

# MYSTERY IN PARIS, THE GERMAN CONNECTION AND MORE: THE BÉRARD—BLANCHET CONTROVERSY REVISITED

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## ABSTRACT

*In 1755 a small vocal instruction book dedicated to the King's mistress, Madame de Pompadour, was published in Paris under the name of [Jean-Antoine] Bérard. His role in this work was challenged a year later by l'abbé Jean Blanchet, who published a greatly enlarged version of Bérard's book, claiming that he was its true author. Up to now, the lack of definitive source material has prevented a resolution of this question. New evidence clarifies its puzzling aspects, enabling us to reach a plausible conclusion. Investigating this matter leads also to insights in other areas, including the original meaning of the term amateur, the first known presentation of diaphragm breathing in print, the quality of singing at the Paris Opéra, contemporary views on the overuse of embellishment and audience behaviour.*

One of the unsolved mysteries in the assigning of authorship involves a curious incident in Paris, where in 1755 a small book entitled *L'Art du chant*, dedicated to the King's mistress Madame de Pompadour, was published under the name of [Jean-Antoine] Bérard (c1710–c1772), a vocal teacher and former soloist in small roles on the Paris stages. His acquaintance with Pompadour was probably slight, for his dedication says only: 'Permit me to declare here that I have had the pleasure of hearing you [sing] and that my praise can add nothing to your glory'.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the dedication was arranged by an intermediary, someone with good connections at court.

Bérard's text has three principal sections: the first treats the anatomy of the vocal organ (it is the first singing manual to do so), the second deals with diction and the third comprises mainly a verbal description of the embellishments and how the vocal organ performs them. Atypically for an instruction manual, music notation is avoided, even in the last section, where it would seem obligatory for better comprehension; it is found only in an appendix of excerpts from well known operas with Bérard's suggestions for embellishment. This is his sole prose work.

Apart from a 1757 statement in the literary journal *Observations périodiques sur la physique, l'histoire naturelle et les beaux-arts* defining Bérard as 'un musicien sans études & sans lettres', nothing is known of his education.<sup>2</sup> According to a 1738 inventory from the Paris Opéra, he 'entered and left [the Opéra] at Easter 1733'. After three years at the Théâtre-Italien, he returned and was tried out in solo roles, only to be 'totally booed and hissed' in Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Indes galantes*. But he was later 'to astonish the entire audience, surpassing himself to an amazing degree', which led to his promotion from the chorus to

1 [Jean-Antoine] Bérard, *L'Art du chant* (Paris: Dessaint and Saillant, Prault fils, Lambert, 1755; reprinted Geneva: Minkoff, 1972). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations throughout this article are my own unless noted otherwise.

2 *Observations périodiques sur la physique, l'histoire naturelle et les beaux-arts*, ed. Françoise-Vincent Toussaint, 3 (Paris, 1757), 71. This phrase is quoted in context below.



soloist.<sup>3</sup> From 1736 to 1745 he performed minor roles at the Opéra, except for singing the title role in Joseph Bodin de Boismortier's *Don Quichotte chez la duchesse*. Thereafter he taught singing.

Further details of Bérard's life are often confused with those of his son. According to Jean-Benjamin de La Borde (1780), the elder Bérard played the violoncello, guitar and harp, and 'gave the public several books of *brunettes* [small airs], with accompaniment of guitar and harp . . . He had only one son, a good musician born on 15 February 1725. Since 1762, he [the son] has been the first cellist in the orchestra at the Comédie-Italienne'.<sup>4</sup> This birthdate makes Bérard a father at the age of fifteen. While he has today been credited with the *Premier recueil d'airs avec accompagnement de guitare* (1764),<sup>5</sup> which probably contains the *brunettes* to which La Borde refers, the listing of living musicians in the *Tablettes de renommée des musiciens* (1785) assigns it to the younger Bérard: 'BERARD . . . a fait un Recueil d'airs pour la Guitare'.<sup>6</sup> Since it is well established that the younger Bérard was a professional cellist, perhaps La Borde confused which Bérard played the violoncello, guitar and harp.<sup>7</sup> Even the date of the elder Bérard's death as given by La Borde ('est mort à Paris le 1. de Décembre 1772') cannot be confirmed; Sophie Jouve-Ganvert found no *acte de décès* for a Bérard in the Archives de Paris for 1772. His date of birth, too, is uncertain. According to Jouve-Ganvert, writers after La Borde (who cites no birthplace) claim that Bérard was born in Lunel; her search of records there, however, revealed no trace of Bérard or his son in the period 1701–1751.<sup>8</sup>

The plot thickens in 1756, when l'abbé Jean Blanchet (1724–1778) published a greatly enlarged version of Bérard's *L'Art du chant*, but with the title *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, claiming that he was the true author of Bérard's book. It, too, carries the King's *privilège*. Blanchet had received a solid classical education from the Jesuits, who hoped to attract him to their order when he completed his studies. After staying with them for several years, he felt a lack of vocation for ecclesiastical life and proceeded to Paris where he studied the sciences and received a doctorate in medicine.<sup>9</sup> He later published two other books, one

3 Graham Sadler, 'Rameau's Singers and Players at the Paris Opéra: A Little-Known Inventory of 1738', *Early Music* 11/4 (1983), 460–461.

4 Jean-Benjamin de La Borde, *Essai sur la musique* (Paris: Eugène Onfroy, 1780), volume 3, 496–497; cited in Sophie Jouve-Ganvert, 'Bérard et l'art du chant en France au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Recherches sur la musique française classique* 25 (1987), 207–233, and 29 (1996–1998), 103–162, here 208–209 (where she also observes that *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), volume 2, 515, erroneously cites the elder Bérard as cellist at the Comédie-Italienne from 1762 and being called a 'bon musicien' by La Borde. The error remains in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (London: Macmillan, 2001), volume 3, 301. Jouve-Ganvert's other biographical findings are not included.

5 Jouve-Ganvert, 'Bérard et l'art du chant', 210–211.

6 [Roze de Chantoiseau,] *Tablettes de renommée des musiciens* (Paris: Cailleau, 1785; reprinted Geneva: Minkoff, 1971), unnumbered page of those playing *Basse ou Violoncel & Contrebasse*.

7 Jouve-Ganvert's assertion that 'Bon nombre affirment qu'il [Bérard père] a été guitariste et harpiste' ('Bérard et l'art du chant', 208) is undocumented. If her unnamed sources postdate La Borde, they probably took their information from him. She also states that Bérard was in communication with Denis Diderot (letters of November 1766 and March 1767 to Étienne Falconet) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*Confessions* (Paris: Garnier frères, 1964), 391–392), but Diderot's letters refer only to an unidentified Bérard in a context unrelated to music, and Rousseau simply had Bérard sing a role in a private performance of his *Devin du village*. The claims that Bérard studied anatomy with Antoine Ferrein and taught Mme de Pompadour ('Bérard et l'art du chant', 158) seem to be undocumented.

8 Jouve-Ganvert, 'Bérard et l'art du chant', 208.

9 *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne* (Paris: Michaud frères, 1811), volume 4, 567, which credits him also with *L'Homme éclairé par ses besoins* (1764) and *Logique de l'esprit et du coeur* (1760). Another work ascribed to him – *Idée du siècle littéraire présent, réduit à six vrais auteurs* (date unknown, but appearing in the literature as 1761 or 1764) – is listed by the *Biographie universelle* (volume 2, 349–350) also under Pierre-Louis d'Aquin de Château-Lyon, where the double attribution is noted. From a brief review in Fredrich Melchior von Grimm and Jakob Heinrich Meister, *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique* (Paris, 1753–1793), ed. Maurice Tourneux (Paris: Garnier frères, 1877–1882), volume 2, 165–166, which attributes it to Blanchet, it can be dated prior to 20 July 1754. According to Tourneux's commentary, l'abbé Claude-Pierre Goujet (presumably in his eighteen-volume *Bibliothèque française, ou*



of which has a passage reminiscent of *L'Art du chant*;<sup>10</sup> his level of education placed him among the tiny elite in a society in which education was marginal and illiteracy high.<sup>11</sup>

Blanchet's preface specifies that he is addressing theatre singing – principally at the Paris Opéra, to judge from his frequent citation of its leading singers, especially the soprano Marie Fel (1713–1794) and the countertenor Pierre Jélyotte (1713–1797). Other singers favourably cited by him include the soprano Catherine-Nicole Le Maure (1704–1786), the bass Claude-Louis de Chassé (1699–1786) and Marie-Justine-Benoite Favart (1727–1772), who sang at the Comédie-Italienne and was the wife of the famed librettist Charles-Simon Favart.

According to Blanchet, 'If these feeble observations go down through the centuries, they will convey the method of our famous singers. I hope that my principles, studied thoroughly, will serve to hasten the progress of a theatre which, by the enchanting spectacle it presents to the ears, eyes, imagination and heart, is well suited to pleasing its citizens and continually attracting Europe and its riches.'<sup>12</sup> Blanchet further hopes that the usefulness of his work will spread throughout Europe. Unlike the standard vocal tutors, which mainly address beginners and concentrate on music reading, the Blanchet and Bérard books are directed to the professional singer and teacher. But Blanchet's book has the distinction of being a work of criticism as well – indirect criticism, to be sure, but criticism nevertheless.

When Jouve-Ganvert addressed the question of authorship for Bérard's book, she presented an impressive amount of useful information relating to this subject but was unable to reach a definitive conclusion. New documentation below will clarify this question and enable us to suggest a solution that is both plausible and probable.

**Class structure and education.** An understanding of the social mores and the levels of education in the period is pertinent to the question of the authorship of Bérard's work. Blanchet refers to himself as an *amateur* in music, but this word meant something quite different in the eighteenth century than it does today.<sup>13</sup> *Amateur* was a term of distinction reserved for members of the educated upper classes; in itself, it conferred no specific achievement level in any particular field and, when used in a musical setting, included both individuals who were simple music lovers and those whose musical skills and knowledge exceeded that of most professional musicians. Context determines what type of *amateur* is meant. While the *amateur* might have authoritative knowledge of music and be able to play or sing with considerable proficiency, he would rarely do so as a professional (unless in straitened circumstances), because this was an inferior station. A case in point is the bass Chassé (commended by Blanchet for his diction), who left the Opéra in 1738, having 'discovered some trace of nobility; this, according to him, was the reason why he left the Opéra'. Although he did obtain a title, his efforts to restore the family fortunes foundered and he returned to the Opéra in 1742, retiring in 1756.<sup>14</sup>

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*histoire littéraire de la France* (Paris: P. J. Mariette and H. L. Guerin, 1741–1756)) attributes it to d'Aquin, while Jacques Hébrail and Joseph de La Porte, *La France littéraire* (Paris: veuve Duchesne, 1769) assign it to Blanchet. Goujet's attribution seems the more plausible, for the work treats the writings of six authors (including Crébillon, Fontenelle and Montesquieu). This is an unusual subject for one whose primary endeavour was science and who was not yet thirty years old. *Idée du siècle littéraire* is not included in Pierre M. Conlon's compilation of the period's literature, *Le Siècle des lumières* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1990–1993), volumes 7, 9, 10 and 11.

10 As Jouve-Ganvert observes ('Bérard et l'art du chant', 212), Blanchet's *L'Homme éclairé* (337–342) discusses the 'organes de la voix' and the 'sons à caractères'. It might be added that a large portion of the work treats the sciences.

11 See François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, *Reading and Writing: Literacy in France from Calvin to Jules Ferry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

12 [Jean] Blanchet, *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant* (Paris: Augustin Martin Lottin, Michel Lambert, Nicolas B. Duchesne, 1756), xlvii–xlviii: 'si ces foibles productions vont aux siècles, elles y feront passer la méthode de nos fameux chanteurs'.

13 Documented more fully in my unpublished article 'Amateur and Dilettante, or: Our Evolving Language'.

14 Sadler, 'Rameau's Singers and Players', 455.



On the other hand, it was socially acceptable for the *amateur* to write about musical subjects or to compose – La Borde is only one well known example.<sup>15</sup>

In most cases professional musicians below the highest level had a limited general education, often consisting of little more than a basic knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic obtained at an elementary or ecclesiastical choir school. Marcelle Benoit's study of documents containing musicians' handwriting during the era of François Couperin shows that they had meagre skills; their writing is confused and spelling purely phonetic. Their wives often admitted to the notary that they could neither write nor sign their names.<sup>16</sup> As a singing teacher, where did Jean Bérard acquire the erudition evident in his book? In all probability, his education mirrored that of his peer group; otherwise, he would not have sought the services of an *amateur* in writing his book (as discussed below). The level of education required to write its anatomy portion was not generally available to members of his class. While the Jesuits did educate boys of limited means if they were of exceptional promise, it is unlikely that such an individual would have chosen a career in the theatre, because of its low status.

**Diaphragm breathing.** What makes Bérard's book so unique for this period is its discussion of vocal anatomy and, in particular, diaphragm breathing:

L'inspiration suit nécessairement de la dilatation de la Poitrine: cette dilatation a son principe dans le mouvement des côtes qui s'élevent en se portant en dehors, & dans la contraction du Diaphragme, dont la partie convexe qui regarde la Poitrine descend & comprime le Ventre. L'Expiration est l'action des Organes, par laquelle l'air intérieur est chassé des Poumons, & en sort par les mêmes voyes qu'il y étoit entré: on doit rapporter l'Expiration au rétablissement du Diaphragme, & au retrécissement de la Poitrine, qui se fait par l'abaissement des côtes. Comme le Poumon est le centre contre lequel agissent tous ces différens mouvemens, il doit être comprimé, & l'air doit être chassé des Cellules pneumoniques où il étoit contenu: c'est cet air qui doit servir à la formation de la Voix & par conséquent du Chant.<sup>17</sup>

Inhalation necessarily follows from dilating the chest. The principle of this dilation lies in the movement of the sides [of the chest], which lift in expanding, and the contraction of the diaphragm, whose part convex to the chest descends and compresses the abdomen. Exhalation is the action of the organs by which the interior air is expelled from the lungs by the same path it entered. The exhalation is combined with restoring the diaphragm and contracting the chest, done by lowering the sides. Since the lung is the centre against which all these different movements take place, it has to be compressed and the air expelled from the lung cells holding it. It is this air that serves for forming the voice, and consequently, for singing.

The same passage appears also in Blanchet's book.<sup>18</sup> At this time, such information could have come only from one trained in the sciences; eighteenth-century French vocal methods never broach the subject of voice production, as they deal essentially with the fundamentals of music reading and embellishment.<sup>19</sup> In 1760 Rameau declared that the few good singers France had produced resulted from chance, not training – they had a natural instinct for singing properly: ' . . . il n'est pas étonnant non plus qu'il y ait si peu d'habiles

15 [de Chantoiseau,] *Tablettes de renommée*, unpaginated (*Auteurs, Compositeurs*).

16 Marcelle Benoit, 'La vie quotidienne des musiciens au temps de François Couperin', in *François Couperin: nouveaux regards. Actes des Rencontres de Villecroze*, ed. Orhan Memed (Paris: Klincksieck, 1998), 4–5.

17 Bérard, *L'art du chant*, 10–11; compare Jouve-Ganvert, 'Bérard et l'art du chant', 160, who does not discuss the significance of this passage on diaphragm breathing.

18 Blanchet, *L'Art ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, 8–9. Among the minor editorial changes, *rétablissement* replaces *retrécissement*.

19 In Germany, Johann Friedrich Agricola's commentary in his *Anleitung zur Singkunst*, a translation of Pierfrancesco Tosi's *Opinioni de' cantori* (Berlin: Georg Ludwig Winter, 1757), chapter 1, treats vocal anatomy (citing Ferrein) but does not appear to delve into diaphragm breathing.



Chanteurs en France, vù qu'on ne les doit qu'au hasard'.<sup>20</sup> These lucky few had an ear tuned to harmony without any effort on their part, he continued, and their voices were made flexible with beautiful tones, even though they did not know that the principle for achieving these consists of proper breath control. From the material in Blanchet's book, it is clear that most singers did not consciously practise correct breathing, and, as Rameau implies, France had no vocal method – hence no technical knowledge of the vocal mechanism that is presented in Bérard's book. This is confirmed in a vocal tutor of 1769 by Lécuyer, whose discussion of the Bérard/Blanchet books inadvertently reveals his lack of knowledge of this subject:

Messrs. Blanchet and Bérard have treated [articulation] very astutely; I could only repeat what they have said. But I cannot concede their technique for teaching [singing], for one cannot control the stretching of the 'vocal cords', the opening of the 'larynx' or the 'modification of the breath'. The internal organs do not obey a simple command. Moreover, the technique varies according to the subject, whose mouth is larger or smaller, with a better or worse set of teeth. It is up to the teacher to set in motion the vocal organ entrusted to him, and deploy the means in the way most advantageous for his pupil, for the facial features and bearing must not suffer from an artificial method.<sup>21</sup>

Apparently Lécuyer considered mouth structure to be a major factor in voice production.

**A scientist's language.** Vocal anatomy also plays an important role in the embellishment portion of the Bérard/Blanchet books. Avoiding music notation, both books describe embellishments according to the way a scientist views a functioning vocal apparatus. Consider the description of how one sings the prepared trill (*cadence appuyée*):

In the prepared trill, the larynx should be made to rise by one degree or half a degree. One's expiration must be arranged so that it successively acquires equal forces. Thus the lips of the glottis will be more tense by one degree or half a degree, and consequently the sound will be higher in the same proportions. Furthermore, the vocal cords will be compelled into [*reduits à*] vibrations which will become more profound [*plus profondes*] by degrees, and the strength of the sound will increase in arithmetical progression. In equal movements, the duration of expiration on the point of preparation [*point d'appui*] must correspond exactly to half the value of the [main] note, and to one-third in unequal movements. This is why the sound will be more or less spun out in these different cases. One should take care to detach the trill from its preparation by a small jerk of the throat on the outside [*en dehors*], alternately lowering and raising the larynx by one degree, and exhaling briefly for each repercussion. The result will be that the vocal cords will pass through various states of tension and relaxation, and the sound will rise successively from low to high. As these same oscillations will be little protracted, the sounds will follow one another rapidly; then one will exhale for brief and equal periods of time on the different points of elevation and descent of the larynx, and the repercussions will be slow and quite equal. The duration of one's expiration [for each repercussion] will be gradually shortened and the repercussions will become more rapid. Finally, the larynx will be made to descend by one degree; one will exhale as in duple time, first with a certain softness, then with a little force in a way that a soft expiration meanwhile takes place in the

20 '... neither is it surprising that there are so few capable singers in France, seeing that they are owed only to chance'. Rameau, *Code de musique pratique* (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1760), 15; cited by Jouve-Ganvert, 'Bérard et l'art du chant', 110–111.

21 Lécuyer, *Principe de l'art du chant* (Paris: the author, 1769; reprinted Geneva: Minkoff, 1972), 7–8: 'les organes intérieurs n'obéissent pas au simple commandement; d'ailleurs le mécanisme varie suivant les sujets; tel a la bouche plus grande ou plus petite, plus ou moins bien meublée'; quoted in Jouve-Ganvert, 'Bérard et l'art du chant', 159–160, who observes a 'systematization' and an almost geometrical rigour in the Bérard/Blanchet books. The above interpretation is mine.



interval [between] the sounds. One sees that [the sounds] will be lower than the preceding, that they will be linked, and that the penultimate [sound] will have less strength than the last.<sup>22</sup>

It is inconceivable that any vocal teacher would present the ornaments by such complex verbal description alone, without using notation.

While Blanchet makes no pretension of being a trained musician, he does have intellectual knowledge of basic principles of music and he approaches the subject of singing from a scientist's point of view. The very different backgrounds of Blanchet and Bérard, and how they relate to the contents of Bérard's book, are critical factors to bear in mind.

## THE EVENTS

According to Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, who lived in Paris for several years during the 1740s and became the most widely read German writer on music of his generation, Blanchet's claim to authorship was accurate:

In 1755 a vocal instruction book entitled *L'Art du chant dédié à Madame de Pompadour* by Mr Bérard appeared in Paris. The work was announced in the *Mercure de France* with high praise, and Bérard was complimented on it everywhere. He experienced the most pleasurable delight, which was not a little augmented by the generosity of Mme de Pompadour, who sent him a couple thousand *livres* as a gift. Mr Bérard, whose good fortune already began to be the envy of some singing teachers, would not in time have failed to be deified in this or that musical dictionary if he had not played a stupid trick. The book about singing was no work of his, but the product of a capable, poor musician by the name of Blanchet, who out of necessity had relinquished his manuscript for a very insignificant honorarium. But Bérard, who was a miser and no man of honour, did not pay Mr Blanchet, who to avenge himself not only revealed the secret but brought an action to recover his payment. In such a way Bérard, *sua culpa – sua maxima culpa*, attained honour and respect as a plagiarist, after he had previously been considered worthy to apply for a doctorate at the University of Oxford or Cambridge.<sup>23</sup>

The *Mercure de France* review to which Marpurg refers is brief but positive. Noting that the author is the first to treat vocal technique, the reviewer finds that he handles the material like a physician and offers a course in the anatomy of the vocal organ. Had he provided only a sketch of this subject, the public would still be obliged to him for having raised the matter: '... le premier qui parle d'un art a toujours un grand mérite'.<sup>24</sup> For the *Mercure*, this was the true importance of Bérard's book; no mention is made of its appendix with ornamented examples.

Who was the source for Marpurg's account? We know, for instance, that he was well acquainted with Rameau and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert and was accepted at the highest levels of French society. But a more probable source was the editor of the above-cited *Observations périodiques*, François-Vincent Toussaint (1715–1772), who published two long articles supporting Blanchet's book. Described on the title page of the *Observations* as an attorney at the Parlement de Paris and a member of the Prussian Royal Academy, from 1764 Toussaint lived for a while in Berlin at the invitation of Frederick the Great and was one of the editors of the *Journal littéraire*, published by French intellectuals in Berlin between 1772 and 1776. During his Berlin sojourn, Toussaint would surely have become acquainted with Marpurg, one of Germany's great

22 Jean-Baptiste Bérard: *L'Art du chant*, translation and commentary by Sidney Murray (Milwaukee, WI: Pro musica, 1969), 109–110.

23 [Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg,] *Legende einiger Musikheiligen* (Cologne: Peter Hammer, 1786; reprinted Frankfurt, London and New York: Peters, 1977), 192–193. A similar account appeared earlier in the *Kritische Briefe über die Tonkunst*, ed. Marpurg, 2 (Berlin, 1762), 292; quoted in Jouve-Ganvert, 'Bérard et l'art du chant', 219.

24 '... the first to speak of an art is always of great merit.' *Mercure de France* (Paris, April 1755), 75–77.





Francophiles. Toussaint had a distinguished literary career, writing, for example, major articles on jurisprudence for the *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonnée* and a book, *Les Moeurs*, for which he is remembered today. He also served as editor of the *Journal étranger* from 1754.

Material below shows that Marpurg's account is correct in its essence but contains two inaccuracies – as might be expected if he had received his information orally. First, Blanchet was not a musician, but a physician and writer. Second, it is doubtful that he ever filed a suit against Bérard: one would think twice about suing one who enjoyed the protection of the King's mistress. Instead, Bérard sued Blanchet after the latter's book was published. Since it was normally the aggrieved party who would sue, Marpurg confused who sued whom. Madame de Pompadour's involvement created an unusual scenario and probably explains why Bérard was the one who initiated a suit.

Toussaint's journal did not mention any controversy after Blanchet's book was published, nor did it name Bérard's book, but simply alluded to it as the 'first edition'. Its assertion that singers followed no scientific method of voice production is useful.

Les Chanteurs pour la plupart n'étoient guidés jusqu'ici que par une routine ou un sentiment aveugle, & les regles étoient dispersées dans les têtes de quelques amateurs éclairés. Monsieur Blanchet a heureusement porté le flambeau de l'analyse dans les ténèbres de cet Art. Il a été chercher dans la Nature & le jeu de l'instrument de la voix, dans l'idée de la déclamation chantante, & dans toutes les branches du Chant une théorie universelle qui en explique les mystères les plus cachés.<sup>25</sup>

Up to now, singers for the most part have been guided only by blind routine or feeling, and the principles have resided in the minds of some enlightened *amateurs*. Fortunately, Monsieur Blanchet has carried the torch of analysis into the darkness of the art of singing. His study of the vocal organ, declamation and all the elements of singing has enabled him to draw a universal theory that can explain the most hidden mysteries.

Noting that Blanchet's work features new chapters and an expanded discussion of principles, and has been justly praised by various journals, the reviewer observes: 'On peut d'ailleurs assurer que cette seconde édition est infiniment plus parfaite que la premier.'<sup>26</sup> After reprinting a substantial portion from one of its chapters, the reviewer concludes by quoting a letter of 3 April 1756 from Voltaire to Blanchet:

Be assured, Monsieur, of my most sincere thanks for the ingenious and profound work that you have kindly sent me. It expresses taste and knowledge of the fine arts; the physician still leads the musician. Such a work could have been written only in the most enlightened of times. May it train artists worthy of your lessons. I shall not be able to witness it, but I shall applaud from afar the art's progress owed to you. With all the esteem due you, Monsieur, I have the honour of being your most humble and obedient servant,  
VOLTAIRE<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps Toussaint or another well-known writer was the intermediary for soliciting this letter, which is found among Voltaire's correspondence. This same letter is reported as appearing also in the *Suite de la Clef ou Journal historique sur les matières du tems* (1756), implying that it accompanies an article similar in content to the one from Toussaint's journal.<sup>28</sup>

Turning now to Blanchet's book, we find a foreword explaining its origins:

<sup>25</sup> *Observations périodiques* 1 (August 1756), 113–114.

<sup>26</sup> 'One can, moreover, vouch that this second edition is infinitely more thorough than the first.' *Observations*, 114.

<sup>27</sup> *The Complete Works of Voltaire*, ed. Theodore Besterman (Banbury, Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1971), volume 101, 137.

<sup>28</sup> *The Complete Works of Voltaire*, volume 101, 137 (editorial commentary citing the *Suite de la Clef* (Paris, June 1756), volume 79, 449–450).



As soon as *L'Art du chant* appeared, every well-informed person refused M. Bérard the literary honors he wanted to usurp. At the same time, the word spread (by what means I do not know) that I was the author of this work. My friends . . . advised me to perfect a useful treatise that everyone rightly attributed to me, and which I regarded as the plan or unfinished study for a larger book. Finally they persuaded me that both my honour and the public expected this work from me. This is what prompted me to make some corrections to *L'Art du chant*, augment it by more than half, and prove that Mr Bérard could not have written it.<sup>29</sup>

This course of action had already been implied by the *Mémoires pour l'histoire des sciences & beaux-arts* review of Bérard's book. The author explains the subject very well, says the critic, but is perhaps a little too laconic; in general, one senses that he feared to expatiate in some instances where it was necessary to deal with anatomy, metaphysics and the like:

Nous osons prier l'Auteur de se mettre plus au large dans une seconde édition; il parcourt un pays non défriché: qu'il ne craigne pas d'ouvrir la voie, de l'applanir, de revenir même sur ses pas, pour voir si tout le monde peut y marcher.<sup>30</sup>

We venture to request the author to express himself more extensively in a second edition. He is covering untilled ground. Let him not fear to open the way, make it smooth and even retrace his footsteps to see if everyone can proceed there.

When reviewers call Blanchet's book the second edition of Bérard's, they seem to imply that Blanchet was the author of both. For example, the *Annonces, Affiches et Avis divers* declares, 'To us [it] seems greatly superior to the first edition'. And the *Journal des Sçavans* deems Blanchet's book to have 'great advantages over the preceding edition, of which we gave an idea last June'.<sup>31</sup> 'By its nature', continues Blanchet, 'this treatise is dependent on logic, physiology, metaphysics and grammar: consequently, no one has been deceived by the vanity of an artist who is not even initiated into the sciences.' Claiming that Bérard was unable to read accurately the proofs of a book that had often been explained to him over the course of four months, Blanchet describes five errors of meaning, adding that the book contains more than seventy other small errors. A man of Blanchet's acquaintance had asked Bérard why he preferred Antoine Ferrein's system of anatomy to Denis Dodard's. Because, he replied, 'the words vocal cords, the *rubans sonores*, captivate the ear and charm the imagination'. According to Blanchet, Bérard had responded to various objections from this same individual only by singing various operatic pieces:

C'étoient là des raisons de Musicien, & non de Philosophe. Il est bien plus aisé de chanter que d'expliquer comment & pourquoi l'on chante? [*sic*] La pratique ordinaire de certains arts est presque toute du ressort des organes & des sens; tandis que leur théorie est du domaine des sciences, & de l'entendement.<sup>32</sup>

These were the answers of a musician, not an intellectual. It is much easier to sing than to explain how one sings. Although the standard practice of certain arts is concerned almost entirely with the organs and the senses, their theory is the domain of the sciences and the understanding.

It probably was not uncommon for practising musicians, few of whom had writing skills, to seek the assistance of an *amateur* when preparing a method book for practical music instruction. Thus Blanchet describes and quotes what he found in the manuscript that Bérard, brought him: ' . . . car cet Artiste avoit la

29 Blanchet, *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant, Avertissement*, iii; compare Jouve-Ganvert's presentation, 'Bérard et l'art du chant', 215–216, of Blanchet's case.

30 *Mémoires pour l'histoire des sciences & beaux-arts* (Paris, first July volume, 1755), 1548–1549.

31 *Annonces, Affiches et Avis divers* (Paris, 28 April 1756), 66, and *Journal des Sçavans* (Paris, April 1756), 253; quoted in Jouve-Ganvert, 'Bérard et l'art du chant', 213. For the Amsterdam edition of the latter journal, the page number is 398.

32 Blanchet, *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, vi–ix.





manie de vouloir se faire Auteur. Il ne scauroit me désavouer: j'ai des originaux écrits de sa main . . . je puis satisfaire les curieux, & convaincre les incrédules<sup>33</sup> (. . . for this artist had the craze of wanting to be an author. He will not be able to repudiate me; I have the original writings in his hand . . . I can satisfy the curious and convince the skeptics). Finding Bérard's only estimable ideas to be the choice of embellishments and the signs to represent them, Blanchet is confident that all honourable, well-informed persons who saw Bérard's writings before 4 August 1754, when he, Blanchet, began to communicate the drafts of *L'Art du chant* to Bérard, will attest to his sincerity.

According to Blanchet, Bérard took every precaution to play to the fullest the perilous role of author. He told everyone that he had taken a course in anatomy, and, yes, the medical doctor M. Bordeu had shown him a larynx several times. He proclaimed that he had been working for three years on a work of philosophy, yet had had to ask Blanchet the meaning of '*Libro 1<sup>o</sup>. de Oratore, &c. Tension, vibration, oscillation, isocrone, monocorde, bicorde, Physique, Philosophique, &c.*'. Asserting that he holds all the drafts of Bérard's book, Blanchet describes his witnesses:

J'en ai toutes les façons entre les mains: de plus, les corrections considérables que j'y ai faites . . . formeront une démonstration pour tous les Lecteurs judicieux. Je pourrois ajouter que des gens de Lettres, d'une probité reconnue, me l'ont vû composer comme sous leurs yeux, & presque sans aucune sorte de secours; & que je leur ai lû en détail tous mes Manuscrits avant que de les communiquer à M. Bérard.<sup>34</sup>

I have all of its drafts in hand; moreover, the extensive corrections which I have made to it . . . will constitute proof for all judicious readers. I could add that some men of letters, of acknowledged probity, saw me write it as under their eyes, and nearly without any type of help; and that I read all my manuscripts to them in detail before communicating them to Mr Bérard.

This indicates a prior agreement between the men; in effect, Blanchet had hired out his writing skills in exchange for remuneration.

In response to any who would claim that a scientist could not write about music, Blanchet declares:

Up to now, nearly all those who have written on the arts were not artists at all. Aristotle, to whom we owe poetry, was not a poet. M. Dubos, whose reflections about painting are as fine as they are solid, never touched a paint brush. Although Père Laugier is not an architect, he wrote an essay about architecture that has been admired by all the connoisseurs. Most of the mathematicians who have established rules about musical composition know nothing about practical music. Without practising declamation himself, M. Duclos produced a masterpiece of both philosophy and acumen. M. de Cahusac is not an artist, but his dance treatise has attracted public attention. Lastly, the Encyclopedists are certainly not manual workers; yet they have provided us with articles about the mechanical arts that are both inquiring and useful.<sup>35</sup>

Blanchet's point is well taken: as already noted, most practising musicians lacked not only writing skills but also knowledge of the other disciplines that would enable them to write with insight; those who rose above their peers produced tutors for practical music instruction. On the other hand, works concerning music criticism, aesthetics and composition are usually the work of the educated elite – those called *amateurs*. To

33 Blanchet, *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, x–xvi.

34 Blanchet, *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, xvi–xix.

35 Blanchet, *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, xix–xxi: 'presque tous ceux qui ont écrit jusqu'à présent sur les arts, n'étoient point Artistes'. Jean-Baptiste Dubos (1670–1742), historian, critic and author of *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture* (Paris, 1719); Marc-Antoine Laugier (1713–1769), historian, author of *Essais sur l'architecture* (Paris, 1753, 1755); Charles Pinot Duclos (1704–1772), novelist, moralist and essayist on various subjects, including the theatre; Louis de Cahusac (died 1759), dramatist and author of *La Danse ancienne et moderne* (La Haye [Paris], 1754).



prepare his book, Blanchet consulted authorities from both classes, including ‘artists’ such as Rebel, Francoeur, Chéron, La Motte, Duché, Jélyotte and Fel, and the ‘best-informed *amateurs*’, among them de Cahusac, Diderot, de Lagarde and Rameau.<sup>36</sup> These *amateurs* were intellectuals conversant with the vocal art, and Rameau’s compositions and theoretical writings earned him a place in this select group.

Noting that he has treated the sounds produced instead of the notational signs representing them, Blanchet believes that a careful reading of the book bearing Bérard’s name will reveal it to be more the work of a man of letters, an *amateur*, than of a simple artist. For his research, Blanchet made a thorough study of such matters as pronunciation, articulation, gesture and embellishment, and often asked people of talent to sing for him:

Is it perhaps for having sung and responded to various questions I asked that M. Bérard imagines he has rights over my treatise? If this were the case, our celebrated artists whom M. Diderot consulted could, with much more justice, appropriate to themselves most of the articles in the *Encyclopédie*. . . I was very surprised that the *Almanach des Auteurs* attributed the anatomical part of the *L’Art du chant* to M. Ferrein. This wise physician, who knows very well that he had no part of any kind in this work, must be as astonished as I.<sup>37</sup>

In 1757 details about this episode appeared in print when Toussaint’s journal published a letter from an ‘Amateur’ about the second edition of *L’Art du chant*. According to the writer, the editor did not know the details of the Blanchet/Bérard controversy when the review of Blanchet’s work was published. The second edition is much more finished, he says, but its outline was already present in the first edition (the one bearing Bérard’s name):

Avant cette édition qui porte le nom de M. Blanchet, il en avoit paru une précédente, qui portoit celui de M. Berard. La seconde est plus parfaite: mais l’esquisse en étoit déjà dans la premiere: c’est que M. Blanchet avoit vendu ses recherches à M. Berard. L’édition parut, & M. Berard ne paya pas. Le vendeur crut par-là le contrat réfilé: il se presenta au Magistrat chargé de ce détail, pour obtenir un privilège en son nom, & l’obtint. Il donna, en conséquence, la seconde édition de l’art du chant, qui est celle dont vous avez parlé, & dont je vais parler à mon tour. M. Berard fâché de se voir enlever la gloire d’Auteur qu’il avoit usurpée, revendiqua au Conseil l’ouvrage qui n’étoit pas sien. Faute de preuves par écrit des faits que M. Blanchet alléguoit pour sa défense, il succomba. Le sieur Berard, enflé de la victoire, fit afficher l’Arrêt à grand nombre. Il fit plus, il en falsifia l’intitulé; a lû qui a voulu lire dans cet intitulé, contre la teneur de l’Arrêt, la qualité d’Auteur de l’art du chant donnée au Sr. Berard, & la condamnation de M. Blanchet à cent livres d’amende; quoique la question sur le véritable Auteur du chant ne soit pas décidée par l’Arrêt, & que les cent livres, au payement desquels le défendeur est condamné, ne soient que des dommages-intérêts. M. Blanchet eût été bien fondé à poursuivre la réparation de l’injure, à lui faite, par cette falsification de l’intitulé. Il s’en est abstenu par modération: mais, au moins, faut-il que le public sache qu’on l’a calomnié.<sup>38</sup>

[In paraphrase:] Blanchet had sold his research to Bérard but was not paid when the edition appeared. Believing the contract thus null and void, he obtained a *privilège* to publish under his own name. After this

<sup>36</sup> Blanchet, *L’Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, xl. François Rebel (1701–1775) and François Francoeur (1698–1787) were composers and violinists who were associated with the Opéra, as was the harpsichordist André Chéron (1695–1766). Antoine Houdard de La Motte (1672–1731), librettist for Campra’s *L’Europe galante*; Joseph-François Duché de Vancy (1668–1704), librettist; Denis Diderot (1713–1784), encyclopedist and writer on a wide variety of subjects; Philippe Bridard de La Garde (1710–1767), a writer who collaborated on the *Mercure de France* and organized the *fêtes particulières* for Louis XV.

<sup>37</sup> Blanchet, *L’Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, xxi–xxv. Bérard’s book refers to Ferrein.

<sup>38</sup> ‘Lettre d’un Amateur, sur la second édition de l’art du chant, à l’Auteur des Observations’, *Observations périodiques* 3 (1757), 70–71.



second edition was published under Blanchet's name, Bérard brought suit to claim a work that was not his. For lack of proof in writing of the facts that Blanchet alleged in his defense, he lost. Then Bérard posted many copies of the decree and falsified its entitlements to make it read as though he had been granted the authorship of *L'Art du chant* and Blanchet had been condemned to pay 100 livres in penalty. However, the decree did not determine the question of the work's true author and the 100 livres Blanchet was assessed as loser were only damages. Although Blanchet could have pursued reparation for Bérard's falsifying the language of the decree and distributing it, he declined. But the public should know that he has been slandered.

Before filling five large pages with quotations from Blanchet to demonstrate that a musician lacking formal education was not likely to have put his hand to the work in question, the writer asserts: 'Je crois, il apparoîtra démonstrivement, qu'un musicien sans études & sans lettres n'est seulement pas soupçonné d'avoir mis la main à l'ouvrage dont il s'agit'.<sup>39</sup> (I believe it will become conclusively evident that a musician without education and without scholarship could not even be suspected of having put his hand to the work concerned.)

In 1987 Jouve-Ganvert reports having found no trace in the registers of the Parlement Civil de Paris (2 January 1753 to 7 January 1757), or in other documentary sources, of the suit Marpurg mentions.<sup>40</sup> But this account of Bérard vs Blanchet (of which she had no knowledge) was not published in Toussaint's journal until the second half of 1757, indicating that it could have taken place after the time under investigation. Another possibility, she speculates, is that any agreement between Bérard and Blanchet would have remained secret if the suit had not been disclosed. Lacking both the funds and the will to contest a suit brought by someone supported by Mme de Pompadour, Blanchet, we can suppose, would have settled as quickly as possible. Under such circumstances his fate was preordained. Thus the *Biographie universelle* lists him as the author of *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, but 'together with Bérard'. Even though Blanchet lost the suit, he appears to have emerged the victor in the eyes of his peer group, to judge from Marpurg's account and what is implied in the literary journals.

## LATER COMMENTARIES ON THIS EPISODE

For two hundred years writers have largely accepted La Borde's 1780 judgment:

[Blanchet] claims that M. Berard stole part of his manuscript in writing his *L'Art du chant*, but in truth it has nothing worth stealing, for it is impossible to produce anything worse. Moreover, the edition of his work is filled with gross errors. However, he assures us that it *is written with finesse, precision, and system* . . . In taking the opposite of this encomium, one still has no idea of all the stupidities in this work.<sup>41</sup>

At this point we need to consider the political situation and the importance of 'honour' in this society that sanctioned duels for matters that seem trivial to us. Because Bérard's book was dedicated to Mme de Pompadour, the court could never admit that it had been duped, but had to discredit Blanchet's claims. Not only was La Borde a recognized writer and scholar, but he had also held a high-level position at court for many years and was well placed to ensure that the court's view of Blanchet was the one transmitted to posterity. This explains why his criticism of Bérard's book elsewhere is so muted, despite the similarity of the two books. Allowing simply that Bérard's *L'Art du chant* has 'some good things', he adds that 'most of it is useless today, being incompatible with the new singing style, which has nearly entirely supplanted that which

<sup>39</sup> *Observations*, 71.

<sup>40</sup> Jouve-Ganvert, 'Bérard et l'art du chant', 219–220.

<sup>41</sup> La Borde, *Essai sur la musique*, 585; quoted in Jouve-Ganvert, 'Bérard et l'art du chant', 217, who observes this article's strong influence on other writers up to the present and notes that La Borde had doubtless not studied the two works sufficiently to observe all the resemblances and 'fautes grossières'.



for more than a hundred years was the delight of Paris and all France'.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps the latter phrase was written in irony; as one who favoured singing in the Italian style and was instrumental in bringing Niccolò Piccinni to Paris in 1777, La Borde is unlikely to have approved some of the frequent 'effects' (see below) that were prominent in French singing. And nothing in La Borde's brief commentaries suggests that he actually read the Bérard/Blanchet books. Meagre as his praise of Bérard's book was, Choron and Fayolle's *Dictionnaire historique des musiciens* (1810) erroneously cites him as saying that it is 'filled with excellent insights', while Blanchet's book 'abounds with clumsy errors'.<sup>43</sup>

The encomium that La Borde cites in reference to Blanchet's book appears in the 1756 *Sentiment d'un harmoniphile*, is quoted from a circular it claims the author distributed.<sup>44</sup> Because La Borde elsewhere in his book discusses this journal, it was probably a source for his negative assessment of Blanchet's work. Its review focuses on a small portion of the author's work, faulting the inaccurate quotation of poetry – for example, making two lines of six syllables each instead of one line of twelve – which is unrelated to the diction under discussion. Otherwise the only criticism is Blanchet's use of numbers instead of symbols to designate the embellishments.

Also of interest are anonymous hand-written annotations dated 1766 and 1772 opposite the title page of a handsome leather-bound, gold-imprinted copy of Bérard's book presumably owned by an unidentified aristocrat:

This work is not at all poor, but on the contrary is clear and methodical, and the last part well explains the correct way to sing French. Monsieur Bérard, Chevalier de Saint-Jean de Latran [*sic*], singer at the Comédie Italienne and then at the Opéra – an unpleasant voice, but a good singing teacher – claims the honour of this book and is capable of having done at least the last two parts. However, a certain Monsieur . . . has disputed the paternity and has written to claim it. He could have had something to do with it, but surely the better part of it is from Bérard.<sup>45</sup>

The portions on diction and embellishment (probably meaning the appendix) to which this individual refers are areas where Blanchet either grants Bérard credit or disagrees in part with his text.

## THE HISTORICAL SETTING

In his Preface Blanchet observes: 'On a fermé les yeux sur les ridicules qu'offrent les différens théâtres lyriques; on ne s'est point armé des traits de la satire: on s'est proposé de proscrire les abus, & non d'aigrir les artistes.'<sup>46</sup> (We have closed our eyes to the absurdities offered at the various *théâtres lyriques* and certainly have not armed ourselves with the arrows of satire. We intend to proscribe abuses and avoid offending the artists.) While his book is both instructional and critical, it avoids the harsh tone that marred Jean-Jacques Rousseau's criticism. Blanchet's approach is instead to accentuate the positive (note his citation as role models those few singers at the Opéra who practised the principles he presents). What were the 'absurdities' he mentions? From contemporary accounts, we can surmise that audience behaviour played a significant role in producing them. Unlike today's highly educated audiences, eighteenth-century French audiences comprised a wide cross-section of society. On the one hand, a small band of intellectuals and critics continually urged greater refinement and taste in musical execution, while, on the other, the crowd

42 La Borde, *Essai sur la musique*, 496.

43 Quoted in Jouve-Ganvert, 'Bérard et l'art du chant', 217.

44 *Sentiment d'un harmoniphile sur différens ouvrages de musique*, ed. Marc-Antoine Laugier (formerly attributed to Labbet, Morambert and Lérès), 1 (Paris, 1756; reprinted Geneva: Minkoff, 1972), 126. This article is discussed in Jouve-Ganvert, 'Bérard et l'art du chant', 213–214, but the above interpretation is mine.

45 Quoted by Jouve-Ganvert, 'Bérard et l'art du chant' 225, who notes that another hand has added 'Blainville' in the blank space after 'Monsieur'.

46 Blanchet, *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, xlvi.



demanded extreme volume levels and effects that would be unthinkable today. Consider a letter that the Swiss writer François-Louis d'Eschery sent a friend after viewing the Paris Opéra's 1768 revival of Rameau's *Dardanus*:

C'est un vieux reproche, comme vous savez, qu'on fait aux chanteurs français de donner trop d'essor à leur voix, de crier même; mais je n'avois rien entendu de pareil à *Dardanus*, et pour moi, je crois que c'est une plaisanterie de la part du parterre, et qu'il cherche à s'amuser. Le jeu est cruel. La dernière fois que j'y suis allé, paroît Legros, qui jouoit *Dardanus*; il donna toute sa voix, qu'il a extrêmement forte et perçante; je trouvois qu'il crioit comme un diable. Point du tout, le parterre ne dit mot, il n'applaudissoit point. Legros s'évertue, et pousse avec effort des sons renflés, et si prodigieusement éclatans, que parvenus à leur plus haut période, je ne savois qui couroit le plus grand danger de sa poitrine ou bien de mes oreilles, je frémissais pour lui, et le parterre d'applaudir et de battre des mains. Le pauvre Legros, sur les dents dès la fin du second acte, ne rendoit plus que des sons aigres et rauques. Au troisième acte vient sur l'arène, et pour le remplacer, un nouvel athlète qui d'abord fit merveille; il étoit frais: nouveaux battemens de mains à tout rompre. Au commencement du cinquième acte, il étoit déjà si enroué, qu'a peine on l'entendoit. A l'instant partent en même temps, de cinq ou six coins de la salle, cinq à six coups de sifflets. Ceci est à la lettre. . . . ce jeu là paru plus barbare que les gladiateurs de Rome.<sup>47</sup>

As you know, French singers have long been criticized for singing with too much vigour, even screaming. But I have heard nothing to compare with *Dardanus*. I believe it to be a witticism on the part of the *parterre* [the large group of male standees filling the floor area], which seeks to amuse itself. The game is cruel. The last time I went, Legros played *Dardanus*. He gave out with all his voice, which is extremely loud and piercing; I found that he screamed like a devil. Not at all – the *parterre* said not a word and did not applaud. Legros exerted himself and with effort heaved some swollen, prodigiously bursting sounds. As they reached their summit, I did not know which ran the greatest danger – his chest or my ears. I shuddered for him . . . Poor Legros, worn out from the end of the second act, had only some harsh and hoarse sounds left. At the third act, he was replaced by a new athlete who at first did marvellously well because he was fresh. Then there was clapping like mad. At the beginning of the fifth act, he was already so hoarse that he could scarcely be heard. Instantly, from five or six corners of the hall emanated five or six whistles. This is the literal truth. . . . This game seemed to me more barbarous than the gladiators of Rome.

Singers of talent needed support to resist what could bring them instant applause. Perhaps the reason the critics constantly singled out Fel (who had studied with an Italian teacher<sup>48</sup>) and Jélyotte for praise was because they avoided the crowd-pleasing exertions of most singers and came closest to the Italian style of voice production. Seeking to persuade singers to aspire to honour instead of immediate gratification, Blanchet observes that their talent, when brought to a certain degree, puts them on an exalted level and that the eloquent pens that have transmitted to posterity the illustrious acts of the Athenian and Roman heroes have also sung the praises of Roscius, the famed actor: 'Jaloux de mériter l'estime de leur siècle ces mêmes Chanteurs ambitionnent les suffrages éclairés du petit nombre des Amateurs délicats, & dédaignent l'approbation aveugle de la multitude, qui applaudit le plus souvent aux efforts & à l'exagération.'<sup>49</sup> (Desirous of deserving their century's esteem, singers will prefer the enlightened approbation of the small

47 François-Louis d'Eschery, *Mélanges de littérature, d'histoire, de morale et de philosophie* (Paris: Bossange & Masson, 1811), volume 2, 318–319. Joseph Legros (1739–1793) was a leading countertenor at the Opéra.

48 See Mary Cyr, 'Eighteenth-Century French and Italian Singing: Rameau's Writing for the Voice', *Music and Letters* 61/3–4 (1980), 320–322. Her notated realizations of Bérard's embellishments (327–328), however, do not appear in Bérard's book.

49 Blanchet, *L'art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, 142–143. The audience behaviour to which Blanchet alludes is well documented by Henri Lagrave, *Le théâtre et le public à Paris de 1715 à 1750* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1972).



number of refined *amateurs* and disdain the blind hailing of the multitude, which most often applauds exertion and exaggeration.)

This exertion exacted a severe toll on singers, and broken blood vessels in the chest were not rare. For example, in 1779 the *Correspondance littéraire* reports a casualty of Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride*: 'Le sublime rôle d'Iphigénie a achevé de tuer M<sup>lle</sup> Rosalie Levasseur; elle a eu plusieurs crachements de sang qui font craindre qu'elle ne soit forcée de renoncer entièrement au théâtre.'<sup>50</sup> (The sublime role of Iphigénie has finished killing Mlle Rosalie Levasseur; she has coughed up blood several times, and it is feared that she will be forced to give up the theatre for good.) Vocal exertion is evident also when Marc-Antoine Laugier reports on the Opéra's 1756 revival of Jean-Baptiste Lully's *Roland*, complaining that the personage being portrayed is lost in the singer's desire to be heard: 'La manie que l'on a de faire voir la force de ses poumons, & l'étendue de sa voix, diminue le plaisir & détruit l'illusion.'<sup>51</sup> (The craze of showing the strength of his lungs and the extent of his voice diminishes pleasure and destroys illusion.)

Overdone embellishment was a crowd-pleaser to which the educated elite, such as Laugier, took exception: 'The endless one-note graces; the trills fluttering for a quarter hour in places where it would not be necessary to have any, or at the least, very short ones; the crescendos carried to the point of running out of breath dampen the action.'<sup>52</sup> He blames vocal teachers:

This is what results from the way our claimed *maîtres de goût* teach the art of singing. Confined for the most part to simple musical learning, they are unable to distinguish what must be declaimed from what is to be sung. From this derives these absurdities in expression – giving to grave or sad songs some sweet and honeyed embellishments.

D'Alembert says much the same in his 1759 critique of declamation: 'Les Acteurs, pour faire briller leur voix, ne songent qu'à crier & à traîner leur sons . . . Les cadences, les tenues, les ports de voix que nous y prodiguons, seront toujours un écueil insurmontable au débit ou à l'agrément du récitatif.'<sup>53</sup> (To make their voices stand out, singers think only of screaming and dragging out their notes . . . The trills, *tenues* and one-note graces used in such abundance will always be an insurmountable stumbling-block to the declamation or to the recitative's charm.)

The *Mercure de France*, too, protests against the singing style in the Opéra's 1762 performance of a portion from André Campra's *Fêtes vénitiennes*:

L'affectation de donner des sons pleins ou éclatans sur toutes les syllabes, de prolonger des cadences, ou de faire valoir tous les ornemens du chant, en produit nécessairement une très-grande [word missing: 'lenteur?'] dans le jeu; & le tout ensemble produit, avec l'ennui, les contresens les plus choquans contre la vraisemblance du Dialogue. Ce n'est point à notre Musique nationale mais souvent à la manière de l'exécuter, qu'il faut attribuer le ridicule.<sup>54</sup>

The affectation of making crescendos or outbursts on all the syllables, elongating the trills and showing off all the ornaments of singing cannot help but make the execution extremely [word missing: 'slow?']. All of this together creates not only boredom, but the most appalling

50 *Correspondance littéraire* 12 (August 1779), 291–292.

51 [Laugier,] *Sentiment d'un harmoniphile*, 129.

52 [Laugier,] 129–130: 'Les ports de voix sans fin, les cadences battues pendant un quart d'heure dans des endroits où il n'en faudroit point, ou du moins de très courtes, les sons de voix filés à perte d'haleine, refroidissent nécessairement l'action'.

53 Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, 'De la liberté de la musique', in *Mélanges de littérature, d'histoire, et de philosophie* (Amsterdam: Zacharie Chatelain et fils, 1766), volume 4, 425–426. The *tenues*, which require too lengthy a discussion for this article, will be treated in a future work.

54 *Mercure de France* (March 1762), 182–183.





absurdity against the dialogue's credibility. It is not to our national music, but often to its manner of performance, that we must attribute the ridicule.

There is a salient observation here: when music is badly performed, its quality cannot be judged accurately. Rousseau's harsh judgment of French music in his *Lettre sur la musique française* probably derived from the inferior manner in which it was often executed. On the other hand, his statements about the execution of music are more nearly accurate because they can be verified by other commentators who offer similar reports.

A passage from the critic Friedrich Melchior von Grimm illustrates the extent to which poor performance influences one's perception of a composition's value. Grimm revelled in virtually all aspects of French culture except opera, whose singing he found inferior to that of Italian opera. In his 1764 remarks concerning overloaded notes and harmony in Rameau's operas, it is clear that what he heard, and what we hear, are two different things:

Rameau ajouta presque partout à ces récits des accompagnements d'orchestre. Il est vrai qu'ils sont d'assez mauvais goût; qu'ils servent presque toujours à étouffer la voix plutôt qu'à la seconder, et que c'est là ce qui a forcé les acteurs de l'Opéra de pousser ces cris et ces hurlements qui font le supplice des oreilles délicates. On sort d'un opéra de Rameau ivre d'harmonie, et assommé par le bruit des voix et des instruments.<sup>55</sup>

Rameau added orchestral accompaniments nearly everywhere in his passages for solo voice. It is true that they are of poor enough taste, that they nearly always serve to suffocate the voice rather than support it and that they have forced the singers at the Opéra to thrust out these screams and bellows that are the torment of refined ears. One leaves a Rameau opera drunk with harmony and stunned by the noise of the voices and instruments.

The tremendous volume the orchestra produced was not entirely the players' fault, for they had to play instruments whose mechanisms were crude by modern standards (modern period instruments substitute a modern mechanism, enabling much better tone quality and technical facility).<sup>56</sup> Consider, for example, Louis-Joseph Francoeur's 1772 discussion of the oboe: 'This instrument is not perfect in all its notes: there are some that the performer's art cannot render completely in tune, and also some . . . whose fingering is very difficult and which need to be avoided, especially in solos.' Being unaware of these essential facts, he continues, many composers have blamed the player for the resulting poor harmony. Consequently, he spells out the instrument's deficiencies so that composers will avoid them. Among the many problems cited is poor intonation for the notes c<sup>1</sup>, c<sup>♯1</sup>, f<sup>♯1</sup>, b<sup>♭1</sup> and b<sup>♮1</sup>.<sup>57</sup> Thus Grimm's sharp criticism of Rameau's operas had more to do with the effect they produced with the resources available than with his compositional ability. His operas require more technique than most instrumentalists of the time possessed. On the other hand, his dances for the ballets within the operas won universal approbation, perhaps because their much simpler texture lay more within the capabilities of the players and instruments.<sup>58</sup> Music by others, such as Lully and

55 *Correspondance littéraire* 6 (October 1764), 88.

56 See Beverly Jerold, 'Clarinets in Beethoven's Day Had Faulty Keys, Reeds on Top', *The Instrumentalist* 58 (May 2004), 16–20. The limitations of other woodwind instruments are touched on in this article as well. Because instruments were constantly being improved, those a half century earlier would have been still more defective. The mechanical deficiencies of the principal instruments, including keyboard, are treated at length in my book *Skill Level in Music Performance: The Eighteenth Century*, as yet unpublished.

57 Louis-Joseph Francoeur, *Diapason général de tous les instruments à vent* (Paris: Des Lauriers, 1772; reprinted Geneva: Minkoff, 1972), 13–14: 'Cet Instrument n'est pas parfait dans tous ses Tons: il y en a que l'Art de l'Exécutant ne peut pas rendre parfaitement justes: il y en a aussi . . . dont le doigter est très difficile, et qu'il faut avoir soin d'éviter surtout dans les Solo'.

58 For more about mid-century standards see Beverly Jerold, 'Fontenelle's Famous Question and Performance Standards of the Day', *College Music Symposium* 43/1 (2003), 150–160.



certain Italian composers, could often make a better impression than Rameau's because it did not place so many demands on the players.

Apart from the excesses described above, singing in general did need improvement. In his *Prospectus où l'on propose au public . . . un Code de musique pratique* (1757), Rameau notes the deficiencies of French vocal training:

La troisième Méthode [of his proposed work] contient l'Art de former la Voix . . . Méthode non encore usitée en France . . . on a pris la mauvaise route; on perd un tems infini dans ce Labyrinthe, on se décourage à la fin; & toute la consolation qu'on croit pouvoir en tirer, c'est d'attribuer à la nature des vices que de mauvaises habitudes ont fait contracter, & qu'il seroit bien facile de réformer, si l'on vouloit oublier qu'on n'a jamais chanté, pour rentrer tout de nouveau dans la carrière. . . . L'extrême étenduë & la grande flexibilité des Voix chez les Italiens doivent certainement prévenir en faveur d'une Méthode qu'on tient en partie d'eux.<sup>59</sup>

The third method [of his proposed work] contains the art of training the voice . . . a method not yet used in France . . . one has taken a bad route, loses an infinite amount of time in this labyrinth, and at the end becomes discouraged. All the consolation to be drawn from this is to attribute to nature the defects that have arisen from bad habits, defects that would be very easy to correct if one wanted to forget ever having sung in order to start one's career anew. . . . The immense range and great flexibility of Italian voices should certainly predispose us in favour of a method derived partly from them.

In this context, it is worth remembering that Toussaint's journal, too, stated that singers did not follow a method of voice production. But France was not alone in this predicament, for with certain exceptions singing was generally deficient nearly everywhere except in Italian opera.<sup>60</sup>

These writers offer a glimpse of the Enlightenment in action, with the printed word serving as a tool to raise musical standards. Critical writing became particularly evident around mid-century, increasing over the next fifty years. And it bore fruit: critiques of performance in the 1750s were the seed that led to Paris playing such an important role in opera and orchestral music in the nineteenth century. The quantity of critical writing centred in Paris is so great as to make one think that performance there must have been worse than elsewhere. But this is largely illusory. As the hub of European literary activity, Paris had an unusually large number of writers (and visitors from abroad) who hoped to raise musical standards by their reportage. Documentation elsewhere is sufficient to conclude that France was not alone in mediocrity of musical execution. Indeed, France had certain strengths. In 1754, Marpurg agreed that Italian singers were superior to the French but that little difference existed between the two countries in solo instrumental performance; many of the most famed German players, he continues, attribute the neatness of their execution to the French. When playing a piece for the first time, the French 'not only handle it well, but also can play it at once with more grace than perhaps many Italians are ever able to do'.<sup>61</sup>

59 Rameau, *Prospectus*, 9–10, in *Complete Theoretical Writings*, ed. Erwin R. Jacobi (no place of publication: American Institute of Musicology, 1969), volume 4, xxiv–xxv. The vocal method that Rameau then proposed in his *Code de musique* is presented in my *Skill Level in Music Performance: The Eighteenth Century*.

60 For the situation in Germany see my 'Fasch and the Beginning of Modern Artistic Choral Singing', *BACH: Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute* 35/1 (2004), 61–86.

61 *Historisch-kritische Beyträge zur Aufnahme der Musik*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, 1 (Berlin, 1754), 24, 27, 31–32.



## ASPECTS OF BLANCHET'S BOOK

For the portion of his book dealing with vocal anatomy, Blanchet consulted Lorenz Heister's (1693–1769) *Anatomie d'Heister*, and included one of its illustrations. Noting that Dodard and Ferrein had not carried their observations beyond the formation of the voice, Blanchet believes he is the first to consider the mechanics of how notes are generated.

**Diaphragm breathing.** Blanchet's stated goal is to teach the art of singing an entire phrase, four or six times longer than usual, easily in one breath. His remarks about breath control indicate that most singers had difficulty in this area and consequently could not produce a smoothly connected melodic line:

La plûpart des gens, pour ne point connoître mes principes, ont l'air tout essoufflé dans le Chant, ne sont entendre que le commencement des sons qu'ils forment, se permettent des chûtes brusques, interrompent le sens d'une phrase par plusieurs inspirations, & tombent dans une infinité d'autres fautes qui ternissent l'éclat des plus belles voix.<sup>62</sup>

From not knowing my principles, most singers seem to be completely out of breath, make only the beginning of notes heard, allow themselves a sudden collapse, interrupt the sense of a phrase by several inhalations and fall into an infinite number of other errors that deaden the brightness of the most beautiful voices.

Noting that his method is followed by the virtuoso singers of Italy, Blanchet mentions that the illustrious castrato Caffarelli, whom all of Paris had recently heard with astonishment,<sup>63</sup> owes his success to this method, as does M. Rochar, who with a low level of volume can perform the longest phrases of music with a rare perfection.<sup>64</sup> Blanchet also observes that 'although French singers are not as accustomed as the Italians to singing at a low level of volume and in the high register, my principles could help them succeed in performing the cadenza just as well'.<sup>65</sup> The cadenza, which was to be sung in one breath, was not part of French singing.

Besides the detailed technical description of diaphragm breathing quoted above, Blanchet offers also a brief, practical one: 'To make a good inhalation, one should lift and enlarge the chest so that the abdomen swells. By this expedient, the entire cavity of the lungs will be filled'.<sup>66</sup> This method greatly enhances a singer's powers, says Blanchet, and is followed by Fel, Jélyotte, and Favart.<sup>67</sup> Diaphragm breathing was probably the foundation of the Italians' success in singing.

In offering some suggestions for improving out-of-tune singing, Blanchet recommends Fel's singing style in particular, noting that her agile, in-tune voice ascends easily from the lowest to the highest notes, producing each one with the same precision.<sup>68</sup> This observation tells us why the critics praised her so often: her good ear was the exception instead of the rule among singers, not only in France but elsewhere as well. As an unnamed but learned Frenchman quoted by the Berlin *Critische Musicus an der Spree* put it: 'dass unsre Sänger selten gute Musickverständige sind, es dauret mich, dass es wahr ist; dass viele falsch singen, der

62 Blanchet, *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, 33.

63 The *Correspondance littéraire* (1 September 1753) contains a laudatory account of Caffarelli's singing for the Académie Française. His 'angelic voice' and skilled execution, says Grimm, enchanted the sense and heart.

64 This is likely to be François-Joseph (called André) Richer (1712–1757), singer at court and for the Dukes of Orléans and Chartres. His son Louis Augustin was praised by the critics for avoiding the conventional excesses.

65 Blanchet, *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, 31–32: 'On peut étendre l'usage de mes règles jusqu'à l'agrément que nous appellons *point d'orgue*, & que les Italiens nomment *cadenza* . . . Quoique les Italiens soient plus accoutumés à chanter avec un petit volume de voix & à sons aigus, que les François, ceux-ci avec le secours de mes préceptes réussiront à former le point d'orgue avec autant de perfection que ceux-là'.

66 Blanchet, *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, 26: 'Pour bien inspirer, il faut élever & élargir la poitrine, de manière que le ventre se gonfle; par cet artifice, on remplira d'air toute la cavité du poumon'.

67 Blanchet, *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, 29–30.

68 Blanchet, *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, 104–105.



Vorwurf ist rechtmässig' (that our [French] singers are seldom well-trained musicians is, I regret to say, true. That many sing out of tune is a legitimate criticism).<sup>69</sup>

**Diction.** This is the area in which Blanchet's book differs most from Bérard's. Not only is it much longer, but there are differences of opinion. Like the poet Ranieri Calzabigi,<sup>70</sup> Blanchet objects to the widespread practice of elongating the mute syllable at the end of a word and forcing it to speak by terminating it with *eu*, as in *aimable: aima-bleu*. He takes Bénigne de Bacilly's *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter* to task for advocating this usage, noting that the rule he (Blanchet) gives is followed rigorously by 'our famous singers, in particular MM. Chassé and Jélyotte and M<sup>lle</sup> Fel. The latter two and M. Cahusac have astutely observed that its pronunciation is close to a soft *o*.' Many artists, he adds, wrongly change it to a loud (*gros*), hard *o*.<sup>71</sup> And when Blanchet warns against prescribing new rules, perhaps he has in mind Bérard's recommendation for pronouncing *foi, loi, Roi*, etc. as if written *foua, loua, Roua*, etc.; noting that the Académie Française is the sole repository of the language, Blanchet says that it alone has the authority to fix rules. Most of the pronunciations invented up to now, he adds, have been poorly received, and deservedly so, for they tend to multiply the syllables of words and, consequently, to augment the note values, thus disfiguring both the language and the music.<sup>72</sup>

### BÉRARD'S APPENDIX OF EXAMPLES

Interest in this work has focused chiefly on the appendix of embellished music examples, which derives from Bérard and which Blanchet omitted from his book.<sup>73</sup> For the three pieces that Bérard included from Rameau's operas, the composer's trills and one-note graces are reproduced almost exactly (in contrast to numerous additions made to examples from other composers).<sup>74</sup> But Bérard added to Rameau's pieces what later writers called 'effects,' which do not involve pitch changes but, rather, modifications of sound. In Rameau's monologue 'Tristes apprêts' from *Castor et Pollux* Bérard applies the following effects, indicated by symbols of his own invention (see Example 175):

- *Son filé entier* – a *messa di voce* (crescendo and decrescendo).
- ┌ *Son demi-filé* – the first half of a *messa di voce* (crescendo only).
- ┘ *Accent* – an inflection at the end of a note.

In describing how the *accent* is produced, Bérard's book again uses anatomical language:

L'accent demande qu'après avoir soutenu ou enflé le Son, l'on fasse monter le Larinx d'un degré ou d'un demi-degré, & qu'on fasse sortir l'air intérieur par les lèvres de la glotte avec une douceur extrême, afin de caresser le Son de la dernière note.<sup>76</sup>

69 *Der kritische Musicus an der Spree*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Marpur, 1 (Berlin, 6 January 1750), 365.

70 [Ranieri Calzabigi,] *Lettre sur le mécanisme de l'opéra italien* (Naples and Paris: Duchesne, Lambert, 1756), 29. In *Haydn, Mozart and the Viennese School 1740–1780* (New York: Norton, 1995), 158–164, Daniel Heartz presents convincing evidence that this work, previously attributed to Josse de Villeneuve, is by Calzabigi.

71 Blanchet, *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, 65–67. Compare Bérard, *L'Art du chant*, 80–83, and Jouve-Ganvert, 'Bérard et l'art du chant', 211 and 116–117.

72 Bérard, *L'Art du chant*, 83; Blanchet, *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, 68. On xi–xv he reproduces text about diction from the manuscript that Bérard brought him, noting also Bérard's copying from the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*.

73 Besides Cyr, 'Eighteenth-Century French and Italian Singing', another article treating Bérard's ornaments is by Nicholas McGegan and Gina Spagnoli, 'Singing Style at the Opéra in the Rameau Period', in *Jean-Philippe Rameau: Colloque International organisé par la Société Rameau*, ed. Jérôme de La Gorce (Paris: Champion, 1987), 209–226.

74 Cyr, 'Eighteenth-Century French and Italian Singing', 326.

75 Bérard, *L'Art du chant*, 119–120, 131–134, and Appendix, 7–8; Jouve-Ganvert, 'Bérard et l'art du chant', 133–134, 138–142, 144–145.

76 Bérard, *L'Art du chant*, 131–132.



*Monologue  
de Castor  
et Pollux.*

*Tristes apprêts, pâles flambeaux,  
Jour plus affreux que les ténébreux, Astres lu-  
gubres des tombeaux, Astres lugubres des tom-  
beaux, No...n je n'irai plus que vos clar-  
tes funébreux, No...n, no...n. Je n'irai  
plus que vos clar tes funébreux, Tous qui vous man-  
cœur éperdu, Père du jour, O Soleil! O mon Père,  
Je n'ai plus d'un bien que Castor a perdu,  
Et je renonce à la lumière. Tristes apprêts...*

Example 1 Bérard's interpretation of Rameau's 'Tristes apprêts', *Castor et Pollux*, Act 1 Scene 3



After sustaining or increasing the tone, the *accent* requires raising the larynx a degree or half a degree, and releasing the interior air through the lips of the glottis extremely smoothly, so as to caress the sound of the last note.

According to Michel-Pignolet de Montéclair, the *accent* is an aspiration or mournful elevation of the voice, used more often in plaintive than in tender airs, and never in lively pieces or those expressing anger. It is formed in the chest by a type of sob at the end of a long or loud note, making the pitch immediately above it sound softly:

une aspiration ou élévation douloureuse de la voix, qui se pratique plus souvent dans les airs plaintifs que dans les airs tendres; il ne se fait jamais dans les airs gays, ni dans ceux qui expriment la colère. Il se forme dans la poitrine par une espèce de sanglot, à l'extrémité d'une note de longue durée, ou forte . . . en faisant un peu sentir le degré immédiatement au dessus de la note accentuée.<sup>77</sup>

Lécuyer's 1769 vocal tutor, however, states that the *accent* does not have a defined pitch of its own, but is simply the repercussion of the existing pitch and that it is erroneous to mark it with a [small] note: 'Beaucoup de Musiciens le marquent par une Note au-dessus, d'autres au-dessous & se trompent également, car il n'est que la répercussion du Son déjà donné.'<sup>78</sup>

As performed by some singers, the *accent* may have seemed to be a higher pitch, even if that was not the intent, and while it is true that the harpsichord *accent*, for example, did use a pitch different from its main note, the vocal *accent* seems to have been more an effect than an ornament. That would explain why Bérard felt free to add it copiously to Rameau's pieces while generally adhering to the composer's indications for trills and one-note graces. The fact that Bérard added many trills and one-note graces to music of deceased composers, but not that of Rameau, suggests that this living composer had strong views on the matter.

Montéclair's 'sob' terminology in describing the *accent* brings to mind remarks by Florido Tomeoni, an Italian-trained singer who taught in Paris. When inhaling, he says, some singers in the French theatres mimic the convulsions of gasps or nerve attacks:

Ils prennent cela pour de l'expression; mais ce n'en est que *la charge*. Peut-on s'imaginer en effet que des personnages célèbres, des princesses, ou des héros, tels qu'on les représente sur la scène française, s'étudiassent à pleurer à chaque instant comme des enfans, ou à sangloter comme de petites filles! . . . ces aspirations barbares et déplacées devraient être sévèrement bannies du chant et des représentations lyriques. L'imitation des convulsions vomitives, et des soubresauts du hoquet, ne sont pas assurément de bons moyens pour donner des sons pleins et harmonieux; et ceux qui les prendraient pour de l'expression, auraient de la peine, je crois, à soutenir leur sentiment.<sup>79</sup>

They call it expression, but it is only caricature. Can we really believe that the celebrated personages, princesses and heroes represented on the French stage cry like children or sob like little girls! . . . these barbarous and unbecoming inhalations should be banished from singing and opera performance. The imitation of vomitive convulsions and sudden gasps is assuredly not a good method for producing full and harmonious tones, and those who call them 'expression' will have difficulty, I believe, in supporting their case.

<sup>77</sup> M.-P. de Montéclair, *Principes de musique* (Paris: veuve Boivin, 1736; reprinted Geneva: Minkoff, 1972), 80; partially quoted in Jouve-Ganvert, 'Bérard et l'art du chant', 134.

<sup>78</sup> Lécuyer, *Principe de l'art du chant*, 16–17; quoted in Jouve-Ganvert, 'Bérard et l'art du chant', 134.

<sup>79</sup> Florido Tomeoni, *Théorie de la musique vocale* (Paris: the author, Charles Pougens [c.1799]), 27–28.





Bérard's ornaments and effects in his appendix of musical examples probably represent what many singers did. The above commentaries, however, suggest disapproval and a desire for much more modest usage, as does *L'Année littéraire* in its review of Bérard's book:

Je ne crains qu'une chose, c'est qu'en voulant porter le Chant au plus haut degré de délicatesse, cette délicatesse ne dégénère en raffinement. . . . Ce Chant si *maniéré* qui s'est introduit parmi nous n'est-il pas une affectation puérole? Notre Chant demande de l'expression, de la vérité, de l'énergie, de l'intelligence, de la finesse même. Mais j'ose dire que tous ces petits agréments & ces nuances légères, dont on le croit susceptible, peuvent ternir sa beauté naturelle.<sup>80</sup>

I fear only one thing: that, in wanting to carry singing to the highest degree of delicacy, this delicacy not degenerate into affectation. . . . Isn't this highly mannered singing that has been introduced among us a puerile affectation? Our singing requires expression, verity, energy, intelligence, and even finesse. But I dare say that all these little ornaments and frivolous nuances, to which singing is believed open, can tarnish its natural beauty.

Laugier's review of Bérard's book expresses similar concerns, doubting that the embellishment symbols presented will fulfil their goal. Bérard wanted to let the public and posterity know the way a skilled singer would have performed a piece, says Laugier, but there will always be a character of expression unique to an individual singer which can never be transmitted on paper; moreover, an embellishment well suited to one singer will not be so to another: 'Le goût est une affaire de sentiment, que la multitude de signes dont M. B. a chargé ses exemples, ne fera point naître dans celui qui n'en sera point susceptible.'<sup>81</sup> (*Le goût* is a matter of feeling, which the multitude of signs with which M. B. has loaded his examples will never inspire in one who is not at all susceptible to it.)

When Blanchet advises singers to be careful about repeating an embellishment in the same piece of music, 'at least not too close together', he concurs with this view.<sup>82</sup> Compare, for example, his recommendation with Bérard's addition of fifteen *accents*, nine crescendos, and five *messe di voce* to Rameau's brief monologue. 'As performed by M<sup>lle</sup> Le Maure, M<sup>lle</sup> Fel and M. Jélyotte', says Blanchet, 'the embellishments have a singular quality of melody and expression; the ear is deliciously charmed and the heart, deeply moved, is led into the various passions. . . . But when these same embellishments are performed by mediocre artists, the ear is offended and the heart not touched at all.'<sup>83</sup> With respect to embellishment, then, we find a clear delineation between Bérard's heavy usage and Blanchet's urging of restraint, something that is also advocated by other informed critics.

Aspects of eighteenth-century class structure and limited educational opportunities are major factors in determining the authorship of Bérard's book. Recall Benoit's findings with respect to musicians' lack of basic writing skills. As asserted in Toussaint's journal, Bérard lacked the education necessary for writing a book of this nature. Had he been one of those few music teachers capable of writing a book, it would have had a more practical focus and it would have used notation to describe the ornaments. And Blanchet tells us that his section on vocal anatomy was intended more to satisfy the curiosity of scholars than to further artistic progress. He can be credited with being the first writer known to verbalize the concept of diaphragm breathing, which is crucial to the art of singing. The lack of such knowledge among many singers and teachers helps to explain why singing was so often of poor quality. Unintentionally, the vocal pedagogue Lécuyer confirmed that this material was indeed beyond his own grasp and that of most singers and teachers of the period.

80 *L'Année littéraire*, (Amsterdam, 1755/2), 62–63.

81 [Laugier,] *Sentiment d'un harmoniphile*, 31.

82 Blanchet, *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, 138: ' . . . on doit bien se garder de les répéter dans les mêmes morceaux de Musique, du moins à une trop foible distance de l'endroit où on les a exécutés'.

83 Blanchet, *L'Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, 113.



Either directly or by allusion five literary journals expressed support for Blanchet, and there may have been others. It is improbable that Toussaint would have granted this issue so much coverage in his journal without sound basis, nor would Voltaire have furnished the unknown Blanchet with a letter of commendation without intercession from a respected writer. In contrast, a contemporary source supporting Bérard's authorship has yet to be located and La Borde, in presenting a quarter century later what was probably the royal position, evaded the question of authorship. With his Berlin connections, Toussaint is the most probable source of Marpurg's account citing Blanchet as the true author. And so the signs point to Blanchet as the source for much of Bérard's book, except for those parts he disclaims, such as the appendix of music examples, portions of the section dealing with diction, the choice of ornaments to be presented and the errors he cites.