom he refers in the most gracious manner in the introduction of his work), which would not have allowed him to copy their work without stating it.

In the opening paragraphs of the *Méthode*, the instrument's rank and its status is declared as the only instrument able to compete with the human voice, with a timbre that combines sweetness and radiance, and which is naturally made to dominate in concerts.<sup>154</sup> Notice is also taken of the instrument's progress: '[...] mettre des beautés de sentimens à la place de ces beautés de convention qui pouvaient surprendre l'admiration au moyen de la difficulté vaincue, mais qui ne présentaient rien à l'imagination, n'avaient jamais été jusqu'à l'âme et n'avaient fait qu'amuser l'oreille'.<sup>155</sup> This progress was achieved by uniting genius and taste – terms that recur throughout the treatise; the work of genius is to discover new means of expression, while good taste is there to keep it within the limits of what is wise.<sup>156</sup>

We learn more about the broader ideal of balance of genius and taste from the *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review*'s comments on the treatise: '[...] they impel the student to use his understanding as well as his fingers'; '[...] they will teach him to form high and honourable notions'; '[...] in search of the *beau idéal*, which according to his judgment will consist of whatever touches and exalts the

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<sup>154</sup> 'le rang qui lui appartient'; 'il obtient l'honneur de rivaliser avec la voix humaine'; 'son timbre qui joint la douceur à l'éclat'; 'fait par sa nature pour régner dans les concerts'. 'The rank that belongs to it'; 'it has the honour of competing with the human voice'; 'its timbre that joins sweetness to brilliance'; 'is made by its nature to reign in concerts'. Pierre Marie François de Salles Baillot, Pierre Rode, Rodolphe Kreutzer, *Méthode de violon du Conservatoire* (Paris, 1803), p. 1.

<sup>155</sup> 'To put beauty of feelings in the stead of beauty of convention which could instigate admiration through the overcoming of difficulties, but which presented nothing to the imagination, had never reached to the soul and had only amused the ear'. *Méthode*, p. 2.

<sup>156</sup> 'Mais c'est peu que le génie ait produit de nouveaux moyens d'expression, s'il ne reste pas dans de sages limites son but est manqué; il faut que le bon goût le guide et l'arrête à propos'. 'But it does not suffice that genius has produced new means of expression, if it does not remain within wise limits its goal is missed; good taste must guide it and limit it accordingly'. *Méthode*, p. 2.

soul'.<sup>157</sup> This is made perfectly clear from early on in the introduction of the treatise, where the qualities of an artist are explained: 'Pour se former le goût, l'artiste doué d'un esprit droit et d'une imagination ardente doit consacrer sa vie à la recherche de cette perfection idéale dont il est si beau d'approcher. Adoptant pour règle du vrai beau tout ce qui sait toucher le cœur et élever l'âme [...]'.<sup>158</sup> Baillot thus makes it obvious that perfection and true beauty are among his priorities in performance, but other commendable features of violin-playing, listed throughout the introduction, include grace, confidence, suppleness, clarity, intonation, a touching melody and a majestic harmony, brilliance of the left hand, variety in performance, and a full and soft sound.<sup>159</sup> The references to singing are several, and at times become more specific, such as the association between breathing techniques and the use of the bow.<sup>160</sup> Importance is also given to the timbre – or indeed the quality – of the instrument, and it is underlined that the finest timbre is the one that unites sweetness and radiance – a quote from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's late eighteenth-century music dictionary.<sup>161</sup> In the subject of dynamics, in a similarly poetic manner, we are told

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<sup>157</sup> 'Rode, Baillot, and Kreutzer's Method of Instruction for the violin', *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* (1824), vol. 6, no. 24, pp. 528-9. Baillot was not the only one to use this definition for the term: in a late nineteenth-century dictionary we find the following description: 'tout ce qui élève l'âme, en lui faisant éprouver un sentiment de plaisir mêlé d'admiration. Le beau idéal. Le beau dans tous les genres est ce qui plait à la vertu éclairée'. 'Everything that lifts the soul while making it experience a feeling of pleasure mixed with admiration. The perfect beauty. Beauty in all genres is what appeals to the enlightened virtue'. Paul Guérin, *Dictionnaire des dictionnaires. Lettres, sciences, arts, encyclopédie universelle* (Paris, 1895), vol. 1, p. 967.

<sup>158</sup> 'To form his taste, the gifted artist of good disposition and of an ardent imagination must devote his life to the search for the ideal perfection which is so beautiful to approach. Adopting as a rule of true beauty all that touches the heart and lifts the soul [...]'. *Méthode*, p. 3.

<sup>159</sup> 'grâce'; 'l'aplomb'; 'souplesse'; 'netteté'; 'justesse dans l'intonation (mérite si rare et nécessaire)'; 'touchante mélodie'; 'harmonie auguste'; 'avoir du brillant dans la main gauche'; 'variété dans l'exécution'; 'un son plein et moëlleux'. *Méthode*, pp. 1-4.

<sup>160</sup> *Méthode*, pp. 133-4.

<sup>161</sup> '[...] le beau timbre est celui qui réunit la douceur à l'éclat; tel est le timbre du violon'. '[...] a beautiful timbre is that which brings softness to brilliance; this is the timbre of the violin'. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique* (Geneva, 1781), vol. 3, p. 745, and also in *Méthode*, p. 135.

that they are to the melody what *chiaroscuro* is to painting,<sup>162</sup> while when exploring the topic of ornamentation, we are reminded of the relationship between genius and good taste: imagination – an attribute of the genius – invents ornaments, while good taste restricts them. We are told that a large quantity of ornaments can be damaging to true expression, causing distortion to the melody and ultimately resulting in monotony.<sup>163</sup> All this serves as an explanation to one of the most central principles of Baillot’s philosophy, which is then presented without fanfare: ‘rien n’est beau et touchant que ce qui est simple’.<sup>164</sup> All this points to a performer who concentrates on the quality of sound, on dynamic contrast, beauty of expression, simplicity, and restricted, or indeed tasteful, parade of technical work (seen in ornamentation).

The *beau idéal*, mentioned in the *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review*, which truly sums up Baillot’s philosophy, can be traced back to Ancient Greece, a good example being Plato’s *Phaedrus* and its recurring discussion of true beauty. The cultural eminence of Ancient Greece was especially encouraged by the writers of *La décade philosophique, littéraire et politique*, founded in 1794. Ewa Lajer-Burcharth notes that in the late 1790s there was an effort to separate the post-Thermidorean regime from its predecessor, the Jacobin Republic, which was seen at the time as a period of terror, anarchy and vandalism. She states:

La décade championed Antiquity as a cultural model for different republican practices through which the image of the desired political and social stabilization could be produced. Specifically, it advocated ancient Greece, inasmuch as Greece demonstrated the link between artistic

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<sup>162</sup> ‘elles sont pour la mélodie ce que peuvent être le clair obscur et le jeu des lumières pour la peinture’. ‘they are to melody what chiaroscuro and the play of light are to painting’. *Méthode*, p. 137.

<sup>163</sup> ‘L’imagination invente les ornemens, mais le bon gout les restreint. [...] on doit encore éviter de les multiplier, la quantité d’ornemens nuit à la véritable expression, défigure la mélodie et finit par devenir monotone’. ‘The imagination invents the ornaments, but good taste restricts them. One must still avoid multiplying them, the quantity of ornaments affects true expression, disfigures the melody and eventually becomes monotonous’. *Méthode*, p. 139.

<sup>164</sup> ‘Nothing is as beautiful and touching as that which is simple’. *Méthode*, p. 139.

excellence and political liberty. [...] La décade's advocacy of Greek Antiquity offered a cultural vehicle for representing the desired distance from immediate French history, thus feeding the paramount ideological effort of constructing the Directorial status quo as the Revolution accomplished.<sup>165</sup>

The use of the term in eighteenth-century Paris is very common, especially in matters of literature, painting and sculpture.<sup>166</sup> Jean-François Marmontel (1723-1799), one of the *encyclopédistes* along with Voltaire and Rousseau, wrote eloquently on matters of beauty in the arts, notably dividing it into three kinds:

La nature et l'art ont trois manières de nous affecter vivement, ou par la pensée, ou par le sentiment, ou par la seule émotion des organes. Il doit donc y avoir aussi trois espèces de beau dans la nature et dans les arts: le beau intellectuel, le beau moral, le beau matériel ou sensible. [...] il se trouve qu'en effet l'œil et l'oreille sont exclusivement les deux organes du beau.<sup>167</sup>

Baillot, too, depicts the *beau idéal* as early as 1798, in a letter to Montbeillard, disappointed at the fact that it is not appreciated by the servants of fashion and of bad taste.<sup>168</sup>

Other principles touched on in the *Méthode*, on taste or on the genius of performance,<sup>169</sup> appear unaltered in *L'Art du violon*, which shows the extent to

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<sup>165</sup> Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, *Necklines: the Art of Jacques-Louis David after the Terror* (New Haven, 1999), pp. 145-6. See also Régis Michel, *Le beau idéal ou l'art du concept* (Paris, 1989).

<sup>166</sup> In the *Traité de la peinture et de la sculpture* by Jonathan Richardson, father and son, we find a lengthy introductory chapter on the *beau idéal*. Richardson, père et fils, 'Discours préliminaire sur le beau idéal', *Traité de la peinture et de la sculpture* (Paris, 1728), vol. 3.

<sup>167</sup> 'Nature and art have three ways of deeply affecting us; through thought, through sentiment, or through the single feeling of the organs. There should therefore be three types of beauty in nature and in the arts: intellectual beauty, ethical beauty, and physical or responsive beauty. [...] it seems that in fact the eye and the ear are the two exclusive organs of beauty'. Jean-François Marmontel, *Elémens de littérature. Œuvres complètes de Marmontel* (Paris, 1819), vol. 4, p. 171.

<sup>168</sup> 'j'avais résolu de le risquer malgré les valets du mauvais goût qui ne veulent jamais qu'on produise le beau parce que le beau idéal n'est point accrédité par la mode'. 'I had made up my mind to take a risk, in spite of those servants of bad taste who never want us to produce that which is beautiful because the *beau idéal* is not accredited by fashion'. Letter to Montbeillard, 3 April 1798, in Brigitte François-Sappey, *Pierre Marie François de Salles Baillot (1771-1842) par lui-même: étude de sociologie musicale* (Paris, 1978), p. 177.

<sup>169</sup> Baillot divides taste into natural – which 'precedes reasoning and without knowing it always makes the right choice', and perfected – which is a gift of nature but also a result of education. A

which Baillot believed in them over a three-decade period. Nevertheless, he did consider this latest treatise to be a revision of the *Méthode*,<sup>170</sup> thus keeping the fundamental truths about the instrument, while enhancing the text with the necessary information required by new repertoire and customs.<sup>171</sup> In the introduction to his work, Baillot – as in the *Méthode* – covers several topics, such as the origin of the instrument, its history and structure, but this time includes three noteworthy sub-titles: *Virtuoses les plus celebres, Rode - Kreutzer* and *Monsieur Paganini*. The first is a tribute, short yet filled with gratitude, to Corelli, Tartini, Gaviniés, Pugnani and Viotti.<sup>172</sup> The second is an emotionally charged reminiscence of his two good friends and colleagues, Rode and Kreutzer, who had passed away in 1830 and 1831 respectively. It is a plea to their students to stay loyal to the two masters' tradition of expressive qualities.<sup>173</sup> This brings us to the third title, that of Niccolò Paganini. Baillot feels it appropriate, in view of the timing of the publication, to mention his success and to highlight the uniqueness of his playing. He makes it apparent that his sole source of admiration stems from Paganini's ability to produce something that

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genius of performance is he who can transport the composer's own feelings to the listener's soul, and who can revive the great geniuses of the past. *Méthode*, pp. 161-3.

<sup>170</sup> 'Notre amour pour l'art nous faisait un devoir; il nous fait aujourd'hui une loi de profiter des leçons de l'expérience pour refaire cette méthode dont la révision, au bout d'un certain espace de temps, avait été considérée comme utile et arrêtée en conséquence dès son adoption'. 'Our love for art was our duty; it obliges us today to take advantage of lessons of experience in order to revise this method, whose revision, after a certain period of time, was considered useful and was fixed, as a result, upon its adoption'. Baillot, *L'Art du violon* (Paris, 1834), p. 2.

<sup>171</sup> '[...] ces ouvrages [...] avaient été faits à une époque trop éloignée pour aider à surmonter les difficultés nouvelles et pour donner la flexibilité de moyens que les compositions modernes rendaient de plus en plus nécessaire'. 'these works [...] had been made at a period too distant to help overcome new challenges and to provide flexibility of means that modern compositions were making increasingly necessary'. *L'Art du violon*, p. 2.

<sup>172</sup> The names are in chronological order; such was Baillot's courtesy and attention to detail.

<sup>173</sup> 'Combien il est pénible pour nous d'ajouter aux noms des grands artistes qui ne sont plus, ceux de nos deux collègues Rode et Kreutzer, descendus presque en même temps dans la tombe! pourquoi faut il déjà pleurer la perte de ces honorables amis et regretter sitôt de ne les entendre plus!'. 'How painful it is for us to add to the names of great artists who are no longer, those of our two colleagues Rode and Kreutzer, taken almost simultaneously to the grave! why do we have to mourn the loss of these honourable friends already and regret so early not to be hearing them any more'. *L'Art du violon*, p. 5.

was ‘all his’, and which gave him the sharpness, or indeed the edge, of novelty.<sup>174</sup> He goes on to list several features of his trickery, stating plainly that these had all been employed in the past, except for double harmonics and the exclusive use of one string of the instrument for an entire piece. It is significant to observe that despite Baillot’s description of the ideals of beauty and expression that he so fondly believed in and which seemed to outline an overall attachment to the principles of Classicism and of the past, he still finds it important to appreciate Paganini’s ability to produce something novel and original. Could this be a first contradiction in Baillot’s beliefs?

This little feature on the successful virtuoso seems to have drawn to an end, but then the reader encounters the next section, *Observation sur l’art en général*. It immediately becomes apparent that Baillot has not finished talking about Paganini; he seems eager to present his personal opinion, which he chooses to somewhat conceal, giving the reader the impression that he is discussing something new. Here he grasps at the opportunity to state that art might be gaining on one side, but loses on another; he explains, among other issues, that elegance might come at the expense of simplicity, and a showcase might come at the expense of expressive and natural singing.<sup>175</sup> This seems to be an almost direct criticism of Paganini, and indeed he goes on to distance himself from this school of thought even further, by mentioning that Carl Guhr’s treatise, which contains a detailed explanation of

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<sup>174</sup> ‘[...] sa manière de jouer du Violon était, en général, toute à lui, et n’avait que peu de ressemblance avec celle des autres virtuoses; cette différence donne à son jeu le piquant de la nouveauté’. ‘[...] his way of playing the violin was, in general, entirely his own, and had but little resemblance to that of other virtuosos; this difference gives his game the spice of novelty’. *L’Art du violon*, p. 6.

<sup>175</sup> ‘Il est une observation importante à faire ici; c’est que, le plus souvent, l’art perd d’un côté ce qu’il gagne de l’autre; on perd en simplicité ce que l’on obtient en élégance; [...] en chants expressifs et naturels ce que l’on trouve en choses d’effet’. ‘It is an important observation to be made here; it is that, most often, art loses on one side what it gains from the other; we lose in simplicity what we gain in elegance; [...] in expressive and natural songs that which we find in impressive matters’. *L’Art du violon*, p. 6.

Paganini's technique methods, 'should not be considered as following the *Méthode du Conservatoire*, as the latter is arranged in a completely different system'.<sup>176</sup> (With the word system he supposedly means the set of ideals, which he has already outlined earlier.)

It becomes obvious that Baillot does not identify with Paganini; his evaluation might not have been long, but it is certainly critical. Without referring to Paganini, he returns to the topic later on in the introductory chapter; there is a section entitled *Le virtuose*, where he briefly explains the etymology of the word virtuoso as the portrayal of strength or power, ability and perseverance, before going on to talk even further about the virtuoso of his time:

Le virtuose de nos jours, le plus digne d'admiration est, comme aux temps anciens celui qui, en sachant d'abord suivre le marche de son siècle dont il est le coryphée, réussit à l'entraîner, ensuite par l'impulsion de son génie et à lui faire ainsi presser le pas.<sup>177</sup>

The sketching of the virtuoso continues into the next section, *L'Artiste du 19e siècle*, where Baillot tells us in an almost repetitive way that the artist of the nineteenth century is the man who is passionate about everything that is beautiful and truthful, whose aspiration in all ventures is to have kindness as his aim and beauty as his model, and whose entire life is a continuous drive of admiration towards the marvels of nature.<sup>178</sup> Again, his reference to true beauty and to nature points to Classical ideals of the past, yet the title of the section seems to suggest that he believes them to

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<sup>176</sup> 'il ne doit point être considéré comme faisant suite à la *Méthode du Conservatoire*, composée dans un tout autre système'. 'It is not to be considered as following the method of the Conservatory, it is composed in an entirely different system'. *L'Art du violon*, p. 6.

<sup>177</sup> 'The virtuoso of today, the most worthy of admiration, is, as in ancient times, he who, while knowing how to follow the progress of his century of which he is the leader, succeeds to train it, and then drives it with his genius to increase its pace'. *L'Art du violon*, p. 9.

<sup>178</sup> '[...] c'est l'homme passionné pour tout ce qui est beau, pour tout ce qui est vrai, c'est celui qui dans ses œuvres a toujours le bien pour objet, et le beau, pour modèle; [...] sa vie entière est un élan continuel d'admiration vers les merveilles de la nature'. 'it is the man who is passionate for all that is beautiful, for all that is true, it is he who always has goodness as the subject of his work, and beauty as a model; [...] his whole life is a continual outpouring of admiration for natural wonders'. *L'Art du violon*, p. 9.



be contemporary to the nineteenth century. The most fascinating part, however, is yet to come: Baillot insists that a true artist possesses ample confidence in the power of his art, and if he practises it with passion, then he will do so with simplicity and modesty, while making peace and love his sublime mission. Further, according to Baillot, an artist must have an upright spirit, a sensitive and generous heart, a noble soul and a firm and constant will.<sup>179</sup> Does this gracious portrait remind us of Monsieur Paganini at all? Does his obscure and frightening exterior, along with the rumours about his association with the devil, and the grotesque of his works correspond to the ideals of beauty, modesty, honesty and kindness present in Baillot's passionate account? Far from it; we have seen that after a brief mention of Paganini and his novel style, Baillot returns to talk about the principles he so sincerely represents and, indeed, the principle of sincerity in performance.

However, in the part of the treatise that includes exercises to help students overcome technical challenges, he does include *études* that are of considerable difficulty. Especially when compared to those of the *Méthode*, one can quickly identify how technique evolved in the thirty years that separated the two treatises. In *L'Art du violon* there is a focus on double-stops and chords, as well as left-hand *pizzicati* and an extensive use of harmonics. In a way, Baillot may have not recognised Paganini as one of his own, but nevertheless he quietly acknowledged the need to prepare his students for the technical features that were now increasingly

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<sup>179</sup> '[...] plein de confiance dans le pouvoir de son art, s'il exerce avec passion, il l'exerce aussi avec simplicité et modestie'; 'mission sublime de paix et d'amour'; 'il faut à l'Artiste un esprit droit, un cœur sensible et généreux, une âme élevée, et une volonté ferme et constante'. '[...] full of confidence in the power of his art, he practises it with passion, he also practises with simplicity and modesty'; sublime mission of peace and love'; an Artist must have a right spirit, a sensitive and generous heart, an elevated soul, and a firm and constant willingness'. *L'Art du violon*, p. 9.

present in violin repertoire.<sup>180</sup> This, too, presents us with another contradiction in Baillot's actions: while persisting in the values he believes in, he nonetheless looks forward to new technique practices and seems to keep up with more progressive customs.

### Paganini and the *Revue musicale*

While Baillot continued his very successful chamber music concerts in the capital, rumours of the extraordinary touring performer that was Niccolò Paganini were spreading in Paris; his arrival had been long awaited. On 19 February 1831, the first exclusively musical newspaper in the city, the *Revue musicale*, announced that Paganini had arrived in Strasbourg, where he gave a concert during which nerve attacks and spasms forced him to interrupt his concerto three times, nevertheless exciting the greatest enthusiasm in his audience. More concerts were to be given in Strasbourg, before the virtuoso travelled to Colmar, and then to Paris.<sup>181</sup> In the next issue, a week later, the readers were informed of his arrival in Paris, along with tittle-

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<sup>180</sup> It is worth mentioning here, however, that the *Méthode* was possibly aimed at younger students, as the author(s) often mentioned ways of overcoming issues caused by the small size of the student's hands or of their violin. That being said, the *Méthode* was written at a time that the Conservatoire would have adhered more to the revolutionary ideals of equality and would have accepted students of a beginner's standard provided they were very young. With time also came increased professionalism, and so more was expected of students entering the Conservatoire. Thus Baillot's *chers élèves*, to whom he dedicated *L'Art du violon*, would have been of a higher standard and, from the author's affectionate language, we imagine they had a more familiar relationship with him, formed over the years.

<sup>181</sup> 'Paganini s'est mis décidément en route pour Paris; arrivé à Strasbourg depuis quelques jours, il y a donné un concert le 13 février. Des attaques de nerfs et des spasmes l'ont forcé d'interrompre trois fois de suite son concerto: néanmoins il a excité le plus vif enthousiasme dans son auditoire. Il se propose de donner plusieurs concerts à Strasbourg. De là il ira à Colmar, puis il se rendra directement à Paris'. 'Paganini has definitely set out for Paris; in Strasbourg since a few days ago, he gave a concert there on 13 February. Attacks of nerves and spasms forced him to interrupt his concerto three times: nevertheless he excited the greatest enthusiasm in his audience. He proposes to give several concerts in Strasbourg. From there he will go to Colmar, then he will go directly to Paris'. *Revue musicale*, vol. 11, p. 22, (19 February 1831).

tattle about what he had been up to in his first few days there, and that the first of his concerts was imminent.<sup>182</sup>

On 9 March, the anticipation was finally over; Paganini gave his first public appearance, to which Fétis devoted the first three pages of his next issue, that of 12 March. One might find it peculiar that, instead of immediately setting out to describe what he had heard, Fétis first offers an introduction on the art of the critic. We are told that for the audience, there are simply ‘good or bad feelings, pleasure (moderate or frantic) and boredom (more or less tolerable)’, but that the connoisseur, ‘whose superiority of perception consists of knowing how to analyse the feelings that are being conveyed to him, is not blindly forsaken by the thoughtless movements of a preoccupied mind, but instead searches to give each matter the just eulogy it merits, without allowing himself to be influenced by the opinion or the feelings of others’.<sup>183</sup> It seems that Fétis may be apologising in advance for what he is about to tell his readers, and after having read the entire article, one finds the following passage to be summing up the essence of his review:

Convaincu que les arts, comme toutes les choses humaines, sont édifice auquel on travaille sans cesse sans jamais atteindre le faite, il admire et loue l’artiste dont les travaux ajoutent une assise à celles qui ont été posées précédemment; si quelque erreur échappe à cet homme privilégié de la nature, il en prend note, mais ses observations critiques ne sont

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<sup>182</sup> ‘Le plus étonnant des violonistes de l’époque actuelle, Paganini, est arrivé à Paris jeudi dernier. Il est descendu à l’hôtel des Princes, rue de Richelieu. Le soir il s’est rendu au Théâtre-Italien. On y jouait *Otello*; il a applaudi avec transport les belles inspirations de Mme Malibran. On annonce comme très prochain le premier concert de cet artiste célèbre’. ‘The most impressive violinist of the present time, Paganini, arrived in Paris on Thursday. He came down to the hôtel des Princes, rue de Richelieu. In the evening he went to the Théâtre-Italien. *Otello* was played; he applauded cheerfully the beautiful inspirations of Mrs. Malibran. The first concert of this famous artist promises to take place very soon’. *Revue musicale*, vol. 11, p. 30, (26 February 1831).

<sup>183</sup> ‘Pour le public, pris en masse, il n’y a que des impressions bonnes ou mauvaises; du plaisir, soit modéré, soit frénétique, ou de l’ennui plus ou moins supportable; mais le connoisseur consiste à savoir analyser les sensations qui lui sont transmises, ne s’abandonne point en aveugle à ces mouvemens irréfléchis d’une âme préoccupée. Il cherche à faire à chaque chose la juste part d’éloge qui lui appartient, sans laisser influencer dans son jugement par le jugement ou par les impressions d’autrui’. *Revue musicale*, p. 41.

qu'un hommage rendu à la vérité, et n'ôtent rien à la portion de gloire et d'estime qui appartient le génie.<sup>184</sup>

In sum, Fétis takes note of Paganini's slip-ups, but continues to acknowledge his brilliance throughout the review. First, in the lyrical aspects of his playing, Paganini achieves a quivering vibration of the string, which Fétis finds to be similar to the human voice, but to which the performer often adds a sliding movement of the left hand comparable to that of a justly-criticised (according to Fétis) dragging human voice or *portamento*, and which he considers not in good taste.<sup>185</sup> He also comes back to this topic later in the review, saying that the sliding effect from one note to another harms the effect of the musical work. Further, he mentions that the use of *pizzicati* is intended to please the less musically enlightened part of the audience, suggesting that the excessive employment of this technical feature is a superficial means of showing off.<sup>186</sup> Who would not hear echoes of Baillot's treatise here, warning that a showcase might come at the expense of expressive and natural singing?

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<sup>184</sup> 'Convinced that the arts, like all human things, are constructions on which we work endlessly, never reaching the end, he admires and praises the artist whose work adds a foundation to those that have been previously created; if some error escapes this man privileged by nature, he notes, but his critical observations are only a tribute to the truth, and do not detract from the glory and esteem that belong to the genius'. *Revue musicale*, p. 41.

<sup>185</sup> 'Un effet [...] est celui d'une vibration frémissante de la corde qu'il emploie fréquemment lorsqu'il chante, et qui lui est particulier. Cet effet s'approche sensiblement de la voix humaine, surtout sur les trois dernières cordes ; malheureusement il y joint fréquemment un mouvement glissé de la main qui a de l'analogie avec un trainement de la voix qu'on blâme avec raison dans la méthode de quelques chanteurs, et qui n'est pas de bon goût'. 'An effect [...] is that of a quivering vibration of the string that he frequently uses while singing, which is particular to him. This effect noticeably approaches the human voice, especially on the last three strings; unfortunately, it is often attached to a sliding movement of the hand that is equivalent to a dragging of the voice that we rightly blame in the method of some singers, and which is not in good taste'. *Revue musicale*, p. 42.

<sup>186</sup> '[...] cet effet étant destiné à plaire à la partie la moins éclairée du public et l'amusant en effet beaucoup, on ne saurait blâmer Paganini de ne point négliger ce moyen de succès'. 'this effect is meant to appeal to the less enlightened members of the public and indeed to amuse it considerably, one could not blame Paganini of ever neglecting this means of success'. *Revue musicale*, p. 42.

With regard to Paganini's intonation, Fétis states that it is generally very good; however, he points out that some double-stop passages in thirds in his concerto 'ont laissé quelque chose à désirer sous ce rapport'.<sup>187</sup> One should, nonetheless, not be mistaken: these were nothing but minor details in a lengthy positive review, which attempts objectivity in presenting all aspects of Paganini's performance. In closing the article, Fétis stresses that he has done his utmost to present a fair and honest account of what could only be considered a positive tribute to the violinist, but feels that it is time to complete his analysis. He thus goes on to say that what he experienced while listening to Paganini was astonishment and infinite admiration, yet at the same time he had not felt touched or moved.<sup>188</sup> He goes on to make suggestions for improvement by abandoning the sliding between notes, by focusing on a profound sensitivity, rather than sacrificing it in order to appeal to the imagination of the musically uneducated part of the audience with the artificial means he employs.<sup>189</sup> But one phrase in the entire review is perhaps worth

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<sup>187</sup> 'La justesse de l'intonation de Paganini est généralement fort bonne; cependant quelques passages en tierces du premier solo de son concerto ont laissé quelque chose à désirer sous ce rapport; mais cela ne peut être considéré que comme accidentel'. 'The accuracy of Paganini's intonation is generally very good; however, some passages in thirds in the first solo of his concerto left something to be desired in this respect; but this can only be regarded as accidental'. *Revue musicale*, p. 42.

<sup>188</sup> 'Après avoir rendu un juste hommage au talent merveilleux de Paganini, après avoir rendu un compte sincère de tout ce qui peut en donner l'idée la plus avantageuse, je commence ma tâche de critique, et je dois la remplir. Je dirai donc que ce que j'ai éprouvé en l'écoutant était de l'étonnement, de l'admiration sans bornes; mais que je n'ai point été touché, point ému de ce sentiment qui me paraît inséparable de la véritable musique'. 'After paying a suitable tribute to the wonderful talent of Paganini, after giving a sincere account of all that can give the most positive idea, I start my task of a critic, and I have to complete it. So I would say that what I experienced while listening was astonishment, limitless admiration; but I have not been touched, not been moved by this sentiment that seems to me to be inseparable from true music'. *Revue musicale*, p. 43.

<sup>189</sup> 'Il me semble qu'avec un foyer de sensibilité profonde, Paganini devrait se défendre des moyens artificiels dont il se sert quand il chante, et renoncer à la fausse expression des sons traînés péniblement d'une note à l'autre. Je crois aussi qu'il sacrifie un peu trop au désir de frapper l'imagination de la partie la moins éclairée de son auditoire, et je voudrais qu'il renonçât à ces traits de sifflement qu'il prend dans la partie aigue de la corde où les sons cessent d'être appréciables'. 'It seems to me that with a focus of deep feeling, Paganini should refrain from the artificial means he uses when he sings, and renounce the false expression of the painfully dragging sounds from one

highlighting: ‘L’art de Paganini est un art à part qui est né et qui mourra avec lui’.<sup>190</sup>

It seems that even from that early moment in time, Fétis was able to establish that Paganini was a phenomenon, rather than a product of the natural evolution of the instrument.

One could question the eminence and exclusiveness of the source I am using in this discussion. It might suffice to mention that Paganini himself wrote two letters to the editor for publication in the newspaper about matters that suggest he wished to address as wide a musical audience as possible. The first one was on 7 April 1831 and referred to a charity ball, during which the violinist had been asked to perform, but refused. He presented the reasons for his decision and instead announced that his next concert would be free to all.<sup>191</sup> The second, in the issue of 23 April 1831, was rather lengthy and referred to rumours about Paganini’s imprisonment for committing murder, which the violinist wished to dispute in order to reinstate the truth.<sup>192</sup>

Paganini’s second concert was featured in the issue of 19 March 1831 of the *Revue musicale*. The review, also by Fétis, starts off in a rather ordinary manner, full of admiration for the violinist, who had amazed his audience. It was only when Paganini performed the Variations on the theme ‘Dal tuo stellato soglio’ from Rossini’s *Mosè in Egitto* that Fétis suddenly started to listen differently. The piece is written entirely on the violin’s G string and the critic was stunned by the power of this prayer, as he calls it, expressing his regret for what he had written in the first

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note to another. I also believe that he sacrifices a little too much to the desire to capture the imagination of the less illuminated members of his audience, and I wish he would renounce these features of whistling that he executes in the sharp part of the string where sounds cease to be significant’. *Revue musicale*, p. 43.

<sup>190</sup> ‘The art of Paganini is an art apart which was born and will die with him’. *Revue musicale*, p. 43.

<sup>191</sup> *Revue musicale*, pp. 76-7.

<sup>192</sup> *Revue musicale*, pp. 94-6.

review, but also justifying himself by explaining that Paganini ought to perform works like this more often, as they showed his true lyrical abilities. At this point, Fétis brings in Baillot for a brief, yet highly significant comparison: even though he recognises Paganini's singing skills and the extraordinary intensity he brought to the Variations, he confesses that the French violinist possesses more passion and a sense of intimacy when he performs an *Adagio* by Mozart or Beethoven, and ultimately declares him to be the only violinist able to be heard playing after Paganini without appearing at a disadvantage. He concludes that whatever the extent of other violinists' talent, the impression they produce is microscopic compared to this giant of violinists.<sup>193</sup>

In a later issue of the newspaper, that of 19 May 1831, Fétis talks of Baillot's quartet and quintet concert of 7 May; it appears that the large hall was filled with listeners who had gathered to judge the Frenchman, after having heard the marvels of the 'Italian magician', as he chooses to call Paganini. Baillot, who knew what he was up against, displayed prodigious inspiration, youthfulness and verve, and was proclaimed by the critic an incomparable performer of the beauties of Mozart, Boccherini and Onslow. There was frantic (and well-deserved, according to

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<sup>193</sup> 'En écoutant cette belle prière si bien rendue, je n'ai pu m'empêcher de penser à Baillot, qui sait aussi chanter et émouvoir, et de comparer les manières des deux artistes dans cette partie de leur talent. Bien que je rende toute justice à Paganini comme chanteur, et que j'admire sincèrement la puissance extraordinaire qu'il a déployé dans la prière de Moïse, j'avoue qu'il y a dans le violoniste français, plus de passion, plus de sentiment intime, lorsqu'il exécute un *Adagio* de Mozart ou de Beethoven. Au reste, Baillot me paraît être le seul violoniste qui, dans le genre qui lui est propre, puisse se faire entendre sans désavantage après Paganini; quelque soit le talent des autres artistes, l'effet qu'ils produisent est microscopique après ce géant des violonistes'. 'By listening to this beautiful prayer so well executed, I could not help but think of Baillot, who also knows how to sing and move, and compare the style of the two artists in this part of their talent. Although I do justice to Paganini as a singer, and I sincerely admire the extraordinary power he displayed in the prayer of Moses, I admit that in the French violinist there is more passion, more intimate feeling when performing an *Adagio* by Mozart or Beethoven. Besides, Baillot seems to me to be the only violinist who, in his own genre, can be heard without disadvantage against Paganini; whatever the talents of other artists, the effect they produce is microscopic compared to this giant of violinists'. *Revue musicale*, p. 54.

Fétis) applause throughout the *soirée*, which seemed too short for the vast audience that had turned up.<sup>194</sup> In this short article, the critic finds various ways to show his support for Baillot; perhaps the fact that he opens with the phrase ‘M. Baillot, sur qui j’ai épuisé toutes les formules de l’éloge [...]’, or the use of the possessive adjective in ‘notre grand Artiste’, add a layer of friendly affection towards him.<sup>195</sup> At the same time, referring to Paganini as that ‘Italian magician’, a term that would suggest crowd-pleasing tricks and illusions, or indeed charlatanism, places his *protégé* in an even more favourable position.

Fétis brought much attention, furthermore, to Paganini’s ill health; in the very first pages of the same issue in which the rave review of Baillot appeared, Fétis presents excerpts from a report on Paganini’s physiology, written by the violinist’s personal doctor, Mr Benatti. In this three-page article, the editor has chosen passages that describe Paganini’s physical characteristics as being out of the ordinary: apart from giving the impression of being older than his age, due to the slenderness of his figure and his lack of teeth that caused his mouth to turn inwards, it seems that his continuous illnesses since childhood and his general frail health contributed to his

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<sup>194</sup> ‘Dans une vaste salle au milieu d’une foule d’auditeurs empressés à juger le violoniste français dont s’honore l’école actuelle, après les prodiges fantastiques du magicien italien. Notre grand artiste avait compris sa position: il y avait du quoi pâlir pour un homme ordinaire; mais ces instants critiques sont toujours favorables aux talents d’un ordre supérieur. Le génie de la musique et le sentiment de ses forces protégeaient Baillot: il s’est surpassé. Il a été prodigieux d’inspiration, de jeunesse et de verve, sublime incomparable interprète des beautés de Mozart, de Boccherini et d’Onslow. [...] Des applaudissements frénétiques et bien mérités ont retenti pendant toute cette soirée, soirée trop courte pour les amateurs nombreux qui y étaient réunis’. ‘In a large room in the middle of a crowd of listeners eager to judge the French violinist who honours our current school, compared to the prodigious miracles of the Italian magician. Our great artist had understood his position: there was good reason for an ordinary man to turn pale; but these critical moments always come out in favour of the talents of a higher ranking. The genius of music and the feeling of his powers were protecting Baillot: he outdid himself. He was prodigiously inspired, of youth and eloquence, incomparably sublime interpreter of Mozart, Boccherini and Onslow. [...] Frantic and well-deserved applause resounded throughout the evening, too short a night for the numerous fans who had gathered there’. *Revue musicale*, p. 119.

<sup>195</sup> ‘Mr Baillot, on whom I have exhausted all form of praise [...]’; ‘Our great artist had understood his position [...]’. *Revue musicale*, p. 119.



heightened sensitivity, but so did the extreme thinness of his skin and the animal-like outer structure of his ears.<sup>196</sup> Painting a near supernatural portrait through the statements of a specialist, Fétis effectively set Paganini apart in the eyes of his readers. In so doing, the writer was able, in comparison, to construct Baillot as an artist who, besides having nothing frightful about him, was able to produce an equally – if not more – inspirational musical sensation. A healthy-unhealthy divide between the two artists seems to emerge, reminding us of Goethe’s view (probably first uttered a couple of years earlier, in 1829): ‘Classisch ist das Gesunde, romantisch das Kranke.’<sup>197</sup> According to Angus Nicholls’ interpretation, within this aesthetic dualism, the classical corresponds to that which is ‘limited, orderly, clear, formal, sensuous and mature’, while the romantic stands for ‘the limitless, the formless, the mystical, the spiritual and the immature’.<sup>198</sup> Given Baillot’s own remarks in his treatises, on true beauty, ornamentation within reasonable limits, honesty, simplicity, good taste and a beautiful sound, Nicholls’ understanding of the

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<sup>196</sup> ‘Paganini est pâle et maigre et d’une taille moyenne. Quoiqu’il ne soit âgé que quarante-sept ans, sa maigreur et le manque de dents, en faisant rentrer sa bouche et rendant son menton plus saillant, donne à sa physionomie l’expression d’un âge plus avancé. Sa tête volumineuse, soutenue sur un col long et maigre, offre au premier aperçu une disproportion assez forte avec ses membres grêles, un front haut, large et carré, un nez aquilin fortement caractérisé, des sourcils arqués d’une manière parfaite, une bouche pleine d’esprit et de malice rappelant un peu celle de Voltaire; des oreilles amples, saillantes et détachées, des cheveux noirs et longs retombant en désordre sur ses épaules, et contrastant avec un teint pâle, donnent à Paganini une physionomie qui n’est pas ordinaire, et qui représente jusqu’à certain point l’originalité de son génie’. ‘Paganini is pale and thin and of medium height. Though he is not older than forty-seven years old, his thinness and lack of teeth, tucking his mouth in and making his chin more prominent, give his appearance an expression of a more advanced age. His large head, supported on a long, thin neck, offers at first sight a fairly strong disproportion with its slender limbs, a long forehead, broad and square, an aquiline nose strongly outlined, eyebrows arched in a perfect way, a mouth full of wit and malice somewhat reminiscent of that of Voltaire; wide ears, protruding and detached, long black hair falling on his shoulders in disorder and contrasting with a pale complexion, give Paganini an appearance that is not ordinary and which represents to a certain point the originality his genius’. *Revue musicale*, p. 113, but see also pp. 114-6.

<sup>197</sup> ‘What is classical is healthy, what is romantic is sick’, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen* (Weimar, 1907), p.215. See also Judith Norman, ‘Nietzsche and Early Romanticism’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 63. no. 3 (July 2003), pp. 501-19.

<sup>198</sup> Angus Nicholls, ‘Goethe, Romanticism and the Anglo-American Critical Tradition’, *Romanticism on the Net*, vol. 28 (November 2002).



Eugène Delacroix, *Paganini* (1831), Phillips Collection, Washington DC

classical seems to be a perfect fit. One might therefore identify Paganini as the sickly romantic and Baillot as the well-groomed classicist.

An event that coincided with Paganini's concerts in Paris was the outbreak of cholera in the capital. The epidemic started spreading in Europe in 1830 and the French had been preparing their hospitals and medical teams for at least two years before the first occurrence in March 1832. Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer makes a fascinating association between the features of Paganini's various portraits – most importantly the one by Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) – and the appearance of cholera in Paris, which claimed 18,000 lives.<sup>199</sup> Paganini's exterior seems in parallel with the ill atmosphere of death and dismay that was dominating the city at the time of his second round of public concerts; some, desperate to flee Paris and avoid catching cholera, even demanded a refund for tickets they had purchased to his concerts. One might even go as far as to say that being carried away by Paganini's persona was like being infected.

#### An unlikely connection: Giovanni Battista Viotti

Having discussed Baillot's graceful musical decorum as opposed to Paganini's grotesque and sinister style, one would not expect to establish a common denominator between the two violinists, who appear unconnected, or indeed

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<sup>199</sup> 'On the eve of his second concert, on April 6, terrified ticket holders fleeing the city in fear of the epidemic stampeded the box office demanding their money back. [...] Like the cholera's broadly devastating effect on both the individual and the civil body, for example, grotesque abjection in the arts aimed to abolish the normative by inverting it or replacing it with marginalized and suppressed liminal notions, including the horrific and the uncanny. This defiant plunge into the lower depths of the (human) and aesthetic imaginary, a regression, so to speak, to a precivilized barbaric condition, proved unexpectedly fertile. For horror became both end and regenerative beginning all at once. Its defiant elevation of the banished to the status of the culturally sanctioned shook, aired, and purged the slate clean of preexisting musty formulas to make way for modernist innovation'. Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, 'Blemished Physiologies: Delacroix, Paganini, and the Cholera Epidemic of 1832', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 83 no. 4 (December 2001), pp. 686-710, and also Florence Gréteau, 'Romantic Pianists in Paris: Musical Images and Musical Literature', *Music in Art*, vol. 29 no. 1/2 (Spring/Fall 2004), pp. 188-202.

opposed. Yet an interesting link between them is embodied in Viotti, one that is more significant than it might initially appear. The Italian violinist and composer spent most of his career in Paris and London and instantly won the admiration of his audiences. What is fascinating is that critics at the time were almost equally appreciative of his playing as contemporary writers are today. We often come across rave reviews of musicians whose names we have never heard of today; however, Viotti seems to have maintained his status to the present day as one of the most exceptional violinists of the late eighteenth century. I am not seeking to affirm that today he is recognised internationally as easily as Paganini, but surely most musicians are aware of his position in violin-playing history.

In 1794, London's *Morning Chronicle* stated: 'Viotti, it is true, without making that his object, astonishes the hearer; but he does something infinitely better – he awakens emotion, gives soul to the sound and leads the passion captive'.<sup>200</sup> A hundred years later, a lot was still attributed to Viotti; W. Francis Gates, in his *Anecdotes of Great Musicians*, declared that 'had the world not had a Viotti it might not have produced a Paganini', emphasising Viotti's important role in establishing the principles of violin playing, regarding bowing technique in particular.<sup>201</sup> Yet another hundred years later, in a recent publication, Sandor Salgo claims Viotti was to eighteenth-century violin playing what Paganini represented to the nineteenth century and compliments his large and beautiful tone and technical abilities. He also draws attention to the special effects employed by the virtuoso, which included intricate passages, chords and double-stops, as well as the extensive use of the

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<sup>200</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 12 March 1794.

<sup>201</sup> W. Francis Gates, *Anecdotes of Great Musicians* (Philadelphia, 1895), p.129.

violin's G string, which had been overlooked until his time.<sup>202</sup> Zdenko Silvela takes us to the onset of Viotti's success in Paris:

Viotti made his debut at the Concert spirituel on Good Friday, the 17<sup>th</sup> of March, 1782, playing a concerto of his composition. (This date must be well remembered for it constitutes one of the most phenomenal events in history). His success was instantaneous, and he was unanimously and without exception acclaimed, at once, as the best violinist in (sic) the face of the earth. Thus in just one evening, he was skyrocketed from the last desk of the Turin orchestra to violinist number one in the world. The general recognition that took Paganini 15 years to acquire, from 1813 when he triumphed in Milan until 1828, when he played in Vienna and definitively established his world-wide reputation as the best violinist alive, was obtained by Viotti on a single evening.<sup>203</sup>

The author seems to highly esteem this instant musical triumph; however one might argue that Viotti's success was due to the fact that, although clearly a brilliant violinist, he was not utterly different from what the listener was accustomed to. In other words, he conformed to the existing ideals of violin-playing and undoubtedly excelled in them, but in order to obtain a positive response from the audiences at the time, he could not have presented something drastically different from the norm – he could not have shocked. The latter was Paganini's technique, which took longer to take effect on the conservative listener, and although, as we will see, Paganini took inspiration from Viotti, it seems that the type of listener that admired Viotti did not subsequently think highly of Paganini.

By 1830, however, things had progressed considerably in the virtuoso soloist scene, and the supporters of the *beau idéal* appear to be on the defensive. François Fayolle's 1831 publication *Paganini et Bériot* provides adequate demonstration for this. Fayolle (1774-1852), author of the *Dictionnaire historique des musiciens, artistes et amateurs, morts ou vivants*, dedicates this sixty-nine-page

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<sup>202</sup> Sandor Salgo, *Thomas Jefferson. Musician and Violinist* (Charlottesville, 2000), p. 28.

<sup>203</sup> Zdenko Silvela, *A New History of Violin Playing. The Vibrato and Lambert Massart's Revolutionary Discovery* (Boca Raton, 2001), pp. 103-4.

‘brochure’ (as described by d’Ortigue in the *Courrier de l’Europe*) ‘aux Professeurs, derniers soutiens de la bonne école, et aux jeunes artistes qui en sont les futurs Professeurs’.<sup>204</sup> From the very beginning, Fayolle seems to be warning new artists not to fall for the superficial charm of musical fashion, but rather to persevere with the true principles of the *beau idéal*, which are allegedly timeless.<sup>205</sup> The reader quite quickly perceives that this is indeed the purpose of the publication and Fayolle confirms this by making it the subject of his conclusion: ‘O vous, jeunes Artistes [...] préservez-vous de la mode et du mauvais gout qui passent, pour vous attacher au simple, au vrai, au grand qui restent [...]’.<sup>206</sup> By that point, the reader can clearly see Paganini’s name sketched beside the word fashion and Viotti’s next to the true, the simple and the great. Fayolle also makes reference to Paganini’s salary of 15,000 francs per concert, choosing to compare it to that of Viotti (whose ‘talent will never have a rival’) of a hundred francs.<sup>207</sup> Therefore, even though Viotti was a major influence on Paganini, the latter made a far greater impact on audiences and forged an enduring reputation that eluded – or was not sought by – Viotti.

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<sup>204</sup> ‘[...] dedicated to teachers, the last supporters of the good school, and to young artists who are to be the future teachers’. François J.M. Fayolle, *Paganini et Bériot* (Paris, 1831), p. 4.

<sup>205</sup> ‘Ainsi, ce qui est à la mode aujourd’hui sera bientôt vieilli et suranné; et ce qui nous charme maintenant sera peut-être du dernier ridicule à nos neveux. Tel est, dans les arts, et surtout en musique, ce qu’on appelle la mode; tandis que les vrais principes sont éternels’. ‘So, what is fashionable today will soon be old and outdated; and what delights us now may be most ridiculous to our nephews. This, in the arts, and especially music, is what we call fashion; while true principles are eternal’. Fayolle, *Paganini et Bériot*, p. 12.

<sup>206</sup> ‘Oh, young artists [...] refrain from fashion and bad taste that are short-lived, in order to become attached to simplicity, to truth, to the greatness that endure [...]’. Fayolle, *Paganini et Bériot*, p. 69.

<sup>207</sup> ‘Paganini, de son propre aveu, gagne environ 15,000fr. par séance; au lieu que l’immortel Viotti, dont le talent n’aura jamais de rival, ne touchait de M. Le Gros, de 1782 à 1784, que douze cents francs pour tous les concerts de l’année; ce qui, en supposant douze concerts, fait cents francs par séance’. ‘Paganini, by his own admission, earns about 15,000fr. per session; whereas the immortal Viotti, whose talent will never have a rival, made, according to Mr Le Gros, no more than twelve hundred francs for all concerts of the year from 1782 to 1784; which meant that, on the assumption that there were twelve concerts, he made a hundred francs per session’. Fayolle, *Paganini et Bériot*, p. 5.

This is not to suggest that Viotti was the sole influence on Paganini. Another was violinist August Frederyk Duranowski (1770-1834, a Polish-born, French violinist originally named Auguste Frédéric Durand), who Paganini reportedly heard in concert at the church of San Filippo Neri in his hometown Genoa when he was twelve years old. Duranowski's brilliant technique astounded the young Paganini and triggered his jealous admiration, but perhaps what he was not aware of at the time was that Duranowski was a student of Viotti's in Paris. When not performing his own compositions, Paganini's repertoire included concertos by Viotti and two of his students, Pierre Rode and Rodolphe Kreutzer, and continued to do so well into the 1820s. In Warwick Lister's view, we find 'unmistakable echoes' of Viotti's concertos in Paganini's works.<sup>208</sup> The most obvious of these appears in the opening of the second movement of Paganini's Violin concerto in B minor, which is a true reproduction of the second movement of Viotti's Violin concerto no. 24, as seen below.



Giovanni Battista Viotti, Violin concerto no. 24, 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, bb. 1-4.

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<sup>208</sup> Warwick Lister, *Amico. The life of Giovanni Battista Viotti* (Oxford, 2009), p. 371.



Niccolò Paganini, Violin concerto no. 2 in B minor, 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, bb. 1-4.

Similarities can also be found in the third movements of the two concertos, composed some thirty years apart, as well as between the opening of Viotti's Violin concerto no. 18 and Paganini's Grande Concerto in E minor, and between Viotti's third movement of concerto no. 25 and Paganini's last movement of concerto no. 4 in D minor.

While Paganini appears to have been influenced by Viotti mostly on a technical level, by listening to his student Duranowski and by performing his concertos, Pierre Baillot got to know Viotti on a both musical and personal level, since he was his student. Some of the most important steps of his musical career were, one way or another, overseen by his mentor, Viotti. As a young boy, like Paganini, he had an encounter that enhanced his love for music: when he was just ten years old he heard Viotti perform one of his concertos in concert. Once Baillot was a grown artist, Viotti secured a place for him in the Opéra orchestra in Paris, which he took on and later gave up in order to accept an administrative position. When he decided to come back to music professionally, it was Viotti, again, who was watching over: Baillot gave an important concert during which he performed one of Viotti's concertos, and which helped him obtain a teaching position at the Conservatoire, alongside his other two *protégés*, Rode and Kreutzer.



Baillot greatly admired his professor and did not miss a chance to make this public. In the *Méthode de violon du Conservatoire*, Viotti's works figure most prominently, and Baillot writes lucidly and evocatively of the impression his playing made on the audience. Interestingly, in the section entitled 'Virtuoses les plus célèbres' of his introduction to *L'Art du violon*, he mentions Corelli, Tartini, Gaviniés, Pugnani, and of course Viotti, but Paganini's name is nowhere to be seen.<sup>209</sup> Surely, if Paganini had reproduced Viotti's principles in his playing – not only the technical part or the 'bag of tricks' he mentioned to his biographer,<sup>210</sup> but the grace, the beautiful tone, the audacity and the passion that made Baillot so fond of his teacher – then we would expect Paganini to make it to Baillot's group of virtuosos. Professional rivalry might also explain the omission, or perhaps Baillot wished to distance himself from elements of Paganini's playing, and image, despite the debt of both musicians to Viotti.

#### Baillot: Soloist, teacher, writer, concert organiser...and composer

As we have already mentioned in a previous chapter, Baillot's own compositions were the third most performed in his series, after Boccherini and Haydn, followed closely by Mozart and then Beethoven. In a total of 154 concerts of the society over

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<sup>209</sup> 'Virtuoses les plus célèbres. Le violon, fait par sa nature pour régner dans les concerts et pour obéir à tous les élans du génie, a pris les differens caractères que les grands maitres ont voulu lui donner: simple et mélodieux sous les doigts de Corelli; harmonieux, touchant et plein de grâce sous l'archet de Tartini, aimable et suave sous celui de Gaviniés, noble et grandiose avec Pugnani, plein de feu, plein d'audace, pathétique, sublime entre les mains de Viotti, il s'est élevé jusqu'à peindre les passions avec tant de grandeur et d'énergie que de charme et de douceur'. 'The most famous virtuosos. The violin, made by nature to reign in concerts and to obey to all impulse of genius, took the different characters the great masters wished to give it; simple and melodious under the fingers of Corelli; harmonious, touching and full of grace under the bow of Tartini, kind and sweet under that of Gaviniés, noble and grand with Pugnani, full of fire, full of daring, passionate and sublime in the hands of Viotti, he rose up to paint passion with as much grandeur and energy as charm and sweetness'. Baillot, *L'Art du violon*, p. 5.

<sup>210</sup> See Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Nineteenth Century. The Oxford History of Western Music*. (Oxford, 2010), pp. 251-2.

twenty-six years, Baillot's name appeared 124 times in concert programmes. These occurrences were spread over 116 concerts, meaning that Baillot only performed two of his works on the same evening on eight occasions. But what strikes us most is the number of different works actually performed, which did not exceed thirty-eight, since the violinist often repeated the same pieces (with some appearing as many as twelve times, such as the Menuet de Handel, varié, op. 31 no. 2). Baillot's compositions presented at the concert series can be divided into three categories: variations for solo violin (usually an *air* or a *menuet*) accompanied by different combinations of strings or fortepiano; string trios (for two violins and bass); and violin concertos. Of the three categories the first was by far the most popular, while from the other two Baillot presented merely four string trios (trio op. 1 No. 5, trio op. 4 no. 2, trio op. 4 no. 3, and trio op. 39 no. 2) and only individual movements from six of his concertos (*adagio* and *rondo* from Concerto no. 4 op. 10, *adagio* from Concerto no. 5 op. 13, *rondo* from Concerto no. 6 op. 18, *andante* from Concerto no. 7 op. 21, *adagio* and *rondo* from Concerto no. 8 op. 22, and *romance* and *rondo* from Concerto no. 9 op. 30). The list below displays all works presented at the series, with the number in square brackets stating the number of times each work appeared throughout the life of the society (if more than once).

Adagio et polonaise op. 40 [2]  
 Air *Charmante Gabrielle*, varié, op. 25 [4]  
 Air des Deux jumeaux de Bergame, varié, op. 31 no. 3  
 Air de Gretry, varié, op. 33 [5]  
 Air de Handel, varié, (op. 5 no. 2) [3]  
 Air de la Famille suisse, varié, op. 28 [9]  
 Air de Paisiello, varié, op. 19 [2]  
 Air écossais, varié, op. 31 no. 1 [4]  
 Air (français) varié, op. 15 no. 1  
 Air russe, varié, op. 11 [4]  
 Air russe, varié, op. 14 [3] (later appears as Introduction et air russe varié op. 14)  
 Air russe, varié, op. 20 no. 2 [5]  
 Air russe, varié, op. 20 no. 3 [3]

Air russe, varié, op. 24 [8]  
 Air russe, varié, op. 37 [2]  
 Air *Tandis que tout sommeille*, varié  
 Air varié op. 5 no. 1 [2]  
 Andante op. 29 [7] (later found as Introduction et andante op. 29)  
 Boléro (later found as Introduction et boléro, varié) [3]  
 Concerto no. 4 op. 10 (adagio, rondo)  
 Concerto no. 5 op. 13 (adagio)  
 Concerto no. 6 (rondo) op. 18  
 Concerto no. 7 (andante) op. 21 [8]  
 Concerto no. 8 op. 22 (adagio, rondo)  
 Concerto no. 9 op. 30 (romance, rondo)  
 Fantaisie sur le ranz des vaches et la Tyrolienne de G. Tell  
 Introduction et Boléro varié sur un thème de Rossini  
 Menuet de Fischer, varié [6]  
 Menuet de Handel, varié, op. 31 no. 2 [12]  
 Menuet favori de Pugnani, varié, op. 36 [6]  
 Morceau à sourdines (Sérénade)  
 Nocturne, op. 35 no. 2, *Le songe* [2]  
 Souvenir pour le violon, composé sur le motif d'un chœur de Plantade,  
 op. 40bis  
 Thème varié, op. 17 [5]  
 Trio no. 5 (op. 1 no. 5) [3]  
 Trio no. 8 (op. 4 no. 2) [2]  
 Trio no. 9 (op. 4 no. 3)  
 Trio no. 14 (op. 39 no. 2)

Fétis reveals that one of the main reasons why Baillot's compositions did not enjoy the success they deserved was their technical difficulty: even though Baillot's own performances of his music were exceptional (given his technical and expressive abilities), others found it daunting to even attempt to imitate the *grand maître*.<sup>211</sup>

There is therefore an underlying air of superiority in Baillot's compositional

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<sup>211</sup> '[...] comme compositeur de musique pour son instrument, il ne me paraît pas qu'on lui ait rendu justice, ni que ses ouvrages aient été estimés à leur juste valeur. [...] La difficulté d'exécution de la musique de Baillot a pu nuire aussi à son succès. Empreinte de la véhémence et de la souplesse de son archet, elle était rendue par lui comme elle avait été conçue; mais il y a si peu de violonistes capables de sentir et d'exprimer ainsi, qu'il n'est point étonnant que le découragement se soit emparé de la plupart d'entre eux, quand ils ont essayé d'imiter le maître'. '[...] as a composer of music for his instrument, it seems to me that we have not done him justice, nor have we esteemed his works to their just value. [...] The difficulty of execution of Baillot's music could have also interfered with its success. Imprinted with the vehemence and flexibility of his bow, it was performed by him as it was conceived; but there are so few violinists capable of feeling and expressing thus, that it is not surprising that most of them were possessed by discouragement when they tried to imitate the master'. Fétis, 'Baillot', *Biographie universelle des musiciens* (Paris, 1866-68), vol. 1, p. 222.

behaviour, which comes as a bit of a surprise, given his *politesse*, modesty, and refined social decorum; but it nevertheless helped to advance a man who was eager to show off his exceptional talent. One would expect that, as one of the five most-performed composers at the *séances*, Baillot's works would contribute towards the genealogy of instrumental music that we discussed in the previous chapter. However, even though one could argue that, strictly chronologically, his music represented the contemporary (which would place Baillot at the very bottom of the musical family tree he was constructing at his series), an attempt to make his music fit in with the string quartets and quintets of Boccherini, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven proves nothing less than unsuccessful. The reason behind this is mainly to do with the lack of the French aesthetic of musical conversation and the salon practice of polite exchange of ideas that we touched upon previously and which the audiences had become accustomed to. In contrast, Baillot's works were dominated by a virtuosic display of technique and expression: an undisputable monologue of a soloist, or otherwise an interruption of the quartet and quintet performances so one could be reminded of the brilliance of the ensemble's first violinist. After all, we have established that Baillot's reputation as one of the finest violinists of the time contributed greatly to the success of the series, so surely he felt the need to oblige.

Baillot was especially attracted to the variation technique and his *airs variés* were certainly among his more popular works,<sup>212</sup> as they provided a platform for the virtuoso to present all his merits. The variation was certainly a display genre; Paganini, too, composed an array of variation works (Introduction and variations on Rossini's *I palpiti*, *Le streghe* variations on Süßmayr's ballet *Il noce di Benevento*,

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<sup>212</sup> 'De tous les morceaux composés par Baillot, les airs variés sont ceux qui ont été le mieux compris et qui ont obtenu le plus de popularité'. 'Of all the pieces composed by Baillot, the airs variés are those that were best understood and that have achieved the most popularity'. Fétis, 'Baillot', *Biographie universelle*, p. 222.

Introduction and variations on *Nel cor più non mi sento* from Paisiello's *La Molinara*, the last of his twenty-four Caprices op. 1, in A minor, titled *Tema con variazioni*, as well as variations on the English and Austrian national anthems, to name a few). Viotti, on the other hand, concentrated on his twenty-nine violin concertos (and sixteen piano concertos), while the only apparent use of the variation technique can be found in a collection of violin pieces, WV:16-18, published in 1788. It is rather interesting, therefore, that Baillot, instead of following in his mentor's footsteps, pursued the evolution of the virtuoso soloist and the changes of his time.

Knowing that he would be the one performing the solo part, while his colleagues accompanied him, Baillot had the advantage of being aware of how to use his own skills to impress his audience and reinforce its admiration. In the *Air russe*, op. 20 no. 2, composed in 1810, the initial theme is a sixteen-bar *andante* in G minor, which, although fairly simple, makes extensive use of the violin's D string for notes as high as e'' flat, thus adding a special colour to the opening while evading the easiest technical path, which would be to play certain notes on the A string. (One would expect 'magician' Paganini to do the same).



Pierre Baillot, *Air russe, varié*, op. 20 no. 2, bb. 1-16.

In the first variation, quite traditionally, the theme is embellished and intricate semiquaver and demisemiquaver details appear, as well as trills, while the somewhat daring use of the D string reappears in the final bars. But Baillot, true to his ideals of beauty and elegance, is not simply satisfied by ornamentation; the entire section is marked *con molto espressione*, showing the importance of expression, beyond any technical difficulties of the left hand.



Pierre Baillot, Air russe, varié, op. 20 no. 2, bb. 17-32.

Variation two sees an increase in tempo (the metronome marking rises from 80 to 112) and the continuous use of semiquavers throughout, while in variation three double-stops are introduced, in combination with captivating bowing patterns (to include *legato-staccato* blending and consecutive down-bows). Here Baillot does not shy away from perfect-fifth and augmented-fourth intervals in his double-stopping, which can be seen as more challenging than thirds and sixths (that are present throughout the variation, as seen below), and which hint at a certain Paganinian air.



Pierre Baillot, Air russe, varié, op. 20 no. 2, bb. 49-64

The equilibrium between left-hand technical tricks and musical expression (inevitably involving technical demands such as *legato* and a wide range of dynamics), is maintained later as well, as variation four returns to a slower tempo (metronome marking at 72) with the indication *con molto espressivo e ad libitum*, followed by a faster variation (metronome marking at 126), displaying extensive double-stopping in semiquaver passages. Variation six returns to a slow pace, marked *cantabile*. It shows off the upper end of the violin's E string, with an ornate melody that brings the soloist as high up as b'' flat. In variation seven, *con forza*, Baillot uses the higher register of both the G and the D strings, in a passage that sees the arpeggio-like triplet as the main motif, as seen below.



Pierre Baillot, Air russe, varié, op. 20 no. 2, bb. 113-20.

The piece ends with variation eight, which conforms to the pattern of two eight-bar halves, which are repeated, but extends to twenty-three bars, as it accommodates a seven-bar coda. Both eight-bar sections include double-stopped semiquaver passages, which culminate in a full bar of three-note chords in the penultimate bar of each part. The coda, with its semiquaver triplets, blows an air of triumph as the piece draws to an end and one can only imagine Pierre Baillot's audience applauding with enthusiasm.

The publisher of this work, Jean-Delphin Alard (1815-1888), includes a short biographical note about Baillot in the end of the music part: 'L'air russe varié que nous publions, d'un caractère tendre et mélancolique, exige beaucoup d'expression et un accent passionné'.<sup>213</sup> Such was Baillot's focus in music; expression and beauty always came first, but his extraordinary abilities meant that technical aspects were tackled with effortless grace, which left audiences in awe, as we have already seen in previous chapters.

Seeking his audience's enthusiasm, however, knowledgeable Baillot employed a technique that, although somewhat concealed, was sure to spark excitement. His works entitled *airs russes* (a total of six can be found in the list of works above, accounting for twenty-five performances among them) were doorways onto virtuosity in the form of agility, as we are about to discover. Having spent about three years in Moscow (1805-1808), Baillot would have had time to become acquainted with local musicians and their traits. At the time, gypsy music, and particularly gypsy choral music (with groups such as the Sokolovsky gypsy choir, which was founded in the 1770s), was spreading in Russia, and what we identify

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<sup>213</sup> 'The air russe varié that we are publishing, of a tender and melancholic character, requires a lot of expression and a focus on passion'. Jean-Delphin Alard, *Les maitres classiques du violon. Air russe par Baillot, op. 20.* (Paris, 1863-84), p. 6.



today as *style hongrois* might have not been as distinguishable at the time as it became later in the nineteenth century, with works like Brahms' *Hungarian Dances* and Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. For example, the already-developed Turkish style was not totally discrete from the early *style hongrois* and 'in the European mind distinctions between non-European groups were not particularly subtle'.<sup>214</sup> Baillot would have had a taste of such eastern music in the third movement, *rondo alla zingarese*, of Haydn's Piano trio in G major Hob.XV:25, as well as the *finale* of Mozart's Violin concerto in A major K219, and perhaps the *Rondo alla Turca* of his Piano sonata K331, in the same key. The same could be said of the *finale* of Haydn's string quartet op. 33 no. 3, *The bird*, which Pierre Baillot performed at the *soirée* of 16 February 1819 and again on 5 February 1828 and 24 March 1829.

According to Jonathan Bellman, 'what the Gypsies and their music represented to the Romantic sensibility is encapsulated by Liszt's performance instruction at the beginning of the seventh Hungarian Rhapsody, which reads: "To be played in the Gypsy style, defiant, and yet melancholy"'.<sup>215</sup> Upon hearing the word melancholy we are reminded of Alard's performance note on Baillot's *Air russe* op. 20 no. 2: 'd'un caractère tendre et mélancolique'. Slow, rhapsodic playing offered Gypsy fiddlers the clearest opportunity to show off their skill and Baillot has made good use of this here, in combination with the exclusive use of the G or D string, thus adding the inevitable yet very expressive *portamento*. He then alternates these slow intense sections (known as *lassú* in Hungarian) with fast leaping episodes (or *friska*), which contribute to the audience's excitement – an effect surely present in gypsy music as well, traditionally known as the popular *verbunkos* style, which saw a slow

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<sup>214</sup> Jonathan Bellman, 'Toward a Lexicon for the Style hongrois', *Journal of Musicology*, vol. 9, no. 2 (Spring 1991), p. 218.

<sup>215</sup> Bellman, p. 214.

dance followed by a fast one. Dotted rhythm seems to play an important role as well; although not exclusive to gypsy music, Baillot seems to use it generously in variations one, three and six, as a technique for melodic embellishment.<sup>216</sup>

One might find these gestures to be insignificant in the establishment of an association to the *style hongrois*, yet it is possible that Baillot was aiming simply for an exotic tint in his music, rather than an apparent tribute to the gypsy players he might have encountered in his travels and through the works of the two composers he so honoured in his series. In the list of his works we also see an Air écossais as well as a Boléro, which reinforce this idea of the exotic which Baillot was introducing in order to appeal to his intellectual audiences, and which might suggest that he was more modern than the talk of the *beau idéal* might suggest.

Returning to the second category of works he presented, his string trios for two violins and bass, given Baillot's chamber ideals of equality, it might come as a surprise that they place the first violin in an evidently soloistic position, without any effort whatsoever of concealing this, while the other two instruments retain an accompanying role throughout.<sup>217</sup> However, at this stage, Baillot's interest in soloistic virtuosity has become evident enough for the first violin's leading role to seem expected. The three-movement trio op. 4 no. 2, in F major, composed in 1803 and performed on 27 February 1815 and then again on 10 February 1817, is no exception. It starts out with an *allegro molto vivace* movement, followed by a *romance* and a *scherzando*, marked *presto ma non troppo*. The opening bars of the first movement, with their intricate four-bar phrases, send the first violin to the fifth

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<sup>216</sup> 'One rhythmic feature not peculiar to the Style hongrois but certainly a component of it is the dotted rhythm. This was one of the most typical ways for a Gypsy musician to ornament a melody'. Bellman, pp. 231-2.

<sup>217</sup> See also Charles Lévêque, 'L'esthétique musicale en France: VI. Psychologie du quatuor', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, vol. 27 (January-June 1889), pp. 113-34.

position on the E string, while the second violin and bass repeat lacklustre *ostinato* quavers. In the interest of avoiding dreary repetition, I will not go into more detail about the relationship of the three instruments in the further two movements, as one quickly understands Baillot's agenda behind the seemingly chamber works he presented. He may have stayed in history as one of the finest quartet players, with this statement being confirmed in numerous biographical notes, yet he is clearly a soloist in disguise, so much so that it seems odd that critics at the time did not pick up on his camouflaging tactic.

#### 4 | ‘Le Beethoven français’: George Onslow and French chamber music aesthetics

Poor Onslow, the prototype of the highly cultivated and refined composer, the pet of society, admired for his ‘originality’, called to succeed Cherubini at the Institut de France, and soon forgotten. Musical history is full of Onslows!<sup>218</sup>

With these condescending words, published in *The Musical Times* in 1918, pianist, publisher and critic Carl Engel encapsulated the modern fate of the once celebrated but ‘soon forgotten’ French-English aristocrat chamber-music composer André George Louis Onslow (1784-1853), the only French composer whose works enjoyed regular performances at Baillot’s *séances*. Although brief, Engel’s caricature, sixty-five year’s after Onslow’s death, carries a succinct message about his music: it was socially polished in such a way that it became too compliant with the tastes of its audience. Furthermore, originality is only used in quotes, to reveal that such a tag was perhaps used so often that it had developed into a form of praise that was conventional and unchallenging. As we will touch on later, given Onslow’s public comparison with Beethoven and his nickname ‘le Beethoven français’, it is even possible to read a little further into Engel’s comment and to discover a clear antithesis between the two composers, especially since Beethoven, with his coarse manners, was known not to warm to aristocrats.

Onslow, still alive while his chamber works were performed at the *séances* and often present at Baillot’s concerts, was an important member of Baillot’s essential support network. Wealthy, respectable, well-connected with the aristocracy and seen by his contemporaries as a talented composer, he provided Baillot with works that followed the principles of the established German quartet tradition, as we

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<sup>218</sup> Carl Engel, ‘Music We Shall Never Hear’, *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 4 (1918), p. 491.

will see, but also allowed Parisian audiences to identify him as their own at a time when French instrumental music had nothing thrilling to demonstrate. Onslow's presence at the *séances* also blew an air of freshness, or novelty, over Baillot's establishment: the audience was not otherwise accustomed to *premières* of works by a living composer who was also present at the concert and who very often dedicated his string music to prominent French artists or members of the aristocracy who would have attended the *séances* to witness the first performance. In other words, Onslow offered Baillot both quality music in the German tradition that the latter so fully embraced and the social connections which were so vital for the continuation of the society. This chapter looks into Baillot's attempt to establish a French composer as a regular at his series, by determining whether Onslow can indeed be tagged as a French composer and by uncovering the sources of his presumed frenchness. Most significantly, rather than making an effort to revive Onslow's celebrity status, I examine his persona as a problem of music history, still present today, of a nineteenth-century composer who was important during his time but who is treated today as nearly insignificant: Louis Spohr (1784-1859) and Rodolphe Kreutzer (1766-1831) also come to mind.

Because of this presumed insignificance, a recuperative attempt has been made to raise awareness of Onslow's work by the George Onslow Association in France, founded in 1994: it considers that 'the impact on the Romantic period of French music by the composer George Onslow [...] is still insufficiently recognised'.<sup>219</sup> However, the extent, or indeed the nature, of his impact and the Frenchness of his music are not clarified by these efforts to raise Onslow's stature.

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<sup>219</sup> The Association is led by its president Laurent Martin, honorary president Joël-Marie Fauquet, whose work on the Parisian chamber music societies we have already mentioned, and Viviane

After two attempts at presenting Onslow's biography in the 1880s, by Cirice Teillard and Henry Luguët,<sup>220</sup> Christiana Nobach was the first modern musicologist to publish a work on Onslow's chamber music: it appeared in German in 1985.<sup>221</sup> More recently we have had two further publications, in French, to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the composer's death in 2003. The first is by Vivianne Niaux, member of the George Onslow Association: a concise and well-organised publication that provides a solid introduction to Onslow's life.<sup>222</sup> Niaux's narrative does, however, seem a little carried away by emotion, or indeed by compassion for 'poor Onslow', and the perceived injustice that accompanied his fall from celebrity status.<sup>223</sup> The second work is by Baudime Jam, whose 561-page account, although lengthy, cannot exactly be characterised as a comprehensive biography, as certain periods of Onslow's life are only briefly outlined.<sup>224</sup> In his review of Niaux's *George Onslow: Gentleman compositeur*, Emmanuel Hondré declares that Jam's work is heavily inspired by Niaux's previous articles on Onslow, without acknowledging the sources. This seems fair, especially as it would be practically impossible to conduct research on a forgotten composer such as Onslow without consulting the work of the main researchers in the field – a title that Niaux certainly deserves. Jam does, however, attempt to explore – albeit unsuccessfully – the gradual decline of Onslow's once celebrated reputation, and seems to place it in the period following a

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Niaux, who can be considered as one of the important researchers in the field. The George Onslow Association can be found online at [<http://www.georgeonslow.com>]. Quote available at [<http://www.georgeonslow.com/en/>].

<sup>220</sup> Cirice Teillard, *Un grand homme en province: George Onslow, l'homme et le musicien* (Paris, 1889); Henry Luguët, *Etude sur George Onslow* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1889).

<sup>221</sup> Christiana Nobach, *Untersuchungen zu George Onslows Kammermusik* (Basel, 1985).

<sup>222</sup> Viviane Niaux, *George Onslow: Gentleman compositeur* (Clermont-Ferrand, 2003). See also Emmanuel Hondré, 'George Onslow, Gentleman Compositeur by Viviane Niaux', *Revue de musicologie*, vol. 91, no. 2 (2005), pp. 478-80, and Julian Rushton, 'George Onslow: Gentleman Compositeur by Viviane Niaux', *Music and Letters*, vol. 89, no. 1 (February 2008), pp. 126-7.

<sup>223</sup> See also Jan Dewilde, 'George Onslow: Gentleman Composer by Viviane Niaux', *Fontes Artis Musicae*, vol. 52, no. 2 (April-June 2005), pp. 127-9.

<sup>224</sup> Baudime Jam, *George Onslow* (Clermont-Ferrand, 2003).

hunting accident, an event we shall examine in due course. Jam seeks an explanation for the fate of Onslow in the technical difficulty of his music, the fact that he had no students, that music was not his profession *per se*, since he was independently wealthy, and that he was not in line with the dominant musical tastes of France.<sup>225</sup> Although valid, these features of Onslow's personality and music were also in place earlier on in his career, when his success was sure and certain. Unfortunately, not much has been written about Onslow in English, apart from a 1981 PhD dissertation by Richard Nelson Franks, who found the early biographies historically distorted.<sup>226</sup>

Although this chapter is informed by these studies, I do not seek to establish Onslow's significance through a biographical project similar to those surrounding the most celebrated composers. It seems important that Onslow's legacy survives the passing of time, not so much for the endurance of his works, but most significantly for what his character conveys about the culture of chamber music at the time. Through this problem of music history comes a great opportunity: by uncovering Onslow's historical significance one can reveal the aesthetic ideals of the Parisian chamber music scene. His role in this study will be to guide us through the core chamber music values; to allow us to discuss both conservatism and French identity, amid an already-established German quartet tradition; to evaluate his position as a *Biedermeier* composer; and finally to unlock the mystery, or indeed the paradox, behind his public comparison to Beethoven.

Onslow's obscurity today is balanced by his illustrious recognition during his time. Regularly praised by his contemporaries for the beauty of his music, terms that accompanied his name were 'élégance', 'grâce correcte et ingénieuse',

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<sup>225</sup> See also Julian Rushton, 'George Onslow by Baudime Jam', *Music and Letters*, vol. 86, no. 1 (February 2005), pp. 123-4.

<sup>226</sup> Richard Nelson Franks, *George Onslow, A Study of His Life and Works*, PhD dissertation (University of Texas Press, 1981).

‘charme’, ‘grandes beautés’, ‘fécondité’, ‘la beauté calme’ and ‘la verve pétulante’, all of which echo Pierre Baillot’s ideals and beliefs, which we discussed in the previous chapter, along with the concept of the *beau idéal* that dominated, or perhaps haunted, Baillot’s violin treatises.<sup>227</sup> We thus embark on this chapter on Onslow with a slight, yet ever present, predisposition towards a set of ideals that were gentleman-like and utterly agreeable in good society: beauty of expression and the elevation of the soul.

But perhaps some further information on Onslow’s upbringing, musical education and illustrious career will assist us in gaining a deeper understanding of the circumstances. Onslow was born in Clermont-Ferrand to an English father and a French mother. He was raised in an aristocratic family; his father was Edward Onslow, the son of the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Onslow; his mother was Marie-Rosalie de Bourdeilles de Brantôme, of the Château de Laurie. An international figure from early in life, Onslow studied piano with Nicolas Joseph Hüllmandel (1756-1823) in London in 1790, while visiting his English relatives, with Jan Ladislav Dussek (1760-1812) in Hamburg in 1798, where he was accompanying his father, and later with Johann Baptist Cramer (1771-1858) in London, from 1802 until 1805. He was introduced to composition by a friend, Hippolyte Comte de Murat (1779-1854), who offered him some harmony treatises as a gift, and in 1808 he moved to Paris to study composition with accomplished composer Anton Reicha (1770-1836), who also taught Liszt and Berlioz among others. His titles and honours were equally

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<sup>227</sup> ‘Elegance, ‘correct and ingenious grace’, ‘charm’, ‘great beauties’, ‘fruitfulness’, ‘calm beauty’, ‘spirited vigour’. These can be found in the following texts: Jacques-François Halévy, *Derniers souvenirs et portraits: études sur les beaux-arts* (Paris, 1861), p. 186; Joseph d’Ortigue, ‘Revue musicale’, *La quotidienne* (12 March 1833), p. 2; Hector Berlioz, ‘George Onslow’, *Feuilleton du Journal des débats* (10 October 1853); Hector Berlioz, ‘Théâtre de l’Opéra-comique: première représentation de Guise ou les Etats de Blois’, *Feuilleton du Journal des débats* (10 September 1837), p. 2.



international: he was announced honorary member of the London Philharmonic Society along with Mendelssohn in 1829, a title later awarded to Rossini, Berlioz, Wagner, Brahms and Stravinsky, and of the Vienna Philharmonic Society in 1836, along with Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer, among others. He was also elected president of the Athénée Musicale in 1834, was made *chevalier* of the Légion d'Honneur in 1837, and succeeded Cherubini as director of the Académie des beaux-arts in 1842.<sup>228</sup> His ties with the Conservatoire were also of paramount importance; his four symphonies were often performed at the Société des concerts du Conservatoire from 1831 until 1847, when his name finally ceased to appear in their programmes, despite the enthusiasm expressed by music critic Joseph d'Ortigue at the prospect of hosting music written by a compatriot, in alternation with the German masters' works that were regularly presented at the series.<sup>229</sup> A fact that cannot go unnoticed, especially as we are to delve into Onslow's paradoxical public comparison to Beethoven, is that his symphonies always opened the Conservatoire's concerts, which concluded, on all of the occasions, with a symphony by Beethoven.<sup>230</sup>

A prolific chamber music composer, Onslow was, according to German journalist Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, 'the last master' of 'the composers of quartets by profession, who [...] spent their whole life in nothing but composing chamber music,

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<sup>228</sup> See also Viviane Niaux, 'George Onslow', *Grove Music Online*.

<sup>229</sup> 'Il serait bien à souhaiter que le Conservatoire pût, en rendant ses séances hebdomadaires, nous faire entendre alternativement les compositions allemandes et les productions de nos compatriotes: ce serait le vrai moyen d'allumer parmi nous un véritable foyer musical, au lieu de nous contenter d'aller chercher quelques étincelles chez nos voisins'. 'One should hope that the Conservatoire could, by making its sessions weekly, make us listen alternately to German compositions and productions of our countrymen: this would be the true way to start among us a real musical home, instead of contenting ourselves with fetching some sparks from our neighbours'. Joseph d'Ortigue, 'Sixième concert du Conservatoire. Symphonie de M. Onslow', *L'avenir*, vol. 2, no. 184 (18 April 1831), p. 13.

<sup>230</sup> A full list of the concert programmes of the Société des concerts du Conservatoire, compiled by D. Kern Holoman, can be found on the portal of University of California Davis, online at: [<http://hector.ucdavis.edu/sdc>].

and could count their quartets and quintets by hundreds'.<sup>231</sup> Riehl was without doubt thinking of Boccherini and Haydn, and perhaps Giuseppe Cambini (1746-1825) and Franz Krommer (1759-1831) (who could indeed count their quartets and quintets by hundreds), but applied to Onslow the statement is certainly an exaggeration.

However, it undoubtedly shows how strongly Onslow's name was affiliated with chamber music, amid a Paris that was overwhelmed by opera. Among Onslow's works are thirty-six string quartets and thirty-four string quintets, ten piano trios and several other chamber works, along with four symphonies and three (not-so-successful) operas (a fourth one, *Les Deux Oncles*, was never performed or published). But Onslow was not a composer by profession, as his aristocratic status meant that it would have been unseemly for him to work for money. Cultivating one's land was thought of as a far more respectable activity for the nobility; he thus spent his summers in the family estate in Auvergne and only went to Paris in the winter, where he presented the works he had recently completed. This period coincided with the season of chamber music societies in Paris, which began in November and went on until late spring, giving him the opportunity to introduce his creations to Parisian chamber music audiences. It is therefore more complex than initially perceived to decipher Onslow's multifaceted persona: a musician of professional standard yet technically an unpaid amateur; with rural activities (hunting and farming) but also active in the metropolis; modest yet highly esteemed in society. Joël-Marie Fauquet presents this series of antitheses in a rather effective way, showing how two sides of the coin can effortlessly unite in the face of one person:

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<sup>231</sup> '[...] the composers of quartets by profession, who [...] spent their whole life in nothing but composing chamber-music, and could count their quartets and quintets by hundreds, exist no more. Onslow was the last master of this kind'. W.H. Riehl, 'George Onslow. Translated from W.H. Riehl's *Musikalische Charakterköpfe*', *Monthly Music Record*, vol. 11 (1881), p. 28.

[Onslow] réunit à lui les principaux traits qui définissent la problématique du fait musical de son temps: les relations entre la province et Paris; les échanges avec l'étranger, principalement avec l'Angleterre et l'Allemagne; les notions de concert public et de concert privé, de musicien amateur et de musicien professionnel; le rôle déterminant du modèle beethovenien; la question de l'opéra et du rapport avec les institutions, l'économie même d'une carrière auréolée de plus de gloire que de succès.<sup>232</sup>

One can explore Onslow's personality further by examining a portrait by Pierre-Louis Grévedon<sup>233</sup> – the most successful one, according to Antoine François Marmontel (1816-1898), who found his face 'noble', with 'smooth features drawn with purity', the combination of 'one of the most beautiful examples of the great British race' and 'French grace'. His face is described as 'honest and caring', contributing as a whole to a person that was 'imposing and likeable'.<sup>234</sup> Marmontel's personal relationship with Onslow surely added to this eloquent description of both internal and external characteristics. However, examining the portrait, one observes a man with impeccable clothing, including a jacket that is buttoned up (as opposed to a

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<sup>232</sup> '[Onslow] unites the main features that define the issues of the musical fact of his time: the relationship between the province and Paris; exchanges with foreign countries, mainly with England and Germany; the notions of the public and the private concert; the amateur and the professional musician; the decisive role of the Beethoven model; the question of opera and the relationship with institutions, the very economics of a career of more glory than success'. Joël-Marie Fauquet, 'Editorial', *Bulletin de l'Association George Onslow*, no. 1 (1994), in Viviane Niaux, *George Onslow. Gentleman compositeur* (Clermont-Ferrand, 2003), p. 14.

<sup>233</sup> Pierre-Louis Grévedon (1776-1860), also known as Henri Grévedon, was a French painter, who also produced portraits of Rossini, pianist composers Friedrich Kalkbrenner, Pierre Zimmermann and Sigismond Thalberg, violinists Pierre Rode and Charles-Auguste de Bériot, among other personalities of the time.

<sup>234</sup> 'Le portrait le mieux réussi de G. Onslow est celui de Grévedon mais je n'ai pas besoin de le consulter pour retrouver dans ma mémoire cette noble figure aux traits réguliers et purement dessinés, un des plus beaux spécimens de la grande race britannique, tempéré et complété par un heureux mélange de grâce française. Le front haut, le nez bourbonien, l'ovale correct de la figure, la bouche arquée et souriante, le regard franc et bienveillant attireraient et charmaient par la douceur et la bonté. La taille au-dessus de la moyenne, la démarche vive, l'abord résolu complétaient cet ensemble à la fois imposant et sympathique'. 'The most successful portrait of G. Onslow is that by Grévedon but I do not need to consult to find in my memory this noble figure with proportionate and purely sketched features, one of the finest specimens of the great British race, moderated and supplemented by a happy mixture of French grace. The long forehead, the Bourbon nose, a perfectly oval face, the arched and smiling mouth, the frank and kind gaze attracted and charmed by the gentleness and kindness. The height above average, a lively walk, a first impression of determination, completed this both imposing and friendly ensemble'. Antoine François Marmontel, *Symphonistes et virtuoses* (Paris, 1880), pp. 202-3.

more relaxed setting in Grévedon's portraits of Bériot, Kalkbrenner and Zimmermann). The very high collar and perfectly straight bow tie contribute to a certain rigidity of a person that seems not only reserved, but ceremonial and imposing, as Marmontel also suggested. The facial hair adds to the seriousness of the appearance, yet an ever-so-slight grin and the relaxed gaze soften his appearance, which is, nonetheless, impressive overall.

Onslow's high social standing is also demonstrated by the dedications of his compositions. Quite a few of his string quartets were composed for members of the aristocracy, while at the same time, all the leading personalities of the Parisian chamber music movement up to 1850 received the dedication of a work by Onslow, including Ignace and Camille Pleyel, Auguste Franchomme, Pierre Baillot, François Habeneck, Charles-Auguste de Bériot, Louis-Pierre Norblin, the Tilmant brothers, Jan Ladislav Dussek, Friedrich Kalkbrenner, and Felix Mendelssohn, to name only a few.<sup>235</sup> The composer's advantageous position in society certainly helped him in his musical career. As we have already established, artists often maintained good relations with the nobility, whose amateur string quartets they often led in their salons, and we have discussed how such relations proved extremely beneficial in setting up the *Séances de quatuors et de quintettes de Baillot*, since the vast majority of the audience members were amateurs and aristocrats, who admired Baillot and paid the annual fee to attend his concerts. Onslow, on the other hand, was not only a distinguished composer and cellist, but also a member of the aristocracy: being one of their own must have facilitated matters further. One can only assume the delight, and indeed the pride, of the Comtesse Arthur de Bouillé, the Duchesse de Berry, or the Baron de Ponnat, attending a concert where a work dedicated to them exclusively

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<sup>235</sup> Niaux, *George Onslow*, p. 259-75.



Henri Grévedon, *Georges Onslow* (1830), Bibliothèque nationale de France

was heard by the audience. Going back to Fauquet's statement, one might add another two contrasting positions that Onslow united in his name: both an aristocrat and an artist of professional standing.

But Onslow did not only secure the admiration of the nobility; fellow musicians continually declared their appreciation of his work. However, and as we will see, it seems that the terms on which Onslow was praised by his contemporaries were later to hasten his obscurity. Violinist Eugène Sauzay, Baillot's son-in-law and Onslow's dedicatee, notes that 'Onslow was one of the most beloved composers' and that 'for a while it was only his works that people spoke about'.<sup>236</sup> Berlioz was fascinated by Onslow; in a letter to Albert du Boys in 1829 he wrote: 'depuis la mort de Beethoven, c'est lui [Onslow] qui tient le sceptre de la musique instrumentale',<sup>237</sup> and he did not hesitate to make his views public in the *Journal des débats*: 'M. Onslow est une des plus belles gloires musicales de la France'.<sup>238</sup> He was also admired by Schumann in Germany, who placed him beside the great instrumental music masters of his time: 'We are accustomed to the type of quartet developed by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. In recent years we have acknowledged Onslow and Mendelssohn as worthy successors following the same path'.<sup>239</sup> It is not clear what Schumann meant by 'the same path', but one might simply interpret it as equally noteworthy music, perhaps similarly significant in the progression of chamber music,

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<sup>236</sup> 'Onslow comptait parmi les compositeurs les plus aimés; durant un moment on ne parlait plus que de ses œuvres'. Brigitte François-Sappey, 'La vie musicale en France à travers les Mémoires d'Eugène Sauzay (1809-1901)', *Revue de Musicologie*, vol. 60, no. 1/2 (1974), p. 174.

<sup>237</sup> 'Since Beethoven's death, it is him who holds the sceptre of instrumental music', letter to Albert du Boys, 24 April 1829. See also Gérard Streletski, 'Présence d'Onslow dans la correspondance et quelques autres écrits de Berlioz, des *Huit scènes de Faust aux Troyens*', *George Onslow un 'romantique' entre France et Allemagne*, ed. Viviane Niaux (Lyon, 2010), p. 35-54.

<sup>238</sup> 'Mr Onslow is one of the greatest musical glories of France'. Hector Berlioz, 'Théâtre de l'Opéra-comique', *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires* (10 September 1837), p. 1.

<sup>239</sup> Cited in Henry Pleasants, *The Musical World of Robert Schumann, a selection of his own writings* (London, 1965), p. 145.

or even construe this remark to be highlighting a certain continuity between classical and romantic chamber music. Critic, conductor, composer and violinist Henri-Louis Blanchard (1791-1858), writing in the *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* in 1847, seemed to be pointing in a similar direction, identifying Onslow next to Mendelssohn as the modern masters who continued the work of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven:

De toutes les auditions musicales les plus réelles, les plus pures, parce qu'elles ne sont pas mélangées d'appréhension de voir faiblir les exécutants, ou de regrets d'avoir perdu son temps, ce sont celles des trios, des quatuors et des quintettes de Haydn, de Mozart, de Beethoven, ou des deux maîtres modernes, MM. Onslow et Mendelssohn, qui suivent de si près ces trois hommes de génie dans la belle voie qu'ils ont ouverte et tant élargie.<sup>240</sup>

We note that both quotes, written by Onslow's contemporaries, make a case of Onslow's and Mendelssohn's music being a worthy continuation to the *œuvre* of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. They do not use terms such as classical or romantic to elaborate their argument, but rather limit their commentary to identifying Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven as a group of great composers. This is despite the fact that Schumann's view that Mozart's music was imbued with a classical spirit was already being voiced in his writings in the 1830s.<sup>241</sup> However, Schumann never openly assigned Mozart to a Classical era; it was not until later that the term was complicated further by Hegelian philosophy.<sup>242</sup> In France specifically, I have found no documentation referring to Onslow as either a classical or romantic composer at the time and I should make it clear that the use of these terms in my study is made

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<sup>240</sup> 'Of all the listening experiences the most real, the most pure – because they are not mixed with apprehension that the performers falter, or of disappointment from wasting one's time – are those of the trios, the quartets, and the quintets of Haydn, of Mozart, of Beethoven, or of the two modern masters, Messrs Onslow and Mendelssohn, who closely follow these three men of genius, in the great path that they have cleared and so much enlarged'. Henri Blanchard, 'Coup d'œil musical sur les concerts de la saison', *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* (14 March 1847), p. 86.

<sup>241</sup> See John Daverio, 'Mozart in the Nineteenth Century', *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*, ed. Simon P. Keefe (Cambridge, 2003), p. 178-9.

<sup>242</sup> See also James Webster, *Haydn's Farewell Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style* (Cambridge, 1991).

from a modern point of view. (The same applies to the term conservative, which is also not found in nineteenth-century texts surrounding any of the characters or institutions examined in my thesis. The concept of conservatism can still be considered as new during Baillot's time and the main reason it is made possible to talk about conservatism during that period altogether is the increasing historicisation taking place, which we have recorded in Baillot's genealogical programmes. In my study, I use the term to define the institutionalised values, the all-important association with musical tradition and even the lifestyle that characterised both Baillot and Onslow.)

But audiences too appreciated Onslow's work; after the *soirée* of 27 April 1830 at Baillot's, Fétis wrote in the *Revue musicale*: 'Le nouveau quintetto de M. Onslow a produit une vive impression sur l'auditoire choisi qui assistait à la séance de mardi dernier'.<sup>243</sup> In London also, where the composer took his first steps as a pianist, his critical acclaim was celebrated. A few days after the composer's death in October 1853, we read an obituary in London's *Athenaeum* that sums up Onslow's music as noteworthy but less than extraordinary:

The large mass of chamber music, however, finished by Onslow well merits the epithet of remarkable. It is thoroughly original without being extraordinarily striking, delicate and interesting without sickliness or the absence of occasional vigour, suave in phrases, ingenious in structure, not always, it may be, sufficiently varied by happy strokes of episode, but always thoroughly well reasoned out, and interesting to the players, from the closeness of attention and readiness in dialogue, reply, and imitation which it demands.<sup>244</sup>

In this passage, although Onslow is certainly praised, he is also distinguished from the exceptional. His work comes across as reasonably original, but not truly striking,

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<sup>243</sup> 'Mr Onslow's new quintet made a strong impression on the audience that attended the session last Tuesday'. François-Joseph Fétis, 'Soirées musicales de M. Baillot', *Revue musicale* (1830), vol. 1, p. 401.

<sup>244</sup> *The Athenaeum*, 'Mr George Onslow', vol. 1355 (15 October 1853), p. 1233.



while chamber-music ideals of dialogue, imitation and artistic enjoyment confirm it as an attainment of existing paradigms. The idea of the healthy as opposed to the sickly in Onslow's music certainly echoes the discussion on Paganini's physique and music in the previous chapter, where we juxtaposed the famous virtuoso with Pierre Baillot's graceful and polite demeanour. Perhaps the view expressed in the *Athenaeum* helps us place Onslow next to Baillot,<sup>245</sup> rather than to Paganini, and allows us to assess the prospect of classifying him as a *Biedermeier* composer. This would potentially further explain why, despite his contemporaries' views, expressed by Ferdinand Rahles in 1871, that 'no composer of classical chamber-music better deserves to be remembered in future ages than George Onslow – an artist whose compositions show at once the excellence of his models and his own high attainments',<sup>246</sup> today he is indeed forgotten.

The *Biedermeier* style emerged, mainly in German territories, between 1815 and 1848, and one could say it largely stemmed from the renewed comfort, or indeed reassurance, in one's home, following the political turbulence of the previous years. In art, this was reflected in a preference for domestic intimacy and depictions of everyday life,<sup>247</sup> which also links *Biedermeier* to the French Troubadour style of the early nineteenth century, with its highly regarded portrayals of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Interior design was also – if not primarily – affected, with a

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<sup>245</sup> Although Onslow dedicated his string quartets opus 8 to Baillot in 1815, it was not until 15 May 1824 that the latter introduced the composer to his series, continuing to do so until 1832, with a clear preference for his string quintets, rather than his quartets. With nineteen appearances in Baillot's programmes, however, Onslow was the sixth most performed composer (after Baillot, Beethoven, Boccherini, Haydn, and Mozart, who all appeared well over a hundred times at the series), and the only Frenchman among them besides Baillot.

<sup>246</sup> Ferdinand Rahles, 'George Onslow', *The Musical World*, vol. 49 (1871), p. 507.

<sup>247</sup> French painter Louis-Léopold Boilly's (1761-1845) works are testimony to such a movement, with his use of Neoclassical devices, such as illumination and genders distinctly separated in a stage-like space. See also Michelle Facos, *An Introduction to Nineteenth-century Art* (New York, 2011), p. 171-82.

turn from the heavily ornate *Rococo* style to the simple and more modest *Biedermeier* style. In France, this was anticipated by the *Empire* style, which evolved during the Napoleonic era and came to oppose the flamboyant *Rococo* style with its simplicity and clean lines.

In music in particular, according to Dahlhaus, some composers, while sharing certain traits with romantic composers, merit more than ‘the contemptuous tag “subsidiary romantics”’ and ‘deserve to be placed in a category of their own – the *Biedermeier* [...]’.<sup>248</sup> However, no links to an equivalent French term have been established. As the style points to conservatism and a lifestyle originating in peaceful domesticity, as opposed to the turmoil of the Napoleonic years, an image of Onslow in his glorious Château de Chalandrat would suffice to convey the social stability and the un-romantic way of living that surrounded him. Essentially, the use of the term as a historical category stemmed from this attempt to consider the arts as linked to an un-romantic social context, and given Onslow’s affluence and favourable social status, it would be difficult to contradict such a claim. Taking this a step further, William Edgar Yates has argued that *Biedermeier* musicians ‘tended to see themselves as followers of Mozart and the heirs of Classicism, while the Romantics saw themselves as followers of Beethoven’.<sup>249</sup> This will prove a critical argument when attempting to unpack the *charivari* surrounding Onslow’s nickname ‘le Beethoven français’.

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<sup>248</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, ‘Romanticism and *Biedermeier* Music’, *Nineteenth Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley, 1989), p. 169, but see also p. 168-78.

<sup>249</sup> William Edgar Yates, ‘Biedermeier’, *Grove Music Online*. See also Kenneth DeLong, ‘The Conventions of Musical Biedermeier’, *Convention in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. Wye J. Allanbrook, Janet M. Levy, William P. Mahrt (Stuyvesant, 1992), and Alice M. Hanson, *Musical Life in Biedermeier Vienna* (Cambridge, 1985).

Le quintette de la balle, left-ear deafness, and Beethoven

Onslow's widespread recognition in France came around the time that his string quintet no. 15 op. 38 was composed (1829), a work dedicated to Louis-Pierre Norblin, cellist of Baillot's quartet. This was advertised as *le quintette de la balle* (the bullet quintet), owing to a hunting accident, described in detail by d'Ortigue:

On vient réveiller Onslow bien avant le jour. Le compositeur, fort occupé de son quintette, refusa d'abord. Cependant, comme son ami redoublait d'instance, il craignit de le désobliger, et consentit à l'accompagner. Ils arrivent dans la forêt. Onslow est posté par son ami sur une petite élévation, auprès d'un arbre, et non loin de l'endroit où le sanglier devait passer. Quelques temps après, les chiens aboient, une laie traverse, Onslow tire un coup du fusil et la manque; au même instant, un second coup part du côté où se trouvait son ami, et Onslow reçoit au milieu de la joue gauche la balle destinée à la laie.<sup>250</sup>

However, what might come across simply as an aristocratic pastime gone wrong, in reality had severe repercussions for the composer's musical future, as the bullet caused him left-ear deafness:

Onslow tomba, et il aurait été infailliblement étouffé par son sang, si un des chasseurs ne fût arrivé fort à propos pour le relever. On le soutint jusqu'au château; il y arriva la tête enveloppée et sanglante. Ce fut la nuit suivante qu'il composa le morceau du *Délire*. Cet accident a occasionné la surdité de l'oreille gauche, et depuis lors Onslow n'a pu jouer du violoncelle. La balle pénétra dans les chairs et les os et n'a point été retrouvée.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> 'We come to wake Onslow well before day-break. The composer, strongly sunk in his quintet, at first refuses. Meanwhile, as his friend exhibits insistence, and not wanting to disoblige, he consents to accompany him. They arrive in the forest. Onslow is posted by his friend to a little rise, next to a tree, not far from where the boar is supposed to pass. A little while later, the dogs bark, a boar crosses and Onslow shoots and misses; at the same time a second shot comes from the direction of his friend, and Onslow receives the bullet in his left jaw'. Joseph d'Ortigue, 'George Onslow', *Revue de Paris*, vol. 1 (November 1833), p.161.

<sup>251</sup> 'Onslow falls, having been slightly choked by his own blood, and one of the hunters arrives quickly to help him up. He is carried back to the castle; he arrives with his head wrapped up and bloody. It's the following night that he composes the piece *Délire*. This accident caused the deafness in his left ear, and from then on Onslow could no longer play the cello. The bullet penetrated both flesh and bone and was never retrieved'. D'Ortigue, *Revue de Paris*, p.161.

Perhaps it is the dramatic circumstances of this quintet, along with the composer's suffering, that reinforced his nickname as the 'Beethoven français'.<sup>252</sup> It appears otherwise difficult to pinpoint the exact origin of Onslow's comparison to Beethoven, especially if one were to consider that this might have begun in Germany, as some nineteenth-century sources suggest,<sup>253</sup> but it can certainly be traced as far back as an entry in the *Revue musicale* in 1830, written by publisher Camille Pleyel (1788-1855), son of Ignace Pleyel: '[...] un *fac simile* de musique écrite par notre Beethoven français'.<sup>254</sup> About a decade later, the nickname was still going strong: we find it in an article in *La France littéraire* about artistic and scientific activity in Onslow's native Auvergne: 'M. Georges Onslow, que ses riches symphonies ont fait surnommer le Beethoven français, a probablement si bien accaparé tout notre génie musical, que nos autres artistes sont vraiment embarrassés'.<sup>255</sup> However, no matter how many writers mentioned this nickname, the real interest is in what was at stake, culturally, in the comparison. (No other composer was given this nickname during Onslow's time; however Saint-Saëns was

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<sup>252</sup> It is interesting to note that Onslow's hunting accident has hints of *Der Freischütz's* plot, where the fate of the magic bullet is of central importance in the opera. Although Berlioz's version at the Opéra in Paris was not presented until 1841, news of the *première* in Berlin in 1821 must have reached the Parisian music lovers through accounts in the press.

<sup>253</sup> 'Après l'audition d'un pareil morceau, on n'est plus étonné que les Allemands aient surnommé M. Onslow le Beethoven français'. 'After listening to such a piece, one is no longer surprised that the Germans have nicknamed Mr Onslow the French Beethoven'. Georges Bousquet, 'Chronique musicale', *L'illustration*, vol. 16, p. 83.

'Les Allemands l'avaient surnommé le Beethoven français; parmi les compositeurs français de musique instrumentale de chambre, il était sans contredit le plus remarquable'. 'The Germans had nicknamed him the French Beethoven; among the French composers of instrumental chamber music, he was undoubtedly the most remarkable'. *Almanach de la littérature, du théâtre et des beaux-arts* (Paris, 1855), ed. M.J. Janin, p. 86.

<sup>254</sup> 'A facsimile of music written by our French Beethoven'. 'Souscription à la collection complète des quintetti et quatuors de George Onslow', *Revue musicale*, vol. 8 (1830), p. 282. See also Niaux's article 'George Onslow: le Beethoven français?' presented at the Palazetto Bru-Zane Symposium, (Venice, October 2009).

<sup>255</sup> 'Mr Georges Onslow, whose rich symphonies resulted in him being nicknamed the French Beethoven, probably monopolised all our musical genius in such a way that our other artists are truly embarrassed'. 'Mouvement intellectuel. Etat des sciences et des beaux-arts en Auvergne', *La France littéraire*, ed. Charles Malo, vol. 36 (Paris, 1839), p. 245.

also tagged the French Beethoven in the late nineteenth century, a comparison which borders on nonsensical). A few writers addressed this issue explicitly, usually in order to either defend or to criticise Onslow. But, according to Viviane Niaux, neither of the two sides succeeded in presenting sound arguments to support their stance; the result was that Onslow often suffered the criticism of his contemporaries simply because one could not bring up his music without referring to Beethoven.<sup>256</sup> One might recall here the Concerts du Conservatoire, which never presented a symphony of Onslow's without ending with a symphony by Beethoven; even if one wished to avoid such comparisons between composers, it must have been, in effect, nearly impossible.

Niaux's statement certainly holds some truth, especially when applied to the *quintette de le balle*. From the second movement onwards, the work's titles follow Onslow's health after the accident: *allegro moderato ed espressivo; menuetto – dolore; trio – febre e deliro; andante sostenuto – convalescenza; finale – guarigione*.<sup>257</sup> Such a testimony of one's health can also be found on Haydn's visiting card of 1803, used during the last years of his life, which read: 'Hin ist meine Kraft, alt und schwach bin ich' ('All my strength is gone, old and frail am I') and which was quoted by Onslow in a letter to Camille Pleyel in 1817,<sup>258</sup> but most significantly it brings to mind Beethoven's string quartet op. 132, whose third

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<sup>256</sup> 'Les défenseurs du "Beethoven français" et ses détracteurs manquèrent souvent du recul nécessaire pour avancer des arguments pertinents. Le résultat fut qu'Onslow eut souvent à souffrir du jugement de ses contemporains, justement parce qu'on ne pouvait évoquer sa musique sans faire référence à celle de Beethoven'. Niaux, 'George Onslow: le Beethoven français?', p. 3.

<sup>257</sup> Pain/sorrow, fever and delirium, convalescence/recuperation, recovery/healing.

<sup>258</sup> In the letter to Camille Pleyel in 1817, we read: 'Vous recevrez, mon cher Camille, [...] les variations que vous m'avez demandées et qui m'ont fait dire bien souvent comme Haydn (je ne me compare à lui que dans cette circonstance) *ma force est perdue*'. 'You will receive, my dear Camille, [...] the variations that you asked for, and which very often made me say, like Haydn (I do not compare myself to him except on this occasion) *my strength is lost*'. Letter of 3 May 1817, in Collection Album, Château d'Aulteribe, in Niaux, *George Onslow: Gentleman compositeur*, p. 279. Haydn's visiting card text is taken from Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim's (1719-1803) poem *Der Greis*, which Haydn set music to in 1790.

movement is entitled *adagio, Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart* (a convalescent's holy song of thanksgiving to the divinity, in the Lydian mode), while the *andante* that follows bears the heading *Neue Kraft fühlend* (with renewed strength). With Beethoven's op. 132 having been completed and premiered in 1825, four years prior to the *quintette de la balle*, it seems that Onslow was seeking to create a further connection between his work and Beethoven's, one that was more solid than the music critics' desire to establish Onslow's prominence. This intertextuality, overlooked by Niaux and her colleagues, provides new insight into Onslow's own view of his public comparison to Beethoven, and, as it appears to be, he did not mind it at all! We can locate an eagerness to the point that everything in the quintet is overdone: Beethoven only devoted one of five movements to his thanksgiving song and statement of renewed strength, while Onslow uses his three of the four movements to establish the stages of his health (perhaps even all four, if one considers the first movement to be a fanfare introducing the hunting trip, and hence Onslow's good health at the time). Further, we are led to understand that Onslow made it his sole intention to reflect the titles of his movements in the music, resulting in an over-dramatic and perhaps exaggerated account, which could have made the events obvious to the listener without the assistance of the descriptive titles. The diminished seventh chords marked *fortissimo* at the start of the *menuetto* signal the unfortunate shot, while the chords in chromatic sequence that follow clearly mark the pain. The *trio*'s rapid modulations and chromaticism communicate the delirium, the *andante sostenuto* sets a peaceful tone of contentment – or even gratification – to mark the recuperation, and at last the exuberantly joyful *finale* resonates the message of recovery.

But there is a further (dis)connection with Beethoven that arises from the circumstances of the *quintette de la balle*: Beethoven's Heiligenstädter Testament. Even though both stem from their respective composers' need to express their feelings of suffering, the latter was not intended to be made public (except to Beethoven's two brothers, after his death), as was the case with *le quintette de la balle*. On the contrary, Beethoven kept the document private for his entire life. It is quite possibly the hopefulness of Onslow's last two movements that made it easier for him to share his work with his audience, while Beethoven thought there to be no way out of his condition. One must not forget, however, that Onslow, too, was left deaf in one ear after the accident; nevertheless this did not dissuade him from giving a happy ending to his work. It is interesting, however, to see d'Ortigue's view on this topic of suffering, especially since he was an enthusiast of Onslow's work. On the topic of Beethoven's late quartets' reception, he divides artists unable to comprehend these works into three categories: the first includes artists that are too old to be able to accept novelty, the second are ignorant, and the last have not experienced sufficient pain or suffering to understand the work of Beethoven. It seems that Onslow is most suited to the last category:

S'il m'est pénible d'avoir à placer George Onslow dans une de ces trois catégories, il est consolant pour moi de lui assigner avec assurance son rang dans la troisième; car si, d'un côté, ses compositions attestent que ses facultés sont encore douées d'une assez grande flexibilité pour se mettre en rapport avec les formes nouvelles; d'un autre côté, ceux qui le connaissent savent que avec élévation de pensées qui le distingue, il ne saurait se méprendre sur le caractère et l'esprit de son époque et sur la nature du mouvement qu'elle communique aux arts. Mais Onslow jouit de toute la félicité qu'humainement il soit permis de désirer.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> 'Even if it is hard to have to put George Onslow in one of these three categories, it is comforting for me to confidently assign his position in the third; for if, on one hand, his compositions show that his faculties are still endowed with a considerable flexibility in order to establish contact with new forms, on the other hand, those who know him know that with the elevation of thought that distinguishes him, he cannot confuse the character and spirit of his age and the nature of the movement that communicates the arts. But Onslow enjoys all bliss that he is humanly allowed to

This commentary, written several years after the hunting accident, shows that, despite the left-ear deafness, Onslow's life, and indeed his state of mind and musical stimulation, were not shaken by it, as any pain experienced was simply the result of an accident. He did not experience 'ces perturbations, qui bouleversent dès les premiers pas dans la carrière toute une existence, jettent l'âme dans un profond désenchantement et un immense dégoût de toutes choses, et font de la vie une longue et morne succession d'ennuis', which made up Beethoven's suffering, according to d'Ortigue.<sup>260</sup>

Furthermore, Onslow's partial deafness was the result of a hunting trip with his high-society friends, whereas Beethoven's was the consequence of his 'cruel fate'.<sup>261</sup> In turn, Beethoven faced complete deafness, whereas Onslow's was limited to the left ear. It might be precisely here, however, that we find the root of Onslow's nickname. Let us return to the quote in the *Athenaeum* which spoke of Onslow's compositions as 'thoroughly original without being extraordinarily striking',<sup>262</sup> which resonates as a partial success, as opposed to Beethoven's extraordinarily striking works. Could the 'Beethoven français' title specifically mean 'Beethoven but not quite', just as Onslow was deaf but not quite, and his work was original but not quite?

But apart from the nature and the consequences of their deafness – entire or one-sided – there are other features that divide the two composers, and so the word 'French' in Onslow's nickname could take different meanings, as we shall see

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desire'. Joseph d'Ortigue, 'Quelques considérations philosophiques à propos d'une querelle musicale', *Revue européenne* (June 1834), p.501-2.

<sup>260</sup> '[...] these disturbances that upset one's existence from the very first steps in one's career, throw the soul into a deep disillusion and a huge disgust of all things, and make life a long and dreary succession of troubles'. D'Ortigue, 'Quelques considérations philosophiques', p. 502.

<sup>261</sup> '[...]meinem harten Schicksal [...]', *Beethoven's Letters*, p. 48.

<sup>262</sup> 'The Athenaeum', vol. 1355, p. 1233.



in due course. First, as far as was reported, there is an element of graciousness and social decorum in everything that Onslow did in his life – both musical and not. The language he employs in his letters to friends and acquaintances is always elegant and considerate. Moreover, he comes across as modest, even if that was a façade he felt was expected of him. In a letter of 1833 responding to d’Ortigue, who was asking for information in order to prepare a feature on the composer, he writes:

Votre bonne amitié veut voir de l’intérêt dans des détails qui en fournissent peu et il me faudrait être un Beethoven pour que le nom du facteur de mon piano pût n’être pas la chose la plus indifférente du monde. Cependant, puisque vous désirez le savoir, je vous dirai qu’il a nom Tomkisson (sic).<sup>263</sup>

Such was Onslow’s public humility that he seemingly could not tolerate the idea of being compared to Beethoven (not even for the most trivial topic), or any other renowned composer for that matter.<sup>264</sup> On the other hand, in the opening sentence of his Heiligenstädter Testament, Beethoven speaks of those who thought or declared him ‘hostile, morose, and misanthropical’,<sup>265</sup> while later we read: ‘no longer can I enjoy recreation in social intercourse, refined conversation, or mutual outpourings of thought. Completely isolated, I only enter society when compelled to do so. I must live like in art exile’.<sup>266</sup> There is, therefore, no doubt that the two men did not lead

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<sup>263</sup> ‘Your kind friendship wishes to find interest in details that provide little and I would need to be a Beethoven for the name of my piano maker not to be the most insignificant thing in the world. However, since you wish to know it, I can tell you it bears the name Tomkisson (sic)’. Letter of 27 September 1833, Bibliothèque municipale d’Avignon, autographes Requien, in Sylvia L’Ecuyer, ‘Biographie musicale de George Onslow par Joseph d’Ortigue’, *George Onslow un ‘romantique’ entre France et Allemagne* (Lyon, 2010), p. 30.

<sup>264</sup> See letter to Camille Pleyel, note 258.

<sup>265</sup> ‘O ihr Menschen, die ihr mich für feindselig, störrisch oder misantropisch haltet oder erkläret’. ‘Oh! ye who think or declare me to be hostile, morose, and misanthropical, how unjust you are, and how little you know the secret cause of what appears thus to you!’ Grace Wallace, *Beethoven’s Letters 1790-1826* (New York, 1869), vol. 1, p. 45.

<sup>266</sup> ‘[...] für mich darf Erholung in menschlicher Gesellschaft, feinere Unterredungen, wechselseitige Ergießungen nicht statt haben, ganz allein fast nur so viel, als es die höchste Notwendigkeit fodert, darf ich mich in Gesellschaft einlassen, wie ein Verbannter muß ich leben [...]’, Wallace, *Beethoven’s Letters*, p. 46.

the same social life at the time that they were dealing with their deafness; one was still rubbing shoulders with artists and the aristocracy, the other, once maintained by aristocratic patronage, but now in self-declared exile.

The same year as the completion of *la balle*, on 24 March 1829, Pierre Baillot famously presented Beethoven's quartet op. 131 at his *séances*. On the same night, the large audience of 300, according to Berlioz,<sup>267</sup> also listened to Haydn's quartet no. 39, Boccherini's quartet no. 48, Baillot's *Air de Handel varié*, and Onslow's quintet op. 18 no. 5. In two letters, Onslow made his feelings of frustration about Beethoven's late quartets known to two close friends of his, the pharmacist Paul-Antoine Gratacap, referred to as Cap, and Louis-Philippe-Joseph Girod Vienney, the baron de Trémont.<sup>268</sup> Both letters, written three years after the concert, and thus at a time that Beethoven's late quartets were received with more enthusiasm, show Onslow's despair at the extravagant writing, which is ultimately epitomised in his question: 'if we like such music how can we ever tolerate mine'?

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<sup>267</sup> 'Il y avait près de trois cents personnes...'. Hector Berlioz, 'Lettre à sa sœur Nanci' (Paris, 29 March 1829) in *Correspondance générale*, vol. 1, p. 244.

<sup>268</sup> '[...] je me remettrai à l'ouvrage pourvu toutefois que l'admiration fanatique qu'on affecte d'avoir pour les derniers ouvrages de Beethoven, ouvrages dont j'ai lu et relu la partition et que je proclame le chef-d'œuvre de l'extravagance et de l'ineptie musicale, ne me dégoûte pas à jamais d'une occupation qui jusqu'ici a été pour moi la source de tant de charme'. 'I will go back to work, provided, however, that the fanatical admiration that is displayed for the latest works of Beethoven, works whose score I have read and reread and that I declare the masterpiece of extravagance and musical ineptitude, does not repel me from an activity that has, until now, been the source of such charm'. Letter to Cap, 20 April 1832, Bibliothèque nationale de France, in Niaux, *George Onslow: Gentleman compositeur*, p.302.

'[...] le succès de mes trois derniers quintettes qu'on regarde comme mes meilleurs. L'encouragement que ce succès devrait me donner est paralysé par le dégoûtant fanatisme qu'on affecte pour tout ce qu'un cerveau musical a produit de plus déplorable: je veux parler des derniers quatuors de Beethoven. J'en ai reçu la partition d'Allemagne et je me suis plus que jamais convaincu qu'un auteur ne peut-être plus extravagant. Si on aime une pareille musique, comment pourra-t-on jamais tolérer la mienne?' '[...] the success of my latest three quintets that are considered as my best. The encouragement that this success should be giving me is paralysed by the repulsive fanaticism that is displayed for everything deplorable that a musical mind has produced: I wish to speak about the last quartets of Beethoven. I received the score from Germany and I am convinced, more than ever, that a composer cannot be more extravagant. If we like such music, how can we tolerate mine'? Letter to Trémont, 26 april 1832, in *Mémoires du baron de Trémont*, Bibliothèque nationale de France. In Niaux, *George Onslow: Gentleman compositeur*, p.304.

With this he clearly distances himself from Beethoven's work, from the master he once did not dare compare himself to, and one can only wonder how he felt about being nicknamed the Beethoven français. But these seem to be genuine feelings of disappointment in the genius of Beethoven, which, apart from the two private letters, are also found in public display, in d'Ortigue's feature on Onslow in the *Revue de Paris*:

Les derniers quatuors de Beethoven! des folies, des absurdités, des rêveries d'un génie malade [...]. Il se trouverait peut-être des esprits assez bêtes, assez méchants, assez petits, pour m'accuser de jalousie. Moi jaloux de Beethoven! de ce génie immense devant qui je me prosterne, de ce géant des géants. Oh! croyez, monsieur, que le seul sentiment qui me fait parler ainsi, c'est la profonde douleur que j'éprouve de voir cet homme sublime tomber dans de semblables aberrations.<sup>269</sup>

Nevertheless, critics continued to point out the Frenchman's connection to Beethoven's style of writing; it is d'Ortigue, again, who tells us of the first French symphony to be performed at the Société des concerts du Conservatoire in 1831: Onslow's symphony op. 41. The following remark is indeed fascinating, as it goes to show that Onslow's contemporaries could indeed see elements of Beethoven's work in his compositions:

Dans le menuet, M. Onslow a trouvé des effets de timbales du genre de ceux que nous avons applaudis dans le *scherzo* de la symphonie avec chœur. Je signale cette ressemblance, parce qu'elle fait honneur au compositeur qui ne connaissait pas et ne pouvait connaître l'ouvrage de Beethoven au moment où il écrivait le sien.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>269</sup>The last quartets of Beethoven! follies, absurdities, the reveries of an ill genius [...]. Perhaps daft minds can be found, wicked enough, small enough to accuse me of jealousy. Me jealous of Beethoven! of this great genius to whom I bow, this giant of giants. Oh! believe me, sir, that the only feeling that makes me speak thus, is the deep sorrow that I experience by seeing this sublime man fall in such aberrations'. Joseph d'Ortigue, 'George Onslow', *Revue de Paris* (November 1833), p. 154.

<sup>270</sup>'In the minuet, Mr Onslow found the effects of the timpani of the same kind as those that we applauded in the *scherzo* of the symphony with chorus [Beethoven's ninth symphony]. I point out this resemblance, as it honours the composer who did not and could not know the work of Beethoven at the time that he was writing his'. Joseph d'Ortigue, 'Sixième concert du Conservatoire. Symphonie de M. Onslow', *L'avenir* (18 April 1831), p. 12.

A few years later, in 1835, it is through the support of the ‘authority’, or indeed the expertise, of Onslow, that François Stoepel wrote an article manifesting the value of Beethoven’s late quartets. In this, Stoepel explains that Onslow, ‘one of the most distinguished musicians of our time’, had studied and compared Beethoven’s fourth and last quartets in terms of their structure and external shape, and had discovered that they were developed in the same way.<sup>271</sup> Given the time that had passed, which would have allowed Onslow to recover from the initial astonishment of his encounter with the late quartets, and study them further in order to comprehend their mechanism, he would perhaps no longer be offended to be called the French Beethoven.

### Frenchness

There is, of course, another path one can follow when examining Onslow’s nickname, one that would appear more straightforward. Onslow was born and brought up in France by a French mother, yet he was taught composition by Anton Reicha, who, although was later naturalised French, spent time in Bonn and Vienna, and was a lifelong friend of Beethoven. Consequently, the first word of the nickname in its original French-language form could show Onslow’s musical heritage, while the second could demonstrate his obvious family roots and extend into his musical inspiration.

Onslow’s musical influences were undeniably German: he learnt to love German chamber music through his lessons with Reicha, but he also meticulously copied Haydn’s string quartets and Beethoven’s six string quartets that form opus 18

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<sup>271</sup> François Stoepel, ‘Beethoven et ses derniers quatuors’, *Gazette musicale de Paris* (21 June 1835), pp. 205-7.

for practice, early on in his training.<sup>272</sup> During his first compositional steps, he also followed Mozart's model of a string quintet with two violas in his op. 1 no. 1 and no. 3. The use of the fugue in his chamber music also demonstrates his attachment to the compositional style of the *vieux maîtres*, while the graceful melodies of his thematic material, as well as the liveliness of the conversation between instruments make Haydn's impact on Onslow quite apparent. Charles Estienne, writing about Onslow's string quartet op. 10, insists on the resemblance of his works to those of Haydn: 'L'*andante* rappelle la manière de Haydn, que l'on retrouve d'ailleurs si souvent dans les premières compositions instrumentales d'Onslow'.<sup>273</sup> Having adopted the four-movement structure in his chamber works from his string quartet op. 8 onwards, the effect of the German school on Onslow was still obvious to contemporary critics such as d'Ortigue in later works too, as in the three string quartets of op. 46:

Il y a dans cette dernière production et surtout dans ces deux adagios et un minuetto, cette rêverie passionnée et cette expression profonde et intime qui prête tant de charme aux compositeurs de l'école allemande.<sup>274</sup>

So what was it that made Onslow a French composer? What were the sources of this frenchness? Katharine Ellis argues that French music had become a 'term of deprecation' during the eighteenth century, as it had been left behind by fresh Italian opera styles.<sup>275</sup> Even if this view was starting to fade in the first decades of the nineteenth century, French instrumental music was far behind and, as we have seen in concert programmes in previous chapters, very few French composers figured in the chamber music scene. Onslow's string music did not seem to fit in with that of

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<sup>272</sup> See also Niaux, *George Onslow: Gentleman compositeur*, p. 50.

<sup>273</sup> 'The *andante* recalls the manner of Haydn, which we indeed so often find in the early compositions of Onslow'. Charles Estienne, *Lettres sur la musique* (Paris, 1854), pp. 176-7.

<sup>274</sup> 'In this last production, and especially in these two adagios and the minuet, there is this passionate daydream and this profound and intimate expression that lend such charm to the composers of the German school'. Joseph d'Ortigue, *La quotidienne* (12 March 1833), p. 2.

<sup>275</sup> Katharine Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past. Early Music in Nineteenth-century France* (Oxford, 2005), p. 16.

his French colleagues: the string quartets of Ignace Pleyel, François-Joseph Gossec and Nicolas Dalayrac, generally in the *style concertant*, were quite short, usually consisting of two or three movements, and quite unsophisticated in nature, mostly featuring question and answer episodes. In order to be accessible to as wide an audience as possible, they were also rather easy to perform, which certainly cannot be said of Onslow's chamber works, which were quite clearly not destined to be played by amateur musicians.

Ellis also reports an established 'sense of national backwardness' along with 'bewilderment as to whether any future of French music could legitimately be celebrated'.<sup>276</sup> Stendhal seems to relate this backwardness to national pride, or indeed competition with foreigners; in his *Salons* we read:

[...] comme les Allemands avec leur littérature, les Français font de leurs beaux-arts une question de vanité *nationale*, ou [...] de gloire nationale. Au lieu de louer ce qui leur donne du plaisir et vaut la peine qu'on le loue, ils louent ce qu'ils pensent susceptible d'éblouir et de rendre jaloux les étrangers. Ils privent ainsi leurs artistes d'un public capable de juger honnêtement, et cette gloire nationale excessive 'dépasse son but et produit l'effet inverse.'<sup>277</sup>

Alas, it seemed like an unfortunate time to be called a French composer. One admittedly desperate solution was to encompass the works of not just native composers, but resident foreigners, under the heading of French music. A paradoxical effect of this inclusiveness was to render the nature of French music all the more uncertain, and admittedly, the uncertainty inspired some noble attempts at clarification; in *Le diable boiteux* of October 1824 we read:

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<sup>276</sup> Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past*, p. 18.

<sup>277</sup> 'Just like the Germans with their literature, the French make their arts a matter of national vanity, or [...] national glory. Instead of praising what gives them pleasure and is worth the praise, they praise what they think might dazzle and make strangers jealous. They thus deprive their artists from a public able to judge honestly, and this excessive national glory "surpasses its goal and produces the opposite effect"'. Stendhal, *Salons*, ed. Martine Reid, Stéphane Guegan (Paris, 2002), p. 48.

La musique des Français, pleine de motifs légers et peu développés, semble plus particulièrement s'adresser à l'esprit; celle des Italiens charme à-la-fois le cœur et l'oreille; les Allemands, initiés à tous les secrets de la science harmonique, paraissent avoir pour but d'élever l'âme, et de réveiller dans l'intelligence les idées les plus nobles: le Français cherche une distraction, l'Italien un plaisir et l'Allemand une leçon de morale.<sup>278</sup>

Among these 'distractions' employed in French music might be the use of motifs borrowed from folk music (if one can use this term at this stage), which Onslow seems to have given into as well. In his Variations sur la romance 'Charmante Gabrielle', Onslow makes use of a seventeenth-century song about Henry IV's mistress, Gabrielle d'Estrées. The tune appears to have enjoyed a vogue, as Baillot, too, wrote an *air varié* based on the song. Onslow also appears to have fallen for the trend of adding Spanish colour to music, which becomes quite evident in the second movement, *andante non troppo lento*, of his string quartet op. 8 no. 3. Furthermore, in Onslow's three string quartets op. 10, each of the three minuet movements include the title Air de danse des montagnes d'Auvergne. Being his native region, one would find this rather a natural musical effect, but perhaps it was out of pride, or indeed nostalgia, that he chose to share these melodies with his Parisian audience. It is certain, however, that, with or without the folk references to Auvergne, Onslow distanced his minuet movements from the pleasant and reserved style of the classical minuet from quite early on in his career, by composing very fast movements. Perhaps both this and the use of folk elements in his chamber music were part of an attempt to step away from the Viennese quartet and to put his own individual stamp on string music of the time.

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<sup>278</sup> 'French music, full of light motifs that are little developed, appears more particularly to appeal to the spirit; that of the Italians charms the heart and the ear at the same time; the Germans, party to the secrets of harmonic science, appear to have as their object the loftiness of the soul, and to arouse the most noble ideas in the intellect. The Frenchman seeks a distraction, the Italian a pleasure, and the German a lesson in ethics'. *Le diable boîteux*, 15 October 1824, in Mark Everist, *Music Drama at the Paris Odéon, 1824-1828* (London, 2002), p. 251.

A possibility that Viviane Niaux explores fully is that Onslow was delving into the idea of the exotic – that is, exotic as to the German chamber music ideals he adhered to.<sup>279</sup> In the previous chapter we discussed the exotic element with regard to Baillot's compositions and were led to understand that this was a way to impress his amateur aristocratic audience, owing to the virtuosic flair involved in the many *airs russes* that he composed for solo violin. This, however, was certainly not the case with Onslow, since there is nothing virtuosic nor technically demanding in his auvergnat dances. It is possible, however, that Onslow was feeling increasingly aware of his national identity, as the political events at the time were certainly giving rise to a general awakening of national consciousness.

An important aspect of this consciousness was historical awareness: indeed, popular tunes may themselves have carried connotations of the past. As Sarah Hibberd discusses, France was a 'complex, multi-vocal culture preoccupied with its past'.<sup>280</sup> During 1789's troubled aftermath, there seemed to be a need, or indeed a nostalgia, during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, for the quieter lifestyle and the values of Louis XIV's *grand siècle*. In the words of literary critic Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804-1869), 'en ce temps où tout renaissait, il y avait, en certains coins, comme une reflorescence et, si l'on peut dire, *regain* du pur Louis XIV'.<sup>281</sup> For intellectuals like Sainte-Beuve and Victor Cousin (1792-1867), the seventeenth century represented the foundation of modernity, and so, in combination with the attainments of the 1789 Revolution, there was a merging of

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<sup>279</sup> Viviane Niaux, 'L'exotisme Auvergnat dans l'œuvre de George Onslow', presented at the IRPMF seminar *La notion d'héritage dans l'histoire de la musique* (June 2007).

<sup>280</sup> Sarah Hibberd, *French Grand Opera and the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 2.

<sup>281</sup> 'In that time, when everything was coming back to life, in some circles there was a reflowering, if one can say that, a revival of the pure Louis XIV'. Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, *Portraits des femmes* (Paris, 1852), p. 466.



tradition and progress (however slight this progress might have been perceived as at the time).<sup>282</sup>

Reporting on life after Napoleon, François-René de Chateaubriand (1768-1848) paints a very dim picture about the future of the country, and hence the development of French identity, in a passage entitled 'Changement du monde', changing of the world, in the twenty-fifth book (years 1815-20) of his *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*:

Retomber de Bonaparte et de l'Empire à ce qui les a suivis, c'est tomber de la réalité dans le néant, du sommet d'une montagne dans un gouffre. Tout n'est-il pas terminé avec Napoléon ? [...] Des générations mutilées, épuisées, dédaigneuses, sans foi. [...] Non: je suis convaincu que nous nous évanouirons tous. [...] nul son ne sort du cœur des morts.<sup>283</sup>

But soon after this account of lost hope for an entire country and its future, Chateaubriand goes on to explain that the Restoration, that followed the Empire, gave a breath of life to the mind and, in extension, to intellectual thought, and thus allowed the ideals of the Revolution to continue to develop.<sup>284</sup>

It seems that at such desperate times, the French sought encouragement in the history of the *grand siècle* and the image of a simple life that accompanied its memories, despite its own turbulent episodes. But Louis XIV's reign was the subject

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<sup>282</sup> See also Jonathan Dewald, *Lost Worlds: the Emergence of French Social History, 1815-1970* (State College, 2006), pp. 55-76.

<sup>283</sup> 'Falling from Napoleon and the Empire to what followed is to fall from reality into nothingness, from a mountaintop into an abyss. Did all not end with Napoleon? [...] Generations mutilated, exhausted, disdainful, without faith. [...] No, I am convinced that we will all disappear. [...] No sound comes out of the heart of the dead'. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, ed. Jean-Claude Berchet (Paris, 1989-1998), vol. 2, pp. 11-3.

<sup>284</sup> 'La Restauration donna un mouvement aux intelligences; elle délivra la pensée comprimée par Bonaparte: l'esprit, comme une cariatide déchargée de l'architecture qui lui courbait le front, releva la tête. L'Empire avait frappé la France de mutisme; la liberté restaurée la toucha et lui rendit la parole: il se trouva des talents de tribune qui reprirent les choses où les Mirabeau et les Cazalès les avaient laissées, et la Révolution continua son cours'. 'The Restoration set intelligence in motion; it liberated thought oppressed by Bonaparte: the mind, like a caryatid relieved from the architecture that bent its forehead, raised its head. The Empire had beaten France to silence; the restored freedom touched her and gave her speech back: there were talented public speakers that resumed things from where Mirabeau and Cazalès had left them, and the Revolution continued its course'. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, p. 17.

of more popular literature as well; Alexandre Dumas père (1802-1870), whose fictional characters in *Les frères corses* (1844), *Les trois Mousquetaires* (1844), and *Le comte de Monte-Cristo* (1846), among others, captivated the entire nation for years to come, was also the author of *Louis XIV et son siècle* (1844). Although some might feel that Dumas's approach to history was at times quite casual, he, too, expressed his belief that during Louis XIV's years the French capital saw genuine social progress:

On a vu ce qu'était Paris lorsque Louis XIV le prit: sans police, sans guet, sans réverbères, sans carrosses, avec ses voleurs dans ses rues, ses meurtres dans ses carrefours, ses duels sur ses places publiques; on sait ce qu'était Paris quand il l'a laissé. Le Paris du commencement du règne de Louis XIV est encore le Paris du moyen âge; le Paris de la fin du règne de Louis XIV est déjà le Paris moderne.<sup>285</sup>

In the early 1800s, these contradictory attitudes to the past tended to polarise around attitudes to Classicism (in several of its senses). However, not everyone was in agreement with these principles; Stendhal in particular, but also Baudelaire later on, saw the world of the seventeenth century as fundamentally different from their own and declared the need for nineteenth-century France to move on from Classicism and to search for deeper means of expression. Therefore, an apparent battle to determine Classicism's position in French life was in place, between the conservatives, whose interest in the seventeenth century perhaps reflected their distressed reaction to the difficulties of post-revolution life, and those who believed expression of deep emotions was essential in order to move forward from the *politesse* and posing of the seventeenth century.

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<sup>285</sup> 'We have seen what Paris was when Louis XIV took it: no police, no watch, no streetlights, no carriages, with thieves in its streets, murders in its crossroads, fights on public squares; we know what Paris was when he left it. In the beginning of the reign of Louis XIV Paris was still the Paris of the Middle Ages; at the end of the reign of Louis XIV Paris is already modern Paris'. Alexandre Dumas, *Louis XIV et son siècle* (Paris, 1844), vol. 2, p. 499.

Ernest Renan (1823-1892), whose religious debate and progressive perception of the concept of a nation were much discussed during his time, also gives an insightful account confirming the move towards modern thought in nineteenth-century Paris:

J'étais venu à Paris formé moralement, mais ignorant autant qu'on peut l'être. J'eus tout à découvrir. J'appris avec étonnement qu'il y avait des laïques sérieux et savants; je vis qu'il existait quelque chose en dehors de l'antiquité et de l'Eglise, et en particulier qu'il y avait une littérature contemporaine digne de quelque attention. La mort de Louis XIV ne fut plus pour moi la fin du monde. Des idées, des sentiments, m'apparurent, qui n'avaient eu d'expression ni dans l'antiquité, ni au XVIIe siècle.<sup>286</sup>

Having established Onslow's conservatism, both in his lifestyle and his works, one might recognise a sense of bourgeois *juste milieu* in Riehl's sketching of the composer: '[...] he never allows himself to be carried away by powerful inward passion. He is only passionate as far as a perfect gentleman in good society is permitted to be, but he is too gifted and liberal-minded to become cold and tedious'.<sup>287</sup> This description of Onslow as a talented and well-mannered aristocrat is perhaps another interesting addition to the debate about his nickname. But the 'French Beethoven' holds a tension between the acknowledged eminence of German instrumental music and an emerging French identity and here, too, Riehl sheds light on Onslow's subtle, yet ever-present, frenchness:

[...] he could never believe, though he wrote German quartets, that he had lived for years in France, and at times you can even recognise in his German domestic music a sprinkling of French. One is not astonished at it, for after all it is still part and parcel of a gentleman to show a slight tinge of French in his education.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> 'I came to Paris morally educated but as ignorant as one can be. I had everything to discover. I learned with astonishment that there were serious and knowledgeable civilians; I saw that there was something outside of antiquity and of the Church, and in particular there was contemporary literature worthy of some attention. The death of Louis XIV was no longer the end of the world for me. Ideas, feelings, appeared to me, which had no expression in antiquity or in the seventeenth century'. Ernest Renan, *Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse* (Paris, 1893), pp. 160-1.

<sup>287</sup> Riehl, 'George Onslow', p. 29.

<sup>288</sup> Riehl, 'George Onslow', p. 29.

A glimpse at Onslow's operas, despite their uncertain success, will verify his fondness of the past and an openness towards exotic and folk themes – features that contribute to his frenchness, as we established.<sup>289</sup> *L'alcalde de la Véga*, set to a text by Monsieur Bujac, takes place in northern Spain and Onslow takes his role rather seriously, with local tunes like the *fandango* (Iberian couples' dance) in the first and second acts. The subject in *Le Colporteur ou l'enfant du Bûcheron*, set in Russia, is taken from an old Russian tale, reinforcing this tendency towards the exotic, as with Baillot's numerous *airs russes variés*. Finally, in *Guise ou les Etats des Blois*, we turn to a theme stemming from sixteenth-century French history, as the *drame lyrique* takes place in the Château de Blois, with King Henri III as protagonist.

But despite Onslow's attempt to enrich his country's repertoire, French music was seen as not reaching out to the listener's soul (Stendhal's comments on the lack of deep emotion seeming rather fitting), and this is quite possibly the reason why we have repeatedly seen Baillot in his *L'Art du violon* in a previous chapter praising the beauty of music that lifts up the soul and almost pleading with the reader not to accept anything less. The time had come for French instrumental music to take a step forward. But how important was Onslow's contribution to the future of French music? Vivianne Niaux makes an interesting – albeit somewhat unexpected – point, suggesting that Onslow's music paved the way for the musical language employed by French composers later in the nineteenth century: she argues that the cello's motif in the *Largo* introduction of Onslow's string quartet op. 62 is identical to the piano's solo motif in César Franck's *Variations Symphoniques*, composed in 1885, and that Onslow's musical language in op. 62 foreshadows that of Franck. Onslow was

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<sup>289</sup> See Félix Clément and Pierre Larousse, *Dictionnaire des operas* (Paris, 1881), pp. 16 and 170, and Félix Clément, *Les musiciens célèbres* (Paris, 1878), p. 357-9.

without a doubt the last representative of the tradition of the classical string quartet in France, before the aesthetic in French instrumental changed decisively: in the decades that followed, the French quartet became a single work sealing a composer's life of creativity. The examples are several: Debussy, Ravel, Chausson, Franck and Fauré were among the composers who only composed one string quartet as *chef d'œuvre* that marked their compositional career.

Given the sense of national pride, or indeed 'national vanity', that pervaded the country, as described by Stendhal earlier,<sup>290</sup> a composer the French could tag as French, but who at the same time shared the reputable qualities of German instrumental music, was just what they needed. George Onslow was perhaps their only hope at this time, and it is quite understandable that musicians and critics praised him with every opportunity. It is possible, however, that the marketing strategy they chose in order to promote Onslow's persona further – the nickname 'le Beethoven français' – did not have the exact effect they might have initially envisaged.

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<sup>290</sup> '[...] les Français font de leurs beaux-arts une question de vanité *nationale*, ou [...] de gloire nationale'. '[...] the French make of their arts a matter of national vanity'. See note 277.

## 5 | Inspiring the next generation: Société des concerts du Conservatoire

‘Si je ne vaud pas mieux, au moins je suis autre’  
Jean-Jacques Rousseau<sup>291</sup>

We have established Pierre Baillot’s pioneering role in the chamber music society movement in early nineteenth-century Paris, with the founding of his *Séances de quatuors et de quintettes de Baillot* in 1814, but we have also found that, within this remarkable innovation, there was undisputed conservatism, seen in the fondness for the classical values of true beauty and the elevation of the soul. In other words, while leaping forward towards new and unprecedented ventures, he was nonetheless loyal to his generation’s principles, which, in a way, meant remaining devoted to the past. Even though he dared to put his audiences (until then accustomed to the heavily varied programmes that we examined in the first chapter) through over two hours of uninterrupted chamber music, an unheard-of custom at the time, Baillot presented, almost exclusively, works by Boccherini, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven.

Contrary to popular belief, Baillot’s society was not conceived with the vision of bringing to light Beethoven’s string quartets, or at least it does not seem to have been the case based on the concert programmes that survive. Beethoven’s works were the least performed out of the four aforementioned masters. During the twenty-six years of the society, Baillot mainly presented Beethoven’s six early string quartets that form opus 18, with only very few exceptions (namely his attempt to

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<sup>291</sup> ‘If I am not better, at least I am different’. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les confessions. Première partie, livre premier (1712-1719)*, p. 3. Rousseau’s statement, from the opening of his autobiographical *Les confessions* offers a noteworthy take on the importance of individuality and a suitable opening to a chapter that will extensively deal with the presence and the value of innovation, as a measure of progress. By being different, Rousseau distinguishes himself from the norm and thus also declares that being different does not always mean to be superior – perhaps a good starting point for a discussion on the over-expectation of cultural advancement today.

perform op. 131 and a movement from op. 135 in 1828 and 1829). We have discussed his willingness to introduce to his audience the new world that he had discovered in the late quartets, but also his quick withdrawal when the reception turned out to be disapproving – to say the least. Pierre Baillot was a man of progress; this cannot be denied, given his contribution to the evolution of chamber music. But his audience's contentment was perhaps seen as more important, if this experiment he was carrying out were to flourish, and so if the late quartet tasters he offered did not enjoy the welcome he had personally hoped for, he knew he would have to return to his usual programmes to secure the future of the society, and by extension chamber music in the capital in general.

Baillot's influence on the next generation of artists, most of whom he taught at the Conservatoire, either in his violin or chamber music classes, was truly significant. We have discussed the role of Baillot's support network in securing the expansion of his *séances*; however, younger artists like Eugène Sauzay also ensured the continuation of the chamber music society movement beyond Baillot's *séances*, as many of them founded their own concert series based on Baillot's model. One of the many societies that followed in Baillot's footsteps was the Société Alard et Chevillard, founded in 1837 by violinist Jean-Delphin Alard (1815-1888), who succeeded Baillot as professor at the Conservatoire in 1843,<sup>292</sup> and cellist Pierre-Alexandre Chevillard (1811-1877). Their society, in a way, continued Baillot's work by presenting, along with equally-frequent string quintets by Mozart, Beethoven's quartets opus 59 (string quartets nos. 7, 8 and 9) and opus 74 (string quartet no. 10). Boccherini and Haydn – the oldest masters in Baillot's genealogy – were cast aside and replaced by works by French composers, such as Alard and Chevillard

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<sup>292</sup> Boris Schwarz and Cormac Newark, 'Alard, (Jean-)Delphin', *Grove Music Online*.

themselves, violinist Charles Dancla (1817-1907), another of Baillot's students at the Conservatoire, and George Onslow, and foreign composers such as Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837), Austrian violinist Josef Mayseder (1789-1863), and Mendelssohn (namely the string octet op. 20 and the sonata for pianoforte and violin op. 58). The two men went their separate ways ten years later, in 1847, when Alard joined cellist Auguste Franchomme (1808-1884), who often performed alongside Pierre Baillot himself, in founding the Société Alard et Franchomme.<sup>293</sup> Chevillard then went on to establish, along with yet another student of Baillot's who later became professor at the Conservatoire, Jean-Pierre Maurin (1822-1894), the Société des derniers quatuors de Beethoven. As its title suggests, the society's priority was to pay homage to Beethoven's late string quartets. Among them, occasional chamber works by Mozart, Mendelssohn, Weber, Schumann and Schubert were also performed. Founded by young artists whose musical development was greatly affected by Baillot's teachings, music-making and chamber music activities, what the aforementioned societies achieved was that which Baillot never could: having already established the success and safety of the chamber music society (given that its perception in 1814 was already several decades away), to escape from conservative programmes.

This leap forward into the public acceptance and performance of the late quartets is also recorded by violinist Eugène Sauzay:

A cette époque, avec nombreux amis, nous formions un groupe passionné de jeunes musiciens qui ne rêvions plus que de la Symphonie avec chœurs et des derniers quatuors de Beethoven. Jeunes révolutionnaires de

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<sup>293</sup> Sophie Ruhlmann, 'Auguste Franchomme: portrait d'un jeune virtuose sous le règne de Louis-Philippe aux heures de la suprématie de l'art lyrique. Paradoxes et évolution d'une carrière', *Défense et illustration de la virtuosité*, ed. Anne Penesco (Lyon, 1997), pp. 127-40.



1830, oublieux de Mozart et de Haydn, nous nous étions épris follement de cette musique qui répondait si bien aux idées nouvelles.<sup>294</sup>

Also depicted in Sauzay's *mémoires*, and in a manner that painted it as equally revolutionary, was the Société des concerts du Conservatoire, an enterprise that was already in the making while Baillot was organising his *séances*, and which, although founded in 1828, seems to have had its roots in the Conservatoire students' concerts known as *Exercices*, which first appeared in 1800 and lasted for some fifteen years. Here, too, Baillot can be recognised as a driving force: as a professor at the Conservatoire, he played an important role in the education of many of the violinists that took part in the concerts, through his Conservatoire classes, but also through his treatises. Baillot also taught François Antoine Habeneck (1781-1849), the violinist and conductor who established the Orchestre de la Société des concerts du Conservatoire and remained its conductor for twenty years (1828-1848).<sup>295</sup> According to D. Kern Holoman, the orchestra's violinists 'traced their line to Pierre Baillot, who had played a formative role in the foundation'.<sup>296</sup> Baillot's valuable contribution to the formation of the *société* was to be celebrated from the very first concert, when he was due to appear as soloist in a concerto composed by Pierre Rode. However, he was replaced by his student Sauzay at the last moment. At the second concert of the series Baillot was certainly in the spotlight, as he gave the *première* of Beethoven's Violin concerto. He also went on to perform Beethoven's Romance in F for the first time, at the *société's* *Concert extraordinaire* on 21

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<sup>294</sup> 'At that time, along with numerous friends, we formed a passionate group of young musicians who dreamt of nothing else than the Symphony with choir and the late quartets of Beethoven. Young revolutionaries of 1830, forgetful of Mozart and Haydn, we were infatuated with this music that responded so well to the new ideas'. Eugène Sauzay and Brigitte François-Sappey, 'La vie musicale à Paris à travers les Mémoires d'Eugène Sauzay', *Revue de musicologie*, vol. 60, no. 1/2 (1974), p. 175.

<sup>295</sup> Baillot was also violin teacher of Narcisse Girard (1797-1860), who succeeded Habeneck in 1848.

<sup>296</sup> D. Kern Holoman, *The Société des concerts du Conservatoire, 1828-1967* (Berkeley, 2004), p. 60.

December 1828. According to Holoman these two performances were considered ‘for many years the high point of the first season’.<sup>297</sup> But the *société* committee did not stop at invitations for solo appearances; they also showed their appreciation for Baillot’s commitment by awarding him the title *sociétaire solo* that came with an attached honorarium, which Baillot humbly refused.<sup>298</sup>

It seemed, however, that Baillot’s support network at his *séances* had also followed him over to the *société*. Fétis was present from the very first concert, prepared to give his literary opinion on the new venture; performing in the orchestra were also the three members of Baillot’s quartet: violinist Jean-Jacques Vidal, violist Chrétien Urhan and cellist Louis-Pierre Norblin,<sup>299</sup> and finally much of the audience were Baillot’s own subscribers at the *séances*, who were serious music amateurs who gathered merely for the music itself, as D’Ortigue notes: ‘Ce n’est point un lieu de réunion et de causerie, c’est un sanctuaire où accourent l’écrivain, le peintre, tous les artistes sérieux’.<sup>300</sup>

Having managed to run well into the twentieth century (until 1967, when the Orchestre de Paris was founded and took its place), the *société* was without a doubt the most enduring of the institutions that followed Baillot’s example. In this chapter, we shall examine how its programming became more conservative over the years (as opposed to the progress recorded by chamber music societies outlined above), but also how, within this conservatism, one may find creativity and, to an extent, progress.

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<sup>297</sup> Holoman, *The Société des concerts*, pp. 3-4 and 144-5.

<sup>298</sup> Holoman, *The Société des concerts*, p. 32.

<sup>299</sup> Holoman, *The Société des concerts*, p. 25.

<sup>300</sup> ‘It is not a place for meetings and informal talk, it is a sanctuary where the writer, the painter, all serious artists come running’. Joseph d’Ortigue, ‘Société des concerts’, *Le balcon de l’Opéra*, p. 344.

### Habeneck, the *Eroica*, and an emerging pattern

On the inaugural concert of the Société des concerts du Conservatoire, on 9 March 1828, an E-flat chord was the first sound to reach the audience's ears in the Salle des concerts of the Conservatoire; this was no other than Beethoven's Third Symphony, *Eroica*, which had an impact and reception similar to a work's *première* (although, in his biography of the *société*, D. Kern Holoman suggests it was in fact performed at the students' *Exercices* concerts in May 1811).<sup>301</sup> As a result, and clearly marked on the programme as 'généralement redemandée' (generally requested again), the *Eroica* returned to open the society's second concert, a fortnight later. This time, the concert was dedicated to the memory of Beethoven and was made up entirely of his works, including the French *première* of his Violin Concerto, with Baillot as soloist, as we have seen.<sup>302</sup> On 11 May, the *Eroica*'s *scherzo* returned, along with a repeat performance of the Violin concerto, and from then onwards the symphony featured at least once in every annual series.

Fétis had already announced, at the beginning of the year, that the project was soon to materialise:

Ce projet est devenu une réalité; l'orchestre, les chœurs, les solos sont organisés, et nous reverrons les beaux jours de la musique en France. On n'exécutera dans ces concerts que de la musique qu'on n'entend point ailleurs, ou qui est complètement inconnue en France. Déjà les répétitions sont en activité. On prépare un concert pour l'anniversaire de la mort de Beethoven, où l'on n'entendra que de la musique de ce grand artiste. Parmi les morceaux que l'on cite comme devant entrer dans sa composition, on remarque la belle symphonie héroïque, qui n'a jamais été exécuté à Paris, et un concerto de piano, qui serait joué par un de nos plus célèbres pianistes.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Holoman, *The Société des concerts du Conservatoire*, p. 3.

<sup>302</sup> A list of the *société*'s concert programmes has been put together by Holoman and is available online on the University of California Davis portal, at [<http://hector.ucdavis.edu/SdC/default.html>].

<sup>303</sup> 'This project became a reality; the orchestra, choirs, solos have been organised, and we will see the great days of music in France again. In these concerts music that is heard nowhere else or that is completely unknown in France will be performed. Rehearsals are already under way. A concert is prepared for the anniversary of Beethoven's death, where we will only hear the music of this great

Fétis might have got it wrong about both the French *première* of the *Eroica* and the piano concerto, but nonetheless the enthusiastic tone and eagerness for the return of the ‘beaux jours de la musique en France’ (the heyday of music in France) is evident. The Third symphony was a work that Parisians were not acquainted with – the first two symphonies being the most performed until that time – and Habeneck was thus taking a risk by starting out like so. It was an experiment that worked, however, as reported a few days later in the *Revue musicale* by Fétis, who was evidently taken by the *Eroica*:

[...] chef-d’œuvre de grandiose, d’élégance, d’énergie, de grâce et d’originalité, où l’on ne sait ce qu’on doit le plus admirer, de la profusion des motifs, de l’art de les présenter sous une prodigieuse variété de formes, ou de la nouveauté des effets. Qui pourrait croire, cependant, que jusqu’aujourd’hui, cette magnifique composition n’avait point été entendue à Paris?<sup>304</sup>

But it was not only Beethoven’s masterpiece that Fétis had praise for; the exceptional level of the orchestra and its director (who was leading from the violin, which, according to Fétis, added to the success of the performance) stimulated the audience’s tremendous appreciation and brought about a feeling of national pride:

L’enthousiasme de l’auditoire, égal à son étonnement, s’est manifesté par des applaudissemens bruyans et répétés. On sort rarement satisfait d’un concert; mais ici c’était mieux que de la satisfaction; il s’y mêlait de l’orgueil national, et chacun répétait à l’envi: ‘Il est impossible qu’en aucun lieu de l’Europe on exécute la musique mieux que cela’.<sup>305</sup>

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artist. Among the pieces that we mention as needing to enter his oeuvre, we notice the beautiful *Eroica* symphony, which has never been performed in Paris, and a piano concerto, to be played by one of our most famous pianists’. François-Joseph Fétis, ‘Nouvelles de Paris’, *Revue musicale*, vol. 3 (1828), p. 83.

<sup>304</sup> ‘[...] a masterpiece of magnificence, elegance, energy, grace and originality, where one does not know what to admire the most, the profusion of the motifs, the art of having them presented in a prodigious variety of forms, or the novelty of the effects. Who could believe, however, that until now, this beautiful composition had never been heard in Paris?’ Fétis, ‘Régénération de l’Ecole Royale de musique. Société des concerts’, *Revue musicale*, vol. 3 (1828), p. 147.

<sup>305</sup> ‘The enthusiasm of the audience, equal to its astonishment, was expressed through loud and repeated applause. We rarely come out of a concert satisfied; but this was more than satisfaction; it was combined with national pride, and everyone repeated at will: “It is impossible that music is performed better than this at any other place in Europe”’. Fétis, ‘Société des concerts’, pp. 148-9.

This emphasis on the quality of performance was not new in Fétis's writings: in his numerous reviews of Baillot's *séances* in the *Revue musicale*, he had admittedly used all forms of praise for Baillot's qualities as a violinist and musician ('M. Baillot, sur qui j'ai épuisé toutes les formules de l'éloge [...]').<sup>306</sup> There was certainly a persistent focus on Baillot's performing skills rather than the works he was presenting, not only in Fétis's articles, but also in D'Ortigue's and Momigny's, as we have seen in previous chapters.<sup>307</sup> This was no coincidence; quality of performance was a matter that the French could boast about and they took every opportunity to do so – as in the *société*'s review we have just seen, where the audience set the orchestra apart from any other European organisation. Performance can therefore be seen as one of the chief characteristics of frenchness, detected not only by the modern scholar, but clearly by Baillot's contemporaries too, resulting in the 'gloire nationale' articulated by Stendhal.<sup>308</sup>

Concentrating on a work's performance rather than the work itself is fundamentally opposite to modern musicology's tendency of searching for answers in the musical composition.<sup>309</sup> This was not the case in the nineteenth century: in the first two decades, especially in the operatic world, there was a debate about the identity of the artwork and whether it was to be found in the composition or in each individual performance. In the 1820s, however, the idea that the artwork was the performance, dependent almost entirely on the performer's talent and excellence,

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<sup>306</sup> 'Mr Baillot, on whom I have exhausted all form of praise [...]'. *Revue musicale*, vol. 11, p. 30, (26 February 1831), p. 119.

<sup>307</sup> See notes 38, 78, 79.

<sup>308</sup> Stendhal, *Salons*, ed. Martine Reid, Stéphane Guegan (Paris, 2002), p. 48.

<sup>309</sup> Musicology 'generally bypasses performance, seeking meanings or formal designs in the immortal musical work itself'. Carolyn Abbate, 'Music – Drastic or Gnostic?', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 30 (2004), p. 505.

was well established.<sup>310</sup> In essence, it indicated that the meaning of the work was to be found in the interpretative experience, a view that placed Baillot at the very centre of the music he was presenting at the *séances*, and similarly the *société* orchestra at the centre of the *Eroica*'s reception.<sup>311</sup> Had Baillot's contemporaries – both audience and critics – limited their commentaries to the significance of the compositions they listened to, the entire experience would have been displaced, leaving us with very little aesthetic material to work with while attempting to gain a deeper understanding of concert culture at the time.

Besides the orchestra's excellence, the sense of national gratification experienced by the audience upon leaving the first concert of Habeneck's series could have arguably also stemmed from the theme of the *Eroica* itself; a lot has been said about Beethoven's intentions to entitle the work *Bonaparte* and to dedicate it to the First Consul of France. The suggestions that this was mostly due to Beethoven's plans to move to Paris (which never materialised) seem quite sensible, given that Napoleon (an emperor by now, which reportedly angered Beethoven) received neither a dedication nor the title of the symphony in the end.<sup>312</sup> Even though it would be naïve to construe the *Eroica* as pure homage to Napoleon, it is possible that Beethoven drew inspiration from the audacious atmosphere of the Napoleonic

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<sup>310</sup> '[...] a debate not only about the integrity of the artwork, but about its very identity: was it the composition, or was it the performance? This was the question that would absorb and affect the development of the operatic marketplace through much of the nineteenth century. In the 1820s, however, few would have doubted the answer: the artwork was the performance. And the performance was essentially of a singer's individual characteristics and talents: the way his or her particular qualities – both vocal and histrionic – were given accent and shape within the compositional frame'. Susan Rutherford, "'La cantante delle passioni": Giuditta Pasta and the Idea of Operatic Performance', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 19, no. 2 (July 2007), pp. 107-38.

<sup>311</sup> See also Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford, 1992).

<sup>312</sup> See Franz Wegeler and Ferdinand Ries, *Biographische Notizen über Ludwig van Beethoven* (Berlin, 1906), pp. 92-4 and also Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven* (New York, 1977), p. 177.

wars.<sup>313</sup> And even if one were to reject this last statement, given the unmistakably heroic tone of the symphony, it would have been hard for the *société's* audience not to relate to this on a national – or even a personal – level.

Whatever the truth of the matter, the first two concerts were a genuine success: ‘Après trois heures de musique, le public est sorti du concert de l’Ecole royale dans une sorte de délire; on ne se rencontrait que pour s’écrier: Divin! délicieux! admirable! et le soir, dans les cercles, l’agitation n’était point encore apaisée’.<sup>314</sup> Who would have expected such a triumphant reception following Beethoven’s unwelcoming symphony performances in Paris about two decades ago? The main question is what triggered such a drastic change in the audience’s perception? James H. Johnson rejects Leo Schrade’s view that it was the arrival of Romanticism that allowed this near-revolutionary change to occur, arguing that in the early performances of Beethoven’s symphonies ‘there was no idea that could play escort to Beethoven; there were only traditional ideas of classicism ready to repulse him’.<sup>315</sup> Schrade’s view is taken even further by William S. Newman, who argues that this shift in Beethoven’s reception in France was the doing of Romantic authors such as Balzac, Hugo and Deschamps, who convinced audiences to accept Beethoven. But this, too, is rejected by Johnson, mostly on the grounds of wrong

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<sup>313</sup> William Kinderman offers an in-depth discussion on Beethoven’s heroic style, but particularly draws our attention to the following: ‘But the heroic symbolism of the *Eroica* is too deeply embodied in the artwork to be adequately interpreted in terms of Beethoven’s biography, or in relation to any other historical figure such as Napoleon. What Beethoven explores in the *Eroica* are universal aspects of heroism, centring on the idea of a confrontation with adversity leading ultimately to a renewal of creative possibilities’. William Kinderman, *Beethoven* (Berkeley, 1995), p. 90, but see also pp. 86-107.

<sup>314</sup> ‘After three hours of music, the audience came out of the concert at the Royal School in a kind of delirium; we came together only to exclaim: Divine! delicious! admirable! and in the evening, in the clubs, the excitement had not yet appeased’. Fétis, ‘Société des concerts’, p. 206.

<sup>315</sup> Leo Schrade, *Beethoven in France* (New Haven, 1942), p. 28. See James H. Johnson, ‘Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience in France’, *Nineteenth-century Music* (Summer 1991), p. 23-35.



P. C. Van Geel, *François-Antoine Habeneck* (1835), Bibliothèque nationale de France



timing, as their literary works were published after the first exceedingly successful Beethoven concerts of the *société* in the capital.

What Johnson suggests is perhaps more straightforward than one would expect and will eventually allow us to trace Baillot's influential role in the *société's* rapid success. In the early 1800s, listeners found Beethoven's music impossible to understand, mostly because they had 'no key to decode its language, no grammar to read its expression'; by 1828, however, they had gradually adjusted their expectations towards the meaning of music, having passed in just under a century from the view that music painted images and imitated natural sounds, to the belief that music could express emotions, and having at last embraced the opinion that the meaning of music could surpass any kind of description (both in terms of image and emotion), or as Johnson puts it, having accepted 'pure music as aesthetically legitimate'.<sup>316</sup> In other words, the listener had acquired a new set of ears, or indeed an understanding of the musical language employed by Beethoven. Johnson attributes this new attitude to three main reasons: first, to the numerous performances of Rossini's harmonically exotic works at the Théâtre Italien during the late 1810s and throughout the 1820s;<sup>317</sup> second, to the audience's long familiarity with Haydn, which allowed them to eventually discover the music's richness beyond the images and emotions that had become so easily recognisable to them; and third, to the fact that, following their early unenthusiastic reception, Beethoven's symphonies were

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<sup>316</sup> See Johnson, 'Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience in France', pp. 27-8 and 30.

<sup>317</sup> Fétis confirms: '[...] le besoin de nouveauté se faisait sentir dans la musique instrumentale, parce que les opinions s'étaient modifiées par le génie de Rossini dans la musique dramatique; enfin les concerts du Conservatoire furent rétablis: on entendit toutes les symphonies de Beethoven'. '[...] the need for novelty was felt in instrumental music, because opinions had changed through the genius of Rossini in dramatic music; at last the concerts of the Conservatoire were re-established: we listened to all the symphonies by Beethoven'. Fétis, 'Sixième concert du Conservatoire', *Revue musicale*, vol. 6 (1831), p. 84. See also Benjamin Walton, '1828. The discovery of "twin styles"', *Rossini in Restoration Paris* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 210-56.

kept off concert programmes for several years, which meant that by 1828 listeners were more prepared to give them another chance.

However, even though Beethoven's symphonies were not often performed in France between 1811 and 1828, Parisians had regular access to Beethoven's chamber music at Baillot's *séances* (string quartets op. 18 and op. 59, string trios op. 8 and op. 9, and string quintets opp. 4, 29, 104 in particular), which allowed them to get acquainted with his music and to gradually accept his musical language as legitimate. Most crucially, however, at the time of their *naissance* in 1814 and for well over a decade, the *séances* provided the sole opportunity for Parisians to listen to Beethoven's works, placing Baillot at the centre of this aesthetic development. Although not performed as often as chamber music by Boccherini and Haydn, as we have established, Beethoven's music did nonetheless achieve a regular focus during the series. Works often returned, week after week, in a similar manner to Beethoven's 'généralement redemandées' symphonies at the *société*, slowly but steadily educating the listeners' expectations and providing them with a vocabulary that would allow them to indulge in conversation after the concert, or in social circles later on.

Ernst H. Gombrich's has suggested that filing visual impressions into mental categories helps us to perceive something new as a modification of the existing set of expectations.<sup>318</sup> Johnson uses this as a model to contend that if we were to file musical impressions into categories, we could ultimately begin to make sense of music that would otherwise be incomprehensible, and adds that 'it is only

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<sup>318</sup> Ernst H. Gombrich, *La préface des études françaises et étrangères*, ed. Henri Girard (Paris, 1923), in Johnson, 'Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience in France', p. 27.

after we learn a new word that we hear it all the time'.<sup>319</sup> In that sense, who was Baillot if not the patient teacher who taught Parisians how to categorise their musical knowledge and eventually discover this new set of musical expectations that were needed to decipher Beethoven's instrumental music? What would the *société's* first few concerts have been like without fourteen years of regular concerts at Baillot's *séances*? Would Habeneck have even considered taking such a confident stance on Beethoven's *Eroica*, which was reportedly laughed at by audiences back in 1811?<sup>320</sup> It becomes obvious that Baillot's contribution to instrumental music is far greater than music history has so far acknowledged. Furthermore, apart from being the only source of regular performance of Beethoven's works during the period 1811-1828, Baillot's concerts also strongly enhanced the audience's familiarity with Haydn's music, which, as we have seen, Johnson considers as a key factor in the transformation of Beethoven's symphony reception in Paris. In this too, Baillot's activities proved instrumental.

Both Baillot's *séances* and Habeneck's *société* were experiments that succeeded, because of a great deal of luck and perhaps more so because of their persistence of their insightful founders. In one way or another, thus commenced an outpour of Beethoven symphonies in the French capital: the *société* presented the Fifth on 13 April 1828 (repeated on 4 and 11 May), the Seventh on 1 March 1829 (and again on 29 March and 3 May that year), the *Pastoral* on 15 March 1829 (and again on 12 April), and the Fourth on 21 February 1830 (followed by a repeat performance on 4 April the same year). These were repeated and alternated (in addition to a performance of the better known Second symphony on 25 April, and the

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<sup>319</sup> Johnson, 'Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience in France', p. 27.

<sup>320</sup> See Robin Wallace, *Beethoven's Critics: Aesthetic Dilemmas and Resolutions during the Composer's Lifetime* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 106.

First a fortnight later), until the performance of the Ninth symphony on 27 March 1831, which, as one can imagine, was nothing less than groundbreaking.

However, our prime interest in the *société*'s programming is not the championing of Beethoven's genius – the Parisians would have caught up with that sooner or later – but indeed what it did for French music and its future. Fétis wrote triumphantly about the victory of French music mirrored in the outstanding performance standard of the Conservatoire orchestra; but the music performed was not French. Habeneck made no effort to promote French symphonies in the first three years of the running of the *société*; one might argue he did not have enough material to work with. But from 1831 onwards, a lackadaisical attempt to bring some French (or French-resident) composers' works to life is indeed recorded, as we will see shortly.

#### Mendelssohn: a new hero entices the French

Having confirmed Beethoven as a mentor and his *œuvre* as prime inspiration for the founding of the *société*, Habeneck began to unhurriedly branch out and to occasionally include symphonies by contemporary composers in his programmes. In April 1831, a symphony by George Onslow made its first appearance, followed by compositions by Joseph-François Rousselot (1803-1880) in 1834, Thomas Täglichsberk (1799-1867) in 1836, Ferdinand Ries (1784-1838) in 1837 and Henri Reber (1807-1880) in 1840.<sup>321</sup> Given that by March 1831 all Beethoven symphonies except for the eighth had already been performed at least twice and could, in a sense, be considered as somewhat familiar to the audience, Habeneck's move towards

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<sup>321</sup> See Holoman's concert programme list at [<http://hector.ucdavis.edu/SdC/default.html>].

contemporary symphonies was thus in keeping with the *société*'s purpose to constantly present new music.

However, the sharp change in the way the audience received Beethoven's symphonies was reportedly more profound than it seemed; in his review of the concert of 10 April 1831, which included the *première* of Onslow's First symphony, Fétis declared: 'Quand les innovations d'un homme de génie sont adoptées par le public, quand elles sont devenues populaires, il faut considérer leur effet dans l'art comme un fait accompli'.<sup>322</sup> What Fétis was suggesting was that the *société*'s audience had become so committed to Beethoven's music, that any composition that did not include the *bizareries* that they had once dismissed but had now come to accept and appreciate would most probably experience a cold welcome. Such was the response to Onslow's First symphony as well: Fétis notes that one would have desired more innovation.<sup>323</sup> Similarly, Täglichsberk's symphony did not trigger much enthusiasm in 1836.<sup>324</sup>

Thankfully, however, more was yet to come for the *société*, which now seemed stranded between constant reruns of Beethoven's symphonies and occasional new works by contemporary composers: on 15 January 1843, the first concert of the year, Mendelssohn's First symphony launched the *matinée*. Writing in the *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, Maurice Bourges acknowledged Mendelssohn as a celebrity and praised his *œuvre*, but did not seem overly enthusiastic about his First

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<sup>322</sup> 'When the innovations of a man of genius are adopted by the public, when they became popular, one must consider their effect on art as a done deal'. Fétis, 'Sixième concert du Conservatoire', *Revue musicale*, vol. 6 (1831), p. 84.

<sup>323</sup> '[...] on y désirerait un peu plus de nouveauté'. Fétis, 'Sixième concert du Conservatoire', p. 85.

<sup>324</sup> See Hector Berlioz, 'Premier concert du Conservatoire', *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* (1836), pp. 37-8.

symphony.<sup>325</sup> The work was not greeted with the type of mania that accompanied Beethoven's symphonies at the *société*, yet a year later it was a symphony by Mendelssohn, again, that opened the annual series on 14 January 1844: the Third symphony in A minor, *Scottish*.<sup>326</sup> Stephen Heller (1813-1888), reviewing the concert in the *Revue et gazette musicale*, perhaps intentionally, avoids going into a detailed analysis of the symphony out of fear of ruining its enchantment, but quickly reveals its originality, supposedly obvious from the first bar.<sup>327</sup> Heller emphasises Mendelssohn's striking ability to present material that is entirely his, in a symphony that bears nothing else but his own name, in an attempt to affirm his identity. This was reported as slightly confusing for both the audience and the artists of the *société*, as there was no sign of Haydn, Mozart or Beethoven in the *Scottish*.<sup>328</sup>

Phrases that were used by Heller to describe Mendelssohn's music were 'douce', 'élégiaque', 'limpide', 'bien gracieux, qui étincelle de mille feux comme un diamant', 'effet saisissant', 'large, grandiose, d'une sérénité douce et majestueuse à la fois', 'bruissement mystérieux, indéfinissable'.<sup>329</sup> The discussion of the *Scottish* symphony takes up most of Heller's review, who explains that this was because it was unknown music (even though the audience had already listened to Mendelssohn's *Fingal's cave* overture three times in the previous two series), whereas the other works, by Haydn, Beethoven and Félicien David, were already

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<sup>325</sup> Maurice Bourges, 'Premier concert du Conservatoire', *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* (1843), pp. 31-2.

<sup>326</sup> Holoman lists this simply as 'Symphonie nouvelle de M. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy' (new symphony by Mr. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy), but from Bourges' review we gather that it is indeed the Third symphony that was performed.

<sup>327</sup> '[...] d'une originalité vraie, que nous reconnaissons dès la première mesure'. Stephen Heller, 'Société des concerts. Première matinée', *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* (1844), p. 21.

<sup>328</sup> See Stephen Heller, 'Société des concerts', pp. 20-2.

<sup>329</sup> 'sweet/gentle', 'elegiac/melancholic', 'transparent', 'very graceful, that sparkles with a thousand lights like a diamond', 'striking effect', 'broad, imposing, of a tranquillity both sweet and majestic', 'mysterious and indefinable rustling'. Heller, 'Société des concerts', pp. 20-2.

known to the audience. Habeneck's previously firm stance on classical programmes was starting to see progress: romantic music was entering the *société* and, although the effect was not as ablaze as the reception of Beethoven's symphonies, it certainly made its mark. The first concert of the 1845 season saw the return of the *Scottish*, which was performed again on 22 February 1846 and on 4 April 1847. This mark was apparently powerful enough to justify a Mendelssohn memorial concert on 9 January 1848, with a programme made up entirely of the composer's works, to commemorate his death a couple of months earlier, but possibly not powerful enough to validate Katharine Ellis' view on the rapidity of Mendelssohn's triumph at the Conservatoire.<sup>330</sup> Would we really call this a triumph? Repeating the same symphony once a year can hardly amount to an accomplishment, especially since Mendelssohn's music posed absolutely no threat to Beethoven's, that had become more than a custom, or indeed a centrepiece, at the Conservatoire concerts, and which continued to excite the audience, even after several *reprises* of each symphony.

Ellis also argues that Onslow's symphonies had served as a bridge between Beethoven and Mendelssohn. It is difficult to agree with such an observation, given the lack of innovation in Onslow's symphonies recorded by critics at the time, and the conservatism of his works which we documented in chapter four. Is it possible to form a bridge between Beethoven's revolutionary works and Mendelssohn's version of romanticism through a composer whose track record shows nothing but an attachment to classical ideals and the past? However, one point that finds us in agreement with Ellis is that Mendelssohn's music became

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<sup>330</sup> Katharine Ellis, 'The *Société des Concerts* and the 'Classical' Symphony, 1831–1849', *Louise Farrenc und die Klassik-Rezeption in Frankreich*, ed. Rebecca Grotjahn and Christin Heitmann (Oldenburg, 2006), p. 45.

increasingly associated with conservative customs. This perhaps added to the *société's* overall conservative fate towards the end of the century, as Ellis maintains that Habeneck found a *juste milieu* between Classicism and Romanticism in Mendelssohn's symphonies.<sup>331</sup>

#### Developing a canon: conservatism or progress?

Despite Habeneck's promotion of Beethovenian supremacy, which proved difficult for living French composers to be accepted by the *société*, and despite the fact that, following largely innovative performances of Beethoven's unplayed symphonies, Habeneck had nothing excitingly new to present at the Conservatoire concerts but rather repeated, week after week, the same symphonies, one can argue that the emergence of a canon was indeed a valuable outcome.

For a composition to become part of the canon, it first needs to be published, then premiered, in combination with some positive attention in the press, and then it would need to remain in the public consciousness through regular performance.<sup>332</sup> Marcia J. Citron underlines the importance of 'regular access to musical establishment, that heterogeneous corps of professionals consisting of other composers, and of performers, conductors, impresarios, and board members of major performing organizations'.<sup>333</sup> Although not all of Beethoven's symphonies were premiered at the *société* (even though some performances indeed felt like *premières*, based on the audience's reaction, notably the *Eroica*), Habeneck certainly ensured Beethoven's works received regular performances. The *société's* strong institutional status meant that critics were ever present and wrote reviews after almost every

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<sup>331</sup> Ellis, 'The *Société des Concerts*', p. 35.

<sup>332</sup> See also Marcia J. Citron, 'Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon', *The Journal of Musicology*, vol. 8, no. 1 (Winter 1990), pp. 102-17, but especially pp. 104.

<sup>333</sup> Citron, 'Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon', p. 106.



concert, with the *Revue musicale* and later the *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* in the frontline. Fellow artists, performers, conductors and professors at the Conservatoire, whose opinion was valued, were also in attendance and helped spread the word.

In other words, the *société* was the perfect establishment for Beethoven's symphonies to flourish and become part of the repertoire, first, and part of the canon thereafter. As Joseph Kerman argues, the repertoire, defined by the performers, is simply the performance of old works, whereas the canon, determined by the critics, is their admiration on a critical level and in a literary context.<sup>334</sup> As simplistic as this might sound, in Beethoven's case, the two – repertoire and canonic status – occurred almost simultaneously at the *société*. Such was the impact of the Conservatoire concerts on artists, critics and audience alike, that Beethoven rapidly made his way into the canon and has since held a firm position for almost two centuries. William Weber maintains that it is the musical culture and its customs that shape and develop the canon;<sup>335</sup> this emphasises further the importance of the regularity of the *société*'s gatherings and the power of the routine, or indeed the tradition, that grew out of the Conservatoire concerts.

Nevertheless, the musical culture and the customs observed at the *société* without a doubt stemmed from Baillot's own principles, which were first put into effect at his *séances*: the regularity of his concerts, the performance of music by specific composers whose works were very frequently repeated week after week, the growing list of subscribers, the persistent recognition in the press, the all-important support of fellow artists, performers and composers, most of whom had strong

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<sup>334</sup> Joseph Kerman, 'A Few Canonic Variations', *Critical Enquiry*, vol. 10, no. 1, Canons (September 1983), p. 107-26.

<sup>335</sup> William Weber, 'The Eighteenth-Century Origins of the Musical Canon', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, vol. 114, no. 1 (1989), p. 7.

institutional connections, and the unquestionable performance excellence were all characteristics that contributed to the success of the *séances*, but that also established a concert culture that the next generation (like Habeneck and his *société*) could build on.

However, the idea of a repeated routine that turns into a tradition can also be seen as a source of conservatism. Although Habeneck initially made a giant leap forward, he soon went on to adopt a rather stationary attitude towards new repertoire. This seemingly contrasting behaviour does not fall far from the opposing dialectics of Romanticism: in art, for example, a passionate admiration of Greco-Roman antiquity was still very much in place, making links to the past, and hence to tradition, ever stronger.<sup>336</sup> Looking at Aristotle's view of art one observes an emphasis on rationality and deliberation, and the importance of conscious work in completing a creative inspiration.<sup>337</sup> Would such a notion not clash with the romantic ideals of creativity, which saw the creative inspiration as stemming from an irrational unconscious, as any rational deliberation would interfere with the creative process altogether? The answer is quite simply yes, but that did not seem to trouble the Romantics. The constant clash between innovation and preservation, or originality and tradition, was a fundamental part of Romanticism, one that is observed on several levels. This was a time of intense revolutions and reactions in the arts; previous customs of unconscious and exceptionally gradual changes of an inherited tradition did not hold anymore.<sup>338</sup> In a similar tone, Habeneck might have felt the need to shock his audience with Beethoven's *Eroica* at the inaugural concert of the

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<sup>336</sup> See Léon Rosenthal, *Romanticism* (New York, 2008), p. 8.

<sup>337</sup> See also R. Keith Sawyer, *Explaining Creativity: the Science of Human Innovation* (Oxford, 2012), especially pp. 18-25.

<sup>338</sup> See also P.M. Jones, 'French Romanticism: A Tradition of Dissent', *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 24, no. 3 (July 1929), pp. 294-301.

*société*: a gradual preparation of the audience for such repertoire was perhaps seen by him as a method of the past. Achieving this aggressive progress was a victory for Habeneck, one that, it may seem, he did not seek to take a step further.

One might argue that there was not enough compositional material for the *société* to continue progressing. However, Hector Berlioz was often in the audience and one might indeed question why his works never made it to the *société* programmes during Habeneck's twenty-year leadership (or even later, as we very sporadically only find excerpts from *Damnation de Faust* or *La fuite en Egypte* in the 1860s and 1870s). The *Symphonie Fantastique*, completed in 1830, with its innovative five-movement setup, the exceedingly romantic subjects of passion, unrequited love, fear of betrayal, suicide, sorcery and grotesque-themed finale, would have provided an excellent platform for the series' musical development and in keeping with Habeneck's bid for new music. In addition, given the sense of national pride among audience and critics that the Conservatoire orchestra gave rise to, one would expect a symphony by a French composer to have instigated similar – if not greater – feelings. At the same time, Berlioz's technically demanding musical writing would have granted the orchestra another way of showing off its celebrated skill and finesse.

But was the *Symphonie Fantastique* a step too far for Habeneck? The movement titles given by Berlioz, in combination with his programme notes, which made sure no part of his darkly emotional, near-psychedelic and at times grotesque story went untold, might have indeed discouraged the *société* director from exploring this path. (The work's length was certainly not an issue, since Beethoven's Ninth, performed several times already, was longer). Ellis considers that Berlioz's music went against Habeneck's musical taste and that the latter might have felt intimidated

by it.<sup>339</sup> That might have been specifically the case, but P.M. Jones offers a more comprehensive explanation: ‘A notable feature of French Romanticism has been its inability to attain a formula that would satisfy more than a generation of adherents’.<sup>340</sup> This seems a fair statement, given the length of the Romantic era and its inevitable development, or indeed its regeneration, along the way. The intense revolutions and reactions that took place in the arts at the time were possibly too abrupt for the older generations to take in and warm up to at once. Younger generations, having not lived long enough to become accustomed to the old days and to the ideals of Classicism, perhaps found it easier to accept those rapid changes, and often sought them eagerly. A suitable example is that of the young violinist Eugène Sauzay, who, having attended and performed at Baillot’s *soirées*, did not stop there, but longed to play Beethoven’s late quartets, and went on to do so with other musicians of his age. Baillot’s audience, however, mostly made up of Baillot’s generation, found Beethoven’s opus 18 string quartets sufficiently innovative. Habeneck, some thirty years older than Sauzay, having absorbed Baillot’s teachings on Classical ideals of beauty and grace, must have believed that the performance and excitable acceptance of Beethoven’s symphonies was not only daring (given the 1811 reception of the *Eroica*, when he was thirty years old) but adequately progressive for his generation. This seems to further explain why he probably saw no reason to search for a more advanced, or indeed daring, version of Romanticism.

What comes as a surprise is Ellis’s claim that Habeneck found the *juste milieu* between Classicism and Romanticism he was seeking in Mendelssohn’s

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<sup>339</sup> Ellis, ‘The *Société des Concerts*’, p. 35.

<sup>340</sup> Jones, ‘French Romanticism’, p. 295.

music.<sup>341</sup> Surely from a musicologist's perspective much of Beethoven's *œuvre* was in itself a bridge between Classicism and Romanticism, but it is Habeneck's standpoint that one seeks to understand in order to evaluate such a claim. Was Beethoven's music considered so innovative that it was initially tagged as a *bizarrierie*? Indeed it was. Did the musical language employed in his works require a set of educated ears in order to be appreciated? We have discussed that it did. And finally, did Beethoven's compositions move away from the description of natural sounds, and that of emotions, to essentially surpass any type of description and validate the aesthetic values of pure, or absolute, music? Certainly. Therefore, in Habeneck's eyes, among this heap of progress, Beethoven could not have been seen simply as a Classical composer. Among the audience's overexcited cheers, the critics' approving writings and the orchestra's enthusiastic renditions at the very end of the 1820s, one can hardly believe that Habeneck was looking for a passageway into Romanticism, for he had already found it.

One might seek to explain the conservatism that we discovered followed the first very innovative years of the *société*. We should not forget that even the emergence of a canon can be seen as a form of creativity, and hence even conservatism hides a secretly creative side. We must not disregard that so many years after the *société* we still share the same canon (with additions of compositions from later years), and nonetheless still value Habeneck and his contemporaries' choices. What might feel like miniature changes within a seemingly conservative atmosphere under the microscope of a musicological study, was however of paramount importance to the shaping of the concert experience as we know it today. One must not overlook the significance of supposedly quiet periods in terms of

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<sup>341</sup> Ellis, 'The *Société des Concerts*', p. 35.

progress, as they too contributed towards the agenda of innovation by allowing previous novelties to settle in and become the new norm. We have already discussed Leo Schrade's view that 'all that goes beyond the limits of an ideal that has been venerated over a sufficiently long period of time is cast aside into the category of aesthetic ugliness' and that 'the issue does not depend upon rational understanding'.<sup>342</sup> Considering that Beethoven's symphonies were seen as an example of such aesthetic ugliness, or indeed *bizarrierie*, at the start of the nineteenth century, but were welcomed triumphantly in 1828, Habeneck must have foreseen the fate of presenting more new music as radically innovative for the audience's untrained ears as the *Eroica* was in 1811, and perhaps wished to refrain from an unsuccessful episode that might have proven detrimental to the future of the *société*. In parallel, allowing sufficient time and space for Beethoven's symphonies to gain the audience's familiarity and to become established as part of the repertoire, was also important. We recall Fétis's words: 'Quand les innovations d'un homme de génie sont adoptées par le public, quand elles sont devenues populaires, il faut considérer leur effet dans l'art comme un fait accompli'.<sup>343</sup> For these innovations to be considered a *fait accompli*, a done deal, they need to be accepted by the audience and to subsequently become popular. How could such a drastic move, from aesthetic ugliness to the new norm, take effect without plenty of time? Were we too quick to judge Habeneck for his subsequently conservative programmes at the Société des concerts du Conservatoire, when less than two decades ago he had achieved such great progress with the return of Beethoven's *Eroica*? Are we perhaps constantly seeking more innovation and advancement in our interpretations of history as a result

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<sup>342</sup> Leo Schrade, *Beethoven in France. The Growth of an Idea* (New Haven, 1942), p. 5.

<sup>343</sup> 'When the innovations of a man of genius are adopted by the public, when they became popular, one must consider their effect on art as a done deal'. Fétis, 'Sixième concert du Conservatoire', p. 84.

of our fast-paced modern lives? David Edgerton, discussing the persistence of old things in the history of technology, offers a stimulating point of view:

The post-modern world has forty-year-old nuclear power stations as well as fifty-year-old bombers. It has more than a dash of technological retro about it too: it has new ocean-going passenger ships, organic food and classical music played on 'authentic' instruments. Aging, and even dead, rock stars of the 1960s still generate large sales, and children are brought up with Disney film seen by their grandparents when they were children.<sup>344</sup>

He also argues that today's progress-obsessed society indeed supports such hasty thoughts:

A use-based history will do much more than disturb our tidy timelines of progress. What we take to be the most significant technologies will change. Our accounts of significance have been particularly innovation-centric, and tied to particular accounts of modernity where particular new technologies were held to be central.<sup>345</sup>

It therefore seems unfair to criticise Habeneck's ventures based on the fact that he did not continue to deliver novelty in the pace that we, perhaps ignorantly, expected him to, in a set period of time. Edgerton actually condemns the tag of conservatism altogether in measuring the significance of an achievement:

The assumption that the new is clearly superior to what went before has an important corollary: failure to move from one to the other is to be explained by 'conservatism', not to mention stupidity and straight-forward ignorance.<sup>346</sup>

This leads us to wonder: what is indeed the appropriate measure of significance? Could carving one's name in musical history ensure significance? As we have seen with George Onslow, and considering Habeneck's non-existent renown today, it certainly does not. However, establishing Beethoven's symphonies as part of a canon, so that they may endure the changes of circumstances over the course of two

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<sup>344</sup> David Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History since 1900* (London, 2006), p. xii.

<sup>345</sup> Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old*, p. xii.

<sup>346</sup> Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old*, p. 9.

centuries – not only musical, but also social and political – can indeed be seen as an achievement. Like Baillot, people might not even recognise Habeneck’s name today, but he is directly related to the fact that just about anyone can hum along to Beethoven’s Ninth.

However, the idea of progress, while haunting our every move today, also concerned Baillot and his colleagues, as it was still a fairly new notion. The Enlightenment can be seen as a pathway into creating a new kind of universal culture, one that was more rational and hence secular, humanitarian, republican, and perhaps indeed progressive as a whole.<sup>347</sup> Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, Baron de Laune (1727-1781) recorded his idea of progress as early as 1750 in his speech entitled *Tableau philosophique des progrès successifs de l’esprit humain* (*A Philosophical Review of the Successive Advances of the Human Mind*) and claimed that the human condition had improved over the course of history and would continue to do so. He also maintained that advances in science and the arts contributed to the improvement of human condition. In a similarly optimistic tone and although writing his *Esquisse d’un tableau historique des progrès de l’esprit humain* (*Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Spirit*) while in hiding during the Revolution, Nicolas de Condorcet (Marie Jean Antoine de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, 1743-1794) also viewed the development of ideas over time as the fundamental change that causes overall improvement. He further believed that the past revealed an order that could be understood in terms of the progressive development of human capabilities.<sup>348</sup> Applying this to our case study of the *société*,

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<sup>347</sup> See also *Progress: Fact or Illusion?* ed. Leo Marx and Bruce Mazlish (Michigan, 1996).

<sup>348</sup> See also Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New Brunswick, 1994); Larry Laudan, *Progress and its Problems: towards a Theory of Scientific Growth* (Berkeley, 1977); Richard Rorty, *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge, 1998); Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940* (Oxford, 1988).



we can presume that it was precisely this understandable order of the past that Habeneck sought to introduce to the audience's view of Beethoven's works. And for this to happen, as we have mentioned, ample time was necessary.

Even though both Turgot and Condorcet expressed their optimism about the future of France and of humanity as a whole, they did not endeavour to define human well-being, despite it being one of the most significant parameters of their concept of progress. Explaining well-being can, of course, prove rather problematic, but as a general rule one could determine it based on freedom, happiness and utility. Applied to music, this would clearly cause further difficulty, but keeping Condorcet's view on the continuous development of ideas as a broad guide, might provide some answers. For example, recording over a certain period of time the audiences' gradual move from the view that music painted images and imitated natural sounds, to the belief that music could express emotions, and subsequently to the concept that the meaning of music could surpass any kind of description, both in terms of image and emotion, would certainly display a development of ideas, and hence progress, according to Turgot and Condorcet. On the topic of music specifically, Turgot states:

Knowledge of nature and of truth is as infinite as they are: the arts, whose aim is to please us, are as limited as we are. Time constantly brings to light new discoveries in the sciences; but poetry, painting, and music have a fixed limit which the genius of languages, the imitation of nature, and the limited sensibility of our organs determine, which they attain by slow steps and which they cannot surpass.<sup>349</sup>

Our initial hypothesis, that additional time is necessary in order to establish progress in music, is thus confirmed, as Habeneck's progress was entirely dependent on his

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<sup>349</sup> Turgot, *On Progress, Sociology and Economics*, ed. and trans. Ronald L. Meek (Cambridge, 1973), p. 52.

audience and their human limitations. Would Parisians have considered Habeneck to be taking ‘slow steps’ if he proceeded to present Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique*, for example, just as he had finished introducing all of Beethoven’s nine symphonies?

In the nineteenth century, carrying on the work of Turgot and Condorcet, French sociologist Auguste Comte (Isidore Auguste Marie François Xavier Comte, (1798-1857), greatly contributed to the idea of progress by claiming that intellectual development should be understood as change in the form of explanation employed by individuals seeking to understand the world. In his *Cours de philosophie positive*, first published in 1830, he makes it clear that the form of explanation affects social life as long as it corresponds to a way of predicting and manipulating events and that human excellence is exercising the uniquely human capacity for reason. In other words, he claimed that the human race was progressing because humans were becoming more rational and less emotional.<sup>350</sup> As much as this might seem right for many aspects of human well-being, it would be difficult to assert that a move towards rationality and away from emotion is what made progress possible in nineteenth-century music. If we accept that the successful reception of Beethoven’s *Eroica* in 1828, as opposed to the negative reaction to its *première* in 1811, represents progress, then it is quite problematic to credit rational, as opposed to emotional, audience thinking for such a development. However, noting this change as a form of explanation, as the audience endeavoured to understand the musical language of Beethoven, then perhaps Comte’s theory does seem feasible. Subsequently, if we were to ascribe this understanding to the audience’s increasing attentiveness and its gradual interest and education in matters of performance (such

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<sup>350</sup> Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive* (Paris, 1864). See also Harriet Martineau ed., *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte* (New York, 1858); *Introduction to Positive Philosophy*, ed. Frederick Ferré (Indianapolis, 1988); John Stuart Mill, *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (London, 1866); Gertrud Lenzer ed., *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (New Jersey, 1998).

as the use of technical musical terms and distinguishing between the work of different composers), both of which we have already discussed, then we begin to appreciate how reason – although not immediately obvious – contributed to musical progress as well.

Comte puts relatively little emphasis on violence and struggle as a source of change. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and Karl Marx (1818-1883), however, both firmly believed conflict to drive historical development. Again, in matters of music, such an interpretation can be less straightforward. The Revolution of 1789 did not halt concerts in Paris but, to the contrary, their pace quickened. In a letter to a friend in October 1801 Baillot mentioned that the arts were now heavily promoted:

What news do you wish to hear from here? The newspapers must have reported the general peace, which seems to fall from the skies. Everything is transformed. The arts are encouraged more than ever; our manufacturing competes with that of the English. Bridges, columns, and statues are being erected in Paris – work has already begun. Trade is returning to life, and our ports are like the dying suddenly brought back to health and happiness by the hand of God. Authors and poets are hard at work. Cries of joy and thanks rise up everywhere.<sup>351</sup>

Baillot further explains this advanced musical activity:

Il n'est pas un cercle qui ne soit devenu un concert, toutes les tables sont des pianos, les femmes des musiciennes, les hommes de petits Garat. [...] Dans l'espace d'un quart d'heure, on a chanté trois opéras de Gluck, on a parcouru quelques finales italiens, on a joué des ponts-neufs, des pots-pourris, des romances et une grande sonate de Steibelt. Rien de médiocre, rien de mauvais. Tout charmant, parfait, délicieux, sublime. Quand les voix sont un peu fatiguées, on attaque le quatuor.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> In Mongrédien, *French Music from the Enlightenment to Romanticism 1789-1830*, trans. Sylvain Frémaux (Portland, 1996), p. 9.

<sup>352</sup> 'There is no club that has not become a concert, all tables have become pianos, women have become musicians, men little Garat. [...] Within a quarter of an hour we have sung three operas by Gluck, we have gone through some Italian finales, we have played pont-neufs, potpourris, romances and a great sonata by Steibelt. Nothing mediocre, nothing bad. All lovely, perfect, delicious, sublime. When the voices get a bit tired, we attack the quartet'. Brigitte François-Sappey, 'Pierre Marie François de Sales Baillot (1771-1842) par lui-même: étude de sociologie musicale', *Recherches sur la musique française classique*, vol. 18 (1978), p. 202.

This might reinforce the Hegelian idea of conflict as a pathway to historical progress, yet there is evidence to support the contrary as well: the political turmoil at the start of the Restoration arguably had detrimental consequences on musical life in the capital. The Conservatoire was temporarily closed down in 1815, bringing the *Exercices* student concerts to a permanent halt. In addition, music societies and public concerts at the beginning of the Restoration were particularly disorganised and the private music salons were hit by chaos, as the nobles contemplated the Bourbons' reinstatement. Although the Conservatoire went on to reopen and public concerts found their stability once more, the *Exercices* concerts did not and it was not until 1828 that the founding of the Société des concerts du Conservatoire filled the void that they had left in the progress of instrumental music. One cannot help but wonder how things might have turned out differently if there was no such interruption to musical matters. On the other hand, however, this allowed for a near two-decade gap between the *première* and the revival of the *Eroica*, giving audiences the all-important space of time to gain the knowledge, and indeed the reasoning, behind Beethoven's symphonic works, which was in the meantime further facilitated, as we have seen, by the performances of Rossini's harmonically exotic works at the Théâtre Italien, by the audience's familiarity with Haydn's music, and most importantly by Pierre Baillot's *séances*, which ensured the audience was kept in constant contact with Beethoven's music.

We thus return to our initial idea of creativity within conservatism, or indeed the idea of progress during a period that is misconstrued as insignificant. It was certainly the seventeen years between the two aforementioned performances of the *Eroica* that ensured its success in 1828; it was this seemingly quiet period, in terms of performance of symphonic works, that laid the foundation for its growth

thereafter; and ultimately, it was the political turmoil that allowed for such a creative disruption to take effect. In parallel, Habeneck's pause for thought following the performance of all of Beethoven's symphonies at the *société* and his refusal to carry on with symphonic innovation, but rather to establish Beethoven as the champion of his series, has often been described as conservative behaviour. Yet during this period of presumed calm, creativity never ceased to occur, for the next chapter of music history was steadily being set out. Habeneck had played his role in music history, even if we only see the results of his actions and otherwise ignore his name today.

The modern historian seems to be constantly looking to record action and therefore periods of silence are often cast aside as insignificant. In a fast-paced society driven by novelty, ever-changing technology and a constant pursuit of prominence, we would perhaps benefit from reproducing these nineteenth-century figures' composure and trust in the future, rather than simply studying their actions ultimately seeking to reveal a past that was packed with achievements.

## Afterword

Summarising the impact of Pierre Baillot's musical activities in the first half of the nineteenth century in the French capital and recording the benefit it has had on chamber music's future, and ultimately on the manner things are still carried out today, is not straightforward. However, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of our hero would be a good starting point. First and foremost, Baillot was a performer: a violinist *d'exception*. He was a renowned soloist, who valued the ideals of true beauty, expression, honesty and elevation of the soul, which showed his ties to the principles of Classicism, yet with a hidden inclination towards the technical qualities of a Romantic virtuoso, as we have established in both the technical studies of his treatises and in his compositions. He was also an avid chamber musician, a term which reveals the musical and personal attributes of dialogue and communication, camaraderie and equality (in good measure) and graceful performance, which Baillot himself would have probably liked to be remembered by. He was also an excellent organiser, administrator and bookkeeper, seen in the records that he kept on the running of the *séances*, all of which were necessary for the success of the series, and can thus be seen as an eager entrepreneur. In addition, Baillot's contribution as an educator cannot be questioned; during his time as violin professor at the Conservatoire he taught and mentored numerous violinists who went on to become prominent performers. However, his guidance and input was not limited to his teaching; his compositions and his two treatises, the *Méthode de violon du Conservatoire* and *L'Art du violon*, contained valuable information not only for his students at the time, but for the contemporary researcher, keen to discover more about his string playing ideals. The violin treatises also bring to light an eloquent

writer, with an elegant and sophisticated tone, appropriate to his *politesse* and social decorum. Pierre Baillot's manners are also consistent with his facility to socialise and mix with members of the aristocracy and the haute bourgeoisie, which was of utmost importance for the future of his society, given that they made up a substantial part of his audience at the *séances*.

However, it was Baillot's ability to stand out that should gain him the most recognition: the numerous eulogies about his first-class playing in the press confirm his performing was one of a kind, his post at the Conservatoire and the many successful students show he was a unique educator, but above all, he stood out as an innovator, as the designer of something new. If his name is not preserved today as the founder of the public chamber music concert that is because of the common problem of music history that sees many musical figures go from fame to insignificance in under a century. Baillot's actions, however, and the tradition he slowly built and passed on to others largely remain in place still today and, although we do not show our appreciation directly to him, we carry on in the direction he first took.

Pierre Baillot helps us paint a picture of those involved in chamber music at the time: the audience, the press and the performers. An overall air of Classicism blows over such establishments, with the *beau idéal*, true beauty of expression, honesty, integrity, *politesse*, and indeed national pride in the frontline of what was admirable. Ties to such conservative ideals of the past often meant that the different was greeted with caution, or even disapproval, since it went against what was familiar and comprehensible. However, despite our pessimistic expectations about establishing progress under such conditions, we conclude that progress, even within conservatism, is achievable. We note progress in founding sound institutions that

became the basis of a chamber music tradition; in educating audiences to recognise and appreciate differentiation between composers and to gradually acquire a new set of ears so as to welcome Beethoven's once rejected symphonies; in gaining a sense of music history that was still underdeveloped and in passing it on to future generations; in establishing a canon, which is still in place today, with minor – if any – changes; and last but not least, in periods of calm that, although seemingly inactive, serve to prepare for further innovation in the future.

Contemplating chamber music as part of all available music events in any capital city in our day might indeed make it seem like small and insignificant. However, once directly involved in chamber music, either as a performer or as a regular member of the audience, one feels overwhelmed by it and by the number of available events and activities. Similarly, in a nineteenth-century Paris bustling with spectacle, both musical and otherwise, chamber music concerts must have felt of minuscule importance to those assessing music as a whole. To the few dedicated musical amateurs and the passionate musicians who found an outlet for their artistry, however, Pierre Baillot's contribution was life-changing. This dissertation was not about trying to imprint his name in the reader's memory or restoring his lost celebrity status, but rather about acquiring the necessary viewpoint from which to look at how we arrived at today's chamber music ideals, whose long-standing significant stability often lead us to ignore how they originally came about.



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